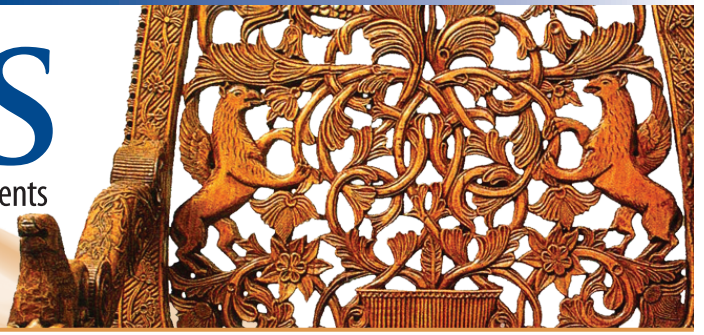


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT MISHPATIM • 5779 • VOL. 9 NO. 19

📧 breslov.org/pathways



The Specialness of a Jew

By Yossi Katz

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, the Jews have irked the nations of the world by proclaiming ourselves the Chosen People. The idea of us being called by this extraordinary title stirs up their jealousy and challenges their self-worth. “Why are you so special?” they ask. “What makes you any better than us?” Interestingly, these questions are actually indicative of why they were not chosen in the first place.

Our nation traces its roots back to Abraham. At the age of three, Abraham began to reject the idol worship of those around him as he discovered the one true God. Despite an attempt on his life, Abraham set out to spread this awareness throughout the world. His tent was open on all sides, inviting all to enter and learn Torah. After seeing Abraham’s self-sacrifice and absolute pursuit of truth, God sealed an everlasting covenant with him.

One may think that at this point, Abraham had the right to feel good about himself. After all, wasn’t he chosen because he was so worthy? But the Torah tells us the exact opposite: Abraham declared, “I am but dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:27). Rashi explains that Abraham was saying, “I was already fit to be dust at the hands of the kings (with whom he fought), and ashes at the hands of Nimrod (who threw him into the fiery furnace).” In other words, Abraham was looking at his Divine salvation and feeling that he was saved undeservedly—despite the fact that he had put himself in those situations for the sake of God Himself!

Fast forward to the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Standing at the foot of the mountain, the Jewish people make their own incredible declaration: “All that

God has said, we will do and then we will understand” (Exodus 24:7). Our Sages greatly praise the Jews for enthusiastically embracing God’s commandments even before knowing what they were (*Shabbat* 88a). But how could they accept something if they didn’t know what it was? On the other hand, the verse begins “All that God has said.” This seems to imply that God *did* state what was asked. If so, what great attitude did our Sages laud?

The answer is that the Jews indeed heard the words and knew what they were commanded to do, but they didn’t ask or analyze the meaning behind the commandments. Rather, they acted enthusiastically to fulfill God’s word. Why and how? Because they had inherited the attitude of Abraham. They knew they were not really worthy of God’s salvation, but that everything was an underserved gift from Heaven. Their attitude was: “We will do with absolute sincerity and happiness the commandments of God, and we will be blessed with whatever deep knowledge and insight God grants us.”

As Jews, that’s what makes us special and unique. Sometimes we are fortunate and feel a burst of spirituality, but we must never become self-absorbed and think that that was coming to us. Yes, it’s nice when we feel a deep and special spiritual insight, but that’s purely an underserved gift from Above. Instead, we must serve God with humbleness and faith, and feel an incredible happiness that we were chosen to fulfill this role. It is precisely this quality that God finds so special and wholesome in us – this is our *pintele yid*. This was the reason that God chose Abraham and revealed Himself to him. And this is the reason that God will choose each and every one of us, and bless us with our own unique Torah revelation.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Nefilat Apayim 4:13

Nip It in the Bud

By Yehudis Golshevsky

BRESLOVER CHASSIDIM WOULD say that it's best to be quiet about the good that you do. Letting other people know about your accomplishments leads only to pride, and pride is the enemy of serving God.

Reb Noson was very careful to trim any harmful pride that he found growing within the hearts of his students. Once his close disciple, Reb Nachman of Tulchin, traveled a long, hard journey to supervise a printing of *Likutey Halakhot*, Reb Noson's magnum opus. Besides the arduousness of the trip, Reb Nachman faced many overwhelming obstacles and dangers as he finished printing the books and smuggled them over the border.

After hearing about his harrowing adventures, the Breslovers felt that Reb Nachman deserved special distinction for having somehow managed a virtually impossible feat. "Perhaps we should begin calling him 'Rebbe Nachman' as a way of showing our vast appreciation?" they suggested.

Reb Nachman was in the room when they presented their idea to Reb Noson, who immediately rejected it. "Is it really so simple in your eyes?" Reb Noson asked. "I don't understand this attitude at all. Don't you know that every good point – even if it is as fragile and apparently insignificant as an eggshell – is priceless? Surely every good deed is worthy of endless praise. So why should you call him 'Rebbe' because of this particular good turn that he's done?"

Reb Noson facetiously added a rhyme in Yiddish: "*Leig em uffen tisch chappin a schmitz* – That makes as much sense as laying him on the table and slapping him up!"

Reb Avrohom, the son of Reb Nachman of Tulchin, explained why Reb Noson had made such a strong point, and had even made a joke about the idea. "Reb Noson knew that this request – made in my father's presence – was very unhealthy for his spiritual well-being, so he nipped it in the bud!"

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:571, III:284

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MIDNIGHT PRAYER. 5. The merit of rising for the midnight prayer protects us from destruction by fire (*Likutey Moharan II*, 67).

6. The main devotion of the Jew is to get up every night in the winter for the midnight prayer. In the summer, when the nights are short and we do not rise for the midnight prayer except in the Land of Israel, one should be sure to get up with the dawn each morning (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #301).

JOURNEYING AND TRAVEL. 1. In the periods when people ignore attempts to criticize them and offer them spiritual guidance, the end result is exile, expulsion from the lands they are living in, and bitter wandering (*Likutey Moharan I*, 22:1).

2. Before going on a journey, one should give money to charity. Then nothing will delay him or trouble him on the way (*ibid.* I, 31:4).

3. All the traveling a person has to do is because of flaws in his faith in God. ... At times traveling can be a tikkun for these flaws, and this removes the force of anger from the world and draws down the influence of love (*ibid.* I, 40).

4. Neglect of Torah causes exile (*ibid.*).

5. A person may spend his life as a "fugitive and a wanderer" (Genesis 4:14) and at times may come to places that are very far from God. Even so, a Jew has the power to elevate all these places to God (*ibid.* II, 76).



breslov.org

PO Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641

PO Box 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

Pathways is a weekly publication. To subscribe, please visit breslov.org/pathways. To make a dedication, please email pathways@breslov.org.

© 2019 Breslov Research Institute

The photo on the front is a close-up of Rebbe Nachman's chair, which is displayed in the main Breslov synagogue in Jerusalem.