

Dvar Torah for Sukkot – Feed Your Head

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Feed Your Head!

You're probably familiar with the expression "a way to a man's heart is through his stomach." That was told to young women of bygone generations to encourage them to learn how to cook well so that could "catch" a man. Well, Rebbe Nachman teaches, the same is true of coming close to Hashem (God). The way to your *neshamah* (soul) is through your stomach. But the way away from your *neshamah* is also through your stomach.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that all of Creation came into being because God foresaw the pride He would receive from each and every Jew (every day!) as well as from the Jewish people as a whole. Now, on our own, neither you nor I nor all of our

coreligionists could deliver all that latent pride. We need an extraordinarily great tzaddik who sees our DPQ (Divine-Pride Quotient) better than we, and can get us to envision it and produce it.

However! The fact that there is such a tzaddik is no guarantee that our DPQ, our potential love for and awe of God, will suddenly find proper expression. There is a danger that they will be wasted through misuse or non-use. (Which is worse? I'm not sure.) It is crucial that that we have eyes to perceive the light of the tzaddik.

Let me tell you something about this tzaddik-light. This "light," this medium that allows us to more easily and clearly perceive God's presence and live accordingly, is so bright and powerful that it shines even in angelic worlds! Remember: angels have no free will because their perception of God is so clear and strong. They have no choice but to live according to His will. Nonetheless, tzaddik-light enhances their perception of God.

That being the case, logically speaking, tzaddik-light should bring great clarity to our dark world. But one can be next to tzaddik (e.g., studying his works or praying at his grave) and miss the point, fail to see the light. This is due to the foolishness which results from one's "muddy-deeds." Instead of walking away from an encounter with the tzaddik wiser and enriched, one leaves with a loser's opinions and attitudes, with ideas that estrange by causing distance and damage.

How can we eliminate the "muddy deeds" that produce the foolish mind that moves us away from our *neshamah* and from Hashem? Rebbe Nachman teaches that our "muddy-deeds" are due to improper eating. We know what happens when a person doesn't eat for a long enough time. He starves to death. Our instinctive understanding is that the person is no longer here to work, play or interact with us. A true answer, but incomplete because in looking from the body's point of view it

considers only the body's demise.

But when a person dies, also his *neshamah* "dies," i.e., takes leave of this world. No longer can it grow by shining its unique portion of Hashem's light into the world. That means eating is meant primarily to feed the *neshamah*, because one purpose of life is to shine your light into the world. So a first step to eliminating "muddy-deeds" is to eat so that your *neshamah* will live.

What's this have to do with Sukkot? The mitzvah of sukkah focuses very much on eating. Although "casual" eating is permitted outside the sukkah, "serious" eating (e.g., mealtimes) must be done in the sukkah. Furthermore, the blessing on the mitzvah of sukkah is recited only when we eat in it. A central message of sukkah is: the physical world is impermanent. What makes a home long-lasting is not walls and a roof, but the Shekhinah's presence.

When we bring our eating into the sukkah we should infuse it with that same focus. What makes your eating long-lasting is not the quality of the viands, but your intention to nourish your *neshamah* so that it will shine its light into our world. If you eat like that, "muddy-deeds" fall away, your mind becomes clearer, your perception of tzaddik-light is enhanced and your DPQ becomes real like you never thought possible. Amen!

Based on *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #17

agutn yom tov!

chag sameach!