

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

Dedicated by Josh Halickman in Honor of the Anniversary of the Bar Mitzvahs of My Father Mel Halickman and My Brother Isaac Halickman

CURSES! FOIL THEM!

By Ozer Bergman

Back and forth our *parashah* goes, from blessings (26:1-15; 27:12) to curses (27:13-26), back to blessings (28:1-14), back to curses (28:15-68). It's obvious that neither the blessings nor the curses are haphazardly or arbitrarily administered. It says openly, black fire on white fire, that if we cheerfully comply with the Torah, "life is good," and if, God forbid, the opposite, then life becomes a living hell. We've seen the truth of the latter too often throughout history. How can we avoid curse and bring blessing?

Is there a reference point of some kind that we can use to help ourselves recalibrate if, God forbid, we see ourselves suffering curses rather than enjoying blessing? There are two that are one. The first point, the external one, is truth/falsehood. Rebbe Nachman teaches that an important method for drawing close to God is to speak honestly. One who is truly dedicated and determined to cultivate his relationship with the Creator will be careful to never speak falsely, even by mistake (cf. *The Aleph-Bet Book*, Truth A:1).

Speaking truthfully and honestly depends on our eyesight, on how well we see. One thing that weakens eyesight is a melancholy attitude. When the ego and the animal that have usurped us become frustrated by their lack of success in having their demands met, the tears we shed (or want to shed) blur our vision. As a result, even if we still manage to outwardly perform *mitzvot*, they don't produce a proper environment (Deuteronomy 28:47).

But whence the melancholy? Whence the falsehood? Here we come to the true reference point, the one within. We are just two weeks from Rosh HaShanah, Judgment Day, the day mankind was created. It is also the day that Creation began to move away from oneness and towards duality.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that there are two distinct eras in history: before-Creation (the Era of Oneness) and after-Creation (the Era of Duality). When everything is one, everything is good. For example, it's "good" if everything goes your way, just the way you want it. Things become "bad" when what others want get in the way and frustrate your

will. On a larger scale, and in a much more real way, on that day when God will be One, only the blessing of "Who is good and beneficent" will be relevant. The blessing "the Truthful Judge" will be obsolete (*Pesachim* 50a).

Nowadays, however, in the Era of Duality, there is much "bad" in the world, much that gets in the way of our positive will—i.e., our desire to live a noble, sacred life according to the Torah. Not surprisingly, since God is good and created the world in order to do good (*Mesilat Yesharim*, Chapter 1), He wants the Era of Duality to be temporary. The mission He assigned us is to restore to Creation the Era of Oneness.

In the Era of Oneness, there was no free will. Our current era is all about free will (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #300). To fulfill our mission, we must make choices. To successfully choose requires keen eyesight to determine what is true and what is false. Is our perception correct? Do we accurately assess the inherent significance and triviality of objects and ideas? Can we surmise accurately whether an object or idea will lead us closer to Oneness or, God forbid, to the opposite?

As we wrote last week, in order to do *teshuvah* (return to God) we have to regret our wrongdoings, pledge to never* repeat them, and confess them to God. A sign of true regret and an honest pledge is to plead with God for clearer vision to perceive between truth and falsehood, so we can choose properly and bring mankind and all of Creation to "that day [when] God will be One and His Name will be One" (Zekhariah 14:9), speedily and in our lifetime. Amen.

*Never is a long time. Doing one day at a time is easier.

Here are some other suggestions for avoiding curses and bringing blessing:

▲ Doing business honestly voids the curses (*The Aleph-Bet Book*, Curses B:6).

▲ Through a person's *simchah* (joy) in doing a mitzvah, God protects him (ibid., Joy A:24).

▲ Through peace, Jerusalem will be rebuilt (ibid., Peace A:7).

▲ Peace brings good tidings and blessing (ibid., A:8, 18).

agutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

(Based on *Likutey Moharan* I, 51)

SIDEPATH

Reb Noson once asked R' Meir of Teplik about a certain individual living in Teplik. R' Meir answered in an offhand manner, as if to say that this individual wasn't worth discussing.

"Listen to me," said Reb Noson. "If you're going to look at things negatively, you'll find fault with everyone in the whole world. Think of the people you know living in Teplik. Start with the person living at the far end of town. If you look at him carefully, you'll certainly find some shortcomings. Now go from house to house until you get to your house. Are you the only good Jew in the entire town?"

"Me? I'm also not very righteous," R' Meir quickly replied.

"If you're not, then who is?" asked Reb Noson. "But if you would try to look at others favorably, you will be able to find some degree of merit even in the worst people. And you certainly will [find good] when you think about the people who aren't so bad. This applies to everyone. Even in you there's something good. If you look at things this way, you'll be able to improve the whole world!" (*Kokhavy Ohr* #18).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

26:17 Today you have distinguished God to be your God...and God has distinguished you today as His special people

When We Speak To God, God Speaks To Us

When a person engages in *hitbodedut* and opens up his heart to speak to God, confessing his sins and his desire to draw close to Him, then God, as it were, opens up His heart to this person and pours out His anguish over the suffering that the Divine Presence endures (LM I, 259).

