

Honey and Milk

נֶפֶת תִּטּוֹפְנָה שִׁפְתוֹתַיךְ כְּלֶה
דְּבַשׁ וְחָלָב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנַיךְ

*Nofet titofna siftotayich kalah,
d'vash v'chalav tachat l'shonaych*

Your lips, my bride, drip honey.

Honey and milk are under your tongue. (Song of Songs 4:11)

One of the most important spiritual challenges we face is the need to sweeten the bitterness that is in us. Bitterness can accumulate within us, even without our knowing it, made from small or large disappointments, regrets, unhealed grief, grudges, anxieties or resentments. That bitterness forms the obstacle to fully stepping onto the Path of Love.

According to the Baal Shem Tov, here are the steps we must take in order to sweeten that bitterness:

- **Hachna'ah:** Being humbled, surrendering, yielding
- **Havdalah:** Discerning God's Presence in the midst of it
- **Ham'takah:** Sweetening our bitterness

First we face and taste the bitterness within us, and are humbled by it. Then we look into that bitterness and find the seed of soul-growth. When we focus on that seed and water it with our compassion and awareness, the sweetening begins. Here in the Song of Songs, we can savor the rewards of this journey of transformation. The milk and honey under our tongues are the taste of the Promised Land. That taste inspires us to find voice for the love that is in us.