

The Breslov Pesach Companion



Breslov Research Institute

Pesach

Pesach Preparations

On Seder night, we try to envision ourselves as slaves in Egypt and thank God for having redeemed us as well. To reach such a level of awareness, we beg God to let us experience our freedom to the ultimate degree.

God, help us to take upon ourselves the sanctity of Pesach with awesome holiness and great joy and gladness. May we fulfill the mitzvah of drinking the Four Cups during the Pesach Seder meal properly, in great holiness and purity. Disclose to us the light of Divine perception, and pour forth upon us the light of the various sublime states of mind, so that we should be privileged to receive on Pesach all holy levels of higher perception – expanded consciousness and constricted consciousness.¹

May we perform the Pesach Seder in great sanctity, as is befitting. Enable us to recite the Haggadah in a strong voice, with intense and awesome concentration, with profound joy and gladness, with deep fervor and fiery passion, and with holiness and purity, until our voices awaken the intention of the heart. Then we will attain the tikkun of the covenant and tikkun of the mind to the ultimate degree, and receive new Torah insights, in truth.

(LT I, 20)

Notes

¹ See Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Etz Chaim, Sha'ar Chag HaMatzot* 1.

Purging the Heart of Chametz

We would all be loyal, loving servants of God were it not for the "chametz in the dough" that leads us astray with dreams of glory and power. Help us, God, to weed out and nullify this "chametz" so that we can return to You in truth.

Master of the Universe, "Who gives a voice to the mute,"¹ give us a voice with which to speak words of Your Torah and relate Your true wonders constantly, "in order that the last generation may know; children yet to be born will arise and tell their children."² May we merit to make known to our children and grandchildren, as well as to all the Children of Israel throughout their generations, all God's deeds and wonders that He performed for us from the day of the Exodus from Egypt until today. As it is written: "You shall make known to your children and to your children's children."³

All-Merciful One! Grant us the light of true vision by which we can gaze and behold the truth always, by which we can gaze and behold God's wonders always, in truth! Open my eyes and the eyes of all Israel, and we will behold the wonders of Your Torah which You revealed through Your true tzaddikim. You alone know the wondrousness of the Torah they revealed to the world.

Through the light of this vision, may all the requests and supplications that we have prayed ascend to the Heavenly Holy Temple. Awaken the Redemption which depends on the heart, as it is written: "For a day of

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retribution is in My Heart, and the year of My Redemption has come.”⁴

Nullify from our midst the leaven and chametz of the “evil inclination of the human heart that remains within us from our youth.”⁵ This is the leaven and chametz of the heart that entice a person to entertain doubts about the Torah sages of the generation, saying, “This one is appealing, and that one is unappealing.”⁶ This causes our hearts to be divided, and the “seventy-two tzaddikim of the generation”⁷ to be concealed from us, so that we do not clearly recognize one of them.

Have mercy on us for Your sake and remove, destroy and nullify the leaven and chametz within our hearts until we become capable of believing in all the tzaddikim, and no longer entertain any doubts whatsoever about them, or make any distinctions between them at all. Rather, may they all be extremely beautiful, beloved and precious in our eyes.

As a result, may we merit that our hearts be inflamed with enthusiasm in our study of the Torah, with flames of love; and the “many waters” of extraneous loves and fears “will not be able to extinguish the love, nor will rivers drown it.”⁸

(LT II, 42)

Notes

- 1 Paraphrase of Exodus 4:11.
- 2 Psalms 78:6.
- 3 Deuteronomy 4:9.
- 4 Isaiah 63:4.
- 5 Paraphrase of Genesis 8:21.

- 6 Cf. *Eruvin* 64a. See *Likutey Moharan* I, 5:4; *ibid.*, 56:10.
- 7 See *Sukkah* 45b; *Sanhedrin* 97b. According to the *Zohar*, there are thirty-six hidden tzaddikim in the Land of Israel and thirty-six in the Diaspora; see *Tikkuney Zohar*, *Tikkun* 21, 50a.
- 8 Song of Songs 8:7.

Expanded Consciousness

Matzah is a spiritual food that expands the mind and gives the Jew a taste of the most sublime concepts.

Master of the Universe! Help me to attain holy memory – to remember the words of Your Torah constantly and not let them slip from my memory, in fulfillment of the verse: “They shall not cease from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your children, nor from the mouth of your children’s children, says God, from now until the end of time.”¹

Protect me from violating the prohibition of possessing even the smallest amount of chametz throughout the days of Pesach. Through this, may I be saved from falling into states of constricted consciousness that lead to all harsh judgments and all sufferings, God forbid. May I be worthy of seeing beyond the illusion of nature completely and eliciting the full manifestation of Divine Providence, which comes from expanded consciousness.

Grant me the privilege of eating matzah on the days of Pesach and, by so doing, attaining the perception of Divine Providence – to truly believe that the natural order is an illusion, and that everything takes place through Your Providence alone; to negate all perplexities and heretical ideas that befall humankind because of Your hidden ways; and to believe that all that transpires is for the good. We can accomplish all this by eating matzah in a state of holiness. Through the merit of eating matzah, may we be granted revelations of Godliness, to see and to know that everything reflects Your Providence.

(Tefilot HaBoker, Tefilah 7)

Notes

- 1 Isaiah 59:21; cf. Joshua 1:8 as cited in *Bava Metzia* 85a. The latter is the subject of *Likutey Moharan* I, 110.

A Seder Overview

Pesach. What comes to mind? For some it is a story of ancient times. An epoch which shifted the direction of human history. The birth of the Jewish People as we know it. For others it is the hectic preparations which leave us drained for the duration of the Festival. And for some it is the sitting down to the Seder and rehashing the unanswerable paradoxes of Jewish thought. While for others it is the discussions of various theoretical Halakhic/Midrashic points.

But is there nothing more to it? Doesn't the Haggadah tell that we are obligated to see ourselves as if *we* left Mitzrayim? Is this obligation to be nothing more than having a vicarious fantasy into antiquity? Can we, in a free, democratic world, even be expected to experience the pain of Bondage? Or the joy of Redemption?

There must be more to it. After all, aren't we taught that the Exodus shows Creation to be more than a once-upon-a-time Event? (*Ramban*, Exodus 20:2). The Jewish Creation is something much more dynamic. Aren't we taught that the Egyptian Bondage is seen as a Rectification for Adam's "sin" - his Miscalculation? (*Sha'ar Ha Pesukim*, *Shemot*), And of the two million Jewish men, women and children, not including the millions of gentiles who came with, each of whom perceived something different.

There must be more to it.

In The Beginning ... (Genesis 1:1)

Space. Time. Life. Three dimensions of Creation. Three realms of human experience. Man - each individual man - is a microcosm of each.

There is vast Space out there. We all know that. Our finite minds just cannot grasp the magnitude of the universe. We know that Time marches on. There was existence, the stuff of history, on Earth before us. It will continue to be there when we are gone. And there is Life. Hidden. Somewhere. The Secret of Life. The flash of the elusive experience. What is the meaning of it all?

And what *is* the relevance of Universe to us on speck-of-dust Earth? What implication *does* Human History, Jewish History, have to our mundanity? And what meaning can Life have if we are too busy with the drudgery of living it?

Creation. Then the Fall of Man. The Flood. Then Noach. Terach. Then Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. The Exile, the Exodus, and the Torah Giving. Then the Golden Calf. The Tabernacle, the Land of Israel, the Judges, the Prophets, and the Holy Temple. Then the Destruction. Purim, the Second Temple, and Chanukah. Then the Second Destruction. The Diaspora. The Arab lands. Western Europe. The Crusades. The Inquisition. Then Central Europe. Pogroms. Russia. The Cossacks. Then the "Enlightenment." Out of the ghettos ... Auschwitz. Treblinka. Bergen- Belsen. Then Reviving. Rebuilding. Re-Souling ...

