

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

BOUNCING BACK... AND FORWARD

By Ozer Bergman

"All of you are standing here today" (Deuteronomy 29:9).

Rashi comments: "Like 'today' which is, which gets dark and which shines, [God] has shone on you in the past and will shine on you in the future. The curses and the suffering [of Deuteronomy 28] maintain and sustain you.* They help keep you going with [God]" (Rashi, Deuteronomy 29:12).

Oyyy! Finally. Finally! The last Shabbat of the year. You made it! There were certainly a good number of ups and downs, emotional, physical, maybe even spiritual. It's most likely that some of those downs were avoidable. Review what happened, see if you can avoid your mistake in the future, do *teshuvah* (return to God) and then—forget about it! Don't let the past haunt your future. Doing so ruins and deprives you of upcoming *mitzvot*. What Rebbe Nachman would do is forget the past and not let it disturb his future (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #26*).

I hear some of you. "Hey, Ozer! Did you forget? Rosh HaShanah is also called *Yom HaZikaron*, the Day of Remembering, not Forgetting." No, I didn't, and correct, it is. What we need to remember is the future, the goal towards which Creation is moving. That means we need to forget the stuff that might keep us from the goal.

Using memory selectively is part of what it takes to be resilient, and Rebbe Nachman was a model of resiliency. He once said that even if, God forbid, he would commit the worst crime in the Torah, it wouldn't throw him—at all.** He would be a kosher Jew just as he was before, on the same level. How? By doing *teshuvah*.

The Midrash (*Tanchuma, Nitzavim #1*) teaches us that a Jew's natural response to tragedy is surrender and prayer. The *Likutey Moharan* (II, 7:3) tells us that the biggest tragedy is a Jew weighed down by

his not living according to the Torah. So we need to be resilient, we need to know what lessons to learn from our past, and move on to being bigger Jews.

We have to quickly move "today" from its darkness to light. But we also have to know that we can't force things. Reb Noson writes that this concept of "ready and waiting" can't be satisfactorily spelled out in writing. On the one hand, a person has to be nimble and quick to do any *mitzvah* that comes his way. After all, you're only alive *now*. No one knows what obstacle may suddenly materialize, getting between you and the *mitzvah*.

On the other hand, it happens that there's something you must do for your Jewishness, but it's eluding you. Don't be discouraged. Remain patient. Use the waiting time to build up your thirst for your immediate goal (the *mitzvah*) and the long-range goal (closeness to God). Reb Noson tells us that this was Rebbe Nachman's *modus operandi*, doing what *mitzvah* he could as soon as he could,*** and longing for the *mitzvah* that he couldn't yet do. Worked for him. It'll work for us, too. Amen.

* By toughening us up when we survive them, and by making us smart enough to avoid them in the first place!

** We really have to think about this a lot more to better understand what he meant.

*** Reb Noson reports that when Rebbe Nachman had this-worldly business to attend to, he never procrastinated and would take care of it immediately.

*agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Chayei Moharan (Tzaddik)*
#431 and #453

**Breslov Research Institute
wishes all our readers a
good and sweet new year**

כתיבה וחתימה טובה

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman: The Evil One is like a prankster running through a crowd showing his tightly-closed hand. No one knows what he is holding. He goes up to each one and asks, "What do you suppose I have in my hand?"

Each one imagines that the closed hand contains just what he desires most. They all hurry and run after the prankster. Then, when he has tricked them all into following him, he opens his hand. It is completely empty.

The same is true of the Evil One. He fools the world, tricking it into following him. All men think that his hand contains what they desire. In the end, he opens his hand. There is nothing in it and no desire is ever fulfilled (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #6*).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

29:9 All of you are standing today before God your Lord

Suffering Strengthens A Person

Our Sages teach that when the Jews heard Moshe pronouncing the curses (Deuteronomy 28), they felt dismayed and overwhelmed. Moshe told them: "You have sinned, yet 'you are standing today before God your Lord.' It is precisely the curses and suffering that strengthen you and make it possible for you to stand" (Rashi).

The vilification and opposition that the *tzaddikim* and their followers endure, whether in the material or spiritual realm, are beneficial for them (LM I, 181).

