

The Rebbe's Discourses

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

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THE SANCTUARY, THE SHEMA AND SHABBAT

THESE ARE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE SANCTUARY, THE SANCTUARY OF THE TESTIMONY, which were calculated by Moses' order by the Levites, under Ithamar the son of Aaron the Priest². In Likkutei Torah³ it explains that 'the Sanctuary of the Testimony' means the Upper Unity⁴, the unity of the first two letters of the Divine Name (Y-H), which is expressed in the first line of the Shema, 'Hear o Israel... G-d is One'; and the term 'Accounts of the Testimony' signifies the Lower Unity, the unity of the lower letters in the Divine Name (V-H), which is expressed in the subsequent words in the Shema text 'And you should love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and all your soul and all your might..' (Deut.6:4-5).

This love, expressed in the Lower Unity, is the product of a person's intellectual contemplation of existence. It is called Love from Contemplation of the World (Ahavat Olam).

The Men of the Great Assembly, who arranged all the prayers, established that before the Shema one should say the 'Verses of Praise' (Pesukei deZimra), which express the service of the Levites with song and musical instruments. This provides the preparation to uplift the soul so that one is then able to achieve spiritual unification in the Shema.

¹ *Eleh Pekudei 5725*, published in *Dvormalchut Pekudei 5782*.

² Beginning of *Sedra Pekudei*, Ex.38:21.

³ Together with *Torah Or*, this work contains the bulk of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's discourses, edited by his grandson, the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, known as the Tzemach Tzedek (1789-1866). *Likkutei Torah* was printed in 1848 and its earlier companion volume *Torah Or* was printed in 1837.

⁴ The Upper Unity is the term for the state of consciousness in which the person feels 'there is nought apart from G-d'. The person feels there is only G-d, no world. The Lower Unity is the perception that there *is* a world, but it is permeated by G-dliness. See *Tanya*, Part Two, ch.1, ch.7. These terms also apply to the unifications of letters in the Divine Name, the Tetragrammaton, as explained in the text.

However the goal is to draw this intensity of feeling in the Shema, into a vessel which can contain it and sustain it. This vessel is Torah study. For this reason Ithamar is mentioned in the verse. His name relates to ‘itmar’, a term often used in the Talmud, meaning ‘it was said’. The fact that this is in the passive expresses the way, in Torah study, the ‘word of Hashem which is the Halachah’⁵ is uttered by the person studying, as if he is in a state of *bitul*, selflessness, and the words are said by themselves. The Shema itself mentions Torah study, in the words ‘[‘And these words which I command you today should be on your heart, and you should teach them to your children] and you should speak of them’.

The verse also mentions Aaron the Priest (Cohen). Aaron the Cohen expresses the idea of Great Love, Ahavah Rabbah. [This is a love which comes from deep within the person, and is higher than the intellectual love achieved through contemplation.] This inner [but possibly hidden] Great Love empowers the person to engage in the effort to serve G-d with the conscious spiritual arousal which leads to contemplation and intellectual love, to the love expressed in the Lower Unity⁶.

This links with another teaching in Likkutei Torah on the theme of Shabbat⁷. This cites the verse from Beshalach ‘See that G-d has given you the Sabbath’⁸. The dual concepts of Love from Contemplation of the World, Ahavat Olam, and Great Love, Ahavah Rabbah, correspond to the six days of the week and the Sabbath, respectively.

In the six week days the person works at their job and other activities. They engage in the 39 categories of work which may *not* be done on Shabbat, but of course are permitted during the week. Looked at in a deeper way, one’s ordinary work is not only ‘work’, but is also connecting with G-d. There are different aspects to this: ‘all your actions should be for the sake of Heaven’⁹ and more profoundly ‘in all your ways know Him [G-d]’¹⁰. Chassidic teachings tell us that the real goal of our daily work is to create the Sanctuary¹¹.

While involved in our workaday activities, we can still contemplate the presence of the Divine, and feel the intellectual love of Ahavat Olam. On Shabbat however, we are on a higher level. We do not engage in ordinary work, and our

⁵ Shabbat 138b.

⁶ Thus a deep dimension within the person, not necessarily consciously accessible, prompts their consciousness and enables them to make more elementary spiritual steps forward: contemplation and then love.

⁷ Likkutei Torah is mostly on the three Books Vayikra, Bemidbar, Devarim, and Song of Songs. But these sections are preceded by a short section on the Book of Shemot. The Rebbe is linking the final discourse in that section, on Sedra Pekudei, with the opening discourse, about Shabbat.

⁸ Ex.16:29

⁹ Ethics 2:12

¹⁰ Proverbs 3:6.

¹¹ This is why, on Shabbat, the 39 categories of work which went into building the Sanctuary are forbidden. Because on Shabbat, the Sanctuary has been completed, if only spiritually.

eating and drinking become themselves part of the Mitzvah of celebrating Shabbat. We are in a more spiritual mode altogether, and, hopefully, are able to experience Great Love of the Divine.

The Rebbe explains that the fact that the verse in Beshalach says ‘G-d has given you the Sabbath’ means that this spiritual aspect of Shabbat is a *gift*. A gift does not depend on the qualities of the recipient. One can give a valuable present to a small child. G-d presents us with the gift of Shabbat, which includes the possibility of Great Love.

This relates back to the theme we encountered earlier in discussing the Shema: the Great Love of the first line of the Shema empowers the person to engage in the contemplation which leads to Ahavat Olam and the Torah study which is a vessel for it.

We often think of the days of the week as a preparation for the Shabbat ahead. But another way of thinking is that Shabbat inspires and empowers the weekdays ahead. The Great Love of Shabbat, inspires the Ahavat Olam, the love which comes from contemplation of, and involvement with, the world around us.

Looking more closely at Shabbat itself, Chassidic teachings explain that there are three aspects of Shabbat: the effort that we make to prepare for Shabbat; the fact that the holiness of Shabbat is revealed every seventh day, whether or not we made an effort; and finally the ‘gift’ which is expressed by Shabbat. As the Sages tell us, G-d says ‘I have a present in My treasure house, called Shabbat’¹².

These three aspects of Shabbat relate to the three times on Shabbat: Friday evening, Shabbat day, and Shabbat afternoon after the Mincha prayer, a time called ‘Delight of Delights’. This time of delight is seen as a foretaste of the World to Come.

All these act together to empower us for the days of the week ahead, so that we are able to make the world into a positive realm of good, indeed, a Sanctuary where the presence of the Divine is revealed.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

¹² Shabbat 10b.