

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
פרשת בחוקתי תשל"ג ד"ה והתהלכתי בתוכם בלתי מוגה
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DOUBLE MOVEMENT

THE SEDRA STATES THAT G-D TELLS THE JEWISH PEOPLE ‘I WILL WALK IN YOUR MIDST... and I will lead you upright’². The preceding verse states ‘I will put My dwelling among you’ which means the Temple. This implies that great and important as the Temple is, the phrase ‘I will walk in your midst’ refers to an even higher level relationship with the Divine.

Now this statement links with the beginning of the Sedra which says ‘If you walk in My statutes’, meaning that through serving G-d in a manner called ‘walking’ one is granted the Divine response of G-d ‘walking’ with us. For in general, Divine responses take the form of ‘measure for measure’ מדה כנגד מדה.

But what is meant by ‘walking’ with the Statutes? Wouldn't it be more usual to write ‘keeping’ the Statutes or something similar?

The point is that ‘walking’ here means something special. It means a double kind of movement: a movement from above downwards, and from below to above. Because this is the nature of the relationship of the individual with G-d: a flow from above downwards, from G-d to the person; and correspondingly, a flow from below upwards, from the person towards the Divine. First comes the flow from above, because even when the person is striving with his or her own effort, there is first a prompt and a help from above [of which the person might not be aware].

¹ Maamar Vehithalacht Betochechem 5733 (1973). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Bechukotai 5784. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Lev.26:12-13, Bechukotai.

This initial help comes from an exaltedly high realm, beyond 'place' (ie: space, as in space-time). The word place in Hebrew, Makom, מקום in Gematria is formed from the squares of the letters of the Tetragrammaton (Yud = 10, squared = 100; Heh = 5, squared = 25; Vav = 6, squared = 36; and another Heh = 25, adds up to 186. This is the same as the numerical value of Mem=40, Kuf=100, Vav=6, Mem=40)³. From that ethereal aspect of 'place', through the process of the downchaining of the worlds, there is 'place' in our physical realm (ie: space).

But the initial help comes from beyond that realm, beyond 'place'. It emerges from that exalted level and flows down to the very lowest level, to the realm of the Kelipot⁴, which are lower than the positive realm of 'place' which has its source in the Tetragrammaton, because the Kelipot by their nature oppose the Divine. [Hence they are lower than 'place' which derives directly from the Divine].

Both these kinds of flow, from above and from below, are found in the Torah. Torah by definition flows from G-d, and even when it descends below it still is the very word of G-d, as it is written 'are not these My words, like fire'⁵. But then the person has to study the Torah, which is a movement from below to above.

In more general terms, this is the difference between the Written and the Oral Torah. The Written Torah comes from above, and therefore we cannot add or subtract anything from it. By contrast as regards the Oral Torah there is the idea that every Jew has a portion of the Oral Torah in which they have to discover new ideas, *chiddushim*, which means that the Oral Torah requires the input of people, with their own effort from below to above.

Examining things in more detail, in fact each of the Written Torah and the Oral Torah also have both dimensions of from above to below, and from below to above.

Thus even though one cannot add or detract to the Written Torah there is the idea that 'everything a seasoned student might present as a new idea, was already told to Moses on Sinai', which includes the way a person might interpret the Written Torah according to the Esoteric meaning, Sod, or the 'Drash' (like Midrash) meaning, or the 'hints' of Remez and even on the level of Peshat, the simple meaning⁶. Thus Rashi, famous for his Pshat 'simple level' interpretation

³ Sometimes the word 'Makom' is used with the meaning 'G-d', as 'Baruch Hamakom' in the Haggadah.

⁴ Literally 'shells', the forces of impurity and negativity.

⁵ Jeremiah 23:19.

⁶ There is a famous concept that PaRDeS (mentioned in Chagigah 14b) represents four levels of interpretation of Torah: Peshat, Remez, Drush, Sod.

of the Written Torah, admitted to his grandson Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, that if he had time he would rewrite his commentary with more insights as to the true nature of the simple meaning of the text.

Similarly the Oral Torah combines both aspects. There is the concept of ‘new ideas’, from below to above, which, as mentioned earlier, were also taught to Moses by G-d at Sinai and therefore have authority. And, in addition, there is that aspect of the Oral Torah which makes it binding law ‘from above to below’ which cannot be changed.

A more general way of seeing this distinction is Torah on the one hand, from above, and Mitzvot on the other, from below. [G-d gives the Torah from above to below through His teachers, Moses and the chain of rabbis through the ages, and Mitzvot are carried out by each individual, from below.]

A yet wider level is that Torah and Mitzvot together constitute the revelation from above, while ‘the world’ [– our surroundings, all the material things we consume and utilize in our lives -] is the domain which we have to elevate and purify, from below to above, as expressed in the image of the ladder in Jacob’s dream, with its feet standing on the ground and its head in the heavens.

Now this sacred Torah originating beyond the world has to descend into the world, as discussed in a passage in the Talmud⁷ where the angels claim that G-d should keep His glorious Torah in heaven, and Moses retorts to them: did you go down to Egypt? Do you have an evil desire? [..hence clearly the Torah is speaking to us human beings who are below!]

In fact the Torah descends to the lowest levels, where there is the Evil Desire, and the Kelipot, the forces of impurity, lower than the ‘place’/’space’ which derives from the Divine Name, because the Kelipot are opposed to the Divine. The Torah has the power to descend so low because it starts so high, utterly beyond the worlds.

The fact that the Torah, starting utterly beyond the worlds, then descends to the lowest levels answers an interesting question asked in Chassidic teachings⁸. Why does the Torah describe the rewards for serving G-d in a genuine way, learning Torah and observing Mitzvot, in *material* terms? One would expect exalted *spiritual* rewards, not material plenty.

⁷ Shabbat 88b.

⁸ See the Rebbe Shalom Dovber’s book of discourses beginning Rosh Hashanah 5666 (1905), beginning of Bechukotai, 5667. See also the Rebbe’s Likkutei Sichot vol.37 p.79 ff.

The point is that the Torah descends *below*, to the lowest and simplest levels of life, to our material wellbeing, including physical health. As the Rambam writes, that in order to serve G-d properly one needs a healthy body⁹.

This discussion answers our questions at the beginning of the discourse. At the beginning of the Sedra it speaks of ‘walking’ in G-d’s statutes, because the way one keeps G-d’s Torah and Mitzvot is through the two kinds of movement, from above to below and from below to above. Similarly, G-d states that after the promise of the building of the Temple there is still the even greater idea that He ‘will walk in your midst’, also with those two modes of movement, from above to below and from below to above.

Through this double mode of interaction, we come to the deepest levels of bonding with the Divine, which will be expressed in the true and final Redemption with our righteous Moshiach.

[Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care](#)

⁹ Laws of De’ot (Opinions), 3:3.