

Dvar Torah for Parshat VaEtchanan

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Based on *Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #78

“At that time I [Moshe] pleaded with God, saying” (Deuteronomy 3:23).

This is the lesson in which Rebbe Nachman makes one of his most famous pronouncements:

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS DESPAIR!

And how does he know this? From the history of the world.

In *Likutey Halakhot* (*Milah* 3:2), his commentary to *Likutey Moharan*, Reb Noson writes that logically speaking, because the purpose of Creation is that the Jews should live by the Torah, God should have given the Torah to mankind straight away. (Back then the whole world could've been, would've been Jewish.) Not only that, but since life—the mere animal, “live to eat” kind and the truly human, sacred life—comes only from living according to the Torah, it seems imperative that the Torah be given immediately. So why did God wait for twenty-six generations until He gave it?

God was doing us a favor, a favor we didn't deserve and a favor that would serve us well when we would be undeserving (as we often are). God doesn't want to lose a single soul. Any spark of holiness that a soul will produce is the soul's salvation. Had the Torah been given right away, we would immediately have been charged with its observance. And with the first false step, it would've been over.

Because, Reb Noson says, Creation tests our free will and

without free will there is no reward or punishment. Theoretically, every human being could always choose to observe the Torah and live a flawless life. Theoretically. But practically speaking, there isn't a tzaddik alive who hasn't sinned (Ecclesiastes 7:20; see *Tosafot, Shabbat* 55a s.v. *arba'ah*). So had there been no twenty-six generation grace period, in which God sustained mankind without anyone at all living by the Torah, the first human mistake (aka sin), would have brought personal, perhaps even global, destruction in its wake.

That initial grace of God still exists. In our personal lives as well, there is always, always, a measure of grace that God extends. It is available even if a person has committed every crime in the Good Book. This grace goes by the name teshuvah, return. This grace is taught and modeled by the tzaddik. Seek him and allow him to show you how to receive and live the gift of hope and repair, of teshuvah, no matter what.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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