

## Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

### WHAT DID HE SAY?

By Ozer Bergman

**"God said to Avram: 'Go for yourself...and I will make you a great nation...and I will make your name great'" (Genesis 12:1-2).**

We mentioned last week that at one point, when the world started, God wanted everyone to be Jewish (*Derekh HaShem* 2:4). Avraham Avinu (our Patriarch), even when he was still Avram, worked very hard to convert (or re-convert) as many people as he could to the true faith, to believe in the One and Only Deity. It is interesting to note that he did much of what Rebbe Nachman suggests we do in our lesson (LM I, 17).

*Parashat Lekh Lekha* starts with God informing Avraham Avinu of how proud He is of him, by already telling him the end of the story: Avraham will be universally revered, and his (as-yet unborn) progeny will become a nation that contributes greatly to mankind.

I don't know how or when Avraham Avinu became aware that it would be necessary to found a nation dedicated to God; that it was, in the long run, insufficient to teach people to abandon idolatry and to worship God instead. Nonetheless, both before and after, he and Sarah Imeinu (our Matriarch) were constantly working to make *geirim* (converts). They opened their home to wayfarers, providing them with meals.

As we have seen, giving charity creates a tranquil atmosphere that allows for building an *emunah* (faith)-based fellowship and community. Avraham Avinu didn't wait to give. He went where there was great need—a desert—to provide what people needed most. As a result of actually building a hotel-restaurant (as it were) and waiting personally on those who came to benefit from his hospitality, Avraham Avinu became a trusted friend of the travelers who found their way to his home. A person who actually practiced what he preached in the name of his God—his words were worth listening to. Furthermore, they were worth sharing with others as these travelers continued on their journeys.

This is an important point of which many people are unaware. When you have a good

*Yiddishe vort*, you ought to share it. What is a *Yiddishe vort*? Literally, it means a "Jewish word." In common parlance, it means a Torah insight that, yes, adds to the sum total of one's faith in God, Torah teachings, tzaddikim, etc. More importantly, though, a *Yiddishe vort* stokes one's desire to be more Jewish, better Jewish, than before—even if only a little bit, even if in only one thing.

Almost all Jews can tell a *Yiddishe vort* some of the time, and some Jews can tell a *Yiddishe vort* all of the time. But everything a genuine tzaddik says is a *Yiddishe vort*. But if a *Yiddish vort* falls in a forest and no one hears it, does it do its job? Rebbe Nachman says no. The spoken word won't travel too far and won't be physically heard by ears if there is too much turbulence. The tzaddik's message won't travel too far and won't be heard by the heart if there is too much turbulence.

Avraham Avinu's investment paid off handsomely. His reputation and influence grew to such an extent that he was proclaimed king by nations far and wide (see Rashi on Genesis 14:17). God Himself told our first patriarch that his influence would extend globally (see *Kli Yakar* on Genesis 17:4-5) and for as long as there are human beings.

Advancing the reputation and influence of a genuine tzaddik—someone like Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, for example—is not a by-product of peace. It is a major objective. Making the world more "Jewish," "converting" another thing or place or slice of time to advancing positive God-awareness, happens more readily when people know that there is a tzaddik whose wisdom they can trust, who has what to say that will advise, console and re-soul them.

Such peace is not born from a desire to force conversion. It starts with genuine kindness born of genuine concern for a fellow human being. You know, the kind that would actually get you to open a hotel in a desert. Don't have it in you yet? Do your best to help.

*a gutn Shabbos!  
Shabbat Shalom!*

(Based on *Likutey Moharan* I, 17)

### SIDEPATH

Someone once asked Rebbe Nachman: "When I'm praying and I mention God's Holy Name, what profound thoughts, what deep intentions, should I have in mind?"

The Rebbe responded, "Isn't the simple meaning—God—enough for you?!" (*Tzaddik* #414).

### PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

**12:1 "Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house, to the Land that I will show you"**

***Everyone Must Find His Own Point Of Truth***

*Lekh lekha* (literally, "Go to yourself") means that wherever you go, you must always look "to yourself"—to the point of truth within you. Each individual has his own point of truth. To find it, he must leave behind his "land"—these are his material desires, for each land has its own material pursuits, some for money, others for immorality, etc. He must leave behind his "birthplace"—these are his physical desires. And he must leave behind his ancestry—his thoughts of receiving honor and respect by others. All these deter a person from finding the truth. Then he will merit to the "Land"—to holiness (LH VIII, p. 207a-b).

***The Merit Of The Holy Land Is Beneficial For Having Children***

God sent Abraham to the Holy Land because its merit is beneficial for having children. The Holy Land is also a locus for prayer. However, prayer anywhere is also beneficial for having children (LM I, 48).

**12:2 "I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great"**

***Wealth Enables One To Influence Others***

"I will bless you"—with money (Rashi).

Wealth adds many friends (Proverbs 19:4).

Because Abraham would become wealthy, many people would try to befriend him. This in turn would “make his name great,” as his fame would spread. Subsequently, he would become “a great nation,” for he would be able to spread teachings about God far and wide and inspire others to serve Him (LH III, p. 478). Rebbe Nachman adds that by giving charity to the tzaddik, one also “adds many friends” (LM I, 17:5).

**13:7 There was a dispute...the Canaanites...were then dwelling in the Land**

***Strife Brings Poverty, Peace Brings Abundance***

*KeNaANI* (כנעני, Canaanites) is similar to the phrase *KaNa ANI* (כאן אני, here is poverty). When there is strife, there is poverty. But peace brings abundance (LM I, 277).

**15:8 "How will I know that I will inherit it?"**

***Gehinnom Is Reserved For Opponents of Divine Service***

At the time of the Covenant Between the Pieces, Abraham had to decide which punishment his descendants would suffer should they sin. He chose exile as opposed to Gehinnom.

Nevertheless, there is one exception. Those who brazenly oppose people devoted to serving God are punished not with exile, but with Gehinnom (LM I, 22:12).

**16:8 "I am running away from my mistress Sarai"**

***We Can Gain Relief From The Forces Of Evil***

When Sarah, who represents the Kingdom of Holiness, becomes manifest, then the maidservant Hagar, who represents the forces of the Other Side, must flee (LM I, 36:3). This means that when we draw the yoke of Heaven onto ourselves, we can gain relief from the forces of evil.

**17:1 "Walk before me and be perfect"**

***We Must Elevate The Mundane To The Holy***

The word *hit-halekh* (התהלך, walk) represents the feet, symbolizing the lower, mundane levels of reality such as eating and earning a livelihood—i.e., the means that enable a person to stand on his feet. *LiPhaNal* (לפני, before Me) can also be translated as “to My Face.” Abraham was so pure that he was able to elevate the mundane—the “feet”—to the level of God’s Face, Divine Providence, which is associated with the Showbread (*Lechem HaPanim*—literally, “Bread of the Face”). A person who attains this level does not have to work for a living. Rather, all of nature will work on his behalf (LM I, 31:9).

**17:14 "An uncircumcised male whose foreskin has not been circumcised"**

***Remembering The World To Come While Forgetting This World's Allures***

From this verse, we learn that the *milah* is performed at the place where one can differentiate between male and female (Rashi).

*ZaKhaR* (זכר, male) is like *ZiKaRon* (זכרון, remembrance). *NaShim* (נשים, women) is like *NiShyon* (נשיון, forgetfulness). These are two distinct levels. One must strive to remember God and recall the World to Come. One must also forget the vanities, lusts and immorality of this world. And one must remove the foreskin—i.e., he must remove the foolishness that clouds the mind and blemishes the ability to remember and differentiate (LH V, p. 150).

### ***KITZUR L"AM WEEKLY***

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

3. Before a person repents, he does not yet have “being”; it is as if he does not yet exist in the world, since “it would have been better for him had he not been created at all.” But when he comes to purify himself and to repent, then he prepares himself to have “being” in the world. Therefore, repentance is associated with [the Divine Name] *EHYeH* (I will be)—that is, “I am prepared to exist.”

4. Repentance is also related to the concept of Keter, since *KeTeR* is an expression of “waiting,” as it is written, “Wait (*KaTaR*) for me a bit and I will speak to you” (Job 36:2).

Waiting is closely related to the idea of repentance, as our Sages, of blessed memory, said, “One who comes to purify himself is helped...It is like when someone comes to buy fragrant persimmon oil. He is told to wait” (*Yoma* 38b-39a). In other words, a person needs to know that when he comes to purify himself and to repent, “he is told to wait.” Even though it is necessary to act with great swiftness to save his life and to flee from the darkness, nevertheless, he should not be dismayed when he sees how far he is from prayer and from all holy practices. For a person must wait before he attains complete rectification, and he must proceed step by step according to the instructions of the true tzaddik, since it is impossible to come into holiness all at once.

5. One must be constantly involved in repentance. For even at the time that a person is saying, “I have sinned, I have transgressed, I have done wrong” (*Viduy* confessional prayer), it is impossible for him to say it without some degree of falseness. Thus, a person must repent for his previous repentance—namely, on the “I have sinned, I have transgressed, I have done wrong” which he said previously.



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