

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה בלע המות לנצח יום ג' פ' דברים תשכ"ה מוגה

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DEATH WILL BE GONE FOR EVER

THE PROPHET ISAIAH TELLS US THAT ‘DEATH WILL BE SWALLOWED UP FOR EVER, and G-d will wipe away tears from every face’². The Rebbe Maharash explains that the reason for this will be because, in the future, G-d will remove the spirit of impurity³. We can understand the link between these two ideas because, as the Torah tells us, due to the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, death came into the world. The sin of the Tree of Knowledge was also the source of all future sin. Hence, in the future, when the spirit of impurity, ie sin, will be removed from the world, death will disappear as well.

The effect of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge was to confuse the structure of existence. Before the sin, evil existed, but it was separate from good. There were the realms of holiness, and below, the realm of the impure Kelippot (shells).

The effect of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge was to mix good and evil throughout existence. From then on, there is no good without some evil, and no evil without some good. This is why G-d determined that, after the sin, man should be mortal. Because if he lived for eternity, it would mean that the evil mixed with good would also exist till eternity.

¹ The discourse Bila Hamavet Lanetzach was taught by the Rebbe on Tuesday of the week of Parshat Devarim, 5 Menachem Av, 5725. This day marked the conclusion of saying Kaddish for the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana. (Since that year was a leap year, Kaddish ended two months before the Yahrzeit on 6 Tishrei). It was later edited by the Rebbe and published for the Shloshim of the Rebbe's wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, in Adar 1988. Published in Dvartalchut Devarim 5782.

² Isaiah 25:8.

³ This is stated by Zacharia 13:2. Rabbi Shmuel, the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, discusses this in a discourse said in 5628 (1868).

We can see this from the fact that originally, man and woman were created to live for ever. G-d warned Adam that if he ate from the Tree of Knowledge, he would die⁴. But when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, G-d was concerned that they should not eat also from the Tree of Life, which would enable them to live for ever⁵. Why should this be a problem, if when they were first created they were anyway going to live for ever?

Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains as we said above: that if they would live for ever, the evil in them would also become eternal, which G-d did not want. Hence death was decreed for them, and they were banished from the Garden of Eden to prevent them from eating from the Tree of Life, which would make them – and the mixture of evil within them - live eternally.

The Rebbe explains that death is in fact the product of sin. Because ‘life’ is essentially a product of holiness, while ‘death’ is a product of unholiness and sin. Hence on account of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve caused themselves ‘spiritual death’. The eventual ramification of this spiritual death was literal, physical death. This explains why in the future, the reverse will take place: G-d will remove the spirit of impurity from the world, the spirit of sin, thus nullifying ‘spiritual death’. The effect of this will be that literal physical death will also cease.

The reason why this double process will take place specifically in the future is because then there will be a revelation of an unparalleled exalted level of radiance. When that radiance shines, all ‘opponents’, [including all opposing forces, including sin and death] disappear.

It is true that great radiance shone in the time of the Temple, and even more in the time of the First Temple, and even more, in the time of King Solomon who built the First Temple and of whom it is said that he represented ‘the fullness of the moon’⁶. This is why Solomon (unlike other Jewish kings) did not have to go to war, and indeed that is the meaning of his name: Shlomoh, relating to shalom, peace.

Nonetheless, the revelation of radiance which was in his time was not total. It was still possible for negative forces to draw energy from the realm of holiness, even if this is only from its most external aspect, not its inner dimension. But in the future, the revelation of radiance will be so great that this will not happen, and ‘death will be swallowed up for ever’.

⁴ See Gen.2:17.

⁵ See Gen 3:22.

⁶ Zohar I, 150a. This is because he was the 15th generation from Abraham, and on the 15th day of the month the moon is full.

The difference between the two stages of the time of King Solomon, on the one hand, and the future to come, on the other, can be compared to two different levels of spiritual service in an individual today.

One level is that the person ‘turns away from evil’. The person pushes away the evil, he avoids it. But this might need some degree of effort, because a bit of attraction to the evil might still be there in his heart. A higher level is that the person ‘loathes evil’. He or she cannot tolerate evil at all, and in no way sees it as having any attractive quality.

This can be compared to the description in Tanya⁷ of two kinds of Tzaddik: the imperfect Tzaddik who avoids evil but yet might subtly be attracted to it, and the perfect Tzaddik who completely loathes evil.

Tanya explains that the level of rejection of evil is proportional to one’s love of G-d. When the love of G-d is more intense, then the rejection of evil is more total. This helps us understand that it is the greater revelation of radiance of the future, [like a greater level of Love of the Divine] which enables the total rejection of evil in the future, [which includes the annulment both of sin and of mortality].

It is known that the spiritual attainments of the future depend on our service today. There are certain parallels in our own lives to the state of total absorption in goodness, in which there is not even a thought of sin.

For example, at the time of prayer, or Torah study, or keeping a Mitzvah which he or she regards as their ‘special’ responsibility, or even in ordinary daily life but with the sense that one is doing it ‘for the sake of Heaven’⁸, and even more – if one is achieving the goal ‘in all your ways you should know Him’⁹. At that moment one is totally giving oneself over to G-d, without room for any negativity.

This moment might be brief, here in this world; but in upper realms, goodness is eternal. Hence one can continue to get inspiration from that positive moment to help one achieve a more spiritual level in life, closer to the ideal of ‘death is swallowed up for ever’.

⁷ Tanya ch.10.

⁸ See Avot 2:12.

⁹ Prov.3:6.

But the full effect will be in the future, when the Jewish body will be sustained by spirituality, like the soul, in fact the body will then be on a higher level than the soul.

All this will be revealed here below in a tangible way, with the full and true Redemption through Moshiach, very soon.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care