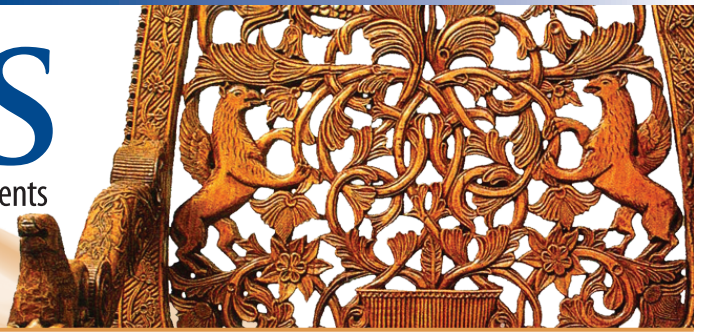


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT VAYIGASH • 5779 • VOL. 9 NO. 12

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Getting Past the Clouds

By Yossi Katz

I PERSONALLY DON'T like cold weather. Growing up in Toronto, I remember walking home from school in the icy, cold and already darkening afternoon hours. Even today, as I sit in my warm minivan, when the forecast predicts wintry weather, I begin to brainstorm ways of getting to Florida in a jiffy. It's just a two-and-a-half-hour flight to paradise. Although I never end up making it there, just the thought that it's warm somewhere in the world gives a certain comfort.

This is not only true of the weather, but also of our spiritual "forecast" and outlook. We all love warm, sunny days with a clear blue sky and a gentle breeze. Wouldn't it be nice to have these kinds of days when we're trying to grow spiritually as well?

Picture the perfect day. You wake up in the morning and give heartfelt thanks to God for restoring your special *neshamah* (soul). You begin the day with sincere prayer and inspirational Torah study. You are both productive and diligent at work while finding deep meaning and connection with what you're doing. You remember to make time for your family and community. You also work on your character traits and, of course, avoid ever becoming angry, jealous or arrogant.

But when was the last time you actually had a day like that? Why do our days seem to always get so cloudy and murky? We all want to live this way, but "stuff happens" and we lose focus and fall back down to "reality."

One of Rebbe Nachman's basic teachings is the concept of *yeridah tachlit aliyah* (falling for the purpose of rising). This means that although we perceive we are spiritually falling, in actuality, we are being prepared for our future spiritual ascent.

In our *parashah*, Jacob has suffered for many years because he was under the impression that his beloved son Joseph had died. One day he receives word that tells him he's been mistaken all this time. Joseph is alive and well, and is viceroy of Egypt! Jacob is jubilant, and desires to immediately see his son.

But he is also afraid. Joseph lives in Egypt and Jacob resides in the Land of Israel. The Hebrew word for Egypt is *Mitzrayim* (constrictions), alluding to the bitter constraints of the exile. It is a place of darkness, a cloudy and cold place. Since hearing the good news, Jacob has been overjoyed and the prophecy that left him because of his depressed state has been restored. How can he now go "down" to Egypt? God reveals to him, "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you back up" (Genesis 46:4).

God is always with us, even when we feel that we are distant. Wherever a Jew goes, God is always there with him. Perhaps to us it looks like a cold and cloudy day, but we fail to see the sun behind the clouds. Only God knows what is best for us, and that what we perceive to be bitter and painful is actually therapeutic and healthy.

Furthermore, God does not conceal Himself for one extra second. Just as the moon, at its darkest moment, is really renewing itself so that it can wax full and bright in the nighttime sky once again, so God acts with us. We think that it is too late, that things are too difficult, that we've made too many mistakes and the day has already been wasting. Don't throw in the towel! Hold on just a little bit longer and you will discover that God has been with you the entire time, and that all of your difficulties were only paving the way for incredible spiritual growth and inner meaning.

Based on Likutey Halakhot V, p. 286-144a-288

Reb Noson's Last Will and Testament

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REBBE NACHMAN ONCE said of Reb Noson, "If not for Noson, not a shred of even one of page of my teachings would have been preserved!" The day of Reb Noson's passing, the tenth of Tevet, hints to the greatness of the task that he undertook. For the fast of the Tenth of Tevet commemorates not only the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, but the passing of Ezra the Scribe.

It was Friday and Reb Noson was very ill. He asked those who were with him to read two of Rebbe Nachman's famous tales, "The Lost Princess" and "The King and the Emperor." In "The Lost Princess," the king's daughter disappears and his viceroy searches for a torturously long time until he finally finds her. He must release her from a "pearl castle on a golden mountain."

In "The King and the Emperor," the king's son is engaged to the emperor's daughter, but she is abducted before they can marry. The story describes her escape and how she contrives to become the ruler of a kingdom and bring back her long-lost fiancé. After rewarding those who suffered because of her, she turns to her fiancé and says, "Come! Let us go home!"

Reb Noson asked those who were with him to repeat these final words several times. Then he said, "It is my time to go home."

He spoke as if giving his last will and testament: "You must keep together and love one another. You are all good people, but you are *shlimazelniks*—unlucky!"

Suddenly Reb Noson said, "Three tragedies befell the Jewish people in the month of Tevet. What were they? Ezra the Scribe passed away, the Torah was translated into Greek in the time of King Ptolemy, and Jerusalem was besieged.

"When Ezra the Scribe leaves the world, and atheism and heresy engulf the world, as we find today, with false ideologies springing up in their thousands and myriads ... still, I trust that even one page of Rebbe Nachman's writings will be enough to rectify everything! I therefore want to give you instructions. Your work will be to *print the Rebbe's books*, and 'Your wellsprings will flow outward' (Proverbs 5:16). Be strong – with money, willpower and effort!"

From "Through Fire and Water," pp. 542-543

Dedicated in the Memory of (L'ilui nishmat) Yehudis bat Shimon

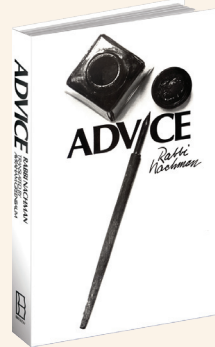
SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

ALIEN PHILOSOPHIES AND IDEOLOGIES. 5. When the Jewish people adopt the ideas and outlook of the other nations, God forbid, the Tzaddik falls from his level and his perceptions become covered over and obscured (Likutey Moharan I, 49).

6. Too much intellectual sophistication can be harmful, especially when it takes the form of excessive philosophizing and speculation. The basis of true wisdom is a strong heart and a strong character. The only way to attain them is through good deeds. A person whose intelligence outstrips his practical attainments in the form of good deeds will lack the strength of character to contain his intelligence within the necessary bounds. His intelligence will only make him sin.

It can be very dangerous when people with lax moral standards dabble in philosophy. Their intelligence drives them on to even greater transgressions and it harms them, and indeed the entire world, more than all the snakes and scorpions, wild animals and other dangerous things in the world. They use their intelligence to hurl insults and abuse at the heavens and to cast aspersions on the holy Torah and especially the Sages of the Talmud and the Tzaddikim who followed them. All this is well known. May God in His mercy take pity on the remnant of Israel and guard them from this band of people and their babblings (ibid. I, 55:6).



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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.