

I WILL BE WITH YOU

In the Egyptian bondage, our people were afflicted with terrible suffering: וימררו את חייהם בעבודה קשה, “*And they embittered their lives with difficult labor.*” Think about what any Jew must have felt like then. They knew of the prophecy made to Avraham *Avinu* that the Egyptian exile would last for 420 years. How could they take it any longer? How could anyone ever hope to get out of Egypt? Even if anyone would have ran away from Egypt, they wouldn’t be able to escape, because the Egyptians used their sorcery to hold back anyone from escaping. What did any Jew think back then? How could he cope with such suffering, knowing that it’s going to take 420 years to be redeemed? Imagine that we are one of the Jews enslaved in Egypt. What would we do? How would we cope? Would we just give up? When the people complained to Moshe of the suffering, Moshe entreated to Hashem, and Hashem told him to tell them, “Just like I was with the forefathers, so will I be with you by the other hard times. This pain is only temporary.” Hashem was saying, it’s true – it really is a very hard time that they are going through, but do not worry, it is only temporary, and I am with you, so don’t worry. How are we to understand Hashem’s response, “The pain is only temporary”? How does this help them survive a 420-year exile?

This lesson shows us how we can deal with our own difficulties. Is there anyone who hasn’t gone through difficult times? There is no such person. Every single one of us has gone through something. Some of us came out of much of our past hardships, and some of us are still going through hardships. But what we all have in common is that we are still going through something hard, and we haven’t fully come out of our difficulties. We are all still going through some difficulty. When a person has a big problem, he convinces himself that it’s the worst problem he ever had. He compares his new problem to his previous problems, and realizes that it’s not the same kind of problem he is used to – it’s a whole new problem he has never faced, and it doesn’t seem to have a solution. What happens? Eventually, the problem goes away, and he forgets about it. Then a new problem comes, and again the person thinks that this is a problem that has no solution. The cycle repeats itself.

People don’t remember that their previous problems, which didn’t seem to have a solution, eventually went away. Really, we can calm ourselves by remembering that just like our previous problem didn’t seem to have a solution, yet somehow it went away. So is there is a solution to

our current problem, although we don’t see how. We can realize that it is only our eyes which doesn’t see a solution in front of us, but that doesn’t mean there isn’t a solution. The Ramban says, “*Maaseh Avos Siman Labonim,*” “What happened to our forefathers is a sign for their children.” Just like Hashem was with Avraham *Avinu* when he went down to Egypt and he saved him from his problem when Pharaoh abducted Sarah. Avraham *Avinu* had no solution to his predicament. And we always have a solution to our problems, even though it seems like there isn’t. Although we don’t know how to solve our problems on our own, Hashem can take us out of it, just like He helped Avraham when he didn’t have a solution, and just like He redeemed our people from exile when there seemed to be no way out. This is what Hashem told Moshe to tell the people – “The pain is only temporary: just like I took Avraham out of Egypt, so am I with you. Just there was no natural solution for Avraham, yet I was with him and took him out of his problem, so will I take you out of your problem even though you do not see any natural solution.”

Every day, we remember how we left Egypt. This is part of what we say every day in *Shema* – we remember how we were taken out of Egypt. We have many *mitzvos* as well where we remember how we were taken out of Egypt. On Shabbos and Yom Tov, we say, “*zecher l’yetzias mitzrayim,*” in “remembrance” to our redemption from Egypt. Why must we remember the redemption? Is it merely to have a memorial day to remember the miracles of the past? Many reasons are given for this, but for our discussion, it is relevant to say that the reason why we remember the redemption from Egypt so much is because it serves as the foundation for all our troubles. It shows that there is a way out from all our troubles – **just like Hashem was with us then, so is He with us now.**

Just as there is a collective *Geulah* (Redemption), so is there a private *Geulah* that can take place in each person’s soul (*Shaarei Ramchal, sefer Chesed L’Avraham* in the name of the *Baal Shem Tov*). When a person has a problem and he doesn’t know the solution, yet he has ***emunah peshutah*** (simple, unquestioning faith) in Hashem, he can experience his own personal *Geulah*.

Whenever most people have a problem, they think that “this is the worst problem they ever had in their life.” A person, let’s say, is in debt, or he is sick, or he needs a *shidduch* – and he always feels like *this* is just the worst. Let’s say a person can’t find a *shidduch*; he thinks that this is the worst problem he ever had in his life. What happens? He eventually finds his *shidduch* and gets married, and then he has children. Life goes on, and then he encounters all sorts of problems. Now, he thinks, *this* is the

worst problem I ever had.... People forget that they one time came out of their previous, “never-ending” problems, and they go through life thinking that every new problem is the worst problem ever. They forget that they ever came out of their previous problem, which they also thought one day was the “worst” problem ever.

