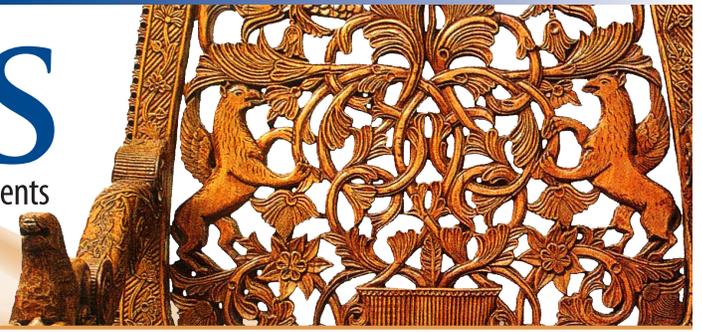


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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One Good Eye

By Yossi Katz

IT WAS FINALLY Friday afternoon, almost time for Shabbat and some long overdue rest. Jerry had returned from a long overseas business trip and hadn't been at his familiar seat in shul for several weeks. As the men filed in for the *Minchah* service, Jerry was greeted by the Rabbi with a hearty "*Shalom Aleichem*."

Jerry tried to pray properly but his mind wasn't at ease, there was just so much catching up to do. He pictured all the places he had been to and the people he had met. Before he knew it, he was taking three steps back as he completed the *Amidah* prayer. Once again, Jerry heard the Rabbi wishing him, "*Shalom Aleichem*."

"Huh?" Jerry thought to himself, staring at the Rabbi. The Rabbi whispered, "True, I welcomed you back from your first overseas trip, but I wanted to welcome you back from this last trip as well!"

We often live our lives subconsciously feeling, "I am the ultimate example of a religious hypocrite." We think, "Maybe I prayed with some intensity and concentration this morning, but already this afternoon my mind was wandering and distant from the words of the siddur." Or, "I may have seen the good points in my friend, spouse or business associate yesterday, but today they couldn't do anything right. I am back to being such a negative person."

We quickly become convinced that we haven't made any progress, and that whatever measure of good we thought we'd accomplished is either nonexistent or wiped out by now. But is this true? We have all been taught that two wrongs don't make a right, but what about the opposite? Am I erasing the good deed I've done by later doing something that implies the opposite? If my future behavior isn't at the higher standard of my

earlier actions, does that mean I was insincere and have only been deluding myself until now?

Well, thankfully, God already answered this question for us! Jewish sources teach that the entire creation and history of civilization was only a prelude for the most important event ever. This event was so great that it was actually the *raison d'être* for everything that came before it. This event was the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

One could assume that the Jewish People had to be spiritually worthy in order to receive this ultimate gift. Certainly they had to be completely sincere and dedicated to following what was written in the Torah. And yet God says about the Jewish People at Sinai, "You have captured My heart with *one* of your eyes" (Song of Songs 4:9). Why only one? Because the other eye was already looking at the Golden Calf, waiting for the moment it could be worshipped! (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:55).

Surely there couldn't be a greater hypocrisy than this. At the very giving of the Torah, there were elements of our nation who already had their eye on defiling all that was written. As our Sages teach, "Idol worship is equivalent to transgressing the entire Torah" (*Shevuot* 29a). And yet God was drawn toward us because of our one good eye!

Good is true and eternal. Nothing I do will ever negate the value and absolute purity of a good deed, thought or desire. Every bit of good that I do is forever cherished by God and safeguarded for my eternal reward. Now is not the time to despair, but to strengthen myself and start again, because whatever good I do from now on remains with me always!

Based on Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom #123

Right On Time

By Yossi Katz

THE PESACH SEASON is a very expensive time in Jewish life. From new Yom Tov clothing to special Pesach foods, things can get *very* costly.

In light of this, Reb Noson's students asked a merchant who was traveling to market day in Breslov to bring Reb Noson money they had collected on his behalf. This fellow arrived at Reb Noson's home in Breslov and entered along with a few Breslover Chassidim who had also come for market day.

In his usual style, Reb Noson spoke at length to them regarding the upcoming holiday and its deeper meaning according to Rebbe Nachman. He also instructed and inspired them to yearn, pray and petition God that they would merit to properly prepare for and receive the incredible spiritual energy available on Seder night. The visitors became extremely stirred and electrified by Reb Noson's words and, in a great state of renewal, exchanged the usual Pesach greetings and departed .

While Reb Noson was busy inspiring them, he had not mentioned his own dire financial plight. His right-hand man, Reb Nachman Tulchiner, became very despondent and worried, knowing that the local Chassidim did not have the means to support Reb Noson and his family.

Reb Noson sensed his student's worries and encouraged him. He explained that one must truly rely on God, since God provides for mankind using all kinds of circumstances in the most wondrous ways, until bounty finally reaches the person at the exact time it is needed. Sometimes His ways are so wondrous that the bounty is already "at home," yet it goes out because the time is not yet ripe. (If the livelihood were to come earlier, it might be destructive to the person.)

While Reb Noson was explaining all this, the merchant came running back into the house to give Reb Noson the collection of monies.

Reb Nachman was incredibly impressed that in such dire circumstances, Reb Noson was able to maintain such a relaxed state of mind, as if he had been missing nothing at all. He then became extremely joyous and his face beamed at the outcome. Reb Noson then told him, "Nachman! Now you see that God saves us at exactly the right time – not before and not when it's too late. You see that true trust in God is that salvation will come exactly on time!"

Based on Otzar Nachmeini, pp. 15-16

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

THE COVENANT. 45. Anyone who marries a woman for money is a fool and an idiot (*Kiddushin* 72). He will be spiritually crippled and his children will turn out to be immoral (*Likutey Moharan* I, 69).

46. Charity given in secret is a *tikkun* for a nocturnal emission (*ibid.* I, 83).

47. Depression and anxiety are the main cause of sexual immorality. The foundation of the Covenant lies in joy (*ibid.* I, 169).

48. The milk that a baby suckles can have a decisive effect on his sexual behavior later on. If a baby is given to a wet nurse, she should be a good and pious woman. A child who suckles from a morally lax woman can be overwhelmed by sexual temptation in later life. But a child who is suckled by an honest, pious woman will have only as much desire as is necessary to fulfill God's commandments (*ibid.* II, 1:4).

49. The arrogance of false leaders causes sexual immorality to become rife, with wanton destruction of seed. The "flesh is stopped" (*Leviticus* 15:3) – this "sealing" of the flesh is the seal of the Other Side. The only way to escape this is through the strength of the Guardians of the age, the Tzaddikim and those who are truly pious. The battle they have to fight is fierce. But these Guardians have the power to transform the "stopped up flesh" to a "seal of holiness" – the tefillin (*Likutey Moharan* I, 5:6).



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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.