

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

PROUD TO BE JEWISH

By Ozer Bergman

We're on the threshold of Rosh HaShanah, the Day of Judgment, when we're scrutinized, weighed in the balance, and then written down for a good year (hopefully), all in less time than it took to read this sentence.

Rosh HaShanah is two days long not because God needs that much time to figure out what to do for you or because that's how long it takes some people to complete reciting their gimme list. It's that long to give you time to think it through: What do I need to change, and how?

Rosh HaShanah time, many people think there is a correlation between how good they've been (or promise to be) and how much good God will shower upon them. That is not currently the case. Prosperity is often granted to villains but denied to tzaddikim. Free will would be lacking and Creation could not serve its purpose if the results of one's behavior were obvious. But I digress.

We all need to improve our behavior, speech and attitudes. We should deepen our belief and trust in God, our faith in all that is *kadosh* (sacred), and our other religious sentiments. But in many ways, these are mere symptoms. To accomplish long-lasting *teshuvah* (return to God), we need to find out what is missing at the root.

At some point in history, God foresaw that He would have immense pride in the Jewish people. He foresaw that He would have immense pride in every single Jew including you, dear Jewish reader. He also foresaw that He would have immense pride in every part of you, every day. All this foreseen God-pride in the Jews is a root of Creation. The root of the problem is that God saw it coming, but we don't!

When we inventory our lives, we see what needs repair: talking in shul, eating non-kosher, wasting time, paying interest on a loan, disrespecting our parents, and whatever else. So we try to come up with strategies for keeping our mouths shut, for

being less distracted and more efficient, etc. Yet the root of our Jewishness-failures is our being unaware that God so much wants to take pride in us that He created the world—and continues to recreate it! Our awareness of this grows when we ask questions like: "Does fighting with my spouse or neighbors induce God-pride in me?" "Is my carelessness in keeping Shabbat and Torah study the pride He foresaw?" Reckoning whether or not a behavior or an attitude makes God proud of you, in itself makes God proud!

But that's not all. Because God has pride in the Jewish people, today exists! North America, South America and Asia, the galaxies and all they contain, all exist. Because of God's pride in some Jew's conduct today, a slice of today exists. Thanks to God's pride in a second Jew, a gentle breeze will blow somewhere in the Land of Israel. Got that? Because of God's pride in *you, today*, some aspect of Creation exists now. And because of tomorrow's pride, some part will exist tomorrow.

Here's more good news. Since a piece of Creation exists thanks to the Jewish-pride you generate, God "generates" you. Since He wants the pride, He wants to bless you with health and prosperity today, tomorrow and all year long. So correct the root and deliver the pride; then your requests are more justified.

Reb Noson makes us aware of a fundamental point. All of God's latent pride in us Jews, as a nation and as individuals, hinges on *shalom* (peace). *Shalom* starts with *tzedakah* (charity), which includes giving charity, lending money interest-free, doing favors, doing business honestly and pleasantly, and a willingness to relinquish some of one's due for the sake of peace.

(Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Toan v'Nitan* 5:2, 6)

Tikateivu v'teichateimu l'alter l'chaim tovim u'l'shalom b'sifran shel tzaddikim!

May you and yours be immediately written and sealed for good life and peace in the Book of Tzaddikim!

SIDEPATH

The Rebbe said, "For me, Rosh HaShanah is the most important thing. Right after Rosh HaShanah, I begin listening very carefully for the knocking on the wall, to wake us for next year's *Selichot* (penitential prayers).

"For time does not exist at all—the year passes and is gone in a wink of an eye" (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #215).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

32:1 *Ha'azinu*

The Song Of Forgiveness And Merit

Why is *Ha'azinu* called a "song" (Deuteronomy 31:30) if it consists mostly of rebuke?

Moshe was able to attain the deepest meanings of the Torah. On that level, he could effect forgiveness for sin. With this ability, he could transform the sins for which he was rebuking the Jews into merits. Therefore his words are called a "song" (LH V, p. 220).

32:6 *Foolish people and unwise*

We Must Be Foolishly Simple And Accept The Torah

Targum Onkelos translates the phrase "foolish people" as "a nation that received the Torah and is yet unwise."

The principal factor in how well a person serves God is his attachment to the tzaddikim. One must accept the tzaddik's teachings fully, and not stray from them to the right or the left. He must throw away his own ideas as if he has no mind of his own. Although this advice might initially seem foolish, he will eventually be very successful.

