

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

In this world that I inhabit it is close to impossible to make plans. Things happen with no warning and everything changes with the ring of a phone. Let me show an example. One *motzaei Shabbos* I heard the phone ringing as I stepped into the house after Maariv. Before I could reach it, the answering machine was blaring out the words I had dreaded hearing these last few weeks. "Rebbe, ----Yaakov has past away....." Sobs took over as I finally reached the hand set. "Reb Boruch.....I am so so sorry....." Words have no place at such times. Yaakov was a sweet *neshama* of seven years, and had fought a huge battle for some time. A battle he could little understand yet one that was the harbourer of his untimely death. Speaking to the caller, his grandfather, I had flashbacks in my mind of this sweet happy child who used to run about in my shul. He had a penchant for wearing different caps, and everyone knew him as "the smile with the hat". His grandfather was one of the community's stalwarts, a man who stood for everything we strived for. More than that, he was a loyal friend, one who had been with me through thick and thin. *Ribono shel Olam*, the child is gone, how will his parents cope?

Some few moments later and I was with the family in the house where the child was *niftar*. He had given his soul back to Hashem just as Shabbos was ebbing away, as if he wanted to slip into the Heavenly Shabbos before it was over. The little soldier who had fought this uninvited enemy so bravely was now at rest. There was very little left of him, the disease had taken its horrific toll, what was still there was the child's core love of others, and the memories he had created for us all with his smile.

Such tragedies are part of the tapestry of a communal life, but they don't become any easier, no matter how often they are faced. You speak to shocked family, and you cry with them, not for them mind you, but with them, for their loss is yours, their little soldier was part of the same army you belong to.

The next day we buried the sweet child in a peaceful *bais hachiam* in the countryside... and I had to turn around and go directly to a wedding! Yes, within an hour or so I stood under a *chuppa* addressing a young bride and groom about the promise that the future held for them and our hopes that they will bring light to the world.

How does one turn from the bleakness of a grave dug for a small coffin to the blaze of light that illuminates the faces of a young couple? The answer is you really can't say, you just do it because in your heart you know there is no other way. We Yidden have a DNA that gives us the impossible

ability to keep on going. We see our losses, grieve with pain and then turn to find a Simcha. We can do this because we know Hashem is with us on all occasions. We see the impossible, we cry, but the inner pintele that is our soul keeps us from sinking. The family of little Yaakov was surrounded by a blanket of love, people came and shared with their prayers, it's the way we are, and it gives one hope. The child they lost will always be within them, for the neshama is eternal; however in the darkness this isn't always apparent. What we share is our connection with Hashem, and this brings us all through the pain. We know there will soon be light for Hashem floods us with His Essence.

After these events I had some time to mull over the mixed feelings they left within me. Then, well then I had another phone call. My son was in Yerushalayim attending the chassna of the Gerrer Rebbe's son. In the middle of the tisch he phoned me.....so I could hear just one word.....I heard the Rebbe call out l'chiam, and the thousands in attendance responded in kind!

Yiddalach, I rest my case....

This kapitel tells us of Hashem's watchfulness.

Shir Hamaalos Ledovid...

"If not for Hashem Who was with us---let Israel declare it now! If not for Hashem Who was with us when men rose up against us; Then they would of swallowed us alive, when their anger was kindled against us."

We live in times where stress is considered a number one killer. There are so many things that seem to be working against us. Yet, if we accept that Hashem is watching, and is intervening, then we can grow through life's trials. Our enemies would have long gobbled us up, not only those of human form, but those that grind down our inner hearts. The torment of seeing so much sorrow is no less an enemy than the wicked aggressor with his bombs. The world little understands how strong the Jewish Nation is, this drives them to distraction. Take that strength dear Yidden, and use it to find a way through all life's enemies.

Azai Hamayim Shetafunu... "Then the waters would have inundated us, the current would have surged across our soul."

If not for Hashem's attachment to our souls, we would drown in the sea of life's tears. Our souls would become embittered from the pain. However, Hashem implanted awareness in us of His love for us, and it brings us the ability to carry on.

Baroch Hashem Shelo Netanenu... "Blessed is Hashem, Who did not present us as prey for their teeth. Our soul escaped like a bird from the hunters snare----the snare broke and we are free."

Hashem gives us the facility not to become defeated. We may hover at the edge, but just as a bird freed from a trap, so too we can fly above the troubles and seek true *Simcha*. We are able to turn to new life because Hashem is within our very being. This is the greatest sense of freedom one can

imagine.

Ezrenu Beshem Hashem... "Our help is through the Name of Hashem, Maker of heaven and earth."

So, we tremble with the sadness we witness, we feel the anguish of our loved ones, yet, we know help will come. Hashem is eternal; therefore His salvation is as well. Heaven, earth, all one, all part of Hashem's Will.

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