



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 15 | Lech Lecha | Sichah 2

## Attaining the Unattainable Torah

---

Translated by Rabbi Shmuel Kesselman

General Editor: Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | Copy Editor: Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

Content Editor: Rabbi Sholom Zirkind

A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses are those of the translators or editors, and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time maintaining readability. The translation, however, carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed – please send all comments to: [info@projectlikkuteisichos.org](mailto:info@projectlikkuteisichos.org)**

## 1.

### WHY IS THE FOREFATHERS' AVODAH RELEVANT?

[Our Rabbis taught,<sup>1</sup> “Avraham *Avinu* was an Elder and learnt in yeshiva...,” “Avraham *Avinu* kept the entire Torah before it was given.”]<sup>2</sup> We have discussed many times (a topic *Chassidus* explains in numerous places)<sup>3</sup> how the Torah study and the *mitzvah* performance of Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and his sons differed from that of the Jewish people after *Matan Torah*.<sup>4</sup> Since our forefathers studied Torah and performed *mitzvos* before *Matan Torah*, before the Divine revelation at Sinai, this meant that their Torah study and *mitzvah* observance (was not executed as one who is “commanded and obeys,” but rather) was of their own volition, with their own abilities. Therefore, they {could not and} did not reach the level of Torah as it exists beyond the realm of created beings, be it even the most lofty level of created beings. Rather, their connection was only to Torah as it relates to and is connected with created beings and with their *avodah*.

In contrast, after *Matan Torah*, once Hashem had already given the command to study Torah and perform *mitzvos*, He simultaneously (conferred) the ability of (the Commander) the Creator, to reach the essence of Torah as it stands entirely beyond the world.

Therefore, *Rambam* writes:<sup>5</sup>

All the things that we reject and observe today, we do so only because Hashem commanded us through Moshe *Rabbeinu*, not because Hashem instructed us to do so through the prophets before him. For example, we forswear eating a limb from a living animal not because Hashem forbade [it] to Noach, but rather because Moshe forbade us.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Yoma* 28b.

<sup>2</sup> *Kiddushin* 82a; Rashi, *Bereishis* 26:5 (regarding Avraham); *ibid*, 26:12, 27:3,9 (regarding Yitzchak) 32:5 (regarding Yaakov).

<sup>3</sup> *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5654, s.v., “*Zachor*”; *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5678, s.v., “*Ve’chol Ha’am*”; 5689, s.v., “*Hashkifah*,” at the end (printed in *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5710, p. 280); *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5706, s.v., “*Ve’chol Ha’am*”; et al.; see *Sefer Ha’Erchim*, vol. 1, entry “*Avos*,” and the sources cited there.

<sup>4</sup> {The giving of the Torah}

<sup>5</sup> Commentary on *Mishnah*, *Chulin*, ch. 7, sec. 6.

Similarly, we do not circumcise ourselves because Avraham *Avinu* circumcised himself and his household, but rather because Hashem instructed us through Moshe that we circumcise ourselves just as Avraham *Avinu* did. So, too, regarding the sciatic nerve. We follow this practice not because of the prohibition given to Yaakov *Avinu*, but because of the *mitzvah* given to us through Moshe *Rabbeinu*.

The reason: Specifically by fulfilling Torah and *mitzvos* as they were given at *Matan Torah*, do we tap into the power of the Creator invested in the *mitzvos*; and in this way is the essence of the Torah draw forth.

On this basis, we must clarify: Every matter of Torah (etymologically related to the word ‘*hora’ah* {a lesson}’)<sup>6</sup> serves as a directive for the *avodah* of a Jewish person (even) after *Matan Torah*. What is the directive inferred from the lengthy narratives of the forefathers’ *avodah* recorded in the Written Torah and in the Oral Torah, and then explained at great length in the teachings of *Chassidus*, etc. Since this *avodah* is not the same as the *avodah* of Torah study and *mitzvah* performance after *Matan Torah* {these lengthy narratives, etc., are seemingly irrelevant}, “What happened, happened!”<sup>7</sup>

## 2.

### AN ACTUAL LESSON

*Ramban*,<sup>8</sup> in his commentary on our *parshah*, explains that “the reason why the Torah recounts at such length the {details of the Patriarchs’} “travels and their digging of wells, and the other incidents (in our forefathers lives)... they all come to teach about the future.” [As the *Midrash* says,<sup>9</sup> “All the events that occurred to the forefathers are signs for their descendants.”] As *Ramban* explains further:

---

<sup>6</sup> *Zohar*, vol. 3, 53b,

<sup>7</sup> {In the original Aramaic, “*Mah de hava, hava*”; cf. *Yoma* 5b.}

<sup>8</sup> *Bereishis* 12:6; see *ibid.*, 12:10; 14:1; 26:1; 32:4.

