

CHAPTER SEVENTY-NINE

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

We are all warriors, each of us splattered with the dirt and grime of the battlefield. Our Sages tell us that each person must wage war with the evil impulses that stream through his mind. A philosopher once remarked that if man would be held accountable for his every thought, we would all be hung. It's a sad but true understanding of what our usual reality is. We try hard, we work on ourselves, but it's a battle that never seems to cease.

What then keeps us on the field? Where do we gain the armor to protect ourselves? There is but one source of all such weaponry, and that is found in Hashem's will. One of the greatest difficulties in bringing disengaged Jews closer to Torah is that they have no frame of Torah reference to relate to. Yidden who live a life filled with Torah awareness have a huge amount of positive connections with Hashem that stems from memories of mitzvos done and cherished. When things seem bleak, they can call up these experiences and with them temper the difficulties they face. What can you say to those without any such memory bank? They too face life's difficulties, but to them, there is nothing in their Jewish experience that calls forth any positive hope. Many would be astounded at the depth of ignorance that vast numbers of Jews have about our mesora. Basic concepts have never been heard of and certainly not lived, so although Jewish in name, they have none of our shared historic faith in Hashem. They face the battlefields of life with nothing but a title of a people who aren't all that loved. When the times become difficult, they flounder in the mire and blame that very name for their pain.

"Where was G-d?" "Why me?" These are questions that Torah Jews don't usually ask, simply because they have lived with Hashem through so many times that they have stored up an ocean of faith. The Maggid of Mehzeritz once noted, "Just as a man cannot look at the sun face to face but is able to utilize its light, so he cannot comprehend Hashem but he is free to utilize His light; namely, a person's own thoughts and spiritual emotions." Emotions created by a sensitivity to Hashem's will can bring one closer to Him and give strength to continue in the daily war over our inclinations.

In this kapitel we see how the hope of ultimate victory lies within our souls. Mizmor le'asaf Elokim ba'u goyim benachalasecha..., "A psalm of Asaf. Hashem, nations have entered into Your inheritance, they have defiled the sanctuary of Your holiness, they have made Jerusalem into heaps of ruins." The Rebbe of Medzibuz reads this passage with a unique understanding. "Hashem, foreign thoughts have come into the brain which I inherited from You; they have made unclean the heart, which is Your holy temple." Hashem creates us with a holiness; it is because we allow "foreign nations" to

enter therein that we find ourselves defiled.

The Torah Jew has a holy heart, one that has been cultivated through mitzvos and good deeds. Unfortunately we are weak, and we allow for some of the rubbish of the street to enter. This creates a tumult within our souls, and then the destruction begins. It is interesting to note that this psalm starts as a mizmor, a song. How can we sing when speaking of such devastation? Perhaps we can say that by connecting ourselves with Hashem's sanctuary, with His city of Jerusalem, we are indicating that just as they will one day be renewed and brought back to their great splendor, so too will every Yid. Yes, every one of us can return to our former purity. How? By being conscious of where we want to really be. As long as we have a memory of what it is to be a Yid, we can somehow overcome life's trials and return to Hashem's Will. *Nasnu es nivlas avadecha maachal le'of hashamayim...*, "They have given the corpse of Your servants as food to the birds of the heaven; the flesh of Your devoted ones to the beasts of the earth." Those who have never tasted Hashem's Torah are like spiritually dead corpses, their flesh and lives given over to the beasts of the field. This is the tragedy that we see amongst so many of our brethren. They don't stand a chance amongst the cruel enemies of Hashem; they are spiritually dead before they begin. However, they are still considered "Your servants, Your devoted ones." A Yid is a holy soul, and he can always be restored if given the right guidance and love. How did this all come about? How did Hashem's children lose all sense of who they are?

Hayinu cherpa lishcheineinu..., "We were a humiliation to our neighbors, an object of scorn and derision to those around us." As long as Yidden were able to stay together as one nation, we at least knew what was expected of us. In galus we were thrown apart and strewn amongst those who laughed at us, who were jealous of our moral standing. How long could this be withstood? For many, unfortunately it took only a generation or two until their young knew nothing of who they were.

Ki achal es Yaakov..., "For they have devoured Yaakov, and to his habitation they have laid waste." It now seems that some of our own, Jews who don't know what it is to be a Jew, have devoured Yaakov and destroyed what was his home. The reformists took the houses of Hashem and made them into a wasteland of pseudo-religion that is sold to the unaware as an "alternative" Jewish lifestyle.

Azreinu Elokei yisheinu..., "Help us, Hashem of our deliverance, for the sake of the glory of Your Name; save us and atone our sins, for the sake of Your Name." Hashem, the world sees us as Your people. True, we aren't worthy of Your help, for we have been weak and foolish. However, for the sake of Your Name, so that there be no chillul Hashem, please, save us and forgive our sins. This is such a moving prayer. When you are on the battlefield of reality and you feel you are slipping away, you can turn to Hashem and plead for help for the sake of the name that we carry as Jews. For this alone Hashem will save us.

Vaanachnu amecha vetzon marisecha..., "And we are Your people, the sheep of Your pasture; we

give thanks to You forever, from generation to generation we will recount Your praise." If we can just remember that we are but sheep, and that Hashem seeks to lead us to His pasture, then we can carry on to the next generation.

What of those already lost? The ones who don't know where that pasture lies? We can give thanks to Hashem in a real way by befriending those lost sheep and showing them where that pastureland is. The greatest kiruv tool in the world is friendship. By sharing Hashem's pasture with those who aren't yet aware of its richness, you are not only giving, but more importantly, receiving. When we give praise to Hashem we are activating our inner selves to recognize the will of Hashem, and by igniting that will in others we bolster our own sense of direction. This is truly the fulfillment of "from generation to generation we will recount Your praise."

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