

The Rebbe's Discourses

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

פרשת וארא תשכ"ה ד"ה וארא אל אברהם בלתי מוגה

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MOSES AT EIGHTY...

SEDRA VA-ERA PRESENTS THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS IN WHICH MOSES takes the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt.

The Sedra begins with G-d's statement to Moses: 'I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob with my Name E-I Sha-dai but I was not known to them by My Name the Tetragrammaton².

The verses continue with G-d saying that Moses will take the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt, and bring them to the Land which was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. A few verses further on, G-d commanded Moses to again speak to Pharoah and to demand that he release the Israelites from his land.

There then follows an intriguing passage which seemingly interrupts the narrative: a detailed genealogy of Moses and Aaron, providing exact details about how they were descendants of Jacob through his son Levi, and then his son Kehat, and finally his son Amram³. Then G-d again encourages Moses in his mission to Pharoah, and that despite his misgivings, Moses undertook this task. Then the Torah reports that when they spoke to Pharoah, Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty three⁴.

¹ Maamar Va-era el Avraham 5725 (1965). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Vaera 5782. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

² Exodus 6:3-5. The Tertagrammaton, 'Name with Four Lettrs', is the ineffable Divine Name which is now never pronounced. In Temple times the High Priest would utter this Name on the Day of Atonement and everyone would prostrate themselves.

³ Exodus 6:14-26.

⁴ Exodus 7:7.

The discourse asks two simple questions. Why does the Torah provide the genealogy of Moses at this point, and what is the significance of saying that he was eighty years old?

The Rebbe now refers us to a discourse by the Tzemach Tzedek in *Or HaTorah*⁵ which quotes the Torah commentary of the *Panim Yafot* by Rabbi Pinchas Halevi⁶ which states that the reason for presenting the genealogy of Moses and Aaron is to emphasize that they are the seventh generation from Abraham. The reason why this should be significant is that ‘all sevenths are precious’⁷, and hence they have a special level of spiritual empowerment to aid them in their task to take the Israelites out of Egypt.

Further, Rabbi Pinchas continues to explain, the fact that G-d was revealed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by His Name E-l Sha-dai links with the six days of Creation. For the Talmud tells us that in the act of Creation the world was, so to speak, unfurling endlessly, and in order to crystallize it in a finite form, G-d had to say ‘Enough!’, in Hebrew *Dai*. By contrast, G-d will reveal His Tetragrammaton to Moses, and this Name expresses Shabbat, which is higher than the six days of Creation.

Shabbat is the seventh day, and this links with Moses being the seventh generation after Abraham. The seventh is ‘precious’, just as the Sabbath is precious above the other six days of the week.

Based on the same commentary the Tzemach Tzedek then considers the fact that the Torah tells us that Moses was eighty years old. In Psalms⁸ we read that ‘The days of our lives are seventy years, and if with Might, eighty..’. The Tzemach Tzedek explains that ‘seventy years’ relate to the seven attributes of the Divine Sefirot⁹ while ‘eighty’ reaches the realm beyond them, the eighth Attribute Binah, Understanding¹⁰.

Kabbalistically, Binah, Understanding is associated with Might, as the verse states ‘I am Binah, Understanding, and I have Might’¹¹ and also that the Exodus from Egypt took place through the expression of a supernal form of Might.

⁵ The Tzemach Tzedek is the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1789-1866). See his *Or HaTorah* on Sedra Vaera, p.227 ff.

⁶ *Panim Yafot* is by Rabbi Pinchas Halevi Horowitz (1731-1805) author of the *Hafla'ah*, and Rabbi of Frankfurt a. Main. He and his brother Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg visited the second generation leader of Chassidism, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch and used his ideas in their works..

⁷ Midrash Vayikra Rabbah 29:11.

⁸ Ps. 90:10

⁹ Kindness, Severity, Mercy, Victory, Submission, Dedication, Kingship. Each includes ten aspects, and thus seven times ten is seventy.

¹⁰ Counting upwards from Kingship, Binah is the eighth Attribute.

¹¹ Proverbs 8:14.

Hence the Exodus is mentioned fifty times in the Torah, corresponding to the Fifty Gates of Understanding.

We now understand why the genealogy of Moses is mentioned, to link him with Abraham and show that he is the seventh, with the special empowerment which that entails. This links with the idea that the Patriarchs link with the six days of Creation, in which G-d said 'Enough!', the Name E-I Sha-dai, while Moses expresses the Tetragrammaton beyond, the sacred Shabbat, the seventh day.

Further, by virtue of Moses being eighty years old, he was able to reach the Attribute Binah, supernal Understanding, which would provide the 'Might' needed for the Exodus.

In addition, taking Binah more literally as Understanding, this empowered Moses to receive the Torah and transmit it to the Jewish people. Moses could absorb the Divine Wisdom of the Torah and then, through Binah, communicate it to Joshua and the rest of the Jewish people.

Although so far, in this discourse, the emphasis has been on Moses, in fact he gains his power from the Patriarchs before him. The fact that he is the 'seventh' emphasizes the importance of Abraham, the 'first'. This is why right at the beginning of the Sedra, G-d names the Patriarchs. In fact, the Talmud¹² tells us the Redemption from Egypt is connected with the birth of the Patriarchs: each of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were born in the month of Nisan, and that is the month when the Israelites went free from Egypt.

The discourse explains that through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob great Divine radiance was drawn into the world, from the realm of Keter, Crown, the highest Sefirah. This was then consolidated by Moses, with the power of Binah, expressing supernal Might, bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. And then, also through his power of Binah, Understanding, he was able to receive the Torah at Sinai and transmit it to the Jewish people.

As the Talmud¹³ goes on to tell us, in Nisan the Patriarchs were born, in Nisan the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt, and in Nisan we will be redeemed from our current Exile. May this be speedily in our days!

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

¹² Rosh Hashanah 11a.

¹³ Ibid.

