

# The Rebbe's Discourses

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

פרשת שופטים תשט"ז ד"ה שופטים ושופטים בלתי מוגה

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## KNOWLEDGE OF G-D AND JUDGES AT THE GATES

**T**HE SEDRA<sup>21</sup> TELLS US TO PUT JUDGES AND OFFICERS AT ALL OUR GATES. On one level this is about organising a basic aspect of civilized society: a system of legislation, which defines the laws, the judges, and the 'officers' or police who will enforce the laws. In this sense 'gates' means the Gate of the city, where, in ancient Israel, the lawcourt was to be found.

Similarly, a verse from the well-known text 'A Woman of Valour' tells us 'her husband is known at the gates.'<sup>3</sup> He is known at the regular gatherings of significant and responsible figures, which take place at the gates of the city.

Now let us consider other levels of understanding these teachings. We will begin with the verse from Woman of Valour: her husband is known at the gates. Whose husband? The kabbalists explain that this 'wife' is the Jewish people, and her 'husband' is G-d. But in what sense is G-d 'known'? G-d is Infinite! He is beyond human knowledge.

The Zohar<sup>4</sup> gives two explanations. One is that He is not really 'known'. The word Gate 'sh'ar' relates to word 'hash'arah' 'approximation'. We can know of the Existence of the Divine, but not His Essence. [For example, we can see the effects of G-d's existence, such as the fact that the universe exists. But we do not at all know the nature of G-d.]

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<sup>1</sup> Maamar Shoftim veShotrim 5716 (1956). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Shoftim 5773, 5784. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 16:18

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 31:23

<sup>4</sup> Zohar I 103a. See also Likkutei Torah Matot 85b ff.

The other explanation is that we are not speaking of the unknowable Essence of the Divine, but of His manifestation through the Sefirot. In this sense, G-dliness can be 'known'. The Rebbe explains that in this case, the word 'sh'ar' can be understood as 'shiur', meaning fixed measure, something limited and defined.

One can explore the microcosm of a human being, a defined structure of intellect and emotions, and through that have some tangible level of knowledge of the infinitely exalted macrocosm, the Divine Sefirot. [Because the Sefirot have a cerebral aspect, Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge; and an emotional aspect: Kindness, Severity, Mercy, and so on. These aspects of the Divine Sefirot are mirrored in the human psyche. So by our understanding of our own inner being, as explained in Divinely inspired Chassidic teachings, we are able at a certain level to gain some sort of intimation of the nature of the Divine. But this is only at the level of the Sefirot. The higher levels of the Divine, beyond the Sefirot, cannot be grasped at all. ]

Exploring this structure of the Sefirot, we learn that there are 50 Gates of Understanding, through which there is a flow from the higher levels of the Sefirot, Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge, to the lower: Kindness, Severity, Mercy, etc. The fifty Gates relate to the 'gates' mentioned in the opening verse of the Sedra. They transmit to the heart the inspiration aroused through contemplation in the mind.

There are also '32 Paths of Wisdom' which represent an interaction between the upper Sefirot of Wisdom and Understanding. As explained in Chassidic texts, 'Wisdom' is the 'nekudah' (dot) or flash of truth, of selflessness in relation to the Infinite. This interacts with Understanding, our power of cogitation and contemplation. The 32 Paths of Wisdom ensure that the cerebral construct we build through our contemplation is consistent with and appropriate to the flash of truth and selflessness of Wisdom.

When Wisdom and Understanding connect in the right way, then the flow from the mind to the heart is also appropriate. But in order for that to take place properly, the heart itself has to seek the bond with the mind. [One might add, rather than indulge in unbridled emotionalism].

This brings us back to the concept of Judges and Officers at our gates. The gates, according to commentators, are the gateways of the consciousness of the individual: our eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth. We need to be able to guard these gates, to see that they open to admit only permitted material; or, in the case of the mouth, that it expresses to others only what is appropriate.

Through taking control of the 50 Gates of Understanding and the 32 Paths of Wisdom within ourselves, we are able to be master of our Gates as well.

In this process we need the Judges, the Torah teachings which give us the guidance as to what is right or wrong, permitted or forbidden; and the Officers, who help us firmly follow this guidance, especially when things are difficult.

This firmness is called Kabbalat Ol, the acceptance of the yoke (of Heaven). It is through such self mastery that we will achieve true blessing for the coming year...

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care