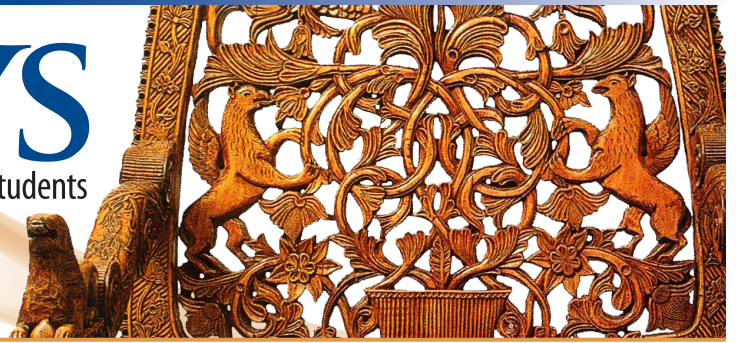


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Sadness That Leads to Joy

By Yossi Katz

**TISHA B'AV** is often called the saddest day of the Jewish year. It commemorates so many tragedies, including the destruction of both Holy Temples, the Spanish Inquisition and European pogroms. On Tisha B'Av, we sit on the floor and weep as we remember everything that was lost, and recite many special prayers that bring us to the appropriate frame of mind. Sounds kind of depressing, no? But what is sadness, or better yet in Breslov terminology, “brokenheartedness,” all about? Why is it a must, and why do we have a special day dedicated to cultivating it?

Let's differentiate between brokenheartedness and depression (and all the more moderate forms of it). The Kotzker Rebbe famously said, “There is nothing as whole as a broken heart.” Similarly, Rebbe Nachman taught, “Brokenheartedness and depression are not at all the same. Brokenheartedness involves the heart, while depression involves the spleen. Depression comes from the Other Side and is hated by God. But a broken heart is very dear and precious to God” (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #41). We even have a litmus test to distinguish between the two: “After brokenheartedness comes joy. This later joy is a true sign of a broken heart” (ibid. #45). Clearly, brokenheartedness is a healthy and necessary emotion. It is even something that fosters future joy.

There are two ways to embolden a muscle: by stretching and by strengthening. Stretching muscles causes them to expand. Strengthening muscles means applying a great deal of tension and resistance, forcing the muscles to contract.

This is a great metaphor for our discussion. Imagine a heart expanding and then contracting. The expansion corresponds to the heart's capacity for love and kindness, which manifests as joy. The contraction corresponds to the heart's capacity for restraint. Longing for something

that you can't have right now is an example of something that creates resistance and contracts the heart. Both joy and restraint are necessary to maintain a healthy heart, emotionally and spiritually. However, a depressed person's heart is entirely different. It is cold and stone-like. Such a person experiences anger and possibly rage (based on Tanya, chapter 31).

Every generation has the capacity and responsibility to bring the Mashiach and rebuild the Holy Temple. Therefore, if the Mashiach hasn't come yet, we can be said to be responsible for the Temple's destruction. Likewise, each of us has the duty to bring redemption to our personal acts of destruction. By reflecting on these acts – broken relationships, missed opportunities, lack of progress, forgotten aspirations – we create the resistance necessary to strengthen our hearts and repair our wounds.

After Rebbe Nachman's passing, Reb Noson was kept very busy dealing with the Rebbe's estate, rebuilding the shul in Breslov, raising funds, printing books, and so on. Yet inside he was broken beyond imagination. How could he deal with such tremendous loss? Reb Noson once said, “I have no way to soothe my broken heart except with *Chatzot* (the Midnight Lament) and the dirges of Tisha B'Av” (*Aveneha Barzel* p. 57, #20).

Tisha B'Av is an incredible opportunity! It is the day we can finally turn to God and let go. We can admit that we don't have the answers, we have made mistakes and we hope for so much more. This is precisely what God is waiting for. As our Rabbis teach, “Whoever mourns for Jerusalem will merit seeing its joy” (*Ta'anit* 30b). By longing for God, we are strengthening our heart's capacity and creating room for Him, as well as the space necessary for experiencing future joy and celebration. With every lamentation we say, we remember our losses and lacks, but simultaneously we remember our powerful hope and faith that our hearts will once again beat in tremendous joy and future consolation. Amen!

# For the Sake of the Children

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**REBBE NACHMAN'S MATERNAL** grandfather was a mysterious figure in the history of Chassidism. The Rebbe's great-grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, made the match between his daughter, Adil, and one of his students, Rabbi Yechiel, known as "the Deutschel" (the German). Rebbe Nachman's own brother, one of his earliest followers, was named after their grandfather. But who was he really? And how did he find his way to the Baal Shem Tov?

Not much is known about Rabbi Yechiel, but we do know that after he arrived in Eastern Europe he somehow came to the attention of the Baal Shem Tov. The founder of Chassidism sent one of his own disciples, Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Polonoye, to go and see if he would be a worthy addition to their circle.

When Rabbi Aryeh Leib caught up with "the Deutschel," he began to ask him a series of questions meant to test his Torah mettle. Rabbi Yechiel answered, "I haven't known, I do not know, and I will not know!" When Rabbi Aryeh Leib reported the newcomer's strange answer to the Baal Shem Tov, the latter said, "I can tell from his words that he belongs here with us." Thus "the Deutschel" made his way to Mezhibuzh and to the inner circle of the Baal Shem Tov.

In time, the Baal Shem Tov decided to take him as a son-in-law. When asked what he saw in Rabbi Yechiel to make him worthy of such a distinction, the Baal Shem Tov answered, "I did it for the children!"

Rabbi Yechiel and Adil had two sons who became two of the greatest lights of their generation: Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuzh and Rabbi Ephraim of Sudilkov (author of the *Degel Machaneh Ephraim*). But it wasn't until much later, after the passing of Rabbi Yechiel himself, that the further intention of the Baal Shem Tov became known.

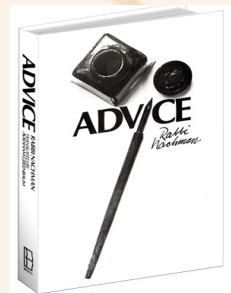
After Rabbi Yechiel passed away, the children of Mezhibuzh began to fall ill. Over the years, many of them died in inexplicable epidemics. The merit of the tzaddik, Rabbi Yechiel, had been preserving them all the while that he had lived. The Baal Shem Tov had really wanted him in Mezhibuzh "for the sake of the children!"

*Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 241-243*

## SIDEPATH

Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

**EATING.** 8. When a person eats in holiness and purity, his face, and the inner "face" – his soul – becomes radiant through his eating. But when he eats without holiness, the food damages his heart and he loses that inner face and falls into a "sleep." He may still think that he is serving God, occupied as he is with Torah and prayer. But he is "asleep," and all his devotions remain below in the lower worlds. God has no pleasure from them. The tales and stories told by the Tzaddikim



have the power to rouse those who are asleep, so that their days will not be wasted (*Likutey Moharan I, 60:6*).

9. When desires and impulses press in on a person, this is the battle of the *kelipot* against holiness. The principal desires are for food and drink. When a person is in their grip, they send his faculty of speech into exile. He finds himself unable to say a single word before God. By fasting, he can overcome the power of these desires. Then he will be able to speak. Through this he will be able to draw those who are far from God closer. As more people come to acknowledge God, His glory is revealed over the whole Creation, and our faith in God becomes complete (*ibid. 62:1, 2, 5*).



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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.*

*Dedicated in the Memory (L'Ilui Nishmat) of Yehudis bat Shimon*