

# Bouncing Back—and Forward

written by Ozer Bergman

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Dvar Torah for Parshat Netzavim-VaYelekh

## Bouncing Back—and Forward

“You are standing here today... (Deuteronomy 29:9). Rashi comments: “Like ‘today’ which is, which gets dark and which shines, [God] has shone on you in the past and will shine on you in the future. The curses and the suffering [of Deuteronomy 28] maintain and sustain you.\* They help keep you going with [God].”

Ooyyyyyy! Finally. Finally! The last Shabbos (aka Shabbat) of the year. You made it. There were certainly a good number of ups-and-downs, emotional, physical, maybe even spiritual. It’s most likely that some of those downs were avoidable. Review what happened, see if you can avoid your mistake in the future, do *teshuvah* (return to God) and then—forget about it! Don’t let the past haunt your future. Doing so ruins and deprives you of upcoming mitzvahs. What Rebbe Nachman would do is forget the past and not let it disturb his future (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #26).

I hear some of you. “Hey, Ozer! Did you forget? Rosh HaShanah is also called Yom HaZikaron, the Day of *Remembering*, not of Forgetting.” No, I didn’t and correct, it is. What we need to remember is the future, the goal towards which Creation is

moving. That means we need to forget the stuff that might keep us from the goal.

Using memory selectively is part of what it takes to be resilient and Rebbe Nachman was a model of resiliency. He once said that even if, God forbid, he would commit the worst crime in the Torah, it wouldn't throw him, at all.\*\* He would be a kosher Jew just as he was before, on the same level. How? By doing *teshuvah*.

The Midrash (*Tanchuma, Netzavim* #1) teaches us that a Jew's natural response to tragedy is surrender and prayer. The *Likutey Moharan* (II, Lesson #7:3) tells us that the biggest tragedy is a Jew weighed-down by his not living according to the Torah. So we need to be resilient, we need to know what lessons to learn from our past, and move on to being bigger Jews.

We have to quickly move "today" from its darkness to light. But we also have to know that we can't force things. Reb Noson writes that this concept "ready and waiting" can't be satisfactorily spelled out in writing. On one hand, one has to be nimble and quick to do any mitzvah comes his way. After all, you're alive only *now*. No one knows what obstacle may suddenly materialize, getting between you and the mitzvah.

On the other, it happens that there's something you must do for your Jewishness, but it's eluding you. Don't be discouraged. Stay patient. Use the waiting time to build up your thirst for your immediate goal, the mitzvah, and the long-range goal, closeness to God. Reb Noson tells us that this was Rebbe Nachman's *modus operandi*, doing what mitzvah he could as soon as he could,\*\*\* and longing for the mitzvah that he couldn't yet do. Worked for him. It'll work for us. Amen.

Based on *Chayei Moharan (Tzaddik)* # 431 and #453

*agutn Shabbos!*  
*Shabbat Shalom!*

\*By toughening us up when we survive them and by making us smart enough to avoid to them in the first place!

\*\*We really have to think about this a lot more to better understand what he meant.

\*\*\*Reb Noson reports that when Rebbe Nachman had this-worldly business to attend to, he never procrastinated and would take immediate care of it immediately.

Bonus story:

The Rebbe said, "For me, Rosh HaShanah is the most important thing. Right after Rosh HaShanah I begin listening very carefully for the knocking on the wall, to wake us for next year's *selichot* (penitential prayers). "For time does not exist at all. For the year passes, gone in a wink of an eye" (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #215).