

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

Let me share an old American folk tale with you. Once upon a time there was a wave that lived in the ocean. His was a joyful existence as he danced and sprayed in the wide stretch of water. All day long he would rush along in the sea's currents, growing and prancing as he sped on. Yes, our wave was a happy one with not a problem in his heart.

Then one day he was startled. He saw that the waves in front of him were crashing against an as of yet unknown beach, quickly dissolving into nothingness. He became frightened and started to cry. Just then an older wave slid over to him and said, "Young wave, until now you have been thinking only of your enjoyment. You thought you were alone and in charge of your destiny. Now you have learned that you were never alone. You were part of a huge ocean, part of a greater force."

People often forget that they belong to a greater community; one that has a destiny that far exceeds an individual's "pursuit of happiness." The secular world often ignores this. They allow themselves to become infatuated with their "fun" at the cost of accepting their responsibilities. Then when they approach the shoals of the beach they fall apart with dismay, wondering from whence this all came.

Throughout our long history, the Jewish nation has always remained strong as long as we kept bonded together. Whenever Jews became arrogant and sought to rise above their brethren, whenever they became entranced by their own desires, they ended up broken upon the beach. If, however, we relish and accept that we are part of the vast and glorious ocean that is our people, then we accept whatever trials Hashem sends us. We grow in our love for one another, lending each other support in difficult times. Unfortunately, I often come into contact with broken Yidden who ask, "Why, Rabbi? Why has this happened to me?" It may seem a perfectly sound question, but it misses the point of why we were given the gift of life in the first place. Don't ask why, ask what. What can I do to make something positive come out of life's difficulties? If I can do one affirmative thing with what seems to be the gloomiest situation, then I have created some light in an otherwise dark place. If I am part of the teeming ocean that is Hashem's people, then I dare never lose faith in Hashem's greater understanding.

We who have seen so much, who are aware of so much, must certainly understand this. No other generation has been so conscious of our previous history. We live in a time when we have more information about the world's condition than any previous period. Every one of us has seen survivors of the darkest chapter in our long galus. Everyone we know has known real heroes of the spirit. It behooves us to carry this further and accept that we are part of each other. When we first witness

the breaking waves cast upon the beach we need never despair, for we are joined with eternity.

King David speaks to this dramatic point. In this kapitel he tells of future trials for his people and how in the end they will see victory. He underlines the immovable function of our nationhood, and the fact that as one people we will witness Hashem's Glory.

Noda biYehuda Elokim..., "In Judah Hashem is known, in Israel His Name is great." A Jew knows who his Father in Heaven is. Jews may be in different locations, but they share this same knowledge. Today our people can be found on every continent, and in each corner where we are huddled together we can find the voice of Torah ringing out.

Vayehi beshalem sukko..., "When His tabernacle was in Shalem [Jerusalem], and His dwelling place in Zion. There He broke the flying arrows of the bow, the shield, the sword and the battle, *selah*." When we were together as one people, all devoted to the service in the Beis Hamikdash, without internal rifts, then Hashem showed us His all-encompassing protection. No enemy could overcome a Jewish nation that saw itself as one. Our losses have always come when we allowed ourselves to become fragmentized by jealousy. When we lose our sense of togetherness we become like that foolish wave bound for the edge of the rocks.

Na'or ata adir meiharerei teref..., "Awesome are You, and mightier than the mountains with their lairs." Others build fortresses and hidden caves for protection, but Hashem sees everything and can seek out our enemies no matter how hidden they may seem.

Migaarascha Elokei Yaakov..., "At Your rebuke, G-d of Jacob, they are cast into a deep sleep, also their chariot and horse." Here David touches on future events. When Sancheirev camped against Jerusalem, Hashem caused a deep slumber to engulf his armies. This clearly demonstrated that even the most energetic power could fall into a slumber, not seeing reality, when Hashem so desires. Nothing is impossible for Hashem. Great leaders go to sleep at the rudders of history when the will of Hashem so dictates.

Ata nora ata umi yaamod lefanecha..., "You, awesome are You, and who can stand before You once You are angry." In these troubled times we need to remind ourselves of this point. Der velt iz nisht hefker, "The world is not ownerless." There is a master, and the Master is Hashem. We may read about the comings and doings of mortal leaders, but nothing and no one can stand before Hashem. We are used to thinking we are in control of things, and we sometimes forget this powerful reality.

Those waves in the ocean, those enemies of ours, may think they are powerful and huge. But they are nothing more than spray in the wind when crashing against the force of Hashem's will.

Mishamayim hishmata din..., "From Heaven You caused sentence to be heard, the earth feared and was still. When Hashem arises to pass judgement, to deliver all the humble of the earth, *selah*." Newspapers can print banner headlines, commentators can pontificate - it is all to no avail. When Hashem wills it, His voice will still all the hubbub and put an end to all the scheming. We who have been derided for

so long will be delivered to His sanctuary, and then and only then will true peace be found.

Ki chamas adam todeka..., "For the wrath of man will turn to praise You, the residue of wrath You will restrain." Those who speak lightly of Hashem's Torah will turn around and praise that which they mocked. Even the smallest bit of remaining hostility will dissipate in the face of Hashem's totality.

Yivtzor ruach nedivim..., "He cuts down the spirit of princes, He is awesome to the kings of the earth." Like melted butter, those who sought to disparage Hashem's word will melt into nothingness.

We, who are part of the ocean, sometimes wonder where it will all end. What good can come from our being one nation when others seek so much to destroy us? However, one day it will all come to light, and all those kings and princes will realize the futility of their aims. They will lose their vaunted spirit and be humbled by the sight of what was always there.

Fear not, children of Israel, David tells us. You may think you are bobbing along in futility, but you are part of the greatest force that can ever exist - the force of Hashem's Will.

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