



פרשת בהר-בחקתי

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I guess it should have not surprised me that, on the Shabbos after Klal Yisroel's tragedy, we read the תוכחה which concludes the Sefer of Korbanos. After a week of trying to wrap our minds around the impossible, hearing news of all kinds – true and otherwise – but never really hearing anything that can provide us with any form of solace. This Shabbos we will all shudder, as I did when I first noticed it, as we will read (26: 36-37) “the sound of a rustling leaf will pursue them and they will flee as if being chased by a sword and they will fall, but without a pursuer”. וכשלו. “they will stumble, each man over his brother as if being chased by a sword, but there is no pursuer”. The Torah describes a chaos, a horrible calamity with no one to blame, which makes the question of “why” much more pressing.

My friends, I hope you are not expecting an earth shattering answer that will make the dark, ominous cloud hanging over our heads and hearts just go away. I am just as broken and bewildered as all of us are. I am not דעת תורה, but just a Yeshiva Bachur with a grey beard. The only I thing have, maybe, is strength learned from my parents and השקפה imbued by my Rabbeim to know how to react to adversity. Let me just share with you what I have been telling myself repeatedly.

תיקו – for thousands of years, Klal Yisroel has lived with that answer – תשבי יתרץ קושיאות ואבעיית. We lived with that answer in the Gemara, and we have lived with that answer in life, time and time again. What does that mean? It means that I have a question which I don't know the answer to, BUT I know, for sure, beyond a shadow of a doubt that there IS AN

ANSWER; I just don't know it YET. We can live with that answer, AND WE HAVE for thousands of years.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz, Mirrer Mashgiach shares a fascinating idea (Daas Chochma U'Mussar vol. II Maamar 30) that it is the understanding of the נסתר, the hidden aspect of something, the non-tangible, is really the עיקר (his משל is fire, where the נגלה - tangible - is the flame and the light it produces, while the נסתר is what it will do - such as warm or destroy). Life too, has a נגלה but as Chazal teach us צדיק באמונתו יחיה, the understanding of life is the ultimate נסתר, requiring אמונה to live. Klal Yisroels maiden steps as a nation in the Midbar, without a map, without a compass, without any plan of where to go was directed ONLY by על פי ה' יחנו על פי ה' יסעו. He quotes a classic Ramban (Vayikra 16:8) (the Rishonim seemed to have had semi-respect for Aristotle's wisdom, but were greatly disillusioned by the man and his deplorable humanity) who writes about the Yevani (Aristotle) and his תלמידיו הרשעים, whose arrogance led them to believe that what they could not believe or understand could not be true. “כל ענין שלא השיג אליו הוא בסברתו איננו אמת”. Rav Yerucham then quotes the Ramchal (Daas Tevunos) that if Hashem would have created a world where there is nothing that we could understand, there would never be questions in Emuna, never a need to ask “why”. The fact that there ARE THINGS WE DO UNDERSTAND leads us to think and to question the things WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND. The נסתר will always be there, there will always be a degree of uncertainty.

Science has discovered that man only uses 10% of his brain (referring, of course, to those that actually





use their brains). Some people will obviously use somewhat more; it is reported that Rav Chaim Ozer was able to write two separate Teshuvos with each hand while simultaneously speaking to someone. Then why did Hashem create man with a brain that remains 90% unused? It certainly is because on THAT GREAT DAY of the Geulah, we will need that heightened awareness to understand all the things we previously could not understand. Imagine a recipe for a cake with ONLY 10% OF THE INGREDIENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS provided! Of course we would have a hundred questions - why does it look like that, why would anyone want to eat it, it smells bad too. That is the sad state that man – AND US – are struggling with, unconscious of the fact that we are only at 10% capacity and, therefore, must surrender to the superior intellect and wisdom of Heaven. Ay the Kotzker! He said the entire Hilchos Dea'os in one sentence which could and should be used whenever someone needs a נחמה. He said – first in Yiddish to retain the whole טעם - שוין - "וואס פאהר א גאט וואלט ער שוין - טעם" - ג'קענט זיין אויב איך וואלט איהם גיקענט פארשטיין" - what kind of G-d would He be, really, if I could understand him. Hashem should give us the strength to fortify our אמונה and understand that this harsh message is for us to be חזק ואמץ לבך in whatever we need Chizuk in.

