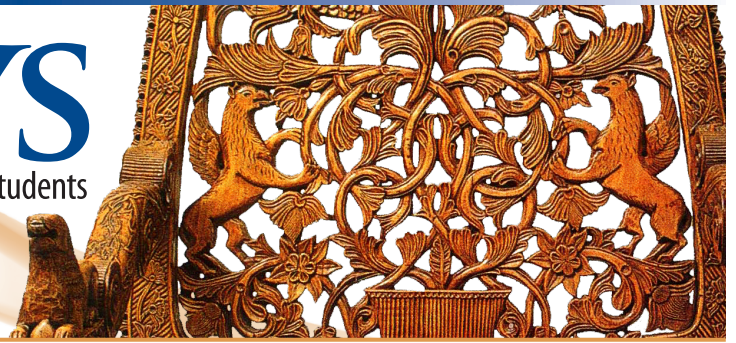


PATHWAYS

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

Who Was “The Deutschel”? (Part I)

By Yehudis Golshevsky

THERE WAS A German Jew who was pious, learned and wealthy, blessed with righteous and scholarly sons. When they came of age, he summoned them and said, “Beloved children! I’ve decided to send you to seek your fortunes abroad. Money you’ll be provided with. My only condition is that you return in exactly five years so that I can see what you’ve made of yourselves.”

Each one packed his provisions and money, and went out to seek his way in the world. The third son, Yechiel, chose to travel to Poland. When he got there, the locals nicknamed him “The Deutschel.” During Reb Yechiel’s five years of travel in Eastern Europe, he came to the attention of the Baal Shem Tov and became his son-in-law.

When the five years drew to a close, Reb Yechiel made plans to travel back to his father to fulfill his command. Before leaving Mezhibuzh, he approached the Baal Shem Tov and asked for a blessing.

“Rebbe, please bless me that I’ll be back in time to spend Rosh HaShanah with you.” But the Baal Shem Tov didn’t answer. Reb Yechiel took this as a sign, and so he took along a shofar in case he found himself far from a Jewish community during the holy days.

Reb Yechiel arrived home five years to the day of his departure. What a celebration! Each of his brothers had also returned from his corner of the world, and their father prepared a magnificent feast in their honor and invited all of the city’s notables.

During the meal, each son in turn stood up to share words of Torah, but Reb Yechiel barely lifted his head out of his plate as he ate his soup. When his turn came to speak, Reb Yechiel rose, said, “I have nothing to say,” and sat down again. His father was devastated; his family and the guests were embarrassed for him. What had become of him?

After the feast, Reb Yechiel’s father summoned him and poured out his heart. “My son, you were the most learned of all of your brothers. What happened to you? Where is your Torah?”

Reb Yechiel said gently, “I can make it up to you, Father, if you will make another feast tomorrow...”

Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 228-241

SIDEPATH

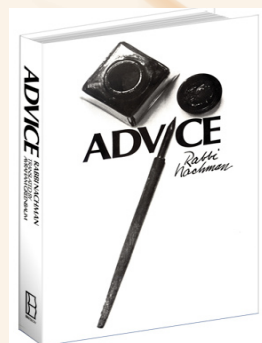
Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

EATING. 10. When a person eats greedily, it is a stain, as it were, on the honor due to God’s holiness. The more disrespect shown to God, the more the arrogant start to assert themselves.

The nations of the world abrogate to themselves all the glory that is due to God. They flaunt themselves and boast and receive the world’s respect and deference for it. God hides His face from the world and the Divine aspect of severe justice prevails. But when we break the desire for food, God shows favor to the world. The aspect of severity is withdrawn. The honor due to God’s holiness is restored. The arrogant are humbled and lose their power and influence (*Likutey Moharan I, 67:2, 3*).

11. Never eat more than you need. If you eat unnecessarily it can be very harmful. Even the food which the body needs is then joined with the extra food and causes great damage (*ibid. I, 257*).

12. A person who eats excessively is like an animal. To be human is to eat only what is necessary. Excessive eating brings on fever. Another cause of fever can be if a person eats food that is insufficiently pure for human consumption (*ibid. I, 263*).



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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.

Dedicated in the Memory (L’Ilui Nishmat) of Yehudis bat Shimon