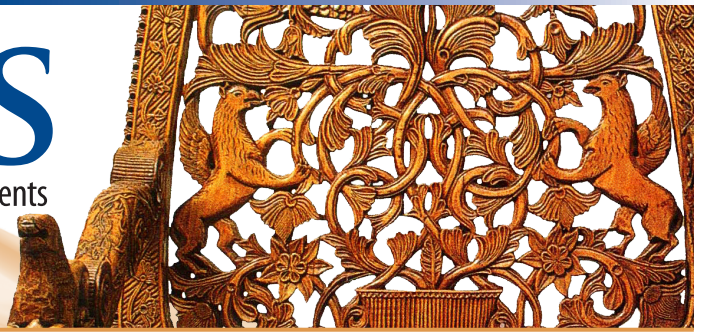


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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All in Good Time

By Yossi Katz

IF I WERE TO ask, “What is the secret cause of evil and sin?” what would you answer? Perhaps you would suggest lust, greed, or one of our many other base temptations. However, Reb Noson offers one basic catalyst: time.

Our Rabbis teach that the evil inclination is only influential “in its time” (*Yerushalmi, Sotah 3*), Beginning with the first sin – the eating of the forbidden fruit – the great Tzaddikim erred only because they acted based on a miscalculation of time. For example, had Adam waited until Shabbat, the forbidden fruit would have become permissible to him. It wasn’t that he was wrong about the great potential spiritual rectification brought about by eating it, but rather that the time was not yet ripe for his deed. And, as we know, his partaking of the fruit had disastrous ramifications.

Similarly, after twice being promised the land, Abraham asks God, “How will I know that I will inherit it?” (Genesis 15:8). The Talmud (*Nedarim 32a*) identifies this specific query as being the root cause of the Egyptian exile. Now, Abraham was an awesome Tzaddik who introduced monotheism to the world. In fact, one need go back only two verses to see God complimenting Abraham for his tremendous level of belief. So how could Abraham have had such a quick reversal of faith?

Abraham foresaw that although his descendants would eventually conquer the Holy Land, they would be exiled from there. He perceived that for over 2,000 years they would be persecuted, tortured and murdered while living in foreign lands. Therefore, he “pushed” God to calculate and lay out at that very moment the exact plan for his descendants inheriting the land forever.

Yet the time for revealing the final redemption had not yet come. The wondrous “grand finale” could not yet be revealed.

Though these episodes involved great Tzaddikim, the challenge of time affects us the same way. Life is very precious. Every moment affords us the opportunity to connect with God. We were not put here simply to do and not to do. God breathed a *neshamah* (soul) into our bodies so we could experience Him even in the mundanity of the world. What stops us? Who wouldn’t take advantage of fostering a private relationship with the Master of the Universe?

More than anything else, time stops us. God promised Abraham that he would inherit the land and that the redemption would eventually come. Similarly, we know that in the end, every Jew will receive his or her personal rectification. Each of us will merit eternal spiritual bliss. But when and exactly how this will happen is known only to God. We simply don’t know.

We do know that we can grow and experience a spiritual life by living in the present. By avoiding the pressure of constantly looking back at our failures, and the anxiety of trying to figure out how things will correct themselves in the future, we can live in the moment. We are free to connect to all of the goodness that is being offered to us right now. Doing so allows us to move forward and expedite the process that, yes, God will somehow finish. But first we must let go and establish true trust in Him; only then are we at liberty to discover our true, Godly essence.

Perhaps the only way this lesson could have been learned was by us being exiled in Egypt. Even though we were enslaved and completely subservient to the Egyptians, God demonstrated to us, before the entire world, that in the end He will take us out. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhhot Gezeilah 5

The First American in Uman

By Gedaliah Fleer

IN AUGUST 1963, R' Michel Dorman agreed to bring R' Gedaliah to Rebbe Nachman's grave.

As we stepped out the taxi, R' Michel whispered, "Say a special prayer that the driver did not notice anything unusual, and that when we return, the police won't be waiting for us."

My nervousness mingled with excitement as we walked toward the *tziyun*. R' Michel told me that Reb Noson had mentioned the old marketplace to his son, R' Yitzchak. Reb Noson had said, "There may come a time when you cannot, or will not, be permitted to approach the *tziyun*. If that should happen, you should stand in the marketplace, from where you can see the *tziyun*, and recite the *Tikkun HaKlali*."

We passed the *kloyz* built by Reb Noson and continued walking down into a valley. R' Michel pointed out a stream of water that flowed into a small pool. The Chassidim would immerse themselves in this pool before *Shacharit*, having spent the entire night in *hitbodedut*. During the winter, in sub-zero temperatures, they would break through the layer of ice covering the pool and immerse themselves with incredible self-sacrifice. It is impossible to describe the holiness and purity of the people who spent their nights here.

R' Michel told me that a non-Jewish couple lived in the house adjoining the *tziyun*. The woman was a kind-hearted Ukrainian and most of the time it did not bother her that Jews came to pray there. But she was wary of her neighbors. They assumed that the Jews paid her to be able to pray in her yard, and were jealous of her presumed wealth. Therefore, she only allowed people to enter her yard at night, when the neighbors wouldn't notice. "The moment we enter the yard, you should start reciting the *Tikkun HaKlali* and hope that no one sees us."

We slipped inside and I immediately began to recite the *Tikkun HaKlali*. I made it though four or five Psalms before the woman of the house noticed us and began screaming. "Go away from here!" she shouted. "Why are you bothering me? If you don't leave immediately, I will call the police!" Other than the last two Psalms, which I recited while standing just outside the gate, I was able to recite most of the *Tikkun* while still inside the yard.

From "Against All Odds"

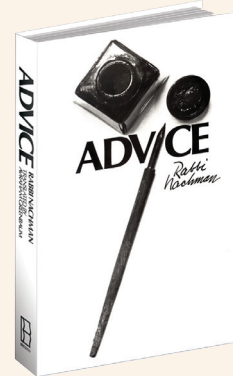
SIDEPATH

Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

LAND OF ISRAEL. 15. Pray to God to give you desire and yearning for the Land of Israel. Then you will succeed in reaching there. And pray also that He should plant yearning for the Land in the hearts of all the Tzaddikim (*Likutey Moharan* I, 155).

16. God repays man "measure for measure." Nowhere is the repayment more exacting than in the Land of Israel. But this is really a great kindness. If we know that God repays us according to our deeds, then by thinking about the situations God sends us, we can gain an insight into our own behavior and learn how to improve (*ibid.* I, 187).

17. The holiness of the Land of Israel is the epitome of holiness, encompassing all other levels of holiness. It is there that we can free ourselves completely of the materialistic viewpoint which claims that events take place naturally. We can come to know and believe that everything comes about only through the hand of God. When man knows this, he becomes like God in his power to divide the light from the darkness. ... To be able to divide the light from the darkness requires that ultimate level of faith, which can only be achieved in the Land of Israel (*ibid.* I, 234).



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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.