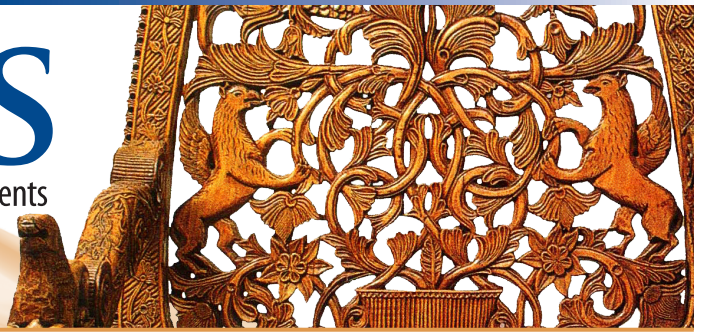


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Staying Connected

By Yossi Katz

AS THE SUN begins to set, the Torah scrolls are removed from the Holy Ark. They are held close to the heart as the *chazan*, dressed in white and bedecked with a *tallit*, begins the famous chant, “*Kol Nidrei, vèsarei, u’shevu’ei, vachamei...*” Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, is upon us. We will pray five prayer services and abstain from food, drink, washing or anointing our bodies, wearing leather footwear, and marital relations. On this day, we rise to the awesome spiritual level of the angels.

Rebbe Nachman describes two methods of serving God. The first is called *baki bayil*, describing one who is an expert in ascending to serve God on ever-elevated levels of worship. No matter the spiritual heights he has reached, he understands that God is infinitely greater, and continually aspires to rise ever higher.

The second way of serving God is called *baki b’nafek*, referring to one who is capable of serving God in mundane affairs, or when he feels far removed from Him. No matter how great the spiritual distance between him and God, he is capable of connecting to God even on that level.

In large part, Yom Kippur belongs to the category of *baki bayil*. Our minds, prayers and even physical bodies are focused entirely on the spiritual realm. Throughout the day, we push ourselves to say yet another prayer, to concentrate a bit more and to remain focused on this day’s special sanctity. But if this is so, the Torah reading for Yom Kippur seems completely out of place.

It begins, “And God spoke to Moses after the death of Aaron’s two sons, when they drew near before the Lord, and they died” (Leviticus 16:1). The Torah seems to imply that they passed away because they drew too close to God. But is that not the essence of Yom

Kippur? Is Yom Kippur not the day when the Kohen Gadol would enter the Holy of Holies, when every Jew rises to his ultimate level of sanctity?

During the Mussaf prayers, we retell the Kohen Gadol’s Yom Kippur service. The Kohen Gadol would change his clothing five times, each time entering and exiting the Holy of Holies. Even though the Temple is considered a place of *baki bayil*, nevertheless, for the Kohen Gadol himself, these were great variations. When he would exit the exalted place of the Holy of Holies to enter the Inner Courtyard or the *Heichal*, and perform the various services there and then return, he would constantly be drawing closer or further away from God. The purpose in all of this was for him to perfect *teshuvah* (returning). By serving God in this way, he was elevating every place and every possible situation, and demonstrating that we can access God from anywhere. At any moment, whether we are living in the “Holy of Holies” or we have moved away from it, we can always connect to God.

This was the mistake of Aaron’s two sons. They wanted to serve God with awesome closeness, but hadn’t yet perfected their ability to serve Him even in mundane life or in situations where they felt distanced from Him. Therefore the Torah continues, “With this shall Aaron enter the Holy” (ibid., 16:3), describing the various enterings and exitings of the Holy of Holies during the Kohen Gadol’s Yom Kipper service.

Yom Kippur is the ultimate day of *teshuvah*. It’s not about pretending to be a perfect saint, but about truly repairing our spiritual gaps. The essence of our *teshuvah* isn’t as much about what we’ve done wrong as it is about what we will fix in the upcoming year. As we stand in the synagogue wearing our pure, white clothing, let us be worthy of real change – not only by serving God on this exalted day, but more importantly, by remembering Him through the ups and downs of the rest of the year.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhos Shabbat 7

Look At Yourself The Right Way

By Yehudis Golshevsky

A CHASSID ONCE approached Rebbe Nachman with a heartfelt question. “Rebbe, I feel like such a lowly person. The negative way that I see myself permeates my life and I have a hard time being happy. How can I ever succeed?”

The Rebbe responded that one is never allowed to lose confidence in himself. And the surest way to revitalize oneself is to focus on one’s good points. Think about it, he told the chassid. Isn’t there anything good, any mitzvah, you’ve ever done?

A person needs to say to himself, “Don’t I fast on Yom Kippur, Tisha B’Av and the other obligatory fast days even when I feel sick? Don’t I sometimes go to the *mikveh*? No matter how bad it is, I still have some good points. On some occasions, I really have done the Creator’s will.”

Searching for and finding one’s good points will strengthen and revitalize you. And if that internal negativity returns and rears its head, threatening to overcome you, go back over those same good points again and again.

You can also pour out your heart to God, mentioning every single good point or quality that you have, even the simplest ones, even things that were done not through your own efforts, but are still mitzvot.

For example: “Master of the world! However I am, however sorry my spiritual state, as You and I know the pain I bear, You have still done an astounding kindness for me by making me a Jew. After eight days, they gave me a *brit*. I worked hard to learn the *aleph-bet*, to pray and study the Torah. I endured many painful experiences to attain this knowledge. I worked hard for it ...”

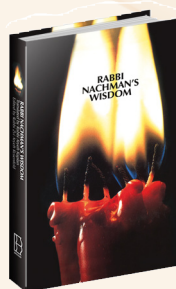
When Reb Noson met someone who was having a hard time focusing on his good points, he encouraged him, “You need to follow all the different paths of advice that Rebbe Nachman revealed to help you find joy, especially by focusing on your good points. And be aware: One’s entire connection to Judaism depends on this!”

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh I:156; Eiruvey Techumim 6

SIDEPATH

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

163. One of the Rebbe’s followers from Zlatipolia related the following: One summer day in Zlatipolia, the Rebbe prayed very early. He sent his daughter, Sarah, to call me. When I came to him, he suggested that we take a stroll together. We left the city and walked in a grassy meadow.



The Rebbe spoke. “If only you could be worthy to hear the song of this grass. Each blade sings out to God without any ulterior motive, not expecting any reward. It is most wonderful to hear their song and serve God in their midst. It is very good to be religious among them.”

We walked a bit farther and came to a small mountain. The mountain was hollowed out like a cave, and when we entered it, we could not be seen from the outside. As soon as we entered the hollow, the Rebbe took a copy of *Sha’arey Tzion* out of his pocket and began to read. He read it page by page, weeping bitterly all the while. I stood there holding the Rebbe’s coat and was amazed at the extent of his weeping. He wept in prayer for an entire long summer day without stopping. Then he asked me for a light and smoked his pipe for a while. He sat there for some time and then went outside.

The Rebbe said, “A time will come when it will be very difficult to approach me. But now I am in your hands. If you and R’Y.Y. desired it, I could make you into tzaddikim just like myself.”



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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.