

Discourse 10

“*Margela b’Pumei d’Rava... -
Rava was wont to say...*”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Vayishlach,
16th of Kislev, 5729
By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

It states in Talmud,⁵⁶³ “Rava was wont to say, ‘The ultimate objective of wisdom (the primary aspect of Torah – Rashi) is repentance and good deeds etc., as the verse states,⁵⁶⁴ ‘The beginning of wisdom is the fear of *HaShem*-יהוה, good intellect to all who practice them.’ It does not say, ‘To all who study them-*L’Lomdeihem*-ללומדיהם,’ but says, ‘To all who practice them-*L’Oseihem*-לעושיהם.’”

In his well-known discourse, said by his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, on Shabbat Parshat Vayishlach forty years ago,⁵⁶⁵ (printed in the pamphlet of wedding discourses – *Drushei Chatunah*),⁵⁶⁶ he explains that at first glance, this is not understood.⁵⁶⁷ For, wisdom (that is,

⁵⁶³ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 17a

⁵⁶⁴ Psalms 111:10

⁵⁶⁵ Shabbat Parshat Vayishlach 5689 and the *Sheva Brachot* meal

⁵⁶⁶ Kuntres 2 – Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim Vol. 1, p. 28b and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5689 p. 148 and on.

⁵⁶⁷ Also see Sefer HaSichot, Torat Shalom p. 158

Torah), repentance, and good deeds, differ from each other in their substance.

That is, the substance of wisdom is understanding and comprehension, whereas the substance of repentance and good deeds is fear of Heaven and piety. As he states in the discourse, in the language of the world [Yiddish], wisdom is called “cleverness-*Klug*-קלוג,” whereas in the language of the world [Yiddish], repentance and good deeds are called “piousness-*Frum*-פרום.”

Moreover, not only do wisdom, repentance, and good deeds differ in their substance, but beyond this, they completely differ from each other, as we clearly see that there are simple folk who say Psalms with inner feeling and a broken heart, and are occupied in fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot* with fear of Heaven, though they are not at all masters of knowledge and intellect. That is, there can be repentance and good deeds even without wisdom. This being so, why does he state that “the ultimate objective and primary aspect of wisdom is repentance and good deeds”?

2.

This may be understood by prefacing with the teaching of the Zohar,⁵⁶⁸ that “no thought grasps Him whatsoever,” but “He is grasped in the desire of the heart (*Re’uta d’Leeba*).”⁵⁶⁹ To clarify,⁵⁷⁰ the word “Him-*Beih*-בִּיה” here refers to the

⁵⁶⁸ Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 17a

⁵⁶⁹ See Zohar III 289b (Idra Zuta); Sefer HaMaamarim 5689 ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Regarding the coming section also see *Hemshech* 5666 p. 57 and on.

Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and about this it states, "no thought grasps Him whatsoever." That is, His Essential Self is altogether not grasped through thought (*Machshavah*), the general substance of which is intellect (*Sechel*).

The explanation is that when it comes to the matter of intellect (*Sechel*) (that is, "thought-*Machshavah*") there are two aspects, which are Wisdom-*Chochmah* and Understanding-*Binah*, these being "nothing" (*Ayin*) and "something" (*Yesh*).⁵⁷¹ Understanding-*Binah* is the matter of comprehension and grasp, meaning that one grasps the intellectual matter by its edges, this being a matter of measure and limitation. This is why it is called "something" (*Yesh*).

In contrast, Wisdom-*Chochmah* is the [essential] point of the intellectual matter that transcends understanding and grasp, which is why it is called "nothing" (*Ayin*), in that it only is a point (*Nekudah*). It is about these two aspects of the intellect (Wisdom-*Chochmah* and Understanding-*Binah*) that it states, "no thought grasps Him whatsoever."

[To further explain] from the easy [to understand] to the more difficult: When it comes to the aspect of Understanding-*Binah*, since its substance is grasp and comprehension, which is measured and limited according to the manner of his grasp, it therefore does not at all grasp His Essential Self, blessed is He, being that He transcends grasp and transcends all measures and limitations.

⁵⁷¹ See *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 1 p. 71 and on; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 1, and elsewhere.

[However], even the aspect of Wisdom-*Chochmah*, which is the [inner] point (*Nekudah*) of the intellectual matter that transcends comprehension and grasp, even this point of Wisdom-*Chochmah* then comes into the understanding and grasp of Understanding-*Binah*. In other words, the point (*Nekudah*) of the Wisdom-*Chochmah* itself comes into the Understanding-*Binah* with explanation and in detail, this being the matter of “the point in the chamber” (*Nekudah b’Heichala*).⁵⁷² This being so, even the point of Wisdom-*Chochmah* is an intellectual matter, and therefore, it too does not at all grasp His Essential Self, blessed is He.

Furthermore, even the intellectual axiom that transcends the point of the Wisdom-*Chochmah*, meaning that this is something axiomatic to him, in a way that transcends intellect and reasoning, [which is why if he is asked for a reason for it he will not know how to answer, since it is not by way of grasp, but is only that such is axiomatic to him, and on the contrary, it does not require explanation, being that this matter is axiomatic to him]. Nevertheless, even this axiom is an intellectual axiom, and therefore automatically relates to the comprehension and grasp of the Understanding-*Binah*. Therefore, it too does not at all grasp His Essential Self, blessed is He.

More specifically, the “thought” (*Machshavah*) (of [the teaching] “no thought grasps Him whatsoever”) refers to the level of Wisdom-*Chochmah* alone. This is as stated in Zohar,⁵⁷³ “Thought (*Machshavah*) and the Jubilee (*Yovel*) never

⁵⁷² See Zohar I 6a; Tikkunei Zohar, beginning of Tikkun 5 (19a); Tikkun 28 (72b); Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Ch. 5 (107a); Likkutei Torah, beginning of Re’eh.

⁵⁷³ Zohar I 123a

separate.” The Jubilee (*Yovel*) refers to the aspect of Understanding-*Binah*, whereas “thought” (*Machshavah*) refers to the aspect of Wisdom-*Chochmah*.⁵⁷⁴

Now, the word “thought-*Machshavah* מַחְשַׁבָּה” divides into “the thought of *Ma”H-Chashav* מַחְשַׁב מַחְשַׁבָּה,”⁵⁷⁵ in which “thought-*Chashav* חַשַׁב” refers to the intellectual axiom, and *Ma”H* מַחְשַׁבָּה refers to the aspect of the sight (*Re’iyah*) of Wisdom-*Chochmah*, which transcends (not only the [inner] point of the Wisdom-*Chochmah* that then comes into the comprehension and grasp of Understanding-*Binah*, but) even transcends the intellectual axiom.

This is because the matter of sight (*Re’iyah*) is not at all a matter of understanding and comprehension. [Even so], about this it states, “no thought grasps Him whatsoever.” That is, the entire matter of thought (*Machshavah*), not only the aspect indicated by “*Chashav* חַשַׁב,” but even that which is indicated by the aspect of “*Ma”H* מַחְשַׁבָּה,” does not grasp His Essential Self, blessed is He.

This is because even the sight (*Re’iyah*) of Wisdom-*Chochmah* causes there to be additional light in the intellectual axiom, as well as in the understanding and grasp of the intellect, and because of this it [also] relates to comprehension and grasp, and therefore does not grasp His Essential Self, blessed is He.

The same is even so of the aspect of the Primordial Thought (*Machshavah HaKedooma*) of Primordial Man (*Adam*

⁵⁷⁴ Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Eight (*Binah*) and Gate Nine (*Chochmah*).

⁵⁷⁵ See Zohar I 24a; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 40.

Kadmon).⁵⁷⁶ For, being that it is called “thought-*Machshavah*-מחשבה,” it therefore relates to comprehension and grasp, and thus it too does not grasp His Essential Self, blessed is He.

3.

