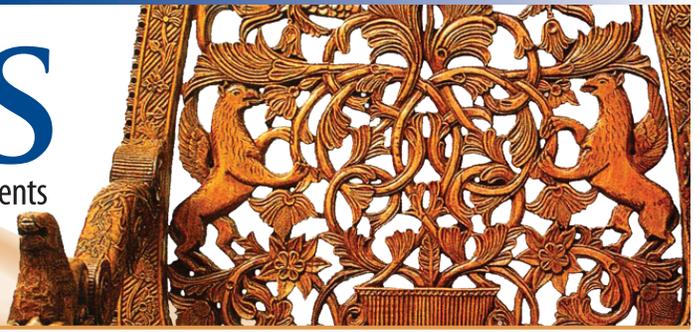


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Yes, We Can!

By Yossi Katz

THE OTHER DAY I was introduced to a successful businessman who was interested in studying Breslov Chassidut together. In order to get know each other, we shared our backgrounds, and he said something that has stuck in my mind ever since.

My newfound *chavrusa* explained that although his wife and children were making headway in their spiritual journeys, his growth was stunted and even retarded because he enjoyed the pleasures that his wealth provided. Was this a valid excuse?

Logic is something that we value as being supreme. Unfortunately, it is oftentimes the preferred vehicle of the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). This is because logic is a byproduct of the mind, but the mind is limited by its mental capacity and perceived reality.

Korach is the ultimate example of this flaw. Korach himself was a brilliant tzaddik and leader, yet his logic led him to be swallowed up alive. He made the following argument: The Torah calls for one string of *tekheilet* (sky-blue wool) to be added to the three white *tzitzit* strings on each corner of a garment. (Today, in the absence of *tekheilet*, we put four white *tzitzit*-strings on each corner.) If one string of *tekheilet* permits the wearing of a four-cornered garment, then surely a garment made completely of *tekheilet* would not require *tzitzit*! Similarly, if one tiny white blemish renders a person a *metzora* (see Leviticus 13:10-11), how can someone covered from head to toe with a white blemish be considered pure? (ibid. 13:13).

Spiritually, his arguments are profound. Every day we recite the blessing on the *tallit*: “who has sanctified us and commanded us to wrap ourselves with *tzitzit*.” We don’t say “to wrap ourselves with a *tallit*” because the spiritual power of the *tekheilet/tzitzit* is so great that they upgrade the entire *tallit* garment to their level of sanctity.

Korach therefore argued that an entire garment made of *tekheilet* should certainly have awesome holiness and not require anything further. His reasoning was based on viewing the entire Jewish people as equal – after all, hadn’t everyone experienced prophecy? What more is there? We are all like the superior garment made entirely of *tekheilet*; why should Moses be the lone *tekheilet* string? As Korach said to Moses and Aaron, “The entire assembly is holy...why do you raise yourselves above us?” (Numbers 16:3).

But Korach made a terrible mistake. For even if, logically, a garment made of *tekheilet* is superior, there’s no such thing as a “perfect” garment. Even the greatest of tzaddikim must always grow and improve. No one can ever say, “I made it.” Every Jew, from Moses to Moe, has his own unique challenges that he can overcome only through the Torah and *mitzvot* – through the strings of *tekheilet/tzitzit* that God has commanded us.

Korach erred the other way around, too. If a little blemish causes a person to become a *metzora*, certainly becoming white all over means you’re eternally doomed – all hope must be lost! Was he right? Like my *chavrusa*, if one feels so far, if he is entirely absorbed with the frivolities and pleasures of life, can he ever change?

Yes, he can!

No matter where a Jew has fallen, there is always hope. As long as we call out to God, hold on to our faith, and do what we can, we can transform even the lowest descent into the greatest ascent. As the Torah teaches, someone who is completely covered by a white blemish can be pronounced pure! Korach’s logic was flawed because he couldn’t grasp the kindness of God. No matter how high or low we find ourselves, the Torah is our means to reach a greater closeness with God. As long as we aren’t fooled by false logic and follow the counsel of the true tzaddikim, every one of us can always come closer. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shiluach HaKen 4

A River of Tears

IN 1914, WORLD War I had just begun and twenty million Russian soldiers were on the battlefield, falling like straw before the wind. Like most religious Jews, young Breslovers did their utmost to avoid the army, not only because of the dangers but also because of rampant anti-Semitism in the ranks.

In Uman, many attempted to hide in the *kloyz* (the Breslov synagogue), but it was hardly necessary since the authorities turned a blind eye to them. There was one sharp-eyed policeman in particular who could easily have made life difficult for them, but since he knew that the authorities considered the young Breslovers “poor material,” he ignored them. The young men would venture out to make purchases and bake bread, walking Uman’s streets without fear.

Reb Shmuel Aizik Rosenfeld had a tall, strong, good-looking son named Moshe Ber. When this policeman saw him, he was very upset. He told the Breslovers, “There is a young man hiding with you that the army really does want. We want him, and we will have him.”

The police broke into the *kloyz* at night, rushing to where Moshe Ber slept. At the last moment, the lad jumped up and fled. He was very fast and quickly outran the soldiers, but he lived in constant fear. A deserter was a true fugitive, and could be shot by anyone who recognized him, no questions asked.

When Moshe Ber approached Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender for advice, the sage said, “Although I can’t help you, go to God. He is your only hope.”

The teen would hide in various places and beg God for help, crying a river of tears every day. Eventually it became impossible for him to remain in Uman and he fled to Demitrivka near Tcherin. He hid in an underground crevice, trembling with fear and uncertainty.

He once shared his pain with Reb Levi Yitzchok. “Will I ever be a person? Will I have a family? Will this persecution ever end?” But he made it through the war and lived to see children and grandchildren.

Reb Levi Yitzchok would say after telling his story, “We see the power of tears. Never give up! Shed tears and hold on. God helps!”

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

HONOR. 16. Charity cleanses the stains on God’s honor. Glory and power are taken from the Other Side and restored to the wise, who are the world’s true leaders (Likutey Moharan I, 67:5).

17. In the morning prayers, when we reach the words “and You rule over all,” it is customary to give charity



in order to take glory and power from the hands of the Other Side and restore them to the forces of holiness (ibid. I, 67:7).

18. When honor is restored to the wise, who are the true leaders, at the beginning of their ascendancy there is likely to be factionalism and strife (ibid. I, 67:6).

19. When some new honor comes to a person, he should do his utmost to cultivate the fear and love of God within himself in order to give birth to the new soul which comes to him clothed in this honor, to raise it and bring it to maturity (ibid. I, 67:7).

20. By giving respect to an old man who has forgotten his learning, cool waters are drawn to revive the fainting soul. Giving such a person respect makes up for all the prayers that people say without sincerity, because prayers like those cause the faintness of the soul (ibid. I, 67:8).



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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.