

Oneg Shabbat – Insights from Reb Ephraim Z”l

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There is a wonderful lesson we can learn by analyzing the verses of the Torah a little.

It is written, “Remember I have taken you out (of Egypt) through shortcuts... From the day you were taken out of Egypt until today, you have rebelled against G-d.” The feeling we get from the Torah is that G-d went and did us this great favor by taking us out of Egypt in a miraculous way and now all we can do is so to speak slap Him in the face.

Elsewhere it is written, “I have remembered for you the kindness (that you did for me) in your youth (referring to the Jewish nation’s youth...) How you followed after me in the desert... And the people feared G-d and Moshe His servant.” Now we have an entirely different perspective, this seems perplexing?

The truth is that based on the teaching of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, we can both explain this contradiction and learn an incredible lesson.

In Torah 6 of Likutey MoHaran we are taught that every Jew must possess two expertise. An expertise in running (meaning growing spiritually) and an expertise in returning (referring to an apparent backwards trend in spiritual growth.) The Breslov Tradition teaches that the main expertise is in returning. The reason being that when we are spiritually running, we encounter little friction. One feels as if he is an angel for whom the heaven has opened up to and is now shining down on him its light. But when one is in the process of “returning” it is most difficult for him to strengthen himself and not fall in to despashabbat

ir whatsoever. He simply feels like throwing in the towel and waiving a white flag. Furthermore, we have been taught the concept that falling is always for the sake of climbing, he will therefore merit a great spiritual accent following the descent.



Based on this, the reason why one gets rewarded even when he is “spiritually flying ahead at supersonic speed” is because of how he held himself strong when he was down. [He mentally believed that he was still connected to G-d and did whatever mitzvah he was able to do, even if this means just a good thought or sinning less etc...] This is where the main freedom of choice is to be found! It is also because of this reason that we must always have our ups and downs.

The Jews in the desert were on such a great spiritual level that they were called "The Generation of Knowledge." However, they only got to that level in the merit of Moshe who was able to teach and inspire even the lowest Jew that he could reach awesome spiritual heights. This is the meaning of when it says that the Maidservant (a low level Jew) at the Red Sea prophesied at the level of Yechezkal Ben Buzzi. But when the Jews fell, they chose not to strengthen themselves but rather to place the blame on Moshe and test G-d (ten times to be exact.) It is for this reason that the spiritual heights of that generation were not considered to be such a great feat.

May we all merit always looking for and revealing our connection with G-d, especially when it is most bleak.

Good Shabbos!