

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT BEREISHIT • 5777 • VOL. 7 NO. 2

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Let in the Light!

By Yossi Katz

MAZEL TOV, WE have completed the reading of the Torah! Incredibly enough, just a few minutes after finishing a year's worth of reading, following a small celebration, we begin all over again. In this vein, Rebbe Nachman would always encourage his Chassidim to start afresh and never become accustomed to "regular, everyday life." We may have finished the Torah and gleaned much insight, but now we can begin again with fresh eyes and vigor, soon to discover that we haven't really begun to understand the depths of the Torah at all!

The Torah begins by describing Creation, including the verse, "God made the two great lights – the greater light [the sun] to rule the day and the lesser light [the moon] to rule the night" (Genesis 1:16). The beginning of the verse calls both luminaries "great," but the end of the verse refers to the moon as "lesser." Rashi explains that they were created equal, but the moon was made smaller because it contended, "It is impossible for two kings to share the same crown."

If we observe the sun and the moon, we discern an obvious difference between them. The sun shines its own light, whereas the moon reflects that light. Kabbalistically, the light of the sun is representative of the Divine. God's blinding light reflects the true reality of the universe, that there exists nothing but Him. This is alluded to in the final letters of the words in the Torah's first verse, *barA ElokiM eT* (God created), which spell *EMeT* (truth). The very purpose of God's Creation was for His true nature to become known down on Earth.

The moon represents our earthly-human existence. Had the moon shone as bright as the sun, the two luminaries would have "shared the same crown." This means that God's light would have burned so brightly that essentially there would have been no difference between Heaven and Earth. God's true reality would permeate Creation in a way that all would be one

angelic existence, but God's desire was for His truth to be reflected in the human experience.

Therefore the moon was made smaller; it no longer shines as brightly as the sun, leaving room for falsehood and doubt. This spiritual darkness is manifest whenever we feel distant, cold or disconnected from God.

Although Creation gave rise to the original darkness, when we misstep or make bad judgment calls, we further compound the problem and are surrounded by even more layers of darkness. Have you ever found yourself in a downward spiral, wanting to get out and do something meaningful, but being badgered by distractions at every turn? Do you want to make that meaningful prayer and begin building a true relationship with God, only to find yourself sidetracked whenever the opportunity presents itself? What is the key to opening our hearts and minds to God's essential reality that we know exists?

Next week's *parashah* states, "Make a light for the ark" (ibid., 6:16). The Hebrew word *teivah* (ark) also means "word." By verbalizing words of prayer with truth and sincerity, we illuminate them and cause them to shine brightly, dispelling the darkness that surrounds us and revealing God's truth. Describing the type of light mentioned in this verse, Rashi says, "Some say it was a window, and some say it was a precious gem." What's the difference? The gem produces its own light, whereas the window allows in light.

Perhaps we aren't up to burning with such tremendous desire for the absolute truth that we dispel all of the darkness on our own. But we can utter a few words of sincere prayer from wherever we stand spiritually and emotionally. Each honest and sincere word we say creates a window that allows in God's light so that the spiritual pathways home are revealed to us. Thus we can ultimately fulfill the purpose of Creation and return the moon to its original glory. Amen!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Dayanim 3;
Likutey Moharan I, 9*

The Best Career of All

ONE OF RABBI Zvi Aryeh Rosenfeld's Talmud Torah students, whom we'll call "Kohn," lived next-door to the Rosenfeld family. One Friday night, Rabbi Rosenfeld's four-year-old son opened his bedroom window before going to sleep and heard Kohn singing *zemirot*.

He went to tell his father. Rabbi Rosenfeld came into the room, sat on his son's bed, and listened intently. His son wanted to go to sleep, but he wanted to continue listening. He sat there, bent forward, straining to catch every note. After about half an hour, Kohn finished singing. Rabbi Rosenfeld wished his son a "Gut Shabbos" and left the room.

Rabbi Rosenfeld had been concerned about Kohn's religious observance, and was afraid that he might even remove his yarmulke. That evening, when he heard Kohn singing *zemirot* with such *kavanah* (devotion), a small hope burgeoned within him that Kohn would be all right. But shortly afterward, Kohn did remove his yarmulke and stopped observing mitzvot.

Rabbi Rosenfeld was terribly hurt when Kohn and another of his promising students stopped keeping mitzvot. He wrote to Rabbi Avraham Sternhartz in Israel and told him that he was considering leaving the *kiruv* (outreach) field.

This happened in 1953. When he visited Jerusalem that summer, Rabbi Rosenfeld entered the Breslov synagogue in Katamon after *Maariv*, when the Chassidim were in the midst of their traditional *rikud*, a short dance after prayers. Rabbi Sternhartz danced past Rabbi Rosenfeld without acknowledging him. Rabbi Rosenfeld thought that Rabbi Sternhartz was angry with him for planning to leave *kiruv*. The truth was that the Breslov elder had simply failed to notice him.

The second time Rabbi Sternhartz danced past Rabbi Rosenfeld, he finally noticed him and raised his arms as if to embrace him from afar. Rabbi Rosenfeld cut through the line of men to speak with him directly. "I feel so out of place here," he told him. "I'm clean-shaven, wearing a suit, and living of outside Eretz Yisrael."

Rabbi Sternhartz replied, "Having a beard is great! Wearing Chassidic clothes is great! Living in Eretz Yisrael is great! But *nothing* compares to bringing one soul back to Torah!"

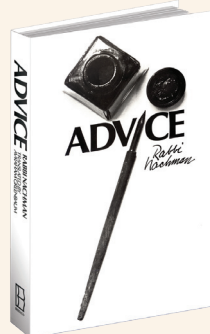
Rabbi Rosenfeld had his answer. He remained in the United States, continued working in *kiruv*, and did not grow a beard. And he never looked back.

From an upcoming biography of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Rosenfeld

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

LAND OF ISRAEL. 8. The Land of Israel possesses a mystical power to stimulate procreation and also to bring relief from the divisiveness and hostility that exist between people. Through the sanctity of the Land of Israel, the true guide and leader of our age will be revealed. Truth will spread throughout the world and even the heathen nations will return to the Holy One and serve him "with one consent" (Zephaniah 3:9) (*Likutey Moharan* I, 48).



9. The mitzvah of sukkah is a segulah for coming to the Land of Israel (*ibid.*).

10. It is impossible to see the downfall of the wicked except through the concept of the Land of Israel (*ibid.*, I, 58).

11. Praying with intense devotion reveals sparks of the radiance of our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The patriarchs laid the foundations of our faith. This faith is embodied in the prayers we recite. The lives of the patriarchs were completely bound up with the Land of Israel, as is our faith. Through genuine prayer, therefore, it is possible for us to feel the sanctity of the Land of Israel even today, when we are in exile and the Land itself is under the dominion of the forces of the Other Side (*ibid.*, I, 55:2, 3).



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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.