

Pathways

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with
Rebbe Nachman and his students.

FINDING A REAL TEACHER

By Ozer Bergman

“Moshe spoke to God, saying, ‘Let the Omnipotent God of all souls appoint a man over the community ... Let God’s community not be like sheep without a shepherd.’ God said to Moshe, ‘Take Yehoshua son of Nun, a man of spirit, and lay your hands upon him.’ ... Moshe did as God ordered him” (Numbers 27:15–17, 22).

“Each person must seek out a suitable teacher ... one who can elucidate and give him to understand ... perceptions of Godliness. This is something that requires a very, very great rabbi.”

Rebbe Nachman talks often about the concept of tzaddik. He explains what it is, why it’s important to a person’s Jewishness and to the Jewish people’s Jewishness. He tells the tzaddik wannabe that he’s undertaking a difficult project and he tells pretenders that they’re asking for trouble. He stresses that a Jew absolutely must have a rebbe who is a genuine tzaddik. He teaches, though, that it is so very hard to find a genuine tzaddik, and why. Not only that! He warns us ordinary folk that we have to be careful not to select, or even endorse, someone who is unqualified to serve in that capacity.

Although the tzaddik needs us, we need the tzaddik more. Here are renderings of some selections from Reb Noson’s *Likutey Tefilot*, prayers he wrote based on Rebbe Nachman’s teachings.

Master of the Universe! You know that only the greatest tzaddikim can give us an inkling of understanding Godliness because our spiritual state is low and pathetic. We need a guide and leader who is beyond outstanding. The patient is so sick! He must have the greatest doctor!

When we were in Egypt, slaves of slaves, morally corrupt and spiritually diseased, on the 49th rung of degradation, you sent Moshe Rabbeinu to save and redeem us. Now it’s even worse. Only someone Moses-like can possibly do the job of saving us. But not only

are we not privileged to attach ourselves to someone like that, You seem angry at us because You took from this world people we thought were candidates!

What are we going to do now? Especially someone like me, so spiritually diseased, crushed and broken. From head to toe I’m full of holes, wounded over and over. Won’t anyone have pity on me? Won’t anyone stand up for me? (*Likutey Tefilot* I, #30)

Please protect me, and save me, so that I don’t attach or affiliate myself with the wrong kind of rebbe, one whose behavior isn’t 100% what it should be, who talks the talk more than walking the walk. Help me to avoid his teachings, to not add his confusion to mine. In addition to everything else, following his advice sucks holiness out of my income which can lead to who-knows-what!

Better to help me find any and all tzaddikim whose teachings are 100% unadulterated holiness, whose teachings stem from good *ruach**, prophecy *ruach*, holy *ruach*. (*Likutey Tefilot* I, #54)

Omnipotent God of all souls, Ruler of Above and Below, Who holds in His hand the souls of the living and the dead: Pity me with Your brand of pity: Grant me a good and proper *ruach*, one that is for a sacred life. Let me bring into myself, from genuine tzaddikim, a *ruach* of real life, one that is sacred.

These tzaddikim are what life is about! They make life worth living! Grant me the privilege of carrying their name, of being associated with them, to do them favors, run their errands, assist with their projects. Let me be attached to them like a branch to a tree, so that I share in their growth. Allow me to spend as much time with them as I can. (*Likutey Tefilot* I, #66)

Amen.

agutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

— Based on *Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #111

* Ruach can mean breath, spirit or wind.

SIDEPATH

During his last months, Rebbe Nachman made great efforts to influence the nonreligious *maskilim*, followers of the secular Enlightenment movement who lived in the city of Uman, to return to religious observance. He would answer their questions and discuss their concerns with them for many hours.

After Rebbe Nachman’s funeral, Reb Noson wept profusely. Hirsch Leib, one of the *maskilim*, said to him, “You miss the Rebbe? We miss the Rebbe! If only the Rebbe had lived, he would have made us all into penitents and perfect *tzaddikim!*” (*Kochavey Ohr, Sippurim Niflaim*, pp. 3-7).

PARSHA PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

25:11 Pinchas turned aside My anger.

Pinchas Used His Zealousness to Protect the Jews

The justice of man is harsher than that of Heaven. Therefore, when Pinchas pursued Zimri the heavenly decree ceased (not only against Zimri, who had instigated the evil, but against all of the Jews who had sinned). But as soon as Pinchas killed Zimri, he contained his zealotry and sought forgiveness for the Jews (LM I, 241).

Thus, his execution of Zimri was an act of mercy.

