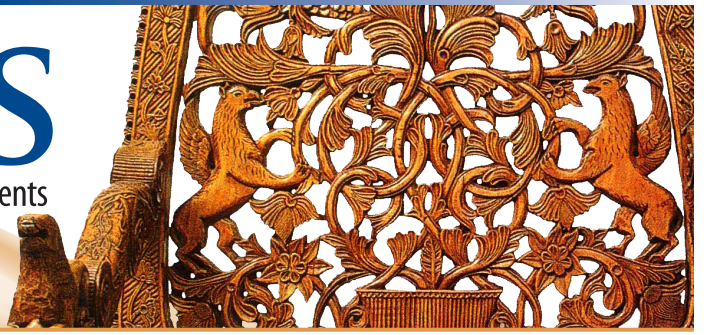


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Every Day Counts

By Yossi Katz

IF YOU'VE EVER davened (prayed) in a Breslov shul during these days of counting the Omer, then you've witnessed the incredible intensity and devotion that Breslov Chassidim invest in their Omer counting. The whole service, perhaps one page long, can take up to an hour for them to recite. Obviously, this practice must be very meaningful and tremendously important. (If you have a chance, go to a Breslov shul and experience it for yourself!)

What exactly is the Omer offering? The offering is barley; on the second day of Pesach, an Omer (a measure equal to approximately 2 quarts) of barley was waved in the six directions (north, south, east, west, up and down). Barley is traditionally considered animal food. What kind of offering is this, anyway?

Moreover, the 49 days of the Omer correspond to the 49 days between Pesach and Shavuot. These days are considered preparatory days, when we ascend from the 49 levels of impurity in Egypt and rise to the 50th level of holiness on Shavuot, becoming fit to receive the Torah. What is the connection between counting the Omer and building our personal capacity for receiving the Torah?

Part of the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt was not just the destruction of our enemies, but also our spiritual rescue – a spiritually despondent nation became elevated to incredible new heights. When we tasted our awesome potential, not only were our bodies redeemed, but so were our spirits. However, this presented a problem. Since we didn't initiate this process, we weren't capable of permanently maintaining our new connection with God. Just as it's unhealthy for a nutritionally destitute person to immediately overload on nutritionally dense food, so too, we are incapable of maintaining this new, elevated level. We have to take a few steps back and begin to build strong enough vessels to hold the awesome light. These are the 49 days.

We need animal food in order to build our spiritual muscles. We must become strong enough to lift even the lowest, most challenging encounter and wave it in all six directions, symbolizing that God is everywhere and in everything.

Life is not just about experiencing miraculous revelations of Godliness, but about seeing Him and connecting to Him even when the worst perceived “garbage” is thrown at us. There are only seven days in a week. The Kabbalah explains that each day can be subdivided further to include all seven days within it. These 49 days are therefore a microcosm of every conceivable type of day that's possible to experience. In order to rise to the level of being able to receive the Torah, we must first learn to appreciate each and every day as being a unique and worthy vessel with which to experience Godliness. During the Omer-counting, we are correcting our “free ride” out of Egypt and engaging in the process necessary to build a true connection with our Creator.

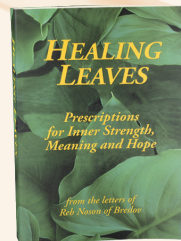
The laws of the Omer-counting stress that one should not miss counting even a single day. This is the law of life itself. Each person has awesome spiritual potential; each of us can reach the 50th level of holiness – the level of personally receiving the Torah at Sinai. But first, we must learn to count today. Have you counted yet?

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Pikadon 4*

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



A person must believe in himself, that is, believe that the good that is in him is still very, very strong. “Even though I have done wrong,” he should say, “great waters cannot extinguish the love and rivers cannot wash away’ the good points I have merited to grasp within this fleeting life.” (Letter #320)

# Our Patriarchs & Matriarchs Show the Way

By Ozer Bergman

*THE JEWISH PATRIARCHS and Matriarchs excelled at prayer and reaching out to God. Their example illuminates Rebbe Nachman's key teaching of hitbodedut – a daily time-out, as it were, to seclude oneself in personal conversation with God.*

Twenty years of marriage and still no children. Not only did Yitzchak, our second patriarch, not curtail his efforts, he increased them. He churned out prayers and heaped them upon God, as it were. This was not an easy thing for Yitzchak to do. He was quite the intellectual, basing his entire life on critical thinking: "Is this a good idea or not? Is it going to work or not?" Rivkah, his wife, our second matriarch, was not a silent partner in this prayerful endeavor. In fact, it was her influence on him that allowed Yitzchak to develop his prayerful side.

Their prayers were answered. Rivkah bore children, and the embryo of the Jewish people continued to develop.

For those of us who need encouragement to pause and create an oasis of peace in the tumult of the day's events, Yitzchak did some of his best praying in the afternoon, when the light grows shorter and the shadows longer.

\* \* \*

Rivkah, our second matriarch, is the personification of prayer, as alluded to in the Shabbat prayer, *Nishmat*.

Rivkah grew up in a rough environment. Dad and her domineering older brother were atheists. They weren't above thievery or murder, either. The neighbors were pagans. Yet even as a very young girl, Rivkah found the courage and strength to become a model for kindness to humans and animals. She worked so hard at prayer that she achieved prophecy.

No matter how bleak your situation looks, remember that the light of God's kindness can shine through the darkest clouds. Dig a little deeper into yourself and pray a little more, and a little more on top of that.

Get God to pray for you! The more enthusiastic you are about pray for what you think needs to be prayed for, the sooner God will pray for it, too.

*From "Where Earth and Heaven Kiss: A Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Path of Meditation"*

## SIDEPATH

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

225. A man had been told that it was impossible to understand the Kabbalah without fasting and frequent immersion in the mikvah. He saw the Rebbe in Uman and asked him about this. The Rebbe answered, "It is possible to know the wisdom of Kabbalah without this. For it is wisdom..."



He explained, "The reason why the main Kabbalistic work, *Etz Chaim*, and other such works are so difficult to understand is because they are not written in order. Where science and philosophy end, that is where true wisdom – which is Kabbalah – begins."

Scientists and philosophers can only speculate within the bounds of the physical world. They can reach up to the stars and galaxies, but beyond that, they know absolutely nothing. Even their understanding of the physical world is very incomplete, as they themselves admit.

The wisdom of Kabbalah begins where their wisdom ends, beyond the physical world. The Kabbalah includes the entire physical world as part of the World of Action. Its teachings then go beyond the World of Action to the Worlds of Formation, Creation and Emanation. The World of Action also has a spiritual level beyond the realm of science and philosophy. The Kabbalah speaks only of the spiritual roots of the World of Action and above. Therefore the Kabbalah begins where scientific knowledge ends.

226. The Rebbe once said laughingly, "If they would allow one dead soul to visit an assembly of philosophers, that would put an end to all their teachings."



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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.*