

# The Rebbe's Discourses

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

פרשת נשא תשכ"ו ד"ה וידבר אלקים בלתי מוגה

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## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE TEN UTTERANCES

**A**ND G-D SPOKE ALL THESE WORDS SAYING....” (Ex.20:1). A QUESTION is asked about this verse which introduces the Ten Commandments: why does it say ‘saying’? Generally, in G-d’s commands to Moses, the word ‘saying’ is understood as meaning that G-d was instructing him to repeat to the Jewish people the commands which he alone had heard from G-d. But in the case of the revelation at Mount Sinai, the entire Jewish people was present and heard G-d’s words. So we can ask: what is meant by the word ‘saying’?

The Rashab<sup>2</sup> explains in a Maamar (Hasidic discourse)<sup>3</sup> that this relates to the interconnection between the Torah and the universe. The Sages tell us “Precious is Israel for they were given a wonderful instrument, with which the universe was created” (Ethics 3:14).

There are two explanations of this. One, that by means of the Torah the universe was created, as the Midrash<sup>4</sup> tells us that the Torah was a kind of blueprint for the universe. The second is that the purpose of the creation of the universe is for the sake of the Torah. As the Sages tell us: G-d made a condition with the work of Creation. If the Jewish people accept the Torah, it will be good, and if not ...[I will return the world to chaos ]<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Maamar Vayedaber Elokim 5726 (1966). Printed in Dvar Malchut of Naso 5777. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Shalom Dovber Schneersohn (1860-1920), fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe.

<sup>3</sup> The discourse said on Shavuot in 1886, beginning ‘Precious is Israel...’

<sup>4</sup> Bereishit Rabbah 1:1.

<sup>5</sup> Shabbat 88a.

The Rashab continues in the Maamar, that the word ‘saying’ hints at the Ten Utterances (‘sayings’) with which the world was created. The Ten Commandments feed into the Ten Utterances, the Giving of the Torah sustains the creation and continued existence of the world.

One might ask why this is necessary. In Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s Gate of Unity and Faith (Tanya Part 2) it explains that every particle of the universe exists because of a constant input of a stream of energy from the Divine. It explains that the source of this energy is the Ten Utterances. Why is an additional input needed from the Ten Commandments?

To understand this, we need to consider a deeper dimension of the nature of existence. The Rashab continues in his Maamar with a discussion of the verse “If you walk in My statutes I will give your rain in its season...” (Lev.26:3). The Rashab explains, based on the Midrash<sup>6</sup>, that ‘rain’ signifies Torah. This links with a saying of the Sages: when the Jewish people fulfil G-d’s will, the land is watered by the rain, from the upper waters. But when they do not fulfil His will, the land is sustained by the lower waters<sup>7</sup>.

At the beginning of creation there was only water. Then G-d divided between the upper and lower waters<sup>8</sup>. The upper water became the realm and source of the spiritual, while the lower waters relate to the material. The Sages tell us that the lower waters weep, saying ‘we would like to be before the King’<sup>9</sup>. This means that the very fact of physical existence imposes an imbalance, expressed by the weeping of the lower waters.

Through various practices, such as having salt (which comes from water) at the table, which is holy, and on Succot, the Joy of the Water drawing, we seek to elevate the lower waters. But the greatest way we do that is by keeping the Commandments of the Torah.

The upper waters are the source of rain, while the lower waters provide irrigation from under the ground. Hence the emphasis on rain as expressing the positive relationship of the Jewish people with G-d. As we saw above, rain signifies the Torah.

Further, the Rebbe explains, the upper waters are the realm of the Ten Commandments, while the lower waters are that of the Ten Utterances. Through

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<sup>6</sup> Bereishit Rabbah end of ch.26.

<sup>7</sup> See the discourse by the Maharash (R.Shmuel Schneersohn) ‘Mayim Rabim’, 5636, ch.128.

<sup>8</sup> See Gen.1:7.

<sup>9</sup> Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 5.

the Jew keeping the Torah, the upper waters flow into the lower waters, healing the imbalance in existence.

This is the meaning of the word 'saying' in the verse introducing the Ten Commandments. 'Saying' means the Ten Utterances creating the world, which need the input of the Ten Commandments, in order to fulfil the true purpose of Creation.

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