

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

### FEED YOUR HEAD

By Ozer Bergman

You're probably familiar with the expression "A way to a man's heart is through his stomach." That was told to young women of bygone generations to encourage them to learn how to cook well so they could "catch" a man. Well, Rebbe Nachman teaches, the same is true of coming close to Hashem (God). The way to your *neshamah* (soul) is through your stomach. But the way away from your *neshamah* is also through your stomach.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that all of Creation came into being because God foresaw the pride He would receive from each and every Jew (every day!) as well as from the Jewish people as a whole. Now, on our own, neither you nor I nor all of our coreligionists could deliver all that latent pride. We need an extraordinarily great tzaddik who sees our DPQ (Divine Pride Quotient) better than we, and can get us to envision it and produce it.

However! The fact that there is such a tzaddik is no guarantee that our DPQ, our potential love for and awe of God, will suddenly find proper expression. There is a danger that it will be wasted through misuse or non-use. (Which is worse? I'm not sure.) It is crucial that that we have eyes to perceive the light of the tzaddik.

Let me tell you something about this tzaddik-light. This "light," this medium that allows us to more easily and clearly perceive God's presence and live accordingly, is so bright and powerful that it shines even in angelic worlds! Remember: Angels have no free will because their perception of God is so clear and strong. They have no choice but to live according to His will. Nonetheless, tzaddik-light enhances their perception of God.

That being the case, logically speaking, tzaddik-light should bring great clarity to our dark world. But one can be next to tzaddik (e.g., studying his works or praying at his grave) and miss the point, fail to see the light. This is due to the foolishness that results from one's "muddy deeds." Instead of walking away from an encounter with the tzaddik wiser and enriched, one leaves with a loser's opinions and attitudes, with ideas that estrange by causing distance and damage.

How can we eliminate the "muddy deeds" that produce the foolish mind which moves us away from our *neshamah* and from Hashem? Rebbe Nachman teaches that our "muddy deeds" are due to improper eating. We know what happens when a person doesn't eat for a long enough time. He starves to death. Our instinctive understanding is that the person is no longer here to work, play or interact with us. A true answer, but incomplete because in looking from the body's point of view, it considers only the body's demise.

But when a person dies, his *neshamah* also "dies"—i.e., takes leave of this world. No longer can it grow by shining its unique portion of Hashem's light into the world. That means eating is meant primarily to feed the *neshamah*, because one purpose of life is to shine your light into the world. So a first step to eliminating "muddy deeds" is to eat so that your *neshamah* will live.

What does this have to do with Sukkot? The mitzvah of sukkah focuses very much on eating. Although "casual" eating is permitted outside the sukkah, "serious" eating (e.g., mealtimes) must be done in the sukkah. Furthermore, the blessing on the mitzvah of sukkah is recited only when we eat in it. A central message of sukkah is: The physical world is impermanent. What makes a home long-lasting is not walls and a roof, but the *Shekhinah's* presence.

When you bring your eating into the sukkah, you should infuse it with that same focus. What makes your eating long-lasting is not the quality of the viands, but your intention to nourish your *neshamah* so that it will shine its light into our world. If you eat like that, "muddy deeds" fall away, your mind becomes clearer, your perception of tzaddik-light is enhanced, and your DPQ becomes real like you never thought possible. Amen!

*a gutn yom tov!  
chag samei'ach!*

(Based on *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #17)

Click here for more on the sukkah and impermanence in [\[Midrash for Monday: All Things Must Pass\]](#).

### SIDEPATH

It was the eve of the Sukkot festival. Reb Noson's student, Reb Nachman Tulchiner, was assigned the mitzvah of building the sukkah. That night, after they had ushered in the festival and were enjoying their meal, Reb Nachman commented, "One appreciates the sukkah much more after he has invested so much time and effort in building it."

Reb Noson responded, "One appreciates the mitzvah of sukkah that much more after he has prayed and prayed: 'God! Give me a taste of the mitzvah of sukkah!'"

### PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

#### *Sukkot & Simchat Torah: Reconnecting to Torah*

The Festival of Sukkot corresponds to the *sefirah* of Binah (Understanding). Fulfilling the mitzvah of sukkah makes it possible for a person to build a house. This is as is written, "With wisdom, a house is built, and with understanding it will stand" (Proverbs 24:3). Also, observing the Festival of Sukkot is beneficial for the protection of one's flocks. The reason is as follows.

Binah corresponds to the heart. Human beings are unique in that, as babies, they draw nourishment from breasts that are next to the mother's heart—in contrast to animals, which draw nourishment from dugs that are near the mother's waste organs. The same idea applies in a spiritual sense. When a person behaves properly, he draws nourishment from Binah—the heart. Otherwise, he descends to the level of an animal and draws nourishment from the "waste." In the latter case, he takes the nourishment that should rightfully go to animals, preventing the animals from gaining proper sustenance on a spiritual level.

