

OPENHANDEDNESS

By Ozer Bergman

This week's Torah reading has Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses our Teacher) calling upon the Israelites to donate towards the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) in the desert (Exodus 25:1-8). They responded by giving liberally. Each person gave as much as he wanted of what he had. Almost overnight, the Israelites donated more than enough of the necessary raw materials (ibid., 36:5-7). Since they gave generously, let us talk about two contrasting types of "openhandedness."

Your ordinary, average human being feels that he's missing something, or that he needs something. (If he doesn't, there's a whole industry devoted to making him think that he needs exactly what they him to buy.) Sometimes that feeling comes from something that the body craves to see, hear, smell, taste or touch. A person may imagine that owning something or achieving some form of status will confer upon him some sort of worth.

These feelings of lack make each of us very susceptible to one of the *yetzer hara's* (evil inclination's) most successful ploys. The *yetzer hara* is like a prankster who runs through a crowd while showing his tightly closed hand. No one knows what he is holding. He fools people by asking everyone, "What am I holding? What am I holding?" Each of us imagines that the prankster is holding what he desires. So we run after him, certain that he is holding what we want. When the prankster finally opens his hand, it is completely empty. The expression "bitter disappointment" comes to mind.

Another form of this prank is a contemporary variation of a carnival shill. In order to get people at a carnival to gamble away their money, a shill would parade around with his supposed winnings. People would think that the games were easy to win and would end up wasting their money—and time—in a vain attempt to duplicate the shill's success. Nowadays, a handful of the rich and famous are paraded in the (social) media so that millions waste their lives trying to strike it rich and/or become "the next big thing." "Heaven protect us from this misleading notion!" (*Shabbat* 84b).

The *yetzer hara* tricks the entire world. One way or another, at some point, everyone runs after him. Each of us is so fooled by his notions and desires that he is tricked into thinking that the *yetzer hara* holds exactly what he wants. But when the *yetzer hara* opens his hand, it is empty. He satisfies no one's desire.

Now, let's take a look at that other openhandedness we referred to earlier. Whether we realize it or not, the eyes of all living beings (not just humans, but birds and animals, too) look to God with the hope that He will provide what they lack. For all sorts of reasons—our unreadiness to properly receive and use what we would be given is one of them—even what we need may be late in coming, according to our reckoning. Yet, "You open Your hand and satisfy every living being with *ratzon* (will, desire)" (Psalms 145:16). King David tells us that when God opens His hand, we are not disappointed.

I can almost hear someone asking, "Really? So where's my Lexus and overflowing bank account?" The answer is: Is that really what you want? Given a choice between a Lexus and being able to get out of bed in the morning on your own, which would you prefer? Given the choice between "having more and enjoying it less" and "having less, but enjoying it more," which would you choose? Because the prankster is so good at his job, we confuse what we want—what would be nice to have—with what we really want, namely, what we *need*—material, psychological and spiritual satisfaction.

So before we set off in the pursuit of happiness, let's remember to examine what it is that we really want and Who is the One that can really deliver it.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Sichot HaRan* (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom) #6 and #284

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

SIDEPATH

If only we were joyous, we would not taste the bitterness of suffering, and the full measure of life's problems could not weigh us down. This is neither fanciful nor unrealistic. It's simply that we know that sometimes we can do nothing about our situation except pray. Rather than wallow in sorrow, we can rise above it and make the best of it. Things will eventually work out. Thus, Rebbe Nachman teaches: Joy opens the heart (*The Aleph-Bet Book*, Joy A:2).

25:2 Take My contribution

Torah Study Enables Us To Take Godliness

The letters of the word *TeRUMaH* (תרומה, contribution) may be rearranged to spell *TORaH Mem* (תורה מ), in which the *mem* (מ) is understood by its numerical value to mean "40." This alludes to the Torah, which was given after forty days (*Zohar* III, 179a).

Thus, "Take My contribution" means that in order for a person to be able to "take" Godliness, he must engage in learning Torah (LM II, 60).

25:8 I will dwell within them

God Dwells Within Us

God dwells *within* the Jews, just as a person dresses within a garment (LM I, 94).

25:10 Make an Ark out of acacia wood

Giving Charity Causes A Divine Unification

The Ari teaches that the Ark and its Cover parallel Malkhut and Yesod, respectively. The Ark receives its illumination of Godliness through the Cover (*Sha'ar HaMitzvot, Terumah*).

