

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

And then it strikes you!

You go along life's winding bumpy path, never really asking, just responding to the daily ups and downs. You are a Yid that tries. You daven, you learn the *Daf*, give *tzedaka*, send the kids to the right schools, it's not easy; in fact it can seem extremely hard at times. However, you believe in Hashem's oneness, and you accept your holy role. Every once in a while you may stop and wonder, where does this ability come from? How are we able to disregard the entire world and stay steadfast to our heritage? It is wondrous because our faith in Hashem defies all logic. And then, it strikes you! Our ability to stay on the path comes from Hashem's faith in us.

The *Avnei Nezer* speaks of this strength that *Yidden* have in a brilliant fashion. He explains that every act that a Yid does has an indelible mark in the heavens. How is it possible for mere humans to have such spiritual power? By being commanded to perform a *mitzva*, a Yid becomes an agent of Hashem, acting in the place of the One who sent him, so to speak, acting with His authority and energy. Therefore when a man performs a *mitzva*, it is as if Hashem Himself is doing it. This is in keeping with the *halachic* dictum that "a person's emissary is as the person himself." Being that nothing is beyond Hashem's power, therefore our mitzvos also have such enormous spiritual energy.

This concept can be seen in the very wording we use in our blessings. "Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to ..." There are two separate things: First, Hashem sanctifies us with His commandments, whereby we are transformed into His agents, as it were, and then, there is the commandment itself, which He commands us to perform.

The Rebbe's son the *Shem Mishmuel* develops this understanding even further. The Gemara tells us that when Moshe told the Jewish people that the Torah was "not in the heavens," he meant to say that, therefore, they would not be required to go up to the heavens to receive it; had it been in the heavens however, then they would have been required to do so. What can this mean? How could they have been expected to perform an impossibility? Hashem does not tyrannize His people. In truth, had Hashem commanded the people to go up to the heavens to receive His Torah, it would not have been an impossibility. The commandment itself, designating them as His agents, would have enabled them to do whatever was required to fulfill their obligation ... even going up to the heavens.

Yidden do mitzvos, and it is this that gives them the amazing ability to survive and prosper. There can

be no other understanding for our survival. We have been debased by others, kept in physical and emotional captivity and yet we shine on, forming new links in the chain of our history.

Every time we take a *mitzva* in hand, close our eyes and make a blessing, we become Hashem's agents, and through this extraordinary spiritual strength, He allows us to do the impossible, to remain holy in this most unholy place.

As agents of Hashem's will, we can do anything, and we do, we even create heaven here in this mortal place.

We live in troubled times. Outside our enemies howl and bray. There are those that seek to physically kill us, others who seek our moral destruction. Even in the confines of our own holy homes we find corruption seeping in. So, what to do? Well we learn Torah with a new understanding, one that tells our hearts that we are Hashem's real agents and that we can seek the Torah's light no matter how dark our surroundings are.

The *Seforno* tells us that this *kapitel* is a sermon telling the common Jew to devote his time to Torah learning. Most tell you that they have no time, business and home take up all the hours of the day. The same fellow will add that he has no background in study, so he cannot really even begin. Comes the psalmist to say:

Halleluka Odeh Hashem ... "Praise Hashem! I shall thank Hashem wholeheartedly, in the council of the upright and the congregation."

We are used to davening to Hashem. The route of the word daven has at its route the word *abba* because when we pray, we talk to Hashem, our father. It is also the heritage of our forefathers routed in the word *d'avhon* because our ability to communicate, the connecting lines, were established by our forefathers. But this praise, to be "wholehearted," must come with a fulsome understanding of the "council," "the wisdom," that we have deep within ourselves and draws on the surrounding "congregation," the community of Israel. Such understanding is ours when we are bonded with the adhesive that is the Torah.

Gedolim Ma'asei Hashem ... "Great are the accomplishments of Hashem, accessible to all who want them."

Hashem is everything, and we can gain access to this knowledge by sharing in his Torah. If a Yid truly wants, he can find time to learn. Our ancestors have shown that Torah can be absorbed in all places, and in all extremes. There hasn't been a circumstance where our Torah hasn't been given over to the next generation by those who understood that without it we are not a people.

Teref Nassan Lirei'av ... "He provided food for those who fear him, He eternally remembers His covenant."

Hashem will be eternally true to His connection with us, His nation. The test is ours. He provides the

"food" of the soul, the Torah, and it is up to us to feed on it. *Koach Ma'asav Higid Le'amo* ... "The strength of His deeds He declared to His nation, to give them the heritage of the peoples."

Hashem gives us the realization of His Truth through His "deeds," His mitzvos." This is our heritage, and when we actualize this knowledge with Torah deeds, we give our heritage to the rest of the world.

Ma'asei Yadav Emes ... "His handiwork is truth and justice, faithful are all His orders." Hashem's every act is pure in its truth and justice. For us to become His agents, we too must strive towards such truth. This is only possible when we seek this reality through the one prism that is truly just, Hashem's Torah.

Reishis Chachma ... "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of Hashem - good understanding to all who perform [His commandments], His praise endures forever."

Yes we are Hashem's agents in this mortal realm. As such we understand the awe and fear such proximity brings with it, and therefore, our praises will endure, for they become part of the eternity that is Hashem.

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