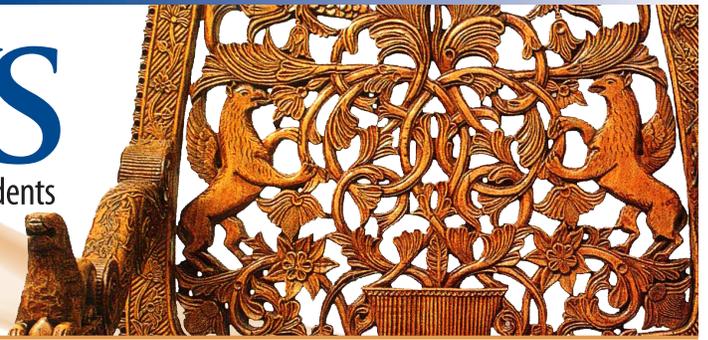


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Is Everybody Happy?

By Ozer Bergman

“The Jews had light and *simchah*...” (Esther 8:16); “...to make them days of drinking and joy, and sending food-portions each person to a friend, and gifts to the poor” (ibid., 9:22).

Do you what the purpose of Creation is? You're not one of Haman's ten sons, so I won't leave you hanging. I'll give you a hint. The purpose of Creation has something to do with Purim. We have to be happy on Purim.* The purpose of Creation is to increase and expand – to grow – *simchah*.** This is one reason why Purim, unlike the other holidays, will be celebrated even after the arrival of Mashiach, may he come swiftly and soon. (Amen!)

Since Purim is futuristic, continuing forever into the future, it can teach us about how to prepare for the future. Let's look at its mitzvahs to see what they can teach us about how to bring the future *simchah* into today, and how to live that *simchah* every day. If we practice being happy now, we'll be much readier for Mashiach Era happiness.

The four mitzvahs of Purim are (in order of appearance): [1a] reading *Megillat Esther* at night; [1b] reading it again during the day of Purim; [2] *shalach manot*, sending portions of ready-to-eat food to a friend or acquaintance; [3] *matanot le'vyonim*, gifts to the poor; [4a] the *seudah* (feast), and, finally, everybody's favorite: [4b] drinking wine/becoming intoxicated. We'll start with *shalach manot*.

Food is love. Providing it, cooking it, preparing it, presenting it and serving it are all signs of care and concern. “I want you to be well, to be physically satisfied and emotionally cared for. I know what you like because I think about you. You are not alone. We are connected.”

Matanot le'vyonim, a gift of money (far and away the most common gift), conveys the same message. On the surface, it sounds like ordinary*** *tzedakah* (charity), but there is a subtle – and crucial – difference. Any other day of the year, if someone requests charity we are allowed, sometimes required, to investigate if he is truly in need. On Purim, “anyone who puts out his hand to take, we give to him” (*Kitzur Shulchan Arukh* 142:3).

Translated into Jewish, this means, “I don't need to pry and ask personal questions. Your word as a Jew, as my brother/sister, is enough to convince me that your need is genuine. I'm here to help you out.”

So the first rule of getting ready for the future, for being in a state of *simchah*, is to care enough for a fellow Jew that you reach out to give him two gifts: Jewish connection to other Jews, and personal inner joy. The other two mitzvahs are also connected to this theme. Ideally, reading the Megillah requires a minyan. *Megillat Esther* is, after all, *our* story. The *seudah*, too, is meant to be eaten and celebrated with others (Esther 9:28). All the mitzvahs of Purim are aimed at increasing and expanding the *simchah*.

(God willing, next week we will learn other lessons from these last two mitzvahs, reading the Megillah and drinking to the point of intoxication.)

And to think, we needed Haman to teach us all this!

* The Arizal teaches that Yom Kippur, aka *Yom ha-KiPpURIM* is “like (i.e., almost as holy) as Purim.” The Piasetzener Rebbe, zt”l, said that this means also that just as you must fast on Yom Kippur, no matter how hungry you become, you must also be happy on Purim, no matter what's happening.

