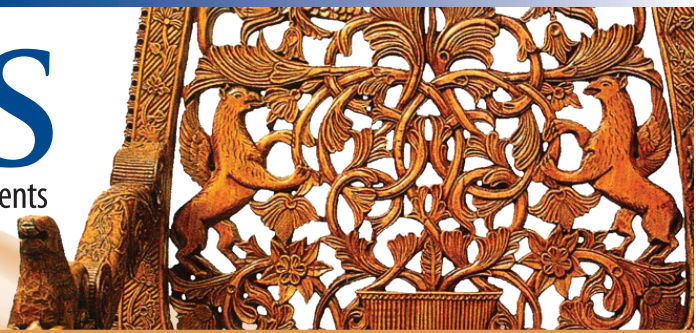


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Faith vs. Effort

By Yossi Katz

OUR PARASHAH STATES, “Remember God your Lord, for He is the One Who gives you strength to earn a livelihood” (Deuteronomy 8:18). If our living is completely dependent on God, why do we have to work so hard for it?

Two seemingly opposite forces are at work here: trusting in God’s grace and investing effort in earning a living. Rebbe Nachman says that it’s impossible for us to grasp in this world how these two contrary concepts can coexist, but both are true. Yes, the most important thing is to trust in God, for all our success and bounty is determined by Him alone. Yet at the same time, God says, “God your Lord will bless you in all that you do” (ibid. 15:18), implying that we still have to do our part.

There are two forms of heresy, each form determining the corresponding response of faith or effort. The first form of heresy stems from the Shattering of the Vessels. The Kabbalah teaches that God originally designed the sefirah-vessels as separate entities that were incapable of giving support to one another. When He shone His light into these vessels, the vessels could not bear the intensity of that influx, and shattered. Some of the shards were thrown far afield and formed *kelipot* (forces of evil) that hide the light of God and create a front for heresy. Man’s engagement in business or work parallels the process of sifting the good from the bad and redeeming the goodness trapped by the forces of evil.

But there is a second, more severe form of heresy. The Kabbalah explains that in order to create our world and the possibility of freedom of choice, God had to “make room” for the Creation. Until that point, God’s Infinite Light filled all existence; there was no empty space that

could be characterized as space, emptiness or void. God then constricted His light to the sides, allowing for a Vacated Space in which Creation could take place. This initial act of constriction and darkness concealed His Godliness from creation.

Although God certainly exists in this place, He is also concealed. This differs from the first type of heresy, in which one has the ability to make sense of things and extract the goodness. In this place, the human mind is limited and cannot engage in any form of “sifting” or logical calculations. In this place, the only thing one can do is strengthen his faith in God’s existence and reinforce his belief that, even in this place of darkness, God will not abandon him.

The Targum explains that “He is the One Who gives you strength to earn a livelihood” means that God will give you an idea to make money. How does someone go from rags to riches? Only because God plants an idea in his head. He can be a phenomenal businessman, but if he doesn’t have any savvy ideas of what to do business with, his talents won’t be of any help. If he forces the issue and chooses the wrong merchandise, he risks losing everything. The idea that God grants him isn’t dependent on his efforts at all. By remaining steadfast in his faith even when God is completely hidden, he merits revealing God’s presence in the Vacated Space and will subsequently receive the advice he needs to make matters work.

So the next time things look bleak, whether at work or at home, and you have no idea what to do, realize that you’ve arrived at the Vacated Space. Right now, your job is not to do anything at all, except believe that God is somehow still there. This faith will reveal God’s presence, so that you see Him in your life and are blessed by His advice.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Pikadon 3

Carry On!

By Chaim Kramer

LIKE REBBE NACHMAN, Reb Noson embarked on his own adventure-filled pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1822. Accompanied by his friend Reb Yehudah Eliezer, he undertook a long sea journey there and back, and spent one month in the Land itself. During his visits to Safed, Meron, Tiberias and Haifa, he maintained his usual routine of engaging in Torah study and prayer. He continued writing his own Torah discourses, and took every possible opportunity to spread the teachings of Rebbe Nachman.

On the eve of Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, Reb Noson was anxious to be in Meron to pray at the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, author of the *Zohar*. He arrived around noon and recited Psalms and other prayers, but he was feeling very weak at the time. He wrote that he didn't feel he prayed the way he would have wanted.

Reb Noson's comment gives us an interesting insight into his character. This was the one and only time he visited the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, whose teachings Reb Noson could appreciate better than most. Reb Noson had already amassed an impressive array of knowledge of the entire *Zohar* and Kabbalistic writings. One would have expected him to have been greatly inspired when he finally reached the holy tomb. Yet by his own admission, he was not feeling his best at the time.

Instead of allowing himself to become dejected, he simply carried on. He went to the nearby grave of Rabbi Yochanan HaSandler, where he began to become aroused little by little. By the time he reached the cave of Hillel, he was almost back to himself.

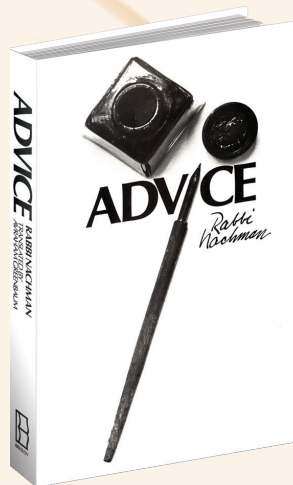
A few days later he and Reb Yehudah Eliezer went to Tiberias, where they were received with great honor. During the ten days they spent in Tiberias, they visited the graves of Rabbi Nachman Horodenker, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk and Rabbi Avraham Kalisker, as well as Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes, Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai and his students, and Tziporah (wife of Moses), Yocheved, Bilhah, Zilpah and Avigail. While in Tiberias they also took the opportunity to bathe in the hot springs.

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

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

SHABBAT. 21. Shabbat is one of the Names of God. Shabbat is the light of the eyes that illumine the Holy Temple and the whole world. This is why those who



observe Shabbat will have their eyes opened and they will have the power to see into themselves and judge how far they have reached in their spiritual journey. They will be able to repent for all their failings and come to recognize the true greatness of the Creator. They will have the power of vision over the entire universe. They will be drawn to the innermost point of truth: the true

tzaddikim and those with genuine fear of Heaven. Their minds will be opened. It will be as if they are engaged in rebuilding the Holy Temple. Additionally, through the merit of Shabbat, the homes of Jews are saved from fires, may God save us (Likutey Moharan II, 67).

ROSH CHODESH. 1. The force that draws all the worlds to return to God has its root in Rosh Chodesh. On Rosh Chodesh the desire to return to God is felt over the entire creation. Even the wicked in hell cannot escape a certain feeling of contrition. They are drawn a little closer to God and feel a flicker of regret. They are forced to acknowledge the truth and feel ashamed of their wrongdoing (ibid. I, 10:9).



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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.

Dedicated for the speedy and complete recovery of Reb Chaim Menachem ben Leah