

Then Hashem will bring back your captivity. (30:3)

Rashi comments: “Our sages derived from here that the *Shechinah* resides among *Klal Yisrael* when they are in exile.” Why is the word *shvuscha*, your captivity, used instead of the more practical *galuscha*, your exile? *Horav Lazer Brody, Shlita*, suggests that *shvuscha* refers to a specific exilee, the *tinok she'nishbah*, child taken captive. In our modern day vernacular, this refers to the assimilated Jew who never had a chance to learn about the beauty of Judaism and its observance, who has been, so to speak, taken captive by the culture in which he was raised. Without the opportunity to learn about *Yiddishkeit*, one is no different from the child taken captive by gentiles who raised him as a gentile. The *Rambam* rules that such a person is not held accountable for his lack of observance.

In a well-known commentary, *Rambam* rules regarding children of the *Karaim*, a sectarian group who mislead their children with regard to Jewish religious observance. He considers these children to be no different than a child taken captive by them and reared in their misguided ways. This child is comparable to one who has been coerced to transgress the Torah. It is thus proper to catalyze their return to religious observance and to draw them near with words of peace. Most authorities have applied *Rambam's* ruling to all contemporary Jews who have been educated in a secular/agnostic environment. We must reach out to them, taking in consideration that they are essentially blameless for their present state of non-observance.

The above *pasuk* addresses these *tinokos she'nishbu*, assuring them that Hashem has not only not rejected them, but that He is with them and will awaken within their hearts a desire to return “home” to observance and to live as a Jew should live. In his commentary to the last *pasuk* in *Parashas Kedoshim* (*Vayikra* 20:27), the *parshah* which commences with a call for all Jews to “be holy” (not just “good” – we must strive for holiness) within the prohibition against consulting sorcerers such as the *ovad yid'oni*. He says that this sin symbolizes the chasm that exists between *Klal Yisrael* and the nations of the world. When we serve Hashem properly, we will warrant the privilege of guidance by prophets and thus not require the services of magicians to foretell what lays in the future. In other words, it is all about our *mesorah*, tradition, of transmitting Torah from one generation to the next.

During most of our history as a nation, the Jewish People were all observant. We have been victim throughout the ages to *meshichai sheker*, false messiahs, who have attempted to sever our relationship with the past. The latest such falsehood was the Enlightenment, which was the precursor of the various secular groups that metastasized from it – each one preaching a break with the past. The hapless victims of these movements are *tinokos she'nishbu*.

Rav Brody offers an inspiring and meaningful analogy to a man who was shipwrecked on a far-off island with no one to talk to. He began to raise kittens as a pastime to occupy himself. They benefitted him by addressing the growing mice population. All day, his cats (who were no longer kittens) would chase the mice. One day, a beautiful golden “kitten” appeared on the private island.

Well, at least it looked like a kitten, despite the fact that it was actually a baby lion. As far as the man was concerned, he had one more cat to ride herd on the mouse population.

Thus, the baby lion grew into adulthood among its feline cousins. It lived with and did everything like a cat, despite its inordinate size and brute strength. One day, a fishing boat wandered onto the island and the fisherman alighted his boat. The man with his many cats and one lion greeted him. The fisherman was interested in a tour of the island, which the man was happy to provide. When the fisherman saw the lion frolicking with the cats, he was shocked. How could the king of beasts spend his day chasing mice? He spoke to the man who had raised the lion. "Do you know that in your litter you have a lion?" "Absolutely not." He replied that it was a large cat. It acted like a cat in every manner. It just happened to be much larger than the other cats, but what difference exists between a large cat and a small cat? A cat is a cat!

A few days passed, and the fisherman was rested and ready to leave the island. It was late at night as he went to the cat shelter where all the cats were kept. He motioned to the lion to come with him. The lion, unfortunately having been treated as a cat for so long, had developed a cat mentality and was afraid to leave. After some coaxing, the fisherman "convinced" the lion to leave with him. Once the fisherman arrived home, he encouraged the lion to run and roam on his land. As the lion's strength increased, his fear mentality decreased until he understood and acted like the lion that he was.

The *nimshal*, lesson, is obvious: We act in accord to the environment in which we are raised. When we spend our days in pursuit of trivialities (much like the cats chasing mice), then we will become trivial people whose purpose in life is self-gratification with material pursuits and pleasures. We will have neither the desire nor the mental stamina required for spiritual ascendancy. We are lions, *bnei melachim*, princes, of a noble, illustrious heritage that heralds back to the *Avos hakedoshim*, holy Patriarchs. Hashem will return the captivity – the Jews whose connection to our heritage has been severed by misguided Jews who thought they were saving Jews from "Judaism" by offering a more enlightened and progressive outlook on life and living. How wrong they were, exchanging the blessings of eternity and morality for a putrid bowl of red lentils. They would rather be like cats who chase mice all day, than be the lions, kings and rulers over themselves and the world.