

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

START YOUR DAY RIGHT

By Ozer Bergman

“May God bless you and protect you. May God shine His face upon you and grant you grace. May God turn His face to you and grant you *shalom*” (Numbers 6:24–26).

Every morning, when we start the day, we say *Birkhot HaTorah*, the blessings on the mitzvah of learning Torah. As with all *mitzvot*, we immediately fulfill the mitzvah—in this instance, by learning a few words of Torah. One might think to suggest that the first words of Torah with which we start the day should be the words of the *Shema*, or the Ten Commandments, or perhaps even those words which tell us of the mitzvah to learn Torah. But no. The first words of Torah we speak every day are the words of the *Birkat Kohanim* (Priestly Blessing) quoted above. Reb Noson explains why.

Rebbe Nachman writes, “From out of the mouth of the One Above comes neither good nor evil” (cf. Lamentations 3:38; *Likutey Moharan* I, 36). The light of God’s goodness descends to mankind, to each and every one of us, in an undefined form. It is up to each individual to decide what form it takes by choosing what he wants, thinks, says and does. The Rebbe notes that our Sages long ago pointed out that the Torah can be an elixir of life or, God forbid, a fatal poison. It depends on whether or not the person is *zokheh*.

Usually the word *zokheh* means “worthy” or “meritorious.” But in this context, it is related to the word *zikhukh*, “purification,” “cleansing.” Rebbe Nachman teaches that a person must cleanse himself of the obsessions and infatuations relating to sexual desire. The more successful one is in this process, the more beautifully formed the light of the Torah—God’s light of goodness—becomes.

This is why we start our Torah day with *Birkat Kohanim*. The *Kohanim* are meant to be exemplars of sexual purity. The blessing that they give creates and channels God’s light into fitting vessels. Our learning the three verses which constitute that blessing therefore serves as a reminder to us of (1) how we want God’s light to be actualized, and (2) how we ought to behave in order that that may be achieved. We want God’s light, both as it is perceived through Torah study and as it is concretized in the physical world, to be for the best possible good; and we want to interact with the world, in how we present ourselves to others and how we react to the way they present themselves to us, in a way that truly exemplifies the dignity and holiness of God’s Torah.

Elsewhere, Reb Noson provides another reason for starting our Torah learning with this set of verses. Learning and living by the Torah is a lifetime venture. One of the major challenges of a long-term project is maintaining fresh interest. So, bright and early every morning, to stay as excited about the Torah as we were on Shavuot, we bless God for being *Notein HaTorah*, the One Who *gives* the Torah. To the extent that our desire to live a Torah life is truly resurgent, it triggers the verses: “May God bless you” with the money you need to live as Jewishly as you want; “and protect you” from being afraid to live that way. May God graciously shine His “face” upon you so that your passion to live Jewishly grows. Finally, “may God turn His face to you” because you generously give charity, and with that He will “grant you *shalom*”—you will be a person who spreads peace in the world. Amen.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Likutey Halakhot*, *Birkhot Hatorah* 1 and *Birkat Hashachar* 5:63

SIDEPATH

Someone asked Reb Noson how he could become happy when he had so many problems and difficulties. Reb Noson answered, “Borrow the happiness!” (*Stach Sarfei Kodesh* 1-736).

When it comes to money, we rarely hesitate to borrow against a future paycheck, dividend, and so on. Well, sadness makes a person feel he’s missing something. The thing to do, as Reb Noson advises, is to borrow from whatever you can think of that makes you happy.

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

5:14 He is jealous regarding his wife

Jealousy and Love

A love unaccompanied by feelings of jealousy is not true love (*Zohar* I, 245a).

This verse refers to a couple whose marriage is an expression of the greatest and most profound love, due to which the man may feel jealous of his wife even if she is blameless. Such a couple possesses the highest levels of sanctity and reflects the purity of the Mashiach himself (LM II, 32:4).

5:23 Erase it in the bitter waters

Holy Books Are Destroyed To Create Peace Between God And Israel

In the course of the *sotah* ceremony, which determines whether a woman was unfaithful to her husband, God’s Name is written on a shard of clay which is then dipped in water, causing the Name to be erased. It is as if God is saying, “My Name, which was written in holiness, may be erased in order to bring about peace between husband and wife.”

That being the case, say our Sages, in order to bring about peace between the Jews and God, certainly books of atheism should be erased from the world (*Shabbat* 116a).

Many holy books were written in earlier generations. They are alluded to in the holy writings, yet none of them are extant. Why is that?

