

The Rebbe's Discourses

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

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RULING FROM SEA TO SEA

IN PSALMS IT STATES “HE WILL RULE FROM SEA TO SEA, AND FROM THE RIVER TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH”². Rashi on Psalms interprets this verse as regarding Moshiach, who will rule the entire world. Why is his rule described in terms of ‘from sea to sea’? Further, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman says³, the coming of Moshiach depends on the service of the Jewish people, and therefore, our service in some way parallels the process of the advent of Moshiach. What is there in our service of G-d which corresponds to ‘he will rule sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth’?

The first concept to consider is ‘he will rule’. Each individual Jew is a ‘king’ within himself or herself, and we have to strive to see that the spark of Moshiach within each of us rules over our entire inner world, which then has an effect on the world as a whole, as the Rambam states⁴, that one should always consider oneself as equally balanced between good and its opposite, and the entire world as likewise equally balanced. Then if one does one good action – and, the Rebbe adds, or says one good word, or thinks a good thought – one tips the entire world to the side of good, and brings Redemption.

¹ Maamar Veyerd Miyam ad Yam 5733 (1973), said on Yud Beit Tammuz. It was partly edited by the Rebbe and published in Likkutei Sichot vol.38, p.100 ff. It was also printed in Dvar Malchut Chukat 5784.

² Psalm 72:8. The Rebbe was 71 years old when he taught this discourse, and Psalm 72 was the Rebbe's Psalm, following the Lubavitch custom to recite daily the Psalm corresponding to one's next birthday.

³ In Tanya, beginning of ch.37.

⁴ Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance, 3:4.

What about the two seas? A verse from Zachariah⁵ tells us that in the time of Moshiach ‘On that day, living waters will flow from Jerusalem (where Moshiach will dwell), half of them to the initial sea, and half of them to the concluding sea’.

Chassidic teachings explain that there are two aspects to the sea. One is that the rivers flow into the sea, the other is that the sea is also the source of water flowing in the world, such as by sea water evaporating and becoming clouds which then give rain, which gives rise to the rivers.

These two aspects of the sea, the source and the conclusion, which correspond to the Sefirot Wisdom and Kingship, exist also in each individual. The sea as source, the initial sea, is like the mind, beginning with Wisdom, Chochmah, often explained as the initial idea, which is then developed by Understanding, Binah, the power of contemplating a concept in all its ramifications, leading to Knowledge, Da’at, the commitment to action.

Then comes the question of how to engage in that action, in practical terms. For this there is a process of Thought, Speech and finally Action. These constitute the ‘concluding sea’, Kingship, which brings the abstract thoughts of the Mind into effect in the world.

Why does the verse say ‘from sea to sea’ without specifying which is the initial sea and which the concluding? Because the process works in different ways for different people. Some start with an idea which they translate into action, others start with the action, which they then support with the appropriate idea and rational construct. However, whichever way round, every person needs these two aspects to be working within them.

Now comes a further step. Considering the final stage in the process expressed by the concluding sea, ‘Action’, this Action might take place in the privacy of one’s home. That is not enough.

So the next part of the verse teaches us that we must move beyond that, extending our positive influence to the whole world. The verse states ‘and from the river to the ends of the earth’.

The ‘river’ is the river which flowed from Eden, into the Garden of Eden, watering the trees and beautiful plants which are there⁶. Each individual has to take the water of that river and irrigate the world as far as they can reach, to the ends of the earth.

⁵ Zachariah 14:8, see Rashi’s commentary there.

⁶ See Gen.2:10.

Through doing this each person will achieve their personal Redemption, which will lead to the General Redemption, in which all nations will join together in recognition of G-d. And then the verse will literally be fulfilled: 'He (Moshiach) will rule from the sea to the sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth'.

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