<sup>9</sup> See *Tanchuma*, *parshas Lech Lecha*, sec. 9; *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 40, sec. 6.

When an event occurred to a prophet among the three Patriarchs, there can be understood from it {an allusion to} something that was decreed to happen to his descendents. You should know that any “decree of the angels,”<sup>10</sup> when it leaves the realm of a potential decree to become a symbolic act, will be fulfilled in any event. (And *Ramban* provides a number of examples from the prophets).

Similarly, and moreover, we can suggest a similar idea regarding the Torah and *mitzvos* of the Patriarchs. Their Torah and *mitzvos* (as explained at length in *Chassidus*)<sup>11</sup> served as a preparation and as an empowering force that enabled the giving of the Torah and *mitzvos* at *Matan Torah*; and enabled the *mitzvos* that a Jew would perform with material objects after *Matan Torah* to draw down G-dliness.<sup>12</sup>

However, ostensibly this explanation is insufficient:

Since the narrative of the divine service of the forefathers is recorded in Torah, and Torah is eternal,<sup>13</sup> we must therefore conclude that this narrative is (not only informative or preparatory {regarding the future giving of the Torah}, as discussed, but also) an eternal (actual) **directive** concerning the *avodah* after *Matan Torah*.

### 3.

#### AN ETERNAL LESSON IN PREPARING

Similar to the discussion above regarding the *avodah* of the forefathers, a similar question is asked regarding the Egyptian exile: What directive can be gleaned from the Torah’s narrative of the Egyptian exile that is germane to the

---

<sup>10</sup> {A stylistic citation from *Daniel* 4:14, referring to a heavenly decree.}

<sup>11</sup> See *Toras Chaim*, *parshas Lech Lecha*, 83c, ff.; *ibid*, *parshas Chayei Sarah*, 135a ff. (ch. 29); *ibid*, 137a (ch. 34); *Ohr HaTorah*, *parshas Lech Lecha* (72b, ff.) and 1075a ff.; et al.

<sup>12</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 1, p. 41; vol. 3, p. 758; vol. 5, p. 79, ff. and p. 88, ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 17; *Kuntres Acharon*, s.v., “*Le’havin pratei ha’halachos*” (160a).

Jewish people at all times and in all places? (This question is especially relevant since an exile comparable to the one in Egypt will never again happen.)<sup>14</sup>

And similar to the above, here, too, the well-known explanation<sup>15</sup> seemingly does not suffice, i.e., the Egyptian exile served as a preparation for *Matan Torah* — meaning, the Egyptian exile served as the “iron crucible”<sup>16</sup> that purified the world so that it would be worthy to receive the Torah. {This explanation does not suffice:} Since this narrative is a part of Torah, we must say that it is an eternal process and an actual directive for all times, even after *Matan Torah*.

The Torah narratives about “the *avodah* of the forefathers,” and “the Egyptian exile,” as directives to be followed after *Matan Torah*, however, are of a preparatory nature, as will be explained. Therefore, these narratives appear in Torah as introductory and preparatory to *Matan Torah*.

#### 4.

##### QUALITY AND CLARITY

The explanation:

The difference between the forefathers’ *avodah* and that of the Jewish people after *Matan Torah*, in regards to the observance of Torah and *mitzvos* is twofold — from the perspective of the person performing the *avodah* and from the perspective of the revelation from On High. When the forefathers performed their *avodah*, the ensuing revelation of G-dliness was prompted by the denizens of the lower realms. Meaning, the forefathers elevated and purified themselves, and automatically, they became fitting vessels to the G-dly light radiating as a result of their *avodah*.

---

<sup>14</sup> See *Gevuros Hashem* of the *Maharal*, ch. 61; *Zohar*, vol. 2, p. 40a; *Sefer Hamaamorim* 5708, s.v., “*Kimei Tzeischa*,” ch. 12; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 177; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 18, p. 392.

<sup>15</sup> *Torah Ohr*, 74a ff.; et al..

<sup>16</sup> *Devarim* 4:20.

