

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Don't Hit!

By Ozer Bergman

“An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:24).

Rashi: If a person blinds someone, he makes financial restitution for the value of the eye (*Bava Kama* 84a).

Generally, in Jewish law, when a person commits two crimes simultaneously, the *beit din* (Jewish court) administers the more severe punishment. The perpetrator is thereby absolved of his lesser crime as well. There is a notable exception. One who physically assaults and harms a fellow Jew does not receive the more severe corporeal punishment for the assault, but makes financial restitution (medical costs, unemployment compensation, etc.). Why?

Disagreements are inevitable in life. We are all gifted different tastes and perspectives, and we develop our own particular outlook on life. We are not always going to agree. However, disagreement need not lead to discord. Just as we need to develop a way to overcome our weakness for chocolate, liquor, or what-have-you, we also need to develop a way to deal with differences. If, God forbid, Jews come to blows, it is because they have over-argued, failing to remind themselves of the importance of shalom and the loathsomeness of conflict. To paraphrase Rashi, peace is not born from a fistfight.

The attacker has not only harmed the recipient of his blows. The unseen victim in every altercation is *emunah*, faith.

We usually think of a yeshiva as an educational institution, and rightly so. But we usually think of educational institutions as intellectual institutions, places to sharpen the mind. This may be true of a college or university. However, the real business of a yeshiva is to produce Torah – instruction and advice on how to live a sacred life, one imbued with faith in God and in the implicit holiness of His creation.

Sadly, the quintessential yeshiva, the “mother of all yeshivas,” no longer exists. That yeshiva is better known as the Sanhedrin, which was located in the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple). One of the primary functions of the Sanhedrin was to maintain *mishpat*, justice. This they could do only if its foundation, shalom, was preserved. This is why King David prayed, “Seek the peace of Jerusalem... May there be peace within your walls... for the sake of my brothers and friends I say now: May you have peace!” (Psalms 122:6-8).

Hundreds of years ago, the Arizal greatly stressed the importance of brotherly love among Jews. With that, he was echoing the Mishnah that Torah can be ours only if we truly care about one another (*Avot* 6:6). Any strife that engenders dislike already wounds the Torah and *emunah*. A disagreement that leads to physical violence is much worse. Those blows produce Divine influence that cause Jewish suffering, God forbid.

We can say that all suffering is a result of “too much physicality and not enough *neshamah* (soul).” When we hurt, or are weakened, somewhere in our body, it’s because the bit of *neshamah* that usually occupies that part is not there. There’s too much body and not enough soul. And without the soul, the body is dead.

The spiritual root of money relates to the concept of infusing *neshamah* into things. So the attacker, who removed some *neshamah* from the victim’s body, now restores *neshamah* by paying for the losses and costs incurred. To a degree, the wrong has been righted, but peace has yet to be born. That can only happen, and the attacker only fully absolved, when the attacker seeks forgiveness from his victim, and the latter learns from Avraham Avinu (our Patriarch) to be kind and forgive (*Bava Kama* 8:7).

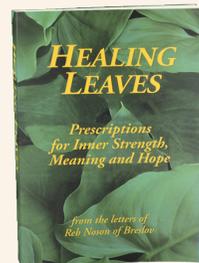
Based on *Likutey Halakhot*, *Nezikin* 5:26

A gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



For the time being, know and remember well every day that God is great and that His greatness is infinite. Every moment of every day, entirely new and miraculous things are being created and are taking place in the world. All this is to inform, to hint at, and to remind each person about God’s greatness

and sovereignty, so that every single person, wherever he is, can attach himself to God at any time, any hour, any moment — whenever he wishes. (*Letter #272*)

A Little Bit is Also Good

by Yossi Katz

“Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel ascended. They saw the God of Israel...He did not send forth His hand – they [Nadab and Abihu] viewed God, yet they ate and drank” (Exodus 24:9-11).

This implies they were fit to be punished because they looked at Him with a haughty heart while eating and drinking (Rashi, ad loc.).

Food has a special power to satiate the heart. In spiritual terms, this means that it strengthens and warms our hearts. This can make us yearn and even burst for spirituality and closeness to God, beyond the boundaries that are fit and proper for us.

Nadab and Abihu ate and drank, fueling their desire for

We give up before we even get started.

spirituality and leading them to “gaze” at God at a level not suitable for them. According to the Midrash, they repeated this mistake when they brought a “foreign fire” into the Sanctuary after drinking wine. They actually forgot about God and became wrapped up in their own spiritual fantasy.

Most of us struggle with a similar desire for spirituality, but we take it in the opposite direction. In our case, we think that we can never reach the heights of spirituality that we want to attain, so we give up before we even get started. “What’s the point? I’ll never be a tzaddik,” we tell ourselves.

This kind of thinking stems from the belief that we have done so many wrongs that we cannot change anything by doing something good again. We think that “small” acts like learning a page of Torah or giving money to charity won’t earn us full *teshuvah* (repentance) and make us better people. To do *teshuvah*, we contend, we must completely remake ourselves, reversing all our bad character traits, studying and praying all day, and doing everything perfect. Overwhelmed by the abundance of spirituality we think we need to grasp, we end up not doing anything at all.

The truth of the matter is that a little bit is also good. Even if we merit doing a tiny act for God’s sake, this will be preserved for us forever and can never be taken away. Even if we give but a penny to charity, the merit we gain is eternal. And if we accustom ourselves to thinking and living in this manner, adding spirituality in measured doses, slowly but surely, we will become tzaddikim.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Terumot U’Maaserot 3

SIDEPATH

Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt”l

11. Rebbe Nachman said, “I have great joy simply because I was worthy of being in the Land of Israel.”

The Rebbe’s voyage to the Holy Land involved much confusion and many frustrations and obstacles, including money. Nevertheless, he overcame all barriers and attained his goal of walking in the Holy Land.



He said, “I believe this and understand it fully. Every movement, every thought and every effort made for the sake of doing something holy is never wasted.

“When you want to do something holy, at first you are confused and unsure. You are standing on the balance deciding whether or not to do it, and barriers seem to be springing up on every side. But when you are worthy of completing the task, your every movement, your every thought, and even the confusion you had in completing this deed, are all marked for good. They are lifted on high and made into very holy and exalted things.”

Fortunate is he who is worthy of breaking down all barriers and completing each holy task.



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The photo on the front is a close-up of Rebbe Nachman’s chair, which is displayed in the main Breslov synagogue in Jerusalem.