

לְשׁוֹן רַבֵּנוּ זְכוּרֵנוּ לְבָרְכָה עַל־יְדֵי תְקוּן הַבְּרִית

The Bow and the Arrows of Prayer

THE TEACHING

A dense teaching that climbs step by step. Guarding the covenant (תְּקוּן הַבְּרִית) is a bow (קֶשֶׁת), and prayer (תַּפִּלָּה) is its arrows (חֲצִיצִים): the eighteen blessings are three ו's, like three arrows on the string. Prayer is faith (אֱמוּנָה), "וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֱמוּנָה" (שמות יז:ב), "his hands were faith."

From such prayer the horn of Mashiach begins to sprout, "אֶצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן לְדָוִד" (תהלים קלב:יז), "I will make a horn sprout for David." Mashiach is the holy speech (דְּבוּר) we pray with, made of fire, water and wind (אֵשׁ מִיֵּם רוּחַ).

MAIN POINTS

- Then a person becomes free (בְּחֵירוּת) and comes to the holiness of Shabbos: שְׁשֵׁי בֵּת is שֶׁשֶׁת. The three strokes of the ש are fire, wind and water; the בֵּת is the blessings, "וְהָיָה בִּרְךְּ אֶת אֲבֹתָם בְּכָל" (בראשית כד:א).
- Shabbos is the goal of knowing, and "תִּכְלִית הַיְדִיעָה שְׁלֵא נִדְעַ", the goal of knowing is that we do not know: "אֲמַרְתִּי אֲחַכְמָה, וְהָיָה רַחֲקָה מִמֶּנִּי" (קהלת ו:כג). This goal surrounds the world, its Place (מָקוֹם): "אֵל יֵצֵא אִישׁ מִמָּקוֹמוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי" (שמות טז:כט); "הַקּוֹבֵץ מָקוֹם לְתַפְלָתוֹ" (ברכות ו:).
- He takes off the body from the snake's skin and puts on Shabbos clothes, a holy body from Gan Eden: "וְהָיָה שָׂכָה כְּבָשָׂרוֹ" (שמות ד:ז). His fortune (מָוֶל) rises, "בְּרַכְתָּ ה' הִיא תַעֲשֶׂיר" (משלי י:כב), his good inclination grows strong, and sadness and scoffing (עֲצָבוֹת וְלִיצְנוֹת) fall away. "קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר הוֹלֵךְ וְחֹזֵק מְאֹד" (שמות יט:יט).
- With this right hand he lifts those fallen into bad loves and fears to holy ones, and clears the darkness from their eyes: "גַּל עֵינַי וְאֲבִיטָה נִפְלְאוֹת" (תהלים קיט:יח), the wonders of Pesach (פֶּסַח סָח).
- The light of the eyes lifts every prayer to the Beis HaMikdash and searches out the chametz of the heart: the urge to second-guess the Torah scholars of the generation, "חֲלַק לָבָם" (הושע י:ב). So "אוֹר לְאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר" (פסחים ב:). By the light of the eyes we search for chametz.
- Then the heart burns with love in Torah, "מִיָּם רַבִּים לֹא יוֹכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת הָאֵהָבָה" (שיר השירים ח:ז). "הָעוֹבֵר עֲבָרָה וּמִתְבַּיֵּשׁ בָּהּ, מוֹחֲלִין לוֹ" (משלי י:יב): shame is like blood spilled, and the Shechinah covers it with love, "עַל כָּל פְּשָׁעִים תִּכְסֶּה אֱהָבָה" (משלי י:יב).
- The rest goes deeper: even a tzaddik's mitzvos need this shame, like shechitah (שְׁחִיטָה), and spilled blood lifts fallen souls, until "וְדוֹנוֹת נַעֲשִׂין כְּזָכוֹת", sins become merits.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

Prayer is an arrow, so pray with strength. Admit what you do not know. And when you have done wrong, let yourself feel it honestly; that shame is not the end, it is where love covers.

In the full shiur: 1. From the Arrows of Prayer to Shabbos · 2. The Light of the Eyes and the Love That Covers

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