Once I knew someone who became very ill. He needed surgery which was dangerous. I knew him throughout the entire situation, and he was calm throughout his entire ordeal. He had to spend Pesach one time in the hospital, and I asked him how he is. He told me, “*Baruch Hashem* I can feel like I am a *ben chorin* (a freed person) on Pesach.” This person persevered with his *emunah* and was able to feel like a *ben chorin* in a hospital. The strength he showed was amazing. I asked him, “Is this the first ordeal you have gone through in your life?” He told me, “When I was a *bachur*, I was having a hard time finding a *shidduch*. I got older and older, I was very disappointed to see all my friends getting married, while I remained alone without a *shidduch*. I went back and back to my Mashgiach to discuss my problem, and the Mashgiach told me, “Keep waiting a little longer...it must be that the right one didn’t come yet.” I waited and waited, and it seemed to me like the worst problem of life. Then I realized – Why am I relying on my Mashgiach for support? My *emunah* is in my Mashgiach?! “I realized that although I was having a difficulty, I need to realize that Hashem can take me out of my situation. *Baruch Hashem*, after this I found my *shidduch*. And just like I remember how Hashem took me out of my situation, which seemed to have no solution, so will Hashem take me out of my current difficulty.”

This person remembered how Hashem took him out of his seemingly impossible situation, he was able to face a scary ordeal and even spend Pesach happily in the hospital. It is only when a person gives up hope that he feels broken from his situation and he will not be able to cope. But when a person is hopeful that he will come out of his situation, with *emunah* that Hashem can take him out of it, that is how he can deal with it properly.

The *galus* that we are in is very long. Do we have any hope to be redeemed from it? Is there anyone who really believes it will end? We say in *Ani Maamim*, “And although Moshiach tarries, I still wait for him.” Anyone who truly feels this way will not give up. Just like there will be a public *Geulah*, so is there a private *Geulah* that can take place in every person’s soul. We can all have hope to our difficulties, if we remember the times where Hashem took us out of our previous difficulties.

When our people left Egypt, where did they go? They went into a desert for forty years, and they had 42 encampments when they were there. Each of us as well goes through “42 encampments” in our lives. How do we deal with our personal “42 encampments”? The *sefarim* say that a person should deal with this by feeling like he

is כגמול עלי אמו, “like an infant on its mother.” Just like a baby who goes from place to place doesn’t feel like he is going anywhere, because all he feels is his mother’s arms holding him – so can a person go from difficulty to difficulty, yet he won’t feel like he is getting moved around, because he can feel himself in Hashem’s embrace.

All of us go through a lot of “movements.” The question is, do we have something to hold us up when we are being thrown around? That is the question. We need to uncover within ourselves a source of stability to keep us strong when we get moved around from situation to situation. Just like a house that is built strong can withstand an earthquake, so do we need to fortify ourselves to withstand life’s pressures.

All of us go through emotional “earthquakes.” How can we survive life? The place in our soul which gives us stability to withstand hardship is when we are connected to our soul. Many people are always moving from place to place. They never settle down to live in one place for a long time. They are constantly going through changes – and they lack stability in their life. They don’t know how to feel settled. Every person wants his life to work out, but that doesn’t happen. Such a life wouldn’t be a real life. Really, we need to have an inner stability in ourselves, and this will help us deal with situations we have never been in before. We gain this stability when we are truly connected to Hashem and learning Torah.

Some people only seek closeness to Hashem, but they are missing Torah in their life. Others only seek Torah, and Hashem isn’t in their life. But we need to have both in order to feel stable. The soul of a person wants to feel free. It wants to overcome its limits and be close to Hashem. But this has to be balanced with stability. It is not enough to be a very feeling person with strong emotions which doesn’t **build** a person. People who have very deep, strong feelings would become *Gedolim* if their minds would match the intensity of emotions! But because they don’t have a balance between their mind and their emotions, they lack inner stability, although their feelings come from the depths of their heart. In order to have stability to get through life, we need to develop both our mind (through learning Torah and thinking in it) and through developing our heart’s emotions. If we only have a very feeling heart but we are far from our minds, our soul will lack stability. I one time asked someone, “How much Torah do you learn?” He answered me, “When I sit down at the Shabbos table on Friday night, I look at all the *sefarim* on my shelf and I feel how much I wish I could know all of them.” He has a lot of yearnings for Torah, but he doesn’t actually learn Torah! He is full of feelings, but it isn’t balanced with his mind. He lacks stability. It is only when a person learns Torah, and constantly learns Torah in-depth, where his thoughts become immersed in Torah can he gain stability. When a person is immersed in

Torah, it is only then that his heart's emotions are stabilized, and then he will be able to find *chizuk* in any situation. Without this stability, the "Torah remains in a corner" – and he always feels that his *chavrusa* doesn't work out...

