

כְּשֶׁאָדָם הוֹלֵךְ אַחֵר שְׂכָלוֹ וְחֻכָּמָתוֹ, יוֹכֵל לִפְלֹ

Following Your Own Cleverness

THE TEACHING

Following your own intellect (שְׂכָל) can lead to great mistakes; the famous wicked who misled the world did it through their cleverness. The heart of Judaism (יְהוּדוּת) is to walk in wholeness and simplicity (תְּמִימוּת וּפְשִׁיטוּת): in everything you do, ask only whether Hashem's honour (כְּבוֹד) is in it. Then you will never stumble.

And even one who falls into doubts, even about Hashem, “הַנִּפְלֵה וְהִירִידָה הִיא תִּכְלִית הָעֲלִיָּה”, “the fall and the descent are for the sake of rising”, through the cry “אֵיִה מְקוֹם כְּבוֹדוֹ”, “where is the place of His glory?”

MAIN POINTS

- Everything was created for Hashem's glory: “כָּל הַנִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁמִי וְלִכְבוֹדִי”. The world was made “בְּעֶשְׂרֵה מֵאֲמֻרוֹת” (אבות ה:א), “with ten utterances”, and His glory is clothed in each: “מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ” (ישעיה ו:ג), and “וּבְהִיכָלוֹ כָּלוֹ אִמֵּר כְּבוֹד” (תהלים כט:ט).
- His glory does not spread into sin and impure places, yet they too must live. They draw life from the hidden utterance, “בְּרֵאשִׁית מֵאֲמֵר סְתוּם”, “Bereishis is a hidden utterance.” This cannot be understood, and one must not dwell on it.
- A person who falls there, sees how far he is and asks “אֵיִה”, “where?”, attaches himself by that very question to the highest glory, the hidden utterance that gives life even there. So he rises.
- This is the עוֹלָה offering, which atones for the confused thoughts of the heart (הִרְהוּר הֶלֶב): “וְאֵיִה הֵשֶׁה לְעֹלָה” (בראשית כב:ז), “where is the lamb for the olah?” And this is the essence of teshuvah (תְּשׁוּבָה): to search, to long, and to ask “אֵיִה”.
- So the Sages say: “אִם יֹאמַר לָהּ אָדָם, הֵיכָן אֵלֶיָּקִי – תֹּאמַר לוֹ: בְּכֶרֶךְ גְּדוֹל שֶׁל רוֹמִי” (ירושלמי תענית), “if someone asks where your G-d is, say: in the great city of Rome.” Whoever asks where He is already knows He is, only hidden, and that gives him holy life in the very place of his fall.
- This Torah is bound up with Torahs 15 and 16, hinted in the aggadah of Rabbi Zeira's questions about “כָּל חֻלְלֵי דְעֻלְמָא” (חֻלְלֵי הַפְּנוּי), “all the spaces of the world”: the vacated space (חֻלְלֵי הַפְּנוּי), which lives from the hidden utterance.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

When you feel far from Hashem, keep asking where He is. The question itself is the way back.

In the full shiur: 1. Simplicity, and Glory in All Creation · 2. Ayeh: Where Is the Place of His Glory? · 3. Even There He Is Hidden

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