

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Making Shabbat Every Day

By Yossi Katz

NOWADAYS, EVERYONE TALKS about the value of a healthy psyche. Newspapers and magazines are filled with advertisements for various mental techniques and services. Some of these ads claim their services will deliver success in business, while others promise better relationships and a happy marriage. Yet others claim that a positive mindset is the key to longevity and overcoming disease. All agree that the mind is an extremely powerful tool. Yet few of us realize that a healthy psyche is the main ingredient in a spiritually-prosperous relationship with God.

Do you ever find yourself striving for more, desperate to increase your mitzvah observance or to study more Torah, but in the end always seem to be dragged into a familiar routine? Perhaps just a few days ago, on the joyous holiday of Purim, you were able to break out your usual self for a few hours. Each of us experiences times of intense motivation for positive change, yet they are always short-lived. This is precisely the plan of the evil inclination. While most people envision the forces of evil as being some external test or challenge, their main staging ground is in our minds.

Let's take, for example, a challenge we often face: the pursuit of money. We have been raised from birth to expect a pampered life where our every need and want is satisfied. As a result, as soon as we receive something we desire, we usually start thinking about acquiring something greater. We lease a car, and a few years later we're counting the days for the lease to expire so we can get that newer model. Weren't we thrilled that first day we drove the car off the lot? Aren't the car and its features still fully functional? Yes, but ... it's natural to want more, isn't it?

If luxuries (or so-called necessities) aren't your fancy, what about food or intimacy? Are we ever truly satisfied, or are our thoughts always jumping to something bigger and greater? We want a more spiritual life, we want to break out of our routine and experience something higher and more

meaningful, but our thoughts pull us down, time and again.

This week's *parashah* states, "Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have sanctity" (Exodus 35:2). In the plain sense, this means that even if we are swamped with work as Shabbat arrives, we are to close down our business, thereby affirming our belief that God created the world and can give us what we need even if we don't work for it.

But Reb Noson takes this further. Shabbat isn't just about the hours between Friday evening and Saturday night, nor is it about physical labor. The concept of Shabbat extends into the work week, into the day-to-day situations where we are striving for more, when we seek to connect with God and to create a Shabbat break. There, too, we must transplant the spirituality and faith of Shabbat into our minds. How do we do this?

Our thoughts are powerful; they have the ability to overwhelm us. Trying to argue with them is counter-intuitive. But just as we can drop everything when Shabbat arrives and affirm our faith in God, so too, we have the ability to take a deep breath and relax when nagging thoughts come along. We can "rest" the mind by focusing on God and His Infinite Light, and then the negative thoughts will pass away on their own.

By thinking of God and His higher realm, we can quiet down our mind's "temper tantrum." And by remembering Shabbat in the middle of the week, we utilize the most important technique of all for a healthy psyche and eternal success. Training starts today!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shabbat 7

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Belief in God can fill anyone with fresh energy and life, no matter what level he is on. (Letter #43)

Prayers that Move the Heart

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REB NOSON WAS truly humble, but nevertheless gave high praise to his own *Likutey Tefilot*, the book of prayers he composed at Rebbe Nachman's recommendation. The Rebbe said that nothing gives pleasure to God like taking Torah and turning it into prayer. Reb Noson did this literally, by composing beautiful and inspiring prayers based on each of the Rebbe's lessons in *Likutey Moharan*. Reb Noson said, "People say that the famous work of the *Shlah Hakadosh* – the *Shnei Luchot HaBrit* – is the entranceway to *Gan Eden*. Well, *Likutey Tefilot* is *Gan Eden* itself!"

Not many know that there was another student of Rebbe Nachman who also tried to compose prayers rooted in the Rebbe's lessons. When this student reached the third lesson in *Likutey Moharan*, which speaks about the importance of holy song, he hit a barrier. How should he approach this lesson in prayer? He asked Reb Noson whether he had already written a prayer on this lesson.

"Yes, I have," Reb Noson replied.

"Can I see it?" the student asked.

"Certainly," Reb Noson said generously.

When the student saw the prayer, he was amazed. Reb Noson begins the prayer, "Master of the world, Who chooses songs of praise and Who chose David and his descendants..." Reb Noson expands on this theme, leading the reader into the wondrous concepts discussed in the Rebbe's lesson. The student appraised the situation honestly. "Now that I see how gracefully you address the major issues in the lesson, I feel like my eyes have been opened," he said. "I believe the task to make Rebbe Nachman's lessons into prayers should be left to you. It is your mission, since every detail of the Torah shines so brightly in your prayers."

Reb Noson would say that many people made it into *Gan Eden* because they regularly recited his prayers.

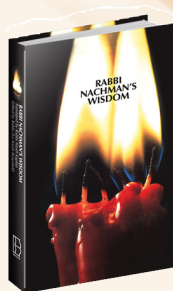
Rabbi Yaakov Meir Schechter noticed a certain person who spent an hour or two each day tearfully reciting the prayers in *Likutey Tefilot*. He discovered that this person was a simple working man who was paid to move heavy objects and goods for people. But when he said these prayers, one could see how powerful their effect was on him. He said them with his whole heart. *Gan Eden!*

Based on *Siach Sarfey Kodesh* I:347-348, IV:53-54

SIDEPATH

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

212. The Rebbe once quoted the Talmudic rule, "The accepted opinion is that of Rabbi Nachman in litigation" (*Ketubot* 13a). He was referring to his opposition. For his opinion was certainly the one accepted on high.



The Talmud also states, "The decision is like Rabbi Nachman, the decision is like Rabbi Nachman, the decision is like Nachmani" (*Gittin* 34a).

213. The Rebbe was once speaking about strife and said: Why do people worry when others speak against them? It is because opposition can cause a person to fall from his level, Heaven forbid.

It is written in the words of King David, "Princes have persecuted me for nothing, but my heart trembles at Your word" (Psalms 119:161). "Princes have persecuted me" – but I know that it is "for nothing." They can accomplish absolutely nothing with their opposition. I know this because "my heart trembles at Your word." I still have the fear of Heaven and have not fallen from my level. This is a sign that their persecution was in vain.

214. I heard that the Rebbe once said, "When you ask a tzaddik whether or not you should do something for God that involves great sacrifices, it is proper for him to tell you not to do it. However, you are not bound by his advice." You must obey whatever a tzaddik tells you. But if he tells you not to come to him on Rosh HaShanah, you should not obey him.



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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.