

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
שבת פרשת כי תבוא ח"י אלול תשל"ג ד"ה קומי אורי מוגה
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LIGHT BEYOND LIGHT

THE HAFTORAH BEGINS ‘ARISE, GIVE LIGHT, BECAUSE YOUR LIGHT HAS DAWNED’². This means that G-d is telling the Jewish people, because your light has dawned, you have to rise up and give further light. What is meant by these two kinds of radiance, the light of the Jewish people themselves, and the light which they have to radiate?

This can be understood by considering a passage in the Midrash³: The Jewish people say to G-d: we made You a Menorah in the time of Moses, in the Sanctuary, and it was extinguished⁴; in the days of Solomon, and it was extinguished⁵. From now on we are waiting for *Your* light, as it says in Psalms ‘For with You is the source of life, in Your light we shall see light’⁶. Then G-d responds to them with the verse from Isaiah: ‘Arise, and give light, because your light has dawned.’

From the fact that the Midrash links these two verses together, it can be understood that they are parallel to each other, as we will see.

A discourse⁷ by the Previous Rebbe discussing the above verse from Psalms will help us understand. That discourse explains that in that verse ‘For with You is

¹ Maamar Kumi Ori 5733 (1973). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Ki Tavo 5784. It was edited by the Rebbe and published as Kuntres Chai Elul 5749.

² Isaiah 60:1.

³ Yalkut Shimoni to Isaiah 60:1, and Midrash Tehilim to Ps.36:10.

⁴ [Because the Sanctuary is no more].

⁵ [Because the Temple has been destroyed].

⁶ Psalms 36:10.

⁷ Beginning ‘*Ki imcha mekor chaim*’, 5700 (1940).

the source of life, in Your light we shall see light' there are four aspects. Life, the source of life, Your light, and also a further dimension of 'light'. These four aspects are listed from below upwards. 'Life' means the Divine life-force which is en clothed in the worlds, the Immanent Radiance (*memaleh kol almin*). The 'source of life' means the Transcendent Radiance, (*sovev kol almin*), which is on a higher level.

Now moving to a higher level, the term 'Your light' means Torah, for 'Torah is light'⁸, which is even higher than the Transcendent Radiance. Then finally there is a yet higher dimension which is termed 'Light'. This is higher than the light of Torah, and in fact the light of Torah is described as serving as a preparation for this higher light.

The Rebbe explains that the levels termed 'life' and 'source of life', also termed the Immanent and Transcendent Radiance, relate directly to the worlds. But the higher level 'Your light', which means the Torah, and the ultimate level of light which is reached by means of 'Your light' – they are beyond the worlds.

The lower two levels which relate to the worlds are called 'life' but the higher levels, beyond the worlds, are called 'light'. They are called this because they relate more closely to the Luminary, and their nature as 'light' is to reveal the Luminary, [the Essence of the Divine].

As mentioned, the term 'Your light' is explained as being the Torah. What is the higher radiance which is seen by means of the radiance of Torah? The souls of the Jewish people.

Thus the Midrash⁹ states: Two things came before the world: the Torah and the Jewish people. But which of these two came first? When the Torah states 'Command the Jewish people', 'Speak to the Jewish people' you see that the Jewish people came first.

However, there is a problem. When the soul comes into the world, in relation to its exalted source, it is like the child of a parent: it comes from the parent but is separate. This means the exalted source of the soul is concealed. By contrast, Torah is always joined to its source in G-d, even when it enters this practical world. For 'G-d and the Torah are one'¹⁰.

⁸ Proverbs 6:23.

⁹ See Tana debei Eliyahu Rabbah ch.14, Bereishit Rabbah 1:4.

¹⁰ See Tanya I, chs. 4, 23; Zohar I 24a, II 60a.

It is through the Torah that the source of the souls of the Jewish people is revealed. A parallel idea is expressed by the other verse, from Isaiah, the beginning of the Haftorah, with which this discourse began.

In that verse, ‘Arise, give light, for your light has dawned’ can be understood as speaking of two levels: ‘your light has dawned’, the lower level which, once it has been expressed, leads to the higher level, ‘give light’.

An important theme in Chassidic teaching is the distinction between the soul and the body. Not, as one might expect, that the soul is more spiritual than the body. Instead, the opposite. The soul is very significant, but even higher is the body¹¹.

Hence in this verse, ‘your light’ is the radiance of the soul. When this is revealed, and, through Torah as explained earlier, it has its effect on the body of the person¹², then the higher level is disclosed, the exalted radiance of the body which expresses an even higher level of bond with the Divine.

The Previous Rebbe’s discourse¹³ cited the Midrash which explained the verse ‘For with You is the source of Life’ as the appeal of the Jewish people to G-d in a time of Exile. The Baal Shem Tov (whose birthday is on 18 Elul) taught, that in a time of Exile the yearning for G-d is greater than at a time when the Temple stands.

In the same way we can understand the verse from the Haftorah ‘arise, give light’¹⁴. Although it is still Exile (and especially since it is the last days of Exile), G-d declares to the Jewish people ‘arise, give light, because your light has dawned’ meaning both the radiance of the soul - ‘your light’ - and even higher, the spiritual radiance of the body - ‘give light’.

Through our activities and service of G-d in this vein we will hasten the Redemption and then the verse will be understood as referring to the time of Redemption, when ‘your light has dawned’ literally¹⁵. May this be, as it says at the very end of the Haftorah, ‘very swiftly’.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

¹¹ See Likkutei Sichot vol. 18, p.409, and vol.11, p. 5ff.

¹² Torah and Mitzvot are the path by which the body reveals its sacred essence, even higher than the soul.

¹³ *Ki imcha mekor chaim*, 5700.

¹⁴ The Rebbe points out that the simple reading of the verse ‘Arise, give light’ would suggest that it is a statement about the time of Redemption, when G-d says to the Jewish people ‘arise, give light, because your light has dawned’, meaning the time of Redemption has come. But the Rebbe then presents a different way of understanding this verse, that it is said by G-d in a time of Exile.

¹⁵ See the previous note.