

You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d. (29:9)

We are standing motionless before Hashem. This does not seem right, because it is the time of the year when anxiety and tremors should accompany the chill creeping up our collective spines. *Rosh Hashanah*, accompanied by its ominous reminder that the future we hope for might, *chas v'shalom*, Heaven-forbid, be nothing more than hope, is quickly bearing down upon us. Is this a time simply to be "standing"?

Regrettably, there are instances when the debit column of our spiritual spreadsheet is overwhelming. The credit column is embarrassing, paling in comparison with its counterpart. "We should be crying out," declares *Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl*. "Why are we silent? Where is the emotion?" The venerable *Mashgiach* employs a *mashal*, parable, to illuminate this anomaly.

"A young sheep that is grabbed by a wolf and dragged away by its legs invariably cries out (or whatever sound a frightened sheep makes). It screams and does everything possible to plead for help. If we see a sheep being dragged away, and the sheep does not utter a sound, it is an indication that the wolf has grabbed it by the throat, obviating its ability to breathe, let alone scream. When an *eiver she'ha'neshamah teluyah bo*, organ upon which the animal's life is dependent, is torn, we understand why it does not scream: it is too late.

"The same idea applies with regard to our contemporary times. When our *emunah*, faith, and *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem were strong, and the winds of change did not sway us; when our *avodas Hashem*, service of the Almighty, was on a meaningful and inspirational level, then, when a person would fall prey to the *yetzer hora*, his hands and his feet – nothing upon which his spiritual life was dependent – were affected. Thus, when the days of *Rosh Hashanah* neared, they began to shake, to weep, to scream, to plead with Hashem that He overlook their errors and grant them life. Sadly, in our generation (this was written thirty years ago), our service to Hashem has slacked off so much that it is almost as if the wolf (of the outside world) has grabbed us by the throat and is holding us in a choke hold. We have lost our ability to articulate our needs, because we have lost our understanding of the seriousness of our condition. I think it is more like the fellow who thinks his cough is a cold, when, in fact, it is a grave disease which is robbing him of his life with every passing day. We must wake up before the available treatment, which we are delaying, loses its effectiveness.

In *Niflaosecha Asicha*, *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, quotes *Horav Shlomo Bloch, zl*, distinguished *talmid*, student, of the *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, who relates the following story. A group of Russian soldiers grabbed ahold of a *yeshivah* student who was walking from the *bais hamedrash* to the house where he ate his nightly dinner. The Russian soldiers were comprised of the lowest of the low, people who were uncouth, base, and illiterate. They despised anyone who was different than they were. After beating him to within an inch of his life, they decided to use him for rifle

practice. They began shooting, but, no matter how often they shot, they could not hit their mark – the *yeshivah* student. First, they blamed their failure on the rifle's deficiency, but, after taking it apart and finding nothing wrong, they decided that a Higher Authority wanted the *yeshivah* student to continue living.

The entire incident took about a half hour, but, to the *yeshivah* student, it was an eternity. During that half hour of intense fright, the trauma caused the students hair color to change from black to white! (This is not an uncommon phenomenon.)

The *Chafetz Chaim* commented, "This is how a Jew should feel on the Day of Judgment, when every living creature passes before Hashem. If his hair does not turn white, it is because he does not have the proper emotion concerning the *Yom HaDin*, Day of Judgment."