

חסידות

From the Chassidic Courts

Tiferet Shlomo

RADOMSK · BERESHIT, TIFERET SHLOMO

Each generation has its own "great light" — its own tzaddik (righteous one) — through whom guidance and salvation come, and one must cling to the tzaddik of one's own generation rather than despair over not having the stature of earlier ones. While the earlier tzaddikim ruled with strict judgment, demanding higher conduct from their generations, the later tzaddikim, precious in their own way, plead leniently and find merit for Yisrael amid the darkness and poverty of galut (exile), and their prayers, like those of mere "schoolchildren" compared to the giants of old, are still cherished and accepted above. AI SUMMARY

"And God made the two great lights: the great light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night," etc. For behold, there are two types of tzaddikim (righteous ones) who are called "great lights," each one great in his generation. For indeed, in the generations before us there were great tzaddikim who illumined the world with their righteousness, like the tzaddikim and early prophets who existed long ago. To them was given rule and power in heaven and on earth, to decree a matter and have it established, and over all their ways light shone.

But now, in these generations, although the tzaddikim are not like the earlier ones, nevertheless a person should not despair and say, "We will grope like the blind in darkness," heaven forbid. Rather, one should know that they too are called "lights" in their own time, for now, in the ikvot dimeshicha (footsteps preceding the Messiah), they cannot attain the levels of the earlier ones. Yet now, by their word all matters are sealed; to them alone has the land been given. And a person must cling to the dust of the feet of the tzaddik who is in his generation, lest he be lost, heaven forbid — "Yiftach in his generation is like Shmuel in his generation."

And so our Sages, may their memory be blessed, said: "Scripture weighs three of the lightest of the world as equal to three of the heaviest of the world." At first glance the expression "lightest of the world" is difficult. However, behold: the earlier tzaddikim, being on a very, very high level, were stringent

toward their generation, for it pained them greatly that their generation did not conduct itself properly, as is known regarding the prophets and the generations after them. But the tzaddikim who are not on that lofty level — they are lenient toward the people of their generation, pleading well on their behalf, to forgive their iniquities and all their sins, for they offer excuses before Hashem, may He be blessed, on account of the heaviness of the exile and the greatness of the poverty. And this too is very precious before Hashem, may He be blessed, for in this the Holy One, blessed be He, desires to teach merit on behalf of the Children of Israel and to pray for them always.

And this is what the verse means: "And God made the two great lights" — a hint to the two types of tzaddikim, the earlier and the later. "The great light to rule the day" — these were the tzaddikim of the earlier generations, who had the power to annul from the Children of Israel all harsh decrees. "And the small light" — this is the tzaddik of this generation — "to rule the night," in the bitter exile which resembles night. He too has the power to pray, for in ancient years, concerning both the earlier and the later ones, it was spoken for good, "for the ways of the world are his, from the heavens, to be seen in the midst of the earth."

This is what is stated in the Gemara, Shabbat 104a: the Rabbanan (Sages) said to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, "Schoolchildren came today to the beit

midrash (house of study) and said words the like of which were not stated even in the days of Yehoshua bin Nun," etc. And the early commentators explained that it was a cloudy day, and the great ones did not come to the beit midrash, so the children came and said their words. The hint in this is that in the time of exile, it is like a cloudy day; because of

the darkneses of the galut (exile), Torah has diminished. And we are considered like schoolchildren compared to the earlier generations. Nevertheless, may our words be accepted above, that He hear the voice of our prayer, to raise up the glory of His people Yisrael, speedily in our days.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5)