

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ליל ב' דהג הסוכות תשל"ד ד"ה בסוכות תשבו בלתי מוגה
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MAKING THE ESSENCE SHINE

THE TORAH TELLS US THAT 'YOU SHOULD DWELL IN SUCCOT FOR SEVEN DAYS' AND THEN ADDS 'every citizen in Israel will dwell in Succot'². What is meant by this apparent repetition? The Baal Shem Tov explains that the word 'citizen', *ezech*, should be read as a verb meaning 'I will shine', and the phrase is actually a promise from G-d: if you dwell in Succot for seven days, then I will cause the deepest level of your soul to radiate within you'.

This relates to the idea in the Midrash³ that the soul is termed by five names: Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chaya, Yechidah. The first three are 'inward' aspects, these dimensions of the soul nestle within the person. Then Chaya and Yechidah are beyond the person, transcendent levels called '*makifim*' (lit. 'surrounding').

The term Yechidah, which literally means 'only one', is in the feminine. Chassidic teachings tell us that Yechidah joins to and receives from Yachid, the same term in the masculine. Yachid is defined as 'a spark of the Creator'.

This is the exalted spiritual essence of the soul. The Rebbe points out that even use of the word 'exalted' is redundant, because Yachid is from a realm beyond the distinction between high and low, exalted and mundane. In these terms we can now understand the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov. Through our keeping the Mitzvah of dwelling in the Succah for seven days, meaning using all the

¹ Maamar BaSuccot Teshvu 5734 (1973). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Succot 5785. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Lev.23:42.

³ Bereishit Rabbah 14:9, Devarim Rabbah 2:37.

seven attributes⁴ of the ‘inner’ aspects of our soul – Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah – then the transcendent aspects, including even Yachid, the ‘spark of the Creator’ will shine their radiance into our being. That is what is meant by the second phrase in the verse, which we initially translated as ‘every citizen of Israel will dwell in Succot’. It is G-d’s promise to us, about the transcendent effect of the Mitzva of dwelling in the Succah.

But this raises a question. How can it be that such an amazing effect is achieved by our ‘dwelling’ in the Succah? In halachic terms, the main aspect of ‘dwelling’ is eating and drinking. When we eat certain types of food in the Succah – usually bread or cake – we make the blessing thanking G-d for giving us the commandment to dwell in the Succah. And it is when eating a certain amount of food that we have the actual duty to eat in the Succah.

By contrast, when we engage in spiritual activities such as Torah study or prayer, if we find it more conducive to our understanding or attention to study indoors, or to pray in the Synagogue, rather than in the Succah, that is what we do. So why is it that the way we bring about the amazing spiritual effect of the Succah, as explained by the Balal Shem Tov, is particularly through the mundane activity of eating?

This can be understood through a teaching by Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, the Rebbe MaHaRaSh (1834-1882), the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe⁵. He comments on a phrase from the Yom Tov Amidah prayer: ‘all Israel, who sanctify Your Name, should rejoice in You’.

What does this phrase mean? First, let us consider the concept of ‘name’. The name of a person is something external, used by other people when they want to address him. But at the same time, the name relates to the very essence of a person. Hence it is said that if someone faints, if you whisper their name in their ear, they revive.

Rabbi Shmuel explains that the Jewish people have the power to draw from the Divine Essence, and make this flow into the Divine Name, thus ‘sanctifying’ the Name. How do they achieve this? Through carrying out the Mitzvot. Because the Mitzvot themselves draw from the Divine Essence and reveal it in the world.

But this only takes place when the individual actually performs the Mitzvah. For example, says Rabbi Shmuel, take the Mitzvah of Tefilin. If the Tefilin are lying on the table, nothing is being achieved. But if the man or boy (over Bar Mitzva) puts on the Tefilin, an exalted Mitzva is being carried out.

⁴ The seven Sefirot are also attributes of the soul: kindness, severity, mercy, endurance, submission, dedication, fulfilment.

⁵ Rabbi Shmuel’s Yahrzeit is 13 Tishrei. This teaching is at the end of his *Book of Discourses 5630*.

What gives the Mitzva such power, to reveal the Essence of the Divine in the world? Says Rabbi Shmuel: the joy with which the Mitzvah is carried out. Because joy itself is an expression of the essence of the person. Normally, the essence is hidden. But ‘joy breaks through all barriers’. It breaks through the barrier concealing the person’s essence, and reveals his or her essence to others.

The same is true on the supernal level of the Divine. Our joy in the observance of the Mitzvot enables them to draw the Divine Essence into the Divine Name and into the world.

The Rebbe points out that the key to this process is the fact the souls of the Jewish people are themselves rooted in the Divine Essence, even higher than the Torah and Mitzvot⁶. Hence, through observance of the Mitzvot, the Jewish people are able to reveal the Essence in the world.

This is why, through our physically eating and drinking in the Succah, with joy, we bring about the most remarkable personal inner spiritual revelations, as explained by the Baal Shem Tov. Even more, this is also a revelation of the Divine Essence for the entire Jewish people and ultimately for the world.

The word initially translated ‘citizen’, *ezrach*, when taken as a verb, is in the future – ‘I will shine’. So, although the radiance is there now, for each individual and for the Jewish people as a whole, its full effect will be in the future, with the coming of Moshiach.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

⁶ See the Rabbi Shalom Dovber’s book of Discourses beginning ‘The Festival of Rosh Hashanah’ 5666 (1905), p.230 (revised 2010 edition, 305).