

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Coming Clean

By Yossi Katz

JERRY PAYS HIS boss a short visit and says, “We’re doing some major Passover housecleaning tomorrow and my wife needs me around to take care of the heavy hauling.”

“I’m so sorry, Jerry, we’re kind of short-handed right now and I just can’t afford to have you take the day off,” his boss answers.

“Thanks, Boss, Jerry replies. “I knew I could count on you!”

Have you begun cleaning for Pesach yet? I’m sure you have. When this time of year rolls around, “Pesach cleaning fever” is sure to set in. But while we may be so worried and exasperated trying to detect and obliterate every little morsel of *chametz*, have we stopped to consider the value of the little bits of goodness that we each possess? While we shine the candlelight into the dark corners of our rooms trying to spot any traces of *chametz*, do we also peer deeply into our souls to discover our inherent Godliness and spiritual potential?

People often make a wrong assumption. They feel that if they’ve fallen or erred spiritually, they become “impure” and are “unfit” for further serious spiritual devotion. This happens all the time. For example, if someone feels guilty because of a misdeed and then a mitzvah comes his way a moment later, he may feel “disqualified” and not take advantage of the opportunity. Or he may do the mitzvah, but without joy and proper intention.

Every moment of life is an opportunity for connection with God. Just as there are an infinite number of rungs on the ladder of spiritual heights, God is present on all the lower rungs as well. There is no place in the entire world where one cannot find God and experience a close bond with Him.

Our *parashah* describes the laws of the *metzora* (loosely translated as “leper”). In the days of the Temple, if someone discovered a mark of *tzara’at* on his body, he had to be brought before the Kohen. If the Kohen validated the mark, the person underwent a purification process. But what if the person discovered that his entire body, from

head to toe, was covered with *tzara’at*? Then the Kohen pronounced him to be pure and he was free to go. How could this be? If a person who has one mark must undergo an entire process of purification, shouldn’t he require at least as much purification if his entire body was affected?

We learn from this an incredible lesson in God’s ways. Often times, even if a person has hit rock bottom and he might be entertaining thoughts of utter failure, precisely at that moment, God is compassionate and sends him purity and a helping hand from Above. All is never lost! We must learn to abandon our so-called rational thought processes and stop “playing God.” It’s not our role to judge ourselves and others negatively. Our job is to learn about God’s true nature and become attuned to the way He truly operates.

Our *parashah* also speaks about the first mitzvah commanded to us, proclaiming the new moon. We celebrate Rosh Chodesh at the darkest time of the month, when the moon is barely visible. But this is also the time of its renewal: though it can hardly be seen, it has just started a new cycle. This is the key to each of our lives. There are always rough patches and desperate challenges, but the darkest moment comes right before the time of true redemption. Never give up!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Shiluach HaKen 4
A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Trust God that everything is for your ultimate good, that you will soon be rescued and be able to send me news of the great kindness He has shown you. In the meantime, forget all the worry and frustration that can be so troubling and distracting. Just cast your

burden on God. (Letter #23)

Giant of the Spirit

By Yehudis Golshevsky

THE TERROR AND INTIMIDATION faced by those who wished to give their children a Jewish education in Communist Russia is hard for us to imagine. What could be wrong with teaching a child about his heritage? Sadly, to the communists, educating children in any religion was a serious offense. At any moment, one could be taken in for “questioning” and never be seen again. Those who were lucky enough to survive often had to serve years in prison or work camps for their “crimes.”

Reb Herschel Tepliker remained in Uman until he fully absorbed the Breslov path and made it his own. Eventually he visited Rav Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn of Lubavitch. When the rebbe noticed the embers of Reb Herschel's pure desire to help others, he charged him with the task of creating an underground *cheder* (religious school) in Polonoye.

Reb Herschel was very successful at this task, finding qualified teachers and eluding the hawk-eyed glare of the authorities. Later, when Reb Herschel found himself in the same city as the Lubavitcher rebbe, he paid him a visit.

The usual procedure was for visitors to write their personal request on a note, which the *gabbai* presented to the rebbe. Reb Herschel explained that he was not well-educated at all—he had never even finished *cheder*! Although he knew the Hebrew letters, he didn't know how to write in proper Hebrew, and could only express his desires in pidgin-Yiddish. When the *gabbai* saw that the note was barely legible, he offered to read it to the rebbe.

Both were astounded by the contents of this unschooled man's note. It was the first petition the rebbe had received in a very long time that made no mention of physical needs. The rebbe and his *gabbai* marveled at Reb Herschel's exclusive concern with the needs of his soul. What had transformed this simple man into a giant of the spirit, who only asked the rebbe for help in increasing his faith, without uttering a single plea for help in surviving the deprivation and dangers of the times?

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VII, 230b

SIDEPATH

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

113. People say that when God wants to make a man a fool, He takes away his wife. It is written, “A woman of valor is the crown of her husband” (Proverbs 12:4). This is a good wife. It is also written, “*Nafla ateret rosheinu* – The crown has fallen from our head” (Lamentations 5:16). This is the death of such a wife. *Nafla Ateret Rosheinu* forms the acrostic *Na'aR* (fool).

114. Nowadays, it is easier to resist temptation. When people of earlier times withstood temptation, its evil husks were broken. It then became easier for others to withstand it. People have already withstood many temptations, making it easier for the average person today.



115. Man's main test in this world involves sexual temptation. People may also be greatly tempted by money. This can degrade a person and is a form of idolatry. Still, it does not compare to sexual temptation, which is man's main test.

116. A man was once speaking to the Rebbe, praising someone else for his good character. He said that the other was *arintlach* (ethical). The Rebbe replied that it is inappropriate to call a Jew ethical. The nations of the world, who may have a morality determined by common sense and fairness, can be called ethical. But the Jews are a holy people (Isaiah 62:12). We observe moral commandments that are logical and fair, but we do not do so for reasons of ethics. We keep the commandments because they were decreed by God and not for any logical or moral reasons.



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P.O. Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641
P.O.B. 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

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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.