That Pasuk keeps on bouncing through my head - וכשלו איש באחזיו and I'd like to share my initial thoughts with you. The Goyim did not do this, the pandemic did not do this – we did this to ourselves. My mind immediately closed in on the Haftarah of Parshas Metzora, where one Jew was trampled to death by other Jews. But first, a little background. The story begins in Melachim II (6-7), where the army of Aram places the city of Shomron under a terrible

siege, causing horrific famine (the likes of which are described in the תוכחה of mothers driven mad enough to consume their own children). Yoram, king of Yisroel, initially blames Elisha but after subsequently humbles himself to Hashem. Elisha promises Yoram's captain that tomorrow, there will be food, and predicts the prices of flour and barley. Yoram's captain mocks Elisha and basically says "even Hashem can't make that happen". Elisha promises him that it will happen, but that he will not be able to benefit from it. Then גיחזי and his three sons, all of whom were lepers, discovered that the army of Aram had abandoned their camp, as Hashem made them hear sounds of a thunderous army approaching. They had left everything, and it was now theirs for the taking. If you have ever learned that Navi, you know that I am just hitting the headlines and leaving out much. Come to think of it – maybe learning it is a good idea. They inform Shomron, and Yoram appoints his captain to monitor the gate so that chaos would not develop. The Navi relates that he failed at that task, and was in fact trampled to death. The Ozraver (Baer Moshe Melachim 7) brings a של"ה who says that the captain was punished because he used an expression the Torah uses about the דור המבול , (Beraishis 7:11) ארובות השמים נפתחו; meaning to say was that Shomron did not deserve the food – in essence, he was מקטרג on them thereby forfeiting his right to benefit from the miracle. The Ozraver understands this by saying that had he truly shared in the pain of the Tzibur, upon hearing such good news, he should have responded with הלואי אמן! Somehow, this spoke to me with a lesson that if you are ready to trample Jews, you yourself can get trampled. We can trample on people with a nasty comment, we can trample on people in business, we can even trample on people by simply ignoring





them and certainly by bad-mouthing them. Do not for one second think that I am assigning any blame to the קדושים וטהורים but rather, the phenomenon of Jews trampling other Jews should draw our attention – ABOUT OURSELVES – to ponder.

Another thought – maybe this is my therapy. The Mishna (Shabbos 60a) forbids one from wearing a nailed sandal on Shabbos. The Gemara explains that Jews were hiding after a decree either in a cave or in a Shul and, thinking they had been discovered, ran over each other seeking safety and many were killed. Explains the Ritva, the Chachamim forbade it because if these sandals were to be seen on Shabbos, they would remind people of the tragic event which would ruin their Simchas Shabbos and Yom Tov. Givalt! What a lesson of wow we need to join together and share in the pain of other Yidden. This Halacha is for everyone, even if the calamity did not happen in your town – even if you just heard about - it happened SOMEWHERE. The חכמים understood that this is the way a Yid should think. The צרה happened to MY BROTHER, MY SISTER won't ever be able to Bentch Licht Friday night without the vision of the moment her life changed, haunting her. Homes in which there will always be an empty seat at the table, ה' ירחם. How great, how important is the Mitzvah of נושא בעול עם , caring, hurting and trying to do something about it.

Another thought from a mind that has a whirlwind of thoughts these days. Hopefully, we are seeing an end to the מגיפה that took so many Nefashos from us, and constricted us so badly in Ruchnius and Gashmius, and left so many of us with a זכר לחורבן in so many ways. The question we kept hearing, “how is their breathing?”, with constant checking, ventilators

etc.; it was, in fact, a respiratory disease. The reports from Meron survivors described people screaming “I can't breathe”, רחמנא ליצלן . Two צרות, back to back, of people having trouble breathing. The message – to me – is to think about the חסד of being able to breathe. Who ever thought about breathing? It seems that we all took it for granted. What is more natural, more casual than breathing? I need to better learn the Chazal on the Pasuk of על כל כל that כל הנשמה תהלל קה , to praise Hashem for every single breath I take, every נשימה that allows נשמה to remain with me – ערב ובוקר וצהרים. Sometimes, we indulge in gratitude to Hashem on special occasions – getting married, having a child, a grandchild or a spectacular business deal. But feeling a sense of gratefulness to the Borei Olam for every mindless breath, for every minute שבכל עת is certainly a מדריגה worth aspiring to. I hope to say מודים with a little more כוונה - how can I not, seeing these lessons in נשימה ונשימה.

Let's all be Zocheh to be נושא בעול , not to trample on other Jews, and appreciate every moment of life that our אב הרחמן gives us with to be Zocheh to למען ירבו ימיכם בניכם.

Among those who are מצפים לישועה.

אמני דאפקיה
חיים טאג איתן

