

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

The staff at a safari park was on the verge of calling the police to investigate a series of silent telephone calls...until they found out that the caller was one of their chimpanzees. Chippy the chimp stole a mobile phone from a keeper at the park. The phone's owner said, "It's been driving us bananas. He must have been hitting the redial button and then going through my phone book. It was a pure fluke, but people have been jumping out of bed thinking there was an emergency at the park."

Amusing and in a way, indicative of our society. There are more than a few monkeys using phones these days, and more to the point, when calling others we sometimes wonder if we haven't in fact gotten the local zoo instead.

On a more serious note, we must ask if we listen to the calls our souls make to our hearts and minds. Are we like the fluky chimp, pushing the right buttons but never hearing the voice that cries from within? We daven every day, each of us is in direct contact with our Creator, yet somehow there is an aching feeling of disquiet. We somehow have missed the point of it all, and feel uneasy despite our position as Hashem's chosen children.

A philosopher once wrote, "If expensive things cannot bring us remarkable joy, why are we so powerfully drawn to them? Because of an error similar to that of the migraine sufferer who drills a hole in the side of his skull: expensive objects can feel like plausible solutions to needs we don't understand." We have a need for the comfort that only a connection with Hashem can assuage, but in this materialistic world, we don't always understand this. Therefore, we seek that comfort in trinkets of gold and silver.

Let's not hide behind our three-times-a-day davening. Let's not cling to the falseness that allows us to talk ourselves into thinking that these words are not meant for us. Stop for a moment. Stop and make a cheshbon hanefesh. Have you seen the prices of the gifts that have become mandatory for the chasan and kalla to give to each other? Have you thought of what our weddings cost? Do we really need expensive cars and homes that are furnished with luxury items never even considered by our parents? Aren't we doing this to answer a need that is so deep and so holy we can't begin to find it?

Children ask their parents for cloths that cost a fortune, because all their friends have such apparel. Why? Why do we go down this path? Because we really do want something but it is not something

we will find in a store. It can only be found within ourselves.

There is no better time than the present to look into our essence and bring strength to our needy souls. The Koretzer Rebbe used to say: "It is proper to cry on the holy days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur to show that despite all our apparent wisdom and learning, we are as helpless as children, who cry for what they want." Our first step should be an admission of our smallness.

We are not perfect. While it may be hard to look within one's own darkness, it's the only way we can begin to bring light. In Mussaf of Rosh Hashana, there is a famous responsive reading that begins: "Vechol maaminim, And all believe." The Rebbe Reb Bunim of Peshischa explained the seventeenth verse, "He is good, and benefits the wicked and the good" as meaning, "Hashem benefits those who are sometimes wicked and sometimes good."

I don't think we need any further explanation. We know who we are, and where we stand, and so we must direct ourselves accordingly.

Let us take a brief look our kapitel and draw strength from its message.

Hashem is my light and my salvation of whom should I stand in awe? Hashem is the strength of my life of whom should I be afraid? The first and foremost truth is that Hashem is the source of the only true light. With this realization, we are already saved. All the fears and insecurities we suffer are because we forget that Hashem is the only source of strength, and we need never fear.

When evildoers approach me to devour my flesh, my tormentors and foes stumble and fall. The evil that lurks without and that which worms its way in, all of it will lose its power to harm when we focus on Hashem.

I have asked only one thing of Hashem, and this is all I will request: that I may dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life, to behold Hashem's pleasantness and to meditate in His Sanctuary. We should seek only this awareness: that pleasantness and goodness is found only with closeness to Hashem. Luxury homes and shiny cars are nothing but an illusion. Real pleasure is found in the house Hashem creates for us.

For He will conceal me in His Sukka on the day of evil. He will secrete me in the hiding place of His Tent and lift me high on a rock. We all have times of distress, for such is the human condition. Hashem will hide us from the pain, but where? Not in our great mansions, but in His Tent. There we will find the solid rock that is our safety zone, the rock that will never move or shake. This will give us the uplifted feeling all mankind seeks and needs. We need never look to the trinkets of this world for safety; Hashem's rock awaits us in His Tent.

Now my head is raised high above my enemies around me, and I will offer victory sacrifices in His Tent. I will sing and chant to Hashem. When we accept Hashem's Tent as our place of abode, all the so-called sacrifices we make to remain steadfast become the stuff of our song to Hashem. Song has a power that transcends the here and now.

Hear my voice, Hashem, when I call, and favor me and answer me. We admit that our attention span is not a long one and that we may soon forget what is real. We ask Hashem to answer us whenever we call out, and with His graciousness answer us despite our weaknesses.

My heart has already spoken to You, saying, "May my face seek Your face, Hashem!" This is all I ask. Dear Father, Who is compassionate, in my heart of hearts it is only You I seek. But I am weak, and storms batter my soul. Let me follow my true heart and seek only You.

Do not hide Your face from me nor turn away Your servant in anger. You have been my help always do not cast me off or abandon me, God of my rescue. Life can seem so clouded by the crassness of material want. No wonder we find ourselves thinking that Hashem has turned away from us. We beg Hashem not to let this seem so, not to turn us away, for our only real help comes from Him. Only He can save us from the tugs of a materialistic society.

This kapitel offers so much, particularly in our times. Listen to King David's last words: *Seek Hashem! Be strong, and He will give you courage and seek only Hashem.* This is so encouraging! If we seek only Hashem and look to Him for our security, we will find the courage to persevere. Not only that, but through that courage we will find even deeper wellsprings of faith. Hashem, our loving Father, will repay our faith in him by giving us even more of the same.

Yidden, we need never fear! We need only truthfully search for our hearts' deepest desire.

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