

VAYEILECH

NOW what do we do?

2001 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplowitz

Moses finally told the nation of Israel the words they were afraid to hear: *“I am one hundred twenty years old today...G-d has said to me, ‘You will not cross this Jordan.’”* (Deuteronomy, 31:2)

Imagine how frightening that news must have been. For the past forty years, Moses had been their lifeline. He had “negotiated” their release from Egypt. He had led them on a dry path through the Red Sea. Moses had brought them a Torah from Mt. Sinai and delivered bread from Heaven. When there was a war against the Amorites, Moses killed their king and led Israel to victory. And, perhaps most importantly, whenever G-d’s wrath was kindled against His People, Moses had managed to intercede on their behalf.

What were they to do now? The Israelites were about to embark upon a military campaign into uncharted waters. How would they defend themselves from the cruel and ruthless Canaanites? How would they manage without Moses? They needed a miracle, and their miracle worker was leaving them. It was an IMPOSSIBLE situation.

The truth is that they really didn’t have to be concerned about an “impossible” situation. Where the “possible” ends, miracles take over. More words from Moses: *“Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid and do not be broken before them...for G-d, it is He who goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you.”* (Ibid. verse 6)

I am very concerned about our country. We are engaged in a war unlike any other in our history. We don’t know whom to fight or where to fight them. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, we knew where Hiroshima was. We are at war against an army whose soldiers aren’t afraid to die if they can take some innocent people with them. A small container of anthrax in the hands of one of these suicidal madmen could, G-d forbid, produce unthinkable results.

G-d, in His unfathomable wisdom, sometimes allows unspeakable evil to take place. A mere three days before the attack we read, in synagogues throughout the world, *“G-d will bring upon you a nation from afar, from the end of the earth, swooping down like an eagle. It will be a nation whose language you do not understand, a sadistic nation, that has no respect for the old and no mercy for the young...It will lay siege to you in all your settlements, until it has brought down all your high fortified walls in which you trust...”* (Ibid. 28:49, 50, 52)

It is a frightening situation. It is an impossible situation. But we must remember: WHERE THE “POSSIBLE” ENDS, MIRACLES TAKE OVER.

“Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid and do not be broken before them...for G-d, it is He who goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you.”

Rabbi Akiva shocked his colleagues who shared with him the experience of viewing what was left of the Temple after the Romans had destroyed it. While their reaction to seeing “Ground Zero” was to cry, Rabbi Akiva laughed. He explained to them, with a hopeful eye to the future, that the same G-d who had fulfilled His threat to destroy the Temple, would someday keep His promise to rebuild it and bring peace to the world. We must share his optimism.

There are tough days ahead. That makes this Thursday all the more important. Let us pray and cry our hearts out this Yom Kippur. Let us resolve in these final days before Yom Kippur to rededicate our lives to G-d and His Torah. He has promised that He will never abandon us --There are brighter days ahead.

May G-d seal us all in the Book of Life, Prosperity, Health, and Peace. May He inspire our president and government with wisdom and courage. May He watch over the soldiers and civilians of the United States and Israel.

And may G-d, please dear G-d, bless America. Amen v'Amen.

Have a great Shabbos.

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