



Against All Odds

Rabbi Yosef Dovid Rothbart, Rabbinic Administrator

ויהס כלב את העם אל משה ויאמר עלה נעלה וירשנו אתה
כי יכול נוכל לה (פרק יג פסוק ט)

The year is 1940. The location is the Warsaw ghetto. It is *Shabbos* afternoon and over 200 people gather, searching for some way to comprehend the events that transpired and tragedies that befell them the weeks prior. Just last Friday, on June 14th, the fall of Paris was confirmed. Reports of the fall of France on that *Shabbos*, June 22nd, meant that the area stretching from the English Channel to the Soviet Union was now under German control. Disheartened by the news, the people wait expectantly for their leader, the 51 year old descendent of Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk, who himself became the Rebbe of Piasieczno when he was merely 20 years old. A hush settles over the assembled as the Rav Kalonymus Kalman Shapira begins to deliver the following message of faith and courage addressing the feelings of despair that permeate his audience.

The Jewish nation was set to enter the land that was promised to them so many years prior. But they were hesitant, concerned about the lack of intelligence and requested that Moshe send out scouts to survey the land. Finally, after 40 days of reconnaissance, the scouts, each of whom was a leader of a tribe, arrived at the camp bearing fruits of enormous proportions.

The report that the nation so eagerly awaited began positively. But too quickly the tone changed, crushing the nation's morale. Ten of the scouts bemoaned that an attempt to conquer the giants dwelling in the Land would be futile.

But Calev did not share the sentiments of those 10 scouts. He silenced the murmuring and began to encourage the anxious people. "Let us go up and take over [our Land], for

we certainly are able to do so," he exhorted, contradicting the conclusions of hopelessness.

He does not disagree with the reports. There is nothing in Calev's statement that contradicts the rationale of the other 10 scouts. Calev simply said, "Let us go up, for we can conquer the giants that reside in the Land."

Rav Kalonymus Kalman, speaking to his own community who had also just received reports that painted a portrait of dark clouds and bleak colours, continued:

Such must be the faith of the Jewish person. Not only when a Jew perceives that it is reasonable to believe, according to the course of natural events, that *Hashem* will save him, that he is strengthened, but also at the time when there is no realistic possibility for his salvation, he must still believe that *Hashem* will save him and thereby be strengthened in his faith and trust.

Indeed, at a time where no logical means of salvation exists, the Jew should not look to find some rationale and natural means of deliverance for he will not find one, and consequently his faith may be effected. And it is possible that this diminution in trust itself might prevent his salvation.

Rather, a Jew must confidently declare that it is all true; that the nations living there consist of powerful giants; it is accurate that the cities built there are heavily fortified. But despite this reality, I have faith in *Hashem*, that He is beyond nature and He *will* save us. Therefore, I declare, "Let us go up and take it over, transcending reason and logic." Such faith and trust brings a person's salvation closer.

The Shofar Would Not Blow

In the previous edition, R' Nechemia who served as the ba'al tokeah for the Ukrainian town Dlinetz was not able to blow his shofar as it had become pasul. Each time he attempted making a new shofar something went wrong and the shofar was ruined. One day a visitor came and related that he was accosted by taken to the house of the priest. The priest who was very sick related to the visitor that he had with him a Jewish child whom he wanted to return to the Jewish people. The visitor asked R' Nechemia to come with him to the priest who did not have long to live. The priest began to explain.

"Three nights ago, I had a frightening nightmare. I saw myself being carried up into the heavens. I couldn't tell to where they were taking me, but then suddenly, a man came running towards me, he looked like a Jewish rabbi, you know, white beard and side locks, and started to smash me with his cane and yell at me; 'All this and more will happen to you because you are holding Anton hostage in your house! You will burn in *gehinom* for that, for eternity!'"

"I woke up with a start," the priest continued, "And understood the meaning of the dream immediately. There was a Jewish family living here about fifteen years ago. The husband was an honest and friendly man who got along famously with all of his neighbours, Jew and gentile alike. He spearheaded the project of building a modest synagogue in town, and on the day that it finally opened, a gang of rowdy, drunken peasants set fire to it and to the home of this unfortunate Jew. The entire family was burned beyond recognition. One small child miraculously survived suffering only minor burns. I was not happy about the entire incident and felt pity for the little boy as well. I took him in to live with me in the monastery, named him Anton, and raised him as a good Christian. Anton," he called out with his fast-waning strength, "Come out here!"

A tall, lanky boy of about eighteen stepped out from the adjoining room. "Here he is Rabbi," said the priest. "He is one hundred percent Jewish. Take him with you and teach him the Jewish *Torah!*" Then, with a trembling finger, he pointed to a box in the corner of

the room. "That box contains the only things I could salvage from the scorched house -five books of some kind, and a funny-looking ram's horn."

R' Nechemia's heart skipped a beat as he blurted out, "A shofar!"

