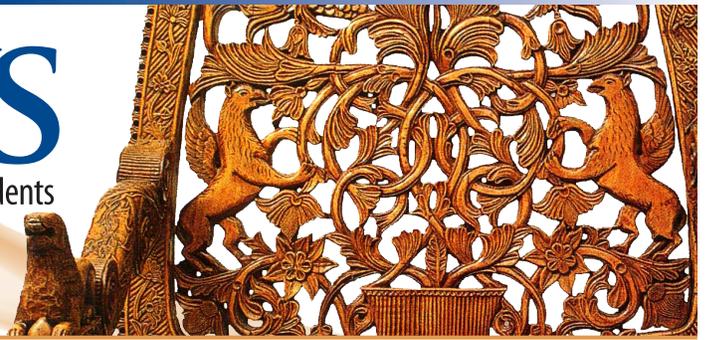


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Know It by Heart

By Ozer Bergman

“Elokim spoke to Moshe...I am YHVH. I revealed Myself to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov as *E-l Shad-dai*, but [not] by My name YHVH...I will let Pharaoh's heart be hard... Pharaoh's heart remained firm; he did not listen to [Moshe and Aharon]” (Exodus 6:2-3; 7:3, 13).

We Jews have one and only one God, the one and only God. Even though God is one, He has seven names. (“His name is one” [Zechariah 14:9] does not mean that He has one name.) His two most common names are *Elokim*, which we perceive when we experience difficulty, and *YHVH*, which we perceive when we experience ease and success. The opening verses of *Parashat Va'eira* contain four of God's names. Why so many? What does it have to do with Pharaoh's heart, or ours?

At the end of *Parashat Shemot*, Moshe Rabbeinu, thinking he had failed in his mission, complained to God. “Why have You visited misfortune on this people? Why did You send me? Ever since I came to speak in Your name, [Pharaoh] made things worse for [them], and You have not saved Your people!” (Exodus 5:22-23). This was a mistake (*ibid.*, 6:1; see Rashi) that we need to learn from.

At times a person may have questions on how God runs the world. Sometimes the question is historical: “How could He have let the Holocaust happen?” Sometimes the question is personal: “Why me?” The reason we ask such questions is because we perceive too much truth, but not the whole truth. For example, the Jews really should not have suffered so much at the hands of Pharaoh; instead of making the Jews suffer even more horribly, Pharaoh should have accepted Moshe's message from God and freed the Jews.

All of these statements are true, but the conclusion – that God is wrong, or somehow to blame – is incorrect. Because the truth that Elokim delivers often conceals from us that *Elokim* is *YHVH*. God refers to Himself here by these two names to remind us: painful experiences, yes; two names, yes; but only one God.

The effort of getting humankind to know that there is one God was begun in earnest by the Patriarchs. Reb Noson explains that the full truth of this idea – and the accompanying experience – has to develop over the course of history, “from generation to generation.” During the era of the Patriarchs,

mankind was only ready to perceive *E-l Shad-dai*. The fullness and richness of “*Elokim* is *YHVH*” that mankind can perceive in this world will take place only in Mashiach's era.

Similarly, in our personal lives, we cannot immediately leap to an “*Elokim* is *YHVH*” perspective. In order to experience God, we must invest serious time and effort to open our hearts to Him. This is what the holy *Zohar* means when it comments on the verse “Her husband is known at the gates” (Proverbs 31:23) – a person experiences God only in proportion to the gates he makes in his heart” (*Zohar* I, 203b). We have to dedicate time daily to using what happens in our lives to making and widening those gates.

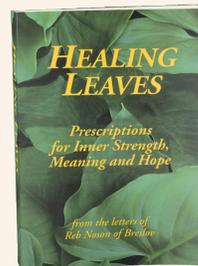
Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch points out (on Exodus 7:3) that three words describe various states of Pharaoh's heart. It was sometimes *kasheh*/hard – i.e., impervious to feeling and unimpressed by events. It was occasionally *kaved*/heavy – namely, impressionable, but in need of extra motivation and effort to change. Ultimately, it was *chazak*/firm – consciously opposed to pliancy and submission. When the tzaddik brings God's message to free your Jewish potential, may your heart be as un-Pharaoh-like as possible. Amen.

