

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

BE QUIET ALREADY

By Ozer Bergman

"God will fight for you, but you need to be silent" (Exodus 14:14).

Practicing silence results in trust in God (*The Aleph-Bet Book, Trust A:14*).

"Pharaoh drew near. The Israelites raised their eyes and—Egypt was coming after them. [The Israelites] were greatly frightened and [they] screamed out to God" (Exodus 14:10). After all the miracles they had witnessed, why were the Israelites scared? Yes, the Egyptian army was attaching them from the rear, their way was blocked by the sea in front and the desert to each side, but so what? During the previous year, they had seen from up close that nature was controlled by a greater force—God's will—and that the Egyptians were just flesh-and-blood human beings, neither gods nor demigods. Why the fear?

Every day, twice a day, we Jews declare that God is One. This quality of oneness, sometimes called "unity," is therefore something loved by God. The Egyptians who were marching towards the Israelites were thoroughly united (see Rashi) in their desire to reclaim the Israelites for slaves. Our ancestors knew that this trace of Godliness made it more likely that the Egyptians would succeed. Our ancestors also saw that "Egypt," the eponymous guardian angel of their previous owners, was on his way to attack them (see Rashi).

In addition, the Israelites were with a twinge of uncertainty. Maybe, just maybe, all the miracles they had witnessed weren't for their sake, to save them. Maybe they were to punish Pharaoh for his blasphemy, when he said, "Who is God that I should listen to Him?" (Exodus 5:2). Facing such powerful forces, one of them unknown, without seeing any way of escape, coupled with an element of doubt about their own status in God's eyes, our ancestors were terrified. Who wouldn't be?

But the Israelites, being Israelites, did what we Israelites/Jews do: they screamed out in prayer to God (see Rashi). However, there are times when a person's prayer lacks strength to effect the desired change. There are even times when a prayer lacks strength to pray

altogether! The classic example is King Chizkiyahu. When the mighty Assyrian army was knocking at Israel's door, Chizkiyahu rolled over in bed and said to God, "I don't have the strength to kill, pursue or pray. I'm going to sleep. You take care of it." God said He would, and He did (*Yalkut Shimoni #163; II Kings 19:35*).

Be careful! The silence Rebbe Nachman refers to is not the silence of depression, when one cannot talk. It is the silence of one who wants to talk, one who wants to ask, "Why me? Why now? What now?" but keeps himself in check. The Tcheriner Rav (a disciple of Reb Noson) suggests two sources for this teaching from *The Aleph-Bet Book*. One is the verse "Be silent before God and entrust yourself to Him" (Psalms 37:7), and the other is "I silenced my soul like a weaned infant with its mother...Yisrael, hope in God" (ibid., 131:2). We so much seek knowledge because we want and/or need to feel in control. But even the oldest and wisest of us is a baby in God's eyes—and arms.

We have to realize that every crisis we experience is to wean us from thinking that was good enough, but must now be improved. We have to be ready to be unenslaved from narrow Egyptian consciousness and to accept expanded Jewish consciousness. Our trusting silence leads to the greatest insight: we don't need answers because there are no questions.

It is told: On his return journey from the Land of Israel, Rebbe Nachman and his attendant were aboard a ship that was fast taking on water. Certain that the ship would soon sink, the Rebbe told his attendant to divide their money. Each would take half. "What for?" asked the attendant. "The fish can swallow us without the money!"

The Rebbe replied, "Do as I tell you. The Jews were in the Red Sea and did not drown. We are still on a ship..." (*Shevachey HaRan #21*).

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Sefer HaMidot, Bitachon
(The Aleph-Bet Book, Trust) A:14*

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

13:18 God led the people roundabout

SIDEPATH

You'd think that being told to be happy is superfluous. Who doesn't know this? Is it really necessary to coax, urge and encourage people to make sure they're happy? It's a natural desire, not one that has to be worked on. So you'd think. Or would you? Rebbe Nachman certainly didn't. "True joy is the hardest thing of all," he insisted. "You must force yourself to be happy all the time" (*Advice, Joy 35*).

How To Eat In Holiness

VayaSeV (ויטב, He led them roundabout) connotes *le-haSeiV* (להטב, to dine) (*Shemot Rabbah 20:18*).

A person should try to turn his physical eating into an act of holiness. He can accomplish this by following the same path as the Jews who traveled through the desert and crossed the Red Sea. *MidBaR* (מדבר, desert) is similar to *MeDaBer* (מדבר, speaker), for one must always speak words of faith. *Yam SuF* (ים סוף, Red Sea) refers to Malkhut, which is the *SoF* (סוף, end) of all the Divine illuminations and represents speech. To merit to speak words of faith, one must pursue holiness by being *chamushim* (armed) with a moral attitude—i.e., with a guarded covenant (LH VIII, p. 167a).

