

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
פרשת תרומה תשמ"ו ד"ה מי יתנך כאח לי בלתי מוגה
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MEETING G-D OUTSIDE

A KEY ASPECT OF SEDRA TERUMAH IS THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SACRED KERUVIM, termed in English 'Cherubim', gold figures, male and female, which adorned the top of sacred golden Ark, in which were the Tablets with the Ten Commandments. The Ark of the Covenant was to be placed in the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctum in the Sanctuary which this Sedra describes in detail. What do the Keruvim mean?

A text by Rabbi Shneur Zalman, printed in the volume of his discourses, *Torah Or*, which was in his own handwriting², can be interpreted as meaning the two golden figures represent aspects of the Sefirot: the male represents the Divine, reaching, through the upper Sefirot, towards the female, which represents Kingship, the tenth Sefirah and the feminine aspect, which also expresses the souls of the Jewish people.

An important text which also speaks of G-d and the Jewish people is the Song of Songs. Phrased as a poem about intense, yearning love, the Sages and commentators through the ages explain it as about the love between G-d and the Jewish people (or the individual)³.

¹ Maamar Mi Yitencha Ke-Ach li 5746 (1986). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Terumah 5778. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² The discourses in *Torah Or* are edited by his grandson Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the Tzemach Tzedek from transcripts of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's oral discourses. The transcripts were written by Rabbi Menachem Mendel himself, also by certain of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's sons and by his brother. This brief passage taken from his own handwritten text is very unusual.

³ The first three paragraphs of this Summary are not in the discourse but are presented here as an introduction to it (ed.)

In *Torah Or*, the main discourse for Sedra Trumah starts with a verse from the Song of Songs, and the Rebbe's discourse begins with the same verse: 'If only you were my brother, who had drunk the milk of the breasts of my mother. I would find you outside, I would kiss you, and no-one would look askance'⁴. The Rebbe points out that this verse, focusing on the Jewish people yearning for G-d, can be seen as relating to the two Keruvim, which are, as mentioned above, a key feature of the Sedra.

Let us look in more detail at the image presented in the verse. In a time of exile, G-d and the Jewish people are in some sense separated. They cannot be openly together. The Jewish people are 'outside'. Like a woman and a man to whom she is not married, if they meet outside where people can see them, they must be careful. But if they were brother and sister, no-one would comment. So the verse depicts the Jewish people saying to G-d 'If only you were my brother...'

The text in Song of Songs continues: 'I would lead you, and bring you to the house of my mother'. Rashi comments on Song of Songs that this 'house' means the Temple. There indeed the Jewish people and the Divine can openly be one. The Rebbe points out that this image directly connects with the beginning of Sedra Terumah, which states 'They should make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell among/within them'⁵.

The Rebbe explains that the indwelling of the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, in the Temple is deeply connected with the Torah. When the Temple stood, the actual point where the Divine Presence dwelt is described as being above the cover of the golden Ark, between the Keruvim⁶. The Ark clearly embodies the Torah, for within it are the two Tablets of the Covenant, and also a Torah Scroll⁷.

After the Temple was destroyed, the Sages tell us that the Divine is to be found in 'the four cubits of Halachah', of Jewish Law⁸. Hence this too is the plea of the Jewish people in a time of Exile – I want to bring You to the house of my 'Mother', which represents the Oral Torah⁹.

Successful study of the Oral Torah requires great effort. There are sixty Tractates, with statements by the Tannaitic Sages in the Mishnah and Baraitha, and all the discussions of the Amoraim in the Talmud. The goal is not just to study this complex material [although this itself can be very rewarding] but to

⁴ Song of Songs 8:1.

⁵ Exodus, Terumah, 25:8. The verse can be translated as 'among' or 'within'. The Bati Legani discourse explains that it means 'within' because the Divine Presence dwells within each individual.

⁶ See Exodus 25:22.

⁷ See Rashi to Deut. Vayelech 31:26. The Scroll was either in the Ark or next to it.

⁸ Berachot 8a.

⁹ This is stated in the discourse in *Torah Or*, 80a ff. The 'Father' represents the Written Torah.

arrive at the genuine Halachah, the actual Law as it is to be carried out in daily life. As the Talmud states, 'G-d is with him' – this is the person who's exposition of the Law is the genuine Halachah¹⁰. This is the true indwelling of the Divine Presence, the Shechinah, as it was revealed between the Keruvim, above the cover of the Ark. This is the wonderful revelation of the Divine within 'the house of my mother', even in a time of Exile.

However, there are also people who are 'outside'. These are people who are involved in other walks of life, whether business [or a profession], and their main activity is not the clarification of the Halachah. The Sages speak of the symbiosis of the two Tribes, Issachar, Torah scholars, and Zebulun, merchants¹¹. This concept is often applied to the Jewish people as a whole. The merchants [or professionals] are involved in making a living, and good deeds, charity; while the Torah scholars focus on their profound study and deep meditative prayer. This is the meaning of the verse: 'I will find You outside', that the merchants and others who are not 'in the Tent of Torah', in 'the house of my mother', instead they are 'outside' – but they too can find the Holy One, the Divine.

In fact, the verse says about them: 'I will kiss You', because those who are 'outside' often have a very deep bond with the Divine, expressed as a 'kiss', a love beyond verbal expression, a cleaving of spirit to spirit (which can also be achieved in Torah study, as is explained in Tanya.¹²).

This too is expressed by the Keruvim. They are described in the Talmud as a 'greater face' [the 'male'] and a 'minor face' [the female]. The 'greater face' is the flow of G-dliness in the Torah, from above to below, and the 'minor face' is the way this is received by the 'female', the Jewish people. The plea expressed in the verse 'If only... I could find You outside.. and bring You to the house of my mother' is that in a time of Exile, each of us should be able to find that revelation of the Divine which was there between the two Keruvim, whether as a Torah scholar 'inside' or a merchant 'outside'.

This relates to the special service in this time of Exile, spreading the wellsprings of Chassidic teaching to the 'outside', where there is the special intimacy with G-d expressed by the 'kiss', and through this we achieve the making of the Sanctuary within us, and the physical Sanctuary/Temple in Jerusalem which will be built by Moshiach.

Then there will be a great ingathering of the Jewish people, including 'Issachar' and 'Zebulun', the Torah scholars and the businesspeople, those who focus on

¹⁰ Sanhedrin 93b, commenting on I Samuel 16:18.

¹¹ See Rashi to Deut. Vezot Habrachah, 33:18.

¹² See Tanya chs.45-46.

study and those who focus on action, in the true and complete Redemption, may it happen speedily in our days.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care