

## PREPARE TO DIE

By Ozer Bergman

"There was no water for the people...The people contended with Moshe. 'If only we had died when our brothers had died, before God! Why did you bring God's congregation to this desert? So that we...should die?'" (Numbers 20:2-4).

Death runs throughout this week's Torah reading. The ashes of the Red Heifer. Miriam's death. The people's death wish when they had no water. The sentence against Moshe and Aharon. Aharon's death. The confrontations with Edom, Canaan, and Sichon and Og. The snakes.

Make no mistake about it. The day will come when you and I will be dead, excuse me, will have "passed on." We won't be living on Planet Earth. This is an unpleasant fact to confront, but ignoring it won't make it go away. Preparing for it will prove beneficial because we *will* be alive somewhere else. Our quality of life "there" depends on what we do here.

Rebbe Nachman was, in a manner of speaking, a time/space traveler. He visited dimensions of reality that we have heard about but are not familiar with. He once reported the following:

In Jerusalem there is a synagogue to which all the dead people on earth are brought. As soon as someone dies, he is brought there to be judged as to where his place should be...In this synagogue, this court sits in judgment and determines a person's place. Some unfortunates are found to have no place at all. They are destroyed and cast into the hollow sling.

When the dead are brought there, they are brought in clothing. Sometimes a dead person's clothes are defective. His garment may be missing a sleeve or a hem. Everything depends on his actions while alive, because his postmortem clothing corresponds to his deeds. His verdict—and his place—depend on the clothes in which he is judged.

One dead person was brought there completely naked, with no clothes at all. His verdict was the hollow sling and destruction, may God spare us. However, a tzaddik came and threw one of his garments over the deceased. The court took exception, because why should a dead man be

saved by being given clothing that is not his? The court asked the tzaddik to justify himself.

The tzaddik replied, "I have a mission for this man, so I am entitled to outfit him. A nobleman may send his servant to another nobleman. The servant has not gone and he asks, 'Why haven't you left?' 'I don't have the right clothes for going to the nobleman in question. He is very great and it is impossible to go there in clothes that are not respectable.' The master answers, 'Wear an outfit of mine and hurry to do the job.' Similarly, I need to send this dead man on a mission. That's why I gave him one of my garments." Thus, the tzaddik saved the dead man from the bitter punishment of the hollow sling.

The Rebbe also said that we all recognize the awful pity of being poor, to be without shoes and clothing or food or drink. So we pursue worldly things. But, he said, one who has foresight sees the pity on naked souls in the afterlife. Pity won't help them there. In this world, we can take up a collection and buy clothing for someone who lacks it. But not there. There the clothing one needs is Torah and good deeds. No pity can provide that there. "But a person worthy of connecting to a genuine tzaddik can run to him and take from him some."

So one way to prepare ourselves is to have a proper attachment to a great tzaddik. Another way the Rebbe suggested is this:

"In the World to Come, many are on the outside. They wail, 'Give us something to eat!' Others answer, 'Here is food and drink. Eat! Drink!' 'No! We can't use such food. We need the food of Torah and devotion.'

"Other outsiders are naked. 'Give us something to cover ourselves with!' Again, others approach. 'Here is clothing.' 'No! Such clothing is absolutely useless to us. We need *mitzvot* and good deeds to cover ourselves with.'"

The Rebbe then said, "Happy is the one who is worthy of eating many chapters of Mishnah, drinking a number of Psalms, and clothing himself with some *mitzvot*."

*a gutn Shabbos!  
Shabbat Shalom!*

— Based on *Chayei Moharan* #102 (Tzaddik #228) and *Sichot HaRan* (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom) #23

## SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman teaches: People say that there are two worlds, this world and the World to Come. We all believe that there is a World to Come. This world may also exist somewhere. However, with all the suffering that we see in the world and what people must endure, where we are now must be Gehinnom! (*Likutey Moharan* II, 119).

Reb Noson told one of his followers, "If you were constantly happy, you wouldn't see Gehinnom" (*Kokhavye Or*, p. 78).

## PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

**19:2 Let them bring to you a completely red cow that has no blemish and that has never borne a yoke**

***We Can Gain Purification Through Our Prayers***

The Red Heifer purified the Jews from the worst impurities. After the destruction of the Temple, the service of the Red Heifer was annulled. Today, we are able to gain forgiveness through our prayers. The cow in particular represents prayer, as it is written, "We will offer [the words of] our lips instead of cows" (Hosea 14:3). Thus, the purification ceremony of the Red Heifer is reflected today in our prayers.

"A completely red cow"—the color red indicates judgments, for red is the Supernal Color of Gevurah, which is associated with judgment. The *Zohar* (III, 180b) teaches that the power of the Red Heifer to purify stems from Gevurah.

"That has no blemish"—a person must turn to God in prayer and accept God's judgments as righteous. When he does so, he diminishes the intensity of the judgments and attains a state of being unblemished.

