

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

Recently over twenty-one thousand football fans came out to watch their favorite team. Nothing new about that you may say, except that those thousands were Jews and the day of the match was Rosh Hashana. Tel Aviv Maccabi played Bayern Munich at Ramat Gan's National Stadium, and no one even thought of appealing for a change of date. Israel's football fans would not be denied, and the game seemed more vital to the nation than the fact that it was to be played on this most holy of dates.

The management of the Haifa team made it clear that playing on Rosh Hashana was "not even an issue for us," and the result was a refusal of the international governing board to move the match even one day. The well-known writer and critic, Jonathan Rosenblum, has written on this matter in his usual brilliant fashion. I only bring the matter to the reader's attention because it is indicative of a general malaise of the Jewish soul. To the Torah Yid this event is no different than the tens of other football games played each Shabbos in Israel; however in truth we see here a crossing of yet one more border. Rosh Hashana is meant to ring differently in the ears of all Jews, even those otherwise taken up by the secular mindset. When this day is seen to be less vital than a football match with guests from Germany, then those who go out to watch the spectacle are making a tragic statement.

Recent events have shown that the secular bend of many Israelis has left them with no concept of what their Jewishness is all about. Jews living in the Diaspora look on incredulously as the State of Israel becomes ever more disenfranchised from its roots. Our enemies wait in glee, knowing full well that given the current trends, Jews won't even care if there is an Israel, and all its young will find jobs driving taxis in Los Angeles.

To the Torah loyal Jew all this poses a difficult challenge that must be met fully. With all of the darkness that is being spread in the world that most of our brethren inhabit, we must redouble our efforts to create ever greater light. There is no doubt that the future of Klal Yisrael stands in the balance, and our actions can weigh things either way. Every generation has its difficulties, and throughout history we have faced dire troubles at every turn. Each new trial is specifically tailored for those involved, and today's chaos is no different.

Yes, secularism is a strong beast that pulls in every direction, but it can be tamed with a focused heart. Just as we see so much that can drive a wedge between Hashem and us, His children, so too we have enormous tides of teshuva washing away much of the damage. Never have so many sefarim been written, nor so much Torah made available to so many. Shuls grow each day, with new

adherents streaming forward to hear the Word of Hashem. The baal teshuva movement is huge, and brings hope to every Torah heart. Yeshivos are springing up daily with new programs of teaching Torah to the uninitiated. At the same time we see problems that have long been neglected becoming priority items on the communal agenda. Torah scholars are using everything at their disposal to reach out to those who are at risk of slipping away, and this is cause for true optimism.

In our kapitel we can see how David Hamelech ingrained in our souls with the focus needed when faced with difficulties. He speaks of the building of the Sanctuary, and although Hashem never granted him this honor, he was thankful for the ability to start the process.

Zechor Hashem LeDavid ... "O Hashem, remember unto David all his suffering." David asks that all his efforts expended towards finding the proper place for the Sanctuary should always be remembered. He didn't allow anything to dissuade him from this task, nothing! We too are building a Sanctuary for Hashem. By repairing the broken souls, those who have gone astray we are creating a place where the Shechina can come to rest.

Im Avo Be'ohel Beisi ... "If I come into the tent of my home, if I go upon the bed that is spread for me. If I allow sleep to my eyelids." David swore that he would never cease from the task at hand. Sleep would not interfere with his holy goal, nor would any creature comforts.

Ad Emtza Makom ... "Until I find a place for Hashem, resting places for the Strong One of Jacob." David's role was to find that one place that would be right for Hashem's abode. We are here to create the ambiance so that Hashem's people will be able to come to that place once it is rebuilt. We too must never desist from our work, nor lose heart. There may be many comfortable places for us to rest our weary heads, and sleep beckons enticingly, yet we must remain focused and true.

Kuma Hashem ... "Arise, Hashem, to Your resting place, You and the Ark of Your strength. Let Your priests don righteousness, and Your devout ones sing joyously. For the sake of David, Your servant, turn not away the face of Your anointed."

These words are evoked when we take out the sifrei Torah and prepare to dance with them on Simchas Torah. The resting place of the Jewish essence is in that Torah. Our Torah Sages sing in joy, and although we seem battle scared, Hashem will never turn His face from us. There are no easy answers to what we see around us. We must accept that the situation is tailored to who we are. We can overcome these difficulties, just as David did, and all those who have followed.

Nishba Hashem LeDavid ... "Hashem has sworn to David, a truth from which He will never retreat: From the fruit of your issue I will place upon your throne." This promise is our promissory note of ultimate redemption.

Im Yishmeru Banecha ... "If your sons keep My covenant, and this, My testament, that I shall teach them, then their sons, too, forever and ever, shall sit upon your throne." The only salvation for the Jewish nation lays in the Torah and by us, Hashem's children, living by its ways.

In the smog of the secular mirage, where the roar of a crowd of football fans takes precedence over the kol shofar, you may wonder if there is any hope for our holy nation. However, the Torah we learn, the energy we give will drown it all out, and in the end Hashem's promise will be lived, with joyous song and true happiness.

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