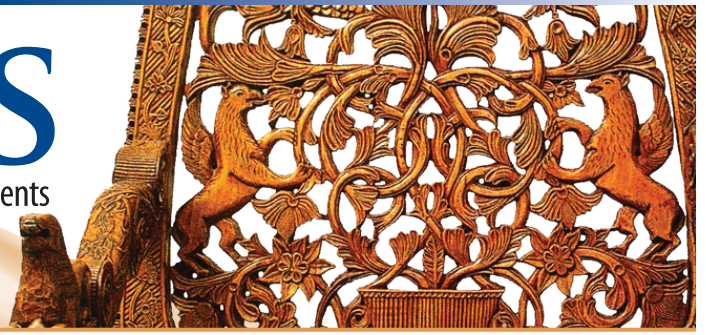


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT PARASHAT TOLDOT • 5780 • VOL. 10 NO. 7

📧 breslov.org/pathways



Balancing Act

By Yossi Katz

HAVE YOU EVER wondered why Jacob was specifically chosen to father the twelve tribes and establish the Jewish nation? Weren't Abraham and Isaac also fitting figures? Yet despite their greatness, Abraham fathered a "Ishmael" and Isaac fathered an "Esau." What was Jacob's secret to perfection?

The Torah alludes to Esau's essential point by saying, "Isaac loved Esau because he trapped him with his mouth" (Genesis 25:28). Esau would ask Isaac how to tithe things like salt and straw, seemingly demonstrating his rigidness in observing the Torah (see *Midrash Tanchuma, Toldot* 8). Esau's tremendous resolve and exactitude could have earned him greatness, but instead its mismanagement became his greatest flaw.

Isaac did not perceive Esau as being sarcastic and was fooled. He saw in Esau the trait of holy chutzpah, something essential to spiritual success and something Isaac himself mastered. However, as awesome as Isaac was in mastering strictness and rigidness in the service of God, he had not mastered the ability to know when to mitigate this attitude with kindness. This imperfection caused Esau to be too harsh on himself. His narrow-minded approach made him demand nothing less than perfection – an attitude that ultimately leads to dejection.

The major conflict between Jacob and Esau surrounded the birthright. Spiritually, the birthright represents the opening of the womb, the creation of a new channel of influence. Through the birth of the firstborn, the spiritual legacy of the father can be manifest to future generations. All later births are but a continuation of this process. The Torah therefore mandates that the firstborn should receive a double portion of the father's inheritance. This is because he essentially owns the copyright and claims its royalties. He is the master of influence.

The main part of Isaac's estate was the weapon of prayer. Isaac's level of prayer held the keys to both spiritual and physical bounty. Its arms bearer could largely influence the direction of society. Rebecca knew that Jacob had to inherit this rite in order to bring the world toward its rectification. Not only would Esau potentially misuse this ability, but his flaws would inhibit his ever hoping to master its art.

The success of our prayers corresponds directly with our belief in their power. Jacob is called Tiferet Yaakov. Tiferet is the confluence of kindness and severity. Jacob is called "the wholesome one" (Genesis 25:27) because he mastered this most difficult balance. Kindness without restriction is like giving a child unlimited candy. But restriction for its own sake serves no purpose. Jacob's balancing act helped him understand that while none of his prayers were ever truly deserving of God's blessings, nevertheless, God still listens to and answers every prayer. His kindness and compassion are so great that every one of our prayers has tremendous value on high.

The more we perfect our trust and belief in God's appreciation for our efforts, the more potent our prayers become. When we reach this understanding and then experience salvation vis-à-vis prayer, we open the channel for all future prayers. We then become worthy of inheriting its capabilities.

Esau, in contrast, did not properly perceive God's incredible kindness. He could not fathom how anything less than perfection could be acceptable to the Master of the Universe. Therefore he could not inherit this potentially powerful weapon.

As the children of Jacob, we have inherited both a mighty weapon and a constant companion to face our daily challenges. Let us mitigate our negative thoughts by turning to God and relying on His never-ending compassion and love. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Nachalat 4

Make Your Own Miracles

By Chaim Kramer

MANY PEOPLE THINK of tzaddikim as miracle-workers. In Reb Noson's day, too, everyone had stories of the wonders performed by this or that tzaddik. Many of the stories were undoubtedly genuine: true tzaddikim have such powers.

Rebbe Nachman, on the other hand, did not perform miracles except on rare occasions. For him, the greatest miracle of all was the self-transformation a Jew could achieve by himself through his own prayers and efforts. Therefore the Rebbe worked to instill in us the confidence that we, too, can forge a personal relationship with God, so that He will heed *our* prayers and perform miracles on our behalf.

One of Rebbe Nachman's main teachings is that every Jew has the capacity to achieve everything he needs through prayer.

Reb Noson elaborates:

One must have perfect faith in God – believing that He is the Creator of everything, that He controls and supervises everything, and that He has the power to change the course of events any way He wishes and bless us with everything good.

And just as one must have perfect faith in God, so too, one must have perfect faith in himself. He must have perfect faith that God listens and attends to every single word spoken by every single Jew, even the lowest of the low. Every single Jew has the power to accomplish what he needs through praying to God truly and sincerely, as it is written, "God is close to all who call Him" (Psalms 145:18).

Reb Shimshon of Tulchin was one of Reb Noson's staunchest supporters, giving generously from the proceeds of his business for whatever was needed. Reb Shimshon was childless, and kept asking Reb Noson to help him.

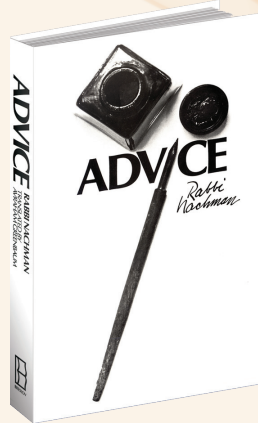
Reb Noson wrote to him, "I don't have the key to children. But then, neither does anyone else. One thing is certain: If there is any way of mitigating the decree and helping you, the Breslover chassidim can help you more easily than anyone else!"

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

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 31. A person can come to possess stolen property without even physically stealing it himself. It is possible to rob one's neighbor merely by being jealous of what he has. This is why the prohibition against envy and covetousness is so grave. Through envy alone, one can rob one's neighbor of his money and the soul of his sons and daughters, just like an actual thief (*Likutey Moharan I, 69*).



32. Giving charity can make amends for any money which has come into one's hands improperly because of envy. But for money that has literally been stolen, there is no remedy except to return it to its rightful owner or, in cases where it is impossible to return it to its owners, to devote it to the public good,

as our Sages explained (*Bava Kama 94b*) (*ibid.*).

33. If a person finds the money he has to live off is too little for his needs, the best thing to do is to make it into charity. Charity is the *tikkun* for material possessions. In the end he will have plenty of money (*ibid.*).

34. A person who marries a woman for money is a fool and an idiot, as our Sages said (*Kiddushin 72*). He will lose whatever intelligence he may have had, and his children will not turn out good (*ibid.*).



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.