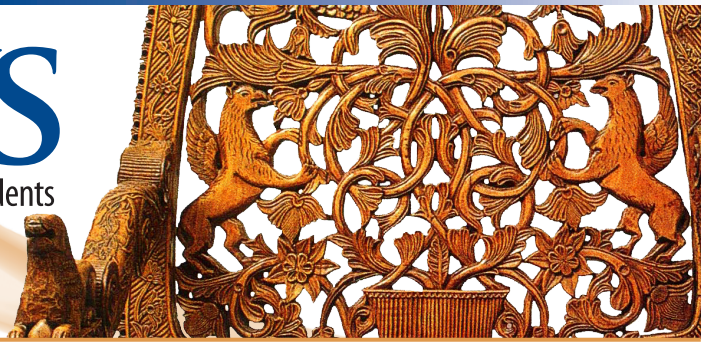


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT TAZRIA-METZORA • 5773 VOL. 3 NO. 29

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Second Time Around

By Yossi Katz

Has it ever happened that one day you got excited and had a sudden impulse to draw close to God? This is because a holy spark within you began to blaze intensely, seeking to reconnect to its place of origin, Godliness. You began to make serious resolutions about mending your ways and correcting bad habits. But a short while later, it was déjà vu as you found yourself embroiled again in your past struggles. Yearning and retreating, aspiring and not succeeding, we become emotionally spent and give up hope of ever truly returning to God.

Why does it work this way? We are always given a chance to correct our previous misdeeds. Similar circumstances are set up and we are confronted with similar physical desires and pressures. If we can overcome the similar challenge, we know that we have truly changed our ways.

So how do we succeed this time around? It's all in the mind. We must overcome the negative thoughts that constantly attack us. Our evil inclination works overtime to overwhelm us with negativity. If we remain psychologically sound,

Our evil inclination works overtime to overwhelm us with negativity.

we will eventually attain complete *teshuvah* (repentance). Remember, "No good thought is ever lost." Drink from the wellsprings of faith and encouragement that Rebbe Nachman left us and focus on those powerful thoughts instead. (See *Restore My Soul* for further reading.)

This is why it is so important to connect to the true tzaddikim. They can coach us along the path of *teshuvah* because they've already travelled the path and are well aware of the many pitfalls along the way. Most importantly, they remind us that God is great beyond all comprehension, and that hope is never lost.

"On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin should be circumcised" (Leviticus 12:3).

I once heard that the foreskin is the only excess body part that man was created with. So why were we created with it in the first place? The Midrash (*Bereishit Rabbah* 11:6) explains that this teaches us that everything in the world requires rectification. But why didn't God create everything in a perfect state and thus negate the need for rectification?

The answer is that when we face challenges and make the right choices, we actually reveal that God is with us the entire time – even when He is hidden in our most difficult moments. This is the power and the gift of *teshuvah*. We have been given the ability to undo all our previous bad choices and transform them into knowledge and awareness of God. Let's take advantage!

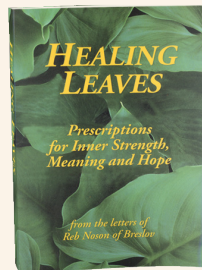
*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Tefilat HaMinchah 7:8;
Likutey Halakhot V, p. 67a*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell

The suffering is bad enough while you are going through it. No matter what, though, do not dwell at all on your difficulties! Be extremely careful to heed my advice, and do not let your mind be troubled in the least over this. Just study Torah, pray and go about your business. Relax your mind with things that cheer you and bring yourself to joy – even, if need be, with silliness. You have no idea what is really going on in the world! (*Letter #213*)



Rebbe Nachman's Torah

The holiday of Purim, which we celebrated not so long ago, appears again in connection with Parashat Tazria.

“If his hair falls out near his face, it is frontal baldness; he is pure” (Leviticus 13:41).

The initial letters of the words *Ve-im Mi-pe'at Panav Yimaret Rosho* (if his hair falls out near his face) spell PURIM. The festival of Purim subdues the *kelipah* of Amalek, which manifests as haughtiness. Our Sages teach that *tzara'at* (leprosy) is also a result of haughtiness (*Erkhin* 16a). There are four types of leprosy (*Nega'im* 1:1) and four types of humility (*Likutey Moharan* I, 14:4). Purim has the power to rectify haughtiness and instill humility (*Likutey Halakhot* V, p. 360).

* * *

Why does the passage about the Red Heifer follow the Torah reading about Korach? The Levite tribe of Kehot (of which Korach was a member) was chosen to carry the Ark. But as part of the consecration of the Levites, Korach had to shave his head. Korach said, “Is it not enough that I am not a Kohen, but my head must be shaved and I look like a fool?!” He began to oppose Moses. But Korach did not know that the Red Heifer would effect forgiveness for Israel (*Yalkut Reuveini, Chukat*).

Korach represents the Levites, who correspond to the left side, while the Kohen's place is the right side (*Tikkuney Zohar* #30, p. 74a). Korach chose to shirk his own destiny (the left side, the side of holy *gevurot*) and seek that which was not his. Thus, he rebelled against being shaven.

Kabbalistically, hairs represent the *tzimtzumim* (constrictions) of great knowledge; these *tzimtzumim* enable the many people who are distant from great knowledge to partake of it. Korach wanted it all—even, or especially, that which he was not destined for and which belonged to others. He refused to acknowledge that shaving the hairs represents mitigating the *gevurot* and that as a Levite, this was the way to prepare himself to attain his greater levels. Each person has his own path to attain the greatness he is destined for.

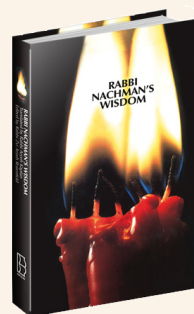
Rebbe Nachman teaches that the initial letters of the words *Ve-im Mi-pe'at Panav Yimaret Rosho* (if his hair falls out near his face) spell PURIM. Fulfilling the *mitzvot* of Purim is a means of rectifying the sin of Korach. This is because the *PaRah Adumah* (Red Heifer) is made through the *mitzvah* of *PuRim* (see *Likutey Moharan* II, 74).

SIDEPATH

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

24. A parable: Once there was a son who became separated from his father. The son greatly yearns for his father, and the father for his son. Eventually they decide to travel to see each other. As they come closer, their yearning grows all the more.

Soon they are separated by just a few short miles. They both feel such great longing for each other that they cannot endure it any more. They both decide to cast aside their yearning and put it out of mind.



Just at that moment, a coach comes along and swiftly brings the son to his father. Imagine the tremendous joy that the driver brings both to the father and the son who longed so much.

God has a great longing for the tzaddik, just as the tzaddik yearns to return and come close to God. But as they approach each other, their yearning becomes so great that they cannot endure it. They both decide to put their longing out of mind. God says, “Is this My only task? Do I not have many worlds?” The tzaddik says, “Is this yearning my only duty? Do I not have many other ways of serving God, such as with the *talit*, *tefilin* and other *mitzvot*?”

Just at that moment, a Jew comes along driving a coach. He brings the tzaddik his livelihood, and thereby brings him close to God. The person who supports a true tzaddik is thereby responsible for the immeasurable joy when the tzaddik is able to be close to God.



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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.