

"וְכָל הָאָדָם עוֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ כְּבָנֵי מָרֹן"

"And all mankind passes before Thee like 'bnei maron'." This inspiring verse from the sacred דְּפִינָה תְּפִינָה prayer crystallizes within its few words the essence of this holy day. All mankind, on this Day of Judgement, passes before the Divine Tribunal awaiting the verdict of the heavenly magistrate. Now, what are the specific charges on which we, the defendants in this cosmic trial, are brought up? What are the actual matters on which we are being tried? The author of the prayer summarizes these charges in the words /וְנִמְצָאנוּ. We are being tried as /וְנִמְצָאנוּ. And the Rabbis of the Talmud tell us that these words have three meanings, three interpretations, each of which symbolizes another charge against which we must defend ourselves.

The first meaning of /וְנִמְצָאנוּ which the Talmud records is /עֲרֵב מִן הַבְּרֵיית, a flock of sheep. We are tried as a flock of sheep. The characteristic quality of sheep is that they are gregarious, they keep together. Of all the members of the animal kingdom, they are most famous for their sociability. Other animals, too, tend to stay in groups. But none can equal the sheep in loyalty to its own society, its devotion to its fellows, in the desire to stay with its friends and not stray off alone. When we say, therefore, that mankind is judged like a flock of sheep, we mean that man is judged for his community responsibility, his devotion to his society, his loyalty to his flock. Let us add to that philosopher's thought by saying that even animals live in flocks and herds - and that G-d, too, created for Himself a מִשְׁכָּן לְעַמּוּךָ, a heavenly "family" of angels. Living like a sheep in its flock, responsible to his community, is therefore man's Divine obligation. And on this day, therefore, each and every one of us is asked: how much of yourself have you given to your fellow-man? Have you been only a go-getter, or also a go-giver? How much have you done for the synagogue, and how much have you accomplished for Jewish education? How much support have you given to the agencies for Israel, and for the local philanthropies? To what extent, in short, have you acted like a loyal and responsible member of your flock?

Rabenu Tam, the famous grandson of Rashi, writes somewhere that the great mistake of Noah, the Noah of flood fame, was that he isolated & dissociated himself from his fellow men. Well aware of their evil ways and of the dire consequences to follow upon such a course, Noah built for himself an ark. Noah, the צַדִּיק הַדּוֹר, the pious man who should have girded his loins and gone among the people and shouted far and wide that the time was at hand to stop all this crime & sin & immorality; this same Noah refused to mingle with his fellow men, he cut himself off from the community in which he lived, & he went off to a side & built a small ark to save himself. Therefore, says Rabenu Tam, was Noah punished in kind, for G-d said to him, "Noah, since you were not content to live amongst your fellow men, go now into that ark & for 40 days live with animals & beasts!" Indeed, he who will not live with his fellow men must live with worse than his fellow men.

The first charge, then, which the Divine Judge investigates this day, is Community Responsibility. וְכָל הָאָדָם עוֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ כְּבָנֵי מָרֹן! And all mankind passes before Thee like a flock of sheep."

The second meaning of /וְנִמְצָאנוּ, according to the Talmud, is צִבְיֹת בְּבֵית דָּוִד, the "legions of the House of David", for the word /וְנִמְצָאנוּ implies His Majesty, which denoted King David. G-d investigates our records this Judgement Day to see if we have lived up to the standards of the legions of King David. The traditional enemy of the Israelites of those days, you will recall, were the Phillistines. The pages of the Bible are filled with tales of encounter after encounter, battle after battle, war after war between Israelites and Phillistines. These two antagonistic peoples, so radically different in character, culture and tradition, were symbolized by their leaders and heroes who were similarly possessed of diametrically opposed personalities - David the Israelite and Goliath the Phillistine. David, the sweet & saintly singer, sincere & sober-minded; and Goliath, the superficial, bombastic & boasting bully. Yet it must be remembered that David & Goliath were not really strangers to each other, for generations before, in the days the Judges, their grandmothers were sisters-in-law. The ancestress of David was Ruth the Moabite; the grandmother of Goliath was Orpah. So that Ruth, in a way, was the forerunner and representative of David & his legions; whereas Orpah epitomized the Goliath-Phillistine type. You will recall from the Book of Ruth that both these women were daughters-in-law to the sweet but sad

\* A great philosopher once said that to live alone, outside of society, one must be either a god or an animal.