Additionally, from the perspective of the G-dly light itself: Since this light was commensurate with the (*avodah* of) created beings, the light was illuminated for them in a **revealed** manner.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, through the *avodah* (of Torah and *mitzvos*) of the Jewish people subsequent to *Matan Torah*, not everyone reaches the state of purity and spiritual heights of the forefathers (who were **chariots** for G-dliness).<sup>18</sup> But on the other hand, Torah and *mitzvos* after *Matan Torah* elicit a G-dly light transcendent of the world — and so it is not (as) manifest.

The reason: Before *Matan Torah*, Hashem had decreed that “the {Divine light of the} supernal realms shall not descend below, and the ones below shall not ascend to the upper {transcendent} realms.”<sup>19</sup> Meaning, the level of G-dliness that altogether transcends the world should not diffuse “below.” Following *Matan Torah*, Hashem “rescinded the original decree and declared, ‘The ones below may ascend to the upper realms, and the {Divine light of the} supernal realms may descend below.’” To the extent that the lower created beings can unite with Divinity that is totally beyond the pale of the world.

During *Matan Torah* itself, however, the revelation occurred in a top-down manner. Meaning, the lower realms were not a suitable receptacle to the revelation of G-dly light. Therefore, the light did not descend into the lower realms in a visible way.

And as known, the revelation of G-dly light at *Matan Torah* was only temporary<sup>20</sup> and then it was cut short, “When the blast of the ram’s horn is drawn out, they will ascend the mountain.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> {Since this light is commensurate with created beings, and created beings can internalize it and serve as a vessel for this light, the light can be revealed overtly in them. In contrast, a light that transcends creation is beyond their capacity, and cannot be internalized. Consequently, such divine light cannot be revealed overtly in created beings. -- SZ}

<sup>18</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 47, sec. 6; ch. 82, sec. 6; see also *Tanya* ch. 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Shmos Rabbah* ch. 12, sec. 3; *Tanchuma, Vaera*, sec. 15.

<sup>20</sup> See *Tanya* ch. 36.

<sup>21</sup> *Shemos* 19:13.

Only through his *avodah* can a Jew come to absorb a revelation of G-dly light radiating from *Matan Torah*. And in this way, a revelation and eternal unification {of G-dliness within this world} is achieved.

## 5.

### EVERYONE NEEDS TO GO THROUGH THE PROCESS

On this basis, we can appreciate how Avraham's (and, in general, the forefathers') *avodah* of performing Torah and *mitzvos* constitutes a part of Torah — an eternal directive to every Jew throughout the ages. Even after *Matan Torah*, in order for the revelation of *Matan Torah* to resonate<sup>22</sup> and unite with a Jew who studies Torah and performs a *mitzvah*, this activity must be preceded by the person's *avodah* on his own, similar to the *avodah* of the forefathers:

This was the case in the general preparation for *Matan Torah*: In order for the dimension of G-dliness and of the Torah, which {totally} transcends the world, to descend into the realm of creation, created beings first needed to achieve the ultimate state of *bittul*<sup>23</sup> that they could on their own. This *bittul* elicited G-dly light that was relative and proportionate to the creations. This general preparation was accomplished through the forefathers' *avodah*. — Only afterwards could the Divine light that is beyond {the constraints of} the world be infused into creation.

The same holds true on a smaller scale in the *avodah* of the Jewish people: In order for the G-dly light that is beyond creation (which descends from Above to below, as discussed) to become revealed and united with a Jew who studies Torah and performs *mitzvos*, he must first complete his *avodah* and the *bittul* and refinement of his own self. This brings the person to a state of unity with G-dliness and Torah that is commensurate with the world. — Then he becomes a suitable receptacle for the diffusion and revelation of Hashem's Torah as it was given at *Matan Torah*, which totally transcends creation.

---

<sup>22</sup> {In the Hebrew original, “*nisgaleh*.”}

<sup>23</sup> {*Bittul* connotes self-nullification, humility, and the negation of ego. It is the antithesis of *yeshus*.}

[This is **analogous** with the teaching of our Rabbis,<sup>24</sup> “A person should always engage in Torah and *mitzvos* even if not for their own sake, because through the performance not for their own sake, a person will eventually progress to perform them for their own sake.” **This** order — as implied by the word “always” — is not only relevant to someone who, at the beginning of his *avodah*, cannot study Torah for its own sake; but rather this is the regular order of Torah study as outlined by Torah.<sup>25</sup> The reason: Through studying Torah not for the sake of Torah, albeit for the most noble reason,<sup>26</sup> a Jew connects with the aspects of Torah (not as Torah stands unto itself, beyond the world, but rather) as it relates, in some way, to the existence of the world (for this is where the purpose of his studying Torah is found). This serves as a prelude to then reach the level of learning Torah for its own sake (i.e., as Hashem’s Torah) and the person connects to Hashem Himself through the Torah as it stands completely beyond enclothment within the world.

