

Based on a teaching of Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt"l

Contained within this week's Parsha is the opening line of the first paragraph in שמע (Devarim 6:5):

וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ

Rav Pincus explains this verse in connection with the Brisker Rav's explanation of Shir HaShirim 8:7:

מִיָּם רַבִּים לֹא יוֹכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת הָאֵהָבָה וּנְהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטַפּוּהָ אִם יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶת כָּל הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ בְּאֵהָבָה בּוֹז יְבוֹזוּ לוֹ

Many waters cannot quench the love, nor can rivers flood it;

should a man give all the treasure of his house in exchange love, he would be laughed to scorn.

The Brisker Rav zt"l says that this verse describes **three subjects relating to challenges to our faith and commitment**:

3 Poverty; one who, *chas*, becomes destitute, must be willing to sacrifice his/her means in order to perform mitzvos and maintain love for Hashem.

2 Nations that use their power to impose **harsh decrees** upon us, ultimately seeking to **annihilate** us entirely.

1 Nations that try to **influence** us with their way of life, hoping to **convince** us they offer a more exciting or enjoyable life than a Torah-prescribed existence.

These three categories of challenges to our faith correspond to encouragement found in our parsha and Shir HaShirim:

CHALLENGE 3 Monetary	CHALLENGE 2 Existential	CHALLENGE 1 Spiritual	Source
<p>ENCOURAGEMENT 3 וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ</p> <p>Our possessions are to be used in the service of Hashem and in furtherance of intensifying our relationship with Him.</p>	<p>ENCOURAGEMENT 2 וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ</p> <p>We must be willing to give our lives for Hashem and not lose hope when our people are targeted simply for being Jewish.</p>	<p>ENCOURAGEMENT 1 (וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ) בְּכָל לִבְּךָ</p> <p>We must love Hashem with all our hearts to stand against influences in the world that distance us from Him.</p>	<p>ואתחנן:</p>
<p>אִם יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶת כָּל הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ בְּאֵהָבָה בּוֹז יְבוֹזוּ לוֹ</p> <p>Wealth is insignificant compared to the relationship between a Jew and his Creator. [Rashi: If a person tried bartering a Jew away from Hashem, he would be utterly ridiculed for such a futile attempt, due to the strength of a Jew's love for Hashem.]</p>	<p>וּנְהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטַפּוּהָ</p> <p>All of the destruction, decrees and persecution will not wash away our love.</p>	<p>מִיָּם רַבִּים לֹא יוֹכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת הָאֵהָבָה</p> <p>The coldness of the world (the gushing waters) in the form of the attempts by certain nations, to "cool off" our scorching desire for our Creator, cannot extinguish our love for Hashem.</p>	<p>שיר השירים:</p>

The intense love being described is not always an easy feeling and can be especially challenging after a period of mourning and recollections of tragedy and destruction that transpired from 17 Tamuz through 9 Av.

Nevertheless, our emergence from this time of sadness is necessary, and we are boosted by the words of this week's parsha, **to love Hashem with ALL our faculties**. The response to tragedy is not interminable depression, but rather a **proactive refresher course on the love we share with Hashem**, expressed in the words of the prophets and Tefilla, and a return to the sort of refined lives Hashem wants us to lead.

May the affectionate assurances of the Torah and the consolatory urgings of the Navi Yishayahu - נחמו נחמו עמי - be a comfort for all, and a bridge into the upcoming Elul month of intensified concentration and closeness with Hashem.