On Sukkot, such a person reconnects to Binah—the heart—and thereby makes it possible for animals to receive their proper sustenance. Furthermore, on Sukkot (more precisely, on Simchat Torah), we complete the cycle of Torah readings and begin the

Torah anew. The Torah corresponds to Ze'er Anpin, which is rooted in Binah. Thus, we make a fresh start in our relationship to the Torah by beginning the Torah reading anew right after Sukkot (LM I, 266).

### **The Torah Is The Story Of Our Lives**

"This is the book of the generations of man" (Genesis 5:1).

Each year we repeat the cycle of weekly Torah readings. Each reading is divided into seven portions, one for each day of the week. Though we repeat the Torah each year, it is a new book each time, as it reflects each person's unique situation and gives him understanding and inspiration to navigate life's challenges and adversities. The Torah contains allusions to each and every person; it is the story of each individual's life. Everyone can find himself in the Torah reading of that day and week, and draw inspiration from it (LH I, p. 196a-392).

### **PARASHAT BEREISHIT**

#### **1:1 In the beginning God created Heaven and earth**

##### **The Torah Teaches Us Simple Faith**

Moses did us a great favor by beginning the Torah with the simple words "In the beginning God created Heaven and earth." In this way, he provided us with a model of faith that involves no sophistication or philosophy (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #219).

##### **Awe Leads To Humility Leads to Fear**

"The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God" (Psalms 111:10).

The letters of the word *BeREiShYT* (בראשית) can be transposed to form the phrases *YaREi BoSheT* (ירא-בשת, awe-humility) and *YaREi ShaBbaT* (ירא-שבת, awe-Shabbat). *ShaBbaT* (שבת) is associated with repentance, for it contains the same letters as *TaShuV* (תשב, you will repent).

Thus, with the word *Bereishit*, the Torah indicates the importance of striving for awe of God. With this awe, a person can attain great levels of humility before God, so that even if he falls, he can always return to Him (LM II, 72; *ibid.*, I, 38). Furthermore, *YaREi BoSheT* (awe-humility) indicates that a person's humility—which is due to his

understanding of the awesomeness of God—inspires him to fear God (*ibid.*, I, 22:10).

##### **We Must Seek The Tzaddik**

The letters of the word *BeREiShYT* (בראשית) can be rearranged to form the phrase *ROSh BaYiT* (ראש בית, head of the house). The "head" refers to the tzaddik and the "house" to the world. A person's first step in drawing close to God should be to seek out the tzaddik (LM II, 67).

#### **1:5 God separated between the light and the darkness**

##### **Night And Day, Ups And Downs**

Each day of a person's life contains a night and a day, both ups and downs. Our main mission in life is to combine the two, to understand that even in the darkness there is light, and that notwithstanding the light and good moments, there could be difficult moments, too. With this understanding, we attain true faith and come to recognize God (LH II, p. 202-102a).

#### **1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness"**

##### **We Are Meant To Be Charitable Beings**

In the Book of Ruth, when Naomi asked Ruth where she received the wheat that she brought home, Ruth replied, "The name of the man for whom I did today is Boaz" (Ruth 2:19). The *Zohar* teaches that this verse is speaking of charity, which is alluded to in the word *ASiti* (עשיתי, I did). The root of that word is the same as the root of the word *na'ASeh* (נעשה, let us make), and thus recalls the creation of man (*Zohar* I, 13b).

God created man to be charitable and kind (LM I, 37:3; *ibid.*, II, 2:4). The "image"—corresponding to man's spiritual essence—charitably gives its light to the "likeness"—corresponding to man's body.

The concept of charity also applies to a marriage. Each partner in a marriage relationship can be either a benefactor or a beneficiary. As such, husband and wife must always be considerate of one another. When they are in a relationship of mutual kindness, they are considered to be complete—a whole "human being" (*ibid.*, I, 13:5).

## **KITZUR L" M WEEKLY**

### **5 — "With trumpets and the sound of the shofar" (Psalms 98:6) (continued)**

12. Foreign thoughts and evil ruminations are the side of death, represented by *chametz*. When these foreign thoughts chase after one's mind, trying to enter it, and the person repels them and engages in conflict and dispute with them, not allowing them to enter his mind, he is thereby rescued from *chametz*—the side of death. Moreover, he merits to attain high levels of understanding, represented by *matzah*, which is associated with life. (It is understood that the mitzvah of destroying *chametz* and eating *matzah* on Pesach are efficacious for attaining all of the above.)

13. The strife that exists between the tzaddikim who have attained perfection is also only for this reason—in order to drive out the forces of the Other Side so that they do not draw close to the Tabernacle of Holiness. Therefore, the strife that exists between them is represented by *matzah*. [The Hebrew word *matzah* can mean both "strife" and "unleavened bread."]



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