

CHAPTER SEVENTY-TWO

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

"Rebbe, I have such bad news," begins the telephone call late last night, and my heart starts to thump loudly in my chest. "My son and his family went on a holiday to a distant country, there was a car accident..." here the Zeidy starts to weep, then he catches his breath and continues, "They have all been hurt, and the youngest, my sweet grandson Binyamin, didn't survive."

Tears can't be kept back forever, and we both sob. So sudden, so unseen - what's going on? A Zeidy isn't supposed to bury his young grandchild; it's just not done. Unfortunately the trail of tragedy doesn't end there, for within the hour my friend's daughter-in-law joined her beloved son in the Olam Ha'emes.

What can be said? Where can one begin? A fellow raises his children in the best way he knows how. He sees them under the chuppa, and soon he smiles as they in turn are blessed with sweet neshamos. To see this torn away, to find all your dreams ripped to sunders - is there anything worse? He begins to blame himself: *"It must be something I did. Why else would these innocent souls be taken away?"* Can one hope to find strength to carry on? To carry the burden?

I write these words at 2:30 in the morning. My mind won't let me rest; I am full of the pain that my community is now sharing. I turn to my Tehillimel and find this kapitel. I know that somehow David will give me strength, and perhaps with this renewal I will be able to give comfort to the raw hurt that my friend is feeling. Life is full of its moments of sorrow. These moments are sent to give us something unique that for some reason can't be gained in any other fashion. However, when they strike it is oh so very hard to remember these truths. When tragedy hits we often turn inward, ripping ourselves apart and becoming even more distanced from Hashem. In truth, the first thing we should strive for in such times is a return to one's simplicity of faith.

We live in sophisticated times. Nothing is explained in simple terms; everything is given to us with a veneer of over-intellectualized nonsense. This creates a wall between our inner feelings and what we believe we should be thinking. Every once in a while we all should return to the simple wonderful faith that our forefathers had - the same faith that saw our parents through the Holocaust, yes, the simple inexplicable faith in Hashem. As a youngster I saw this faith in daily action, and I now cherish those moments greatly.

Take the smell of bronfin, or whiskey if you must. I recently had reason to be reminded of the wonderful feeling that was given over to us way back then, when on a Shabbos morning after

davening we would all sit down to a simple kiddush of herring and whiskey. I still remember how Zeidy would make kiddush over the whiskey, eat some matyas herring and egg kichel, then wash his hands with some of the bronfin, wipe his long moustache and say a heartfelt lechaim. The aroma of that true bitachon is still in my heart, and it is this that we so need today.

When I learned of the aforementioned tragedy, I immediately called a friend of the stricken family who is with them at this moment. He pleaded with me, "Rebbe, we are so alone here, so far from all our loved ones. Pray for me, I need so much strength!" I felt so small, so inadequate, yet I realized what these young people needed more than anything else was an old fashioned Yid to wipe his hands with a bissel bronfin. What the inner soul craves in times of tragedy is the safety that is Hashem, and the knowledge that what is happening is beyond mortal understanding. There are questions that will never be answered, so we must focus beyond them and look to the light which is our Father in Heaven.

David says this all in this kapitel. Let us look at his wondrous words and find solace. *Elokim mishpatecha lemelech tein...*, "Hashem, endow the king with Your own justice, and Your righteousness to the king's son." David asks Hashem that any Divine punishment he deserves should be given to him, while his children, his beloved son Shlomo, should see only the righteousness of Hashem's bountiful love. David had led a life filled with great events and tests. He pleads with Hashem that his children should never be penalized by anything he may have done wrong.

Yadin amecha betzedek..., "May he judge Your nation with righteousness, and Your poor with justice." David goes even further. He asks that Shlomo always be righteous in his judgments, leading the people with justice. This is a prayer that Shlomo should never carry bitterness in his heart and that he see events as what they are - learning opportunities that are meant to give him insight into being a just and worthy leader.

The kapitel then goes on to ask that the people themselves find peace and charity. *Yira'ucha im shamesh...*, "So that they will fear You at sunrise and before the moon's appearance, generation after generation." The elderly King David asks that the future generation should fear Hashem in the good times, as represented by sunrise, and in the darker times, symbolized by the moon's appearance.

Notice that David speaks of generation after generation. He knows with certainty that there will be future continuity; in this respect he never despairs. Although we see tragedy all around us we must believe, as did David, that there is a future, generation after generation, and they will flower both in the sunshine and in the moonlit night. The psalm then turns to explain how and why all of this will come to be. *Ki yatzil evyon meshave'a...*, "For he will rescue the needy when he cries, and the poor man who has none to help him." Klal Yisrael will always live because we have the inborn ability to hear the cries of those in need. We will always be holy; we will always give to those in need, for this is who we are! This merit will give us our continuity, our hope.

So, how does a Zeidy survive disaster? Or a brokenhearted father the loss of loved ones? There are

no answers, but there is the simple sweet trust that is ours. David sang of it, and so do we.

Baruch Hashem Elokim Elokei Yisrael..., "Blessed is Hashem, G-d, G-d of Israel Who alone performs wonders. And blessed is the Name of His glory forever, and may His glory fill the whole earth, amen and amen." Everything is Hashem - all wonders and all actions. That is forever, and the glory of this truth fills the whole earth with the very answer to the unanswerable. If you focus on this simple yet deep truth, then you will sincerely answer amen, "Yes, it is true," again and again.

Kalu tefillos David ben Yishai..., "Completed are the prayers of David, son of Yishai." With these soft gentle words David finishes his second book of Tehillim. He was old, weary and afraid for his son, yet he calls out the greatest truth of all, leans back and softly says, "That's it, I've said everything there is to say on the matter." We all see such wondrous things, so much strength in the face of adversity. We also witness unbelievable pain and sorrow. So where do we find the strength?

We lean back, clean our hands with some bronfin, sigh and say "Lechaim," and fortify ourselves with our fathers' emuna peshuta

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