

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

### MAKE IT REAL

By Ozer Bergman

Now, I don't know how it is at your Seder. Maybe the highlight is eating the matzah or the meal; maybe it's negotiating the return of the *afikoman* or singing all those fun songs at the end of the Haggadah. I do know that for many of us, it's the actual telling of the story. As I began to prepare for the Seder, I reviewed its 15 *simanim* (signs/signposts/steps) and had a question: Why is the telling-of-the-story *siman* called *maggid*? What does *maggid* even mean?! Why not *sipur* (tell, recount), which is how the mitzvah is described and named? Yeah, sure, the mitzvah is couched using a *maggid*-word (Exodus 13:8), but so is a more common *emor* (say) word. In fact, a *maggid*-word is used only once in relationship to this mitzvah, while *emor* and *sipur*-words are used many times. So I started to do some (Breslov) research.

I discovered that the holy Ohr HaChaim also wondered why the *maggid*-word is used instead of an *emor*-word. I also discovered that in defining *maggid*, Rav S. R. Hirsch contrasts it to other "speaking" words. He writes that to be *maggid* something is to bring it home, to make it real and present, to demonstrate its truth.\*

Think about our first exile and exodus—from Avraham Avinu coming to Eretz Yisrael and being told that his descendants would be enslaved, redeemed and brought to Eretz Yisrael; the actual enslavement of millions of people for hundreds of years to harsh and cruel taskmasters; the plagues; the liberation and the leaving. To call it crucial or seminal is a vast understatement. It is defining, if not more. One would think that a process and an event such as the liberation of a nation from centuries of slavery would never, could never, be forgotten. Apparently, one would be wrong. After all, we find time and again the injunction to remember that God took us out of Egypt, sometimes attendant to a mitzvah and sometimes on its own.

How could this be? From the very first, we celebrated our emancipation and exit from Egypt on two planes, as families and as a nation. As family events go, this ranks as unforgettable. This wasn't Grandma getting her first job as an immigrant teenager. As a

national event, this is not some boring political convention nominating a vice-president. This is literally the birth of a nation. How could someone forget it, God forbid?

There's a place inside us where memory and forgetting live. In Rebbe Nachman's teachings it's called *medameh* (imagination). You know who else lives in *medameh*? *Emunah* (faith). The most critical and difficult aspect of *emunah* is to believe that God created the world out of nothing. As stupendous as it is that a seed becomes a fruit-bearing tree or that a seed becomes an intelligent human being, it's easy to believe that God created trees and people because we see them being born all the time. It's also easy to believe that He created the sun because we see it rise and set every day. But since it is so hard to imagine something coming from nothing, it's a challenge to believe that God created existence out of nothing.

This is also the challenge of remembering the Exodus from Egypt. Had the Exodus been a revolution or a migration, events we have seen, we could believe it without any great to-do. The Exodus parallels Creation. The Midrash (*Mekhilta*) tells us that the Israelites in Egypt were indistinguishable from their hosts. To separate them and create them as a new, distinct and chosen nation so defied rationality that the angels questioned God's actions. Precisely because it is so unbelievable, the Exodus is easily forgettable.

Therefore, telling the story is not enough. You have to bring it home and make it real—*maggid*. Back up your words with action: wash your hands, drink the Four Cups, and eat matzah and maror. May your Seder be unforgettably good, and your *emunah* unbelievably strong. Amen.

\* Avudraham cites *Targum Yerushalmi* (see Deuteronomy 26:3) that *maggid* also means to thank and praise.

*A kosher and freilekhen Pesach!  
Chag kasher v'sameach!*

(Based on LH, *Birkhot HaRei'ach* 4:9-15)

Remember to friend "The Breslov Research Institute" on Facebook and/or follow me on Twitter (@Of Breslov) to know when we've shared more learning from Rebbe Nachman!

### SIDEPATH

Speech remains in exile until Pesach.  
Pesach is "*peh sach*"—"a mouth speaking."  
...This the main idea of the Exodus.  
(*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #88)

When we were liberated from Egypt, we were given the chance to begin our face-to-face relationship with God as a nation. On Pesach, we spend all night talking, learning, singing God's praises and praying to Him. This is what it means to be free.

### PESACH STORIES

By Chaim Kramer

#### The Stories Of Our Lives

Man is incapable of a sudden confrontation with his Creator. The overwhelming experience of such awareness is just too awesome. Truth, the stark Truth, must be camouflaged. Only then can the soul gradually absorb it.

God, so to speak, camouflaged Himself in stories. These are the stories of the Creation and of Adam and Eve; the stories of the Flood and of the Patriarchs; the stories of Jewish exile and redemption. God is hidden in all the stories of human history, and in the as yet untold stories of each and every human being—his trials, his tribulations, and his salvation.

At the Pesach Seder, we tell stories—*maggid*. We recount the stories of the exile in and the redemption from Egypt. These represent the collective stories of mankind. They typify the individual stories of each and every one of us. As we relate the details of these stories, we must relate to them. Be aroused by them. See the Hand of God in the stories of our own lives.

