

ON THE
ESSENCE OF THE
JEWISH PEOPLE

A Translation and adaptation
into English of

Mehutam Shel Yisroel

By

The Renowned Chassid and Mashpia

Rabbi Yoel HaKohen Kahan,
of righteous memory

Adapted into English by:
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Warning

The Holy Torah, the living words of the Living God, commands us,¹ “You shall not desecrate My Holy Name.” In explaining the true unity and service of *HaShem*, blessed is He, this book necessarily and unavoidably makes use of His Holy Name. It therefore is holy and sacred and great care should be taken not to desecrate it in any way, shape, or form.²

Now that we have entered the era of the true and complete redemption, it is our *mitzvah* and obligation to learn and disseminate the teachings of the knowledge of *HaShem*,³ “So that **all** the peoples of the earth may know that *HaShem*, He is God, there is none else.” Nevertheless, it behooves us to do so with the utmost reverence and care to sanctify His Great and Awesome Name. Therefore, wherever His Divine name and titles are found in this book we have placed quotation marks between the letters, thus assuring that they are not the actual Divine names themselves.

In addition, it should be noted that the ineffable name of *HaShem* **is not to be pronounced** whatsoever. This is as stated in the prophecy of Amos,⁴ “He shall say: ‘Silence-שׁוֹתָם, for we must not utter the Name *HaShem*!’”⁵ Rather, one must toil only to **know** *HaShem* and thereby know His Name, as stated,⁶ “For he has loved

¹ Leviticus 22:32

² Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 115a

³ Kings I 8:60

⁴ Amos 6:10

⁵ That is, it is forbidden to say His Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה. Therefore, when we pray or read the Torah, we must be silent-שׁוֹתָם-65, by saying His title Lord-*Adonay*-יְהוָה-65 instead. However, since His title Lord-*Adonay* is also holy, therefore, in regular conversation, we say *HaShem*, which means “The Name.” See *Ginat Egoz* by Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated under the title *HaShem is One*, Vol. 1.

⁶ Psalms 91:14

Me, therefore I shall deliver him; I will set him on high, because he knows My Name.” The verse specifies, “because he *knows* My Name,” and not because, “he says My Name,” or because, “he uses My Name.” As known, the Ten Commandments warn us, that the only sin *HaShem* does not forgive, is the sin of bearing His Holy Name in vain.⁷ It is thus of critical importance that we alert you to this.

Therefore, because the focus of this book is solely on the unity and service of *HaShem*, blessed is He and blessed is His Name, great care must be taken to treat it with the utmost respect. Be aware that it should not be defaced, destroyed or taken into any impure place, such as the toilet or bathroom.

If, for whatever reason, you need to dispose of this book, do not discard it in the trash. Instead, drop it off at your local Orthodox Jewish Synagogue, where it can be enjoyed by someone who will appreciate its value (or, if it is tattered beyond repair from much use, will be respectfully disposed of, according to the manner prescribed by Torah law.)

On the other hand, whosoever studies this work and contemplates its great depth, is assured abundant blessings from *HaShem*, blessed is He and blessed is His Name. This is as stated,⁸ “Whosoever lengthens their contemplation of His Oneness shall be rewarded with length of days and years.”

It is our sincere hope and prayer that our humble offering will find favor before *HaShem*, blessed is He and blessed is His Name and that the dissemination of these teachings will be the final act that ushers in the true and complete redemption. May we **fully** realize the time,⁹ “When there will be neither famine nor war, envy nor competition, for goodness will flow in abundance and all delights will

⁷ Exodus 20:6

⁸ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 13b

⁹ Mishneh Torah, Melachim u’Milchamot 12:5

be as freely available as dust. The occupation of the **entire** world will be solely to know *HaShem*. Therefore, the Jews will be great sages¹⁰ and know the hidden matters, grasping the knowledge of their Creator according to the full extent of human potential, as Isaiah (11:9) states, ‘The earth will be filled with the knowledge of *HaShem* as the waters cover the ocean floor.’”

The Translators

¹⁰ Who will teach the entire world about *HaShem*, for all nations will be thirsty for this knowledge and will greatly desire it.

Translators Forward

It is with tremendous joy and gratitude to *HaShem*, blessed is He, and with awesome trembling and humility, that we have been graced with presenting this important and popular work to the English reading public.

The original work, published by Heichal Menachem, was written by the famed genius and true Chassid, the renowned Mashpia, Rabbi Yoel HaKohen Kahan, of righteous memory. Rabbi Yoel Kahan, was the primary repeater (“*Chozzer*”) of the oral teachings of the *Tzaddik Yesod Olam* (The Tzaddik the foundation of the world), our Master, Teacher and Rabbi, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Moreover, Reb Yoel, as he was endearingly called by all Chassidim, was the primary writer and redactor (“*Kotev*”) in putting these teachings into written form. Besides all this, he also wrote an incredible Chassidic Encyclopedia, which, as of yet, is unfinished. Rabbi Yoel Kahan, was an unparalleled servant of *HaShem*, who lived and breathed Chassidus with his very being. His encyclopedic knowledge and uniquely clear power to explain and clarify the teachings of Chassidus, both in public orations and in his written works are renowned throughout the Torah world.

Originally given over as audio classes accessible by phone (from the years 5744-5746), the teachings presented here were reworked in written form by Rabbi Yoel Kahan himself, of righteous memory, in conjunction with Rabbi Dovid Olidort, may *HaShem*, blessed is He, bless him with many good and long Chassidische years.

It is our fervent hope and prayer that our efforts in making the teachings of Chassidus, especially this wonderful book, freely available to the English speaking public, will illuminate the whole world with the knowledge of *HaShem*, blessed is He and blessed is His Name. May our humble offering find favor before *HaShem*, and may the dissemination of these teachings be the final act that ushers in the true and complete redemption when,¹¹ “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of *HaShem* as the waters cover the ocean floor.”

28 Nissan, 5783

כ"ח ניסן תשפ"ג, תהא שנת שמחה פורצת גדר

The Translators

¹¹ Isaiah 11:9

Discourse 1

Our forefather Avraham – The First Jew

1.

The first¹² account in Torah about our forefather Avraham is in the beginning of the Torah portion *Lech Lecha*—Go for yourself, when the Holy One, blessed is He, told Avraham,¹³ “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house etc.” Now, the Torah also tells us about Avraham at the end of *Noach*, but only as it relates to the portion,¹⁴ “These are the descendants of Shem,” (the son of Noach)¹⁵ and is just a brief summation. The Torah only begins discussing our forefather Avraham as a subject unto himself at greater length and with many details when the Holy One, blessed is He, told Avraham, “Go for yourself.”

¹² This discourse is based on the following sources: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 25, Parshat Lech Lecha, Sichah 1; Also see Siddur Im Divrei Elokim Chayim of the Alter Rebbe, the beginning of Shaar Lag Ba’omer; Shaar HaEmunah of the Mittler Rebbe, Ch. 2 and on, and Ch. 13; *Hemshech* 5672 of the Rebbe Rashab, Vol. 2, p. 1,182; Sefer HaMaamarim, Melukat Vol. 2 p. 56 and on, and the citations there; Likkutei Sichot Vol. 4, p. 1,193 and on; Reshimot of the Rebbe, Booklet 101.

¹³ Genesis 12:1

¹⁴ Genesis 11:10

¹⁵ In other words, the verses at the end of the Torah portion *Noach* which discuss the genealogy of Avraham, only discuss him to inform us that he was the tenth generation from Noach, but not to inform us that he was the head and beginning of his own progeny (the nation of Israel). Another example of this is that the verses at the end of the Torah portion of *Bereishit*, which speak about Noach, are a portion of the section that begins (Gen. 5:1), “This is the account of the generations of Adam.” That is, Noach is discussed insofar as to inform us that he was the last of the ten generations from Adam to Noach. However, the discussion of Noach himself, as he was the first of the ten generations until Avraham, begins in the Torah portion of *Noach*.

Now, various books have asked: Is it not so that even before the Holy One, blessed is He, told Avraham, “Go for yourself,” Avraham already served his Creator in several foundational ways? For example, when he was only three years old, he already recognized his Creator,¹⁶ and from that time forward he dedicated himself to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Moreover, he even was willing to sacrifice his life (*Mesirat Nefesh*) to publicize the Name of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the world, to the extent that he was cast into a fiery furnace for doing so.¹⁷ However, even so, the written Torah does not recount this.¹⁸

Thus, as mentioned, Avraham only begins to appear in the written Torah, both at length and with particulars, when he was seventy-five years old and the Holy One, blessed is He, told him, “Go for yourself (*Lech Lecha*).” The written Torah states this explicitly,¹⁹ “Avram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.” This being so, what of all his service of his Maker throughout all the preceding years? Where is the account of his self-sacrifice for the sanctification of *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה Name? Why does the Torah not relate all this?

The answer is as follows: The Torah does not come to relate the story of Avraham simply to tell us that he was a great man, but that he was the first Jew. This is why Torah only

¹⁶ Talmud Bavli, Nedarim 32a; Midrash Bereishit Rabba 30:8, and elsewhere.

¹⁷ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 38:13

¹⁸ With the words “*Ur Kasdeem*-the fire of the Chaldees” (Genesis 11:28) at the end of the Torah portion of *Noach*, the Torah hints at the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of Avram when he was cast into the fiery furnace (as Rashi explains on the verse). However, this is only in a way of a hint. Moreover, Rashi does not actually mention this in regard to Avram himself, but only to explain why (his brother) Haran died.

¹⁹ Genesis 12:4

begins recounting the details of his life in the Torah portion, “Go for yourself (*Lech Lecha*)” because this was the very first expression of his Jewishness. That is, all of Avraham’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה before this, even his self-sacrifice, only indicated that as a man, he was the most elevated, choicest, and superior (of all men) in many wondrous ways. That is, Avraham reached the highest level of a human being (*Medaber*-the speaker). However, his singularity in the role of the first Jew began when the Holy One, blessed is He, commanded him to “Go for yourself (*Lech Lecha*).”

In other words, the accounts in the written Torah about our forefathers (beginning with Avraham) are only there to teach us about how the Jewish nation was formed, which began when the Holy One, blessed is He, told Avraham, “Go for yourself etc.,” as the continuation of the verse expressly explains, that through fulfilling this command, “Go for yourself etc.,” he will come to the next verse,²⁰ “And I will make you a great nation.” Thus, by the very fact that the story of Avraham’s life before the Torah portion of *Lech Lecha* is omitted, we learn that all the great wonders and elevated levels that Avraham attained before this, have no bearing on the novelty of the Jewish people.

This being so, to understand the essential novelty of the Jewish people, we must contemplate and delve into what was newly introduced with this matter of “Go for yourself etc.”

²⁰ Genesis 12:2

2.

Now, we should begin with the known matter that the world at large is divided into four general classes: The silent (*Domem*), the growing (*Tzome'ach*), the living (*Chai*), and the speaker (*Medaber*). [The silent refers to all inanimate objects, the growing refers to all vegetative things, the living refers to all animals, and the speaker refers to human beings.] Now, although at first glance, the Jewish people are part of the class of speakers (*Medaber*), only that within speakers (*Medaber*) they were chosen to be a singularly unique and special nation, nevertheless, the earlier sages²¹ have already taught that the Jewish people are not merely the choicest part of the speaking class (*Medaber*), but are an entirely separate class unto itself - a fifth class.

With the above in mind, it is understood that the difference between the Jewish people (the fifth class) and humans in general (the fourth class), is no less than the difference between humans (*Medaber*) (the fourth class) and animals (*Chai*) (the third class).

The explanation is as follows: The division of creation into four categories emphasizes the vast difference between one class and the other. For example, the class of things that grow (*Tzome'ach*) [such as plants and trees] is not merely the same as inanimate things (*Domem*) [such as stones and minerals] with

²¹ See Shomer Mitzvah of Rabbi Avraham Abulafia, Gate 3, p. 43; Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as HaShem Is One, Vol. 2 (The Letters of Creation), Section entitled "The twelve letters ט"י ל"י ס"ע צ"ק correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel."; Also see Shaarei Kedushah of Rabbi Chayim Vital, translates as Gates of Holiness, Part 3, Gate 2, The Existence of Man, and elsewhere.

the added superior element that they also grow (*Tzome'ach*). Rather, they are in a different class altogether. Even within the inanimate class (*Domem*) itself, there are vastly different levels. For example, there is no comparison whatsoever between plain dirt and silver, gold, and precious gems. Nonetheless, it is readily understood by all that the difference between plain dirt and the most precious gem is insignificant compared to the difference between the most precious gem and even the lowest of the vegetative class (*Tzome'ach*). This is because the vegetative (*Tzome'ach*) is a completely different level, in that it has a certain spiritual vitality to it, whereas the inanimate (*Domem*) is as its name implies – inanimate and silent (*Domem-Silent*-דומם), lacking the spirit of life. This being so, the difference between the lowest of the inanimate (*Domem*) and the highest of the inanimate (*Domem*) is not at all like the difference between the highest of the inanimate (*Domem*) and the lowest of the vegetative (*Tzome'ach*), in that it is not at all comparable to it.

By the same measure, there altogether is no point of comparison between all the levels of the vegetative class as a whole (*Tzome'ach*) and the class above it – which is the animal class (*Chai*). That is, even the lowest level of animal is utterly above the vegetative (*Tzome'ach*) and it is not that it merely has an additional element of superiority to it. Rather, it is a creature of a completely different class. That is, the vegetative (*Tzome'ach*) only has the vitality to sprout and grow, whereas animals (*Chai*) already possess a soul that expresses itself in feelings, desires and other characteristics. It therefore is incomparably different in every way!

The same is so of speakers (*Medaber*) – (that is human beings) – they are a unique and separate category within creation. In other words, man is not merely an animal (*Chai*) who in addition to possessing all the qualities of an animal, also has additional qualities. For this would be like saying that just as amongst animals, there are those animals that are simple and those animals that are intelligent, like the fox, which is the most intelligent animal²² – that similarly, within the class of animals (*Chai*), there is yet another, even more intelligent animal called man. Clearly, this is not at all so. Rather, human beings are of an entirely different class. That is, a human being is a creature who has been graced with a different soul - an intellectual soul (*Nefesh HaSichleet*) – by which he is transformed to a completely different class within creation.

Now, according to the teachings of the earlier sages, that the Jew is in the category of a fifth class, it is understood that the same is true of the uniqueness of the Jew. That is, a Jew is not merely a man like other men, who has been graced with additional qualities superior to other men. Rather, a Jew is in a completely different class unto himself – a fifth class.

3.

Now, at first glance, it could be said that Jewish people possess superior soul-qualities not found amongst other nations. This certainly is so in regard to having good and positive character traits and finer emotional qualities, as our sages, of

²² See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 61b and elsewhere.

blessed memory, stated,²³ “This nation possesses three distinguished qualities: They are merciful, they are shamefaced, and they do acts of lovingkindness.” However, it also is so of the intellectual qualities of a Jew, that a Jew has a special intellectual refinement that is not found in other nations.²⁴

Nevertheless, upon closer examination, in and of themselves, these superior elements are insufficient in separating the Jewish people from other nations as a fifth and separate class unto themselves. For, even regarding other nations, we find that the qualities of the children of Yefet are superior to the qualities of the children of Cham, and the qualities of the children of Shem are superior to the qualities of the children of Yefet. Nonetheless, they all fall into the class of human beings (*Medaber*-the speaker).

However, by the fact that the Jewish people are called a fifth class, it must be said that their superiority over and above the other children of Shem is not just that the same qualities found in all mankind are found in them, but in a more refined and lofty manner. Rather Jews possess something completely novel, the likes of which is not found in the other nations of the world, and because of this they are a “fifth class.”

That is, this is like the novelty of an animal (*Chai*) over and above a growing thing (*Tzome'ach*) such as a plant. In other words, an animal is not merely a plant (*Tzome'ach*) that has the additional superiority of being animate and alive (*Chai*).

²³ Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 79a

²⁴ Sefer HaMaamarim 5702 of the Rebbe Rayatz, discourse entitled “*Chaviv Adam*,” Ch. 1.

Likewise, a human being (*Medaber*-the speaker) is not merely an animal (*Chai*) who has the additional vitality and ability to speak. Similarly, the Jewish people are not merely superior in matters that are also found in other nations. Rather, they possess something that is entirely novel.

4.

To further elucidate, it is explained in Tanya²⁵ that the difference between the Jewish people and the nations of the world is in two things. The first thing is that even in regard to the general soul that all mankind possesses, in the Jewish people this soul is loftier and more refined. The second thing is that in addition to this soul, the Jewish people also have a second soul that other nations of the world do not have. This soul is literally “a part of God from above,”²⁶ and because of it, the Jewish people are called the children of the Ever-Present One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.²⁷ For, “just as a child is conceived in his father’s brain, so too, the soul of every Jew is drawn from the thought and wisdom of the Holy One, blessed is He.”²⁸

²⁵ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 1-2

²⁶ Job 31:2; Pardes Rimonim of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, Shaar 32, Ch. 1; Ohr Ne’erav by the same author, Chelek 1, Ch. 3; Likkutei Torah of the Arizal, Bereishit; Etz Chayim, Shaar 42, Ch. 1; Etz HaDa’at of Rabbi Chayim Vital, VaEtchanan; Asis Rimonim v’Pelach HaRimon, Shaar 32, Ch. 1; Chessed L’Avraham, Maayan 3, Nahar 25; Introduction to Siddur HaArizal of Rabbi Yaakov Kopel of Mezhritch; Da’at Tevunot of the Ramchal, Section 158; GR”A to Heichalot, Heichala Tinyana, Heichal 1; Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 2; Nefesh HaChayim, Shaar 1, Ch 5, and elsewhere.

²⁷ Deuteronomy 14:1

²⁸ See Tanya Ch. 2 *ibid.*

What we thus find is that the fact that Jewish people possess special qualities (both emotionally and intellectually) because of the superior level of their soul that other nations also have, is insufficient in transforming them into an entirely different class unto themselves. However, because of their second soul, the likes of which is not at all found in the nations of the world, they are of an entirely different class altogether.

Moreover, this fact, that the Jewish people are an entirely different class unto themselves, is actually far beyond the difference between a human being (*Medaber*-speaker) and an animal (*Chai*). This is because both human beings (*Medaber*-the speaker) and animals (*Chai*) are part and parcel of creation, whereas, in contrast, the second soul of the Jew is part of the Creator, blessed is He, as it were.²⁹

[With the above in mind, it makes sense why we say that the creation is divided into four, rather than five classes (the inanimate-*Domem*, the vegetative-*Tzome'ach*, the animal-*Chai*, the speaker-*Medaber*, and the Jew). For, if we would say that there are five classes within creation, we would be including the superiority of the Jewish people as part and parcel of the general categories of creation. However, in reality, the superiority of the Jewish people is that they have a part of the **Creator**, a part of God, blessed is He.

Therefore, creation is divided into only four categories and classifications, from the inanimate (*Domem*) to the speaker (*Medaber*). (In this, the first soul of the Jewish people can be included, even though it is far superior to the souls of other nations.) However, the primary superiority of the Jewish

²⁹ See Etz Chayim, Shaar 42, Ch. 1

people is that they have a Godly soul which is not part of creation, but is part of the Creator that was instilled in them.]

5.

Now, according to the above, it is understood that the difference between even the lowest level of the inanimate (*Domem*) and the highest level of the speaker (*Medaber*), is absolutely insignificant relative to the difference between all of creation and the Jew. That is, the difference between dirt and stones and the most superior human intellect (which is the superiority that man has over and above all other creatures), does not even begin to reach the vast difference between even the deepest and most profound minds and intellects of the nations of the world, and the lowest and simplest Jew.

For, the difference that separates the inanimate (*Domem*) from the speaker (*Medaber*) is a difference within creation itself. That is, it all is within the limitations and parameters of the world. That is, both are part and parcel of the limitations of the world, only that within this limitation, there are lower levels and higher levels. However, this is not so of the difference between even the highest intellect and a simple Jew who has a Godly soul. For here the difference is like the difference between the created and the Creator, and it is quite simple to understand that all the differences that exist within the creation itself, are like nothing compared to the difference between the created and the Creator.

This may be understood through the following example: Although the difference between one and one-million is very

vast, nevertheless, both numbers are limited, and therefore, the difference between them is also limited. However, the difference between one-million and infinity is unlimited and beyond measure. This is because the infinite has no limitations, and is therefore utterly different.

Now, if this is so of two qualitatively similar matters, in that both are numbers, how much more is it certainly so when discussing matters that are qualitatively different in level. That is, the difference between the level of the inanimate (*Domem*) and the level of the speaker (*Medaber*) does not even begin to reach the vast and awesome difference between even the loftiest level within creation (the loftiest level of intellect) and the soul of a Jew, which is part of God, Who is utterly Unlimited, blessed is He.

6.

With the above in mind, it is easy to understand that there is no way to describe the essential self of the Jewish soul. This is because we are discussing a part of God from above. Thus, just as it is impossible to describe the Essential Self of the Holy One, blessed is He, it likewise is impossible to describe the essential self of the Jewish soul. Rather, we can only describe specific qualities of the Jewish soul which become pronounced and expressed from the fact that it is a part of God.

[In addition, as mentioned above from the words of Tanya, the fact that the Jewish soul is part of God is analogous to the relationship between a son and his father, and there is

much to be learned from this analogy, as will later be explained in the sixth discourse.]

However, here we will focus on two matters that become pronounced regarding the singularity and essential being of the Godly soul of a Jew, which came to the fore in the incident of “Go for yourself from your land etc.” The first matter is the way that a Jew recognizes his Creator, and the second matter is the way that a Jew serves his Creator. Namely, a Jew’s recognition of the Creator is by simple faith that is not bound to intellect, and similarly, the essence of his service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is not service stemming from his understanding, but is rather solely the fulfillment of **the command of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.**

7.

The Jewish people are called “the faithful, children of the faithful.”³⁰ That is, every Jew, by the very essential nature of his being, has faith in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. The meaning of faith (*Emunah*) is the knowledge of something even if one has not seen it, nor has intellectual proofs of it.

Now, the existence of the Creator can also be proven intellectually and for this, faith (*Emunah*) is not required. That is, even according to straightforward logic and reason, there are sufficient proofs that compel a person to reach the conclusion that the world did not create itself, but that there is a Creator who creates and conducts it. This is an established matter even

³⁰ See Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 97a

amongst the nations of the world. We therefore find many wise men amongst the nations who proved through logical reasoning and intellect that there is a Creator of the world. However, the novelty of the Jew is that his recognition of the Holy One, blessed is He, does not stem from intellect (*Sechel*), but from faith (*Emunah*). That is, a Jew naturally has faith in the Holy One, blessed is He, even without understanding the proofs of His existence.

Now, at first glance, it appears that knowledge that only stems from faith (*Emunah*) is on a lesser level than knowledge that stems from intellectual proofs. For, it is quite apparent that if a person knows through intellectual proofs that the world has a Creator, he then is sure of it, and this forces him to intellectually submit to this reality, such that his recognition of the reality of it, is with strength and might. However, this is not so if recognition of the Creator only stems from faith (*Emunah*) – in which case it does not have the same strength. For, after all, what kind of faith is it? He was told this and believes without checking or investigating it, or even attempting to understand it. Rather, he simply believes, like “a fool who believes anything.”³¹

Nonetheless, the above only applies to matters of faith (*Emunah*) that a person has no bond to in the essential self of his soul. However, the faith (*Emunah*) of the Jew in the Holy One, blessed is He, stems from his very soul, which is part of God, and therefore, his faith (*Emunah*) in the Holy One, blessed is He, is much deeper and stronger, beyond all measure compared to recognition stemming from intellectual proofs.

³¹ Proverbs 14:15

To better understand this, let us begin with the words of the Maharal of Prague,³² in his book *Gevurot HaShem*.³³ He states as follows, “If a person knows something through his comprehension and knowledge, this knowledge is **human knowledge**. However, if a person has faith (*Emunah*) in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, his faith is **because of the Holy One, blessed is He**, [rather than because of his own comprehension] and he is utterly and completely drawn after Him. As a result, it is certain that [compared to the first person, who only relies on human logic] he is on a much loftier level.” In other words, the foundation and source of intellectual knowledge is man himself, whereas the foundation and source of faith (*Emunah*) is the Holy One, blessed is He.

The difference between these two ways of recognizing the Creator is like the difference between knowing something through intellectual proofs and substantiations, and knowing something by seeing it with one’s very eyes. That is, if a person knows something from intellectual proofs, even if they are the strongest, most immutable proofs, nevertheless, it itself remains hidden and concealed from him, only that its existence is necessitated by force of logic (based on secondary matters). However, if he sees it, it is revealed to him as it is.

This is like the difference between knowing of the Holy One, blessed is He, stemming from intellectual proofs, and

³² Rabbi Yehuda Loew of Prague, who aside for being one of the greatest sages of his time, is also famous for creating an indestructible man (a Golem) from clay to protect the Jewish people of Prague.

³³ *Gevurot HaShem*, Ch. 9

knowing Him stemming from faith (*Emunah*). Intellectual recognition of Him comes about through secondary matters, that is, from the fact that there indeed is a world comprised of many creations, [and being that the world could not possibly create itself out of nothing] logic necessitates the existence of a Creator. Nevertheless, since this is only logic, the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, is not revealed to him. In contrast, the faith (*Emunah*) of a Jew stems from the inner depth of the essential self of his soul, which is part of God, meaning that, as it were, the Holy One, blessed is He (the “part of God”) is revealed to him.

In other words, in knowledge of the Creator that stems from intellectual recognition (*Sechel*), what a person senses is the existence of his own human intellect and the existence of the world and the creations within it, and then, from their existence he proves that a Creator exists. In contrast, the knowledge of the Jew stems from his faith (*Emunah*), meaning that first he senses the existence of the Creator, יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, who illuminates and is revealed in his soul.

9.

This difference also affects the way he recognizes *HaShem*'s יהו"ה Godliness and the strength of his conviction. For, certainly, without a doubt, knowledge that stems from seeing, is much more powerful and with far greater conviction than knowledge that stems from a different source.

That is, knowledge that stems from seeing, is immovable, unchanging and impervious to any possible proofs

to the contrary. Even if according to some logic there could be room for the contrary, and someone comes against it with strong arguments and proofs that this cannot possibly be, even then, he will have no doubt whatsoever that this is how it is in reality, since he sees it.

For example, if a person is sitting in a room that is securely locked from the inside, in that there is no way to enter the room, and he suddenly sees someone else in front of him, according to logic, we must say that there is no one but him in the room. After all, the door is securely locked and the window is closed shut, and it is impossible for anyone to enter the room, but, nonetheless, because he sees him with his own eyes, he is absolutely sure that someone is standing before him. As a result, no questions or intellectual proofs can override his certainty that this person is in the room.

The same is so of our matter (the analogue). That is, in knowledge of *HaShem*-יהו"ה that stems from intellectual proofs, even if they are the strongest proofs, nonetheless, if some question is aroused about that proof, this instills some element of doubt in it. However, the faith (*Emunah*) of Jewish people in the Holy One, blessed is He, stems from the fact that a Jew “sees” *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness, being that his soul is part of God. Such knowledge is based on such certainty and conviction that no intellectual proof to the contrary, no matter how strong, is capable of dislodging it from its place.³⁴

³⁴ It is explained elsewhere that, in reality, the faith of the Jewish people has an even stronger element of certainty than certainty that is compared to seeing. See *Sefer HaMaamarim Melukat* Vol. 6 p. 132, at length regarding this.

With the above in mind, we can understand how the incident that the Holy One, blessed is He, told Avraham to “Go for yourself” brings out the kind of recognition of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that was introduced to form the Jewish nation – “And I will make you a great nation.”

Our forefather Avraham began recognizing the Holy One, blessed is He, when he was still a child, as our sages, of blessed memory, taught in Talmud,³⁵ “When Avraham was three years old, he recognized his Creator.” Now, there are Midrashim³⁶ that expound and teach that Avraham’s age was different, such as age forty, forty-eight, or fifty. Now, it has already been explained in various books³⁷ that these various ages can be reconciled in that there are levels in “the recognition of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He,” and that each progressive age indicates a higher level of recognition attained by Avraham.

Nonetheless, even the highest level of recognition of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, attained by Avraham at each of these ages, was not through the Holy One, blessed is He, revealing Himself to him. Rather, they all were based on secondary proofs. In other words, these were levels of recognition necessitated by his intellectual contemplation about the existence of the world and the creations within it, all of which was attained through intellectual investigations and

³⁵ Talmud Bavli, Nedarim 32a

³⁶ See Mishneh Torah of the Rambam, Hilchot Avodah Zarah 1:3, and the Kessef Mishneh there; Also see Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 2, p. 14.

