

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Don't Be Fooled!

By Yossi Katz

KORACH WAS NO ordinary fellow. He was the leading Levite, a close relative of Moses, a tremendously clever fellow, and also enormously wealthy. In fact, he was so great that 250 members of the Sanhedrin followed him into open rebellion. So how could the great Korach openly rebel against Moses, who was doing nothing other than following the directive of God? How could such a Torah scholar fall so low?

Spiritual growth is like arm-wrestling. The more you press forward, the greater the resistance you encounter. In order to rise from one spiritual level to the next, the *dinim* associated with the new level must first be mitigated. *Dinim* are harsh judgments; they are the protective forces maintaining the balance of good and evil. These forces challenge you to prove that you are sufficiently worthy of reaching this new level. They force you to prove your resilience and worthiness.

Furthermore, Rebbe Nachman explains that even those who have totally eliminated their sensual temptations and purified themselves from the pleasures of this world must still face an even higher level of challenge, one which the Rebbe refers to as a “holy angel,” a completely spiritual *yetzer hara*. As a *Tzaddik* advances from level to level, he must continually face these ever more difficult, spiritual-only challenges.

Unfortunately, Korach didn't realize this. He reasoned that the Jewish people had achieved universal prophecy at Mount Sinai. Each person had heard God speak to him directly. Korach therefore claimed, “The entire congregation is holy, and God is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above God's community?” (Numbers 16:3). Korach was arguing: “Haven't we all made it? At our level, we have subdued our *yetzer hara* and certainly no further *dinim* remain.”

Because Korach truly was at a mighty level, the *dinim* at his level were enormous. Additionally, the defining

character of his Tribe of Levi is *din*. Everything created by God is holy and for ultimate goodness, including harshness. However, this is realized only when the harshness is combined with kindness. It is for this reason that the Levite is to serve the Kohen, whose job is to atone for the Jewish People and exhibit kindness. When the Levite serves the Kohen, the former's harsh nature is subjugated to the latter's kindness in a way that the correct balance is achieved. However, because Korach was egotistical, he did not realize that there was still much more room to grow and many *dinim* to conquer. He therefore separated himself from Aaron the Kohen and the *dinim* were unleashed, overpowering him into openly rebelling against and harshly criticizing the entire concept of the priesthood.

At every new level, we are faced with challenges and difficulties. Many mistakenly believe that they have fallen and are upset, expecting that had they truly risen to new heights, they would now find themselves on the easy road. However, this is the universal experience and the path to greatness. These arguments are nothing but a product of the very *dinim* attempting to suppress our growth and fool us into complacency. We have the power to mitigate them by remembering that everything God does is for our best. The difficulties we feel are not because we have failed, but because God is orchestrating a process created to bring us closer to perfection. Rebbe Nachman himself once said that had he realized in his youth that even the *Tzaddikim* encounter this experience, he would have found it tremendously encouraging. Let us not be fooled!

Korach's fault was that he did not humble himself and subjugate his harsh judgmental nature to the Kohen, so that it could be used in a balanced, positive way. We, too, must learn to humble ourselves, allowing our own critical nature to be subjugated to the encouragement and loving advice of the *Tzaddikim* so that we may continue to grow from level to level. By living this way, we can mitigate all of the harshness and difficulties in our lives. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shiluach HaKen 4

The Baal Shem Tov's Remedy

By Y. Golshevsky

REBBE NACHMAN'S DAUGHTER, Sarah, suffered from ailments that caused her great pain. On one occasion, her agony was so great that she was left bedridden. When Rebbe Nachman came to visit and when saw the depths of her distress, he felt awash in sadness for her. As he listened to her speak of her troubles, he suddenly fell into a deep, trance-like sleep. In his dream, his great-grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, appeared before him.

"Why are you so upset?" asked the Baal Shem Tov, with great kindness.

"It's because of my daughter," answered Rebbe Nachman.

The Baal Shem Tov nodded his head and said, "We find in the Book of Psalms the phrase 'He magnifies salvations for His king, and does kindness for His anointed one, for David and his seed, forever' (Psalms 18:51). This means that God magnifies the interventions that He does for His 'king'—His righteous ones—since the Talmud teaches us that the sages are called kings. And He performs kindnesses for those who 'speak about' His righteous ones. That's because the word for 'anointed one' (mashiach) is written exactly the same in Hebrew as the word for making conversation (meisiach). God does this for 'David and his seed, forever'—and that means that He will do it for you and your children, since you descend from the House of David."

The Baal Shem Tov meant to teach Rebbe Nachman that he could alleviate his daughter Sarah's suffering by sharing stories about the Tzaddikim with her.

At that moment, Rebbe Nachman awoke and approached the bed where his daughter lay in pain. He began to tell her a wondrous story about the Maharsha, Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Halevi Eidels, author of the great commentary on the Talmud. Rebbe Nachman had traveled far and sacrificed much just to have the chance to see the original record of the tale in the communal archives of Ostrov.

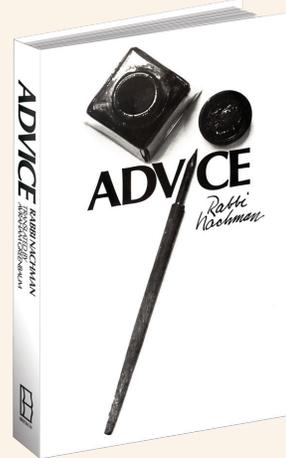
(to be continued)

Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 196-197

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

49. A person with faith has a very good life. Without faith, there is no life at all. No one in the world can be free of troubles and hardships of one kind or another, because "Man was born to struggle" (Job 5:7). But a person who has faith can find comfort even when he has to endure pain and suffering. He knows that God loves him and intends everything for his own ultimate good, to purify and cleanse him. For everything that God does is for the best.



But the sophisticated disbeliever has no one to turn to when trouble strikes. He can find comfort nowhere. There is nothing to encourage him. This is why he has no life at all. He walks without God and he does not come under His protective care. But through faith, your life can be good always

(Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom #102).

50. True faith in the unity of God comes through the Tzaddikim. They are the tip of the letter Dalet of the word echaD, which means One (Tikkuney Zohar #21, 55b; Likutey Moharan I, 10:5).



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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.