

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT PINCHAS • 5777 • VOL. 7 NO. 35

📧 breslov.org/pathways



Recapture the Flag!

By Yossi Katz

THE JEWISH PEOPLE have never lacked enemies. Just as we are attacked today by terrorists, so too, in the days of Moses, our enemies constantly schemed and planned our destruction. However, in the days of Moses, our nation was worthy of prophecy: ours was a nation that witnessed the Ten Plagues in Egypt and the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. Because of our elevated spiritual status, our enemies were not brazen enough to attack us in a conventional way, but were cunning enough to realize that they must threaten the spiritual core of our people.

“The God of the Jews despises *zima* (immorality)” (*Sanhedrin* 106a). The Midianites were intelligent. They understood that the trademark of the Jew – *brit milah* – demonstrates the holy nature of our people. We are a people who cherish life, who use our sensual desires to promote family life. Sensuality is the strongest drive we possess; by focusing this in a kosher and dignified way, we sanctify our greatest passion before God. This area of holiness is our spiritual battlefield.

The Midianites, like most of our enemies, had little self-regard for their own. They sent out their daughters as harlots to seduce Jewish men. Zimri ben Salu, one of the princes of the Tribe of Simeon, was discovered together with the king’s daughter, Kozbi. The Midianites’ hatred was so great that they were willing to use the king’s daughter to entrap us!

We were deeply wounded in battle; the enemy captured our flag. But God never abandons us. When we left the spiritual waste pit of Egypt, we were counted. After the sin of the golden calf, we were counted. Now, too, God commanded Moses, “Take a head-count of the entire assembly of Israel ... all of those who go out to the army of Israel.” God was teaching us how to be inducted into

the army of Israel and how to reclaim our spirit: We must count every single Jew, we must find what makes each one of us special.

By reading the Torah, we could mistakenly think that our ancestors were bad people. God forbid! Generally speaking, they were great Tzaddikim, much greater than us – but the Torah is teaching us to realize that we all err, and we all fall. But we can change and grow; we can defeat our enemies.

Each of us has tried so many times to change, only to fall right back down a short time later. The reason we are stuck is because we judge ourselves negatively. Our lack of progress and constant retreats confuse us into seeing our essence as bad and flawed. Our actions and thoughts are a mixture of good and bad, but our essence, our *neshamah*, is completely good and pure.

The secret to change is learning to identify ourselves by our *neshamos*. We have to realize who we really are. By discovering our good points and thanking God for them, we begin the process of finally transforming ourselves.

Dramatic progress is almost never experienced immediately. Therefore we need to find the little things, the things we might make light of, and feel happiness because of them. That smile that we shared with someone ... those few words of prayer that we concentrated on saying ... that temptation that we pushed away even for a few seconds. These are reflections of our *neshamah*. We must recognize them, identify ourselves with them, and feel great joy and gratitude for them. Rebbe Nachman said, “A little bit of light dispels a lot of darkness.” By connecting to our good and our *neshamos*, we are capable of restoring our dignified selves and recapturing our flag.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Nesiyyat Kapayim 5:14

A Little Is Also Good

By Yehudis Golshevsky

ONCE THERE WAS a devastating fire in the town of Breslov. Shortly after the conflagration, Reb Noson went with several other Breslovers to survey the damage. They saw a homeowner frantically digging through the ruins of his house. He was searching for anything that could be used in rebuilding his house. Any usable wood or metal was carefully set aside. Then the search continued.

“Do you see?” Reb Noson asked his companions. “Although this man’s house went up in flames, he has not given up on rebuilding. He is making every attempt to salvage whatever he can to start again. The same is true regarding spiritual matters. Even if a person feels as though he has completely failed and is ‘burned out,’ he should never give up hope. He needs to search out and collect every single good point buried within his negative actions and attitudes. In this manner, he will rebuild himself spiritually and truly return to God.”

* * *

Reb Yisrael Abba Rosenfeld was a very wealthy man. He appeared modern but was enthusiastic about spiritual matters since he was strongly committed to Rebbe Nachman’s path. Yet because of his many business concerns, he spent most of his time involved in money matters. When Rosh HaShanah rolled around, he felt devastated. “I made so much money this year, but what spiritual accomplishment was accrued? Compared to what I could have done, almost nothing. I was too involved in business!”

Then he spoke to Reb Avraham b’Reb Nachman. Whenever Reb Avraham spoke, his words penetrated deeply, like a powerful spiritual injection. The two of them spoke for a short while and Reb Yisrael Abba came away from the conversation a changed man. “He told me to be happy with the positive even if it’s meager, since a little is also good. He stressed Rebbe Nachman’s teaching that a little is also good and completely revitalized me.”

Reb Abba had a lovely family: children and grandchildren who moved to Israel and stayed faithful to the Torah. And it was all because he hung on and didn’t give up despite feeling discouraged.

*Based on Kokhvey Ohr, Anshei Moharan 29;
Noam Siach II, pp. 115-116*

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

PRIDE & HUMILITY. 18. Experiencing the sanctity of Shabbat is one of the ways of attaining true humility, which means seeing one’s own lowliness and understanding the greatness of the Jewish people and being willing to sacrifice oneself for them, like Moses did (*Likutey Moharan I*, 79).

19. A person should look upon himself as if he were less than he really is. That is true humility. And at the very least he should not look upon himself as if he is more than he really is (*ibid.*).



20. When a person is meek and lowly, no one will ever be able to shake him or push him from his place. No one can take away his livelihood, God forbid (*ibid.*).

21. Humility protects against sexual temptation. Pride arouses it (*ibid.*, I, 130).

22. One way to rid yourself of pride is to celebrate the festivals with open-heartedness and joy, and honor them in the most lavish manner you can afford (*ibid.*, I, 135).

23. If someone is humble, it is a sign that he is bound to the Tzaddik, because being close to the Tzaddik breaks one’s pride (*ibid.*).

24. When a person is so humble that he is literally nothing, he can attain Torah and greatness at the same time. Otherwise it is hard for the two of them to dwell together (*ibid.*, I, 162).



breslov.org

PO Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641

PO Box 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

Pathways is a weekly publication. To subscribe, please visit breslov.org/pathways. To make a dedication, please email pathways@breslov.org.

© 2017 Breslov Research Institute

The photo on the front is a close-up of Rebbe Nachman’s chair, which is displayed in the main Breslov synagogue in Jerusalem.