

Sacrifice

by HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

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“If you strike me down now I will become more powerful than you can possibly imagine.” These words were spoken by the character Obi-Wan Kenobi in the movie Star Wars just before he was killed by his nemesis Darth Vader. Yet, after Vader administered the death blow, Kenobi's body vanished into thin air, leaving behind his empty cloak and a very surprised Vader.



As is known from the film, Kenobi became absorbed into what the film calls The Force, the movie's pseudo-mystical version of what for many others might be an expression of G-d. Yet, the nature of the fictitious Force is irrelevant. Kenobi's statement however fictitious, nevertheless does relate an actual spiritual reality. The righteous are far more powerful untethered from their physical bodies than when stuck within them, limited by natural forces.

Religious literature of all kinds is full of lessons about our true human essence, which we call our immortal soul. Our true soul self comes to Earth, inhabits a body for a while and then returns to the domain from which it came. This domain is said to be the domain of true reality, a dimension very much unlike our own. This higher reality is said to surround us and penetrate us, it is said to be everywhere and yet invisible and unmeasurable by physical standards. While it is not physical as we understand it, it nevertheless exists and this domain is very much populated with all types of non-human entities, religiously referred to as angels, demons and souls. In religion, we refer to this domain as the spiritual world. Just what this means and what it really is we may never know as long as we sojourn here on Earth in physical bodies. Yet, once untethered, we are reabsorbed into our source, we essentially return home.

The spiritual domain is not out there somewhere, it is right here, next to us and surrounding us. Although we physical entities cannot see those whom we call the spiritual entities of that domain, they nevertheless can see us at any time and interact with us at will. We do not see, but they do! We cannot interact with them, but they do interact with us. They watch us. They speak to us, inside our minds and inside our dreams. They can influence our choices and our behavior without our ever knowing or becoming aware of their influence.

In the movie Star Wars, Obi-Wan Kenobi insinuated to his nemesis Vader that if he did strike him down, he would immediately be absorbed back into “The Force.” In real life, when the righteous pass away, either through natural causes or through violent means, they in turn are absorbed into the spiritual domain and acquire spiritual powers in that domain that far surpass the fictitious account portrayed in Star Wars.

In real life, G-d knows human souls. He knows them while they are in the physical body and He knows them while they are in the spiritual body. In G-d's eyes, there is not much of a difference

between the two. Both are His creations. Both serve the purpose of His Divine Will. When G-d allows the righteous to be martyred, to be killed without justification or cause. He is not doing so as some nebulous form of punishment. On the contrary, He is doing the righteous a favor. G-d is taking the righteous souls out of the corruptible physical body and restoring them to the incorruptible spiritual body. In this form, the righteous become far more powerful and can easily maneuver and manipulate their enemies in ways that physical limitations could never allow them.

This is why we often see that once great physical powers in this world martyr smaller and lesser ones, the greater one itself somehow always becomes corrupted from within and eventually implodes and collapses under its own weight. While some might call this a natural course of events, others recognize the supernatural invisible undercurrent underlying all natural phenomena.

A great question asked in religious circles is why does G-d allow the righteous to suffer? Why do those who stand up for G-d and what is right always seem to get hammered down. Why does not G-d come to the defense of His righteous and smite the evil doers who seek their harm? The answer to these question can be found in scripture itself. It is written in Isaiah (55:8-9), "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," says the L-rd. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts [higher] than your thoughts." With this Isaiah is revealing to us how G-d views our questions. For while in our eyes it appears that G-d is abandoning His righteous into the hands of evil-doers, in G-d's eyes nothing could be further from the truth.

G-d is His great wisdom knows how to strengthen and refine the souls of the righteous. He knows how best to protect them and He knows how best to remove from them any and all forms of weakness. These weaknesses include attachment to physical, corruptible bodies. Sufferings refine the soul. Sufferings make the soul realize beyond any shadow of doubt that physical living in this corporeal world is not the end-all pleasurable experience some have deluded themselves into believing.

Physical suffering enables the soul to remember that there is more to life than just the physical body. Suffering enables the soul to remember itself and recognize itself as an independent entity, free from and removed from the sufferings of the flesh. As such, sufferings are a blessing to the soul that enable it to refocus on the spiritual higher reality that is ever present but blinded from our eyes due to attachment to the flesh.

Remove the desire for fleshly focus and one can develop spiritual awareness and insight. One can even begin to grasp glimpses of the spiritual domain all the while in the flesh as long as the flesh does not act as an impediment. Therefore, in His mercy, G-d sends to His beloved righteous sufferings to help them separate their attention from the illusions of the physical world and to attach their minds, their focus, on their true soul selves and the reality of the higher domain. One with such insight experiences and knows for sure that death is not a door that closes, but rather a door that opens. Death is not a curse for the righteous but rather a blessing. Death is a doorway home to the higher domain of righteous souls.

Thus when close to death the righteous say, "strike me down now and I will become more powerful than you can possibly imagine." Not that death enables one to act in the physical world, but rather one acts in the soul world and even the smallest action in the soul world is far more powerful than anything in the physical world. In the physical world all one can do is destroy the mortal flesh. In the spiritual world, one can destroy both body and soul. In the physical world all one can do is kill the body and send it to the grave. In the spiritual world one can kill the soul and send it to Hell. Death of the body means nothing to the soul. Death of the soul means everything.

The righteous come to view death as does G-d Himself, as a door that opens to a greater world. The righteous do not fear torture and sacrifice, for both prepare them for the ultimate passage and make such passage easier and quicker. The righteous therefore seek to die as they have lived, for righteousness sake. The righteous do not fear to push upon the blades of the enemy or to block gunfire with their own bodies. For the righteous, all that matters is the cause of righteousness. Whatever the cost, it is G-d who is paying the price and our souls are His currency. The righteous are proud to live and die in the service of Heaven. For the righteous, there is no other reality.

Bad times come to refine the righteous and to train the faithful. This is why sufferings are considered a blessing in disguise. This is why even the prophet Isaiah refers to the righteous as G-d's suffering servant. This is why apparently bad things happen to good people. It is all a matter of perspective. What looks to us as something bad may very well be in the Eyes of G-d something good. All we can do is put our trust in Higher Hands and know that whatever transpires does so to serve a Higher Good. That should comfort us as we suffer through the trials and tribulations of our daily lives. G-d is most certainly with us, the question is, are we with Him?

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