

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Time to Rebuild

By Yossi Katz

IF SOMEONE WERE to curse and totally demean you, wouldn't it seem strange if he told you moments later how great he is going to make you? Well then, take a look at what's going on:

First, the prophet Amos informs us that God compares the Jews to Cushites, saying, "Are you not like the children of the Cushites to me, O children of Israel?" (Amos 9:7).

Comparing us to Cushites wasn't exactly a compliment. The Cushites were the descendants of Cush, the son of Ham. After Ham either castrated or sodomized his father Noah, he was cursed by God with slavery and lowliness. "So shall the king of Assyria lead the captivity of Egypt and the exile of Cush, youths and old men, naked and barefoot, with bare buttocks" (Isaiah 20:4).

But immediately, Amos continues, "But I will not destroy the house of Jacob, says the Lord... On that day, I will raise up the fallen Tabernacle of David... And I will return the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild desolate cities and inhabit [them], and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their produce... And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no longer be uprooted from upon their land that I have given them, said the Lord your God" (Amos 7:8-15).

So where exactly do we stand?

We just finished the mourning period of the Three Weeks. At the climax of this period, Tisha B'Av, we commemorated the destruction of both Temples.

But just a few hours after Tisha B'Av, we blasted our boom boxes and everything is permitted once again. Wouldn't it seem more appropriate if after three weeks of preparation and then the destruction of the Temple, we had at least a few days of actual mourning? Instead, we are all preparing for a very special Shabbat: *Shabbat Nachamu*, the Sabbath of Consolation.

There was once a chassid who truly desired closeness with God but would constantly experience setbacks. He truly wanted to amend his ways, but many years passed and he was still unable to escape his issues. Still, he never gave up, and always tried again and again. However, he was extremely bitter about this. Rebbe Nachman, with great wisdom, told the chassid in a very simple way, "How can I speak with you, you are completely evil?" The chassid immediately retorted, "Yes, but isn't it also true that I never gave up and still try to push myself?"

The Holy Temple was called *Tiferet Yisrael*, the Pride of Israel. It was at the Temple that the holiness of our mitzvot would be gathered up. This was the landmark that glorified our special relationship with God. When it was destroyed because of our sins, it was as if our pride were thrown down and shattered. It was as if our special status were cancelled. This is also why, on Tisha B'Av morning, we don't don our *tefillin* – *tefillin* are our crowns that exemplify our status as God's special people. However, this is all for our own good.

As soon as we are compared with the other nations, our special characteristics and many mitzvot shine through! It's immediately obvious that yes, we are different. So, too, regarding our spiritual growth. When we look to compare ourselves with great Tzaddikim, or with very lofty goals, we are almost always dismayed and fall away. However, by first realizing that we are human beings born with a *yetzer hara* (evil inclination), and then searching for the good, we can rebuild ourselves. Now, after Tisha B'Av and after we have swallowed our pride and realized our faults, we can start to rebuild and become the People we truly are.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Reishit HaGez 4

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



There is no other advice for anyone in the world except to have faith and to trust God. The most effective way to build this trust is to strengthen oneself in Torah study and prayer each day. (Letter #222)

The Miracle of Children

By Chaim Kramer

MANY CHASSIDIC MASTERS are famous for their miracles and heroic exploits. Rebbe Nachman, on the other hand, is famous for his Torah teachings and the advice for living that he gave to every individual. Nevertheless, Breslov oral tradition records several instances in which the Rebbe demonstrated that he, too, could perform miracles.

Moshe Chenkes was one of the community leaders in Breslov who had welcomed Rebbe Nachman to the town. He became quite close to the Rebbe, through whose blessing his business prospered. He became extremely wealthy, but he had no children.

Moshe Chenkes asked the Rebbe to give him a blessing for children, but the Rebbe told him that the reason he was childless was because he had been the victim of theft: a former business partner had stolen money from him, and “stealing a person’s money is like stealing his wife and children” (*Likutey Moharan* I, 69). Shortly before Rebbe Nachman passed away, he said to Reb Noson, “If Moshe [Chenkes] divorces his present wife, he’ll be able to have children.”

At first Moshe Chenkes was uninterested in divorcing his wife. But one time when he met Reb Noson after morning prayers, the latter urged him, “Just as I am wearing *tallit* and *tefillin*, Rebbe Nachman said, ‘You will have children!’” A few years later, Moshe Chenkes’ wife agreed to a divorce. She asked for half his wealth, which he gave her, and then she married his former partner. He, too, remarried, yet a few years passed and he still didn’t have children.

Occasionally Moshe Chenkes would complain to Reb Noson, “After all, you’re the one who told me to divorce.” Finally Reb Noson told him, “Go to Uman and complain to the Rebbe at his grave. Say to the Rebbe, ‘I did as you told me through Reb Noson. I divorced my first wife. Where is the promise that I’ll have children from my second wife?’”

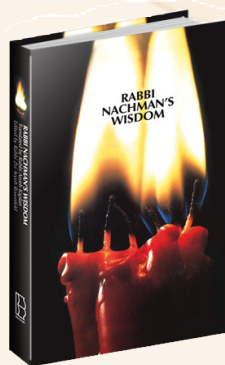
Moshe Chenkes went to Uman and prayed at the Rebbe’s grave. Upon leaving the grave, the first thought that came to his mind was “Sow for yourselves seeds of charity” (Hosea 10:12). At that moment, he felt as if Rebbe Nachman himself was standing next to him saying the verse. Upon returning to Breslov, Moshe Chenkes gave generously to charity. He was blessed with a daughter and a son.

SIDEPATH

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

261. Oil is wisdom. Wisdom is in the eyes. When you look through the eyes of wisdom, you are worthy of perceiving your lowliness. You can then attain perfect faith.

The Talmud teaches that the measure of oil needed for the Chanukah lamp is enough to last until “feet no longer walk outside” (*Shabbat* 21b). The feet are the feet of faith. You must look carefully with the eye of wisdom until your faith is purified. Then “feet no longer walk outside.” The feet of faith no longer walk in the place of the Outside Forces of skepticism.



262. There is a type of *chen* (grace) that enables a person to see the future in dreams. A person who has this grace can ask for a vision and perceive the future in a dream.

Dreams contain predictions of the future, but these are intertwined with much worthless chaff. Then there is the clear dream of the prophet, regarding which it is written, “In a dream, I will speak to him” (Numbers 12:6). This is the dream of the person who has grace.

Such a person can also predict the future through the dreams of another. When he hears the other’s dream, the worthless chaff falls away and only the clear vision falls upon his ears. Joseph had such grace. He is called “a fruitful son by the fountain” (Genesis 49:22). Rashi explains that his fruitfulness was that of grace.



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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.