

# CHAPTER SIXTY-EIGHT

*by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin*

I recently visited a congregant who was seriously ill in the hospital. He was suffering from a grave heart ailment and although a young man, he was facing a major operation within the next few days. He was describing how lucky he felt that one of the world's greatest heart surgeons had undertaken to perform the procedure, which would last some twelve hours. He then related the following incident that had just occurred.

The great doctor had come to his bedside to explain exactly what the situation was. He began to describe how the heart works, portraying it in simple terms as a common pump. Well, little did the great man know, but my pal is not only a trained plumber, he teaches this exacting art in a local technical college. I often call him my Doctor of Plumbology. Anyway, when he told the doctor that he was well acquainted with pumps and was a plumber who specializes in home heating, the doctor stopped his talk in mid-flow.

"You're a plumber? Specializing in heating? That's great! Please tell me something, I am having this problem with my central heating, the thermostat doesn't kick in, and...."

"Stop," cried my friend, "Listen doctor, I am about to undergo a twelve- hour heart operation. It's very possible that I may never recover. Please, let's talk about my heart."

"Yeh, yeh, sure, but first tell me how to fix my heater. We can talk about your heart later."

My congregant was philosophical about it all...and I learned once again how people's priorities could be skewed. To that doctor, his home heating was more interesting than the poor patient's fear of the complicated operation. "Of course, we'll talk about it soon, just first tell me how to sort out the heating." I can accept that to the great healer such operations were perhaps mundane, but to question the worried patient about the details of heating?

This incident got me thinking how indicative it is of how the wider world sees its problems. For most, the difficulty that grabs their attention is really the "heating." Let's fix that, they say, and then we can get on with the other stuff, like your heart. The general society we live in looks at short-term problems, the things that rise to the surface. They seek quick fixes and only want to be able to continue on their self- absorbing journey down life's path. They really don't want to look at the root problems that afflict so many, those heartrending situations that need so much help. The prevalent attitude is, things that are just too deep, I'll leave alone - maybe they'll go away of their own accord. Let me worry about my own little world, and let the rest fend for itself. This is not a new

phenomenon; history is replete with such shortsighted selfishness. No, there is nothing new under the sun. The same mistakes come into play over and over, time and again.

For the Jewish nation, however, things are different. We are enjoined to look beneath the surface and find the root causes of life's dilemmas. With this sensitivity we can then approach the difficulties and try to solve them. The Torah Jew is not a shortsighted denizen of this mortal world; he is one who seeks to bring light and create a kiddush Hashem.

We must look to our past to find out what is real and what is superficial. The treasury of such knowledge lies in our holy books, and one sterling example is Tehillim. In this kapitel David speaks of these matters and gives us hope and guidance, together with a focus that will lead us on our way.

*Yakum Elokim yafutzu oyvav..., "Let G-d arise, let His foes flee before Him. As smoke is dispersed, so disperse them; as wax melts before fire, so let the wicked perish in the face of G-d."* We ask that Hashem's reality arise from within our own hearts. Then all our inner foes, all the superficial nonsense, will be dispersed forever, for in reality they are like smoke which is blown away with the wisdom that is found in our faith. Similarly, wax can be shaped into false impressions of reality, yet it melts at the slightest hint of heat. So too, those misleading impressions will melt with the heat of our love for Hashem.

*Vetzaddikim yismechu..., "But as for the righteous - let them be glad, let them exalt before Hashem; let them rejoice with gladness."* It may seem to be a terribly difficult burden to have to carry Hashem's message through this disturbed world. When everyone about you seems to be worried about trivial matters, we sometimes wonder why we should remain focused on the core realities. The psalm tells us to rejoice, not simply at an undemanding level but with our entirety: "Rejoice with gladness!" We need never feel burdened by our role; rather, within it we can rejoice with genuine gladness, a happiness that goes beyond any mundane sense of "fun."

*Avi yesomim vedayan almanos..., "Father of orphans and Judge of widows, Hashem in the habitation of His holiness."* There is but one accounting in this world, and that is the one done by Hashem! He knows of the tears, of the pain suffered by all the orphaned and bereft. There are times when we all can be seen as orphans, for each of us has our moments when we are so vulnerable that we feel utterly alone. We can always comfort ourselves at those difficult times by remembering that Hashem is with us at all times. His is the constant Fathering of a loving parent.

*Elokim moshiv yechidim baysa..., "Hashem gathers the lonely into a family, He releases the prisoners at suitable moments, only the rebellious dwell in the thirsty land."* Yes, we belong - we are part of the most wondrous family possible, the family of Hashem. Every one of us can find release from the ordinary foolishness that eats at our soul, for we are each a member of Hashem's people and will find the prison gates that bind us opened in due time. As for those who choose not to listen, theirs is a thirsty place where they are never quite fulfilled, always seeking more and finding nothing.

And what gives us strength and majesty? The experience we all shared at Mt. Sinai, when we all

accepted Hashem's truth. Eretz raasha..., "The earth roared, even the heavens dripped before the presence of Hashem. This is Sinai, before the presence of Hashem, the G-d of Israel."

In a world given over to superficiality there is but one certainty. Sinai, the Torah experience, is always in the presence of Hashem, always! With this knowledge we can see through the facade of nothingness that surrounds us, we can *"attribute might to Hashem, Whose majesty hovers over Israel and Whose might is in the clouds."* All else is really nothing.

The kapitel majestically ends with what should be the real goals of man: to realize *nora Elokim mimikedashecha...*, *"You are Awesome, O G-d, from Your sanctuaries, O G-d of Israel - It is He Who grants might and power to the nation, blessed be Hashem."* And so we turn from this simplistic world to see what is real. We are so blessed to be a part of this reality, and we can find our strength, priorities and sanity within this understanding.

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