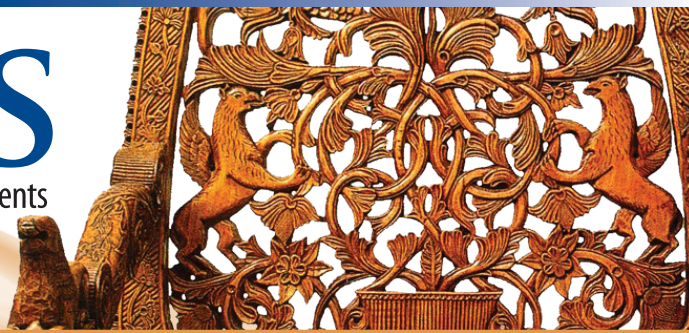


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT KI TEITZEI • 5779 • VOL. 9 NO. 50

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Who Are You Doing Teshuvah For?

By Yossi Katz

YES, IT'S THAT time of year again. Elul is upon us, and life is so incredibly topsy-turvy from the moment you wake up – or the moment you don't wake up!

The kids missed the school bus. Check.

The car door was left open and the ignition won't start. Check.

There was an accident on the highway and traffic is backed up for miles. Check.

So often it seems that life was engineered not to go our way. Guess what? There's actually a lot of truth to that.

It seems especially obvious when it comes to this month of Elul. Three times, Moses ascended Mount Sinai to attempt to receive the Tablets. During the first episode on the 17th of Tammuz, certain Jews were serving the Golden Calf and Moses destroyed them. Shortly thereafter, Moses again ascended to plea and score favor for the Jewish People. Forty days later he descended from the mountain, seemingly unsuccessful. But just then, God called on Moses again and told him to ascend the mountain for another forty days and nights. It was during this period, beginning on Rosh Chodesh Elul, that Moses successfully pleaded on behalf of the Jewish People and delivered the Tablets on Yom Kippur.

Elul is a month of incredible Divine favor. The word *ELUL* is an acronym for the verse “*Ani L'Dodi V'dodi Li* – I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine” (Song of Songs 6:3). God is waiting for us with outstretched arms and asking us to return to Him during this special time of year that is spiritually the easiest time for *teshuvah* (repentance). But if this were true, why when we attempt to work on ourselves and increase our merits during this month do we often find that things don't go our way?

Our *parashah* begins, “When you go out to war against your enemies” (Deuteronomy 21:10). Every war entails a conflict between opposing sides. Similarly, we desire to do *teshuvah* and plan what we're going to work on. But then we're faced with life's opposing forces of turmoil (like the alarm clock not ringing in the morning). This creates an internal war that gives us much heartache, and may even cause us to abandon our *teshuvah* plans altogether. What can we do so that “HaShem your God will deliver him [your enemies] into your hands” (ibid.) and our desires will prevail?

The conflict we feel in our heart stems from our belief that we understand how life is supposed to proceed. However, every day presents various situations. When we are certain that our smarts and capabilities have the power to enforce our will and overcome whatever may be, we crash into a gigantic wall of opposing willpower. Whose will is this? God's!

When we do *teshuvah*, we accept God's will upon ourselves. Even if we have good intentions (and this is fine and proper), our goal is not to demonstrate that we are “professional *teshuvah*-doers.” Rather, we want to show that our whole desire is to accept God's will and rule over us.

This corresponds to the final part of the verse, “And you take him captive” (ibid.). Our job is to capture and incorporate God's wisdom and will into our lives. When things aren't going our way and we feel heartache, this is just God's friendly reminder that we're too caught up in ourselves; we aren't remembering that *teshuvah* is about returning to Him. Yes, we may have had a beautiful plan, but who was the plan beautiful for? Our *teshuvah* plan is not about hanging our report card on our fridge, but about doing God's will with utter purity and simplicity. It's when we can demonstrate to God that we're willing to do His *teshuvah* that He will “deliver our enemies in our hands” by nullifying all opposing wills, and bless us with a sweet and successful life. Amen.

Based on Likutey Moharan II, 82

Keeping the Connection Every Day

By Dr. D.

AFTER ALMOST THREE years of being involved with Breslov, I finally considered taking the big step of traveling to Uman for Rosh HaShanah. I was nervous that I would find the people there worshipping Rebbe Nachman, God forbid, rather than the Almighty, and of course, I didn't want to have any part of that.

I made the trip and wasn't disappointed. I didn't find worship of Rebbe Nachman. Instead, I found inspirational prayer and true cleaving to God. I found incredible joy and a great sharing of spiritual and material nourishment.

Uman felt like a huge soup of the Jewish people, a cholent of every possible type of Jew. I never expected to see chassidim with long *peyot* and *shtreimels* rubbing shoulders with young men with ponytails and earrings. The mikvah scene was outrageous – all those tattoos!

Despite the differences, a tremendous love existed between the different groups. I had always thought that most Breslovers have long *peyot* and wear long coats. In Uman, I met an entire group of clean-shaven, English-speaking, professional Breslover chassidim and saw many people of all types – not religious, Modern Orthodox and traditional Jews – from many different countries.

Tashlikh was unforgettable. Picture it: 25,000 people surrounding a river, doing *teshuvah*, many of them singing and dancing. There was so much joy!

Before Rosh HaShanah, I took a day trip to Reb Noson's grave in the town of Breslov. I spent time there in *hitbodedut*; it was an amazing experience. In addition, I went to the Sofievka Park in Uman for *hitbodedut* three or four times. One of the English-speaking rabbis took us on a special *hitbodedut* expedition to the forest, where he gave us pointers on how best to communicate with God. It was very down-to-earth, yet uplifting at the same time.

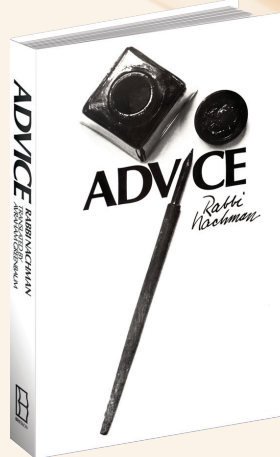
I hope to continue studying the Torah ideas of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov and make them part of my life. I hope to strengthen my commitment to follow the Rebbe's advice to spend time in *hitbodedut*, to immerse daily in the mikvah, and to follow all the other guidelines he gave us to be able to serve God and increase true, deep joy in our lives.

From "Rebbe Nachman and the Knights of the Rosh HaShanah Table"

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 13. People who are sunk in the desire for wealth are always in debt. We can actually see this. When people are dissatisfied with what they have, they start speculating – and saddle themselves with a mighty burden of debt. They borrow from others in the hope of making big profits from the investment. But in the end, they die as debtors. And even if they are



not literally in debt when they die, they are always effectively in debt to their own lusts, as we can see. There are many people who have more than enough to cover their needs. Yet they spend all their days chasing after profit. They are prepared to struggle and submit to all kinds of risks and inconvenience just for the sake of money. ...

Even a whole lifetime is not long enough for them to pay off the debts they owe to their desires, because there is no limit to them. All their days they are depressed, worried and bitter because of their appetite for money. The more money people have, the more depression and worries they have, because they are entangled in idolatry, which is the very source of depression, darkness and death. Their money eats up the days of their life with problems and worries (*Likutey Moharan* I, 23:5).



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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.