

Dvar Torah for Parshat Mishpatim 5764

Based on "Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom" #6

"Do not allow a witch to live" (Exodus 22:17).

Rebbe Nachman compares the *yetzer hara* (Evil Urge/Inclination) to a prankster running around with his hand closed, as if wrapped around something. "What am I holding?" he asks. He runs on and we run after him. Some have idea that triggers their pursuit; others are ignited by passion.

Yet, when we finally catch up to him and he opens his hand, the *yetzer hara* provides us with nothing. His hand is empty and we remain unsatisfied. Silly fools that we are, we continue to run after him.

One of the tools of magic and witchcraft is mis-direction. The very question, "What have I got in my hand?" is a lie that plants a seed of discontent. "There is something I'm missing." Till he asked the question, did we really think so? Unlikely. Did he say there is something in his hand? No. Yet, when he runs by, he unsettles our minds and we don't take even a moment to consider if there is anything we lack and, if indeed we do, does he have it.

So we take off, in hot, sometimes desperate, pursuit. And lo and behold! we catch him. We get him to open his hand and nothing, nothing, nothing. It doesn't have to be that way. The witch can be put to rest, permanently.

We have to become aware that abracadabra and hocus-pocus, the smoke and mirrors of images and pleasures consumed don't and can't satisfy. They may promise to satisfy our skin or our ego, but they never promise to soothe the soul. We make that leap of misfaith.

We need to generate some thought of holiness, a wise thought; and/or some passion for helping and doing the right thing. Where does one get such a thought, how can one generate some of that good passion? The same way King David did -- ask for it. Be a noodge if you have to. Then we need to pursue the One Who actually can -- and does -- provide satisfaction. "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living being" (Psalms 145:16).

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!