

BS"D Soul Prayer, Class #15, February 18, 2020¹

Standing in Your Truth Part 2

Last week, we spoke about why *Viduy* follows the *Amidah*, and how it provides us with a means to self-cleanse through which we realign ourselves with our deepest truth, namely, to be responsible, to have integrity, to be trustworthy, ethical, honest, and to use our best talents to help others and make the world a better place. This week we want to go further, delve more deeply. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov on the power of *emet*-truth (*Likutey Moharan I*, 9:3):

At times when a person stands to pray, he is beset by extraneous thoughts and is surrounded [and attacked on all sides] by *klipot* (shells, negative voices). He is left in the dark, unable to pray... Certainly the darkness itself contains many openings through which one may exit...but one who is trapped in darkness is like a blind man who gropes in the dark, unable to find an opening. Know, however, that a person can merit to find an opening even in the thickest darkness through *emet* (truth). For the principal light that illuminates the darkness is none other than the Holy One Himself, as it is written, "*Hashem ori ve'yishi*—Hashem is my light and my salvation" (Psalm 27:1). Through *emet*, the Holy One dwells with man [and makes His presence felt], as in "*Karov Hashem lekhol korav, lekhol asher yikrauhu be'emet*—Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, [but He is especially close] to all who call Him sincerely and truthfully" (Psalm 145:18). When the Holy One is with a person, He enlightens him as to how to go forth from the darkness that is preventing him from praying...

This is the meaning of Hashem's command to Noach, "*Tzohar taaseh la'teivah*—make a *tzohar* (light) for the ark..." (Genesis 6:16). [We know that the word *tzohar* indicates some type of light source, but what type?] Rashi fills us in: "Some say that *tzohar* is a skylight, and some say that it is a precious jewel [that shines in the dark]." The difference between a skylight and a precious jewel is that a skylight has no light of its own. It is simply a passive medium through which light may enter. As such, when there is no light coming from the outside, the skylight itself remains dark. With a precious jewel, however, even when there is no outside light, the jewel gives off its own light. [*Teivah*: Besides referring to Noach's ark, the Hebrew word *teivah* literally means "word." Accordingly we may now understand Hashem's command to Noach as "*Tzohar taaseh la'teivah*—make a *tzohar* for the word you speak," alluding to the fact that we should make the words of our prayers shine with the power of truth (*Likutey Moharan I*, 112:2).]

So too there are people whose faculty of speech is like a skylight, which has no ability to illuminate words on its own. This is what is meant by "Some say a skylight." Their *saying*—their speech—is a skylight without any light of its own. There are others, however, whose *saying* is a precious jewel. Their speech radiates by itself. Know, however, that everything depends on a person's *emet*. For the principal light is the Holy One, and the Holy One is the essence of *emet*. His primary yearning is also for nothing but *emet*...This is alluded to in the initials of the concluding words of our verse, "*ve'el amah tekhalenah mi'lemaalah*" (literally "construct it [the roof of the ark, so that it slopes downward on both sides from a width of] one cubit at its top"). When rearranged, the initial letters of *amah tekhalenah mi'lemaalah* spell *emet* (truth). Through *emet*, the Holy One dwells with man.

In his prayer based on the above teaching, Rabbi Nathan of Breslov/Nemirov pours out his heart (*Likutey Tefillot I*, 9):

My head is filled with a flood of uncontrollable thoughts. They press in on me wherever I turn. My mind is confused. I simply cannot open my mouth to pray. I cannot even say a single word of my prayers correctly due to the darkness, the confusion... // I am surrounded and trapped by barriers on all sides. They are holding me back from You. I cannot see an opening anywhere. I cannot see any exit. My only hope is to be truthful. This is what You have taught us through Your holy sages. You let us know that if we speak honestly and truthfully, You will shine Your light into us, even in the thickest darkness, and help us depart the darkness and reach a great light. Precisely because You love truth, You are close to one who cries out to You in truth.

