

בְּרוֹךְ הַבּוֹחֵר בְּעֵדֶת מִי מָנָה, אֲשֶׁר

Eyes Like Two Moons

THE TEACHING

A short Torah on a tale of Rabbi Yochanan in the Gemara (Bava Basra 74a): “וּמָנָא חָדָא הָוָה קֶאָזְלִינוּ בְּסַפִּינְתָא, “וְחִזְינָא הָאִי כּוֹרָא דְאַפִּיק רִישָׁהּ מִמָּיָא, וְדַמִּיא עֵינֵיהּ כְּתַרִּי סְהָרִי”, “once we were travelling on a ship, and saw a fish lift its head out of the water, and its eyes were like two moons.”

The fish (דג) is the tzaddik (צדיק), and the water is the higher wisdom (חכמות עליונות) where his mind roams. He cannot stay there every moment: at times he must step out to deal with the world, and then his eyes, which shone like the sun, shine like moons.

MAIN POINTS

- Sometimes stepping out is what keeps the Torah standing, as Chazal said: “פְּעָמִים בְּטוּלָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה זוֹ הִיא קִיּוּמָהּ”.
- Open eyes stand for wisdom (חכמה): “וְתִפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם” (בראשית ג:ז). Inside his wisdom the tzaddik's eyes are a sun; when he steps out it is like sunset, and they are left like moons, for the moon shines once the sun is gone.
- So we say “וְעֵינֵינוּ מְאִירוֹת כְּשֶׁמֶשׁ וְכִיָּרֵחַ”, “our eyes shine like the sun and like the moon”: like the sun when we cleave to wisdom, like the moon when we step back.
- Why step out? Esav and Yishmael, which include the nations, are two clouds (ענני) covering the eyes. If he never stepped back, they could overpower his eyes and cancel his wisdom, Heaven forbid.
- The fish's two nostrils are the two Messiahs (תריין משיחין), “רוּחַ אֶפְיָנוּ מְשִׁיחַ הִי” (איכה ד:כ). To them the nations, the rivers of סוּרָא (from “סָרוּ מִהֶר מִן הַדָּרֶה” (שמות לב:ח)), will be drawn: “וְנָהָרוּ אֵלָיו כָּל הַגּוֹיִם” (ישעיה ב:ב).
- All will speak a clear language, and then “וְהָיָה אוֹר הַלְבָּנָה כְּאוֹר הַחֹמָה” (ישעיה ל:כו), “the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun”, and the tzaddik will never need to let go of his clinging (דבקות).

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

When you must step away from learning, the light does not have to go out. Let it shine in you like the moon, until the day it shines like the sun.

In the full shiur: 1. Eyes Like Two Moons · 2. When the Moon Shines Like the Sun

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