

Dedicated Child!

R' ELCHANAN WASSERMAN'S FINAL WORDS

AS HE WAS BEING LED to his death *al Kiddush Hashem*, the great *tzaddik*, **R' Elchanan Wasserman**, *zt"l*, addressed the crowd with several concluding words of *chizuk*. He said as follows:

There was a man seeking a livelihood, and like many did back in those days, he decided that he would become a farmer. His kind friend Shimon took him out to the field to show him how to manage a field. The first thing Shimon showed him was plowing. They went to the barn, got out the oxen, and attached them to the yoke.

"After they're secured," Shimon told him, "You walk them up and down the field and break up the dirt."

The new farmer looked at Shimon perplexed. "Is this how you grow things? It seems like you're only destroying the field."

Shimon replied, "Wait and see." The inexperienced farmer trusted him, and thus just watched.

After the field was plowed, Shimon then showed him how to seed. They got a bundle of dry seeds from the previous year and started placing them into the torn-up ground.

"Ah, now I see why you broke up the dirt," the new farmer observed. "But why are you taking good-looking kernels and placing them in the ground? You're simply destroying good kernels!"

Here too, Shimon simply told him, "You have to wait and see."

A few weeks later, little saplings appeared in the ground in the same spots where the seeds had been planted. The young farmer again admitted his understanding of the reason behind the seeding. He watched the stalks grow to full height after a few more weeks, and just as he thought they'd grown to full beauty, Shimon announced they were cutting them down and trashing them.

"What?!" the learner farmer exclaimed. "After all those weeks of growth you're going to destroy what you worked so hard over?" He thought that the end had finally come as all their weeks of waiting and hard work were being decimated.

"You have to wait and see," was all Shimon replied as he went on to crush the cut stalks, winnow the hay, and separate out the harvested wheat kernels.

"Ah, now I see. That was the only way to get the seeds out of the chaff."

This back-and-forth continued throughout the ensuing steps as Shimon then broke up the seeds even further to make flour, drowned the flour in water, making an inedible mush, and then put the mush into a burning oven, ostensibly to burn it to embers. At each step, the newbie believed Shimon was simply destroying what he'd been doing, but when the fresh bread emerged from the oven and the new farmer tasted from their labor, he agreed that waiting for the answer was surely worth it.

R' Elchanan then delivered the upshot of his last words. "At times, it looks as if everything is over, but then you see that it continues... until the next time you think, 'now it's **really** over.' We think like this farmer: 'This time it worked out, but now there's no hope.' But we must not think like this farmer. Instead, remember that the whole process is needed to bring out the delicious bread in the end, no matter how confusing and strange the in-between steps look." (*Lifanov Naavod, Tefillah*, p. 342)



HASHEM CHOOSES THE TESTS

The same message applies with challenges confronting us when serving Hashem. People have their ideas as to what their *avodas Hashem* is, and if their "plans change," they feel as if they suddenly can't serve Hashem. However, once we internalize that it's Hashem who is giving us our *nisyonos*, tests and circumstances, we go about fulfilling whatever He is giving us, happily and willingly, no matter what they may be.

We don't always choose our particular way of *avodas Hashem*. Hashem arranges for us what He wants our *avodah* to be.

R' Nota Zenwirth, *zt"l*, once entered his *Beis Medrash* holding a broom and announced to everyone there that he was waving a lulav.

They looked at him queerly. "Why was he calling a broom a lulav? And why was he bringing a broom into *Beis Medrash* anyway?"

"I took a lulav on Succos," explained R' Nota, "because it was Hashem's will. Now, it is Hashem's will that I take a broom and clean up the *Beis Medrash*, as it's impossible to daven here with what's on the floor right now."



A LOYAL SERVANT

זכרו תורת משה

Someone who admired and loved the king of his country went and pledged his service. "Whatever the king requires," he announced, "I am ready to do."

