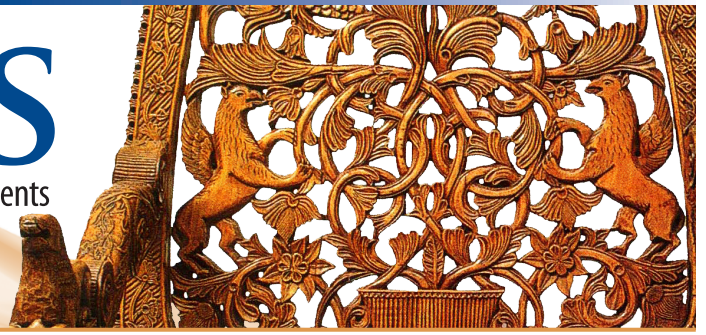


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Torah Lifeline

By Ozer Bergman

“*Va'Etchanan* – I [Moses] pleaded to God at that time” (Deuteronomy 3:23).

Va-etChaNaN (I pleaded) comes from the root *ChaNaN* (gracious), signifying an undeserved gift. Although tzaddikim have many merits, they plead to God to grant them their requests as undeserved gifts (Rashi).

It was the time ordained for Moses' death. Denied entry into the Holy Land, he pleaded and begged God to annul His oath and allow him to enter the Land. Although Moses was a truly righteous man, rather than enumerating his many good deeds and his untiring self-sacrifice for the Jewish nation, he pleaded with God to grant him an unearned gift from His Treasury of Unearned Gifts. Rebbe Nachman explains how Moses' plea to enter the Holy Land includes the concept of connecting to the tzaddik.

The Rebbe teaches:

The verse states “For it is your life and the length of your days” (Deuteronomy 30:20). Whoever distances himself from Torah distances himself from life (*Zohar* I, 92a).

This idea is rooted in the Midrash, which states that prior to creating the world, God created the Torah. He then used the Torah as a “blueprint” for the creation of the universe and everything in it (*Bereishit Rabbah* 1:1). The Torah thus represents the vitality of life, meaning eternal life.

Based on the understanding that the Torah is the essence of life itself, Rebbe Nachman poses the following question:

How can anyone possibly separate himself from Torah for even a moment? Yet it is literally impossible to be attached to Torah continually, day and night, without a second's interruption. Even the most diligent and devoted students of Torah must stop their studies while they tend to their livelihoods and other physical needs. Nevertheless, Torah is life. How can one separate himself from life even for a second?

Everyone, even the greatest tzaddik and most dedicated Torah scholar, must interrupt his studies to tend to his material needs. At that moment he is interrupting his connection to life. Certainly this is true of those who have never had the opportunity to study Torah, don't want to study it, or reject it. From where, or from what, do they

draw life? There must be some type of “interface” by which an ordinary person can always be attached to Torah, even if indirectly, because without Torah a person would be cut off from life itself.

A very great tzaddik, one who is always attached to Torah, serves as this “interface” for all of humanity. This implies that the tzaddik is always, on some level, attached to Torah, even when tending to his material needs. When he is involved in his mundane affairs, the tzaddik receives his vitality from the Torah in a concealed form. When he must interrupt his Torah study, he also becomes an “ordinary person,” but he remains intrinsically bound up with the Torah in a concealed manner.

In this same concealed manner, those who are distant from Torah can also receive their vitality. But as they are distant from Torah to begin with, it is very difficult for them to receive their vitality directly. The tzaddik is attached to Torah, but at the same time he may become an “ordinary person.” He therefore acts as a channel: the ordinary people can receive their vitality through him, for he can “interface” both with the Torah and with them. (The whys and wherefores can be learned directly from the lesson upon which the above is based, or the book *The Treasury of Unearned Gifts*, from which this piece is taken.)

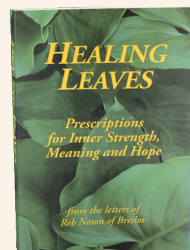
*Based on Likutey Moharan II, 78
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

This is a reprint

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



A person must give careful attention to every thought, word and event that comes his way every day. For God places Himself within them, as it were, sending each person different messages, appropriate to the time and place. (Letter #37)

Rebbe Nachman's Torah

Compiled by Chaim Kramer

“Hear, Israel! God is our Lord. God is One” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

The Shema represents the holy point of faith that is found within every Jew. This faith is developed in three ways: by conversing with the tzaddikim, by conversing with a friend, and by conversing with God.

Therefore it is written, “Love God” (ibid. 6:5)—for in developing one’s inner faith, one develops love for God. The verses of the Shema then give us the tools for nurturing faith. “These words that I am commanding you” (ibid. 6:6) corresponds to studying the Torah and the teachings of the tzaddikim. “Teach them to your children” (ibid. 6:7) corresponds to conversing with a friend. “Speak about them” (ibid.) represents conversing with God (*Likutey Halakhot* V, p. 56a-112-57a).

* * *

“Speak about them when you are sitting at home, traveling on the road, going to sleep and waking up”

(Deuteronomy 6:7).

“Sitting at home” corresponds to the revealed aspect of God, the study of Torah and the performance of *mitzvot*, with which a person feels “at home.” “Traveling” corresponds to the times a person feels distant from God. Wherever a person finds himself and whatever he feels, he must keep these thoughts of God “close to his heart” (*Likutey Halakhot* VII, p. 50a).

* * *

“Write them upon the mezuzot of your house and your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:9).

The letters of the word *MeZuZOT* can be rearranged to spell the phrase *ZaZ MaVeT* (death is removed) (Zohar III, 300b).

Those who succumb to the desire for money and do not believe that God can provide them with an easy livelihood invest great effort in chasing after their sustenance. They fall victim to the curse “In sadness you will eat” (cf. Genesis 3:17), which is associated with the countenance of the Other Side, idolatry, darkness and death. But those who fulfill the mitzvah of mezuzah can overcome avarice, idolatry and death. Instead, they are attached to the light of the countenance of holiness, the Light of God’s Face—i.e., life itself! (*Likutey Moharan* I, 23:1; ibid., I, 23:9).

SIDEPATH

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

49. The Talmud states, “If Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah would have been tortured, they would have bowed to the idol” (*Ketuvot* 33b).

The Rebbe spoke about this and said that the Talmud does not mean that they would have certainly given in. People have been beaten and tortured in every way possible without abandoning God. Many tales are told about martyrs in recent times who underwent untold agony to sanctify God’s Name. Happy are they.

50. The Rebbe often spoke to us about physicians and medicine, denouncing them in the strongest terms. We should not place our lives in the hands of even the most outstanding of the physicians, for they are closer to death than to life.



The precise remedy depends on each individual’s nature as well as the exact time, season and other variables. Doctors themselves admit that even the greatest physician cannot take all these factors into account without error. Therefore they can very easily do irreparable damage. In the end, one must still rely on

God, so why not do so from the beginning?

The Rebbe once said in jest that the Angel of Death oversees the entire world and therefore cannot do all the killing himself. Because he needs help, he appoints agents in each locality. These agents are physicians.

The Rebbe himself traveled to Lemberg and accepted medical treatment, but this involved deep mysteries. When the Rebbe returned from Lemberg, he spoke all the more strongly against medical practice.



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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.