

Kabbalah on Qohelet 6:1—Zohar III: 155b-156a

Rabbi Aba was sitting one night and studying Torah, accompanied by Rabbi Yose and Rabbi Hizkiyah. Rabbi Yose said, “How hard-hearted are people, totally disregarding matters of that world!”

Rabbi Abba said, “Evil of the heart, gripping all members of the body, makes them so.”

He opened saying, “**There is an evil I have seen under the sun...**” (Ecclesiastes 6: 1). There is an evil— an evil force in the heart, seeking dominion over matters of this world, completely disregarding matters of that world.

Why is evil? The following verse demonstrates this, as is written: “**One whom God give wealth, possession, and honor, and the person lacks nothing for oneself of all one desires; yet God does not enable that person to consume it**” (Ecclesiastes 6: 2). This verse is difficult. Since it is written “**and the person lacks nothing from oneself of all one desires**” why then “**yet God does not enable that person to consume it**”, seeing that “**person lacks nothing for oneself of all that person desires**”?

“Well it is a mystery, and all the words of King Solomon are clothed in other words—like the words of Torah, which are clothed in stories of the world.

Come and see: Although we should look at the garment, now this verse is explained as follows: A person proceeds through this world, and the blessed Holy One gives this person wealth, so one may thereby become worthy of the other world—the principal remaining with this person.

What is the principal? That which endures, a place in which the soul is bundled. So one must leave this principal behind, and one will receive it after departing from this world. For that principal is the Tree of that world, and it does not exist in this world—only the fruit issuing from it. So a person who proves worthy eats its fruit, while the principal endures for that person in that world, to attain supernal life above.

“If one defiles oneself, lured after oneself, so that one lack nothing at all—and that Tree is abandoned, not placed before that person in awe, so that it will welcome this one above—then God does not enable this person to consume it and to attain that wealth. Another person consumes it—as is said: “**What one prepares, the righteous will wear**” (Job 27: 17)

Therefore, by what the blessed Holy One give a person, this one should prove worthy of that world—so that one may eat of it in this world, while the principal remains for this person in the other world, that one may be bound in the bundle of life.”

6:1-3—Suffering is part and parcel of life itself, but you only augment it through your anxiety. You labor hard and become wealthy. You own much and are admired by many—but we both know how high is the cost! What time remains to enjoy your success? Your days are spent chasing after what you have yet to grasp and the fear of loss crowds out any enjoyment of your gain. (after Rami Shapiro)