

Searching for Answers

written by Yossi Katz

July 1, 2020



We are in pain. We are in sorrow. Tragedies are everywhere, both on a personal and global level. When will they end?

When describing this month of Tamuz, Rebbe Nachman teaches, “The first letters of *Zikhru Torat Moshe* (Remember Moshe’s Torah) (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 represents the Tablets, which are described as measuring 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).

God Himself engraved the Ten Commandments – the Torah that was

to be given in Tamuz was so exalted that it was to be engraved in our hearts and minds forever. Had we been able to wait just a little 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. But instead, the Tablets were shattered and forgetfulness descended upon our nation.

Now we feel far, we feel distant. Things happen and we lack any sense of clarity in understanding them. 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?

In this week's *parashah*, Balaam describes us as "a people that will dwell alone, and will not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9). The word "alone" in Hebrew is *BaDaD*, as in *hitBoDeDut*. Balaam was revealing an essential method for our survival and eventual triumph: we must seclude ourselves in conversation with our Creator.

Although many great tzaddikim spoke about the importance of *hitbodedut*, it was only Rebbe Nachman who recommended speaking to God as if He were a true, close friend. When a son speaks to his father, he always feels a certain level of reservation and awe of authority. Not so when one speaks to a good friend: then he is free to pour out his whole heart and express all his emotions and deepest thoughts.

The way we can not only survive life, but live life, is by fortifying ourselves in private conversation with God. 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 share the burden with Him. We can better understand ourselves and reach clarity. And we can fill our lives with hope by praying for a better future.

If we try to find meaning and hope during difficult times, instead of using those times as an excuse to harm ourselves and our relationship with God and others, then, Balaam continues, "Who can count the dust of Jacob?" (ibid., 23:10). Who can count and ascertain the preciousness of each Jew, for every step he takes will be toward serving God? Every step will effect incredible *tikkunim* and give immeasurable *nachas* to God. May we be mindful of the forgetfulness and sorrow of this month and, through our *hitbodedut*, build an everlasting relationship with God. Amen.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot HaShachar 5:85