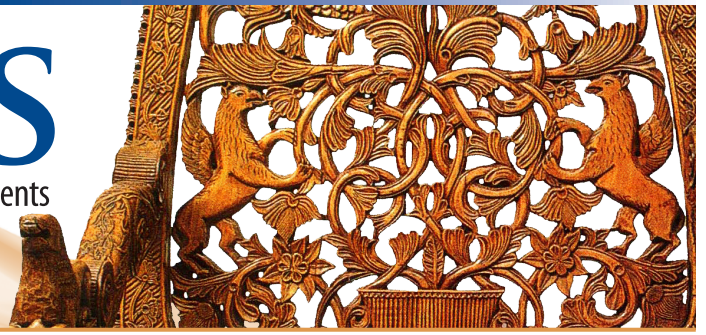


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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The True You

By Yossi Katz

Who are you? Have you ever considered what is your true essence? When someone calls your name, what are they referring to? Do they mean your good looks, your designer clothes or maybe a prestigious job or position?

Rebbe Nachman teaches, “Man’s principal essence – that which man calls ‘I’ – is the soul. She is the essence that is eternal” (*Likutey Moharan I, 22:5*).

The words “*Lekh lekha*” that begin this week’s Torah portion literally mean “*Go to yourself*.” With these words, God taught Abraham how to become the spiritual father of our people. In order to grow and flourish spiritually, we need to take an inward-bound journey to discover ourselves. We start to grow by first discerning and understanding our own personal spiritual nature. What is my spiritual DNA? What are my strengths, and how do I personally connect to God?

Our souls are eternal; they are a portion of God above and are our actual reality. When we are able to tune into the portion that each of us was specifically given, and be attentive to her spiritual needs, we can begin to grow and connect with our real selves.

What stops us? What is the source of our distraction and disconnect?

The verse states, “Go...from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house” (Genesis 12:1).

We live on a secular planet. For one, our society promotes all kinds of shallow pleasures and desires. Besides these, society fosters false beliefs and attitudes, redefining such things as true success and the need for personal honor and glorification. In order to truly find ourselves, we must divest ourselves of attitudes that are not sourced in the Torah and that cause us to become distanced and unconnected with our true selves.

Our upbringing, too, exerts a tremendous influence on who we are. From cradle to grave, our families affect our

outlook and goals. Reb Noson explains that inasmuch as our evil desires are one of our greatest obstacles, the influence of other people is the greatest danger we face.

The Torah is teaching us that, ultimately, only we can discover our true spiritual path. And only once we realize this can we begin our spiritual journey.

Rebbe Nachman adds that we can find help and support in our quest by taking the time to talk to God every single day. *Hitbodedut* offers us a wonderful opportunity to evaluate where we’re going, how far we’ve come, and the best ways to find our true spiritual selves.

The verse concludes, “to the Land that I will reveal to you.” If we will be stubborn and resilient in our search for truth, God will certainly lead us to the Promised Land. Amen.

Based on Likutey Halakhot Pesach 9, and Hilkhot Geneivah 8:7-8)

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell

My dear children! I ask all of you, for God’s sake, to think carefully about the true purpose of this world!

Although we may be poor, God does help us with what we really need. Do not set your sights too high on material possessions. As for the real necessities, trust in God. Only fortify yourselves in Torah and prayer and ask God every day to guard you from all evil and to help you to be good Jews. For nothing remains of a person except whatever he manages to grasp of true Jewish life in this world. (*Letter #400*)



Whether or not a person has money, his days and years still rush by like a shadow, and nothing remains except the vitality which he drew from his belief in God. (*Letter #43*)

Rebbe Nachman's Torah

Compiled by Chaim Kramer

Our Patriarch Abraham exerted himself greatly to teach faith in God to an unbelieving world. Here is Rebbe Nachman's description of Abraham's proselytizing efforts.

Abraham suffered terrible opposition during his proselytizing activities. He would come into the city and run about crying, "Woe! Woe!" and people would run after him the way they chase a madman.

He would argue with them at length, trying to show them that they were all caught up in a profoundly mistaken way of thinking. He was quite familiar with all the arguments and rationalizations they used to justify their idolatrous practices. The idolatry of the ancients was bound up with all kinds of spurious beliefs, and Abraham was fully conversant with all of them. He used to demonstrate the falsity of their ideas and reveal the truths on which our own holy faith is founded.

*Abraham wrote thousands of books
in his effort to spread the true faith.*

Some of the young people were attracted to him. As far as older people were concerned, he never even tried to draw them closer because they were already firmly entrenched in their false beliefs and it would have been very hard to get them to change. But the younger people were drawn to him. He would go from city to city and they would run after him.

But the parents and wives of these young people were strongly opposed to their newfound faith, saying they had fallen victim to evil influences and had been ruined. They put up such a front of hostility that some of these young people reverted to their old ways under the weight of domestic pressure from their parents, wives and in-laws. However, a few remained firm in their attachment to Abraham.

Abraham put great effort into spreading the true faith. He wrote books—thousands of books. He had numerous sons, and we may assume that if they were his children, they all followed the path of righteousness. Even Ishmael repented.

Later on, however, when Abraham thought about how he could ensure that his legacy of books and teachings would endure in the world, he pondered deeply as to which of his sons he should bequeath them to. In the end, he decided to leave everything to Isaac, and so he did (*Tzaddik* #395).

SIDEPATH

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

69. The Talmud states, "Sing to the One who rejoices when conquered" (Pesachim 119a). There are times when you must even conquer God.

You may feel that God rejects you because of your sins. You may think that you are still not doing His will. But remain strong and throw yourself before God. Spread your hands to Him and beg that He have mercy and let you still serve Him.



It may seem that God is rejecting you, but cry out, "No matter what! I still want to be a Jew!" This is the way you overcome God. God has great joy when you conquer Him this way.

70. A law was about to be passed, bringing much evil to the Jews. The Rebbe then said, "How do we allow God to bring evil to the world?"

We must call God away from all His other tasks. We must draw Him away from sending evil decrees to the world. We must tell Him to put everything else aside and listen to us, for we want to ask Him to draw us close.

When a Jew wishes to speak to God, God puts everything else aside. Even evil decrees are set aside at this time. God puts everything aside and listens only to the person seeking His presence.



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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.