

LET THE HEALING BEGIN

By Ozer Bergman

I'm choosing to write about this for *Parashat Shekalim* because part of the story takes on a Shabbat *Parashat Shekalim* long ago, and because I had the privilege to be in Uman this week, to say the *Tikkun HaKlali* (General Rectification/Remedy) at Rebbe Nachman's gravesite.

For those of us who don't know, the *Tikkun HaKlali* is a set of ten Psalms* that Rebbe Nachman prescribed to be said in the event of a "nocturnal emission" (onanism). I almost wrote "unlikely event," but that would be incorrect. The Rebbe commented that "three parts" (i.e., 3/4) of mankind is ensnared by this sin. In a number of places, the Rebbe referred to the holy *Zohar's* comment that controlling this drive was the most difficult challenge a person faces.

We won't go into the specifics, but many classic Jewish works decry this sin, detailing the damage it causes and warning about the spiritual, and even material, catastrophes that onanism brings in its wake. The holy *Zohar* not only calls it the worst possible sin a man can do (for some momentary pleasure, he's willing to kill even his own children!), but it also states that *teshuvah* (return to God) for this sin is impossible (*Zohar* I, 188a, 219b). Again, many of our classic works say that *teshuvah* is possible even for this sin. Rebbe Nachman concurs and even goes as far as to say that he is the only one who truly understands this statement of the *Zohar* (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #71).

In addition, Onan's older brother Er was guilty of the same sin. The Torah says Er was *ra* (bad, evil) in God's eyes (Genesis 38:7). The *Zohar* (I, 57a) and Rebbe Nachman (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #249) both asked why he is termed *ra*, rather than *rasha* (villain). The Rebbe says that one reason is that a person who commits the sin of Er, God forbid, is generally bad-tempered, unpleasant, disagreeable and irritable. This can be better understood when we take a closer look at the meaning of the word *ra*, usually translated as "bad" or "evil." The same root also means "shatter" (Psalms 2:9). The nature of *ra* is to fragmentize, to detach in a negative, counterproductive way. *Ra* is disagreeable.

One might expect that such a harmful, horrible misdeed would call for a difficult, severe, and perhaps somber process of *teshuvah*. One should be, and people often are, surprised that Rebbe Nachman says that in fact, the *teshuvah* for this is rather easy and enjoyable. Just say some Tehilim (Psalms) and be in a good mood. "Sing along with Dovid HaMelekh," as it were. Think positive and sing? How can that possibly undo the enormity of what's been done?

Fantasizing about committing immoral acts—bad thinking—creates more bad thoughts and bad thinking. As the Ramchal writes in *Mesilat Yesharim* (*Path of the Just*), when one does not see clearly, he misidentifies what he sees. As a result, he makes poor judgments and even worse decisions. Fantasy also displaces reality. By thinking about things that aren't, things that may never be and perhaps should never be, one displaces his thoughts about reality, piling them up in disarray. The technological temptations we face today are not just the cause of the problem—they are a result of the chaos of the mind. (See *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #25 concerning the order of thoughts.) Finally, fantasizing indicates that deep down, a person is dissatisfied and unhappy with his reality.

So being in a positive frame of mind is critical. The stronger and more enduring it is, the more it prevents fantasy from taking hold, or even starting. Instead of a shattered, disjointed thought process, one can have a clear, flowing and seamless stream of thought. This is also part of the musical *tikkun*. Music is about harmony, about determining what really fits with what and organizing the notes into an integrated whole. By connecting to song—singing or playing music—one becomes infused with the essentials of song. The happiness and the healing lead back to holiness. Amen.

* The Psalms are: 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137, 150. They are to be said specifically in this order.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Sichot HaRan* (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom*) #141

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

SIDEPATH

Reb Noson once attended the funeral of someone he hardly knew. When asked why, he said, "A person should always cry out before God. Whenever an opportunity presents itself, I make the most of it" (*Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 1-635).

We must do the same when it comes to happiness, and seize every opportunity. Rebbe Nachman's writings are replete with teachings about being joyous, especially on joyous occasions. He encouraged us to take advantage of Shabbat and the Festivals by making an even greater effort to be happy and joyous on these days (Chaim Kramer, *Crossing the Narrow Bridge*).

21:1 And these are the laws that you should set before them

We Should Constantly Evaluate Our Deeds

TaSiM (תשימים, you should set) alludes to *TaShuM* (תשומים, you should evaluate). One must always evaluate his deeds to ensure that he is acting correctly, and to rectify his shortcomings (LM I, 15:2). Rebbe Nachman recommended the daily practice of *hitbodedut* (private, individualized prayer) as the highest path to self-awareness and God-consciousness (see *Outpouring of the Soul; Crossing the Narrow Bridge*, chapter 9; *Where Earth and Heaven Kiss*).