The king replied, "Very good, but I have all the ministers and officials I need. There is, though, much work to be done with the sewer system; go and take care of the drainage issues we're having."

The man balked at the offer. It wasn't the type of service he'd had in mind.

The *nimshal* is that when we say *Shema* in the morning, we pronounce Hashem as king and proclaim that we are prepared to serve Him. But then, during the day, Hashem sends us a test, a situation where we are caught off guard, and we face something we weren't anticipating, and we might say, "This isn't the type of *avodas Hashem* I had been planning." But, as we said, it isn't up to us to decide. We do Hashem's will with loyalty and devotion.



DANCING IN JAIL!

Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli and **Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk זי"ל**, were once in a prison cell, and there was a commode in the room, preventing them from davening and learning. Rebbe Elimelech sat there, very distraught. It was hard enough to be in jail, but they couldn't even daven or learn there!

Rebbe Zusha explained to his brother that he had no reason to be upset. "We are performing the mitzvah of 'not learning Torah or davening when there is something impure in the room!'"

Rebbe Elimelech agreed, and they danced joyously around the toilet bucket. They were fulfilling Hashem's will by abstaining from learning or davening, and so they danced around the cause of their *kiyum ha'mitzvah*.

When the guard heard their singing and dancing, he ran over to see what was happening. "Oh, so it's the bucket you are so happy about?" he exclaimed. Not wanting them to "enjoy" their time in jail, the guard took it away, and with that, they were then able to learn and daven.



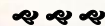
GROWING FROM TESTS

When one is confronted with challenges, he may tend to feel that it's unbeneficial and unproductive. But this is not true. Challenges are there for our very best to make us into the very best we can be.

Once, a person told his *rebbe* that he wished he had no tests. He was not unto enduring tests.

His rebbe told him: "Take three pots and fill them with water. Cook a potato in one, an egg in the second, and out coffee, sugar, and milk in the third." An hour later, the rebbe showed him that the egg became hard, the potato became soft, and the third pot had sweet coffee.

The rebbe explained, "The boiling water represents life's tests. They toughen soft people, soften tough people, and can make someone sweet like sweetened coffee. As you see, people can grow from the hardships they overcome." (*Torah Wellsprings, Vayera* p. 11)



CHACHAM OVADYAH YOSEF WAS SPARED

I heard a marvelous story that happened with **Chacham Ovadyah Yosef, זי"ל**. Just a week before his *chasunah* was scheduled, his *kallah* began talking about a lifestyle that Chacham Ovadyah hadn't planned on living, expressing her desire to go with him to theaters, and the like. It was difficult for Chacham Ovadyah to call off the match, but he couldn't marry her knowing what she expected of him. In the end, he married another woman, Rabbanit Margalit.

When Chacham Ovadyah was ninety years old, just a few years before his *petirah*, a woman arrived at his house, shouting that she must speak with Reb Ovadyah. When they brought her in, she asked Chacham Ovadyah if he remembered her. Chacham Ovadyah didn't.

"We were supposed to get married many years ago," she explained, "and a week before the *chasunah*, it was called off. You should know that Hashem loves you, because now I am an *almanah*, and through all the years I was married, I never had children. The doctors told me that I can't have children. Hashem Loves You!"

Chacham Ovadyah went through a hard time when the shidduch had to be called off, but it was all for his benefit.

Similarly, when something difficult happens to us, let us remember that it is for our good. Something very good will come from it. The same is true with *nisyonos*. When we go through tests, know that something very good will come from them. (*Torah Wellsprings, Vayera* p. 13)



2023'S LOYAL SERVANTS

This lesson serves as *chizuk* for the times that we face. Many things we cannot comprehend, but we must remember that they are all part of our growth process. This challenge, and every challenge for that matter, is there for our growth. As servants of Hashem, we take up the will of Hashem whether we understand it or not, similar to soldiers that do their commands no matter what. We have that strength.