Emet (truth). I am to speak words of *emet*, to not only create a skylight through which the light may enter from outside, but to generate light within my very being. Through the power of *emet*, I create light. What is darkness but the place within where I don't yet believe in Hashem's love? Darkness is an opportunity to enter into my own disbelief. If I don't give permission to myself to enter that darkness, sit in that darkness, feel that darkness, and find out that Hashem is there too, I will never truly know that He is there. // Calling out in truth, or calling

¹ Contact Avraham Sutton, www.AvrahamSutton.com; email: avraham.sutton@icloud.com; whatsapp: +972-525-640-249.

out from a place of truth, is not easy for most of us. When given an opportunity to do so, the first thing many of us experience is anger, red-hot anger. Anger is a powerful emotion, but it is a result as opposed to being a cause. What is beneath the anger? What is the cause of the anger? What is the *emet* (truth) behind the anger? Usually it is pain. The pain of not having been loved, appreciated, or even acknowledged for who we really are. We feel hurt. What do we do with this *emet*?

Feel the hurt. Allow yourself to feel your own pain. Can't feel the pain? Think of a little boy or little girl being attacked by a stranger. What are you going to do? You will do anything possible to save this child. You channel your anger; you become a mother lion protecting her cub. No one is going hurt this child again. You are that child. You are also the adult you. In terms of *nefesh* and *ruach*, the hurt child is your *nefesh*; the adult you is your *ruach*; and your higher self (the godly soul that knows why you had to endure what you endured) is your *neshamah*. When you feel that child's pain as a child (*nefesh*), and also commit to being there for that child as an adult (*ruach*), you are not only bringing light into the darkness but birthing an even greater light that was trapped in the darkness. The transformative moment is when your *neshamah* reveals to you that the pain you endured was necessary in order for you to be truly and fully you. Yes, it was like being in hell. Nobody wants to go there. But having gone to hell and back, you can now be there for others in a way that you could never have been otherwise. And again, by discovering and reclaiming this lost part of your Self, you are now on the road to being fully you.

It all starts with *emet*, *aleph-mem-tav*. The *aleph* of *emet* is the beginning of the *aleph-beit*, the *mem* is the middle, and the *tav* is the end. *Emet* is I myself standing in the middle of my life, looking all the way back to the beginning and all the way forward to the end. *Emet* gives me perspective on where I am in my life. // And yes, in order to live in *emet*, I must temporarily give up the mundane part of me that clings to the familiar and is afraid of going beyond me. I must give up thinking that I already know myself by allowing the awareness of eternity to penetrate into my consciousness. I must stand in the mystery – not only in the mystery of God's eternal reality that is only hidden but never absent, but in the mystery of my own existence. Standing in my truth, mundane thoughts no longer distract me. Here I declare my desire to serve Hashem, to cling to Him, to remain in His presence forever, which we now know is the same as being true to the truth of my soul. Here, in the holy of holies of my soul I find Hashem. I merge my little "i" in the great I AM. Standing in this sacred space, this place beyond place, I fear not that I will be unable to return to the mundane me again. It will happen soon enough. In the meantime, I ask for wisdom and understanding, forgiveness and blessing, love and mercy. I ask for redemption – for myself, my people, mankind, and all creation. I ask to take the light of this moment-in-eternity into my life.

King David's Teshuvah – We Are Judged as We Judge Others

How do we know this? We know it from dreams and we know it from the Baal Shem Tov. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov taught in the name of his grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov (*Likutey Moharan* I 113):

I heard in the name of the Baal Shem Tov: Before any decree of fate is issued by Heaven against anyone in the world, everybody in the world is assembled in order to determine whether all agree to that verdict. So too the very man against whom this sentence has been passed – he too is asked if he agrees. And when he does, the verdict is given. Now, of course, if he were to be asked explicitly about himself, he would certainly deny his guilt and protest that it is not a correct verdict. [In order to get an objective opinion from him] however, he is deceived. He dreams a dream seemingly about someone else, and he is asked to judge what that person did. When he then pronounces judgment on that case, the verdict he has pronounced is really his own verdict on himself... This is the meaning of the Mishnah, "*Nifraim min ha'adam mi'daato ve'shlo mi'daato* – payment is exacted from a person, whether he is aware of it or not" (*Pirkey Avot* 3:20). That is, "*mi'daato* – he is aware of it," for he is asked his opinion. At the same time, however, "*ve'shlo mi'daato* – he is not aware," for he is not told that he is deciding his own fate.