Reading through Jewish History, we search to relate to it. To feel part of it. Not to be just "visionaries" into the past. We may even try to imagine how it must have been to live in those times, only to be carried away... "If only I had lived then! How exciting! How inspiring! *Then* I would have been a good Jew!"

In doing this, we will have already missed the point. We *don't* merely want to be "visionaries," escapists from life into a distant past. We want to draw from the past. To bring meaning and purpose into our everyday lives.

But how? How are we to relate to the teaching that every human being is himself an entire world? A microcosm of Universe; of History; of Life? What pertinent messages do the most esoteric secrets of Creation bear for our daily lives, then?

Let Us Make Man... (Genesis 1:26)

Adam, Man, was created with a profound and innate Knowledge of God's existence. That God-Consciousness was inherent in his every action. In his every thought. His soul was imprinted with that Truth just as every child's soul is imprinted with certain fundamental knowledge. Every child innately knows how to learn to speak. How to walk.

But is the child *aware* of that knowledge? Certainly not. He just "knows." Adam, too, just "knew." But, he didn't *know* that he knew. He did not yet have Da'at. Intimate Knowledge. Awareness. Experience of that Knowledge. He was God-Conscious, but without Da'at, without being aware of that great Knowledge within him.

And how could he have been? Da'at, Awareness, comes only when there is differentiation. Only when there is objective knowledge of something and its absence, its contrast. Could we be aware of day if not for night? Could we be aware of joy if not for pain? And would we even be aware of life if not for death? Adam, too, could not become truly aware of his Paradise without a taste of its absence.

And without that awareness, there can be no appreciation. No experience. Man cannot appreciate that Paradise without an awareness of what is "outside." And without that appreciation, God's Benevolence to Man - the manifest Goal of Creation - cannot be complete. And even if God *had* provided Adam with an awareness and appreciation, it would have been pure Grace. Unearned. And God's Plan is for Man to *earn* his Paradise. To make *himself*.

So God gave Man an opportunity. A chance to experience a taste of Godlessness. To become aware of the Paradise he was in. A chance to enter an even higher Gan Eden. He gave him Temptation (see *Zohar II*, 55a).

But the Serpent was Cunning ... (Genesis 3:1)

But Man was brash. He was subtly conceited (see Haggadah p.35). Overanxious to experience God (*Likutey Halakhot, Gezeilah* 5:7). So he was lured into thinking it was God's Will for him to transgress. *Then* he would appreciate God! Or so he thought ...

If only Man had endured the pain of temptation ... If only he had perceived the experience of temptation as an opportunity to cling to God, to yearn and cry out to be saved from that temptation... If only he had seen God hiding in the pain of that temptation, seen the Tree of Life hidden inside the Tree of Knowledge ... (*Chizkune*. Genesis 2:16; *Hadar Zekenim. Tosafot*, Genesis 3:22; *Yalkut Reuveni*, Bereshit 33b). That itself would have been his awareness of the Dark, his experience of pain, his taste of Godlessness ... If only he had clung to the Tree of Life until the Sabbath ... He would have then legitimately partaken of it, and been also granted from the Tree of Knowledge - he would have become fully aware of God (*Chesed L'Avraham* 1:8).

But Man didn't see things that way. He saw only the "serpent." He heard only the voice of temptation. He "saw," he "knew," what *he* thought to be evil in Creation. A realm of existence beyond his personal, inner experience of the world. He became very curious. Curious to *know*. To experience God's "Non- Existence." "How can that be," he asked himself, "when I know God is everywhere?" (*Likutey Halakhot, Apotropus 2;11*).

But, God said no! Adam "knew" that. So he rationalized (*Likutey Halakhot, Ribit 5;8*). "Surely, I can better serve God once I have an intimate knowledge of this evil. Surely, once evil becomes an integral part of my inner experience, my controlling it will then be that much greater!" Man wanted to control things, as well ... (see Haggadah p.21). And he rationalized again. "Surely, once I taste it, I will see for myself its bitterness. But, if I don't, I may be forever gnawed by the question, 'Maybe the serpent was right?'" (It is told that this is what Reb Elimelekh of Lizhensk answered his brother, Reb Zushia, when asked why they - who were also part of the First Man's composite soul - had allowed Adam to transgress. This was *their* "transgression.')

Perhaps *all* these thoughts and many more went through Man's mind. Don't *we* find ourselves with several motivations for a single act? Surely, Adam, the composite human being of all his billions of descendants, had all of *our* thoughts on his mind ...

And Man Took From the Fruit ... (Genesis 3:6)

And so Man - that Man whose God-Consciousness was innate - reached out to experience what he saw as evil. To become aware of the Darkness. To taste Godlessness. To experience transgression. But to have that experience, he had first to become "unaware" of God. By "closing his eyes." "Turning his head." "Pushing God from his mind." So Man enraptured himself in what he saw as evil, presuming that it would bring him to an even higher level.

Man got what he wanted. Godlessness. "Non-Existence." But, alas, Man had fallen into the Kelipot - the Mental Barriers. Now, Awareness was no longer dormant within him. That God-Consciousness which had been awaiting actualization was now actively constricted (*Likutey Halakhot, Edu 4:5; cf. Bereshit Rabbah 19:7*). Inherent Knowledge was gone. His thoughts, his actions, were no longer an expression of that Knowledge. He now felt as if *he* wanted evil. He could not erase that experience from his mind.

God gave Man another opportunity. A slap!

"And *now* ... *lest* he eat from the Tree of Life ... God banished him from Gan Eden ... " (Genesis 3:22-3).

"Go!" God said. "Out of My Presence!" God sent Man into Exile. A *spiritual* exile. The physical was only "symbolic." The correlative manifestation of the spiritual.

And Man went.

How he regretted his misdeed! How he repented! (*Eruvin ISb*) .
... If only he had cried out, "No! I shall not go! No! I *cannot* go! No! My life is meaningless without You! I have erred! I am not deserving! But You can forgive! You are above human rationale!"

... If only he had "followed" in the footsteps of Moshe, Moshe who took God's cue. It was after the Golden Calf. Told by God, "And *now*, leave Me be and I will destroy them!" Moshe protested! (see Haggadah p.77). He stood his ground. He knew what God *really* wanted. (*Yalkut Shimoni and Shemot Rabbah* on Exodus 32:10).

Adam, Man, would have then seen the Cherubim and the Flaming Sword which bar entry to Gan Eden for what they really are: a Mental Barrier, an illusion (*Paneach Raza and Bachaya* on Genesis

3:24). He would have realized God's true intent; that when God says NOW, He means: *Forget the past!* (*Bereshit Rabbah* 21:6; cf. Ibn Gabirol, *Keter Malkhut* prayer, see also in Haggadah p.61).

... And when a father slaps his son, does he mean the slap?

But Man, feeling only the slap, went away from his Father. He went through life bearing the unbearable pain that only a father's slap can give. Rejection! The pain of Distance.

And who can measure the pain of the father who cries out for having driven away his own son?

And all because of a misunderstanding ...

Yet the Father cries out to Man ever since: "*Ayekah* - Where are you?" But Man, once "slapped," has shut out that Voice. The Father too, is in "Exile." Exiled by Man (*Zohar* I, 53b).

