

דרכים בפרשה ואתחנן

R' Mordechai Appel,
an alumnus of the
Telzer Yeshiva, is the
author of *Derachim
Beparsha*.



ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההוא לאמר

Moshe Rabbeinu stands at the end of his life and pours out his heart to Hashem, pleading for the opportunity to enter Eretz Yisrael. Chazal tell us that Moshe offered five hundred and fifteen tefillos, yet his plea was not answered. Hashem's response was: "רב לך." No. You will not enter the Land.

Throughout Tishah B'Av, one question kept returning to my mind. It was there as we recited the Kinos. It was there as I listened to the heartfelt divrei hisorerus delivered in our shul. Indeed, I imagine the same was true in countless batei kenessios around the world. Kinos after Kinos and speaker after speaker transported us through the tragedies that have befallen our people throughout history, from the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash to the horrors of Churban Europa.

And one question would not leave: **How?**

How did they find the strength to begin again? How does someone lose everything he has ever known, and somehow find the courage to build another home, another family, another yeshiva, another kehillah?

Perhaps the answer begins in this week's parsha.

What would Moshe do the morning after?

He does not retreat. He does not withdraw. Instead, Moshe gathers Klal Yisrael and begins the greatest series of *shiurim* in our history. He reviews the Torah, repeats the Aseres HaDibros, teaches Shema, and prepares a nation to enter a land that he himself will never merit seeing.

How?

Perhaps if we understand what happened atop Har Nevo, we will better understand what happened throughout Jewish history. The *velt* speaks about resilience, but resilience alone cannot explain how a shattered nation could repeatedly rebuild itself. The answer is much deeper.

Every Jew has dreams. Moshe dreamed of entering Eretz Yisrael. Every one of us carries hopes and aspirations that we daven for with all our hearts. But a Jew is defined by more than his dreams. He is defined by his *shlichus*. Every Yid is sent into this world with a unique mission from Hashem. The seforim teach us that a person's true avodah is discovering what Hashem wants from him in the present

moment, not only the future he imagined, but the avodah that Hashem places before him today.

As long as my life is about fulfilling my plans, then when those plans collapse, I collapse with them. But when my life is about fulfilling Hashem's ratzon, then even when one dream comes to an end, my mission remains.

Moshe's dream died atop Har Nevo. His mission did not. And because Moshe was the ultimate עבד ה', he descended that mountain with the same *bren* to fulfill the mission that still lay before him.

Perhaps that is the answer that carried Klal Yisrael throughout history. After every Churban, Yidden asked the same question: "Ribbono Shel Olam, what do You want from us now?"

After Churban Europa, survivors who had lost everything rebuilt. They established yeshivos where the sound of Torah had almost been silenced. They rebuilt chassidic courts that the enemy had tried to erase from the world. They founded thriving kehillos, married, raised families, and filled batei medrash with Torah once again. They did not merely survive; they rebuilt a world that had been destroyed, carrying within them the emunah that the future of Klal Yisrael was still alive.

The scars remained. The memories remained. But alongside the pain was a deeper awareness: The *shlichus* carries on, and Hashem is still "writing" the story.

Not because the pain disappeared. Not because they forgot. But because they understood that a broken dream is not the same as a finished mission.

Perhaps this is the message of Shabbos Nachamu. The Beis HaMikdash has not yet been rebuilt. Mashiach has not yet arrived. Nothing has changed. And yet the Navi calls out: "נחמו נחמו עמי."

Perhaps the *nechama* begins when we hear Hashem asking us the same question He asked Moshe:

"What is your mission now?"

That has always been the strength of Klal Yisrael. We cry. We mourn. We remember. And then... we build.

Perhaps that strength began with Moshe Rabbeinu, who stood atop Har Nevo, heard that his dream would never come true, descended the mountain, gathered Klal Yisrael, and picked up the pieces once again. For nearly two thousand years, every generation has answered that same call. Because that has always been the story of Klal Yisrael.

We cry. We mourn. We remember.

And the morning after... We build.

מרדכי אפפל, Good Shabbos,