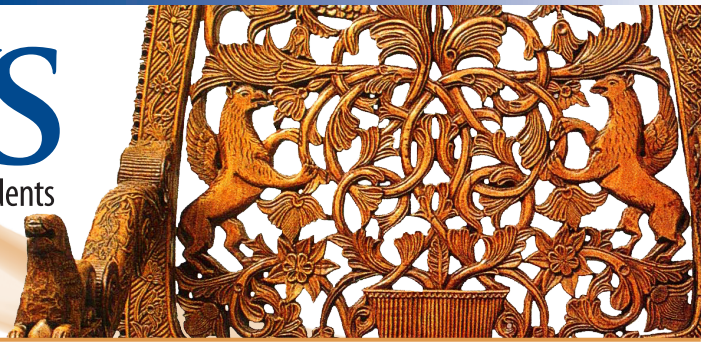


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Life Preservers

By Ozer Bergman

“But the Israelites walked in the midst of the sea on dry land, the water to their right and to their left, like walls” (Exodus 14:29).

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As Napoleon’s campaign to conquer Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) began, Rebbe Nachman and his attendant\* were making their escape. They were aboard a Turkish warship. (Don’t ask!) The ship began taking on water. The water seeped into the Rebbe’s cabin, making it impossible for them to sleep on their pallets. The Rebbe climbed to a higher place in the compartment to lie down, as did his attendant. Throughout the night the water continued to rise.

At daybreak the Rebbe said that he was greatly disheartened from terror. “Deep down I know I am in great danger because this is no simple matter. I do not know what [the sailors] are doing, but the heart still sees.” His attendant comforted him. “Don’t be afraid. Thank God, everything is fine.”

The attendant left the cabin to assess the situation. The sailors had thrown all the cargo overboard while bailing water. The ship was carrying so much water that it was bound to sink. He realized that only a miracle could save them. He returned distraught and frightened, unable to talk. The Rebbe asked, “Where’s your tongue? You said nothing was wrong. Why are you frightened?” The attendant replied that, barring a miracle, they wouldn’t survive. The water was rising, and the sailors’ strength was failing.

The Rebbe told him, “Take all our money and divide it in half. Bind your half to your body and I will do the same with mine.”

“What for? The fish can swallow us without the money!”

“Do as I tell you,” the Rebbe said. “*The Jews were inside the Red Sea and did not drown. We are still in a ship...*” [emphasis added]... The Rebbe told his attendant to put on his overcoat and to tie the belt. The Rebbe did the same, like someone preparing to embark on a journey.

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Chumash, aka The Pentateuch, is not just a “history of our people” book. It’s not all Kabbalah and mysteries or a list of do’s and don’ts. It’s all those, and a teacher, too. Although

not every one of its lessons applies to each of us in an obvious manner, when we pay attention, even the details will jump out at us to provide the advice or inspiration we need.

Do you think only someone like Rebbe Nachman can do that? The Rebbe teaches that even ordinary people like us can gain insight from the Torah from the simplest type of study— if done sincerely (*Likutey Moharan* I, 281). Even if we find ourselves up a creek without a paddle, God forbid, or have lost our bearings by what is happening around us; even if we are frightened by looming calamity, the Torah offers hope and a plan. Of course, it helps to study it while we can!

Sometimes, however, there is no time to plan, or even to cry out to God. So we must always be ready to lift our hearts to Him as if we were hanging by a thread on a stormy sea. Our only recourse is to lift our eyes and heart to God. This is why we need to seclude ourselves every day, to talk privately with God. Deep down, we all know that life is precarious. Let us take Torah and prayer precautions to protect what is precious. Amen.

\* The attendant was one of the Rebbe’s early chassidim. His identity is not recorded in Breslov literature. There is no mention in Breslov literature or lore of Napoleon meeting Rebbe Nachman.

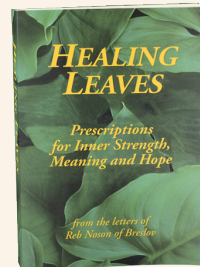
*Based on Shivchey HaRan (Rabbi Nachman’s Praises) #21 and Sichot HaRan (Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom) #117*

*A gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



You can accomplish anything through desire and yearning. Accustom yourself to speak the words of your desires. Wake up! Rise and stir the good in your heart to articulate your yearnings and desires in personal prayer! Accustom yourself to yearn and to ache with longing for God – at all times – and to bring these desires to your lips. (*Letter #64*)

# It's Not Up To Us

by Yossi Katz

“God said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain down bread from Heaven for you’” (Exodus 16:4).

How often do we hear people complaining about how difficult it is to make a buck these days? It doesn't help that the media is filled with dire predictions of economic turmoil. Why is making a living so difficult?

The *Zohar* says that earning a livelihood is not dependent on our merits but on our *mazel* (constellation). The Arizal explains that this refers to a place in the spiritual worlds that is extremely lofty. The spiritual source of earning a living is so distant from our world that in reality it should not descend down to us. However, God, in His great kindness, “steps in” and provides for all of His creations; as we say in *Eshet Chayil*, “She brings her bread from afar.”

*The spiritual source of earning a living is so distant from our world that in reality it should not descend down to us.*

There is much to be learned from this principle. Firstly, if we are fortunate enough to see material wealth, we shouldn't think that we've somehow entered a new class of society and God is now responsible to maintain our new status. Everything God sends us is a blessing and we need to be grateful for what He has given to us, without expecting any extras. As far as what we really need, we must trust that God will provide for us each and every day. If we truly understood how distant the source of livelihood is from us and the path it must travel in order to reach us, we will realize that a livelihood is truly miraculous and have full confidence in God's abilities without a doubt.

This was the lesson of the Manna that fell every day to provide for the Jewish People in the desert. God could have made the Manna last for a week or even a month without spoiling, so why did He cause the Jews to go out and collect the Manna every day? It was in order to teach us that God provides for us in a miraculous way on a daily basis. We must turn our eyes Heavenward and not worry about the hows and ifs, or even about tomorrow. God always has provided and always will provide.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Shiluach HaKen 5*

## SIDEPATH

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

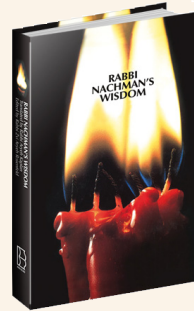
6. The evil inclination is like a prankster running through a crowd showing his tightly-closed hand. No one knows what he is holding. He goes up to each one and asks, “What do you suppose I have in my hand?”

Each one imagines that the closed hand contains just what he desires most. They all hurry and run after the prankster. Then, when he has tricked them all into following him, he opens his hand. It is completely empty. The same is true of the evil inclination. He fools the world, tricking it into following him. All men think that his hand contains what they desire. In the end, he opens his hand. There is nothing in it and no desire is ever fulfilled.

Worldly pleasures are like sunbeams in a dark room. They may actually seem solid, but he who tries to grasp a sunbeam finds nothing in his hand. The same is true of all worldly desires.

7. It is very good to pour out your thoughts before God like a child pleading before his father. God calls us His children, as it is written, “You are children to the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 14:1). Therefore it is good to express your thoughts and troubles to God, like a child complaining and pestering his father.

How very good it is when you can awaken your heart and plead until tears stream from your eyes, and you stand like a little child crying before his father.



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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.*