

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

DIG WE MUST

By Ozer Bergman

I write this on the first day of Elul, the last month of the year, the month that precedes Rosh HaShanah. It's a universal Jewish custom to "blow shofar" in Elul. Part of the idea behind this custom is the same idea behind the mitzvah of blowing shofar on Rosh HaShanah: Wake up and return to God!

We're not the only ones who sound the shofar. Reb Noson writes:

"The Rebbe once told me that he had seen a new angel that day and that he knew its name. [The angel] has deputies who hold shofars. They blow a *tekiah* [simple note], then a [staccato] *teruah*, and another *tekiah*. They are digging in search of lost items."

Looking for and finding lost items is a noble, long-established occupation among us Jews. In the desert, the Tribe of Dan was the last one in line, collecting what the other eleven tribes had lost. Elul, the last month of the year, is the time to collect what we have lost during the other eleven. The Danites' job of searching was their mission. We have to dedicate one month a year (at least) to this.

What is lost? Reb Noson continues:

"Many things are lost, as is alluded to in the verse '*Ta'avat Reshaim Toveid*—The desire of the wicked will be lost' (Psalms 112:10). ... It is also written, 'They shall search and be lost' (ibid. 83:18). Even a tzaddik who searches for lost things sometimes gets lost, as per 'There is a tzaddik who is lost through his righteousness'" (Ecclesiastes 7:15).

We're human beings. God made us that we have to eat, earn money, etc. The catch is, we have to do these things in a holy—i.e., Godly—way. But we're fighting a war of attrition. The forces of advertising play on the fleeting pleasure we enjoy from eating (for example). They grind away and we forget or become distracted from our inborn penchant for Jewishness—i.e., Godliness. So our enthusiasm and intelligence get lost on the temporal and the trivial, instead of being invested in the eternal and worthwhile.

The mnemonic for the shofar sounds we blow is identical with the Hebrew for "The desire of the wicked will be lost." In addition to a general "Wake up!" this indicates to us that our losses are not irretrievable. They can be found—if we search. True, the search is fraught with danger. (This is why our national and personal exiles are so long.) We often find ourselves in spiritually dreadful circumstances. Why? Because that's where the lost items are! The verse points out that even a tzaddik can get lost. Reb Noson explains that the tzaddik doesn't actually sin, but through the search he does on behalf of others, he may become slightly tainted.

Certainly, when we find ourselves in such places, we have to reach deeper within to find the strength, patience, faith and trust that we will find what we need to find. It's even possible, Reb Noson writes, to find things from previous reincarnations! However, many, many times we will rightfully sense that we have found nothing. We will want to quit the search. Reb Noson offers us encouragement. First, some people are not shown what they have found till they leave this world. (Perhaps because they would stop searching, thinking that the search was over.) Second, the search itself is a finding. Even if you don't retrieve what you lost, your "digging" makes it easier for the tzaddik to find. That will certainly happen.

Ah, I hear you asking, "So, *nu?* What constitutes searching?" Here's Reb Noson's short list:

- ▲ Any effort and practice you put into Torah study and prayer, especially your own private talks with God (aka *hitbodedut*)
- ▲ Associating with genuine tzaddikim and Jews who are sincere about Jewishness
- ▲ Willingness to suffer much hardship, embarrassment and humiliation in order to find it

What's the reaction when the finds are made? "There is great excitement and joy on high."

*agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

Based on *Sichot HaRan* (Rebbe Nachman's *Wisdom*) #180

SIDEPATH

It is imperative that we encourage ourselves and strive to gladden our souls with every strategy and every method that our master [Rebbe Nachman] revealed to us...

Now, too, God performs miracles and wonders for us—for every day we are given the privilege to perform many *mitzvot*, to don *tzitzit* and *tefilin*, to recite the Shema and pray, and to study the Torah. Therefore, at every moment, we may anticipate and hope and yearn for His deliverance, which will surely come (*Likutey Halakhot, Birkhat Hoda'ah* 6:67, abridged).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

16:18 Appoint judges and officers in all your gates

When We Learn Halakhah, We Attain Wisdom

The Garden of Eden contains two levels, which correspond to Upper and Lower Wisdom. The gates to the Garden of Eden have been sunken in the earth, as the verse states: "Her gates have sunken in the earth" (Lamentations 2:9). Before a person can enter through these gates, he must elevate them. He does so by studying *halakhah*.

