

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה ויאמר לו יהונתן תשי"א בלתי מוגה

Published for Sedra Acharei Mot (Diaspora), Kedoshim (EY)
Eve of Rosh Chodesh Iyyar 5782, 30 April 2022¹

THE HIGHER LEVEL OF TRANSFORMATION

WHEN SHABBAT FALLS ON THE EVE OF ROSH CHODESH, A SPECIAL HAFTORAH IS SAID (I Sam.20:18-42). The Haftorah is generally expected to reflect the content of the Sedra of the week. In this case, however, it focuses on the fact that it is read on the Eve of Rosh Chodesh. This is a special occasion, which overrides the idea of connecting with the content of the Sedra. The link with this special day is seen in the fact that the initial conversation between David and Jonathan in the Haftorah takes place on the eve of Rosh Chodesh, as Jonathan mentions to David².

To understand the significance of the Eve of Rosh Chodesh, let us consider this in the light of the recent festivity of Acharon shel Pesach (the last day of Pesach) which focuses on the theme of Moshiach. One of the aspects of Moshiach is that he is able to 'scent' the truth in every situation. He is able to go beyond appearances, and reach the essence of the situation.

This also relates to the fact that Chassidic teachings tell us (based on the Zohar) that Moshiach enables Tzaddikim to achieve Teshuvah (Repentance)³. A person might seem to be a Tzaddik, but in reality his essence is not perfect, and Moshiach, who connects with the essence, helps him repent. However there is another kind of Tzaddik, whose essence *is* perfect. In what way might Moshiach help this person achieve Repentance?

¹ *Vayomer Lo Yehonatan Machar Chodesh 5711*, published in Dvormalchut Acharei (Diaspora) 5782. The Hebrew text was not edited by the Rebbe.

² "And Jonathan said, 'tomorrow is [Rosh] Chodesh'" (I Sam. 20:18).

³ See Likkutei Torah Shemini Atzeret 92b, Shis hashiring 50b, Zohar III 153b.

We can take the example of Moses, who was always ascending to higher levels. For there is always a higher level to reach. So, this explains the effect of Moshiach on the truly perfect Tzaddikim, but it raises another question: it would seem that all through history there is the idea of rising to higher and higher levels, as did Moses. So what is the special and unique effect of Moshiach?

To understand this, we need to consider the central goal of the Torah: as the Zohar puts it, ‘to include the left hand in the right’⁴, which means to transform evil. In the struggle between good and evil, there are three general possibilities. That good suppresses evil, that evil is transformed to good by means of the shining of the radiance of good, and even higher, that evil is transformed by the revelation of the ‘hiddenness of the Essence’.

If good transforms evil, the transformation is effected by the power of good, the contrary of evil. But if the transformation comes about through the revelation of the ‘hiddenness of the Essence’, evil transforms its nature from its own being.

An example of this is seen in the two views about the incident when Moses sweetened the bitter waters of Marah, by throwing a branch into the water⁵. The Zohar⁶ says the branch was Torah, which transforms bad to good by shining goodness. But the Midrash⁷ says the branch was itself a bitter drug. The waters were sweetened by bitterness discovering its true inner nature: to be sweet. This was not a matter of revelation of light, but revealing the hiddenness of the Essence, of which it says ‘He makes darkness His hiding place’ (Ps.18:12).

Let us consider this in the life of a person. The idea that ‘good suppresses evil’, can be seen in the service called ‘itkafya’, literally ‘quelling’: the person engages in spiritual contemplation as described particularly in Chassidic teachings and as a result the negative aspects of the person’s Animal Soul are (temporarily) quelled and nullified by the good which is revealed through the spiritual contemplation.

Then there is the higher service of ‘it-hafcha’, transformation, that the negative aspect within is transformed to good. As we saw earlier, this can take place in two ways: one, that there is a bright spiritual radiance from above, which transforms the negative to good. This might be the result of a person’s connection with a Rebbe. Because of the uplift which the Rebbe gives him, he feels – as Rabbi Shneur Zalman puts it – that ‘a Jew neither wants nor is able to be separated from G-dliness’⁸.

The second way is not from an illumination from above. Rather it is because the negative force inside the person *discovers its own true nature*, that it is ultimately and essentially good. This is revealed because of the deep connection

⁴ See Zohar III 176a, 178a.

⁵ Exodus 15:23-25

⁶ Zohar II 60b.

⁷ Shemot Rabbah 23:3, 50:3.

⁸ See HaYom Yom, 25 Tammuz.

of the soul to the Essence of the Divine. This means the person moves away completely from the negative kind of behaviour he was doing, without knowing why. Simply his whole being, his body, wants a connection with G-d beyond anything else. This is the form of transformation which comes about through the revelation of the 'Concealment of the Essence'.

It is this second kind of transformation which will take place in the time of Moshiach. The quality of 'being' (*yesh*) - such as the body, the ego, the 'self', existence in general - which usually conceals the Divine, will instead reveal it. This is why Moshiach brings the totally righteous Zaddikim to Teshuvah. Because even the most righteous person, who passionately loves the Divine, has at heart a 'self' which loves G-d. With the coming of Moshiach, this self totally ceases to act as any force of concealment. Because Moshiach reveals the true nature of existence, *yesh ha-amiti*, the Divine Essence, which is within all the apparent manifestations of created being, *yesh hanivra*.

This is hinted at in Jonathan's words to David in the Haftorah: *Machar chodesh*, tomorrow is [Rosh] Chodesh. The term Rosh Chodesh itself relates to the renewal of the moon which takes place at the beginning of each Jewish month, and this renewal of the moon hints at the revelations which will be in the time of Moshiach.

The time in which we are now living has the quality of the 'eve of Rosh Chodesh', and it is our service of G-d now at this time of Galut (Exile) which will lead to the transformations of the future, when the Concealment of the Essence will be disclosed, and all aspects of 'being' instead of hiding the Divine will reveal the Essence.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care