

עדת אש קודש Adass Aish Kodesh



Rhythm of the Heart

Tehillim - Kapitel 34

By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

The State of Minnesota saw a fascinating court case. A group of people wanted to find out who could run 100 yards the fastest. To make it more interesting, each runner strapped a refrigerator on his back. When one man injured his spine, he sued the refrigerator company for not issuing a warning that carrying an enormous refrigerator complete with icemaker might damage your back.

This bit of news got me thinking. As crazy as it sounds, we all run about in the race called Life with what amounts to a refrigerator tied to our backs. Our fridges aren't huge, bulky boxes, but nevertheless they weigh a ton. They are made up of all the troubles and woes we schlep through life with. There are those who carry the weight of all of life's miseries with them constantly, never letting go or allowing themselves the comfort of some respite. On and on they run, jumping through the hoops that are life's hurdles while all the while *shlepping* their refrigerator-sized *peckelach* on their backs.

In *parashas Beshalach* Hashem tells the Jewish nation, "All the diseases that I visited on Egypt I will not bring on you, for I am G-d, your Healer" (*Shemos* 15:26). Reb Mendel of Vitebsk commented, "*All the diseases* refers to worry and dejection, because these are the source of all illnesses." Rabbi Abraham Twerski points out that Reb Mendel's sage observation was made hundreds of years before his time. It is now clear that most of the illnesses we witness are kick-started through stress and worry. Studies have shown that even such conditions as diabetes and cancer may well be the result of the body's defense systems being short-circuited by anxiety and depression.

What, then, is the antidote? Notes Rabbi Twerski, the cure is clearly stated in the latter part of the verse: "For I am G-d, your Healer." If we have true and heartfelt faith in Hashem, we will be free of worry and sadness. We will be secure in the knowledge that

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Hashem watches over us and everything that happens throughout our lives is somehow to our ultimate advantage.

King David knew a thing or two about such situations. He had a life that was strewn with difficulties, and if measured in levels of refrigeration, his could be described as a walk in a freezer chest-full of *peckelach*. Every once in a while he reminds us of this in his *Tehillim*, and more important, he shows us how to survive.

This *kapitel* finds David thanking Hashem for once again saving him from harm. On being forced to flee from Saul, David hid himself among the Philistines. He was soon recognized as the slayer of Goliath and found himself in mortal danger. To escape, he pretended to be crazy. The ruse worked, and David was sent away unharmed by Avimelech, the king of the Philistines.

Through the entire tension-fraught episode, David focuses on his true Savior and relates to us how he perceived his situation.

By David, when he acted insane in the presence of Avimelech, who drove him away, and he left. I will bless Hashem every moment. His praise is constantly in my mouth. Even at the overwhelming moment of being forced to make others think he was crazy, David's own focus was on praising Hashem at all times, constantly. This alone gave him the strength to persevere.

We can't even begin to understand how David must have felt at that moment — the torment, the fear — yet like a heat-seeking missile, his thoughts were focused on Hashem's praises. We too find ourselves in all sorts of situations, and many are the fearful moments and tortuous times. If we can learn to somehow, in some way, channel our feelings toward Hashem, we too will find His salvation.

In Hashem, my soul takes pride. The humble will hear this and rejoice. David exclaims that evoking Hashem's name, even in difficult times, brings him a sense of pride. For as long as one feels his connection with Hashem, no one and nothing can cause him to feel lost or insignificant. David tells us this so that those who are humbled by their tribulations can hear it and rejoice.

Declare the greatness of Hashem with me, and let us exalt His name together. We are children of the survivors from the hell called the Holocaust. We have learned Torah from those who survived what can never be understood. Each of those survivors declared the greatness of Hashem in his own way, and this has led to the exaltation of the thriving *Yiddishkeit* we now experience. No other generation can better prove that by remaining tied to Hashem one can do more than just survive; he will ultimately exalt in Hashem's kindnesses together with others.

I sought Hashem, and He answered to me. And from all my fears, He saved me. Notice that David does not negate the fact that he did have fears. He is not oblivious to his problems. David is human and liable to the same fears as others. However, he directs these feelings toward seeking Hashem, and he finds that which he seeks in return.

Those who look to Him are enlightened, and their faces are never covered with shame. There are those who see religiosity as being backward and unsophisticated. However, true light shines forth on the faces of those who "look to Him," because strength gained from closeness to Hashem can never be broken or humiliated. Although the world can very well deal a person a difficult time, if you are bonded with your identity as Hashem's creation, you won't feel humiliation.

This poor man called, and Hashem heard. And from all his troubles, He saved him. In his humility, David describes himself as a poor man, one with little worth. Yet he testifies that even from such a depth, such a complete lack of self-confidence, Hashem heard his plea.

Taste and see that Hashem is good. Enriched is the man who takes refuge in Him. It is often the case, especially in these secular times, that Yidden never actually "taste" Hashem's goodness.

They are so far away that they don't even begin to understand what a relationship with Hashem could bring them. Those who are given this insight are truly enriched, for they have a place of safety in the turbulent sea of this insensitive world.

Who is the man who desires life, loves days to see good? We are all placed here on earth for a purpose, and that is what our lives should be about. If a person seeks to fulfill that purpose, he will love his days, since he sees in them the good done toward fulfilling his goal.

I received correspondence from a young Jew who lives in the Far East. Don't ask how he got to me; it's just one more unbelievable result of living in this extraordinary world. He has begun to seek his Torah roots and feels strongly that Hashem wants him to fulfill some purpose. He wanted help in doing so. As he put it in his own words, he has a very good material life but he seeks a real life so that he will "see good." I am profoundly moved by his search. He comes from so far, yet he has responded to the Voice of Hashem that lies within his heart.

Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceitfully. These words have become the weather vane for Jews throughout the world. The Chofetz Chaim has left us with an understanding of how vital our words are and how destructive they can become if not carefully guarded.

Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. In Kotzk one was taught that doing good is the first step in turning away from evil. David started this *kapitel* with thanks to Hashem for rescuing him. Giving such thanks is a positive act. However, David wanted us to learn that we can give this thanks with a greater understanding if we refine ourselves. Language, the building blocks of articulating thanks, must become finer. Then he goes further and tells us to turn from evil. How? By filling our days with good. As the Kotzker Rebbe was wont to say, "Let my chassidim not sin because they are too busy doing good!"

David then makes another observation. If a person wants to seek peace, he must actually pursue it. Peace is a difficult concept. It is so mixed with our own self-serving conceptions. To find true peace, one must actively seek it out.

Hashem is close to the brokenhearted, and He delivers the depressed. One more inspiring *vort* from Kotzk: "There is nothing as whole as a broken heart."

If we follow David's route we will find light within the darkest of trials, for in the darkness we will realize that Hashem is there with us. This is the healing balm that the *kapitel* offers — the wholeness of the frightened broken heart.