³⁷ See Kessef Mishneh and Likkutei Sichot ibid.

grasp. (That is, from the existence of the world he proved that there is a God who creates it.)³⁸

However, when³⁹ “*HaShem*-ה"יהו said to Avram, ‘Go for yourself,’ something new was introduced, in that the Holy One, blessed is He, revealed Himself to him and spoke to Avram. That is, something radically new was introduced in him, namely, recognition of *HaShem*-ה"יהו, blessed is He, stemming from Above – from *HaShem*-ה"יהו revealing Himself to him.

The Midrash likewise states this on the verse, “*HaShem*-ה"יהו said to Avram, ‘Go for yourself.’” That is, “Because Avraham said, ‘Do you mean to say that this world exists without of a Conductor?!’ The Holy One, blessed is He, therefore gazed upon him and said, ‘I am the Master of the world.’” About this, the commentators explain that even though Avraham already recognized his Creator before then, nevertheless, since his recognition of the Creator only stemmed from intellectual proofs, therefore, when he observed matters of the world that seemed to contradict that the Holy One, blessed is He, actively conducts the world, he found it necessary to strengthen his proofs by questioning the possibility of the world existing without a Conductor) “Do you mean to say that this world exists without a Conductor?!”). However, after this, “The Holy One, blessed is He, gazed upon him and said, ‘I am the Master of the world,’ at which point, his recognition of *HaShem*’s-ה"יהו Godliness no longer stemmed from proofs derived through secondary matters, but rather, from the

³⁸ See Mishneh Torah of the Rambam, Hilchot Avodah Zarah *ibid*.

³⁹ Genesis 12:1

revelation of the Holy One, blessed is He. Thus, from that point on, his recognition of the true reality of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness came to its ultimate strength, in a way of seeing, like a person who sees something with his own eyes, to the extent that it becomes impossible to dislodge this recognition through anything in the world.

This is why this incident, in which *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, spoke to him, is the inception of forming the Jewish people – “And I will make you a great nation.” This is because what makes the recognition of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness in the Jewish people novel, is the fact that their recognition of *HaShem*-יהו"ה is in a way of seeing. In other words, it does not stem from proofs from secondary matters, but from the revelation of the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself. Moreover, this recognition is in a way of seeing, in that it is utterly immovable and impossible to dislodge in any way whatsoever.

11.

Through the above, we come to the second novelty of the Jewish people, namely, in their way of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

That is, just as the novelty of knowledge of the Creator is not founded on man (or the world), but on the revelation of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, this likewise is so of our service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. That is, the fact that a Jew is drawn to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, is not because of the level of perfection he will attain through this service, but because he

wants to fulfill the commandment of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and adhere to Him.

In other words, there are two matters in the *mitzvot*. The first is that each *mitzvah* is a level unto itself, in that each *mitzvah* has a unique effect and brings about a specific refinement and elevation in the person who fulfills it. In this, each *mitzvah* is different than other *mitzvot*, since the refinement brought about by one *mitzvah* is different than the refinements brought about by all other *mitzvot*. The second is a general matter that is equal in all *mitzvot* – that is, they all are the commands of the Holy One, blessed is He.

Now, at first glance, it could seem that the specific quality of each *mitzvah* is its primary superiority. Moreover, it could seem that the effect and reason for each specific *mitzvah* is the “cause” and “reason” for the Holy One, blessed is He, commanding it. However, such a view is rooted in an approach that conforms to human intellect (and therefore is also relevant to the nations of the world). However, the real view of the Jewish people, which stems from their Godly soul, is that the primary matter of the *mitzvot* is to fulfill the command of **the Holy One, blessed is He** [whatever it may be].

The reason is as follows: If a person’s primary foundation is in his own intellect and existence, his ultimate intent and purpose is to attain his own perfection, that is, to be whole and inclusive of all superior levels. However, since there are matters and deeds that a person is incapable of grasping or attaining refinement in by means of these things themselves, it therefore is necessary for there to be commandments from the

Holy One, blessed is He, to make the superiority of those *mitzvot* and their special effects known to man.

However, in the view of the Godly soul of the Jewish people, a person does not need to desire his own self-perfection. Rather, the whole objective that he is drawn to, is to adhere to **the Holy One, blessed is He**. Therefore, for a Jew, the primary aspect of all *mitzvot*, is not their specific levels and unique effects, but rather, that they are the **commands of the Holy One, blessed is He**, and that through fulfilling them, he bonds and adheres to **the Holy One, blessed is He**, as we see in the term “*mitzvah*-מצוה” itself, which means a connection and bond-*Tzavta*-צוותא.

This foundation is one of the explanations of the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory, who stated,⁴⁰ “Greater is one who is commanded and does, than one who is not commanded and does.” For, if the primary aspect of the *mitzvot* was their specific levels and unique effects, and the command is only to inform us of the lofty level and unique matter of each *mitzvah*, it would not make (much) difference whether a person is commanded or not. However, since the primary aspect of a *mitzvah* is that through it, he who is commanded bonds with the One who commands, the Holy One, blessed is He, as long as a person has “not been commanded,” he lacks the primary thing.

The difference between these two approaches of fulfilling the *mitzvot* becomes apparent in how a person relates to the *mitzvot*. That is, if one’s fulfillment of the *mitzvot* is because of their unique qualities and effects, there is “room” to

⁴⁰ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 31a

differentiate between the *mitzvot*, such that there comes to be a distinction between fulfilling a severe *mitzvah* and a *mitzvah* that is less severe. However, if one's foundation for fulfilling the *mitzvot* is that they are the command of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, it makes no difference at all to him what the command is – whether it is a great and lofty matter, or whether it is a small and simple matter, as our sages, of blessed memory, taught,⁴¹ “Be as careful with a light commandment as with a grave one.”

12.

Now, it is quite simple to understand that the superiority brought about in man through fulfilling the *mitzvot* in the second above-mentioned manner, is of an entirely different category and is completely different than the elevation caused in him through the various beneficial effects of the *mitzvot* according to the first above-mentioned manner.

According to the first approach, the elevation brought about through fulfilling the *mitzvot* is within the parameters of creation. That is, in the world, this matter and deed has the unique capacity of bringing a person to a higher, more lofty level. Even if it is necessary for the Holy One, blessed is He, to make this known, nevertheless, the knowledge imparted is about a level of superiority that already exists in the matter, in and of itself. Therefore, this level of elevation is limited to the parameters of creation.

⁴¹ Mishnah Avot 2:1

In contrast, this is not so of the elevation stemming from fulfilling the *mitzvot* according to the second approach, in that this elevation stems from the fact that it is a command of the Holy One, blessed is He. Thus, this elevation – of bonding and adhering to the One who commands the *mitzvot*, the Holy One, blessed is He – is limitless and transcends the parameters of creation.

13.

This is also the reason why the beginning of the formation of the Jewish people began with the Holy One, blessed is He, commanding Avram, “Go for yourself.” That is, the loftiness of all of Avraham’s deeds that preceded this commandment, including being imprisoned and having the self-sacrifice of being thrown into the fiery furnace for publicizing the Oneness of the Holy One, blessed is He, only stemmed from the deeds themselves (matters of the world), which are levels of loftiness and superiority that are within the parameters of creation. This being the case, the elevated level that Avraham attained through them was not sufficient to begin the formation of the Jewish nation – the essential nature of whom is that they transcend the parameters of creation.

Thus, to form the Jewish people, he had to fulfill a command of the Holy One, blessed is He. Therefore, it was specifically with the fulfillment of the command of the Holy One, blessed is He, to “Go for yourself,” that the formation of the Jewish people began – “And I will make you a great nation.”

Now, this point, that was introduced with the command “Go for yourself,” is pronounced in the substance of the commandment, “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.”

Various Chassidic discourses⁴² explain that this commandment is spiritually pertinent to every single Jew. The substance of the command is that a person must leave his present condition and transit to a different condition. The meaning of the word “Your land” (*Artzecha*-ארצך) is “your desires” (in that the word “land-*Eretz*-ארץ” is related to the word “desire-*Ratzon*-רצון”). The word “Your birthplace” (*Moladetcha*-מולדתך) refers to habits that a person acquires and becomes accustomed to. The words “Your father’s house” (*Beit Avicha*-בית אביך) refer to a person’s intellect and understanding (as explained in the third chapter of Tanya, that the power of wisdom-*Chochmah* is called “father-*Av*-אב”). The words “to the land (*HaAretz*-הארץ) that I will show you,” refer to fulfilling the desire of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

Now, a question is asked about this. That is, it is simply understood that included in this command to our forefather Avraham, was not only the plain meaning (that he should leave his place and go to the land of Canaan), but also the spiritual meaning as well. In other words, the Holy One, blessed is He, told our forefather Avraham, “Leave your desires, go out of your habits, and go out of your current state of understanding

⁴² See the discourse entitled “*Lech Lecha*” 5655, 5702, 5705 and elsewhere.

and knowledge.” However, at first glance, why would the Holy One, blessed is He, command Avraham to leave all this? Why did he have to abandon his desires? For, after all, are we discussing regular human desires here? Did our forefather Avraham desire mundane physical matters? Rather, Avraham only desired to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and publicize His Name in the world! Similarly, why was he commanded to let go of his habits, as if he had negative habits of some kind? Rather, all his habits were matters of the ultimate goodness and holiness! Moreover, did he have some kind of blemish in his intellect and understanding? After all, we are discussing the understanding and knowledge of a person who already recognized his Creator at the young age of three years old, and from that point forward delved deeper and deeper in expanding this recognition! This being so, why did the Holy One, blessed is He, command him to leave all this?

The answer is that the command of the Holy One, blessed is He, did not in any way challenge the desires, habits and understanding of our forefather Avraham. They indeed were good, of the ultimate goodness, however even so, they ultimately were founded on creation and stemmed from it. That is, his desires were the desires of a human being who is a creation, his habits were the positive habits of a created being, and his understanding of the greatness of the Creator, was the understanding of a created human being. All this was very good. However, when the time came to fulfill the continuing verse, “And I will make you a great nation,” that is, the beginning of the existence of the Jewish nation, the Holy One, blessed is He, told him, “It is necessary for you to leave all the

desires and habits you have acquired, and all your understanding and knowledge about the greatness of the Creator, and to go ‘to the land (*HaAretz*-ארץ הא) that I will show you,’ meaning, to the desire (*Ratzon*-רצון) that **I** will show you – that is, to **My desire!**”

That is, the Holy One, blessed is He said to our forefather Avraham, “When you leave the limiting parameters of a created being and fulfill **My desire** – you will thereby form a novel existence, the existence of the Jewish people.

15.

This point, that the Jewish people are a novel existence, may be further explained through the laws of conversion, as follows:

It states,⁴³ “In our times, when a convert comes to convert, they say to him: What did you see that motivated you to come and convert? Do you not know that currently the Jewish people are anguished, suppressed, despised, harassed, and hardships are visited upon them frequently? If he says, ‘I know and I am unworthy (‘of joining the Jewish people and sharing in their suffering, and may it only be that I should merit to do so’ – Rashi) he then is immediately accepted.”

Now, it is simple to understand that this person, who previously was a simple gentile who worshiped the stars and constellations, and now has come into the category and level of being willing to forego all the pleasures of the physical world and is ready to accept suffering upon himself solely to be

⁴³ Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 47a

brought under the wings of the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He (the *Shechinah*), and says, "may it only be that I should merit to do so," certainly some awesome transformative change has taken place in him, compared to how he was before. But, even so, if for any kind of secondary reason, he was unable to immerse in a purifying ritual pool (*Mikvah*), he is not a convert, and is still completely governed by the laws that apply to the descendants of Noach. That is, through immersion in a ritual pool (*Mikvah*) he becomes transformed from a regular descendant of Noach to a Jew, and is no longer governed by the laws that apply to the descendants of Noach, which are removed from him. Instead, he now is governed by the laws that apply to a Jew.

One example of the halachic ramifications of this, is that if he has not yet immersed in the ritual pool (*Mikvah*), it is forbidden for him to marry a close relative that has also converted. However, once he has immersed and becomes a convert, the general principle that, "the Halachic status of a convert is like that of a newborn child [with no previous familial ties]⁴⁴ applies to him and he therefore is permitted to do so according to the written Torah.⁴⁵

Now, at first glance this is very wonderous. For, seemingly, the change that he underwent in his soul before deciding to convert and accept all the sufferings of the Jewish people upon himself, was an essential change from one extreme to the other, and the only thing that is lacking is one seemingly trivial deed, and nothing more. Moreover, the fact that he has

⁴⁴ See Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 22a *ibid.*; Yevamot 62a

⁴⁵ Although, as discussed in Yevamot there, it is Rabbinically forbidden.

yet to immersed in a ritual pool (*Mikvah*) is not because of any lack of preparedness to do so in his soul, but is only because of some other secondary obstacle or reason. How then can it be said that the change he undergoes through immersion is so great and awesome, beyond any comparison to the change that took place in his soul when he accepted upon himself to convert?

However, based on the foundation mentioned above, the matter is simple to understand. The decision that he came to, to convert and accept all the suffering of the Jewish people upon himself etc., was all the decision of a created person with human intellect. Even though it indeed is a very great transition from a state of lowliness to a state of elevation and exaltedness, nevertheless, he still remains entirely within the class of the speaker (*Medaber*), rather than the fifth higher class.

(By way of example, this is like a small, weak tree that flourishes and grows into a great and mighty tree with many branches etc. Nonetheless, it still is in the class of the vegetative (*Tzome'ach*), and is not at all in the class of the animal (*Chai*.)

However, by fulfilling the deed (of immersion in a ritual pool) a holy soul enters him, the soul of a Jew, which is part of God from above, and transcends the parameters of creation. It is specifically then that he is born anew (“The legal status of a convert is like that of a newborn child”). For, it is through this soul entering him that he is transformed into a different existence, an altogether different class.

This foundation, that the superiority of every single Jew is not merely a specific level of superiority within the class of human beings (*Medaber*-the speaker), but rather, is a completely different class, is expressed in the fact that it is impossible for the Jewishness of a Jew to change in any way, as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁴⁶ “An Israelite, even though he is a sinner, is nevertheless an Israelite.” This is to such an extent that even a Jew who has renounced his faith, God forbid, is still a Jew from the perspective of Torah law (in regard to matters such as marriage,⁴⁷ imparting ritual impurity, and other matters).⁴⁸

If it was the case, that the Jewishness (meaning, the bond with the Holy One, blessed is He) of the Jew is not tied to the essential self of his being, but is just one specific of his being, there would be room to say that if a Jew conducts himself in a way that is the diametric opposite of his Jewishness, he would be separating himself from his bond with the Holy One, blessed is He. However, the reason that even a person who has renounced his faith, God forbid, is “still an Israelite,” is because his Jewishness is essential to his existence, and it therefore is entirely inapplicable for it to undergo change.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 44a

⁴⁷ Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 47b

⁴⁸ Rama to Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 372:2

⁴⁹ See Talmud Bavli, Gittin 57a (In regards to “that man”), “Come and see the difference between even the sinners of Israel and [the prophets of the nations of the world etc.]” and the notes of Maharal there, “*HaShem*, blessed is He, gave even the sinners of Israel a pure soul **of Himself**... for the Jewish people are fitting **in and of themselves** to receive truth, holiness, and purity... in an essential manner, and not incidentally, and **that which is essential does not undergo change.**”

Moreover, this fact that every single Jew, regardless of the spiritual condition he finds himself in, remains in the full force of his essential Jewishness, is also pronounced in his desire. That is, no matter what state a Jew finds himself in, in the very depth of his heart he desires to fulfill the will of his Maker, as the Rambam ruled as a matter of Halachah,⁵⁰ that every Jew “desires to fulfill all the *mitzvot* and distance himself from transgression, (only that) his inclination overpowers him.”

17.

Now, in regard to what was said (in chapter fourteen), that through fulfilling the command, “Go for yourself,” the novel existence of the Jewish people was formed, this is expressly stated in the Midrash on the verse, “And I will make you a great nation.” It states,⁵¹ “The verse does not say ‘I will give you’ or ‘I will place you,’ but ‘I will **make** you-*E’scha-אעשך*,’ meaning that I will create you as a new creation.”

In other words, until Avraham received this command, he was a man like all other men, and though it is true that he was much loftier than all other men, and attained a much loftier level of the knowledge of the Creator and a much loftier level of serving Him, nevertheless, none of it elevated him beyond the parameters and paradigm of creation. However, by fulfilling *HaShem*’s-יהו"ה"s- command, “Go for yourself etc.,” the Holy One, blessed is He, made him into a “new creation” - the fifth class.

⁵⁰ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Geirushin 2:20

⁵¹ See Midrash Bereishit Rabba 39:11

However, even regarding the word “I will make you-*E’escha*-אעשך,” which means “I will create you as a new creation,” there still is room to say that the novelty of “creating” the Jewish people is also as a class within creation. That is, it may still be compared to the novelty of the speaker (*Medaber*) over and above animals (*Chai*) [both of which are part of creation]. The verse therefore specifies and adds, “And I will make you a **great** nation (*Goy Gadol*-גוי גדול).” This teaches us that the difference between this nation (*Goy*-גוי) and all other nations (*Goyim*-גוים) is this matter of “greatness” (*Gadlut*-גדלות), which refers to the greatness of the Holy One, blessed is He, as it states,⁵² “Yours, *HaShem*-ה'יהו, is the greatness (*Gedulah*-גדולה).”

For, there is only One who is truly great. That is, the Holy One, blessed is He, is the truly great One (*HaGadol*-הגדול). To explain, the comprehension of matters of greatness and smallness as they are in creation are relative, and are not ultimate and true greatness. In other words, within the totality of creation there is nothing that is true and absolute greatness (*Gadol*-גדול). For example, the number one-million is far greater than the number one, but it is not an absolutely great number. This is because ultimately, the number one-million is composed of many ones. (Even in the “greatness” of a giant, such that he is of a different class, nevertheless, a multitude of many midgets will never transform them into a giant.)

Now, just as this so of the distinctions of quantity and number, this likewise is so in the matter of quality. That is, as long as qualitative greatness is a limited greatness, it is possible

⁵² Chronicles I 29:11

to establish defined parameters to its level of greatness, and it is thus not true greatness. True greatness has utterly no limitations, and is impossible to quantify or define, and such greatness is the sole domain of the Holy One, blessed is He.

This then, is the meaning of “I will make you into a great nation (*Goy Gadol*-גוי גדול).” That is, the “making” of the Jewish people as a “new creation” of a “nation” is in this matter of greatness (*Gedulah*-גדולה), meaning, a nation whose soul is part of God, He who truly is great (*HaGadol*-הגדול).

18.

Now, since the greatness of this “great nation” is the greatness of the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, therefore, just as it is impossible to define and limit the greatness of the Holy One, blessed is He, so likewise, it is impossible for us to fully grasp the greatness of this “great nation.” Rather, we only can discuss various expressions by which this greatness becomes **pronounced**.

About this it was explained above⁵³ that one of the expressions by which this is pronounced is the fact that a Jew’s recognition of *HaShem*-יהו"ה does not stem from intellect, but comes from Above, from the fact that the Holy One, blessed is He, is revealed in him. This matter is brought about through serving his Maker, the matter of which is not out of any elevation in the act of service itself, but for the fact that it is the command of the Holy One, blessed is He.

⁵³ In chapter six and on.

About this the Midrash⁵⁴ connects this verse, “I will make you into a great nation (*Goy Gadol*-גוי גדול),” to the verse,⁵⁵ “Which is a great nation (*Goy Gadol*-גוי גדול) that has a God Who is close to it, as *HaShem*-ה"ה our God is whenever we call to him.” That is, the greatness of the Jewish people becomes pronounced in the fact that “God is close to it.” In other words, the greatness of this nation is not in the fact that “it is close to God” (which also is true of the Jewish people over and above other nations of the world), but rather, the greatness is that “God is close to it.” That is, this does not stem from man, but from the Holy One, blessed is He.

⁵⁴ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 39:11

⁵⁵ Deuteronomy 4:8

Discourse 2

The Test of the Binding – The *Akeida*

1.

There⁵⁶ were ten tests by which our forefather Avraham was tested, and he withstood them all.⁵⁷ The tenth test was the test of the binding of Yitzchak (the *Akeida*), when by the command of the Holy One, blessed is He, he bound his son Yitzchak upon the altar. This test is always recalled by Jews when they want to rouse the merit of our forefathers. As Rabbi Yitzchak Abarvanel wrote,⁵⁸ “This Torah portion is the principal merit of Israel before their Father in Heaven, and it therefore is familiar in our mouths in our prayers throughout the day.”

Now, the question about this has already been asked.⁵⁹ Namely, what exactly is the greatness of the binding of Yitzchak over and above all the other pious and saintly individuals who gave up their lives with self-sacrifice for the sanctification of *HaShem* יהו"ה's Name, blessed is He, such as Rabbi Akiva and his friends and all of the saintly people who

⁵⁶ This discourse is founded upon Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 20, the third Sichah of Parshat Vayera; Also see Tanya Ch. 18-19; Torah Ohr, Megillat Esther, discourse entitled “*Chayav Inish*” (99b); Biurei HaZohar of the Mittler Rebbe, Parshat Pekudei (59b and on); Biurei HaZohar of the Tzemach Tzedek, Parshat Pekudei (p. 310); *Hemshech* 5666 p. 267; Sefer HaMaamarim, Melukat Vol. 4 p. 6.

⁵⁷ Mishnah Avot 5:3

⁵⁸ Abarvanel to the Torah portion of Vayera (p. 275b – Jerusalem 5724)

⁵⁹ Sefer Halkkarim, Maamar 3, Ch. 36

gave their lives for the sanctification of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Name in every generation?

One of the explanations is that our forefather Avraham was the first who had self-sacrifice in his soul to fulfill the will of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. In doing so, he bestowed this strength to all the Jewish people after him to have self-sacrifice for the sanctification of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Name, blessed is He. This is explained in various books, that the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) that every Jew possesses, is an inheritance from our forefather Avraham.

Nevertheless, this still requires further explanation. What exactly is the novelty of the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of our forefather Avraham and his descendants after him? Although it is with an infinite degree of difference, we find that even amongst the nations of the world, they too have self-sacrifice for matters that they believe in. It therefore follows that the novelty in the Jewish people is not in the matter of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in and of itself, but rather, in the matter of their faith in *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (in that their faith in Him and His Name is to such an extent that they will sacrifice their very lives for this). This being so, why was it necessary for there to be a granting of special strength as an **inheritance of self-sacrifice** (*Mesirat Nefesh*) from our forefather Avraham at the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak?

Furthermore, even before the test of the binding of Yitzchak, our forefather Avraham already withstood the test in Ur of the Chaldees. That is, he cast himself into the fiery furnace, preferring to be burned to death rather than to renounce the Creator of the world. He did not know that a miracle would

happen for him and that he would come out unscathed. When he cast himself into the furnace, it was with the full intention of being burned to death for the sake of sanctifying the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. This being so, what exactly was the greatness of the test of the binding of Yitzchak, over and above the other tests that our forefather Avraham withstood? What aspect of the binding of Yitzchak brings out a greater element of self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*)?

This question is made all the greater by the words of our sages, of blessed memory, who taught,⁶⁰ “The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Avraham: If you do not withstand this test, they will say that the previous tests that you withstood had no substance to them.” From this we see that, as it were, not only is this test greater than all the other tests, but it is so great that without it, the other tests would be of no consequence. However, at first glance, this is not understood. Why should anyone say that the other tests have no substance? Everyone witnessed with their own eyes how he cast himself into the fiery furnace for the sake of sanctifying *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Name, blessed is He!

The essential point in explaining this is that specifically this test of the binding of Yitzchak brings out the novelty of the essential self of the Jew (as explained at length in the previous discourse). Moreover, that novelty, which began when the Holy One, blessed is He, told Avram,⁶¹ “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house

⁶⁰ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 89b; Midrash Tanchuma Veyera 22; Rashi to Genesis 22:2

⁶¹ Genesis 12:1

etc.,” (as explained before) reached its ultimate culmination and perfection with this tenth test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak.

For, the novelty introduced with the command “Go for yourself” (*Lech Lecha*) is a complete departure from all matters connected to the existence of man. That is, it is the absolute nullification of the desires and nature of man. This matter was brought out in our forefather Avraham through withstanding each test that followed the command “Go for yourself.” That is, through this he ascended from strength to strength in his submission and nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, until he came to the height of self-nullification (*Bittul*) with the test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak, as will be explained.

2.

To elucidate, it was explained (in the previous discourse) that it actually is possible to attain recognition of *HaShem* יהו"ה's existence, blessed is He, through human intellect alone and that there have been wise men amongst the nations of the world who came to recognize the Creator on their own. Moreover, through understanding and comprehension, they even came to recognize that it only is fitting to serve Him alone, meaning, to adhere to him by going in His ways.

Still and all, there is a fundamental difference between how the nations of the world serve Him and how the Jewish people serve Him, blessed is He. That is, the ultimate purpose of the nations of the world in serving Him is for man to attain

the perfection of his existence, which is impossible except through adhering to the Creator of the world. In contrast, the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of the Jewish people (is not to attain perfection, but) solely to fulfill *HaShem*'s יהו"ה will, blessed is He.

As an example, our sages, of blessed memory, stated in Talmud⁶² that, “In the coming future, the nations of the world will complain to the Holy One, blessed is He, ‘Why have you not given us Torah to fulfill?’ At that time, the Holy One, blessed is He, will say to them, ‘I have one easy *mitzvah* called Sukkah, go and do that one etc.’ Immediately, each one will take building materials and construct a Sukkah on his rooftop. The Holy One, blessed is He, will then send the heat of the sun upon them like in the season of Tammuz, and each one will kick his Sukkah and leave.”

Now, at first glance, this is difficult to understand. Why should they kick the Sukkah? After all, according to the laws of Sukkah it is permissible for them to leave, since one who is caused discomfort by dwelling in the Sukkah is exempt from the Sukkah.⁶³ Why then should they kick it?

However, the explanation of the matter is for the very reason stated above. Namely, when the nations of the world desire to fulfill a *mitzvah*, it is for the purpose of attaining the perfection of their existence through its fulfillment. However, if they are given a *mitzvah* that they are unable to perform because one who is caused discomfort is exempt from the

⁶² Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 3a

⁶³ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 640:4

Sukkah, they then cannot attain perfection through it, and they therefore kick it.

In contrast, the Jewish people want to fulfill the will of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and are not concerned as to whether they will attain perfection through doing so. Therefore, when the Holy One, blessed is He, gives them a *mitzvah* in a way that they are exempt from its fulfillment, they fulfill the *mitzvah* even in that way, with the full and wholehearted desire of their heart. This is because their love for *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is so great that their only objective is to fulfill the will of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

3.

Now, in a refined manner these two approaches also exist in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of the Jewish people themselves. That is, in love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, there are two manners.

To explain, there is love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, that is brought about through contemplating (*Hitbonenut*) that the Holy One, blessed is He, is the source of all life, as stated,⁶⁴ "To love *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God... for He is your life." In other words, when a person contemplates the greatness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and how before Him everything is as nothing, he then will have no lust or desire for anything in the world, neither physical nor spiritual, since it all is as nothing. Rather, the totality of his love and desire will be solely for *HaShem*-יהו"ה alone, blessed is He, the source of life.

⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 30:20

Nevertheless, in this love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, there still is the sense of self-existence of the one who loves. For, since his love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, stems from the fact that "He is **your** life," meaning that the Holy One, blessed is He, is the truth of his own life, we therefore find that even in his love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, there still is the sense of the self-existence of the one who loves – meaning that he loves **his own** life.

However, there is a higher level of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה than this. This is when the soul desires to adhere to the Holy One, blessed is He, and become subsumed and included in Him, even though through this, he will become absolutely nothing, in that nothing at all will be left of him.

About this love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, the verse states,⁶⁵ "A man's soul is the flame of *HaShem*-יהו"ה." That is, it is like the flame of a candle that is drawn above, desiring by its nature to separate from the wick and adhere to its root above in the foundational element of fire under the orbit of the moon. Even though by doing so, it will be extinguished and its light will become nullified, nevertheless, it naturally desires this. The same is so of the soul of man (referring to the souls of the Jewish people who are called "man-Adam-אדם").⁶⁶ By its very nature it desires to separate from the body and become subsumed in the limitless light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the Unlimited One, blessed is He, even though by doing so, it will be nullified of its existence.

