

THE BEST GUARANTORS

By Ozer Bergman

"Draw me after you / we will run" (Song of Songs 1:4). At Sinai, when the Jews were ready to receive the Torah, God said to them, "What? Am I supposed to give you the Torah without any security? Bring some good guarantors that you will keep it properly, and I will give it to you."

Jews: Our ancestors will be our guarantors.

God: They themselves need a guarantor! Avraham questioned Me: "How will I know?" (Genesis 15:8). Yitzchak loved Esav although I hate him (Malachi 1:3). Yaakov thought I mistreated him (see Isaiah 40:27).

Jews: Our prophets.

God: I have complaints against them, too: "The shepherds sinned against Me"* (Jeremiah 2:8). "Israel, your prophets were like foxes..."** (Ezekiel 13:4).

Jews: Our children are our guarantors.

God: Now, that's a guarantor! "From the mouth of infants and babes You founded *oz* (strength)" (Psalms 8:3)—this is Torah (ibid., 29:11).

What happens if the borrower doesn't pay? The lender collects from the guarantor. "If you forget [My] Torah, I will 'forget' your children" (Hosea 4:6). Therefore a person has to bring his child into the Torah and educate him in it (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:4:1).



Receiving the Torah is not only about learning Torah. It's also about teaching Torah. Why? Because although gaining deep mystical and/or rational insight into the Divine is the purpose of Creation, you are not the only one meant to gain such insight. Everyone is. By "everyone," we mean not only those alive today, but those who will follow us in the future, including our children.

Rebbe Nachman told us that, ideally speaking, each person should spend two to three months learning a particular lesson of *Likutey Moharan*. During that time, one should view all of life through the prism of that lesson. The Rebbe also said that Lesson

#282, better known as *Azamra* ("I will sing"), is a lesson that one should live by all the time. What is the primary point of *Azamra*? Judge everyone favorably, including yourself.

From time to time, more often than we care to admit, we all do the wrong thing or bad things. That, the Rebbe tells us, does not make us worthless or mean we are worthless. It means we are human. The real person—you or someone else—is the good the person has manifested, even if only in thought, even if only in passing. The results of such an attitude are outstanding: one doesn't quit trying to be a better Jew because of a series of real failures; one is more understanding and kinder towards others, in word and in deed. In fact, Rebbe Nachman says, when you judge someone favorably, you cause Heaven to judge that person favorably, opening the person's way to *teshuvah* (return to God).

One segment of the population that often gets overlooked when we seek to live *Azamra* is our own children. We are told to "establish many students" (*Avot* 1:1), and there is no reason that our children should not be among them. The first rule in teaching Torah is "Be patient in judging" (ibid.). Use your ingenuity to recognize your child's—your student's—strengths and virtues. (Often, you'll have to tap into those strengths in a tedious, roundabout way. That calls for more ingenuity—and patience.)

Favorably judging our children (and others) creates an atmosphere of peace and respect that allows them to learn from us, so that when we speak, they listen. They learn to want to live a Torah life, and they do. So the Torah is perpetuated and our guarantors are not called upon to pay. Most of us are not going to teach in a yeshivah, and even fewer will head a yeshivah. The average person will "establish many students" over the course of generations, as his or her children raise their children to live a Torah life.

* By prophesying in the name of Baal.

** By not praying enough for the Jews.

a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

—Based on *Likutey Halakhot*, *Nezikin* 4:24–25

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman said, "The world considers faith a minor thing. But I consider it an extremely great thing" (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #33).

When the Rebbe told Reb Noson to record his own discourses, he said to him, "In your writings, every word should be measured. But when you come to the topic of faith, let your pen flow!" (*Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Rosen*). The importance of faith is unparalleled. Without it, we cannot enter the realm of Torah or *mitzvot*. With it, we can attain the highest of levels.

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

26:3 If you walk in My statutes...I will provide you with rains in their season

Eating Facilitates Spiritual Growth

"If you walk in My statutes"—this refers to toiling in Torah study (Rashi).

Why does the Torah promise material blessing for spiritual achievements? Indeed, the body and soul are separate entities and the soul is the more important of the two. Yet a soul cannot attain spiritual heights by itself—it needs a physical body to act as a restraint against spirituality, in order for the person to remain in a physical world while engaging in spiritual devotions. Eating keeps body and soul together so that spiritual growth is possible.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that if a person is meritorious and strives to find God, his eating can elevate him to a level of desire and will for God that transcends many, many other spiritual attainments. In such a case, his physical desires not only support his spiritual longings, but actually mirror those longings! (LH V, p. 426).

26:6 I will provide peace in the Land...and a sword will not pass through

Unity Elevates The Fallen Sparks

When people are fragmented due to strife, the sparks of holiness are scattered throughout the world. But when people

speaking words of Torah and prayer, these holy sparks are united and elevated, and peace may be attained (LM I, 75B:3).

