

# The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל  
פרשת תולדות תשכ"ז ד"ה ויזרע יצחק מוגה  
Published for Shabbat Sedra Toledot  
5 Kislev 5784, 18 November 2023<sup>1</sup>

## DESCENT IN ORDER TO RISE

**A** KEY THEME IN CHASSIDIC TEACHING IS THE CONCEPT OF 'DESCENT IN ORDER TO RISE', the idea that by in some way descending to a lower level one eventually achieves far more than otherwise possible. The Sedra provides a hint to this theme in its description of Yitzhak 'planting'. It tells us that Yitzhak planted seed for crops, and they yielded a hundredfold of produce, "and G-d blessed him". And as a result of this, Yitzhak "became very great"<sup>2</sup>.

The Torah does indeed relate much about the practical side of the lives of the Patriarchs. We can understand this passage in simple terms: that through Divine blessing, Yitzhak became wealthy. But Chassidic teachings point out that there is also a spiritual meaning.

The focus is on the concept 'planting'. In physical terms, planting seeds is an interesting process. The beautiful wheat seed is buried in the ground, where, in effect, it decomposes. As we well know, this is just a step to its abundant yielding of produce. Hence one can consider the process of planting as an example of 'descent in order to rise'. The seed is buried in the ground, as if relegated to a lower level of existence. This is the 'descent'. But precisely from this comes the 'rise', in terms of the several stalks of wheat which eventually emerge, each bearing many grains of life-giving produce.

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<sup>1</sup> Maamar Vayizra Yitzhak 5727 (1967). This was edited by the Rebbe and was published in Kuntres Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5751. It was also printed in Dvar Malchut Toledot 5774.

<sup>2</sup> Toledot, Gen. 26:12-13.

We can now consider Yitzhak's planting of seeds as expressing powerful spiritual processes. One Midrash<sup>3</sup> links his planting with the verse 'light is sown for the Tzaddik' (Ps.97:11). Another<sup>4</sup> defines it as the planting of Tzedakah, which includes all practical Mitzvot.

Chassidic teachings also link the verse "six years you shall plant your field"<sup>5</sup> with the Six Orders of the Mishnah. Hence one can understand his 'planting' as the total enterprise of Torah and Mitzvot, which is 'planted' in the physical world, for Torah study and carrying out Mitzvot predominantly concern physical activities. Nonetheless, the produce which emerges on account of the planting is exalted spiritual radiance.

Viewed in this way, Torah and Mitzvot 'descend' into the physical world in order to rise. A further example of a descent, which can also be considered 'planting', is that of the Divine Soul, which is implanted in the Animal Soul and the physical body. The Divine Soul seeks only holiness; the Animal Soul, joining with the body, is the source of passion, libido and earthly bound desires.

This is the way we are created by G-d, so we could say that it is G-d Who is causing the descent of the Divine Soul into the often problematic possibilities of physicality. However, this descent is also in order to rise, by virtue of the Divine Soul resisting temptation and indeed creating a dwelling for the Divine in the physical world.

The Rebbe points out there is a further step. We ourselves have to make the sacred wisdom and emotion of the Divine Soul – which in themselves seek only G-dliness beyond – reach down into the mind and emotion of the Animal Soul. This is another form of 'planting', another descent in order to rise.

Helped by the Chassidic teachings themselves, we reach down and involve the imagination and passions of the Animal Soul in our Mitzvot and Torah study. The resulting positive effect, the product of the planting, is increased enthusiasm and dedication in all aspects of our Jewish lives. The Torah we study, the Mitzvot we carry out, prayer, and indeed all aspects of our thoughts and activities become bonded to the Infinite. Each in our own way, sometimes facing and overcoming remarkable challenges, we express the radiance which emerges from this process.

As a result of these various forms of descent in order to rise, of 'planting', we gain the hundredfold positive effect, as did Yitzchak in the Sedra. This was a reward for his efforts, but in an abundant measure: a hundredfold.

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<sup>3</sup> Shemot Rabbah 15:26 (following the reading in Matnot Kehunah).

<sup>4</sup> Tana debei Eliyahu Zuta ch.1

<sup>5</sup> Behar, Lev. 25:3

When the verse continues to say that “G-d blessed him”, this means a further level of blessing quite beyond his efforts. And even this is transcended by the final statement, that Yitzchak “became very great”. The Rebbe explains that this means drawing from the very Essence of the Divine, from the ultimate boundlessness of G-d.

This insight into the grandeur of our exalted ancestor Yitzchok, teaches us about the Yitzchok within us. Through dedication to the Torah and its Mitzvot, and facing and overcoming challenges, may we too be blessed by G-d, beyond our own efforts, and also achieve the revelation of the boundless greatness of the Essence of the Divine.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care