

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
פרשת נצבים-וילך תשכ"ז ד"ה אם יהיה נדחך
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GATHERING THE SCATTERED ONES

EVEN IF YOUR SCATTERED ONES² WILL BE AT THE ENDS OF THE HEAVENS, FROM THERE G-D WILL GATHER YOU... (Deut. 30:4). Firstly, let us consider the simple meaning of this verse: that those who are 'scattered' in terms of Jewish commitment will be gathered together³.

This means, as Rashi writes on the verse 'The L-rd your G-d will return your captivity' (Deut.30:3), that G-d will take each individual by their hands, wherever that person might be, as it says 'you will be collected one by one, o House of Israel.' (Is.21:12), gathering them all together so that they will be as described at the beginning of the Sedra, that many different types of people will be 'all standing together'⁴. Through this unity they will receive blessings from G-d, as it says in the liturgy 'bless us our Father, like One', which means that when we are unified, we are blessed.

But in order to achieve the simple meaning, we have to attain the spiritual meaning, as explained by Chassidic teachings. Thus the second Lubavitcher Rebbe⁵ asks: why is the Hebrew word for 'your scattered ones' actually in the singular? (*Thy scattered one*). You would expect it to be in the plural.

¹ Maamar Im Yihye Nidahecha 5727 (1967). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Nitzavim 5774. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² The Hebrew word actually means 'thy scattered one', in the singular, as will be discussed below.

³ The verse can also mean that those Jews who are scattered geographically will be gathered together and brought to the Land of Israel. But the discourse focusses on spiritual scattering.

⁴ Deut.29:9-10.

⁵ Rabbi Dov Ber (1773-1827), known as the Mitteler Rebbe. See his Sha'arei Teshuvah, Part I, 3:1.

The answer is that this promise applies to each individual, and that each individual is actually, in spiritual terms, ‘one’. Our Neshamah, Soul, is ‘one’, but as it comes down into the physical world and our physical body, and is drawn into the appetites and lusts of the Animal Soul, it becomes more and more scattered. For the nature of our world is multiplicity.

Nonetheless, really the individual is One. Even if he transgresses the Divine Will, he is still One. For ‘a Jew, even though he sinned, is still a Jew’⁶. The word for Jew here is Yisrael, a name which comes from the idea of prevailing ‘against spiritual forces and men’⁷. This level is above the downchaining of worlds and has no limitations. Therefore every Jewish man and woman has this quality, even if they do the worst sins. The sin might be so serious that it cuts them off from their root – which is called *Karet*. But nonetheless, their Essence is still whole.

This explains why the phrase is ‘thy scattered one’ in the singular rather than the plural. Each person’s Essence is singular -even if it sometimes seems to get scattered in the ups and downs of life.

This Essence means the deepest aspect of the Soul, termed *Yechidah*⁸. When this is revealed, the soul is rescued from being scattered. Through Teshuvah we reveal the Yechidah of the Soul.

Teshuvah has two aspects: a good resolution for the future, which might be ratified by one’s regret for the past, with the uprooting of one’s desire for the forbidden kind of action in which one was involved. This first aspect dissolves away the ‘soul’ of the *kelippah*, the impure ‘shell’ concealing the Divine which was created by the transgression. The soul of the *kelippah* emerged as the product of one’s pleasure and desire when carrying out the transgression.

However, the practical aspect of the transgression, which created the ‘body’ of the *kelippah*, still remains. How does one get rid of it? Through the second aspect of Teshuvah: Viduy, confessing the sin. On Yom Kippur (and other occasions as well) one recites an alphabetical list of transgressions, which has the effect of erasing the ‘body’ of the *kelippah*. The letters of the alphabet can have myriad permutations, covering every kind of possible negative activity. At the same time, through our inner good resolution and our regretting the desire which drew us into the transgression, we uproot the soul of the *kelippah*.

⁶ Sanhedrin 44a.

⁷ Gen.32:29.

⁸ Chassidic teachings tell us the soul has five aspects: Nefesh, Ruach, Neshama, Chaya, Yechida.