"That has never borne a yoke"—one must have complete faith in God, free of the yoke of other nations' idolatrous beliefs.

"Cedar wood, hyssop and crimson wool"—these refer to countering the voices of the

wicked during one's prayers. These "voices" are the sound of foolishness, the sound of philosophers and atheists, and the sound of vilification and mockery. When one counters these voices, he can pray sincerely and properly, nullifying himself before God. The acts of slaughtering the Red Heifer, burning it to ash and gathering those ashes also help counter these three types of sounds.

"Burning ash"—this refers to nullifying one's evil traits, drawing wicked people to serve God, and attaching one's prayers to those of the tzaddikim.

The *Zohar* (III, 76b) notes that the Red Heifer is associated with the number 7—e.g., the Torah mentions seven immersions (of the body or garment) in this passage, and the Kohen is mentioned seven times. Seven is similarly the aspect of prayer, as it is written, "Seven times a day I praise You" (Psalms 119:164) (LM I, 55:3-6).

### 19:3 Someone should slaughter it in his presence

#### *By Celebrating The Three Festivals, We Draw The Purity Of The Red Heifer*

"Slaughtering" refers to Pesach, when the Jewish people brought the Paschal lamb.

"Burning" corresponds to Shavuot, when we received the Torah in fire.

"Gathering the ashes" corresponds to Sukkot, the Festival of Ingathering.

By celebrating the Three Festivals, we draw upon ourselves the purity of the Red Heifer (LH IV, p. 224).

### 19:14 This is the Torah, a man

#### *A Person Must Give Up His Material Lusts In Order To Attain Torah*

The Torah remains only with someone who "kills himself" over it (*Berakhot* 63b).

*AtZMO* (עצמו, himself) alludes to *AtZMiyuto* (עצמיותו, his essence)—i.e., his evil traits and evil desires, the source of all the blemishes etched onto *AtZMOTav* (עצמותיו, his bones).

A person who "kills" his material lusts in order to attain Torah will attain the light of Torah wisdom, which purges the evil traits etched onto his bones (LM I, 101:3).

### 20:13 The Waters of Strife

#### *Through Questions And Answers, We Learn To Serve God*

"Waters" refers to strife (cf. *Sanhedrin* 7a).

When employed properly, arguments can serve as a means for coming to recognize God. Every series of questions and answers can result in teachings on how to serve God. Thus, the "Waters of Strife" rectify arguments (LM I, 61:5).

### 21:14 As an outermost boundary, I have given the rivers of Arnon

#### *The Battles Of Torah Learning Are Actually Profound Peace*

*Et vaHeV be-SuFaH* (את והב בסופה, I have given an outermost boundary)—they did not move from there until they became *OHaVim* (אוהבים, lovers) (*Kiddushin* 30b).

Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will, in the end (*SoFaH*, סופה) prove constructive (*Avot* 5:17).

Even though Torah scholars battle each other over God's words, in the end, they are friends, because their battle is for the sake of God and eventually brings them to attain *da'at* (knowledge of God). Although a battle for the sake of Heaven may appear hostile, it is actually an expression of profound peace (LM I, 56:8).

## KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

### 14 — To Draw Peace (continued)

2. When people who are outside of holiness draw closer and come into holiness—be they proselytes who convert to Judaism or formerly alienated Jews who return to the faith [since the latter group, like converts, were also once "outside"]—this constitutes God's greatest honor and "the Name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is exalted and honored above and below." Honor is then elevated to its root, which is holy awe, and this, in turn, brings peace into the world.

3. Through the Torah, it is possible to draw close converts and those who return to the faith, and to let them know what path they should take.

4. By studying Torah in holiness, a person awakens Jewish sinners and proselytes to

repentance. But the only way to merit this is through the greatest humility and lowliness of spirit. With these qualities, a person merits [true] Torah study, until he is able [with his study] to illuminate and awaken the roots of the souls of the Jewish people—even those that are many miles away. This also applies to actual Jewish sinners, "as long as they are still called 'Jewish'—for although they have sinned, they are still Jews" (*Sanhedrin* 44a). Through Torah study, it is possible to shine light to them from the root of their souls to wherever they may be, and in this way, they come to repentance.

5. Each person—particularly a Torah scholar—must see to it that he is able to illuminate and to draw blessing from his Torah study into the root of the [Jewish] souls—that is, into the "original, first thought [of creation]." By this means, he will be able to draw close and to awaken wicked [Jews] and converts to repentance—even those who are far away from him [at the time he is studying]. Then he will also merit to have his own son be a Torah scholar. But when he does not study in this fashion, his son will not be a Torah scholar (see *Nedarim* 81a).

6. A person cannot merit Torah except through humility, and he must break his pride in the four categories of humility. He must diminish himself before those who are greater than he; before his equals; before those who are inferior to him; and even if he himself is the smallest of the small, he must diminish himself according to his own level by considering himself to be less than he actually is.



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