

הצדיק הוא מכרח לעשות תשובה בעד ישראל

The Tzaddik Does Teshuvah for Israel

THE TEACHING

“הצדיק הוא מכרח לעשות תשובה בעד ישראל”: when someone goes outside the line and throws off the yoke (פּוֹרֵק עַל), the tzaddik (צַדִּיק) is compelled to do teshuvah (תְּשׁוּבָה) for him.

No punishment (עֲנֵשׁ) really helps such a person, and every punishment touches the tzaddik himself, for he is the simple root from which every person is drawn. And above it is the same: Hashem's Name is joined with ours, so when He forgives on Yom Kippur, His Name grows great.

MAIN POINTS

- A parable: a wild horse throws two men from their wagon. A fist only hurts the hand; a strap makes it bolt and throw them into the mud; tying it to a tree and beating it only wears him out. “וְאִין תִּקְנֶה לְסוֹס כְּזֶה רַק לִירוֹת אוֹתוֹ” (ישעיה סג:ט), “וְזֶה צָר לוֹ”, and that grieves him.
- So with one who strays: every punishment touches the tzaddik, as with Hashem: “בְּכָל צָרָתָם לוֹ צָר” (ישעיה סג:ט), “in all their troubles He is troubled”, for they are “חֶלֶק אֱלֹהִים מִמַּעַל”, a portion of the Divine above. So “גַּם עֲנוּשׁ לְצַדִּיק לֹא טוֹב” (משלי יז:כו), “punishing the righteous is not good.”
- A person is made of four elements (אַרְבָּעָה יְסוּדוֹת): fire, wind, water, earth. All are drawn from the simple element (יְסוּד הַפְּשׁוּט), the tzaddik, “צַדִּיק יְסוּד עוֹלָם” (משלי י:כה), like “וְנִהְיֶה יָצָא מֵעֵדֶן לְהַשְׁקוֹת אֶת הַגֶּן, וּמִשָּׁם יִפְרָד וְהָיָה לְאַרְבָּעָה רָאשִׁים” (בראשית ב:י).
- So when you come to the tzaddik, find yourself in him: see how you hold in every trait (מִדָּה). “אֵשׁ רוּחַ מִים עֶפֶר” (בראשית ב:יט), “your eyes shall see your teacher”: its first letters spell עֶפֶר. “וְהָיוּ עֵינֶיךָ רְאוּת אֶת מוֹרִידֶךָ” (ישעיה ל:כ).
- A punishment uproots a person from his life-force, and the name is the life-force: “נִפְשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ” (בראשית ב:יט), “נִפְשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ” (בראשית ב:יט), “if not, erase me”, asking Him to act for His great Name. His Name is joined with ours (מִשְׁתַּתֵּף בְּשִׁמְנוֹ), so our punishment touches Him, as it were. So Moshe said “וְאִם אֵין מַחְנִי נָא” (שמות לב:לב).
- On Yom Kippur Hashem said “סָלַחְתִּי כְדַבְּרְךָ” (במדבר יז:כ), “I have forgiven, as you asked”, and His Name grew great. So the next day Israel were warned about Shabbos, “שִׁבְתָּ שְׁמָא דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ-הוּא” (זוהר יתר), and that day is called “שֵׁם ה'”.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

When someone strays, try praying and doing teshuvah yourself before reaching for punishment. Look for yourself in the ways of the tzaddik, trait by trait. And every forgiveness makes Hashem's Name great in the world.

In the full shiur: 1. The Wild Horse · 2. Finding Yourself in the Tzaddik, and Shem Hashem

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