

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

The last 100 years have seen enormous gains in scientific discovery. Just think about it for a minute. Things now commonplace were seen as fantasy just decades ago. Human flight, mass communication, antibiotics all of these were unheard of a century ago. New frontiers are traversed daily in mankind's constant march toward new developments.

I am sure that every thinking person can enumerate his personal list of what he considers to be the most momentous discovery of these fast-moving times. For me, the most astounding of all must be...superglue!

That's right, superglue is my personal wonder. Until its moment of discovery, shleppers like me were forced to suffer the consequences of their clumsiness. Since its discovery, anything is possible. I can mend things once deemed beyond all help. In just a moment, I can bond together broken pieces of favorite dishes that would otherwise have been destined for oblivion. The wonders of this glue never cease to amaze me.

For those still living in the past, let me give you just one recent example. We have a chinik, a teakettle, which has been part of the Rubin Shabbos experience for years. It's special to every family member, and Shabbos just wouldn't be the same without its dribbling presence.

A few weeks ago disaster struck. The chinik's black enamel handle broke off. What could be done? How would the Rubin Shabbos function without its chinik? Buying a new one never entered our minds; there are some things that just can't be replaced.

For days I walked about with a gray cloud over my head. Then a brainstorm entered my feverish mind. Superglue, that stuff of miracles, would mend the chinik and save the day.

Off I went to the local "Do it Yourself" superstore, quickly searched out the glue department and found the magical stuff in its cute little innocuous container.

Being an old hand at such matters in addition to being terribly anxious to bring the healing balm to my sorrowful chinik, as soon as I got home I ripped open the package and pricked the bottle open. Out bubbled the clear liquid that would bond the handle to its rightful place forever. My fingers feverishly wiped around the edge of the connection, making certain that none of the glue's strengthening prowess was wasted. As I did so, a small alarm bell rang in my head. "Wait! Do not get glue on your fingers, and if you do, don't ever let said fingers come into contact with other such

appendages." But by then I was too committed to worry. "I'll wash my hands off later. The chinik comes first. Lekovod Shabbos Kodesh!"

Well, friend, let me tell you a little about the bonding abilities of superglue. My chinik was now firmly repaired, ready to give the Rubin family Shabbos service for many more years to come. The only problem was that Rubin senior now had two of his fingers so glued together that there was a real threat he would never be able to put on tefillin again. Hot water eventually helped in separating the two, but the residue of glue stayed firmly attached to my skin despite ruthless scrubbing. I tried everything - detergents, window cleaner, even nail polish remover - but nothing would get rid of the stuff. After a few days of hiding my hands in public, things got a bit better, and I am happy to report that at this moment my hands are finally glue free - that is, until something else breaks.

While my misadventure may have proven humorous, it got me thinking a bit deeper. Yes, science is wondrous indeed, and some bonds can be made to seem imperious for all time. However, there is one bond that is truly forever, a bond that means everything to the Jewish people.

When Yaakov Avinu leaves Beersheba for Haran, he lies down to rest and has a wondrous dream (Bereishis 28:12). He sees a ladder standing firmly on the ground, reaching upward to the heavens. Angels are going up and down, and v'hinei Hashem nitzav alav, "Behold, Hashem is standing above him."

The Izhbitzer Rebbe explained that there are two words that can be used for standing. One is omed, which simply means standing there, and the other is nitzav, which implies being planted in place. A human being is an omed. He always has the choice to stay in one place or move away. A nitzav has no such choice; it is planted in its place, like a stone.

By using the expression of nitzav, Hashem was telling Yaakov a beautiful message. "Dear child, I have no choice but to be with you." Hashem wanted us to realize that no matter what, no matter where, He would always be planted and bonded with us. Hashem's connection with us is forever, something that can never be moved nor shifted. We may ascend and descend the ladder to Heaven, sometimes rising and sometimes falling, but Hashem will always be planted above us and within us. No matter where we are, because we are Hashem's children, He will be with us.

What a powerful message! It gives one a sense of tranquility despite the world's thunderous storms.

One of Tehillim's most beloved kapitlach tells us this same message. In Psalm 23 we read, *Hashem is my shepherd. I shall not lack for anything.* A shepherd cares for his flock and stays with it through thick and thin. Every lamb is precious to him, and not one goes unaccounted for.

Even when I walk through the valley overshadowed by death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff are what will comfort me.

Dear Yidden, just think of all those who have uttered these soothing words - and where fate placed them. In the hell of the death camps, on the fire pyres of the inquisition, under the hooves of

rampaging Cossacks through this and untold more, our holy ancestors held onto these sweet words. And Hashem remained with them, just as He had promised Yaakov Avinu. He never moves, and this is the only reality that really matters.

We can gain so much strength from this truth. Gevalt, how much we suffer! Yet we are never alone. Hashem is shepherding each and every one of us through it all. Others may ask how we Yidden survive despite everything, but we don't have such questions, for Hashem is eternal, and He has promised to be there for us forever.

You set a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anointed my head with oil. My cup overflows. All those who sought to destroy us stand mute in the face of who we are. Hashem sits us down to the prepared table of the Torah, and with this we anoint our lives and our cup of joy overflows.

How many of us suffer from a personal walk through a valley of tzaros and tears? It would be disingenuous for anyone to minimize such pain or disregard its power of destruction. People all around us carry so much within themselves, it's a wonder they can muster a semblance of a smile. Yet Hashem is always with us, pulling us back into the flock with His rod, or giving us a light tap with His staff to send us scurrying back into place.

Sometimes we forget this truth. The words of this kapitel are meant to remind us. There is a custom to say this kapitel whenever we wash to eat to remind ourselves just how much Hashem watches over us.

Time and again, I realize that many of our problems come about because we find it so difficult to internalize these truths. We mouth them over and over, but in the heat of stress, we neglect their message. Let us remember the generations of sweet, pure Yidden who eternalized its message: *Even when I walk through the valley overshadowed by death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me."*

This kapitel carries within it a strong message. It permits us to release our anguish by internalizing the truth that we are never alone. Hashem shares our every moment. This is why David is able to ask as he is being anointed king, *May only goodness and kindness continue to pursue me....* Even his troubles can be seen, in retrospect, as evidence of Hashem's kindness and goodness.

Every word of this psalm is saturated with so much hope, that I only wish it was possible to grab every broken Yid and tell him so.

Text Copyright © 2007 by **Torah.org**.