

TORAH THOUGHTS
AND INSPIRATION FROM THE
RIMANOVER REBBE
HARAV CHAIM E. WASSERTHEIL



TRANSCRIPT OF THE REBBE'S SPEECH ON TU BISHVAT
TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL YIDDISH AND HEBREW

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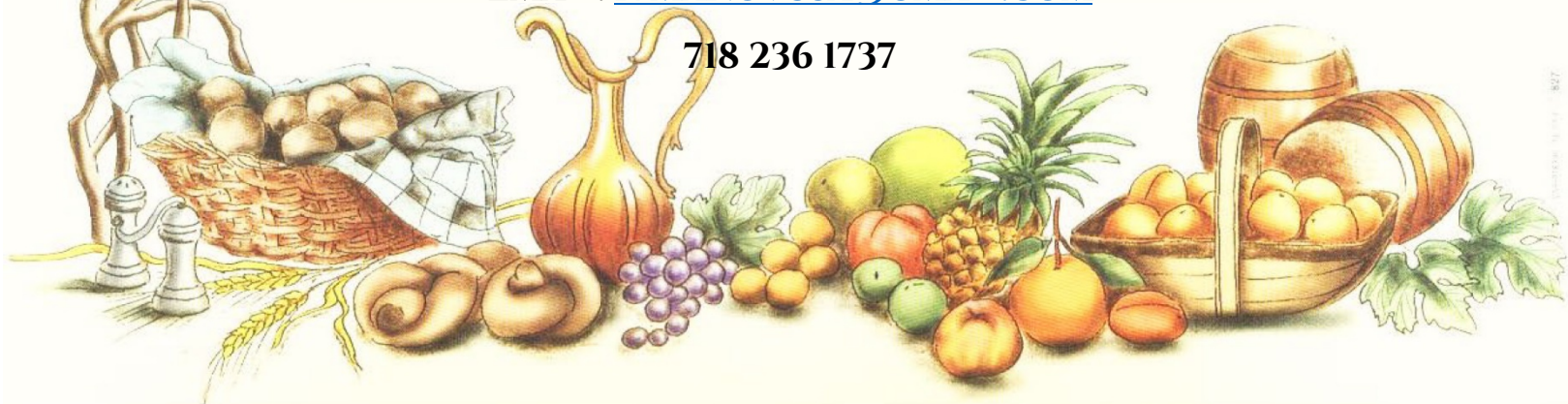
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Divrei Torah Tu B'Shvat 5781

Dovid HaMelech a"h, says in Tehillim¹,

שִׁירוֹ לַה' שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ שִׁירוֹ לַה' כָּל הָאָרֶץ: שִׁירוֹ לַה' בְּרָכוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּשָׂרוֹ מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם וְשׁוֹעֲתוֹ: סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּכָל הָעַמִּים
נִפְלְאוֹתָיו: כִּי גָדוֹל ה' וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נוֹרָא הוּא עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים:

“Sing a new song to Hashem! Sing to Hashem, everyone on Earth! Sing to Hashem and bless His Name! Bring word of his salvation from day to day! Relate His Glory among the peoples, his wonders among all the nations! For Hashem is great and so very praiseworthy—more awesome than all gods.”

The *Kapitel* concludes,

יַעֲלֶז שְׂדֵי וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ אֲז יִרְנְנוּ כָּל עֵצֵי יַעַר: לִפְנֵי ה' כִּי בָא כִּי בָא לְשֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט תִּבְּל בְּצֶדֶק וְעַמִּים בְּאִמּוֹנָתוֹ:

“The field and everything in it will exult; then all the trees of the forest will sing with joy, before Hashem, for He is coming—He is coming to judge the Earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and nations with His integrity.”

Let's understand the ideas in these pesukim. Throughout his life, Dovid Hamelech would sing about everything he experienced—both in hard times, and upon seeing Hashem's salvation. Every chapter of his life inspired new compositions. He praised Hashem. He poured his heart out. He begged Hashem to save him, to grant him relief from his plight.

