

# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## This Way to the Treasure

By Yossi Katz

*A MAN ONCE dreamed that there was a great treasure under a bridge in Vienna. He traveled to Vienna and stood near the bridge, trying to figure out what to do. He did not dare search for the treasure by day, because of the many people who were there.*

*An officer passed by and asked, “What are you doing, standing here and contemplating?” The man decided that it would be best to tell the whole story and ask for help, hoping that [the officer] would share the treasure with him. He told the officer the entire story.*

*The officer replied, “A Jew is concerned only with dreams! I also had a dream, and I also saw a treasure. It was in a small house, under the cellar.”*

*In relating his dream, the officer accurately described the man’s city and house. The man rushed home, dug under his cellar, and found the treasure. He said, “Now I know that I had the treasure all along. But in order to find it, I had to travel to Vienna” (Rebbe Nachman’s Parables, “The Treasure”).*

I have always enjoyed this fascinating parable and find that it truly describes the nature of our people. We each possess an amazing treasure whose incredible preciousness constantly gnaws at us. Often we misinterpret this subconscious yearning to finally discover our treasure. We confuse it with making lots of money, or seeking great honor, but it never goes away. It chases us to Vienna...

While in Vienna, the man was so certain of discovering his sought-after treasure that he would not dare retrieve it in broad daylight. This led him to include the officer on his “team.” But the officer also had a dream, a very different dream. In the officer’s dream, the man’s treasure was buried right under his own house.

The officer represents the Tzaddik. We come to him misguided, thinking that something really big is waiting for us as the result of some other passionate pursuit of ours. However, the Tzaddik knows us for what we really are. He

teaches us that this is really our *neshamah* (soul) calling for true meaning, and he sends us home! Our treasure was waiting for us the entire time right underneath our doorstep. Many times, it’s necessary to run halfway across the world before we realize that we have overlooked the most obvious of answers. Life is a journey, but by finding the Tzaddik, we will be pointed in the correct direction.

This week’s *parashah* states, “You should place these words of Mine on your hearts” (Deuteronomy 11:18).

The Hebrew word *ve-SaMtem* (you should place) is similar to *SaM* (potion). Our Sages interpret this to mean that the words of the Torah have two possible potentials: either as a potion of healing and life, or a potion of death (*Yoma* 72b). They are teaching us that even something which is the source of ultimate spirituality can cause death. This is truly shocking! So many of us think that Torah is Torah, and no matter what, it can only help and do no harm. This is very wrong. There are times when certain Torah teachings can actually be harmful. One such example is when a person studies with the intention of finding the Torah “gems” associated with someone else’s *neshamah*.

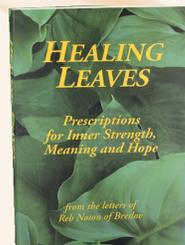
The verse tells us to place these words on our hearts. We are all unique individuals; we all must find our way and our own unique interpretation and personal message in the Torah. When we study with the Tzaddik as our teacher, and heed his voice, we will be directed to find our individual treasure and personal understanding of the Torah.

*A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



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)

# You Are Bigger Than Your Mistakes

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**THE STUDENTS OF** the Baal Shem Tov were often ridiculed for their allegiance to their rebbe. But they stood strong, committing themselves to serve God.

One student of the Baal Shem Tov would eat only on Shabbat. He would secretly refrain from food and drink for the rest of the week as he immersed in study and prayer.

Once, during such a fast, he felt extremely ill. He felt as though he would expire if he didn't put something in his mouth.

The only food available was the matzah set aside for the communal eiruv. It was kept safe in a glass case in the synagogue, but the young man couldn't help himself.

He ate the matzah.

When the town's opponents of Chassidut realized the matzah was missing, they searched for it. When they didn't find it and inferred that only this student could have eaten it, they were delighted.

They publicly insulted him and mocked him as a lowly thief. "What kind of a lowlife would eat food that was set aside for a religious purpose for the community? Is it the one who calls himself so religious?"

Wherever he went, the abuse followed him.

Eventually, this man couldn't take it any more and did the unthinkable: he left the Jewish faith.

When this sad story was recounted to Reb Noson, he made a poignant comment: "He only fell because he didn't have enough encouragement. He should have thought to himself, 'It's true that I ate the matzah, and I feel ashamed for it. But it's not as if I ate non-kosher food. Is it such a crime to eat communal matzah when in need? Why does this failing make me so bad?'"

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh I:468*

## SIDEPATH

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

148. The twelfth story in *Sippurey Maasiyot* is "The Master of Prayer." We understood that every word in these tales teaches a great lesson. The mouth cannot speak it, nor can the heart conceive it.



149. The thirteenth story in *Sippurey Maasiyot* is "The Seven Beggars." It was told over a period of several days. The Rebbe began telling this story on a Friday night. It all began because of a snuff box that was given to him by one of his followers. I had written to one of my friends about this and told

him to remain happy. The Rebbe saw this letter and remarked, "I will tell you how people once used to rejoice!" Then he began the story.

On Wednesday morning, I went in to see the Rebbe. The Rebbe said that he was anxious to know – that is, to tell – how the story continued and what happened on each of the seven days of the wedding feast. The Rebbe told the entire story of the second day on that Wednesday. On Friday night, he told the story of the third and fourth days. On Sunday, he told about the fifth day. On the following Tuesday, he completed the tale of the sixth day.

One of us then told him a short anecdote and he remarked, "Is this not the story of the seventh day? It seems that people are already telling my story. I would very much like to complete it." However, the Rebbe never completed the story.



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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.*