

PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Be Nice to Your Mother

By Ozer Bergman

“Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12).

There are three partners in the creation of a human being: God, the person's father and the person's mother. When the person honors his parents, God reckons it as if He were honored (*Kiddushin* 30b). When Rav Yosef heard his mother's footsteps, he would say, “I will stand for the *Shekhinah*.” Rabbi Yochanan said, “Fortunate is the one who never saw his parents.” Rashi explains: It is impossible to fully honor one's parents, as he ought. As a result, one is punished (*ibid.*, 31b).

Before you act, consider: Is what I am about to do going to add to God's glory, or not? If yes, do it. If not, don't (*Likutey Moharan* II, 12).

* * *

Why we are commanded to have children? In order to bring honor to God. Our time in this world is limited. When we are gone, who will keep Shabbat, eat matzah at the Seder, and so on? Revealing and increasing God's *kavod* (honor/respect/glory) is the purpose of Creation. So perpetuating the world by having children who will enhance God's *kavod*—by doing business honestly, giving charity and doing kindness—is equivalent to honoring God.*

Why do Mommy and Daddy get nervous when their child asks, “Where did I come from?” In part, because we too readily identify with our bodies and we know—subliminally—that body-pursuits are shameful to our actual selves, the *neshamah* (soul). We assume the child is referring to the body, and we are uncomfortable dealing with shame.

Standard parental answers relate to the “depths.” “Depths” means any place or activity in which God's *kavod* is not readily apparent, disrespected or denied. The act of procreation, for example. All would be better off if the parental response spoke to the real person, the *neshamah*. “Child o' mine, your *neshamah* comes from the most beautiful and wonderful place in Heaven. It comes from God's very own *kavod*. You are part of God's *kavod*!”

“God's glory fills the entire earth” (Isaiah 6:3). Yet because it's concealed, it's our job—responsibility and privilege—to reveal that glory. We have to make the effort. The hiddenness, perpetrated by the *kelipot*—the shells and layers of physicality and misconception—allows for the possibility of false desire.

That is, how could you even think of having a cheeseburger if you “saw” God's glory right in front of you? False (i.e., forbidden) desires, as well as over-wanting what is permitted (like a third piece of kugel), are possible only because God's glory is not apparent to you. Adding in the pressure of fulfilling our physical needs, and the questions and doubts we have, makes revealing His *kavod* quite the challenge.

The nature of our world is such that the resistance to revealing God's *kavod* is (almost) always proportional to the “depths” in which it is hidden. (The resulting revealed *kavod* is also greater.) When you honor your parents, you acknowledge that God's *kavod* is found even in those “depths.” When we realize God's glory even in “bedroom” matters, this is the highest form of announcing His honor. Implicit in honoring your parents is your belief that your parents increased God's glory by giving birth to you.** That is: They honored God, so you honor them. Implicit in that is your belief that your existence—in this body—stems from the highest levels in Creation.

So be nice to your mother—and your father, too!

*In fact, the birth of any species and the blossoming of any vegetation is a testament to God's *kavod*.

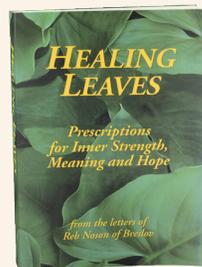
Can you imagine? **You increase God's glory. (Guffaw.) **BELIEVE IT!** It'll improve your Jewishness 100% within one week, or your money back!

Based on *Likutey Halakhot*, *Kibud Av v'Eim* 4:1–2
A *gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!*

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



The truth is that nothing in the world is ever beyond hope. Even if, God forbid, a strong edict has already been decreed against a person, still, through many prayers and good deeds and never giving up, he can arouse God's compassion to effect a complete reversal. (*Letter #88*)

Whether or not a person has money, his days and years still rush by like a shadow, and nothing remains except the vitality which he drew from his belief in God. (*Letter #43*)

Parashah Pearls

By Chaim Kramer

In this week's *parashah*, the Jews received the Torah at Mount Sinai. Here is how Reb Noson explains the deeper meaning behind each of the Ten Commandments:

"I am God your Lord"

The essence of *da'at* (knowledge of God) is to know that God is Lord.

"Do not have any other gods before Me"

This refers to the foolishness that diverts a person from serving God. Elsewhere, Scripture states: "If you sway, you will serve idolatry" (Deuteronomy 11:16), on which the Baal Shem Tov comments: "If you sway from your devotion to God, it is as if you served idolatry."

"Do not take the Name of God your Lord in vain"

This refers to fearing God, for fear of God leads to knowledge of God (as explained in *Likutey Moharan* II, 7:4).

"Remember the Shabbat day"

This corresponds to self-nullification before God, the Creator and Master of all.

"Honor your father and mother"

This refers to revealing God in this world, for parents draw down souls to this earth so that these souls can come to recognize God.

The next five commandments contravene the first five commandments. Thus:

"Do not murder"

This implies concealing knowledge of God, for the person who is murdered can no longer draw knowledge of God into the world.

"Do not commit adultery"

This is an example of the foolishness that diverts a person from serving God.

"Do not steal"

This refers to shunning the fear of God, since a person who steals essentially believes "God is not watching."

"Do not bear false witness"

This contravenes Shabbat and self-nullification before God, as one who lies gives testimony that he does not take God into consideration at all.

"Do not desire"

This contradicts honoring one's parents and revealing God in this world, because one who is not satisfied with his lot but desires what belongs to others denies that God provides him with his needs. Being happy with one's lot displays true honor of God.

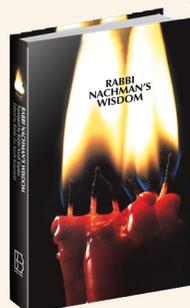
Likutey Halakhot III, p. 328ff

SIDEPATH

Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt"l

8. When studying subjects dealing with tragedy, such as the laws of mourning, do not delve too deeply. One should not probe too deeply into these matters, for thoughts have great power. Therefore these subjects should be covered as rapidly as possible.

9. In the name of the Baal Shem Tov: "A knife should not be given as a gift."



10. The wicked are filled with regrets, but they never really know what regret is. Any sorrow they may feel results only in their strengthening their wickedness. As soon as a thought of remorse enters their minds, they fight it by making themselves more determined in their evil.

It is like two men fighting. As soon as one begins to win, the other fights all the harder. As soon as evil detects that good is beginning to stir in a person, it fights extra hard. Understand this.

This is an important principle in serving God. The more you want to serve God, the more the evil inclination strives against you (*Likutey Moharan* I, 72). If you realize this, you can fight it with strategy and continually defeat it. With God's help, you will be worthy of emerging victorious.



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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.