

The Story of Our Lives: The Lost Princess (#13)

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No Good Desire is Ever Lost

Hi there, friends! It has been a little while since our last lesson, so let's take a moment to review. We learned that the lost princess had given the viceroy clear instructions on how he could go about freeing her from captivity in the beautiful and orderly palace of evil. For an entire year, the viceroy was meticulous in fulfilling each condition of the princess. Then, on the last day of the year, as the viceroy began walking to the palace to free the princess, the yetzer hara attacked with all of his strength in a final attempt to thwart the plan. Tragically, he was successful, and the viceroy succumbed to the temptation. Immediately after eating the

apple from the tree, the viceroy fell asleep for a very long time. When he woke, he overcame his disappointment and made his way back to the palace to find the princess, determined to mend what he had broken. In this lesson, we pick up our story in the palace of evil, where the lost princess addresses the viceroy.

She (the princess) lamented to him greatly, saying “If you had come on that day, you would have freed me from here. But because of one day, you lost everything.”

It would appear that the princess is extremely angry at the viceroy. How could he have made such a poor decision? How could he have traded away an entire year of effort and the great goal of bringing her home to her father for a silly little apple? How could he have blown such an incredible opportunity? However, it is clear that this is not the message the princess is relaying in these words. Looking carefully at the way Rebbe Nachman writes this sentence, we find that the princess is not yelling at the viceroy in attempt to take make him feel even worse than he already does. This would undoubtedly break the viceroy and drag him to the depths of despair. Rather, with these words, the princess intends to strengthen the viceroy by revealing to him how much she had been yearning for him over the course of the year; how much belief she had in his ability to fulfill the conditions and free her from this place. The princess does not yell. She does not cry with brokenness as if all is lost. She rather is *“mitztaeres lifanav”*, she reveals her pain; a pain which bespeaks just how much hope she had and still has in the viceroy and her full conviction that although he has failed in his first attempt, he will yet succeed in the future if he will only use this failure as a learning experience.

Friends, the same holds true in our attempt to free the lost princess of our avodas Hashem. Oftentimes, just like the viceroy in our tale, we fall prey to the yetzer hara’s final ferocious attack as we toe the threshold of a spiritual

breakthrough. Immediately, we hear the voice of the princess echo through our being, revealing her pain over our folly and the opportunity we lost. It is so easy to mistake her cry as one of anguish and despair. When we do, it cripples us by bolstering the notion that there is no longer any hope for us, that we will never be able to change. In this line of the story, the tzaddik teaches us that this is a tremendous mistake. The voice we hear is not one of hopelessness and despair – on the contrary! It is a voice of strength and hope, reminding us just how much the princess is relying on our avodah and how much she truly believes in our ability to free her from the darkness of her captivity.

“However, it is very difficult not to eat, especially on the last day when the Evil Urge is very strong.” (The princess is telling him that she will make the conditions easier for him by allowing him to eat on the last day, for it is very difficult...)

Having strengthened the viceroy by reminding him how much she is relying on him and how strongly she believes that he can, with the proper focus, free her from the palace of evil, the princess further appeases him by telling him that she understands how difficult it was for him and how strong the yetzer hara had been. For this reason, she hints that she will give him a new set of conditions. This time, they will be easier to fulfill – he will no longer be forbidden to eat on the final day.

At first glance, it seems difficult to understand why the conditions for freeing the princess become lighter after the viceroy’s initial failure. Doesn’t the opposite sound more logical? Wouldn’t it make more sense for the conditions to grow even more difficult now that he has failed on the first try? What of the teaching that a ba’al Tehshuva needs stricter fences against sin than the perfect tzaddik? (Menachos 29b)

When we understand the deeper meaning behind what the princess

is telling the viceroy, we find that Rebbe Nachman is teaching us one of the deepest and most important secrets in avodas Hashem. On a very deep level, the princess is telling the viceroy that this time around he needn't refrain from eating on the final day because even though he had ultimately failed, his effort and mesiras nefesh throughout the year with regard to eating accomplished a tremendous amount, removing the necessity for him to work on that condition again this time around. It isn't simply that the princess doesn't believe in the viceroy's ability to make it through the final day without succumbing to the temptation of satisfying his hunger. Rather, there is *no need* for him to work on that condition again because despite his failure, his work on this particular area over the course of the year accomplished the goals of that particular condition.

This is such an important idea for avodas Hashem. So many times, we come to see our relationship with Hashem through Torah and miztvos as being all or nothing. We feel that if we have succumbed to whatever temptation in a particular area, all is lost – nothing positive we have done or may even currently be doing seems to be of any consequence. Much like a mission in which success in multiple areas are required for the sole purpose of one primary objective, it appears that all that matters is the final result: did we succeed in our mission, or did we fail? If we feel that we have failed, the various successes along the way seem to be worthless and entirely inconsequential.

Here, Rebbe Nachman tells us that when it comes to avodas Hashem, this couldn't be further from the truth. The Zohar HaKadosh teaches us: "*Leis reiusa tava d'isavad*", "No good desire is ever lost". This means that even if in the end, a person is ultimately unable to hold on to a particular devotion and falls, his holy desires, thoughts, words, and actions are celebrated in heaven and Hashem takes eternal pride in them. Even though it seems as if his efforts did not

produce tangible results, they are all lovingly gathered and used for his aid in future battles. (See Sichos HaRan 11 and Likutei Moharan Tinyana 48) From the princess lessening the conditions the second time around, Rebbe Nachman is teaching us that despite his ultimate failure, the viceory's avodah did in fact accomplish great things. Though he failed in his overall mission, this does not mean that his year was entirely wasted. Avodas Hashem is not all or nothing. Every good desire or effort toward holiness in whatever manner is so precious to Hashem and is cherished forever, regardless of whether or not we succeed in our overall mission.

Next time, with Hashem's help, we will learn the new conditions the princess presents the viceroy in order that he may again attempt, with renewed confidence, to free her from captivity in the palace of evil.

See you then!