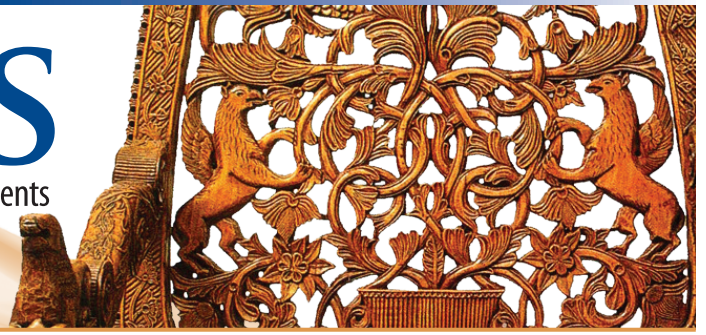


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT EIKEV • 5779 • VOL. 9 NO. 47

📧 breslov.org/pathways



Faith vs. Effort

By Yossi Katz

OUR PARASHAH STATES, “Remember God your Lord, for He is the One Who gives you strength to earn a livelihood” (Deuteronomy 8:18). If our living is completely dependent on God, why do we have to work so hard for it?

Two seemingly opposite forces are at work here: trusting in God’s grace and investing effort in earning a living. Rebbe Nachman says that it’s impossible for us to grasp in this world how these two contrary concepts can coexist, but both are true. Yes, the most important thing is to trust in God, for all our success and bounty is determined by Him alone. Yet at the same time, God says, “God your Lord will bless you in all that you do” (ibid. 15:18), implying that we still have to do our part.

There are two forms of heresy, each form determining the corresponding response of faith or effort. The first form of heresy stems from the Shattering of the Vessels. The Kabbalah teaches that God originally designed the *sefirah*-vessels as separate entities that were incapable of giving support to one another. When He shone His light into these vessels, the vessels could not bear the intensity of that influx, and shattered. Some of the shards were thrown far afield and formed *kelipot* (forces of evil) that hide the light of God and create a front for heresy. Man’s engagement in business or work parallels the process of sifting the good from the bad and redeeming the goodness trapped by the forces of evil.

But there is a second, more severe form of heresy. The Kabbalah explains that in order to create our world and the possibility of freedom of choice, God had to “make room” for the Creation. Until that point, God’s Infinite Light filled all existence; there was no empty space that could be characterized as space, emptiness or void. God then constricted His light to the sides, allowing

for a Vacated Space in which Creation could take place. This initial act of constriction and darkness concealed His Godliness from creation.

Although God certainly exists in this place, He is also concealed. This differs from the first type of heresy, in which one has the ability to make sense of things and extract the goodness. In this place, the human mind is limited and cannot engage in any form of “sifting” or logical calculations. In this place, the only thing one can do is strengthen his faith in God’s existence and reinforce his belief that, even in this place of darkness, God will not abandon him.

The Targum explains that “He is the One Who gives you strength to earn a livelihood” means that God will give you an idea to make money. How does someone go from rags to riches? Only because God plants an idea in his head. He can be a phenomenal businessman, but if he doesn’t have any savvy ideas of what to do business with, his talents won’t be of any help. If he forces the issue and chooses the wrong merchandise, he risks losing everything. The idea that God grants him isn’t dependent on his efforts at all. By remaining steadfast in his faith even when God is completely hidden, he merits revealing God’s presence in the Vacated Space and will subsequently receive the advice he needs to make matters work.

So the next time things look bleak, whether at work or at home, and you have no idea what to do, realize that you’ve arrived at the Vacated Space. Right now, your job is not to do anything at all, except believe that God is somehow still there. This faith will reveal God’s presence, so that you see Him in your life and are blessed by His advice.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Pikadon 3

Superhuman Strength

AFTER THE ISRAELI WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, when access to the Kotel (Western Wall) was cut off by the Jordanians, Breslover chassidim in Yerushalayim would spend Thursday nights at the tomb of King David on nearby Mount Zion. There, they would recite the *Tikkun Chatzot* (Midnight Lament), spend time in *hitbodedut*, and study Torah until sunrise. One time, Reb Shmuel Shapiro and Reb Shmuel Tchetchnik were overheard discussing Rebbe Nachman's *tziyun* (gravesite) in Uman.

"Do you mean there is actually a chance that in our times, one can travel there?" Reb Tchetchnik asked Reb Shapiro.

"One has to pray," replied Reb Shapiro.

"I have already prayed so much that I have no more words left," said Reb Tchetchnik.

"At the very least, you should recite the prayer composed by Reb Yitzchak Breiter," Reb Shapiro said.

"First one has to remember to carry the prayer around with him!" Reb Tchetchnik retorted.

Reb Shapiro looked at Reb Tchetchnik in shock. "What? You don't know that prayer by heart? I recite it every single day!"

Reb Shmuel Shapiro's greatest desire was to visit Rebbe Nachman's *tziyun*. In 1970, he traveled to America to get a special stateless passport so he could apply for a visa to Russia. Even with this so-called "white passport," it took nearly three years to obtain a visa, but finally he succeeded. Not satisfied with the one trip, he longed to spend Rosh HaShanah by the Rebbe's *tziyun*.

In the last decade of his life, Reb Shmuel suffered from Parkinson's disease and was confined to a wheelchair. Nevertheless, in 1988, shortly before his passing, he was asked if he wanted to join the Rosh HaShanah pilgrimage despite the physical challenges. He immediately replied, "My entire life, I invested superhuman efforts into reaching Uman. Now that people want to wheel me there, should I refuse to let them?"

Reb Shmuel made it to the Rebbe's *tziyun* that year, and the most incredible thing happened. Reb Michael Dorfman and Reb Moshe Burstein, two Breslov elders, were dancing hand in hand near Reb Shmuel's wheelchair. All of a sudden, Reb Shmuel got up on his own two feet, walked over to them, and grabbed their hands. For fifteen minutes straight, he joyfully danced with them. Those who witnessed this were astonished. Reb Shmuel explained, "Rebbe Nachman himself gave me abilities beyond nature!"

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

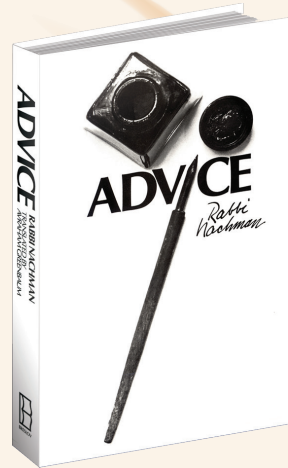
MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 6. The desire for wealth is literally a form of idol worship. As long as it continues to exist, the world is under the shadow of God's anger. But the more completely it is uprooted, the more God's anger is

lifted and the world radiates with the blessing of His love. The messianic spirit begins to spread, understanding springs forth, and it is as if the Holy Temple has been rebuilt. New horizons of Torah are revealed – the Torah that is destined to be revealed in the future (*Likutey Moharan I*, 13:2-5).

7. People who are obsessed with the idea of getting rich lack faith in God's power to send man his livelihood

with little effort on his part. Instead, they get involved in all kinds of complicated enterprises in the struggle for extra profit. Only after great toil and anxiety do they eat their daily bread. They are constantly worried and depressed. They have attached themselves to the "countenance of the forces of the Other Side" – the domain of darkness, depression, idolatry and death.

It is completely different for those who go about their work in a spirit of faith and trust in God. ... They know and believe with perfect faith that God alone is the source of man's wealth and income ... People like this are attached to the light of God's countenance, which is the realm of radiance, life and joy (*ibid. I*, 23:1).



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.