

## LET THE FEAST BEGIN – IN A MINUTE

By Ozer Bergman

“When you eat and are satisfied, you must bless God ... for the good land He has given you” (Deuteronomy 8:10).

Rebbe Nachman said that if a person doesn't make it a practice to ask God for his material needs—food, clothing, shelter, income, health—then even if God provides him with everything, he is living like an animal. Even though he doesn't ask, God provides for him (Psalms 147:9). (The young ravens crying for help at the end of the verse are not calling out to God. Nonetheless, He prepares nourishment for them, but not in a way that we would find pleasant. See *Ketubot* 49b.) Sustenance, any material item you own or use without having asked God to provide it, lacks the finishing touch, the human touch. This is prayer—the recognition that God creates everything, cares about everything and wants to interact with His creatures in a tender, loving and beneficial way.

Since children of all ages love stories and learn better from stories, here's one from the holy *Zohar* (*Miketz* 199b). “The man of faith has many blessings” (Proverbs 28:20). This refers to a person who has faith and trust in the Blessed Holy One, like Rabi Yeiva Saba. Even though he had enough food for the day in his pantry, he would not prepare it until he had requested nourishment from the Holy King. After he prayed, he would begin to cook. He always used to say, “We won't prepare our food unless it has been given to us from the King's palace.”

This idea of having to take care of things and to prepare them—also known as making the world a better place—goes back to the Garden of Eden. Although the Garden was ready to burst forth with bounty, it needed Adam, Mr. and Mrs. Mankind, to come along and pray it into being (see Rashi on Genesis 2:5). See, when God created the world there was no one else around to do it, so He did it all by Himself. But now that you and I are here, He wants us to take initiative—*itaruta d'litata* in Kabbalah—speak—and take the raw materials that He has placed all over and turn them into something better. The classic

example is grinding wheat to make into bread, but I'm sure you can think of some on your own.

Just in case you can't (your favorite *parashah*-writer wouldn't leave you in a lurch, would he?), Reb Noson writes something that flies in the face of a widespread, mistaken notion. You might find this very shocking, so please stay seated. He writes that just as we human beings were created to correct and perfect the spiritual side of Creation by doing good deeds, we were also created to complete and correct the *material* side of Creation! This is why nothing is created “ready to use” without human intervention (*Likutey Halakhot, Umnin* 4:2). Cooks and artisans score high because they take raw materials and make stuff that people can use to serve God (e.g., making a spoon and bowl to eat soup in honor of Shabbat.)

“OK, Mr. Favorite *Parashah*-Writer. I can use this and start to pray to God for stuff I need, and to turn it into something spiritually and materially useful. But what about all the stuff from the past that I didn't ask for? What about all the spiritual and material work that I left undone?” The Grace after Meals (*Birkat HaMazon*) is our saving grace. Reb Yitzchak Breiter (may God avenge his blood) writes that even if a person did not have the awareness to turn to God to ask for His help, protection, etc.—whether because of ignorance, fear, stress or what have you—when he later finds himself still alive and conscious, he can then say *Birkat HaMazon*, “Thank you.”

For all that we've left undone, we can also say *Birkat HaMazon*. The Land of Israel is a major theme in this blessing. In fact, our thanks for our food is really thanks for the Land, because all Jewish nourishment comes via our Land. Rebbe Nachman teaches that we can only grow spiritually if we fall first (*Likutey Moharan* I, 22:11). The Land of Israel gives us the patience and desire to move forward despite our mistakes. Thanking God for that turns our undone-past into present-doing.

*a gutn Shabbos!*  
*Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Sichot HaRan*  
(*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom*) #233

## SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman once spoke to one of his followers about praying with devotion. He said, “Voice arouses feeling. The opposite is also true, for feeling can also arouse the voice.

“Pray with feeling. Bring every thought and emotion into each word. Your voice will automatically be awakened and you will pray out loud. You can actually test this and see that it is true” (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #293).

## PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

**7:12 If you listen to these laws, observing them and carrying them out**

*Hitbodedut Brings Us To A State Of Joy*

*Ve-hayah* (והיה, it will be) connotes joy (*Vayikra Rabbah* 11:7).

Dancing and hand-clapping mitigate harsh decrees (see LM I, 10). But when judgments are decreed against the world, it is very difficult to dance. The judgments, which correspond to the feet, make one's feet heavy and sluggish.

In order to mitigate these judgments and regain a state of joy, one must judge and evaluate himself. Through *hitbodedut*, a person should examine and correct each of his actions and his relationships with others. In this way, he mitigates Heavenly judgment, “for when there is judgment below, there is no judgment Above” (*Devarim Rabbah* 5:4).

These ideas are expressed in this verse. *Ve-hayah eikev tishma'un* (If you listen)—the word *ve-hayah* connotes joy, and *eikev* alludes to the feet. If you want the feet to listen and “hear” the joy, then “to these judgments, observing them and carrying them out”—you must practice *hitbodedut* and judge yourself (LM I, 169).

