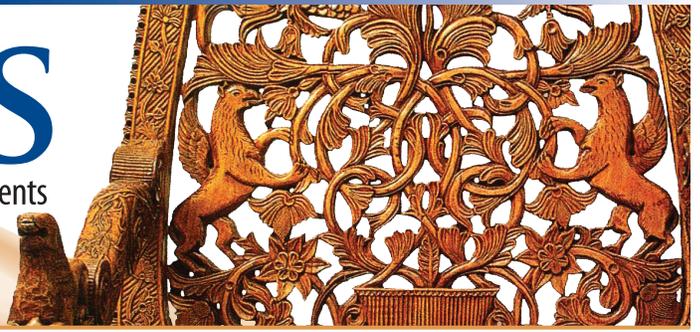


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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It's All About Desire

By Yossi Katz

EVERY SYNAGOGUE is considered a mini *Beit HaMikdash*. We are told that in the future time of our redemption, all these synagogues that served as places of refuge during the Diaspora will rise up and travel to the Holy Land, where they will be combined with the eternal *Beit HaMikdash*. Therefore many of the symbols displayed in our synagogues serve the purpose of memorializing the vessels of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and also remind us that we will be privileged to gather within the walls of the *Beit HaMikdash* once again.

Hanging near the front of every synagogue is the *ner tamid* (eternal light). The *ner tamid* is a memorial of the *ner ma'aravi* (western light) of the Menorah which the Kohanim lit in the *Beit HaMikdash*. In the Temple, this light was to be kindled during the evening hours – a time symbolizing darkness and tribulation. However, the Kohen would arrive to find that the light remained miraculously aflame. The warm glow of this light contains the hidden secret of Jewish survival throughout our darkest times.

The Hebrew word for soul, *nefesh*, also means to want and to desire. The pure Jewish soul craves spirituality and is passionately aflame with a desire for closeness to God. This is why in Judaism we always associate a candle with the soul; for example, we light a candle on a *yahrtzeit*. The Jewish soul with its desire for God lives on for eternity.

The beginning of our spiritual journey, or any time we decide to strengthen and renew ourselves, is invariably strewn with obstacles. We experience dark and dreary days, challenges that make us want to give up. Where do we find the reserves of strength necessary to trek on? We must access the source of our souls – namely, our desire for God.

King Solomon teaches, “A righteous man will fall seven times, and rise” (Proverbs 24:16) Seven refers to the seven different types of challenges that our evil inclination tests us with. Even the tzaddik, at his lofty level, falters to an extent, and certainly we do. This is all part of life.

But no matter what happens to us, and no matter how far we fall, we must never let go of our burning desire for God. We must look at each day as a new opportunity to attach ourselves to Godliness and regenerate our spiritual drive. If we can hold on to this desire no matter what happens, our soul will be our candle, illuminating every kind of darkness in this world.

Rebbe Nachman said that he wanted us all to become tzaddikim just like him (see *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #165). This is extremely difficult to understand. Even Reb Noson, the Rebbe's greatest disciple, never reached the Rebbe's awesome level, so how can we?

I once heard the following explanation from a great Breslov teacher. Our Rabbis teach that if someone intends to do a mitzvah, but is unable to complete it, it is considered as if he did the mitzvah (*Berakhot* 6a). True, none of us will be able to reach the spiritual heights of Rebbe Nachman. However, we can want to be a tzaddik as much as Rebbe Nachman wanted to be a tzaddik. Even though I make a lot of mistakes, even though I may sin, my passionate desire for God can help me accomplish what I have to.

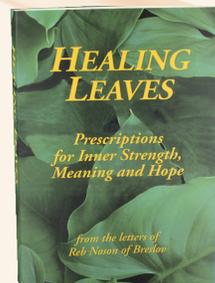
So the next time you're in shul and see the *ner tamid*, look up!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhat HaShachar 5
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



We must elevate all our worries and anxieties, so that we fear nothing but God. We should know and believe that all the anxiety and fears that come upon us, especially those we are experiencing right now, are meant to remind us to fear God. (Letter #198)

The Road to Greatness

By Yehudis Golshevsky

ONCE REBBE NACHMAN was speaking to his followers about the greatness of traveling to the tzaddik. "If I had a tzaddik like you have," he said, "I would go to him on foot." "And on the way back?" his students asked. "On the way back," he answered, "I would run!"

Rebbe Nachman meant that after receiving from the tzaddik, he would race home to carry out whatever he had learned and follow the tzaddik's advice in his Divine service.

Today, attaching ourselves to the tzaddik through his written teachings and stories has just as much effect as actually being with him.



When Rebbe Nachman left Breslov for Uman in 1810, Rabbi Aharon, the Rav of Breslov, followed him because he wanted to remain close to him. Before Rosh HaShanah, Rebbe Nachman received a letter from the residents of Breslov, complaining that they had no Rav to lead them during the High Holy Days.

"We have no right to lodge a complaint about the fact that you, Rebbe Nachman, left our city," they wrote, "but why did you have to take the city's Rav with you? Please send Rabbi Aharon back home."

Rebbe Nachman showed the letter to Rabbi Aharon. "Should I return and miss being with you for Rosh Hashanah?" Rabbi Aharon asked.

Rebbe Nachman said, "I cannot describe the pain it would cause me if you wouldn't be here for Rosh Hashanah."

"If so, should I remain here?"

"But they're right!" Rebbe Nachman said.

"Does that mean I should return?"

Rebbe Nachman only repeated what he had said originally, that the pain of Rabbi Aharon's leaving would be indescribable. It was Rebbe Nachman's way to never tell anyone outright what he should do. On his own, Rabbi Aharon decided to return to Breslov.

On the way he met up with Reb Noson and Reb Naftali, who were traveling to Uman to be with Rebbe Nachman. "Now, just before Rosh HaShanah, you're leaving the Rebbe?" they asked him.

Rabbi Aharon told them the story. "Even so," they said. "Had it been us, even if Rabbeinu had thrown us out with a smack of one of the roof beams, we wouldn't have left him before Rosh HaShanah!"

Based on Siach Sarfei Kodesh II:112, 117

Dedicated in the Memory of (L'Ilui Nishmat) Yehudis bat Shimon

SIDEPATH

Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt"l

96. You should accustom yourself to be in the World to Come. Separate yourself from all worldly desires. For in the World to Come, there is no eating or drinking, nor any of the other harmful, worldly appetites.

Even when you are alive and well, you can still exist on a plane of the World to Come by eschewing all worldly pleasures. If you would only contemplate the delights of the World to Come, you would find this world and its pleasures impossible to tolerate.



*

People do not consider the ability to forget an advantage. But without it, it would be impossible to live in this world.

Imagine that you would constantly recall all the delights of the World to Come. There is an angel with a thousand heads. Each head has a

thousand tongues. Each tongue has a thousand voices. Each voice has a thousand melodies. The beauty of this angel's song is indescribable.

If you could imagine such things without forgetting, you would constantly compare your own limited abilities to the immensity of such a being. It would be utterly impossible for you to endure life. You would be so disgusted with your worldly life that you would die before your time.

If not for the power to forget, you would constantly recall your lowly state. Therefore the power to forget is a great benefit. Still, you should remember enough [of the World to Come] that you do not lose it.



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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.