

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Once in a Lifetime

By Yossi Katz

“THE ARCHITECT OF the world never does the same thing twice. Every day is an entirely new creation” – Reb Noson of Breslov.

People like to say, “Today is a new day.” There’s actually an incredible amount of wisdom in that expression. That’s because we have a tendency to view time as one complete unit, and therefore we get caught up in the past. If yesterday was a “bad” day, it means today doesn’t have much of a chance. Truth be told, each day is a new creation. If it weren’t, God wouldn’t bother recreating the world over and over again; after all, who likes reruns?

In this week’s *parashah*, the Torah prescribes a day-based waiting period depending on the severity of the impurity that a person came in contact with. For example, one who has a minor encounter, like a seminal emission, only has to wait until the sun sets and the next day begins. Someone with a severe impurity, like being in contact with a corpse, requires a seven-day waiting period until he can be purified. This is because each day is different and unique; each day has its own power to cleanse and add additional holiness.

Even after the one who came in contact with a serious impurity has waited seven days and immersed himself in the holy mikvah waters, the Torah says, “And when the sun is down, he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat of the holy things” (Leviticus 22:7). Why should he have to wait? He’s already waited the required amount of days and immersed – shouldn’t that be enough? No, because by waiting just a bit more for the sun to set, he merits receiving the holiness of an additional day – an entirely new creation.

This teaching is very applicable to our own lives. If we feel “unholy” and are dismayed at the prospect of engaging in sincere Torah study, prayer or other spiritual devotions, we should realize that every day is a new opportunity. What we didn’t take advantage of yesterday is no longer applicable because God never creates the same day twice. I must say to myself, “Today I have the ability to receive

something entirely new that will never come into existence again! I need to visualize today as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!”

But what if I take the initiative yet I don’t feel purified? Don’t be discouraged. Depending on the extent of my impurities, I must now be patient and count each day, and in the end I, too, will “eat of the holy things.”

There are seven characteristics through which God reveals Himself to the world. Each of these is represented by a day of the week. According to the Kabbalah, each characteristic can further be divided into seven, as it itself includes all seven characteristics. Thus, there are 49 possible combinations. Paralleling these are the 49 days of the Counting of the Omer. We count each day of the Omer individually to show that every day contains an opportunity to experience a unique manifestation of Godliness. For this reason, if a day goes by without being counted, one cannot continue his or her daily count with a blessing. Every day is a blessing and should be appreciated for its own unique flavor.

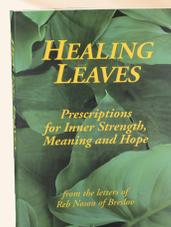
So don’t get caught up worrying about yesterday or pushing things off until tomorrow. Living each day as it comes is the way to prepare to receive the ultimate knowledge and connection to the One Above – the Holy Torah. May we merit to count each day individually – with much blessing! Amen.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Birkhot HaShachar 5:41
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Even if the salvation seems slow to arrive, we still have to wait for it. ... The key is to wait patiently for God to save us and not to question His ways at all. In the end He will rescue us from everything. (Letter #24)

The True Taste of Pesach

By Yehudis Golshevsky

THE GRINDING POVERTY suffered by ordinary people in Ukraine over a hundred years ago is hard for us to imagine. Pesach was especially difficult for the poor. So many expenses ... where was the money supposed to come from?

Reb Noson was no stranger to poverty. One year his family lacked the most basic requirements, such as matzah. As they drew water for Pesach, Reb Noson began to dance. He joyously proclaimed, "Thank God we have water for the coming holiday!"

On a different occasion, Reb Noson overheard a chassid saying to his friend, "Pesach is coming and I still don't have what I need. How can I possibly get everything in time?"

The poor man's pain was obvious. Reb Noson spoke quickly to allay the man's fears: "Don't worry. You will certainly have your physical requirements for the holiday." Then he wondered aloud, "But how can one merit to bring in the Pesach itself?!"

Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender explained that Reb Noson meant this should be our main concern. The matzos, clothing and wine will all work out in the end. But how can we be sure to absorb the inner light and purpose of this precious holiday?

We find a similar Yom Tov story that took place during Sukkot. Reb Nachman of Tulchin labored tirelessly to erect Reb Noson's sukkah. That evening, while sitting in the sukkah, Reb Nachman remarked, "There is a different feeling of joy and satisfaction when sitting in a sukkah that one has worked very hard to build." Reb Noson replied, "You have not yet tried this. Spend an entire day crying out to God: 'Master of the Universe! Let me taste the true taste of sukkah!' Then see what feelings a person can experience in the sukkah."

Rebbe Nachman once said, "Why do you work so hard when nothing will remain? Labor less so that something will remain!" As one labors for the material things of this world, his time is taken up. But he must eventually leave it all behind. By working less for the physical, a person can have time for that which does remain with him — his spiritual accomplishments.

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh, III, 172; V, 88; I, 649; I, 263; Aveneha Barzel, p. 52, #12

Dedicated in the Memory of (L'Ilui Nishmat) Yehudis bat Shimon

SIDEPATH

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

117. The Rebbe spent most of his youth in the village of Ossatin, where his father-in-law lived. Nearby was a large river. The Rebbe's holy way involved his taking at times a small boat and rowing by himself along the river. As he could not control his boat very well, when he came to the middle of the river, far from shore, the boat would rock violently in the heavy current and seem ready to sink. The Rebbe had no idea how to remedy the situation and would lift his hands and cry out to God with true devotion.



The same thing happened later when he was in Tiberias. Attempting to escape the plague, he found himself on a narrow wall, hanging by his fingertips above the Sea of Galilee. When he felt that he would surely fall, he cried out to God in his heart.

The Rebbe constantly repeated these stories. They were a lesson that he wanted to impress on our hearts and minds. Imagine that you are in the middle of the sea, with a storm raging to the very height of the heavens. You are hanging on by a hairsbreadth, not knowing what to do. You do not even have time to cry out. You can only lift your eyes and heart to God.

You should always lift your heart to God like this. The danger is more than imaginary. As you know deep down in your soul, every man is in great danger in this world.



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P.O. Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641

P.O.B. 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

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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.