

CHAPTER NINETY-FIVE

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

The week has been just so difficult. You have been thrown from pillar to post, not knowing what the next telephone call will bring. The bank is on your head, and those bills continue to lie on the table looking more and more ferocious. The children are so sweet, yet they constantly seem to be getting into scrapes. The *Rebbe* in yeshiva wants to know why Mendy isn't doing his homework. And on and on it goes, with woe after woe piling up on you.

You feel as if you are in a vortex that is spinning you out of control. You can't find the energy to cope. Husband and wife seek strength in each other, yet find themselves too tired to really give of themselves. You feel ground down and worn out. The doctor has warned you about your blood pressure, and your weight - well, don't ask. Sound familiar? Welcome to the world of the here and now.

Wait! The clock tells you that it's almost *Shabbos*, and somehow you find the will to persevere. You grab a lungful of air, drink a strong coffee, chase the kids into their showers, yell about shoes being shined (if they can be found), and help sift through tumble-dried piles of clothing. The clock marches on, tick-tocking its way toward the magic moment. You find some few moments to care for your own needs and rush down the stairs.

"Fine! *Gut Shabbos*, Mommy. Come on boys, let's get to *shul*." You walk quickly towards your *beis medrash* and see all the other hassled fathers schlepping their own gang of children. You enter, walk into the main sanctuary - and whoosh, life turns, and everything becomes so sweet and different.

The *baal tefilla* goes to the *amud*, raises his voice, and you enter a different realm; a world of such light and hope that you lose all remembrance of the chaos that preceded it. *Lechu neranena laHashem...*, "Come, let us sing to *Hashem*; let us sound the *shofar* to the Rock of our deliverance." This particular expression of singing indicates an enthusiastic call. We reach out to each other, waking up the embers of *kedusha* that have become smothered by weekday toil. "Sing to *Hashem*!" The simple act of raising one's voice brings deliverance. The awakening *shofar* sound can be found within each heart, and with it, one's revival.

Nekadma panav besoda..., "Let us greet His presence with thanksgiving, with hymns let us raise our voices unto Him." Yes life can seem a muddle, but we are *Yidden*, alive and burning with a love for *Hashem*. True, we tend to forget momentarily, but comes *Shabbos*, comes that special moment, and we greet the world's creation with song. Our voices raise our inner hearts to higher levels. Everything

seems better now, everything is bearable. When we are laden with life's woes we cannot really feel *Hashem's* presence, for our pain creates a barrier. Greeting *Hashem's* presence is accomplished when we heighten our joy and become filled with thanksgiving.

Ki Kel gadol Elokim..., "For a great Alm-ghty is *Hashem*, and a great King over all gods." The whole week we allow earthly matters to become idols, worshipping them with fear and trepidation. What will become of this? How will I cope with that? There is no shortage of worries, each one amply able to become yet another idol of fear. *Shabbos* is the clearing in the mist, the place where we can actually feel *Hashem's* greatness.

The greatest gift that is *Shabbos* is its renewal. The *Ruzhiner Rebbe* used to explain that the reason the *Gemara* tells us to give thanks to *Hashem* for each breath we take is because life depends on breathing, and therefore each breath becomes a renewal of one's life. The *Rebbe* continued, "Therefore a person has a right to consider himself newly created with every new breath. Since this is the case, a person need not see events of the past as a burden that keeps him from coming closer to *Hashem*. Even though the person of the past may well have been woefully inadequate, full of the idols of worry, one can assume that that person has gone with his last breath, and with his next a new persona has come to the fore."

Shabbos brings us a new creation. Who we were before is gone. Now we can cry out in song to *Hashem* with a new sense of being.

Ki beyadav mechkerei aretz..., "For in His Hands are the depths of the earth, and the heights of the mountains are His; for the seas are His, and He made it, and the dry land, His Hands formed." It is such a wondrous thing. If we internalize the knowledge that *Hashem* creates everything, our own scuffles pale into nothingness. Find yourself smothered in the depths of pain? *Hashem* created every level of existence, and He can carry you out of the deepest cavern. Feel as if the troubles are about to flood you? Fear not, for every ocean is bound by dry land. All is in *Hashem's* power; we can free ourselves from the torment of the mundane.

Bo'u nishtachaveh venichre'ah..., "Come, let us prostrate ourselves and bow, let us kneel before *Hashem*, our Maker." The psalmist bids us to throw ourselves entirely upon the trust of *Hashem*. With such totality one can find recourse from life's stresses.

Ki hu Elokeinu vaanachnu am mariso..., "For He is our G-d and we are the people of His pasture and the flock of His Hand, even today if you will heed His voice." We tend to think of only the past generations as being holy. Certainly the spiritual giants of yesteryear are beyond our understanding. However, no matter what our time and place, *Hashem* always sees us as His flock, His people. *Shabbos* gives us the breathing space to remind ourselves of this truth.

Reb Nachman of Breslov used to say, "A man must not delay his start in the right direction until the next day. Do not say, 'Tomorrow I will commence to serve *Hashem* properly.' A man has only the day and hour in which he stands, and the morrow is a different world into which he enters. Thus we read

this in this passage, Even today if you will heed His voice.' "

This world is a hard place, and sometimes we wonder how we can survive. This *kapitel's* words are used throughout the world to usher in the *Shabbos*. Its message is but a preamble of what the *Shabbos* offers us. have been blessed in seeing young people enjoying the sanctity of *Shabbos* for the first time. Again and again I have realized that its healing powers are astounding. We can actually turn away from our tribulations and difficulties and hand them over to *Hashem* with song. We need but observe its trueness and believe in its worth.

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