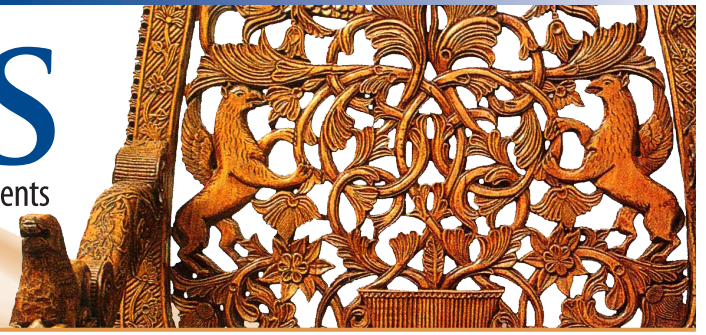


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT PARASHAT BESHALACH • 5777 • VOL. 7 NO. 17

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In the Know

By Yossi Katz

KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, EDUCATION ... these are the cornerstones of a typical Jewish upbringing. Almost as soon as a Jewish baby is born, his or her parents have already established a college fund. This reminds me of a joke: A Jewish mother is walking down the street with her two little boys. A passerby sees the children and remarks, “What adorable children you have. How old are they?” The proud mother replies, “The doctor is seven and the lawyer is five.”

But is knowledge truly everything? And should measuring our lives based on “what we know” be the guiding principle for our children and ourselves?

To answer this question, we turn to our *parashah*. Over the past few weeks, the Torah has recounted numerous incredible miracles. First we read about the Ten Plagues devastating mighty Egypt and bringing about the release of the Jewish People. Now free, the Jews must travel through the Sinai desert on their way to the Holy Land. God leads them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The battered Egyptians decide to give it one more shot and pursue the Jews into the sea. The sea supernaturally splits and the Jews cross on dry land. The Egyptians, in hot pursuit, meet the sea-wall as it comes crashing down on them.

The Talmud testifies to the awesome level of the Jewish People at this time: “What a maidservant at the sea saw, Yechezkel ben Buzi [the prophet Ezekiel] did not see in all his days” (*Mekhilta*, Rashi 15:2). Let’s ponder the depth of this statement. Ezekiel was a very great prophet; his most famous vision was that of God’s “Chariot” (Ezekiel 1). This vision was so great that our Rabbis warned, “The Act of Creation can be taught to just one student at a time, but the Chariot cannot be taught at all. It must be studied alone, and then only

if the student is wise and understands on his own” (*Chagigah* 11b). Despite Ezekiel’s lofty vision, he did not reach the exalted level of the simple maidservant at the sea!

After all these miracles, and considering the incredibly elevated level of the Jewish People, the Torah states, “And Israel saw the great hand which the Lord had used upon the Egyptians ... and they *believed* in God and Moses His servant” (Exodus 14:31). At this point, wouldn’t just “believing” be preposterous? Moreover, the verse seems to imply that their knowledge led to their faith. Doesn’t belief apply only to something that you can’t experience for yourself?

Rebbe Nachman teaches that the essence of knowledge is to know that you know nothing at all. Yes, the Jews had seen the “hand of God” – but the more they saw, the more they appreciated God’s greatness and acknowledged the limitations of personal knowledge. Knowledge and education are important as a means, not an end. The purpose of expanding our knowledge is to strengthen our faith in God. After all is said and done, all roads lead to faith and the existence of the ever-present Creator. Therefore the greatest thing we can do is to fortify ourselves with simple faith in God and his true Tzaddikim.

Living with faith means living a God-centered life. It means living with the awareness that everything we experience is being orchestrated by God Himself. And it means perceiving that we must always have faith, because no matter how much we know about God, we realize our insignificance vis-à-vis His greatness and rulership.

Rebbe Nachman said, “The world considers faith a minor thing. But I consider it an extremely great thing” (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom* #33).

