

# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## The Poor Man's Offering

By Yossi Katz

**ONE OF THE GREATEST** gifts that Chassidic teachings impart to us is the ability to illuminate and make relevant all parts of Torah, even the seemingly obscure ones. The teachings of Rebbe Nachman and Reb Noson make the Torah come alive, helping us find answers and life advice in verses of the Torah that cynics claim are irrelevant and archaic. These incredible teachings reinforce our belief in the profound depth and truth of the Torah and its authentic interpreters, the Tzaddikim.

One such idea that seems to be “out of date” is the idea of animal sacrifices. The Torah states, “When a man from [among] you brings a sacrifice to God, from animals...” (Leviticus 1:2). Rebbe Nachman shines a beautiful light on one of the lessons that we can glean from the Temple sacrifices even today:

*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... 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...*

*Therefore, always do your part, making every effort to serve God to the best of your ability... Do everything in your ability, and God will do what is good in His eyes (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #12).*

Reb Noson elaborates on this idea by illuminating one of the laws of the *Minchah* offering. The *Minchah* offering is often brought by the poor, who cannot afford the price of an animal; they are instructed to bring an offering of flour instead. Yet when referring to the one who brings this offering, the Torah calls him a “soul” rather than a “man.” Rashi explains that it is as if God is saying, “I consider it as if he has sacrificed his very soul!”

One may never assume, God forbid, that because of all his shortcomings and errors, he cannot come close to God. On the contrary! Just like the poor man who can't bring an expensive animal, he can still gather together a few pennies and offer flour. God values the sincere offering of the pauper – whether he lacks materially or spiritually.

Our Rabbis teach that today our prayers are in place of the sacrifices and Temple offerings. When someone feels his physicality and smallness before God and pours out his heart before his Father in Heaven – even if it seems he can't concentrate properly or have the right intentions – that prayer has great value on high. “He has neither despised nor abhorred the cry of the poor, neither has He hidden His face from him; and when he cried out to Him, He heard” (Psalms 22:25).

The main thing is for us to act humbly, pouring fourth our sincerest thoughts and desires in conversation with God. Then, despite whatever personal shortcomings we have, God will turn to us wherever we are. Furthermore, these prayers that are offered from a position of distance and lowliness are most valued and potent. May we all merit to bring the poor man's offering – today!

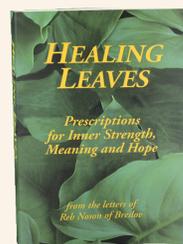
*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Tefillat Minchah 7  
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell

The pursuits of this world and its allures, and the struggle for livelihood, are all vanity of vanities...



The food and clothing that God wants to give us, He will certainly give through His generosity, compassion and loving-kindness, without excessive involvement and trouble on our part. He alone supports and sustains. (Letter #440)

# Even a Murderer Can Change

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**DURING THE CHAOTIC** period of the Communist Revolution in Russia and its street warfare between the “reds” and the “whites,” marauding bands looted and harmed civilians all over the country. Moshe Tzadok was a rare Jew who took part in this criminal behavior and even went so far as to murder innocent people.

Later, when Moshe was wanted by the government for his crimes, he fled to Uman and went underground. But when it came time for him to recite Kaddish for his father, he resurfaced. Despite his pleas, every synagogue rejected this man with Jewish blood on his hands – except the Breslover *kloyz*.

After Moshe Tzadok finished saying Kaddish, Reb Yankel Zhitomer came over to him and asked gently, “Since you already said the Kaddish, why not put on *tefillin*?” Patiently, he helped Moshe lay *tefillin* for the first time in many years. This marked a turning point in Moshe’s life. Slowly but surely he did heartfelt *teshuvah* (repentance). Before long, it was common to see Moshe crying while reciting Psalms or *Likutei Tefillot* (Reb Noson’s prayers).

When the Communists closed the mikvehs, Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender said to Moshe, “Moshe! You killed Jews – now give them life! Build a mikveh. This will fix your past.”

Moshe was a wagon driver by trade. He made up his mind to dig into the hard earth below his stable until he found water. After digging down a full 50 meters (164 feet) – an almost impossible feat without machinery – he struck water. His mikveh was the only one in Uman for many years. Moshe also gave food to whoever needed it.

When Moshe Tzadok began to do *teshuvah*, the other townspeople derided the Breslovers for accepting him. “Those Breslovers even took in a murderer!” they jeered.

But afterwards they changed their attitude. “He struggled to build the only mikveh in town; he takes food out of his own mouth to feed the needy. Maybe the Breslovers are right that there is no giving up ... even on such a sinner. He has saved our families and given so much. Isn’t it clear that he truly rectified his ways?”

*Siach Sarfey Kodesh IV, 561; V, 253*

## SIDEPATH

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

103. It is better to be “a fool believing everything” – even that which is foolish or false – and end up believing the truth, than to be smart and skeptical of everything, God forbid. One can begin by ridiculing foolishness and falsehood, but eventually he will ridicule everything and end up denying even the truth.

104. Regarding the evil inclination, the Talmud teaches, “If this disgusting one accosts you, drag him to the house of study” (*Kiddushin* 30b).



Sometimes the evil inclination worships inside a man. The man becomes like a synagogue, with the evil inclination worshipping inside him. The evil inclination can also study inside a man. The man is then like a study hall, with someone studying inside him.

In such a case, study is better than prayer. If you are like a synagogue with the evil inclination worshipping inside you, drag him to the house of study because Torah study is the most effective antidote.

105. Those who approach God are called “those who have the power to stand in the King’s palace” (Daniel 1:4).

There is a King’s palace on high. Here, below, the King’s palace is speech. Palace is *Adonoy*. It is written, “*Adonoy* (Lord), open my lips.” God’s name *Adonoy* refers to speech.

You must have “the power to stand in the King’s palace.” This is the power of the tzaddik. You must have the power to stand when a tzaddik opposes you and speaks against you.



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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.*