

We Can Sweeten the World

On the surface, the spiritual service of transforming darkness to light and bitterness to sweetness seems to be the service of pious individuals, while the average person is more than preoccupied with overcoming his animal soul. But when we look at ourselves and at the world around us, we see that there is no getting around it: Our souls descended to this world to be like candles to illuminate its darkness. Even more, it is upon us to sweeten the hardships and troubles filling this world – to transform the attribute of severity to the attribute of compassion. We transform darkness to light by revealing God’s light in this world – with faith, Torah study and mitzvah fulfillment. All of these slowly but surely infuse us with the nullification of our separate self-consciousness. But how do we sweeten hardship?

One way to do this is to contemplate the Divine root of the severe judgments and see what is hiding in their concealed dimension: God is not looking for revenge, heaven forbid, and the hardships with which He afflicts us stem from His great love for us. “As a man afflicts his son, Havayah your God afflicts you.”^[1] Love is concealed within the severe judgment. Furthermore, the Divine *ayin* - nothingness – that effects reality, including the hardships themselves – is all good, pleasure and life. In the supernal source, there is no evil at all. When we contemplate and elevate the severe judgments up to their good root, we are also able to reveal that goodness here in our lower reality. Then everything becomes manifestly good and sweet.

There is an additional way to sweeten hardships: To draw down lovingkindness from its supernal source, from the level of *Atika*. This level is so lofty that the opposites of lovingkindness and severity, of reward and punishment and of “the left hand distances while the right hand brings close” do not exist within it. In *Atikah*, everything is the right hand. Everything is love. Love is right, and severity - usually associated with the left - is nothing more than an intensification of lovingkindness. When this lovingkindness is drawn down, it turns reality on its head.

What is the difference between the service of elevating hardship to its supernal source and the service of drawing lovingkindness down from its supernal source? When a person is ill and we want to draw compassion down upon him and heal him, according to the first method, we will tell him to repent – to ascend to the root and to contemplate the Divine, loving message concealed in his illness. When he succeeds in doing so, certainly the harsh judgments from which he suffered will be sweetened.

According to the second method, of drawing down sweetness, we make no demands of the ill person. His condition itself awakens so much compassion that we must first draw healing and sweetening upon him from Above. Afterward, presumably, this revelation of Godliness will completely turn his life upside down.

This holds true for the Nation of Israel, as well. The second method says, first of all, “Redeem Israel, o’ God, from all its hardships.^[2]” Afterwards, the verse, “And He will redeem Israel from all its sins^[3]” will also be fulfilled.

The second method of sweetening – which is our preferred method – is relevant to the greatest tzaddikim – to Moses and the Mashiach. Their souls are rooted at the loftiest level, which is all good and lovingkindness (and in the supernal Name *Havayah* of *atika*, where everything is right, as above). From there, they can draw sweetening down to reality.

The role of Moses in every generation is to reveal that each and every one of us has a root in that lofty level – the level of “*Havayah* is our God,^[4]” which we recite daily in the *Shema Yisrael* prayer. This level makes it possible for us to rectify reality. When we listen to the call of Moses, “Hear Israel, *Havayah* is our God, *Havayah* is One,” with Jewish self-sacrifice – we will be able to sweeten the entire world and to enter the era of the world that is all good, where “God will be One and His Name will be One.”^[5]

^[1] Deuteronomy 8:5.

^[2] Psalms 25:22.

^[3] Psalms 130:8.

^[4] Deuteronomy 6:4.

^[5] Zecharia 14:9.