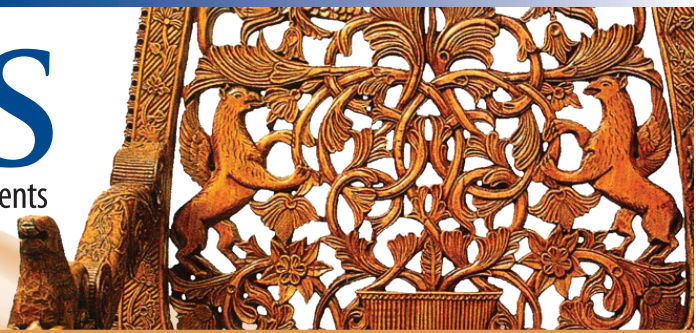


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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What Are We Waiting For?

By Yossi Katz

AS A YOUNGSTER, I remember asking my teacher a question that was really bothering me: “How can the Mashiach come if there are so few Jews in the world who are connected to the Torah and *mitzvot*?”

At the time, I was a good student at an elitist Jewish institution. My teacher replied, “Forget about those other Jews. If students such as yourself and others in similar institutions live up to their goals, Mashiach will immediately arrive!” Apparently, he should have checked out his answer with our forefather Jacob first.

Jacob accomplished what no one before him did: he merited to have completely righteous children. Before his passing, he brought together all of his holy offspring, the twelve tribes. At this opportune time, with this gathering of holy tzaddikim, Jacob thought he would merit to reveal the great secret of the time of the Final Redemption. His intention is hinted at by his use of the word *he'iasfu* (come together) (Genesis 49:1). “Come together” is said when one wants to call over people who are close by. Jacob was, in the spiritual sense, addressing like-minded individuals – the holy twelve tribes. But just as he began, the Divine Presence departed – signaling that something was missing, something was still not complete.

What could possibly have been lacking? If Jacob, whom the Torah calls “the perfect one,” did not merit to have offspring righteous enough to bring the Mashiach, how could we ever be so righteous?

The answer is that God’s greatest pleasure is when souls who were previously distant come closer to Him. Because of this, God is ever patient with us. He specifically doesn’t bring the Mashiach so that we won’t be left behind, and so we actually have time to return to Him.

Realizing this, Jacob switches and says, “Gather yourselves and listen, sons of Jacob” (ibid., 49:2). In contrast to “come together,” “gather” refers to assembling a group from afar. The name *Yaakov* (Jacob) comes from the Hebrew word *eikev* (heel) (ibid., 25:26), symbolizing the low spiritual state of a Jew. Jacob is speaking to us, saying that it is specifically because we are far from God that God has not yet brought the Mashiach! We think that because we’ve made mistakes and haven’t lived up to our potential, God doesn’t want our service. In actuality, God is holding back the coming of the Mashiach for our sake!

After Jacob fought with Esau’s angel and won, the angel gave him the name *Yisrael* (Israel) (ibid., 32:19). This is a name that connotes victory. *YiSRAeL* is also a Hebrew acronym for *Yesh Shishim Ribo Otiot LaTorah* (There are 600,000 letters in the Torah). The 600,000 letters in the Torah correspond to the 600,000 root-souls of Yisrael. Every Jew who will ever be born has a piece of one of those 600,000 root-souls. Only when all 600,000 letters – in other words, every Jew – are gathered together in spiritual unity are we collectively called “Yisrael.”

This should serve as a reminder of how much we need each other and how much God wants and waits for each and every one of us personally. When we are unified, we will be victorious over our enemies, both spiritual and physical, and merit the Final Redemption, may it come speedily and in our days. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Piriayah Ve'Riviyah 5; ibid. Ishut 4

The Merit of a Mitzvah

By Yehudis Golshevsky

REB AHARON OF KIBLITCH had been feeling fine when, suddenly, he fell ill. Fever and weakness quickly followed, and his health began to fail. Reb Aharon's situation deteriorated so rapidly that his family was afraid it would soon be the end, and so did everyone else who saw him. Many heartfelt prayers were offered, but none seemed to help. His life-force continued to ebb until it became obvious that the end was near.

Reb Aharon had instructed his household and his entire family—including his son-in-law, Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Bender—to gather round and prepare for his imminent demise. His death throes began and the family quickly summoned the burial society. These dedicated volunteers quickly left their respective jobs and came to guide Reb Aharon's final moments, as was their privilege and duty.

Strangely, the moment they walked into the room, Reb Aharon's condition seemed to stabilize. After a short time, his final struggle abated and the Angel of Death seemed to retreat from the room. This was so unusual that the members of the burial society remained to observe his condition. As the color returned to Reb Aharon's face and he relaxed into restful sleep, the burial society felt that they could leave him to recover.

By the very next day, Reb Aharon was well enough to walk around.

Everyone was astounded at his amazing recovery and they wondered what had caused it. One of the members of the burial society spoke up. "Obviously, we cannot know the mysterious ways of Heaven. But I think I may have an idea as to why he began healing the moment we entered the room.

"As you know, I am a wagon driver by trade. What you probably don't know is that after my wedding, I didn't have any way to support myself and my young bride. I approached Reb Aharon and poured out my heart to him, explaining that if I only had a horse and wagon, I thought I could make a decent living.

"Reb Aharon took me around town and helped me collect the entire sum I needed to get started earning a living. I believe that the moment I entered the room, the merit of this great mitzvah was aroused and sparked his rapid recovery."

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh IV:341

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

THOUGHTS AND FANTASIES. 5. A person's entire destiny – for good or ill – depends on the thoughts in his heart. These thoughts and ideas are the basis of the heart's "inclinations" – the good inclination and the evil inclination. Good thoughts are the good inclination, bad thoughts are the evil inclination (*Likutey Moharan I*, 49:1).

6. When a person expels all the unholy thoughts from his heart and thinks only good thoughts about ways of serving God, then he has founded his strength on the "rock of my heart" (Psalms 73:26) and he will succeed in reaching the level where "my heart is void within me" (*ibid.* 109:22). He will be able to develop his character to perfection and take on the yoke of Heaven with a perfect heart. He will be worthy of true prayer and perfect repentance, and bring about unification in the worlds above

and the worlds below. The hidden Torah of the Ancient One will be revealed, the forces of evil will be destroyed, and the forces of holiness will be elevated. Israel will be blessed with vitality, abundance and prosperity (*ibid.*).

7. All the thoughts that pass through the mind are always expressed in words. At the moment one thinks a thought, "the lips move" (cf. *Yerushalmi Berachot* 7a). He may not actually feel this, but as the *Zohar* explains, there is always a movement, however subtle. Every thought that a person can think must be expressed in words, however subtly (*ibid.* I, 66:4).



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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.