

CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED FIFTY

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

I never knew how it would end; in fact, I rarely thought about the fact that it would. For several years I wrote about Tehillim, tapping words on the keyboard that I hoped would be read and shared. Each chapter was a new adventure, and the Tehillim project became very much a part of my life. With each new segment I came closer to the end, never really feeling that an end was what I sought.

Tehillim is so strongly connected to the Jewish identity, and I have been privileged to be able to share some of my thoughts with so many. I expected that ending it was certainly going to be a wrenching experience. But fate has always been the co-producer of this work, and it has brought me to the perfect place to end this particular voyage.

I was at Kever Rachel, in the company of some forty Yidden from Britain. We had come together for a few days to see the Holy Land and visit its special sites. This was a unique trip, because those who had joined us were all from different backgrounds. Some were Torah observant, others not yet so, yet we were joined together to see and experience.

I had long wanted to make such a pilgrimage, to take some of my flock to see the Land of Israel as it is meant to be seen through Torah eyes. We stood in prayer, the ladies in the other room with my wife, and I with my fellow congregants. My son was with me. He had come with a large group of his congregants from Glasgow. And so two generations of Rubin rabbanim stood with their communities, reaching out to Mother Rachel with hearts full of hope.

Some of us could read lashon hakodesh, our holy language; others could not. Nonetheless, we were together, and we could speak in any way we found we were able to. It was as if each one of us was a different instrument, a different voice unique but in tune with the others.

Any musician will tell you that in an orchestral piece, the beauty is found in each instrument's ability to add its voice in its own way. Alone, each individual piece makes no sense; it is nothing more than a set of tones with no bonding force. Joined together with the others, it takes on new character, a special majesty that can rend the heavens. This kapitel tells of this special bonding, and I am humbled that Hashem has brought me here to experience this event at this unique moment.

Halleluyah! Praise God in His holy place; praise Him in the sky that contains His might. Sometimes you come to a place in your mind where everything feels so special and calm. Those around you pray, their voices creating a patina of soft murmurs. But it is always going to be about this praising Hashem. Each chapter of Tehillim is full of potential, but when it comes down to it, the Yiddishe

neshama is humbled. Hashem is so, so good to us, and after all is said and done, we can only mutter this one truth: "Praise Hashem!"

Praise Him for His acts of strength; praise Him as much as befits His greatness. The Yid who turns to Hashem uses David's words as the key to his own heart. With his words we can articulate that which would otherwise remain stuck in our throats.

Hashem's greatness is seen differently by each of us. His enormity is such that no one person can even begin to describe His uniqueness. But we praise Him according to our understanding, and in this way, though our words are those of the psalm, they are different when we render them.

This is not a bad thing; in fact, it seems to me that this uniqueness makes Tehillim the vehicle of so much hope for so many generations. David's heart was the heart of all Jews, and so he opened every Jewish heart with his words.

Praise Him accompanied with a shofar blast; praise Him using a lyre and harp. Every Jew is an instrument of praise to Hashem. One may be a shofar, the next a harp... It doesn't make a difference. Each one praises with his own voice, his unique tune.

Praise Him using a drum and flute; praise Him using various musical instruments. Everyone can play in this orchestral masterpiece; in fact, if one instrument is muted, then the whole song loses its power. Here David gives us his final piece of Divine inspiration the knowledge that every Jew is part of Klal Yisrael and is called upon to praise Hashem.

I stood at Kever Rachel with tears coursing down my face. *Hashem, this is not an ending. It is just the beginning of the start. Look at these Jews standing here with me. They are crying, sighing, some speechless, others in complete, unabashed awe of the moment. This is Your true praise, these Yidden with their newfound voices of love for You.*

Sometimes things happen that are a mystery locked in the moment. Before entering the tomb, I had given out a paper with the names of those in our community who are ill. After we recited Tehillim, we all read out those names, and then, for some reason I will never completely understand, one member of the community came to stand next to me, put one hand on the stone that lies above the kever, and bowed his head. Instinctively, I, too, placed my hand on it, and together we said Shema. He looked up with his red eyes and smiled. Then another came and another...until every one of those men had come to accept Hashem's Oneness with me. This episode was unscripted, and it tore my heart in two.

Even more astounding, and unbeknownst to me, was the fact that the ladies were going through the same sort of moment with my wife. Each one came closer to touch the stones as she shared words of hope. Mama Rachel must have seen all this and felt the wondrous light that we all shared. For me, it is what this sefer has been about, and it allowed me to finish what is never really finished.

With the entire soul, praise God. Halleluyah! King David gave us this splendid gift, and with it we can

open up all the souls of Klal Yisrael, making every soul just one soul, the soul of Hashem's children.

The crowd shuffled out. They were amazed at the intensity of their feelings. I, too, was amazed and deeply affected. In my heart I offered sincere thanks to Hashem for having granted me this moment, and I said slowly to myself, "Ashrei ha'ish..., Enriched is the man who has not followed the advice of the wicked, stood on the path of sinners, or sat among the scornful..."

You see, friends, we never end, never...

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