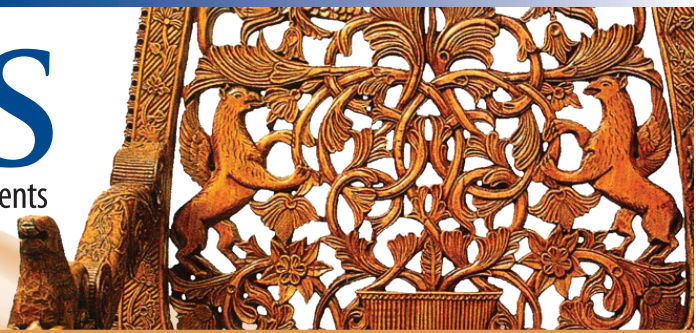


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Peace Plan

By Yossi Katz

PINCHAS CERTAINLY RISKED his life and did a most honorable thing. Zimri, a tremendous Torah scholar and great prince from the tribe of Shimon, had taken Kozbi, a Midianite princess, into his tent in front of Moses and the entire Jewish people. This act was a total disgrace. Pinchas could not bear to see this and, solely for God's sake, killed both Zimri and Kozbi. While Pinchas did what was necessary, nevertheless, he had murdered two people. Why was he worthy of being blessed with the "covenant of peace" (Numbers 25:12) and being given "the priestly covenant forever" (ibid. 25:13)?

When God desired to create our world, He emanated an awesome light of lovingkindness into the vacuum of the universe. As He carried out the process of Creation, He included a built-in flaw. As the light reached the emanation of Yesod (Foundation), it overpowered the vessel created to absorb it. The vessel shattered and its shards fell to the lower worlds. The light was now trapped; without its vessel, it could not descend into our world.

Consequently, we are born into a world in which God's lovingkindness is "stuck" above us. While our soul seeks this love, by default it can't unify with it. Furthermore, the shards that were once united with God's lovingkindness remain – only now they are broken and far from their source. They still emanate a sense of love, but it is illusory, cloaking itself in the vanities of this world (see *Likutey Moharan* I, 34). For this reason, we seek to infatuate ourselves with materialism or elicit temptation; our souls are clamoring for God, but don't know how to access Him.

Yesod represents the mechanism God created to shower Heavenly bounty upon earth. Metaphysically, Yesod parallels the reproductive organ, which similarly gives life. The tzaddik has mastered his physicality and uses this organ and its associated drive solely for fulfilling God's will. He is the master of Yesod, and can influence God's

lovingkindness to draw down Heavenly bounty. Because of Yesod's paramount importance, man's central challenge lies here, in the most difficult area to conquer. The *brit-covenant* is made in this place. When man sanctifies himself, demonstrating His love and allegiance to God, God in return showers His blessing upon mankind.

When we stray and pursue illusory lusts and loves, we break this bond. We become ashamed of ourselves and God's love becomes hidden from us. But the tzaddik, master of Yesod, offers us hope. His words, infused with God's lovingkindness, inspire and reinvigorate us. When we hear or study these words, discuss them with our friends, and seclude ourselves in private conversation with God, we can restore our relationship with God. Our bond is renewed and lovingkindness flows to us once again.

None of this interested Balaam. He was evil, lewd and immoral. Our Rabbis teach that his power was with his mouth (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 20). Balaam chose to use speech and communication, which have such a great potential to uplift, to speak immorally and poke fun at the tzaddikim. He understood that our relationship with God is dependent on our sanctity, so he devised a plan to attack us from this angle. He successfully penetrated the Jewish camp and Zimri became a terrible threat to the mark of our special bond with God. So vile was the danger that Moshe forgot the law regarding Zimri. Our entire relationship with God was on very shaky ground.

Thankfully, Pinchas arose and tore into the evil. He restored our sanctity so that God's love would once again shower upon us. The service of the Kohanim serves to evoke God's compassion and forgiveness. Pinchas was therefore worthy of joining their ranks, for he had restored God's lovingkindness. As God's love became revealed once again, the Jewish people felt the inner peace of connection with their true Source rather than the confusion of self-infatuation. Pinchas had brought peace.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkat Kohanim 5

In This World & the Next

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REB SHIMON B'REB BER, who met Rebbe Nachman on the Rebbe's wedding day, was Rebbe Nachman's very first disciple. Reb Shimon proved to be a faithful devotee and *shamash* (personal assistant) throughout the Rebbe's years as a leader and teacher. One question was always on his lips: "Will I merit to be your *shamash* in the next world, too?" Rebbe Nachman never gave him a clear answer, though.

Once Reb Shimon appealed yet again to Rebbe Nachman for assurance that he would be worthy of attending him in the World to Come. He reminded his mentor of one of the best examples of the extent of his self-sacrifice on Rebbe Nachman's behalf.

It happened when the two were traveling in a horse-drawn carriage with a number of other passengers. As the carriage began to descend downhill, one of the wheels broke away. Not only did the carriage begin to race uncontrollably, but the road itself was filled with obstacles and boulders. The danger grew from instant to instant and all of the passengers were in danger of their lives.

Without a thought for his own safety, Reb Shimon jumped out of the carriage and flung himself against the side of the vehicle. Using his own body as a support in place of the missing wheel, he raced with the carriage downhill to keep it from overturning.

"Rebbe, did I not save your life that time in the carriage? Is that not enough to guarantee me a place by your side in the next world?"

Rebbe Nachman smiled and nodded. "You're right – that time, you really did well!" This was the Rebbe's way of acknowledging the debt of gratitude that he owed his student. Nonetheless, he didn't promise that Reb Shimon's request would be granted. Soon afterward Reb Shimon appeared again before Rebbe Nachman with his usual refrain, and this time the Rebbe didn't refuse him.

"Since I saw you last, my righteous mother appeared to me in a dream and she took me to task for not agreeing to your request," the Rebbe told him. "So I promise you that you will indeed be my *shamash* in both this world and the next."

Rabbi Nachman of Tulchin, Reb Noson's great student, would add, "And even Reb Noson was jealous of Reb Shimon for having received that kind of a promise from Rebbe Nachman!"

Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 123-125

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

HONOR. 30. The revelation of God's glory depends entirely on man. Therefore, when some new honor comes to a person, he must be scrupulous about not taking any of it for himself. He must make sure that he gives all the glory to God (*Likutey Moharan* II, 71).

31. A person who insults God's honor falls from the mentality of the "Land of Israel" – which is the source of true understanding and wisdom — to the mentality of "outside the Land." This is the root of strife and factionalism (*ibid.*).



32. One who is jealous of a friend who rises to greatness can lose his faith and turn into an atheist. We must be extremely careful about this (*ibid.* II, 80).

33. In our times there is no one whose motive for seeking power is purely for the sake of Heaven. In previous generations there were such people, but today, no one should seek out positions of power. All honor and authority should be avoided (*ibid.*).

34. Anyone with a clear mind can see that all the affairs of this world are utterly futile and foolish. This is especially true of earthly prestige, power and fame. The truth is that these give no pleasure or satisfaction even in this world. They are always attended by suffering and abuse from other people (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #47).

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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.