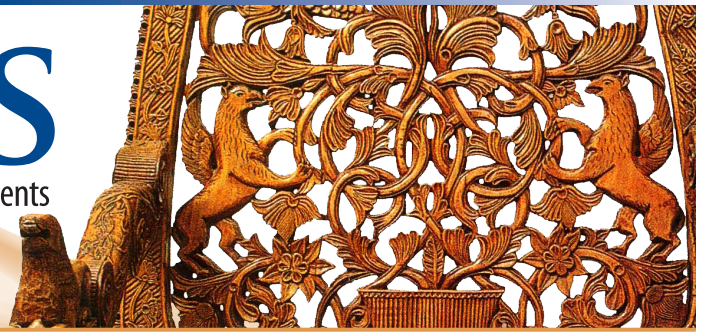


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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The Art of Giving Reproof

By Ozer Bergman

“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel” (Deuteronomy 1:1).

“These are the words” – Because these are words of reproof, and [Moshe Rabbeinu] lists here the places where they angered God... out of respect for the Jews, he [merely] alludes to them (Rashi).

Even though reproof is a very important thing – and everyone is obligated to reprove his friend if he sees him acting improperly (see Leviticus 19:17) – nevertheless, not everyone is able to give reproof. As Rabbi Akiva said, “I’d be really surprised if there’s anyone in this generation who can give reproof” (*Erkhin* 16b). If Rabbi Akiva said that in his generation, how much more so is it true in ours, says Rebbe Nachman.

The purpose of reproof is not to vent your anger or frustration, or to show the other person that you’re smarter than him. Rebbe Nachman explains that the purpose of reproof is to bring out the beautiful fragrance within your fellow Jew.

Each of us has within the potential to be either a very great *tzaddik* (saint) or a very great *rasha* (villain). The right kind of reproof is going to stir up and reinforce a person’s good qualities, bring him to life and help him to be a better Jew. The wrong kind of reproof is going to have the opposite effects.

So you have to be careful when speaking to people. You have to know what to say and to whom you can say it. You have to know where and when. And you have to know when to remain silent, leaving certain things unsaid or saying nothing at all. You also have to judge others favorably – that way, you open up an “escape route” that will allow them to give up their sins.

You have to reprove yourself the same way. No matter how criminal your past (or present!) activities, don’t judge yourself negatively. For, in fact, you have no conception of how well you are doing. You don’t know what incarnations you’ve lived through in the past, what you’ve gone through in this lifetime, and what power(s) your evil inclination has. All told, you might actually be a tremendous spiritual success despite outward appearances.

“Don’t degrade any person” – even yourself. Don’t be so harsh on yourself that you lose hope and interest in the mitzvot, because that’s suicide. Your capacity to do the wrong things will grow. And then what will be? This is why *Sefer Devarim* (Deuteronomy) is a reproof of kindness. Moshe Rabbeinu teaches us that as much as we’ve angered Hashem (God) with our “golden calves” and our “spies” and all our other sins/mistakes, large and small, Hashem still loves us and has pity on us.

And what does Hashem want from us? To fear Him, namely to pray to him (see Deuteronomy 10:11; Proverbs 31:30). The main “escape route” is to cry out from the depths of the heart, be what may. Never to despair, never to think that, God forbid, crying out won’t help.

Being who we are, we need a “Moshe Rabbeinu” to remind of us this. About this, Rebbe Nachman writes:

“A person needs to search and seek very much for such a guide and become close to him... In fact, he needs very, very much to search and seek a genuine guide like this. He needs to request very much from Hashem that he be worthy of coming close to a true guide.”

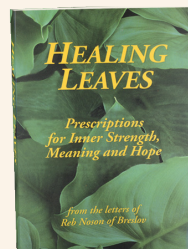
With such a guide/teacher, our faith can reach perfection. When enough of us achieve perfect faith, a “new world” will be ushered in, a world for which we have been waiting for almost 1,000 years. May it come soon, speedily, in our time. Amen!

*Based on Likutey Moharan II, 8;
Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhot Orlah 4:16
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!
This is a reprint*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



“Cast your burden upon God and He will sustain you” (Psalms 55:23). A person must take his burdens, his cares – in fact, everything that weighs on his heart and mind – and cast them all onto God. (Letter #64)

Rebbe Nachman's Torah

Compiled by Chaim Kramer

Parashat Devarim is always read on the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av, since it speaks of the rebuke that Moses gave the Jews for their blemished faith, which caused them to believe the spies and bemoan their entry into the Holy Land, creating the "day of weeping for generations" (*Taanit* 29a). The next

*Asking advice of a tzaddik
is considered the equivalent
of asking many advisors.*

Torah portion, *Parashat Va'etchanan*, is always read on the Shabbat after Tisha B'Av, since it speaks of God's Treasury of Unearned Gifts (see Rashi on Deuteronomy 3:23), through which He gives us the merit to enter the Holy Land (see Rashi on Genesis 1:1) (*Likutey Halakhot* VIII, p. 157b).

* * *

"Judgment belongs to God" (Deuteronomy 1:17).

God is the Only One Who knows how to judge each individual for his deeds, in the context of his intentions and circumstances. We must take great care never to judge others, for we do not know everything there is to know about a person's reason for his deeds (*Likutey Moharan* II, 1:14).

* * *

**"See! God your Lord has placed the land before you.
Go up and take possession"** (Deuteronomy 1:21).

What should a person do if he desires to do a mitzvah, but cannot? For example, he wants to travel to the Holy Land, but he cannot find an available flight, or he lacks the funds, or it's a time of war, and so on. The answer is that he must never give up the desire to do the mitzvah. If he remains steadfast, the opportunity will present itself (see *Likutey Halakhot* II, p. 160).

* * *

"Then all of you approached me" (Deuteronomy 1:22).

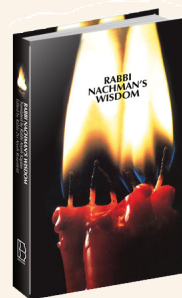
The spies did not ask Moses for advice (see Rashi on Deuteronomy 1:23). This was their principal error. Before proceeding on a serious task, a person should always ask advice from many people. And asking advice of a tzaddik is considered the equivalent of asking many advisors (*Likutey Moharan* I, 143).

SIDEPATH

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

48. The Rebbe often spoke about his childhood piety – his awe, holiness and alacrity. He said that he began anew many times each day. He would begin the day with deep devotion, resolving that from then on, he would be a true servant of God. Then the temptation of food or such would get the better of him, and he would fall from his high level of devotion. But on that same day he would begin again, with new resolve towards true devotion.

Thus, the Rebbe would fall and begin anew many times each day. He often told us how he continually began serving God anew.



This is an important rule in devotion: Never allow yourself fall completely, even if you have already slipped in your service of God.

At times, your prayer and devotion may seem devoid of meaning. Strengthen yourself and begin anew. Act as if you were just beginning to serve God. No matter how many times you fall, rise up and start again.

Draw yourself towards God with all your might.

Remain strong, no matter how low you fall. Whether you go up or down, always yearn to come close to God. No matter how low you have sunk, stay resolved and determined to draw close to God and to yearn and pine for Him, and cry out to God. Do everything you can to serve Him in joy. Without this inner strength, you will never be able to truly approach 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.