

Today's Intuited Word

by Ariel Bar Tzadok

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“A wise man once instructed his son that he should not take too much pleasure from this world, that he should not let eight days go by without fasting on one of them, and that he should pray, even for those who hate him, that they should come to serve the Holy One, blessed be He.” Sefer Hasidim, 225

This morning, as I prayed, I asked Heaven to guide me to some small and simple words of wisdom that I could share with my readers today. Looking at the books in front of me at the moment, I felt drawn to the Sefer Hasidim of Rabbi Yehudah HeHasid. As is my way, I closed my eyes, said my prayer, and let the book open to whatever page it would. The above words are what stood out to me, and I felt that I needed to share them at this moment. As I sat to write, the words of this first paragraph, explaining what I do and how I do it, came to me first. I guess that someone out there needs for me to write these words, learn this method, and maybe come to use it for him/herself. With this being said, let me share some insights into the above words.

The wise man in question is not identified. He does not have to be. The wisdom in his words shine through his anonymity. Some things are just true regardless of who says them. Like Ben Zoma said in Pirkei Avot (4,1), *“who is wise, one who learns from everyone.”*

There is absolutely nothing wrong and everything right with enjoying the pleasures of this world. However, to everything there must be safe and sane boundaries and limits. In the secrets of the Kabbalistic sefirot, we speak about primal forces of energy, Hesed, expansive energy and Gevurah, contracting energy. One is like an inhale and the other like an exhale. There is no full breath without the two together. We cannot live unless these two function together.

There are times of plenty and there are times of want. This is something we all know. To want what we need is natural and normal. To strive for what we need is equally natural and normal. It is also natural and normal to pursue those pleasures which are enjoyable, even though they are not needs, but desires.

In times of plenty, gathering desires can be easy, and desirable. Yet, in times of want, gathering desires is harder and sometime unattainable. While in times of need, we must still make every effort to provide for our needs, yet, we do not have to exert ourselves to the point of self-harm to pursue desires, which, for the moment, may be out of reach.

To all things there is a time and purpose under Heaven. There is a time for plenty and a time for want. There is a time when things come with ease, and there is a time when things will not come at all, no matter how much effort one invests. One who is wise will sense the times and act accordingly. This is the foundation for the wise words spoken by our anonymous wise man quoted above.

Take what is in your hand to grasp, but be cautious trying to grab for that which is beyond your reach. Hurting yourself in an attempt to gain something for a moment's pleasure is not worth the pain and recovery that must follow.

Fasting is also a good thing. It is a good discipline. We live in a society that is very food oriented. We socialize over food, we entertain with food, we spend out free time eating. Instead of food simply being a way to sustain our bodies and strength, we have transformed it into an object of pleasure and we pursue it far more often than is necessary. We pursue foods to the point of serious self-harm. The growing epidemic of obesity proves this point.

Food is good and necessary. Even sweets can be fine in proper moderation. Yet, we must always keep things in balance. We must never forget how much is need and now much is too much. There is a big difference between these two and we should make efforts to remember it.

Whether or not one fasts for one day out of eight is not the key issue. The key is that we remember that food has its place and its purpose. We must keep this in mind, and keep food in its proper amounts, in its proper place.

As for those who hate us, they will most likely never cease. There will always be someone who hates another for some valid or invalid reason. If one is responsible for provoking valid hatred in another, then one should rightly change ones behavior and attempt to make amends. This may or may not work to alleviate hatred. At least, one can make sure that any hatred one experiences does not have valid cause.

As for invalid hatred, what can one do other than to pray? One should not seek to see one's enemies suffering and destroyed. Rather one should pray to see that hatred itself is destroyed, and that one's enemies be saved from that hatred, as much as you are saved from it yourself.

We do not first seek the destruction of evil people, we first seek the destruction of the evil within them, and the removal of the causes that persuaded them to embrace evil behavior.

Evil is a choice, as is good. We can choose how we behave. We can choose how we act. Granted, there is a time for hatred, but that time is not eternal. Like inhaling and exhaling, hatred and evil reach their limit and then deflate.

If not, then as we learn from balloons, fill them with too much air and they pop. One with too much hatred and evil inside them will also eventually explode, unless they learn the natural way and come back into balance with themselves and the universe.

We must pray that we all return to God's natural order so that our world, our society, our country, and all of us, can regain the natural benefits and blessings that we have been endowed with, by our Creator.

Balance is the answer, remembrance is the key, prayer is the way.

This is the lesson that I have to share with you today. May today and all your tomorrows be good ones.