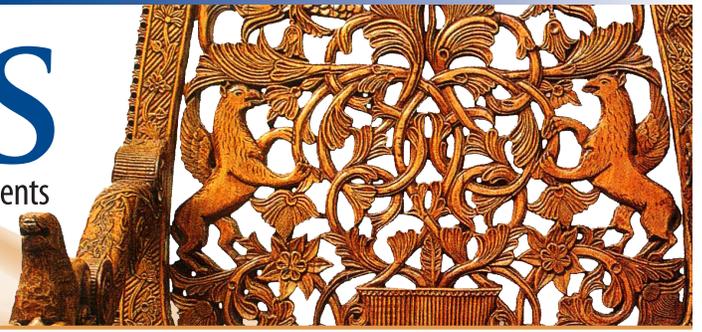


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Looking the Right Way

By Ozer Bergman

“[God] does not look at the sins of Jacob” (Numbers 23:21)

Some of us might find this verse somewhat troubling. Does it mean that Hashem (God) doesn't judge us for what we do? Does it mean that He doesn't see what we do? Does it mean that it's OK to do those things the *yetzer hara* (evil urge) whispers in my ear?

No, no and no. “He forms the eye, does He not see?” (Psalms 94:9). Our verse does call them “sins,” so they are still forbidden. So, what *does* the verse mean?

Rebbe Nachman tells us that Hashem's way is to focus on the good that Jews do. Even if there are things that are no good about them, He turns a blind eye to those. “All the more so, a *person* is forbidden to look at another in a negative light, to seek and find specifically what is wrong about [the other's] worship. On the contrary. One is obligated to focus only on the positive.”

This is important year-round, but it's absolutely critical now because on this coming Tuesday, 17 Tammuz (June 25), the period of *bein ha-metzarim* (literally, “between the straits,” aka The Three Weeks) begins. This is the period of the year in which we mourn our exile, which began with the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple). The climax of The Three Weeks is the anniversary of the Temple's destruction, 9 Av (July 16). The Talmud tells us that the reason for the destruction of the Temple – and our prolonged exile – is *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred).

It sounds like a rather formidable task to rid ourselves of the tendency to look at people unfavorably. How do we do it? The Rebbe gives one suggestion in his lesson: Celebrate Shabbat! Enjoy it! Eat what you like, drink what you like! Put on some fancy clothes. I'm sure you have no objection to this suggestion. But you're probably a little curious: What's the connection?

Hashgachah (Divine Providence). Rebbe Nachman writes that when a person does right, then God takes care of him or her with a personalized, tailor-made *hashgachah*. What would happen, he asks, if a person misbehaved? If he were to be treated with tailor-made *hashgachah* then, he would have a difficult, unpleasant existence. What does Hashem do to allow you to enjoy some good in life? Hashem lets your life

be run by nature. That way, in the natural order of things and in the natural course of events, good things can happen to you.

Shabbat is holiness itself. All holiness demands (appropriate) celebration. When we observe Shabbat by refraining from the 39 types of *melakhah* (loosely defined as “work”), we remove the distractions that keep us from appreciating Hashem's presence in our lives. The food, drink and other pleasures we enjoy are meant to enhance our true happiness, which is the recognition and feeling of God's care and concern for us – His *hashgachah*.

When we celebrate Shabbat, our appreciation for Hashem's “not look[ing] at the sins of Jacob,” we internalize to some degree the same perspective so that we, too, do “not look at the sins of Jacob,” of our fellow Jews. For just as you understand God's involvement, care and concern in your own life, you understand His involvement, care and concern in the other person's life. You begin to understand that just as He overlooks your errors, mistakes and defiance – your sins – out of His love for you, He also overlooks the errors, mistakes and defiance – the sins – of your fellow Jews. All the more so should you!