Naomi, whose husband & 2 sons had died, leaving her bereaved & alone with Ruth & Orpah, & stranded in a strange land. Naomi bade her daughters-in-law to leave her & return home to their heathen parents, perhaps to remarry & begin a new life. Both women, we are told, protested; they wished to remain with Naomi. After some more coaxing by Naomi, however, Orpah decided to leave, but Ruth was adamant & insisted upon remaining. And here, as the ways of these two historical figures part, one wonders what it is that destined one to become the great-grandmother of a David & the other of a Goliath. Why, one wonders, was Fate so good to Ruth & so harsh on Orpah. And the answer, my friends, lies in the difference in attitude between <sup>them</sup> as expressed by the Bible: וְרֹחַל כָּסְתָהּ בְּרֻחַל וְרֹחַל כָּסְתָהּ בְּרֻחַל - "And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, whereas Ruth clung unto her". Orpah kissed; Ruth clung. This, then, was the essential difference between the two. A very slight difference, you might say. True, but as these differences develop and unfold through the generations, the clinging of a Ruth becomes the noble passion for Truth of the legions of David; and the superficiality of Orpah, symbolized by the kiss, degenerates into the rabid and demonic wickedness of a Goliath, the lukewarm attraction becomes the very cold antipathy. Indeed, the Talmud refers to Israel as בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה - the sons of she who clung; and to the enemies of Israel as בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה - the sons of she who kissed. And ultimately, predict our Sages, וְנִשְׁכָּה יִנְצֵחַ, the clingers prevail over the kissers, the Davids vanquish the Goliaths.

These two types, the בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה and בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה, are universal types. And it is the בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה who were the embodiment of בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה, the clingers in life. And on Rosh Hashana, G-d wants to know if we are of the legions of the House of David, the בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה, the clingers; or of the legions of the House of Goliath, the בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה.

A psychiatrist friend of mine recently told me of a case which he had and which, he insists, is typical of many others which come before him. A young child had developed some unseemly habits and had proved, on too many occasions, to be emotionally unstable. The parents of that child brought him to the doctor and asked what had caused the trouble & what could be done for him. The psychiatrist, upon examination, found that the little boy was love-starved, and this feeling of being unwanted was the basis of his fears, his insecurity and, consequently, his ugly habits. When the parents were informed of this fact, they protested bitterly. "On the contrary", cried the mother, "we show him all the love we possibly can. We buy toys for him, dress him nicely, & kiss him frequently". When pressed further for information, it was revealed that every night, the child was invariably kissed, put to bed - and left with the baby-sitter, while father & mother left for canasta or bridge or meetings. They were בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה but not בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה. They kissed, but they failed to cling. How empty and how superficial.

And no wonder, therefore, that the psychiatrists' couches are so crowded! For what I just related to you is not an isolated incident. Only recently the press carried a report by an important educator in Ontario who estimated that Canadians spend over one million dollars annually in trying to be away from their children, on such projects as baby-sitting & camps. Compare that, if you will, with the training given us by our parents & grandparents; people who, perhaps, were not as sophisticated as we, European immigrants who were unexposed to Baby-raising & Child Psychology Manuals. When they kissed a child it was a rare occasion. But in its place they gave that child unswerving devotion, undivided attention and self - sacrifice. They walked with their child to shul, they reviewed his homework with him, they gave him a tradition & a culture of which he could be proud; and they expected and got the sought for "Nachass". They were the בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה, & therefore their children were more devoted to them & more respectful towards them than children are to the בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה of our days. They were clingers; they did not suffice by merely kissing their children.

In our religious life too, we have these 2 types. The בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה are ever-ready with the ubiquitous & easy expression of affection. A synagogue is a "nice" thing to have; services are "beautiful". A Talmud Torah or Day School is "important". Kashruth is a "good idea". All our Jewish institutions are treated with the saccharine sweetness symbolized by the superficial & sugar-coated kiss. But the בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה, without whom these very same institutions would never exist, view these things otherwise. A synagogue is not "nice" but urgent, services are not "beautiful" but profound & soul-stirring. Jewish education is not "important" but vital, a matter of life & death. Kashruth & family purity are not "good ideas" but the very corner-stones of our faith. The בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה kiss the Mezuzah; the בְּנֵי נִשְׁכָּה cling to its precepts.



The צדיקים close the Siddur, kiss it & leave the synagogue; the חסידיים close it, take the synagogue with them & begin to live the Siddur, they begin to practice the אורח חיים, the clinging of Faith, about which Hassidism has so much to say. The חסידיים express affection; the צדיקים impress with passion. The former are insincere; the latter sincere. the former are of no avail; the latter shall ultimately prevail. וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ. "And you who cling to the Lord are alive, every one of you, this day".

So, then, the 2nd matter for the Divine Judge to look into this day is whether we are members of David's legions, the scions of Ruth, who knew how to cling. וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ. And all mankind passes before Thee like the legions of David, sons of she who clung.

The third & final interpretation of רִמּוֹן, according to the Rabbis, is רִמּוֹן the mountain passes of the place called Beth-moron. If the first charge is that of Community Responsibility; and the second that of sincerity & genuineness versus insincerity & superficiality, then the 3rd is that of individual courage & determination, symbolized by the רִמּוֹן the high mountain passes of Beth-moron. For it is never a coward who attempts to climb a mountain. It is only a man endowed with indomitable courage & vision, with an urgent & passionate desire to reach the top who undertakes to scale its perilous cliffs. It is our ability & desire, then, to scale the mpuntains of Life that is tested on this day.

We might, in fact, to continue the metaphor, say that there are three classes of people: besides the climbers, we have also the sitters & the walkers.