In fact, all major questions that people have about life comes from a lack of stability: "Where will I live?," "When should I get married?," "How will I earn a living?," etc. Marital problems are also because there is no stability in a person. Many times a person gets into problems in his marriage because he thought that it would be as he planned. If he would only have had more stability in his soul, he would be able to deal with the unexpected scenarios of marriage. No one knows what will happen to him in his life. But a person can survive whatever life will bring if he is always connected to his source of stability.

Many people depend on their friends or surroundings for *chizuk*. What happens when, later in life, he isn't around his friends anymore, or he is in a different setting that he felt dependent on? If he is connected to his inner world within him, when he is stable in his soul because he has balance between his mind and his heart, he will have the strength to go on.

One of the biggest problems in a person's life is *shidduchim*. Eventually, a person who went through this problem gets married, and his life changes and now he has new problems. How does he deal with his marriage problems? It depends. If he remembers that when he got married, he had no idea that this would be the person he would marry – he will discover that he was only able to come to the decision of getting married, because he had stability. He had stability because he was connected to Hashem when he made his decision - this is what gives a person the strength to decide he will marry this girl whom he doesn't know. But if a person thought that his decision to marry this girl only depends on his decision alone, such

a person wasn't connected to Hashem when he made his decision. Such a person, when he encounters marital difficulties, will want to get divorced, because it's all up to him anyway...he doesn't have any stability.

When a person looks back at his whole life, he will realize that it was only Hashem who took him out of his situation. When he remembers this, he will be able to go through any situation. The words here are not nice ideas – it is the meaning of how Torah is our very life. I also went through many hardships in my life, and the only thing that kept me going was how I remembered that it was Hashem who took me out of my previous struggles, together with my *emunah* and that He can take me out of my new problems. The more a person goes through life, he is able to look back at his previous struggles and see how it was Hashem who helped him out of them.

It is very painful for people when they don't have any *menuchas hanefesh*, when they feel that they have no rest from their problems. Really, there is no *menuchas hanefesh* to be found on the physical world. But on the other hand, there is no situation in which we cannot find how to have *menuchas hanefesh*. We can always find *menuchas hanefesh*, wherever we may be. How? Because *menuchas hanefesh* is something we can uncover from our inner world, no matter where. We can find true peace of mind and true enjoyment in our very own soul. The inner kind of peace of mind we want to have isn't so far from us, but it is not that close either. It is deep within ourselves.

Only when we are connected to our inner world (our *pnimiyus*) can we utilize our soul. When a person isn't connected to his *pnimiyus*, he isn't able to utilize it, because he is only connected to superficiality. When one isn't connected to his own inner world, he can't express his inner feelings to others. He feels a love for someone and he can't express it to him. If he would be more connected

to his inner world, he would be able to reveal it and express it.

In order to connect to our *pnimiyus*, **we need to know what our unique strongest point is and connect to it.** It has to be your unique strong point, and it is not necessarily your friend's strong point, or what you would like to be. If you open up a *sefer Orchos Tzaddikim* and you decided to learn *Shaar HaSimchah* so that you can acquire *simchah*, you can't connect to the power of *simchah* if it isn't your strong point. For some people, *simchah* is indeed their strongest point, and they can connect to their *simchah* and that is how they will become strongly connected to their *pnimiyus*. But if *simchah* isn't a person's strongest point, learning about *simchah* is not the way for him to become connected to his *pnimiyus*. He will need to find his own unique strong point. How can you know what your strongest point is? One needs to see which abilities are already **opened** to him. Once a person realizes what his strongest point is, how does he actually connect to it? This is when a person is clear that he's using his strongest point that he is in the midst of utilizing his strongest point. In this way, he becomes connected to it both in his mind and with his heart. And this stabilizes one's soul and provides a person with *menuchas hanefesh* – the calmness that will enable one to get through the challenges of life. There is no one who does not have a strong point that's already opened to him. All of have some strong point that is already opened in our life, but we need to **connect** to it, and then **open** it up even more.

