

# The Rebbe's Discourses

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

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## PARABLE AND REALITY

**T**HE SEDRA TELLS US TO INCLUDE SALT WITH THE OFFERINGS IN THE SANCTUARY AND TEMPLE. Rabbi Shneur Zalman<sup>2</sup> points out that when used for human consumption, salt - which does not have an agreeable taste in itself - brings out the taste in the meat. In the same way, he says, the inner dimension of Torah, which in itself is highly esoteric, makes the revealed dimension - the Talmud and halachah - more meaningful, in that through adding the inner dimension one comes to Awe of G-d. This leads to a more tangible sense of contact with the Divine through one's study of Torah.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman continues with explanation of the nature of Torah, that it expresses Wisdom of the world of Emanation, in which is 'encloded' the radiance of the Ein Sof. On this the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek (1789-1866) comments: 'hence the Torah is called the Divine parable... for it is a vessel for the radiance of the Infinite... As it says in the discourse about Purim.'

The discourse discusses the concept of a parable (mashal). A parable should reveal something about the concepts it is supposed to express. But sometimes the reverse happens. The person focuses on the details of the parable, and forgets altogether that there is anything else to be explored.

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<sup>1</sup> *Velo Tashbit Melach Vayikra 5725*, published in *Dvormalchut Vayikra 5776, 5782*. The Hebrew text is not *mugah* (finally edited by the Rebbe).

<sup>2</sup> *Likkutei Torah, Vayikra*, 13d.

In this respect, a parable can sometimes be more concealing than a riddle, like the riddle which Sampson addressed to the Philistines: ‘from the strong came something sweet’<sup>3</sup>. Because when one hears a riddle, one knows it is speaking about something else, which one has to guess. The riddle in itself makes no sense. But a parable can be very meaningful and understandable, so much so that a person might forget that it actually has another level of meaning.

The discourse explains that the revealed aspect of Torah is the ‘parable’. A person might study the Torah laws on a particular topic and think this is the whole story, without realising that they are the gateway to the radiance of the Infinite. For the laws can be understood clearly in their own right.

This is what the Tzemach Tzedek meant. One should realise that the revealed Torah, the laws explained in the Talmud, constitute a parable, enabling one to have intimations of the radiance of the Infinite, Ein Sof. The inner dimension of Torah helps one do this, by imparting a sense of awe of the Divine when one is studying the legal discussions in the Talmud. Just as salt makes the meat more palatable, so the ‘salt’ of the inner dimension of Torah reveals deeper aspects in the legal discussions and rules. But one has to search for these deeper aspects. A student might stop with the legal discussion, which is indeed highly important, and not see it as having any deeper meaning.

By contrast, the stories and aggadot<sup>4</sup> of the Torah are like ‘riddles’. One knows at once that they mean more than their literal meaning, and are intended to teach us something spiritual.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman’s discourse speaks also of Mesirat Nefesh, self-sacrifice for the sanctification of the Divine Name. The power for Mesirat Nefesh comes from the Essence of the Soul, above intellect. This power too enables one to reveal the Ein Sof in one’s Torah study.

The Tzemach Tzedek commented that these ideas about understanding the revealed Torah as a parable relate to ‘the discourse about Purim’. He does not

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<sup>3</sup> Judges 12:14. Sampson had killed a lion, and shortly after, he saw that bees had nested in its carcass, producing honey, some of which he ate. He made a wager with the Philistines that if they could solve his riddle - ‘from the eater comes food, and from the strong comes sweetness’ - he would give them a large gift, and if not, they would give a large gift to him. Sampson’s Philistine wife persuaded him to tell her the answer to the riddle, and then she told the Philistines.

<sup>4</sup> Spiritual stories in the Talmud.

refer to the discourse by its specific title, but states in general ‘the discourse about Purim’. The Rebbe points out that this is referring to a general concept concerning Purim.

There are several Mitzvot and customs on Purim. But one which applies every moment of the twenty four hours is the idea ‘a person has a duty to get drunk on Purim... so that he does not know the difference between Arur Haman (cursed is Haman) and baruch Mordechai (Blessed is Mordechai).’<sup>5</sup> Commentators explain that these two phrases in Hebrew have the same numerical value (gematria). One becomes drunk enough that one ‘does not know’, ie cannot work out that they are the same.

Spiritually this means reaching an exalted level of ‘not knowing’, beyond ordinary knowledge, the level of the Essence. At this level one realises that the ultimate purpose of evil, of the aspect ‘cursed is Haman’, is that it should be transformed into ‘blessed is Mordechai. One sees that evil itself is a parable, and that its true meaning is goodness, the revelation of the light of the Infinite Ein Sof.

This applies also to personal ‘evil’. A person might do wrong: but the deeper meaning of his error is that he should repent, which he or she does by reaching the Essence beyond the distinction between good and evil. The darkness of error, through repentance, is transformed from sin to merit<sup>6</sup>.

This is the inner meaning of Torah, of Purim, or Repentance and of life. All around us can be understood in a transformative way so that the darkness reveals the light, the light of the Infinite. The inner dimension of Torah, Chassidic teaching, enables us to make that discovery.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

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<sup>5</sup> Megila 7b.

<sup>6</sup> See Talmud Yoma 86b.