

Dvar Torah for Parshat Bo 5764

Based on Likutey Moharan I, Lesson #8

God said to Moshe, "Come to Pharaoh..." (Exodus 10:1).

COME to Pharaoh? I would have thought, "Get as far away as you possibly can from that guy!" Pharaoh was a cruel, nasty individual -- drowning babies, bathing in their blood, enslaving people (not only Israelites) under inhumane conditions -- and an ungrateful ego-maniac to boot. Why should anyone have to "come to Pharaoh"? "Run away!" is more like it.

The world was created with *ruach* (breath, spirit, wind) -of-life (Psalms 33:6). To the extent that this *ruach* fills a person, to that extent is his life whole. the holy Zohar teaches us that the *ruach* of God which animates creation "overs over the waters" of the Torah (Genesis 1:2; Tikkuney Zohar #36). The *ruach*, when it is present, resides in the heart. When it is absent, the pain is the heart's.

Esav, Pharaoh's spiritual grandfather, also provides a *ruach*. His, however, is a stormy one, powerful for a while, but which ultimately peters out. As long as it lasts, one taking his cue from Esav feels that he has plenty. Yet, as we know from experience, when such a wind dies out we feel enslaved to Pharaoh, missing something and forced to march to his tune.

Pharaoh hardening his heart is one of the themes of the plagues. God told Moshe Rabbeinu (our teacher) that Pharaoh would harden his heart and that at a certain point He Himself would harden it. If we allow Pharaoh-*ruach* to continuously refill our heart, it grows colder, harder, insensitive.

What is one to do? Tzaddikim, due to their constant and unceasing struggles for spiritual growth, are directly connected to the waters of the Torah. One who desires to vanquish his suffering and become whole -- to become filled with sacred *ruach* -- must attach himself to such a tzaddik and adhere to his directions. The first step, which one may take as many times as necessary, is to decide to follow the tzaddik's advice. Then breath in deeply the air of Torah and blow away the storms of Pharaoh.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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It's very good to speak out your heart to God
as you would speak to a true good friend.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov