

Discourse 41

“Shofteem v’Shotreem... - Judges and officers...”

Delivered on Shabbat Parshat Shoftim,¹³³⁷

2nd of Elul, 5729

By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹³³⁸ “You shall appoint Judges and officers in all the gates of your cities etc.,” and the passage concludes,¹³³⁹ “and you shall destroy the evil from your midst.”

The explanation is that our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹³⁴⁰ “‘A little city’¹³⁴¹ this refers to the body, ‘with only a few inhabitants,’ this refers to the limbs, ‘a mighty king came upon it’ this refers to the evil inclination, ‘and surrounded it and built great siege works over it’ etc.” About this the verse states, “Judges and officers shall you appoint in all the gates of your cities,” this being the body of man, (the “little city”).¹³⁴²

The ultimate culmination of the toil is to affect that “you shall destroy the evil from your midst,” referring to the evil inclination. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, stated in

¹³³⁷ This discourse is only in summary form (*Roshei Prokim*).

¹³³⁸ Deuteronomy 16:18

¹³³⁹ Deuteronomy 17:7

¹³⁴⁰ Midrash Kohelet Rabba 9:15

¹³⁴¹ Ecclesiastes 9:14

¹³⁴² See Sha”Ch Al HaTorah, beginning of Parshat Shoftim; Ohr HaTorah, Shoftim, p. 822.

Tractate Sukkah,¹³⁴³ “The evil inclination has seven names. The Holy One, blessed is He, called it ‘evil-*Ra*-רע.” Thus, about this it states, “You shall destroy the evil-*Ra*-רע from your midst.”¹³⁴⁴ It is through banishing the evil from one’s own midst, that “you shall destroy the evil from Israel”¹³⁴⁵ comes about as well, such that evil is banished from the Jewish people as a whole, and from the entire world.

[This is like what the Rambam rules,¹³⁴⁶ “A person should view himself... as well as the world, as equally balanced between merit and guilt... If he does one *mitzvah* he tips the balance for himself and for the entire world to the side of merit etc.”] For, since the creation of the world is for the sake of the Jewish people, [as the verse states], “In the beginning-*Bereishit*-בראשית,”¹³⁴⁷ meaning, “For the sake of Israel who are called ‘the beginning-*Reishit*-ראשית,’” therefore, through the evil being destroyed from Israel, there thereby is automatically the destruction of evil in the entire world.

All this is brought about through “Judges and officers.” The matter of “judges” (*Shofteem*-שופטים) is as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹³⁴⁸ “A person should always incite his good inclination against his evil inclination,” whereas the matter of “officers” (*Shotreem*-שוטרים) is as our sages, of blessed memory, taught,¹³⁴⁹ “He should remind himself of the

¹³⁴³ Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 52a

¹³⁴⁴ See Ohr HaChayim Al HaTorah to Deuteronomy 13:6, cited in Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* (p. 828); Discourse entitled “*Shoftim v’Shotrim*” 5629 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 p. 319),

¹³⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 22:22

¹³⁴⁶ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4

¹³⁴⁷ Rashi and Rambam to Genesis 1:1

¹³⁴⁸ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 5a

¹³⁴⁹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 5a *ibid.*

day of death,” (this being similar to officers who render the punishment etc.).

Now, even though the reminder of punishment (“officers”) certainly is effective, which is not so of the matter of inciting the good inclination against the evil inclination (“judges”), which is not always effective, as self-understood from the above-mentioned teaching of our sages, of blessed memory, “A person should always incite... If he is victorious, good, but if not, he should remind himself etc.,” nevertheless, the order in this work is that at first, there must be the matter of inciting the good inclination against the evil inclination (“judges”) and only afterwards, if this is not effective, there then must be the work of “remind him etc.” (“officers”).

2.

Now, to explain the matter of [the verse], “You shall appoint Judges and officers in all the gates of your cities,” on a deeper level,¹³⁵⁰ the verse states,¹³⁵¹ “Her Husband is known at the gates.” “Her Husband” refers to the Holy One, blessed is He,¹³⁵² [about Whom it states], “No thought grasps Him at all.”¹³⁵³ Nevertheless, He “is known at the gates.” That is, He is caused to be known (in the aspect of grasp (*Hasagah*)) through the “gates-*She’arim*-שערים,” which has two meanings. The first meaning is that “gates-*She’arim*-שערים” is of the same

¹³⁵⁰ In regard to the coming section, see Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 *ibid*. Also see Ohr HaTorah *ibid*. (p. 823 and on).

¹³⁵¹ Proverbs 31:23

¹³⁵² See Zohar I 103a

¹³⁵³ Introduction to Tikkunei Zohar 17a

root as in the phrase, “each person according to his measure-*Shee’ura* שיעורא,”¹³⁵⁴ in that the service of Him of one person is not comparable to that of his fellow.

This is because even though all Jewish souls are in equilibrium one with the other, and we all are as one,¹³⁵⁵ nevertheless, the general totality of Jewish souls divides into six-hundred thousand particular root souls, and each root divides into six-hundred thousand sparks etc.¹³⁵⁶ Therefore the order and mode of service of one person is unlike his fellow, like the service of Reuven ראובן which is with seeing (*Re’iyah*-ראיה), whereas the service of Shimon שמעון is with hearing (*Shemiyah*-שמיעה), and the service of Levi לוי is the matter [indicated by the verse],¹³⁵⁷ “My husband will become attached-*Yilveh*-ילוה to me,” as explained in Torah Ohr in the Torah portion of Vayechi.¹³⁵⁸

This meaning of [the word] “gates-*She’arim* שער־ים” (the order of service by each person according to his “measure-*Shee’ura* שיעורא”) is connected to the second meaning of [the word] “gates-*She’arim* שער־ים” which is that it denotes “measure-*Shee’ur* שיעור” and limitation. This is because the service of each individual, even if for him it is in a way of limitlessness, nevertheless, in comparison to the Holy One, blessed is He, it is limited. This certainly is so if he is in a state and standing of not having yet departed from his limitation. However, even so, “Her Husband is known at the gates-

¹³⁵⁴ Zohar I 103a *ibid*.

