

A HUMBLE WEEK

By Ozer Bergman

Let's start with a Chassidic story.

The holy Baal Shem Tov was once a guest at someone's home. He got up to go from a large room to a smaller room, but took a wrong turn and ended up in the cellar. "Check the mezuzahs," he said.

Someone there asked him, "Just because a person made a mistake, he has to find a reason? Maybe it was just an accident."

The Baal Shem Tov responded, "By me, there are no accidents."

From here, every person should learn to believe that everything happens due to Divine Providence. He shouldn't attribute it to happenstance, God forbid (Shivchei Baal Shem Tov #150).

There are no accidents in your life, my life or the world's life. What happens and when is carefully orchestrated by the One Above. Since next week, the fifth week of *Sefirat HaOmer*, hosts both Pesach Sheini and Lag BaOmer, there must be some connection—especially since this week parallels the *sefirah* of Hod which is represented by Aharon HaKohen.

What are Pesach Sheini (Second Passover) and Lag BaOmer (the 33rd day of the Omer-count)? Pesach Sheini is a biblical holiday (Numbers 9:9-14). When the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple) stood in Jerusalem, every Jew had to participate in the bringing and eating of a Paschal sacrifice. What if he missed it? He got a second chance. He could bring it a month later, on Pesach Sheini, the 14th of Iyar. Though the Torah speaks only of accidentally missing it, the Talmud teaches that even someone who purposely refused to participate in the Paschal sacrifice could make it up on Pesach Sheini (*Pesachim* 93b).

A second chance. God gives us second chances not only when we unintentionally mess up, but even when we willfully ignore our duty, or spitefully and ungratefully decline an opportunity to grow closer to Him. This is certainly an indication of God's love and kindness for His people. It's also an instance of one of Rebbe Nachman's well-known teachings: Despair does not exist! How did the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini come to be taught?

Shortly before the first anniversary of the Exodus, God told Moshe to have the Jews bring the Paschal sacrifice. Moshe transmitted the command and all the Israelites did it, except for

a few who were forbidden to do so because of they were in a state of *tumah* (spiritual impurity). They were distraught, but not devastated. Even though they were *halakhically* exempt, and even though their spiritual sensitivity was diminished by their *tumah*, they turned to their teacher, leader and guide, Moshe, and asked, "Why should we be worse?" (Numbers 9:7).

Their sincere desire elicited a never-before-known degree of God's kindness. Not by itself, however. God's kindness became apparent because they chose to find a solution by seeking the tzaddik's advice. This is true today as well. We, too, want to be close to God. Despite our innate limitations, self-inflicted flaws and spiritual insensitivity, you and I can have such a strong desire for God that we elicit a new degree of God's kindness in our individual lives. (That kindness can expand to others. A shmooze for another day.) But we also need to go to a tzaddik to get the advice needed to find God. This brings us to Lag BaOmer, the anniversary of the passing of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai, author of the holy *Zohar*.

The prophet Elijah once declared that the Jews will leave the final exile because of the holy *Zohar* (*Zohar* 3:124b). How can a book take us out of exile? When that book is a manifestation of the Tree of Life, and we study it and ask tzaddikim who understand it to teach us its message and advice, it takes us out of exile. The light of *teshuvah* (return to God) shines and our path out of exile is one of compassion and kindness.

What has this got to do with Aharon HaKohen? We know now that Moshe was a great tzaddik. But how did the Jews in Egypt know? Who told them that he was "an OK guy"? Aharon. Although he had been the Israelites' sole, undisputed leader for decades, when Moshe returned to Egypt, Aharon recognized and accepted his younger brother's greatness and leadership. He told the Israelites to do likewise. Aharon's humility allowed him to yield and acquiesce—the quality of Hod—to his superior.

Never losing hope, maintaining your desire to be a better Jew, humbly seeking guidance from tzaddikim—a tall order, but doable, if you make use of the power of *tefilah* (prayer). During the entire week of Hod, the Heavenly Gates of Mercy are open. Your prayers are more readily accepted. *Seize the opportunity!*

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

(Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Geviyat Chov MeiHayetomim* 3:18)

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman teaches: The advice given by one person to another creates a union between them; it forms a bond between the giver and the receiver. In a sense, this union is like a marriage. The idea and counsel which one implants in the other grows and develops and is eventually "born" into reality. If the advice comes from a wicked person, if the giver lacks virtue, nothing good can ever come from it. Conversely, the advice one receives from the tzaddikim is total truth. The end results of their counsel are positive (*Likutey Moharan* I, 7:3).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

21:1 Say to the Kohanim, Aaron's sons, and say to them

The Tzaddik Inspires The Common Folk

The repetition of the verb "say" teaches that the elders should caution the young people against becoming defiled (Rashi).

"Say" refers to prayers, because *EMoR* (אמר, say) is similar to *he'EMaRta* (האמרת, you have spoken), which indicates praise (Deuteronomy 26:17). "Kohanim" refers to the Torah. "Aaron" corresponds to justice, since Aaron wore the Breastplate of Judgment. *Hazhir* (warn) can also mean "illuminate."

Thus, this verse teaches that the "elder"—the tzaddik—must illumine the prayers of the "young people"—the common folk—inspiring them so that "none shall defile themselves"—i.e., so they will guard their covenant. When they do so, they will be able to receive illumination from the tzaddik (LM I, 2:9).