**8:17 You may say to yourself, “My strength and the power of my hand made for me all this wealth”**

## ***We Must Have Faith That God Alone Provides***

The desire for money is at the root of all idolatry. *MaMoN* (מָמוֹן, money) has the numerical value of 140 (including one unit for each letter), paralleling the 140 calls that the Divine Presence screams—"Heavy is My head! Heavy is My arm!" (*Sanhedrin* 46a)—over those who succumb to greed (LM 23:1).

Rabbi Nachman Goldstein, the Tcheriner Rav, connects Rebbe Nachman's teaching with the present verse. "My strength" alludes to the mind, the thoughts with which a person considers how to earn money. "The power of my hand" alludes to the physical labor one actually expends. Against these two idolatrous ways, the Divine Presence screams, "My head ... My arm" (*Parparaot LeChokhmah* 23:end).

## **10:12 What does God your Lord ask of you?**

### ***We Should Strive To Draw New Levels Of Awareness Into Our Minds***

Do not read *MaH* (מה, what), but *Me'AH* (מהא, one hundred). From this, we learn that a Jew should recite 100 blessings each day (*Menachot* 43b).

A person should strive to draw the letter *aleph* (א) into the word *MaH* (מה). *MaH* (what) implies the question "What reality lies beyond my comprehension?" *Aleph* has the numerical value of 1, representing the Oneness and Unity of God. By drawing the *aleph* into his *mah*—his humility—a person gains the awareness that all is good and all is one (LM I, 4:10; *Mei HaNachal*, ad loc.).

## **10:16 Circumcise the foreskin of your heart**

### ***Evil Thoughts And Desires Rule The Heart***

"The foreskin of your heart"—this means the foolishness of your heart (Targum Onkelos).

The heart, like the covenant, contains a "foreskin" that must be removed. The foreskin of the heart consists of a person's evil thoughts and foolish desires (LM I, 49:1).

## **10:19 Love the convert**

### ***Together We Are One***

God rejoices greatly when a simple unity emerges from diverseness (LM II, 2:6). That is, God's Oneness should be manifest in every

single thing. But because of the complexity of the creation and each individual's unique perceptions, each person and thing represents a "diverse phenomenon." Only when people draw themselves to God and His Unity does the "simple oneness"—a reflection of the One God—emerge from the "diverse phenomena."

## **11:12 It is a land that God your Lord seeks. The eyes of God your Lord are always upon it**

### ***Draw The Sanctity Of The Land Of Israel When You Pray***

*Tefilot ke-neged temidin tiknum*—The daily prayers were established to parallel the daily sacrifices (*Berakhot* 26b).

*TeMIDin* (תמידין, daily sacrifices) shares the same root as *TaMiD* (תמיד, always). *Tamid* is conceptually the Land of Israel, as the verse states: "It is a land that God your Lord seeks; the eyes of God your Lord are *always* upon it." Rebbe Nachman teaches that when a person stands up to pray, he is often besieged by foreign and extraneous thoughts. The way to avoid such thoughts is by clapping one's hands during prayer, which draws the sanctity of the Land of Israel upon oneself.

The Talmud's wording hints at this dynamic. *Tefilot ke-neged* (the daily prayers parallel) literally means "opposition to prayers." When extraneous thoughts create opposition to your prayers, then *TeMIDin TiKNum*—then *TaMiD*, the concept of drawing the sanctity of the Land of Israel, is the *TiKkun* (תיקון, rectification) for this (LM I, 44:3).

## ***KITZUR L" M WEEKLY***

### **14 — To Draw Peace (continued)**

18. Through perfect prayer—which, in turn, brings about "overall peace"—all creatures come to have compassion on one another and there is peace between them. This is the state that will prevail in the future, as it is written, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb" (Isaiah 11:6). Then God will show compassion to all of them, as in the verse, "His compassion is upon all His handiwork" (Psalms 145:9). As our Sages, of blessed memory, said, "Whoever has compassion on others, Heaven has compassion on him, as it is written, 'He will give you compassion and be compassionate to you'" (Deuteronomy 13:18; *Shabbat* 151b).

19. Through the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles, God's honor radiates forth and is uplifted and magnified in the world, awakening those who are far from God to return to Him. Then a person merits holy fear of God, domestic harmony and prayer. Strife and slander are also eliminated and "overall peace" is brought into all the worlds.

20. There exist slanderers and people who stir up strife, who are described by the verse, "The complainer separates a man from his master" (Proverbs 16:28). Such people go around spreading gossip and slander, and initiate quarrels and strife between friends and between man and wife. This is all on the physical, mundane level. A similar phenomenon also exists on the spiritual level, whereby the Other Side and the impure forces try to tempt a person and create enormous strife between his body and his soul, until that person comes to the point of "There is no peace in my bones because of my sin" (Psalms 38:4). But when a person merits to draw those who are far from God closer to God's service—by which God's honor radiates forth and ascends back up to its root, which is holy fear—then all the slanderers and gossipers disappear and peace and harmony increase in the world. Similarly, lighting the Chanukah candles at the proper time also effects this result.



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