⁶⁵ Proverbs 20:27

⁶⁶ Zohar I 20b; Zohar II 25b, and elsewhere.

4.

Now, this love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, exists in the heart of every single Jew, only that in the very righteous *Tzaddikim*, this love is palpably felt with a yearning desire and thirst to adhere and become subsumed in the limitless light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the Unlimited One, blessed is He, even though by doing so, they will be nullified of their existence. Even simple Jews who have no relation to having a palpable sense of this thirst in their souls, nevertheless possess it, and this is true of even the lowest of the low and the sinners of Israel. That is, this love is brought out and expressed in the fact that [as we see throughout history] they too will give their lives up for the sanctification of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, rather than forsake Him.

To further clarify, the fact that a Jew is ready to give up his life for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה is not because he makes some calculation in his mind that he is willing to forgo his life in this world in order to merit life in the coming world. (This is proven by the fact that even the sinners of Israel, who have no consideration for the life of the coming world, will also give up their lives for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה.) Rather, their love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is of the second kind mentioned above, which has no connection to their self-existence. They therefore are prepared to give up their souls and nullify their own existence for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

[However, this love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is called a "hidden love" (*Ahavah Mesuteret*), since, generally, the

animalistic soul covers over this love and conceals it. It therefore is dormant and unrecognizable in them, to the extent that they can even be sinners of Israel, God forbid. Nevertheless, should they come to a situation in which their faith in the Oneness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is tested, which touches the very essence of their Jewish soul, this awakens their love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and they will sacrifice their lives for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and suffer through horrible travails, just not to renounce "*HaShem* is One-*HaShem Echad*-יהו"ה אחד"]

5.

This then, is the essential novelty of the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of the Jewish people in comparison to the self-sacrifice of the other nations of the world.

That is, the self-sacrifice of the nations of the world stems from calculating that this matter is worthwhile for him and is for his own benefit. That is, there is either the positive calculation that he wants to become renowned as a martyr who gave up his life for his faith and views, or he may have a negative calculation that "If I cannot live according to my beliefs and convictions, why should I continue to live?" The common denominator between these two motivating factors is that one's reason for self-sacrifice is not a matter of nullifying of his own existence, but the very opposite, it is entirely motivated by self-interest.

This is not so of the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of the Jewish people, the essence of which is giving up one's life for **the Holy One, blessed is He**.

6.

On a deeper level: On rare occasions we find that certain singularly unique individuals amongst the nations of the world have given up their lives to uphold a certain philosophy or way of life, even if it is of no benefit to themselves as individuals. The reason is because they considered the sustainment of that philosophy or way of life more important than their own personal lives. However, since this self-sacrifice is for a particular philosophy that he subscribes to out of his own understanding and sensibilities, we therefore find that even this kind of "self-sacrifice" is still entirely connected to the qualities and parameters of his own self-existence (that is, his own understanding and sensibilities).

For example, let us say that over the course of his life, a person has built and developed something, or adhered to a particular philosophy, expending himself throughout his life to develop and disseminate it in the world, and is then forced to renounce it. He can calculate in his soul that if he does not withstand the test, everything he stood for throughout his life will come to be ridiculed by all, and whoever hears about it will say, "Look at this person. He invested his whole life into this, but when push came to shove, and he had to sacrifice for it, he renounced it." This certainly will weaken the strength and sustainment of his philosophy. On the other hand, if he

steadfastly stands with his philosophy and gives his life for it, this will strengthen it in the world. Thus, based on this calculation, he concludes that to strengthen the continuity of his philosophy, it is worthwhile for him to sacrifice his life for it.

However, this form of self-sacrifice is not true self-sacrifice, for in reality, he has not completely nullified his self-existence at all, but rather, his “I” itself is so invested in his philosophy, that it is one with his ego. (This is especially so if he is one of the founders of this philosophy, in which case, if the philosophy is nullified, his entire life becomes utterly meaningless.) We therefore find that his act of self-sacrifice does not mean that he **nullifies himself** at all, but on the contrary, his self-sacrifice is because he feels that **the sustainment of his own existence** depends on the continuity and victory of his philosophy.

True self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), is found solely amongst the Jewish people, in that a Jew will sacrifice his life so as not to renounce the Oneness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. This self-sacrifice is not because he wants to show the strength of his heart, that he is willing to give up his life, nor does it come about to ensure the continuity of Judaism, nor even to uplift an ensign to the eyes of the world and show that Judaism is the true faith, or the like. Rather, this self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) is without any logic or reason stemming from any kind of intellectual challenge or the like. It rather is solely because a Jew is incapable of separating himself from *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

This is why this self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) is even found amongst the lowest of the low, who have utterly no

interest in strengthening and upholding “the views of Judaism,” or the like. Rather, it is solely because a Jew in no way, shape, or form desires – nor is he capable of – being separated from *HaShem*-יהו"ה. Therefore, this self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) indicates absolute self-nullification (*Bittul*) to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. That is, a Jew completely nullifies and entirely gives himself over, even to the point of death, for the sake of sanctifying the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

7.

Now, at first glance, this is a wondrous matter. For, a person indeed is a something and an existence. How then is it applicable for him to give up his life and absolutely nullify himself for the sake of the sanctification of the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He?

However, this may be understood based on what we explained before, that the soul of a Jew is like the flame of a candle. That is, the fact that the flame is drawn to its root, even though, in its root, it will be completely nullified of its own existence, does not stem from the flame itself, but only because its root and source, the foundational element of fire, is recognized in it. In other words, it is not **he** who is drawn to his source, but the opposite is true, **his source** draws him to Himself.

The same is likewise true of the love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of the Jewish people. That is, this love stems from the fact that the soul of a Jew is literally part of God from above. In other words, this love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is not because

he is drawn to the Holy One, blessed is He, but rather, because the **Holy One, blessed is He**, draws him to Himself. This being so, the love is not limited to the parameters of his own existence, or his desire for his own goodness and self-interest, but rather, it is love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה that stems from the absolute nullification of his own existence.

8.

To further explain, it was previously discussed that the difference between the knowledge of the Creator, as it is amongst the nations of the world, and the knowledge of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as it is amongst the Jewish people is as follows: The knowledge of the nations of the worlds is founded on human intellect, which necessitates that the world has a Creator and Conductor. Because of this, when some contradiction is raised about this, this instills a weakening of this knowledge in him. In contrast, the knowledge of the Jewish people is based on the revelation of the Holy One, blessed is He, in that **the Holy One, blessed is He**, is revealed to them. Therefore, there is utterly nothing in the world that can possibly contradict this and cause any weakening in this knowledge.

The example given for this is someone who sees something with his own eyes. Even though intellectually, he may be aware of proofs and reasons that negate the existence of that which he sees, nevertheless, since he sees it openly revealed to him, there utterly is no proof that can weaken the certainty of its existence.

The same is true of the love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of the Jewish people. Since the love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of a Jew does not stem from himself, but is rather because the **Holy One, blessed is He**, draws the Jew to Himself with thick cords of love, therefore, even when his own self-existence is a contradiction to this love, meaning that the love causes the nullification of his own existence, he is prepared to nullify himself and give up his life.

From this we learn a very deep point regarding the novelty of the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of the Jewish people. That is, not only is the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) of the Jewish people true self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), in that a Jew completely gives up and nullifies his own existence (as explained before), but beyond this, the self-nullification and self-sacrifice does not actually come from his own decision or desire, that **he** has decided to nullify himself. Rather, it is **the Godly light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He** that draws him to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (when he senses it) and the essential point of his Jewishness becomes revealed, namely “that **it is utterly impossible** for him to renounce *HaShem* is One-*HaShem Echad*-אחד יהו"ה,”⁶⁷ not as something that is dependent on his desire.

⁶⁷ See the language of the Alter Rebbe in Tanya, Ch. 18 (24a).

In light of all the above, we can understand the great superiority of the test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak, over and above all the other tests that our forefather Avraham withstood before this. For, it is specifically through the test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak that he came to the epitome of expressing the novelty of the essential self of a Jew.

In all the other tests that our forefather Avraham withstood, it can be explained that their form of self-sacrifice is also found amongst non-Jews, to uphold and sustain a certain way of life or philosophy. For, over the course of many years, our forefather Avraham was occupied in publicizing the Oneness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in the world. The Rambam recounts at length⁶⁸ the various debates of our forefather Avraham, and the explanations that he was occupied in, to make it known in the world that there is a Creator who is One and Singular. Thus, when he was tested in Ur of the Chaldees, Avraham could have made the simple calculation and conclude that if he does not sacrifice his life, this will damage and weaken the faith in the Oneness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. On the other hand, should he sacrifice his life for this, this will strengthen and benefit this faith. However, as explained above, this is not true self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*).

In contrast, the test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak, was entirely different. Firstly, it cannot be said that he did this to publicize his great adhesion to the Creator of the world, being that no one else was present. Rabbi Avraham Ibn

⁶⁸ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Avodah Zarah Ch. 1

Ezra writes⁶⁹ that (except for Yitzchak) there were no other people, even his two lads.⁷⁰ Thus, there was no opportunity to publicize anything, as there was no one to publicize it to.

Secondly, this incident stands in absolute opposition to ensuring the strength and sustainment of faith in the Oneness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. For, his son Yitzchak, was an only child of Avraham, born to him in old age in a very miraculous manner. He was the only person who had the ability to continue strengthening and publicizing Avraham's faith and knowledge concerning the Oneness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Avraham was very aware that if he slaughters Yitzchak as a burnt offering to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, he will lose the only possibility of establishing a proper continuity of publicizing his faith. In other words, according to all rational intellect and logic, there was utterly no room for the binding of Yitzchak, in that from every rational angle, it could only cause damage.

However, notwithstanding all this, with self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*), Avraham took his son Yitzchak (*Mesirat Nefesh*), and bound him upon the altar. He made no calculations, and without taking anything into consideration, not even the continuity of his views regarding the Oneness of the Creator, he went with joy to fulfill the will of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

With this in mind, it is understood why if our forefather Avraham had not withstood this test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak, it could have been said that all the previous tests

⁶⁹ Ibn Ezra to Genesis 22:1

⁷⁰ Yishmael and Eliezer

that he withstood were of no consequence. That is, it could have been said, (as explained above) that they all were founded on intellectual calculations, and were therefore automatically not in the category of true self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*).

However, once Avraham withstood the test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak, the Holy One, blessed is He, said, “Now I know that you fear God etc.” That is, specifically this event expressed the absolute bond that our forefather Avraham had with the Holy One, blessed is He, a bond that transcends all logic and intellect, such that if the Holy One, blessed is He, commands him to do something [whatever it may be] he joyously and gladly fulfills it without considering the outcome.

10.

With the above in mind, we can also understand the novelty of the self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) that was bestowed as an inheritance to every single Jew from this act of binding (*Akeidah*) Yitzchak that our forefather Avraham fulfilled.

That is, from human nature alone, it is impossible to reach true and absolute self-nullification to the Holy One, blessed is He, without any admixture of self. However, the Jewish people have the power of true self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) in a way of absolute self-nullification (as explained above), as an inheritance from our forefather Avraham. For, through withstanding the test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak, he imbued this nature and quality into all Jewish people.

Now, on closer examination, this self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) which is embedded in the heart of every Jew as an inheritance from our forefather Avraham withstanding the test of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak, is not only something that has an effect when the Jewish people must actually sacrifice their lives for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, but is also expressed in every deed that a Jew does in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He.

Since a human being is an existent being, in every deed that he does, including fulfilling the *mitzvot* of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, he has a sense of his own existence. However, true service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is when a person serves *HaShem*-יהו"ה for the sake of *HaShem*-יהו"ה alone, without even a hint of any ulterior motive or self-interest.

Through Avraham's act of binding Yitzchak (*Akeidah*), which was done with absolute self-nullification, as explained above, power was granted to every single Jew to also be able to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in a way that is solely for the sake of His Name (*Lishmah*), in a way of ultimate truth.

In other words, from the perspective of human nature, it is inapplicable for a person to do even the slightest thing without it being connected to his own existence. However, the fact that a Jew can force and overcome himself in even the smallest thing – if this overcoming of himself is completely for the sake of Heaven without any consideration whatsoever that he will benefit from it – then this is a motion of self-sacrifice

(*Mesirat Nefesh*) that comes as an inheritance from the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak.

12.

This then, is the depth of the words of Shulchan Aruch (the Code of Torah Law) on the laws pertaining to waking up in the morning.⁷¹ That is, one of the reasons given for reciting the Torah portion of the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak every day is “to subjugate the evil inclination to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, just as Yitzchak was willing to sacrifice his life.”

Now, at first glance, the subjugation of the evil inclination to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, includes all acts of self-restraint in which one must overcome and force his evil inclination against its will, even in the most minor and insignificant matters. This being so, how can we equate this subjugation (in whatever manner it may be) and compare it to the binding of Yitzchak?

However, the explanation of subjugating the evil inclination, as it is understood to its true depth, is that one forces and overcomes himself, without any ulterior motives or calculations. This power, which every Jew has, to subjugate his evil inclination in this way (even in minor and trivial matters) comes as an inheritance from the binding (*Akeidah*) of Yitzchak, as explained above.

We therefore recite the Torah portion of the binding of Yitzchak. For, its recitation reveals and arouses this strength in

⁷¹ Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, Mahadura Kamma 1:11

every Jew, which he has as an inheritance from the binding of Yitzchak.

Discourse 3

Our forefather Yitzchak The first person born as a Jew

1.

In⁷² Midrash Rabbah to the Torah portion of Lech Lecha,⁷³ on the verse,⁷⁴ “Everything has its season, and there is a time for every desire,” our sages, of blessed memory, stated: “Why was (Avraham) not circumcised at the age of eighty-five when the Holy One, blessed is He, spoke to him from between the pieces? In order that Yitzchak be born of holy seed.” The Yafeh To’ar⁷⁵ explains there, “In order to show that in comparison to Yishmael, Yitzchak was distinct in his holiness.”

In other words, the reason that the Holy One, blessed is He, waited until Avraham was ninety-nine years old before commanding him to circumcise himself (*Milah*) – which was an extended period after the birth of Yishmael and before to the birth of Yitzchak – was in order to show the uniquely special holiness of Yitzchak. That is, before Yitzchak’s birth it was necessary for Avraham to come to an additional state of holiness and sanctity through fulfilling the *mitzvah* of circumcision (*Milah*). (This is as stated,⁷⁶ “Walk before Me and

⁷² This discourse is founded upon Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 1, Parshat Lech Lecha; Vol. 2, Parshat Lech Lecha; Vol. 3, Parshat Vayera; Vol. 15, the first Sichah of Parshat Toldot.

⁷³ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 46:2

⁷⁴ Ecclesiastes 3:1

⁷⁵ Also see the other commentators to Bereishit Rabba 46:2 there.

⁷⁶ Genesis 17:1

be perfect,” and as Rashi explains (according to Midrash), that through circumcision Avraham was made perfect). It automatically follows that Yitzchak was born of holy seed.

Now, it is easily understood that when Midrash states that this was “in order to show that compared to Yishmael, Yitzchak was distinct in his holiness,” it is not referring to how Yishmael was when he was in a state of “a wild-ass of a man, with his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him.”⁷⁷ For if this was the case, no distinction would be required. It rather means that even compared to after Yishmael repented, when it states about him,⁷⁸ “He expired and he died,” about which it states,⁷⁹ “The term ‘He expired-*Vayigva* ויגוע’ only refers to the passing of the righteous.” That is, even after Yishmael repented, “compared to Yishmael, Yitzchak was distinct in his holiness.” That is, the fact that Yishmael repented certainly was due to his father Avraham’s influence.⁸⁰ However, since this influence came from Avraham’s level before he was circumcised, therefore, even though (at the time of his death) Yishmael was a righteous Tzaddik, so much so that about him, Torah uses the expression “He expired-*Vayigva* ויגוע” (as stated above), nevertheless, he cannot at all be compared to Yitzchak, who was born of holy seed.

⁷⁷ Genesis 16:12

⁷⁸ Genesis 25:17

⁷⁹ Rashi to Genesis 25:17 *ibid.* citing Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 16b

⁸⁰ See Bava Batra 16b that he repented during the lifetime of Avraham.

2.

Now, we see this superiority of Yitzchak over Yishmael, even in their righteousness, when Avraham was informed about the birth of Yitzchak.

When the Holy One, blessed is He, informed Avraham,⁸¹ “I will give you a son through her,” Avraham responded,⁸² “If only Yishmael might live before You,” to which Rashi comments, “If only Yishmael might live before You, as I am unworthy of receiving such a reward. The words ‘live before You,’ mean, ‘live in fear of You.’” In other words, because of his great humility, Avraham thought he was unworthy of such a great miracle, and his only request was that Yishmael should have fear of Heaven (“live in fear of You”).

It is self-understood that when Avraham said, “If only Yishmael might live in fear of You,” he meant fear of Heaven in accordance Avraham’s intention and comprehension.

About this, the Holy One, blessed is He, responded,⁸³ “Nonetheless, your wife Sarah will bear you a son and you shall call his name Yitzchak; and I will fulfill My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. But regarding Yishmael, I have heard you etc.” In other words, in regard to his request that “Yishmael might live before You” (“in fear of You”) – “I have heard you” (which Ohr HaChayim states means that He brought Yishmael to repent). Nevertheless, it was necessary that “your wife Sarah will bear you a son and

⁸¹ Genesis 17:16

⁸² Genesis 17:18

⁸³ Genesis 17:19-20

you shall call his name Yitzchak.” For, even after Yishmael repented and became righteous, still and all, his righteousness did not at all reach the level of Yitzchak, as mentioned above.

Now, since Yitzchak was the first person born as a Jew, it must be said that Yitzchak’s superiority over Yishmael – even in Yishmael’s state of righteousness – was not just superiority within the same class of righteousness, meaning that they both were righteous, except that Yitzchak was a greater Tzaddik. Rather, his superiority was of an entirely different class and he essentially was completely different. This is as explained before,⁸⁴ that the novelty and singularity of the Jewish people is that they are a completely different class than the rest of mankind. That is, the level of mankind as the class of speakers (*Medaber*), in comparison to all the other classes in the world [inanimate, vegetative, and animal], is still part and parcel of creation. In contrast, the souls of the Jewish people are part of God.

We therefore must delve into this and explain two matters: Firstly, we must understand how this superiority was brought out in Yitzchak, and secondly, we must understand why this superiority depended on his being born of holy seed, after Avraham’s circumcision.

3.

The explanation is as follows: It was explained before that the singularity and uniqueness of the Jewish people is that all other creatures in the world are merely part and parcel of

⁸⁴ In the preceding discourses.

creation. In contrast, the Jewish people are bound to *HaShem's*-יהו"ה Godliness. This is brought out both in spiritual matters, such as their manner and approach in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (as explained before at length), as well as in all the details of their lives, in that they do not fall under the dominion of the natural order. That is, even though the totality of creation is governed by the laws of nature and the parameters of the creation, nevertheless, in the very essence of his being, a Jew is bound to the Holy One, blessed is He, and as such, transcends the natural order.

Now, the fact that the Jewish people transcend the natural order may be observed in various matters, especially in the very existence and sustainment of the Jewish people throughout history. For, throughout the course of history, there have been many great and powerful nations that have disappeared and are no longer, to the point that there is barely a memory of them, although they were not pursued, slaughtered, suffered, or constantly caused to wander from place to place. In contrast, the Jewish people have known tremendous suffering, have been slaughtered and pursued, and their enemies have invested great efforts to extinguish and annihilate them, as we recall every Passover in the words of the Haggadah, "In each and every generation they rise up against us to destroy us." Nonetheless, the Jewish people are alive and firmly established, thriving with eternal life and continuity.

There is no greater wonder and miracle than this! The words of Midrash are well known.⁸⁵ The Midrash clearly describes this with the words, "She is like one lamb amongst

⁸⁵ See Esther Rabba 10:11

seventy wolves, yet she is protected.” According to the natural order, there is no possibility of such a thing happening. That is, according to the natural order, if a lamb is placed amongst seventy wolves it will immediately be torn to shreds and consumed in the blink of an eye. Certainly, no one would expect it to survive, let alone continue to be sustained throughout a long and difficult two-thousand years of exile. Rather, the only explanation is that this is miraculous! That is, it is beyond nature. For, as we continue to recite in the Haggadah, “**The Holy One, blessed is He**, saves us from their hands.” That is, the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself breaks the laws of nature and protects the Jewish people in a miraculous way.

This is one of the primary matters by which the uniqueness and singularity of Yitzchak is recognized over and above Yishmael (even as Yishmael is in an elevated state of righteousness). For, Yishmael was born in a natural way, whereas Yitzchak, who was the first born Jew, was born in a miraculous way, in a way that there was utterly no possibility of his being born naturally. This teaches that the Jewish people transcend the parameters of the natural order, as mentioned before. Moreover, this does not only pertain to the continued sustainment of the Jewish nation, but even to the very inception of its existence, in that the birth (and formation) of the first Jew – from which the Jewish people were formed – was in a miraculous way that transcends the laws of creation.

4.

This difference between Yitzchak and Yishmael – that Yishmael was born in accordance to the laws of nature, whereas Yitzchak’s birth transcended the laws of nature – does not only pertain to their birth, but also to their essential self and substance, and it therefore certainly pertains to their relationship and bond with the Holy One, blessed is He.

Since Yishmael is a part of creation, his bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, is according to the nature and parameters of the world. In contrast, Yitzchak’s bond to the Holy One, blessed is He, does not accord to the nature of the world, but transcends it.

This is expressed in yet another difference between them, namely, when it is that they entered the covenant of circumcision (*Brit Milah*). That is, Yishmael was circumcised when he was thirteen years old, whereas Yitzchak was circumcised when he was eight days old.

The meaning of a covenant (*Brit*) is that two people form a covenant establishing a bond with each other – a bond that is so strong that it never will be severed. Now, according to simple logic, it makes sense to say that it only is applicable for a person to form a bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, when he has already reached the age of knowledge. However, it should be entirely inapplicable for an eight-day old infant to form a covenant in any way whatsoever. This being so, why is it that the covenant of circumcision (*Brit Milah*) is performed on the eighth day after birth?

However, in this too, we see that the bond and covenant between the Jewish people and the Holy One, blessed is He, does not stem from a person's intellect and understanding, but is a covenant that *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, establishes with each and every Jew. Thus, since it is an act of *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, it makes no difference whatsoever what the feelings and reasoning of the person with whom He forms the covenant are, being that the entire foundation of the covenant is solely an act of *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He.

5.

To further explain, about the covenant of circumcision (*Brit Milah*) the verse states,⁸⁶ "My covenant shall be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant." In other words, this is an everlasting and eternal covenant that shall never cease. However, since man is essentially a limited being who undergoes changes, it follows that whatever he does by his own strength and volition cannot be an "everlasting covenant," which is eternal. Rather, it is only because this covenant is formed by **the Holy One, blessed is He**, with the Jew at the time of circumcision, that it therefore is an "everlasting covenant," in which it is utterly inapplicable for it to undergo change or cessation whatsoever.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Genesis 17:13

⁸⁷ This also applies Jewish women and girls, in that "women are considered as though they are circumcised" (See Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 27a). The explanation is that (not only is it the case that they do not have the lack of having a

Thus, immediately at the first possibility⁸⁸ of the infant being capable of undergoing circumcision, when he is eight days old, he is circumcised, even though he himself has no feeling or understanding of the meaning of this act. This is because the bond brought about through the covenant of circumcision (*Brit Milah*) is not founded upon man, but upon the Holy One, blessed is He.

6.

With the above in mind, we also can explain the Midrash⁸⁹ on the verse,⁹⁰ “And it happened after these things,” that an argument took place between Yishmael and Yitzchak, in which “Yishmael said, ‘I am more beloved than you, as I was circumcised at the age of thirteen,’ and Yitzchak said, ‘I am more beloved than you, as I was circumcised at eight days.’”

That is, according to the understanding of Yishmael, who was born naturally and whose existence fully accorded to the parameters of creation, according to his understanding, the bond with the Creator is formed by a person bonding himself to the Holy One, blessed is He, through his own intellect and the powers of his soul. He therefore argued that the perfection attained through circumcision is specifically at age thirteen, when a person already possesses knowledge.

foreskin, but additionally) they also have “the covenant of the circumcision” brought about through the act of the circumcision. See Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 22 p. 64.

⁸⁸ See Moreh Nevuchim, Part 3, Ch. 49 (toward the end), that until the eighth day the infant is still weak etc., and is considered as if it still is in its mother’s womb.

⁸⁹ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 55:4

⁹⁰ Genesis 22:1

In contrast, Yitzchak, whose birth was by way of the miraculous, which transcends the parameters of nature, argued the very opposite. That is, the superiority of the covenant with the Holy One, blessed is He, is primarily done by the Holy One, blessed is He, without any intermingling of the nature or intellect of man whatsoever. Therefore, his belovedness stems from the fact that he was circumcised as a little infant, who has no knowledge at all of what is being done.

7.

Now, at first glance, this requires further explanation. For, the bond of the Jewish people with the Holy One, blessed is He, exists even absent the covenant of circumcision, as explained before at length, that every single Jew has a soul that is part of God from Above. This being so, what is the significance of the covenant and bond introduced through circumcision?

However, the explanation may be understood from the terminology of the verse,⁹¹ “My covenant shall be **in your flesh** as an everlasting covenant.” This teaches that the novelty introduced with the covenant of circumcision is not just a bond with the soul, but a bond with the flesh of the body. That is, even the physicality of a Jew is bound in an eternal covenant with the Holy One, blessed is He.

Additionally, this essential point – that the covenant is upon the physical flesh – is also because it comes from the Holy One, blessed is He. That is, the consecration of a covenant

⁹¹ Genesis 17:13

between two human beings relates to the powers of their soul, meaning that through the covenant, a person binds his soul to the person he forms a covenant with. However, the fact that the covenant (of circumcision) is also “in your flesh” is because this covenant is specifically formed by the Holy One, blessed is He, and it is inapplicable to limit Him, God forbid, and state that He only forms a spiritual covenant with the soul of the person.

8.

Now, we also find this matter regarding Avraham himself. This accords with the words of Rashi on the verse,⁹² “Avraham fell on his face and God spoke to him etc.,” to which Rashi states, “Out of fear of the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the *Shechinah*. For, before he was circumcised, he did not have the capacity to stand while the Holy Spirit was upon him.” In other words, even though before circumcision, Avraham indeed attained a very lofty level, nevertheless, this was only in his soul, whereas his body did not have the capacity to stand when the revelation of the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, the *Shechinah*, was upon him. In contrast, once he was circumcised, he was made perfect and whole (*Tamim*-תמים), even in his physical body, and he then had the capacity to receive the revelation of the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, the *Shechinah*.

The same applies to the covenant of circumcision (*Brit Milah*) of every Jew. That is, the novelty is that even the physical body becomes bound to the Holy One, blessed is He.

⁹² Genesis 17:3; Also see Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer, Ch. 29

[With the above in mind, yet another wondrous matter is brought out. That is, from a certain angle there is an actual superiority to the covenant of circumcision (*Brit Milah*) over and above the covenant formed with the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, when the Torah was given.⁹³ This is because that covenant was formed with all the souls of the Jewish people throughout all generations. This is as is stated in the teachings of our sages, of blessed memory,⁹⁴ that the covenant formed at that time was with all Jewish souls, including souls of future generations, as in the well-known dictum,⁹⁵ “He already is under oath from Mount Sinai.” Moreover, regarding those who were physically present at Mount Sinai, the consecration of the covenant was through the fact that they heard and accepted the words of the covenant in their souls. In contrast, the covenant of circumcision (*Brit Milah*) of a Jewish infant is even “in your flesh,” meaning that it is a covenant with the physical flesh of the body.]

9.

With the above in mind, it is clearly understood why Yitzchak’s birth specifically needed to be from holy seed, after Avraham was circumcised.

