

# The Rebbe's Discourses

Partial Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל

ד"ה ואלה שמות פרשת שמות תשכ"ה בלתי מוגה

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## NAMES AND NUMBERS

**A**ND THESE ARE THE NAMES OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WHO WENT DOWN TO EGYPT.. (Ex.1:1). Rashi comments on the fact that the immediate offspring of Jacob were enumerated in the Torah, in Genesis<sup>2</sup>, while they were alive, and here are enumerated again, in Exodus, generations after they had passed away. This shows the great love which G-d has for them. Rashi then compares the Jewish people to the stars, which G-d both counts and also calls each one by name. So too, says Rashi, in the case of the Jewish people: G-d counts them by name.

The discourse focuses on the concepts of 'name' and 'number' with respect to the individual Jew.

A discourse by the Tzemach Tzedek tells us about the spiritual effect of the stars. The Zohar speaks of the influence which the stars have on our lower world; the Rebbe (in a later talk) mentioned scientific findings concerning radiation from stars which can hardly be seen through a telescope, reaching the earth and having an effect<sup>3</sup>. The Rebbe explains further, that on the one hand the star has an effect below. At the same time, in order to do so it also receives a spiritual input from above. This is why each star has a name: through its name, it both receives a flow from above and also gives flow to the world

בברכת רפואה שלמה וקרובה בשביל האשה העניא רבקה בת ברכה דבורה לאה תחי'  
Praying for a Refuah Shelemah for Henya Rivka bas Brochah Devorah Leah 'תחי'

<sup>1</sup> Maamar Ve'eleh Shemot 5725 (1965). Printed in Dvar Malchut of Sedra Shemot 5779. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

<sup>2</sup> In Sedra Vayigash, Gen.46:8-27.

<sup>3</sup> Information from Rabbi Shmuel Lew who was present at these talks.

below. Hence each star is well known by its name, as the source of the particular flow which it provides.

This is also instructive concerning the name of any Jewish person. Each name expresses its particular quality regarding one's effect in the world. For example the biblical Reuben was called this 'because G-d has seen..', (Gen.29:32) meaning that Reuben denotes the spiritual service of 'sight'. Shimon was given his name 'because G-d has heard' (Gen. 29:33). Hence his service concerns 'hearing'<sup>4</sup>. Similarly with all other names: each relates to the specific shelichut (mission) which that individual has to carry out below in this world.

A further aspect is that beyond each specific name of an individual, there is also the 'Essence' of that name and of the life-force of the person. The Essence relates to the name, but is on an exalted level. This explains the idea, often cited in Chassidic teachings, that if someone has fainted, calling them by their name will help to revive them. This is because the name of the person links them to their own Essence; calling their name, draws life-force from their Essence which revives them.

Even higher, in some respects, is not the name, but the 'number' by which a person can be counted. Number completely transcends any distinctive qualities of the individual. When the Torah presents the count of the seventy souls of the Jewish people, our great ancestor Jacob and the little baby girl Yocheved who was born as they were entering Egypt, were each counted as 'one'.

It is taught that the number by which a person is counted expresses the soul on such an exalted level that it does not yet have any relationship with a specific body. Then comes the Essence of the name, expressing the soul as it relates to a body, but standing beyond it and certainly not limited by it. Then lower down comes the name of the person as the soul inhabits their body, with all its challenges and limitations.

Rashi tells us that as the Jewish people, the children of Jacob, were entering and settling in Egypt, G-d 'counted them by name' as an expression of His love for them. This means that G-d loves the Jewish people in their essence, at a level where one individual is not distinguished from another, on the level of 'counting', and also at the level of their individual names, when each person has a specific and individual task in the world.

Indeed, that is the significance of this idea being presented as they come into Egypt. Egypt represents a realm of impurity and spiritual challenge. G-d's love is revealed to the Jewish people as they are in their exalted Essence, and also as

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<sup>4</sup> Chassidic teachings present various ways of understanding the service of 'sight' or 'hearing'.

they are as specific individuals, limited in many ways, and facing moral and spiritual challenges. This love empowers them to face these challenges.

Further, this love applies to each person in his or her span of life in the world, and also after leaving the world, having completed one's task. For then, instead of the Essence beyond channelling life to the soul as it is within the body, their respective roles are reversed. The soul which has faced the challenges of a lifetime now elevates its own Essence, to higher and higher levels towards the infinite Divine.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care