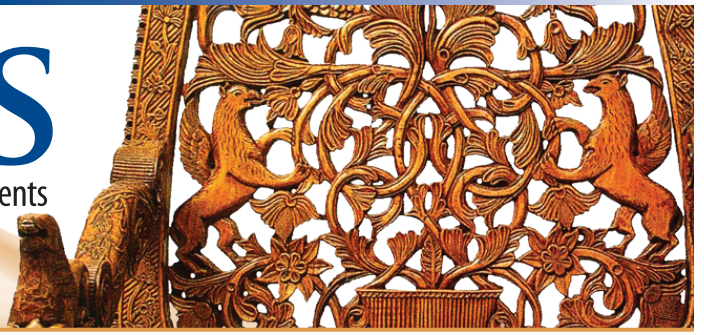


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Time to Rebuild

By Yossi Katz

**IF SOMEONE WERE** to curse and totally demean you, wouldn't it seem strange if he told you moments later how great he is going to make you? Well then, take a look at what's going on:

First, the prophet Amos informs us that God compares the Jews to Cushites, saying, "Are you not like the children of the Cushites to me, O children of Israel?" (Amos 9:7).

Comparing us to Cushites wasn't exactly a compliment. The Cushites were the descendants of Cush, the son of Ham. After Ham either castrated or sodomized his father Noah, he was cursed by God with slavery and lowliness. "So shall the king of Assyria lead the captivity of Egypt and the exile of Cush, youths and old men, naked and barefoot, with bare buttocks" (Isaiah 20:4).

But immediately, Amos continues, "But I will not destroy the house of Jacob, says the Lord... On that day, I will raise up the fallen Tabernacle of David... And I will return the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall rebuild desolate cities and inhabit [them], and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their produce... And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no longer be uprooted from upon their land that I have given them, said the Lord your God" (Amos 7:8-15).

So where exactly do we stand?

We just finished the mourning period of the Three Weeks. At the climax of this period, Tisha B'Av, we commemorated the destruction of both Temples.

But just a few hours after Tisha B'Av, we blasted our Bluetooth® speakers and everything is permitted once again. Wouldn't it seem more appropriate if, after three

weeks of preparation and then the destruction of the Temple, we had at least a few days of actual mourning? Instead, we are all preparing for a very special Shabbat: *Shabbat Nachamu*, the Sabbath of Consolation.

There was once a chassid who truly desired closeness with God but would constantly experience setbacks. He truly wanted to amend his ways, but many years passed and he was still unable to escape his issues. Still, he never gave up, and always tried again and again. However, he was extremely bitter about this. Rebbe Nachman, with great wisdom, told the chassid in a very simple way, "How can I speak with you, you are completely evil?" The chassid immediately retorted, "Yes, but isn't it also true that I never gave up and still try to push myself?"

The Holy Temple was called *Tiferet Yisrael*, the Pride of Israel. It was at the Temple that the holiness of our mitzvot would be gathered up. This was the landmark that glorified our special relationship with God. When it was destroyed because of our sins, it was as if our pride were thrown down and shattered. It was as if our special status were cancelled. This is also why, on Tisha B'Av morning, we don't don our *tefillin* – *tefillin* are our crowns that exemplify our status as God's special people. However, this is all for our own good.

As soon as we are compared with the other nations, our special characteristics and many mitzvot shine through! It's immediately obvious that yes, we are different. So, too, regarding our spiritual growth. When we look to compare ourselves with great Tzaddikim, or with very lofty goals, we are almost always dismayed and fall away. However, by first realizing that we are human beings born with a *yetzer hara* (evil inclination), and then searching for the good, we can rebuild ourselves. Now, after Tisha B'Av and after we have swallowed our pride and realized our faults, we can start to rebuild and become the People we truly are.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Reishit HaGez 4*

# Keep Smiling!

By Chaim Kramer

**REB AHARON OF KIBLITCH** was a devoted Breslover chassid who was known for his extraordinary diligence in Torah study and his cheerful demeanor, which was immediately apparent to all who saw him. Though beset with financial difficulties and other hardships, Reb Aharon always managed to remain happy, singing and dancing at the slightest excuse. Needless to say, his joy was contagious.

He once described how after an especially lively dance, the evil inclination had taunted him, “Aharon! You are the poorest man in town. You have all sorts of problems. Where did you find the joy to dance with such enthusiasm?”

“I borrowed it,” he readily admitted. “I borrowed that dance from the better days ahead!”

*Based on Oneg Shabbat, Hosafot, p. 525*

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The legendary Polish Breslover chassid and tzaddik Reb Ben-Zion Apter lost his entire family during the Holocaust. Somehow he survived and immigrated to Israel, where he was a favored guest in the courts of many great Chassidic rebbes. In his later years, he would go to weddings and other celebrations to collect money for the poor, even though he lived in dire poverty himself. A skilled *badchan* (wedding entertainer), Reb Ben-Zion would sing and dance, invent rhymes in Yiddish, and pretend to play the violin, holding an invisible bow across his outstretched beard.

Once he entertained a wedding party that included David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel. Ben-Gurion laughed at the old chassid’s antics until tears came to his eyes.

“For me, a good laugh is a rare and precious thing,” Ben-Gurion confessed. “How can I repay you for this?”

“*Ich hob tzuris mit di tzeyner*—I have troubles with my teeth,” the *badchan* answered, gesturing comically at his poorly-fitting false teeth to indicate the legitimacy of his request.

Ben-Gurion immediately gave Reb Ben-Zion his dentist’s business card and promised to make all the necessary arrangements right away.

Sometime later, after receiving the finest dentures available, Reb Ben-Zion also incorporated this into his routine. “Look!” he would tell everyone, pointing to his mouth. “These are Ben-Gurion’s teeth!”

*Heard from Reb Akiva Greenberg, who, as a young yeshivah student, attended Reb Ben-Zion Apter*

## SIDEPATH

*Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum*

**MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD.** 1. Worthless pursuits and malicious gossip can lead only to poverty. Pride also causes poverty. The remedy is to give charity, which brings blessing and prosperity (*Likutey Moharan I, 4:8*).



2. Immorality can deprive a person of his livelihood (*ibid. I, 7:5*).

3. Intense prayer makes one worthy of one’s livelihood (*ibid. I, 9:2*).

4. The less careful a person is about upholding his moral standards, the more unpleasantness and hardship he will experience in his efforts to earn a living (*ibid. I, 11:4*).

5. In order to draw God’s providence upon ourselves completely, it is necessary to break the desire for wealth. The way to do this is by giving charity. When a person gives money to charity, it cools his urge to acquire. He will conduct his business affairs truthfully and honestly, he will be satisfied with his portion in life, and he will have pleasure and contentment from what God has blessed him with. Because he is not desperate to get rich, he is free of the constant struggle to make extra profit. The burden of this struggle is the fulfillment of the curse “By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread” (*Genesis 3:19*). Giving charity frees a person from this. It is accounted to him as if he had made an incense-offering before God (*Likutey Moharan I, 13:1*).



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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.*