"Judges and officers" are men who, knowledgeable in *halakhah*, reveal God's authority and thus attain authority. When a person has authority, he can elevate the sunken gates, and then attain the Upper and Lower Wisdom (LM I, 286).

With Proper Judgment, People Appreciate God's Awesomeness

When there is proper judgment and justice on earth, the fear of God is established and elevated to its rightful level. Then people fear God because they recognize that He is great, not because they are afraid of punishment (LM I, 154).

16:19 Bribery blinds the eyes of the wise

Justice Rectifies The Eyes

Judgment is in the eyes. That is to say, a person judges in accordance with how he sees an issue.

Improper justice clouds the eyes. Not so proper justice, which also rectifies the eyes (LM I, 2:5).

17:11 Do not stray from the word that they will tell you, to the right or the left

Faith In The Tzaddikim Yields Beneficent Heavenly Judgment

This verse teaches the importance of having faith in the tzaddikim. Even if it appears to us that they are wrong, we must not stray from their teachings.

The *Zohar* teaches that beneficent judgment corresponds to the *sefirah* of Tiferet, which blends kindness and judgment, and is the "central column" (*Tikkuney Zohar*, Introduction, p. 17a).

When a person has faith in the tzaddikim and veers neither to the right nor the left, he corresponds to that central column and can receive a beneficial judgment (LM I, 61:1).

17:16 He should not have too many horses

Too Many Illusions Can Damage Faith

"Horses" represent the imagination. They are vessels that should be subordinate to the rider, much as the imagination should be subordinate to the intellect.

The "king" represents Malkhut, which corresponds to faith. In the realm of holiness, one's imaginative powers allow him to pursue knowledge of God through faith. Yet if he allows too many material illusions to take hold, his faith will be damaged. Therefore the king (faith) is forbidden to have too many horses (LH VII, p. 440).

17:19 He will read in it all the days of his life

Through Torah Study, We Call Out To God

Ve-kara bo (he will read in it) literally means "he should call in it," for when one studies Torah, he is actually calling the days of his life—his Source, i.e., God (LM I, 56:1).

Similarly, the public reading of the Torah in the synagogue is called *Kriat HaTorah* (the calling of the Torah), for reading the Torah calls God (life) into a person (LH I, p. 214a).

18:9 Do not learn to do anything like the abominations of those nations

We May Learn Kabbalah, But Not Make Use Of It

The Talmud states: "You may not learn in order to do, but you may learn in order to understand and teach" (*Shabbat* 75a).

The same principle applies to the study of Kabbalah. One must not try to pray and meditate according to the instructions of the Kabbalah, nor try to implement its invocations. One may learn it only to understand and teach (LM II, 120).

18:13 Be perfect with God your Lord

One's Needs Can Be Provided Directly Through Divine Providence

People tend to think that even as they serve God, they are subject to the laws of nature.

But this is not necessarily so. When a person perfects his ways, he can be provided with his needs through Divine Providence (LM I, 31:9).

20:19 Man is like a tree of the field

Strife Can Elevate a Person

Man is compared to a tree in that just as water can lift up a tree, so too, man can be elevated if he behaves correctly when facing strife (LM I, 161).

Water is compared to strife, as it is written, "These are the waters of strife" (Numbers 20:13). Strife can elevate a person when he endures his suffering properly.

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

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

9. Because of idle talk and slander, poverty comes; also, on account of haughtiness, poverty comes. Through the charity given to the Torah scholar, a person rectifies this and merits wealth.

10. Before a person confesses and speaks his whole heart before the Torah scholar—even if he was in the presence of the Torah scholar and gave him money—he still does not know which path he is traveling. For "There is a path that a person believes to be right, and ultimately, it is the path of death" (Proverbs 14:12). But when he confesses before the Torah scholar, the Torah scholar directs him on the right path according to the root of his soul, and everything is rectified.

11. Each time that a person comes to the Torah scholar, he should speak his whole heart before him. In this way, he is included in the Infinite, and thereby merits to know that everything that happens to him is for his benefit. Then he will say the blessing "Who is good and Who does good" over everything, and this is a "taste of the World to Come."

12. Through humility, one merits to shed his physicality and be included in the Infinite. He also comes to know that everything that happens to him is for his benefit, which is a "taste of the World to Come."



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