

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT SHLACH • 5774 • VOL. 4 NO. 35

📧 breslov.org/pathways



The Missing Link

By Yossi Katz

“**IN THE PLACE** where returnees to Judaism stand, even completely righteous Tzaddikim cannot stand” (*Berakhot* 34b).

Wow! Our Rabbis are implying that the returnee is greater than the saint. But shouldn't one who has spent his entire life in the service of God, and never really faltered, be considered supreme in every aspect? How could there be a “place” reserved for one who has erred?

This question is as old as the universe. You see, once there was only Oneness: only God existed. But God wanted to create a world where others would know Him and develop the deepest kinship with Him. Because He wanted us to appreciate and experience His ultimate kindness and greatness, He created our universe. But there was a problem. If we were to immediately recognize everything created as an obvious manifestation of Godliness, the world would automatically revert to its original state — we would be nullified in God's awesomeness. Therefore God created freedom of choice and its many forms of multiplicity. By being able to experience the opposites of pure holiness, including our doubts and lusts, we have the space to develop our own identities while at the same time uplift and connect our every experience with God's absolute unity.

This is life. God created an incomplete world, but He gave us the power to complete His creation. When we see through the “thick of things” and have *emunah* (faith) that everything comes from Him, we are able to reunite creation with its Source. Whenever we study Torah, pray or do a mitzvah, we express our *emunah* in the unity of creation, and reconnect ourselves in the highest way.

For someone who has lived a completely righteous life, there isn't that great a distinction between God's Oneness and creation. Such a person has more or less lived his life always connected to God, and is therefore, in a sense, living in the original, nullified state that God was not content with. On the other hand, the one who has fallen, the person who has done wrong and forgotten about God, best expresses the purpose of Creation. When that

person returns, he exemplifies God's purpose: to create a distinct being who achieves complete connection and unity with his Creator. The further removed we are from God, the greater is our capacity to experience and reflect the awesome Oneness of God. By being strong and having *emunah* in God when He feels distant, we are fulfilling the purpose of Creation to the ultimate degree – we are completing God's creation!

The Jewish people lived a miraculous lifestyle in the desert for 40 years. The people who were living with such an obvious level of direct manifestation of Godliness were expected to enter the Holy Land, the land of Divine Providence, with *emunah* alone. The same God who fathered them at Sinai would also father them in the Land of Israel. Any challenge they encountered would ultimately serve to bring about God's will. But instead, they resorted to the logical plan of sending spies to “check out” the Land – they made their own “creation.” Their newly-created burden and challenge of finding God in the multiplicity of things was now entrusted with the spies – and unfortunately, the spies did not live up to this challenge.

Each of us is an agent of God Himself. We have been entrusted with life and have been asked to carry out God's will by connecting to Him in every situation. True, it would have been easier had we always made the right choices and lived on the level of the Jews in the desert. But even if we have erred, with our *emunah*, we have the awesome power to complete God's creation!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shluchin 3
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Whether or not a person has money, his days and years still rush by like a shadow, and nothing remains except the vitality which he drew from his belief in God. (*Letter #43*)

The Hired Gun (Part 2)

By Yehudis Golshevsky

(RECAP: CHAIM KATZAV, the intimidating kosher butcher of Kiblitich, is dispatched to kill Reb Pinchas, the Breslov teacher – but is inspired to change his ways after hearing Reb Pinchas' encouraging words.)

With burgeoning hope in his heart and tears in his eyes, Chaim Katzav approached Reb Pinchas. "Can even I do *teshuvah* for my sins?" he asked. "I have sinned so terribly against you!"

"Of course you can," said Reb Pinchas. "*Teshuvah* (repentance) is always possible. If you follow Rebbe Nachman's path, you will certainly do *teshuvah* in his merit."

"Promise me you are telling the truth!" said Chaim. "I have sinned so greatly – please forgive me!"

It was astounding to see this huge giant of a man prostrating himself before the thin, weakly tzaddik. "I want to do *teshuvah*!" he cried. "Please, please forgive me!"

Reb Pinchas and his students didn't understand exactly what Chaim meant. But then Chaim told them how some parents had hired him to kill Reb Pinchas, and how he had been inspired by Rebbe Nachman's teaching that there was hope for every single Jew. "I want to see the person who dares harm a hair of your head!" he concluded.

The next day, the townsfolk were amazed to see Chaim going to shul on time, his *talit* and *tefilin* under his arm. He wept through the entire service. Afterwards, he announced: "I am becoming a Breslover *chassid*, and I would like to see the person who dares lift a hand against Reb Pinchas or any other Breslover!" Although there had been incidents in the past, they ceased from that day on.

Breslovers who visited Reb Chaim decades after his astonishing about-face reported that it stayed fresh his entire life. Reb Chaim would cry copiously to God, begging Him to accept his *teshuvah*. His copy of *Likutey Tefilot* (Reb Noson's prayers) was tear-stained and well-used.

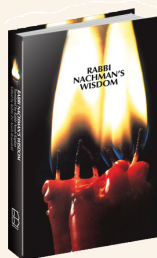
People would comment on the shining countenance of Reb Chaim, who spent his days helping others and learning Torah whenever he could. The butcher was never violent with anyone ever again. "Ever since I became a Breslover, I cannot lift my hand to my fellow," he explained. "Even if I am insulted, I just can't do it!"

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh V:213-214

SIDEPATH

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

131. Reb Noson writes: This occurred shortly before Purim when I was with the Rebbe, writing the lesson [in *Likutey Moharan* I, 10]. The lesson begins by stating that when there are decrees against the Jews, they can be mitigated by dancing and clapping. The Rebbe remarked, "This is what I said. News is coming about decrees against the Jews. But Purim is near and Jews will dance and clap, and this will alleviate the decree."



The Rebbe then repeated himself, strongly emphasizing the words "*This is what I said*." His intent was to emphasize to us that we should sincerely follow all his lessons, abiding by the simple meaning of his words. All the Rebbe's lessons contain awesome depth, plumbing the deepest mysteries and loftiest secrets. Still, he emphasized that the main thing was their simple meaning, and we should put this into practice as he taught.

He used this lesson as an example. It teaches that dancing and clapping can mitigate the harshest decrees. He bid us to take the lesson at face value and make an effort to be happy on our joyous holidays such as Purim and Chanukah, as well as at mitzvah celebrations such as weddings. We can make ourselves so elated that we actually dance and clap our hands in joy. This is what alleviates the decrees against us.

Open your eyes and concentrate on each of the Rebbe's lessons. Open your heart to understand the practices, advice, direction and inspiration there according to the simple meaning, and you will find a path to God there.



BRESLOV
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

breslov.org

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

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

Pathways is a weekly publication. To subscribe, please visit breslov.org/pathways. To make a dedication, please email pathways@breslov.org.

© 2014 Breslov Research Institute

The photo on the front is a close-up of Rebbe Nachman's chair, which is displayed in the main Breslov synagogue in Jerusalem.