

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Dining with the King

By Ozer Bergman

“And the rabble among them goaded themselves on to desire ... The Israelites wept and said, ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the free fish we ate in Egypt, with the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.* Now ... all we have to look forward to is the manna” (Numbers 11:4-6).

Don't eat like a glutton and don't devour your food. Instead, eat as if you were eating with a king. Blessing rests on the innards of a *mensch*, not of a chowhound. A chowhound is a spiritual relative of Esav, who said, “Let me gulp down this red, red stuff” (Genesis 25:30). Why does such a person have no blessing in his belly? Because the evil Serpent lives there, denying him satisfaction. What's more, such a person is called a *rasha* (villain), as it is written, “The stomach of villains is lacking” (Proverbs 13:25). Therefore one ought to eat unhurriedly, at the table, as if eating with a king (*Zohar Chadash*, Ruth 106a).

A person who eats only for the physical craving, without any longing for *kedushah* (holiness), fails to connect body and soul. As a result, when he dies, he is really dead—namely, his corpse is an empty container, totally devoid of *kedushah* (may God spare us!). On the other hand, to the extent that one eats with conscious craving to be a part of holiness—Shabbat, Torah, prayer, giving charity, etc.—one generates more and stronger desire for *kedushah*.

If you're like most people, you probably don't pay much attention to *how* you eat. Yes, you pay attention to *what* you eat: only kosher food that you're careful to cook kosher. Undoubtedly, you make genuine effort to focus and concentrate when saying the *berakhot* (blessings) before and after eating.

If you're more aware, you will remember that you are eating to stay healthy and have strength to serve God. You will also learn some Torah at some point during the meal, before saying the after-blessing.

Sadly, however, many of us, once we take that first bite, get swallowed alive by the food on our plate, whether it's organic tofu, genetically-engineered beef, or anything in between.

Eating is an opportunity not to be missed, but not because our stomachs are empty or our taste buds ache. When we eat, we are—or could be and should be—joining body and soul, Heaven and Earth, infusing creation with *kedushah*. How do

we accomplish this? The first steps are really quite simple. Eat slowly, without wolfing down your food. Eat calmly and with proper etiquette (which may vary with local custom).

The effect is tremendous, much greater than you might have guessed. Your thinking becomes clearer and you are less taken in by foolishness. The converse is also true: if one *fresses* (eats gluttonously), foolish ideas take hold in his mind, crippling him, God forbid. Even though he learns Torah, he is unable to draw from it awe or love of God.

If you're privileged to be eating with a dignified person—someone so regal that he never “takes a time out” from being noble and dignified—you will automatically eat as a Jew should. Even if you sit down at the table by yourself,** imagine that you're sitting with that quasi-royal person. If you're sitting with less-than-dignified others, *you* be the noble person.

* In his commentary on the Pesach Haggadah, Rashba (a student of Ramban) writes that it was a kindness of God to exile the Israelites specifically to Egypt, which was so wealthy that it provided all its inhabitants, even the slaves, with plenty of free food. Having a good diet, the Israelites were strong and healthy.

** Many *tzaddikim*, famous and unknown, past and present, preferred to eat alone. It allowed them to more fully use mealtime as a way of communing with God, in the ways mentioned in this *dvar* Torah, and in many unmentioned ways.

Based on *Chayei Moharan (Tzaddik) #515*

A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

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HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell

Even though the Blessed Holy One has compassion on every single person, rescuing him from his personal problems, God's salvation does not always happen in the same way for everyone – for there are innumerable variations among people, even within one person at different times and on different days. The manner of God's involvement depends on how much a person has prepared himself – how great is his longing for God and for

His holy Torah, and how strong is his desire to come close to the true *tzaddikim*. Each individual must make an effort for the sake of his own salvation. (*Letter #370*)



Rebbe Nachman's Torah

Compiled by Chaim Kramer

At the end of this week's *parashah*, Miriam is stricken with leprosy and Moshe prays for her recovery. From this episode we learn the proper way to pray for sick people, and how to arouse God's compassion.

Moses cried out to God, saying, "Please, God, heal her, please!" (Numbers 12:13).

In his prayer on Miriam's behalf, Moses did not mention her by name. For one who names a person who is subject to Divine judgment makes his or her identity known to the Heavenly prosecutors, who then rise up and overpower the person.

Nevertheless, it is customary to pray on a person's behalf by stating his name together with his mother's name. In Miriam's case, that was *Miryam bat Yokheved* (Miriam the daughter of Yokheved). Moses followed this custom in a concealed fashion, without revealing Miriam's identity to the accusing forces, by alluding to her name in the phrase *NA RePhA* (please heal), which has the same numerical value as *MiRYaM YOKheVeD* (*Likutey Moharan* I, 174).

* * *

Broadly speaking, there are two degrees of Divine Compassion: Simple Compassion, which is rooted in the spiritual level called *Ze'er Anpin*, and Abundant Compassion, which is rooted in the higher spiritual level called *Atik* (*Zohar* III, 137b).

Due to our many sins, we cannot be helped fully by God's Simple Compassion, but require His Abundant Compassion. However, the latter is much more difficult to access.

These two levels may be compared to two rich men who lived in a city. One was a moderately wealthy man, while the other was a fabulously wealthy magnate. Once, another resident of that city found himself in dire financial straits. He was able to get an audience with the moderately wealthy individual, but it was impossible for him to gain entry to the enormously wealthy man. However, the moderately wealthy individual did not have the means to fulfill the man's request. What could he do now? Someone advised the man to go back to the moderately wealthy individual and appeal to his compassion: "Look, I need a great deliverance, and I know that you want to show me compassion. But since it is not within your power to fulfill my request, please go to the very wealthy man and elicit compassion from him on my behalf."

So too, a person should pray for God's Simple Compassion to ascend to the level of His Abundant Compassion in order to fulfill our requests. And the way to arouse that Simple Compassion is to engage in Torah study, since Torah study gives a person proper *da'at* (intellect), and whoever possesses such *da'at* can elicit Abundant Compassion (*Likutey Moharan* I, 105:3).

SIDEPATH

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

32. Strengthen yourself in faith, completely avoiding all speculation. Do not look into philosophy, but believe in God with simple faith.

We have received the Torah through Moses our teacher, and it has been transmitted to us by the great, awesome tzaddikim of each generation. They can be relied upon without question. All one must do is follow in their footsteps, believing in God with innocent simplicity and keeping His Torah and commandments as taught by our holy ancestors.

* * *

Faith is a very strong thing, and it can greatly fortify your life.

If you have faith, then you have a source of comfort and inspiration even when troubles strike. You realize that all troubles are ultimately for your good and are an atonement for your sins. You believe that God will be good to you in the end, both in this world and the next.

The faithless skeptic, on the other hand, has nowhere to turn when troubles strike. He is utterly alone, with nothing to enliven or comfort him.

33. Another time when the Rebbe was discussing faith, he remarked, "The world considers faith a minor thing. But I consider it an extremely great thing.

"The path to faith is empty of all sophistication and speculation. It is the innocent faith of women and the ordinary religious person."



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P.O. Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641

P.O.B. 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

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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.