

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Doctor of the Soul

By Yossi Katz

FOR SOME REASON, people think that spiritual matters are to be taken lightly. They assume that if they have some kind of spiritual issue, it suffices to go to their local Rabbi – like the guy who sells their *chametz* before Pesach!

But this is a huge mistake. If, God forbid, one were deathly ill, he would certainly not be content going to his family doctor for cancer treatment. Only the very best specialist will do. Considering that spiritual issues are no joking matter, as our very afterlife depends on them, shouldn't we look for the greatest expert to cure our non-physical maladies?

When the spiritual is not taken seriously enough, we become sick, to the extent that we may no longer realize we're in a spiritual coma. We go through "life" either sleepwalking or giving up religion altogether. When we do have a brief moment of reckoning, we blame ourselves for not listening carefully enough to the instruction that we were given. In truth, we were never properly instructed with the necessary advice to succeed.

Those who have studied the intricacies of a page of Talmud understand that Gemara learning is not for the uninitiated. One must first have a Rebbe to teach him the *aleph-bet*, basic Chumash, Mishnah, Jewish law, and many other important Jewish concepts before he can even begin to grasp a Talmudic debate. Similarly, in any relationship, one must study and understand the other person before they can truly grow close.

How much more does this apply when we want to grow close to God! When we feel distant or struggle

to navigate life meaningfully, it's because we don't know how to break down the spiritual barriers that make it hard for us to relate to God. We need a Rebbe to hold us by the hand and explain to us the deepest "subject" of all. After learning from this great teacher, no matter how far we may be or however difficult life may seem, we will be able to draw close and grow ever higher.

Such a teacher was Joseph. Our *parashah* says, "These are the generations of Jacob: Joseph, at the age of seventeen, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock, but he was a lad with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives" (Genesis 37:2). Rashi explains that Joseph is called Jacob's "generations" because he was the epitome of what Jacob represented. Just as his father brought those who were distant near, so did Joseph. He is called "shepherd," the Torah's epithet for every true Jewish leader. His age of seventeen is specified because it is the numerical value of *TOV* (goodness). Joseph was completely good and kind toward all.

He was therefore able to identify the good points of even the lowest of the low and bring them back to God. To do so, he lowered himself by playing with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, the children of the concubines, who represent the lowest Jews. Joseph understood that for them to rise to great spiritual heights, he would have to share his knowledge of God with them on their level. This is what made him greater than his brothers who were also shepherds.

Only the true Tzaddik who perceives Godliness on the most sublime level can radiate spirituality and Torah to us no matter how ill we may be. Only he can truly heal us so that we can finally live a life of accomplishment. This Tzaddik exists. May we merit finding him and attaching ourselves to him. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hashkamat HaBoker 4

Remedy for Pride

By Yehudis Golshevsky

“YOU CAN OVERCOME your arrogance by praying for someone else” – Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

R' Yudel, one of the Rebbe's close students, wondered about this teaching. It seems like the opposite should be true. Wouldn't praying for my friend feed my ego and make me feel even more prideful? After all, aren't my prayers answered because I'm important?

Rebbe Nachman explained his teaching with a parable:

Once there was a prince who angered his father, the king. When the king's anger faded, the prince asked his pardon, and it was readily granted. After a while, though, the prince again acted in a way that upset his father. Yet again, the king graciously pardoned his beloved son. But when this pattern continued to repeat itself, the king lost his appetite for it. How could he stop the cycle and ensure that the prince would not appease him once his anger faded? He decided to appoint a minister to prevent his son from approaching him to ask forgiveness.

Once again, the prince tried to reconcile with the king in the usual manner. But this time he was rebuffed by the minister. He again tried to get to his father, but was again prevented. The minister conscientiously foiled every effort to see the king.

Not surprisingly, the prince was very pained by this, and so was the king.

The minister began to consider the matter. He could not allow the prince to see the king, since he was duty-bound to keep him away. But how could he be a party to such a painful estrangement? There must be a way to appease the king, he reasoned.

Finally the minister understood that it was up to him to appease the king on the prince's behalf. He approached the king and described the great pain his son suffered by being kept at a distance. The king immediately pardoned his son.

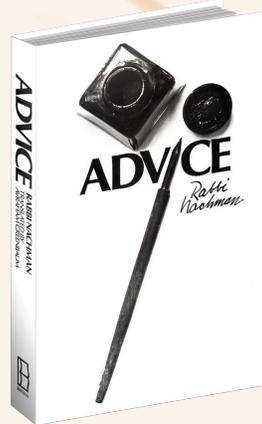
Rebbe Nachman explained, “Our Sages say that every person must say, ‘The world was created for me.’ This means that we are responsible for what the world lacks. Our prayers help our friends only if we're aware that our sins are what prevent them from receiving what they need. This meditation will instill a deep sense of humility, and all arrogance will vanish.”

Based on Peulat HaTzaddik 955-958

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

UNDERSTANDING. 43. The bliss of the World to Come lies in the praise and thanks we will give to God. Through knowing and acknowledging God, we come as close to Him as it is possible to come. In the future, everything else will be of no account whatsoever (*Likutey Moharan II, 2*).



44. A person without understanding is not a person at all. He is not worthy of the name “man.” He is nothing more than a wild animal that resembles a man. The most important aspect of understanding itself is the understanding one has of the holy Torah – to know that God exists and has power and

control over the entire world, and to carry out His will and fulfill His commandments. A person who is worthy of attaining this understanding will be saved from all sin and transgression (*ibid.*, II, 7:2,3).

45. The main reason why people are far from God is that they are not clear-headed. It is essential to think about the purpose of this world, with all its desires and distractions. There are the desires that are bound up with the body, and then there are the other desires – for prestige, honor, and so on – which are not directly concerned with the satisfaction of bodily functions. Think what is the purpose of everything, what is the ultimate goal. Then you will surely return to God (*ibid.*, II, 10:1).



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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.