27:8 You should write upon the stones all the words of this Torah, explained well

When We Gain Torah Wisdom, God Heeds Our Prayers

ZaKeN (זקן, sage) is a contraction of the phrase *Zeh KaNah chokmah* (זה קנה חכמה).

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this one has acquired wisdom). And *KaNaH* (קנה, acquired) is similar to *KaNeH* (קנה, trachea), from whence the voice issues.

Thus, when a person engages in the study of the Torah's wisdom and explanations, and becomes a sage, his voice alone, even without words, is so precious to God that when he cries out to God, God saves him.

Ba'ER (באר, explained) is similar to *Be'ER* (באר, wellspring). It is also the acronym for the phrase *Be-shamo Et Rinatam* (בשמעו את רנתם, when He heard their outcry) (Psalms 106:44).

Thus, when we study Torah and understand its explanations, we attain a voice with which to pray to God. Then we overcome all the nations, who are represented by the seventy languages into which Moshe translated these Torah explanations (LM I, 27:5).

28:10 All the nations of the world will see that the Name of God is called upon you, and they will fear you

The Power of Tefilin

Our Sages state that the mitzvah of *tefilin* has the power to draw the fear of God upon the nations (*Berakhot* 6a).

How much more, then, does this mitzvah have the power to draw the fear of God upon the person who is wearing *tefilin*! (LM I, 38:5).

28:12 God will open up His treasury...to provide rain

Blessing Flows From The Sea Of Wisdom

The "waters of blessing" that God sends to this world mainly flow from the Sea of Wisdom. This wisdom is the true source of bounty and blessing (LH II, p. 19a).

28:61 Every illness and every punishment that is not written in the scroll of this Torah

One Who Lacks Faith In The Tzaddikim Is Liable To Suffer Illness

Our Sages teach that this verse refers to the death of *tzaddikim* (*Eikhah Rabbah* 1:37).

Healing is brought about through the Torah, which is transmitted by the *tzaddikim*. When

a person lacks faith in the *tzaddikim*, he cannot receive healing. His afflictions then become unrelieved suffering.

Thus, the phrase "death of *tzaddikim*" may be interpreted to mean "death that comes about because of a person's lack of faith in *tzaddikim*." Neither herbs nor medicine can cure this person (LM II, 5:1).

28:64 Your life will hang in the balance

To Enjoy Abundance, We Must Maintain Our Attachment To God

Our Sages state that this verse refers to someone who hangs up his *tefilin* by its boxes or straps (*Berakhot* 24a). Alternatively, it refers to someone who must purchase grain from the market (*Menachot* 103b); because he lacks farmland of his own, he worries about the future and thus leads an impoverished existence.

Tefilin represent our attachment to God and His pride in us. If we treat *tefilin* disrespectfully—i.e., if we hang them up like an ordinary article or garment—we are liable to suffer impoverishment (LM I, 47:1).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

4 — "I am God, your Lord" (Exodus 20:2) (continued)

15. Through a person's cleaving to the Infinite by "running and returning"—so that he is not nullified completely—then afterward, when he returns to his own consciousness and to his own state of "separateness from God," there still remains in him a remnant of the wondrous light of this state of attachment. This remnant then shows to the person's conscious mind the unity and goodness of the Infinite, so that he knows that everything is good and everything is one. This awareness is a "taste of the World to Come." And a person merits all this by confessing before the true Torah scholar.

16. When a Jew is awakened to repentance because he senses some small spiritual impurity that distracts him during his prayers and devotions, his repentance causes those Jews who are completely wicked and who have left the fold of the Jewish people as a result of the multiplicity of their evil deeds, to also become a throne for holiness and to

repent. [Then] they, too, assist those who are serving God to construct "buildings of holiness." Amen, may it be His will.

5 — "With trumpets and the sound of the shofar" (Psalms 98:6)

1. Every person is obligated to say, "The whole world was created only for me" (*Sanhedrin* 37a). Therefore, every person must look into and consider at all times how to rectify the world, to provide what is lacking in the world, and to pray on its behalf.

2. A person must perform a mitzvah with such great joy that he does not desire any reward for it in the World to Come. Rather, he should desire only that the Holy One, Blessed be He, should send him another mitzvah as reward for this mitzvah—since he derives enjoyment from the mitzvah itself. Through this joy, a person can know what has been decreed upon the world, whether it is before the decree or after the decree, and upon whom the decree has been finalized, God forbid. He also knows how to pray for the world. For after the final decree has been made, the *tzaddikim* must clothe their prayers in stories. All this is attained by performing a mitzvah with great joy over the mitzvah itself.



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