Based on Otzar HaYirah, Emunah 82

Leaders of the Flock

By Chaim Kramer

The Breslovers who led the “second generation” of the Breslov movement after the passing of Rebbe Nachman and Reb Noson epitomized dedication to Torah, mitzvos, and the teachings of Rebbe Nachman in their daily conduct.

RABBI NACHMAN GOLDSTEIN, the Tcheriner Rav, was the grandson of Reb Aharon, the Chief Rabbi of Breslov in Rebbe Nachman’s time. An erudite scholar even as a young boy, Rabbi Goldstein often remained awake all night immersed in study. As the Rabbi of Tcherin, he was always being invited to weddings by the local residents, though he did not always go.

Once his attendant decided not to pass on an invitation since he knew that the Rabbi, in any case, was not going to attend. When he discovered this, Rabbi Goldstein was upset.

“Whenever I receive an invitation to a wedding, I know that I’m not going to get any sleep that night,” he explained. “Rather than go to the wedding, I stay up the whole night studying, as if I had gone to the wedding. But on nights I don’t have a wedding, I sleep until midnight and then rise to study Torah until morning. By not giving me the invitation, you ‘cheated’ me out of a full night of Torah study!”

* * *

Reb Nachman Chazan of Tulchin was the *chazan* (prayer leader) for the Mussaf prayer on Rosh HaShanah; hence the family name Chazan. His supplications were so intense that those assembled felt he was “standing on air” while reciting the prayers. His great fervor was matched by his modesty. Though he was the leader of the Breslover Chassidim at that time, Reb Nachman did not consider it beneath him to serve others. Immediately after praying the daily prayers with great devotion, he would take the water buckets to draw water for the synagogue.

* * *

Reb Moshe Lubarski and his brother, Reb Zanzvil, were the fruits of Reb Noson’s blessing to their mother. Reb Moshe was one of Reb Noson’s closest followers and a leading Breslover figure after Reb Noson.

Reb Moshe’s faith in his mentor was beyond description. Once he was robbed. Instead of looking for the thief, Reb Moshe entered the house of study, took out Reb Noson’s *Likutey Halakhot*, and studied the laws and discourses on stealing. Shortly afterward, his possessions were returned to him.

From “Crossing the Narrow Bridge”

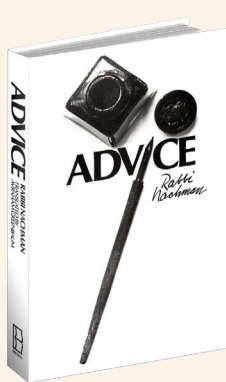
Dedicated in the Memory of (L’Ilui Nishmat) Yehudis bat Shimon

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

THE COVENANT. 27. A person who has not yet achieved the *Tikkun HaKlaki* should avoid wine, because it stirs up the blood and this is the source of all sin. Drinking can have an adverse effect on one’s livelihood. The wine becomes like a poison. But one who has achieved absolute purity can attain profound enlightenment when he drinks wine (*Likutey Moharan I, 29:8*).

28. All the suffering a person goes through when he is travelling is sent to him only because of abuse of the covenant. One who is pure will be free of pain and torment when he travels (*ibid. I, 29:4*).



30. The covenant is the source of true freedom (*ibid. I, 29:5*).

31. There are two aspects to the covenant. The first is embodied in the figure of Abraham. This is the Upper Covenant, which is a firmament separating the upper and the lower waters. The second is the Lower Covenant, embodied in the figure of Abraham’s servant. This is the firmament dividing the pure and

the impure waters, that which is permitted from that which is forbidden, the ritually clean from the ritually unclean. The Upper Covenant entails the endeavor for absolute purity, the purity of the perfect Tzaddik. The Lower Covenant involves the observance of the laws of what is permitted and forbidden, which entails learning. Every person must try to fulfill the covenant on both these levels: to be a Tzaddik and a scholar (*ibid.*).



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PO Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641

PO Box 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

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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.