And This is the Story of Man ... (Genesis 5:1)

The Story of Man. The story of every man. We are born in pain. And first thing, we receive a "slap" (above the upper lip, as well; *Nidah* 30b). We are brought up in the pain of being helpless in an adult world. And then we bear the pain of bringing more children into the world. Universal pains. And then there are all our personal pains ...

So we seek to escape from this pain. To bury it deeper and deeper. To deny it. And sometimes to deny its Source. "All right, if that's what You think of me, then I don't need You either!" We invert the pain into anger at its Conceiver.

But the pain remains. The gnawing emptiness doesn't go away. All the world's pleasures and riches cannot fill the void in the soul. All the veneration that humanity can afford will not raise the soul that seeks it to replace a lost sense of endowed worth. All the Torah Knowledge in Creation cannot give Meaning to Life, if that knowledge is a mere intellectual conception, and certainly not if it is a tool for self-aggrandizement.

It is the pain, the emptiness of "Non-Existence." An experiential void we feel at the deepest level of our soul. The knowing that we have strayed. That our lives have lost meaning. That we are out of touch with God. If anything, it is an experience of Gehennom. In this world. (*Likutey Moharan* II, 119). For to live in the purely physical, is to live in Gehennom.

And the thirst of the soul can only be filled with Existence. With Awareness of God. With the Joy of Existence. With a Meaningful Jewishness. And if Adam had not yet experienced six millennia of human suffering to wonder what had gone awry with his life, *we* have. We know that pain. Have we not experienced it long enough? Is it not yet time to experience the Joy? ..

And These are the Jewish People who Descended to Mitzrayim (Exodus 1:1)

But, because Man decided to bury his Pain, the Distance only grew greater and greater. Until, finally, Mankind's spiritual exile materialized into the physical: the Jewish People in Mitzrayim. And there, in Egypt, the Jewish People descended deeper and deeper. Their Jewish Awareness, their awareness of God, of themselves, grew less and less. They became oblivious to their own situation. The reality of their spiritual descent. Are we aware of *our* situation? How can we be if, for whatever reason, we deny the possibility of Higher Reality? A higher plane of Life? (see Haggadah p.82). In so doing, we only deny *ourselves* the opportunity of becoming aware of our own situation. Awareness comes only with the knowledge of differentiation ...

Finally, all that was left was a vestige of Jewishness. Traditional - perhaps even "rabbinical" - attire. Characteristic names and a unique language. A sort of clansmanship. A clinging to tradition. An unexplainable desire to retain some "Jewish self-identity." Not knowing why or what, "something" just told them to hold on. Almost like today ...

Then Moshe came, bearing the promise of Redemption. At first, they believed. Moshe then gradually brought them to Awareness. But they could not yet put that Awareness into action. Two hundred and ten years in depraved Egypt had had its affect.

... Nearly a year since Moshe's arrival. Nine Plagues, and Pharaoh still unbudging. During the Plague of Darkness, millions of Jews died. Four fifths of the populace wiped out in one week - those who God saw weren't yet ready. How disheartening it was to bury all their brothers!

On the brink of despair. Thoughts of dashed hopes went through their minds. Feelings of the same through their hearts. Perhaps they weren't worthy. Rapidly, they were sinking into the 50th level of spiritual descent: the realm of Resignation and Despair. Had they entered that level, there would have been no hope. We can only change when we don't despair (see Haggadah p.56).

But Moshe reassured them that they were still God's People. Wanting to believe, they slaughtered the Pesach lamb. But, everything hung in the balance. Everything depended on the stroke of midnight. Would God appear?

And, there, in the depths, at the farthest point, at the nadir, the Jewish People were brought to realize that God *is* everywhere. That He can be reached not by hastily trying to be close, but by realizing the ultimate Distance. By experiencing the pain of that Distance, and knowing that there - *there in the Darkness is God!*

In showing them this, God also showed them there is no need to *ever* despair. There is no forlorn soul that cannot be retrieved. No situation that cannot be redeemed. There is no misdeed that cannot be corrected. There is HOPE! Even at the brink of despair.

Thus, Awareness does not come all at once. It is a Process. The rule of Gradual Progression (see Haggadah p. 82). Adam wanted it all at once. We all know what happened ...

If Adam was hasty in approaching God, the Jewish ordeal in bondage had taught them patience. If they performed their Seder in haste, it was only because God had so commanded (*MegaLeh Amukot, Shemot* p. 16a). If Adam was subtly conceited in trying to be "too" close, they were humbled by being aware of the Distance. And therein lay the Rectification of Man's "sin" - his Original Miscalculation.

And Pharaoh said: I Am Not Aware (Exodus 5:2)

A child's awareness is very limited. He is little aware of himself and his surroundings. During the formative years, our awareness grows. Then, unless we consciously seek its development, the Process comes to a sudden stop.

Set for life.

So some of us continue through life with certain illusions. As a child's reality - his role-playing and games - is illusion to us, our's is illusion to those with Higher Awareness. We "role-play." Take seriously our "games" of Prestige, Power and Money, of Intellectual advancement and Earthly pleasure.

For us, Reality proves too disturbing. Awareness provides no comfort. So we consciously decide to live in illusion, rather than endure the Awareness Process. The rule of Gradual Progression.

And for some of us, the Process gets ensnared in a different way. We get stuck for decades in the pain of a long-gone past. Constricted. We live today as if events, people and situations are the same as they were when our developing awareness halted at the time of our painful experience. As if time had stopped. All the way back then. We're still trying to avenge our pain, rather than experience and accept it.

For us, letting go of the pain proves too disturbing. Awareness provides no comfort. So we consciously hold onto our constriction, rather than endure the Awareness Process. The rule of Gradual Progression.

Illusion. Constriction. A halt in the Process. The Constrictor of Awareness, the Master of Illusion, is "Pharaoh" (see Haggadah p. 55). Each of us must go through his "Mitzrayim." We all have illusions, we all have our pains. And to ask "But why me?" is like asking "Why did the Jewish People suffer in Mitzrayim?" Each of us is a microcosm of Time, of Jewish History. But in the End, we will all leave Mitzrayim.

"Pharaoh" is also the "Serpent" (*Sijtei Kohen, Bereshit: 6c*) - the Primordial Constrictor of Awareness and Master of Illusion. He fooled Man out of Gan Eden. With illusion he enticed Man to curiosity, to reach out for an experience of Godlessness; and then with constriction convinced him that he'd already been banished, that it was "too late" to protest. And, as the Evil One, "Pharaoh" even now enslaves us in this world in Gehennom (Rambam, *Igeret Ha Mussar; Sefer HaLikutim, Shemot; Chesed L'Avraham 5:10*). But in the End, we will all return to Gan Eden.

And, being Jewish does not begin only once we're free of "Pharaoh's" illusions and constrictions, for illusions and constrictions exist at every level. Being Jewish begins with the Process itself. With the Gradual Progression of overcoming *our* "Pharaoh," and with our ongoing efforts to raise ourselves to ever - higher levels of Awareness.

Yet, it sometimes takes time to overcome illusion. How long was the world supposed to be terracentric? And, now we are saying it is heliocentric, when really we think it is egocentric ...

So "Pharaoh" needs not to be taken too seriously. He's just here to tempt us, to make us aware. If in the past we decided to listen to "Pharaoh," who tells us "I am not aware" - now we can tell him "I know who you are, but *yes*, I *want* to be aware!"

And, if we have lived our lives until now in ignorance, we must now do what we can. If in the past God withheld from us knowledge, it is not for us to ask to understand. With the knowledge we had, we did our best. More than that, God does not demand.

