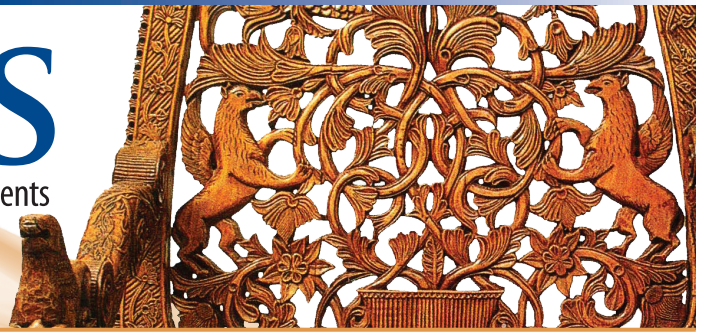


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Precious Prayers

By Yossi Katz

AT THE BEGINNING OF LAST summer, we received a horrific report. Three Israeli boys, Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer and Eyal Yifrach, were kidnapped by Arab terrorists. This devastating news unified Jews throughout the world in fervent prayer. Over 30,000 Jews, including the Chief Rabbis of Israel, gathered at the Kotel to pray for the boys. Sadly, the boys had been murdered almost immediately. While perhaps millions were praying, their lifeless bodies lay abandoned in an empty field.

Eighteen days later, news of this discovery was relayed around the world in a matter of minutes. It was not easy to accept that after so much optimism and unity, after Jews who had long given up on God gathered together to pray, “they hadn’t even been alive.” Were the prayers and hopes of so many in vain? Why couldn’t God at least let us know of their fate immediately? Although we aren’t God, and in this lifetime we will never have a complete answer to this perplexing riddle, this week’s *parashah* relates a fundamental concept to help us understand the big picture.

In Exodus 26, we are commanded to build a Mishkan (usually translated as Tabernacle) and receive a detailed list of materials needed for its construction. Chassidut teaches that these various materials relate to a much deeper, spiritual construct. The various colors of the materials—purple, blue, red—reflect the Supernal Colors and signify the beauty of each individual Jew. These materials were handed to Moses, who assembled the various pieces, each in its proper place, until the Mishkan was complete.

Although the materials were donated, the most significant way that each Jew contributed to the deeper, spiritual building of the Mishkan was by offering his or her personal, heartfelt prayer to God. Moses would use these prayers to construct magnificent spiritual edifices. These prayers were so precious to God that His Presence would rest among us wherever the Mishkan was assembled.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that this was not a one-time occurrence. The Mishkan was never destroyed, but was disassembled and buried, and the Moses of each

generation continues to construct the spiritual Mishkan. No prayer is ever lost, God forbid. Every time we gather together to pray for someone who is sick, whether they recover or not, those prayers are precious to God and have tremendous spiritual value. Even if you put tremendous effort into praying for something and your prayers don’t seem to be getting answered—even if the issue seems to be getting worse rather than better—don’t ever despair! Your prayers are never in vain; they are bringing God’s Presence ever closer to our lives and to this world.

The events of the past summer were tremendously painful. Unfortunately, we also face our own tragedies, sadness and issues. But just as in the times of Mordechai and Esther, our secret weapon has always been to call out to God. Sometimes, like in the Purim story, we merit seeing the great kindness of God unfold before our eyes. But sometimes, like last summer, we simply don’t.

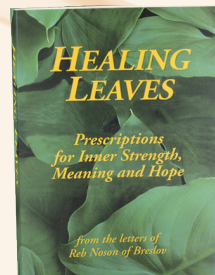
Nevertheless, we have to know that God is a loving God, nothing is without purpose, and nothing is without calculation. Every word of prayer that we say is meaningful. They are each gathered up together with the words uttered by our ancestors throughout the tragedies and hardships they endured. Uniting together in harmony, these prayers build the most magnificent edifice of all, the third and final Holy Temple. May it be built soon and in our days. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Nachalot 4

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



The Rebbe’s words are simple and direct as can be, and they are relevant for every single person. ... So deep are the Rebbe’s teaching and advice that even one who is floundering in deep water can find God, even there. Through crying out and sighing, through good desires and yearnings, and by encouraging

ourselves with every good point we have, we can draw nearer to God, wherever we may be! (*Letter #409*)

The Truth Will Out

By Yehudis Golshevsky

WINE IS FAMOUS—OR INFAMOUS—for breaking down barriers, and it can sometimes help someone see a truth that he might otherwise have missed.

Two drunks were having a heart-to-heart talk. One gushed to his friend, “My dear brother, you know I love you so much!”

“I don’t know that at all!” his drunken companion replied. “If you really love me, why don’t you show it? You know how down-and-out I am. Why don’t you come to see how much I suffer? How come you don’t do anything to help me in my misery?”

Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov heard this exchange and perceived the hidden truth within the wine-soaked speech. “I have always professed to love my fellow Jews with all my heart, yet I, too, have been derelict in this,” he thought. “If I really care for them, why aren’t I doing more for them?”

From that point onward, Rabbi Moshe Leib worked very hard to help his poor brothers. During the frigid Russian winter, he awoke at midnight to recite *Tikkun Chatzot* and then went out to the forest to chop wood. He would chop as much as the poor required. Only then would he return to the city and continue his Divine service.

“I learned from those two drunkards that if your caring doesn’t express itself in action, it is not real,” he said.

Rebbe Nachman made a similar point about *emunah* (faith): “The verse states about Moses that ‘his hands were *emunah*’ (Exodus 17:12). It is not enough to profess to have *emunah* in one’s heart. We need to act on our *emunah*. If it is genuine, our *emunah* will express itself in the world of action.”

As a wise man explained, “Imagine if a wealthy husband professes to love his wife and says he would do anything for her. She asks him to pick up a piece of jewelry for her. He never gets around to it. Will she really believe that his love is genuine? And if she asks for something simple, like picking up some groceries, and he just makes excuses, she knows for sure that his devotion isn’t real. The same is true in Godly terms. If you won’t act in even the smallest way on your professed convictions, what do they really mean?”

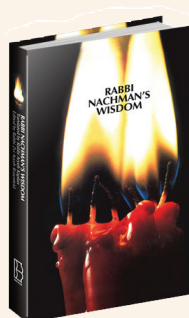
Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:565

SIDEPATH

Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt”l

204. The Rebbe said, “If you are well-versed in my published lessons and conversations, you will be able to find in my teachings the content of every talk in the world. For there is no matter in the world that is not found in them.”

[Every worldly discussion and talk contains the Torah’s wisdom in a hidden form. But only those on the highest spiritual level can perceive these concealed concepts. One who is well-versed in the Rebbe’s holy and amazing teachings will be able, through his basic intellect, to find the holy Torah in all worldly conversations, even if he is not on such an elevated spiritual plane.]



205. Several people once came to see the Rebbe. He took a piece of paper that had his handwriting on it and held the paper in his hand. He said, “How many lessons are written on this paper! Many worlds are nourished through the smoke of these lessons.” The Rebbe then took the paper and burned it with the lamp.

Then he said, “There are many Torah lessons that have never been put into writing. Just to write them and draw them into letters is itself something very special.”

206. The Rebbe said, “If you hear only the sound of my voice when I reveal a lesson, it is still a great benefit, even if you do not hear the words. ... Even if you hear nothing, but are merely in the building where the lesson is revealed, you still gain immeasurable good.”



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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.