I hope that these words not only help each person reach his true potential, but that they should actually help you deal with life - to always be connected to the Torah we learn and the *mitzvos* we do, and making sure that we have the inner stability of being connected with our soul, our *pnimiyus*, along with *emunah* that it is only Hashem Who helped us get anywhere today.

EMOTIONAL STUFF

QUESTION *What should a person do if he finds that his emotions have stopped working, and he can't feel joy or express love? For example, everyone around him is dancing on Simchas Torah and they are happy, but he can't get himself to be happy. What happened? As a child he was able to be joyous and show emotions, and later in life the emotions close down and now he can't get himself to feel those emotions of joy, love, etc. What can be done about this?*

ANSWER There is no such thing as emotions that “stop working.” Rather, emotions can become weakened. A person needs to find how he is still capable of that emotion, and then he should expand it further.

QUESTION What is the way to overcome bashfulness, according to the Torah's approach?

ANSWER (1) Get used to doing one small action a day which you are a little bit shy about doing, and get used to doing it, until you are no longer embarrassed about doing it. Keep trying this and make gradual process like this, step after step. (2) In general, you should reflect on the following. People analyze others all the time, thinking about the good and the bad that is found in others.

Therefore, there is no way for you to be spared from the negative opinions of others about you. Sometimes, you can think of the fact that you simply will ignore whatever anyone thinks of you. This kind of thinking can be a bit helpful to some people. (3) On a more inner level, the more that a person has become balanced and inward, the less affected he is from others' opinions of him. Even more so,

the more that a person discovers his unique potential in Torah learning, the more that he is found within his own inner *daled amos* (“four cubits”), his own “private domain” (*reshus hayachid*), and he will become far less reactive from others' negative opinions of him. (4) Even more so, one can become connected to the very essence of the soul, which is called “*Aisan*” (lit. “mighty”), or the *Yechidah*, a place of great inner strength in the soul, where one is not afraid of others' opinions of him. (5) Those who are more sensitive may sometimes have a harder time with all the above, because they are much more reactive to others' opinions of themselves.

In order to balance out their sensitivity, they will need to develop their inner strength, a strength which comes from the ability of *daas* [the ability of placing their mind and staying centered to their logic, before reacting with their emotions], which is the root of all of the emotions. The stronger a person becomes in his *daas*, the less reactive he will be from others' opinions of him.

QUESTION *What is the source of a person's wishes and wants (retzonos) and why is it that a person lacks a ratzon?*

ANSWER The root of all our wishes comes either from our *nefesh habehaimis* (animal soul) or *nefesh Elohis* (G-dly soul), either from our *yetzer hora* or our *yetzer tov*. When a person lacks a will (*ratzon*), it comes from a dominance of the *yesod ha'afar* (element of earth) in his soul. His “earth” gets too heavy and slows down the movements of his soul, which are his wishes and wants, weakening his faculty of *ratzon*, sometimes even to the point where he despairs.

QUESTION *Why would a person not*

care about himself? Why is it that only when a person can't take anymore suffering that he starts to wake up to take care of himself? Why would a person be unwilling to change even when he knows that he's not going in a good direction, and only when he's at 'rock-bottom' does he wake up? Are we able to daven for a person to change? If a person doesn't pity himself then is it true that Hashem doesn't pity him either? How do we get a person to pity himself and be responsible for himself? And if Hashem isn't giving him the will to change then how does a person make any effort and utilize his free will? Even if a person isn't trying to make progress, is that all from Heaven since Hashem is in charge of everything?

ANSWER Usually this happens when a person went through difficulties in his past, which caused his will to weaken. *Tefillah* can always help, but a person also has to do some work. Hashem gives a person “*bechirah* (free will) which depends on His will” – as it were, a person can either choose to act according to Hashem's will, or *chas v'shalom* he may choose to do the opposite of Hashem's will. *Bechirah* (free will) is in a person's hands, and one may not blame his choices on Hashem.

QUESTION *What can we do for a person who doesn't have the energy to change but really he does want to change, he just doesn't know how exactly he needs to change, since he's having an internal conflict and he doesn't have that much motivation and he can't be consistent?*

ANSWER *Daven* for Hashem to help him. The person in question will need to take one small, easy point to work on, and be consistent about it. That is how he will gradually make progress.