

## Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and his students

### MAKE IT, DON'T BREAK IT!

By Ozer Bergman

Rightly or wrongly, there is a certain sense of apprehension that adheres to the months of Tammuz and Menachem-Av. This is due to the fact that the three-week period of *Bein HaMetzarim* (literally, "Between the Straits"; also known as "The Three Weeks") begins in the second half of Tammuz and continues through the first ten (yes, ten\*) days of Menachem-Av. In this period of mourning the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* (Holy Temple) and our long, long exile that resulted from it (and that still continues, to our regret and shame), many of us wonder how we can mourn a "loss," the absence of something we never had. Although we can't answer that question, we nonetheless sense that something is missing and we are uneasy.

While it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to understand the absence of the *Beit HaMikdash* and what its immediate loss entails, there are many results that we can understand and grieve—and do something about.

There are two things we need to know about Tammuz. It was on the 17<sup>th</sup> of this month that Moshe Rabbeinu broke the *Luchot*, the Tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were engraved. He broke them after he descended from Mount Sinai and saw the Jews' revelry while worshipping the Golden Calf. Rebbe Nachman teaches that when the *Luchot* were broken, Tammuz lost its *vav* (ו, going from תמוז (Temoz) to תמוז (Temoz) (*Likutey Moharan* I, 217). Losing the *vav* means we are liable to forget the Torah we have learned. This is already reason enough to cry—since any kernel of Torah knowledge connects us that much more to the Divine, its disappearance weakens the connection. But it can get worse, God forbid.

Forgetting Torah can lead to losing her. Because the Torah is not just information. It's God-given advice on how to live a

Godly life. God forbid, forgetting the mitzvah of "Love your friend as [you love] yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) leads to not loving your fellow Jew, then to being jealous of him, and finally to hating him for no good reason. Such *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred) is the cause of our exile (*Yoma* 9b). As perpetrator and victim, almost every one of us has tasted the ephemeral sweetness of *sinat chinam* and the bitterness of its long-lasting sting.

*Sinat chinam* has a number of other deleterious effects. We all know the confused "logic" of frustration and hurt feelings. Rancor prevents us from helping others. Rejection creates destructive rivalry. Bitterness creates feelings of superiority. All of these combine and break the *Luchot* again and again, because when we lack love and respect for our fellow Jew, we move away from the Torah. Why? Because the Torah is not automatically yours, or mine, or any Jew's: "It is not your inheritance" (*Avot* 1:17). It is *ours*, but only when we are a community: "Moshe commanded us the Torah; it is an inheritance of the community of Yaakov" (Deuteronomy 33:4).

Receiving the Torah required that we be as one person, united (Rashi on Exodus 19:2). Today as well, we deny our individual selves and our national self access to the Torah and her advice if we fail to properly love our fellow Jews. So we have to be spiritually smarter and bigger to resist all the specious reasoning and temptations that lead to making a Golden Calf. We have to restore to Tammuz her *vav*, the *vav hachibur*, the connecting-*vav*, so our hearts, our people and our Torah will be restored, swiftly and soon, with the coming of Mashiach. Amen.

\* The 10<sup>th</sup> of Av is also touched by mourning, in part because it was on this date that the *Beit HaMikdash* actually burned down.

a gutn Shabbos!  
Shabbat Shalom!

—Based on *Likutey Halakhot*, *Pikadon* 5:14

### SIDEPATH

For some 26 pages, Reb Noson takes the concepts of joy and happiness and relates them to every individual, for every day, in every situation. He begins his discourse as follows:

A person should know that the Rebbe's lesson on attaining the loftiest of levels, the Great Light of the Infinite, is applicable to every Jew who performs the *mitzvot* with joy. The Torah was not given to the angels. It was given to us, to those of flesh and blood. Even we can attain the greatest of all levels ... simply by being HAPPY (*Likutey Halakhot*, *Hoda'ah* 6).

### PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

**25:11 Phineas...turned back My anger...so that I did not destroy the Israelites in My vengeance**

***Phineas Rescued The Jews From Judgment***

The justice of man is harsher than that of Heaven. Therefore, when Phineas pursued Zimri, the Divine judgments ceased—not only against Zimri, who had instigated the evil, but against all of the Jews who had sinned. But Phineas actually did a great favor for the Jews, for he tricked the Divine judgments into thinking that he would exact even greater vengeance than they, and possibly even destroy the Jews altogether, God forbid.

In fact, Phineas was a most compassionate person. His goal was not to destroy the entire nation, but only the instigator of the evil, which would be sufficient to turn away God's anger and bring an end to the Divine judgments. By assuming the mantle of vengeance, Phineas actually eased the judgments from the Jews, so that God could say, "I did not destroy the Jews in My vengeance." Phineas transformed *ChaMaTI* (חמתי, My anger) into *MaChiTI* (מחיתי, I have wiped away), as in "I have wiped away your sins like a cloud" (Isaiah 44:22) (LM I, 241).