When a person gives charity, he transfers bounty to the poor. That act is comparable to the union between the Cover and the Ark, between Yesod and Malkhut, and between the tzaddik and the nation (LM I, 54:2).

25:18 Make two cherubim

The Air Of Spirituality Cools Off Passions

The Ark and its Cover correspond to the heart, and the cherubim to the lungs. Were it not for the lungs "fluttering and cooling" the

heart, the “burning” of the heart would consume the entire body (*Zohar* III, 234).

While the heart burns with desire, the lungs draw in the air of spirituality. This air cools off one’s burning passions, enlivens the mind, and nourishes the entire body. Then all the organs can work together in unison (LM I, 225).

25:30 Place Showbread on the Table

One Who Guards His Covenant Merits To A Shining Countenance

The Table had a rim around its edge, which connotes the covenant, the *sefirah* of Yesod. The Showbread placed on it was called *Lechem HaPanim* (literally, “Bread of the Face”). When a person guards his covenant, his countenance is illuminated (LM I, 63).

25:31 Form the Menorah by hammering it out

We Should Use Our Stubbornness To Serve God

All the designs were hammered out of one solid piece of gold (Rashi).

MiKShah (מִקְשָׁה, hammered out) implies that a person must be *aKShan* (אִקְשָׁן, stubborn) when serving God. Then he will merit to the “designs”—various means of exulting in God (LH II, p. 154-78a).

26:1 Make the Tabernacle out of ten tapestries

Garments That Conceal, Garments That Reveal

Several layers and types of tapestries were used to cover the Tabernacle. These correspond to garments, which also correspond to converts. The more distant a person is from God, the greater the density of his garments that conceal God’s light. But when a person comes closer to God, these garments become integral to the building of holiness and are suitable to become part of the Tabernacle (LH I, p. 498).

26:15 Make the beams for the Tabernacle out of acacia wood, standing upright

The Beams “Stood” In Holiness

Beams made of solid wood framed the main Tabernacle. These beams “stood” in holiness, solid and indestructible, and therefore “stood in the throat” of the Other Side, causing it to

vomit forth all the holiness that it had swallowed. These beams are also called “trees,” as they correspond to the two Trees in the Garden of Eden—the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. The Serpent caused Adam to blemish his knowledge by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. But the beams of the Tabernacle rectified what Adam had lost. Standing solid, they correspond to *gevurot* (judgments) and cause the Serpent to regurgitate what Adam had lost (LH I, p. 249a-498).

27:1 The Altar

Eating In Holiness

The Talmud compares a person’s table to the Altar, since eating can be a holy experience that grants him forgiveness (see *Berakhot* 55a).

Just as the Altar effects forgiveness, so too, when a person eats in holiness, he elevates his eating to the Light of the Face and attains forgiveness for his sins (LM I, 31:9).

27:10 The hooks and bands of the pillars

The Jews Are Pillars Of Support For Torah

The Jews as a whole are compared to the “pillars” of the Tabernacle because they support those who learn Torah. The Tablets are compared to a “hook” (LM I, 34:6) because the Hebrew word for “hook” is *vav*, which is the same name as the letter *vav*. The letter *vav* has the numerical value of 6, and the Tablets measured six handbreadths long by six handbreadths wide (*Bava Batra* 14a).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

10 — “And these are the laws”

(Exodus 21:1) (continued)

3. The true tzaddikim elevate prayer to extremely high levels, to the point that they reveal God’s divinity and kingship to all of the world’s inhabitants, even those who are extremely far away—namely, the wicked [Jews] and the gentiles—and this [revelation to these people in particular] is the most powerful testimony of the greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be He. For the best [witness to the] greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is that even those who are very far from Him—even the heathens—should know that there is a God Who controls and rules the world, as is brought down in

the holy *Zohar* (II, 69a). Therefore, “When a person has a sick person or some other trouble in his home, let him turn to a wise man who will arouse mercy for him” (*Bava Batra* 116a)—since the only ones who really know about prayer are the tzaddikim of the generation. God reaps great delight from this, since “the Holy One, Blessed be He, desires the prayers of tzaddikim” (*Yevamot* 64a), and He has pleasure from them.

4. There exist proud and arrogant people who keep themselves and others from going to the tzaddikim so that the latter may pray for them, and [in doing so], prevent God’s desire from being fulfilled.



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