

Dvar Torah for Reb Noson's Yortzeit

Based on *Likutey Halakhot*

On *motzei Shabbat* (Saturday night) of Chanukah I had the privilege of making a *siyum* on Reb Noson's *Likutey Halakhot*. (A *siyum* is a festive meal in celebration of completing the study of a Torah work.) For those who may have forgotten, Reb Noson was Rebbe Nachman's major disciple. Rebbe Nachman himself said, "If not for my Nossele, not one page of my works would remain." Our debt to Reb Noson is incalculable.

This year (5762) the secular date of Reb Noson's *yortzeit* (anniversary of demise) is Monday night, the 24th of December and the following day. The Hebrew date is the 10th of Tevet, a day on which we fast in commemoration of the breaching of Jerusalem's walls, the beginning of the end of the Beit HaMikdash (holy Temple).

In honor of the *yortzeit* I wanted to share just two of the zillions of lessons I learned from *Likutey Halakhot*.

The first is a lesson that Reb Noson writes in about four or five places. "There is more to be said on the subject, but it was forgotten because I didn't write it down in time." Reb Noson is pointing out two things. One: Our Torah insights are valuable. Even if no one ever reads any of them, they are precious to Hashem (God) and that alone makes them worth recording. In addition, the very act of writing, moving the air with the motions of our hand as we record holy thoughts, makes invaluable rectifications (*Likutey Moharan* I, 61:2). Two: Torah thoughts are difficult to catch. One has to be ready to "trap" them by writing them down as soon as possible (but not on Shabbat or in the middle of praying, of course). See *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #58.

The second lesson concerns the nature of *Likutey Halakhot*—*techilato hitchazkut v'sofa hitchazkut*; its beginning is encouragement and its conclusion is encouragement. *Likutey Halakhot* begins with an exposition on Rebbe Nachman's famous lesson *Azamra* (*Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #282), in which the Rebbe teaches the importance of looking for, searching for and finding good points not only in others, but in one's self, as well.

Likutey Halakhot concludes with an explanation of one of the final laws in *Shulchan Arukh* (Jewish Code of Law), namely that for safety's sake one is forbidden both of the following: to have in his home a shaky ladder and to keep a bad (i.e., viscous) dog. What is the connection between these examples of maintaining a safe home-environment?

Reb Noson connects this *halakhah* (law) to Rebbe Nachman's Lesson #22 (*Likutey Moharan* I). Rebbe Nachman teaches that there are two types of *azut*. One type of *azut* is the boldness and courage it takes to overcome the challenges of one's temptations and poor character. This *azut* is holy. The other type of *azut* is the brazenness that demands that our needs and wants be satisfied, fully and now. This *azut* is anti-holy.

One may not have a shaky ladder in the house. When it comes to making progress in Judaism (that is, one's connection to Hashem), one has to have a good strong ladder, in order to climb up rung by rung.

One must not think of himself as a sadsack, a loser or a flop. One has to exercise kosher *azut* to climb to the next rung.

The danger, of course, is that kosher *azut* may metamorphose into the wrong sort of *azut*. One is forbidden to keep a vicious dog in the house because such a dog may not only bite; it may cause irreparable harm.

There were a number of times in the course of studying *Likutey Halakhot* that I came across a page and thought to myself, that if a person would only fulfill the advice contained on that page he would be among the greatest of tzaddikim. In the merit of Reb Noson and Rebbe Nachman, may we all be worthy of properly studying, teaching and fulfilling the advice and suggestions contained in *Likutey Halakhot* and may we see the coming of the true Mashiach, soon, in our lifetime. Amen.

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