

Bereishis: Before the Eyes of All Israel

THE TEACHING

The Torah's end joined to its start: "בְּרֵאשִׁית - לְעֵינַי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל". Weeping over the exile dims the light of the eyes (מְאֹר עֵינַיִם), and when the luminaries of light (מְאֹרֵי אֹר) withdraw, the luminaries of fire (מְאֹרֵי אֵשׁ) grow strong: the burning of the בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.

When the true tzaddik (צַדִּיק), the beauty of the world, is revealed, Hashem's Name grows great and the eyes of all Israel open. He is בְּרֵאשִׁית, "ראש בֵּית", the head of the house. So rise at midnight (חֲצוֹת) to mourn for the Mikdash.

MAIN POINTS

- "וְשָׁבוּ הָעָנָנִים אַחֲרֵי הַגֶּשֶׁם" (קהלת יב:ב), "the clouds return after the rain": the light of the eyes, which fades after weeping. מְעַרְב, the west where light sets, is the first letters of "רָחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל בְּנֵיהָ" (ירמיה לא:טו), "Rochel weeps for her children"; at the כְּתֹל מְעַרְבִי the Shechinah weeps. Light withdrew and fire took over: "מִמְרוֹם שָׁלַח אֵשׁ בְּעַצְמוֹתַי" (איכה א:יג).
- The tzaddik is like Yosef, "יִפְהָ-תֹאֵר וְיִפָּה מְרָאֶה" (בראשית לט:ו). Whoever draws near him has his eyes opened: first to see himself, how he holds in each trait (מְדָה), then the greatness of Hashem.
- Hashem's Name is joined with ours (מְשַׁתָּף בְּשֵׁמֵנוּ), so as the tzaddik's name grows, His Name grows. From the Name come the three colors of the eye and the pupil: "רְאוּ כִּי קָרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם בְּצִלְאֵל" (שמות לה:ל), "see, Hashem has called Betzalel by name."
- שְׁכֵת is שְׁנֵי בָתִּים, the three colors and the pupil: "רְאוּ כִּי ה' נָתַן לָכֶם אֶת הַשְּׁכֵת" (שמות טז:כט). So Shabbos and the Mikdash go together: "אֶת שְׁכֵתִי תִשְׁמְרוּ וּמִקְדָּשִׁי תִירָאוּ" (ויקרא יט:ל).
- When a false leader with no Name of Hashem becomes famous, light is subdued and fire comes into the world: "וַיִּצֵּת אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן וַתֹּאכַל יְסוּדֶתֶיהָ" (איכה ד:יא).
- Rise at midnight and mourn. Hashem promised "לְשׁוֹם לְאַבְלֵי צִיּוֹן... פָּאֵר תַּחַת אֲפֶר" (ישעיה סא:ג), "splendor instead of ashes." מִתְאַבֵּל hints "לֹא תִבְעְרוּ אֵשׁ בְּכָל מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם" (שמות לה:ג): mourning holds back the fire, and Shabbos guards Israel's homes.
- Bereishis is also a eulogy (הֶסְפֵּד) for the tzaddik, Noach: he loses nothing, but the orphaned generation is pitied: "אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ". When the head is hidden there is no house: "תִּשְׁתַּפְּכֶנָּה אֲבֹנֵי קִדָּשׁ בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל חוּצוֹת" (איכה ד:א).

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

A tear for Zion is not wasted; it holds back the fire. Rise a little at night, and keep Shabbos with care, because it guards the home. And draw close to the light that opens the eyes.

In the full shiur: 1. Clouds Over the Eyes · 2. The Beauty of the World Revealed · 3. The Name, the Eye and Shabbos · 4. The Head of the House, and the Fire in Zion · 5. Splendor Instead of Ashes · 6. These Are the Offspring of Noach · 7. The Beauty of the Esrog, and Rochel's Tears

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