The SITTERS is he who refuses to budge when the right path lies before him; he has not the grit, the basic & fundamental moral toughness that a person must have to be religious. Many are the avenues of religious opportunity & moral achievement that are open before him, yet he refuses to respond to the call of the open road. He sits when decency demands that he move. How did Moses put it to the tribes of Reuven & Gad - הֲאֵינִי יוֹשֵׁב וְאַתָּה מֵלָכִים, "Do you intend to sit here while your brothers go off to war?" In times of moral strife, the sitter sits it out.

The WALKER is he who is ready to tread on the beckoning paths of life, but he cannot blaze his own trail. He will advance on the avenues of ethical accomplishment, but only if he is promised that they are well paved, well protected, well banked and level. And when the forces of Good & Evil are joined in battle, he will not "sit it out", he will fight for his principles - but he will only follow, he will not lead. The walker will not sit; but neither will he climb.

The CLIMBERS of life are those for whom no task is too difficult. Once he has seen the summit high above him, the climber will allow no obstacle to prevent his rise to the top. Once his mind is set, he will blaze his own trails & pursue his task with courage & determination. He will push frontiers, extend horizons & open new vistas. Overwhelming odds mean nothing to him, & adversity only challenges him to greater deeds. Do you recall the report the Meraglim brought to Moses after their reconnaissance patrol in Canaan? It was a land of giants, a land of fortified cities, a land which destroys its inhabitants. Yet among those twelve men were two who were not pessimists & they said: וְעַתָּה נֵלְכֵם וְנִשְׁאַלְנוּ "We must go up, arise, at once & possess it, for we are well able to overcome it." Such words could be spoken only by climbers.

The SITTERS are those who are classified as שְׂמֵרָה on Rosh Hashana, those whose doom is sealed. About them our Rabbis say: כָּל מְקוֹם שֶׁאֵין מַלְאָכֵינוּ מְשַׁלְּמִים, שָׁם שָׂטָן מְשַׁלֵּם. "Whereever you find much "sitting", there Satan is active",... The WALKERS are the מְשַׁלְּמִים, the mediocre, the middle level on the scale of righteousness. They are the ones for whom Rosh Hashana solves no problems & are given suspended sentences until Yom Kippur. The Walker, like the Biblical Chanoch, leaves no permanent mark upon the world, for when he leaves, וְאֵין עֵקֶד, he simply vanishes. Like Chanoch, he is a decent chap & a moral person, but when the end comes, he is simply consigned to oblivion. The CLIMBERS are the צַדִּיקִים, the righteous, whose verdict today is clearly חַיִּים, for a good life. Like Abraham who arose from Egypt - וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ - the climber, disgusted with the immorality of his Egypt-like spiritual lowlands, rises to an I srael and climbs to the top of a Mt. Moriah, there to commune with his G-d. The climber is like Moses, who וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ, he constantly scales the mountains of the Lord. Like David, his life is so restless, so brimming with that energy & desire to climb that comes from the love of the sacred & holy in life, that daily he says: וְאֵין עֵקֶד "I lift my eyes to the mountains". For there are always mountains to climb. And like Elijah, whose immortal epithet will forever be וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ, he went up in a whirlwind to Heaven, the climber is even ready to die climbing.

\* for it was וְאַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ - Chanoch walked with G-d. He only walked, he didn't climb.

My friends, on this Rosh Hashana Day, we <sup>פסוק 12</sup> must prove to G-d that we are determined to scale the <sup>(אנא אר אר)</sup> mountains of our spiritual and religious lives, like true <sup>(אנא אר)</sup> true mountain climbers, not as sitters or walkers. On this day when we conceive of G-d as <sup>(אנא אר)</sup> higher and higher, we must rise to get closer & closer to Him. We are bidden to outdo ourselves, for we know that if Man will not be more than human - then he must be less than human.

<sup>(אנא אר)</sup> "And all mankind passes before Thee like 'bnei maron'." On this Yom Hadin we must acquit ourselves of these three charges. We must prove that like the <sup>(אנא אר)</sup> sheep in the flock, we have been loyal members of the community. We must be able to identify ourselves with the Legions of the House of David, those <sup>(אנא אר)</sup> whose sincerity, profundity & genuineness were beyond question. And we must prove that we are capable of scaling <sup>(אנא אר)</sup> ; that we are, as individuals, not sitters or walkers, but true climbers, courageous & persistent advocates of the highest & loftiest of Jewish ideals.

The prosecution may file heavy & voluminous briefs. The spectators may be skeptical of the outcome of the great trial. But the defence can yet achieve victory if, before it rests, it offers the solemn promise that it will rectify what needs rectification and ~~to~~ henceforth live according to the noble precepts of the Torah. We hope and pray that the verdict of the Divine Tribunal will be NOT GUILTY - and a <sup>ששון ושלום</sup> , a year of life & blessing, peace & prosperity. Amen.

Note - It independent summer mode of  
sitters, walkers climbers - add, as  
walkers (concerning <sup>(אנא אר)</sup>) that he  
was lukewarm, running & not swimming,  
& that's why G-d took him. For  
exact text, see <sup>(אנא אר)</sup> on <sup>(אנא אר)</sup>.