

Dvar Torah for Sukkot – Rabbi Nachman's Stories

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Based on Rabbi Nachman's Stories, The Exchanged Children, #11 (pp.251-62)

The true prince and the son of the maidservant, unaware of each other's identity, become companions while lost in a terrifying forest. While searching for his cattle the prince finds a sack of bread. He then meets a forest man. When the prince meets up with his companion, the latter begs him for bread. The prince counters that in the wilderness nothing is as valuable bread. The son of the maidservant, desperate for a piece of bread, offers to sell himself as a slave in exchange for being fed. The prince agrees to his offer.

Afterwards the forest man brings them into his home which is

suspended in mid-air. He provides food and drink for the true prince and the prince's slave, while letting them sleep in his home rather than in the forest. At night, the prince and his slave hear the sounds of the animals. The lion roared, the leopard growled and the birds chirped and whistled with their own sounds. The loud noise and cacophony frightened them.

However, as they concentrated they realized that all the noise was, in fact, an awesomely beautiful song. It was such a tremendous joy to hear; all the joys in the world were absolutely nothing in comparison. They decided that they would stay there forever because they had enough to eat and drink and they could enjoy this wonderful delight.

The slave persuaded his master to ask the forest man about the meaning of the song. The forest man replied that the sun had made a garment for the moon. The animals of the forest realize that the moon does them a great service by shining. Animals roam mostly at night. When they need to enter an inhabited area they can only do so by night. In recognition of the service that the moon provides by shining for them, they decided to compose a song on her behalf.

They listened even more closely and realized that the melody was even more wonderful than they had thought. The forest man asked them, "Why do you find this so novel? I have an instrument which I received from my ancestors who inherited it from their ancestors. It is made from special leaves and colors. When it is placed on any animal or bird the creature immediately begins to sing the song."

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When a person has his self in order, when “the prince,” the holy *neshamah* (soul) is master over the “slave,” the body and mind, he can be invited into the home of the “forest man,” the tzaddik (saint) who is in control and above all the elements of nature, and partake of the nourishment that he has to offer.

The home of the forest man represents the sukkah. The mitzvah of sukkah is specifically designed to force to go out into the world, into the “wilds” of physical activity, and claim it for the *kedushah*. As we noted in the previous dvar Torah, the essential mitzvah of sukkah is to eat, drink and sleep in the sukkah. By doing so, we invest these activities with *kedushah* (sanctity) the whole year-round.

The home of the tzaddik is suspended in mid-air. That is, a genuine tzaddik can use his spiritual comprehension to allow the materials and enterprises of this world to be performed in holiness (see *Likutey MoHaran* I, 28:4, n. 36). Living life from the elevated perspective of the tzaddik’s home allows one to perceive the frightening noises and discordant feelings that human activity engenders, as something rather beautiful. It is so beautiful that one feels a great desire to participate in it and add to the song.

When asked to explain what they heard, the tzaddik/forest man pointed out the good in the “animals,” in all of mankind, even the most depraved. Most members of our species live life under a thick veil of darkness, unaware of the Divine spark that they contain and that is contained in the world around them. When they wish to venture into “an inhabited area,” when they wish to raise their level of behavior, they can only do so in ignorance. Yet, the light of the moon, the light of faith, illuminates their way and they succeed. Overcoming a basic

human flaw, lack of gratitude (see Rashi on *Genesis* 11:5) they express their thanks in song.

The forest time gives them a warning. Even though the Divine is to be found in every activity, there is a way to access higher levels of spirituality without endangering one's spiritual well-being (*Likutey MoHaran* I, 54:2). That is to accept upon oneself the yoke of Torah. When one allows the "instrument" to be placed upon him and he carries it willingly, it refines the animal within him.

agutn yom tov!

chag sameach!