

# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT MATOT • 5774 • VOL. 4 NO. 40

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## How We Can Bring Mashiach

By Yossi Katz

**WE THINK OF MOSES** as being the ultimate prophet, someone who spoke “face to face” with God and stood between Heaven and earth. Therefore we assume that when he experienced a prophecy, its message and interpretation were obvious to him. Indeed, in this week’s *parashah* Moses states, “This is the word that God has commanded” (Numbers 30:2). Rashi explains that only Moses was able to say “this,” describing the vision that God had given him with absolute clarity, while the capabilities of the other prophets were much more limited.

Yet even for Moses, there were many prophecies that he received only from a blurry distance. One such prophecy concerned the plague of the death of the Egyptian firstborn, when he said, “So says God, ‘Around *chatzot* (midnight), I am going out in the midst of Egypt’” (Exodus 11:4). Why was this prophecy the one that God chose not to reveal clearly to Moses? And why could God not have revealed the exact time of *chatzot* to Moses?

Reb Noson teaches that the time of *chatzot* alludes to the time of the Final Redemption. Precisely at *chatzot*, many of the great tzaddikim rise to mourn the destruction of the Temple, as our Sages teach, “Whoever mourns the destruction of the Temple will merit seeing its rebuilding.” Moses did not know when *chatzot*/the Final Redemption would come; his vision was blurred. And so is ours. We don’t know how or when this prophecy will be fulfilled. And we despair: If so many great tzaddikim have served God with absolute piety and righteousness, and still Mashiach hasn’t come, how can *we* merit bringing about his arrival?

Our Sages make a puzzling statement: “Mashiach will not come until we have given up all hope of the redemption” (*Sanhedrin* 97a). The Maharsha explains that the Jewish people will be so downtrodden that it will be beyond the realm of our imagination for Mashiach to arrive. But isn’t the belief that Mashiach could come any day one of the fundamentals of our faith? And why would giving up hope bring about his arrival?

In actuality, the Talmud is not talking about us giving up on believing in the redemption. Instead, it refers to us believing that the redemption will come in our merit. We are being taught that God will send the Mashiach because of His righteousness and charity, not because we truly deserve him. God’s exact calculation for the time of the redemption was even beyond the perception of Moses.

We can draw tremendous encouragement from this. For God does not insist that we serve him by becoming spiritual giants, Rosh Yeshivas or Kabbalists. We have already been blessed with those great tzaddikim, and Mashiach still has not arrived. Rather, God asks us to humble ourselves and say, “Even though my actions are lacking and I am not worthy of bringing Mashiach, nevertheless, I will strengthen myself and do what I’m capable of, because I have faith in God’s compassion.”

For example, if I’ve wasted time and haven’t been diligent during my study session, or if I spaced out for most of *Shemoneh Esrei*, I will make the effort to grasp whatever time I have left to study or pray with concentration, because I trust in God’s charity and not in my own merit and power.

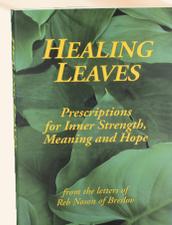
If there is one thing that should be obvious to our frail generation, it is that we are completely dependent on God’s kindness. Our belief in this last ingredient is exactly what God is waiting for to finally bring us home.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Matanah 5  
With thanks to the “Sichot Chaveirim” publication  
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Look for a positive side to everything. If you cannot find one, then just have faith in God’s lovingkindness that everything is indeed for the good. (Letter #84)

# Longing for the Land

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**THERE WAS ONCE** a prisoner sentenced to a very long time in jail. Although he had left behind a comfortable, well-furnished home, he became so used to his life in prison that when asked where his home was, he pointed to his cell.

When this prisoner took a careful account of his life, however, he remembered that he had a beautiful home waiting for him on the outside. He felt pained and filled with homesickness. At such times, when people would ask him where he lived, he would tell them about his home outside the penitentiary. He would wax eloquent: "My house is so beautiful. It's in such and such place, and is very large and well-appointed. To my regret, I am imprisoned in this hard, cold place...for now."

Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender told this parable to explain the mistaken mentality of those who live outside of *Eretz Yisrael* and never long to leave their *galut* (exile) and come to their real home.

*For forty years, the Rabbi of Voltschisk's yearning to go to the Land of the Israel was the recurring theme of his conversation.*

One of Rebbe Nachman's daughters was married to the Rabbi of Chmelnik. Another daughter wed the son of the Rabbi of Voltschisk.

The Rabbi of Voltschisk was constantly yearning to go to *Eretz Yisrael*. For forty years, his yearning for the Land was the recurring theme of his conversation. But this yearning did not find favor in the eyes of the Rabbi of Chmelnik. "What's the big outcry—yearning for forty years?! If he genuinely wants to go, let him get some money together, buy a ticket and go already!"

When this remark was repeated to Rebbe Nachman, he said, "The Rabbi of Voltschisk, who is yearning so fiercely for forty years, will make it to *Eretz Yisrael*. But the Rabbi of Chmelnik, who said that one merely takes money and travels, will never step foot in the Holy Land!"

That is exactly what happened.

May we all yearn and finally merit returning "home," very soon. Amen!

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:388, II:122, III:542*

## SIDEPATH

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

138. The Rebbe said, "I myself was greatly motivated to serve God through stories of tzaddikim. All the great tzaddikim used to visit the home of my holy parents. We lived in Medzeboz, which was also the home of the Baal Shem Tov. Many would come to visit the Baal Shem Tov's grave and they would mostly stay at my father's house. It was from them that I heard many stories of tzaddikim, and this moved me towards God."



139. One of the Rebbe's followers related this to me: "I once told the Rebbe that there was talk about my marrying a certain girl. I told the Rebbe, 'There is no place for me there.'

"The Rebbe answered, 'When a person has a Jewish heart, he has nothing to do with space. The heart is Godliness, and God is the place of the world.'"

140. The lesson in *Likutey Moharan* II, 86 states that because of lack of faith, one must work harder in his devotions. When the Rebbe addressed this lesson to me, I was quite shocked. I always thought of myself as having faith and could not understand his implication. When I mentioned this to the Rebbe, he answered me with some impatience, "*Hast-di in dir kein emunah nit* – You may have faith, but you have no faith in yourself."

You must have faith in yourself. Believe that even you are dear in the eyes of God. A measure of God's goodness is every individual's importance to Him.



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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.*

*Dedicated in gratitude to HaKadosh Baruch Hu for the neis that he performed for us – The Gruber Family, Baltimore, MD*