

The Third Pillar: The Concealment

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III. Third Pillar: The Concealment

The third fundamental principle is to know that all materialistic cravings stem from an inherent atheistic attitude we all have – no-one is entirely clean of it – deriving from the basic concealment of God’s presence through which the creation came about. This attitude is expressed in the egoistic idea that “*my* power and the strength of *my* hand has made me all this might” (Deuteronomy 8:17) – that we are in control of things in this world.

This attitude is idolatry in the literal sense of the word. It is the root of the drive for material wealth – the drive that makes people throw themselves heart and soul into the rush to accumulate goods and money, forgetting that God alone gives us the guidance and strength to achieve anything in this world and acquire anything. Everything comes from God, and He watches over each person individually – over every single detail.[\[1\]](#) The reason why our livelihood is not given to us directly from Heaven, without intermediary causes and without the need for some kind of activity on our part, is to give us free will and to test us. Because God is concealed,[\[2\]](#) it is always tempting to say, “My hand is high and it was not God Who did all this” (Deuteronomy 32:27). Having this attitude is what makes it seem such a burden to give charity, conduct ourselves faithfully and honestly in work and business, set times for Torah study and other mitzvot, etc.

There is a way of testing yourself in this area, and if you keep to it you will be able to repair a great deal. You may

think that something you or someone else did caused you a monetary loss – whether because of a bad idea, a wrong decision or something else. Never regret it.[\[3\]](#) Put any such thoughts out of your mind completely. Just have faith that God was and is in control of every detail. Have faith that everything that you and anyone else may have thought, said or done to cause you a loss all came about from the Hand of God, who is “wonderful in counsel, excellent in wisdom” (Isaiah 28:29). As long as you have regrets about what happened, it is a sign that you are still caught in the trap of “my power and the strength of my hand”, even though you may not put it so bluntly in these actual words. That is why the Torah says, “Lest you say *in your heart*, my power and the strength of my hand, etc.”[\[4\]](#)

The craving for food over and above what is necessary is also rooted in this atheistic attitude. The true source of our strength and vitality lies in the flow of blessing coming down from God, the Life of life. It was only to give us our free will through the concealment of His presence that God arranged for man to receive his vitality through food and drink.[\[5\]](#) As long as a person does not merit this understanding, he is caught in the physicality of the food, and through it forgets God.[\[6\]](#) The only way to silence the din of our craving for food is through knowing that all the energy and vitality in the food, even its taste, is all from God, and that the only reason why our vitality is sent down to us via food is to give us free will and to test us.

We should have this in mind when we say the blessings over food and other material pleasures. If God “brings forth bread from the earth” through physical means which conceal God, it is for the sake of free will, in order that we should be the ones to have the merit of revealing Godliness out of the concealment. The same applies to all the different blessings etc. (Likutey Moharan I:56).[\[7\]](#)

[1] “Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except fear of Heaven” (Berakhot 33b). This is understood to mean exactly that. Everything! Income, health, etc. Even fear of Heaven is sent to us – except that in this area we are free to exercise our free will, whereas in the other areas we are not.

[2] “The reason we are not given our livelihood directly is so that we should get to see the beauty of God – the way He reveals Himself at the very moment He knows we need assistance” (Likutey Moharan II, 16). Thus “The eyes of all look to You and You give them their livelihood, each in his own time” (Psalms 145:15). On this the Talmud teaches that each person has his own moment when he is provided for (Ketubot 67b).

[3] “Whatever one receives is disbursed from Heaven. No one can touch what is provided for someone else even as much as a hairsbreadth” (Yoma 38b). Accordingly regrets over our past actions in business are totally useless, as it was never in our hands to change the Heavenly decree about our finances anyway. The Midrash tells of a businessman who was hurrying to board a ship. He arrived at the port moments after the ship had set sail, and was extremely upset. A few days later, he heard that the ship had sunk and everyone on board was drowned. He then praised God for making him late, thereby saving him (Kohelet Rabbah). One never knows what God has in mind for him. Sometimes, a financial loss can be a great blessing as it nullifies other, more severe decrees.

[4] Every day we say in Shema, “lest you follow your heart” (Numbers 15:39). The Rabbis said, “This refers to atheism” (Berakhot 12b).

[5] The Talmud tells us that the entire world received its sustenance in the merit of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, but Rabbi Chanina himself was satiated with a single measure of carobs from one week to the next (Ta’anit 24b). Everyone has to

receive sustenance, or else they cannot survive. However, Rabbi Chanina was satiated with the barest minimum, because he believed and accepted that everything is from God. One who fully accepts this premise can be satiated with anything.

[\[6\]](#) “Perhaps you will eat and be sated...then you will forget God...” (Deuteronomy 8:12-14).

[\[7\]](#) “In the future (after Mashiach comes), the Holy Land will give forth loaves of bread daily” (Shabbat 30b). When God will reveal Himself, we will see with our own eyes that everything comes from Him in whatever manner He chooses. In the present period of concealment, however, we have to search for Him.