“Sing a new song to Hashem!” writes Dovid—for every day brings its new circumstances. As Dovid passed from stage to stage, he would compose a “new song,” that gave expression to his present situation.

Some of Dovid's poetry was composed in the fields and forests, when he contemplated the wondrous song chorused by the trees in *Gan Eden*. The Zohar says in Parshas Lech Lecha, תָּא חֲזִי, בְּשַׁעֲתָא דְאַתְעַר פְּלָגוֹת לִילְיָא וְקוֹדֶשׁא בְּרִיָּה הוּא עָאל לְגַנְתָּא דְעֵדֶן לְאַשְׁתַּעֲשַׁעָא עִם צְדִיקָיָא, כְּלֵהוּ אֵילָנִין דְּבַגְנָתָא דְעֵדֶן מִזְמָרָן וּמִשְׁבָּחָן קַמֵּיהּ. דְּכַתִּיב, (דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים א ט"ז:ל"ג) אֲז יִרְנְנוּ עֵצֵי הַיַּעַר מִלִּפְנֵי יְיָ וְגו'.

“Come see, when midnight wakes, and Hashem goes up to Gan Eden to rejoice with the Tzadikkim, all the trees in Gan Eden sing praise before Him, as the Pasuk says, ‘then all the trees of the forest will sing before Hashem.’”

The Gemarah also tell us² that Hashem said to Yeravam ben Nevat, ואני ואתה ובן ישי, “I, you, and Yishai's son (Dovid) will stroll through Gan Eden....”

לְבַהֲדֵי דְשִׁכְיָנְתָא חֲנָגָא מְטִילֵי בֵי *“The righteous dance together with the Shechina,”* we say in *Akdamos*.

¹ Ch. 96

² Sanhedrin 102a

At midnight, Hashem roams with the tzaddikim through Gan Eden. All the garden's trees harmonize in greeting as they approach. Dovid Hamelech joins the chorus, and sings his song along with the melody of the trees and the fields and every tiny detail in the universe. This is how Dovid sings his thanks to Hashem. This song and praise to Hashem on high is his essence, his purpose for living.

This, let us suggest, explains Dovid's words, אַז יִרְנְנוּ כָּל עֵצֵי יַעַר, "*Then all the **trees of the forest** will sing with joy.*" Why specifically the trees of the *forest*? Why not trees from a garden, or orchard trees?

There is a difference between gardens and forests. A man entering a garden or orchard knows what he's getting himself into. Gardens and orchards have boundaries. Orchards even stand in rows, and are sectioned by clear paths. But one entering a forest doesn't even recognize what's right in front of him. The trees seem to have been planted randomly and the boundaries of the forest are nebulous. The traveler feels the danger of the place, and knows he'll need lots of divine mercy to enter and exit in peace.

Moreover, a garden is planted with fruit trees for the enjoyment of passersby. Not much fruit grows in a forest—fruit trees are rare there. The place *feels* unsuitable to human life and survival, and one is forced to look toward Heaven for the food he needs. And if he finds a fruit tree—! His heart swells with an overwhelming appreciation for Hashem's kindness to him! He was not forgotten, G-d forbid, even in this land of gloom, even in the shadow of death.

Life's winding roads run through a thick forest. We don't know what will become of us, nor which circumstances we might fall into. We need divine protection every step of the way, and we daven to the Master of the Whole Creation. And sometimes it seems like things are random, unsupervised, like trees scattered and mixed up in a forest—trees that yield no fruit. To this, Dovid said, אַז יִרְנְנוּ כָּל-עֵצֵי-יַעַר, "*then the trees of the forest will chant.*" For, when we find relief, all those shadowy, fearsome, barren forest trees break out in song—to join us in praising our Creator. It turns out that Hashem was among them too, watchfully overseeing all His creations even when it seemed as if he was hiding from us.