The uniqueness of Yitzchak, the first born Jew, is that the novelty in the Jewish people is specifically expressed in him, namely, that they are bound to the Holy One, blessed is

⁹³ See Deuteronomy 9:9; 29:13-14

⁹⁴ Pirke d’Rabbi Eliezer, Ch. 41

⁹⁵ Talmud Bavli, Shevuot 22b

He, not just in the aspect of their souls, but even in the aspect of their physical bodies. This is recognizable in the fact that the formation and birth of Yitzchak's physical body was itself by way of the miraculous from Above. In other words, even in his physical body there was the recognition of the power of the Holy One, blessed is He, as He utterly transcends the natural order. However, as a preface to this novelty, it was necessary for our forefather Avraham, whose body indeed was born naturally, to undergo something like it. That is, it was necessary for there to be something unique in his body that bound him to the Holy One, blessed is He, in an eternal covenant.

This then, explains the matter of Yitzchak being born of holy seed. That is, not only was he born to a father who had a holy soul, but he was born to a father who also had a holy body.

10.

What comes out of all the above is that Yitzchak's superiority relative to Avraham, in that he was the first born Jew, is that in him, there was the novel introduction of the bond of the Holy One, blessed is He, even with the body of a Jew.

In other words, Avraham primarily formed the bond of the soul of the Jew with the Holy One, blessed is He - the "novel creation" that stems from the Godly soul of the Jew. However, even though he too was circumcised, and had the circumcision "in your flesh," meaning, in the physical flesh of the body, nevertheless, this came about after birth and after having spent many years of his life without this covenant. Therefore, this

bond (of the Holy One, blessed is He, with his body) was like something which is superimposed and added to the body itself.

Rather, this was newly introduced primarily through our forefather Yitzchak. For, he was **born** of holy seed, such that the very essence of his physical existence was brought about in holiness. Thus, in him, there was the novel introduction of a bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, even from the aspect of the body, and not in a way of something that is superimposed and added to its essential existence. Rather, the whole being of his body stemmed from holiness.

Yitzchak was the very first person born as a Jew, and therefore, the essential superiority of a Jew was specifically pronounced in him, for it was openly revealed and recognized that his existence was entirely bound to *HaShem's* יהו"ה's Godliness. The very essence of his formation was from holy seed and he was born in a miraculous manner (as discussed before). Thus, the essence and being of Yitzchak entirely brings out the essential bond of a Jew to the Holy One, blessed is He, both from the angle of the soul, as well as from the angle of the body.

11.

From this matter – that unlike Avraham, the novelty of Yitzchak is that from his very inception, holiness penetrated him through and through, including his physical body – we also

see the difference between Yishmael and his father Avraham⁹⁶ in contrast to Esav and his father Yitzchak.

About the superiority of Yaakov, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,⁹⁷ “He is unlike Avraham, that Yishmael came out from him, nor is he like Yitzchak, that Esav came out from him.” It is explained that the specific wording “came out from him” (*Yatza Mimen*-מִמֶּנּוּ יָצָא) teaches us that, in reality, Yishmael and Esav are not considered to be true sons, only that they “**came out** from him,” like something that issued and separated from them.

Even so, we find a foundational difference between the relationship of Esav and his father Yitzchak and the relationship of Yishmael and his father Avraham. That is, Yishmael is not considered to be “the seed of Avraham,” as the verse explicitly states,⁹⁸ “Since (specifically) through **Yitzchak** will seed by considered yours.” In contrast, Esav is indeed considered to be the seed of Yitzchak.⁹⁹ Thus, there are those who are more precise in their liturgy and recite, “Remember the binding of Yitzchak for the descendants of Yaakov today,” rather than

⁹⁶ About Yishmael, it is possible to state that his lack relative to Esav, is in the fact that he was born before Avraham was circumcised. However, about what will be explained later (that it is only “through Yitzchak that your progeny shall be continued” [Genesis 21:12], is that righteous converts [generally] come from Esav) negates the children of Keturah [Genesis 25:4] who were born after Avraham was circumcised. This demonstrates that the fact that Esav was of the seed of Yitzchak, and that it is specifically from him that righteous converts come, is due to the superiority of Yitzchak who was **born** from holy seed.

⁹⁷ See Midrash Vayikra Rabba 36:5; Also see Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 56a; Sifri, VaEtchanan 6:4, Ha’azinu 32:9, Zot HaBrachah 33:2

⁹⁸ Genesis 21:12

⁹⁹ This is further evidenced by the fact that Esav is considered to be an apostate Jew (See Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 18a). In contrast, about Yishmael there is dispute as to whether or not he is judged to be an apostate Jew (See Beit HaOtzar of Rabbi Yosef Engel, Klall 1, Section 3 and 18).

only stating “Remember it for his descendants,” which could also include Esav.¹⁰⁰

We also find this difference between Esav and Yishmael as it pertains to their descendants, as it states in various books¹⁰¹ that [in general] righteous converts (*Geirei Tzedek*) specifically come from the seed of Esav, rather than the seed of Yishmael. The reason is because since the holiness of Yitzchak penetrated through the totality of his existence, as explained before, therefore, all matters that are connected to him – whatever they may be, even if only in a way of “coming out from him” – also have some connection and bond to holiness. This is to such an extent that even the descendants of Esav have sparks of holiness in them, so that righteous converts (*Geirei Tzedek*) come from them. For, as known,¹⁰² a person who comes to convert does so because a spark of holiness is roused within him to convert and come under the wings of the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, the *Shechinah*.

¹⁰⁰ Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, Orach Chayim 591:12

¹⁰¹ Klee Yakar to Genesis 25:23; Midbar Kadmut of the Chida, section on converts (*Geirim*).

¹⁰² See the responsa of Rabbi Meir of Rotenberg (Maharam) (cited in the book *Teshuvot Ba'alei Tosefot m'Ktav Yad* (New York 5714) p. 286, section 19) citing Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid; Also see Midbar Kadmut *ibid*.

Discourse 4

Our forefather Yaakov The choicest of the forefathers

1.

The¹⁰³ superiority of our forefather Yaakov who was “the choicest of the forefathers,”¹⁰⁴ was pronounced in the fact that “his bed was complete.”¹⁰⁵ This is according to the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁰⁶ “From Avraham, there came out Yishmael and all the sons of Keturah. From Yitzchak there came out Esav and all the clans of Edom. However, Yaakov’s bed was whole, in that all his sons were righteous Tzaddikim.”

Now, although in Midrash this is only stated in reference to the sons of Yaakov (the “tribes of Ya”^{h-י”}”),¹⁰⁷ all of whom were righteous Tzaddikim, it nevertheless is appropriate to say that the matter of “his bed being whole” also hints at all the descendants of Yaakov, until the last generation. For they too are part and parcel of “the nation of Israel” (*Am Yisroel*). In other words, whoever is descended (on his

¹⁰³ This discourse is based upon Torat Chayim of the Mittler Rebbe, Lech Lecha 88a and on; Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 25, Sichah 3 to Parshat Vayera, Ch. 4 and on; Also see Likkutei Torah, Eikev 16a; Shir HaShirim 24a-b; Ohr HaTorah, Mishpatim p. 1,219 and on; *Hemshech* 5666 p. 131 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5678 p. 262 and on.

¹⁰⁴ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 71:1

¹⁰⁵ See Yefeh To’ar to Bereishit Rabba ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See Midrash Vayikra Rabba 36:5; Also see Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 56a; Sifri, VaEtchanan 6:4, Ha’azinu 32:9, Zot HaBrachah 33:2

¹⁰⁷ Psalms 122:4

mother's side) from our forefather Yaakov, is a Jew and an Israelite, who has a holy soul and all other superior qualities of the nation of Israel (*Am Yisroel*). This matter does not depend on his deeds or conduct, but rather, whatever his spiritual state may be, he is fully an Israelite and a Jew. This also stems from the uniqueness and superiority of Yaakov, who was the choicest of the forefathers.

According to this, it is understood that what was explained before, that every Jew possesses love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as an inheritance from our forefathers – although it is true that, in general, this inheritance comes from all three of the forefathers - nevertheless, it primary comes specifically from our forefather Yaakov, the choicest of the forefathers.

2.

Now, we must better understand the greatness of Yaakov, and why it was specifically only within his power to bestow the inheritance of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, to the end of all generations after him. However, we first must preface with an explanation about bestowing an inheritance of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in general, for at first glance, this is not understood.

As far as an inheritance that a father bequeaths to his child, it seems more fitting to say this about qualities of the soul. For example, a father who is kind by nature, or intellectually sharp by nature, or is serious and studious, will generally bequeath these qualities to his son. However, it is not

applicable to say that the father bequeaths the actual knowledge that he has acquired through study to his son. The same applies to the love and closeness that the father has toward his friend. It is not applicable for this to be bequeathed as an inheritance.¹⁰⁸

This raises a question. The love that our forefathers had for the Holy One, blessed is He, is like the love that a person has toward his friend, which is not something that is essential to the nature and quality of his soul. This being so, how can it be said that the love of our forefathers toward the Holy One, blessed is He, could be passed as an inheritance to their children?

Moreover, even regarding the qualities of the soul (such as kindness or wisdom), there is no guarantee that these qualities will be passed on as an inheritance to all their descendants to the end of all generations. This being so, what is the difference between this love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, which indeed is passed as an inheritance to all their descendants to the end of all generations and the above-mentioned love?

We therefore are forced to say that the love of our forefathers for *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, was bound up with the essential self of their souls. That is, not only is this love far deeper than the depth of love a person has toward his friend, which is an external love that does not apply to being

¹⁰⁸ This is also one of the explanations as to why our forefather Avraham made his servant Eliezer take an oath to obtain a wife for his son Yitzchak specifically from his own family, and not from the daughters of Canaan. For, at first glance, Lavan and Betu'el were themselves idolaters, and this being so, how were they any better than the people of Canaan? However, the reason is that the people of Canaan were corrupt and evil as an essential part of their character and nature. Thus, these are qualities that are passed forward as an inheritance to their progeny. In contrast, the idolatry of Lavan and Betuel was simply a lack in the matter of faith and knowledge, which is not something that is passed on as an inheritance to future generations.

bequeathed as an inheritance, but is even deeper than the characteristics and qualities of the soul (such as kindness and wisdom), which may or may not be transmitted as an inheritance. Rather, this love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is bound to the essential self of their souls and the very essence of their existence.

To further clarify, there are three categories of matters that relate to the soul. There are matters that are superimposed on a person externally, through study or habit; there are matters that are natural characteristics and qualities acquired at birth; and there are matters that are tied to the very essence of one's existence – such as the fact that he is a human being (within the class of the speaker-*Medaber*).

Now, the difference between them is in the degree that they can undergo change. That is, when it comes to matters that are superimposed on a person externally, they can be changed with relative ease. For, if a person studies and accustoms himself to a certain way of being, he can change his feelings towards various matters, and the like. However, regarding his natural inborn qualities and characteristics, they cannot easily be changed. Nevertheless, through much toil and effort (to a certain degree) he can change his natural tendencies. For example, he can transform himself from a person who is naturally cruel to a person who is compassionate. However, it is impossible for him to change the fact that he is a human being, since this is essential to his very existence.

Now, all this likewise applies to matters that are bequeathed as an inheritance to one's descendants. Those matters that are external cannot at all be bequeathed (as

explained above). The characteristics of the soul, on the other hand, are generally bequeathed as an inheritance. However, over the course of several generations it is possible for them to change. However, the essential fact that he is a human being is something that is bestowed as an inheritance to all his descendants to the end of all his generations.

Now, the love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה of our forefathers was bound to the essential self of their very existence and being, as explained in the preceding discourses. That is, our forefather Avraham's love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (was not just because he "recognized his Creator," but) because of the essential self of his soul, which was part of God from above. Therefore, this love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is transmitted as an inheritance to all Jewish people until the end of all generations. (For, just as the descendants of a certain animal will be the same species of animal as their forefather for all generations, and just as the descendants of all human beings will be in the category of the speaker (*Medaber*) until the end of all generations, so likewise in regard to our forefathers, who were the first individuals of the fifth class – in that, "you (the Jewish people) are called "man-*Adam*-אדם"¹⁰⁹ – this is likewise bequeathed as an inheritance to their descendants for all generations.)

From all the above, it is understood that this matter of bequeathing love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as an inheritance, is specifically pronounced in Yaakov ("whose bed was complete"). This is because, this matter of love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, which stems from the essential

¹⁰⁹ Zohar I 20b; Zohar II 25b, and elsewhere.

self of the soul, was much stronger in Yaakov than in Avraham and Yitzchak.

3.

The explanation is that regarding love of the Holy One, blessed is He, stemming from the soul, which is part of God from above, it is not applicable for there to be any difference whatsoever between Yaakov and the other forefathers. Rather, since this is an inheritance that is tied to the birth of the physical body, the ability to bequeath it depends on the manner of absolute union between body and soul. The explanation of this (the sanctity of the body) is that in this, the superiority of our forefather Yaakov was greater, not only than Avraham (whose body was born from Terach), but even greater than Yitzchak, who was born from Avraham.

Moreover, even though Yitzchak's birth was after Avraham was circumcised (and thus was from "holy seed"),¹¹⁰ nevertheless, there is a novelty and superiority in the birth of the body of Yaakov, over and above the birth of Yitzchak. For, Yitzchak was born from the holy seed of Avraham after he was circumcised in the hundredth year of his life, whereas Yaakov was born of the holy seed of his father Yitzchak, who was circumcised on the eighth day after birth.

¹¹⁰ As explained at length in the third discourse, chapter 9.

4.

The greatness of the superiority (of circumcision on the eighth day after birth) is understood from what our sages, of blessed memory, stated in Midrash,¹¹¹ “Adam, the first man, was commanded seven *mitzvot*... With Noach, the prohibition of eating the flesh of a living animal was added... Avraham was commanded regarding the circumcision, and with Yitzchak it was established on the eighth day.”

From the words of Midrash, it is understood that the superiority of circumcision taking place on the eighth day after birth, compared to circumcision at whatever time, is not just one detail of the *mitzvah*, by which it becomes superior, but circumcision on the eighth day is like a completely new *mitzvah*, just like the prohibition against eating the flesh of a living animal given to Noach, or the *mitzvah* of circumcision given to Avraham.

This may be understood based on what was previously explained¹¹² about the words of Yitzchak to Yishmael,¹¹³ “I am more beloved than you, since I was circumcised at eight days.” That is, the reason he is more beloved is because circumcision on the eighth day brings out and expresses that the bond of the covenant of circumcision established with the Holy One, blessed is He, is an essential bond that transcends the limitations of the intellect. This bond that transcends the limitations of the intellect is completely novel (just like the prohibition against

¹¹¹ Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabbah to Song of Songs 1:2

¹¹² In the preceding discourse, Ch. 4

¹¹³ Genesis 22:1

eating the flesh of a living animal given to Noach was novel). This is because, as explained above, a bond that stems from intellect is a bond formed by the person himself. In contrast, the bond of the covenant of circumcision at eight days, which transcends intellect, is an act of *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, in that it is He who consecrates the covenant. It therefore is simple to understand that compared to the deeds of man, the deeds of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, are completely novel.

5.

However, upon closer examination, this still requires clarification. For, this makes sense when we are discussing the superiority of the circumcision of Yitzchak over and above the circumcision of Yishmael, who was circumcised at the age of thirteen. This is because the circumcision of Yishmael was founded on his own understanding and comprehension, which only is possible once a person reaches the age of knowledge. In contrast, the covenant of the circumcision (*Brit Milah*) of Yitzchak took place when he was eight days old, which brings out the fact that his bond to the Holy One, blessed is He, was not tied to his own knowledge, but that it was **the Holy One, blessed is He Himself** who consecrated the covenant with him. However, this Midrash discusses the superiority of the circumcision of Yitzchak (“it was established on the eighth day”) over and above the circumcision of Avraham. However, it is simply understood that even for Avraham, the covenant was in a way that transcended his own intellect, and beyond this, that the formation of the covenant through the circumcision of

Avraham did not (just) stem from Avraham, but **the Holy One, blessed is He** established the covenant with him.¹¹⁴ This being so, how was the covenant of Yitzchak greater by the fact that he was circumcised at eight days old?

The explanation is that even the covenant with Avraham was entirely from the Holy One, blessed is He. However, even so, the very fact that he merited that the Holy One, blessed is He, established a covenant with him, was due to his deeds and service of *HaShem*, blessed is He, before this. This being so, there still was some connection and relationship between the covenant, which came from Above, and the deeds of Avraham.

By way of analogy, this is like a person who gives a gift to his friend. Even though the gift is entirely by the volition of the giver (which is the difference between a sale and a gift. In a sale, the purchaser pays the seller for the item, whereas a gift is entirely given from the one who gives it), nevertheless, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹¹⁵ “Were it not for the fact that he (the recipient) brought satisfaction to his soul (of the giver), he would not have given him the gift.” In other words, the giving of a gift also depends on the deeds of the recipient.]

In contrast, this was not so of the covenant formed with Yitzchak, the first person to be circumcised at eight days old. Rather, it was purely from the Holy One, blessed is He, and had no connection to any deeds of Yitzchak that preceded it.

¹¹⁴ See Rashi to Genesis 17:25

¹¹⁵ See Gitting 50b; Bava Batra 156a; Megillah 26b; Bava Metziah 16a

6.

To further explain, about the relationship between the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה rendered by the creatures and the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, we find various manners written in the Torah and in the words of our sages, of blessed memory. That is, on the one hand, we find that Scripture states,¹¹⁶ “If you were righteous, what have you given Him? If your transgressions multiply, what have you done to Him?” Similarly, our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹¹⁷ “Does the Holy One, blessed is He, really care if one slaughters an animal from the front of the neck or the back of the neck? (Rather, the commandments were only given to refine the creatures.)”

On the other hand, many other places in Torah indicate that the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה by the creatures indeed is of consequence and relevance before the Holy One, blessed is He. This is to such an extent that our sages, of blessed memory, stated¹¹⁸ that through man’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, they give additional strength to the Holy One, blessed is He, as it were, as in the verse,¹¹⁹ “And now, may the strength of the Lord be magnified.” That is, through man’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, he magnifies and increases the strength of the Holy One, blessed is He Above, as it were.

¹¹⁶ Job 35:6-7

¹¹⁷ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 44:1

¹¹⁸ Midrash Eichah Rabba 1:33

¹¹⁹ Numbers 14:17

In books of Kabbalah¹²⁰ it is explained that relative to the Holy One, blessed is He, as He is, in and of Himself, “everything is before Him as nothing,” and it therefore is inapplicable to say that the deeds of the lower creatures would be of any consequence to Him, blessed is He. However, the Holy One, blessed is He, desired to constrain Himself, so to speak, to such a level that the deeds of the creatures are of consequence to Him.

However, in this matter itself – that the Holy One, blessed is He, constrained Himself to such a level that the deeds of the creatures are of consequence to Him – there are two manners. The first is compared to a “sale,” in which, so to speak, the deed of the creature below “purchases” and arouses a bestowal of influence from above, in reward for fulfilling the *mitzvot*. (This is like what Talmud states¹²¹ that, “the mighty of heart (the righteous *Tzaddikim*) are sustained by force,” meaning that they can “demand” their sustenance from Above, so to speak.)

However, there is another manner that is compared to a gift, in which the deeds of the creatures are inconsequential and do not actually affect bestowal from Above, to such an extent. Rather, the deeds are only like a secondary reason by which the bestowal of beneficence should be drawn from above, not in the form of a reward, but rather, like a gift which entirely stems from the Giver, only that it comes about by the fact that the recipient brought Him “satisfaction of spirit” (*Nachat Ru'ach*).

¹²⁰ See Avodat HaKodesh, Chekek HaAvodah, Ch. 3; Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Shaar HaGadol 29b and on.

¹²¹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 17b

Now, it is simple to understand that the difference between the two depends on the quality and manner of constraint (*Tzimtzum*) from Above. That is, there is an aspect Above in *HaShem*'s יהו"ה Godliness, in which the constraint is to such a degree that the deeds of the lower creatures is of consequence to Him, so to speak. Thus, the bestowal from there is in the form of a “reward,” which is awakened by the deeds of the lower creatures themselves (like a transaction of a sale). However, there also is a much loftier aspect, in which the constraint (*Tzimtzum*) is not so great, and it therefore is entirely inapplicable that the deeds of the lower creatures should awaken and the bestowal of influence. Rather, the deeds of the lower creatures are only relevant as a secondary reason, like a gift which is given because of satisfaction of spirit (*Nachat Ru'ach*).

However, it is understood that even on that level, there also is some element of limitation, as it were, and it is utterly incomparable relative to the Holy One, blessed is He, as He is, in and of Himself, and about which it states,¹²² “If you were righteous, what have you given Him?” In other words, *HaShem*'s יהו"ה Essential Self is utterly limitless, without any constraint (*Tzimtzum*) or limitation whatsoever.

7.

With the above in mind, it is understood how the covenant of Yitzchak, who was circumcised on the eighth day after birth, has a greater superiority and uniqueness completely

¹²² Job 35:6-7

beyond comparison to the deeds and service of יהו"ה-*HaShem* of Avraham, and even the circumcision and covenant with Avraham.

It is true that when the Holy One, blessed is He, formed the covenant with Avraham, a foundational novelty was introduced compared to all his service of יהו"ה-*HaShem* before this, for he then came to a new level of perfection, as in the verse,¹²³ “Walk before Me and be perfect.” This is because all the drawings forth of influence that were previously affected by his service of יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, were due to the strength of his own service. In other words, the drawings forth of influence were only of that aspect of יהו"ה-*HaShem*'s Godliness that is constricted and limited, so to speak, to the point that it therefore is possible to rouse the bestowal of influence from יהו"ה-*HaShem* through service of Him by the creatures. In contrast, upon the covenant of circumcision, there was a drawing forth of a bond and consecration of a covenant stemming from the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself. In other words, this is a drawing forth of the aspect of יהו"ה-*HaShem*'s Godliness that it is not within the power of the creatures to reach on their own, since it is limitlessness (*Blee Gvul*).

This is why this covenant is an “eternal covenant,” being that the root of it is in the limitlessness (*Blee Gvul*) of יהו"ה-*HaShem* Above, blessed is He. In other words, in addition to what was explained before,¹²⁴ that the novelty of the covenant of circumcision over all other forms of service of יהו"ה-*HaShem*, blessed is He, that preceded it, is that the

¹²³ Genesis 17:1

¹²⁴ In the preceding discourse.

consecration of the covenant is from the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, but in addition to this, within *HaShem*'s יהו"ה-s Godliness itself, so to speak, the drawing forth affected by the covenant is from His limitlessness (*Blee Gvul*). It therefore comes to be expressed as an eternal covenant.

However, even so, from the very fact that the consecration of the covenant (*Brit*) came about when Avraham was ninety-nine years old, it must be said that Avraham's service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, before this was consequential in the sense that, at the very least, it was like a secondary reason for the bestowal from Above. In other words, even this bestowal came about from the "constrained" level of *HaShem*'s יהו"ה-s Godliness.

This was not the case, however, when it came to the covenant of Yitzchak, which had no relation to service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, or any preparations that preceded it. That is, the covenant of the circumcision of Yitzchak on the eighth day after his birth was rooted in the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited Being, the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself.

8.

Now, as explained before,¹²⁵ one of the differences between the bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, that stems from man, as opposed to the bond that stems from the Holy One, blessed is He, is that in the bond that comes from man, since it stems from the powers of a person's soul (his intellect, or the

¹²⁵ In the third discourse, chapter 7.

like), as such, the primary aspect of this bond is with the spiritual powers of the soul. In contrast, in the bond that stems from the Holy One, blessed is He, who is utterly limitless (*Blee Gvul*), the bond is also with the physical body of the Jew, as explained above about the verse,¹²⁶ “My covenant shall be **in your flesh.**”

With the above in mind, it is understood that to the degree that the covenant stems from a loftier level of the Holy One, blessed is He, and to the extent that it is entirely and completely exalted and beyond all relation to man, it is to that extent that it influences and penetrates to a greater degree in the physicality of the body.

Therefore, the superiority of, “My covenant shall be in your flesh” as it was with Yitzchak – since it stemmed from the Essential Self of the Holy One, blessed is He, who is utterly beyond all relation to man - it therefore penetrated to a much greater depth in the flesh of the body, than the covenant of Avraham, which came from a level of *HaShem*'s יהו"ה's Godliness that had some relation to man (as explained above). In other words, the covenant that penetrated the body of Avraham had some elements of limitation, whereas the covenant that penetrated the body of Yitzchak entirely transcended all limitation.

9.

From the above we can understand the greatness and superiority of the physical body of Yaakov, who was born of

¹²⁶ Genesis 17:13

the holy seed of Yitzchak, and was himself also circumcised at eight days old, in comparison to the physical body of Yitzchak, who was born of the holy seed of Avraham (who only was circumcised during his hundredth year).

That is, even though the holiness of Yitzchak's body was not something that was superimposed or additional to him (like Avraham), since he was formed from holy seed, even so, since the covenant that penetrated the body of Avraham had some element of limitation to it (as explained above), therefore, the holiness transferred to Yitzchak was only like a particular of Avraham's body, but not the totality of his being.

However, this is not so of Yaakov, who was born of the holy seed of Yitzchak who was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. For, since the penetration of the covenant within the body of Yitzchak (by the fact that he was circumcised on the eighth day) was not limited whatsoever (as explained above), therefore, the holiness of Yaakov's body, who was formed from holy seed, was not just a part of his being, but was the totality of his being.

This is why the holiness of the forefathers is bestowed as an inheritance to their descendants after them in an eternal way, and is why this is primarily so of our forefather Yaakov (as explained above).

For, since the matter of the inheritance bequeathed to the end of all generations specifically relates to the essential self of the one bestowing the inheritance, therefore, this ability to bestow holiness to all bodies of descendants born of them, is brought about because of the one bestowing the inheritance, and

the holiness is part and parcel of the essence of his physical body (and not just a particular).

Therefore, in regard to Avraham and Yitzchak, for whom the holiness of their bodies was not the totality and essence of their body – [for, in Avraham, this was something that was newly introduced after he was formed (being that he was born from Terach) and even in Yitzchak, who was born of holy seed, nevertheless, the holiness was only a part of him, as explained above] – it therefore was still possible for them to give birth to bodies without holiness [like Yishmael and Esav] (in a way that “they **came out** from him”).¹²⁷

However, this was not so of Yaakov. Rather, in Yaakov, the very essence of his body was holy. Therefore, “his bed was completely perfect,” such that all his children and descendants to the end of all generations all have the superior holiness of the Jewish people. (This is similar to the fact that all the descendants of a human being will be human beings until the end of all generations, since his being part of the human species is essential to him.)

¹²⁷ See the preceding discourse, chapter eleven.

Discourse 5

Give Truth to Yaakov

1.

As explained in the previous discourse, the¹²⁸ superiority of our forefather Yaakov was that “his bed was perfect.” This is also connected with another special quality associated with Yaakov - the quality of Truth (*Emet*-אמת). As known, each of our forefathers had a unique path in his service of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He. The mode of Avraham’s service was primarily the quality of love of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, as the verse states,¹²⁹ “The offspring of Avraham who loved Me.” The mode of Yitzchak’s service was primarily the fear and dread of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, as the verse states,¹³⁰ “The Dread of Yitzchak was with me.” However, the mode of Yaakov’s service of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, was the quality of Truth (*Emet*-אמת), as the verse states,¹³¹ “Give truth to Yaakov.”

This is also why they are called, “forefathers” (*Avot*), being that every Jew (until the end of all generations) inherits all three characteristics from the forefathers.

¹²⁸ This discourse is based upon Likkutei Torah, Matot 83c-d; Likkutei Sichot Vol. 9, Sichah 3 of Parshat Devarim, and Sichah 3 of Parshat VaEtchahan; Vol. 10, Sichah 2 of Parshat Toldot (chapters 3-5); Vol. 15, Sichah 5 of Parshat Lech Lecha (chapter 8 and on); Chelek 1, Parshat Vayera (p. 27 and on).

¹²⁹ Isaiah 41:8

¹³⁰ Genesis 31:42

¹³¹ Micah 7:20

Now, at first glance, this requires further clarification, for, why is truth specifically the quality of Yaakov? Could it be said that the love and fear of Avraham and Yitzchak were not true, God forbid?

However, the primary meaning of “Truth” (*Emet*-אמת) is not just that it is the opposite of the “false,” which does not teach us anything. Rather, truth means that it endures eternally, as in the verse,¹³² “Like a spring whose waters never lie.” That is, a spring whose waters cease is called a stream that lies, (or in the language of Mishnah,¹³³ “Waters that lie once in seven years”). In contrast, truth is eternal and unceasing. This is the novelty of Yaakov’s quality - the quality of Truth (*Emet*-אמת) - that the holiness that Yaakov bequeathed to all Israel is eternal holiness which never ceases.

