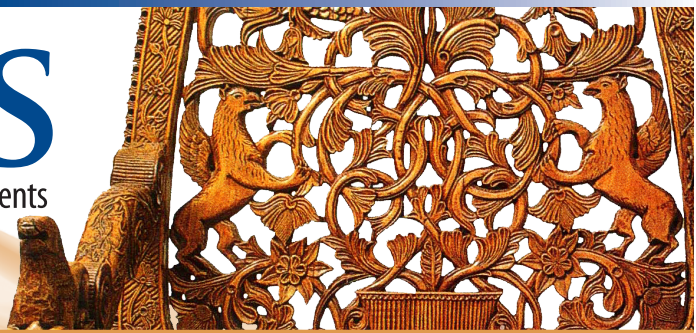


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT DEVARIM • 5775 • VOL. 5 NO. 39

📧 breslov.org/pathways



Let Go and Let God

By Yossi Katz

TISHA B'AV is often called the saddest day of the Jewish year. It commemorates so many tragedies, including the destruction of both Holy Temples, the Spanish Inquisition and European pogroms. On Tisha B'Av, we sit on the floor and weep as we remember everything that was lost, and recite many special prayers that bring us to the appropriate frame of mind. Sounds kind of depressing, no? But what is sadness, or better yet in Breslov terminology, “brokenheartedness,” all about? Why is it a must, and why do we have a special day dedicated to cultivating it?

Let's differentiate between brokenheartedness and depression (and all the more moderate forms of it). The Kotzker Rebbe famously said, “There is nothing as full as a broken heart.” Similarly, Rebbe Nachman taught, “Brokenheartedness and depression are not at all the same. Brokenheartedness involves the heart, while depression involves the spleen. Depression comes from the Other Side and is hated by God. But a broken heart is very dear and precious to God” (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #41). We even have a litmus test to distinguish between the two: “After brokenheartedness comes joy. This later joy is a true sign of a broken heart” (*ibid.*, #45). Clearly, brokenheartedness is a healthy and necessary emotion. It is even something that fosters future joy.

I have struggled through certain physical aches and pains over the past few months and begun doing some gym work with a personal trainer. I learned that there are two ways to embolden a muscle: by stretching and by strengthening. Stretching muscles causes them to expand. Strengthening muscle means applying a great deal of tension and resistance, forcing the muscles to contract.

This is a great metaphor for our discussion. Imagine a heart expanding and then contracting. The expansion corresponds to the heart's capacity for love and kindness, which manifests as joy. The contraction corresponds to the heart's capacity for restraint. Longing for something

that you can't have right now is an example of something that creates resistance and contracts the heart. Both joy and restraint are necessary to maintain a healthy heart, emotionally and spiritually. However, a depressed person's heart is entirely different. It is cold and stone-like. Such a person experiences anger and possibly rage (based on *Tanya*, chapter 31).

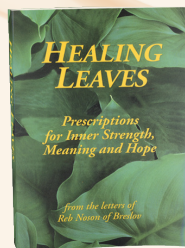
Every generation has the capacity and responsibility to bring the Mashiach and rebuild the Holy Temple. Therefore, if the Mashiach hasn't come yet, we can be said to be responsible for the Temple's destruction. Likewise, each of us has the duty to bring redemption to our personal acts of destruction. By reflecting on these acts – broken relationships, missed opportunities, lack of progress, forgotten aspirations – we create the resistance necessary to strengthen our hearts and repair our wounds.

Tisha B'Av is an incredible opportunity! It is the day we can finally turn to God and let go. We can admit that we don't have the answers and that we hope for so much more. This is precisely what God is waiting for. As our Rabbis teach, “Whoever mourns for Jerusalem will merit seeing its joy” (*Ta'anit* 30b). Because by opening our hearts up to God, we are creating room for Him, as well as the space necessary for experiencing future joy and celebration. With every lamentation we say, we remember our losses and lacks, but simultaneously we remember our powerful hope and faith that our hearts will once again beat in tremendous joy and future consolation. Amen!

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



No matter how *you* may feel about yourself, before God, every good motion – even the slightest movement you make – to remove yourself from bad and move yourself toward good is extremely precious. (Letter #404)

Azamra!

HOW OFTEN DO we look down on others, thinking they are not behaving the way they should? And how many times do we look down on ourselves, feeling that we'll never overcome our bad habits and self-defeating behaviors?

Rebbe Nachman gave us a powerful tool to counteract these thoughts: "Azamra! (I will sing!)" (*Likutey Moharan* I, 282). In this lesson, he explains that all we need to do is search for the good points. Everyone has at least one good point; even the most hardened criminal once held the door open for his mother, or gave a coin to charity. When you find one good point, look for another, and another. Thus you elevate yourself and others to the side of merit, enabling everyone to return to God.

* * *

The Rebbe told me he had been speaking with someone who was complaining bitterly about how terrible his behavior was. This man wanted very much to draw closer to God and change his behavior for the better. But each time he tried, the temptations grew stronger and stronger. The days had turned into years and he had still not managed to extricate himself from his bad ways. But each time he would try even harder to control himself, and he was always struggling to get closer to God.

As the man complained how terribly he behaved, the Rebbe answered with great wisdom, saying in a tone of sincerity and simplicity: "Then I have no one to speak to, because everything is totally bad."

At this the man got excited and said to the Rebbe, "But I do try to fight back at times and get closer to what I should be as a Jew."

"Only the slightest bit," answered the Rebbe. He then told the man to make it a practice to go with the teaching of *Azamra*!

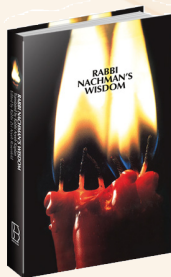
I understood the Rebbe to mean that this was precisely how he revived this man. He had already fallen so low in his own estimation that it was not possible to revive him with anything. It was only when the Rebbe told him that he was totally bad that he was startled and became excited. Then he started feeling a little of the holiness of the good points still inside him. Then the Rebbe told him to go with the lesson of *Azamra*!

Based on Tzaddik #569

SIDEPATH

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

257. The Rebbe said that he can look at a person and know all his sins. He quoted the verse, "God's eyes are to tzaddikim" (Psalms 34:16). Tzaddikim can gaze with God's eyes and see a person's entire past. In many cases, the Rebbe revealed people's pasts to them, telling them everything they had done.



258. The Rebbe often told us to do many good deeds. From the way he said it, it was obvious that he meant that we should do such good deeds as *gemilat chesed* (acts of kindness and favors to others) and collecting charity. He told us, "*Epis tut ihr gar kein mitzvos nit* – you seem to do no good deeds at all."

259. The Rebbe once said, "Thirst is a very great desire." He wanted to give us some idea of the longing and yearning that is the wondrous thirst for God.

The thirstier you are, the greater your pleasure in drinking water. Your thirst is the source of your enjoyment. The same is true of your holy thirst for God. Quenching this thirst will be the main delight of the World to Come.

260. The Rebbe once emphasized the importance of longing and thirsting for the holy. Even though you cannot actually complete an observance, the yearning and longing is still very precious and worthy of reward.



breslov.org

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

Pathways is a weekly publication. To subscribe, please visit breslov.org/pathways. To make a dedication, please email pathways@breslov.org.

© 2015 Breslov Research Institute

The photo on the front is a close-up of Rebbe Nachman's chair, which is displayed in the main Breslov synagogue in Jerusalem.

*In memory of our father of blessed memory, Judah Harry Goldenberg (Yehuda Tvi) niftar Tisha B'Av 1968.
From his children Joe, Sharon, Rita and Israel Goldenberg*