

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

YOUR PLANET HAS BEEN RECALLED

By Ozer Bergman

We Jews, and the rest of the world for that matter, often forget that we weren't always the Chosen People. When this little old world of ours started, God wanted everyone to be Jewish (*Derekh HaShem* 2:4). That means every member of the human race, through good works and prayer, could have provided God with *hitpa'arut* (pride).

Didn't happen. From the moment Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, the world rolled downhill at a rapid clip. In the span of just ten generations, mankind not only failed to provide God with *hitpa'arut*, but they made Him regret the whole enterprise: "God regretted that He made humankind...He was pained in His heart" (Genesis 6:6). That's anti-*hitpa'arut*, at its worst. God renounced His own creation in no uncertain terms (*ibid.*, 6:7).

What were people doing that was so antithetical to God's hope for His creations? Rebbe Nachman teaches that the key element for bringing people, including oneself, to true *emunah* (faith) is peace and friendship. When we share with one another—and especially when we give *tzedakah* (charity) properly—we create an oasis of tranquility with another human being. The more people we give to, the larger the oasis we create. (The better we give, the more tranquil and clean the oasis air.)

The Generation of the Flood constantly stole from one another. One of the most pernicious methods of theft they employed, called *chamas*, was taking less than a penny's worth of merchandise from vendors. "It's such a trifle, less than a penny. There's no harm in that." Of course, there was also no legal recourse for the merchant, so people could get away with it.

Nu. Do you think this made the vendors happy? Instead of fostering an attitude of societal cooperation and friendship, people disliked one another—and caused God to dislike them (*Bereishit Rabbah* 31:1)! Their dislike was neither passive nor silent. It was proactive and vociferous (*ibid.*, 31:4). In stealing one another's money and peace of

mind, they called upon themselves their own destruction.

The attitude of *chamas* carried over into other areas of life. As Rebbe Nachman teaches in *Sefer HaMidot* (*Geneivah u'Gezeilah* A:1), once a person permits himself to steal from others, he opens the door to every type of sin. The *chamas* of theft developed into the *chamas* of murder, idolatry and sexual immorality (*Bereishit Rabbah* 31:6).

Which is not surprising. What's common to all of the above-mentioned evils is their divisiveness. Their inception—the thought of doing them—comes only if a person feels disconnected, "other," from his intended victim.* Their execution—actually doing them—not only actualizes the distance and otherness between perpetrator and victim, it also moves them from the private domain to the public, introducing distance and otherness into the minds and hearts of the people of their community. They poison society's atmosphere.

What's the solution? How can we clear the air and start anew?

Floods are not only impractical, they are also extremely unpleasant. Instead, it's a better idea to give away, rather than hoard. Rebbe Nachman quotes the verse "Wealth adds many friends" (Proverbs 19:4). It seems that millionaires have millions of friends, but those friends are interested in the money, not the one who has it. The genuine wealth that truly adds—produces—genuine affection is the *tzedakah* that one gives away. The money you give to *tzedakah* and the friendships you gain thereby are your true wealth (*Bava Batra* 11a).

When one sows concern, it grows into a circle, a community and a society of people who take care of one another. People feel and are safe, physically and emotionally. Their security and (subconscious) awareness of the oneness that they constitute open their ears to hear the true meaning of what tzaddikim teach, the love and awe of God. That's *hitpa'arut*!

* Even though idolatry seems to be victimless, it is not.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat shalom!*

(Based on *Likutey Moharan* I:17)

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman: We are called an *am segulah* (treasured nation). This is like a *segulah* (propitious remedy) used for healing. Although nature does not dictate that it should effect healing, this object is propitious for curing illness. It is supernatural, beyond comprehension of the ordinary mind. Israel, too, is in the category of *segulah*. It cannot be understood why and how the Holy One chose us as His "treasured nation" from amongst the other nations (LM I, 21:9).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

**6:9 These are the generations of Noah:
Noah was a tzaddik**

An Opportunity To Gain Twice

Noah's name is repeated to reflect the fact that each tzaddik has two spirits: one in this world and one in the World to Come (*Zohar* I, 59b).

When a tzaddik experiences an ascent—whether because he is growing spiritually or because his time to leave this world has come—the higher spirit descends in order to draw the lower spirit higher, so that they may unite. At that time, a close disciple of the tzaddik can benefit from the tzaddik's ascent and even receive a double portion of Godly revelation (LM I, 66:1).

