

דע, שעל-ידי שְׁהֵעוּלָם הֵם מְקַטְנֵי אֱמֻנָה, עַל-כֵּן

Little Faith and Hard Devotions

THE TEACHING

A short teaching on why hard devotions are sometimes needed. One can serve Hashem with everything, for “אֵין הַקָּדוֹשׁ-בְּרוּךְ-הוּא כָּא בְטְרוּנְיָא עִם בְּרִיּוֹתָיו” (עבודה זרה ג.), “the Holy One does not come with impossible demands on His creatures.”

So why are fasts (תַּעֲנִיּוֹת) and hard devotions (עֲבוֹדוֹת קָשׁוֹת) needed? Because people are of little faith, קַטְנֵי אֱמֻנָה.

MAIN POINTS

- Chazal said: “בְּשַׁעַת שְׁמַד אָפְלוּ אַעֲרִקְתָּא דְּמִסְאֲנֵי יְהֵרָג וְאֵל יַעֲבֹר”, “in a time of persecution, even over a shoe strap, be killed rather than transgress.”
- Truly one need not die over such a thing, but the enemy is set on tearing away the faith itself and bringing him to heresy (כְּפִירוֹת), so he must give his life (מִסִּירוֹת נַפֶּשׁ) even over a small thing.
- Idolatry and heresy have no spirit (רוּחַ) at all: “אֶף אֵין יֵשׁ רוּחַ בָּהֶם”. Complete faith (אֱמוּנָה שְׁלֵמָה) is a long, patient spirit, מְאֲרִיךְ רוּחוֹ. Little faith is in the middle: a short spirit, not full faith, yet not denying altogether.
- So the verse says “מִקְצָר־רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה” (שמות ו:ט), “from shortness of spirit and from hard labour.” As persecution, a total breach of faith, calls for giving one's life even over a small thing, so a smallness and blemish in faith calls for hard devotions.
- There are many levels of little faith; even tzaddikim (צַדִּיקִים) can be of little faith, as Chazal expound “כִּי מִי בִז לַיּוֹם קִטְנוֹת” (זכריה ד:י).

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

Hard devotions make up for weakness in faith. The more we strengthen our trust in Hashem, the more simply we can serve Him with everything.

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