

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Soldier On

By Yossi Katz

THE DRIVE DOWN from the hills of Jerusalem to Ben Gurion Airport is a lonely one. After having been privileged to travel to the Land of Israel and bask in its holiness for a few days, it isn't so easy to depart and return to "normal life." Thankfully, I remembered that I had a precedent. Reb Noson once traveled to be with Rebbe Nachman, but because of the opposition of his family at that time, the Rebbe told him, "To you we must say, 'Shalom aleikhem! Tzeis'khem I'shalom!' (hello and goodbye) to keep the opposition to a minimum." The Rebbe then taught Reb Noson a lesson, and Reb Noson was forced to take leave of his beloved Rebbe and mentor.

This is the story of our lives. At times we feel tremendous yearning for and closeness to God. We are able to study much and pray with great concentration and emotion. But more often than not, we slide back into our usual routine and feel distant from God. We pray, but our mind is traveling elsewhere; we have little time or peace of mind for genuine Torah study and spiritual pursuits.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that in order to gain the ability to always return to God, one must be an expert in both "running" and "returning" (*Likutey Moharan* 6:4). Being an expert in "running" means that when you've had a great spiritual lift, you must realize that God is great and that you have certainly not yet arrived at the ultimate level of spirituality—so you will spur yourself to keep on striving for even higher levels. Being an expert in "returning" means that when you feel distant and disconnected, you must remember that God is everywhere, even in the lowest of places—and reach out to and connect to God even there.

This week's *parashah* counts the Jews, for what it refers to as "going out to the army" (Numbers 1:3). "Going out to the army" means that we are each soldiers in the army of God. Our mission is to attempt to connect to Him everywhere—at our jobs, in our relationships with friends and family, and in our study halls and shuls. But many times, things just don't go right. So the

Torah encourages us, "Be a soldier!" Learn to "go out" of your preconceptions for spiritual growth and elevate every aspect of life.

What stops us from doing something that seems so obvious and vital? The Torah tells us, "And the Jewish people should encamp, each person according to his camp, and each person according to his flag" (*ibid.*, 1:52). Later, the Torah praises the Jews for doing this: "Thus did they encamp according to their flags, and thus did they travel" (*ibid.*, 2: 34). What does this mean for us?

When Moses ascended Mount Sinai, God warned the rest of the Jews not to attempt to climb the mountain. The border was defined; the Jewish people were commanded to stay put. In our daily lives, as we experience moments of distance from God and moments of elevation, we need to "camp" and live according to our own circumstances. Our unique lives and experiences are tailor-made from God to pave the road to achieving the ultimate relationship with our Creator. If we are careful not to overstep our boundaries by comparing ourselves with other people's lives or with "visions" of what our lives should look like, we, too, will merit joining the army of God.

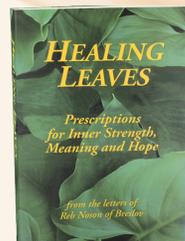
*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhat HaPeirot 5
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

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. People have to endure a great deal in this world. 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 Hired Gun

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REB PINCHAS WAS teaching Breslov wisdom to the youth in Kiblitsh, and many townsfolk were upset.

The kosher butcher in Kiblitsh was known as Chaim Katsav. He was also known as “Chaim *She’yeish Bo*” (Chaim Who’s Got It), because he was a giant of a man and extremely strong. Money meant everything to him, and he was easily swayed. The entire town feared him.

Some parents decided to pay Chaim to take Reb Pinchas out the picture ... by any means necessary. They were convinced that even death would be a fitting punishment for his sin of “converting” their youth to Breslov, and would also send a powerful message to steer clear of Breslovers in the future.

They explained to Chaim that he would be well-paid in this world and the next to “take care of” Reb Pinchas. “After all, you have lived a very coarse life. If you do this simple mitzvah, you’ll earn eternal reward! It will be easy since he is very frail. All you need to do is give him one little cuff and he won’t trouble us ever again.”

“I will do it this very Shabbat when he is sitting with his students during the third meal,” promised Chaim.

On Shabbat afternoon, Chaim went to take care of the matter. When he entered the room, Reb Pinchas immediately understood why he was there. He began speaking powerful words of *chizuk* (encouragement) that he hoped would soothe Chaim’s weary soul. “I can wait a little to hear what he is saying first; it’s no rush,” reasoned Chaim.

As he began to hear the wonderful words Reb Pinchas shared, Chaim became enthralled. Reb Pinchas was saying that there was hope for every single Jew, no matter what! No matter what he had done, he could rectify everything and become a good Jew!

Chaim began to feel great regret for believing that it would be a mitzvah to kill this pure Jew. He also wondered whether this message could possibly apply to him. He had lived a very unworthy life. Could even he repent and become a righteous Jew?

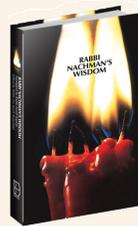
With burgeoning hope in his heart and tears in his eyes, he approached Reb Pinchas... *(to be continued)*

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh V:213

SIDEPATH

Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt”l

127. The Rebbe was once speaking about Elul, the month before Rosh HaShanah. He spoke of the custom of reading from the *Tikkuney Zohar* with its own special melody during this month, and the fatigue people experience from spending many late hours in the house of study. He said, “This practice results in many lofty things and rectification on high.”



128. The Rebbe once mentioned that he knew the entire *Etz Chaim* and *Pri Etz Chaim*, as well as all the works of the holy Ari and the *Zohar* and *Tikkuney Zohar*. From the way he said it, it was obvious that he had achieved this in his youth.

The Rebbe emphasized the importance and holiness of the *Tikkuney Zohar* many times. He spent much time studying and reviewing it, and not only during the month of Elul. He once said, “The *Tikkuney Zohar* contains all the wisdom in the world.”

129. Sexual temptation results mainly from depression. Therefore you should make every effort to be joyful always.

The Rebbe said, “Even when one falls into mud and mire and it is difficult to get out, one screams and screams and screams.” The Rebbe then raised his hands slightly and said no more.

The Rebbe then spoke about the disturbing thoughts that often trouble a person in this area. He quoted the Talmudic maxim, “Trouble is bad enough when it comes” (*Berachot* 9b), adding, “One should not be disturbed by this, either before or after.”



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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.