4. My Prayers

While I was growing up within my family I was taught at my parent home and the synagogue school the set forms of prayers as the means of my communion with God. I could not understand this type of a path. I would ask my parents as to why it was necessary to talk with God not the way I talked with my own father, why it was necessary to talk with Him by using only the set forms of prayers. How could I express to Him my thoughts, my love, my petitions that my mind was feeling and that could not be expressed by the words of those set prayers for they did not include such petitions that my mind did strongly desire to present all the same? My parents and my teacher in religion were scared by these speculations of mine. These were solid and painful speculations both to my parents and to my teacher for they had not adapted their mind to the freedom of such considerations. Therefore they would not know in what manner to deal with me, and they would merely sharply retort: “We follow the law of Moses. He is our prophet and he communicated with Jahve and received teachings from him and he left his regulations over to us as to how it is and it is not allowed to commune with Jahve. That is why we pray the way we are instructed by the Holy Scriptures for it is only they that hold the truth. You are not the one who would be wiser than Moses to abrogate the laws he has left over to us. God shall punish every one who will attempt to equal Him. Thus, do it the way our ancestors did it and the way we do it.”

However these explanations were not convincing to me. It was beyond my understanding as to why it was not allowed to talk with God with love the way one would like to talk with one‘s most beloved friend, with one‘s most beloved and closest father or mother. I did desire such a real and live communion so that my own inner self was boiling with a protest against such a concept of God that I was being offered both by the Scriptures and by my parents – to address the God of Israel, Jahve, by only a fixed form. Therefore I would revolt at home that it was not true. God wants our sincerity and not these very same words being repeated daily. I would ask my father, Joseph: “Father, would you be satisfied if all your children repeated to you these very same words every day. How could you know us better, how could we love you more if all our communication were always the same words; and if all of us were speaking the same words. And not only within our family but in all the Jewish families all the children would be talking with their parents using the very same words. How could you know, then, our wishes? How could you know what we have already achieved, and what we do not need to reach out for at all?”

However, neither my father nor my mother could explain to me anything. They would get irritated and command me not to bother them with such blasphemies. And they would ask me to tell others nothing of this sort for I would run into big trouble.

But how could one, while being a child, begin to listen to the words of one‘s parents when the parents could not provide any satisfactory answers to any of my questions which I was unable to answer for myself either. Therefore I would discuss even these very issues with my friends. I would also put these questions to my teacher at the synagogue school. But nobody could ever give me an answer. They were feeling I was sincere, they were feeling that their uniform answers which I also

heard from my parents at home, did not convince me. And sometimes it aroused their strong irritation that I was still searching for something else, that I was not satisfied with what I would hear from them. In no way could I fit within the frame offered to me by the so-called Holy Scriptures. Therefore I was left alone with these very questions to ponder upon: “Why do I have to commune with God only by the established forms of prayers? Why does Jahve punish people for sins if God is a merciful and loving Father of Israel? Why do people have to suffer and be sick? Why is there so much evil? Why are we not alike? Why are not all the people reasonable and good? Why does God allow to kill?” and many others.

Since my sincere desire to question caused irritation to many, I noticed that people lost their temper merely because they did not know the answer. And once the question would lead them out of an established framework of thinking, then they would feel like they were losing ground under their feet and would get frightened as if I had told them something wrong. And then out of fear, automatically, they would begin to defend themselves by attacking me back.

This is common to all people of a low spiritual level, that fright and fear automatically command a self-defensive reaction which is always an attack against that person who has caused this reaction. And instead of thinking about the question itself, they snap out right away: “What nonsense are you talking? Have you lost your common sense?”

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