

For Hashem, your G-d, is a merciful G-d, He will not abandon you nor destroy you. (4:31)

Lo yarpecha, “He will not loosen His hold on you.” *Rashi* adds, “From holding onto you with His Hands... He will not separate you from being next to Him.” Hashem will never let go of us. Great! So, why are so many people lost in a spiritual maze, floundering, alone, without direction, with little to no faith? Is He still holding on? *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, derives a frightening lesson from *Rashi*. Hashem holds on to us with both Hands. He never lets go/abandons a Jew. How is it possible for a Jew to disengage from Hashem? Only one way: the Jew breaks away! He has chosen an alternative route from the one designated by Hashem. Although the Almighty is directing him one way, the Jew decides this path is not to his liking, so, he breaks away. This is no different than the mother who walks down the street holding on to her young child, only to have the energetic child break from her grip and run away. When we run around, we are actually running away from Hashem.

This notion is what Moshe *Rabbeinu* passed on to his flock as he prepared to take leave of them. “Hashem is holding on to your hands; do not fear anyone, because to fear mortals while simultaneously holding on to Hashem’s Hand is a sign that one does not truly believe in Hashem’s power to protect him. Strengthen yourselves in your service; fear no one, for Hashem is with you.”

To conjure up such imagery requires the tenacity of faith which was evinced by Jews of old: Jews of *emunah p’shutah*, simple faith, who (sort of) related to Hashem as a father, who was very real and very much a part of their lives. While it is inappropriate, perhaps even ludicrous, to refer to Hashem in corporeal terms or to have such feelings of closeness, these people felt Hashem; they truly felt that they were holding on to Him. My mother, A.H., survived six years of Nazi persecution with such conviction. She would “talk” to G-d all of the time. Today, due to our technological “advances,” we have lost much of this simple feeling of closeness with the Almighty.

A popular author, a *Chabad shliach*, describes such a scenario which unfolded before his eyes during a hospital visit on *Rosh Hashanah*. It was a somber morning, wet outside and depressing inside, as this young rabbi visited the geriatric ward of the local hospital. A few elderly women (*bubby*, each called herself) had gathered (actually, were wheeled in) to hear the sound of the *Shofar*.

The *shliach* reminisced that this was a yearly project and that every year at least one of the patients would break down in tears when the sound of the *Shofar* blast was heard. (We should be so fortunate to have such sensitivity to the sound of the *Shofar*: it comes with a belief in Hashem that is palpable.) That special year, one *bubby* did not act as if she was that old. She appeared to be with it, actually brimming with excitement at the sight of the *Shofar*. Sharing memories of her childhood with the rabbi, she said that she hailed from a *Chassidic* background, steeped in warmth,

soul and song. Even in the cold Pacific Northwest (where this story took place), it had never left her. She still felt she was (a young girl) at home (probably Russia/Ukraine).

The *bubby* recited the blessing, and the rabbi blew the *Shofar* – then the tears began to flow. She cried quietly, as the *Shofar* blasts permeated the room. The rabbi continued blowing until he completed the required blasts. She continued to weep – and then she spoke to Him – to Hashem, *Oy zisseh G-tt! Taierah, zisseh G-tt! Mein zisseh G-tt!*

“Oh sweet G-d! Dear sweet G-d! My sweet G-d!” she cried as if she were holding Hashem in her hands, in the hands of an elderly grandmother, old, wrinkled, discolored, but she “held” Hashem in her hands for dear life. This elderly Jewess was holding on to an infinite, timeless G-d. She was speaking to Hashem intimately, as one speaks to a husband, a father, a son; as one speaks to someone whom she knows will never leave her. This is the way this woman was raised. She was taught that Hashem is very real, very close – which, of course, He is. It is just that in our politically correct English language, we do not express ourselves with such reality. We neither refer to Hashem as “sweet,” nor do we act as if we are holding His Hand. In *Yiddish*, which was this woman’s native tongue, this was the way she spoke. Furthermore, this is how she felt.

We philosophize; we seek intellectual rationale; we talk about spiritual journeys and mind-blowing experiences, but, when it comes to the reality of Hashem, we are at a loss. This woman “saw” and “felt” Hashem in her presence. She experienced the Revelation on a constant basis. Perhaps if we would theorize less and rely on simple conviction, we, too, would experience Hashem in our lives.