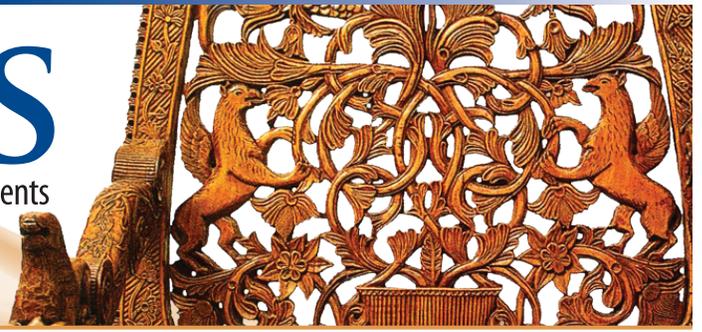


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Back to “Normal”

By Yossi Katz

HOW WAS YOUR Yom Tov? Mine was wonderful. First I experienced the awesome spiritual heights of being in Uman for Rosh HaShanah, then the solemn upliftedness of the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, and then eight joyous days together with my family in the sukkah.

But the Sunday after was very difficult. Besides all the schlepping, like taking down the sukkah and cleaning up after Yom Tov, life was rapidly returning to “normal.” Granted, I am fortunate enough to work for BRI and spend my time doing my best to share the Rebbe’s Torah with the masses; nevertheless, my job is as pressured and stressful as any other. I have deadlines to make, financial obligations to keep, and a multitude of issues always certain to spring up. This got me wondering: Is Tishrei a kind of once-a-year Jewish Oktoberfest, or does its placement at the start of the year indicate its crucial relevance and influence?

As difficult as it is to build a sukkah, Noah’s ark was a far greater feat. For 120 years, Noah toiled at building this massive structure. Why was he asked to build something for so long? Picture your neighbor working around the clock, erecting a giant tower. Would your curiosity not overcome you to ask, “What in the world are you doing?” God gave Noah a massive building project in order to make headlines. This would guarantee that he be swamped with interviews and have ample opportunity to encourage mankind to do *teshuvah*.

The *Zohar* (*Hashmatot, Bereishit* 254b) teaches that after the flood, Noah witnessed the destruction of the world and began to cry. He said, “Master of the world, You are called compassionate. Why were You not compassionate for Your creation?” God rebuked him, “You foolish shepherd! Now you say this?”

For even after toiling 120 years, Noah was not able to bring even one Jew back to God. It wasn’t that Noah was lacking in piety. Quite the opposite – he was a tremendous tzaddik. But he was lacking in his ability to perceive God’s absolute compassion. It was therefore most fitting that he be saved by being sealed in a box. Noah could not have remained on earth, for he was unable to relate to those who had fallen away from God and holiness. He could exist only in an artificial spiritual environment. The *Zohar* (*Tikkun* #21, p. 54) thus compares the ark to Yom Kippur, and points out that the ark came to rest during the seventh month – Tishrei!

Over the past Tishrei, we were blessed to be engaged in one spiritual endeavor after another. Hopefully, we became more aware of our connection to God and the existence and abilities of our special *neshamot* (souls). However, just as we left our Jewish homes, the pinnacle of holiness, for the outdoorsy-ness of the sukkah, so too, we must leave behind the High Holidays season and rejoin “normal” life. Yet the sukkah taught us a tremendous lesson: Just like its *sechach*-roof, God is hovering over us always. His compassion is never-ending.

We have proven that we can ascend to great heights, and that we are active members of God’s great nation, but can we also go beyond Noah? Can we serve God when He is hidden? When we begin to grasp His true greatness and compassion, we can begin to truly serve Him in whatever situation we find ourselves. God’s greatest desire is not for us to have a relationship for a month or two a year, but to get to know Him every day, in every facet of our lives. This is the challenge and greatness of every Jew. May we all merit a joyous year of true closeness with God. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhos Shabbat 7

Passion for Truth

By Yehudis Golshevsky

THE LACK OF TRUTH and honesty in the world distressed Reb Noson no end. One morning he was so upset, he was unable to pray with his usual joy. He prayed apathetically until he reached the verse “Who protects truth for eternity.” These words ignited the rest of his prayers with enthusiasm and joy.

He explained the deep encouragement he found in this verse through a parable:

A nobleman had a resplendent garden with every species of plant – except for one rare, precious species. He searched all over and finally found one seed of this species, which he planted in his garden.

The species was rare because it was difficult to grow. Before it grew, it was in great danger. Watering it too much or too little would kill it, and it was a favorite food of birds and insects. The nobleman hired guards to watch the seed vigilantly, for even one moment of inattentiveness could cause irreparable damage.

“The same is true regarding truth and honesty,” said Reb Noson. “Unadulterated truth and genuine honesty are precious and rare. They get so little respect in this world. God perpetually guards truth and honesty with great care. The time will come when people will see their greatness, as the verse states, “Truth will sprout from the earth” (Psalms 85:12).

It was the custom in Breslov synagogues for someone to share words of Torah between the afternoon and evening prayers. Some stayed to listen, while others learned alone or left.

One of these speakers had many listeners who enjoyed his enlightening ideas. Once the speaker got into a passionate argument with one of his regular listeners regarding a certain matter. They couldn't come to an agreement and each was very upset with the other. Everyone was certain that this man would stop attending the daily lecture. But they were mistaken. When asked why he continued attending, he explained, “I always gain so much from the Torah he shares every day. Why should our dispute make me abandon the good?”

People were astounded at this man's commitment to truth and spoke highly of his honesty.

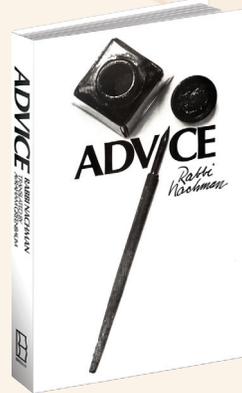
Eventually the two forgave each other and became the best of friends.

*Based on Maasiyos u'Meshalim, p. 40;
Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:176*

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 21. The main reason for the economic hardships that have hit the Jewish people in recent generations is that many of the *shochtim*, ritual slaughterers, have not been worthy. The blessing that a worthy *shochet* makes at the time of slaughtering is a powerful influence on the livelihood of the whole Jewish people. The blessing elevates the living soul that



was incarnated in the animal. But there are *shochtim* who fail to concentrate properly on the meaning of the blessing and harbor improper thoughts. A *shochet* like this, standing with the knife raised ready to slaughter the animal, is no better than a murderer. What pain this living soul experiences at this moment. She cries with a bitter wail, because the blessing this *shochet* makes will

do nothing to elevate her from her incarnation. ... The result is that people's livelihood is hit, and the little that is available can be acquired only with great toil and exertion (*Likutey Moharan* I, 37).

22. A person should always feel content with what he has. He should take no more from the world than is absolutely essential. ... A man should be content with what God has given him, and even out of this minimum he should still contribute a portion to charity. This brings about great unification in the worlds above, and the world is blessed with abundance (*ibid.* I, 54:2).



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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 in the Memory of (L'ilui nishmat) Yehudis bat Shimon