

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
פרשת שמות תשמ"ה ד"ה הבאים ישרש יעקב
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BEING INSPIRED BY THE FUTURE

IN THE HAFTORAH FOR SEDRA SHEMOT ISAIAH DECLARES, translating literally, ‘those who come will be rooted by/in Jacob’². There is a discourse by the Tzemach Tzedek³ in which he discusses two interpretations of this verse.

The first is in the Targum, the Aramaic translation of the verse by Jonathan ben Uziel, which explains it in terms of the Redemption. ‘Those who come’, meaning those who had been in exile, will come to the Land of Israel in the Redemption, and then ‘the House of Jacob will be born’. The Tzemach Tzedek’s discourse explains that the root of their souls will be revealed, and this is termed birth, just as through birth the baby hidden in the womb emerges and is revealed.

The second explanation quoted in the Tzemach Tzedek’s discourse is that this refers to keeping Mitzvot. Just as literal planting and taking root take place in the earth, the physical level, so the taking root and revelation of the soul (‘Jacob’) is on the practical level, through the practical Mitzvot. The link between the two explanations of the verse (a. the revelation of the root of the souls of the Jewish people through the Redemption, b. the keeping of practical Mitzvot) is that there are many levels of the root of the soul, and the most significant is that which is rooted in the radiance above the downchaining of worlds. This level is accessed by keeping the practical Mitzvot, because the study of Torah only reaches to the

¹ Maamar Habaim Yashresh Yakov 5748 (1988). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Shemot 5778, 5785. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Is. 27:6.

³ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1789-1866), third Lubavitcher Rebbe. See his *Or HaTorah* Shemot vol. 7 p.2532 ff.

Sefirah Wisdom, at the beginning of the downchaining; but the practical Mitzvot reach beyond that level.

Why does the Tzemach Tzedek present these explanations of the verse in this order? Chronologically, the keeping of the Mitzvot, expressed in the second explanation, precedes the revelations relating to the Redemption, the theme of the first explanation. So why does he change the natural order?

This links with another point. There is a discourse by Rabbi Shneur Zalman in *Torah Or* discussing the same verse⁴. Instead of focusing on the Redemption, as the Targum by Jonathan ben Uzziel, this focuses on Exile. ‘Those who come’ means those who come down to Egypt, to the exile in Egypt. The discourse explains that in order for there to be the taking root and flourishing of the Mitzvot of Jacob, the Jewish people, through the Giving of the Torah, there had to be first the preparation of being in the exile in Egypt. This was the crucible which made the Jewish people into a ‘precious land’ *eretz hefetz*, in which their Mitzvot could be sown like seed. In the same way, our own long period of exile, and our Mitzvot now, is a preparation for the revelation of the inner dimension of Torah which will take place with the coming of the Messiah.

Why does the Tzemach Tzedek seemingly ignore this interpretation by his grandfather Rabbi Shneur Zalman in *Torah Or*? The Tzemach Tzedek speaks of the effect of the Mitzvot at any time, whether while the Temple stood or in a period of Exile. By contrast, Rabbi Shneur Zalman in *Torah Or* speaks of the special effect of Mitzvot in the time of Exile. Why does the Tzemach Tzedek, in the discourse we are discussing, seemingly ignore this explanation?

The Rebbe explains that there are two aspects to keeping Mitzvot. One is the drawing down of a flow of G-dliness. This took place in an intense way in the time of the Temple, and will be even more pronounced in the time of the Redemption. However, this aspect of the Mitzvot is less apparent during a time of Exile. Drawing a flow of G-dliness depends on the inner selflessness, *bitul*, of the individual. This was much greater in the time of the Temple because of the revelation of the Divine which was then openly apparent, and will be even greater in the time of the Messiah.

The second aspect of the effect of the Mitzvot concerns transforming darkness to light. This aspect is greater during the time of Exile, when all spirituality is relatively concealed, and there are great challenges which hide the Divine. The Mitzvot carried out in these conditions transform the darkness to light.

⁴ *Torah Or* 53c ff.

In his discourse, the Tzemach Tzedek wanted to focus on the first effect of the Mitzvot, the revelation of the Divine. He therefore did not discuss the interpretation in *Torah Or*, which concerns the changing of darkness to light. He also presented the interpretation of the verse relating to the Redemption as his first explanation.

The Redemption is the real key to the revelation of the Divine, and of the root of our own souls, including the way both are revealed through our Mitzvot. By having this in mind when we carry them out, we make them most effective both in the process of revealing the exalted root of our souls, and in revealing G-dliness in the world. The Redemption, rather than the positive effects of the time of Exile, should therefore be uppermost in our minds. The coming of Moshiach is the key to our service of G-d in the here and now.

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