¹³⁵⁵ See Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 32

¹³⁵⁶ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 37 (48a)

¹³⁵⁷ Genesis 29:34

¹³⁵⁸ Torah Ohr, Vayechi 45a and on

She'arim-שערים,” in that “The Holy One, blessed is He, makes Himself known to each and every one according to his measure-*Shee'ura*-שיעורא.”¹³⁵⁹

3.

However, for “Her husband to be known at the gates,” this must be preceded by the toil of, “You shall appoint Judges and officers in all the gates etc.”

The explanation¹³⁶⁰ is that in the soul there are four gates, these being seeing, hearing, smelling, and speaking. The toil in the aspect of seeing (*Re'iyah*-ראיה) is as the verse states,¹³⁶¹ “Raise your eyes on high and see (*u'Re'u*-וראו) who created these.” The toil in the aspect of hearing (*Shemiyah*-שמיעה) is as the verse states,¹³⁶² “Now, O' Yisroel, listen (*Shma*-שמע) etc.” The toil of the aspect of smelling (*Rei'ach*-ריח) is as the verse states,¹³⁶³ “They shall place incense in Your nostrils (*b'Apecha*-באפך).”¹³⁶⁴ The toil in the aspect of speaking (*Dibur*-דיבור) is the matter of prayer, as the verse states,¹³⁶⁵ “This time let me gratefully praise *HaShem*-יהו"ה... then she stopped giving birth.”

This is prefaced by the matter of “You shall appoint Judges and officers in all the gates of your cities.” That is, one must restrict himself in the matter of seeing (*Re'iyah*), in that

¹³⁵⁹ See Zohar *ibid*.

¹³⁶⁰ See Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 p. 324

¹³⁶¹ Isaiah 40:26

¹³⁶² Deuteronomy 4:1; See Likkutei Torah Tzav 17b; Va'etchanan 3c

¹³⁶³ Deuteronomy 33:10; See Pirush HaMilot of the Mittler Rebbe, Ch. 89

¹³⁶⁴ [Also see Rashi to Exodus 15:8]

¹³⁶⁵ Genesis 29:35; See Sefer HaMaamarim 5629 p. 16 and elsewhere.

“he shuts his eyes from seeing evil.”¹³⁶⁶ For, as explained at length in books of Mussar,¹³⁶⁷ and also mentioned in shorter form in Chassidus, in Kuntres HaAvodah,¹³⁶⁸ even when one gazes in a way of cold disinterest, and when doing so he feels no arousal within himself, it nonetheless causes a big impression [in him] and an engraving in the soul, and will not pass without an arousal of evil being revealed [in him], Heaven forbid.

Likewise, one must restrict himself in the matter of hearing (*Shemiyah*), to shut his ears from hearing any evil, such as evil speech (*Lashon HaRa*), by which “he saves three.”¹³⁶⁹ Moreover, by doing so he also has an effect Above, that when there is prosecution against him, they do not want to listen to it, as the verse states,¹³⁷⁰ “But *HaShem* -ה' your God, refused to listen etc.” This is because the Supernal conduct is in a way of “measure for measure.”¹³⁷¹ Thus, when one does not want to hear evil about his fellow, this causes that when they want to speak evil of him Above, they are not listened to in the first place.

Likewise, one must restrict himself in the matter of scent (*Rei'ach*), meaning that one must guard himself against evil thoughts. This is as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹³⁷² “Thoughts of sin are worse than sin [itself] and the

¹³⁶⁶ Isaiah 33:15

¹³⁶⁷ See Reishit Chochmah, Shaar HaKedushah, Ch. 8; Kav HaYashar, Ch. 2, and elsewhere.

¹³⁶⁸ Kuntres HaAvodah, Ch. 2

¹³⁶⁹ See Talmud Bavli, Arachin 15b

¹³⁷⁰ Deuteronomy 23:6; See Likkutei Torah, Teitzei 38c and on

¹³⁷¹ See Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 90a

¹³⁷² See Talmud Bavli, Yoma 29a and Rashi there

sign for this is the scent [of roasting meat, which induces greater lust than eating it].”

Likewise, one must guard himself in the matter of speaking (*Dibur*). As Rambam writes,¹³⁷³ “One should not speak at length, even about matters involving one’s physical needs etc.” Similarly, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹³⁷⁴ “I have found nothing better for a person than silence.”

When he practices the restrictions in these four matters, this being the matter of [the verse], “You shall appoint Judges and officers in all the gates of your cities,” then this brings about that “you shall destroy the evil from your midst.” Through this, you also will “destroy the evil from Israel,” (as mentioned above) and it then is possible for there to be the matter of “Her husband is known at the gates,” that the Holy One, blessed is He, makes Himself known to each one according to his measure.

4.

Now, through the matter of “You shall appoint Judges and officers in all the gates of your cities” as it is in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of each and every Jew, we bring about that there will be the matter of “You shall appoint Judges and officers in all the gates of your cities” in the literal sense as well, as the verse states,¹³⁷⁵ “Then I will restore your judges as

¹³⁷³ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot De’ot 2:4

¹³⁷⁴ Mishnah Avot 1:17

¹³⁷⁵ Isaiah 1:26

at first, and your counselors as at the beginning,” with the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach.