

Nosh and Learn with Mindy – 3.19.2020

*# 1 La'asok b'divrei Torah*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ  
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

*# 2 Kol Ha'olam kulo*

כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוֹ גֶשֶׁר צָר מְאֹד  
וְהַעֲקָר לֹא לִפְחָד כָּלֵל

Kol ha'olam kulo Gesher tzar me'od Vecha'ikar lo lifached k'lal.

The whole world is a very narrow bridge and the main thing is to have no fear at all.

Text from Truth and Lovingkindness:

Ramon, Einat, and David Golinkin. Truth & Lovingkindness: *Sources on Spiritual Care in the Midrash and in Modern Jewish Thought*. The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2018.

### 32. Nechama Pohatchevsky (Brisk, 1869 – Rishon Letziyon, 1934) Despair and Relief

Weakness descends upon me and I see myself standing on the edge of a life without light, without a belief in the need for my life, and without the energy required to end it. I have no recourse except to lay down my oar and let my boat be carried along the waves wherever they will, it will float whence the wind will carry it, until it smashes against a rock.

With pent-up pain I stand beside my window. There above the orchard a great flock of birds flutters by, rising east and then returning west, leaning here to the right, there to the left, but never departing from its circle. Does this entire flock, too, not know where it is headed?... And all the birds took off and disappeared. And within me, everything lay dormant. There is nothing before me, and nothing after me.

From *Nechama Pohatchevsky, "Bivdidut," Bakfar Uba'avodah: Sippurim*, Tel Aviv, 1930, p. 170

*Nechama Pohatchevsky was one of the first Zionist women writers. She came to Israel during the First Aliya and was one of the founders of the Rishon Letziyon settlement, and the first woman to sit on the City Council. She established many different charitable organizations in Rishon and devoted her life to them.*

### **The Author's Reflections**

For many generations, the harsh reality of women's lives prevented them from sharing their spiritual wisdom with posterity. But, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we began to witness the writing and thinking of Jewish women about spiritual matters. Nechama Pehatchevsky depicts a woman in a state of crisis and distress who responds by letting go and allowing herself to "go with the flow," like a boat on a stream. This state of mind may lead to a better reality, one in which we do not fight suffering, but open ourselves up to the mystery of life. Spiritual care often involves being with a person in a state of crisis, when helping that person to let go may be a very effective response.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection**

- How does the heroine of Pehatchevsky's story cope with her feelings of despair and loneliness?
- How do men and women that you know cope with these feelings?
- When does a person feel despair and loneliness? How would you characterize the situations that give rise to these feelings?
- What are appropriate ways for people to cope with despair and loneliness?
- How can a person know which ways of dealing with despair and loneliness are appropriate for him or her?
- How can we help an individual suffering from despair and loneliness?

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[Reflections inspired by this text study]