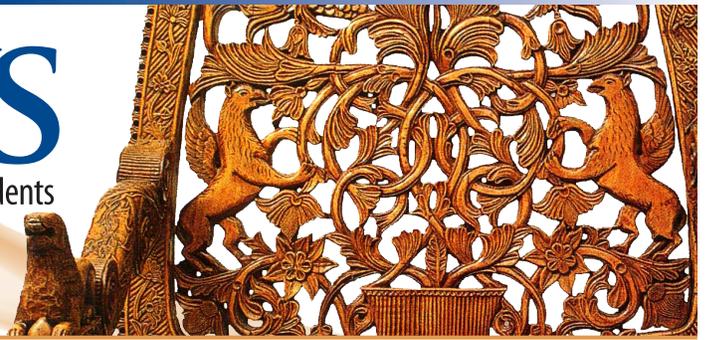


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI • 5773 VOL. 3 NO. 25

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House (of Prayer) Rules

By Ozer Bergman

“And let every wise-hearted one among you come and make all that God has commanded: the Mishkan (Tabernacle)... God said to Moshe... On the first of the month... erect the Mishkan” (Exodus 35:10; 40:1-2).

Since this week’s Torah reading speaks about erecting the Mishkan, the first Jewish communal *beit kneset* (shul, synagogue; literally, “house of gathering”), I want to talk about *davening* (praying). The suggestions I make here are specifically for men who go to the shul in the morning, but some of them can be applied by women, at other times of the day and/or at home.

Your morning prayers start the night before. Get enough sleep. If you’re well-rested, you’ll be better able to concentrate on what you’re saying. If you go to sleep looking forward to praying—instead of worrying about work or watching “Downton Abbey”—you’ll have more enthusiasm for praying. Get to shul early. “Early” means that you have enough time to get ready: to put on your *tallit* and *tefillin*, say good morning to your fellow shul-goers, learn some Torah (by yourself, with a *chavrusa* [study partner], or in a *shiur* [class]), and say some extracurricular Tehillim or whatever else that stokes your enthusiasm and sharpens your focus. Being one of the first ten at the minyan is a very big deal – your reward is equal to that of all who show up (*Berakhot* 47b). (And that’s only part of it.) If you are a steady, reliable type, you may earn a key to the shul. The joys and benefits of straightening up the shul are immense, and having it to yourself in the quiet morning hours is simply delicious.

Have a *makom kavua*, a regular place to sit. Knowing where to go, who sits near you, and having a “home” helps you focus. You also get an extra measure of Divine assistance: the God of Abraham will assist you (*Berakhot* 6b). Along the same lines, have your own *siddur* (prayer book). It should be comfortable to hold, easy to read and attractive to you. It will become your friend.

Give *tzedakah* (charity). *Tzedakah* is your entrée to God (*Bava Batra* 10a). Every shul has a *tzedakah pushka* (charity box). So even if there are no mendicants in your

neighborhood, you can put a coin or a bill in the *pushka*. Another way to be charitable is as follows: Look around at your fellow shul-goers. Think of their needs and desires, their responsibilities, troubles and concerns. Look at them generously, with a kind eye (and no other kind!), wishing, hoping and silently praying to God that He hears their prayers, and saves and prospers each and every one of them. Make sure you wish this for everyone, including any schnooks, jerks and sons of guns who may be in attendance.

Jews in the Americas and Europe face east when they pray. Why? The Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple) stood in Jerusalem, which is east of those continents. “You are where your thoughts are” (*Likutey Moharan* I, 21). Facing toward the Beit HaMikdash and “facing” it – recalling your first or deepest moment at the Western Wall, and yearning to be there (whether you’ve been there or not) – puts you there. What better place to be when you *daven*!

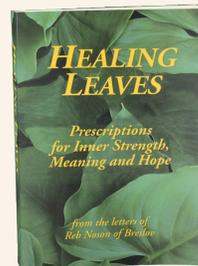
May God bless our efforts to make a home for Him – in our bodies, homes, shuls and in the Third Beit HaMikdash, may it be built soon and swiftly, in our lifetime. Amen!

*Based on Likutey Experience, Coming Late to Shul 1
A gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



This is the way a Jew must travel, whether he goes far or near, even within his own city, when he travels for business and livelihood. His intention should be to make money in order to be able to give charity and to be one of those who support Torah and those who are engaged in the publication of holy books. When he goes out, he

should go with the hope of meeting someone to whom he can speak about the true goal in life, and whom he can tell about the true, original Torah revelations of the true tzaddikim of the generation. (*Letter #322*)

Shabbat Shalom!

by Yossi Katz

Since I was a young child, I have enjoyed following current events and listening to the news. But as I grow older, I have started losing interest in what seems to be the same story being told over and over again, with only the names and places being modified (or sometimes not even those!). Almost every story seems to be about different people or groups fighting with each other, whether in politics or actual physical altercations. What is causing all this strife, and how can we go about bringing some peace and harmony into this fractured world?

On a personal level, this world is in a constant state of war – namely, the war between the body and the soul. Our bodies and their physical cravings try to forcefully subdue our souls and their spirituality. However, as much as we may have fallen prey to our base desires, the body can never fully constrain the soul. Even if someone were completely wicked, his inner soul would still bitterly scream out for its Source.

*This world is in a constant state of war –
the war between the body and the soul.*

The only real force of this world is God's *ratzon* (will). God created this world specifically so that lower beings would serve Him, and therefore the body serves the soul. The soul, which emanates from God, is constantly yearning to fulfill this Divine purpose. It is actually here that the battle lines are drawn between physical and spiritual; from here, the battle extends outward, causing the world to become a fractured and conflicted place.

The Tzaddikim teach us that it is possible to gain total mastery over physical desires and for the body to become soul-like. Someone who has attained this level merits to live in total inner peace and tranquility. In the future, when the world will realize that the only truth is God's will, all conflict and war will disappear.

But for now, no matter what level we may be on, each of us has Shabbat. On Shabbat we don't turn on the radio but rather tune in to the screaming of our thirsty souls. Shabbat is a taste of the World to Come, where the realization of Godliness will permeate creation. Therefore we greet each other, "Shabbat Shalom!" ("Shabbat Peace"), because on Shabbat every Jew can find the inner peace that he and the world so desperately needs.

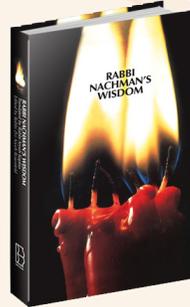
Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Chadash 3

SIDEPATH

Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt"l

17. The Rebbe once lectured someone to spend more time in his sacred studies. He said, "Why don't you study? What can you lose? Don't you realize that it will earn you an eternal reward?"

Certainly, when the Torah reveals its love to a person, he no longer thinks about his future reward, only desiring the Torah itself. Even God studies the Torah, for we are taught that God's day includes three hours of such study (*Avodah Zarah 3b*).



18. The Rebbe once spoke about the printing of sacred books in his day. The number of printers of both recent and earlier works had increased. They had no lack of

customers, for everyone was buying these volumes.

The Rebbe said that the Talmud teaches, "The day will come when the Torah will be forgotten among Jews" (*Shabbat 138b*). Therefore many books are printed and bought, with people building up their own libraries, so that the Torah is not forgotten. Even the simplest tailor has books. As each book is published, people rush to buy it, building up respectable collections.

What people do not realize is that these books are of no help unless they look into them and study their teachings. But today, Torah study has fallen very low and few people engage in it. [How can books prevent the Torah from being forgotten if nobody studies them?]



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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.