When We Pray, We Connect Ourselves To The Holy Land

"Standing" refers to prayer. When a person prays, he is standing before God.

"Before God your Lord" refers to the Holy Land (LM I, 44).

Thus, when a person prays before God, he draws onto himself the sanctity of the Holy Land.

30:2 You will return to God

Shabbat Brings Us Back to God

Ve-ShaV'Ta (ושבת, you will return) is similar to *ShaBbaT* (שבת), and Shabbat is compared to the World to Come. The principal reward of Shabbat and the World to Come is an ever-greater recognition of God. This is the nature of the “return to God” (LM I, 6:3).

30:6 Then God your Lord will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants

Repentance Eradicates The Foolishness In One's Heart

Targum Onkelos translates this verse as “Then God your Lord will do away with the foolishness of your heart.”

When a person repents, he eradicates his foolishness and attains a pure heart. Then he can pray with a clear mind (LM I, 76).

30:15 See. I have placed before you today life and good

Face The World With A Smile

Lefanekha (לפניך, before you) may be translated as “to your face.” Depending on how God shows His countenance, that is how the world receives life and bounty or otherwise.

The same is true of the tzaddik. Depending on his countenance, he can bestow benefit or otherwise (LM I, 172).

And this is dependent on how a person “faces” others. Because the face is invested with such power, we should always smile when we greet people, for doing so can lift others' spirits and revitalize them (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #43).

31:14 Summon Yehoshua; stand in the Tent of Meeting, and I will command him

The Disciple Draws Down The Tzaddik's Teachings

The letter *aleph* (א) consists of an upper point, a lower point and a center line.

Moshe represents the upper point of the *aleph*; his disciple, Yehoshua, represents the lower point; and the Tent of Meeting corresponds to the center line, which joins the two points together.

When a disciple is attuned to the tzaddik, then even after the tzaddik passes away and is subsumed in the Infinite One, the disciple can draw down an illumination from God so that it is as if God is commanding him. In this way, he transmits the tzaddik's teachings (LM I, 6:7).

31:21 For it will not be forgotten from the mouth of his offspring

The Tzaddik's Torah Will Lead The Jews Out Of Exile

Pondering the intensification of the Roman oppression and the impending stages of exile, the Sages declared that a time would come when the Torah would be forgotten. But Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai declared that the Torah would never be forgotten, and he cited this verse as a proof-text (*Shabbat* 138b).

Rabbi Shimon's use of the present verse was not incidental. The final letters of the Hebrew words of the phrase *ki lo tishakhaCh mipiY zarO* (כי לא תשכח מפי זרעו), for it will not be forgotten from the mouth of his offspring) spell *YOChAI* (יוחאי), indicating that through the seed of Yochai—i.e., Rabbi Shimon—the Torah will not be forgotten.

In making this promise, Rabbi Shimon stood alone against the leading Sages of his time. But he was correct. And furthermore, in the merit of the *Zohar*, which Rabbi Shimon revealed, the Jews will eventually leave the exile (*Zohar* III, 124b) (LM I, Preface).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

5 — “With trumpets and the sound of the shofar” (Psalms 98:6) (continued)

3. The essence of joy is in the heart. But it is impossible for the heart to rejoice until one removes the crookedness in his heart, and he attains “straightness of heart.” Then he merits joy. The crookedness in the heart is straightened out by means of “thunder”—that is, by praying with energy and

enthusiasm, with fear and love of God, and intense concentration.

4. One merits joy by praying with energy and enthusiasm, and with great fear and love of God.

5. A person must pray with all his might and utter his prayers with great energy. This causes his voice to strike his mind, and then he will be able to concentrate. In other words, his heart will hear what he is saying. In this way, he will merit to straighten out the crookedness in his heart and come to joy, to the point that he performs *mitzvot* with great joy over the *mitzvot* themselves. Then he will be able to clothe his prayer in stories and to nullify all the decrees, even after they have been finalized.

6. A person who hears the shofar blasts on Rosh HaShanah from a God-fearing, pious man certainly need not worry about “thunder” the entire year.

7. The way to fully arrive at the “thunder” mentioned above is by clearing the mind of all kinds of secular wisdom, foreign thoughts and evil ruminations.



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