

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

SMARTER THAN YOUR AVERAGE BEHEIMAH

By Ozer Bergman

“Yissakhar is a broad-boned donkey”
(Genesis 49:14).

Rebbe Nachman said that it takes great skill and craft to be like an animal. This is alluded to in the verse “All to whom God bestowed wisdom in them (*ba-heimah*)” (Exodus 36:1). *Ba-HeiMaH* (in them) has the same letters as *BeHeiMaH* (animal).

How’s this for a preface to a teaching? “This is so amazing, so intriguing, that it’s worth everything just to learn this. A person could honestly say that if he lived a whole lifetime just to learn this bit of information, it was worth being born.”

At first glance, this may seem exaggerated. After all, Rebbe Nachman seems to be merely pointing out that there is something to be learned from animals. But we know this already from the Mishnah (*Avot* 5:23) and Talmud (*Eruvin* 100b). What else is he saying?

God created wisdom and grants it in different measure to different people (and animals). When God gives life to an infant, He injects into him not only the five senses, but also wisdom, the ability to think. What is wisdom? Let’s look at the wisest of all men, King Solomon. He knew the language of animals and trees. What’s so great about that? What is so important if you could talk to a cat and ask it what it had for breakfast? What could you learn from discussions with a cat? The true use of one’s wisdom is, as the Rebbe says, to study anything in the world and learn from it how to serve God (*Likutey Moharan* I, 1). Observe and learn from an animal’s behavior how to behave. For example, we learn how to be immaculate from a cat and we learn fidelity from a dove (*Eruvin* 100b). Trees talk when the wind rustles through their leaves. What do the leaves tell us? “Each of us derives nourishment only from his root. We don’t steal.”

What we learn from animals in general, the greatest wisdom which is oh so difficult to achieve, is to learn to be like an animal. We are born behaving like animals—i.e., self-centered takers who seek only their own enjoyment and benefit. Yet there is one area that does not come naturally to us and that we must learn from them. A human being tends to feel conceit about

his wisdom, even if he has no particular area of expertise and certainly if he does (see *Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #272). Animals are not conceited because of their wisdom, because they don’t have any. We need to learn the simplicity and sincerity of an animal. Just as an animal behaves with devotion to its master, without looking for loopholes or tricks to deviate from his commands, we have to behave with simple devotion to our Master, to do His *mitzvot* without looking for loopholes or tricks to deviate from them. This is the greatest, truest wisdom possible.

(This is similar to our Sages’ teaching [*Chullin* 5b] on the verse “God saves man and animal” [Psalms 36:7]. This refers to people who are wise and clever, yet conduct themselves humbly, like an animal. As Asaph said, “I was a creature devoid of reason, I did not know. I was beast-like before You” [ibid., 73:22]. [See *Likutey Halakhot, Pikadon* 4:4.]

“God saves man and animal” means that God helps those who are human—superior in wisdom—but who nonetheless behave like “brainless” animals, modestly and humbly. If one’s “humanity” is as simple as that of an animal—that is, if nothing separates the superior, intellectual, Adam-part of a person from his humble animal-side—then God will save him.

There is a Kabbalistic secret lurking here as well. God’s Four-Letter Name, *YHWH*, can be written in various expanded permutations. One such permutation has the numerical value of 45, the same as *ADaM* (man). Another permutation adds up to 52, the same as *BeHeiMaH* (animal). The latter permutation refers to the *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence). When a Jew melds human superiority with animal simplicity, he is making one of the greatest Kabbalistic unifications. As a result, “God saves”—i.e., life gets better.

As Asaph put it, “I was beast-like before You.” Namely, when I am as simple as an animal, then I am “before You”—with God.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on a class given by
Rabbi Tzvi Aryeh Rosenfeld, *zt”l*
on *Sichot HaRan*
(*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom*) #15

SIDEPATH

Reb Noson recognized our need for finding *hitchazkut* (support and encouragement). Yet whenever he talks about the support we can draw from others, he inevitably shifts over to the support we must draw from ourselves. In the final analysis, no matter how much encouragement we get from others (the tzaddik, our family, friends, etc.), it comes down to how much we care about ourselves. Therefore Reb Noson writes: After all, if you don’t take pity on yourself, who will? (*Likutey Halakhot, Netilat Yadayim li’Seudah* 6:37).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

**49:1 Come together and I will tell you
what will happen to you at the End of Days**

Unity Produces Greater Torah Revelations

Jacob wanted to reveal the End of Days, but the Divine Presence left him. He began saying other things (Rashi).

If the prophecy Jacob wanted to reveal is not recorded in the Torah because the Divine Presence left him, why does the Torah record his opening statement? The answer is that Jacob’s intention, albeit thwarted, also contains a message that helps draw blessing. Rebbe Nachman teaches that the tzaddik strives to gather Jews together. The more they unite, the greater the Torah he can reveal to them. In order to effect this revelation, he must perform two devotions. The first is to gather the souls together. The second is to elevate those souls to a higher level—this ascent allows the tzaddik to draw Torah from a higher level (see LM I, 13).