The essential point of this truth flows from the inter-inclusion of the qualities of Avraham and Yitzchak, as Yaakov stated,¹³⁴ “Had not the God of my father – the God of Avraham and the Dread of Yitzchak – been with me etc.” That is, the quality of Yaakov includes both Avraham’s love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה and Yitzchak’s the fear of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, and this inter-inclusion brings out the quality of Truth, which is eternal and never ceases.

¹³² Isaiah 58:11

¹³³ Mishnah Parah 8:9

¹³⁴ Genesis 31:42

2.

We also find this about the three Holy Temples. As known,¹³⁵ the first Holy Temple corresponds to Avraham, the second Holy Temple corresponds to Yitzchak, and the third Holy Temple corresponds to Yaakov. This is why it was applicable for the first two Holy Temples to be destroyed, which will not be so of the third Holy Temple, which will be eternal and never ceasing, in that it corresponds to Yaakov - the quality of Truth (*Emet-אמת*) that never ceases.

Now, just as this is so of the quality of Yaakov, which is Truth, since he includes both the quality of Avraham and the quality of Yitzchak, this likewise is so of the third Holy Temple, in that it will include both previous Holy Temples, (as stated in Zohar,¹³⁶ that the third Holy Temple will include both the first and second Holy Temples). It therefore will be an eternal Sanctuary.

3.

Now, to better understand this, we must begin by explaining the essence and parameters of the first and second Holy Temples. It is written,¹³⁷ “The glory of this latter Temple will be greater than that of the first.” About this, the Talmud states¹³⁸ that, “this latter Temple” refers to the second Holy

¹³⁵ See Chiddushei Aggadot of the Maharsha to Pesachim 88a, section entitled “*Har*”; Alshich to Psalm 24.

¹³⁶ Zohar III 221a

¹³⁷ Chagai 2:9

¹³⁸ Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 3a

Temple. In discussing the greatness of the second Holy Temple over the first Holy Temple, it states there, “One of them said, it will be greater in the size of its structure (in that it was taller than the first Holy Temple) and the other one said, it will be greater in the number of its years (in that the second Temple stood for 420 years, whereas the first Temple stood for only 410 years).”

Now, at first glance, this raises a question. For, it is understood that the greatness of the Holy Temple is not measured by matters such as the height (of the building) or the length of time that it stood (its years), but rather, by the level of holiness that was manifest in it. Thus, given that the level of holiness that manifested in the second Temple was of a lesser order than that of the first Temple, as in the known teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹³⁹ about the word,¹⁴⁰ “I will be honored-*v’Ekavdah*-וְאֶכְבֵּד,” which is written minus the final letter *Hey*-ה-5 of the word, is that the second Temple lacked five primary things that were present in the first Temple (the Ark, the fire [descending upon the altar from above], the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יְהוָה (the *Shechinah*), the Holy Spirit, and the Urim v’Tumim) – this being so, what does it mean that the glory of the second Temple was greater than the glory of the first Temple? Is it so that the greatness of the Holy Temple is measured by its size and the number of years that it stands!?

We therefore must say that the second Holy Temple indeed had a level of spiritual superiority which the first Holy Temple did not have, and that this spiritual superiority came to

¹³⁹ Talmud Bavli, Yoma 21b

¹⁴⁰ Haggai 1:8

be expressed by its additional height and the additional years that it stood.

4.

The explanation is as follows: The matter of the Holy Temple is that it is the bond of the Holy One, blessed is He, with the Jewish people, as stated,¹⁴¹ “I will dwell within them,” meaning,¹⁴² “I will dwell within each and every Jew.” Moreover, the bond of the Holy One, blessed is He, with His world, begins in the place of the Holy Temple, being that from there, the revelation of Godliness is drawn to the whole world.

Now, regarding the bond between the Upper One (the Holy One, blessed is He) and the lower one (the Jewish people and the world), there are two possibilities. The first is that the bond stems from the Upper One, meaning that the Upper One illuminates with such strength that He illuminates and is sensed by the lower one. The second is that the bond stems from the lower one, meaning that the lower being refines and elevates himself until he becomes a fitting receptacle for the Upper One.

These two correspond to the two ways in which the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, dwelt in the first and the second Holy Temples. In the first Holy Temple the Indwelling Presence primarily stemmed from the Upper One, meaning that the Godly light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, illuminated in it with strength. In contrast, in the second

¹⁴¹ Exodus 25:8

¹⁴² Likkutei Torah, Naso 20b; Reishit Chochmah, Shaar HaAhavah Ch. 6; Alshich to Exodus 25:8; Shnei Luchot HaBrit 69a; 201a; 325b; 326b; Likkutei Sichot, Volume 26, p. 173, note 45.

Holy Temple the Indwelling Presence was primarily brought about as a result of the lower one, meaning, the refinement of the Jewish people and the world.

5.

There also is deeper reason for describing the Temples as the “First Temple” and the “Second Temple.” That is, the terms “First” and “Second” do not just apply to their order in time, in that first Temple was built by King Solomon, and the second Temple was built later, in the times of Ezra. Rather, there also is an inner meaning to these terms. Namely, that the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, in the Temple built by Solomon was (primarily) due to the Holy One, blessed is He, (the Upper One), who is the “First” of everything. In contrast, the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, in the Temple that was built in the days of Ezra was (primarily) due to the Jewish people and the world (the lower one), which are “second.”

[We find a similarity to this in the names of the months. That is, the fact that Nissan is called “the first month” and Iyyar is called “the second month” is not just because of their order in time, but is also because of the difference between them in the bond between the Holy One, blessed is He, and the Jewish people. That is, the central focus of the month of Nissan is the exodus from Egypt, which did not come about through the Jewish people refining themselves, (for, they were in a state indicated by the verse,¹⁴³ “You were still naked and bare”).

¹⁴³ Ezekiel 16:7

Rather, the Exodus from Egypt came about because the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He, revealed Himself to them.

In contrast, the primary service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, during the month of Iyyar is to count the Omer, at which time a Jew refines and purifies his personal characteristics (as we recite, "To rectify our souls... from every baseness and defect").

Therefore, Nissan is "the first month" and Iyyar is "the second month." For, the bond between the Jewish people and the Holy One, blessed is He, in the month of Nissan is due to the Upper One (the Holy One, blessed is He), who is "first," whereas the bond between the Jewish people and the Holy One, blessed is He, in the month of Iyyar stems from the lower one (the Jewish people), who are "second."]

6.

Now, when it comes to these two modes of bonding between the Upper and the lower, each has an element of superiority that the other one lacks.

The superiority of the first mode is that since the bond stems from the Upper One (who is not bound or dependent on the refinement of the lower one), therefore, even once He reaches the lower one and is sensed by him, He Himself remains in His full strength as He is, and does not need to adjust Himself according to the level of the lower one. However, this is not so of the second mode. For, since here the bond comes through the refinement of the lower one, therefore, the bond between the lower and the Upper – meaning the degree to which the Upper

One is sensed – is commensurate to the degree of the lower one's refinement.

The superiority of the second mode is that since the bond comes through the refinement of the lower one, he therefore becomes a fitting receptacle within which the Upper light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, can be received. Therefore, the light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, manifests and penetrates within him in an inner way, to his inner depth. However, this is not so of the first mode. For, since the Upper One is only sensed by the lower one because of the revelation from the Upper One, which has nothing to do with the condition of the lower one (being that the lower one has not refined himself to be a fitting receptacle for the Upper light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He), therefore, the radiance of the Upper light of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, does not penetrate him in an inner way, to his inner depth.

We thus find that in regard to the level of bestowal stemming from the Upper One (that reaches the lower one), the first mode is superior. However, in regard to the effect on the lower one and its penetration to his inner essence, the second mode is superior.

7.

This may be better understood through the analogy of the teacher/student relationship. There is one mode of study in which the student listens to the teachings that his teacher imparts on many different subjects, and understands and remembers them well, by which he is transformed into a great

Torah scholar. However, all that he knows is what he learned from his teacher. Nonetheless, he himself is incapable of coming up with new insights in Torah.

However, there is another mode of study, in which the teacher imparts the approach to Torah study (*Derech Limud*), thus giving the student “legs of his own to stand on,” by which he then becomes capable of deriving new insights by his own strength.

Now, in the first mode, the knowledge and grasp of the student is not dependent on himself (the lower one), but comes entirely from the bestowal of teachings he receives from his teacher (the upper one). In contrast, in the second mode, the student becomes much more elevated and exalted, and the knowledge he attains flows from himself (the lower one).

Now, in this analogy we also see the superiority of each mode over the other mode. That is, regarding the level of the student, the primary superiority is obviously when he can derive new insights himself. However, as far as the **level** his insights, it is self-understood that the explanations he heard from his teacher are much loftier and superior than the new insights he has on his own. For, even once he becomes elevated and can come up with new insights on the subject on his own, he will never reach the level of his teacher, and his insights are not as deep or refined as the insights of his teacher.

We thus find that in regard the level of the student himself, the superiority is in those matters that come due to the lower one (the student), whereas in regard to the superiority of the bestowal of the teachings themselves – the actual

explanations – the superiority is in the bestowal that stems from the upper one (the teacher).

8.

Now, in truth, this matter is explicitly expressed in Pirkei Avot,¹⁴⁴ regarding Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach. On the one hand, their teacher, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zachai said, “If all the sages of Israel were put on one scale of the balance, and Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus was on the other scale, he would outweigh them all.” (The commentaries explain that “all the sages of Israel” also includes Rabbi Elazar ben Arach.) However, on the other hand it also was said in his name that, “If all the sages of Israel were on one scale of the balance, and Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus was also with them, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arach was on the other scale, he would outweigh them all.” The commentaries explain, “One master is saying one thing, and the other master is saying different thing, and there is no argument between them.” In other words, each one possessed an element of superiority by which he would outweigh them all.

This is as explained above. Namely, Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenus is described as “a plastered cistern that does not lose a drop.” In other words, his greatness was in his absorption and perfect recall of the teachings of his teacher, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zachai, and as a result, in this respect, he outweighed all the sages of Israel, being that he preserved the totality of the higher Torah teachings of Rabban Yochanan ben Zachai.

¹⁴⁴ Mishnah Avot 2:9

However, from the angle of the superiority of the student, Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, who is described as a “an overflowing spring,” meaning, a student who brings out novel insights by his own strength, was greater.

9.

Now, just as this so in matters of intellect, it likewise is so in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. That is, there are two modes by which a Jew (the lower one) bonds with the Supernal holiness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. The first mode is that holiness is bestowed to him from Above, whereas the second mode is that the Jew toils in himself until he reveals the innate holiness hidden within him (stemming from himself).

In general, these are the two primary paths in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, - studying Torah and fulfilling *mitzvot*, these being the service of the righteous *Tzaddikim* and the service of repentance-*Teshuvah*, respectively.

Torah and *mitzvot* are the wisdom and will of the Holy One, blessed is He. Thus, when a person studies the wisdom of the Holy One, blessed is He, (the Torah), and fulfills His will (the *mitzvot*), the sanctity of the wisdom and will of the Holy One, blessed is He, rests upon him.

However, the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of repentance (*Teshuvah*) primarily stems from the person himself, who has reached a certain state within himself. That is, because he has a holy soul and in the inner depths of his heart he desires to do the will of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He,¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ As the Rambam expressly rules in Hilchot Geirushin, Ch. 2.

therefore, when he stumbles in this, he is pained by it, and it bothers him to the very core of his heart, only that the inner core of his heart is concealed, such that he is not consciously aware of his desire or of his pain and suffering. However, when he reveals the inner essence of his heart, he returns and repents of what he stumbled in, and returns to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with perfect and complete repentance. We thus find that the substance of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in repentance (*Teshuvah*), is the revelation of the inner essence of the person to himself.

10.

This also explains the statement in *Minchat Chinuch*¹⁴⁶ about the view of Rambam and the *Chinuch* about the parameters of the *mitzvah* of confession. That is, it explains that this *mitzvah* only applies when the person does *Teshuvah* (repentance). However, if he is not doing *Teshuvah* (repentance), he is not transgressing the fact that he has not repented, but is only liable for the sin that he transgressed.

Now, at first glance this raises a question. How is it appropriate to say that repentance (*Teshuvah*) is optional, that Torah left this up to man - that if he wants to repent, he repents, but if does not want to repent, he does not?!

However, based on the above foundation, that the definition of repentance (*Teshuvah*) is that it is an act that flows from the inner essence of the person himself, it is understood that a **command** to repent (*Teshuvah*) is the opposite of

¹⁴⁶ *Minchat Chinuch*, *Mitzvah* 364

repentance. That is, if a person repents because he is commanded to do so (and not because he is bothered by his sins and pained in his soul by them), it is not true repentance (*Teshuvah*).¹⁴⁷ For, the definition of repentance is that it is the expression of pain and suffering from the depths of one's heart.

11.

Now, about these two modes of serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, we also find a dispute in Talmud¹⁴⁸ as to whether the righteous *Tzaddikim* are greater than the truly penitent *Baalei Teshuvah*, or whether the truly penitent *Baalei Teshuvah* are greater. However, in various books¹⁴⁹ it is stated that also in this dispute, "One master is saying one thing and the other master is saying another thing, and there is no argument between them."

This may be explained based on the foundation mentioned above, that each has an element of superiority over the other. That is, on the one hand, there is a superiority to studying Torah and fulfilling the *mitzvot* (the service of the righteous *Tzaddikim*) over repentance-*Teshuvah*, as simply understood that the wisdom and will of the Holy One, blessed is He, are lofty beyond all comparison to the heart of man. On the other hand, the indwelling of the wisdom and will of the

¹⁴⁷ This accords with the view of the Alter Rebbe (in *Iggeret HaTeshuvah*, Ch. 1) as well as the view of the Rambam that *Teshuvah*-repentance is a *mitzvah*. The Rebbe already explained in a *Sichah* how this is not a contradiction to the fact that the parameters of *Teshuvah*-repentance is that it is the arousal within the person himself, specifically.

¹⁴⁸ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 34b

¹⁴⁹ *Shnei Luchot HaBrit*, *Hakdamah l'Bayit Gadol* 36a

Holy One, blessed is He, brought about through Torah and *mitzvot* is like something “additional” which is superimposed on the person himself, and it does not penetrate his inner essence to such an extent. In contrast, repentance-*Teshuvah* flows from the very depths of a person’s heart, touching and penetrating the very essence of his being.¹⁵⁰

We therefore find that there also is a difference between the level of holiness that dwells in a person, and the level of the person himself within whom the holiness dwells. That is, in regard to the level of holiness itself, the superiority is in Torah and *mitzvot*, however, in regard to the level of the person himself, the superiority is in serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with repentance-*Teshuvah*.

12.

Now, the difference between the spiritual condition of the Jewish people during the first Holy Temple, and their spiritual condition during the second Holy Temple, is generally like the difference between the righteous *Tzaddikim* and the truly penitent *Baalei Teshuvah*.

The construction of the first Holy Temple was part of the order of things as ordained in the first place (from Above), as indicated by the verse,¹⁵¹ “God made man upright.” In other

¹⁵⁰ It is explained in the teachings of Chassidus that repentance (*Teshuvah*) does not only specifically apply to sins, as is commonly mistaken. Rather, repentance-*Teshuvah* is itself a path in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Therefore, even a perfectly righteous person (*Tzaddik Gamur*) who never has transgressed even a single sin in all his days, can also serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, with the superior element of repentance-*Teshuvah*.

¹⁵¹ Ecclesiastes 7:29

words, that was the order established by Torah, that upon entering the Land, the Jewish people must build the Holy Temple, as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁵² “Three *mitzvot* were commanded to the Jewish people to fulfill upon entering the Land... and to build the Chosen House.”

In contrast, the construction of the second Holy Temple was after the continuation of the above-mentioned verse,¹⁵³ “But they sought many intrigues” (which is the opposite of “God made man upright”). It was because of our sins that the first Holy Temple was destroyed and we were exiled from our Land. However, since after the Babylonian exile the sin was rectified (this being the matter of repentance-*Teshuvah*), they once again merited the construction of the Holy Temple - the second Temple.

Now, just as in the construction of the Temple (“You shall make a Sanctuary for Me”), there is a difference between the second Temple and the first Temple, in that the first one was built according to the order established from Above, whereas the second was built after their sin was rectified, the same is true regarding the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהוה (the *Shechinah* - “I will dwell within them”), which results from building the Holy Temple (“You shall make a Sanctuary for Me”). That is, in the first Holy Temple, the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, (the *Shechinah*) primarily stemmed from the Holy One, blessed is He, (the Upper One). In contrast, in the second Holy Temple, the Indwelling Presence

¹⁵² Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 20b

¹⁵³ Ecclesiastes 7:29

of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (the *Shechinah*) stemmed primarily from the refinements of man (the lower one).

Moreover, each Holy Temple had an element of superiority over the other one. In regard to the level of holiness itself, it is simply understood that holiness that comes from Above is much loftier than holiness that comes from man's refinement. Therefore, the first Holy Temple had all five things that the second Holy Temple lacked (as discussed before). However, regarding the manifestation and penetration of holiness within the Jewish people ("within them"), the second Holy Temple was superior because of their self-refinement. It is about this that it states,¹⁵⁴ "The glory of the latter (second) Temple will be greater than that of the first."

13.

Now, since all matters in man also affect the whole world, as it states,¹⁵⁵ "He even has placed the world in their hearts" (that is, in the hearts of man), therefore, the superiority of the level of the Jewish people during the second Holy Temple – that is, the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, brought about by the lower ones themselves (man) – also affected the world. That is, the holiness of the second Temple manifested and penetrated in the world to a greater degree than the holiness of the first Temple.

This superiority was expressed and pronounced in the manner of its construction, in that it was built at the command

¹⁵⁴ Chagai 2:9

¹⁵⁵ Ecclesiastes 3:11

of Cyrus, king of Persia, and more so, he even contributed to its construction.

Now, at first glance, this begs a question. It stands to reason that such an important act, which brings about the manifestation of the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, should be done by a holy person. We thus find that the Tabernacle (the first Sanctuary in the desert) was built by our teacher Moshe (and by Betzalel and Oholiav), and the first Holy Temple was built by David and Solomon. How then it is fitting for the construction of the (second) Holy Temple to come about through the command of Cyrus?

However, based on the above explanation, that the primary novelty of the second Holy Temple was through the purification and refinement of the lower one, the matter is clear. That is, the very fact that its construction came about at the behest and command of a non-Jewish king, itself expresses the unique novelty of the second Holy Temple. In other words, *HaShem's*-יהו"ה command "You shall make a Sanctuary for Me" (a command to the Jewish people) even penetrated Cyrus, so much so that,¹⁵⁶ "*HaShem*-יהו"ה roused the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he issued a proclamation... Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia... He has commanded me to build a Temple for Him in Jerusalem, in [the land of] Yehudah."

14.

This superiority of the second Temple (built at the command of Cyrus) is further emphasized in the holiness of the

¹⁵⁶ Chronicles II 36:22-23

land of Israel as a whole. That is, upon the ascent of Ezra to the land, there was a superiority to the holiness and sanctity of the land over and above its sanctity at the time of the conquest of Yehoshua.

About this Rambam writes¹⁵⁷ that the initial sanctification of the Land came about through the conquest of Yehoshua, however, “when the land was taken from them [by the conquest of the Babylonians], the [original] conquest was nullified.” However, this was not so of the sanctification of the Land in the time of Ezra, in that “it was not sanctified by means of conquest, but through the formal transference of ownership (*Chazzakah*) and their taking possession of it.” Tosefot Yom Tov explains¹⁵⁸ that what Rambam means is that they “retained rightful ownership by the hand of the king of Persia, who gave them the right to possess it,” and therefore, its sanctity is never nullified.

The explanation according to its inner aspect is that, in and of itself – before its conquest – the land was the land of the seven nations (the land of Canaan). In other words, the substance of the land was that of earthliness and coarseness which relates to the nations of the world. Now, when the sanctity of the Land is brought about through conquest, meaning that the change of ownership over the land, is solely due to the force of strength of the Jewish people, who overpowered the [Canaanite] nations by force, on an inner level this indicates that the sanctity of the land is only because of the dominance of holiness over earthliness. However, the

¹⁵⁷ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Beit HaBechirah 6:16

¹⁵⁸ Tosefot Yom Tov to Mishnah Eduyot 8:6

coarseness of the land itself remains in opposition to the holiness upon it. In contrast, when the ownership of the Jewish people over the land came about through the rightful possession and granting of the land by Cyrus, king of Persia, this indicates that even the earthliness and coarseness itself (Cyrus, king of Persia) “agrees” to the manifestation of holiness and sanctity of the land.

This is why the first holiness was nullified, but not the second. That is, in regard to holiness that stems from dominance by force over that which is made holy, then “when the land was taken from them [by the Babylonians], the [original] conquest was nullified,” and the holiness was dislodged. In contrast, in regard to the second holiness, in which “it was not sanctified by means of conquest, but through the formal transference of ownership (*Chazzakah*) and their taking possession of it” (through the granting of possession by Cyrus, king of Persia), the land (meaning, the earthliness) itself agreed to this, meaning that there was a transformation of the land itself, and it therefore retains its sanctity eternally.

Thus, even in regard to the sanctity of the Land, we find a superiority in each of these two time periods, (that of the first Holy Temple, and that of the second Holy Temple), that each one had a superiority that the other lacked.

That is, when it comes to the level of holiness itself, the first holiness was much loftier, for at that time all its inhabitants (the Jewish people) lived upon it and the Jubilee was in effect.¹⁵⁹ However, when it comes to the matter of the holiness penetrating the land itself, the first holiness did not become

¹⁵⁹ See Talmud Yerushalmi, Sheviit 10:2, and elsewhere.

essentially one with the land, and therefore its holiness was dislodged. This was not so of the second holiness (even though it was a lower level of holiness), which became essentially one with the Land, and therefore remains eternally.

[Another example is found in the first and second Tablets. That is, the holiness of the first Tablets was much greater, however even so, the letters flew off them and they were shattered.¹⁶⁰ In contrast, this was not so of the second Tablets, which followed the repentance (*Teshuvah*) of the Jewish people (the refinement of the lower one), in which there was no shattering.]

15.

Based on all the above, we can settle the matter of the statement of our sages, of blessed memory, that the greater glory of the latter (second) Holy Temple is over and above the first Holy Temple in “size” and “years.”

That is, the Upper holiness transcends the parameters of space and time, meaning that it cannot be constrained to a specific place or a specific time. However, everything in the world is limited to space and time. Moreover, the very parameters and definition of “a world” is the limitation of space (east, west, south, north, up and down) and time (past, present, and future).

Thus, since the uniqueness and superiority of the second Holy Temple was specifically in the fact that its holiness also stemmed from the world (the lower one), therefore, this

¹⁶⁰ Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 87b

superiority comes to be expressed and pronounced in the fact that “a greater portion” of the world was caused to be sanctified by the holiness of the second Holy Temple, and it therefore was greater than the first Holy Temple, both in space and time (“size” and “years”). In other words, the holiness penetrated a “greater portion” of the world, in that it took up more space and existed for a longer period of time.

16.

Now, even though the novelty of the second Holy Temple was that its holiness penetrated the existence of the world, to the point that the holiness was transformed to become part and parcel of the existence of the world itself, as explained before, and it therefore stood longer than the first Holy Temple, nonetheless, its sustainment also was not eternal.

That is, since its holiness was brought about through man’s service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, meaning that it was the work of man’s hands, therefore, being that man is limited and his work is limited, therefore, the result of his work also is limited, and it therefore is possible for it to undergo change and cessation.

An example can be understood from the matter of repentance – *Teshuvah*. That is, at times thoughts of repentance fall into a person’s mind without any prior preparation or toil in himself. The root of this is because of the Heavenly Proclamation (*Bat Kol*) that issues from Above (“Return, O’ wayward children,”¹⁶¹ and the like). Now, there also is

¹⁶¹ Jeremiah 3:14; Mishnah Avot 6:2

repentance (*Teshuvah*) that stems from a person's toil, meaning that he studies and contemplates matters that bring a person to repent (*Teshuvah*).

Now, as far as thoughts of repentance that come from Above, even though they can cause a tremendous awakening in a person, nevertheless they are not sustaining. This is because he did not prepare himself for this, and is therefore not a fitting receptacle for it to be sustained in him. In contrast, repentance that stems from a person's own toil within himself is sustained to a much greater degree, being that he came to it of his own volition, such that the repentance (*Teshuvah*) is part and parcel of his own existence. Nevertheless, even such repentance (*Teshuvah*) can undergo cessation, being that everything that is the product of a person's own labor is not eternal and it is applicable for it to cease.

17.

With the above in mind, it is understood that the cause for the destruction of the second Holy Temple was entirely different than the cause for the destruction of the first Holy Temple.

In the first Holy Temple, the holiness came from Above, and therefore the holiness itself had no limitation and it thus was entirely inapplicable for it to undergo cessation, only that the holiness did not penetrate the world to the point that it became one with it. Therefore, when the world stopped being a receptacle for the holiness, the holiness was dislodged from

the world (like the first Tablets, in that the writing flew off them after the sin.)

This is like the arousal to repent (*Teshuvah*) brought about by a Heavenly Proclamation (*Bat Kol*) from Above. At the time of such an arousal, it is with much greater strength than arousal that comes through one's own efforts, for the Heavenly Proclamation (*Bat Kol*) from Above has much greater strength and force. However, since the arousal and the person are two separate matters that are not united as one essence, it therefore is possible for his arousal to subside.

However, such was not so of the second Holy Temple, in which the holiness became one with the world. In that case, its destruction was caused because such is the nature of the world and everything within it, that (as explained) it is subject to cessation.

18.

However, the third Holy Temple, which will include both the first and second Holy Temples,¹⁶² will have both above-mentioned elements of superiority. That is, the holiness that will illuminate in the third Holy Temple – and thereby in the entire world – will be such that the very existence of the world, in and of itself, will be transformed to holiness (like the superiority of the second Holy Temple, that even Cyrus, king of Persia, sought its construction). Simultaneously, its level of holiness itself will not be limited by the parameters and

¹⁶² Zohar III 221a

limitations of the world (like the superiority of the first Holy Temple).

In Scripture, we similarly find that the description of *HaShem*'s יהו"ה revelation in the coming future is that,¹⁶³ "The Glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be revealed and all flesh, as one, will see that the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה has spoken."

Now, at first glance, what does the end of the verse – "and all flesh, as one, will see etc.," – add to the beginning of the verse – "The Glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be revealed"? If it will be a "revelation" that "all flesh" cannot see, but can only be seen and possibly grasped with "spiritual eyes," this is not full revelation! However, since the verse already stated simply, "The Glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be revealed," the simple meaning is that it is revelation will be without limitation. This being so, the first part of the verse already informs us that "all flesh will see" the Glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. This being the case, what does the end of the verse add?

The explanation is that it indeed is true that from the first part of the verse we already know that, in the coming future, there will be a revelation of *HaShem*'s יהו"ה Godliness in such a manner that even physical flesh will behold His Godliness. However, the first part of the verse does not discuss the quality and nature of the flesh itself, as it will be in the coming future. Therefore, the end of the verse comes to add that in the coming future, the flesh itself will become refined and elevated to such a degree that its quality and nature will be that "All flesh, as one, will see that the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה has spoken," meaning that the word of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be seen.

¹⁶³ Isaiah 40:5

In other words, just as physical flesh perceives physical things (not because of some side reason, but) because that is its nature and constitution, so likewise, in the coming future, its nature and constitution will be to see “that the mouth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה has spoken.”

However, there also is a novelty and superiority to the first part of the verse, “The Glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה will be revealed.” This comes to inform us that seeing *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness with the flesh will not be limited by the limitations of the flesh (For, even in the coming future, when the world will be refined and clarified, it still will be a limited creation.) Rather, this sight will be because of the flow of revelation of the Glory of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, from Above - and *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, has no limitations.

Thus, since in the third Holy Temple both elements of superiority will be present, it therefore will be an eternal Holy Temple, in which cessation will be entirely inapplicable. This is because cessation is either because all matters of the world are limited by their nature (which is what caused the destruction of the second temple), or because holiness that comes from above is additional and superimposed onto the existence of the world (which is what caused the destruction of the first holy temple), (as explained before). However, since the third Holy temple will be limitless holiness that is simultaneously part and parcel of the existence of the world itself, it therefore will be inapplicable for it to cease.

