

# OF BOMBS AND BANDAGES

*by Rabbi Daniel Travis*

During the Gulf War, I was single and studying in Israel. It was a difficult time for all those learning in yeshivos, because many concerned parents were calling their children back home to America. Those of us whose parents were gracious enough to let us stay merited seeing Hashem's Providence daily.

At the time, I was also involved with shidduchim, and a number of suggestions had come up. However, due to the war, those whom my rebbes deemed suitable had left the country before we had a chance to meet. In my heart, I knew that it was for the best, because anyone I did not meet was obviously not my intended, but nonetheless it left me with a feeling of loneliness. This was compounded by the fact that I had just become part of the large student population of Yeshivas Mir and did not know a soul there.

One morning, I woke up early and called a friend in America, hoping to receive some encouragement. Instead of the pleasant words of consolation that I had expected, I was bombarded with criticism. Our Sages tell us that the tongue has the power of life and death, and I felt devastated as I went to the morning prayers.

Each word was a struggle to get out of my mouth, and in the middle of Pesukei D'zimra I felt that I no longer had the ability to continue. I put my head down and for a few minutes sat there quietly. Finally, I gathered up the emotional energy to continue, and I noticed that my finger had remained on the place where I stopped.

To my amazement it was the verse, "He [Hashem] heals the brokenhearted, and bandages their hurts" (Tehillim 147:3). I felt consoled and knew that Hashem would help heal my wounds. A week later, I met my future wife, and soon we were engaged.

During that difficult time, Hashem gave me a special sign that encouraged me and helped me to continue to pray. In fact, Pesukei D'zimra entails a number of practices designed to inspire us all to greater heights of prayer every single day. Let us investigate the halachos of some of these customs.

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