*Matan Torah* brought about change to every level of Torah<sup>27</sup> study in that Torah study of any level draws down Torah as it stands beyond the realm of the world. In contrast, before *Matan Torah* this was not the case. Regarding Torah study after *Matan Torah*, our Rabbis say,<sup>28</sup> “**Any** Torah scholar who sits, reads, studies, and involves himself in Torah, **Hashem** sits opposite him and reads and studies with him” (and similarly is this true regarding *mitzvos*). However, the G-dly light descends in a way that the light remains hidden. In order for it to descend **openly** and unite with the very being of a person who is learning, a person must wholly elevate himself by refining the nature of his existence, and uniting with {the dimension of} Torah that is relative to the world, as discussed.

---

<sup>24</sup> *Pesachim* 50b.

<sup>25</sup> See *Rambam’s Commentary on Mishnah, Sanhedrin*, ch. *Chelek*, s.v., “*Vekat Chamishis*”; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” at the end.

<sup>26</sup> {In the context of this *sichah*, learning Torah “not for its own sake” refers not to Torah learning for self-serving reasons, e.g., to receive reward or honor but to Torah learning that relates to (and benefits) one’s own existence, even if in a lofty and spiritual way. Since the essence of Torah completely transcends mortal existence, it can only be accessed when a person transcends his own existence entirely, and studies Torah for its own sake. Nevertheless, in order to reach that level of Torah study, one must first study Torah as it relates to (and enhances) his own existence. --SZ}

<sup>27</sup> {Ostensibly, referring also to Torah when learnt “not for its own sake,” as discussed in the previous paragraph.}

<sup>28</sup> *Tanna Devei Eliyohu Rabbah*, beg. of ch. 18.



## 6.

### HOW CAN WE ALLOW THE CHILD TO UNDERSTAND THE VERSE LITERALLY?

We find a similar concept in the system that every Jewish person follows in studying and understanding Torah. When a person begins to study with {a child} “at five years of age, the study of Scripture,”<sup>29</sup> verses of Torah which describe Hashem as having “a great hand,”<sup>30</sup> and “a mighty hand,”<sup>31</sup> and the like; the teacher translates these verses literally, as the great and mighty hand of Hashem. No matter how much the teacher explains the meaning and abstractifies the concept of Hashem having “a great hand,” and, “a mighty hand,” a child will still envision it as a great and strong physical hand, just that Hashem’s hand is much larger and stronger than the teacher’s hand that the child sees, and so forth.

Ostensibly, since this understanding is at odds with a primary foundation of our belief that Hashem has no body nor any likeness of a body. How does the Torah of truth ask us to teach a child, or someone with the knowledge of a child, verses and words that we must explain literally?

This question is even more baffling as **this** system of study is the system that Torah prescribes. First, a person studies Scripture according to its simple meaning — *pshat* of Torah, followed by— *remez*,<sup>32</sup> **and drush**,<sup>33</sup> and then the *sod*<sup>34</sup> of Torah.

---

<sup>29</sup> {*Pirkei Avos* ch. 5, sec. 22.}

<sup>30</sup> {*Shemos* 14:31.}

<sup>31</sup> {*Devarim* 7:19.}

<sup>32</sup> {*Remez* is a method of commentary based on hints and allusions in the text, sometimes based on the numerical value of letters.}

<sup>33</sup> {*Drush* is an exegetical method of commentary in which the words of a verse are used as a platform to express an ostensibly extrinsic idea.}

<sup>34</sup> {*Sod* is a method of commentary focusing on the secrets and esoteric teachings of Torah, based on *Kabbalah*.}

## EVERYONE IS IN THE SAME BOAT

The explanation is as follows, albeit in brief (as discussed a number of times):

If when studying the simple meaning of Scripture with a child, the child envisions “a great hand,” and “a mighty hand,” for example, as a physical hand, but much greater and stronger than what the child sees — this is not untrue. The reason is because the child also understands that the fact that his teacher’s, or whomever’s, physical hand possesses strength, abilities and all the characteristics of a hand, is not a result of the physical meat and bones, etc. Rather, these properties derive from the strength and energy contained within the hand (i.e., from the soul — even though the child has no idea what the soul is, and the teacher also does not know — but the teacher tells the child that this is) from the strength and energy that comes from Hashem. Thus, the child understands that when discussing “a great hand,” and “a mighty hand,” or any other physical descriptions, {the uniqueness} is certainly not a result of a greater physical mass, rather, a result of a spiritual power (of Hashem) infused within.