Now, as previously mentioned,¹⁶⁴ we are taught that the three Holy Temples correspond to our three forefathers. Therefore, the three ways that holiness is drawn into the world in the three Holy Temples, correspond to the three special qualities of our forefathers. That is, Avraham is Kindness-*Chessed* (love), Yitzchak is Might-*Gevurah* (fear), and Yaakov is Beauty-*Tiferet* (truth). Kindness-*Chessed* is the matter of drawing down influence from Above to below; Might-*Gevurah* is the matter of ascent from below to Above; and Beauty-*Tiferet* is the inter-inclusion of both a drawing down from above and an ascent from below as one.

This matter itself becomes apparent in numerous accounts throughout scripture about the deeds of our forefathers. However, here we will only cite several examples.

About our forefather Avraham, the Torah relates,¹⁶⁵ “And he called there in the Name of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, the Eternal God.” About this, our sages, of blessed memory, stated in Talmud,¹⁶⁶ “Do not [only] read this as ‘he called-*Vayikra*-ויקרא,’ but read it as, ‘he caused others to call-*Vayakree*-יקריא.’” This teaches us that our forefather Avraham caused the Name of the Holy One, blessed is He, to be called out in the mouths of all passersby.”

The Rambam states this at greater length¹⁶⁷ in describing how our forefather Avraham went about publicizing

¹⁶⁴ In chapter two.

¹⁶⁵ Genesis 21:32

¹⁶⁶ Talmud Bavli, Sotah 10a-b

¹⁶⁷ Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Avodah Zarah, Ch. 1

recognition of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, amongst the nations. Moreover, there are books that state that Avraham explained and clarified matters of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness even to coarsest of people, including Arabs who worshipped the dust of their feet.

In other words, the way that our forefather Avraham served *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, was in drawing down from Above to below. That is, he did not try to change the essential self of the passersby. Rather, they remained below (lowly), only that because his power to explain matters of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness (a revelation and drawing down from Above) was so wondrous, it was even drawn down to the lowest people.

[Citing the above analogy¹⁶⁸ of the first mode of a teacher influencing his student - even though the intellect of the student undergoes no change or elevation, nonetheless, the intellect of the teacher even reaches him.]¹⁶⁹

Now, the Torah relates about Yitzchak that he was occupied in the digging of wells. Since our forefathers are themselves the Supernal Chariot,¹⁷⁰ it is understood that all their deeds are a lens by which to grasp their spiritual service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. The explanation of the matter is as follows:

¹⁶⁸ In chapter seven.

¹⁶⁹ To further illuminate the matter, the superiority of the first manner mentioned before (relative to the second manner mentioned before) is in two things: The first, is that the intellect of the teacher does not change or constrict, but rather, it remains as it is (as mentioned there). Secondly, it is in this itself that the great strength and power of the teacher is recognized, that he is capable of bestowing and explaining his intellect even to the lowest student, as he remains in his lowliness.

¹⁷⁰ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 47:6, 69:3, and elsewhere.

When a person comes to a dry desert where there is no water, there are two ways that he can bring water there. The first, is by transporting water from another place. However, even then, he must dig a cistern to contain the water. The second is by digging deep into the earth, until a well of living waters is revealed in the earth itself.

These two are the two ways that a teacher can instruct his student, whose brain is still very coarse and physical (like parched earth). The first way is for the teacher to pour much water, (as its states, “there is no water except for Torah”),¹⁷¹ until he penetrates the student’s brain, though the student himself is still coarse and his brain is still unrefined. This is bestowal from Above to below.

The second way is that the teacher toils to elevate the student from his present state, by bringing out and revealing the water “in the depth of the earth” of the student himself, meaning, his own latent aptitudes and talents that are hidden within him. This is elevation from below to Above.

This explains the difference between Avraham’s work and Yitzchak’s work. Avraham’s work was to bestow and pour “water,” meaning, matters of spirituality, to even the lowest and simplest people, so much so, that even Arabs (“called out”) and declared “the Name of *HaShem*-יהוה, the Eternal God.” However, this was not brought about by their own state and standing, since they themselves did not become elevated. Rather, this was brought about solely by the fact that Avraham “caused others to call out” in the Name of *HaShem*-יהוה,

¹⁷¹ Talmud Bavli, Bava Kamma 85a; Zohar II 60a, and elsewhere.

blessed is He. In contrast, Yitzchak's work was in a way that the world itself came to reveal the hidden "waters" within it.

20.

With the above in mind, we can now understand why with Avraham and Yitzchak it was possible for there to be children "who came out of them and separated from them" (as our sages, of blessed memory, said about Yishmael and Esav),¹⁷² similar to the possibility of the destruction of the first and second Holy Temples.

It was explained before that the cessation (and destruction) of the first Holy Temple was possible because its holiness only came from Above, and did not transform to be part and parcel of the existence of the world. It was also explained that the cessation (and destruction) of the second Holy Temple, (even though the holiness in it became part and parcel of the world), was possible because all matters of the world are limited.

The same is true of the cause of the "cessation" (meaning the coming out and separation) of Yishmael from Avraham and of Esav from Yitzchak. That is, the reason that Yishmael came out of Avraham but separated from him, is because Avraham served *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, by drawing down holiness from Above. That is, it is like something that is additional and superimposed on that which the holiness is drawn to. Therefore, there is the possibility of

¹⁷² See the third discourse, chapter eleven.

cessation and of a son who is not a fitting receptacle for holiness, to “goes out and separate” from Avraham’s holiness.

On the other hand, the reason Esav “came out and separated from” Yitzchak, (even though Yitzchak’s service was such that the existence of the world itself becomes elevated, which is why Esav’s bond with Yitzchak was greater (than Yishmael’s bond with Avraham), to the extent that he is considered to be the seed of Yitzchak,¹⁷³ is because all matters of the world, including the refinement and elevation of the world, are limited, and it therefore is applicable for them to undergo change and cessation.

However, if both elements of superiority are present, that is, both the superiority of elevating the lower one, meaning that holiness becomes part and parcel of the existence of the world, as well as the superiority of drawing from Above to below, in which the holiness is unlimited (*Blee Gvul*), then it becomes entirely inapplicable for any change or cessation to take place.

Thus, Yaakov, whose service of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, included both qualities, in that he said,¹⁷⁴ “The God of Avraham and the Dread of Yitzchak were with me,” was the quality of Truth (*Emet*-אמת), which never ceases. Therefore, “his bed was complete and perfect,” meaning that all his descendants to the end of all generations have a holy soul. This was explained before about the third Holy Temple, which corresponds to Yaakov, that since it includes the first and

¹⁷³ See the third discourse, chapter eleven *ibid*.

¹⁷⁴ Genesis 31:42

second Holy Temples simultaneously, cessation is utterly inapplicable in it.

Discourse 6

You are children of *HaShem* your God

1.

Based¹⁷⁵ on everything that was said above, we learn that every single Jew received a singularly unique quality as an inheritance from our holy forefathers. Namely, he is bound to the Essential Self and Glory of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited Being, the Holy One, blessed is He, with an essential bond.

This bond between the Jewish people and the Holy One, blessed is He, is like the relationship between a father and his child, about which the verse states,¹⁷⁶ “You are children of *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God.” In other words, all other beings in the world are in the category of creations, and therefore there is utterly no comparison or relation between them and the Holy One, blessed is He. Rather, they are like things that are “outside” of Him. This is analogous to a person who forms a certain object, in which the object that is formed and the person who formed it, are two separate things. However, such is not so of the relationship between a father and his child. That is, the child is not separate from his father, but is rather an “extension” of his father’s existence, and is “part” of the father

¹⁷⁵ This discourse is based upon Tanya, Ch. 2; Iggeret HaTeshuvah, Ch. 4; Sefer HaMaamarim 5670 p. 153 and on; Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim 44b; *Hemshech* 5672 Vol. 1, Ch. 64; *Hemshech* 5666 p. 59 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim 5670 p. 176 and on.

¹⁷⁶ Deuteronomy 14:1

himself. The same is likewise true of the analogue. That is, the fact that the Jewish people are called the children of the Ever-Present One, *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, is because their souls are literally part of God from Above.

This difference, between what a person forms with his hands and his children, depends on their root in the person himself. The root of what a person forms with his hands is in his power of action (*Ma'aseh*), which is an external power. In contrast, his children are rooted in his essential self and being.

In other words, the parameters of the power of action (*Ma'aseh*) is that it is the power to do and actualize something outside of oneself. Therefore, even the power of action itself is only a particular power of the soul, which is separate from the essence of the soul. In contrast, the power to give birth to children is not at all like forming something outside of oneself. On the contrary, the matter of giving birth to children is that the essential self of the parent is sustained and continued [in perpetuity through his children and his children's children]. Therefore, the root of this power is the essential self of the soul itself.

This is the difference between something that a person forms through his power of action (*Ma'aseh*) and a child that is born to him. In regard to something that is formed through one's power of action, since it is rooted in his power of action (which is separate from himself), it therefore is separate and removed from him. In contrast, a child who is born from his father is part and parcel of his father.

We therefore see that there is a fundamental difference between the relationship that a person has with what he forms

with his hands and his relationship with his children. The interest that a person has in the works of his hands does not begin to reach the inner essence of his being to the same degree. For, although a person indeed cares about the works of his hands, nevertheless, this cannot at all be compared to the degree of his interest and care for his children, so that should something happen to his children (whether for good or its opposite, God forbid), this touches the very essence of his being.

We thus find that in the relationship between a child and his father there are three unique matters. The first is that the root in the father is of a much higher essential level. The second is that even after the child is born, he is not truly a fully separate existence from his father, but is still part and parcel of his father. The third is that whatever happens to child touches the very essence of the father's being.

The same is true in the analogue, that the Jewish people are called children of the Ever-Present One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and possess these three matters. The first is that their root Above is much loftier than the root of all other creations. The second is that even after they are brought into being, they remain a part of God. The third is that whatever happens to the Jewish people touches the very Essence of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, as it were. This is as stated,¹⁷⁷ "Whoever touches you, touches the apple of His eye."

¹⁷⁷ Zachariah 2:12; Talmud Bavli, Gittin 57b

2.

This difference between how all other creations were formed and how the souls of the Jewish people were formed, is expressed in Torah itself. That is, in the creation of all other creatures, the Torah uses the terms “speech-*Dibur*-דבור” or “saying-*Amirah*-אמירה” (such as,¹⁷⁸ “The world was created with ten utterances (*Ma’amarot*-מאמרות),” and,¹⁷⁹ “By the word (*b’Dvar*-בדבר) of *HaShem*-יהו"ה the heavens were made”). In contrast, in the formation of the souls of the Jewish people the Torah uses the term “blowing-*Nefichah*-נפיקה.” This is as stated¹⁸⁰ about the soul of Adam, the first man, (who included the souls of all the Jewish people, as explained¹⁸¹ in books of Kabbalah), “And He blew (*VaYipach*-ויפח) into his nostrils the soul of life.” Likewise, in the morning blessings, every Jew recites, “You have blown it (*Nafachta*-נפחתה) into me.”

(By way of analogy) when a human being blows with strength, he puts all his strength into it, to the point that he becomes exhausted.¹⁸² However, when he speaks, in which the breath of his speech is only a small measure of his strength, this is not so. In other words, the breath of speech flows from the externality (*Chitzoniyut*) of the heart, whereas the breath of blowing flows from the inner essence (*Pnimityut*) of the heart.

¹⁷⁸ Mishnah Avot 5:1

¹⁷⁹ Psalms 33:6

¹⁸⁰ Genesis 2:7

¹⁸¹ See Shaar HaGilgulim and elsewhere.

¹⁸² In this, the analogy does not fit the analogue since, of course, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, does not become exhausted.

The same is so in the analogue. That is, Above, all creations are rooted in the external aspect (*Chitzoniyut*), so to speak, which is the power of speech (*Dibur*). In contrast, Above, the souls of the Jewish people are rooted in the inner aspect (*Pnimityut*).

Moreover, the way the creations come into existence from the ten utterances is not that the utterances themselves become transformed into the creations. Rather, there are two matters here: The utterance of the Creator and the created thing. For example, in the utterance, “Let there be light (*Yehiy Ohr-יהי אור*)”¹⁸³ it is not that the utterance itself became light (*Ohr-אור*). It rather is a command, “**let there be** light (*Yehiy Ohr-יהי אור*)” meaning that “light-*Ohr-אור*” should come into existence. That is, the command is for something other to come into existence.

In contrast, the souls of the Jewish people were brought into existence, by His “breath” (*Ru'ach-רוח*) itself. That is, what the Holy One, blessed is He, blew, is itself the soul of the Jew.

In other words, in addition to the fact that the root of the souls of the Jewish people is much loftier than the root of all creations, being that all creations are rooted in *HaShem*'s-יהוה's Supernal speech (*Dibur*), whereas the souls are rooted in the inner aspect Above that “He blew” (*VaYipach-ויפח*) into them, but beyond this, in all other creations, even the externality (*Chitzoniyut*) from Above was not actually transformed to be the creature itself, but rather His “speech” (*Dibur*) only brought the creature into being. In contrast, the souls of the Jewish

¹⁸³ Genesis 1:3

people, are the inner aspect (*Pnimityut*) from Above, which itself is the very soul of the Jew.

This is why about the souls of the Jewish people the verse states,¹⁸⁴ “For *HaShem*’s יהו"ה portion is His people.” To clarify, the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה is His Essential Name (*Shem HaEztem*).¹⁸⁵ That is, this Name is bound to the inner Essential Self of the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, as it were. Thus, the meaning of “*HaShem*’s יהו"ה portion is His people” is not merely that the root of the Jewish people is in the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, which is the Essential Name of the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic Being Himself, blessed is He, but rather, that even once the existence of the souls was formed and the souls descended into physical bodies, to the point that they were transformed into an existence of “His people-*Amo*” (in which the term “people-*Am*” is a term that indicates the opposite of praise),¹⁸⁶ they nevertheless are, “A portion of *HaShem*-יהו"ה.”

This itself is the same as the explanation above about the verse,¹⁸⁷ “And He blew (*VaYipach*-ויפח) into his nostrils the soul of life.” That is, in addition to the fact that the root of the souls is from the inner aspect (*Pnimityut*) Above (like the breath in blowing as compared to the breath in speaking), but beyond this, there is no additional thing here, but rather, the breath (*Ru'ach*) itself is the soul.

¹⁸⁴ Deuteronomy 32:9

¹⁸⁵ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 1, *The Gate of Intrinsic Being (Shaar HaHavayah)*; This is also a matter of Torah law, as brought in the *Kesef Mishneh* to Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Avodah Zarah* 2:7.

¹⁸⁶ *Midrash Bamidbar Rabba* 20:23 and elsewhere.

¹⁸⁷ *Genesis* 2:7

With the above in mind, it is clear why the Jewish people are called children of the Ever-Present One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. This comes to teach us, that in addition to being rooted in the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited Being, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He, but beyond this, even after being brought into the existence of souls in bodies etc., and even if their conduct is not as it should be (like the “people-*Am*-עַם”), even so, they literally are a “part of God from Above” just like a child, who is part of his father regardless of the state he is in.

3.

Based on this foundation we can clearly understand what our sages, of blessed memory, said, that the Jewish people are called the children of the Holy One, blessed is He, even when they sin, as Talmud states,¹⁸⁸ “Either way, they still are My children.” The Midrash adds,¹⁸⁹ “and I am incapable of exchanging them with another nation.”

Now, at first glance, this needs further explanation. For, if it is so that because of their sins, the Holy One, blessed is He, is so dissatisfied with the Jewish people, that there may even be room “to exchange them with another nation,” what then is the meaning of His words that He is, “**incapable** of exchanging them.”

We therefore must say that he does not exchange them because he loves them even when they are in such a lowly state.

¹⁸⁸ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 36a

¹⁸⁹ Midrash Ruth Rabbah, Peticha 3

However, if this is the case, He should have said, “I do not **wish** to exchange them.” What then, is the meaning “I am **incapable** of exchanging them”?

However, in this, our sages, of blessed memory, teach us that the way the Holy One, blessed is He, desires and loves the Jewish people, is such that He “incapable of exchanging them,” as it were. In other words, His love for the Jewish people is an essential love (*Ahavah Atzmit*) in which it is utterly inapplicable for it to undergo any change or exchange.

4.

The explanation is that, as known, there are two kinds of love. This accords with the words of Mishnah Pirkei Avot,¹⁹⁰ “There is love that is dependent on something” and “love that is not dependent on something.” Now, in various books it states that included in “love that is dependent on something” is (not only love that the one who loves derives some benefit from the one he loves, as is simply understood, but is also love) that stems from recognizing of the superior qualities of the one he loves. That is, even such a love depends on something, this being the superior qualities of the one he loves. Therefore, if what he loves about the person becomes null and void, in that the one who is loved loses his superior qualities, the love for him is also nullified.

From this it is understood that in “love that is not dependent on a something,” the love that bonds the one who loves with the one who is loved, has no reason or explanation

¹⁹⁰ Mishnah Avot 5:16

at all, but is entirely bound to his essential self and it therefore is utterly inapplicable for it to be nullified.

An example is the love a person for himself. This love not because he recognizes superior qualities in himself, for even if he recognizes his inadequacies and iniquities, this does not at all diminish his self-love. Rather, it is love beyond reason and is not dependent on any specific thing at all. In other words, he loves himself because he **is** himself.

The same is so when a person has an essential bond of his soul with the soul of another (such as the love of David and Yehonatan,¹⁹¹ as stated in various books, that the bond between them was because their souls were bound to one another).¹⁹² The love that flows from such a bond is “love that is not dependent on something,” which “is eternal and is never nullified.” In other words, even if the loved one descends to a very lowly state, nevertheless, “love covers all faults,”¹⁹³ and it remains in full force.

If this is so of the bond between two friends, like the love of David and Yehonatan, how much more is it certainly so of the love of a father for his son, which certainly stems from the essential bond between them. This is because the son is literally part of his father, and it therefore is not possible for this love to be nullified.

¹⁹¹ Mishnah Avot 5:16 *ibid*.

¹⁹² See Samuel I 20:17 and its commentaries.

¹⁹³ Proverbs 10:12

5.

More specifically, the reason love that is dependent on something can become nullified is because even when it is in full force, it is an external love, both in relation to the lover and in relation to the loved one.

In relation to the loved one, the love that flows to him through the lover's recognition of his superior qualities is not connected to himself, but only to his qualities. In other words, the fact that the lover is drawn to the loved is not because of the loved one himself, but only because of his qualities. (Moreover, even in this itself, it is not the qualities as they actually are in the loved one that the lover loves, but rather as the lover himself recognizes and grasps them as superior qualities.)

In relation to the one who loves, since the reason he loves is because, in his intellect, he recognizes the superior qualities of the loved one, therefore, since his intellect is not he himself, but is only one of his qualities, therefore, the love that stems from his intellect is not bound to the essence of his soul either, but only to the externality of his soul.

To sum up in general, this kind of love is from the externality of the lover to the externality of the loved.

However, this is not so of love that is not dependent on something and comes from a bonding of the soul, which is all the more so of the love between a father and his child, which stems from an essential bond. It certainly is an inner and essential love, both in relation to the one who loves and in relation to the one who is loved.

In relation to the one who is loved, this love is for the child himself, rather than to any quality or element of superiority that he may have. Likewise, in relation to the one who loves, the love of a father for his child comes from the very essence of his soul.

This likewise is the explanation of the words of the Mishnah,¹⁹⁴ that in love that is dependent on something, “when that something is nullified, the love is nullified.” In contrast, in the love that is not dependent on something, “it is eternal and never nullified.” That is, in love that is dependent on something, the “something” (that the love depends on) has two facets. Firstly, there are the superior qualities of the one who is loved, and secondly, there is the recognition of them by the one who loves, but these elements can change and be nullified. For, the one who is loved can lose his superior qualities, and moreover, there also can be a change in the recognition and perception of the qualities of loved one, in the one who loves. Therefore, if either of these facets of the “something” become nullified, the love is nullified. However, this is not so of love that is not dependent on something. Here it is entirely inapplicable for it to be nullified.

6.

From all the above we can understand the analogue. The love that the Holy One, blessed is He, has for the Jewish people, is like the love of a father for his son, and it is entirely inapplicable for it to undergo any change or nullification, both

¹⁹⁴ Mishnah Avot 5:16 *ibid.*

from the side of the one who is loved and from the side of the One who loves.

When it comes to the one who is loved, since the love of the Holy One, blessed is He, for the Jewish people, is bound to the very essence of their existence, like the love of a father for his child, in which he loves the child himself, not any detail or element of superiority in the child, therefore, the state and standing of the Jewish people makes no difference whatsoever, and,¹⁹⁵ “Either way, they still are My children.”

[The fact that *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, wants their conduct be as it should be, that they should study Torah and fulfill the *mitzvot*, is not because His love depends on this. Rather, the contrary is true. This itself stems from His essential love. That is, since He loves them in whatever state they may be, He therefore desires their wellbeing, and that they should ascend to the loftiest level. This is like the statement of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁹⁶ that the fact that the Holy One, blessed is He, “increased Torah and *mitzvot* for them,” is “to confer merit upon the Jewish people.”]

Similarly, in regard to the One who loves, this love is bound to the Essential Self of the Holy One, blessed is He, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, like the love of a father for his son, which is bound up with the totality of His Essential Self. Therefore, “I am incapable of exchanging them with another nation,” in that it is utterly inapplicable for there to be any change or cessation in this, even from the angle of the Holy One, blessed is He, as it were, just as it is utterly inapplicable

¹⁹⁵ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 36a

¹⁹⁶ Mishnah Makkot 3:16

for there to be any change or cessation in His Essential Self, blessed is He.

7.

This likewise is so of the love of Jewish people for the Holy One, blessed is He. That is, there is love for the Holy One, blessed is He, that stems from understanding and comprehending the greatness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, which is “love that is dependent on something.” However, the primary love for *HaShem*-יהו"ה, which is novel and exclusive to the Jewish people, is their innate love for the Holy One, blessed is He, being that they are children of the Ever-Present One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. This is like the love of a son for his father, which also is an essential love that is “not dependent on something.”

The superiority of the love of the Jewish people for Holy One, blessed is He, which stems from the fact that they are His children, as compared to love that stems from understanding and comprehending of the greatness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, comes to be expressed in various matters, both in relation to the One who is loved (the Holy One, blessed is He) and in relation to the one who loves (the Jewish people).

In relation to the One who is loved, the Holy One, blessed is He, if a person loves the Holy One, blessed is He, because he understands His greatness intellectually and understands all the other superior qualities of the Holy One, blessed is He, intellectually, in reality He is not bonding to the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, but only to the external facets

that reveal His greatness. Moreover, even in this, he is not bonding to *HaShem's* יהו"ה true greatness, but only to the greatness as **he** (the person) perceives and understands it. Thus, this love only relates to the externality of the One who is loved, and even in this itself, it is only the externality of the One who is loved as he grasps it.

In contrast, this is not so of the essential love for the Holy One, blessed is He, of the Jewish people, in which the bond is with the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself. This love does not stem from any levels of superiority, but is solely due to the fact that the Jewish people are the children of the Holy One, blessed is He, and are bound to Him with an essential bond. Therefore, the love stemming from this bond is love of the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself - love of His Essential Self and Being. This is like the love of a son for his father, which is not out of any elements of superiority that the father possesses, but is love for his father himself.

In addition, this matter, that this love touches the very essence of the father, is not just because of the sensitivities of the son, that he is essentially drawn to and loves his father (as explained above), but it also applies to the father as well. That is, this love awakens the very essence of the father. For, when the father sees that his son yearns for him, this awakens an inner movement in the father that is unique and extraordinary, in a way that is totally different than the movement affected in him by the love of someone who is not his son. For, the movement that is roused in him by this love, is in the totality of his essential self and being.

The same is so of the love of the Jewish people for the Holy One, blessed is He, which stems from the fact that they are His children. That is, in addition to the fact that the love of the Jewish people is for the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, it also “takes hold” and arouses, the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, as it were.

About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated in the Holy Zohar,¹⁹⁷ “Though the Holy One, blessed is He, is not grasped by any thought, He is grasped in the desire of the heart (*Re’uta d’Leeba*).” The word “thought” (*Machshavah*) connotes understanding and comprehension, which includes love that stems from comprehension. About such love, since it is connected to the greatness of the Creator, only as understood within the understanding and comprehension of man, man is utterly incapable of truly grasping the Essential Self of the Holy One, blessed is He. However, this is not so of the “desire of the heart” (*Re’uta d’Leeba*), which is the essential desire and love that the Jewish people have for the Holy One, blessed is He, being that they are His children. In such love, the Essential Self of the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, is grasped, as it were.

Additionally, in relation to the person who loves, an intellectual bond can only reach the externality of the person. This is because, as explained above, one’s intellect is external in relation to the essential self of a person, and it therefore is inapplicable that the love stemming from it will be deeper and more essential than the intellect itself. That is, the effect can never be greater than its cause. Therefore, love that stems from intellect can only be external love. It therefore is inapplicable

¹⁹⁷ Zohar III 289b

to say that through intellect, the essence of a person can be bound to the essence of the Holy One, blessed is He. For through this, he is not bound to Him at all, and it is only to the external levels that he is bound to Him through intellect.

However, in love that stems from the essential bond of His children with the Holy One, blessed is He, it is love that penetrates the essential self of a person. This love is not merely an expression of intellect, nor is it the expression of the external strata of man, but rather, stems and flows from the innermost level and greatest depth within him, from the very essence of his being. That is to say, the essential self of the one who loves is bound to the Essential Self of the One who is loved.

8.

Now, besides the fact that the love that a person has for the Holy One, blessed is He, stemming from recognition of *HaShem*'s יהו"ה greatness, blessed is He, (even when it is in full force), is significantly lesser than the innate love that every Jew has because he is the "child" of the Holy One, blessed is He, (as explained above at length), beyond this, this love (which stems from intellectual recognition) can undergo change, to the point that it can become nullified, for two reasons:

The first reason is that since the cause of this love is intellectual recognition of the greatness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, and intellect itself is subject to change, it therefore is understood that if there is a change or nullification of the cause, there automatically will be a change or

nullification of the effect, as in the words of Mishnah¹⁹⁸ about love that is dependent on something, meaning, love that stems from something external, like intellectual recognition, “when the thing is nullified, the love is nullified.”

The second reason is that there are matters that are more important to a person than that which is necessitated by force of intellect. This is to such an extent that even if he understands intellectually that these other matters are neither superior nor of any benefit to him, but on the contrary, are inferior and detrimental to him, nevertheless, he can become excited and preoccupied in them with great passion, even ignoring matters that that he understands intellectually. In other words, when there is conflict between matters that relate to himself and matters that are intellectually just and proper, it is not unheard of, that at times a person’s lusts will overpower his intellect.

Therefore, even if he properly understands and recognizes the greatness of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, as is fitting, which necessitates the he should love the Holy One, blessed is He, nevertheless, it is possible that, at times, he will neglect his bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, in favor of his own personal needs, lusts and desires.

[This is like what we find about Yishmael, that his association with bad company and evil influences began after a “dispute with Yitzchak over the inheritance.”¹⁹⁹ In other words, even though Yishmael also had a covenant with the Holy One, blessed is He, (and was circumcised), nevertheless, since his “covenant” (and bond) to the Holy One, blessed is He, stemmed

¹⁹⁸ Mishnah Avot 5:16 *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ See Rashi and Ramban to Genesis 21:10 citing Bereishit Rabba 53:11

from his intellectual recognition, as explained at length before,²⁰⁰ therefore, when there was something that challenged his inheritance, he neglected his bond with the Holy One, blessed is he, and joined with bad company and evil influences.]

In contrast, in the love that every Jew has for *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, stemming from the fact that he is “a child of the Holy One, blessed is He,” it is utterly inapplicable for this love to undergo any change or weakening. For since this love is innate and engraved in the essential self of his being, there is nothing (including intellectual rationalizations or societal influences) that is capable of causing even the slightest weakening of this love.

As we clearly observe, there are neither questions nor intellectual proofs that can cause any weakening in the faith and love that the Jewish people have for the Holy One, blessed is He. The same is true when it comes to societal influences. Not only are the Jewish people prepared to give up all worldly pleasures and delights only to remain in a state of adhesion with the Holy One, blessed is He, but beyond even this, they will give up their very souls and are prepared to suffer terrible travails and sufferings to the point of death, may the Merciful One save us, for the sanctification of the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה.

