

# The Rebbe's Discourses

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

ד"ה ויקהל משה תשי"ב בלתי מוגה

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## REACHING FOR THE ESSENCE

**A**T THE BEGINNING OF SEDRA VAYAKHEL WE LEARN IN VERSES 1-2 THAT Moses gathered the Jewish people and said ‘these are the things that G-d has commanded you, for six days work should be done, and on the seventh day it should be a Sabbath of Sabbaths for you’<sup>2</sup>. And then again, in verse 4, we read that Moses told the Jewish people ‘this is what G-d has commanded you’ and he then detailed all the work necessary to build the Sanctuary.

What is meant by ‘the things that G-d has commanded you’ in the first verse? Some commentators explain this refers to the work of the Sanctuary which forms the bulk of the Sedra. But verse 4 presents this as a separate command by G-d. So, could we say that verses 1-2 are simply teaching about the Sabbath? But the Sabbath has been mentioned several times before in the Torah, such as in the Ten Commandments. So verse 1 must mean something else.

Further, what is meant by the phrase ‘work should be done’, in the passive? And why does it say ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths?’

The discourse explains that the command in verses 1-2 is about the way one approaches one's work in the six days of the week. This is the force of the words ‘work should be done’. A person should realize that their achievements at work come from beyond them, from the Divine. They should see their main task as Torah study, prayer and Mitzvot. In practical terms they are indeed active in ‘making a vessel’ for their parnasah, their material income; but their

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<sup>1</sup> Maamar Vayakhel Moshe 5712 (1952). Printed in Dvar Malchut of Vayakhel-Pekudei 5783. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

<sup>2</sup> Vaykhel Ex.35:1-2

inner focus is on spiritual life. Consequently, when Shabbat comes, they experience it fully, as ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths’. Otherwise, they risk it being disturbed by anxious thoughts about their weekday work.

The struggle to reach a more pure attitude to work and to other activities in life has important effects for each individual and also for the Jewish people in general and the world. Rashi tells us that the point when Moses gathered the Jewish people at the beginning of our Sedra was the day after the first Yom Kippur. That means the day after G-d finally forgave the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf, and Moses came down Mount Sinai bearing the Second Tablets of the Law.

This has a bearing on the deeper history of humanity. At the beginning of Creation all existence was wholesome. Then the Serpent tempted Eve, and as the Talmud and Zohar express it, imparted its impurity to her<sup>3</sup>. This impurity continued until the Jewish people stood before G-d at Mount Sinai, at the receiving of the Torah, when they were purified.

Unfortunately, a few weeks later when they made the Golden Calf, the impurity returned. But after Moses’ long sojourn on the Mountain, pleading with G-d, he attained Divine forgiveness for the people.

Then came the gathering at the beginning of our Sedra which Moses called, and his special address to the Israelites, which was really the instructions how to bring Tikkun and healing to the Jewish people so that they could again be purified and regain the state of purity and innocence as at the beginning of Creation.

The sin of the Tree of Knowledge involved inappropriate passion, and the Tikkun (healing) for this is to go beyond inappropriate materialist passion in dealing with the world and instead to seek to reveal in it the Essence of the Divine.

The hint to this is the concept of Shabbat, and the work in building the Sanctuary which typifies human activity in the daily world. The verse which Moses said, ‘these are the things’ אלה הדברים which G-d has commanded, is explained by the Sages as a hint to the 39 Categories which define ‘work’ and which are forbidden on Shabbat. The numerical value of ‘these’ אלה is 36<sup>4</sup>. ‘Things’ דברים in the plural means at least two, and the definite article הדברים , ‘the things’ adds another one. This adds up to 39<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Shabbat 146a, Zohar I 52b.

<sup>4</sup> Alef is one, Lamed is 30, Heh is 5.

<sup>5</sup> See Talmud Shabbat 70a.

The task of the Jewish souls, rooted in the Infinite Divine, is to reveal the Divine Essence in their encounter with the world and worldliness. This is their goal, and the goal of Creation. They draw the Essence into their own bodies, and into the world around them.

The Kabbalists tell us that everything is divided into ‘World’, ‘Time’, ‘Soul’. We see this in this event. Moses gathers the Jewish people, that means he is gathering all the Jewish souls into a true unity. When he told them ‘these are the things’, hinting at the 39 Categories of work, as we have seen, this expresses the idea of ‘World’, the world in which the work is carried out. And this also relates to Time as we see with the concept of the passage of the six weekdays and Shabbat referred to here.

Moses our great leader has the power to gather all the scattered Jews into a unit, and each one of us has a Moses inside us<sup>6</sup> who can gather our own scattered qualities, and unify us within ourselves and with G-d.

Through this our daily work will be an expression of the Essence, leading to the sublime quality of the Sabbath of Sabbaths each week. Through our work in this way we will complete the construction of the Sanctuary, the ultimate Sanctuary of the Third Temple, swiftly in our days.

[Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care](#)

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<sup>6</sup> See Tanya ch.42.