

*A Hasidic farbrengen (gathering)
is: one person remains silent;
and everyone listens.*

I. The Soul (during Exile)

‘When the turn of Esther ... arrived, she requested nothing other than what Hegay told her’,¹ yet – indeed, for this very reason – ‘she found favour and lovingkindness before [the king].’²

וּבְהִגִּיעַ תֵּר-אֶסְתֵּר ... לְבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, לֹא בִקְשָׁה דְבָר--כִּי אִם אֶת-אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הָגִי ... יִי וַיִּצְחַב הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל-הַנְּשִׂימ, וַתֵּשֶׂא-חַן וְחֶסֶד לְפָנָיו ... וַיִּמְלִיכָהּ תַּחַת וְשִׁתִּי. (אסתר ב: טו, יז)

Esther: allegory for divine source of souls, and for the individual soul, when they are in a state of ‘*hester*’ = hiddenness, i.e. when G-d’s face is hidden from them, in exile (‘I shall surely hide (*hastir astir*) my face on that day’³).

King: allegory for G-d, King of the world.

The arrival of Esther’s turn: allegory for the move of the soul from the state of hiddenness, to ascend before the King of the world.

A soul in the state of hiddenness / Esther / *hester* needs a mediating agent to help it to ascend to G-d. That, however, is true only when it has its own, self-centred agenda. In contrast, due to her self-transcendence, ‘Esther ... requested no thing (*lo ... dabar* = no words (*dibbur*), nothing external – i.e. no mediating agent) but only what Hegay (*higayon* = inner musing, meditation – the inner divine voice) told her ...’: through selflessness, a soul even in the hiddenness of exile is able to draw out (*hoga*) the inner divine voice, and ‘find favour before’ the King, i.e. to ascend before G-d.

II. G-d (during Exile)

2 dimensions of King *Ahashverosh* as allegory for G-d, King of the world

1: King of the world: *Ahashverosh*: *Ahareth* = the end, and *reshith* = the beginning, *shelo* = are His.

2: G-d during exile: *Ahashverosh*: *Ahash* = ‘I remain silent’; & *rosh* = ‘bitter’, & ‘impoverished’.⁴

2 types of silence: G-d’s silence (during Exile) is of type 2:

1: Inability to get the words out: ‘my throat is parched’:⁵ one has something to transmit outwardly, but cannot get it out.

¹ Esther 2:15.

² Ibid. verse 17.

³ Deuteronomy 31:18.

⁴ ‘Bitter’: Deuteronomy 32:32 (see commentaries ad loc.); ‘impoverished’: root רוש \ ריש, cf. root ירש.

⁵ Psalm 69:4.

2: Experiencing essence, which is beyond outer manifestation: beyond words, beyond packageability into articulated concepts, beyond outer-directed cognition. Rather: awareness of inner mind/source/essence.

Standard explanation:

Since the world has alienated Him, G-d recedes into His essence, breaking off communication and relation, that is: breaking off the revelation of the stages of outward and downward flow from Him to the world. Thus, the relation between G-d and the world is 'embittered' and 'impoverished'.

Problem with above model: If, during exile, G-d remains silent = the divine word that is in the Creation is not audible / manifest, then how, during exile, can the soul find its inner divine voice (cf. Esther)? Isn't that voice hidden, silent?

The Rebbe's Twist:

Based on the principle articulated in Psalms: 'The L-rd supports all who are fallen';⁶ 'when one falls, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the L-rd supports his hand';⁷ 'Fallen' = the 'embitterment' and 'impoverishment' of Exile. Unlike the previous explanation, during Exile, when G-d is in His lofty silence of interiority, He does not break off relation with the world. Rather, He 'supports the fallen' by sharing with them. But what he shares is not perceptible, but rather His lofty, interior silence, as follows:

Israel's 2 types of descent in Exile:

1. Inner self is injured by the descent / fall; interior spiritual state affected by lowness;
2. Inner state intact / unaffected; yet it is present in alien environment

Type of descent of 'the Divine Presence is in Exile':

Type-2 above: Interior unaffected, but present in an inhospitable environment, where it nurtures even what is negative / opposed to it

Paradox of Divine support to Israel during Exile: From Beyond; From Within:

The power that supports must be greater than and beyond the fall / fallen;

The power that supports must reach beneath the lowest level of the fallen; &

The power that supports will not be accepted if conveyed as an exterior imposition (heteronomously), but only if it unfolds as the fallen's own self (autonomously).

Parable: student errs, teacher wishes to set him right

Process required of teacher: lower his thought process to the student's level; walk through the topic with the student; lead the student correctively – in a manner that the student does not feel that the concept is the teacher's, who is beyond him, but his own.

Gestalt required of teacher: Inner attachment to loftiness + utter self-effacement / absolute focus on student.

Stance required of student: 'request nothing' – selfless relinquishing of agendas, mindsets, etc.

⁶ 145:14.

⁷ 37: 24.

Integration of 2 aspects of *Ahashverosh*: *Ahash* = 'I remain silent'; & *rosh* = 'bitter', & 'impoverished': Divine silence = essence / interiority is present within the bitter / impoverished = fallen. 'Wherever Israel is exiled, the Divine Presence is with them'.⁸ Revisiting the verse, 'I shall surely hide (*hastir astir*) my face on that day': the Divine Face is not removed, but is present, albeit imbedded hiddenly; and it is capable of being discovered – through agenda-less absorption of that silence.

Problem with Divine silence-mode: It is disengaged, non-differentiated, inarticulate, non-judgmental, non-linear. Thus it allows everything, not imposing moral enforcement; and thus tolerating evil / the persecution of those who live by (linear) moral judgment.

Solution: Dig deeper than linear morality; Interiorize the Divine Silence:

Between itself and G-d, the soul transcends the limited categories of 'linear conceptualizations' and even 'will (volition), which structures the mindset', engaging, instead, the interior, incommunicable (silent) 'I am' of G-d, in which the soul's depth is rooted.

This Divine interiority is engaged not by linear perfection, but by the Soul's / Israel's depth in steadfastly and selflessly relinquishing agendas, 'requesting nothing'. Thereby, the depth of Divine silence becomes embodied and lived in the soul / Israel, and thereby revealed, articulated and positively / morally directed, thus transforming the exilic world into a housing of the Divine essence.

⁸ Cf. Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 29a.