

When He sees that enemy power progresses, and none is saved or assisted. (32:36)

Hashem's judgment determines the punishment which *Klal Yisrael* deserves. When the situation reaches the point decreed by His punishment, the punishment comes to an end. He shall relent his treatment of them, for He will recognize their utter helplessness and their complete dependency on Him. Concerning the last words of the *pasuk*, "and none is saved or assisted" [Which basically means that Hashem sees that we have thrown in the towel; we realize that *ein lanu l'hishaein ela al Avinu she'ba'Shamayim*, "we have no one upon Whom to rely other than our Father in Heaven."], *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 97a) teach that *Moshiach Tziddkeinu* will not come until *yisyaashu min ha'geulah*, *Klal Yisrael* will despair of the Redemption. Thus, *efes atzur v'azuv* means that we have given up, despaired of the Redemption. *Chazal's* statement begs elucidation. Belief in the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu* is one of the basic tenets of our faith. It is a principle upon which our ability to withstand the travail of our long and bitter exile has been predicated. Without *emunah*, belief in *Moshiach*, we are without hope. What should we do?

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, cites the *Alter Telzer Rav*, *Horav Yosef Leib Bloch, zl*, who explains *Chazal's* statement concerning *yisyaashu min ha'geulah* to mean that *Moshiach* will not come until *Klal Yisrael* gives up on the notion that, through their machinations, they have the power to bring *Moshiach*. We have had this occur a number of times throughout history, during which individuals or groups felt that they could hasten his arrival. This resulted in attempts at expediting his appearance via *kabbalistic* incantations and through the formation of groups which spawned the various *isms* that did everything but what is important. Only when we will realize that, "No one is saved or assisted," that we are powerless, and that the Redemption will only come when we perform *teshuvah*, repentance, and maintain our belief in Hashem that He will send *Moshiach* – that it will happen. We must despair of our own ability to effect a change in Hashem's timeline. He is in control -- not we.

We will be asked by the Heavenly Tribunal, *Tzipisa l'yeshuah*, "Did you wait/yearn for salvation?" This means: "Did you sincerely yearn with all your heart and soul for that moment of Redemption for which every Jew waits?" We have been bequeathed an *emunah sheleimah*, perfect faith, in *Moshiach*, that he will come and that he could come at any time. True, there have been many bumps in the road, and even some roadblocks and serious setbacks, but our faith remains intact. I think this is the meaning of *emunah sheleimah*, "perfect" faith. A faith that is perfect is a factor that relies on faith alone and not on machinations, incantations or anything else of our own volition, just perfect faith.

The following story is well known. The *niggun*, tune that accompanies it, has become a classic, having been sung by hundreds of thousands of Jews for the last seventy-five years. Many variations exist to the story, but its underlying motif – the Jew's undying faith in the coming of *Moshiach* – is the same. *Reb* Azriel David Fastag was one of the thousands of *chassidim* of the

Modzitzer Rebbe, Horav Shaul Yedidyah Elazar Taub, zl. He was especially noted for his extraordinary voice and ability to imbue the most simple tune with a passion that would bring the coldest heart to tears. The *shul* where *Reb* Azriel David and his brothers *davened* for the *Yomim Noraim*, High Holy Days, was the scene of a huge influx of worshippers; many co-religionists attended just to hear him lead the service, and his brothers accompany him as his choir. Their *tefillos*, prayers, had a profound effect on their listeners.

Reb Azriel David lived a simple, austere lifestyle, supporting his family from the proceeds of a small clothing store that he owned. His joy and fulfillment came from his relationship with the world of *chassidic* music. His moving tunes made their way to Otvoczka, a small suburb of Warsaw, the seat of his *Rebbe's* (Modzitz) *chassidus*, where his music was held in high esteem. The day that *Reb* Azriel David introduced a new melody was a festival day for the *Rebbe*.

