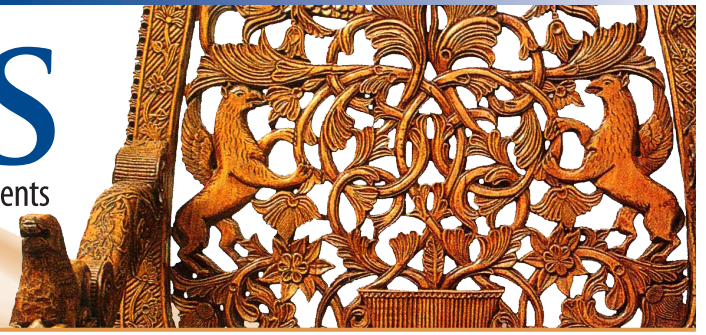


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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In the Know

By Yossi Katz

KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, EDUCATION ... these are the cornerstones of a typical Jewish upbringing. Almost as soon as a Jewish baby is born, his or her parents have already established a college fund. This reminds me of a joke: A Jewish mother is walking down the street with her two little boys. A passerby sees the children and remarks, “What adorable children you have. How old are they?” The proud mother replies, “The doctor is seven and the lawyer is five.”

But is knowledge truly everything? And should measuring our lives based on “what we know” be the guiding principle for our children and ourselves?

To answer this question, we turn to our *parashah*. Over the past few weeks, the Torah has recounted numerous incredible miracles. First we read about the Ten Plagues devastating mighty Egypt and bringing about the release of the Jewish People. Now free, the Jews must travel through the Sinai desert on their way to the Holy Land. God leads them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The battered Egyptians decide to give it one more shot and pursue the Jews into the sea. The sea supernaturally splits and the Jews cross on dry land. The Egyptians, in hot pursuit, meet the sea-wall as it comes crashing down on them.

The Talmud testifies to the awesome level of the Jewish People at this time: “What a maidservant at the sea saw, Yechezkel ben Buzi [the prophet Ezekiel] did not see in all his days” (*Mekhilta*, Rashi 15:2). Let’s ponder the depth of this statement. Ezekiel was a very great prophet; his most famous vision was that of God’s “Chariot” (Ezekiel 1). This vision was so great that our Rabbis warned, “The Act of Creation can be taught to just one student at a time, but the Chariot cannot be taught at all. It must be studied alone, and then only if the student is wise and understands on his own” (*Chagigah* 11b). Despite Ezekiel’s lofty vision, he did not reach the exalted level of the simple maidservant at the sea!

After all these miracles, and considering the incredibly

elevated level of the Jewish People, the Torah states, “And Israel saw the great hand which the Lord had used upon the Egyptians ... and they *believed* in God and Moses His servant” (Exodus 14:31). At this point, wouldn’t just “believing” be preposterous? Moreover, the verse seems to imply that their knowledge led to their faith. Doesn’t belief apply only to something that you can’t experience for yourself?

Rebbe Nachman teaches that the essence of knowledge is to know that you know nothing at all. Yes, the Jews had seen the “hand of God”—but the more they saw, the more they appreciated God’s greatness and acknowledged the limitations of personal knowledge. Knowledge and education are important as a means, not an end. The purpose of expanding our knowledge is to strengthen our faith in God. After all is said and done, all roads lead to faith and the existence of the ever-present Creator. Therefore the greatest thing we can do is to fortify ourselves with simple faith in God and his true Tzaddikim.

Living with faith means living a God-centered life. It means living with the awareness that everything we experience is being orchestrated by God Himself. And it means perceiving that we must always have faith, because no matter how much we know about God, we realize our insignificance vis-à-vis His greatness and rulership.

Rebbe Nachman said, “The world considers faith a minor thing. But I consider it an extremely great thing” (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom* #33).

Based on Otzar HaYirah, Emunah 82

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



God desires our prayers, and that is why these things happen: it is all to remind us to pray before Him. Then, in the process of praying about this, we will pray for our own needs as well and, most importantly, draw close to God. (*Letter* #242)

A Life of Faith

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REB AHARON OF KIBLITCH, a Breslover chassid known for his great trust in God, lived a truly meager material existence. His “bad *mazel*” was notorious in his town. Reb Aharon leased the rights to fish along a section of the river in order to provide food for his family and maybe earn some extra cash. People joked, “His *mazel* is so hard, the fish know when he’s coming and get out of his way!” Even after he died, Reb Aharon’s family couldn’t afford the few pennies needed for burial shrouds and had to bury him in homemade shrouds.

Sometimes his wife had a hard time bearing their poverty. She wasn’t worried about her own standard of living; her faith made that acceptable to her. But she was concerned about her daughters. “It seems so unlikely that we will find suitable matches for our daughters, since we can’t afford a dowry. Who will marry girls who come from such a destitute family as ours?”

Reb Aharon would always offer the same enthusiastic encouragement: “What do you mean? Our girls are so special that this won’t be a problem at all. I am telling you, the time will come when the matchmakers will ask, ‘Aharon, don’t you have any other daughters to marry off?’” And that is exactly what happened.

The local Ukrainian nobleman loved Reb Aharon. To show his esteem, he gave him an expensive Italian cow as a gift. The cow produced superior milk and cheese, and Reb Aharon’s situation began to improve. But one day, when Reb Aharon came home after a long day spent in prayer and Torah study, his family came out to greet him with tears in their eyes. “The cow got caught in its lead and accidentally strangled itself!”

How did Reb Aharon respond to this devastating news? He jumped into the air! His face shining with joy, he exclaimed, “This is such a kindness from God! Surely a child was supposed to pass away, and God took the cow instead!” He repeated this emphatically several times, his voice ringing with joy. His family was slowly drawn in to his enthusiasm until they felt grateful for their mishap. “Better the cow than a member of our family!”

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh IV:342, 344, 346

SIDEPATH

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

195. The Rebbe said: There are naked souls that cannot enter a body at all. These souls are more pitiful than anyone alive. When a soul is born into this world, it [comes with] a body; it can give birth to children and observe God’s commandments. But these naked souls have no way of elevating themselves and are most pitiful. They cannot accomplish anything on high and also cannot clothe themselves in a body.



There are also incarnations that have not yet been revealed. One’s incarnation can cause him to desire to travel constantly. He makes plans to travel, but they do not materialize, and ultimately, he remains at home.

196. On the Shabbat of *Bereshit*, the Rebbe revealed the lesson, “In the beginning ... before the eyes of all Israel” (*Likutey Moharan* II, 67). In this lesson, the Rebbe spoke of the “glory of Israel.” He said that when a tzaddik passes away, this “glory of Israel” is eclipsed.

News of the passing of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev passing did not reach us until the following Monday. When the Rebbe revealed this lesson, we had no idea of his inference.

Etrogim had not been available that year, and only arrived miraculously at the last moment. The Rebbe said that he knew *etrogim* would come, for he trusted in the tzaddikim of our generation – particularly in the great tzaddik Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, the *glory* of our congregation.



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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.