

# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT EIKEV • 5775 • VOL. 5 NO. 41

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## This Way to the Treasure

By Yossi Katz

*A MAN ONCE DREAMED that there was a great treasure under a bridge in Vienna. He traveled to Vienna and stood near the bridge, trying to figure out what to do. He did not dare search for the treasure by day, because of the many people who were there.*

*An officer passed by and asked, “What are you doing, standing here and contemplating?” The man decided that it would be best to tell the whole story and ask for help, hoping that [the officer] would share the treasure with him. He told the officer the entire story.*

*The officer replied, “A Jew is concerned only with dreams! I also had a dream, and I also saw a treasure. It was in a small house, under the cellar.”*

*In relating his dream, the officer accurately described the man’s city and house. The man rushed home, dug under his cellar, and found the treasure. He said, “Now I know that I had the treasure all along. But in order to find it, I had to travel to Vienna” (Rebbe Nachman’s Parables, “The Treasure”).*

I have always enjoyed this fascinating parable and find that it truly describes the nature of our people. We each possess an amazing treasure whose incredible preciousness constantly gnaws at us. Often we misinterpret this subconscious yearning to finally discover our treasure. We confuse it with making lots of money, or seeking great honor, but it never goes away. It chases us to Vienna...

While in Vienna, the man was so certain of discovering his sought-after treasure that he wouldn’t dare retrieve it in broad daylight. This led him to include the officer on his “team.” But the officer also had a dream, a very different dream. In the officer’s dream, the man’s treasure was buried right under his own house.

The officer represents the Tzaddik. We come to him misguided, thinking that something really big is waiting for us as the result of some other passionate pursuit of ours.

However, the Tzaddik knows us for what we really are. He teaches us that this is really our *neshamah* (soul) calling for true meaning, and he sends us home! Our treasure was waiting for us the entire time right under our doorstep. Many times, it’s necessary to run halfway across the world before we realize that we have overlooked the most obvious of answers. Life is a journey, but by finding the Tzaddik, we will be pointed in the correct direction.

This week’s *parashah* states, “You should place these words of Mine on your hearts” (Deuteronomy 11:18).

The Hebrew word *ve-SaMtem* (you should place) is similar to *SaM* (potion). Our Sages interpret this to mean that the words of the Torah have two possible potentials: either as a potion of healing and life, or a potion of death (Yoma 72b). They are teaching us that even something which is the source of ultimate spirituality can cause death. This is truly shocking! So many of us think that Torah is Torah, and no matter what, it can only help and do no harm. This is very wrong. There are times when certain Torah teachings can actually be harmful. One such example is when a person studies with the intention of finding the Torah “gems” associated with someone else’s *neshamah*.

The verse tells us to place these words on our hearts. We are all unique individuals; we must all find our way and our own unique interpretation and personal message in the Torah. When we study with the Tzaddik as our teacher, and heed his voice, we will be directed to find our individual treasure and personal understanding of the Torah.

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



If a person wants to focus on what is lacking, he will always lack very much ... But if he remembers that everything he has is his only because of God’s great kindness, then he can be truly happy with his lot. (*Letter #117*)

# The Burnt Book

By Chaim Kramer

**WHILE REBBE NACHMAN** left us many original and practical teachings, he ordered one of his works to be burned. This was the *Sefer HaNisraf*, “the Burnt Book.”

In 1807 Rebbe Nachman called his main disciple and scribe, Reb Noson, to his room to continue the transcription they had begun over two years earlier. Reb Noson writes:

“I sat with the Rebbe for several hours. He dictated the work word by word, and I wrote. All the other chassidim waited outside. When I finally came out, I scarcely knew the difference between day and night. Even though I had no idea what I had written, the little distant glimmer of understanding I had of the awesome greatness of this work filled me with such fire and passion that I hardly knew where I was in the world.”

But he would never have the chance to study it. In 1808, when the Rebbe was critically ill in Lemberg, he told his disciple, Reb Shimon, that he had a decision to make: either he had to burn the book, or else die in Lemberg. The answer seemed obvious to Reb Shimon, but the Rebbe hesitated, because he, and only he, knew of the exaltedness of the teachings contained in the book.

Finally the Rebbe said, “If that is the case, here is the key to my drawer. Go quickly! Hurry! Don’t delay! ... Go as fast as you can to Breslov. When you get there, take two books – one of them is lying in my drawer, the second is in my daughter Adil’s chest. Take them and burn them. But for God’s sake, be as quick as you can!”

Reb Shimon ran out to hire a coach. When he reached Dashev, not far from Breslov, he suddenly fell ill and was bedridden. He ordered that he be carried out to the coach and laid inside. As soon as the coach arrived in Breslov, his health returned. He took the two books (the original and Reb Noson’s copy) and burned them both.

Reb Noson concludes, “The Rebbe said this book would not come into the world again. We lost something that will never return. The Rebbe said that this book had to be burned, and his other work, the *Likutey Moharan*, would be the one to be printed and spread throughout the world.”

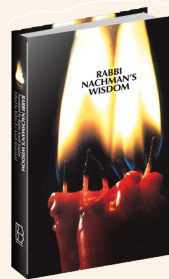
From “*Through Fire and Water: The Life of Reb Noson of Breslov*”

## SIDEPATH

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

263. Someone told me that he had talked with the Rebbe about the fact that it had become fairly common for relationships between the younger men and their wives to degenerate and result in separation and occasionally in divorce, God forbid.

The Rebbe said, “This is the work of the evil inclination. It works very hard to ruin the family life of young men in order to trap them in its net, God forbid. It lies in wait for them, to snare them while they are young, working to destroy their family life. It destroys their relationship with all sorts of trickery.”



264. The Rebbe often stressed the importance of honoring and respecting our wives. He said, “Women have much anguish from their children. They suffer in pregnancy and childbirth and then have the troubles of raising their children. This is besides the many other areas in which they suffer. You should take this into consideration and honor and respect your wife.”

The Talmud teaches, “Honor your wife, that you may have wealth” (*Bava Metzia* 59a). It also states, “It is sufficient that they raise our children” (*Yevamot* 63a).

265. The Rebbe warned us very strongly not to eat raw onions. It made no difference whether they were mixed with oil, fat or eggs, even for Shabbat. The Rebbe said that onions are harmful in many ways and counted out numerous illnesses that can be caused by them. The only safe way to eat them is cooked.



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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.*