

# The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל  
ד"ה אלה מסעי ה'תשכ"ה בלתי מוגה

Published for Sedra Matos-Mas'ey (Diaspora)  
2 Menachem Av 5782, 30 July 2022<sup>1</sup>

## JOURNEYS OF LIFE

**T**HE SEDRA MAS'EY BEGINS BY LISTING THE 'JOURNEYS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BY WHICH they left the land of Egypt.' It lists 42 different stages from Ramses to Jericho. Rabbi Shneur Zalman asks about this<sup>2</sup>: surely, they left Egypt on the very *first* stage of the journey, from Ramses to Succot. But the wording suggests that at every stage they were still 'leaving Egypt'.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains that in fact each of the forty two stages of the journey from Egypt to the Land of Israel, till they reached the Jordan near Jericho, was a stage in 'leaving Egypt'.

This point is taken further by the Zohar commenting on another verse which says of the future Redemption (Micah 7:15) 'Like the days of your going out of Egypt, I will show you wonders'. The Zohar comments: but didn't they leave Egypt on *one* day? It explains that every day, from the time of the Exodus over three thousand years ago, till the ultimate Redemption, is a day of 'leaving Egypt'<sup>3</sup>. Egypt, Mitzrayim in Hebrew, signifies limitations (meitzarim). Until we reach the ultimate Redemption we are trying to leave Egypt every single day.

This point is emphasised by the fact that the Sedra speaks of their journey from Ramses to Jericho. Jericho, Yericho in Hebrew, meaning 'scent' (*re'ach*),

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<sup>1</sup> Maamar Eleh Mas'ey 5725, published in Dvar Malchus Mas'ey 5776, 5782. The Hebrew text was not edited by the Rebbe.

<sup>2</sup> Likkutei Torah, Mas'ey, 88c.

<sup>3</sup> Zohar III 176a.

relates to the description of the Messiah in a famous Biblical prophecy: ‘his scent will be the fear of G-d’<sup>4</sup>, which the Sages explain as the power to ‘scent out’ the truth in judgement<sup>5</sup>. So the forty two stages of the journey described in the Sedra are not only stages in the journey to the Land of Israel, but also the journey to the epoch of the Messiah.

A further insight is provided by a teaching of the Baal Shem Tov<sup>6</sup>: all of these forty two stages are stages in the life of each individual Jew. They begin with birth, which is a liberation from the ‘limitations’ of the womb. Then stage after stage, for each man and woman, till one reaches the exalted spiritual quality of gaining the scent of fear of G-d. This journey of each individual is also, ultimately, the journey of the entire Jewish people and of the whole world, so that all humanity will scent the fear of G-d, with the coming of Moshiach.

The idea that these are the stages in the journey of each individual relates also to the verse (Mas’ey 33:2) ‘And Moses wrote down their points of departure (origin) and their destinations. And these are their destinations and their origins’. For each individual, the point of departure, the origin, is the source of his or her soul. The soul descends from this exalted level into the world, stage after stage, as we say in the morning prayers ‘O G-d, the soul which You gave me is pure. You created it and You formed it...’. This prayer describes the soul’s descent from the Worlds of Atzilut (‘purity’), of Creation, Formation and then into the World of Action. Eventually, when the soul has completed its task in this world, it returns above, to its source.

This double journey is expressed in the two parts of the verse: first, Moses wrote their points of departure (origins) and their destinations, meaning the descent of the soul into the world. And then comes the second half of that verse: ‘and these are their destinations and their origins’. This means, that through fulfilling its task in this world, each soul eventually ascends to its point of origin and even higher<sup>7</sup>.

This means that our Sedra with its list of stages of the journey of the Jewish people presents also the full account of the journey of each individual soul, from before birth, when it was on an exalted spiritual level, then coming down into

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 11:3.

<sup>5</sup> Sanhedrin 93b.

<sup>6</sup> Degel Machaneh Ephraim, beginning of Sedra Mas’ey

<sup>7</sup> The Rebbe explains that the process of entering the world, living a life and then leaving the world must mean that the soul ultimately reaches a realm above which is higher than its original level. Otherwise, what would be the point of the whole process?

the depths of this world, and ultimately ascending again to a level of closeness to the Divine which is higher than its origin.

Then Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains why it says that Moses ‘wrote’ the account of these stages of the journey. This relates to the idea of different levels of writing. The highest is engraving in the stone, as in the Tablets of the Covenant. The text is part of the stone itself. At a lower level there is the idea of writing as with ink on parchment. The discourse explains that the origin of the soul is the exalted level of ‘engraving’. When it is living in the world, a soul in a body, with all the problems of life, it is at the lower level of ‘writing’, ink on parchment. The fact that Moses ‘writes’ the stages of the journey, with the point of origin and the destination at each stage, means that Moses is connecting the soul here in this world with its supernal source<sup>8</sup>. This empowers the soul to carry out its task in the world, as defined by the Torah.

Fulfilling that task, the soul plays its part among the Jewish people, helping all other Jews and ultimately all humanity to connect to their highest spiritual level, bringing about the epoch of Moshiach in which the highest spiritual levels will be revealed in this world.

[Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care](#)

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<sup>8</sup> The discourse does not say this, but one might suggest this is what the ‘Moses in each generation’ does as well: connects each soul with its source.