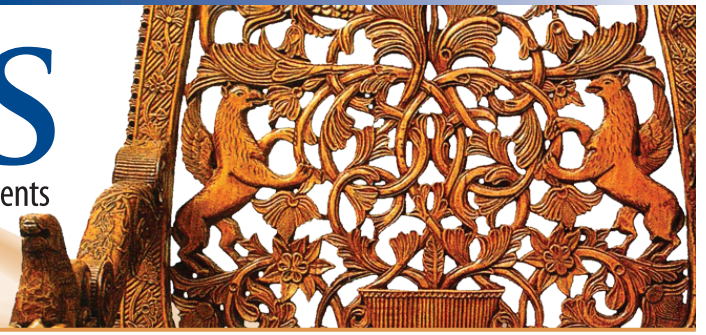


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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The Missing Link

By Yossi Katz

“IN THE PLACE where returnees to Judaism stand, even completely righteous Tzaddikim cannot stand” (*Berakhot* 34b).

Wow! Our Rabbis are implying that the returnee is greater than the saint. But shouldn't one who has spent his entire life in the service of God, and never really faltered, be considered supreme in every aspect? How could there be a “place” reserved for one who has erred?

This question is as old as the universe. You see, once there was only Oneness: only God existed. But God wanted to create a world where others would know Him and develop the deepest kinship with Him. Because He wanted us to appreciate and experience His ultimate kindness and greatness, He created our universe.

But there was a problem. If we were to immediately recognize everything created as an obvious manifestation of Godliness, the world would automatically revert to its original state – we would be nullified in God's awesomeness. Therefore God created freedom of choice and its many forms of multiplicity. By being able to experience the opposites of pure holiness, including our doubts and lusts, we have the space to develop our own identities while at the same time uplift and connect our every experience with God's absolute unity.

This is life. God created an incomplete world, but He gave us the power to complete His creation. When we see through the “thick of things” and believe that everything comes from Him, we are able to reunite creation with its Source. Whenever we study Torah, pray or do a mitzvah, we express our faith in the unity of creation and reconnect ourselves in the highest way.

For someone who has lived a completely righteous life, there isn't that great a distinction between God's Oneness and creation. Such a person has more or less lived his life always connected to God, and is therefore, in a sense, living in the original, nullified state that God was not content with. On the other hand, the person who has done wrong and forgotten about God best expresses the purpose of Creation. When that person returns, he exemplifies God's purpose: to create a distinct being who achieves complete connection and unity with his Creator. The further removed we are from God, the greater is our capacity to experience and reflect the awesome Oneness of God. By being strong and believing in God when He feels distant, we are fulfilling the purpose of Creation to the ultimate degree – we are completing God's creation!

The Jewish people lived a miraculous lifestyle in the desert for 40 years. Living with such an obvious level of direct manifestation of Godliness, they were expected to enter the Holy Land, the land of Divine Providence, with faith alone. Any challenge they encountered would ultimately serve to bring about God's will. But instead, they resorted to the logical plan of sending spies to “check out” the Land – they made their own “creation.” Their newly-created burden and challenge of finding God in the multiplicity of things was now entrusted with the spies – and, unfortunately, the spies did not live up to this challenge.

Each of us is an agent of God Himself. We have been entrusted with life and have been asked to carry out God's will by connecting to Him in every situation. True, it would have been easier had we always made the right choices and lived on the level of the Jews in the desert. But even if we have erred, with our faith, we have the awesome power to complete God's creation!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shluchin 3

Giving Also Means Getting

By Chaim Kramer

OUR SAGES TEACH that charity does much more for the giver than the recipient. Rebbe Nachman explains just how much: the giver earns unlimited blessings, an easy livelihood, a rectification for sin, and the joy of having all his or her prayers answered. These stories from Breslov tradition show us givers who truly understood the value of their charity.

* * *

R' Shabtai Breslover (d. circa 1920) would ride in his wagon in order to collect food and money for the poor. His son, R' Chaim, once said to him, "I am very embarrassed by your behavior. People might think you're collecting for yourself, and say about me that I don't take care of you!"

R' Shabtai replied, "But that's the truth! Who else am I collecting for, if not myself? This is my mitzvah, and I am collecting it for my future!" (*Siach Sarfey Kodesh* 4:576).

* * *

Rebbe Nachman had a follower, R' Dov of Tcherin, who was very wealthy. Rebbe Nachman suggested to him that he give a *chomesh* (one-fifth) of his income to charity. Before he passed away, R' Dov said, "With my *chomesh*, I have nothing to fear from the Heavenly tribunal!" (*Kokhavey Or*, p. 24, #19).

* * *

R' Aharon Leib Tzielman of Poland (d. circa 1943) worked ceaselessly to collect the funds necessary for printing Rebbe Nachman's and Reb Noson's teachings. He was wont to say: "*HaDFaSaH* (the printing of books) has the same *gematria* (numerical value) as *OLaM HaBA* ([the reward of] the World to Come)!"

* * *

Reb Noson was married for eight years without being blessed with children; his wife miscarried several times. Having just met Rebbe Nachman, he spoke to him about their suffering. The Rebbe said to him, "For that you have to give a *pidyon* (redemption)." Reb Noson commissioned someone to make six chairs for the Rebbe, a gift that was well-received.

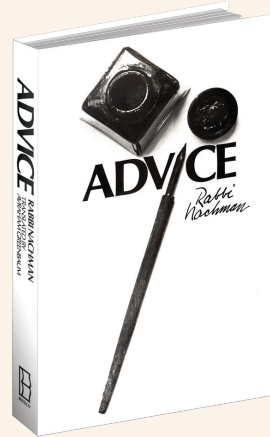
Afterward, Reb Noson had six children, five sons and a daughter. He later said, "Had I known that the number of children depended on the number of chairs, I would have commissioned twelve chairs for the Rebbe!" (*Tovot Zikhronot*, p. 111; Breslov oral tradition).

From "More Blessed to Give: Rebbe Nachman on Charity"

SIDEPATH

Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

ENCOURAGEMENT. 10. The places that seem lowest of all and furthest from God actually contain the most exalted life force of all, albeit concealed—namely the "secrets of Torah." One who has fallen very far should therefore understand that in the very place where he has fallen, he can draw very close to God, because of the exalted life force concealed there. When he succeeds in returning to God, exalted levels of Torah will be revealed through him. These are the "secrets of Torah" (*Likutey Moharan I*, 56:3).



11. When a person wants to return to God and change his life accordingly, making the journey to the Tzaddik, a new evil inclination rises up against him far stronger than the one he had before. At first he feels a great enthusiasm, but when he actually starts on the journey, his desire becomes weakened. At times it happens that when he finally comes to the Tzaddik, he loses his desire

completely. The reason is that as soon as he felt the desire to journey to the Tzaddik, he killed the evil inclination he had before and a new and stronger evil inclination came into being. If you genuinely wish to draw close to God, you must be very firm in the battle against the evil inclination, because it keeps rising up with ever-renewed strength (*ibid.* I, 72).



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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.