²⁰⁰ In the third discourse, chapter four and on.

Discourse 7

You have chosen us from all the nations

1.

Now,²⁰¹ the bond that exists between the Holy One, blessed is He, and the Jewish people, because they are the children of the Ever-Present One (which was explained in the preceding discourse), only relates to the spiritual “part” of the Jewish people, meaning, their souls. For, the fact that the Jewish people are called children of the Ever-Present One is because all other creations are rooted in the Supernal speech (*Dibur*), which is the aspect of the externality (*Chitzoniyut*), whereas the souls of the Jewish people are of the inner aspect (*Pnimiyyut*) that exists Above (like a son who is drawn from the essence of the father), as explained before.²⁰²

This is one of the reasons that the soul is called “the holy soul” (*Nefesh Kedoshah*). For, the term “holiness-*Kedushah*-קדושה” indicates “separateness,”²⁰³ and is indicative of the fact that the Godly soul is of the aspect of the Holy One, blessed is He, as He is holy and transcendentally removed from all matters of creation.

²⁰¹ This discourse is based upon Tanya, Ch. 49 (69b and on); Sefer HaMaamarim, Melukat Vol. 4 p. 266; Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 11, Sichah 1 of Parshat Shemot, Ch. 6; Vol. 18, Sichah 2 of Parshat Masei, Ch. 11; Vol. 4, Hosafot, p. 1,308 and on, p. 1,341, note 17.

²⁰² In the sixth discourse, chapters one and two.

²⁰³ See Rashi to Leviticus 19:2 that the words, “You shall be holy (*Kedoshim*-קדושים)” means that “You shall remain aloof (*Perushim*-פרושים) etc.”

In other words, all other creations are rooted in the aspect of Godliness that is of the level of “speech” (*Dibur*), which is constricted in such a manner that it relates to the creations, in that through it He created His world. In contrast, the root of the Godly soul is separate from any relation to the creations.

However, when it comes to the body of the Jew, since the root of its existence is also from the ten utterances, just like all other creations, (since it only states,²⁰⁴ “And He blew into his nostrils the soul of life” about the Godly soul, indicating the inner drawing forth as explained before, whereas the body was brought into existence with the utterance, “Let us make man”) it would therefore seem inappropriate to say that this bond exists with the body.

Nevertheless, there is another bond between the Holy One, blessed is He, and the Jewish people, which is even deeper and loftier than the bond between a father and son. That is, the Holy One, blessed is He, **chose** the Jewish people, as we recite,²⁰⁵ “**You** have chosen us from all the nations.” In this respect, even the physical body of the Jew is bound to the Holy One, blessed is He.

For, the parameters of the matter of choosing (*Bechirah*) is that the cause of the choice in a specific thing does not stem from the qualities or superiority of the thing chosen, but is rather solely from the desire and choice of the one who chooses. This is likewise the case when it comes to the body of the Jew, that even though it does not possess any superiority or holiness in

²⁰⁴ Genesis 2:7

²⁰⁵ In the liturgy of the Amidah and Musaf prayers of the festivals.

and of itself, so much so, that it even is physically comparable to the bodies of the nations of the world, it nevertheless is possible for this bond to come upon it, because the Holy One, blessed is He, chooses it.²⁰⁶

Now, this matter was newly introduced upon the giving of the Torah. This is as expressly stated in (the Code of Torah Law) Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim,²⁰⁷ that “When one says the words, ‘You have chosen us (from all peoples and languages)’ he should recall the giving of the Torah.” It likewise is stated in other books that the reason we specifically recite “You have chosen us from all the nations,” on the festivals (*Yom Tov*), but not on Shabbat, is because Shabbat is a *mitzvah* that was commanded at Marrah, before the Torah was given.

This itself is the meaning of the verse,²⁰⁸ “For you are a holy people to *HaShem*-יהו"ה your God, and *HaShem*-יהו"ה has chosen you for Himself to be a treasured people from all the peoples on the face of the earth.” Rashi comments on this²⁰⁹ and states, “Your own holiness comes from your forefathers, but, in addition, ‘*HaShem*-יהו"ה has chosen you.’”

We find three points in Rashi’s words: The first is that when he says, “in addition” this is comes to teach us that the holiness and choosing of the Jewish people is in two matters. Secondly, by adding “**your own** holiness” he defines the parameters of the difference between them. That is, that

²⁰⁶ This matter will be further explained in greater detail in the ninth discourse.

²⁰⁷ Magen Avraham to Orach Chayim 60, Se’if Katan 2; Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, Orach Chayim 60:4

²⁰⁸ Deuteronomy 14:2

²⁰⁹ Citing Sifri Devarim 97:1

holiness itself is a quality and superiority that the Jewish people possess **in and of themselves**, even before *HaShem*-יהו"ה chose them, (and as explained before, they have a holy soul). In contrast, the parameter of the choice, is that “the **Holy One, blessed is He, chose**” them, as it states, “*HaShem*-יהו"ה has chosen you.” Thirdly, the cause of the holiness of the Jewish people is “from your forefathers,” as explained before at length.²¹⁰ That is, because of their service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, our forefathers merited to draw a holy soul to their children after them for eternity.

Thus, upon closer examination, we find that the bond between the Jewish people and the Holy One, blessed is He, that was newly introduced when the Torah was given and the Jewish people were chosen, is in addition to the bond that already existed before this. Moreover, since it came through an “act” (of choice) by the Holy One, blessed is He, (unlike the holiness of the Jewish people, which is “your own holiness” and is an innate quality of the Jewish people themselves), it is a much loftier and deeper bond (in addition to also penetrating the body of the Jew as well, as discussed before).

[It is because of this unique bond, which was newly introduced when the Torah was given, that the Jewish people were given an additional, novel description that they did not have before the Torah was given. That is, before the Torah was given, the Jewish people were called “children of the Ever-Present One,” blessed is He. However, upon the giving of the

²¹⁰ In all of the preceding discourses.

Torah, the Jewish people also became “servants of *HaShem*-יהוה” (*Avdei HaShem*).]²¹¹

2.

This may be better understood by beginning with a summary explanation of the essence and parameters of “choice.”

The simple matter of “choosing” (*Bechirah*) is that one chooses between two completely equal things. For, if one thing has a certain superiority over the other thing, this is not true choice, being that its superiority compels the one choosing to choose it over the other thing.

For example, if a person does something because he is being whipped to do so, he is not doing it by choice, but because he is compelled to do so. The same applies to doing something because intellect necessitates it (in that he perceives its benefit, and the like). Such a deed does not stem from true free choice, but because his intellect compels him to do so. This is all the more so if his heart is drawn to it, or if it will benefit him and bring him pleasure. That is, the fact that his heart is drawn to it and he perceives that he will derive pleasure from it, compels him to choose it.

This being so, where does true free choice (*Bechirah*) exist? Specifically when there are two equal things, and neither has an element of superiority over the other, but even so, one is chosen over the other. It is only then that the chosen thing did not sway the choice in any way, since both are equal. Rather,

²¹¹ As will be further explained in the eighth discourse.

such choice solely comes about by the desire of the one who chooses without being compelled by any side factors.

With the above in mind, it becomes clear that true free choice (*Bechirah*) stems from that point in the human soul of man that is completely separate and divested of anything external to him. In other words, if he chooses something because that which is chosen compelled him to choose it, (whether because his heart is drawn to it, or whether because he intellectually perceives that it will benefit him), it must be said that the choice stemmed from a level of his soul in which the external is of consequence to him and has a hold on him, to the extent that it can influence him. In contrast, if he chooses between two equal things, the choice comes solely by virtue of his desire and choice, stemming from a level of his soul that is unrelated to anything external to him.

3.

This is similarly so if a person chooses between two things in which each has a superiority over the other, and he must decide between the two elements of superiority. An example is when his heart pulls him to one thing, but his intellect tells him to choose the other thing, and he then must decide whether to listen to his heart or his intellect. Such a decision likewise stems from a level of the soul that transcends relation to external things.

This may be understood through a preface. That is, as known, people differ in their qualities and compositions. That is, in some people their intellect is more prominent, whereas in

other people their emotions are more prominent. This being so, it would seem that the choice, as to whether to listen to the heart or the intellect, also is not true free choice. For, if a person is of a loftier state, in that his intellect is more prominent, this itself will necessitate that his decision will be according to the dictates of his intellect, even if it contradicts the pull of his heart. On the other hand, if the feelings in his heart are more prominent and of greater importance to him, this itself will necessitate that he will decide according to the pull of his heart, even if it contradicts the guidance of his intellect.

However, we nevertheless find that Rambam wrote in (Laws of Repentance) Hilchot Teshuvah²¹² that, “It is a fundamental principle of Judaism and a pillar upon which all of Torah and *mitzvot* rest” that every person is granted free choice. That is, even a person whose proclivities lean toward evil because of his nature (in which the feelings of his heart dominate and are stronger than his intellect), he nevertheless can choose “to be a righteous *Tzaddik*, like our teacher Moshe,”²¹³ and the opposite is also true.

We therefore must say that the fact that a person is capable of choosing according to the guidance of his intellect, even when the natural proclivities of his heart are more dominant, or the reverse, stems from that point of the soul which transcends all relation to any particular thing. Therefore, even if it is something that should necessarily cause him to choose it (whether because of his heart or because of his

²¹² Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 5:3

²¹³ Hilchot Teshuvah ibid. 5:2

intellect), he nevertheless has the power not to take it into consideration at all, and choose something else.²¹⁴

4.

With the above in mind, we now can clearly understand the novelty and superiority *HaShem's* יהוה's love for the Jewish people, that was newly introduced when “You chose us from all the nations,” compared to His love for the Jewish people, stemming from the fact that they are the children of the Ever-Present One, blessed is He.

That is, the cause of a father's love for his child is the child himself. In other words, there is someone external to the father – the one who loves - which causes him to love him. Even though the love of a father toward his child is because the child is a part of him, and is unlike one's love for a person who is unrelated to him, which only stems from the superior qualities of the one who is loved,²¹⁵ nevertheless, since the child is only a part of the father, but is not the father himself, therefore, even the love of a father for his child comes about because of something that is “outside” of himself, and is not actually his

²¹⁴ This is true even though, in reality, his choice in a specific thing is due to the superiority of the thing (whether due to the pull of heart or due to the guidance of the intellect). Nevertheless, if it is solely due to the level of the soul in which the thing itself is consequential, then this particular thing is of greater consequence to him than the other, and he is compelled to choose it. It therefore necessary to say that even in this choice, between two levels of superiority, there also is an expression of the level of the soul that transcends giving precedence to something external to himself. However, the true expression of this point in the soul in its pure state, is when he chooses between two things that are literally equal. For then, his choice is not due to the thing being chosen, but solely and exclusively due to the desire of the one who chooses.

²¹⁵ As explained at length in the preceding discourse.

essential self. It automatically follows that this love does not reach that point of his soul which is completely divested of all relation to another. However, this is not so when it comes to choice (*Bechirah*) that literally stems from the essence of the soul itself.

In other words, there are a number of levels in the soul of man: There is a level in which the existence of another, who is completely external to himself, is indeed of consequence to him. Loftier than this is the level in which a person who is unrelated to him is completely inconsequential to him, but rather only someone who is a “part” of him (like his child) is of consequence. Loftier than this is the essential self of the soul, as it is, in and of itself, which is divested of any relationship to anything else at all.

The three above-mentioned levels of love, stem from these three levels in the soul. Intellectual love, which comes from the recognition of the superior qualities of the loved one, is rooted in the level of the soul in which the other, who is external to him, is of some consequence. Therefore, the superior qualities of the other have an effect and influence on him, and cause him to love him. The love of a father for his child, which is because the child is a part of the father, stems from the second above-mentioned level, and the love that comes from true free choice (*Bechirah*), is rooted in the essential self of the soul.

5.

From all the above, this may be understood as it is in the analogue, regarding the love that the Holy One, blessed is He, has for the Jewish people. For, in this too, there are these three levels:

There is love that the Holy One, blessed is He, has for the Jewish people, because of their superiority. That is, even the sinners of Israel are full of *mitzvot* as a pomegranate is full of seeds, and every single Jew possesses exalted qualities that cannot be found even amongst the pious of the nations of the world. Then there is *HaShem* 's-יהו"ה love for the Jewish people stemming from the fact that they are children of the Ever-Present One, like the love of a father for his child, and finally, there is the love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה for the Jewish people stemming from the fact that "He chose us."

Now, just as in the analogy of man below, these three types of love stem from the three levels of the human soul, so likewise, these three loves are rooted in three different levels of *HaShem* 's-יהו"ה Godliness, as it were.

The love of the Jewish people that stems from their superiority, stems from a level of Godliness in which the Holy One, blessed is He, contracts Himself (*Tzimtzum*), so to speak, to create the worlds, to the point that matters of the world and levels of the created beings are of consequence to Him, so to speak.

The love of the Jewish people that stems from the fact that the Jewish people are children of the Ever-Present One, is rooted in a level of His Godliness that transcends relation to the

created beings. This is why this love has no relation to the superiority of the Jewish people, but is rather because they are “children of the Ever-Present One,” – in that “*HaShem*’s-יהו"ה portion is His people.”²¹⁶

The love that comes from the free choice (*Bechirah*) of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the Jewish people, is rooted in the level of His Godliness in which any relation to anything external to Him is utterly inapplicable. (That is, even the matter of a “portion” (*Chelek*) is entirely inapplicable here, being that this only applies when He acts as a “father.” However, in this level, no description, parameter, form or definition is applicable at all, not even the description of a “father,” as in the verse,²¹⁷ “He has neither son [nor brother].”) It is in regard to this that we say, “**You** have chosen us,” in which “*You-Atah-אתה*” refers to the Essential Self of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as He is, in and of Himself, literally, in which He transcends all names and descriptions, even as He transcends the Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, which is the Name of His Essential Self, blessed is He.

About this love the verse states,²¹⁸ “Is not Esav the brother of Yaakov – the word of *HaShem*-יהו"ה – but I loved Yaakov and I hated Esav etc.” In other words, the love of Yaakov stems from the Essential Self of the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, before Whom Yaakov has no superiority over

²¹⁶ Deuteronomy 32:9; This is the reason for the specific wording, “*HaShem*’s-יהו"ה portion is His people.” For, the level of Godliness in which the Holy One, blessed is He, constricted Himself to create the worlds, is generally related to His title “*God-Elohi*”*m-אלהי"m*,” as in the verse (Genesis 1:1), “In the beginning *Elohi*”*m-אלהי"m* created etc.” In contrast, the Jewish people are a portion of His Name *HaShem*-יהו"ה, which is the Name of His Essential Self that transcends all relation to creation.

²¹⁷ Ecclesiastes 4:8

²¹⁸ Malachi 1:2-3

and above Esav. That is, not only is it so that the superiority of Yaakov which stems from his superior qualities and characteristics is not of any consequence at all relative to this level, but even the superiority stemming from the fact that he is a “child” of the Ever-Present One is utterly inapplicable here, and “Esav is the brother of Yaakov,” in that they both are equal. However, even so, “I loved Yaakov and I hated Esav,” not because of any superiority on Yaakov’s part, but solely because this is what the Holy One, blessed is He, chose with His free choice.

It is in this regard that at the giving of the Torah, the verse states,²¹⁹ “You shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world.” Rashi explains, “Do not say that you alone are Mine, and that I have no others besides you, and thus what else do I have through which My love for you should be made evident? For the whole earth is Mine, but in My eyes, they are as nothing before Me.”

Now, at first glance, since all the nations are lesser than the Jewish people, so much so, that “they are as nothing,” this being so, what is the meaning of the words, “Do not think that I have no others besides you”? Rather, what Rashi means is that even in this Supernal level, in relation to which the “others” are equal to “you,” nevertheless, because of My choice (*Bechirah*), “in My eyes they are as nothing before Me.”

²¹⁹ Exodus 19:5

6.

Now, according to this, there is room to err and think that since *HaShem's* יהו"ה love for the Jewish people stems from choice (*Bechirah*) and is unrelated to their superiority or uniqueness, but rather, the entire matter is only because of what the Holy One, blessed is He, chose with His free choice, it therefore automatically follows that there is no unique or special importance and value to the Jewish people. For, just as the Holy One, blessed is He, chose them, He could have just as easily chosen otherwise.

However, in reality, the special and unique importance and value of the Jewish people, which was newly introduced by the Holy One, blessed is He, choosing them, is much greater and loftier than the importance that stems from their superior qualities and characteristics.

For, the importance and value brought about and rooted in the superior qualities of a created being, even if the superiority is that he is the “child” of the Holy One, blessed is He, is limited and dependent on the limitations of those qualities and characteristics. In contrast, the importance and value stemming from the desire and choice of the Holy One, blessed is He, being that He is utterly and completely limitless, the importance and value that stems from the choice of the Holy One, blessed is He, is likewise limitless as He is limitless.

7.

This point, that the difference between the Jewish people and the nations of the world is caused by the Holy One, blessed is He, choosing the Jewish people, is much greater beyond all measure of comparison, than the difference between the Jewish people and the nations that preceded this. This is hinted at in various books, that the reason we recite, “You have chosen us” in the prayers of the festivals (*Yom Tov*), but not in the prayers of Shabbat, is because Shabbat was given in Marrah before the choosing (*Bechirah*) at the giving of the Torah.

For, when Shabbat was given to the Jewish people at Marrah, there already came to be a very great difference and separation between the Jewish people and the nations of the world. For, when the Jewish people fulfill the *mitzvah* of Shabbat, vitality is added to them, as it states about all the *mitzvot*,²²⁰ “You shall keep My decrees and My judgments, for if a man fulfills them, he will live through them: I am *HaShem*-יהוה.” (Moreover, even on a simple level, the life of a Jew depends on keeping Shabbat, being that the punishment for the transgression of Shabbat is the opposite of life). In contrast, in regard to the nations of the world, the law is that,²²¹ “A gentile who observes the Shabbat is liable for the death penalty,” and there are no greater opposites than life and death.

²²⁰ Leviticus 18:5

²²¹ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 58b; This is especially emphasized by the words of the Midrash (Shemot Rabba 25:12), that the reason is because “*HaShem*-יהוה has given you the Shabbat” (Ex. 16:29) that, “He has given it to **you**, and not to the idolaters... This is analogous to a King who is sitting and His queen is sitting opposite him. Whoever shall pass between them is liable.”

Thus, from the fact that even after this great differentiation and separation, there was the subsequent addition at the giving of the Torah that, “You have chosen us from all the nations,” it is understood that the difference that stems from this choice (*Bechirah*) is even greater than the vast difference between life and the opposite of life.

8.

Now, the true reason that the Holy One, blessed is He, constrained Himself to the title “father,” as it were, even though as He is Himself,²²² “He has neither son [nor brother],” and did so in such a manner that only the Jewish people are His “children,” is itself because “You have chosen us from all the nations.” [This also applies to the fact that the Jewish people have superior qualities and characteristics that are not found amongst the other nations. That is, the reason the Holy One, blessed is He, created them in such a manner that they should be separate from all the other nations in their constitution, is itself because He chooses them.] This being so, it is clear, that even before the Torah was given, the Jewish people were chosen.

However, before the giving of the Torah, the matter of the choosing (*Bechirah*) did not come to be expressed as it essentially is. Rather, only the effects of the choice were recognizable, in the fact that the Jewish people are the children of the Ever-Present One, (and in their uniquely special qualities and characteristics). The novelty at the giving of the Torah is

²²² Ecclesiastes 4:8

that at that time, the choice (*Bechirah*) itself became revealed. In other words, at that time, it was made known and proclaimed before the eyes of the whole world that the Holy One, blessed is He, chose the Jewish people, along with the love stemming from this choice, that,²²³ “You shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples,” in a way in which “My love of you is recognized” (as per Rashi), and,²²⁴ “I loved Yaakov.”

Thus, through the revelation of the love that stems from the choice of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the Jewish people, at the giving of the Torah, (not just as the result of the choice that they are the children of the Ever-Present One, and that they have uniquely special qualities), a strong and mighty bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, was affixed and established within the souls of the Jewish people, in a way that is even much stronger and greater than the bond that preceded this, which is like the love of a child for his father.

9.

Based on this foundation, we can explain the words of our sages, of blessed memory, in Talmud,²²⁵ that the Holy One, blessed is He, offered the Torah to each and every nation and language, but they did not accept it, until He came to the Jewish people and they accepted it.

Now, at first glance, there is a question here. That is, the Torah specifically relates to the Jewish people. For, even

²²³ Exodus 19:5

²²⁴ Malachi 1:2

²²⁵ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a

about the very beginning of creation it states,²²⁶ “The Holy One, blessed is He, established a condition with the act of creation, and said, ‘If **Israel** accepts the Torah, you will exist etc.’” Moreover, even as the Torah existed before the creation of the world, as it states,²²⁷ “The Torah existed two-thousand years before the creation of the word,” it stated in Torah, “Speak to the children of Israel,” and “Command the children of Israel.” This being so, why did it say in it, “Speak to the children of Israel,” and “Command the children of Israel”? Moreover, what does Talmud mean that the Holy One, blessed is He, offered it to all nations and languages?

Furthermore, the Holy One, blessed is He, certainly knew that all the nations and languages would not want to accept the Torah, and that only the Jewish people would accept it. This being so, why did He offer it to all nations and languages?

Rather, the fact that the Holy One, blessed is He, offered the Torah to all nations and languages is to teach us that in its root, the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people, was from such a level, in which the Jewish people, in and of themselves, are equal to all other nations and languages, as indicated by the verse, “Esav is the brother of Yaakov.”

However, the fact that, in actuality, the Jewish people are the ones who indeed accepted the Torah, is specifically the result of the revelation of *HaShem*’s-ה"ו choice in the Jewish people, as indicated by the continuation, “But I loved Yaakov.” It is for this reason that the acceptance of the Torah by the

²²⁶ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a ibid.

²²⁷ Midrash Tehillim 90:4

Jewish people was in a way that they gave precedence to “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה) before “We will hear” (*Nishma*-נשמע).²²⁸ That is, they entirely gave themselves over to the Holy One, blessed is He, with complete and unlimited self-nullification to Him, which is much greater than the love a child who is given over to his father.

²²⁸ Exodus 24:7

Discourse 8

“For the Children of Israel are servants to Me”²²⁹

1.

Now²³⁰ it was already explained (in the previous discourse) that at the giving of the Torah, there was a revelation of a much greater and stronger bond between the Holy One, blessed is He, and the Jewish people, this being the bond of choice (*Bechirah*). (This bond is even loftier and deeper than the bond between a father and son which was present before then.) This affected that in the Jewish people as well, there is a firmly established and extremely strong bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, which is even loftier and deeper than the bond between a son and his father (which was present even before then).

This unique bond came to be expressed in the fact that, at the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people received the new title of “servants,” that is, they are “the servants of *HaShem*-יהוה,” blessed is He. They already had the title of “children” before this, as it states,²³¹ “My firstborn son is Israel.” However, the title “servants” (*Avadim*) was newly introduced at the giving of the Torah. In the words of our sages, of blessed

²²⁹ Leviticus 25:55

²³⁰ This discourse is based upon Likkutei Sichot, Vol. 11, Sichah 1 to Parshat Shemot (chapter 5 and on); *Hemshech* 5666 p. 308 and on, p. 360 and on; Sefer HaMaamarim, Melukat, Vol. 5, p. 96; Sefer HaMaamarim 5687 p. 182; Sefer HaMaamarim, Melukat Vol. 4, p. 286 and on.

²³¹ Exodus 4:22

memory,²³² “This ear heard My voice on Mount Sinai when I said,²³³ ‘For the children of Israel are servants to Me.’” [This is likewise indicated by the words of Rashi to the verse,²³⁴ “I am *HaShem*-יהוה your God, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery,” that, “The act of taking you out is itself adequate that you should be servants to Me.”]²³⁵

2.

Quite simply, the difference in the relationship between a son and his father, and the relationship between a servant and his master, is as follows: The relationship between a son and his father comes to be expressed in the fact that he **loves** his father. Now, since the motion of love is that the one who loves desires to be close to the one he loves, therefore, the love is connected to the desires and existence of the one who loves (as known about the difference between love and fear. That is, the motion of fear is one of constriction, meaning that he has no desires, and is a motion of self-nullification (*Bittul*). In contrast, the motion of love is that the desire of the one who loves flows from his sense of self-existence.)

Thus, even when the love of the son towards his father is so great that he is willing to forego his own wellbeing (and even the bond he has with his father) in order to fulfill the will

²³² Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 22b and elsewhere

²³³ Leviticus 25:55

²³⁴ Exodus 20:2

²³⁵ The reason that they are called “servants of *HaShem*-יהוה” and not “servants of Pharaoh” when they left Egypt is because the exodus from Egypt itself was the beginning of the giving of the Torah. (This is as stated (Exodus 3:12), “When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve God on this mountain.”)

of his father, nevertheless, it still is within the category of love, the substance of which stems from the desire of the one who loves and his own existence.

However, this is not so of a servant, who necessarily must fulfill the will and command of his master, (even if the command is against his own desire). In other words, the fact that he fulfills the will of the master is not because of his own desire or existence, but solely because his master rules over him.

We thus find that the bond between a son and his father is part of **his own existence** (in that his primary objective is to bond with his father). In contrast, the relationship between a servant and his master is that he is **nullified** to his master, this being the nullification of his own existence.

The same is likewise true in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. That is, the fact that the Jewish people are children of the Ever-Present One comes to be expressed in the fact that every single Jew wants to adhere to the Holy One, blessed is He, to the point that they are prepared to sacrifice their lives just in order not to sever their bond with Him, God forbid. However, the fact that a person wants to be in a state of adhesion to the Holy One, blessed is He, is itself connected with his own existence, as explained before. Even though he has self-sacrifice for this, this itself stems from his own desire (that is, the desire of the person himself) to cleave and adhere to the Holy One, blessed is He.

Furthermore, even a person who has reached an even loftier level than the aspect indicated by a "son," meaning that his love of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is not in a manner that

he thinks about himself at all (or even of his bond with the Holy One, blessed is He), and his whole objective is solely to give satisfaction of spirit to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, nonetheless, ultimately, even this love stems from the desire of the person himself, which is bound to his own existence.

However, when it comes to the fact that the Jewish people are “servants of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” the meaning of this is that it is like an innate nature in their souls that **compels** them to fulfill the will and commands of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, even if these commandments contradict their own desire or existence, just as a servant is compelled to fulfill the will of his master. The reason that they are compelled to fulfill the commands of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is because they have a sense of the rule and dominion of the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He, just as a servant is compelled to fulfill the will of his master because of the rule and dominion of his master over him.

3.

As explained, the difference between a “servant” and a “son” is that, when it comes to the relationship between a son and his father, he senses his own desire and existence, whereas in the relationship of the servant to his master, he senses his nullification to the master. Now, this difference is also apparent in the difference between the manner of satisfaction of spirit that a father has through the deeds of his son, in comparison to the satisfaction of spirit that a master has through the service of his servant.

It is the nature of a person that if he receives a gift from his friend, or if his friend does something on his behalf, he does not derive the same level of delight and pleasure as he does from something that he achieves by his own effort and toil. This is as our sages, of blessed memory, taught,²³⁶ “A person prefers one *kav* of his own, over nine *kavin* of his friend.” This is true even if the one (who does something on his behalf) is a dear friend of his soul and is entirely given over to him with wholeheartedness and complete self-investment. Even so, since ultimately, he is a different person, his deeds lack the matter of “his own *kav*.”

However, if a person’s son does something on his behalf, since his son is not separate from himself, but is his own flesh and blood, who is part of him (as explained before), therefore, the pleasure the father derives from the deeds of his son, done on his behalf, are similar to the pleasure he has from “his own *kav*.”

Nevertheless, even then it is not actually “his own *kav*,” being that ultimately, it is the product of his son, rather than his own product. However, in work that is done for him by his servant, it is not that some other person did work on his behalf. Rather, (in the first place) the work is called by the name of the master, being that the servant is his acquisition and property. This is like the fact that someone’s ox or donkey are not called by their own name, but by the name of their master. It literally is exactly so with the work product of the servant. It therefore is automatically understood that the pleasure the master derives

²³⁶ Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 38a

from this work is the same pleasure that he derives from his own work, “his own *kav*.”

The same is so in the analogue, as it relates to serving *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. That is, the satisfaction of spirit that the Holy One, blessed is He, derives from the service of the Jewish people, stemming from the fact that they are “servants of *HaShem*-יהו"ה” and their sense of the yoke of His Kingship, in that He is the King and they are His servants, is far greater than His satisfaction of spirit that comes from their being “children of the Ever-Present One,” which stems from their great love for Him, like the love of a child for his father.