**49:3 Reuben, you are my firstborn, my
might and the first of my manhood**

Powerful Speech Can Result In Fertility

When a person heeds the teachings of the tzaddikim, his own speech gains power, to the extent that it can enable those who were

barren—including the person himself—to bear children. This is alluded to in Jacob's words "My might and the first of my manhood." Because Jacob's speech was powerful, he began at the age of 84 to father children (LM I, 60:8).

49:10 Until the coming of Shiloh

A Spirit Of Mashiach Exists In Every Generation

Shiloh is another name for Mashiach, it is also a reference to Moses, since the numerical value of both *ShiLoH* (שילה) and *MoSheH* (משה) is the same (LM I, 118). Just as Moses is compared to Mashiach, so too, every tzaddik partakes of the nature of Mashiach (ibid., I, 2:6). Thus, a Messianic presence exists in every generation.

49:13 Zebulun will settle the seashores

One Who Breaks His Avarice Merits To The Holy Land

The Tribe of Zebulun provided a livelihood for the Tribe of Issachar, whose members dedicated their days to the study of Torah. Because Zebulun broke his avarice and shared his wealth with the righteous, he merited to "settle the seashores" and receive territory on the northernmost border of the Land of Israel, in Tzidon. In other words, his territory represents the gateway to the Holy Land, which is attained by breaking one's avarice. A person who breaks his desire for wealth (i.e., Zebulun) and gives charity to the tzaddikim (i.e., Issachar) merits to the Holy Land, because "Tzaddikim will inherit the Land" (Psalms 37:29) (LH II, p. 254).

49:14 Issachar is a strong-boned donkey

Great Wealth Is Needed To Comprehend Profound Torah Secrets

Issachar represents deep Torah learning and wisdom (LM I, 30:9). Thus, the leading members of the Sanhedrin generally came from the Tribe of Issachar. For this reason, Jacob blessed Issachar with great wealth (see Targum Onkelos). For just as a person requires a basic livelihood in order to attain general levels of Torah understanding, he requires great wealth in order to attain a profound understanding of Torah (LM I, 60:1, 9).

49:20-21 From Asher will come rich foods...Naphtali...delivers words of beauty

Our Awareness That God Sustains Us Makes It Possible For Us To Praise Him

When a person realizes that his income ("rich foods") comes to him through Divine Providence, he can pray and praise God ("words of beauty") (LM II, 16).

49:24 His bow stayed firm...he became a shepherd of the Rock of Israel

One Who Guards His Covenant Merits To Prayer

Joseph held firm to his bow—i.e., to the purity of his covenant. As a result, he attained the Rock. The word *EVeN* (בן, rock) comprises two words, *AV* (אב, father) and *BeN* (בן, son). These refer to Jacob and his sons, who together exemplify prayer. Thus, guarding the covenant leads to prayer (LM I, 7:end).

49:27 Benjamin is a predatory wolf; in the morning he eats and in the evening he divides his prey

Holy Eating Brings Spiritual Sustenance Into The World

Benjamin is compared to a wolf that tears away at its enemy. *TaRaF* (טרף, tore) may also be read as *TeReF* (טרף, sustenance). Through his eating, a tzaddik draws down spiritual sustenance ("in the morning he eats") and can tear apart his spiritual enemies ("in the evening he divides his prey").

The Talmud teaches that the Temple Altar was built in the territory of Benjamin (*Zevachim* 54a). As a result of the sacrifices consumed upon the Altar, spiritual sustenance was drawn down to the Jews and their enemies were defeated (LM I, 17:3).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

8 — "I looked, and behold, a golden candelabra" (Zechariah 4:2) (continued)

4. When a person sighs, the true tzaddik expiates his sins. This is because by sighing, the person draws forth from the tzaddik the

breath of life which makes up deficiencies [sins being the greatest possible kind of deficiency]. As it is written, "The wise man expiates" (Proverbs 16:14).

5. It is forbidden for anyone except a perfect tzaddik to challenge the wicked and the opponents. Such a tzaddik must be a person who has already completely separated out and expelled all of the bad from himself, out of all the four elements which subsume all the various character traits, until he is certain that he will not stumble in any transgression. Only a tzaddik like this and the people who are attached to him can provoke the wicked. But anyone who has not completely nullified the bad in himself—and, though he does not commit any actual transgressions, the possibility of his doing so still exists—is not a perfect tzaddik, and it is forbidden for him to challenge the wicked. The reason for this is that such a person can be harmed, God forbid, by the deep breath taken by the wicked, which they draw from the Other Side and which for a time is extremely powerful, may God save us. But the perfect tzaddik can lower himself into the channel through which the wicked receive their breath of life, and can break it and subdue it, bringing about their total demise.



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