These holy books correspond to the Name of God (see *Zohar* I, 37b). Just as God's Name was erased in order to bring about peace between husband and wife, so too, these holy books were destroyed in order to bring about peace between God and the Jewish people. For in addition to these holy books, many books of atheism and heresy also existed, and had the latter been widely disseminated, they would have made it completely impossible for people to come close to God. Therefore, when holy books of Torah teachings disappear from the world, books of heretical teachings are correspondingly erased, and then it is possible to draw close to God (LM II, 32:5).

6:24 May God bless you and protect you

We Must Arouse Three "Points" Everyday

The three blessings of the *Birkat Kohanim* (Priestly Blessing) allude to the three basic "points" that a person must arouse each day in order to experience Godliness. One is the person's own "point," which is unique to him. The second is his friend's point, which is unique to his friend. The third is that of the tzaddik, whose point is an encompassing one for all people.

Receiving the first blessing, "May God bless you," corresponds to receiving the tzaddik's point. The tzaddik is the channel for all blessings, since all bounty flows through the *sefirah* of Yesod (which corresponds to the tzaddik). Receiving the second blessing, "May God shine His Countenance upon you," corresponds to receiving one's friend's point, since whatever love develops between people reveals more of God's Countenance in the world. Receiving the third blessing, "May God...grant you peace," corresponds to receiving the benefits of one's own point, which, when developed properly, brings inner peace (LH I, p. 189a-378-190a).

7:1 On the day Moses finished

Moses' Achievement

The word *KaLOT* (כלות, finished) is read and studied as if the *vav* were nonexistent (לת, *KaLoT*) (*Zohar* I, 236b). Therefore the phrase *KaLOT Mosheh* (כלות משה, Moses finished) can be read as *KaLaT Mosheh* (כלת משה, Moses' bride).

The Tabernacle corresponds to the Divine Presence. Moses transcended the Tabernacle and was thus able to draw Godliness into it.

Hence, the Tabernacle is called "Moses' bride" (i.e., Moses' domain).

Moreover, *KaLaT* (כלת) is an acronym for the phrase *Kaparah Le-khol Toldotam* (כפרה לכל תולדותם, forgiveness for all their offspring) (Rosh Chodesh Musaf). Moses' dedication of the Tabernacle began a process of rectification for the entire world and specifically for the Jewish people (LM I, 151).

7:3 They brought their offering before God: six covered wagons and twelve oxen

One Should Be "Grounded" In His Devotions

The Tribe of Issachar gave the others the idea to donate oxen and wagons. Issachar pointed out that the Tabernacle was "floating" (i.e., there was no means to carry it). Therefore each tribe brought a donation of oxen and wagons to transport it (*Yalkut Shimoni, Naso* 713).

Issachar's advice similarly applies to a person's devotions to God. Since spirituality is transcendent, one must be "grounded"—i.e., he must create a means to transport himself on his spiritual journey (LH II, p. 50). Thus, "He [Jacob] saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him" (Genesis 45:27). When Jacob's bier was carried by his children to the Holy Land, his children carried him in the same formation as they encamped in the desert, for he represented sanctity. When Jacob saw that Joseph had sent him wagons, he realized that Joseph understood the need to be grounded when serving God (LH II, p. 52).

7:89 He heard the Voice speaking to him from atop the Cover that was over the Ark of Testimony, from between the two cherubs

We Must Place Fear of God In Our Hearts

The source of prophecy is situated in the space above the Ark between the cherubim (LM II, 1:6). When a person places the fear of God in his heart, he can receive prophecy from that space.

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

13 — "Happy is the nation that knows the shofar blast" (Psalms 89:16); Divine Providence (continued)

6. From this, you will also understand the vast difference between when a person himself is with the tzaddik at the time the tzaddik gives a Torah teaching, and when he hears this teaching through someone else. For when the person himself is present, he actually has a share in the teaching that is being taught, and at that time, his soul is rejuvenated. There are many other differences besides this, which are discussed elsewhere.

7. When people come to the tzaddik, complete Divine Providence is invoked. The reason for this is that the Torah teachings which the sage "brings down" draw God's providence and supervision upon us. This happens because the Torah consists of cantillation signs, vowels, crowns [on the letters], and the letters themselves, and these four levels, in turn, correspond to the three shades of color of the eye [in the iris] and the pupil. Therefore, through the Torah that the sage reveals, the sage brings down the power of vision of God's providence upon us. The closer a person is to the Torah, the more fully will he receive God's providence.



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