

Kindert Torah

Parashas Nitzavim

כ"ב

The Road Back

"Now we are really lost. It is pitch black and there are no road signs. We lost our map, and there is not a living soul here to ask for directions. What shall we do?"

"First of all, let's not panic. There is a way to deal with every problem. Let us open up the Chumash."

"What? The Chumash? We are in a life and death situation! What are you doing reading the Chumash?"

"Listen to what it says in this week's parasha. The Jewish people will be dispersed among all of the nations. If you are at the very ends of heaven, from there, Hashem will gather you in."

"That is wonderful. I hope that we are alive to experience it. In the meantime, what do we do now?"

"You shall return and listen to the voice of Hashem and perform all of His commandments."

"I am ready to do teshuva. Maybe that will save us."

"Our situation is a parable to the Chumash. Do you remember how we cried so bitterly on Tisha B'Av? We cried over the long, bitter golus (exile) and the lack of direction. We are all wandering around in a spiritual darkness with no one to guide our way. What can we do? We are lost . . . spiritually lost."

"I am going to start crying again. Really, what can we do?"

"The answer is also in the parasha. 'For this commandment (of teshuva) is not hidden from you, and it is not far away. It is not in heaven . . . nor is it across the sea . . . Rather the matter is very near to you - in your mouth and in your heart - to perform it' (Devarim 30:11-14). Don't you see that there is nothing that can prevent us from doing teshuva?"

"I'm still not convinced."

"The Malbim explains that an animal will never do anything to harm itself. Why then, does a human being, who has intelligence, do sins which will surely harm him?"

"Excellent question."

"Because our hearts are stopped up. The healthy heart will always guide the person in the proper direction. Our hearts are covered with layers of spiritual grime, preventing our true feelings from shining forth. Teshuva is removing the layers covering our hearts. Even in this deep, dark golus we need no guide other than our hearts to return to Hashem."

"Hashem, please save us! I will do my best to listen to my heart and keep Your mitzvos!"

A car slowly approaches from the distance. The two men flag down the car.

Inside is a search team. As the two men board the car, they radio to headquarters that the lost men have been found. The man in the back seat is sobbing uncontrollably, his heart breaking.

"Thank you Hashem. Thank you for everything."

Kindertlach . . .

How many times has Hashem saved us? From illness, from poverty, and from danger. Why does he place us in a dangerous situation, then save us? One of the reasons is that He wants us to recognize that He is the One Who saved us. And He wants us to thank Him. The best way to thank Him is by doing teshuva. When we keep His mitzvos, it gives Him pleasure. It is also good for us, because we become closer to Him. Now is the time for teshuva, kindertlach. Take the opportunity.

Days of Favor

"Today is a special day, Avi."

"How wonderful, Abba. I am so excited. Which day is it?"

"It is yom sheini (Monday)."

"Hmmm. What is so special about yom sheini, Abba? It has no special name, only a number, just like all of the six days of the week."

"True, Avi. However, yom sheini and yom chamishi (Thursday) are called yimei ratzon (days of favor)."

"What are yimei ratzon, Abba?"

"I will answer you with a Medrash,¹ Avi. The verse states, 'Seek Hashem where He can be found' (Yishaya 55:6). The Hebrew word for 'can be found' is spelled 'bi'hemotzu' - 'beis', 'heh', 'motzu'. On the second (beis) and fifth (heh) days you will find Him (motzu) close to you if you seek Him out."

"I see, Abba. Hashem is close to His chosen nation during yimei ratzon."

"Precisely, Avi. The Tur² recounts that the forty days of reception of the second

luchos (tablets) on Har Sinai were yimei ratzon. Moshe Rabbeinu went up the mountain on chamishi and came down on sheini. The Omnipresent looked favorably upon this, and therefore this going up and coming down was an eis ratzon (time of favor), and has remained so for all time. Our Elders subsequently imbued these days with special prayers, so that we can 'seek Him out'. We increase our tachanunim (supplications) on sheini and chamishi³ from the normal three paragraphs to eleven paragraphs. Moshe Rabbeinu fixed the Torah reading on these two days. This is based on the verse, 'They went for a three-day period in the Midbar and did not find water' (Shemos 15:22). Water

means Torah, as the verse states, 'Hoy, everyone who is thirsty, go to the water' (Yishaya 55:1). Going three days without Torah made them weak. Therefore he fixed the Torah reading on Shabbos, left a break on rishon (Sunday), another reading on sheini, a break on shlishi (Tuesday) and revii (Wednesday), a reading on chamishi, and break on erev Shabbos, in order that they would not go three days without Torah."⁴

"This is fascinating, Abba."

"Yes, Avi. Now let me share with you a passage from the Zohar.⁵ 'Rebbe Shimon says, "When they take out the Sefer Torah to read it, the heavenly gates of mercy open up. This arouses the Almighty's love, and therefore a person must say the following prayer. 'Blessed is the Name of the Master of the universe...' This beautiful prayer blesses Hashem's Name, crown, and place. We then request favor, salvation, the goodness of His glow, and acceptance of our prayers. This is followed by an individual request for mercy, protection, and to be numbered amongst the righteous. We praise You Hashem - You nourish and sustain all, control everything; You rule over kings, and the monarchy is Yours. I am a servant of the Holy One Blessed be He; I bow before Him and the glory of His Torah always. I put my trust in no man or angel, only in the G-d of heaven, Who is the G-d of truth, Whose Torah is true, and Whose prophets are true, and Who acts liberally with kindness and truth. I trust Him and praise His Name. May it be Your will that You open my heart to the Torah, and that You fulfill the wishes of My heart, and the hearts of Your entire people Israel for good, for life, and for peace. Amen.'"

"May we all seek Hashem, find Him, and drink thirstily of the water of Torah on these days, Abba."

"Amen."

Kindertlach . . .

We have a special opportunity to come close to Hashem on yom sheini and chamishi. The Omnipresent favored these days, because Moshe Rabbeinu went up to Har Sinai on yom chamishi and came down on yom sheini. Our Elders have given us special prayers of supplication on these days to help us seek Him out. We also read the Torah on these days. When we open up the Aron Kodesh to take out the Torah and the heavenly gates of mercy open up. We therefore say a special beautiful prayer of praise and supplication. May the Almighty fulfill the wishes of the hearts of the entire people Israel for good, for life, and for peace. Amen.

¹ cited by Abudarham

² Orach Chaim 134

³ Rema (Orach Chaim 134:1)

⁴ Gemora Bava Kamma 82a and Tosafos

⁵ Parashas Vayakhel as cited in Shaar HaRachamim