

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה בהעלותך תשכ"ט מוגה קונטרס ט"ו סיון תשנ"א

Published for Parshat Behaalotecha
19 Sivan 5782, 18 June 2022¹

THE LAMPS OF THE SOUL AND OF THE TORAH

THE SEDRA BEGINS WITH A DIVINE INSTRUCTION TO AARON ABOUT LIGHTING THE GOLDEN MENORAH in the Sanctuary. The word used for lighting is 'raise up', and Rashi explains that when he lights each wick, he should make sure that the flame he has kindled has caught enough to rise and burn properly.

Flames and lamps are a prominent theme in Jewish thought. The Midrash states that G-d says to each Jew: My lamp is in your hands, and your lamp is in my hands. If you guard and look after My lamp, I will look after yours². The explanation is that G-d's lamp is His Torah, which he gives to each Jew. The lamp of the Jew is his soul³ which is in G-d's care. If we study Torah and keep its teachings, G-d will look after our soul and our lives.

In addition, Rabbi Shneur Zalman presents an interpretation of the Menorah, and of Aaron lighting it⁴. The Menorah was formed from one piece of gold, rather than being made of separate parts joined together. This expresses the fact that it represents the Jewish people who are unified together. Further, the seven lamps of the Menorah represent the different ways in which the Jewish people might serve G-d. One way is with a love for the Divine which flows like water, Chesed, Kindness; another is with love like flames of fire, Gevurah, reaching upwards, and so on.

¹ *Behaalotecha* 5729 (1969) published in *Dvaramalchut Behaalotecha* 5780. The text was edited by the Rebbe and published as *Kuntres* 15 Sivan 5751 in 1991.

² Deut. Rabbah 4:4.

³ Note the verse 'the lamp of G-d is the soul of a person' (Prov.20:27).

⁴ *Likkutei Torah*, *Behaalotecha*, 29c.

But, why does Aaron have to light the Menorah? Doesn't each person burn with his or her own flame, without him?

Indeed, each Jewish soul has in its essence an intense love for the Divine. Some souls are able to preserve this love despite the fact that they descend into this harsh and dark world, dwelling in a physical body. But others are weaker and are drawn into the desires and vanities of this world.

Aaron's task is to help the latter kind of person to rediscover his or her flame and passion in service of G-d. Thus he kindles - or rekindles - each lamp.

Another verse shows a further way to understand the role of Aaron. 'The good [olive] oil on the head of Aaron, descends to his beard....' (Ps.133:2). Chassidic teachings explain that the 'beard of Aaron' represents the laws of the Torah. From Aaron come Torah teachings which arouse the soul of the individual.

Thus Aaron helps the individual's flame flare upwards, and an important way he does this is by transmitting Torah to the person and the community.

This also links with the idea quoted earlier from the Midrash, that G-d cares for each individual's 'lamp', ie their soul, in return for the Jew caring for G-d's lamp, meaning the Torah.

This flow of Torah induces a great sense of *bitul*, selflessness in the person. The idea of *bitul* through learning Torah is also expressed by the opening line of the Ten Commandments. 'And G-d spoke all these words, saying' (Ex. 20:1). The word 'saying' is explained as meaning that when a Jew today says words of Torah, G-d is saying them with him.

Of course this is a daring image. The person studying Torah is together with the Divine, and we can imagine how awareness of this can induce a strong sense of *bitul*, selflessness. The discourse then expands on the theme *bitul*, presenting higher and higher levels. The discourse explains that utter selflessness comes both from study of the Torah and from observing the Mitzvot.

However, while the person's ego dissolves and no longer hides the Divine, this does not mean that the person is annihilated as an individual. That is the force of the words in the Midrash: '..your lamp is in My hands', says G-d, meaning the person's soul. G-d looks after the soul and enables it to preserve its individuality, even with utter *bitul* to the Divine.

Thus one is able to study and keep Torah with true enthusiasm and joy. Chassidic teachings tell us that 'joy breaks through barriers', and therefore, through one's joy, everything one needs, whether material or spiritual, is drawn through G-d's blessings into one's life, and all limitations are transcended....

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