

# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Time to Rebuild

By Yossi Katz

**IF SOMEONE WERE** to curse and totally demean you, wouldn't it seem strange if they told you moments later how great they are going to make you? Well then, take a look at what's going on:

First, the prophet Amos informs us that God compares the Jews to Cushites, saying, "Are you not like the children of the Cushites to me, O children of Israel?" (Amos 9:7)

Comparing us to Cushites wasn't exactly a compliment. The Cushites were the descendants of Cush, who was the son of Ham. After Ham either castrated or sodomized his father Noah, he was cursed by God into slavery and lowliness. "So shall the king of Assyria lead the captivity of Egypt and the exile of Cush, youths and old men, naked and barefoot, with bare buttocks, etc." (Isa. 20:4)

But immediately Amos continues, "but I will not destroy the house of Jacob, says the Lord... On that day, I will raise up the fallen Tabernacle of David... And I will return the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild desolate cities and inhabit [them], and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their produce... And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no longer be uprooted from upon their land, that I have given them, said the Lord your God." (Amos 7:8-15)

So exactly where do we stand?

We just finished the Three Weeks mourning period. And at the peak of this period, Tisha B'Av, we commemorated the destruction of both Temples.

But just a few hours after Tisha B'Av, we blast our boom boxes and everything is permitted once again. Wouldn't it seem more appropriate if after three weeks of preparation and then the destruction of the Temple, we had at least a few days of actual mourning? Instead, we are all preparing for a very special Shabbat — Shabbat *Nachamu* (the Sabbath of consolation.)

There was once a *chassid* who truly desired closeness with God but would constantly experience setbacks. He truly wanted to amend his ways, but many years passed and

he was still unable to escape his issues. Still, he never gave up, and always tried again and again. However, he was extremely bitter about this. Rebbe Nachman, with great wisdom, told the *chassid* in a very simple way, "How can I speak with you, you are completely evil?" The *chassid* immediately retorted, "Yes, but isn't it also true that I never gave up and still try to push myself?"

The Bet HaMikdash was called *Tifferet Yisrael* (the pride of Israel.) It was at the Bet Hamikdash that the holiness of our mitzvot would be gathered up. It was the landmark that glorified our special relationship with God. When it was destroyed because of our sins, it was as if our pride was thrown down and shattered. It was as if our special status was cancelled. This is also why on Tisha B'Av morning we don't don our Tefilin; Tefilin are our crowns that exemplify our status as God's special people. However, this is all for our own good.

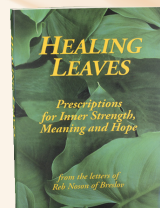
As soon as we are compared with the other nations, our special characteristics and many mitzvot immediately shine through! It becomes immediately obvious that yes, we are different. So too it is with our spiritual growth. When we look to compare ourselves with great Tzadikim, or with very lofty goals, we are almost always dismayed and fall away. However, by first realizing that we are human beings born with a *Yetzer Hara*, and then searching for the good, we can rebuild ourselves. It is now, after Tisha B'Av and after we have swallowed our pride and realized our faults, that we can start to rebuild and become the People we truly are.

*Based on Likutey Halachot Reishit HaGeiz 4*

## 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)

# Finding the Good

By Yehudis Golshevsky

ONCE REB NOSON asked Reb Meir of Teplik about another man from Reb Meir's town. The fellow townsman had recently started coming to learn with Reb Noson, and he wanted to know more about him.

Reb Meir answered in an offhand manner; it was clear that he didn't think much of the man.

"Listen to me," said Reb Noson. "If you view people in a critical manner, you will end up denigrating the whole world. Someone who looks at others in a disparaging manner can literally start at one end of town and judge every Jew unfavorably. Eventually you will conclude that no one is up to par and you are the only genuine Jew in town."

"But I'm also not the way a real Jew should be," sighed Reb Meir.

"If you're not good enough, with all the many positive things you do and all the work you put into yourself, then who is?" Reb Noson concluded.

Reb Noson told Reb Meir to turn off his negative scrutiny and search for the positive instead. "If you see people in an optimal light, focusing on their positive points, you will find good in even the worst individuals. When you look for the good, you will begin to find it in everyone — including yourself!"

On another occasion, Reb Noson gave us an important key to finding the good in others. "I can find merit even in a very wicked person," he said. "I am speaking about finding an abundance of merit, enough to fill many pages. I can do this because I know the terrible hardships that people endure in this life."

Rebbe Nachman once had a follower who had a very difficult time seeing the good in himself. The Rebbe gave him a little push: "Well, according to what you are saying, you have no positive, redeeming feature whatsoever!"

"What do you mean?" the man spluttered. "Surely I am not as bad as that! I certainly have good points."

As soon as the man began to speak about his positive aspects, Rebbe Nachman smiled. "So why do you say you have no good points? You most certainly do, as you just said yourself!"

*Based on Kokhavey Ohr, p. 75.18, p. 74.15*

## SIDEPATH

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

145. *Likutey Moharan* II, 25 states that one should make every lesson he hears into a prayer. When the Rebbe revealed this lesson to me, he said, "It would be good to write the prayers for yourself." From his gestures and the way he said it, I understood what a wonderful and awesome thing this was.



The Rebbe said, "When you take a lesson and make it into a prayer, it causes great delight on high. Such delights have never ascended before God since the day of Creation."

146. In *Likutey Moharan* II, 46, the Rebbe teaches that when you cry out with your heart, this itself is an aspect of faith. You may have many questions and grave doubts, but when your heart cries out, it shows that you still have the burning spark of faith.

The cry itself is an aspect of faith, but it is a very weak faith. But the cry can bring you to strong faith. It can elevate and strengthen your faith until all difficulties vanish.

147. Before the Rebbe told his story, "The Prince of Gems," he said, "I know a tale that contains the entire Forty-Two-Letter Name of God." He then told this story.

Many years ago, I heard the Rebbe say that the Baal Shem Tov knew a story that contained the Forty-Two-Letter Name of God. It was obvious that the Rebbe already knew the secret of this Name.



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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.*