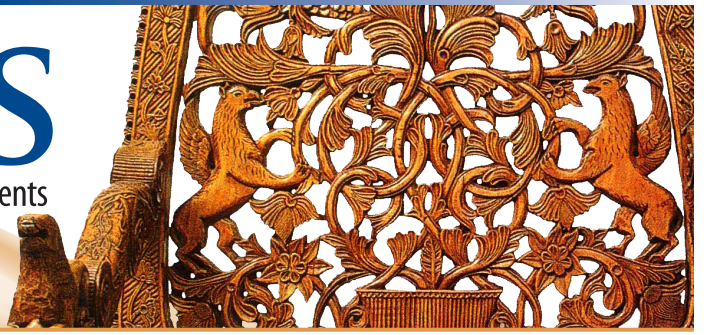


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Know Where You Stand

By Yossi Katz

**HAVE YOU HEARD** about the great “celebration” that takes place this month? You are probably dreadfully eyeing Sunday’s fast and the start of the Three Weeks of mourning, and wondering what in the world I am referring to. While describing this month of Tamuz, Rebbe Nachman teaches:

“The first letters of ‘*Zikhru Torat Moshe* (Remember the Torah of Moses)’ (Malakhi 3:22) spell *TaMuZ* without the *vav*. This is because in the month of Tamuz, we must elicit mindfulness in order to rectify forgetfulness. For it was then that forgetfulness came into existence, as a result of the Tablets being broken in Tamuz. [The *vav*, which has the numerical value of 6, represents the Tablets, which measured 6 by 6 handbreadths.] As our Sages teach, ‘Had the First Tablets not been shattered, Torah would not have been forgotten from the Jews’” (*Eruvin* 54a; *Likutey Moharan I*, 217).

Imagine, God Himself engraved the First Tablets! The Torah was so exalted that it was to be permanently engraved on our hearts and minds. Had we waited just a bit longer for Moshe to come down the mountain with the Tablets, we would have received a Torah that connected us to God in an unbreakable way. Instead, the Tablets were shattered and forgetfulness descended upon our nation.

Now we feel far, we feel distant, we feel utterly disconnected. Things happen and we lack any sense of clarity. This is all part of forgetfulness. True, we do have the Torah, but it doesn’t always speak to us; often we have a hard time finding the answers when we study it. So how do we connect? How do we deal with tragedy and pain, with difficult times and hard decisions?

In this week’s *parashah*, Bilam describes us as “a people that will dwell alone, and will not be reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23:9). The word *BaDaD* (alone) has the same root as *hitBoDeDut*. This is our defining quality, the key to our eternal survival and eventual success: *A Jew will stand alone with His Creator*. Even though it often seems as

if the entire world is battling us and our beliefs, every Jew can courageously stand against the tide by turning to God. No practice better conveys this idea and generates the fortitude to act this way than secluding oneself in conversation with God.

Rebbe Nachman stressed the importance of speaking to God as if He were a true, close friend. When one speaks to a good friend, he feels free to pour out his whole heart and express all his emotions and deepest thoughts. Only by building a strong relationship with God can we develop ourselves to the extent that we realize that He is the only reality. Only then can we gain the strength to stand against the tide.

Every bit of pain we feel, every lack, can be transformed into a prayer. Every experience can be used as an opportunity to come closer. True, there will still be many things that we might never understand in this world. But we can turn to God and cast our burden on Him. We can better understand ourselves and reach clarity. And we can fill our lives with hope by praying for a better future.

God thanked Moses for breaking the Tablets. Why? Don’t we feel at a loss precisely because of it? Had the Jewish People worshiped the idol in the presence of the Tablets, the dichotomy of our actions before God would have been too great to bear. The resulting forgetfulness was the greatest of blessings: It gave us room to face God and build on whatever we lacked, rather than run away from Him and ourselves. By conversing about our forgetfulness and disconnect, we come to remember the Torah that was lost and will never be ashamed to stand before God.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot HaShachar 5:85*

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Strengthen yourself greatly, keep yourself happy and cast aside any bad thoughts! Spend your day in the three prayer services, Torah study, reciting psalms, and conversing with your Creator. (*Letter #464*)

# To Set Foot in the Holy Land!

By Chaim Kramer

**REBBE NACHMAN MADE** his adventure-filled journey to the Holy Land in 1798-99. Reb Noson embarked on his own pilgrimage in 1822.

In the winter of 1822 Reb Noson met a man who had recently arrived from the Holy Land. With the Mediterranean in the grip of the Greek-Turkish war, his journey to Odessa had taken five grueling months, and he painted a gloomy picture of the dangers of traveling to Eretz Yisrael at that time.

But then Reb Noson met a Breslover chassid who told him: When Rebbe Nachman started planning his trip to Eretz Yisrael, a wealthy follower pleaded with him to take him along. The Rebbe said, "If you want to go to Eretz Yisrael, why don't you just go? The man said, "If you take me, I'll go." "What reason do you have for wanting to go to the Holy Land?" the Rebbe asked him. "Turks and Arabs also travel there!" Suddenly the Rebbe became full of passion and said to the people who were there, "When someone wants to go to Eretz Yisrael, he says, 'If you'll take me, I'll go'?! Someone who wants to go to Eretz Yisrael should be willing to go on foot! God said to Abraham, 'Go walk ... to the Land'" (Genesis 12:1).

Reb Noson and his traveling companion, Reb Yehudah Eliezer did go, enduring many travails on land and by sea. When they arrived in Safed, the chassidic community was amazed that anyone would risk coming at such a time – and just for the merit of walking on the soil of the Holy Land!

On the voyage home, their ship was captured by Turks who demanded ransom money from all the passengers. It was just as Rebbe Nachman related in his story of "The Burgher and the Pauper": Sometimes the difficulties one encounters and the conclusion of a mitzvah are as great, if not greater, than those one confronts while actually performing the mitzvah itself.

Reb Noson was someone who valued every minute and would not let a single moment go to waste. Yet for the love of Eretz Yisrael, nothing was too minor for him to attend to in person – negotiating for tickets, arranging travel papers, even selling books to make ends meet – all in order to set foot in the Holy Land.

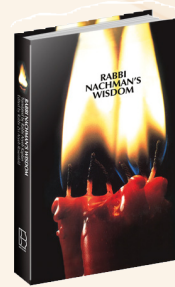
*From "Through Fire and Water:  
The Life of Reb Noson of Breslov"*

## SIDEPATH

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

247. The Rebbe said: The greater your honor and wealth, the farther you are from them. When you have only a little money, you can keep it on your person. When you acquire more, you must keep it in a strongbox. When you acquire still more, you must keep it in the bank.

Acquire still more, and your wealth and investments are scattered in other cities and faraway places.



Great emperors and kings have very great honor, but it is farthest away of all. The tsar's subjects sing his anthem here each evening while he sits far away in his palace. The more worldly honor a person has, the farther away it is from him. But with Torah and good deeds, the more you have, the closer they are to you.

248. The Rebbe said: It is good to select a place and sit there day and night, involved in Torah, prayer and devotion to God. When you must eat, run swiftly to some house, quickly grab a crust of bread to appease your hunger, and then go back to serving God.

249. If you were accustomed to being in the Rebbe's holy presence, you would see extraordinary miracles every minute. But the Rebbe's greatest miracles involved drawing people close to God. If a man truly wanted to come close to God, he would go in and see the Rebbe and immediately be transformed into a new person. Everyone who was worthy of standing in the Rebbe's presence was infused with tremendous awe and inspiration, true repentance, and a great spiritual arousal.



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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.*