The same is so in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. (For, as known, every matter has a likeness in the service of Him, blessed is He.) To explain, when it comes to the matter of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, [about which it states],⁵⁷⁷ “There is no labor like the labor of love,” there are various ways in this. For, there is a love that is brought about through the contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) of the greatness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה which is perceived in the existence of the creations, as the verse states,⁵⁷⁸ “How abundant are Your works,” and,⁵⁷⁹ “How great are Your works,” both in quantity and in quality (as explained in Torah Ohr).⁵⁸⁰ Now, since contemplation into the matter of the abundance and greatness is a matter of reason and intellect, it is understood that the love brought about through this contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) also does not grasp His Essential Self, blessed is He.

However, there is an even higher level of love of Him brought about through contemplating the wondrousness of the limitless light of the Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is

⁵⁷⁶ Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 17 & Ch. 43, and elsewhere.

⁵⁷⁷ See Zohar II 55b; Zohar III 267a; Likkutei Torah, Shlach 42c; Kuntres HaAvodah, Ch. 1, Ch. 3 and on.

⁵⁷⁸ Psalms 104:24

⁵⁷⁹ Psalms 92:6

⁵⁸⁰ Torah Ohr, Va'era 56a

He. That is, one contemplates how the limitless light of the Unlimited One is wondrously beyond and completely divested of the matter of “How great [are your works]” and “How abundant [are your works],” through which he reaches an even higher level in the matter of love of Him.

Nonetheless, even the contemplation of the wondrousness of the limitless light of the Unlimited One is a matter of comprehension, except that in the comprehension itself, it is not in a way of positive knowledge (*Hasagat HaChiyuv*) (such as it is in the contemplation of “How great [are your works]” and “How abundant [are your works]”), but is rather in a way of knowledge through negation (*Yediyat HaShelilah*), which also is a matter of grasp.

Therefore, even the highest level of love, which comes about through contemplating the wondrousness of the limitless light of the Unlimited One, does not grasp the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, in that “no thought grasps Him whatsoever.”

4.

However, even though “no thought grasps Him whatsoever,” nevertheless, “He is grasped in the desire of the heart (*Re'uta d'Leeba*).” The explanation is that the desire of the heart (*Re'uta d'Leeba*) transcends the love brought about through contemplation (*Hitbonenut*). For, even though love (*Ahavah*) is a matter of desire (*Ratzon*), being that the word

“love-*Ahavah*-אהבה” is of the root “desire-*Avah*-אהב,”⁵⁸¹ which is the matter of desire (*Ratzon*), which is why love brings to desire, or alternately, love comes about through the desire, nevertheless, this is not [the aspect of] the desire of the heart (*Re’uta d’Leeba*), the substance of which is the essential desire (*Ratzon Atzmi*) that transcends reason and intellect.

The analogy for this is from the love of a son toward his father (and the love of the father toward his son) this being an essential love (*Ahavah Atzmit*) that does not come about through contemplation (*Hitbonenut*) etc. Specifically through it the essential bond with the father is caused.

This is unlike the love of one who loves and one who is loved. For, even though it also is possible for there to be great strength of love and bonding in this, there nevertheless are reasons for the love and bond, whether it is because [the one he loves] bestowed him with goodness (this being the sense that the thing [or act] is good for him), or whether it is because of the elevation and superior qualities that he has, in that he is an elevated person, (this being the sense that the thing is essentially good).

This is why, in this, there must be some contemplation and intellectual grasp about how he is a good person who does goodness with him, or that he intellectually understands the goodness and elevation, in whatever way he is elevated. Then, when he understands the manner of his elevation, he becomes bound to him and given over to him.

In contrast, in the love of a son to his father, it is not out of any bestowal that he bestows to him, (as in the explanation

⁵⁸¹ See *Sefer HaShoroshim* of the Radak

in books of ethics (Mussar),⁵⁸² that since his father gives him food and drink etc., he must love and respect him etc.) nor is it due to his recognition of the superior qualities of his father. Rather, this love is because the son is one essence with the father.

