



His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!
(Shir HaShirim 2:6)

His left hand is under my head: In the desert. And his right hand embraces me: He traveled a three-days' journey; to search out a rest for them [as in Bamidbar 10: 33], and in the place of the rest, He brought down manna and quails for them. All this I remember now in my exile, and I am sick for His love. (Rashi)

If all this we remember now in our exile why does the pasuk say, “His right hand embraces...” – presently, instead of “His right hand embraced...” – using the past tense?

Perhaps we can explain this with the following story:

A young man, Zalman, was caught desecrating the Shabbos in his hometown of Radin. In the hopes of inspiring him to return to a Torah-committed life, Zalman was taken into the Chofetz Chaim's room. After just a few minutes, he walked out. He was never mechalel Shabbos again! What did the Chofetz Chaim tell him that had made such a significant impact? For many years, no one knew until Rabbi Berel Wein retold this story to an audience in Florida. After the speech, an old Jew approached him and said to him: I am Zalman! Rabbi Wein immediately asked, “Nu, so what did the Chofetz Chaim say to you?” Zalman, filled with emotion, replied, “He just took my hand in his, stroking it lovingly and as tears streamed down his eyes he said, ‘Shabbos! Shabbos! Shabbos!’ Since that day so long ago, there were many times when I faced great challenges keeping Shabbos but I could never violate it for I would immediately feel the warm tears of the Chofetz Chaim on my hands!”

The pasuk above testifies to us that, despite how low we may fall in our Galus, the supreme love of our Father in Heaven, displayed to us in the Midbar, is still alive in the depths of our hearts. So much so, that we actually feel the warmth of His embrace around our necks, so to speak, as if He is embracing us at this moment. Even when we stray from Him, deep down, it is with a broken heart that we feel compelled to breach the love of the One who loves us so dearly, while His arms are still around our neck in a loving embrace!