13:19 Moses took with him the bones of Joseph

We Need The Tzaddik's Advice

Moses represents *da'at*. Joseph corresponds to the tzaddik. This indicates that a person's mind is incomplete without the counsel of the tzaddik (LM I, 211).

14:15 Why are you crying out to Me?

Traveling Away From Trouble

When a person cries out to God, he is told to travel (LM I, 198).

If someone is in trouble and has no idea of how to flee, he cries out to God. Then he should engage in any act to escape his trouble, which constitutes a level of "travel." Since he has cried out to God, God will help him in whatever he does (*Oneg Shabbat p. 88*).

In addition, one should travel to the tzaddik, especially for Rosh HaShanah (ibid., p. 508), and the tzaddik will give him proper advice.

14:21 The waters split

We Can See Divine Providence Every Day

If someone truly wants to perform a mitzvah, he will certainly face obstacles. Yet he can overcome them all if he truly desires. For example, let's say he decides to travel to the Holy Land. If he arrives at the port and there is no ship, or if he has no money left to pay his fare, nevertheless, if he truly desires, he will see miracles happen that allow him to complete the mitzvah and make the trip. In certain ways, these miracles are as great as those that accompanied the Splitting of the Sea. Though that miracle was very great, it lasted only for a short time. If a person opens his eyes to the Divine Providence that brought him to where he is today, he will clearly see God's guiding hand every week and even every day! (LH I, p. 142a-284).

15:26 For I am God, your Healer

May It Be God's Will That We Be Well

The initial letters of the words *Ki Ani YHVH Rofekha* (כי אני יהוה רופאך, For I am God, your Healer) are identical to the initial letters of the words *Amen Kein Yehi Ratzon* (אמן כן יהי רצון, Amen, so may it be Your will) (LM II, 42).

16:7 For what are we?

Humility Makes Us Human

MaH (מה, what) has the same numerical value as *ADaM* (אדם, man). To be fully human, one must be humble (LM II, 82).

16:15 They didn't know what it was

One Who Attains Bitul Can Draw Torah Teachings

The Torah was given only to those who ate the manna (*Mekhilta, Beshalach* 17).

"They didn't know" refers to attaining the level of *bitul* (self-nullification before God). In such a state, one doesn't know about anything except God. A person who reaches the level of *bitul* can then draw Torah teachings. Thus, the people who ate the manna and attained the level of "not knowing" were able to draw understanding of Torah (LH II, p. 110a).

16:25 Eat it today, because today is a Shabbat to God

Eating For Shabbat's Sake

A person should eat on Shabbat not because he is hungry from the previous day or because he wishes to remain satiated for the following day. Rather, he should eat solely for the sake of Shabbat (LM I, 125).

17:16 God will wage war against Amalek in every generation

Amalek Shows A New Face To Each Generation

Every generation has its own atheisms—its "new" ways to steer people away from God. Therefore the battle rages in each generation (LH, VIII, p. 75b). Reb Noson adds that in every generation, Amalek assumes a new appearance, a new face. We must encounter him in every generation, until Mashiach comes (ibid., I, p. 148).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

9 — "The deeps covered them" (Exodus 15:5) (continued)

4. When a person is about to pray, extraneous thoughts and impure forces come to him and surround him [so that] he remains in darkness and is unable to pray. The best measure against this is to make certain to say the words [of the prayers] honestly. Then those words that leave your mouth in sincerity will cleave an opening for you in the darkness where you are trapped, and you will merit to pray well. Understand this point very well, because it is a fundamental rule and foundation in all facets of the service of God, and everything depends on this. Even if a person is sunken, God forbid, in the deepest darkness and spiritual impurity, and he is imprisoned and enclosed within layer upon layer of them surrounding him on every side, and they do not allow him to draw close to holiness—his primary means of rectification is [simply] to orient himself toward the truth. He must fix his eyes on the absolute truth and seek nothing but the truth. Similarly, in his prayers, even though he cannot pray at all because of the deep darkness that surrounds him, he should nonetheless be certain just to speak his words honestly, however low a level this may be. For example, he might say truthfully, "God, save me!" And even though he cannot [even] say that with the appropriate enthusiasm and arousal, he should nevertheless force himself to at least say the words sincerely and simply,

according to who he is. Then he will merit to see the openings in the darkness.

For if a person sincerely desires the truth, there is no darkness in the world that can obscure it for him, because truth is the light of God Himself. While falsehood drives away God's light, so to speak—since one who speaks falsehood will not stand in God's sight (cf. Psalms 101:7)—with truth, the Holy One, Blessed be He, abides with a person. God's greatest desire is solely for truth, and according to the level of truth [that a person has], so does the Holy One, Blessed be He, abide with him and illuminate for him a way out of the darkness and the impure forces that are preventing him from his prayers and devotions. Through this method, the truth will shine its light for a person so that he will be able to pray with God's great kindness, and in turn, he will rectify and sustain all the worlds.



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