When the time came for the Jews to receive the Torah, there were many idolaters who could have persuaded them to follow their own reasoning and reject it. Regardless of Moshe's exhortations and the miracles he had wrought for them, had the Jews obeyed their own reasoning, they may very well have rejected the Torah. Instead, they had to

throw away their own ideas and, with absolute simplicity, believe in Moshe and accept his direction. In this way, they deserved to receive the Torah.

This is the meaning of “a nation that received the Torah and is yet unwise.” Moshe rebuked the Jews: “How could you stray from God, you who were ‘unwise’ in that you accepted the Torah with utter simplicity?” (LM I, 123).

32:8 He established the borders of nations to parallel the number of the Israelites

Torah Study Helps Us Control Our Desires

MiSPaR (מספר, number) is similar to *SaPiR* (ספיר, illuminated).

When a person’s Torah study shines and illumines his mind, he establishes boundaries that control and contain his base desires (LM I, 101).

32:9 Yaakov is the measure of his heritage

Attachment To Our Heritage Will Pull Us Out of Exile

Chevel nachlato (the measure of his heritage) literally means “the rope of his inheritance.” (Traditionally, a rope was used as a measuring device.) The Jews are compared the Jews to a rope tied to the Patriarchs (cf. Rashi).

With this attachment, we will certainly be able to leave the exile, which is finite and “measured”—i.e., as with a rope. In the joyful Messianic Future, the nations themselves will take the Jews out of their exile and bring them back to their heritage, to which they are in essence tightly bound (cf. LM I, 24: end).

32:10 He found him in a desert, and in the wasted wilderness; led him about...watched him with His eye

Eventually All Souls Return to God

There are many Jewish souls lost in spiritual deserts and wildernesses, floundering in the paths of the wicked. Yet God always watches over them, and He will wait for the right moment to stir each soul with an arousal of good to eventually return to Him. Moshe began the song of *Ha'azinu* by invoking the heavens, indicating that a tranquil

atmosphere enables the good in every Jew to hearken to and accept God’s direction to return to Him (LH IV, p. 32a).

32:15 Yeshurun waxed fat and rebelled. You have grown fat, thick, covered with fatness

We Rectify Sin By Accepting Humiliation in Silence

This verse speaks of a sinner who is unwilling to recognize his inadequacies.

When a person acknowledges his faults, he seeks to rectify them. The most effective way to do so is to refrain from responding when humiliated (LM I, 6:6).

32:18 You ignored the Rock Who bore you

Crying Out To God Gives Us Strength To Grow Spiritually

TeShl (‘שט, ignored) is similar to *TaSh* (שט, exhausted) (*Sifri*).

A person must cry and exert effort in order to give birth to new and greater levels of consciousness. This effort is particularly necessary when he is “exhausted”—humiliated by his sins and low levels of achievement.

A person experiences that humiliation when he fails to sanctify his senses. One who wishes to repent must sanctify his senses by crying out to God. Then he can “give birth” to greater levels of spiritual awareness (LM I, 21:7).

32:23 I will use up my arrows on them

Be Wary of Those Who Wield Justice

Even after God’s arrows will be spent, the Jewish people will continue to live (Rashi).

Although Heaven’s judgment may be severe, it does not destroy a person. However, if a human being extracts judgment from someone, he can completely crush him (LM I, 241). Thus, we must be wary of anyone who takes it upon himself to administer what he considers to be justice.

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

5 — “With trumpets and the sound of the shofar” (Psalms 98:6) (*continued*)

8. A person must exercise the utmost care to clear his mind of secular wisdom and foreign thoughts—from “chametz” (leaven)—so that he will not “sour” his own wisdom with non-Torah ideologies and [bodily] desires. For these things stupefy and pollute his mind, making it impossible for him to concentrate on his prayers and be happy. He must also guard himself vigilantly from extraneous fears—which means not being afraid of anything except God alone. For extraneous fears make it impossible for a person to concentrate on his prayers and are an impediment to joy. The main thing is to guard one’s mind from “souring”—[that is,] not to entertain evil ruminations or to think about [bodily] desires, which are likened to chametz and are the side of death. A person must repel these thoughts which are the side of death—the forces of the Other Side—and drive them out of his mind and thoughts so that they do not come near him. He must guard himself vigilantly so that these thoughts do not enter his mind, God forbid. It is also necessary to join love of God to fear of God. Then a person will be able to purify his mind so that he can pray with intense concentration, with all his might, until his prayer becomes “thunder” and he thereby merits joy.



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