

“אֲשֶׁרִי הָעֵם יִדְעִי תְרוּעָה וְכוּ'”

(תהלים פט:טז)

Ashrei HaAm: Charity and Hashem's Watchful Eye

THE TEACHING

Complete providence (הַשְׁגָּחָה), Hashem's full watchful care, cannot be drawn down until the desire for money (תַּאֲוַת מָמוֹן) is broken, and what breaks it is charity (צְדָקָה). The desire for money is idolatry (עֲבֹדָה זָרָה): while it rules there is anger in the world; as it weakens, kindness (חֶסֶד) comes, and kindness brings daas (דַּעַת).

Then the true sage gathers the souls who come to him with their longings, raises them, and brings down Torah. The Torah is shaped like an eye, and it brings Hashem's watchful gaze to all who are close to it.

MAIN POINTS

- The Zohar: “רוּחָא נָחַת לְשַׁכֵּךְ חֲמִימָא דְלִבָּא” (וזהר פנחס רכד), a wind comes to cool the heat of the heart. The wind is charity, a generous spirit, “יִבְצֹר רוּחַ נְגִידִים” (תהלים עו:יג); the Levites' song is honest business, happy with one's portion (שִׁמְחָה בְּחֶלְקוֹ). It is the incense, “קִטְרֹת יִשְׁמַח לֵב” (משלי כז:ט).
- It is the revelation of Mashiach: “כִּיּוֹם הָהוּא יִשְׁלִיךְ הָאָדָם אֶת אֱלִילֵי כֶסֶףּוֹ” (ישעיהו ב:כ), “on that day man will throw away his idols of silver”; “רוּחַ אֲפִינוּ מְשִׁיחַ ה'” (איכה ד:כ).
- “עִיר גְּבֵרִים עָלָה חֶכֶם וַיֵּרֶד עֵז מִכְסָּתָהּ” (משלי כא:כב): the sage climbs and brings Torah down. It is born from the union above, awakened when souls rise: “וְלִקְחָהּ נַפְשֹׁת חֶכֶם” (משלי יא:ל), “he who takes souls is wise.”
- Each person who comes brings a will, a longing (רָצוֹן). The sage gathers them, runs up and returns with Torah: “וְהַחַיִּית רָצוֹא וְשׁוֹב” (יחזקאל א:יד). רָצוֹן is רָצוֹן; שׁוֹב is Moshe, who receives the Torah and calms the heat for money.
- The Torah's notes, vowels, crowns and letters are the three colours of the eye and its pupil (בִּתְעִיָּן). Sight goes out, strikes and returns, “כְּמִרְאָה לְטוֹשָׁה”, like a polished mirror. One close to the Torah is seen fully; over those far from it the gaze is only half, a running with no return.
- The sage repairs a chariot of souls, like Yechezkel's. Rabbi Yonah, when rain was needed, said “אֲזִיל וְאִיתִי בְּזוּזָא עֲבוּרָא” and stood in a deep, hidden place covered in sackcloth: rain is Torah, “יַעֲרֹף כְּמִטָּר לְקַחִי” (דברים לב:ב); the coin is calming the desire for money; the sackcloth is gathering souls.
- We must search for such a sage. In Rabbah bar Chanah's tale the waves are souls. One wave says it is still sunk in desire, and yet “פּוֹק חֲזִי גְבוּרָתָא דְמָרָה” (פוק חזי גבורתא דמר): the sage lifted even it.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

When the heat of wanting more rises, give a little charity and feel it cool. Bring your longing, even a small one, to the Torah and the tzaddik. No one is too far down to be lifted.

In the full shiur: 1. Charity Cools the Heart · 2. The Sage Climbs with the Souls · 3. Torah, the Eye of Providence · 4. The Chariot of the Soul · 5. The Torah's Chariot, and Rabbi Yonah's Rain · 6. Seek Out the Sage: The Sailors' Tale · 7. Lifted to the Small Star · 8. See the Strength of Your Master

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