

CHAPTER SIXTY

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

It was a hot muggy day, yet the students sat enraptured by their holy teacher's lecture. The Piaseczner Rebbe was giving his regular Talmudic lesson to a room full of select students. Suddenly the door of the beis medrash flew open and one of the older chassidim stumbled in. The man was in obvious pain, and he cried out to the Rebbe, "My headaches have returned ever since the Rebbe's prescription faded!"

The students were puzzled. It was well known that the Piaseczner was extremely knowledgeable in the arts of healing. He wrote prescriptions in Latin that were filled in many of Warsaw's drugstores, and he was often consulted by respected doctors before surgical procedures. Yet no one had ever heard of a "faded" prescription.

They watched curiously as the Rebbe took a pen in hand and wrote a new prescription for the man. The fellow took the piece of paper and placed it carefully in the inside band of his hat, breathing a sigh of relief. "Thanks to the Rebbe, I feel much better already. My headache is gone!"

The chassidim could barely contain their laughter, but the Rebbe turned to them and gently explained, "The modern world would classify this as suggestion," but we who hold fast to the ways of our tzaddikim call it emuna peshuta, simple faith."

The Rebbe went on to explain that the blessing of any person who maintains purity of speech and thought is effective for healing, but "in order to clothe this effect in the garb of natural causation, I write prescriptions."

This episode is a true story, not some cooked-up ma'asele. I know, because that old chassid was actually a relative of my son-in-law, and the fellow was no simple Yiddel. He was renowned for his total immersion in all things holy, and his belief in the powers of his Rebbe went way beyond anything superficial.

It has always been a cornerstone of Jewish belief that our sages have a deeper understanding of life in all its facets because they are endowed with the profound knowledge of our Torah. Torah encompasses everything in the world. Nothing exists without it, for with its words the world was created. Everything in this creation stands because of Hashem's will, and that will is found in every sentence and every letter of our Divine Scriptures.

In the Torah portion of Ha'azinu, we read that Moshe told the children of Israel, "Be careful to

perform the entire Torah, for it is not an empty thing for you, for it is your life" (Devarim 32:47). Nothing in our life is devoid of Torah. Living takes energy, and Torah brings that energy to the Jewish soul.

As a born-and-raised American, I well remember a time when this truth wasn't always easy for the American Jewish mind to accept. In the "Land of the Free," one was taught that the pursuit of happiness is in one's own hands, and freedom means that one is able to achieve life's goals through one's own efforts. The understanding of what those goals should be was left up to you. That was real democracy. Rabbis were for leading the flock in prayer and taking care of those awkward moments, like birth and death.

After the war, a new type of rabbi began to leave his mark on Jewish thought. Most were from the "old school" bearded, Yiddish-speaking and seemingly out of touch with the "real world." Nothing could be further from the truth, for these gedolim were the real world. They brought to the "Land of the Free" a true sense of life lived through the Torah. They filled the void that had previously been called the "good times." It soon became apparent to many that those good times were not all that good; they were empty, without fulfillment, and divorced from the flame that burns within the Jewish heart.

One such leader was the Kopycznitzer Rebbe, ztz"l, who started his American sojourn on the East Side of Manhattan. Small in physical stature, he was a giant in Yiddishe love. His face shone with an angelic glow, and his eyes spoke of the entirety of the Jewish experience. Slowly word crept out that in the East Side there was a gutte Yid from the old school. He prayed, he learned, he lived everything the Torah sought for God's children. People began to flock to him for his blessing and advice. Soon huge cars could be seen parked in front of his beis medrash. Out of them would spring captains of American commerce, seeking the little rabbi's advice on complex business decisions.

The Rebbe found this most interesting. He was wont to note that as a young man in Vienna he had made up his mind not to become a Rebbe. Instead he had tried his hand at business, the results of which were a complete disaster. He would often quip, "The bankrupt from Vienna is now the expert in New York." Obviously this was not about simple understanding of commercial facts; it was about Torah. His every word was steeped in the holiness of hours of learning and davening. He was the Sanhedrin of his time, and with this came the wisdom that stems only from thorough Torah knowledge.

In the sixtieth kapitel we see this dynamic very clearly. King David was renowned for his expertise in the arts of warfare. He was a national hero who had vanquished untold numbers of enemies. His shield was held high in victory, and the masses spoke glowingly of his bravery. Yet before going off to war he would ask the advice and consent of the rabbanim in the Sanhedrin. He knew that only with their blessing could he find success.

David dedicates this kapitel to them and movingly explains how the world can find true peace

through their vision. He depicts a world gone mad because it has turned its back on the Torah, and he beseeches Hashem to draw His children closer to their rightful understanding.

For the Conductor, in honor of the Sanhedrin, a michtam by David. According to Rashi, David composed this psalm in honor of the Sanhedrin, whose members are referred to as shoshanim, roses. The phrase shushan eidos in this verse can be translated as "rose of testimony," telling us that Hashem's testimony the Torah and its teachers is sweet and aromatic. David makes this point here because he wants to teach us that everything we do must be according to the Sages' teachings.

David then goes on to depict various battles, both won and lost. He tells us that when we lost, we felt as if we had drunk of yayin tareila, overpowering wine. This could mean that when the Jewish nation loses its Torah focus, they become totally disoriented, baffled, and lost, as if drunk from wine.

He goes on to say: *You tested with the greatest of tests those who fear You, to demonstrate Your eternal truth. The world needs to be reminded of Hashem's truth.* All too easily man can become infatuated with his own deeds. The Jewish nation is the one people who have an understanding of how all-encompassing the Torah is, and when we, too, lose sight of this, we are given tests to help us find our way back.

Save me and answer me with Your right hand, so that Your beloved ones will be strengthened. The psalmist cries out to Hashem for deliverance. According to the Malbim, he specifically mentions Hashem's right hand because this symbolizes the attribute of mercy.

The kapitel ends: *Give us assistance from the enemy, for salvation by man is worthless. With God's help, we will be valiant. He will vanquish our enemies.* In this dark world of nuclear bombs and rogue nations, we may think that our security is found in arms depots and army barracks. David, the military general par excellence, says no he chooses to call upon Torah leaders and seeks to fulfill their instructions. Only afterward does he take on the field of battle.

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