6:13 The end of all flesh

Look For The Good In Others, Not The Bad

The "end of all flesh" refers to those who disparage others, always looking for their negative points and seeking to destroy them—i.e., to put an "end to all flesh" (LM I, 38:2).

6:16 Make a light for the ark

Truth From Without, Truth From Within

What was this "light"? Some say a window, some say a precious stone (Rashi).

The conceptual difference between the two is that a precious stone glows from within,

whereas a window is a medium through which another light shines.

Rashi's comment may be interpreted as follows: "Some say a precious stone"—the words that some people speak come from within. They are absolute truth. "Some say a window"—other people speak words that come from outside themselves. Truth from elsewhere must shine into them (LM I, 112).

6:17 I am about to bring the floodwaters upon the earth

Confusing Thoughts Flood Us During Prayer

MaBUL (מבול, Flood) is similar to *bilBUL* (בלבול, confusion) (LH II, p. 16). Confusing thoughts are like a flood that deluges a person during his prayers.

The Talmud teaches that the Flood did not inundate the Holy Land (*Zevachim* 113b). When we arouse the merit of the Holy Land, those confusing thoughts cannot overwhelm us (LM I, 44).

Overcoming The Floodwaters

"The floodwaters" are akin to the "many waters" (Rashi on Song of Songs 8:7).

"The floodwaters" refers to the many nations that seek to overwhelm and destroy the Jewish people. They also refer to a person's love and fear of things in this world, dissociated from the love and fear of God. When a person feels humble before God, he experiences an intense sense of shame before Him, as if his blood (comparable to the waters of the Flood) is being shed. Then the Divine Presence protects him from the "floodwaters" that overwhelm him (LM II, 83).

8:21 The inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth

One Should Use His Intellect To Control His Heart

Righteous people control their hearts, whereas wicked people are controlled by their hearts (*Bereishit Rabbah* 34:10).

In order for a person to gain control over his heart—the seat of emotions—he must bind it to his intellect so that the latter will rule (LM I, 33:7).

9:4 Do not eat flesh of a creature that is still alive

Animals Also Contain Souls And Sparks of Holiness

The commandment not to eat flesh from a living animal is specifically placed next to the commandment that forbids murder (Genesis 9:5), since they are literally the same concept. Animals contain souls and sparks of holiness that must be elevated via ritual slaughter. One who removes and eats the flesh from a living animal prevents the soul and sparks from being elevated. This constitutes "murder" of that soul and spark. Therefore the Torah juxtaposes these two commandments (LH IV, p. 21a).

9:16 The rainbow will be in the clouds

Singing To God Arouses Great Merit

The rainbow has three primary colors, corresponding to the Patriarchs, who in turn represent the *sefirot* of Chesed, Gevurah and Tiferet.

These *sefirot* also correspond to the elements of fire, air and water. Since these three elements combine to bring forth song (via the "fire" or warmth of the throat, the "water" or fluids of the mouth, and the "air" expelled from the lungs), when we sing before God in prayer, we arouse the merit of the rainbow-covenant that God made with mankind as well as the merit of the Patriarchs. Thus, singing before God in prayer mitigates stern judgments (LM I, 42).

11:26 Terach lived seventy years and begat Abram, Nachor and Haran

One Must Seek God Despite All Obstacles

Abraham was one (Ezekiel 33:24).

Abraham was "one" in the sense that he was alone in his quest for God. Though he was born into a family of idolaters and his entire generation consisted of idolaters, he sought God regardless of the opposition that he faced.

So too, whoever wishes to serve God must not fear the opposition that he encounters. Even if he faces difficulties from his parents, in-laws, spouse, friends, and so forth, he must continue seeking God until, like Abraham, he will come to Him (LM II, Preface).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

6 — "Summon Joshua" (Deuteronomy 31:14)

1. Every person must minimize his own honor and [endeavor to] increase the honor given to God. He should not pursue honor, but rather flee from honor, and in this way, he merits "God's honor." Then people do not scrutinize the honor he has to see if he is deserving of it or not. But a person who pursues honor does not merit God's honor. Therefore, even when such a person does have honor, everyone examines him and inquires about him, asking, "Who is that person that he is so honored?" They oppose him, saying that he does not deserve this honor.

2. Through humility, one merits repentance. For the essence of repentance is when a person hears himself being ridiculed, and he holds his peace and remains silent. He suffers the insults and "bloodshed" by feeling his own lowliness and smallness and the great damage he has done, and understands that it is certainly most fitting that he suffer the insults he is experiencing. In this way, he diminishes the blood in the left ventricle of the heart and slays his evil inclination, thereby meriting God's honor.



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