Pesach, Matzah and Maror - In Our Generation (Haggadah)

Adam, Man, ate from the Etz HaDa'at, the Tree of Knowledge. Its fruit, in fact, was ordinary grain (*Sanhedrin 70b*). But, the simple fact that God forbade it, made it the "forbidden tree." The numerical value of CHaMeTZ - leavened bread, together with Se'OR - leavening, is 639. ETZ HaDA'aT is also 639. When Man ate from it, he "ate leavened bread." He had his taste of Godlessness, Experienced what he saw as evil. Impaired his Awareness.

This, then, is the Matzah, the unleavened bread. Symbolizing Perfection of Da'at, Of Intimate Knowledge. Of Awareness. And of Experience. And of knowing that it is all Divine Grace.

Knowing that all experiences are One - it is all God Himself (*Likutey Moharan I, 4*). This is beyond human intellect; but then again, God is Above reason. We can reach Him only with Intimate Knowledge. With Experience. With Heart. With Emotion (*Likutey Moharan I, 33:4*).

On Pesach we eat Matzah. But, we must make sure to "eat" the Matzah of Perfected Da'at. In so doing, we rectify Adam's Misconception - his "leavened bread" (*Bnai Yissaschar, Nisan 8:4,7*).

And this is the Story of Pesach. The Story of Creation. Of the continual and continuous Process of Creation. Adam, Man, knew of Creation. But he fell. He could not raise himself up again. He could not forget his past deed. He was overburdened with guilt. Adam was unaware of Creation as being NOW! So, when God appeared in Mitzrayim, His message to the Jewish People was; NOW is another Creation! And, in changing the "laws of nature," He showed: I have changed Nature - you can change yours!

For every man, in every generation, is a microcosm. Of Space. Of Time. Of Life. Jewishness is not something which took place only in some distant, or even recent past. It is not something which takes place only in some pristine corner of the world. Nor is it the franchise of those of us who have an unbroken tradition. In fact, true Jewishness is not to be found in the laurels of those of us whose "Jewishness" begins and ends with an unspoken flaunting of that tradition. Neither can it be found in the stale Jewishness of yesterday. No matter how enthused we were then - *today*, yesterday is gone, and we must start again. Creation is a Process.

So is Jewishness.

Jewishness is HERE! Jewishness is NOW! And Jewishness is with YOU! And *within* you! Every Jewish soul in some way relives the entire Story of Creation. Creation. The Fall of Man. The Flood ... (*Likutey Halakhot, Ona'ah 3:1; Ibid; Shiluach Haken 4:61*). But *this* time, each time, with *our* lives, the story is *ours* to rewrite. It is time to transcend the illusory constrictions of the mind. To cease living out the script of limited human awareness. To forget the past and begin Jewishness.

And NOW! is the time to begin.

God Himself created previous worlds that did not satisfy His Plan. So He destroyed them and forgot them. Improved upon them. Used those intentional "mistakes" as lessons. Lessons for *us*. If the "world" we have created for ourselves is not according to Plan, scrap it! Start afresh. Create *new ones*. And turn those experiences - even failures! - into lessons.

And this, then, is the Telling of the Story. The Story of Man. The story of every man. Experiencing the Exile, the Distance. Eating the Maror, tasting the pain, the bitterness of adversity. Every human being is himself an entire world. And it is into *that* world which God wants to bring Joy. To instill Awareness of the Divine, to bestow the Joy of Creation. But that Joy, that Awareness, can only be found in the appreciation of our individual Maror.

Each Jew who left Egypt, each Jew who leaves Mitzrayim, has a different experience. And proportionate to the experience of Pain, is the experience of . Redemption. Redemption from the internalized desire to know what we see as evil (*Likutey Halakhot, ibid; Ma'alot Ha'Iorah p. 22b Jerusalem ed.*). Redemption in knowing the Sweetness of the Pain. Redemption in knowing that God does not mean the "slap." And Redemption in knowing that the story of our lives, of *our* Bondage and Redemption, is Meaning. Esoteric Meaning. And with this Meaning we will see ourselves out of Mitzrayim (see Haggadah p.61).

Destitute. The young man was without an extra penny to buy a present for his bride-to-be.

Bemoaning his plight to Reb Nosson, hoping to hear some words of encouraging advice. those words were not long in coming.

"So what is your problem?" queried Reb Nosson. "Our forefather Yaakov also didn't have a penny. When escaping from Esau, he was divested of everything he owned. He had nothing to give his bride-to-be, Rachel, and could only bemoan his plight with acceptance" (Rashi, Genesis 29:11).

The young man didn't get the message.

"How can you compare me with our forefather Yaakov?" he argued. "His every life-occurrence was laden with esoteric meaning. "

"In your life, too, there is esoteric meaning in every occurrence," Reb Nosson explained (Siach Sarfei Kodesh Breslov, #710).

We may not know what that meaning is. At least let us be aware that there *is* that Meaning.

So, sitting down to the Seder does not mean the recital of a history book. Nor is it meant to be the intellectual resolution of any Jewish paradox. And it is even much more than a Halakhic or Midrashic discussion.

Sitting down to the Seder is nothing less than the Intimate Experience of Jewishness itself. Meaningful Jewishness, The Seder is a cry of anguish to God for those of us who are still in "Mitzrayim." The Seder is encouragement for us to become more aware of that "Mitzrayim." And the Seder is praise to God for whatever extent we have already left that "Mitzrayim."

We need not have "lived then" to be Jewish. We can be Jewish - right NOW!

These are the Festivals, They Call Out Holiness (Leviticus 23:4)

Voices in the air. Spiritual Voices. Our ears cannot hear them, but our minds pick them up. Or the voice of "Pharaoh." Of temptation. Of illusion. Of constriction. The thoughts that go through our minds that we *know* we don't really want .

... A voice of curiosity. Adam was curious. And so are we all. It is the nature of the child to be curious. There's nothing wrong with that. But what are we curious about?

... And the Voice, the Call of the Festival. Whenever it comes. Wherever we are. The gnawing which gets us to feel something very basic is missing. The searching for something and not knowing what, which shows us our lives have gone awry. It is the Voice, the Call of the Festival which tell us that: Yes, it is time to return to God ...

We have been curious long enough chasing after "Pharaoh." Wondering what it's like to live Godlessly, The time has now come to give up the chase, to change the direction of our curiosity.

The air also carries the Voice of the Tzaddik (*Likutey Moharan I, 17:5*). What is it like to experience the world through *his* eyes? To hear the Voice of God resounding in the mind, and see oneself as standing before Him? What is it like to be above the illusory honor of this world? To be unmoved by financial or physical pleasure? To be in touch with the Spark of Divine within, and to *know*, to *do* what we should? And, what is it like to bring Joy into the Space of every step we take on speck-of-dust Earth? To bring Awareness into the limited Time we spend upon it? To find

Meaning in Life, the Secret of Life; and to bring God into our lives, into mundanity - and to make them meaningful?

And there is a great deal more ...

The distance between Gehennom and Gan Eden is exceedingly small (*Kohelet Rabbah* 14:3), in fact, they both exist in this world simultaneously. It's all a matter of where *we* want to live: under "Pharaoh" in Gehennom, or free of him in Gan Eden (see *Likutey Moharan* I, 191). And the greater our awareness of the contrast, the greater our appreciation.

The choice is ours, it will always be. The Tree of Knowledge will exist even when we return to Gan Eden. But then we will *know* - we will be so *aware* - that we will see in that Tree only good (*Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot HaPeirot* 5:17, *Ta'arovet* 1:8).

We will see beyond the momentary Darkness an Eternal Light. A Light which dispels "Pharaoh's" Illusion. Listen for the Voice of the Tzaddik, he will guide us. He will teach us to see Gan Eden existing right before our very eyes.

