

CHAPTER 2 - PART 4

by Rabbi David Sykes

King David foresaw the protracted years of exile, and primarily the difficult years of the "footsteps of the Messiah", just before the Redemption, when one problem follows upon another, God forbid, and the decrees of every day are harsher than those of the day before. The Jewish head, the great mind, is no longer able to grasp what it did when it was young; it is not open to devote itself to Torah as people did in earlier generations. The distress of the heart sometimes becomes strong and overpowers the mind. Jews, who were always involved in "reading the Torah", today barely arrive at the synagogue in time for Maftir (which is at the very end of the reading of the Torah) when there is a Bar Mitzvah celebration or a Yahrzeit. These are Jews who believe they have "completed the exile" with the blessings over the Maftir, with the "Shield of David."

For this reason, and for these Jews, and for the others whose difficult lives preclude studying Torah in depth, and for all of those many people who are removed from the page of the Gemara because of all sorts of stresses and events, this holy book comes with songs and praises through which the glowing coal of faith will continue to light up in the darkness of the night of the exile. The Book of Tehillim is the shield of faith; through its strength we will reach the coming of the Redeemer, as is hinted to in the account of the war against Amalek, in which, when Moses raised his hands, the Jews prevailed against their enemy: "And Moses' hands were faith until the sun came." Faith is the shield and shelter of Israel until the sun of Redemption rises, and it was in the light of faith that will "never lie or disappoint" that the sweet singer of Israel wrote this book with his merciful heart and his holy spirit. The Jew who takes the Book of Tehillim into his hands is not afraid that he will not understand something. Even if he does not understand a verse or a word, it is the same to him. The Rabbis say in a number of places that David requested of God, blessed be He, that someone who involves himself with Tehillim be considered by Him to be just as meritorious as someone who involves himself with the study of the laws of leprosy and overhangs, two of the most intricate subjects in Jewish law. Later, we will explain what this really means, but it can also be explained in a way that is close to our subject. Because these matters are so difficult to understand, a person always remains, despite all of his toil and efforts, without true and complete comprehension. It always seems as if they are not understood fully, and, even so, the student receives reward. So too, David requested that the service of someone who involves himself in saying Tehillim, even though he does not understand what he is saying, be accepted before the Master of all. And from here is the great power of the Book of Tehillim, which does not require Man's mind and its toil but the heart, the pure heart of the "Tehillim Sayers", which preserves the glowing coal of faith until the coming of the Redeemer.

