

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with
Rebbe Nachman and his students.

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH US?

By Ozer Bergman

"The saga makers therefore say, 'Come to Cheshbon!'" (Numbers 21:27).

If you are a craftsman or an artist, you appreciate good tools. If you love driving or playing music, you appreciate a well-tooled car or a fine instrument. As a result of your penchant for your hobby or your job, you understand the power of a good tool. It can make your work easier and significantly improve the quality of what you produce.

How about your Jewish craft? Have you ever stopped to make a *cheshbon* (reckoning), to think about how you approach living a Torah life? Or have you been too busy doing mitzvahs and avoiding misbehavior to fathom your responsibility, what you're called on to do as a member of the Chosen People? Do you have an inkling of the power entrusted to you?

Doing mitzvahs is not a matter of "getting it right" to earn reward on the Great Payday. Any mitzvah you do makes an impact, right now, everywhere. Even so-called ritual mitzvahs and mitzvahs *bein adam l'Makom* (between a person and the Omnipresent [i.e., God]) draw into the world a bit more of those ethereal qualities like holiness and faith. Mitzvahs which are *bein adam l'chaveiro* (between a person and his fellow) lay the foundation for that elusive and fragile thing known as *shalom*.

The most powerful mitzvah we have at our disposal is *tefilah* (prayer). Too many people think of prayer as a refuge of the weak, a placebo for the impotent. Even we, who believe in the efficacy of *tefilah*, underestimate the range of what *tefilah* can change. In part this is due to our puny power of concentration and lack of focus during prayer. We believe that *tefilah* is powerful in theory, "but my prayer? How much is it going to do?"

Furthermore, our prayers are usually limited in scope, aimed at small targets: keep us well, help us make it to the end of the month and

get my kid/spouse/boss to behave/off my back. This is due to our being beaten down by life and barely managing to keep our heads above the flood-waters of exile. Well, dear reader, it's time to make a *cheshbon*. It's time to realize that *your* prayer, honed properly, used patiently and carefully, can result in a better you, with a better life: "Through prayer it is possible to achieve everything, everything good." But that's only scratching the surface. Let's make a deeper, more thorough *cheshbon*.

It's time to realize that it's not just your life and concerns that can be helped by *tefilah*. Believe it or not, there are bigger targets and goals for which we can use *tefilah*. All that news and noise in the media? It's not mere static. It's the Shekhinah crying out in pain, to you. It's God telling us that He wants us think also about the *world's* Torah study, the *world's* faith, holiness and peace.

These are huge goals. Our individual prayers will certainly make improvements. However, if in our personal lives improvement is often imperceptible, all the more so when we are dealing with issues of such a great scale. What can we do? We can pray *together*, as a community. With each additional person that joins a community prayer (especially a tzaddik's community prayer), the strength of the *tefilah* increases by leaps and bounds, to a staggering degree (*Likutey Halakhot, P'ru u'R'vu* 5:10–12).

What's the matter with us? We underestimate the power of *tefilah*, the power of our own *tefilah* and the power of praying together. May God soon open our eyes and hearts to see and understand what we can do for Him and His world. Amen.

agutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

— Based on *Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #111

PARSHA PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

19:14 This is the Torah, a man who would die in a tent.

We Must Strive to Come to the Core of the Torah

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman once remarked: "What most inspired me to devote myself to serving God in truth was hearing stories of *tzaddikim*." He explained that many great *tzaddikim* used to visit his parents' house, which had once been the home of the Baal Shem Tov (Rebbe Nachman's maternal great-grandfather). These illustrious Chassidim would frequently visit Medzeboz to pray at the Baal Shem Tov's grave, and in passing, most of them would visit Rebbe Nachman's parents. In this way, the Rebbe during his youth came to hear the many stories of *tzaddikim* that they would tell. These stories awakened in his soul the burning desire to serve God and to strive for the highest spiritual levels. (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* 138).

There is a "palace of Torah" that a person can enter and then walk through from room to room—that is to say, from idea to idea, whether those of others or his own. Yet he may never get to the core of the Torah itself.

By way of analogy, one can write the word "man," draw a picture of a man or sculpt a figure of a man. But none of these is an actual human being.

So too the Torah is manifested in various degrees. But a person must strive to attain the actual Torah. This is why the Torah states, "This is the Torah, a man." We must attain the Torah that is as real as an actual man (LM I, 245).

To Be Fully Realized, a Person Must Fulfill All of the Mitzvot

Just as mankind consists of various types—e.g., wealthy and poor—so too the Torah has all sorts of applications, lenient and strict (LM I, 13:5). Only when a person fulfills all of the mitzvot of the Torah is he called a complete "man."

A Person Must Give Up His Material Lusts in Order to Attain Torah

Our Sages teach that “the Torah remains only with a person who ‘kills himself’ for its sake”—i.e., who sacrifices on its behalf. As the verse states, “This is the Torah, a man who would die in a tent” (*Berakhot* 43b). The Hebrew for himself, *atzmo*, indicates a person’s material self and desires.

A person who “kills” his material lusts in order to attain Torah will attain the Countenance of God’s Face (LM I, 101).

20:8 Take the staff.

Every Individual Has His Own Staff of Torah

A person’s “staff,” or authority, is formed by the mitzvot that he performs. He then raises his “staff” to subdue the evil within others (LM I, 20:4).

20:8-11 “Speak to the rock.” ... He struck the rock.

We Must Pray in Order to Open Our Hearts to Torah

For a person to open up the Supernal Heart, “the rock of my heart” (*Psalms* 73:26), he must engage in prayer and supplication.

Because instead Moshe forced the issue, he could not enter the Holy Land (LM I, 20:5).

21:14 It is stated in the Book of Hashem’s battles: as an outermost boundary....

The Battles of Torah Learning Are Actually Profound Peace

The Hebrew term for “outermost boundary” is *vaHeiV b’SuFah*, a phrase that our Sages rework to read *oHaVim baSoF*—“friends in the end.” Even though Torah scholars battle each other over God’s words, in the end they are friends (*Kiddushin* 30b).

This is because their battle is for the sake of God and eventually brings them to attain Godly consciousness.

Although a battle for the sake of Heaven may appear hostile, it is actually an expression of profound peace (LM I, 56:8).

KITZUR L”M WEEKLY

“Fortunate are they who go with simplicity” (Psalms 119:1)

1. Through Torah study, all prayers and requests are accepted, the grace and importance of the Jewish people are elevated and raised before all who need in material and spiritual matters.

2. By engaging in Torah study with energy and enthusiasm, a person empowers the Kingdom of Holiness so that it becomes dominant, and he causes the good inclination to prevail over the evil inclination.

3. By engaging in Torah study, a person can merit to understand hints from everything in the world, so that he can bind himself to God through them. Even in a place of darkness and obscurity, where it appears at first that it would be difficult to draw close to God - there too, true intellect will shine its light. For him so that even there he can find God and draw close to Him from that very place.

4. A person does not commit a transgression unless he is possessed by a spirit of foolishness. Therefore, each person - in precise correspondence to the transgressions he has committed and the spiritual blemishes he has caused - is literally insane. This is why most people have all sorts of quirks and idiosyncrasies. The rectification for this insanity is engaging in Torah study. For the

Torah consists entirely of the Names of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and these Names subdue the evil inclination and banish the insanity and the spirit of foolishness that cling to a person as a result of his sins.

5. A person also merits, by engaging in Torah study, to be saved from the cunning deceptions of the evil inclination - which, in most cases, does not incite a person to transgress right away. Rather, it first dresses itself up in mitzvot, etc. [in order to fool the person]. By engaging in Torah study, a person merits true understanding and to be saved from all this. 1 - “Fortunate are they who go with simplicity” (Psalms 119:1)



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