

# CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

*by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin*

This kapitel is the last chapter in the first book of King David's psalms. Looking through this first segment, we find that David concentrated on gratitude to Hashem for healing him of his terrible ailments. Physicians usually treat the physical symptoms of their patients' problems. David has shown us that the root of his and many other illnesses can be found in the deeper recesses of the soul. Stress has long been a potent source of human discomfort. King David accepted this, and he consistently turned his prayers in this direction.

In this, the finish to his first book of psalms, he gives understanding and hope to all future generations. When a person understands his own weaknesses, he can extend a healing hand to others as well.

*Fortunate is one who understands the needs of the destitute. On the day of evil, Hashem will save him.* Painful things happen to each of us, events that hurt both physically and emotionally. If we take these events and grow through them, our experiences increase our sensitivity to others. Too bad we often fail to learn what we could from painful events and so fail to truly empathize with others. It's as if all the pain we suffered served no purpose but to remain a festering wound in our heart. Fortunate is the person who makes the most of life's lessons and uses his deeper understanding to help others.

For such people, Hashem's salvation is always at hand. *Hashem will preserve him and keep him alive. He will be fortunate in the land, and You will not give him up to the will of his enemies.* Those who channel their own experiences toward helping others become beacons of light. People turn to them, and their value to the world increases. Because their continuity is beneficial, Hashem watches over them and protects them.

*Hashem, strengthen him on his sickbed. All his restfulness You overturned during his sickness.* Even at the apex of his illness, Hashem is with him and gives him the necessary strength. Our Sages learn from this passage that Hashem supplies an invalid with needed resources (Shabbos 12b). We also learn from here that the Divine Presence rests at the head of every sick man's bed. The saddest situation is when a person feels Hashem has abandoned him. This kapitel tells us that such is never the case. Even at our worst moments, Hashem sits close by, bringing us help.

*As for me, I said, "Hashem, be gracious to me. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.* The wise man realizes that much of what afflicts us comes from becoming desensitized to all that is spiritual. If

we can find relief for our souls, our physical deficiencies will find needed strength as well. Unfortunately, we often fail to realize that our turning away from Hashem's path is the cause of the stress that drags us down. While many go through the motions of turning to Him, often as not, in our hearts we forget where our actual redemption lies.

David's next words paint a sad picture. He envisions his enemies celebrating his downfall. He even feels that those who pretended to be his friends really harbored ill feeling toward him. *"His wicked actions are cast on him, and now that he is fallen, may he rise no more." Also, my intimate friend whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his foot against me.*

From this low ebb, David cries out, *But You, Hashem, be gracious to me and raise me up. Then I will repay them.* Some may think that David is calling for revenge against those who have thought negatively about him or acted against him. However, the Midrash Shocher Tov relates that Hashem asked David, "With what do you wish Me to repay them, with evil?"

"Heaven forbid," David replied. "Isn't it true that when they were sick, I wore sackcloth?"

David is teaching us a great lesson here. A person of true faith does not seek vengeance against his enemies, nor wish them suffering. He would rather see them overcome their anger through goodness.

Anyone who merited sharing some time with the Bobover Rebbe, ztz"l, can relate to having witnessed this outlook firsthand. He taught us both by lesson and deed that you can do much more when you show respect to those who seek to harm you. Time and again, we saw how small-minded and jealous people tried to embroil the Rav in machlokes. Yet no matter what the provocation, he refused to take sides or become party to communal conflict. He would step aside and allow others to take the limelight rather than make anyone feel slighted. It was sometimes so infuriating to us youngsters. After all, we felt that the kavod of Bobov should always be of first concern. Yet through his energetic kindness, the Rav showed us the true road to respect.

How many times did we hear his holy words on this matter! He often repeated that every machlokes needs two sides. When you refuse to become one of them, the machlokes automatically disappears.

Our kapitel tells us, *By this I will know that You are pleased with me: that my enemy does not shout triumphantly over me.* Rabbi Avraham Twerski relates that when Rebbe Baruch of Mezibuzher was Rav in Tolchin, he suffered constant harassment from members of the community until finally he decided to leave his position. Before departing, he opened the holy Ark and prayed, citing this verse and interpreting it in a unique way: "Hashem, I will know that You favor me if You will not allow any harm to come to my enemies."

When Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev was Rav in Pinsk, his adversaries hounded him and his family. His friends appealed to the renowned Reb Zev of Zhitomir to bring down the wrath of Hashem on the scoundrels. The Rebbe answered, "How can I do that? Levi Yitzchak is already standing before

the holy Ark praying fervently that no harm befall them."

The world has so much anger and negative emotion. These tzaddikim taught us that only way to dispel it all is by creating positive feelings, despite provocation to do otherwise.

David continues and tells us what is real, what is important. *As for me, You have supported me because of my integrity, and You stood me firmly before You forever.* If one has integrity, then Hashem will support him, and everything else pales into insignificance. If we can get beyond our own petty feelings, we will find the ability and strength to help even those who choose to attack us.

This is no simple matter. It takes great courage to act in this way. However, as this first book of Tehillim tells us in its final words, *Blessed is Hashem, God of Israel, from all times past throughout all times to come, amen and amen.* Hashem's ways are eternal, and David speaks of these eternal truths. There are no beginnings and no ends; only moments lived by each human in his turn. In those fragments of time, we each have the ability to turn darkness into light, and that is what our real test is all about. We end by repeating the word amen twice, perhaps to signify that we not only agree with this thought, but will live by it as well.

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