

Good Shabbos Everyone. We now continue with our story from last week... ..Meanwhile, it was growing dark. They took shelter under a ledge, to protect themselves from another avalanche. Morning found them hungry, but hopeful that the view from the top would answer the question, which haunted them: Where were they? Another few hours' climbing brought them to the peak.

The view left them breathless. The creation in its fullest beauty lay before them, displaying a chain of sharp mountain peaks that bordered a huge, open bay. Instead of the road they had gone so far to locate, they saw only water and more water, as far as the eye could see. It was the top of the world! Or, perhaps, the end of the world. In every direction, they found not a single indication that another human being had ever reached the area. Overhead, two huge condors circled round. Guy wondered: Were they eyeing what they thought would be their next meal?

The two travelers were stunned. The wind cut into them, the cold numbed their senses, and clouds were closing in on the summit. They were desperate for food, and completely cut off from any human contact. Clearly, their wisest step now would be to change their plan of action. Rather than searching for a way to get back to civilization, they must concentrate on surviving until a search party could locate them. The two found a sheltered ledge of level rock where they could light a fire. Perhaps the smoke would be seen by a passing ship or helicopter. They pitched their tent, and gathered some twigs. However, the wood was too damp to catch fire. They would have to try their luck lower down.

They packed their gear and carefully descended to a valley, where they found some berries. They broke their fast, and continued down to the shore of the bay. There they found all the berries they could eat. This was their sole source of nourishment for the duration of their ordeal. While exploring the shoreline, they discovered a peninsula, and decided to pitch camp there until they were rescued. Michael refused to rest for a single minute. He demanded that they do whatever they could to make sure they would be rescued. Even when heavy rains poured down, even when Guy declared it was his Sabbath, and he could not work, Michael was a whirlwind of tense, desperate activity.

In contrast, Guy was calmer. He continued to recite Tehillim. An inner voice assured him that, eventually, they would be rescued. On Shabbos, Guy felt that his prayers had an additional dimension of depth that gave him new hope. He would recall scenes from the Shabbosos at home, before he left. The tunes of his family's zemiros at the Shabbos table came back to him. He hummed to himself, again and again, and drew new strength. One song, in particular, echoed in his mind: "Ki eshmerah Shabbos, Keil yishmereni – If I guard the Shabbos, Hashem will guard over me." What meaning these words took on, there at the end of the world!

Every seventh day, the words infused Guy with renewed hope. Guy explained to Michael that a Biblical verse declares that Hashem's salvation comes "in the blink of the eye." "It can happen so quickly," he explained to his Austrian companion, "that we won't have time to prepare for it."

The seasoned mountain climber remained pessimistic. "Perhaps our salvation has already come and gone, and it was so quick that we didn't even notice it!" He was not affected by Guy's faith. Summer was drawing to a close. The days grew shorter, the winds colder. The sun's rays heated the earth less and less. Fall would soon be upon them. In its wake, would come an icy winter which would quickly freeze them to death. Michael looked to the future with dread.

Guy continued to read Tehillim. Verse after verse seemed to express exactly what he felt in his heart, and he drew his optimism from its words. One day they heard the drone of a helicopter, but the clouds hid it from view. They listened as the sound of its motor drew closer, and then faded away.

Another time, they spied a ship in the distance, shell fishing the bay's deep waters, but it did not see them. Late one afternoon, Guy stood scanning the horizon, when suddenly a thought occurred to him. The whole time, they had been heading south. If so, east was to their left. But that was where the sun was now sinking downward, toward the horizon. The sun was setting in the east! How could that be? Guy felt his strength suddenly drain from him. His mind was flooded with melancholy thoughts. Perhaps all his life he had been going in the wrong direction? Maybe this was just another mistake in a long series of mistakes? This might well be far more than just another error; it might prove to be his last.

He turned to Michael: "Tell me, in which direction were we going all the time?" "Southward," answered Michael, mechanically. "If we were going south," retorted Guy, "then look! That way must be east, and that's where the sun is setting now. Do you want to tell me the sun is setting in the east?" "You're

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right," said Michael with a shrug of his shoulders. "I made a mistake. A bitter mistake. But what good does it do us to find out now that we're helplessly lost?"

Now Guy decided that he must be the one to take the lead. Above all, they must not lose hope! Together, they would do everything they could to make themselves visible to a passing ship or plane. They found logs whose bark had been whitened by the fierce winds. As weak and tired as they were, both men sawed away at the wood and dragged it into place. They knew their lives depended on someone's spotting them from afar.

After they had formed a wooden SOS they added a white frame, the better to attract attention should another helicopter chance by. It took several days, but they had to try. It seemed their only hope. Guy kept track of the days, and each Shabbos, he prayed. He also recited Tehillim, and sang zemiros. He remained full of hope, confident that somehow, they would be rescued. They finished their project. Another day went by, and another.

On the third day, Guy prayed with more concentration than usual. He pleaded with Hashem that this be the day of their rescue. Suddenly they heard the drone of a motor in the distance. They looked up and saw a helicopter, headed their way. Closer and closer it came. Their logs had been spotted! They were saved! The helicopter landed!

As the two men rushed up to it, out stepped the pilot, South American, and the passenger, a Japanese who was en route to Chile to hire a team of photographers. They were the first human beings the lost pair had seen in thirty-three days! The pilot had spotted their SOS and decided to investigate. The meeting was moving for all four men.

Quickly they took down their tent, packed up their gear, and climbed eagerly into the rescue plane. As the rotors began to spin and the plane left the ground, their hearts swelled with joy. They would live! They would see their families and dear ones once again!

The melody of "Yeshuas Hashem keheref ayin – Hashem's salvation comes in the wink of the eye – ran through Guy's mind again and again. Indeed, Guy's situation had changed in the time it takes to blink an eye. From the helicopter's pilot they learned that they were not in Argentina, but in Chile, 200 kilometers away from the city of Ushuaia!

Their rescuers took them back to civilization. Guy's first step was to contact his family back in Israel. He had lost fifteen kilos, he told them, but thank Heaven, he was alive. His family told him that an expert search team was looking for him and Michael right then, but closer to Ushuaia.

Dozens of friends and relatives had prayed for him constantly; groups of women had gathered daily to recite Tehillim on his behalf. The family sought the blessings of a number of outstanding rabbis and asked them to join in their prayers on behalf of the two adventurers.

It was a fateful month for the Lavone family in Israel. Their hearts alternated between prayers and hope, and anxiety for their son's fate. Upon his return, Guy learned that until now, no one had ever survived more than two weeks in the Land of Fire and come out alive. The harsh conditions made survival almost out of the question.

After a short rest, Guy returned to Israel a different person. Convinced that Heaven had not guarded over him and rescued him for nothing, he was determined to make his life more meaningful. Now he followed his family's footsteps and delved more deeply into his Judaism. Today he attends a Torah study class regularly. He continues to find deep inspiration in Tehillim, and is certain that one verse, above all, will always be particularly meaningful to him: "Though I walk through the valley of death, I shall not fear, for You are with me."

In this week's Parsha, we read about how Avrohom Avinu was commanded to leave his place of birth and upbringing and go to a new land. It would be in the new land that Avrohom Avinu would become the father of the Jewish People. With this the Torah hints to what a Jew's approach in life should be, i.e., to always seek to go away from the norms of bad behavior and improve one's ways. Just as Guy from the story took both a spiritual and physical journey to better himself, so too, must we all, like Avrohom Avinu seek to improve our lives, to take our spiritual lives to the highest peaks! **Good Shabbos Everyone.**