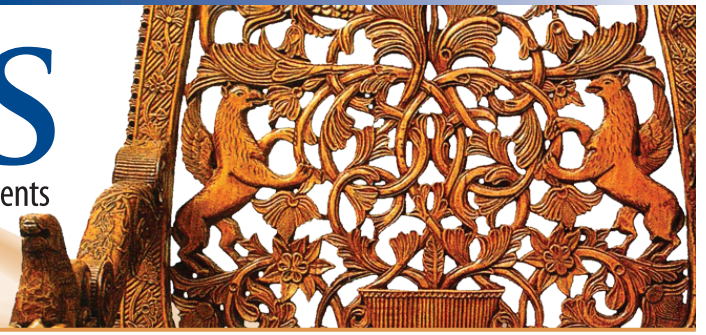


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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One in a Thousand

By Yossi Katz

TRADITIONALLY, JEWISH CHILDREN start learning *Chumash* from the beginning of this week's *parashah*. One might wonder: Why not start from the beginning of the Torah, from *Bereishit*? There is also something very unusual about the first word of this *parashah*, "*Vayikra*," which is written in the Torah with a small *aleph*. What does this all mean?

Regarding the judgment process in the Heavenly Court, it is written, "If he has an interceding angel, one [positive-speaking angel] out of a thousand [persecuting angels] to attest to a man's righteousness, then He is gracious to him and says, 'Redeem him from descending to the pit; I have found a ransom'" (Job 33:23-24). Our Rabbis have interpreted this verse to mean that even if only one angel comes to a man's defense, and even if, within the defense itself, 999 parts are against the man and in only one part is he deemed meritorious, he is still worthy of being saved.

Similarly, we have the power to look at our friends and at ourselves and make judgments in the same positive way. I may look at myself and discover 999 faults, but if I can find one good point – and, even if within that good point, 999 parts are negative and there is but one point of true good intention – nevertheless, by identifying this tiny goodness, I can leave the negative and begin a new, positive spiritual life. The reason is that the source of true goodness is God Himself. Since God is eternal, any point of goodness, no matter how insignificant, has eternal, permanent power.

Inasmuch as we are each a part of the process of discovering and identifying this Godliness, the Tzaddik is the head of the movement. He has both the ability to discover the good point within us – thus causing us

to feel spiritually free to grow and strive – and he also teaches us how we can appreciate and live joyfully with these good points.

In building the Golden Calf, the Jewish People fell into a sin that is considered to include all three capital offenses – bloodshed, idol-worship and illicit relations. The nation that had just heard the Ten Commandments from God Himself now felt utterly lost and rotten. But Moses the great Tzaddik interceded on our behalf. He pleaded with God to see the speck of goodness that remained within us. As a result of this successful plea, God commanded us to build the Tabernacle. Upon its completion, God called out to Moses from the place of the small *aleph*.

Aleph has the numerical value of 1. As we have seen, even if the good point is only a thousandth part good, and even if this thousandth is surrounded by 999 negative points, nevertheless, this goodness is eternal. This goodness is the small *aleph*. Just as the Jews built a physical Tabernacle, so too, the Tzaddik builds a parallel, supernal Tabernacle powered by the goodness contained within each one of us. It is from this place that, even after the sin of the Golden Calf, God was able to still speak to Moses. It is from this place of goodness that the innocent *cheder* boy receives his spiritual vitality, and from this place of goodness within us that a soon-to-be-born spiritual child can grow up.

We are all children of God. Therefore we each have the potential – no matter how distant we may be – to live a spiritual life of goodness. By attaching ourselves to the Tzaddik and his process of discovering Godliness, we can live with this goodness breath by breath. We will then not only change ourselves, but also make an enduring impact on the entire world. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Eiruvey Techumim 6

Open Hands, Open Hearts

By Yehudis Golshevsky

ONE OF THE main mitzvot of Purim is *matanos l'evyonim*, giving gifts to the poor. Breslover chassidim would point out that Rebbe Nachman taught that giving charity is an *avodah*, a Divine service, that requires an investment of effort (*Likutey Moharan II*, 4).

Charity is the means to open all the doors and channels of blessing, and needs to be undertaken with focused attention. This obviously applies even more on Purim, when we have an obligation to give charity to two deserving parties, even if we don't have many resources of our own.

A certain Breslover chassid was feeling resentful about always being approached to donate to supposedly worthy causes. He asked a friend for advice on how to give charity with an open heart.

The friend replied, "Rebbe Nachman explained that whenever something gets you angry, you need to transform your cruelty into compassion. By putting yourself in the position of the poor – really identifying with their pain and struggle – you'll feel real compassion for them. Then you'll want to help them in any way possible."

* *

Reb Mordechai Barbinitzer was a wealthy man who gave large amounts of charity to the poor. Everybody loved him; his heart was wide open to anyone who needed his assistance. Although he was very well-to-do, whenever he arrived in Uman he would not hire a wagon to carry him from the train station to the *kloyz* (the Breslov synagogue), which was quite a distance away. People naturally wondered why he didn't take a wagon as the wealthy usually do.

"If I take a wagon, it will be very difficult for me to empathize with how hard it is for the poor, who have to walk this distance," he explained. "So I walk to see how they feel, and make sure to open my heart and purse to support them."

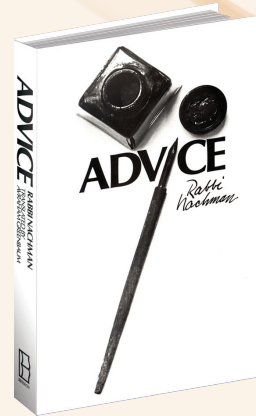
Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:284, IV:456

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

AWE AND DEVOTION. 13. When a new soul enters a person, he must raise it and rear it with love and awe (*Likutey Moharan I*, 67:6).

14. If a person does not consider the purpose of everything, what is the point of his life? (*ibid.* I, 268).



15. One of the basic rules in serving God is to think only of today. Pay no attention to yesterday or tomorrow. This applies to the work you have to do to earn a living and provide for your needs. The same applies to serving God. You should think of only today, the present hour. When a person wants to begin serving God, it seems like a heavy burden that he will never be

able to bear. But if you think that you have only today, it will not be a burden at all. Don't put things off and say, "I'll start tomorrow." "Tomorrow I will pray with strength and devotion," and so on. Man's world consists of nothing except the day and the hour that he stands in now. Tomorrow is a completely different world. "Today, if you would but listen to His voice!" (Psalms 95:7). Exactly! Today! (*ibid.* I, 272).

16. Every mitzvah that a person does in this world creates a lamp with which he can explore the treasure house of the King after his passing. This is the ultimate bliss of the World to Come (*ibid.* I, 275).



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PO Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641
PO Box 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

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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.