

HEAVEN HELP US

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In Parshas Haazinu, Moshe sings a swan song for eternity -- a haunting ballad filled with allusions to the future and grim predictions lest his people stray. Unfortunately, the dire predictions were clearly fulfilled throughout the Diaspora. And the lessons that contained within are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago when they were first imparted.

One verse reads: "*When Hashem will have judged his people, He shall relent... when He sees that the enemy progresses and no one (feels that they) will be saved or assisted.*" (Deuteronomy 32:36).

The Talmud in Sanhedrin explains that this *posuk* refers to the time of Israel's redemption. The Talmud asks, "when is that time?" One of the various answers is derived from this verse. "The Moshiach will not come until the Jews have abandoned hope of redemption as it states: 'He shall relent... when He sees that the enemy progresses and no one (feels that they) will be saved or assisted.' "

My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory in *Emes L'Yaakov*, his classic commentary on the Torah, asks, "How is it possible that a prerequisite for the actual deliverance will be the total abandonment of a very basic tenet of Judaism -- hope for redemption? What does the Talmud mean when it says that the Moshiach will not arrive until the Jewish people "lose all hope of redemption"

My dear friend R' Mendy Kofman related the following story: Rabbi Yaakov Rubin, the Brizdovitz Rav in Brooklyn is known for his wisdom and warmth in nurturing many Russian immigrants in this country. One of the families that he endeared was an amazing family of Russian immigrants who, despite Communist rule and oppression remained strongly committed to Judaism even behind the iron curtain. In fact, the Rav hosted the family for a *Sheva Berachos* festivity for this family's daughter and her new groom.

During the meal the Rav rose to speak. He praised the incredible perseverance of this family and during the course of his speech he discussed the Divine providence that helped them get out of Russia. "Boruch Hashem," concluded the Rav "The *Ribbono Shel Olam* (Almighty) helped them and they got out of Russia..." Suddenly a booming voice in a Russian accent interrupted.

It was the father of the bride. "*Der Ribbono Shel Olam hut NIT GEHULFEN! THE RIBBONO SHEL OLAM DID NOT HELP US!*" The Rav froze and stammered... "I mean, with the assistance of the

Almighty..." Again the voice boomed: "THE *RIBBONO SHEL OLAM* DID NOT ASSIST US!"

Eyes darted from the Rav and back to the man. The Rav was stammering, the man was glowering. Suddenly the Russian man smiled widely as he spoke softly. "Listen carefully. *Der Ribbono Shel Olam* did not help us! *Der Ribbono Shel Olam* did not assist us! He did EVERYTHING!"

Rav Yaakov explains: The Talmud does not mean that Moshiach will not arrive until we have abandoned hope of any redemption. It means that Moshiach will not arrive until we have abandoned hope of other types of redemption! As long as we rely on ourselves, our machinations and own abilities to get out of our troubles, then we are proclaiming self-reliance. If we rely on our own expertise and political abilities to extract us from dire situations, if we think that all answers will be configured by mortal diplomacy; then Moshiach will lock himself in his proverbial room -- and wait. Only when we realize that redemption is in His hands and truly only in His hands will Hashem send us the true redemption!

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