

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED SEVEN

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

So here we are, together we have followed the words of Tehillim to this vital point. We begin now the final book of David's monumental work, and we must ask, "Where to now?" We have seen how Tehillim shares our thoughts, caresses our broken hearts, and in every situation gives us needed strength. So, what can we hope for now?

Well, for me Tehillim now turns up the volume of hope, and enters a whole new dimension.

The words of this kapitel have a unique majesty that has been forged through generations of Yidden who have used them as a vehicle to get them from the weary everyday, to the sunlight of the Shabbos. Go to any community that davens nusach Sefard and you will understand what I mean. (Sorry if I wax lyrical here in support of this minhag.)

Some of my earliest memories in Bobov are of the Rav zy"a coming into the Beis Medrash erev Shabbos and acting as shaliach tzibbur for that last Mincha of the week. His arrival was always preceded by a calming moment in his study where a handful of chassidim would watch as he prepared to go into shul. There was a lovely soft quiet in the room, as if the hustle and bustle of the past week was melting away. I have previously described how the Rav would have a glass of tea in his hand, and would welcome last minute guests as they came into the room to take shalom. He would then rise and put on his gartel; this was accompanied by a softly sung niggun, and would be followed by putting on his tallis.

Soon we would all be swept up by the excited energy any of his departures would create, and we all would rush after him as he strode into the huge Beis Medrash. He would stride directly to the amud, take off his shtreimel, place the silver crowned tallis over his head, and cry out, Hodu LaHashem Ki Tov ...This would unleash a torrent of prayer, every one of us feeling the enormous lifting of the weekday woes from our shoulders. We were flushed of all the debris that the weekday had encrusted upon our souls. We became new children of Hashem, freed from the shackles of the dreary everyday, and our spirits felt as if they would lift us beyond the material world, and lovingly place us in the sweet climbs of the Garden of Eden. No longer were we bound to the grubby world of material need, no, now we were Shabbosdige Yidden, crying out our thanks to Hashem for making such a thing possible.

This moment of freedom was not unique to that one Beis Midrash, nor to those particular Yidden. It is the experience of all of Klal Yisrael when they accept the sweet gift of the Shabbos. This is beyond

any understanding; because it is the stuff of our souls, and is therefore himmeldig. How can one transform the corrupted broken shell of a Yid into a proud triumphant Shabbos bearer? Through these thoughts, the soaring words of this kapitel.

My dear friend, the late Reb David Greenzweig, zt"l, used to tell about the first Friday Mincha davened in the displaced peoples' camp in Germany after the liberation. The Klausenberger Rebbe zy"a had overseen the creation of a makeshift shul in one of the camp's disused buildings. Shortly before Shabbos, the Rebbe devised a tallis by using a sheet and makingtzitzis from a spool of wool. In this way, his beard showing its first signs of re-growth, the holy Rebbe came into the packed room. He walked to the front and began to recite the words of this passage with a heartbreaking voice.

Hodu LaHashem Ki Tov ... "Give thanks to Hashem for He is good ... " The congregation of survivors stood there and cried. None of them had siddurim, but it didn't matter. The Rebbe was extremely weak and his voice trembled, yet with every moment it grew louder and louder until it filled the large room and pierced the Heavens above.

"Say those redeemed by Hashem, who saved them from the enemy." With more cries and greater intensity the Rebbe continued, "Children of Man, who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, shackled in affliction and iron. He removed them from darkness and the shadow of death, and broke open their shackles ..." Reb David would say that all cried from the depths of their hearts, the foundations of the hall shook as the survivors cried with their Rebbe. The davening lasted an hour and a half!

Where does Tehillim take us now? It drives us to newer insights, greater understanding. It takes us on wings that are created through thousands of years of truth, and shows us the glory of a triumphant Torah life.

Hodu LaHashem Ki Tov ... "Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good, for His kindness endures forever."

We suffer so much; our lives are sometimes twisted by the trials and tribulations of mortal existence. We can sometimes lose our focus, it is all so easy to do so when stuck in the traffic jam that is everyday life.

Yomeru Geulei Hashem ... "Let those redeemed by Hashem say it, those He redeemed from the adversary's hand."

When Shabbos opens up its portals we all become redeemed, for the malchus that is Shabbos floats into our very being.

Umei'aratzos Kibetzum ... "And from the lands He gathered them, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south."

The spirit of Hashem's sanctity has no borders, the purity of Shabbos touches us wherever we abide.

Here the psalmist depicts one of the many aspects of the lost soul.

Ta'u Bamidbar ... "They wandered in the wilderness, in a path of desolation; an inhabited city they did not find."

Re'eivim ... "Hungry, also thirsty their soul fainted within them."

Vayitz'aku ... "Then they cried out to Hashem in their distress; from their anguish He rescued them."

Our life often seems desolate, nothing makes sense, and you just don't feel there is a glimmer of hope. Truth be told, you stop thinking in terms of spiritual redemption, hoping for some material relief instead. However, if you cry out to Hashem, no matter from whence those cries emanate, you can find yourself rescued. Shabbos brings us into the sunshine of our hearts, no matter what our enemies have tried to do to us. We are a people that pray, and in this manner we are uplifted beyond all normative experience.

This is such a lovely psalm, filled with grand illusions of Hashem's bountiful love for us.

Ki Hisbi'ah Nefesh Shokeika ... "For He satisfied the longing soul, and the hungry soul He filled with good."

All we really seek is the fullness of Hashem's good in our hearts. It is ours for the taking, for Hashem wants to satisfy the longing soul. We build walls around ourselves, walls created by doubt and pain. Hashem awaits our return to His safety, and Shabbos is the perfect place in which to start.

The Rebbe Reb Bunim of Peshischa tells us that this psalm enumerates various misfortunes which Hashem may send upon us, and concludes with the verse; *Mi Chacham ...* "Whoever is wise, let him note these things, and they will understand the kindnesses of Hashem."

"This teaches us," says the Rebbe, "never to lose hope in the midst of misfortune, but to believe that it is truly meant for good. Let us have fortitude and patients to await better days, and we shall perceive that all was a sign of Hashem's mercies."

What more can Tehillim give us? How deep is the ocean of Jewish need and burden!

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