21:37 (Hebrew)

If a man steals an ox or a sheep and butchers it or sells it

The Tzaddikim Battle Evil To Redeem Us

The thief represents the forces of evil that try to overcome the Jewish people. Sometimes they try to "butcher" our faith, persuading us to give up our faith altogether. Other times they try to convince us to "sell out" our religion for monetary gain. But we should know that the "ox and sheep" also represent the *tzaddikim*, who have the strength to combat evil and redeem us from sin. Ultimately, the "butcher" and the "seller" will pay dearly for their deeds (LH VIII, p. 208b).

22:24 When you lend money to My people, to the poor person who is with you

The Lender Moves The Borrower From Judgment Into Kindness

Why does the Torah call the borrower a "poor person"? Don't wealthy people also borrow money? In fact, the one who has to borrow money finds himself in a position of *din* (judgment). We must strive to bring him into *chesed* (kindness). Therefore a loan is called *gemilut chesed* (literally, "doing acts of kindness"), for it brings *chesed* to the person who is in need of it (LH IV, p. 376).

23:5 If you see the donkey of your enemy bending under its load...you must surely help him

We Must Help Someone Who Is Burdened By His Sins

"Your enemy"—this is a person who has sinned (*Pesachim* 13b).

"You must surely help him"—if he works [to elevate himself] together with you. But if he says, "You have a mitzvah," and sits down in order to let you to do the work, then you are exempt (*Bava Metzia* 32a).

If you see a person breaking under his load of sins, you must make every effort to help him return to God. But if he tells you, "You have a mitzvah to help me, so I'll just sit back and let you do the work to rectify my soul," you are exempt from helping him. However, if he does make an effort to return to God, you should know that the helping hand you extend will clothe him with goodness and help him overcome his material desires (LH VIII, p. 58a-b).

23:14 Celebrate three festivals to Me each year

The Festivals Are Propitious For Rectifying Evil Desires

The Three Festivals are propitious for rectifying evil desires. Pesach, which commemorates the Jews' redemption from Egypt laden with great wealth, rectifies avarice. Shavuot, which commemorates a time when the Jews abstained from marital relations, rectifies immorality. And Sukkot, which is the time of the ingathering of the harvest, rectifies gluttony (LM II, 1:5).

23:19 Bring the first fruits of your land to the House of God your Lord

The Beginning Of Every Day Should Be Dedicated To God

"Your land" refers to the human body, which was created from the earth. A person's "first

fruits" are the devotions and service which he offers to God at the beginning of each day (LH IV, p. 109a-218).

23:25 Then you will serve God your Lord, and He will bless your bread and your water

Even Bread And Water Can Heal Us When We Pray Properly

"Serve God" refers to prayer, which is the "service of the heart" (*Ta'anit* 2a).

When a person prays properly, God blesses him so that even the bread and water which he consumes can heal his illnesses (LM II, 1:9).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

9 — "The deeps covered them" (Exodus 15:5) (continued)

8. A person must see to it that he reaches such a level that he pours out his heart like water before God, and through this, the Mashiach will come. May it be speedily in our days. Amen.

9. Those people who deny all miracles and who say that everything is merely a consequence of natural forces—who, when they witness a miracle, cover it up by explaining it in terms of natural laws—reject and undermine the whole concept of prayer. For prayer is closely related to miracles, in that prayer changes what nature dictates [which is what we call a miracle]. Such people also greatly blemish faith in God, because they do not believe that the Creator oversees His world. Furthermore, they blemish the Land of Israel, the place of miracles—causing the fall into the exile in Egypt as well as the other exiles, and they prolong the present exile, may God save us.

10 — "And these are the laws" (Exodus 21:1)

1. Dancing and handclapping effect a sweetening of harsh judgments.

2. God's greatest honor is when those people who are furthest away from Him draw themselves close to His service. For "at that time, the Name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is exalted and honored above and below" (*Zohar* 69a), and His honor is increased and elevated. Therefore, each person must strive

to bring those who are far away from God, closer to Him. Moreover, no person may ever despair of being able to draw close to the service of God because he has grown so far from Him as a result of his many sins—and this is true even if he has done much evil indeed, God forbid. To the contrary, the more distant he is, the more he will increase God's honor when he tries to return and draw close to Him—since this is God's greatest honor. But it is impossible for a person who is far from God to draw close in the proper way, except through the tzaddikim of the generation.



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