Through the telling, we bring to life *their* stories. In turn, may God bring to life the story of *our* Redemption (LH, *Nedarim* 5:6-8) (*The Breslov Haggadah*, pp. 37-38).

### **Rebbe Nachman And Pesach**

Once, on an intermediate day of Pesach, a young man came to Reb Avraham Sternhartz to speak to him about Rebbe Nachman's teachings. Because the young man had only recently become interested in Breslov Chassidut, Reb Avraham spoke with him at length. At the end of the conversation, he noticed how sad and troubled the young chassid appeared. The young man sensed this and began to relate all the difficulties and opposition he had encountered since becoming a Breslover chassid.

Reb Avraham said to him, "Nu! Today is Pesach, the time of our redemption," and started speaking to him about the greatness of Pesach, the Exodus, and the true meaning of freedom. He gave him much advice and encouragement to help him through these trying times. At the end of the conversation, Reb Avraham said, "*PeSaCh* has the same numerical value as Rebbe *NaChMaN* (148). How can we connect Rebbe Nachman and the concepts of Pesach? The Haggadah teaches us: 'This is what Hillel did: he took the Pesach, matzah and maror, and ate everything together.'"

Reb Avraham advised this young man to accept Hillel's teaching. We can partake of the Pesach—the true tzaddik—only by experiencing bitterness and difficulty! Then we can fully appreciate these teachings. "Now," Reb Avraham said, "go home and have a very joyous Pesach!" (*Oral tradition*).

### **Longing For God At The Seder**

Reb Noson would recite the Haggadah with great fervor and emotion. Often the members of his family were too afraid to look at him during the Seder, so great was the awe and fear visible upon Reb Noson's face. His grandson, Reb Avraham Sternhartz, related that the Seder night was a very trying time for Reb Noson's family. They were never sure that he would make it through the Seder without fainting. Once while reciting the words "The revelation of the Divine Presence!" he became so filled with emotion and a yearning for God that he actually did faint (*Oral tradition*).

### **The Bitter Herb**

Rebbe Nachman told the following parable:

Once a Jew and a German gentile were traveling as hobo's together. The Jew told the German to make believe that he was a Jew

(since his language was similar [to Yiddish]), and the Jews would have pity on him. Since Pesach was approaching, the Jew taught him how to act (when he is invited to a Seder). He told him that at every Seder, Kiddush is made and the hands are washed. However, he forgot to tell him about the bitter herb.

The German was invited to a house on the first night of Pesach and, being very hungry from all day, looked forward to the fine foods that had been described by the Jew. However, first they gave him a piece of celery dipped in salt water, and other things served at the Seder. They then began to recite the Haggadah and he sat there longing for the meal. When the matzah was served, he was very happy.

Then they gave him a piece of horseradish for the bitter herb. It was bitter to taste, and he thought that this was the entire meal. He ran from the house, bitter and hungry, saying to himself, "Cursed Jews! After all that ceremony, that's all they serve to eat!" He went to the synagogue where he had made up to meet his partner, and fell asleep.

After a while the Jew arrived, happy and full from a good meal. "How was your Seder?" he asked.

The other told him what had happened.

"Stupid German!" replied the Jew. "If you had waited just a little longer, you would have had a fine meal, as I had."

The same is true when one wants to come close to God. After all the effort to begin, one is given a little bitterness. This bitterness is needed to purify the body. But a person may think that this bitterness is all there is to serving God, so he runs away from it. But if he waited a short while and allowed his body to be purified, then he would feel every joy and delight in the world in his closeness to God (*Rabbi Nachman's Stories*, Parable #23).

## **KITZUR L" M WEEKLY**

### **11 — "I am God, that is My Name" (Isaiah 42:8) (continued)**

7. Guarding one's sexual purity has two levels. First, there is the person whose marital relations are also on weekdays (see *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 240:1), but who nevertheless guards his sexual purity in accordance with the laws of the Torah. This person's marital relations are in the realm of the

permitted, and this, too, is called guarding one's sexual purity, provided that he keeps himself from transgression, may God save us. Such a person must guard himself with great vigilance in this area. This [first level of guarding one's sexual purity] is called the "lower unification," and through it, one merits to grasp the legal areas of the Torah, which are referred to as "secrets."

There is a second type of person, however, whose marital relations are exclusively on Shabbat (*ibid.*). This person is in the aspect of the "upper unification," and by means of this, he also grasps the Kabbalah [the mystical, inner side of the Torah], which is referred to as "secrets of secrets" (Isaiah 24:16). Even a person whose marital relations are exclusively on Shabbat must be extremely careful to conduct himself with holiness, so that he may be counted among those who guard their sexual purity. As for the small people whose marital relations are also on weekdays—certainly, they need to be even more careful that they do not blemish their sexual purity, God forbid, and that at least they do not transgress the laws of the Torah in this area, God forbid. When a person guards his sexual purity on these two levels, the honor of God is complete and he merits all the aforementioned attributes and attainments, until he attains profound levels of understanding in the Torah.



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