This is the basic process of Teshuvah. But the ultimate of Teshuvah is gathering all one's scattered 'wills' and 'desires' and focusing just on Hashem alone. This is achieved by the revelation of Yechidah, the innermost aspect of our soul.

This is particularly achieved in prayer, and especially in the Shema. The word Shema means 'gather'⁹, and this is the moment of 'gathering' all one's wills and desires away from the negative forces of the *kelippot* and focusing them on G-d. Further, the word Shema is Shem Ayin, and Ayin has the numerical value 70, representing the root of the 70 nations in their most negative aspect. Hence 'Shema' signifies gathering oneself from being scattered among the nations. After the word Shema comes the word Yisrael (Israel), for the power to gather oneself in this way is from Yisrael. Yisrael has the letters *li Rosh* 'I have a head', meaning the Yechidah of the soul, which helps us gather our wills and passions scattered in multiplicities of life. And this thrust to be dedicated to G-d is expressed with Mesirat Nefesh, self-sacrifice, which focuses on the One, the conclusion of the first line of the Shema (Hear o Israel... G-d is One). This is the revelation of Yechidah.

This quality of Yechidah is always whole for every Jew, and the image of the King in the Field for the month of Elul¹⁰ expresses the way the Yechidah of each Jew is aroused, and this is helped and manifested in the blowing of the Shofar every day of Elul.

Now, Israel are joined to the Torah, and in the Torah too is the concept of being 'scattered', namely in the Babylonian Talmud: 'He set me down in darkness – this is the Babylonian Talmud'¹¹. This means that the halachah is scattered through the Talmud, which leads to many discussions. A halachic statement is made in one place, but it is contradicted by halachic statements in other places where the halachah is scattered. Only by analysis and discovering the unity of the halachah does one retrieve all its scattered elements. In order to be able to do this, one needs Divine help¹². This is the flow from the Giver of the Torah.

In prayer, the Shema is the aspect which unifies everything scattered. So too in Torah, there is an aspect which achieves unity, and that is the inner dimension, Chassidic teachings. For this is above conflict and being scattered. Only in order for it to enter one's rational mind, effort is needed. Chassidic teachings give one the strength to achieve unity in all aspects of Torah, through 'blessing on the Torah first', meaning being aware of the Divine dimension of Torah.

⁹ As in the verse 'and Saul gathered the people', using this verb 'vayeshama' (I Samuel 15:4).

¹⁰ Rabbi Shneur Zalman taught that in Elul, the King (G-d) is more accessible to each individual, as when a human King journeys through the countryside, and is available to all the country people. (Likkutei Torah, Sedra Re'eh).

¹¹ Sanhedrin 24a quoting Lamentations 3:6.

¹² See Sanh.93b, expounding I Sam.16:18 'and Hashem is with him'.

This is like the way that the Mesirat Nefesh in the One of the Shema draws the Divine through one's heart and soul and every aspect, one's thought and speech and action, into all aspects of one's life. Similarly, Chassidic teachings affect all aspects of one's Torah study and increase awareness of the Divine author of Torah.

So too Kabbalistic teachings tell us that there is a form of scattering even in G-d, namely the scattering of the Divine Sparks though the 'breaking of the vessels'. But here, in itself, the descent of the sparks was because G-d wanted a dwelling in the lower world. It is when man acts in the wrong way that the sparks are really 'scattered'. Through the individual's Teshuvah the sparks are gathered together. This has two aspects: first, 'you will return', the Teshuvah of the individual, with his or her own power. And then as a result of that, as it says in the next verse 'the L-rd G-d will return your captivity'¹³. This is Teshuvah ranted from above.

As the Talmud says: one who comes to be purified, is helped from above¹⁴. And as is pointed out by the Tzemach Tzedek, 'one who *comes*' – he has not done anything yet, he is just 'coming' toward being purified, but at once he is helped from above. Even though whatever one can do from below is infinitesimal in comparison compared with the Divine help one receives, it means that the person has made a step to accomplish his or her part. And in response G-d gathers the entire Jewish people, with the coming of Moshiach, may he come speedily in our days...

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

¹³ Deut.30:2-3.

¹⁴ Yoma 38b.