

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה והי' כי תבוא תשמ"ג בלתי מוגה

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THE FIRST FRUITS AND PRAYER

THE SEDRA STARTS WITH THE COMMAND THAT WHEN THE JEWISH PEOPLE ENTER THE LAND OF ISRAEL they should bring 'First Fruits' to the Temple². This is a beautiful expression of personal gratitude to G-d. The farmer selects the finest specimens of his produce, arranges it artfully in a large basket, and transports it to Jerusalem. He enters the Temple courtyard with this basket and places it in front of the Altar in an act of dedication to G-d. Then he makes a declaration of his gratitude to G-d, which includes a brief account of the history of the Jewish people. It is a public declaration of thanks.

The Midrash³ tells us that Moses was able to see with the Divine Spirit that the Temple would eventually be destroyed,. Then offerings could not be brought, nor the First Fruits. Consequently he instituted the Prayer services three times a day, which would substitute for the offerings and first Fruits.

The idea that the prayers correspond to the daily offerings in the Temple is expressed in the times for prayer, which relate to the times for the Temple offerings, and to which prayers we say. For example, the Musaf 'Additional Prayer' said on Sabbaths and other special days corresponds to the fact that on those days an 'Additional Offering' would be brought in the Temple.

How does the bringing of the First Fruits relate to prayer? There are two aspects to the bringing of the First Fruits⁴. One is the selecting of the fruit and produce

¹ *Vehaya Ki Tavo 5743*, published in *Dvormalchut Ki Tavo 5773*. The Hebrew text was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Deut.27:1 ff.

³ Tanchuma, Ki Tavo 1

⁴ See the Tzemach Tzedek's *Or Hatorah*, Ki Tavo p. 1039 ff.

and bringing it to the Temple in Jerusalem. The second is the public declaration which is made at the Altar, thanking G-d for His blessings to the Jewish people, and in particular, with that individual.

These two stages can be seen as a private movement towards G-d, bringing the Fruits to the Temple, and then a public event expressing G-d's bounty. Prayer too has two stages: the movement of the individual towards G-d, and the stream of blessings which flow from the Divine. These two aspects of prayer are seen in Jacob's dream of the ladder. The angels going up the ladder are like the words of the prayer reaching towards G-d, and the angels coming down the ladder express G-d's blessing to the person and the Jewish people.

The comparison of prayer to the bringing of the First Fruits, the best of one's produce, relates to the fact that prayer is, or should be, from the most exalted aspect of one's soul. During prayer a person tries to be aware of the Divine before Whom he or she is praying, and to feel a sense of awe, and love, and selflessness before the Infinite.

The individual gives of his or her best in dedicated prayer to G-d. Chassidic teachings tell us that G-d responds likewise, from the exalted level of His Divine Name, pouring blessings to us. We refer to the way G-d grants us abundant blessing in the Grace after meals. There we say that G-d gives us from His 'hand' which is 'full, open, sacred and broad', relating to the four letters of the Divine Name, pouring blessing from the highest level of Emanation into the three lower worlds of Creation, Formation and Action.

This double process of movement towards G-d and His response to us, links to the idea of the Jewish people entering the Land of Israel, as explained by the Baal Shem Tov⁵. He points out that the Hebrew word for Land, *Eretz*, has two meanings. It relates to the word for 'run', *ratz*, and also to the word for 'want, desire', *ratzon*. These two meanings together express one's running, yearning reaching towards G-d. And then there is the second stage: one 'settles' in the Land, and G-d's blessing becomes manifest in the varied aspects of daily life. The fact that the First Fruit is put in a 'basket' itself expresses the way that we receive abundantly from G-d and are able to make a vessel in which His abundance can be contained.

Let us hope that soon we will be granted the ultimate blessing, when we will all be able to enter the Land, in peace, with the building of the Third Temple, and we will again bring the offering of the First Fruits to G-d, in the literal sense of the words.

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

⁵ See the Rebbe's *Hayom Yom*, 18 Elul.