

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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The Spice of Life

By Yossi Katz

“IT’S ALL YOUR FAULT!”

Since the days of Adam and Eve, men have always found a convenient “explanation” for their problems: blame the spouse. The problem for Nadav and Avihu, Aaron’s two unwedded sons who brought an unauthorized incense-offering (*ketoret*) and were punished with death, was that they didn’t have one to blame. The Midrash explains that the reason they were killed was because they had no wives (*Vayikra Rabbah* 20:8-10).

Now, anyone who knows anything about these two also knows they were no ordinary folks. Nadav and Avihu, raised in the home of Aaron the High Priest, were tremendous Tzaddikim, men of an epic spiritual level. According to the *Zohar*, the spiritual effect created by the burning of the *ketoret* is infinitely great. Nadav and Avihu sincerely wanted to generate this cosmic effect. But they overlooked one key and seemingly odd ingredient in the incense mixture: *chelbonah* (galbanum.) *Chelbonah* is different from the other ten ingredients in the *ketoret* because it smells really bad. Nevertheless, the incense-offering is incomplete without it, and one who fails to include it is liable to the death penalty. Yet doesn’t this seem odd? Shouldn’t something as spiritual potent and powerful as the *ketoret* only contain spices whose fragrance is “divine”?

Rebbe Nachman teaches us to view holiness differently. A higher spiritual level necessitates greater responsibility and the potential to elevate things that are on a lower level. The inclusion of the *chelbonah* teaches us that since the other ingredients smell so sweet, they have the ability to “spice up” the foulness of this ingredient. Nadav and Avihu erred by not realizing they were given such a high spiritual level in order to reveal God’s goodness to those whose odor might just be a little off.

They also erred by choosing not to marry in order to protect their spiritual status. As they say, life isn’t always a bed of roses. Daily life has its challenges and stresses. Perhaps Nadav and Avihu were concerned that they might

come home after a long day at work in the Mishkan only to find their wives worn out from taking care of the children and keeping the tent in shape. They might have had to listen and lend support to the emotional demands of their spouses and their complaints about seemingly mundane matters. But this is what God demands of us. We must use our spiritual growth to elevate the most mundane aspects of our lives. Bringing joy to a sad or stressed-out spouse or friend is the greatest of *mitzvot*. Encouraging and bringing closer a Jew who has fallen away is comparable to the powerful effect of the *ketoret*.

It’s only when we start to live with this lifestyle that we can begin to reach truly lofty levels. This is the purpose of Creation and God’s ultimate desire. God has bestowed us with spiritual treasures so that we will share them with others who are not as privileged.

Could there be a “higher” Jew than the High Priest in the Holy Temple on Yom Kippur? The Torah states, “And he shall effect atonement ... upon all the people of the congregation” (Leviticus 16:33). It is specifically at that time, when he is allowed the once-a-year privilege of entering into the holiest place on earth, that the High Priest brings about atonement for all Jews and restores their relationship with their Father in Heaven. And, let’s not forget, he also needs to be married! (Leviticus 16:11; *Yoma* 2a).

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Even HaEzer
Hilkhos Piryah VeRivyah 2
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Our continued existence and all our vitality come through awesome miracles from God, gifts we receive through the tremendous lovingkindness He extends to us every moment of every day. As the Rebbe explained the verse, “In suffering You gave me relief” (Psalms 4:2): there is relief to be found even in the suffering itself. (*Letter #117*)

Now You're Talking!

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REB HERSHEL TEPLIKER, a successful and sharp Breslover businessman, had been a bit wayward in his youth. Along with many young Jews of his time, he was forcibly inducted into the army. Since he was naturally frail, life as a soldier was extremely difficult for him. When his unit was ordered to load and lug huge sacks of sand, he felt sure he would keel over and expire under his staggering burden.

“Hashem!” he cried out in earnest prayer. “If You save me, I promise to return to You and be an outstanding Jew!” Miraculously, he was released from service soon afterward.

He tried to fulfill his commitment to the best of his ability, wandering through the Ukraine until he came to Uman. He understood that to keep strong he would have to become part of a community, but he had no idea which one to choose. So he decided to visit every synagogue in Uman to see where he felt most at home.

He entered one synagogue and approached a few men who were chatting together. In those tumultuous times, it was no surprise that they were talking about the war. Each man spouted quotes from the papers: what one leader allegedly said, how this politician reacted, and so on. Reb Hershel drifted to other corners of the synagogue, where it seemed like everyone was having the same conversation, presenting different perspectives of current events. His visits to other synagogues yielded similar results.

Entering the Breslover *kloyz*, he also saw people talking. Eavesdropping on one conversation, he was intrigued to find that they were earnestly speaking about serving God. Reb Hershel figured they were crazy. After all, who could focus on spiritual matters in such uncertain times?

Listening in on other conversations, he grew increasingly amazed to find what seemed to be an entire synagogue filled with men speaking not about the war, but about their Divine service! Reb Hershel was a very practical man. “If these chassidim can stay focused on the spiritual in the middle of a war, I’ve found the place for me!”

Siach Sarfey Kodesh VII, 230

SIDEPATH

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

109. When he used it in the *Zohar*, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai made the Aramaic language of the *Targum* so holy that even other things written in this language have the power to arouse a person towards God.

110. Many types of foolishness and confusion attach themselves to the mind, particularly confusion concerning faith. Sleep removes this confusion from the mind. Sleep is especially beneficial for faith.



111. It is written, “A man’s own folly perverts his way, and he casts his grudge upon God” (Proverbs 19:3). This speaks of one who does not bind himself to a true tzaddik. Such a person may appear to serve God, but all his devotion is like the contortions one uses when trying to mimic another. He is like an ape trying to mimic a man.

112. There is a sin whose punishment is constant debt. All the merit in the world does not erase his punishment. This sin can even cause others to fall into debt. This is why there are periods when there are many debtors — this sin has become prevalent, may God spare us.

The remedy is to repent in general for all your sins. Even though you do not know which sin is causing these debts, repent in general and ask God to save you from this particular sin as well. And the time for such repentance is when you are in a state of expanded consciousness.



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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.