** A number of English words can be used to translate *simchah*: happiness, joy, cheer, and others.

*** Ordinary charity is, in fact, extraordinary, in its essence and in its effect.

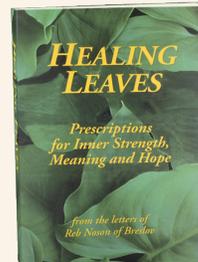
Based on *Likutey Halakhot P'ru u'Rvu* 3:8

A gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



A person needs to have faith that everything that happens to him is really a great favor from God. It is sent either to atone for his sins, to remind him to return to God, or to motivate him to pray over it. (Letter #218)

It is forbidden, and in truth it is not possible, to stubbornly demand things of God. We should only request and beg with many petitions and supplications, and God will do what is good. (Letter #452)

Why Work?

by Yossi Katz

The Menorah was made (Exodus 25:31). It shall be made on its own (*Midrash Tanchuma, Beha'lotkha* 3). Because Moses was uncertain how to create it, God said to him: Throw the brick of gold into the fire and it will form itself. Therefore it does not say "You must make" (Rashi on Exodus 25:31).

Work, work, work... Most of the world spends the vast majority of their waking hours hard on the job. But does more of the grind mean that we produce more and earn a better living? And is there any way that our lives could be a little less stressful and things could come by a little easier?

Reb Noson teaches that when engaging in work or business, we need to focus all of our thoughts, speech and actions on God. The reason why we are engaging in work is because there are sparks of holiness hidden in these mundane matters, and it is God's will that we uplift these sparks through our toil.

It is also God's will that we refrain from working on Shabbat.

We should realize that the work we're doing doesn't actually create anything

When we refrain on Shabbat from performing any of the *Lamed-Tet Melakhot* (Thirty-Nine Acts of Labor) that were used in the construction of the Tabernacle, we merit to rejoice in God's *Ratzon* (Divine Will or Favor) and reinforce our faith in the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Then the *Lamed-Tet* Acts of Labor are transformed into *Tet-Lamed*, which spells *TaL* (dew)—the dew of God's Divine Favor toward us. The more we believe in the power of Shabbat and the realization of God's will permeating this world, the more the holiness of the Shabbat will be drawn into the six workdays and we will be blessed with Divine Favor.

Regarding the construction of the Tabernacle, the Torah states, "The Tabernacle was erected" and "The Menorah was made" – for the work was accomplished by itself. The Jewish people merely intended to perform the work, and the work was accomplished. So too, when it comes to our livelihood, we should realize that the work we are doing doesn't actually create anything: it is only God's Favor that blesses us.

God's will is realized when we rest on Shabbat and affirm our belief that He runs both the world and our personal lives. When we live according to God's will, our work also becomes His will. Therefore our Sages teach that when we fulfill God's will, our work is completed through others (*Berakhot 35b*).

May we all attain true faith in God, and through this faith we will usher in the day that is completely Shabbat, soon and in our days. Amen.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhot Shabbat 3

SIDEPATH

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

12. When people want to become truly religious and serve God, they seem to be overwhelmed with confusion and frustrations. They find great barriers in their path and cannot decide what to do. The more they want to serve God, the more difficulty they encounter.

All the enthusiasm that such people have when trying to do good is very precious, even if their goal is not achieved. All their effort is counted like a sacrifice, in the aspect of "For Your sake, we are killed each day; we are counted like sheep for the slaughter" (Psalms 44:23). The *Tikkuney Zohar* (#21, 59a) explains that this verse speaks of both prayer and sacrifice. Therefore, even if one's prayer is not perfect, his every effort is like



bringing a sacrifice.

The same is true of all devotion. You may wish to perfect and sanctify yourself, but find yourself unable to do so. Still, the effort and suffering involved in the frustrated attempt are not in vain. They are all an offering to God.

Always do your part, making every effort to serve God to the best of your ability. Whatever task is at hand, do it with all your might. Keep it up even when all your efforts seem to be frustrated and all your attempts in vain. Do everything in your ability, and God will do what is good in His eyes.



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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.