

The Rebbe's Discourses

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

ד"ה ועל הנסים.. רבת את ריבם פרשת מקץ תשכ"ח בלתי מוגה

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G-D FIGHTS THE BATTLE

THE VE-AL HANISIM PRAYER INSERTED IN THE AMIDAH AND GRACE AFTER MEALS during Chanuka briefly describes the events celebrated by the Chanuka festival. It states “You (G-d) stood up for them at the time of their trouble, You fought their battle..”.

We might explain ‘You fought their battle’ as meaning You helped them in their battle. The Maamar presents another way of understanding it: You fought the battle they should be fighting, but are not doing so.

The battle is with the realm of unholiness. The Jewish people should be creating a realm where the Divine Presence can dwell. This means cleansing the world. First through the service of turn aside from evil, then of doing good. Turning aside from evil means, not just avoiding evil, but loathing evil - a level described in Tanya as the service of a Tzaddik.

One could suggest that one way of understanding what ‘loathing evil’ might mean to us today, is deciding to do something about it. The person who simply avoids evil might construct a nice enclave where he can forget it exists. But the person who is really concerned about evil does something to get rid of it and transform it to good ².

¹ Maamar Ve'al Hanisim.. Ravta et Rivam 5728 (1967). Printed in Dvar Malchus of Miketz 5775. It was not edited by the Rebbe. This is a newly edited version of the summary printed

² This paragraph is not in the Hebrew discourse.

The difference between these two levels - turning aside from evil, and loathing evil - is discussed by the Rebbe Maharash³. Only when one loathes evil (which might mean a determination to do something about it) is there true rejection of evil; otherwise, it is possible for there to be a certain flow from evil percolating into one's being.

In Kabbalistic terms, this distinction is like that between the lower worlds of Beriah-Yetzirah-Assiyah (Creation-Formation-Action), and the higher world of Atzilut (Emanation). The lower worlds could have evil in them; but Atzilut is the world of unity. Not only is there no evil there, but there is no possibility of evil.

In terms of service of G-d, it is like the difference between the level of a Benoni, the intermediate person, and a Tzaddik. The Benoni could be assailed by negative thoughts from the Animal Soul, but he or she pushes them away. The Tzaddik, especially the complete Tzaddik, does not experience such thoughts, because the Tzaddik has neutralized or transformed the Animal Soul completely. It is no longer a source of bad. Being transformed, it functions as a force for good.

When the Jewish people are on this level they are also given abundant material prosperity, as it is written 'If you keep My statutes.. I will give you rain in its season'⁴.

But when this service is lacking - the result is Exile. This was what happened at the time of Chanukah, even though they were still in their own Land, and the Temple still stood. The Midrash says they were forced to declare publicly that they had no portion in the G-d of Israel, meaning that they were forced to deny their Faith in G-d. This denial was - may G-d protect us - a form of idolatry.

The reason for this tragic fall is because they did not attempt to transform evil completely. Their leaders were content to avoid it, instead of uprooting it and transforming it for the whole people. The result was that they experienced a flow from evil, which they did not wholeheartedly reject, and this led to Exile, albeit in their own land.

At this point, when they were so low, G-d 'stood up for them, and fought their battle'. G-d fought their battle against evil, the battle they should have begun long before. This came as an arousal from above, from G-d. Thus in a miraculous way they were victorious in their physical battle against the Greeks.

³ Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn (1834-1882), 4th Lubavitcher Rebbe. See his discourse beginning *Ravta et Rivam*, ('You fought their battle') taught in 1867.

⁴ Leviticus Bechukotai 26:3-4.

It is true that a crucial factor was the dedicated self-sacrifice of the Hasmoneans. Unlike in the case of Purim, when the whole people were united and stood firm in their Judaism, at Chanuka this was only the few: the Hasmoneans themselves. Their self-sacrifice was important in that it provided the *vessel* for the miracles of the military victory and the oil. But these miracles actually came from above, from G-d acting on their behalf.

Hence it states in the Al HaNisim prayer: ‘You stood up for them at the time of their trouble..’. Standing up means being straight, reaching the highest levels and drawing them down to the feet, the lowest point. Through this G-d fought their battle, against evil itself, so as to transform evil completely.

This links to the theme in Chassidic teaching that Chanuka expresses the verse ‘And G-d will illuminate my darkness’ (II Sam.22:29). In order to illuminate the darkness, there has to be a flow from a very exalted level, described as the Higher Tetragrammaton, a level beyond the downchaining of the worlds. The Hebrew word Ve-Hashem, ‘And G-d’, rather than simply Hashem, G-d, hints at this exalted level. The flow from that higher level of the Divine was able to ‘fight their battle’, to transform evil.

The Talmud depicts the Chanuka lamp as being placed in a doorway. It says that the Mezuzah is on the right (when entering the doorway) and the Chanuka lamp should be on the left⁵. The Mezuzah represents all the Mitzvot, which are carried out with the permitted aspects of the world. The Chanuka lamp relates to the forbidden, negative dimension, which has to be transformed.

The Chanuka radiance achieves this transformation of the negative by drawing from the realm beyond the downchaining of worlds – from the exalted level hinted at in the words ‘And G-d will illuminate my darkness’.

The key to this, from our point of view, is our self-sacrifice, *mesirat nefesh*, going beyond our rational understanding. This provides the vessel for the flow from G-d in which G-d ‘fights our battle’, transforming evil, making the world into a dwelling for the Divine.

This can take place in such a way that the opposing forces are transformed to good, in a way which does not even need battle. It is an expression of G-d ‘redeeming in peace’ my soul, because of ‘the many who are with me’, meaning that the ‘many’ who were formerly enemies have changed sides and our now ‘with me’⁶.

⁵ Shab.22a

⁶ Psalms 55:19, as explained in Chassidic teachings.

This affects not just the few, but the entire Jewish people. As the Al ha-Nissim prayer continues, this was a time of great salvation for all Jews, and they then kindled lights in the Temple. This what they will do in the Third Temple, which will swiftly be built by our righteous Moshiach.

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