The "idyllic" life enjoyed by Polish Jewry was coming to a swift and tragic close, as the dark clouds of Nazism and World War II began to loom. The yellow patch, degradation and ghettos became stark realities, although most Jews had no idea what was yet to come. Only a few managed to escape the tentacles of the Nazis. The *Modzitzer Rebbe* was one of them, being spirited out through the assistance of his *chassidim*. After a perilous journey that took him from Poland to Lithuania, on to Russia and to Shanghai, China, he eventually arrived in America in 1940.

Polish Jewry did not fare as well. Roused from their beds in the middle of the night, husbands were separated from wives, children wrested from the arms of their parents, the elderly often shot on the spot, with the strong and young sent to concentration/labor/death camps as part of Hitler's Final Solution. They were shoved into cattle cars by the hundreds, choking, gasping for breath, weeping and dying, with only a few ever reaching the death camp. Treblinka was infamous as the Nazi's extermination camp. Very few Jews survived Treblinka. The train from Otvoczka, carrying hundreds of *Modzitzer chassidim* on their final journey to Treblinka, was surprisingly filled with song!

It all started when an elderly Jew in torn, ragged clothing inched his way over to his neighbor on the train and asked him to sing the *Modzitzer Rebbe's Maareh Kohen* (from the *Yom Kippur Mussaf* service). The neighbor looked at this elderly *chasid* as if he had lost his mind, "Is there nothing else to think about on this death train? Have you lost your mind?"

The elderly man, *Reb* Azriel David Fastag, was no longer paying attention. In his mind, he was at the lectern next to the *Rebbe*, chanting the *Yom Kippur* service. As he stood there transfixed, suddenly there appeared before him the twelfth principle of the Thirteen Principles of Faith – *Ani Maamin be'emunah shleimah b'vias haMoshiach...* "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the *Moshiach...*" He closed his eyes and meditated on these words and thought to himself, "It is specifically now, when everything appears lost, that a Jew's faith is put to the test."

A few minutes passed, and he began to hum a quiet tune to these words. From his old blood-filled lungs emanated a song so powerful that, within a few moments, it encapsulated the hearts of those

still alive on that train. The song spread from car to car until every mouth began to sing, *Ani Maamin* to *Reb Azriel David's* haunting tune.

Reb Azriel David finally opened his eyes and looked around at the hundreds of tear-filled eyes who were all joined together looking at him as they sang his tune. His eyes beet-red from crying, his cheeks wet from tears, *Reb Azriel David* declared, "I will give half of my *Olam Habba*, portion of the World to Come, to whomever can take my song to the *Modzitzer Rebbe*."

A hushed silence permeated the train. Two young men came forward and promised to "deliver" the song to the *Rebbe* at any cost. One climbed upon the other and found a crack in the train's roof. They broke out a hole as an avenue of escape. One poked his head through the hole and said, "I see the blue heavens, and I hear the angels on high singing *Ani Maamin*, and the song is ascending to the seven firmaments of Heaven!"

They bid farewell to their friends, climbed up to the roof and jumped off the train. One was killed instantly. The other one survived and eventually made his way to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he sang the song to the *Modzitzer Rebbe's* son. The notes were then sent to *Rav Shaul Yedidiah Elazar* in New York.

Upon receiving the notes and listening to the *Ani Maamin* sung before him, the *Rebbe* commented, "When they sang the *Ani Maamin* on the death train, the very pillars of the world were trembling. The Almighty declared, 'Wherever the Jews will sing *Ani Maamin* I will remember the six million victims and have mercy on the rest of My People.'" On the first *Yom Kippur* that the *Modzitzer Rebbe* sang the *Ani Maamin*, thousands of Jews were in the *shul*. The entire congregation burst into tears, which fell like water into the pool of tears and blood of our People. The tune quickly spread throughout world Jewry.

"With this *niggun*," said the *Rebbe*, "the Jewish People went to the gas chambers, and, with this *niggun*, we will be *mekabel*, welcome, and greet *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*."