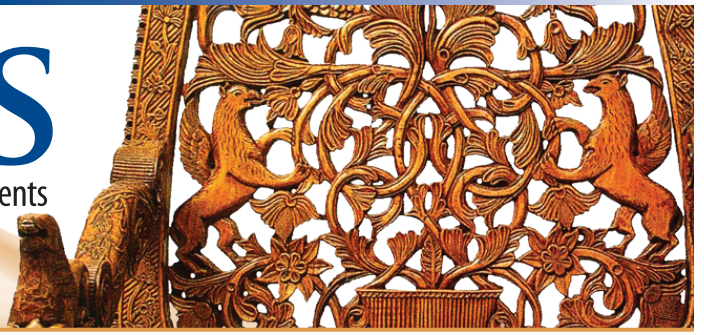


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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A New Day, A New Way

By Yossi Katz

IMAGINE ONE MORNING you open the newspaper and see the following headline: *Pope Decides to Convert to Judaism*. Wouldn't that be something else? But actually, this has a precedent.

Yitro was the Pope of Midian. He served every conceivable idol before deciding to convert to Judaism. In fact, the Baal HaTurim states that the numerical value of the name *Yitro* (616) is equal to that of the phrase *Komer Hayah La'avodah Zarah* (He was a priest to false gods).

After Yitro saw the great miracles that God did for the Jews, he declared, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the deities!" (Exodus 18:11). On this verse, the *Zohar* (*Yitro* 67) comments, "Then God was exalted in His glory from above and below." This seems to imply that only at that point did this ultimate sanctification of God's Name take place. Yet surely during the days of our Patriarchs, a greater sanctification must have happened. Why is Yitro the model for the sanctification of God's Name?

The more distant something is from Godliness, the greater is its potential to reveal Godliness. When Yitro, the Pope of Midian, converted, the world noticed. All his congregants who never considered belief in monotheism saw their influential leader embracing it. What greater sanctification of God's Name could there possibly be?

We may not be the Pope, but we have the same ability to sanctify God's Name. Every day is an entirely new creation, a new opportunity to reveal Godliness in the world. No matter what happened yesterday, God tailor-made today so we could contribute in our own unique ways. Not only that, but if yesterday was a lousy day, then how much more do I have the potential today to bring light and Godliness to that very place I have fallen to! Even if I have sunken very low, when I connect to God in whatever way I can, right here and right now, I can elevate even the darkest places. This is not a task that angels can perform, or even the great tzaddikim. God gave this ability to each and every one of us specifically.

Do we believe in ourselves? Or do we give up before we even try, because we think it's too late? Rebbe Nachman exclaimed, "*Gevalt!* Never give up!" Keep doing whatever you can, even if that means starting over again and again, and you will connect yourself and the place you're at to God each time. If our Rabbis said about someone who sinned his entire life and repented one moment before he died that his sins are forgiven, how much more blessed is one who has begun his return over and over again! This person is constantly revealing Godliness in the places that others much greater than him are afraid to approach.

Yitro said, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the deities, for with the thing that they plotted, [He came] upon them." Rashi comments, "With the pot they thought to cook with, were they cooked." Perhaps Yitro also meant, "Now, specifically, I see how great God truly is, for I see that the place that I descended to became the springboard for the greatest manifestation of God's glory!"

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Kriat HaTorah 6

Speaking Before the King

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REBBE NACHMAN TELLS a parable:

Once there was a lord who had a very competent clerk in his employ. One day he sent this clerk to oversee a distant city within his fiefdom. When the clerk arrived at his post, however, he didn't mention the lord at all, and people got the impression that the clerk was in fact the lord. Whenever they needed something from him, they would fall at his feet and show him all kinds of honor. They would address him as "Your lordship," "Your munificence," and so on.

Once the lord himself came to the city to meet with the clerk and find out why people were not doing their appointed tasks. When the clerk summoned a supervisor to answer the lord's questions, the supervisor immediately bowed to the clerk and called him "Your greatness." When the lord began questioning him, the supervisor addressed his answers to the clerk instead. The supervisor spent much time flattering the clerk, imparting to him the honor that should have been accorded the lord. Naturally, the clerk's face turned black "like the bottom of a pot" from embarrassment. For there is no greater shame than this: that in the presence of the lord, they give *him* the honor.

Rebbe Nachman explains: The principal honor a man receives is due to the power of speech, for speech is the only thing that distinguishes man from animal. Speech corresponds to the Palace of God. When a person seeks honor through another's praise of him, or through his own speech to or about others, he is seeking honor in the King's Palace – honor that belongs to God, not to him.

Reb Noson adds that we should take care to use our speech specifically to honor God and righteous people (who, through their words and actions, reveal God to others).

Perhaps this teaching contributed to the great respect that Breslover Chassidim accorded one another throughout the generations. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Bender recounted, "The care and sensitivity with which Breslovers treated each other is difficult to describe. They never said anything that could be construed as an insult or denigrating to their fellow in any way. They spoke with each other in a calm, tranquil manner, which is rare to find today."

Based on Likutey Moharan I, 194; Likutey Tefilot I, 132

SIDEPATH

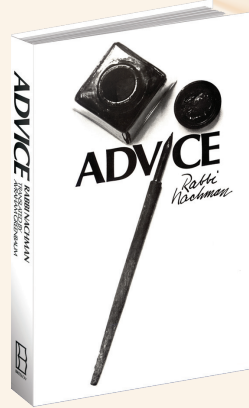
Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MIDNIGHT PRAYER. 2. Rising at midnight sweetens the harsh judgments. This practice is as valuable as presenting a redemption (*Likutey Moharan I*, 149).

3. Throughout the year, the correct time for the midnight prayer is when the first six hours of the night have passed. It lasts for two hours until the end of the second "watch." In the morning, it is a good thing to look up at the sky. This will give you *da'at*, knowledge of God.

4. The exile has already lasted so long. God is only waiting for the moment to return to us and rebuild the Holy Temple. It could happen at any time. Our task is to see that from our side we do nothing to obstruct the rebuilding of the Temple. On the contrary, we must make every effort to hasten it.

This is why we should be so careful to get up each night at midnight and mourn for the destruction of the Holy Temple. Perhaps in a previous incarnation we ourselves were responsible for something that brought about the destruction of the Temple. Even if not, it could still be that our sins in our present lifetime are holding up the rebuilding of the Temple, and this is as bad as if we had actually destroyed it. When we weep and mourn every night at midnight, it is as if we were actually making a tremendous effort to rebuild the Holy Temple (*ibid.* II, 67).



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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.