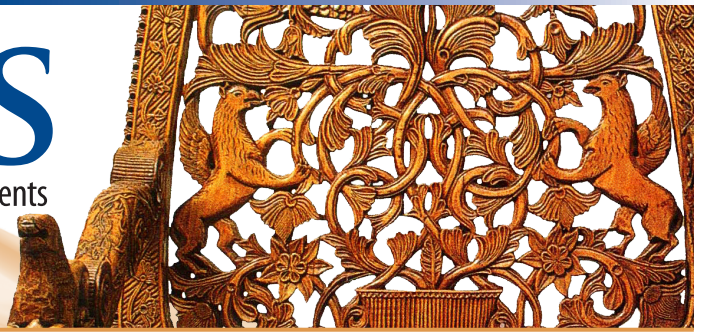


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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“Fear” No Evil

By Yossi Katz

ONE OF THE most misunderstood and potentially harmful emotions is fear of God. Like everything else in the world, fear is not some unfortunate feeling, but a creation of God. The opening word of Creation, *BeREiShYT* (In the beginning) (Genesis 1:1), is an acronym for *YaREi BoSheT* (fear-humility). The purpose of Creation, says the *Zohar*, is for man to humble himself and appreciate God’s awesomeness by means of fear.

But when many people think of fear of God, they conjure up a vision of dark angels smacking the living daylight out of them for some misdoing. That idea is simply misplaced. True, there is punishment in store for our misdeeds, but the punishment itself is a cleansing process for the soul and essential for our eternal life. Fear is a reminder that God has created us for a specific purpose – it’s a wakeup call to stay focused on the task at hand in order to achieve greatness.

I recently read the account of a popular Rabbi’s journey to becoming a Breslover. He describes growing up in the house of a great Tzaddik and always wanting to strive and grow, but he was stunted by personal shortcomings. His thirst for spiritual accomplishment was so great that, at one point, he contemplated suicide. Fortunately, he came across a letter that Reb Noson had written to his own son, Reb Yitzchok:

Pay no attention to any feelings of discouragement, and do not listen to the criticism of the Evil One and the Other Side who give reproof only in order to dishearten you and distance you from that little bit of good that you are trying to hold on to. ... A person must listen to criticism and rebuke only if it draws him closer, not if it pushes him away. I have often spoken to you about the intention of

the mussar literature that so harshly rebukes and belittles the reader. It is not trying to distance a person from God, but seeks to draw him closer. ...

A person’s every thought, word and deed has two aspects and can be an elixir of life or a deadly poison. ... You must be very careful, because much of the time [the Evil One] takes the words of the Living God and turns them upside-down and actually tries to repel and dishearten a person with them, God forbid (Alim LiTerufah, Letter #27).

This can also be seen in our *parashah*. All the miracles and wonders that God performed in Egypt were meant to demonstrate to the world that He is in charge. Pharaoh, however, refused to recognize God. God responded by saying, “But regarding you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear God” (Exodus 9:30). When Pharaoh finally did allow the Jewish people to leave, he pursued them to the Sea of Reeds, where God sent him to his untimely end.

The Jewish people witnessed these same awesome miracles and had a completely different reaction: “Israel saw the tremendous power that God wielded against Egypt, and the people feared God” (ibid. 14:31).

Rebbe Nachman teaches that the whole world is a very narrow bridge – but the main thing is not to make oneself afraid at all. We each experience scares in life, and often live with much fear and anxiety. It is within our reach to transfer those negative feelings to a place of faith and recognition of God’s sovereignty. When we live with the constant recognition that God is in charge and that whatever He does is for our good, we are able to elevate our fears, transforming them into a positive life of purpose and meaning. Amen.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh
Bekhor Beheimah Tehorah 4:3*

Noah's Ark in Russia (Part 2)

By Gedaliah Fleer

In 1963 Gedaliah Fleer had an emotional meeting with Jews trapped in Communist Russia.

SINCE RABBI YEHUDAH Kalasher was the most accomplished Torah scholar among us, he was asked to speak first.

He said, "Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi quotes the Talmud that says there are four different types of people: a tzaddik who has good, a tzaddik who has bad, an evil person who has good, and an evil person who has bad.

"It seems to me that 'a tzaddik who has good' refers to a tzaddik who lives in a place where it is easy for him to be a tzaddik, and 'a tzaddik who has bad' resides in a place where it is difficult for him to observe the mitzvot. 'An evil person who has good' lives in a place where everyone is good but he is evil, and 'an evil person who has bad' lives in a place where all the people are evil and he is also evil.

"Perhaps we are considered 'tzaddikim who have bad' since the Russians are trying to destroy everything holy and do everything in their power to prevent us from observing Torah and mitzvot. But even under such difficult circumstances, we somehow try to observe whatever we can. However, our children and grandchildren will fall under the category of 'an evil person who has bad,' since they will not be able to remain strong in such an environment."

Tears began to course down Rabbi Yehudah's face as he said those last words. He was so overcome that he could not continue.

"Rabbi Yehudah, you look at it one way, but I see it differently," said Reb Shika. "I think that 'a tzaddik who has good' is a tzaddik who remains a tzaddik and whose children become tzaddikim. 'A tzaddik who has bad' is one who remains a tzaddik, but whose children turn to evil. 'An evil person who has good' is an evil person whose children become tzaddikim, while 'an evil person who has bad' is an evil person whose children continue on his evil path. If things continue the way they have been going, then our children might become evil people whose offspring are also evil."

He, too, began to weep.

It is interesting to note that despite their gloomy forecast, fifty years later, Judaism is thriving in the former Soviet Union.

From "Against All Odds"

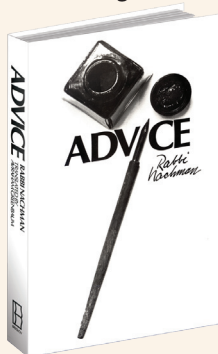
SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

THE COVENANT. 21. The Covenant is a protection against the "face" of the Other Side. This "face" is the craze for money and materialism, which is a form of idolatry and the source of the darkness, depression and heaviness in the world. But through the Covenant, we become bound to Godliness. In the joy of God's radiance we can attain true contentment (*Likutey Moharan I*, 23:2).

22. One who guards the Covenant in purity will come to perceive the source of all the blessings that flow into the world, spiritual and material. This root is pure radiant light. When one attains this perception, all desire for materialism simply disappears (*ibid.* I, 23:5).

23. The Covenant is the foundation of true enlightenment, which is called *HaDRat panim*, the "glory of the face." The mind is refined by the wisdom of the Torah, which one learns to interpret with grace and beauty through the thirteen rules of interpretation. These rules are the "glory of the face" (in the Kabbalah they are known as the "thirteen perfections of the beard." The beard, a symbol for wisdom, is *ZaKaN*, which also means "elder"; and it is written, "*v'HaDaRta p'nei ZaKeN*—Honor the face of the elder" [Leviticus 19:32].) The voice also becomes purified. One has only to lift up his voice and utter the sounds of song, even without words, and God will save him in his time of distress (*Likutey Moharan I*, 27:6).



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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.