The above overview is included in the [Breslov Haggadah](#) © Breslov Research Institute.

Likutey Moharan Vol. I - Lesson 5 Part IV

But it is [first] necessary⁷⁴ to clear the mentalities of secular wisdom and undesirable thoughts—of *chametz*.⁷⁵ A person must not sour his wisdom with secular wisdom or <evil> passions,⁷⁶ so that the voice emerges <pure and clean.> It will then strike the <upper mentalities> and be converted into thunder. But when the sphere of the mind is clogged with impurity—as in (Leviticus 11:43), “...because *nitmeitem* (you will be made unclean) by them”⁷⁷—then his voice is not heard.⁷⁸

He must also safeguard his fear of Heaven—from which the voice emerges, as in, “the thunder of His *gevurot*”—so that he has no extrinsic fears <but only a fear of the Holy One>.⁷⁹ This is: Where there is no wisdom, there is no fear of Heaven; where there is no fear of Heaven, there is no wisdom (*Avot* 3:21).⁸⁰

And <this corresponds to that which our Sages taught: When King Shlomo married Pharaoh’s daughter,> the angel GaVRiel descended and plunged a reed into the sea (*Shabbat* 56b; *Sanhedrin* 21b).⁸¹ The explanation is: From the devolution of the *GeVuRot*⁸²—<which correspond to gold dross,> extrinsic fears⁸³—he “plunged a reed into the sea” of wisdom. A *kaneh* (reed) is the aspect of the voice released from the *kaneh* (windpipe).⁸⁴ Thus, <because of the secular wisdom and> extrinsic fears, the voice remains plunged in the mire of the intellect and will not be transmitted to the creation.⁸⁵

But the most important thing is that a person safeguard his mind from becoming *chametz*.⁸⁶ This is (Psalms 68:31), “Rebuke *ChayaT* (the beast of) the reed.”⁸⁷ As the *Zohar* (III, 252a) states: Break the reed of the *CheT* and make it a *heh*, thus transforming the letters *ChaMeTZ* into *MaTZaH*.⁸⁸ Your wisdom will then not turn sour.⁸⁹

This is the connotation of “rebuke,” which conveys conflict.⁹⁰ For the word *MaTZah* also implies conflict: the tzaddikim engage in *MaTZuta* (battle)⁹¹ with the Other Side in order to keep it from approaching the dwelling place of holiness (*Zohar* III, 251b).⁹²

That is, when you protect your wisdom so that secular wisdom does not penetrate it, <and> you do not entertain evil thoughts—which is the *KaNeH* (reed) of the Other Side,⁹³ in contrast to <the *KaNeH* (windpipe) of holiness, i.e.,> “*K’NeH* wisdom, *K’NeH* understanding”⁹⁴ of holiness—you will be saved from the aspect of *chametz*, which is the side of death. As is stated (*Zohar*, *ibid.*): *MaChMeTZeT*—it contains <*ChaMeTZ* and *MeT*>.⁹⁵ And believe that all strife and conflict between those tzaddikim who have reached perfection is only to dispel the Other Side.⁹⁶

This is the meaning of (Proverbs 15:31), “He whose ear hears the reproof of life *talin* (lodges) among the wise.”⁹⁷ <*TaLiN*> is similar to *TeLuNah* (complaint) and conflict.⁹⁸ When you hear the tzaddikim arguing, know that this is to let you hear reproof for having blemished the drops of your mind.⁹⁹ Concerning this it is said (Proverbs 2:19), “None that go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life.”¹⁰⁰ You have become attached to the side of death, the aspect of

chametz,¹⁰¹ of “Gavriel descended.”¹⁰² Know also that “a reed has been plunged”—extrinsic wisdom has been plunged—into your sea of wisdom.¹⁰³

And, certainly, if your mind had not been blemished, you would not have been given to hear the conflicts among the tzaddikim.¹⁰⁴ This conflict is only for your sake, in order that you return from death to life, from *chametz* to *matzah*, from *chet* to *heh*¹⁰⁵; and so that you repent from unwholesome fear <to fear of His exaltedness>, from a marred voice <to a flawless voice>, from blemished wisdom <to complete and true wisdom>.¹⁰⁶

But when you guard your mind from the aspect of *chametz*,¹⁰⁷ so that it does not become clogged, then your voice will strike your skull¹⁰⁸ and be converted into thunder,¹⁰⁹ and the heart’s crookedness will be made straight. Then, you will merit joy, as in, “and joy for the straight of heart.”¹¹⁰ This is the meaning of (Psalms 81:8), “When you called in secret, I answered you thunderously; I tested you at the Waters of Conflict, Selah.”¹¹¹ The Waters of Conflict are an aspect of *matzah*, of mentalities,¹¹² through which thunder is generated.¹¹³

Footnotes:

74. **But it is first necessary.** Having established that a person must awaken a burning desire in his heart to serve God, so that it will in turn arouse his intellect and generate thunder, Rebbe Nachman now advises against those elements that interfere with the *mochin* (mentalities) and even harm a person’s chances of attaining intellect.

75. **chametz.** *Chametz* (leaven) is symbolic of man’s inner inclination towards evil. As taught in the Talmud (*Berakhot* 17a): When Rabbi Alexandri finished praying, he would say: “Master of all the worlds, it is revealed and known to You that our desire is to do Your will. What prevents us? Only the leaven in the dough (the evil inclination).”

The *Biur HaLikutim* adds: Although Rebbe Nachman has just taught that the heart’s crookedness needs to be made straight, he will next explain that what is most essential is the guarding of the mind. This shows that everything actually stems from the mind (*Chokhmah*) and then descends to the heart (*Binah*). The initial step must therefore be to eliminate anything that might sour the mind.

76. **secular wisdom or evil passions.** These are actually two separate concepts, corresponding respectively to the mind and the heart. Over-indulging one’s natural desire for food, sex, etc. turns these needs into what in our lesson the Rebbe calls evil passions. Controlling them is therefore known as subduing the evil inclination; rather than accommodating his burning desire for the mundane, he employs the flaming of his heart to serve God (see n.63). Conversely, the secular wisdom that distances people from God relates to the intellect, from which wisdom is drawn. Thus, in order for a person’s voice to generate thunder, he must purify both his mind and his heart, as the Rebbe now explains.

77. **made unclean by them.** Rebbe Nachman alludes here to the Talmudic teaching that points to the similarity between the words *NiTMeiTēM* and *NeTaMTēM* (literally, “you will be clogged up”). Our Sages teach (*Yoma* 39a): Sins clog a person’s heart. We learn this from the verse, “Do not defile yourselves with [non-kosher foods], because *nitmeitem* by them.” Do not read *NiTMeiTēM* (נטמתם) but *NeTaMTēM* (נטמתם)—they will make you spiritually insensitive (see *Living Torah*, on Leviticus 11:43). If either of the two channels—the mind or the heart—is clogged by impurities, the voice cannot penetrate the sphere of the mind and so thunder cannot be generated.

78. **his voice is not heard.** This indirectly explains why so many of those who presume to have influence over others are not really very effective: They lack true fear of Heaven. Because they have yet to subdue

their own evil inclination, and because their secular wisdom and passions distance them from God, their words are not heard or hearkened to.

The *Biur HaLikutim* explains that defiling the mind with impurity leads to its becoming clogged and insensitive. In response, God, as it were, clogs His ear and makes Himself insensitive to that person's prayers. And this leads to decrees, God forbid.