Meaning, every concept in Torah that someone with a childish understanding studies and understands literally constitutes a valid study of the Torah of truth, Hashem’s Torah. However, {at this time} he only has a limited understanding of Torah, which {is how Hashem’s intellect has descended and} en clothed itself into the *pshat* of Torah, as grasped by the intellect of the five year old student of Scripture {who is just beginning to learn Scripture}. Only afterwards does the person, according to the order outlined by Torah, progress to the understanding of “at ten years old, the study of *Mishnah*,” and later, “at fifteen years old, the study of *Gemara*,” etc. {Only much later does a person reach the understanding that} in truth and {and according to} the inner {understanding of Scripture}, Hashem **completely** transcends physicality. Eventually, a person advances to understanding the matter according to the *sod* of Torah.

This same idea holds true for every individual's Torah study. First, a person must study Torah in conformity with the root of his soul.<sup>35</sup> This mode of Torah study (in this regard) is similar to the forefathers' Torah study; i.e., Torah that is within the reach of created beings. In this way, the person reaches the consummate revelation and elevation {of Torah} that is possible within the realm of creation. Following this, the person advances to the acme of Torah study, beyond creation and his soul-root — the Torah as it was given at *Matan Torah*.

## 8.

BOTH FROM ON HIGH AND FROM DOWN BELOW

The necessity for a person's *avodah* to match that of his forefathers — i.e., through his divine service, to reach the ultimate level of his own existence (meaning, to connect with the G-dliness and Torah as it is relative to the creations) which prepares him to then receive the revelation of Torah as it was given at *Matan Torah*, Torah that transcends creation — is not only from creation's perspective, meaning, from the perspective of the person studying Torah in the lower realms; but, in fact, this is also necessary from the perspective of the higher realms, i.e., from the perspective of Torah itself.

The process through which transcendent G-dly light descends into creation, to the extent that it becomes one with creation, is not in a way that the light, as it exists unto itself, descends immediately into creation. Rather, to begin with a mere glimmer of the light, a diminished light, is invested into the realm of creation, and afterwards, the essence of the light is revealed.

The same holds true regarding the Torah that transcends creation. Before Hashem gave His Torah at *Matan Torah*, which shares no commonality with created beings, a diminished ray of Torah was drawn down through the forefathers, i.e., the element of Torah that relates and is relative to creation.

---

<sup>35</sup> See Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, "Hilchos Talmud Torah," sec. 1, par. 4. {That source (and other sources) explain that every soul has a specific capacity of Torah understanding which it can grasp. Similarly, each soul — predicated on its spiritual source and divine makeup — has a specific part of Torah to which it has a greeted affinity. For example, some souls are more connected to *pshat*, and others to *sod*, etc. -- SZ}

And similarly, after *Matan Torah* itself, as well: Before Hashem's Torah which stands higher than creation is **revealed** to a Jewish person, the dimension of Torah that is modulated for created beings must first descend and be **revealed**. Afterwards, the dimension of Torah that lies beyond the limits of creation can be revealed in a person.

This is similar to the process of studying the four parts of Torah, *pshat*, *remez*, *drush*, and *sod*; where each one evolves from the other. *Pshat* evolves from *remez*, *remez* from *drush*, and *drush* from *sod*.<sup>36</sup>

## 9.

### HARD WORK

However, the above-mentioned system of *avodah* and Torah study still doesn't sufficiently prepare a person to be able to absorb Hashem's Torah, as it is found beyond the realm of creation. Rather, a person also requires the *avodah* of the Egyptian exile, just as the first time, **after** the Torah, *mitzvos*, and *avodah* of the forefathers, the Jewish nation still needed the Egyptian exile to prepare for *Matan Torah*.

The reason for this is as follows: Since the Torah as given at *Matan Torah* completely transcends creation, therefore, even when a created being, through his *avodah*, reaches his ultimate level and unites with the Torah as it exists relative to creation, this does not suffice. For, at the end of the day, created beings are utterly disproportionate to the Creator.

Therefore, created beings also need to undergo a change, i.e., by prefacing with what the "Egyptian exile" can bring about. Specifically in this way can a person receive the revelation of Hashem's Torah.

---

<sup>36</sup> {The point is that in the order of learning Torah, we start with *pshat* and then advance to *remez*, *derush*, *sod*. However from the perspective of Hashem, the Torah starts with *sod*, then descends into *derush*, *remez*, and *pshat*. The underlying reason for this is understood from the explanation above: a Jew cannot immediately access the level of *sod*. For this reason, the Torah descends from level to level, becoming increasingly condensed until it reaches the level of *pshat*. After a person understands *pshat*, he is able to advance in his understanding of Torah until he reaches the *sod*. This idea is related to the point discussed at the end of section 6. -- SZ}

Regarding the Egyptian exile, the verse states,<sup>37</sup> “*bechomer* {with mortar} and *bilveinim* {with bricks}, and with all kinds of work in the field... with crushing labor.” The meaning of this in the context of {the divine service of a Jew, in his} Torah study, is, as the *Zohar* explains,<sup>38</sup> “‘*Bechomer*,’ this refers to *kal vachomer*,<sup>39</sup> and, ‘*bilveinim*,’ this refers to *libun halachah*.”<sup>40</sup> In general, “crushing labor,” refers to “assigning women’s work to men.”<sup>41</sup> — This means *avodah* and toil that a person is unaccustomed to and which is unnatural to him. Specifically through this *avodah* and toil, contrary to a person’s nature, can a person reach a state of selflessness and refinement whereby he can experience the revelation of Hashem’s Torah, as it exists beyond the limitations of the world.

## 10.

### WHY THE TZEMACH TZEDEK REFUSED THE GIFT

On this basis, we can explain a perplexing story about the Rebbe, the *Tzemach Tzedek*: When the *Tzemach Tzedek* was young, the *Alter Rebbe* sent for him and told him that he wanted to give him (matters of) Torah, as a gift. The *Tzemach Tzedek* declined, explaining that he wished to acquire Torah through hard work, through **his own** toil and labor. Many years later, when the *Tzemach Tzedek* grew in wisdom, the *Tzemach Tzedek* said that he regretted not having accepted the offer of the *Alter Rebbe*. For no matter how many lofty Torah-matters the *Alter Rebbe* would have given him, he could always still toil and labor in his Torah study — in acquiring even loftier levels — for Torah is unlimited and has no end.

Seemingly, we can ask the following question: What was the *Tzemach Tzedek* thinking at first, and what was he thinking at the end? It seems difficult

---

<sup>37</sup> *Shemos* 1:14.

<sup>38</sup> *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 153a.

<sup>39</sup> {Lit., “light and heavy,” *kal vachomer* is a talmudic logical proof, whereby a strict ruling in a lenient case demands a similarly strict ruling in a more stringent case; alternatively, a lenient ruling in stringent case demands a similarly lenient ruling in a lenient case.}

<sup>40</sup> {Clarifying a *halachic* ruling and ironing out a conclusion.}

<sup>41</sup> *Sotah* 11b.

to suggest that he would not realize such a simple idea, when he was already at the lofty spiritual heights on which he was worthy of the *Alter Rebbe* conferring to him understanding of Torah matters as a gift. That is, the *Tzemach Tzedek* was already a giant in Torah knowledge, and so forth.

We can explain this perhaps as follows: He did not regret his original refusal to accept the understanding of Torah matters as a gift. But rather, when the *Alter Rebbe* wanted to give him this gift, he felt that he lacked the preparatory *avodah* of hard work in Torah — toil appropriate to then accepting this proposal. Therefore, he believed that he was not yet a suitable receptacle for the Torah insights that the *Alter Rebbe* would give him.

Later, however, after he achieved **this** level of toiling in Torah, the *Tzemach Tzedek* felt that he was now a suitable “vessel” to accept the gift of Torah. Meaning, he was ready that the Torah as it stands beyond the reach of his toil should be revealed to him.

This preparatory *avodah* and toil in Torah, discussed above, is in accord with how the Egyptian exile prepared the Jewish nation for *Matan Torah*.

-Based on talks delivered on the 2nd day of Sukkos 5735 (1974), and on Purim 5729 (1969)