26:8 Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand

Even If We Can't Perform A Mitzvah, We Can Help Others Do It

There is no comparison between a few people doing a mitzvah and many people performing a mitzvah. Thus, where only five can pursue 100 (twenty times their number), 100 can pursue 10,000 (one hundred times their number) (Rashi).

Sefer Yetzirah (4:12) states that two stones build two houses (i.e., combinations), three stones create six houses, and four stones make twenty-four houses. Rebbe Nachman teaches that these stones represent souls, implying that the more people who join together to do a mitzvah, the more the power of that mitzvah multiplies (see LM II, 8:6).

This teaching also applies to donating to a worthy cause. Even if one is not able to do a mitzvah himself, he can assist others to do it by supporting them with his charity. In this way, he increases the number of people involved in the mitzvah (LH VII, p. 157a-314).

26:15 If your souls detest My laws

We Must Not Detest Wisdom Or The Wise

"If your souls detest My laws"—this refers to detesting the Sages (Rashi).

God's "laws" reflect wisdom. Just as a person who detests God's wisdom also detests the Sages, so too, a person who detests the Sages indicates that he detests God. One way to gauge where we are holding is through faith in the Sages (see LM I, 18:4).

26:25 I will bring upon you a sword of vengeance to avenge the covenant

One Who Guards His Covenant Can Wield The Sword

One who blemishes his covenant is stricken by God's "sword of vengeance." But one who guards his covenant can use this sword to battle the forces of evil. Moses used this sword when he engaged in battle against Amalek (see Exodus 17:8-13) (LM I, 58:3; *ibid.*, I, 58:5). (Moses sent Joshua into physical battle while he stood in prayer,

employing the spiritual "sword" of the purity of his covenant.)

26:40 They will confess

Joy Makes It Easy To Confess One's Misdeeds

ViDuY (וידוי, confession) is similar to *hoDaYah* (הודיה, thanksgiving). A person might find it difficult to confess his misdeeds. He may have forgotten them, he may find it too embarrassing to acknowledge them, he may be worried or depressed because of them, and so on. But when he arouses himself to joy and thankfulness to God, he can overcome these obstacles to confession (LM I, 178).

26:44 Despite all this, when they are in the land of their enemies

We Can Find God Everywhere

Zot (this) refers to the Divine Presence (see *Tikkuney Zohar* #21, p. 61a).

The Divine Presence accompanies the Jewish people always, even when they are exiled among the nations (*Megillah* 29a).

We can reveal God's Presence even in exile, in our enemies' lands. We accomplish this by arousing the merit of the Patriarchs, which we do by engaging in proper prayer. And when the merits of the Patriarchs are revealed, the sanctity of the Holy Land is revealed as well (LM I, 55:2).

27:33 Do not distinguish between good and bad or make any substitutions

We Can Avoid Confusion By Associating With God-Fearing People

The Other Side gains its strength from the Chambers of Exchanges. Within these Chambers, everything is confused and mixed up, so that "good seems evil, while evil seems good; light appears as darkness, while darkness seems light; bitter is presented as sweet, while sweetness seems bitter" (cf. Isaiah 5:20). Confusion and substitution mainly take place in the mind, in one's *da'at*. Therefore we say in our confessional prayers: "What You have made strict, we have made lenient; what You have made lenient, we have made strict; what You forbade, we permitted; what You permitted, we forbade" (Confessional liturgy). To avoid confusion, we must attach ourselves to true, God-fearing people (LH II, p. 144a-288).

KITZUR L"M WEEKLY

13 — "Happy is the nation that knows the shofar blast" (Psalms 89:16); Divine Providence

1. When a person breaks the desire for money, he draws forth full Divine Providence. The desire for money is broken by giving charity, which cools the burning lust for money and breaks the desire for wealth and riches, helping a person merit to do business honestly and with faith. Such a person is happy with his lot and pleased with what God has favored him; he is not running to get rich. Thus, he is saved from the curse [of Adam], "By the sweat of your nose you will eat bread" (Genesis 3:19). [On the other hand,] this curse sees fulfillment in people who are sunken in the desire for money, who are constantly struggling, slaving and running around and never have any satisfaction from their wealth, may God save us. But giving charity rescues a person from this curse, and it is considered as if he had brought an incense-offering in the Temple.

2. The lust for money is literally idolatry, and as long as this idolatrous worship of money exists in the world, Divine anger is also present in the world. Conversely, to the degree that this lust is nullified, so, too, is Divine anger nullified and lovingkindness channeled into the world. Then knowledge is elicited, which is analogous to the building of the Holy Temple. The nullification of money-lust is also related to the revelation of the Mashiach, since at that time, the love of money will cease to exist.



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