79. no extrinsic fears.... A person should never fear anything except God (*Advice*, p. 119). If all he ever fears is the Holy One, then even when something peripheral causes him to be afraid, he is fully aware that these fears are actually a reminder for him to fear only God (*Likutey Halakhot, Pesach 9:15-17*). Fearing extrinsic fears, on the other hand, automatically undermines one's fear of Heaven.

80. no wisdom...no fear...no wisdom. Man must always safeguard both his heart (fear) and his intellect (wisdom). Each complements and depends upon the other. Thus: when his mind is exposed to secular wisdom, the fear in his heart becomes tainted; and when the fear in his heart is caused by extrinsic fears, the intellect turns to secular wisdom and the mind becomes clogged (*Parparaot LeChokhmah; Mai HaNachal*). This explains why later on in the lesson both Rebbe Nachman and the commentaries quoted in the notes include evil passions as one of the mind's enemies, even though, like fear, these passions are actually rooted in the heart.

Rebbe Nachman now brings a proof-text showing the connection between the heart/fear and the mind/wisdom.

81. Gavriel...reed into the sea. When King Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, Gavriel descended and plunged a reed into the sea. Around this reed a swamp gathered and upon this swamp rose the city of Rome (*Shabbat, loc. cit.*, and *Rashi*; Rome is representative of the fourth and final exile of the Jewish people.)

82. devolution of the gevurot. The angel GaVRiEL (גבריאל)—*GeVuRah EL* (גבורה אל, the Might of the Almighty)—corresponds to the *GeVuRot* (גבורות). His having descended is thus depicted as the devolution of the *gevurot*, indicating that there has been a decline in spirituality. These corrupted *gevurot* become enclotted in extrinsic fears rather than a direct fear of God.

83. gold dross, extrinsic fears. From the Kabbalah we learn that gold corresponds to the aspect of fear and the *gevurot* (cf. *Zohar II*, 90b; *Tikkuney Zohar #24*, p.69b). The impurities that form on the surface of gold—gold dross—is thus an aspect of extrinsic fears (*Mai HaNachal*).

84. kaneh, reed...kaneh, windpipe. Rebbe Nachman connects the *kaneh* of Gavriel with one's personal *kaneh*, the windpipe. In the Talmud we find: The voice is released through the *kaneh* (*Berakhot 61a*); the windpipe being a sort of reed or shaft through which the air in the lungs is passed on to the larynx, where it is transformed into the sounds of the voice.

85. voice remains plunged.... At their source, the *gevurot* emanate from an extremely lofty level: the *sefirah Binah* (Understanding; *Zohar III*, 10b; see also *Likutey Moharan I*, 41). However, as the *gevurot* descend into this material world, they assume the form of "gold dross"—i.e., secular wisdom and extrinsic fears. Either of these two evils can become the first step in a person's falling from his devotion to God, hence, "Where there is no wisdom, there is no fear of Heaven..." as above (see n.80; *Parparaot LeChokhmah; Mai HaNachal*).

The passage from *Shabbat* and *Sanhedrin* (n.81) thus reads: **When King Shlomo —** When wisdom **married Pharaoh's daughter** — became secular wisdom, **Gavriel descended** — this caused the *gevurot* to descend into extrinsic fears, etc. **and plunged a kaneh into the sea** — and the voice that emerged from the *kaneh* became mired in the sea of wisdom, the intellect. As a result, the voice was unable to resound like thunder in order to arouse the creation to serve God.

Then, **Around this reed a swamp gathered and upon this swamp rose the city of Rome.** The reed became a post around which debris in the sea began to collect, until a swamp formed... (*Rashi, s.v. naatz*). That is, if a person succumbs to even one undesirable thought and does not excise it immediately, that thought becomes a post to which the "gold dross" of secular wisdom and extrinsic fears are attracted. Eventually, this causes him to fall into the spiritual exile that is Rome.

86. **safeguard his mind from becoming chametz.** Understandably, never succumbing to an evil trait or never allowing an undesirable thought to enter one's mind is an ideal. This is the ultimate level of safeguarding the mind from souring like *chametz*. Most of us, however, find ourselves easily drawn in and even overwhelmed by our traits and thoughts. What then?

87. **Rebuke the beast of the reed.** This was King David's prayer for God to destroy the kingdom of evil. Rashi explains that the "beast" is Amalek, whom Rebbe Nachman equates with secular wisdom (see *Likutey Moharan* II, 19).

88. **As the Zohar states....** The passage in the *Zohar* reads as follows: When King Shlomo married Pharaoh's daughter, Gavriel descended and plunged a reed into the sea...rose the city of Rome. This gave life to the Other Side. The *kaneh* (reed) refers to the life-force of the evil beast. (The Hebrew term *chayah* means both beast and life.) This is the reed that gave the forces of evil dominion over the world. Why a reed? Because a reed is easily snapped and broken. This is Egypt. The Egyptians ruled the entire world. Yet when the time came, the Egyptians, who are like *chametz*, were broken; the Jews, who are like *matzah*, were redeemed. How are the Egyptians broken? By breaking the leg of the *chet*, thereby turning it into a *heh* (*Zohar* III, 251b, 252a and *Matok Midvash* thereon). Phonetically, the Hebrew letter *Chet* (spelled חֵת) is similar to the word *ChayaT* (חַיֵּת, the beast of). When the left leg of the letter *Chet* (ח) is separated from its roof, the letter *Heh* (ה) is formed. Thus, when the *chet* in the word *ChaMeTZ* (חַמֵּץ) is broken, the word *MaTZaH* (מַצָּה) is formed. And the *chet* is likened to a *kaneh*, because like the reed it is easy to break. See next note.

89. **wisdom will then not turn sour.** In our context, the verse and commentary can be understood as follows: The "beast" (*chayah*) alludes to evil and specifically the evil thoughts that enter a person's mind. The "rebuke" is a person's cry or shout of protest against these undesirable thoughts. This breaks the beast. Thus: **Rebuke** — crying out in prayer, **the beast of the reed** — breaks and chases away evil thoughts.

90. **rebuke...conflict.** For safeguarding the mind is a constant battle. Rebbe Nachman now explains an additional significance of this battle.

91. **MaTZah...conflict...MaTZuta.** As in (Isaiah 41:12), "You may seek, but will not find *MaTZutekha* (those who contend with you)." Thus *matzah* (מַצָּה), which shares the same root letters as *matzuta* (מַצוּתָא), suggests conflict and rebuke.

92. **...keep it from...holiness.** As explained above (n.8), Rebbe Nachman's lessons are simultaneously relevant to the very greatest tzaddikim and the simplest people alike. After teaching the need for battling against undesirable thoughts, he now shows that each person's efforts in this is a microcosm of the larger battle that the tzaddikim constantly wage against the *Sitra Achra* (Other Side). The tzaddikim pray and engage in daily struggle against the forces of evil, to keep them from gaining a foothold in holiness. The person who struggles against his evil thoughts is waging the same battle, albeit on a smaller scale. And, just as it can be said that in the overall scheme of things the tzaddikim have succeeded in protecting holiness—keeping the Jewish people alive and flourishing despite a national history replete with devastating decrees—so, too, each individual, commensurate with the effort he has put into the battle, has succeeded in building and safeguarding his own "holy encampment" (see n.96)—i.e., his mind.

The *Biur HaLikutim* adds that there are times when the struggle and strife the tzaddikim engage in seems not to be with the Other Side but with each other. In truth, their intent is to banish the forces of evil—the decrees. However, because they know the decree has already been issued, they disguise their prayers and struggle in a *maamar*, giving the impression that they are at odds with each other. See text and note 96, below.

93. **KaNeH of the Other Side.** For from the *kaneh* the Other Side draws its sustenance and life-force, as in note 88 above.

