

The Faith and The Love Are All in The Waiting

(For the exiles of Moshav Mevo Modi'in, all displaced people, and all beings who are living with pain)

We find ourselves still in the weeks of *nechamah* / comfort, after the devastation of Tisha b'Av — after every tragedy in the world. But I need several weeks of *nechamah*, because not all of me is "after the devastation" yet. It can take time to recover.

These days I'm definitely still been a bit in the world of Tisha b'Av, in an ongoing experience of the 'dark night' of severe pain. They tell me it's calcified tendonitis, inflammation from an old rotator cuff injury. What they didn't *need* to tell me is that the pain of this condition multiplies at night to horrifying levels. During those long hours, I find myself enveloped in darkness, alone, without anyone to help or comfort me, painkillers not working, not knowing what to do, unable to lie down, sometimes crying out in desperation to Hashem, other times struggling with my 'all' to find an escape route from bottomless agony. This is a physical struggle, but it's also a spiritual one, straining to contact the comfort of Hashem's Presence.

In calmer moments, my mind comments, "I really should use this pain as a meditation; this experience ought to make me more compassionate and patient." In the doctor's office yesterday, it even came to me to think, "Wow, I've tasted Gehinom for three nights, and I haven't yet used the opportunity to realize that Hashem is found in pain. What a waste." Spiritual expectation and physical struggle are both 'resistance strategies'. They have their appropriate times and applications, but sometimes they just exacerbate the problem.

Tachashirun, "Be silent." The Medrash says the Jews cornered by the Egyptian army at the sea divided into factions: some insisted that hope would only be found in returning to captivity. Some said we should turn around and fight the Egyptians. Some wanted to drown themselves in the sea. Some surely great spiritual people said, "We must pray for salvation!" Hashem replied, "Be silent and go forward..." Just "go" along with it, inwardly quiet. This is not a time for struggling, nor even for prayers, epiphanies, insights and spiritual growth. Be quiet and still, and go along with the experience as it is. I am hereby removing your capacity to pray and meditate.

And even this is could be taken as a spiritual instruction for some great activity of "being silent and going with the experience", with an idea of getting something from it. But attempting to do that would again introduce a subtle level of resistance, reinforcing the experience of entrapment.

Why would Hashem design an 'impossible trap' — just when you need the transcendence and comfort of sleep, the pain only multiplies and prevents you from sleeping? Is Hashem cruel? Impossible. The thought came to me that the intent of this pain must be protective. So if pain keeps you up all night it's because you may need to be confined against your will to your home and to rest there during the next day. You are not ready to think that you're sufficiently refreshed in the morning and then go off and do something that would deepen the injury. Of course, as reasonable as this answer may be, it is another subtle attempt to bypass "going with the experience as it is". Just wait without reasons and answers; just "go forward" without fighting or forcing a solution.

*I said to my soul, be still and wait without hope, for hope would be hope for the wrong thing;
wait without love, for love would be love of the wrong thing.
there is yet faith, but the faith and the love are all in the waiting....*

TS Elliot, excerpt

And this is Rebbe Nachman's instructions for Elul. The essence of *teshuvah*, returning to Wholeness, is when you receive a *bizayon* / insult (or anything that triggers you; lust, fear, pain) and you remain inwardly quiet, un-reactive, to the best of your current ability. And this, he says, is the concept of "waiting". (See Likutei Moharan, 6)

~

Eyes opening. Without knowing how it happened, I have slept a couple hours and the nightmare has shifted into "after". Dawn arrives gradually and without forcing, finally whispering, *Nachamu, nachamu ami...*

Mid-morning: after a nap, a compassionate friend recognizes my grief and allows me to "go" with it, staying present with it, until it changes in tone. Afternoon: another friend visits and uplifts my heart. He encourages me to find the faith to lovingly drop my arm sling, saying, *"Don't let self-protection become imprisonment. Unfurl your posture; starting today, expand your comfort zone bit by bit, breathe, gently stretch. It's good that you "waited" and "went with" the experience of exile from wholeness, and now you're going to see yourself crossing through the sea on dry land."*

Where is the dividing line between night and dawn? There is none. But it is known that the dawning has begun when one person can recognize another person who is relatively near.

Mattisyahu Yisrael
Yerushalayim, the City of Rebuilding
Elul 5779