

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Feeling Homesick

By Yossi Katz

I **DON'T KNOW** about you, but this summer has been especially challenging.

Living in Lakewood, NJ, I am not too far from the Jersey Shore. As I look out my window on a warm, sunny day, I observe the cars going to and fro, the drivers blasting music and seemingly having a carefree time. I turn on the radio and hear yet another news report condemning Israeli aggression and reporting the latest sum of rockets fired on Israel, new casualties and injury figures. My mind wanders and imagines joining the masses ambling around and enjoying some exciting new destination. Wouldn't it be nice to forget all the problems and just run away? But I snap out of my daydream, remembering that I have a job and many obligations to take care of.

But in all honestly, what does God really want from us? Is this period of the Three Weeks some kind of living hell that we are doomed to suffer every year? Is there a certain measure of pain and suffering that has been decreed against us?

To make some sense out of these days, let's examine this three-week period of mourning. We once had a national home: the *Beit HaMikdash* (literally, "Home of the Sanctuary"). There were several reasons why the Holy Temple was a fitting home for God's Chosen People. For starters, it was a place that gave witness to Divine Revelation on a constant basis. Anyone who entered witnessed extraordinary miracles taking place daily. It was also the seat of the Sanhedrin, where justice and spiritual direction were meted out to the nation. Most importantly, the Temple was the resting place of the *Shekhinah*, God's Presence. In our terms, this means that by entering the Temple, one could feel ultimate connectivity with our Father in Heaven.

For over 2000 years, we have lived far away from our collective home. It is at this juncture of the year that we acutely sense and experience our feelings of homesickness. Everything going on around us is a mere reflection of what is really going on inside of us, whether we're aware

of it or not. Our exalted position has been lowered to the status of what Rebbe Nachman calls "*prustakes*," or simple, common folk. We find it hard to concentrate on learning Torah or feel connected when we pray. For this reason, at the climax of this period, on Tisha B'Av morning, we don't even wear *tallit* and *tefillin*. So what do we do?

We reflect, we remember, and, if we are able, we even shed a tear. We are being reminded that we are lost, far away from home. Those around us scream and yell that we have stolen their land, that we are thieves. But just as God gave "free" life to the world for generations before the Torah was given, before there were even any mitzvahs to do, so too, God sustains the entire world today. No one can accuse us of anything, for God is the Source of everything and has given us our land.

In our lowliness, God is reminding us that it is He who is supporting us now as well. Our cries and suffering remind us that despite our material abundance, and even despite our spiritual accomplishments, we are very much His poor children, longing to go home. When we realize and affirm our utter dependency on His generosity, we remind the world that they, too, are indebted to God – the same God Who chose to give the land to His People.

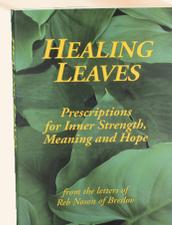
May our reflecting bring about the remembrance of our faith in the kindness of our Creator, and may this create the final argument on high to bring us all back to our real home. Amen.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shomer Sakhir 4

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



The Rebbe told me explicitly, "God is right there with you; He's right next to you. Do not be afraid." (Letter #171)

Passion for the Truth

By Yehudis Golshevsky

THE LACK OF truth and honesty in the world distressed Reb Noson no end. One morning he was so upset, he was unable to pray with his usual joy. He prayed apathetically until he reached the verse “Who protects truth for eternity.” These words ignited the rest of his prayers with enthusiasm and joy.

He explained the deep encouragement he found in this verse through a parable:

A nobleman had a resplendent garden with every species of plant – except for one rare, precious species. He searched all over and finally found one seed of this species, which he planted in his garden.

The species was rare because it was difficult to grow. Before it grew, it was in great danger. Watering it too much or too little would kill it, and it was a favorite food of birds and insects. The nobleman hired guards to watch the seed vigilantly, for even one moment of inattentiveness could cause irreparable damage.

“The same is true regarding truth and honesty,” said Reb Noson. “Unadulterated truth and genuine honesty are precious and rare. They get so little respect in this world. God perpetually guards truth and honesty with great care. The time will come when people will see their greatness, as the verse states, ‘Truth will sprout from the earth’ (Psalms 85:12).”

It was the custom in Breslov synagogues for someone to share words of Torah between the afternoon and evening prayers. Some stayed to listen, while others learned alone or left.

One of these speakers had many listeners who enjoyed his enlightening ideas. Once the speaker got into a passionate argument with one of his regular listeners regarding a certain matter. They couldn’t come to an agreement and each was very upset with the other. Everyone was certain that this man would stop attending the daily lecture. But they were mistaken. When asked why he continued attending, he explained, “I always gain so much from the Torah he shares every day. Why should our dispute make me abandon the good?”

People were astounded at this man’s commitment to truth and spoke highly of his honesty.

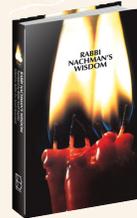
Eventually the two forgave each other and became the best of friends.

*Based on Maasiyos u'Meshalim, p. 40;
Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:176*

SIDEPATH

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

141. While I (Reb Noson) was home in Nemirov, the Rebbe revealed the Ten Psalms to the Rav of Breslov and my good friend, R’ Naftali of Nemirov. The Rebbe asked them to bear witness and said, “Three quarters of people have been caught in this trap (of improper seminal emissions). I call you to bear witness that these Ten Psalms are an extremely beneficial remedy for this unclean occurrence. In fact, they are an absolute remedy and help immensely.



“Many great tzaddikim sought this remedy and worked hard to find it. Some never had any idea at all of the true remedy. Others began to perceive it, only to be taken from the world before they could grasp it completely. But God helped me and I totally grasped the solution. Rectifying this matter by reciting the Ten Psalms is something completely new, an outstanding innovation, because it is entirely new and a wonderful and awesome remedy.”

He told them, “Bear witness to my words: When my days are over and I leave this world, I will intercede for anyone who comes to my grave, says these Ten Psalms and gives a penny to charity. No matter how great his sins, I will do everything in my power, spanning the length and breadth of the creation to save him and rectify him...”

“I am very positive in everything I say. But I am most positive in regard to the great benefit of these Ten Psalms. These are the Ten Psalms: Psalms 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137, 150.”



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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.