94. **K'NeH wisdom...understanding.** In Proverbs (4:5), King Solomon says: "Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding." Rebbe Nachman plays on the phonetic similarity between the words *KaNeH* and *K'NeH* (acquire). That is, by using his *kaneh* (windpipe) to cry out in prayer against the evil thoughts, a person can overcome the *kaneh* (reed) of the Other Side and *k'neh* (acquire) true wisdom and understanding. In addition, "wisdom" and "understanding" correspond to *Chokhmah* and *Binah*, the mind and the heart—i.e., the two organs which when united form the voice of holiness that arouses fear of Heaven (as above, §3 and nn.47-58).

95. **MaChMeTZeT...ChaMeTZ...MeT.** The letters of the word *machmetzet* (מחמצת, sours or leavens) can be arranged to form the words *chametz* (חמץ, leaven) and *met* (מת, death). Thus, the letters themselves hint to the connection between leavened dough and the Other Side, the side of death (cf. *Zohar* III, 251b, "One who eats *chametz* on Pesach"). And since the Other Side is considered *chametz*, death, a person who safeguards his mind against evil thoughts has banished the Other Side and spared himself a spiritual death.

96. **to dispel the Other Side.** As mentioned at the end of note 92, it is a mistake to take the strife between true tzaddikim at face value. Rather, the battle one tzaddik wages against another is in actuality a battle, in disguised form, against the *Sitra Achra*. Then again, this is only one explanation. Further on in the lesson Rebbe Nachman will give another reason for the strife between tzaddikim (see text and nn.99, 100; see also *The Aleph-Bet Book*, Strife). It is clear, therefore, that understanding the true intentions of the tzaddikim is no simple matter. Their disputes should thus not become the concern or talk of the common folk, as is unfortunately all too common today. See also *Likutey Halakhot, Ribit 5*.

The *Parparaot LeChokhmah* explains this form of strife in a manner that ties together the different points of the lesson. He writes: The mind of a Jew is likened to a holy encampment. The secular wisdom that seeks to infiltrate this encampment stems from the corrupted *gevurot*, the gold dross, which are elements of the Other Side (see nn.82, 83). Their attempt at infiltration in itself denotes strife, because the intention of the Other Side is to pursue the person and oppose his striving for holiness. He, in turn, must mitigate this decree (the pursuit of the Other Side) and thereby reconnect the fallen *gevurot* to their source in holiness. This requires his using precisely the same means, namely conflict. However, in his case it is "holy conflict." He battles against his evil inclination—against his interest in secular wisdom and his desire for evil passions—thereby transforming the forces of evil into holiness, the *chet* into a *heh*, and *chametz* (impurity) into *matzah* (holy conflict).

Unfortunately, not everyone is capable of waging this battle. It is therefore incumbent upon the tzaddikim, who can do battle, to engage in conflict against the Other Side and so prevent it from infiltrating the encampment of holiness. They battle to keep secular wisdom and heresy away from the Jews. And so people must have faith in the tzaddikim and understand that their conflicts and disagreements are only for the benefit of the Jewish people. Indeed, any suggestion that these disputes are indicative of actual enmity between the tzaddikim is in itself a foreign thought, one that only adds more strength to the Other Side (by clogging one's mind).

97. **hears the reproof of life....** The simple meaning is that the person who is willing to listen to rebuke will be counted among the wise (*Metzudat David*).

98. **TaLiN...TeLuNah...conflict.** The *Zohar Chadash* teaches: When Yaakov lodged in Bethel on his way to Lavan's house (Genesis 28:11), he took issue with God that Esav was being granted control over this world. We learn this from the word *LaN* (lodged), which resembles *vayaLoNu* (they argued) (*Zohar Chadash, Vayeitze*, p.27; marginal note from the Tcheriner Rav). Similarly, in our text, the Rebbe makes the connection between *talim* (תליון) and *telunah* (תלונה).

99. **drops of your mind.** Earlier in this section Rebbe Nachman spoke of safeguarding the mind from becoming *chametz*. Here, he adds another dimension: keeping the drops of the mind from becoming blemished. Essentially, this entails guarding the Covenant, i.e., refraining from sexual sin (e.g., having relations with a *niddah*, non-Jewess, or any woman one is proscribed from marrying, as well as not engaging in homosexuality or masturbation). As is taught, the origin of semen or seed is in the mind (cf. *Yevamot* 53b; *Zohar Chadash, Bereishit* 15a; see *Likutey Moharan* I, 7:3, n.39; *ibid.* 11:4, n.42; see also *Rabbi Nachman's Tikkun*, Breslov Research Institute, 1984, especially pp.74-76). Seed is therefore

known as the “drops of the mind.” As mentioned above (nn.47, 53), these drops, which descend from the whiteness of the mind, are the *chasadim* that descend from *Chokhmah* and temper the *gevurot*. A blemish of the Covenant is therefore considered a blemish of one’s intellect and an inflaming of the *gevurot*.

Now, as explained, conflict between the true tzaddikim is actually spiritual conflict, a battle against the Other Side. Therefore, when a person hears this conflict, he should realize that the strife and blemish is actually in his own mind—a dispute between the sacred and the secular, between holiness and impurity. He is being rebuked for having soured his mind with undesirable thoughts.

The *Parparaot LeChokhmah* explains this in greater depth: Had this person been worthy of defeating his evil inclination and expelling all evil thoughts—engaging the Other Side on his own—the tzaddikim would not have had to engage in conflict for his benefit. Their battles would then not pertain to him, and certainly he would not have been made to hear about them. On the contrary, he would have understood that this was not conflict and contention, but a way of mitigating decrees and overcoming the forces of evil for everyone’s benefit. But, because this person has blemished the drops of his mind and become attached to the aspect of *chametz*, he hears of the conflict and interprets it superficially—considering it no different than the rivalry and bickering of ordinary people. However, it is precisely this interpretation that indicates that his mind is blemished. If only he would realize that he is being shown this for his own benefit, as a test. He is being given an opportunity to catch himself from falling further; a chance to turn *chametz*-thoughts into *matzah*, so that with the aspect of *matzah*—i.e., holy conflict—he himself can battle the Other Side. And, even if this proves too much for him, so that the tzaddikim are obliged to wage the battle for him, his belief in the holy intention behind their conflict is itself enough to mitigate the decrees against him. Conversely, if he chooses to not recognize his blemish and deny responsibility for the conflict between tzaddikim, then this conflict will only cause him to be even further distanced from God (see also *Torat Natan* #7).

100. **None that go...return...regain....** In its simple meaning the verse relates to immorality, yet it also refers to undesirable thoughts and heresies (*Rashi*, Proverbs 2:16). Rebbe Nachman shows that the two are actually connected. Not safeguarding the mind from secular wisdom (heresies) blemishes the mind. Sexual sin blemishes one’s fear of Heaven, which in turn blemishes the mind. The Talmud teaches that it is very difficult to repent for either of these sins (*Avodah Zarah* 17a), which is why Scripture states: “None that go...return, nor do they regain the paths of life.”

