



**RABBI JUDAH**

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## Parshas Parah: *Lev Basar*

Rav Simcha Wasserman, the renowned *rosh yeshivah* and pioneering educator, was the eldest son of the martyred *gaon*, Reb Elchonon, Hy'd. A 'down to earth' *talmid chacham*, Rav Simcha was beloved for his sensitivity, openness and approachability. Although the Wasserman's were not blessed with children of their own, they dedicated themselves to rebuilding Torah institutions, establishing *yeshivos* in Strasbourg, Detroit, Los Angeles and Yerushalayim. In this way, they raised thousands of students across the world.

Rav Simcha's holy father had been murdered in Kovno, and his entire world was lost. Since then, he would soldier through life, with incredible faith and strength, and seldom speak about or show emotion about his losses in the War. However, one time of year, on Parshas Parah, he would receive the *Maftir aliyah* and recite the Haftarah which contains the End-of-Days prophecy of Yechezkel (11:19):

וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד וְרוּחַ יְהוָה אֵתָן בְּקִרְבָּכֶם וְהִסְרֹתִי לָב  
הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׁרָם וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר

"And I shall give them one heart, and a new spirit I shall place within them, and I shall remove the heart of stone from their flesh, and I shall give them a heart of flesh."

When Rav Simcha came to this line, his voice would choke and he would break down and weep copiously. Every year, approaching the redemption of Pesach, he allowed himself to soften, open his heart and feel everything that he had gone through.

We usually think that a *lev even*, a 'heart of stone' is undesirable; a hardened, closed heart implies we are not in touch with our feelings, emotions and true desires. However, the Chasam Sofer says, in exile, the heart of stone is really a gift, a coping mechanism we are given in our excruciating exiles, allowing us to survive. The suffering, travails and hardships we experience in *galus* can just be too much to consider fully and feel deeply. If we were to be completely vulnerable and open, we would crumble under the weight of our collective suffering and lack the strength to continue on in our service of Hashem. With the dawn of redemption and the End of Days, we will be granted respite from the travails of *galus* and finally have the opportunity to reflect, take a deep breath, open our hearts and fully process the entire experience of our personal and communal history.

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Parshas Ki Sisa details the laws of the Red Heifer, a *tikun* for Am Yisrael following their falling into a state of impurity with the *Eigel haZahav*, the Golden Calf.

When Moshe ascended to the upper worlds to petition Hashem in prayer on behalf of his fallen people, the Midrash teaches that he found the *Ribbono shel Olam* learning (as it were) the *parsha* of the Parah Adumah: *Zos chukas haTorah....* Hashem said to Moshe: *Eini osek elah b'taharasan shel Yisrael*, "I busy Myself only with the purity of the Jewish People!" (*Pesikta Rabbasi*, 14)

In the days of Moshiach, Hashem will 'be busy' extricating us from the depth of our exile. He will metaphorically sprinkle us with pure waters like those being cleansed from *tumas meis*, the ritual impurity of coming in contact with death. He will renew within each of us a pure heart and a

spirit as befitting His beloved ones. He will replace the emotional armor of our battles with a deep sensitivity, allowing us to feel His healing Presence and giving us all a new beginning in Eretz Yisrael.

"I will give you a heart of flesh, *LeV BaSaR....*" The Midrash suggests reading the word not as *BaSaR* but as *BoSeR*, "glad". Rebbe Nachman says this means everyone will be glad at their friends' good fortune. (*Chayey Moharan* #339)

A heart that hurts, that feels, is a heart that is totally alive. As we approach our redemption, may we open our hearts to hold and relieve the pain of those who are not yet able to feel completely, those who are soldiering through life for Hashem. And may we merit to tearfully rejoice with them on the day that their good fortune is fully revealed. ■



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