

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה שיר השירים (מצורע) תשכ"ה בלתי מוגה

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THE JOY OF WINE – AND HUMILITY..

SONG OF SONGS...YOUR LOVE IS BETTER THAN WINE². WINE relates to joy, for the wine is hidden in the grape, and then it is revealed; this revelation of that which had been hidden brings to joy, as when one goes from darkness to great light.

This revelation of joy relates to redemption, and Pesach. Indeed, popular Jewish custom links the Song of Songs with Pesach and the words ‘the voice of my beloved is coming, leaping over the hills’ (Song 2:8) are interpreted as concerning Pesach, in which G-d ‘passed over’ the houses of the Jewish people, protecting them and redeeming them.

Pesach is the first of the Festivals, and all the festivals express joy (as in the phrase ‘seasons [festivals] of joy’), and the Sages link joy with wine. Hence the Previous Rebbe would drink a goblet of wine every day of a festival, including Chol Hamoed, in order to express the joy of the festival.

Further, Pesach also looks forward to the future Redemption, when the Inner dimension of Torah will be revealed. Only 210 years of Exile in Egypt were needed to in order for us to leave Egypt and then experience the Giving of the Torah, imparting the Revealed Torah. But our long Galut is needed in order to reveal the Inner Dimension of Torah, the Torah of Moshiach. This is compared to wine, and the phrase from Song of Songs ‘let him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth’ is explained as the revelation of the inner teachings of Torah which will take place then. These are Torah teachings which are beyond understanding, the ‘wine of Torah’, which will then be revealed.

¹ *Shir Hashirim (Metzora) 5725*, published in *Dvormalchut Shemini 5776, 5782*. The Hebrew text was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Song of Songs 1:1-2.

Chassidic teachings explain the difference between joy and delight. Delight relates to Chochmah, Wisdom; joy relates to Binah, Understanding. When we look at the pattern of the Sefirot, Wisdom is higher than understanding. But in fact Understanding draws from a higher level, from the 'breadth beyond'. The power of Understanding is to categorise and see different aspects of the topic. It draws this power from its link with the 'breadth beyond'. By contrast, Wisdom perceives only the central unifying aspect, without the details perceived by Understanding.

Now we can consider two central features of the Seder: the Matza and the wine. The Matza represents Wisdom, and there are three Matzot corresponding to the three aspects of the Supernal 'mind'³. The wine represents Binah, Understanding, and the four cups of wine express four spiritual aspects of Binah⁴.

In a sense the joy of the wine drunk at the Seder is higher than the spiritual effect of the Matza. This might seem unexpected, because eating the Matza is a command from the Torah, while drinking four cups of wine is a practice instituted by the Sages. Usually Mitzvot from the Torah are regarded as more important than those from the Sages. But in fact, there is a special quality in the Mitzvot of the Sages. "The words of the Sages are more serious and more delightful than the words of the Torah"⁵.

Now the Torah here means the Written Torah, while the words of the Sages mean the Oral Torah. The Written Torah is like the 'general principle', Wisdom, while the Oral Torah is like the details, Understanding. All the details are included in the general concept of the Written Torah, and are brought out of concealment and revealed by the Oral Torah.

In addition, the teachings of the Oral Torah increase over the generations. The Mishnah itself is relatively brief, but the further teachings in the Baraitot and the teachings of the Talmud are far more extensive. They express, and in some sense 'grasp' the Infinite.

In this they can be compared to the Negative Commandments, in their power to reach for the Infinite. The Sages explain that the Positive Commandments tangibly connect with Divine at a certain level of spirituality. But the Negative Commandments reach higher, since they are only defined in terms of *not* doing something. The Rebbe explains in this discourse that the words of the Sages, their extra detailed laws and customs, have some of this quality of the Negative

³ Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge.

⁴ Wisdom, Understanding, and two aspects of Knowledge: relating to Kindness and to Severity.

⁵ See Yerushalmi Berachot 1:5, Mishnah Sanhedrin 88b.

commandments, even though the Rabbinic teachings are often positive actions. The Rebbe points out that in origin the rabbinic laws are a ‘negative’ extension of the Mitzvot, as in being a fence to prevent transgression.

The same applies to the Inwardness of Torah. Compared with the external, revealed Torah, the Inner dimension is Infinite. Further, while the Words of the Sages are instructions for practical action, the Inner dimension of Torah allows the mind itself to connect with the Divine.

In this process there is tremendous joy. The Rebbe explains that while sometimes joy can lead to egotism, the special experience at the Seder leads to both joy and humility, humility before every human being. This is because through the Mitzvot we carry out at the Seder, we link with the Essence of the Divine. At this level joy and total humility co-exist.

This is why the verse says ‘Your love is better than wine’. G-d’s love is revealed in Torah and Mitzvot, which express the Essence, and are therefore generally greater than ‘joy’. But when the joy itself is from the Essence, as it is at the Seder, there is no difference, and we join with the infinite Divine, in humility and joy.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care