4.

Now, the reason that the Jewish people specifically became “servants of *HaShem*-יהו"ה” upon the giving of the Torah, is because their being servants of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, stems from the Holy One, blessed is He, choosing the Jewish people, which became revealed at the giving of the Torah.²³⁷

To clarify, as previously explained,²³⁸ when the Holy One, blessed is He, is called “our Father” (*Avinu*), this is after His descent to constrict Himself, so to speak, to act according to the level and description of a “father.” That is, on this level, the Jewish people are of some consequence in relation to Him, in that they are a “part” of Him. However, the fact that the Holy One, blessed is He, chose the Jewish people by His free choice,

²³⁷ As discussed before in chapter one.

²³⁸ In the preceding discourse.

stems from His Essential Self, blessed is He, which is beyond relation to anything, even in relation to a “child.”

Therefore, as long as there only was the revelation in the Jewish people of the bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, that relates to their existence in the role of “children of the Ever-Present One,” their bond with the Holy One, blessed is He, on their part, stemmed and was founded on their desire and existence in the role of His “children.”²³⁹ However, when at the giving of Torah, the free choice of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the Jewish people, stemming from His Essential Self, was revealed, for which no “existence” is of any consequence, then likewise, the bond of the Jewish people to *HaShem*-יהו"ה as His “servants” was with the nullification of their existence (*Bittul b'Metziyut*) to Him.

5.

Now, based on this foundation, that at the giving of the Torah the Jewish people became “servants of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” which is the matter of self-nullification (*Bittul*) stemming from the fact that the Holy One, blessed is He, chose the Jewish people, and this choice (*Bechirah*) is from His Essential Self, which is utterly beyond any relation to anything, it must be said that as “servants of *HaShem*-יהו"ה,” their self-nullification to

²³⁹ Nevertheless, since the relativity and relationship between the son and his father is not due to any particular elements of superiority, but is solely due to the fact that he is a part of the father, therefore, even this desire of the Jewish people (to be connected to the Holy One, blessed is He) in the role of “sons,” itself also transcends all calculations of the intellect and rationale, to the point that they are prepared to sacrifice their lives for this.

HaShem-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is absolute and complete (*Bittul b'Tachlit*).

The explanation is that about the verse,²⁴⁰ “And they stood at the bottom of the mountain,” our sages, of blessed memory, stated,²⁴¹ “This teaches that the Holy One, blessed is He, overturned the mountain upon them like a tub and said, ‘If you accept the Torah, good, but if not...’” The question about this is well-known. That is, the Jewish people already gave precedence to²⁴² “We will do” (*Na'aseh*-נעשה) over “We will hear” (*Nishma*-נשמע), even before the mountain was overturned. This being so, why was it necessary to force them to accept the Torah?

However, based on the above foundation, that the self-nullification (*Bittul*) introduced in the Jewish people at the giving of the Torah was absolute and complete self-nullification, it can be said that their self-nullification (*Bittul*) when they gave precedence to “We will do” (*Na'aseh*-נעשה) over “We will hear” (*Nishma*-נשמע) was not yet absolute and complete. Rather, this was specifically brought about when He overturned the mountain upon them.

6.

The explanation is as follows: When a person accepts the yoke of a king upon himself, and willingly chooses to be his servant, even though the parameters of his servitude are such

²⁴⁰ Exodus 19:17

²⁴¹ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a

²⁴² Exodus 24:7

that he is nullified to his master, (and is therefore compelled to fulfill the will of his master, even if it goes against his own desires), nevertheless, since his servitude stems from his own desire, even after he has become a servant and must fulfill the commands of his master, there still is an admixture of “his own desire” and “existence” in that he himself chose to be his servant.

However, if a person’s servitude is forced upon him, without desire or choice on his part, his servitude is then servitude that is absolute and complete, and his self-nullification (*Bittul*) is pure (in that there is no admixture of his own existence in this).

[There is a hint of this in the laws of a Jewish slave.²⁴³ That is, in regard to a slave who has sold himself into slavery, his master cannot give him a Canaanite maidservant as a wife, whereas in regard to one who was sold into servitude by the court, his master can give him a Canaanite maidservant as a wife.²⁴⁴ The reason is that the law that the master can give him a Canaanite maidservant stems from the fact that the servant is completely and totally subjugated to the master. Therefore, this law specifically applies to a servant who was sold into servitude by the court. For, in regard to one who sold himself willingly, since even after he becomes a servant, there nevertheless is an admixture of his own desire and existence, his servitude to the

²⁴³ In general, the servitude of a Jewish slave is not truly a good example for the matter of slavery. However, just as in this type of servitude there is a difference between a person who sold himself (willingly), and one who was sold by the court (by force), so likewise is this the case when it comes to the true matter of servitude. That is, the ultimate servitude is specifically in one who is caused to be a servant by force.

²⁴⁴ Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 14b

master is not absolute to the same extent. Rather, it specifically applies when the servant was sold by the court, in which even the beginning of his servitude was not of his own desire, but he was rather completely subjugated in servitude of the master.]

This then, explains why the self-nullification (*Bittul*) of the Jewish people in giving precedence to “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה) over “We will hear” (*Nishma*-נשמע), was still insufficient, and the overturning of the mountain was necessary. For, even though the self-nullification (*Bittul*) in giving precedence to “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה) over “We will hear” (*Nishma*-נשמע), was very great self-nullification (*Bittul*), in that they accepted the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהויה Kingship upon themselves,²⁴⁵ and gave themselves entirely over to be His servants, nevertheless, since this giving of themselves was out of their own desire and choice, there still was an admixture of their own existence and it thus was not the ultimate self-nullification. However, through the Holy One, blessed is He, overturning the mountain and forcing them to accept the Torah,

²⁴⁵ It is explained in various places that their giving precedence to “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה) over “We will hear” (*Nishma*-נשמע) is akin to the acceptance of the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהויה Kingship, which transcends the acceptance of the yoke of the *mitzvot*. (See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 13a in the Mishnah, that the acceptance of the yoke of the Kingship of Heaven, and the acceptance of the yoke of the *mitzvot*, are two different things.) The difference between them is that the self-nullification of the accepting the yoke of the *mitzvot* relates to the power of action in a person, that he will do whatever he is commanded to do. In contrast, the self-nullification (*Bittul*) of accepting the yoke of *HaShem*’s-יהויה Kingship relates to the person himself, meaning that his entire existence is that he is the servant of the King, King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He. Nevertheless, since the acceptance of the yoke of the Kingship of Heaven stems from the person himself, that **he accepts** upon himself to be the servant of the King, this self-nullification (*Bittul*) is still one that is intermingled with himself, as is discussed above.

their servitude became absolute and perfectly complete self-nullification (without any admixture of their own “existence”).

This also explains the doubled language in the verse,²⁴⁶ “For the children of Israel are servants to Me, they are My servants.” In other words, in addition to the fact that the Jewish people are “servants” because they (willingly) accept the yoke of *HaShem*’s יהו"ה Kingship upon themselves, they also possess an additional, loftier matter as well, which is that they are “My servants,” in that the Holy One, blessed is He, made them His servants (by force), by overturning the mountain upon them like a tub etc.²⁴⁷

Based on this, that the superiority of Him “overturning the mountain” is in the fact that the Jewish people are “servants of *HaShem*-יהו"ה” in a way of absolute and complete self-nullification (*Bittul b’Tachlit*), we can understand the relationship between this forcing and the giving of the Torah. For, one of the primary novelties of the giving of the Torah is that there was a revelation of *HaShem*’s יהו"ה choice (*Bechirah*) in the Jewish people, which stems from the level of His Godliness in which any relation to anything at all is inapplicable. This revelation comes to be expressed in the fact

²⁴⁶ Leviticus 25:55

²⁴⁷ The conclusion of the verse (Leviticus 25:55 *ibid.*) which states, “Whom I took out of the land of Egypt,” emphasizes that they are “My servants,” and that this was brought about through the fact that the Holy One, blessed is He, took them out of Egypt (and not because they accepted upon themselves the yoke of His Kingship). Nevertheless, the primary matter in this was drawn forth at the giving of the Torah (with the overturning of the mountain). Also see the prior note at the beginning of this discourse, that even the servitude of the Jewish people that was brought about through their exodus from the land of Egypt is because the exodus from Egypt was the beginning of the giving of the Torah.

that the Jewish people are servants of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is in a way of total and complete self-nullification, by force.

7.

Now, according to complete self-nullification such as this, it is entirely inapplicable for a person to have any pleasure or joy in it at all. Moreover, it could seem that this would cause a person to be in a motion of constriction, which is the opposite of pleasure.

That is, it makes sense that if his servitude stems from willingly accepting the yoke of Heaven upon himself, and he desires to be a servant of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, then even though the motion of servitude is one of nullifying his own existence (*Bittul b'Metziyut*), nevertheless, there is room to say that since this self-nullification (*Bittul*) is the result of his own desire, he therefore takes pleasure and delights in this self-nullification, being that through it, his desire is fulfilled. However, if the servitude is by force and against his will, in that even if he wants to cast off the yoke of Heaven from himself, God forbid, he is unable to fulfill this desire, being that he is forced from Above to be the servant of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, (as in the verse,²⁴⁸ "As I live – the word of the Lord *HaShem/Elohi*" מ-יהו"ה אדני" יהו"ה – I will be King over you with a mighty hand etc.") it seems as if there is no room to have any sense of pleasure or joy in such servitude.

²⁴⁸ Ezekiel 20:33

However, in reality, since “the Jewish people and the Holy One, blessed is He, are entirely one,”²⁴⁹ indeed a Jew also has pleasure in the fact that he has merited to be the servant of the Holy One, blessed is He, in such a lofty and unique way. Now, there are two facets in this: The first is that since this servitude is such that he is incapable of casting off the yoke of the Holy One, blessed is He, meaning that it is an eternal servitude, in which cessation is entirely inapplicable, he therefore rejoices from the fact that he is an eternal servant of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. Secondly, the fact that he is incapable of casting off the yoke of the Holy One, blessed is He, stems from the fact that his servitude is one of absolute and utter self-nullification, in which there absolutely is no admixture of his own desire or existence, as explained before. He therefore rejoices in the fact that he has merited to serve *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in such a lofty way.

8.

With the above in mind, we can perhaps explain the continuing words of the Talmud.²⁵⁰ That is, after they stated that the Holy One, blessed is He, turned the mountain over them like a tub, “Rava said, ‘Even so, they reaccepted it in the days of Achashverosh.’” That is, in the days of Achashverosh the Jewish people accepted the Torah upon themselves willingly and by their free choice.

²⁴⁹ See Zohar III 73a and elsewhere

²⁵⁰ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a

Now, at first glance, this begs a question. For, if the primary perfection of receiving the Torah was for it be accepted willingly, by their own desire, then why was it necessary for them to be forced by the overturning of the mountain? After all, they already willingly accepted it when they gave precedence to “We will do” (*Na’aseh*-נעשה) over “We will hear” (*Nishma*-נשמע). On the other hand, if willingly accepting it was not adequate, and had to be received by force (as explained before), what then was added when they again accepted it willingly in the time of Achashverosh?

However, based on what was explained before, it can be said that their acceptance of it willingly in the times of Achashverosh, which was after He “overturned the mountain upon them like a tub,” indicates that they then came to desire and delight this itself, that is, that He “overturned the mountain upon them like a tub.” In other words, the desire, pleasure, and joy, themselves stemmed from the absolute self-nullification, that was forced upon them, as discussed before.

This lofty matter was newly introduced in the days of Purim, at which time there came to be a revelation in the Jewish people of the great superiority in this. That is, they sensed that their absolute self-nullification to the Holy One, blessed is He, in a way of force from Above, is not a contradiction to their existence, but on the contrary, this is the true essence of their existence. Therefore, not only does this force not cause them pain, but on the contrary, they have much pleasure and rejoice in it.

Discourse 9

The unique superiority of the Jewish body, that the soul does not possess

1.

It²⁵¹ was previously cited²⁵² that one of the novelties introduced by the Holy One, blessed is He, choosing the Jewish people at the giving of the Torah, is in the fact that the choice (*Bechirah*) was also in the bodies of the Jewish people. For, before the Torah was given, the bond that the Jewish people had with the Holy One, blessed is He, was primarily that of the soul, which is “a portion of *HaShem*-יהוה.” However, at the giving of the Torah, there was the novel introduction of choosing (*Bechirah*) the body of the Jew as well.

Now, based on the explanation there about the superiority of the bond between the Holy One, blessed is He, and the Jewish people, which began when, “You chose us from all the nations,” compared to the bond that preceded this, we find that there is a special superiority to the body of the Jew, over and above the soul. For, it is specifically through it (the body) that the choice of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the Jew (at the giving of the Torah) is expressed.

²⁵¹ This discourse is based upon *Hemshech* “v’*Kachah*” 5637 (of the Rebbe Maharash), end of ch. 91 and on; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5665 p. 220 and on; *Sefer HaMaamarim*, Melukat Vol. 4, p. 276 and on; *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. 8, p. 58 and on; Vol. 5 p. 324 and on; *Sefer HaMaamarim*, Melukat Vol. 4 p. 179 and on.

²⁵² At the beginning of the seventh discourse.

It therefore is explained in various holy books that in the coming future, the soul will derive its sustenance from the body. For, in the coming future there specifically will be the revelation of the superiority *HaShem* 's-ה"ה choice in the body of the Jew, and then the soul too will receive this element of superiority from the body.

2.

Now to understand this, we must explain the essential superiority that was newly introduced to the bodies of the Jewish people in choosing them. For, even before the Torah was given, there already was a bond between the body of the Jew and the Holy One, blessed is He, as stated about the *mitzvah* of circumcision,²⁵³ “My covenant shall be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant.” That is, “**My** covenant” (the bond between the Holy One, blessed is He, and the one who is circumcised) is “in your flesh,” meaning, the physical body. Additionally, it already was explained²⁵⁴ that Yitzchak needed to be born specifically after Avraham was circumcised, so that he could be born of holy seed. That is, it was so that the birth of his physical body should be of holy seed, so that the holiness would even penetrate his physical body.

Still and all, the bond between the bodies of the Jewish people and the Holy One, blessed is He, as it was before the Torah was given, stemmed from the soul that resided within the body. In contrast, the novelty introduced at the giving of the

²⁵³ Genesis 17:13

²⁵⁴ At length in the third discourse.

Torah was the bond of the Jewish body and the Holy One, blessed is He, stemming from the body itself.

3.

This may be understood by prefacing with an explanation that this novelty (the bond with physicality) at the giving of the Torah, is also found in the *mitzvot*.

It is explained in various holy books that the *mitzvot* fulfilled by our forefathers were primarily done through spiritual intentions (*Kavanot*). In contrast, (after the Torah was given) it is the physical deed itself which is primary in the performance of the *mitzvot*.

The reason is because the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, rendered by our forefathers, only reached the highest level that created beings achieve by their own volition, is of any consequence.²⁵⁵ Thus, since their spiritual service was of greater significance and elevation, therefore, our forefathers primarily served *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, through spiritual intentions (*Kavanot*).

In contrast, after the giving of the Torah, the drawing forth affected by the *mitzvot* is of a level of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness that transcends all relativity to the deeds and service of created beings done on their own accord. Moreover, the fact that *mitzvot* cause a drawing forth of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness is (not because of the superiority of the *mitzvot* themselves, but)

²⁵⁵ This was previously discussed in the fourth discourse, chapter six, that relative to the Holy One, blessed is He, "all is before Him as nothing," but that the Holy One, blessed is He, nevertheless desired to constrict Himself, so to speak, to such a manner in which the deeds of the lower beings be of consequence to Him.

because they are the essential will of the Holy One, blessed is He. That is, it arose in His will to manifest Himself in the *mitzvot*, so to speak.²⁵⁶ Thus, since it arose in His will for there to be physical commandments performed in actual physical deed, therefore, we take hold of the Essential Self of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, specifically through them, as it were.

In other words, the drawing forth of *HaShem*'s-יהו"ה Godliness which preceded the giving of the Torah, primarily stemmed from the superiority of the deeds themselves. Therefore, since spiritual service is loftier than physical actions, it specifically was through their spiritual service that an arousal of the drawing forth from Above was achieved. In contrast, the drawing forth affected by the *mitzvot* after the giving of the Torah, stems from the fact that they are the Supernal will of the Holy One, blessed is He, and therefore, the drawing forth is specifically in the deeds that He desires, which are physical deeds.

About this our sages, of blessed memory, stated,²⁵⁷ “All the *mitzvot* that our forefathers fulfilled before You, were only scents, whereas about our *mitzvot* the verse states,²⁵⁸ ‘Your Name is like the finest oil.’” The difference between a scent and oil is in two ways. Firstly, a scent is only like a glimmer of radiance that spreads out from the item that gives off the scent.

²⁵⁶ It is for this reason that the first of the Ten Commandments at the giving of the Torah begins with the word “I-*Anochi*-אנכי,” about which our sages, of blessed memory, stated (Shabbat 105a, Ein Yaakov version) is an acronym for, “I have placed My soul in My writing-*Ana Nafshi Katavit Yahavit*-אנא נפשי כתבתי יהבית-” In other words, the Holy One, blessed is He, says that He “wrote Himself and invested” (“I have placed... in My writing”) His Essential Self (“My soul”) in His Torah and His *mitzvot*.

²⁵⁷ Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabba 1:3

²⁵⁸ Song of Songs 1:3

On the other hand, oil is poured from one vessel to another and is the thing itself. Secondly, a scent is more spiritual, as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,²⁵⁹ “A scent is something that the soul derives benefit from, but not the body.” In contrast, oil is a physical thing that can be felt with one’s physical hands.

This itself explains the difference between the *mitzvot* fulfilled by our forefathers, and our *mitzvot* (after the Torah was given). The drawing forth affected by the *mitzvot* by our forefathers, was only a glimmer of radiance spreading forth from *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, as it were, (to the extent and level that the service of the created beings by their own volition is of consequence, as it were). Therefore, this drawing forth was brought about in the form of spiritual service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He. In contrast, the drawing forth affected by our *mitzvot* (after the Torah was given), is of the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic and Unlimited Being, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He. Therefore, this is brought about through physical actions and deeds.

4.

Now, we indeed find that the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, of our forefathers, was not only in spiritual matters (such as the contemplation of the greatness of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, or the love and fear of Him and the like). Rather, they too served Him through physical deeds. For example, Avraham welcomed guests and ate matzah on Passover, Yitzchak separated tithes, and Yaakov peeled the

²⁵⁹ Talmud Bavli, Brachot 43b

sticks (about which Zohar²⁶⁰ states that this was comparable to donning Tefillin).

Nevertheless, all those deeds were only in order for the spiritual matters to have some element of grasp and tangibility in physical things, and are comparable to someone who claps his hands and dances with his feet as a result of his great joy. That is, the physical clapping of the hands and dancing of the feet have no content, in and of themselves, and are merely the expression of the spiritual joy of the soul.

Proof of this, is that when Avraham fed the angels who came in the appearance of men, in truth, through this, he did not at all fulfill the *mitzvah* of welcoming guests. This is because angels have no need of food (especially according to the words of our sages, of blessed memory,²⁶¹ that they only “appeared to be eating.” The fact that Avraham told the Holy One, blessed is He,²⁶² “to wait for him while he welcomes guests,” is only because he thought that through doing so, he was fulfilling the *mitzvah* of welcoming guests (*Hachnasat Orchim*). This being so, it seems as if that they caused him to stumble from Above, God forbid, by departing from the Indwelling Presence of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He (the *Shechinah*), to do something in which there was no actual fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of welcoming guests?!

It must therefore be said that the entire matter of welcoming guests (*Hachnasat Orchim*), as it was before the Torah was given, was only an expression of the kindness-

²⁶⁰ Zohar I 162a

²⁶¹ Talmud Bavli, Bava Metzia 86b

²⁶² Rashi to Genesis 18:3

Chessed and feelings of the soul, (similar to the fulfillment of all their other *mitzvot*, the substance of which was the expression of the inner spirituality). Thus, since in Avraham's mind, these were actual guests who required food and drink, by running to welcome them with food and service etc., he fulfilled the matter of welcoming guests (*Hachnasat Orchim*) in a perfect and complete manner, as it was then.

This itself is the difference between the deeds of our forefathers before the giving of the Torah, and our performance of the *mitzvot* in deed, after the giving of the Torah. That is, the deeds of our forefathers were primarily an expression of their inner spiritual content. In contrast, in *mitzvot* as they are after the giving of the Torah, the primary matter is the physical deed itself.

Though it also is true that even in the *mitzvot* that follow the giving of the Torah, it is explained in holy books that the physical acts of performing the *mitzvot* also have an effect on the soul, (for example, on the most simple level, eating matzah on Passover has the effect that through doing so, a person recalls and relives the exodus from Egypt, and on a spiritual level, the matzah has a special *Segulah*, in that it is the "bread of faith," and draws faith in a person), nevertheless, this is an **additional** aspect of elevation and superiority in the *mitzvot*, whereas the primary aspect of the *mitzvot* is the actual physical deed itself.

Therefore, even if a person has all the proper spiritual intentions (*Kavanot*) associated with eating matzah, but does not actually eat the matzah (because for some reason he was prevented from doing so) he did not fulfill the *mitzvah*. On the other hand, if he ate matzah without any spiritual intention

(*Kavanah*) whatsoever, even if he was forced to eat it against his will, he indeed fulfilled the *mitzvah*.

[With the above in mind, we also can better understand the matter of donning Tefillin done by our forefather Yaakov, which was accomplished through placing the sticks. That is, after the Torah was given, since the *mitzvah* of donning Tefillin does not come (only) as the expression of some spiritual matter, but its purpose is the actual donning of Tefillin, it is not possible to fulfill it through any other deed or act, but solely in the specific manner specified for its fulfillment in Torah. In contrast, Yaakov was indeed able to fulfill this *mitzvah* through the sticks, since at that time, the primary aspect was the spirituality of it, and spiritually, it can indeed (even) be expressed by the placing of sticks.]

5.

Now, based on this introduction, we can explain the novelty introduced to the physical bodies of the Jewish people when the Torah was given, in comparison to the level and sanctity of the physical body as it was in the days of our forefathers (beginning with Yitzchak who was born of holy seed).

The sanctity of the body that preceded the giving of the Torah was connected to the fact that the body is the receptacle (*Klee*) for the holy soul residing within it. This is comparable to the physical performance of the *mitzvot* as it was before the Torah was given, the entire substance of which was only the expression of the inner spiritual content. In contrast, the

superiority of the physical bodies of the Jewish people, which was introduced upon the giving of the Torah, is that the Holy One, blessed is He, chose the physical body of the Jew, in and of itself. This is like the physical performance of the *mitzvot* as they are after the Torah was given, the primary superiority of which is not (only) that the inner spiritual content comes to be expressed through it, but rather, what is desired is the physical deed itself.

6.

To further clarify, we will preface with an analogy from the organs of the human body. We find that amongst the organs of the body, there are various levels of sensitivity and refinement. For example, the foot (and particularly its heel) is very coarse and physical and the heart is more refined, whereas the brain is the most refined and sensitive substance in the human body. They therefore differ from each other in the soul-powers that reside in them. That is, the feet and heels are vessels of mobility (which is the lowest power of the soul). The heart is the vessel for the feelings of the soul (the emotions), and the brain is the vessel for the power of intellect, which is the highest power of the soul.

Now, even in the substance of the brain itself, not all people are equal. That is, there can be one person in whom the substance of his brain is more physicalized, and therefore, the vessels of his comprehension and understanding are only capable of understanding simple explanations. On the other hand, there can be another person whose brain is more refined

and sensitive, and is therefore capable of grasping much deeper and more refined ideas.

Now, when we want to explain a very deep and refined matter of intellect to a person whose brain is very physicalized, the advice is to teach him matters that relate to his capacities, and through much self-investment and consistent study, the substance of his brain will become more and more refined, until ultimately, his brain will become sufficiently refined to receive the deep matter.

The same applies to the superiority of Jewish bodies before the Torah was given, over and above the bodies of the nations, which was due to the fact that every Jew is the descendent of Yitzchak, who was born of holy seed. That is, their physical bodies became more refined and sensitive, as in the analogy of the superiority of the brain over the heel of the foot. Therefore, the bodies are receptacles for the holy soul that dwells within them, like the brain which is a receptacle for the power of intellect.

The same is true of the superiority that was affected in the physical bodies of the Jewish people, particularly through the covenant of circumcision (*Brit Milah*), about which it states that it shall be “in your flesh.” That is, this bond (the covenant) with the Holy One, blessed is He, is in the flesh of his physical body. This indicates that through circumcision there was a refinement of the body to an even greater extent, similar to the refinement in the brain itself, such that a coarse and physical brain is caused to be much more refined.

7.

Now, notwithstanding the fact that there is a vast difference between the brain and the heel, (in that the substance of the heel is coarse and physical, whereas the substance of the brain is sensitive and refined), nevertheless, there is a common denominator between them, in that they both are physical substance. In other words, the difference between them is only in the “form” (*Tzurah*) of the substance (*Chomer*), (whether it is refined or coarse). However, when it comes to the essential substance itself, they both are equal.

The same is likewise so in the analogue, that even though the bodies of the Jewish people (even before the Torah was given) were refined and rarified to a much greater degree than the nations of the world, nevertheless, the common denominator between them was that they are both are physical bodies, and in this regard they both are equal.

However, the novelty introduced when “You chose us from all the nations” at the giving of the Torah, is that the superiority of Jewish bodies over and above the bodies of the nations, is not only in the fact that they have a different and more refined “form” (*Tzurah*). Rather, the Holy One, blessed is He, also chose the substance (*Chomer*) of their physical bodies, even in that aspect that is equal to the nations of the world. In other words, even in this matter, in which the bodies of the Jewish people are equal to the bodies of the nations of the world, there is the choosing of the Holy One, blessed is He.

(Although this choosing of the body comes totally and completely from the Holy One, blessed is He, Himself, (and not

from the one who is chosen), nevertheless, it is much loftier than the refinements of the body (and also is loftier than the holiness and superiority of the soul), as explained before at length (in the seventh discourse). Even so, because the physical body is coarse and this superiority is not at all felt in it. However, through performing the *mitzvot*, this matter becomes revealed in the body, as will be explained.)

8.

From all the above, what arises is that the body of the Jew has two general matters: The first is its refinement, through which it is a receptacle for the light of the soul. The second is its substance (*Chomer*), in which it is similar to the bodies of the nations of the world.

However, through the Jewish people performing Torah and *mitzvot*, they affect these two matters in their bodies. The first, is that through every *mitzvah* that is a Jew performs, he refines his body to a greater extent. (As in the words of the Midrash,²⁶³ “The *mitzvot* were only given to refine the creatures.”) Through doing so, the body becomes a greater receptacle for the light of the soul. The second, is that through the actual performance of the *mitzvot*, which are done through the medium the physical body, there is a revelation of the superiority of the choosing of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the body itself.

²⁶³ Midrash Bereishit Rabba 44:1

These two effects come about through the two matters that are present in the *mitzvot* themselves, as explained before.²⁶⁴ Firstly, through the expression of the inner spiritual content of each *mitzvah*, the body is caused to be refined. Secondly, through the actual performance of the *mitzvah* in deed, there is a revelation of the Holy One, blessed is He, choosing the substance of the body.

9.

Now, the completion and perfection of these two matters affected by the *mitzvot*, will come about in the coming future.

In other words, in addition to the fact that in the coming future the body will be in its ultimate state of refinement and perfection, to the point that it will be a complete receptacle to receive the most supernal lights of the soul, it also will itself sense the superiority of the choosing of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the body itself.

This then, is what is meant that in the coming future, the soul will derive sustenance from the body:

That is, the choosing of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the body, is much loftier than the level of the soul, as explained at length before, that the soul is of a level of *HaShem's* יהו"ה's Godliness that has some relation to that which is external to itself. In contrast, the choosing of the Holy One, blessed is He, in the body, stems from the Essential Self of the Singular Preexistent Intrinsic One, *HaShem*-יהו"ה Himself, blessed is He,

²⁶⁴ In chapter four.

Who transcends and is beyond all limitations. In the coming future, this superior level of the body will also be drawn to the soul, “and the soul will derive its sustenance from the body.”