

Dvar Torah for Parshat VaYakhel

written by Ozer Bergman

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Based on *Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #25

In addition, it's also good to make a prayer out of Torah. That is, when you study or hear a Torah lesson from a genuine tzaddik, turn it into a prayer ask. Plead with God about each point in the lesson: "When will I be privileged to live by this practice, and embody that ideal? I'm so far from it!" Ask God to grant you the privilege to achieve every point mentioned in the teaching.

The Midrash (*Tanchuma*, VaYakhel #7) wants to tell us about the magic of the Ark, the chest that held mankind's greatest treasures: The Tablets of the Ten Commandments and the Torah scroll that Moshe himself wrote.* The Midrash mentions a number of miracles, "one time only" ones and more frequent ones, that were associated with it. Then the Midrash poses an obvious question: What was it about the Ark that brought about the miracles? It answers by telling us that the Ark also contained the Torah and the Shekhinah. In fact, continues the Midrash, wherever the Torah is, that's where the Shekhinah is. As it is said (Malachi 3:16), "Then those who revere God spoke, each with a

friend; God listened and heard.”

As is well-known, Rebbe Nachman emphasized the importance of, and the need for, daily *hitbodedut* (the practice of talking to God in one’s own words, about whatever one chooses). In one conversation with his chassidim, the Rebbe not only gave a practical suggestion for how to feed and fuel** one’s *hitbodedut*, he practically pleaded with us (those who lived when he did, and those of us alive today) to make use of that suggestion: use any of his teachings as a touchstone for our *hitbodedut*.

Rebbe Nachman was not a preacher. He did not sermonize. Nonetheless his every conversation, and certainly his lessons, dealt with devotion to God (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #124). The Rebbe said, “When one makes a lesson into a prayer, it causes great delight on high. Never in history have such delights ascended before God” (*ibid.* #145). The greatest delight for God—and perhaps the greatest miracle from your perspective—is what such a *hitbodedut* can accomplish. It can pierce you to the core, drawing and binding you to God so fervently so that you are certain that you will definitely live by His will and never again separated or disobey Him—God forbid!—even in the slightest (*ibid.*).

As precious and exquisite as the Ark was, you are even more so. Write the words of Torah on the Tablets of your heart (Proverbs 7:3), and God willing the Shekhinah soon follow. And may we pour out our hearts to God like water (Lamentations 2:19), every day. Amen.

agutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

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*Actually, the Ark, wherever it may be now, still houses them.

**To feed it, so as to never be at a loss for words; to fuel it, so that it always is fresh and alive.