On the surface, this seems to indicate that repentance for sins associated with blemishing the Covenant (sexual purity) is well nigh impossible. Yet, from the teachings of Rebbe Nachman we know that this is certainly not so. Reb Noson explains: As mentioned, conflict between tzaddikim has the power to distance a person from God. In one sense, this is precisely the purpose of the conflict! Certain sins engender such devastating spiritual harm that, as the *Zohar* states, repentance is impossible for these iniquities (see *Zohar* I, 188a; see *Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #71). Even so, God’s capacity for compassion is unlimited and He wants everyone to repent. Repentance is therefore always possible. Why then does the *Zohar* state that one cannot repent? However, this is the same as the strife between tzaddikim. That is, by rights, when a person has sinned so terribly, he deserves to be distanced from holiness. He is therefore put to a test. It is only natural that if shown the conflict between tzaddikim, or told by the holy writings that he can never repent, he will turn even further away from holiness. This is his trial. If he refuses to be fooled and pushed away, if he stands at the gates of holiness and refuses to depart, if he cries out to God to help him regardless of his murky past and the crookedness in his heart—then even he will merit repentance. There can be no better proof of this than those very terrible sinners who have successfully repented. From their example we learn that being driven away from holiness is actually the initial stage toward repentance (*Torat Natan* #7).

101. **death...chametz.** As above, note 95.

102. **...Gavriel descended.** See above, notes 82 and 88. As has been explained in earlier lessons, what appears to be a restatement of associations already established is actually Rebbe Nachman’s way of directly connecting yet another concept to the equation. Rebbe Nachman has already connected a blemished mind to *chametz*/death. Here, he adds the above mentioned concept of corrupted *gevurot* (Gavriel) to this equation.

The *Parparaot LeChokhmah* adds: Rebbe Nachman mentions three aspects: death, *chametz*, and the letters *chet* and *heh*. They can be understood as symbolizing three levels of spiritual decline. On one level are those whose descent is so total that they are considered spiritually dead. On a second level are those whose minds have leavened spiritually. They are linked to death, or as the Rebbe said, “have become attached to the side of death,” though not to the same degree as those on the former level. Finally, there are those who are only slightly separated from holiness, just as there is only a slight difference between the *chet* and the *heh*. What the people on these different levels have in common is the responsibility to make the world a better place (see §1). To do this, they must do their best to repent—no matter what level they are on. And by doing so, they can then merit the three positive levels (which Rebbe Nachman discusses next): fear of God’s exaltedness, a flawless voice, and complete and true wisdom.

103. **extrinsic wisdom....** As above, notes 82, 83 and 85.

104. **not have been given to hear the conflict....** The verse thus translates in our text as follows: **The ear that hears the reproof of life** — There is a personal lesson to be learned when a person hears **lodges among the wise** — the tzaddikim arguing.

105. **from death to life....** See above, notes 88 and 95.

106. **This conflict is only for your sake...true wisdom.** As explained above (see n.100), a person has to understand and believe that the real reason for the tzaddikim arguing is only so as to put *him* to the test. The very fact that he hears of this discord should serve as a warning that according to the dictates of strict justice he deserves to be pushed away from holiness for having abused the drops of his intellect. If he stands up to this test by ignoring the disputes and acknowledging the gravity of his previous wrongdoing, he will be able to come closer to God rather than be rejected. For the truth is that God loves mercy and desires that those distant from Him be drawn closer, despite their being unworthy. But the only way this can happen is by their being subjected to this test. If instead of turning away from the tzaddikim because of their arguing a person draws closer to them out of a desire to repent, they will teach him how to “return...and regain the paths of life” (*Advice*, p. 203f, *Parparaot LeChokhmah*).

107. **guard your mind...chametz.** By fighting the evil thoughts and rejecting secular wisdom. As we have seen (nn.46, 89), this is best accomplished through prayer.

108. **strike your skull.** The flames of the heart strike the moisture of the mind (see n.55).

109. **converted into thunder.** As above, note 47.

110. **heart’s crookedness...straight...joy....** As in section 3, and notes 42-44.

111. **When you called...I tested you....** This verse from Psalms (*loc. cit.*) refers to the Jewish people’s bondage in Egypt. In our context, their enslavement corresponds to the implementation of severe decrees. The Psalmist says that when they prayed to God, He answered them. Rebbe Nachman, who has discussed the importance of prayer in overturning decrees, next explains how the rest of the verse corresponds to our lesson.

Interestingly, Rashi explains “I answered you thunderously” as: I openly displayed My *gevurot* and awesomeness. This supports Rebbe Nachman’s earlier statement: For thunder is essentially from *gevurot*, as is written, “...the thunder of His *gevurot* (strength)” (see §3 and n.48).

The *Biur HaLikutim* points out that Psalm 81 has a further link to Rebbe Nachman’s lesson in that it also speaks of Rosh HaShanah and the shofar.

112. **Waters of Conflict...matzah...mentalities.** When Miriam passed away, the well Israel was given in her merit to provide them with water in the wilderness, departed. The people began demanding water from Moshe and Aharon and demonstrating against them. The place where Israel disputed with God, where Moshe failed to sanctify God’s name by hitting the rock instead of talking to it, was called Waters of Conflict, *Mey Merivah* (Numbers 20:13). In our context, “Waters” connotes the moisture of the mind, the

intellect/*mochin*, and “Conflict” corresponds to *matzah* (as above, nn.91, 96). Thus, “Waters of Conflict” alludes to the conflict between tzaddikim that rectifies the intellect.

113. ...**thunder is generated**. By bringing this verse from Psalms, Rebbe Nachman ties together a number of the lesson’s points: “In your distress you called out and I strengthened you. When you called in secret, I answered you thunderously...Selah.” That is, what was it that made you worthy of My answering and strengthening you when you called out to Me in distress? It was that your voice was an aspect of thunder. “I tested you at the Waters of Conflict”—i.e., I tested you with the conflict between tzaddikim and saw that your intellect was pure, an aspect of *matzah*. You were not put off or confused by their arguments. And so your voice was like thunder, straightening your heart’s crookedness. As a result, you merited joy and knew to differentiate between before and after the decree. This enabled you to pray even after the decree had been issued, by disguising your prayer in a *maamar*. This is, “you called in secret,” for the prayer is veiled and concealed in the *maamar*, and because of this “I answered you” (*Mai HaNachal*).

In particular, these last two sections of the lesson were intended by Rebbe Nachman as a guide for Reb Noson on how to remain focused while praying (see n.1). This was a major concern for Reb Noson, who had already sought help from a number of that era’s great chassidic masters (see *Through Fire and Water*, Chapters 3-6). In addition, Rebbe Nachman addressed Reb Noson’s personal dilemma regarding the ongoing conflict and strife between the leading tzaddikim of the day. We can also assume that the Rebbe’s references to secular wisdom were meant as criticism of the *Haskalah* movement, and his mention of “battles” as a possible veiled reference to the forthcoming decrees of forced conscription (see n.1).

In review: Every person is responsible to make the world a better place. He can do this by praying for the world’s benefit, as prayer has the power to mitigate decrees. However, when decrees are extant and man’s prayers are obscured by his sins, he has to disguise his prayers in a *maamar* (§1). To know whether it is before or after the decree one must perform the mitzvot with joy—feeling reward in the performance itself. Then, the degree to which he succeeds in feeling joy is indicative of whether God is joyous or the decree has already been issued (§2). To feel this joy, one must have a straight heart, a heart whose crookedness has been eliminated by thunder—i.e., a revelation of intellect. This thunder is generated by arousing the fear of Heaven through intense prayer (§3). But for thunder to be generated when his voice strikes his mind, a person must safeguard his fear of Heaven, and more importantly keep his mind free of secular wisdom and evil passions, especially blemishes of the Covenant. This battle waged by the intellect against evil thoughts parallels the one waged by the tzaddikim against the Other Side. Thus, when this latter battle manifests as conflict between tzaddikim, the person who hears it should understand that he is being advised to repent and rectify his own blemished intellect. Only then can he come to the voice of thunder that straightens the heart’s crookedness, and so perform the mitzvot with proper joy. (With this joy he can discern whether it is before or after the decree and pray properly for the world) (§4).