

## Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye Toldot Yaakov Yosef Parshas Va'eira

**And God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by My Name 'the Lord,' I was not known to them" (Exodus 6:2–3).**

The questions will be clarified, and I have already written about this above; see there regarding the service of the Holy One, Blessed Be He. Initially, He draws a person close through the kindness of Abraham. Then, through the person's toil and effort, they merit justice and are called Isaac. Finally, when they persevere in their service and dwell in tents, they are called Jacob, etc.; see there, and it will be understood. It can further be explained as follows: In Tractate Shabbat (118a), it is stated: "Whoever delights in the Sabbath is granted a boundless inheritance," as it says (Isaiah 58:14), "I will feed you the heritage of Jacob."

To explain this: It is written in *Alilot Ephraim* (page 42d, ma'amar 164) that one should rejoice before God and serve Him with gladness and a good heart, and it should not be done with a sense of sorrow. However, there are times when joy is for the soul but not for the body, times when joy is for the body but not for the soul, and times when joy is for both the body and the soul, which is the most desirable state. This can be compared to two people who left the land in which they had lived. When one came to the other's country, even if they prepared delicacies according to the local custom, the second person, not accustomed to it, would eat it with displeasure. Similarly, when the second visited the first's land, the food did not suit them either. Their minds were not at ease until they returned to the land that both had lived in, where they could prepare delicacies that suited them both.

So too is the matter of the body and the soul, which have left their original "homeland." The intellectual soul does not rejoice in the eating of the body, and likewise, during study and prayer, which are nourishment for the soul, the body does not find joy in them. True delight for both is found only in a mitzvah, such as the eating of offerings (e.g., *shelamim*) on a festival, where both body and soul take pleasure. From this, we learn that the body and soul are opposites: the pleasure of one is the distress and sorrow of the other, except in the case of a mitzvah.

With this, we can understand the teaching that "whoever delights in the Sabbath" — referring specifically to the delight of eating as a mitzvah — "is granted a boundless inheritance." This is precise, as it represents the joy of both body and soul together, without any constraint, distress, or sorrow. This is the inheritance of Jacob, as will be explained, and it is understood.

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Similarly, this helps us understand the verse, "And I appeared to Abraham." There are times when joy is for the soul, which corresponds to Abraham, as is known. There are times when joy is for the body, corresponding to Isaac, who is associated with "game in his mouth" (Genesis 25:28). And there are times when joy is for both body and soul, which corresponds to Jacob, who mediates between the two and "dwells in tents," as is known.

Thus, it is written, "I will feed you the heritage of Jacob, your father," indicating this harmonious joy of body and soul. Understand this well.

All of this relates to the Name *El Shaddai*, which is associated with nature, as Ramban explains in this portion (Exodus 6:2). The Name *Havayah* (the Tetragrammaton), which transcends nature, was not made known to the forefathers, but it was revealed to Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him. He embodied the secret of *Da'at* (knowledge), fulfilling the verse, "In all your ways, know Him" (Proverbs 3:6), uniting even physical acts like eating with the sanctity of unifying the Holy One, Blessed Be He, with His Shechinah (Divine Presence).

As I heard explained regarding the verse (Ecclesiastes 9:10), "Whatever your hand finds to do with your strength," this refers to the soul—do it. Understand this well, for then the three distinct states (joy for the soul, joy for the body, and joy for both) no longer exist as separate categories, but rather everything becomes one unified state. Understand this.

It can further be explained as follows: Ramban writes (Leviticus 18:4) regarding "and you shall live by them" (Leviticus 18:5), that some people desire Torah and mitzvot to bring them physical benefits, such as wealth and honor, and these are granted to them. Others focus on the life of the World to Come, and so on; see there. However, this is not the ultimate perfection. As it is written in *Alilot Ephraim* (ma'amar 177, ma'amar 230), the verse "not to turn from the mitzvah, neither to the right nor to the left" (Deuteronomy 17:20) teaches that one should not perform mitzvot with the intent of attaining wealth and honor (on the "left") or longevity (on the "right"). Instead, one should perform them purely for the sake of their Creator, as the *Alilot Ephraim* explains.

This also clarifies the teaching: "One who wishes to become wise should turn south; one who wishes to become wealthy should turn north" (Bava Batra 25b). See there.

With this understanding, there are those who turn southward, corresponding to the attribute of Abraham, who embodies wisdom from the south. Others turn northward, corresponding to Isaac, who embodies wealth and strength from the north. Then there

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are those who turn neither right nor left but remain in the middle path, corresponding to Jacob.

All this operates within the framework of *El Shaddai*, the aspect of God that provides abundant goodness and blessings in line with the name *Shaddai* ("He who is sufficient in His blessings"). However, the name *Havayah*, which represents acting solely for the sake of God's name, was not revealed to them. Only one who reaches the level of *Da'at* (knowledge), fulfilling "In all your ways, know Him" (Proverbs 3:6), acts for the sake of God's name alone. Understand this well.