

CHAPTER SIXTY-NINE

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

Chapter 69

Of all the wondrous toys available to children, there is one that has a special place in everyone's life. I speak here of those small colorful building blocks named Lego. They really are fascinating. The smallest of children can dream away hours as they put these ingenious bits together. Little kiddies can build whole blocks of houses with them. I was told that there is even an amusement park built entirely from these plastic bits, and that it is visited annually by millions of Lego fans.

There is but one great problem with this toy, and it's one that mostly afflicts grandparents. As age creeps up, the eyes grow a bit difficult. While it used to be that you needed one pair of spectacles to make do, as you get older the eyes change a bit more, and soon you need lenses that serve several functions. And you find that even with new lenses there are places where your eyes just can't see as well as they used to. One such situation is when you try to view the floor. That's right, you have to look that much more when you are trying to focus on the area beneath your own feet.

Now we all know that when the grandchildren visit, it is their inalienable right to strew as many toys as possible around your otherwise pristine house. It's just a pity for the poor grandfather who has to get up in the middle of the night because his sweet grandson wants a glass of water. The old man gropes around looking for his house slippers, can't find them and opts to venture forth to the kitchen barefoot. Down the stairs goes our intrepid hero, slowly feeling his way in the dark, and then...a scream is heard! Zeidy has stepped on a Lego piece, and nothing hurts more than that. Those harmless plastic pieces have more sharp angles than the Empire State Building, and every one of them finds its way into the soft vulnerable pad of Zeidy's innocent foot. The pain is searing, the eye watering, and Zeidy is feel just plain stupid, because besides the physical side of it, he must be such a klutz for stepping on it in the first place.

Don't ever look for any pity either, since everyone will laugh and scratch their heads in baffled amazement. "What happened? Oh, it was only a piece of Lego!"

With this preamble, let us look at another irksome bit of the human condition. This too is painful, but it is the stuff of heartbreaking anguish. That little bit of Lego is just a minor irritant, but what I introduce here is enormous and has shaped the whole of history. Since our very beginnings, we Yidden have had to carry a constant load of pain and bother. We have never been made to feel

comfortable by others. They have insisted on stepping on us and then blaming us if it hurts. If you injure your foot, it can heal in time, but if you are beaten in your soul then you are in deep danger. No other nation has had to endure the abuse, slavery, and plain outright hatred that we have. In every land and in every age we have been held up as examples to be derided. Our beliefs have been attacked, as well as our homes, our families and even our very lives. Today is no different. As soon as something goes amiss in this world, the Jews are blamed. Straight-thinking, politically correct folk bend over backward to find reasons why other minorities do not act in a proper fashion. Not so regarding the Yidden. We are thrown into the darkest corner and told to stay there forever. We have a small land, yet we find our rights to it attacked constantly. We are a small minority in every place we dwell; yet we are told that all the ills are due to our misbehavior. In truth, it's a wonder we remain sane! If one would walk daily on substances that cut his feet, he would soon cease to walk. We have had to live in conditions where our souls are lacerated daily, yet we continue to walk and thrive.

I say nothing new here; every Jew knows all too well how things are. But I think it is worthy of thought every once and a while so as to focus on the very miracle of our existence, and thank Hashem for it.

Other nations have been through tough times; they have seen battles lost and blood spilled. This has led to their national demise or to such a total change that their former identity was lost. Yidden are different. We have a covenant with our Creator, and no matter how many of our people are dragged away to be slaughtered, we miraculously remain steadfast to our ideals.

From where do we get this holy chutzpa? There must be as many answers as there are Yidden, for each neshama is different and sees its world in its own way. However, there is one thing that binds us all together. We share one great faith in Hashem, and that is all we really need to know. The world may be strewn with hazards and behind every tree may well lurk an enemy, but we have Hashem's promise and that is why we have survived despite the odds.

In this kapitel David speaks of all the pain and deprivation the Jews will suffer throughout history. He then ends with Hashem's loving promise of redemption. For me this psalm says so very much - it answers the unanswerable and reaches the deepest point of the soul.

Hoshi'eini Elokim ki ba'u mayim ad nafesh..., "Deliver me, Hashem, for the waters have reached until my soul. I am sunk in muddy depths without a foothold; I have come into deep waters and a whirlpool has swept me away." This cry of desperation emanates from the brokenhearted Yid who feels so alone. The waters that seek to drive him from his faith whirl about him; he sinks and then struggles up to the surface, praying to the one Creator Who can save him.

Rabu misaaros roshi sonai chinam..., "More than the number of hairs on my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who want to cut me off, my enemies who pursue falsehood, that which I have not robbed I am nevertheless compelled to return." David goes into the realm of eternal prophecy in these short few words. He tells of the Jewish condition that will play itself out time and again. We

will be hated by so many; the numbers will be beyond count. We will be the victims of extortion, we will be subject to paying taxes, giving up possessions, anything and everything - just to be allowed to live. Our lives will be blighted by this undeserved hatred.

Ki kinas beischa achalasni..., "Because they envy Your House they have devoured me, and the humiliation of those who scorn You has fallen upon me." Here David touches on the actual cause of all this senseless hatred: It all stems from the fact that we cling to Hashem and are steadfastly His children. They scorn Hashem and act out this rebelliousness by trying to destroy His People.

From these depths the psalmist cries out, *Aneini Hashem ki tov chasdecha...*, "Answer me, Hashem, for Your kindness is good; according to the abundance of Your mercy turn to me." Hashem's kindness has no ulterior motive. It is there in its pure and abundant goodness.

The kapitel goes on describing the many ways those who seek to hurt us go about their nefarious deeds. The underlining motif is the cumulative weight of all this hate. It is this that hurts the most. We seem to never have the chance to catch our breath before the next bloodstained chapter is written.

Vaani oni vecho'ev..., "I am afflicted and in pain; let Your deliverance, Hashem, strengthen me." Be strong, Reb Yid, for deliverance will be ours!

Yiru anavim yismachu..., "The humble will see it and be glad, those who seek Hashem, let your hearts revive." This, then, is what we are all about.

Vezeira avadav yinchaluha..., "And the seed of His servants will inherit it, and those who love His name will dwell in it." We are tied to Hashem's love through those who went before us. We will reap what they have sown, and in time we will understand everything. Yidden suffer, but through this they come ever closer to the time when they will dwell in Hashem's chosen abode.

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