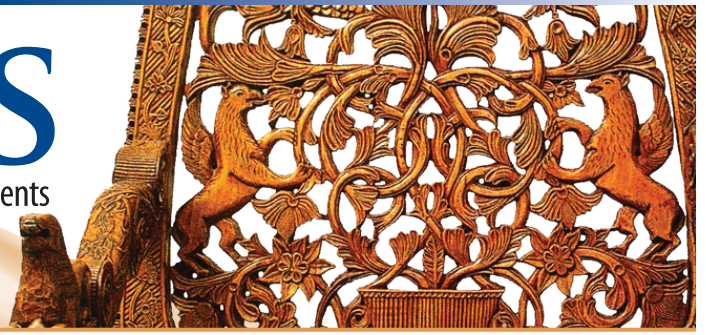


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Take It Easy

By Yossi Katz

DO YOU EVER feel like you're "busy doing nothing"? Do you sometimes work endlessly and yet have the distinct sense that you haven't really accomplished much of anything? We all experience those days from time to time, and as difficult as they are, they allude to the incredible possibility that the exact opposite experience is also possible. Imagine doing "nothing at all" while all of your work is done for you! Does this sound too good to be true? Actually, it isn't at all. In fact, it's a concept we are all already familiar with – it's called Shabbat!

Our *parashah* states, "Work shall be done for six days, and on the seventh there shall be for you a holy Shabbat" (Exodus 35:2). Why does the verse say, "Work shall be done," instead of, "You shall work"?

When the Torah first mentions Shabbat, it states, "And God completed on the seventh day His work that He did" (Genesis 2:2). Rashi asks on this verse, "But what was left to complete on the seventh day? What was still missing? The world was missing the creation of rest. When Shabbat was created, rest was created. Now all of the work was complete."

But how could resting complete anything? Usually, if we have worked hard and are tired, we allow ourselves some rest so our bodies can recover before our next undertaking. But Rashi seems to be implying that rest was an integral part of the creation, not a prerequisite for starting something new. He seems to imply that without rest, God's creation would be lacking.

Vayekhal Elokim (God completed) also means "God desired." On Shabbat, we are most attuned to perceiving that everything in our lives and in the universe exists

and operates exactly according to God's will or desire. The completion that the world was missing was this last piece of information. Everything was set up and running with incredible precision, but without the knowledge that God's hand was behind everything, creation was still incomplete.

By resting on Shabbat, we acknowledge God's Presence. In fact, precisely the forms of work that we engage in during the week are the ones that we are forbidden to perform on Shabbat. By not engaging in them, we demonstrate our faith in God. And we understand that even during the week, when we engage in these forms of work, God is bringing about our every success and we are simply going through the motions.

There were once two wealthy brothers who lived across the street from each other. One was very generous, the other a miser. A traveler passing through town asked where he could get a warm, nourishing meal and was directed to the home of the generous brother. By mistake, he ended up by the miser. The miser promised him a good meal if he would first work for many hours performing grueling labor. When the traveler finally finished, the miser told him to go to the house across the street for his meal. After eating his meal, the traveler complained to his host, "I spent so many grueling hours working for the man across the street, and was given only a meal in return." His host responded, "I'm sorry, the meal was given to you for free by me, not because of your labor!"

By cultivating faith in God through our observance of Shabbat, we internalize God as the source of all bounty. According to the level of our belief, the Torah says, "Work shall be done" – our work can be automatically done by God. Wouldn't that be nice for a change?

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhos Shabbat 3

Tap into Joy!

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REBBE NACHMAN IS well-known for his statement “It’s a great mitzvah to be happy always!”

Happiness figures prominently in many of the Rebbe’s lessons because the more joy a person feels, the more empowered he is to work on coming closer to God. If he lacks joy, he won’t have the strength and vitality he needs to grow spiritually.

Someone once asked Reb Noson how he could be happy when he had so many problems and difficulties. Reb Noson answered, “Borrow the happiness!”

When it comes to money, we rarely hesitate to borrow against future earnings. Well, sadness makes a person feel he’s missing something. The thing to do, as Reb Noson advises, is to borrow from whatever you can think of that makes you happy. Besides, there’s a big difference between owing money and owing happiness. When money is paid back, it hurts a little. But with happiness, when we pay it back, we have happiness again. Forcing joy and happiness actually pays fantastic dividends!

Rebbe Nachman’s daughter, Sarah, had a terrible toothache. When she shared her pain with her father, he said, “You should feel joyous.”

“Even though it hurts me?” she asked.

“Act as if you are happy,” he advised. “There will come a time when you will feel so happy because of this that you will dance. When this happens, you will be healed.”

She listened to his advice and worked on feeling happy despite her pain. Eventually she mustered enough joy and closed her window shades so passersby would not see her, and danced. And she was healed, exactly as the Rebbe had predicted.

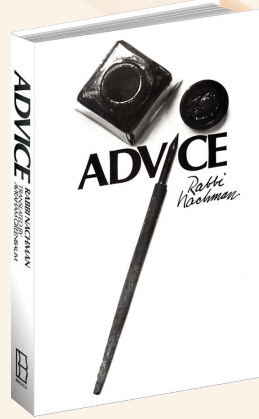
Reb Avraham Chazan, a Breslov leader in Uman and Israel in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, commented, “If Rebbe Nachman taught that it’s a great mitzvah to be happy always, then we must believe that there is what to be happy about!”

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh I:347-348 and I:736

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

AWE AND DEVOTION. 7. Be sure that you make your days very long. With each new day and each fresh moment, make sure that the time is longer, fuller and richer with added holiness. ... This is the secret of a long life. When you start each day, at first the day is very short. The spiritual accomplishments you need to achieve this day weigh heavily upon you. It takes great determination not to be discouraged as you feel the weight of the devotions you have to undertake this day. But be courageous and don’t lose heart. ... If you are determined enough, they will become easier and you will find that you can accomplish what you must in God’s service. ... Then you will be blessed with length of days.



The root of this skill in living lies in cultivating true fear of Heaven (*Likutey Moharan I, 60:2*).

8. Such fear is the foundation of a long life. It can bring you great wealth – the wealth of holiness. And through this wealth it is possible to attain profound understanding. ... This is the reason why so many of the greatest of the tzaddikim were extraordinarily wealthy, such as Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, the compiler of the Mishnah, and Rav Ashi, the compiler of the Talmud. The source of this wealth is in “length of days,” which is attained through awe (*ibid. I, 60:3*).



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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.