Seconds later, the priest gasped his last breath. Anton stood by frozen and scared. The only father that he had ever really known was dead. Where would he go now? What would he do! And who were these two strange Jews," he wondered as he began to cry and shake and as he ran to, in desperation, try to revive his beloved 'father'.

Sensitive R' Nechemia stayed back for a few moments to give the boy some time to grieve before gently taking him by the shoulders. Hugging him warmly and reassuringly, he said, "The priest requested that we take you back to your people. You were born a Jew and you will now be able to live your life as a Jew. You will live with me as my son and will be a welcome addition to my family."

The wagon ride back to Dlinetz was one of the happiest times of R' Nechemia's life. As he and Anton got acquainted, he felt vindicated and exhilarated. He was so grateful to Hashem for not only allowing him to secure a very special shofar, but also for the *zechus* of being able to fulfill the great mitzvah of "*pidyon shvuyim*" - redeeming a captive Jew! As the carriage reached the entrance to the town, R' Nechemia stood up and blew a long, crystal-clear shofar blast, and continued doing so until they reached his house. Smiles greeted the exuberant rav all along the route as the people expressed their delight in knowing that R' Nechemia would indeed be blowing the shofar that *Rosh Hashanah* and hopefully for many more *Rosh Hashanahs* to come!

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Questions from the H.I.T. HOTLINE

Is it permitted to wash one's hands for *mayim acharonim* in the kitchen sink?

A person is allowed to wash *mayim acharonim* in the kitchen sink as long as there are no dishes in the sink. If there were dishes in the sink, Rav Chaim Kanievsky *Shlit"a*, quoted in the *Sefer Shaylas Rav*, and Rav Ovadya Yosef *Zt"l* (*Yabiya Omer* V, 2) both say that the *mayim acharonim* water should be rinsed off before using the dishes subsequently.

An *avel* came to *Shul* after the *tzibur* finished their silent *shemona esrei*. He wanted to serve as the *shliach tzibur* and recite *chazaras hashatz*. Is this allowed?

The *Shulchan Hatahor* (132, 7) writes that if there are a number of *aveilim* in a single *minyán*, one of the *aveilim* could take over by *chazaras hashatz*. The *Aishel Avraham* (*Butchach* 53, 2) writes that this would be the proper thing to do as well. However, he concludes that the custom is not to do so. Therefore, the one who served as the *shliach tzibur* during the silent *shemona esrei* should recite *chazaras hashatz* as well. In

a case of specific need though, the *shliach tzibur* could be replaced with someone else who would recite *chazaras hashatz*.

The *shliach tzibur* accidentally said *modim d'rabanán* during *chazaras hashatz* and continued *ועל כולם*. Only after he was in middle of *sim shalom* did anyone notice. What should he have done?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Aerbauch (*Halichos Shlomo* pg. 111) writes that if a person made this mistake in his private *shemona esrei* and finished the *bracha* he is *yotzei*. He explains that both versions of *modim* share one idea and the change of *nusach* does not preclude a person from fulfilling his obligation. Therefore, if the *shliach tzibur* finished reciting the *bracha* he would not need to go back, for the *Shulchan Aruch* (126, 3) writes that whenever a person does not need to repeat something in his *shemona esrei*, a *shliach tzibur* would also not need to.

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KIDZ KORNER



TIDBITS...

In this week's *Parsha*, the spies that went to scout out *Eretz Yisrael* brought back with them a number of large fruit. Here is a list of some of the largest fruits and vegetables that were grown nowadays.

- Cucumber: A cucumber grown by an Australian teenager grew to be 130.5cm long. This is longer than a golf club and the equivalent of about 5.5 regular cucumbers.
- Carrot: Peter Glazebrook of the UK grew a carrot weighing 9.07 kg (20 lbs). This is the same as 60 normal carrots and heavier than a bowling ball.
- Pumpkin: Switzerland's Beni Meier grew the heaviest pumpkin weighing 1,503 kg (2,323 lbs). This is heavier than a polar bear and the equivalent of about 128 regular pumpkins.
- Parsnip: A parsnip grown by Joe Atherton grew to 5.7 m (19ft 2in). This is about the same height as a giraffe.

RIDDLE



When do we specifically ask someone who is not learned to *pasken a shaila*?

Please send in your answers to yrothbart@halachainstitute.com. Any correct answer that is received by Tuesday will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 gift certificate to Miriam's Judaica.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE: If a person comes late to *Shul* in the morning he is not supposed to skip *shema* in order to *daven shemona esrei* with the *tzibbur*. There is a situation though where a person should skip *shema* in order to start *shemona esrei* with the rest of the *minyan*. What is it?

ANSWER: A person may recite *shema* before *davening* and fulfill his obligation of reciting *shema* in a situation where he would otherwise miss reciting *shema* in its proper time. Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach is quoted in the *Sefer Siach Halacha* (*Siman 51*) to say that if a person did that and came late to *davening*, he should skip *shema* and just recite the *brachos* in order to *daven shemona esrei* with a *minyan*.

Thank you to all those who sent in an answer to last week's riddle.

THERE WAS NO WINNER LAST WEEK

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