Based on *Likutey Halakhot*, Ribit 5:31
A gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



My dear children! I ask all of you, for God's sake, to think carefully about the true purpose of this world! Although we may be poor, God does help us with what we really need. Do not set your sights too high on material possessions. As for the real necessities, trust in God. Only fortify yourselves in Torah and prayer and ask God

every day to guard you from all evil and to help you to be good Jews. For nothing remains of a person except whatever he manages to grasp of true Jewish life in this world. (Letter #400)

All's Right in the End

by Yossi Katz

“Pharaoh hardened his heart” (Exodus 7:22).

God is constantly acting to fix this world and bring it to its ultimate perfection. In the end, everything will turn out exactly as He planned and willed it. Even the actions of the wicked do not affect God's design in the slightest. The Divine blueprint is very profound and God is able to manipulate everything according to His ultimate plan.

Nevertheless, it is absolutely forbidden to violate any law of the Torah. Someone who breaks a Torah law damages all the upper worlds and causes much spiritual destruction. Still, God's blueprint for the world remains intact and God will finish exactly as He planned. It is absolutely impossible for us to understand how this is possible, for on the one hand God is in control, while on the other hand we have freedom of choice. However, this is one of the fundamental principles that Rebbe Nachman taught us.

*Tell God everything, pour out
your heart to Him*

Accordingly, there are many things that a person can do that violate the Torah yet fulfill the desire of God. For example, Pharaoh hardened his heart and intended on harming the Jews. But each time his actions led to a greater sanctification of God's Name. We see from here that God constantly manipulates the world to bring it to its ultimate perfection.

Likutey Halachot, Simanei Beheimah Ve-Chayah 4

Based on this concept, Rabbi Yitzchok Breiter writes: Understand that everything that happens to you, both spiritually and materially...comes about through God's decree. Even if you want to accomplish something holy, if you are not yet sufficiently worthy and have not sanctified yourself enough to achieve it, Heaven arranges things in such a way that you get distracted from it. Some idea gets implanted in your mind that prevents you from carrying out the holy deed, even if you want to. This is not because, God wants to take revenge, but because of His love...

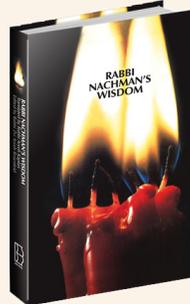
The thing to do is cry out to God about all the wrong you have done. Tell God everything. Pour out your heart to Him and plead with Him for your very life. Ask Him to help you get nearer to your holy goal. God's way of dealing with us in this respect is one of His most amazing wonders. His understanding of us and our needs is perfect.

Seven Pillars of Faith, Pillar #1

SIDEPATH

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

4. In these times, it is very difficult for a religious person to have wealth. To obtain riches, he must suffer a great spiritual decline. Yet even after this, there is no guarantee of wealth – for even the wicked or irreligious can be poor. If one is truly religious, then he is always far from riches.



When the Temple was destroyed, wealth fell into the realm of the kelipot (husks). It is written, “She fell with wonders” (Lamentations 1:9). In Hebrew, “wonders” is *PeLA'IM*. Transpose the letters and you have *ALaPhIM*, the “thousands” (of wealth). The verse then reads, “The thousands fell.”

The thousands of wealth have fallen astonishingly. They have fallen so deeply, it is a wonder. If a person covets these thousands, he, too, must fall with them. But even then, he is not assured of riches.

Therefore it is very difficult for a truly religious person to become wealthy. There are some rich tzaddikim and religious people, but their wealth is burdensome and harms their devotions. And though they seem wealthy, they still do not have the ready millions of the irreligious. For true wealth and Godliness are now unlikely to be found together.



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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.