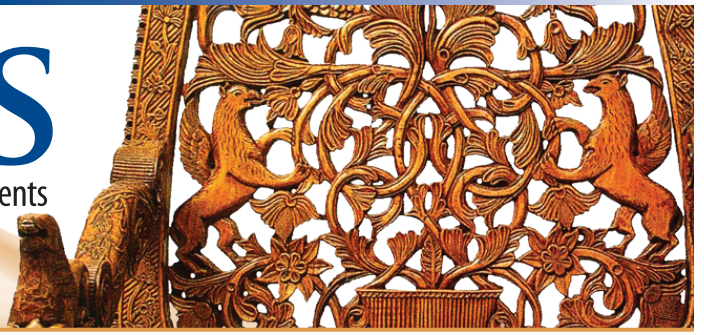


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Day of Desire

By Yossi Katz

WE LIVE IN a material world. Each of us is undoubtedly occupied with a myriad of tasks and responsibilities that we must attend to. Whether our workplace requires our skills, a loved one needs a listening ear, or we simply need to brush our teeth, as much as we may wish to devote a substantial amount of time to spiritual opportunities, we are invariably handcuffed by the daily grind.

However, one day a year is so exalted and holy that we push off our involvement in everything non-spiritual. On Yom Kippur, like angels, we dress in white and focus solely matters of higher purpose. The laws of the day prohibit eating, drinking, anointing the body with oils, wearing leather shoes or having marital relations; these keep us occupied with the soul rather than the body. In this optimal setting, we are free to elevate our minds above all else and mediate only on our relationship with God.

Interestingly, the day before Yom Kippur seems to conflict with the ideal setting we seek to create. The Torah states, “You shall afflict your souls on the ninth day of the month” (Leviticus 23:32). The Talmud asks, “But don’t we fast on the tenth day of the month and not on the ninth? This is to teach that whoever eats and drinks on the ninth of the month, Scripture considers it as if he fasted on both the ninth and the tenth” (*Yoma* 81b). According to our Sages, it’s a great mitzvah to eat the day before, and the custom is to begin Yom Kippur after completing a festive meal. Doesn’t this seem anti-climactic? After all, we are ready to hear the celestial melody of *Kol Nidrei*, but first, pass the chicken soup!

Picture a little baby. You put your hand in your pocket and pull out a shiny red lollipop. As you wave the candy in front of the baby, the baby’s eyes open wide with

excitement and follow the lollipop’s every movement. You bring the lollipop within reach of the baby and, just as he’s about to grab it, you quickly swing your hand away from him. Each time you repeat this tease, the baby will become more focused on wanting the sweet.

Rebbe Nachman explains that this is why God places so many obstacles in our path, to increase our desire for the goal. When we run up against difficulties in our spiritual pursuits, yet track on despite the setbacks, we desire our objective even more. But there is also a deeper reason. If God were to bless us with whatever we want before we have to struggle to achieve it, we would be overwhelmed by His blessing and not know how to hold on to it or what to do with it. But when we aren’t rewarded until we’ve been properly challenged, we appreciate and can properly utilize what we’ve now been granted.

On Yom Kippur, we are given a tremendous opportunity: the chance to nullify our physical selves and attain a tremendous spiritual unity with God. To retain this awareness beyond the few hours of this holiest day, we must strengthen our longing and desire for this closeness. Therefore we feast before Yom Kippur. Our eating is considered like fasting because without first eating, the negation of our physical bodies will have no prolonged effect. And partaking in the festive meals, we’re forced to wait before we can negate our physicality to reach those spiritual heights. Our challenges are holy prerequisites to help us value and achieve our spiritual goals.

Then, at the climax of a whole day of fasting, we scream, “*Shema Yisrael, HaShem Elokeinu, HaShem Echad!*” God is our God, God is One. Standing unified with God, we realize that just as we’ve done today, so too, we can transform all of our setbacks and challenges into great desire for, and connection with, God. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Rosh HaShanah 2

The Yom Kippur Man

By Chaim Kramer

REB NOSON ONCE said, “The Rebbe’s main thing is Rosh HaShanah. My main thing is Yom Kippur.”

Reb Noson’s whole mission was to show that man can always return to God, regardless of anything he may have done, no matter how much he may have sinned. This was the mission Rebbe Nachman had held out to him a few days after their first meeting: to become the “lower point” of the *aleph*, to bring life, vitality and faith to all the lower levels. Even as he left this world, Reb Noson was mindful of his mission, repeating again and again, “*Chanun ha-marbeh lislo’ach* – Gracious One Who forgives abundantly” (from the blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei*). There is hope for all: God will forgive! Always!

{ *There is hope for all: God will
forgive! Always!* }

Repentance and forgiveness for all of Israel were the very essence of Reb Noson. The letters of the words *Chanun ha-marbeh lislo’ach* have the numerical value of 500, the same as that of the letters of *NoSoN*.

Reb Noson passed away just before Shabbos on December 20, 1844. He was 64 years and 11 months old, and was totally attached to God until the very end.

Those were the days before the invention of the telegraph, and it was impossible to transmit news of his passing anywhere until after Shabbat. Even so, that Friday night, his friend Reb Naftali, who was in Uman, already knew that Reb Noson was no longer. When asked how he knew, Reb Naftali answered:

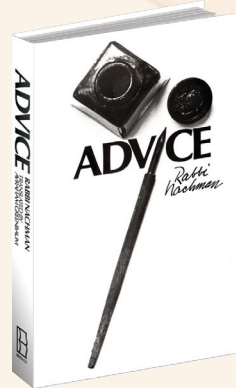
“I had a dream in which I saw Reb Noson running quickly. I said, ‘Reb Noson! Where are you running?’ ‘Me?’ he said. ‘Straight to the Rebbe!’”

*From “Through Fire and Water: The Life of Reb Noson of
Breslov”*

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 15. With every step that a person takes and every word he utters in his efforts to make a living, he should have in mind that his purpose in making a profit is to be able to give money to charity. Charity is the *tikkun* for business activity (*Likutey Moharan I*, 29:5).



16. Only a person who “hates graft” (Exodus 18:21), which means that he absolutely hates materialism, can acquire true wisdom and understanding, and thereby reach a perception of Godliness. And so the opposite (*ibid.* I, 30:4).

17. When a person conducts his business honestly and with faith, his soul – his mind and intellect – is renewed through this faith. Through the business activity

itself, he can develop spiritually and draw fresh wisdom and a new soul from the light of God’s countenance.

Not everyone is on such a level of Torah scholarship that he can grow intellectually in Torah through his business. But even so, simply by virtue of conducting his business in faith and honesty, a great *tikkun* is brought about, and a second Jew whose soul is drawn from the same root as his own can benefit greatly, because his intellect is refreshed and expanded through the honest dealings of the first and he is inspired with new energy to learn and devote himself to God (*ibid.* I, 35:6).



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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.