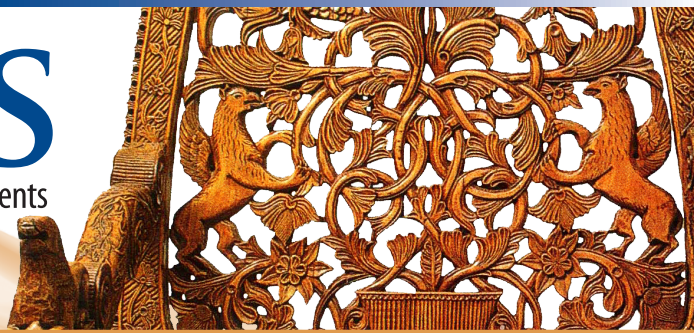


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Happy All Year Round

By Yossi Katz

THE ANTICIPATION HAS been growing for some time. The short, cold, dreary winter days, which reflect our deep spiritual slumber, are just about behind us. I recall traveling to Florida one January and being elated upon seeing some bugs and lizards crawling on the sidewalk. The vibrancy of life is so refreshing. Thankfully, the day Rebbe Nachman called “the beginning of all beginnings” – Purim – is about to begin.

What inhibits us from living a joyous life year-round? We all desire quality of life and set various goals to achieve it. But more often than not, we wind up struggling just to survive. As we are thrown various curveballs, we find that snoozing is just so much easier than remembering this great ideal that we deeply yearn for.

Just as the changing seasons give witness to the various cycles of birth and death in nature, so too, our existence here is only temporary. The thrills and pleasures of this world exist only for the moment; they cannot give us true or lasting meaning. However, the Torah and the *mitzvot* are our elixir, our tree of life. The Hebrew word *mitzvah* is related to the Aramaic word *tzavta* (connection). Through performing *mitzvot*, our soul connects to God, to eternity. We transcend the limitations of physical pleasure and connect to the true Source. There can be no greater joy and no greater vitality.

Our Sages ask: Where in the Torah is Haman, the villain of the Purim story, alluded to? In God’s words to Adam, “*HaMiN ha-eitz* – [Have you eaten] from the tree [of which I commanded you not to eat]?” (Genesis 3:11; *Chullin* 139b). On a deeper level, Haman represents the evil resulting from partaking of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Because Adam ate from the tree, he was cursed with “In sadness you shall eat” (Genesis 3:17). When Adam was exiled from the Garden of Eden and its Tree of Life, tremendous sadness descended into the world. Similarly, when the Jewish People were exiled from God’s Presence, not only were they banished, but also the pure joy of the

mitzvot and the subsequent connection to God fell into exile. The holy sparks of spiritual joy descended into the various vanities of our world.

The Hamans of this world misrepresent those sparks and mislead us into thinking that the “heres” and “nows” of temporal, worldly pleasures are our real joy. They sway us into thinking that the various quick-fixes being offered will make us happy, but ultimately, we remain completely disconnected from the True Source and we fail to redeem the sparks of joy. Consequently, we fall into meaningless routines and feel unfulfilled.

But once a year, we are blessed with the holiday of Purim. On this day, it is customary to act silly and goofy. Only through silliness can we descend into the seemingly dearest parts of our lives and rescue those precious sparks of joy. If we act a little crazy, while affirming our great faith in and connection with God and Torah, we become empowered to face depression and transform it to the greatest joy. Don’t be afraid. This Purim is the time to let loose and experience how liberating true joy can be!

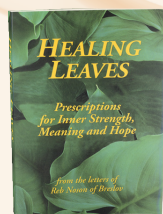
Purim is the start. It’s the day that teaches us how to hone this great skill. And after Purim, Rebbe Nachman says, this skill is absolutely necessary for day-to-day living. Only by acting a little silly can we transcend the confounding barriers of sadness that Haman has erected and reach the redemptive state of happiness and joy every day of the year.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Nefilat Apayim 45

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



The truth is that nothing in the world is ever beyond hope. Even if, God forbid, a strong edict has already been decreed against a person, still, through many prayers and good deeds and never giving up, he can arouse God’s compassion to effect a complete reversal. (*Letter #88*)

Holy Labor

By Yehudis Golshevsky

MANY BRESLOVER CHASSIDIM were willing to work at menial jobs so they could earn a living with their own hands rather than be dependent on the generosity of others. The working men among the Breslover chassidim often cited Rebbe Nachman's words in *Likutey Moharan*: "When one works as is fitting ..."

The Rebbe meant that while there is something noble in work itself, it's also necessary to approach one's livelihood with the right perspective – "as is fitting." If possible, we should work without being completely absorbed by our jobs. That way, we can focus more easily on spirituality even while involved in mundane concerns. Even if our job requires every drop of our attention, we should still take breaks and focus our attention on the Primal Source, because only God determines what we earn, how we earn it, and how much joy we will have in our earnings.

The many Breslovers who focused much of their time and energies on Divine service also held labor to be a spiritual value. Because they were so careful to use every available moment for Torah and prayer, these chassidim were often very poor. Nevertheless, they worked hard at any job they could find, even if it appeared to be beneath their dignity. As our Sages say, one should even skin a carcass in the marketplace if that is the only way he can make a living (*Bava Basra* 110a).

Reb Yaakov Berdichever sold candles. It was the custom right before Yom Kippur to light a candle for every married couple and leave it in the synagogue. Naturally, Erev Yom Kippur was a great time to sell candles. Even so, people were astounded to see Reb Yaakov standing in the marketplace virtually the entire day, flagging down customers. Although he was a very spiritual person, this was his work on the day before Yom Kippur – and he didn't hesitate to pursue it even if it appeared lowly.

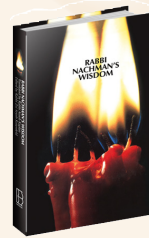
Reb Dovid Shechter told of a certain Breslover chassid who would sell cold drinks on the street. This man was very careful to engage in *hitbodedut* (private prayer to God) whenever possible between sales. Reb Dovid would often see this man in a deep state of bonding with the Almighty, smiling and selling his wares. This is what the chassidim meant by working "as is fitting."

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:283, V:350

SIDEPATH

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

207. The Rebbe said, "When I tell you something, the words may not take effect until much later. It is like taking a medicine. Some remedies work immediately, while others must remain in the body for some time before they have any effect."



The Rebbe's words sometimes take a very long time before they inspire a person. But in the end, they are effective and benefit the person greatly.

208. He said, "I can tell you something, and sometimes it will not affect you at all. But the words are passed from person to person, from one friend to another... These words finally reach a particular individual and penetrate deeply into his heart. It is here that they fulfill their mission and inspire him."

209. Another time, the Rebbe said, "You must also teach your children all the lessons, discussions and tales that I revealed to you." He then quoted the verse, "You should make them known to your children and to your children's children" (Deuteronomy 4:9). ["*Eiyere kinder zalt ihr moidia zein vas da hat zich getan* – Your children should be told what was done here."] He then repeated with trembling and emotion, "You should make them known to your children and to your children's children."

He said, "If it is possible to drag a person out of a bog, then the other person who is holding on to him will also be pulled out with him. Know this and believe."



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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.