

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל

ד"ה ויהי בעצם היום הזה פרשת בא תשמ"ד בלתי מוגה

Published for Shabbat Sedra Bo

6 Shevat 5783, 28 January 2023¹

JOINING MIND AND HEART

THE SEDRA TELLS US ‘AND IT WAS ON THAT VERY DAY (ON THE ESSENCE OF THAT DAY) THAT THE HOSTS OF G-D WENT OUT FROM THE Land of Egypt. It was a night of guarding for G-d, to take them out of Egypt. That very night for G-d, was guarded for all the Children of Israel for their generations.’² In a discourse of 1895 the Rebbe RaShaB³ points out that first it says ‘on that very day’, meaning that they went out during the day. But then it says ‘it was a night of guarding’ implying that they went out at night! Which was it, day or night?

That discourse quotes from the Talmud⁴ a discussion of the same question, based on other verses mentioning the Exodus⁵. The Talmud explains that the beginning of the Redemption was in the night, but it was completed during the day.

This seems to mean that the Redemption combined both night and day, which are normally seen in Chassidic teachings as two opposites. Further, the term ‘that very day’ implies midday, and the Sages also emphasise that the Redemption took place ‘round midnight’. This stresses the paradox of the

בברכת רפואה שלמה וקרובה בשביל האשה העניא רבקה בת ברכה דבורה לאה תחי'
Praying for a Refuah Shelemah for Henya Rivka bas Brochah Devorah Leah תחי'

¹ Maamar Vayehi b'Etzem Hayom Hazeh 5744 (1984). Printed in Dvar Malchut of Sedra Bo 5771. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Exodus 12:41-42.

³ Fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom Dovber Schneersohn (1860-1920).

⁴ Berachot 9a.

⁵ Deut. 16:1, Numbers 33:3.

Redemption taking place both at midnight and also at midday.

To understand this, let us consider the personal aspect of the Exodus. In Tanya⁶ it explains that the personal Exodus takes place every day when the person briefly breaks free from the oppression of his or her Animal Soul, such as when dedicatedly saying the Shema. But the RaShaB's discourse of 1895 speaks of a higher spiritual level of personal Exodus. For there is a sacred realm which can also be considered 'Egypt', from which one has to escape.

In the Chassidic teachings which discuss the personal Exodus every day, a key idea is the way the Hebrew word for Egypt, Mitzrayim, can also be read Meytzarim, which means 'limitations'. So, one can easily understand that breaking out of the negative limitations of the Animal Soul, as described in Tanya, is a personal form of Exodus from Egypt. But what is meant by the idea of breaking out of the sacred 'Egypt', as in the RaShaB's discourse? If it is sacred, how can it be 'Egypt'?

This can be understood by considering the inner structure of a person. Each individual has the two aspects of Mind and Heart, the heart meaning the emotions⁷. A famous saying is 'The Mind rules the Heart'⁸, meaning that the Mind has, or should have, control over the emotions. Another aspect of this is the idea that the emotions spring from the Mind. A person thinks about a certain emotive topic and from this cerebral activity he or she starts feeling an emotion about it.

The discourse now asks a question about this process. Surely, Mind and emotions are two very different realms? Why is it that Mind has such power over the emotions? Indeed, the Zohar⁹ presents a view of the Mind as something quiet and calm, while, as we see in daily life, the emotions are often excited and thunderous. How does the calm cerebral Mind engender stormy emotion?

To answer this question, the discourse describes a process in which the profound, multi-dimensional cerebral activity of the Mind recedes, leaving a relatively simple resolve which can be assimilated and enthused on by the emotions. Physically, the neck of the person intercedes between the head and the heart, the Mind and the seat of the emotions. The neck is seen as a symbol of the process whereby a cerebral idea becomes a heartfelt emotion, through prior attenuation of the cerebral exploration.

⁶ Part I, ch.47.

⁷ Note that in the Sefirot, the Divine Attributes, the upper three (Wisdom, and Understanding and Knowledge) represent the 'Mind' and the lower seven (Kindness, Severity, Mercy and so on) represent the Emotions.

⁸ Tanya ch.12.

⁹ See Zohar III 128b.

This is the realm of 'Egypt' in sacred terms. The constriction (Egypt) of the cerebral leads to positive fulfilment, emotions which are triggered by the activity of the mind.

But here comes the further step of the higher level of the Exodus. 'Going free from Egypt' on this more spiritual level means that there does not have to be constriction of the cerebral dimension. Instead a deeper level of the Mind is revealed, the inwardness of the Mind, or the 'breadth' of the Mind. When this happens, the Mind is able to flow directly to the Emotions, without any constriction. This is a spiritual form of 'Exodus', in which there is a direct connection between Mind and Heart. The emotions of the heart fully express the cerebral discoveries.

This then leads to a yet further, even more remarkable stage in which the root of the emotions is revealed. Chassidic teachings explain that the root of the emotions is actually higher than the root of Intellect. We can understand this as a yet higher form of spiritual freedom, which sometimes can be attained, in which the emotions of the person truly express the depths of their soul.

This discussion helps us understand our question about day and night at the beginning of the discourse. Mind signifies 'day', and the emotions signify 'night'. The Exodus is a process of drawing together 'day' and 'night'. When the Torah refers to 'the essence of the day' it means the inner dimension of the Mind, and the 'night of guarding' means revealing the essence of the emotions, through which night becomes day.

As it was in the time of going out of Egypt then, so should it be for us now, when the darkness of the hiddenness of the Divine will be changed to light, with great wonders, speedily in our time.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care