

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT SHEMOT • 5778 • VOL. 8 NO. 11

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The Music of Our Souls

By Yossi Katz

ONE OF REBBE Nachman's most beautiful teachings is that King David merited possessing incredible *ruach hakodesh* (Divine inspiration). When David expressed himself through the prayers that make up the Book of Psalms, not only did his words include his own pleas and problems, they included everything that each and every one of us was destined to face. Therefore we can find ourselves in every Psalm. Rebbe Nachman explains that we can even relate to King David's wars because we each wage our own battles against our bad desires and thoughts. By envisioning these personal conflicts while we recite the words of Psalms, we connect to God on an awesome level.

Once a chassid pressed Rebbe Nachman, "But what about the verses that describe the greatness of King David, like, 'Protect my soul, for I am devout' (Psalms 86:2)? King David was truly devout and righteous, but how can I say that about myself, a simple Jew?" Rebbe Nachman answered that this verse, too, applies to us, for each of us has a good point, and in this good point we are considered devout (see *Likutey Moharan* II, 101).

Our *parashah* states, "A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know of Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). How could that be? Didn't everyone know about the Jewish viceroy who had rescued Egypt from famine?

King Solomon explains that our promiscuous desires and urges can be compared to an "old and foolish king" (Ecclesiastes 4:13). They are "old" because we are born with them intact, and "foolish" because their temporary pleasure leads us astray from true goodness. Joseph, on the other hand, is called Joseph the Tzaddik. He represents the good points that are found in each of us. Our evil king's strategy is to make us forget about our true essence and its Divine origin. Our soul is a part of God, and therefore we have many points of good within us. If we are made to forget about them, it is only too easy for us to feel low and vulnerable.

The *parashah* continues, "So the Egyptians enslaved the children of Israel with backbreaking labor" (Exodus 1:13). Because we forget how special we truly are, we see little purpose in life's difficulties. Things become overwhelming and exhausting; we become slaves to our perceived fate. Often this happens when we start looking at others whom we feel are greater than we and compare ourselves to them. Observing how special and talented they are, we question our own virtue. We forget the Joseph within us.

Last Shabbat I heard a beautiful story that explains why this attitude is so wrong.

A writer was preparing a biography about the legendary symphony conductor Arturo Toscanini. At some point, the biographer called Toscanini and asked for an interview. Toscanini replied that he was unable to comply because he already had plans to listen to the radio broadcast of a concert he had previously conducted. However, he agreed to meet after the broadcast.

When they met, the biographer said of the concert, "Wasn't that magnificent?" Toscanini answered negatively, "There were supposed to be 120 musicians, among them 15 violinists, but only 14 were present." The writer could not believe that Toscanini could possibly know this, but the next day he checked with the symphony director, who confirmed that one violinist had called in sick. Contacted once more, Toscanini explained, "Being the conductor, I knew some notes were missing and immediately identified one missing violinist."

God is the conductor of the universe. He expects each of us to play the beautiful note that only we can produce. Just as Shifra and Puah beautified and cooed to the newborn Jewish children, so too, we must encourage ourselves and learn to see the beauty in our infant souls so desperately waiting to grow and prosper.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhhot Arvei Techumim 6

The Faithful Chassid

THE BRESLOV MOVEMENT survived and thrived in Communist Russia due to the bravery and self-sacrifice of its chassidim. We cannot fathom the pressures and persecution that these men and women endured to keep their faith alive and follow Rebbe Nachman's teachings, but endure them they did, keeping the Rebbe's flame burning through the most difficult times.

The story of R' Naftali Tzvi Dubinski is a case in point. He came to Uman at the age of 17 and joined R' Baruch Getche's group of *ovdim* (devotees) who spent their nights in *hitbodedut*, their mornings in prayer, and their days in Torah study.

R' Naftali Tzvi's wife died in childbirth, leaving him with one son, Yaakov. In 1937, R' Naftali Tzvi was arrested and sentenced to eight years in a Siberian slave labor camp for the "crime" of convincing a Jewish boy to stop working on Shabbat. Completely isolated during this period, he had no idea what happened to his six-year-old son during World War II.

In fact, his son was being raised by R' Yochanan Galant, a joyous and warm-hearted Jew who had no children of his own. R' Yochanan raised young Yaakov to be God-fearing and, with tremendous self-sacrifice, kept him out of the anti-religious Soviet school system. In honor of his adoptive father, Yaakov changed his last name to Galant.

Following his release from Siberia, R' Naftali Tzvi moved to Prunz. He was reunited with his son only in 1954, when they met in Uman for Rosh HaShanah. At that point, his son was in his early twenties and married. R' Naftali Tzvi emigrated to Israel in 1971 at the same time as his son and grandchildren.

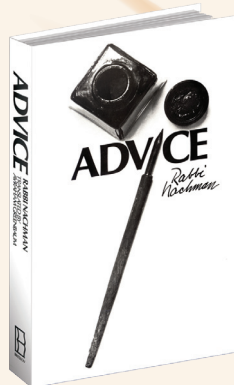
R' Naftali Tzvi may have lost his chance to raise a family, but he did not lose his faith in God. In Jerusalem, he would often go up to the roof of the Breslov synagogue in Mea Shearim for *hitbodedut*. One day, the wife of R' Nachman Strakes heard someone crying out to God from the roof and commented that that was exactly the way R' Naftali Tzvi used to cry out in Uman – not realizing that R' Naftali Tzvi had arrived in Israel and was the one she was hearing!

From "Against All Odds" by Gedaliah Fleer

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

UNDERSTANDING. 49. You must be very worthy to be able to meditate for a given time each day and regret what you must. Not everyone merits such mental tranquility each day. Make sure to set aside a specific time each day to calmly review your life. Consider what you are doing and ponder whether it is worthy that you devote your days to it (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom #47*).



SPEECH. 1. Idle pursuits and abusive, slanderous language bring one to poverty. The remedy is to give charity to Torah scholars – this brings wealth (*Likutey Moharan I, 4:8*).

2. The way to study Torah is by speaking the words out loud. The words will then become a light that will illuminate for you all the places where you must repent and make amends (*ibid. I, 11:1*).

3. Strive to sanctify the way you speak until your words are the words of the "Holy Tongue." Speak many words of Torah. Say many prayers and make many entreaties before God. Talk to Him; plead with Him. At the same time, be careful to avoid any falsehood and derogatory comments about other people. If you are careful about the way you speak, it will help you to achieve personal sanctity and to guard the holy covenant. And the more you purify and sanctify yourself, the more you will be able to perfect the way you speak (*ibid. I, 19:3*).



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PO Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641

PO Box 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

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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.