

Daily Meditation 3/28/2023

God, Justice, and Concern for the “Unregarded”

Good morning.

We continue exploring names for divinity. And yesterday we talked about the physics: earth, air, fire, water, and focusing on the fire element in our meditation especially.

Today we're talking about justice and "concern for the unregarded" - that's Rabbi Heschel's term; so many of these terms are very catchy and rich.

...Concern for the unregarded...

And yes, he talks about "challenging transcendence," a call to challenging transcendence, to act out of love, and concern for other beings, and the work of justice, the work of the prophets, the prophet in all of us.

So you know, it's a response, a call to a challenging transcendence.

So transcendence isn't just something great, bigger than us, that's out there someplace. It is challenging us. It's in a relationship with us, making demands, challenging us, urging us to grow bigger, and grow our insides bigger to reveal our love and our forgiveness and our creativity, and our courage, and our willingness to stand up and be counted.

Furthermore, "Hashem says that God is the ground of conscience"...the ground of conscience.

So we've been meditating on God as the ground of being, the ground of conscience -- that takes us into the realm of ethics and morality and making decisions and choosing. The ground of conscience: that's a beautiful understanding of divinity.

I began reading Thomas Aquinas because when I was a teenager growing up in the 50s, I learned about Martin Luther, and his protest against the corruption in the Christian church at that time. It was such that he ended up uttering a famous line, that he could only act on his conscience, he must act out of conscience to oppose that corruption in religion. And I thought that Luther was a hero in Christianity, for the word *conscience* and the concept of conscience.

It was only many decades later that I read about Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, several hundred years before Luther, saying that conscience is more to be obeyed than authority imposed from the outside. And he goes on and on about conscience and the purity of conscience. So I was very glad to hear that, that not only Luther but Thomas Aquinas and many others have held conscience up as so important.

And therefore the ground of conscience that Heschel talks about is in all of us, and it is accessible to all of us. Conscience is not just for the Martin Luthers of the world. It's for all of us. And it's not just kind of like a feeling in our hearts, or Jiminy Cricket on our shoulder, someone whispering to us.

Aquinas' conscience is a judgment that's made on the basis of clear thinking and taking counsel, and thinking critically. The word "critical" comes from the word *kritein*, to judge, to make some decisions: is this for the good, or is this for the bad? Is this for the common good, or is this for individual ego and aggrandizement?

So the role of the ground of being challenges us, and it's also the ground of conscience. This brings alive our participation in the work of justice today.

As Eckhart says, God is justice itself. God and justice are completely one. Compassion means justice indeed compassion is where peace and justice kiss.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.