Let us think a bit more deeply about the trees. They themselves need quite a few essentials to grow well. Without water and rich soil, the tree has no chance of survival. So too, a person cannot survive without water—as Chazal tell us, אין מים אלא תורה, "*Water refers only to Torah.*" Though the Jewish people left Mitzrayim with loaded donkeys, they still cried out and complained for water and bread. Contemplate this—understand that without Torah one can't survive.

Timely Thoughts:

These are uncertain times. We have been suffering this tragic pandemic for nearly a year. Our government was replaced with shameless, obvious deception. The government in the Holy Land is incapable of surviving. With our own eyes, we are watching how Hashem crowns and deposes kings.

While some find this all so incredible, we are reminded of the pasuk, *ה' בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל וְרָם הוּא עַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים* “*Hashem in Tziyon is great, and higher above all the nations.*”³ The *seforim* tell us that this refers to a debate between the Jewish people and all other nations. All agree that there is a Creator. But the nations claim He is *גדול ורם* “*great, and higher*”—so high, in fact, that He takes no interest in Earthly events. And so, a pandemic is attributed to Nature, and only natural remedies are sought.

But we, the Jewish people, reply that despite His loftiness, Hashem is involved with us. *ה' בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל* “*Hashem in Tziyon is great*”—He resides among us, cares for us. We don’t blame nature for anything. Everything is subject to *Hashgacha Pratis*, and nothing happens without divine consent. And so, we focus on reversing His anger, inspecting our habits and improving them.

These days might well be described by the Pasuk, *בְּיָמִים קָדְמָיִם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיָּשָׁר* “*In those days there was no king in Israel. Each man would do what he considered right.*”⁴ The Pasuk speaks of a nation that had no leader, no one to reprimand them for their sins, nor to turn their attention to whatever matters might demand their *Teshuva*.

The plight of the *Dor HaMabul* afflicted the **whole world**, not just a **single country**. The Torah tells us exactly why the Mabul came—severe aveiros like adultery, *כִּי הִשְׁחִית כָּל-בְּשָׂר אֶת-דַּרְכּוֹ*, *עַל-הָאָרֶץ*: “*for all flesh had corrupted its way.*” The water of the Mabul was a punishment.

A pandemic does not happen for no reason, so let us be blunt. The world’s deterioration comes through the **air**, and it must be caused by our own sins done through the air. That is what has brought this fearsome plague upon us.

In this vein, Chazal tell us that the Dor HaMabul’s “*verdict was only sealed because of theft.*” Of course, we who tremble from the word of Hashem must be an example of moral integrity to the whole world. How tragic, when we hear of a *Shomer Torah U-Mitzvos* who uses made up names, or fraudulent credit cards. Or when a Jew encroaches on a friend’s business,

³ Tehillim 99

⁴ Shoftim 17

In times like these we must internalize again and again, that Hashem is our king, and nobody else is. It's His rule that we accept upon ourselves daily, and we daven that this rule will become known to all the world, וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִי־ה' אֶחָד וְשֵׁמוֹ אֶחָד . *“And Hashem will be king upon all the Earth. On that day Hashem will be one, and His Name, one.”*

Now, on this Tu B'Shvat we must thank Hashem for the privilege of sitting at this table, and for the ability to gather to thank Him for all His kindness to us. The Corona pandemic reached us just after Tu B'Shvat one year ago. Let us hope then, that just as Hashem has kept us alive, sustained us, and saved us from this past year's plague, we now daven “from this Tu B'Shvat day to the next Tu B'Shvat day—may it reach us in good stead” that we can again thank Hashem for His many kindnesses to us.

May Hashem bring us each a personal salvation, and may we be worthy of sweet fruits and a shining legacy—generations of upstanding offspring, who bless Hashem and are enlightened by Torah and mitzvos. And may we soon see fulfilled, אָז יִרְנְנוּ כָּל עֵצֵי יַעַר , *“Then all the trees of the forest will chant,”* and all barren trees will bear fruit with the coming of Moshiach, soon and in our times!

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