

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Search for Your Treasure

By Yossi Katz

REBBE NACHMAN TOLD a tale:

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” (Rabbi Nachman’s Parables, “The Treasure”).

Each of us possesses 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 would not 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 would seem to represent the Tzaddik. Often we come to the Tzaddik misguided, thinking that something really big is waiting for us as the result of

some 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! We return home only to realize that our treasure was waiting for us the whole time. Were our travels in vain? Did we waste our “miles” and time? No! 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 can finally be rerouted 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 *veSaMtem* (you should place) is similar to *SaM* (potion). Our Sages interpret this to mean that the words of the Torah have two potentials: to be an elixir of healing and life, or a potion of death (*Yoma* 72b). Even our holy Torah, the source of true spirituality and holiness, 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 Torah teachings can actually be harmful. A common example is when one 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 all must find our way and our own unique interpretation and personal message in the Torah.

“You shall fear the Lord your God, serve Him, and attach yourself to Him” (Deuteronomy 10:20) How do we attach ourselves to God? Our Sages teach that by attaching ourselves to true Torah scholars, we will discover God! (*Ketuvot* 111b). Only when we study with the true Tzaddik as our personal teacher can we be directed to find our individual treasure and personal understanding of the Torah.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Minchah 6

Our Patriarchs & Matriarchs Show the Way

By Ozer Bergman

The Jewish Patriarchs and Matriarchs excelled at prayer and reaching out to God. Their example illuminates Rebbe Nachman's key teaching of hitbodedut – a daily time-out, as it were, to seclude oneself in personal conversation with God.

Twenty years of marriage and still no children. Not only did Yitzchak, our second patriarch, not curtail his efforts, he increased them. He churned out prayers and heaped them upon God, as it were. This was not an easy thing for Yitzchak to do. He was quite the intellectual, basing his entire life on critical thinking: "Is this a good idea or not? Is it going to work or not?" Rivkah, his wife, our second matriarch, was not a silent partner in this prayerful endeavor. In fact, it was her influence on him that allowed Yitzchak to develop his prayerful side.

Their prayers were answered. Rivkah bore children, and the embryo of the Jewish people continued to develop.

For those of us who need encouragement to pause and create an oasis of peace in the tumult of the day's events, Yitzchak did some of his best praying in the afternoon, when the light grows shorter and the shadows longer.

* * *

Rivkah, our second matriarch, is the personification of prayer, as alluded to in the Shabbat prayer, *Nishmat*.

Rivkah grew up in a rough environment. Dad and her domineering older brother were atheists. They weren't above thievery or murder, either. The neighbors were pagans. Yet even as a very young girl, Rivkah found the courage and strength to become a model for kindness to humans and animals. She worked so hard at prayer that she achieved prophecy.

No matter how bleak your situation looks, remember that the light of God's kindness can shine through the darkest clouds. Dig a little deeper into yourself and pray a little more, and a little more on top of that.

Get God to pray for you! The more enthusiastic you are about pray for what you think needs to be prayed for, the sooner God will pray for it, too.

From "Where Earth and Heaven Kiss: A Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Path of Meditation"

SIDEPATH

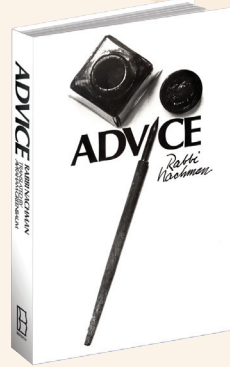
Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

UNDERSTANDING. 4. When a person lacks respect for the Tzaddik, the light of wisdom and understanding is hidden from him. He will never have original Torah ideas or reach new perceptions. He is no better than a dead person (*Likutey Moharan I, 21:6*).

5. There are times when understanding can be very elusive. It is very good then to cry out as one prays or studies. In this way, fresh understanding and insight are born (*ibid. I, 21:7*).

6. The mind is man's very essence. Wherever a person's thoughts are, that is where he himself is — all of him. ... You must force yourself to think good thoughts so that you will be worthy of knowing and understanding God. Then your place will be with Him: you will be merged with Him. The greater your perception of God, the more you will become merged with Him, and then you will achieve eternal life (*ibid. I, 21:11*).

7. Lack of understanding strengthens the hold of the Divine face of severity and harsh judgment, giving rise to anger and unkindness. This is why sick people — who are under the sway of harsh judgments and constricted consciousness — are so often filled with anger. ... A person who has understanding realizes that God is wholly good and therefore all the experiences that are sent to him are for his own good (*ibid.*).



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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.