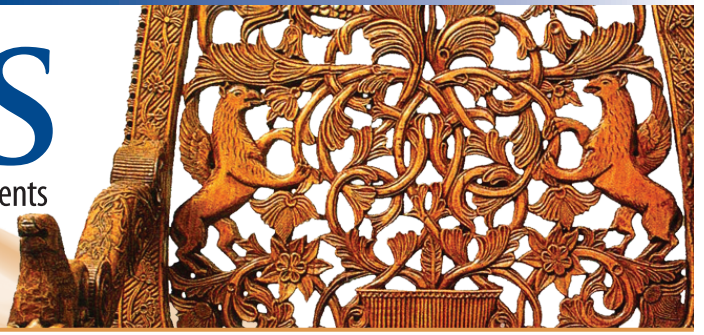


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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A Fight to the Finish

By Yossi Katz

THE DRAMA HAS been simmering for a lifetime. Twin brothers who grew up in the same home to the same parents could not have been more different. One was destined to become the father of the Twelve Tribes and the Jewish people, the other to be the patriarch of mighty nations like Rome. In our *parashah*, Jacob, on the run for years, is finally forced face his brother, his own survival questionable. But before they meet, Jacob faces a major struggle with a mysterious “man.” Our Sages reveal his identity as Esau’s guardian angel, the embodiment of his very spirit.

Although the angel tries to physically assault Jacob, the essence of their fight and Jacob’s struggle is really about the underlying spiritual warfare that will take place until the end of days. The Jewish people would rise to awesome heights and build the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, but this would seem like only a moment in time compared to the lengthy exile at the hand of the Romans.

Each of us faces daily troubles, hardships and struggles, causing us tremendous pain and suffering. The prophet says, “In all of your troubles, He suffers” (Isaiah 63:9). We experience so much pain precisely because of the exile; our discomfort is a sign of God’s exile from our nation. We share part of His pain and exile through these tribulations.

By fighting with the root of the Jewish people – Jacob – the angel had the power to affect our future. Therefore he prolonged the struggle throughout the long, dark night. He hoped to terrify Jacob’s descendants by forcing them into a lengthy and dark spiritual exile. He thought that when they experienced God’s great distance, they would submit themselves to sadness and depression. This state is the greatest threat to one’s spirituality, as it brings a person to lose himself and try to find fulfillment in ulterior evil passions and lusts. Since a person can never

truly be satisfied by these, a cycle is created in which he feels even more despondent and then sinks even lower in his quest for fulfillment.

This is the situation we find ourselves in today. Overwhelmed by our own personal struggles, we are then besieged by society’s ideas and false solutions, yet often we feel too weak and distressed to search for real answers. But Jacob’s characteristic was truth. No matter how much darkness surrounded him, he was always able to struggle and continue on because his inner point of truth shone forth and declared, “I know that I am the chosen one of God. I know that I have been given a heavenly soul. I know that the redemption will eventually come and, by standing strong, God’s plan will be revealed to all and the truth will be known.”

This point of truth is also embodied in each one of us, the descendants of Jacob. By remembering who we came from and how special we are, we can raise our spirits and perform every mitzvah with great joy. We can always remind ourselves, “I am the son or daughter of the King of all kings. How fortunate am I!”

Some of us may have been injured in this process. There is still hope. Jacob’s sciatic nerve was damaged in his fight with the angel. This nerve travels all the way down into the feet and is symbolic of our times, the period before the arrival of the Mashiach called *ikvesa d’meshicha*, the “heel of the Mashiach.” Esau launches his last-ditch assault at the darkest time in order to thwart the arrival of the Mashiach. However, by bringing ourselves to great joy through our inner truth, we can leap to victory and will ultimately be healed.

Thus Jacob was named Yisrael – the first three letters, *yud, sin, reish*, can be rearranged to spell *ShIR*, song. Through feeling great joy in our connection to God, we can begin to sing and defeat Esau once and for all. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhat Hodaah 6

Destination: The Land of Israel

By Yehudis Golshevsky

WHEN REBBE NACHMAN'S third daughter, Miriam, came of age, she married Pinchas, the son of Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Volochisk. Throughout his life, Rabbi Aryeh Leib yearned to move to the Land of Israel. He spoke about his desire often, but years went by and he never made the move.

Rebbe Nachman had another *mechutan*—his daughter Adel's father-in-law, Rabbi Avraham Dov of Chmelnik. When Rabbi Avraham Dov heard how Rabbi Aryeh Leib would constantly express his yearning to make the move to the Holy Land, he said, "Why does he need to talk so much? You get the money together and you go!"

When Rebbe Nachman heard Rabbi Avraham Dov's reaction, he said, "The tzaddik of Volochisk, who has yearned all his life for the Land of Israel, will eventually get there. But the Rabbi of Chmelnik, who said that it's just a matter of getting the money together and going, will never reach it!"

Eventually, after many years, Rabbi Aryeh Leib gathered together a number of his family members and prepared to move to the Holy Land. Among the descendants he chose to come with him was Miriam's husband, Pinchas. But Rebbe Nachman objected to Miriam joining him.

During those days, bands of marauders were common in the Holy Land, endangering travelers. Rebbe Nachman knew that his son-in-law, Reb Pinchas, was of a delicate constitution and wouldn't have the stamina to fight off attackers. So he preferred to keep Miriam safe for the time being.

About four years later, another son of Rabbi Aryeh Leib decided to move to the Land of Israel. He offered to take Miriam with him so that she could be reunited with her husband. This son was a powerful man, so Rebbe Nachman agreed that his daughter would travel with him. He added, "I'll give her to you!"

Rebbe Nachman accompanied them for the first mile of their journey out of the town, and when his students pushed him to ride in the carriage, he said with feeling, "To the Land of Israel, you go on foot!"

Not long after the two arrived in the Holy Land, Pinchas passed away. He and Miriam had no children. Pinchas' brother married Miriam to carry out the mitzvah of *yibum* (levirate marriage), and Rebbe Nachman's words came to be: "I'll give her to you!"

Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 216-218

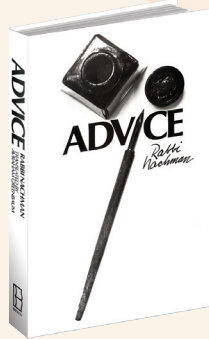
SIDEPATH

Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 41. The time a person spends working is a time of battle. The battle is against the forces of the Other Side, and the goal is to sift out the sparks of holiness and elevate them. Sifting out the sparks is the main purpose of all business and commerce. One has to be literally perfectly honest. Every word he speaks should be true. His "yes" should be "yes" and his "no" should be "no." He must also bind his thoughts to Torah. When he is working, only the exterior aspects of his thoughts should be concentrated on the work itself; the inner thought should be bound to Torah. Through this he can sift and elevate many fallen holy sparks. All the worlds are elevated and awesome *tikkunim* are achieved, just as they are through prayer (*Likutey Moharan I*, 280).

42. The craving for money is one of the three temptations that flaw and spoil the fear of God which is latent in the heart. But when we celebrate the festival of Pesach with the appropriate honor, we can cleanse ourselves of the craving for money and attain true fear, prophetic inspiration and prayer (*ibid.* II, 1:4,5).

43. One who wants to provide for those who are dependent on him must be a person of strength and fortitude, not the opposite. A certain amount of authority and "push" is required in order to earn money (*ibid.* II, 7:10).



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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.