Know Where You Stand

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Have you heard about the great “celebration” that takes place this month? You are probably dreadfully eyeing Sunday’s fast

and the start of the Three Weeks of mourning, and wondering what in the world I am referring to. While describing this month of Tamuz, Rebbe Nachman teaches:

"The first letters of '*Zikhru Torat Moshe* (Remember the Torah of Moses)' (Malakhi 3:22) spell *TaMuZ* without the *vav*. This is because in the month of Tamuz, we must elicit mindfulness in order to rectify forgetfulness. For it was then that forgetfulness came into existence, as a result of the Tablets being broken in Tamuz. [The *vav,* which has the numerical value of 6, represents the Tablets, which measured 6 by 6 handbreadths.] As our Sages teach, 'Had the First Tablets not been shattered, Torah would not have been forgotten from the Jews'" (*Eruvin* 54a; *Likutey Moharan* I, 217).

Imagine, God Himself engraved the First Tablets! The Torah was so exalted that it was to be permanently engraved on our hearts and minds. Had we waited just a bit longer for Moshe to come down the mountain with the Tablets, we would have received a Torah that connected us to God in an unbreakable way. Instead, the Tablets were shattered and forgetfulness descended upon our nation.

Now we feel far, we feel distant, we feel utterly disconnected. Things happen and we lack any sense of clarity. This is all part of forgetfulness. True, we do have the Torah, but it doesn't always speak to us; often we have a hard time finding the answers when we study it. So how do we connect? How do we deal with tragedy and pain, with difficult times and hard decisions?

In this week's *parashah*, Bilam describes us as "a people that will dwell alone, and will not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9). The word *BaDaD* (alone) has the same root as *hitBoDeDut*. This is our defining quality, the key to our eternal survival and eventual success: *A Jew will stand alone with His Creator*. Even though it often seems as if the entire world is battling us and our beliefs, every Jew can

courageously stand against the tide by turning to God. No practice better conveys this idea and generates the fortitude to act this way than secluding oneself in conversation with God.

Rebbe Nachman stressed the importance of speaking to God as if He were a true, close friend. When one speaks to a good friend, he feels free to pour out his whole heart and express all his emotions and deepest thoughts. Only by building a strong relationship with God can we develop ourselves to the extent that we realize that He is the only reality. Only then can we gain the strength to stand against the tide.

Every bit of pain we feel, every lack, can be transformed into a prayer. Every experience can be used as an opportunity to come closer. True, there will still be many things that we might never understand in this world. But we can turn to God and cast our burden on Him. We can better understand ourselves and reach clarity. And we can fill our lives with hope by praying for a better future.

God thanked Moses for breaking the Tablets. Why? Don’t we feel at a loss precisely because of it? Had the Jewish People worshiped the idol in the presence of the Tablets, the dichotomy of our actions before God would have been too great to bear. The resulting forgetfulness was the greatest of blessings: It gave us room to face God and build on whatever we lacked, rather than run away from Him and ourselves. By conversing about our forgetfulness and disconnect, we come to remember the Torah that was lost and will never be ashamed to stand before God.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot HaShachar 5:85