As Rabbi Nachman goes on to mention, this is exactly what happened to King David. King David wanted to marry Bathsheva. The problem was that she was already married to Uriyah. David thus sent a note to Yoav, his commander-in-chief, to make sure Uriyah would be properly taken care of: "And in the morning, David wrote a letter to Yoav, saying: Send Uriyah to the frontlines in the heat of the battle; then withdraw from him so that he will be hit and die" (II Samuel 11:15). David then waited until Bathsheva had risen up from mourning for Uriyah. Without delay, he sent for her and married her, and she bore a son. This entire strategy which David had

conceived did not please Hashem. Hashem therefore sent Nathan the prophet to David. He came to David and told him the following parable:

There were two men in one city, one rich and one poor. The rich man had vast numbers of flocks and herds. The poor man had nothing except one tiny lamb which he had bought and reared. And this lamb grew up together with him and his children. It ate from his bread and drank from his cup. It lay down next to him and was like his own daughter. One day a *wayfarer* came to the rich man. Unable to bring himself to take from his own flocks and herds in order to prepare a meal for the *guest*, he took the poor man's lamb and prepared a meal for the *man* (II Samuel 12:1-4).

Hearing this, David was temporarily caught off guard. Thinking that Nathan was talking about someone else, David became indignant and enraged at the evil that had been perpetrated by the rich man. He said to Nathan, "As Hashem lives, the man who has done this is worthy of dying. He shall also restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because he had no pity" (II Samuel 12:5-6). The opening had been made. Nathan now turned the key:

Nathan said to David, "You're the man! 'Thus says Hashem: I anointed you king over Israel...why have you despised My command and done evil in My sight, slaying Uriyah the *Chiti* with the sword, taking his wife for yourself...! Now the sword shall not cease from your house forever, because you have despised Me and taken the wife of Uriyah the *Chiti* as your wife.' So says Hashem, 'Behold, I shall raise evil against you from within your own household. I shall take your wives away before your own eyes and give them to your fellowman who will lie with them in broad daylight. Though you acted in secrecy, I shall perform this deed in the presence of all Israel and in broad daylight!'" David immediately confessed to Nathan, "*Chatati l'Adonai*—I have surely sinned against Hashem!" (II Samuel 12:7-13).

Although King David was completely unaware of it, the precise verdict which he pronounced was to be carried out against himself. He was to pay a fourfold payment and be put to death by the sword. When he said, "*Chatati l'Adonai*—I have surely sinned against Hashem," this was David's repentance, as a result of which the death-penalty was rescinded, as Nathan himself immediately declared, "*Gam Hashem he'evir chatatkha; lo tamut*—Hashem has therefore removed your *chet*; you will not die for this" (II Samuel 12:13). He was, however, made to pay through the suffering he endured from four of his children: Amnon, Tamar, Avshalom, and the first infant that Bathsheva bore him (Rashi, II Samuel 12:6).

Recall now Nathan HaNavi's parable: "A *helekh* (wayfarer) came to the rich man; unable to bring himself to take from his own flocks and herds in order to prepare a meal for the *oreyach* (guest), he took the poor man's lamb and prepared a meal for the *ish* (man)." Not satisfied to take this parable at face value, the sages identify the wayfarer in this verse as none other than the *yetzer hara*, the notorious evil inclination. They point out that the three different words used to designate the wayfarer in this verse represent a clear progression (*Succah* 52b). Rashi comments:

The evil inclination is first likened here to a passing *helekh* (wayfarer) [who shows no indication of wanting to stay longer than a few moments]. Then he is likened to an *oreyach* (guest) who takes up temporary residence. In the end he is likened to the *ish* (man) of the house. Such is the way of the evil inclination. He begins as a wayfarer, enjoys all the advantages of being a guest, and finally takes his place as permanent master of the house.

In sum, as the Baal Shem Tov intimated, we are shown a kind of movie every night in which somebody wrongs somebody else. Afterwards, we are asked to render our judgment regarding what punishment (if any) need be administered to the guilty party or parties. As we saw in the Zohar, we are even required to sign a document stating that such and such is our final decision. // Of course, the Director of the movie is the Grand Master. He catches us off guard every time by devising the perfect story. Strangely enough, although the minutest details of the story correspond to our own life-situation, we fail to recognize the characters. But, after we have signed, we begin to realize that we have just signed our own sentence. Clearly we are judged the way we judge others.