27:7 Give them a hereditary portion.

The Source of a Man’s Wealth is His Wife

A man’s wealth is dependent upon the extent to which he honors his wife (cf. *Bava Metzia* 59a). This is because the spiritual plane that is the source of her soul is also the source of money. Thus, after a man dies, his inheritance goes to his children, because they are the branches of their mother’s soul (LM I, 69).

27:8 A man who has spirit within him.

Characteristics of the Tzaddik

A "man who has spirit within him" can resonate to the spirit of every individual (Rashi). This is a tzaddik who knows the correct response for each individual, and can draw the spirit of life down to him (LM I, 8:2).

Because the tzaddik is the spiritual source of all souls, he has the spirit to see each person as an individual (LM II, 72). He can arouse the spirit and mind within each individual (LM I, 29:2).

The tzaddik has a uniquely great spirit. Therefore, he is chosen to be a leader (LM II, 8:8). He possesses the spirit to overcome idolatry and haughtiness (LM I, 10:5). Sometimes, when a fire is about to burn out, the wind catches the embers and the fire begins to glow again. So too the spirit of the tzaddik can "catch the embers" of a dying soul and rekindle its flame (LM II, 9).

28:8 A fire offering, a pleasing fragrance.

Benefactor and Beneficiary

The Hebrew word for "fire," *IshE*, has the same spelling as the Hebrew word for "female," *IshA*.

The Kabbalists explain that God designed the world in such a way that there is always a benefactor and a beneficiary. For example, when a husband supports his wife, he is the benefactor and she is the beneficiary. When she gives him food to eat, she is the benefactor and he is the beneficiary. When the husband gives his wife seed, he is the benefactor, and when she conceives and bears a child, she becomes the benefactor of that child.

Conceptually, the benefactor is male and the beneficiary female. When God grants us life and sustenance, He is the Benefactor and we are the beneficiaries. But when we do God's will by performing mitzvot, learning Torah and praying, we give Him joy, and so we become the benefactors and God the Beneficiary (LM I, 15:5; *ibid.* I, 73).

The Burning Fire within Us

A person who burns with desire for God creates a spiritual fire that brings God satisfaction. However, he must be wary of his fiery passion and make sure that it is not the fire of his evil inclination (LM I, 41).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

10. When a person merits to attain all of the above, a great spiritual unification is thereby achieved in all the worlds; the "light of the moon becomes like the light of the sun" (Isaiah 30:26); and he attains grace. Then all his prayers and requests are accepted.

11. The evil inclination wants to make a person literally insane, God forbid. For one who sins is insane, as our Sages, of blessed memory, said, "A person does not commit a transgression unless he is possessed by a spirit of foolishness" (*Sotah* 3a). But how can the evil inclination possibly come to a person and suddenly make him crazy, God forbid? The way of the evil inclination is to first dress itself up in *mitzvot* and to mislead the person, as if it is inciting him to do a mitzvah. Afterward, it misleads him and incites him even more until the person comes to commit actual transgressions willfully, God forbid. This is precisely what happens with the insanity of a madman. [Little by little,] his mind becomes confused and deranged until he finally calls bad, "good" [and good, "bad"]. Nevertheless, he still retains some traces of intellect and sanity, for even in his craziness and senselessness, he, too, understands and knows that a person ought not to do such crazy things. Even so, he does them anyway. Because of this, two methods are required to cure the insane. First, it may be necessary to strike them in order to subdue their willful evil - so that at least it will not be pleasant for them to engage in their crazy behavior, and at least they will not do things that they themselves know to be madness and foolishness. Furthermore, it may also be necessary to place upon them [mystical, holy] names and amulets in order to banish from them the evil spirit which is confusing and deranging their minds, God forbid, to the point that they distort what is correct and call bad, "good" [and good, "bad"]. Similarly, when it comes to curing a person from the

insanity of the evil inclination, one must also employ these same two methods. First, it is necessary to subdue the sinner's tendency for willful evil, so that at least he will not do what he himself understands and knows to be evil and sinful, God forbid. Furthermore, it is necessary to banish from him the evil spirit, the spirit of foolishness, that dresses itself up in *mitzvot* and misleads him, as if it is inciting him to do a mitzvah. All this can be attained in its entirety only by engaging in Torah study, which includes both these methods.

12. The main way to connect oneself with the holy intellect is through straightforwardness and simplicity, as in, "Jacob was a simple man" (Genesis 25:27) - for Jacob merited to attain the light of the intellect to perfection.



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