

The Rebbe's Discourses

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

ד"ה עבדים היינו תשמ"ה פרשת צו בלתי מוגה

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ULTIMATE FREEDOM FROM PHARAOH

ON THE SHABBAT BEFORE PESACH THERE IS A CUSTOM TO RECITE PART OF THE Haggadah. beginning with the section *Avadim hayinu lePharaoh beMitzrayim*, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt'. The discourse explains that the inner meaning of this passage is, that the reason why we became enslaved was because in a spiritual way we were trapped by an aspect of our own self, termed Pharaoh.

The letters of the Hebrew word Pharaoh form an anagram of 'ha-oreph' which means the back of the neck. Unlike a person's face, the back of the neck does not reveal his feelings or desire. One could say that while the face can reveal a person's true inner Will, the back of the neck is opaque. It expresses only the outer will or desire, such as the fact that a person is doing a certain action². While the face might reveal something of the meaning and purpose of this action, the back of the neck conceals its meaning.

When in spiritual terms the inner aspect of the Will is not revealed, meaning that the person is trapped by their own spiritual Pharaoh, then real subjugation to a tangible physical Pharaoh can result. Significantly, this subjugation takes place in Egypt, of which the Hebrew word, *Mitzrayim*, can be pointed (vocalized) differently as *Meitzarim*, which means limitation and restriction.

¹ Maamar Avadim Hayinu 5748 (1988). Printed in Dvar Malchut of Tzav 5778. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² The 'outer will' means the will to take certain visible practical steps, such as, for example, travelling to a certain town. The 'inner will' is one's desire for the true purpose of that journey, such as, for example, the special meeting which will take place in that town, which is the person's true goal.

When one is in a spiritual 'Egypt', when there is dislocation between the inner and outer Will, ruled by Pharaoh, only the external Will is revealed. This can apply to one's sense of one's own self, one's awareness of other people, and also as regards what is happening around one. In this state of subjugation, one perceives only the external Will. In this state one can indeed be a slave.

How can this be put right? How does one escape from slavery to Pharaoh? At the level where there is no distinction between the inner and outer Will, and both aspects of one's will are inward, like the 'face' which expresses and reveals, then the opacity of back of the neck has no place. This is why Pharaoh can only have control in 'Egypt', because the limitations of Egypt cause the gap between the inner and outer Will. But when one transcends the spiritual Egypt and reaches the boundless 'breadth of the Divine' *merhav Yud-Keh* (Ps.118:5), then the inner and outer Will are unified. All has the quality of inwardness, as has also been explained about the potential and ultimate relationship of right (Kindness) to left (Severity): at a higher level, everything becomes 'right'.

This quality will be achieved in the future, when the inwardness of the upper Sefirah Keter will be revealed. Then right and left, Kindness and Severity, will both be seen as Kindness.

The text of the Haggadah continues: "...and the L-rd our G-d took us out of there". In order to break out of the practical and spiritual Egypt, we need the intervention of the highest level of the Divine, the very Essence which is higher than the process of Tzimtzum and concealment which led to the creation of the finite universe. This exalted revelation of the Divine rescued us from Egypt thousands of years ago, as is emphasised in the Haggadah and by Chassidic teachings.

Now too, every year, especially on the night of Pesach at the Seder, this Essence of the Divine is again revealed, helping each one of us break out of our personal Egypt, so that our own outer and inner Will are unified, and in our relationship with ourselves, with others and with existence as a whole we perceive the 'face', the inner Will.

This moment is described as our birth as a people. During the Exile in Egypt we were like a foetus; the Exodus was birth, and then, as described by Ezekiel, we developed and grew, eventually reaching maturity³. The process of development is expressed in the counting of the Omer, and the attainment of maturity is expressed in the Giving of the Torah on Shavuot.

³ See Ezekiel ch.16.

Now since in every generation and every day a person has the duty to see himself or herself as escaping from Egypt that very day, as it is expressed by Rabbi Shneur Zalman in Tanya⁴, this process can be achieved every day. This is the service of ‘face-to-face’ *panim el panim*⁵ which dissolves the opacity of Pharaoh, the back of the neck, and with a sense of dedication beyond limitations, with *mesirut nefesh*, self-sacrifice, one dissolves the limitations of Egypt.

Through this each individual is able to be born, spiritually, to grow and to develop with an increasing service beyond limitations, with the transparency of the inner Will in all aspects of life, reaching the growth and maturity of the Giving of the Torah and the ultimate Redemption.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

⁴ Tanya, Part 1, ch.47, adding twice the idea ‘today’ to a well known passage from the Haggadah, which is itself based on the Mishnah (Pesachim 10:5).

⁵ A phrase expressing the intimate relation of Moses to the Divine (Num.12:8, Deut.34:10).