

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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This Year Will Be Different

By Yossi Katz

THE SUMMER IS quickly fading away. Days are getting shorter, nights are a lot cooler and the leaves have begun their beautiful transformation. Indeed, it's that time of year again – the “head” of the year is around the corner.

On Rosh HaShanah, not only is our annual income predetermined, but our very lives hang in the balance. We say in the stirring prayer *U'Netaneh Tokef*: “On Rosh Hashanah will be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will be sealed – how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created, who will live and who will die...”

We conclude, “However, repentance, prayer and charity remove the evil of the decree!”

Yes, we do have the power to influence the head or foundation of the year for the better, through our own actions and charity. This opportunity sounds so obvious that one would think that only a knucklehead wouldn't take advantage. But let me tell you a familiar story. There was once a Rabbi who was reviewing the areas of his personality that needed some fixing. Incidentally, he came across his notes from the previous Rosh HaShanah. To his horror, the items on his new list matched his year-old list to a “T”

Year after year we make resolutions, invest our energy and our good wishes, and are still stuck on the same old stuff. Truthfully, we all strongly desire to do *teshuvah* (return to God), but we just can't seem to mend our ways.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that the key to *teshuvah* is to hear one's own shame and remain silent (*Likutey Moharan* I, 6). There are many ways to experience this embarrassment or humiliation. Often, it involves people sharing their cynical comments or poking fun at us. However, there is a much deeper shame that is experienced, regardless of whether it was brought on by others or by ourselves. This is the shame that we experience when we internalize our own failures. Nothing destroys us more than when we realize we haven't reached our dreams and goals, we haven't accomplished what we so sincerely set out to do. If there's a reason we're stuck, it's because we have honestly tried but eventually experienced setbacks, and so we let our *teshuvah* efforts pass from our mind.

Rebbe Nachman is teaching us to remain silent – not to answer back to the inner voice of failure. The shame we experience is a stark reminder that we are seeking to serve God and not ourselves. We will not judge our success according to the human outcome, but rather, we will be joyful because of our deep, inner desire for Godliness. Seeing our own shortcomings and yet remaining silent and determined to continue trying is the best antidote to our greatest enemy – our ego.

The Hebrew word Rebbe Nachman uses for silence is *yiDOME*. This word has additional meaning, as King David says, “Be *DOME* before God, hope longingly for Him” (Psalms 37:7). Our silence need not be a silence of shame and failure, but of hope and longing to God. When we acknowledge our weak points, yet live with the incredible words of encouragement that Tzaddikim like Rebbe Nachman give us, we finally gain the inner-strength and fortitude necessary to make real changes.

Many people devalue their *teshuvah* because they think it's incomplete and they haven't yet become perfect. But *teshuvah* is about continually striving for God's honor and kingship, despite life's guaranteed ups and downs. If our Rabbis teach us that the World to Come can be achieved by doing *teshuvah* a moment before one's passing, certainly someone who engages in *teshuvah* his whole life is abundantly more worthy. The more *teshuvah* we do, the better, even if we aren't perfect.

As we stand before the King this Rosh HaShanah, may we merit to say to Him that this year will indeed be better. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shabbat 7

L'shanah tova u'metukah! To a good & sweet new year!

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Everything that is currently happening to us is intended to arouse us from our sleep, so that we will begin anew ... and return to God from wherever we are. (Letter #167)

Planning for the Future

By Yehudis Golshevsky

ONCE THERE WAS a simple tailor. He purchased a burial plot in the local cemetery and spent time there every day, reciting the entire Book of Psalms. Naturally, he said the words with great fervor, since he was in the place most suited to remind him that this world is only a temporary stop on the long journey.

Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polonoye, one of the Baal Shem Tov's greatest students, once passed by the cemetery, close to the tailor's future gravesite. He thought to himself, "I detect a distinct aroma of *Gan Eden* here." He approached the burial society of the town to purchase the plot from which the special aura radiated. "I'm sorry," said the official, "but that plot was already bought years ago by Shmerel the tailor."

"Please summon him to me right away," insisted the great sage. Reb Yaakov Yosef asked the tailor if he would sell the plot to him, but the man refused. "I have spent the last ten years preparing it to be my final resting place. You can't restore my time to me."

When Reb Yaakov Yosef heard how much energy and how many tears the tailor had poured into his future resting place, he was astounded. "If that's the case, then I want to be buried right next to you!" he declared. He immediately purchased the neighboring plot for himself.

Ten years later, Reb Leib, the Maggid of Polonoye, passed by the tailor's plot. "I detect the scent of *Gan Eden* here," he thought. He summoned the tailor and asked him to sell it to him. "I will give any price you ask," he promised.

But the tailor refused. "I'm sorry, but I have spent twenty years preparing this place for my eternal rest. Every day I recited the entire Book of Psalms there. How can I possibly sell that?"

The Maggid was astonished. "If so, I want to be buried next to you!" He purchased the plot on the other side of the "simple" tailor.

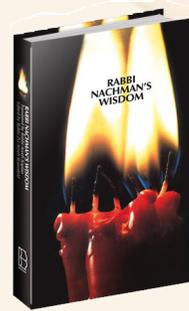
The tailor continued his daily practice for another eight years. Then he passed away and was buried in his plot, surrounded by the two great men who had already passed on.

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh III:613

SIDEPATH

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

160. The Rebbe would often fast from Shabbat to Shabbat. On a Wednesday, in the middle of one such fast, blood began flowing from his nose, eyes, ears and mouth. His attendant started screaming, saying that he would raise an alarm in the house because the Rebbe was so faint.



The Rebbe wisely calmed him down, saying, "This is the way of such a fast. It becomes most difficult in the middle of the week, but tomorrow you will see that it will be easier for me."

The Rebbe had made his attendant take an oath not to tell anyone about his fasts, so he had to keep it to himself.

161. One Friday night, the Rebbe found himself in great danger after fasting the entire week. The only safe way to break such a fast was with things such as milk and warm fluids. The Rebbe had not prepared anything special and no one else knew about the fast. He ate the regular, heavy, Friday evening meal and became dangerously ill. This caused a great commotion in the house.

162. The Rebbe once fasted from Shabbat to Shabbat while living in Zlatipolia. By Friday afternoon, he was so weak that he had to be carried to the mikvah. He said that the reason he became so faint was because knowledge of his fasts had become public.



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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.