

לפעמים הגדול הולך ונוסע להקטן, ולפעמים להפך

When the Great Travel to the Small

THE TEACHING

Sometimes the great one (הגדול) travels to the small one (הקטן), and sometimes the reverse: sometimes the tzaddik travels through the land and shines his light on his students, and sometimes they come to him. Know that the first is the greater.

It is natural for the small to come to the great, to receive. But sometimes the great one's light is so strong that the small one cannot receive it in its place. So the great one must lower and humble himself (להוריד ולהכניע עצמו) and go to him, so the light becomes a little smaller and more physical, and can be received. So his going to the small one comes from his very great level.

MAIN POINTS

- Moshe Rabbeinu was so great that he had to make himself small even before great men like Yehoshua and Aharon, so they could receive his light: “וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנּוּ מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם” (במדבר יב:ג), “the man Moshe was very humble, more than any man.”
- As the Sages say (Megillah 31): “בְּכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁאַתָּה מוֹצֵא גְדֻלָּתוֹ, שָׁם אַתָּה מוֹצֵא עֲנוּתוֹתָיו”, “wherever you find His greatness, there you find His humility.” Where there is more greatness, humility (ענוה) is needed, so the light can be received.
- What does the great one do for the small? He turns a constricted mind (מחין דקטנות) into an expanded mind (מחין דגדלות): that is a sweetening (המתקה).
- Sometimes with a shining face (הארת פנים) and words of comfort. And sometimes the small one cannot receive that way: “אֵצֶא דְּלֹא דָּלִיק, מִבְּטָשִׁין לָהּ”, “wood that will not catch fire is split.” Then the light comes through hardship (יסורין) and humbling, to break him so he can receive.
- The great one's loss in lowering himself is nothing compared with the repair (תקון) of the small one. His lowering is only for a moment, and then he returns to his level; but the small one is repaired and raised for good.
- How much lowering is needed depends. Sometimes a gesture is enough; sometimes he must travel. Like a candle that went out (נר שֶׁכָּבָה): if it still glows a little, hold it near the burning flame and it catches. If there is no light left at all, it must be brought right up to the flame.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

True greatness bends down. A good teacher, a good parent, comes close to where the other person is. And if your own light feels out, don't stay far away: come close to the flame.

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