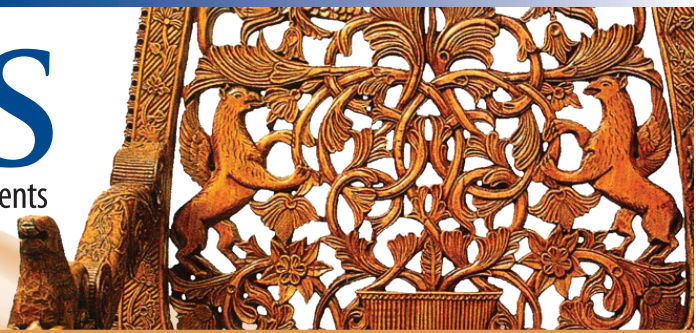


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## How Can We Change?

By Yossi Katz

“**BE TAMIM (WHOLE SOME OR SIMPLE)** before HaShem your God.”

On this verse, Rashi explains that one should conduct himself before God with simplicity, looking to Him dependently. One should accept whatever happens with utter simplicity. Rashi ends with a golden guarantee: “Then you will be together with Him and a part of His portion.”

As we count down the days to Rosh HaShanah, our entire focus and desire is to be reckoned as a part of God’s portion in the New Year for a year of good health, livelihood and *nachas*. We strive and wish to amend our ways and to perfect our actions. But often the entire process leaves us stressed out. Our need for perfection is overwhelming and we may feel our life is nothing but a blown opportunity. We want this year to be different, we want our lives to be different. What can we do?

We hope and pray every day that we witness the “complete redemption.” What is the difference between the complete redemption and the redemption from Egypt? When we were redeemed from Egypt, we reached incredible spiritual heights, culminating in the receiving of the Torah. But afterward we transgressed what was written in the Torah. From where can we now take strength? Even if a person tries to motivate himself and pick himself up, our Rabbis teach that one who is greater than his friend also possesses a greater *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). Now that he is at a higher level, he possesses an even more difficult challenge than before!

The difference between those who succeed in *teshuvah* (repentance) and those who fall away is actually the difference between the redemption from Egypt and the complete redemption. Just as there are Five Books of the

Torah, so too did Mashiach’s ancestor King David write five parallel books of Psalms. Rebbe Nachman reveals that the Mashiach will conquer the world through the ultimate weapon: prayer. If the first redemption was one of Torah, the final redemption of David will be one of prayer.

God is to be found everywhere and in every situation. We don’t have to recreate ourselves in a perfect mold or set up the perfect situation in order to begin to do *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* means looking within ourselves and discovering God right here and right now. Even if we feel as if we have been written out of the Torah, through words of prayer and supplication we can reach out and attach ourselves to God. Our feeling of distance can even be used to create the sweetest prayers in the world.

King David therefore says, “Instead of my love, they prosecute me – but I am prayer!” (Psalms 109:4). The more David sought to motivate himself and draw himself closer to God, the higher the level he reached and the more the *yetzer hara* prosecuted him. But because he personified prayer, he ultimately succeeded in writing the five books of Psalms. David’s Psalms are the revelation that no matter how badly he was persecuted and shunned, through simple faith and prayer he could always find God and hopefulness. Only through this special, intimate connection can we, too, return to God and rekindle a life of Torah and mitzvot.

This is the prescription for living a life of simplicity and faith. If we want to succeed at *teshuvah*, we need not turn our lives upside down and stress out about living an altogether different life. Rather, we should learn to look for God in our lives right now, to talk and relate everything to Him, with the firm hope of betterment. By attaching ourselves directly to God, ultimately nothing can stand in our way and we can rise above life’s daily grind to live a life of meaning and joy. Amen!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Onaah 3*

# The Blame Game

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**IT'S HUMAN NATURE** to look for an external cause when something goes wrong. People often blame their personal problems and communal struggles on the government's policies...on local and foreign anti-Semites...sometimes even on other "confused and self-hating Jews." After all, whatever is bothering me is probably someone else's fault, right?

Reb Noson dismissed that attitude. "Don't 'blamers' realize that whatever the Jewish people suffer is decreed from Above?" he asked. "Why do they spend time talking about politics and ignore that the spiritual is at the root of our troubles? Rebbe Nachman teaches that one should appreciate that the difficulties in every person's life are much gentler than we deserve. The same is true regarding the Jewish people's many trials and tribulations."

Many people feel that Rebbe Nachman's teachings resonate with them and yearn to live accordingly. Breslover chassidim would say that the first sign that they're starting to integrate the Rebbe's words is that they stop speaking against other people. They don't take any pleasure in discovering and describing other people's flaws. Instead, they develop a stronger awareness of their own flaws, and this leads them to be more forgiving of the foibles of others.

The long years of Communist oppression were marked by periods of intense turmoil and overnight changes. There were hot wars and cold peacetimes, periods of harsh policy followed by sudden relaxation of regulations. Naturally, there was always so much to talk about.

Yet the Breslover Chassidim didn't speak about any of this. They understood that one who is immersed in such matters will have a hard time focusing on Divine service. The outward conditions are always so nuanced and in flux; they tend to fill one's attention to the exception of anything else. Another matter that Breslovers never discussed was the claims of their detractors. One could potentially spend the entire day chewing over every bit of news and rumor. What a great way to ensure that we accomplish as little as possible in serving God!

Instead, they made it a practice to focus only on the spiritual demands of the day. We are here on a journey with a mission. Why allow ourselves to be distracted from our primary purpose?

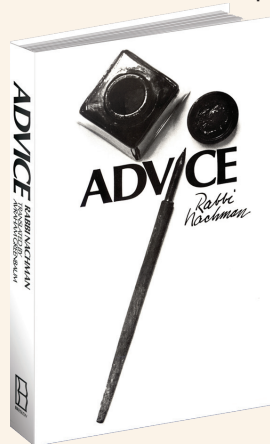
*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh I:442, V:438, VIII:33*

## SIDEPATH

**Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum**

**ENCOURAGEMENT.** 37. Even the most ordinary people, even the wicked, even the nations of the world – all draw vitality from the Torah. A person may be perfectly ordinary, he may be unable to learn or be in a place where he cannot learn. He, too, receives vitality from the Torah. Even at times when he is prevented from pursuing his studies, or if he is a person who doesn't know how to learn, he receives his vitality from the hidden Torah through the agency of the great Tzaddik (Likutey Moharan II, 78).

38. A person may have fallen very far; he may be sunk in the lowest pit of hell. But he can still restore and rebuild, with the help of the true Tzaddik. Through



the Tzaddik, all can receive vitality from the realm of holiness regardless of their situation. Therefore despair is absolutely ruled out. No matter where you may have fallen, remember that there is still hope for you to return to God. The main thing is to cry out – "From the belly of hell I cried out!" (Jonah 2:3). Even a cry from the lowest pit of hell is not lost. Cry, cry and cry again. Do not despair and do not stop

crying out to God. Cry and plead with Him no matter who or what you are, until He looks down from Heaven and sees (Likutey Moharan II, 78).



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PO Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641

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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.*