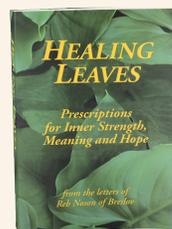
Based on *Likutey Moharan II*, 17
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

This is a reprint

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Give thanks for the past, for God has granted you so much kindness, and petition for the future that He will grant you every kindness. Ask Him to deliver you from all suffering – physical, spiritual and financial – and that you will be worthy of recognizing the kindnesses and wonders that He does for us every day. (*Letter #99*)

The essence of God's greatness is that the very person who is most distant from Him and most attached to physicality can and should serve Him. Such service is God's greatest pleasure and delight! (*Letter #213*)

Rebbe Nachman's Torah

Compiled by Chaim Kramer

While the evil Bilaam wished to curse the Jewish people, God made blessings come out of his mouth instead. Rebbe Nachman and Reb Noson uncover the hidden allusions behind those blessings.

“It is a nation that dwells alone, not counting itself among the other nations” (Numbers 23:9).

It is a nation that is on its own: it practices *hitbodedut*, a secluded, private prayer before God (*Likutey Halachot* I, p. 145a).

*

“Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the seed of Israel?” (Numbers 23:10).

Who can calculate or conceive of the greatness of each and every step that a Jew takes when doing a mitzvah, such as going to the synagogue, greeting his rabbi, or practicing *hitbodedut*? Each step creates great joy Above (*Likutey Halachot* I, p. 145a).

*

“Even now it is said in Jacob and Israel: ‘What has God done?’” (Numbers 23:23).

In the Future, when the angels will see the Jews inside the parameter that is closest to God, they will ask the Jews, “What has God done?” Because they withstood the test of this world, Jews will be closer to God than the angels, who were never tested. The Jews will then merit to the inside parameter, the *Keter*. Thus, the angels are called *seraphim* (burned ones), because they are consumed with their attainments without possessing any necessary vessels in which to contain their enthusiasm. But the Jews, by performing the *mitzvot*, create those vessels (*Likutey Halachot* I, p. 203a).

*

“Behold! The nation will rise like a lion cub and lift itself like a lion. It will not lie down until it devours its prey and drinks the blood of its kill” (Numbers 23:24).

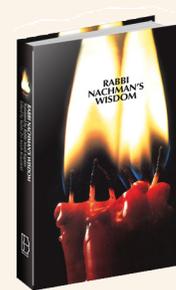
“Drinks the blood of its kill”—this means “inherits the possessions of the nations” (Targum Onkelos). *TeReF* (prey) refers to the Perfection of the Altar, as our Sages teach, “The Altar was in the portion of the *ToReiF* (predator)” (*Zevachim* 53b). The Altar can be perfected when we “inherit the possessions” of the nations—i.e., when non-Jews convert and join the Jewish nation. The nations took the goodness of the Jews captive through confiscatory taxation and the like. That good must return to the Jewish nation, and it does so in the form of converts (*Likutey Moharan* I, 17:4).

SIDEPATH

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

41. Brokenheartedness and depression are not at all the same. Brokenheartedness involves the heart, while depression involves the spleen. Depression comes from the Other Side and is hated by God. But a broken heart is very dear and precious to God.

It would be very good to be brokenhearted all day long. But for the average person, this can easily degenerate into depression. Therefore you should set aside some time each day to express your brokenheartedness to God. But the rest of the day should be joyful.



42. Depression is like anger and rage. It is like a complaint against God for not fulfilling one's wishes.

But a person who has a broken heart is like a child pleading before his father (*Ta'anit* 19a). He is like a baby that is crying and distressed because his father is far away.

43. With happiness, you can give a person life.

A person might endure terrible suffering and not be able to express what is in his heart. There is no one to whom he can unburden his heart, so he remains deeply pained and worried.

If you come to such a person with a happy face, you can literally give him life. This is a great thing and by no means an empty gesture. The Talmud teaches that two merry-makers were worthy of unusual merit merely because they made others happy (*ibid.* 22a).



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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.