21:18 Any man who has a blemish should not offer a sacrifice

Our Prayers Bind All Universes Together

KoRBan (קרבן, sacrifice) is similar to *KaReV* (קרב, close). The purpose of the daily sacrifices was to bring all of the worlds closer to their perfection.

Today, the daily prayers take the place of the sacrifices. Therefore we must see to it that our prayers are without blemish, just as the sacrifices were to be brought from unblemished animals and by a person without a blemish. The *Zohar* teaches that where there is fear of God, there are no blemishes. When we enhance our fear of God, we attain unblemished prayer (LM I, 14:8).

22:10 No stranger may eat of the holy

One Should Understand Torah Before Delving Into Kabbalah

"Holy" alludes to the Torah's holy mysteries—i.e., the Kabbalah. One who is unfamiliar with the Torah should study *halakhah* first, before delving into the Torah's mysteries (LM I, 15:6). As Rebbe Nachman explains in his lesson, by first studying the Revealed Torah, one merits to sincere prayer. Then his prayers cause the Hidden Torah to become revealed to him.

23:4 These are the appointed times of God

We Draw Down Joy On The Festivals

The initial letters of the words *Eileh Mo'adei YHVH* (אלה מועדי י-ה-ו-ה, These are the appointed times of God) spell *IMY* (אמי, my mother). This is a reference to the *sefirah* of Binah, which corresponds to the heart.

Thus, this verse implies that the heart of the year is to be found in the Three Festivals. Because the heart is the seat of joy, the Festivals, too, are times of joy. And we are commanded to "ascend"—to Jerusalem—for the Festivals, to appear before God (Exodus 23:17). Through the joy that a person attains on the Festivals, he can ascend spiritually to draw vitality directly from Arikh Anpin, God's Face (LM I, 30:5).

23:11 He will wave the Omer

The Days Of The Counting Of The Omer Are Propitious For Repentance

Barley, the *Omer*-offering, is essentially animal feed. This sacrifice required *TeNuPhaH* (תנופה, waving before God), invoking the plea "*TeNu PeH* (תנו פה)—Give a mouth!"

The days of the Counting of the Omer are propitious for repentance. A sinner is compared to an animal, since he has descended from the human level to commit a

wrongful (i.e., beastly) act. On the other hand, when a person acts like an animal, he remains silent and does not respond to those who humiliate him; he can repent and return to the human level. Repentance "gives a mouth"—the ability to speak and act like a human being again (LH III, p. 334).

23:15 Count for yourselves

The Beginning Is The Source Of Our Strength

We count the forty-nine days of the Omer in a way that always reminds us of the beginning. That is, "Today is the first day of the Omer," "Today is the second day of the Omer," and so on. The beginning imparts strength and vitality to all that follows. The Counting of the Omer teaches us that we must always draw upon the strength of the beginning so that our continued efforts imbibe our initial enthusiasm (LH IV, p. 70).

23:22 Do not completely reap the corner of your field

One Shouldn't Finish Everything On His Plate

The Torah commands a person not to harvest everything for his material benefit. Rather, he must make sure to leave something over for the poor. So too, one should leave something over from his meals and not indulge himself completely. "Leave something for the poor"—i.e., for your own soul, which is impoverished in exile. In this way, you can strengthen your soul and return it to its rightful level (LH II, p. 219a).

23:24 It is a holy festival of remembrance and shofar-blowing

Listening To Holy Sounds Strengthens The Soul

The shofar represents holy sounds, which have the power to subdue a person's physical desires—to circumcise his flesh, as it were—enabling him to draw closer to holiness and receive the pure light of Godliness (LM I, 22:5). Any sound produced in the pursuit of spirituality—such as a sigh, a song, or the jingle of coins given to charity—is considered to be a sound of holiness. And the more a person listens to holy sounds, the more he subjugates his body to his soul.

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

12 — "A song of praise of David" (Psalms 145:1) (continued)

6. Therefore, a person should know before he studies, that at the time he sits down to study, the tzaddik in the Garden of Eden is listening to his voice, as it is written, "You who sit in the gardens, the friends are listening for your voice; cause me to hear it" (Song of Songs 8:13; *Zohar* I, 92b). A person must bind himself to the *Tanna* or to the tzaddik who originated and revealed this Torah teaching which he is studying, in order for this "kissing" to take place. Then he will merit to repent and to revitalize his life which has thus far passed in darkness.

All this occurs when a person studies Torah for its own sake—[that is,] in order to fulfill the mitzvah to study Torah, which is equal in importance to all the other *mitzvot*—and in order to merit, through his study, to do what the Torah commands. [A person who studies in this way] then sees only good meaning in the Torah, since he knows that God purposely left room in the Torah so that it could be interpreted in the opposite sense, as well.

But when a person studies only in order to be called "learned" and the like, then "he is worse than a carcass," and he is certainly unable to bind himself to the spirit of the *Tanna*. About such a person, it is written, "The kisses of an enemy are forced" (Proverbs 27:6). For the *Tanna* cannot stand to have his spirit cleave to the spirit of a Torah scholar who is a "Jewish demon."



Jerusalem, Israel
Tel: 972.2.582.4641 • Fax: 972.2.582.5542

North America:
POB 587 • Monsey, NY 10952-0587
1-800-33-BRESLOV
Tel: 732.534.7263 • Fax: 732.608.8461

To subscribe to this weekly publication please visit:
breslov.org/pathways
To dedicate in memory or merit of someone please
email: pathways@breslov.org