**26:55 (Hebrew)**

**"But the land should be divided only by lot. They will inherit the land according to the names of their father's tribes."**

## **God Can Help Us Make The Right Choices**

Not only did the lot fall according to *ruach ha-kodesh* (Divine inspiration), but the lot itself called out: "I, the lot, have come up for this portion for this tribe" (Rashi on Numbers 26:54).

All men possess freedom of choice and are enjoined to choose wisely. As this often proves difficult, one can solicit help from Above to make the correct choices (LH II, p. 240-121a).

## **27:7 Give them a hereditary portion**

### **A Man's Wealth Is Dependent On How He Honors His Wife**

A man's wealth is dependent on the extent to which he honors his wife (cf. *Bava Metzia* 59a). This is because the spiritual plane that is the source of her soul is also the source of money. Thus, after a man dies, his inheritance goes to his children, because they are the branches of their mother's soul (LM I, 69:1).

## **27:18 A man in whom there is spirit**

### **Describing The Tzaddik**

A "man in whom there is spirit" can resonate to the spirit of every individual (Rashi).

This is the tzaddik, who knows the correct response for each individual and can draw down the spirit of life to him (LM I, 8:2).

Because the tzaddik is the spiritual source of all souls, he has the spirit to see each person as an individual (ibid., II, 72).

He can arouse the spirit and mind within each individual (ibid., I, 29:2).

The tzaddik has a uniquely great spirit, which is a form of a spirit of prophecy. Therefore he is chosen to be a leader (ibid., II, 8:8).

The tzaddik possesses the spirit to overcome idolatry and haughtiness (ibid., I, 10:5).

Sometimes when a fire is about to burn out, the wind catches the embers and the flame begins to glow again. So too, the spirit of the tzaddik can "catch the embers" of a soul weighed down by depression and rekindle its joy and desire for God (ibid., II, 9).

## **28:4 (Hebrew)**

**"Prepare one sheep in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon."**

## **One Who Can't Pray Should Host A Torah Scholar**

The daily prayers were established to parallel the daily sacrifices (*Berakhot* 26b).

Whoever hosts Torah scholars in his home is considered as if he offered the daily sacrifice (ibid., 10b).

When a person finds it difficult to pray (i.e., to offer his "daily sacrifice"), he should engage in its analogue and extend hospitality to a Torah scholar, which rectifies his prayer (LM I, 209).

## **28:26 On the day of the first fruits, when you bring a new-grain offering to God on your Shavuot festival, it will be a holy festival for you**

### **Give Charity First**

*BiKuRim* (בכורים, first fruits) is similar to *BeKHoR* (בכור, firstborn). A person can make a new beginning by giving "a new grain offering"—i.e., charity. Charity is so powerful a mitzvah that it can open all the doors to success (LM II, 4:13).

## **29:1 It will be a day of shofar-blowing for you**

### **We Must Act With Simplicity Before And After Torah Study**

When we blow the shofar, first we blow a simple sound (*tekiah*), then a staccato sound of nine notes (*teruah*), and then a *tekiah* once again. *TeRuAH* (תרועה, shofar-blowing) implies the Torah, as its letters can be rearranged to spell *TORAH Ayin* (תורה), indicating the "seventy faces of Torah" (the letter *ayin* [ע] has the numerical value of 70). The Torah was given only after the shofar was sounded (Exodus 19:16), teaching that one cannot attain the Torah unless he has both the *tekiah* and the *teruah*—i.e., he conducts himself with simplicity both before and after his Torah study. Similarly, on Rosh HaShanah, we blow the *tekiah*, a simple sound, before and after the *teruah* (LH I, p. 240a).

## **KITZUR L"M WEEKLY**

### **14 — To Draw Peace (continued)**

9. Even after the Jewish sinners have been illuminated and awakened to repentance, they are still very far indeed from holiness

and may experience a great many obstacles. These people must exert tremendous effort in order to shed the "soiled garments" they have donned (cf. Zechariah 3:4), since these "soiled garments" prevent them from returning to the Holy One, Blessed be He. These garments block these people like a river that is impossible to cross. Therefore, do not be troubled when you see that you want to draw close to God but that enormous obstacles confront you. For you must inevitably experience many enormous barriers which are all the result of the "soiled garments" created by one's sins; and a person must simply suffer the struggles and bitterness until he throws off his "soiled garments." After he has done this, all of the obstacles and barriers that separate him from holiness will disappear.

10. According to the honor that one shows to God-fearing people, so is honor elevated to its root. The crucial thing is that one should honor these God-fearing people wholeheartedly; in this way, he rectifies the flaws in his own fear of God and thereby merits peace.

11. There are two kinds of peace. First, there is "peace in one's bones"—since initially, a person must see to it that he has "peace in his bones," since sometimes this peace is not present, as it is written, "There is no peace in my bones because of my sin" (Psalms 38:4). Through holy fear, a person merits to have "peace in his bones," and then he is able to pray. By means of prayer, he merits [the second kind of peace, which is] "overall peace," or peace in all the worlds. A person comes to this holy fear through humility and Torah.



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