

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה ויהיו חיי שרה פרשת ח"י שרה, תשכ"ה מוגה
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REACHING UP IN ORDER TO GO DOWN

THE SEDRA BEGINS WITH THE WORDS “AND THE LIFE OF SARAH WAS A HUNDRED YEARS, AND TWENTY YEARS, and seven years, the years of the life of Sarah”. The Zohar states “this was a life above: a hundred years above, twenty years above, and seven years above.” What does the Zohar mean by this? Further, what is meant by the final phrase in the verse: ‘the years of the life of Sarah’? What does this add?

This passage is discussed in two discourses by the Rashab, one of 1914 and the other of 1918². At first sight, the two explanations seem contradictory. The 1914 discourse explains that ‘the life of Sarah’ means the life-force of Malchut of Atzilut. This life-force flows from ‘a hundred years’, signifying Keter, from ‘twenty years’ signifying Wisdom and Understanding, and from ‘seven years’ signifying the seven Sefirot from Kindness to Kingship. In each case there is also a flow from the Essence, which is what the Zohar means by ‘above’. This describes the energy flowing to the Sefirah Malchut of Atzilut.

Then comes the final phrase in the verse: ‘the years of the life of Sarah’. This means the way that from Malchut of Atzilut there is a flow downwards into the lower Kabbalistic Worlds: Creation, Formation, Action.

But in the discourse of 1918 it explains that the final phrase ‘the years of the life of Sarah’ refers to Malchut of Atzilut but in a different way. Not the fact that

¹ Maamar Vayiyu Chayei Sara 5725 (1964). Printed in Dvar Malchut for Sedra Chayei Sara 5779. It was edited by the Rebbe.

² The 1914 discourse is in *Ayin Bais* vol.2 p.739, and the 1918 discourse is in *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5619 [1918-1919], p.96.

from Malchut there is a flow downwards, but rather the way that Malchut is exalted in an exceptional way: the exaltation of Kingship.

The ideal nature of Kingship combines both great exaltation and also total selflessness. This means that even though the exaltation is tangible, it is not ‘felt’, in the way that an ordinary person might feel important. An example of this is seen in a great Tzaddik such as Moses when he was on Mount Sinai. The Sages tell us that he was sustained by the radiance of the Shechinah. On the one hand this tangibly sustained his physical body. But at the same time he did not ‘feel’ it: he was selfless.

Another example is the time of the Revival of the Dead, when people will have physical bodies, but their bodies will be totally pure, and will not require food but will be sustained by the radiance of the Shechinah³.

At first sight, as mentioned above, the two explanations of the words ‘the years of the life of Sarah’ seem contradictory. The first discourse of 1918 explains this phrase as meaning a flow from Malchut *downwards* into the lower worlds, while the second discourse interprets it as meaning a special kind of exaltation *above*, in which the two opposites of self and non-self are joined. The Rebbe explains that this really takes place beyond Atzilut, for only at that exalted level can two opposites truly be joined.

The Rebbe discusses this apparent contradiction in terms of another discourse, one by the Tzemach Tzedek, in which he comments on the verse in Kohelet⁴ ‘I have found one man in a thousand, but I have not found a woman among all these’. The Tzemach Tzedek explains that when it says ‘a thousand’ it means the realm of Atzilut.

This links with the comment in the Midrash on this verse: “‘one man in a thousand’: a thousand enter to study Chumash (Scripture); a hundred of them go on to Mishnah; ten of them go on to Talmud; and just one becomes a Sage who can decide the Halachah.”⁵ Chassidic teachings explain that Chumash is in Asiyah, the world of Action; Mishnah in Yetzirah, Formation; Talmud in Beriah, Creation; and the level of deciding the Halachah is in Atzilut.

The ‘one man in a thousand’ can be explained to mean Abraham, who was a soul of Atzilut. But Sara is the woman who ‘I have not found’, because she is beyond Atzilut. Hence even though Sarah’s role is to draw the life-force of Malchut into the lower realms of Creation, Formation and Action (and this is also her role in relation to Abraham, who signifies the Hidden Realm: to draw

³ See Talmud Berachot 17a.

⁴ Kohelet 7:28.

⁵ Kohelet Rabbah on 7:28.

his energy into the Revealed Realm⁶) at the same time she stands higher than Abraham, higher than Atzilut. Because the power to draw from life-force and energy from Malchut into the lower realms, comes from standing at a higher level.

Thus the two discourses do not conflict: they show different aspects of Sarah. On the one hand her ability to draw from Malchut (Kingship) of Atzilut into the lower worlds, and on the other the fact that in order to do this, she must stand herself in a much more exalted realm, above Atzilut.

Comment: In the same way, each person in their attempt to transmit Torah teaching to others, to the world, needs to connect themselves to a higher spiritual level so that what they communicate is authentic. For a Chassid who is communicating Judaism to others, the Rebbe facilitates his or her link with the highest levels of Torah and with G-d, so that like Sarah, the Chassid is connected to the supernal beyond and is therefore able to transmit the teaching to this practical world.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

⁶ The Hidden realm is a more exalted spiritual level, represented by the first two letters of the Divine Name, and the Revealed realm is represented by the last two letters.