

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
פרשת שלח תשכ"ו ד"ה ויהס כלב בלתי מוגה
Published for Shabbat Sedra Shelach
28 Sivan 5783, 17 June 2023¹

CHAOS AND REPAIR – TOHU AND TIKKUN

THE SPIES HAVE RETURNED AND HAVE GIVEN THEIR NEGATIVE REPORT ABOUT THE LAND OF ISRAEL. There is a rowdy hubub of voices. Calev, who together with Joshua had a positive view of the project to enter the Land, silenced the people, as the Torah states: 'Calev silenced the people to Moses. He said we can go up and take possession of it, we will have the power'. Rashi adds that he said: look at all that Moses has done for us! Even if he told us to make ladders to climb up to heaven we would do it!

Chassidic teachings highlight the silencing of the people 'to Moses'. What is the full force of those words? And why does Calev present such an irrational example to illustrate the power of Moses, something which is quite beyond Reason?

This can be understood by considering a statement by the Spies, as explained by the Talmud. They declared (13:31) '[The people in the Land] are stronger than us!'. 'Than us' mimenu in Hebrew, can also be understood as 'than Him'. The Talmud (Sotah 35a) says that is what the Spies meant: the people of the Land are stronger than G-d. The Talmud uses a mysterious phrase: 'even the owner of the house cannot remove his vessels'.

¹ Maamar Vayahas Calev 5726 (1966). Printed in Dvar Malchut of Shelach 5777. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

The Discourse explains that the 'vessels' mean the 'broken vessels' of the World of Tohu, Chaos. The Lurianic kabbala explains that there was a primeval level of spiritual reality, called Tohu, Chaos. At this level the Divine radiance was tremendously strong, and the vessels were weak, meaning that they could not limit or restrain the Radiance. As a result the vessels 'broke', and fell to a lower level of spirituality, becoming part of our physical universe. Yet within the shards of the broken vessels, sacred Sparks of the original Radiance of Chaos are trapped.

This intense radiance is the source of the attractive power of the physical. According to Rabbi Isaac Luria and Chassidic teachings, the task of the Jew is to elevate the sacred sparks and relocate them in the World of Tikkun, Repair. This is carried out by engaging with the aspects of the physical world which the Torah permits, in the way which the Torah recommends. Guided by G-d's teachings, one connects with the sacred sparks and elevates them.

The Spies questioned the possibility of being successful in this project. They claimed that 'the owner of the house' the Divine force in the World of Tikkun, Repair, would not be able to 'remove His vessels ' to elevate the Divine sparks which descended into our material world through the mystical Breaking of the Vessels. They saw the power of the Radiance of Chaos as being too powerful to be redeemed.

Hence they would rather remain in the sacred domain of the Camp of the Israelites in the desert, with the Sanctuary at its centre, and the Pillar of Cloud by day as a sign of G-d's presence, and the Pillar of Fire by night, rather than enter the Land of Israel with its temptations and challenges.

The challenges of physical life are prompted by the Radiance of Chaos, which according to Rabbi Isaac Luria and Chassidic teachings, can be elevated. The Spies did not believe this was possible, but we know they were wrong. The World of Repair, Tikkun, **does** have the power to transform and elevate the radiance of the World of Chaos.

There are also examples of Tohu and Tikkun, Chaos and Repair, in the personal life of each individual. One is the relationship between the Animal Soul and the Divine Soul. The Animal Soul and what is often its dominant component, The Evil Desire, manifests the Radiance of Chaos. It is this intense power, from an exalted level, which initially sets the stage for the person's life. The more subtle Divine Soul, expressing the World of Repair, comes later (at Bar or Bat Mitzva.). This parallels the way the World of Chaos, Tohu, precedes and is in some ways more powerful than, the World of Tikkun.

Another example is the relationship of the Mind with the Emotions. The Mind is the seat of the Divine Soul, it is a vital resource in our quest to transform ourselves in a positive way. But the Emotions can be raw and powerful: they stem from the World of Chaos. The Sages strongly encourage us to control our emotions. They say 'a person should be pliable as a reed rather than stiff as a cedar'. There is also a teaching that 'the Mind rules the heart'. But is this always so simple?

The discourse explains that the Mind does indeed have considerable power over the emotions. It can channel them from a negative focus to a positive focus. But it is very difficult for a naturally severe person to become a kind person, or vice versa. This is because the emotions are rooted in the Will, at the level of Keter (Crown) of the Sefirot, higher than Wisdom and Understanding. Because of this force at the source of the emotions, it is difficult to make them pliable.

Now we can understand why Calev silenced the people 'to Moses'. Moses expresses an exalted level, beyond intellect. Through the connection with Moses, one can gain more control of one's emotions, and the Divine Soul can master and transform the Animal Soul.

This is why the Talmud presents such an irrational image, of making ladders to climb up the Heaven. In order to fulfil the task of elevating the sacred sparks from the realm of Chaos, whether in dealing with the challenges of the physical world, or one's own Animal Soul, or the Emotions - one needs to be able to transcend Reason. The bond with Moses effects this, and enables us to begin the task which will be completed with the coming of Moshiach.

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