This then, is the matter of the desire of the heart (*Re'uta d'Leeba*), which is an essential bond that stems from the essential self of the soul, and it is through this that we grasp the aspect of the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהוה Himself, blessed is He, as in the known dictum, “Essence takes hold of Essence.”

5.

Now, similar to the teaching of the Zohar that “no thought grasps Him whatsoever” but “He is grasped in the desire of the heart (*Re'uta d'Leeba*),” it likewise states in Tanya,⁵⁸³ “no thought grasps Him whatsoever, except when it grasps and garbs itself in the Torah and its *mitzvot*, it then does grasp etc.” The reason that through Torah and *mitzvot* grasp of Him is caused etc., even though “no thought grasps Him whatsoever,” is (not because of the intellect, but is rather) because of the matter of the Essential Self present in Torah and *mitzvot*, and as mentioned before, “Essence takes hold of Essence.”

⁵⁸² See Yalkut Yitzchak (Warsaw 5655), Parshat Yitro, Mitzvah 33, Ot 1 (citing Sefer Eileh HaMitzvot); Also see Chovot HaLevavot, Petach HaShaar L'Shaar Avodat HaElokim, and elsewhere.

⁵⁸³ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 4

This then, is the meaning of [the teaching], “The ultimate objective of wisdom is repentance and good deeds.” That is, the ultimate and primary aspect of wisdom is repentance and good deeds, since in this the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהוה Himself, blessed is He, is grasped.

This is as explained by his honorable holiness, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, in the above-mentioned discourse,⁵⁸⁴ at least in short, and is understood based on the explanation at greater length elsewhere, in the discourse entitled “*Yaviyu Levush Malchut*” in Torah Ohr,⁵⁸⁵ about the superiority of the *mitzvot* over and above the study of Torah, this also being the superiority of good deeds (that are preceded by repentance (*Teshuvah*) through which the deeds are caused to be good),⁵⁸⁶ over and above Wisdom-*Chochmah*. From this it is understood that specifically through repentance and good deeds we take hold of His Essential Self, just as through the desire of the heart (*Re’uta d’Leeba*).

With the above in mind, we also can understand Rashi’s explanation of the words “The ultimate objective of wisdom,” [as meaning], “The primary aspect of Torah.” For, at first glance, what is he adding by explaining that Wisdom-*Chochmah* is Torah? However, the explanation is that even in Torah there is the matter of His Essential Self, except that this is the **primary aspect** of Torah. This is as explained by his honorable holiness, the Rebbe Rashab, whose soul is in Eden,

⁵⁸⁴ At the end of the discourse.

⁵⁸⁵ Torah Ohr, Megillat Esther 90a and on

⁵⁸⁶ See Likkutei Torah, Matot 82a; Drushim L’Shemini Atzeret 85a; Shir HaShirim 17c

in the known Sichah talk of Simchat Torah [printed] in Torat Shalom.⁵⁸⁷ Namely, that the primary matter of Wisdom-*Chochmah* is nullification (*Bittul*).

That is, in Wisdom-*Chochmah* itself there is a full stature of form in which there are many matters, including the matter of understanding and comprehension. However, the primary matter of Wisdom-*Chochmah* is the divestment of all forms within it, this being the matter of nullification (*Bittul*), as in the jargon that he adds and explains in the above-mentioned Sichah talk: “being given over” (*Ibbergeggebenkeit-איבערגעגעבנקייט*). This matter is the primary aspect of Torah, meaning the matter of the essence of Torah, through which we take hold of His Essential Self, blessed is He.

This then, is “the ultimate objective of wisdom is repentance and good deeds,” in that the primary aspect of Torah is that through it we take hold of the essence, just as [we do so] through repentance and good deeds. Through this we come to the revelation of His Essential Self, which will take place in the coming future, as the verse states,⁵⁸⁸ “The glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be revealed and all flesh together will see that the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה has spoken.”

⁵⁸⁷ Torat Shalom, p. 159 and on

⁵⁸⁸ Isaiah 40:5