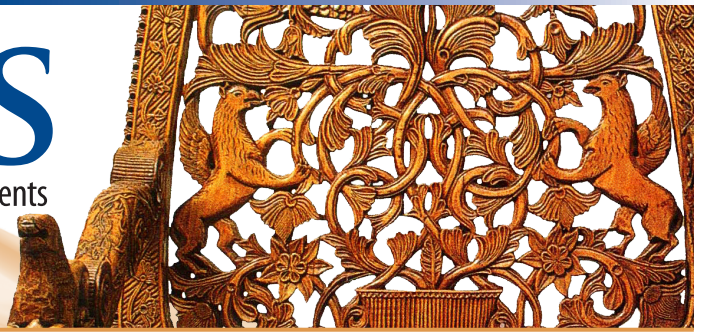


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Should We Laugh Or Cry?

By Yossi Katz

WHEN I THINK of the summer, I imagine people reclining on golden, sandy beaches, letting the cool waves wash up against their feet. They have no worries at all, just lots of time to relax and enjoy.

The Jewish calendar is our spiritual compass; it points us in the direction we should be heading. Just as the summer beckons, the Three Weeks come along and restrict us from some of those pleasures. The end of next week ushers in the Nine Days, further impacting our summer vacation plans. Is our Jewish calendar anti-Semitic? This oddity has always bothered me, particularly in the summer!

Our Rabbis make a very interesting connection. They teach that a hen lays her egg after 21 days. Similarly, the *luz* (usually translated as almond) tree takes 21 days from the time it flowers until its fruit ripens (see *Bekhorot* 8a). Rebbe Nachman explains that these 21 days allude to the Three Weeks; 21 days are the necessary incubation period before a rebirth. This is why it is the *luz* bone of the spine that will remain in the grave after the rest of the body has decomposed, and from it, the body will be built anew at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead. Likewise, the eating of the egg at the final meal before Tisha B'Av begins\* symbolizes the rebirth we will experience on that day, as we have been taught that Mashiach will be born on Tisha B'Av and that day will eventually become a festival (see *Likutey Moharan* II, 85:2).

But something is very odd about this whole process. On the one hand, the *luz* symbolizes future rebirth, but why then does it ripen after 21 days, which represent mourning and sadness (and our being restricted from the summer festivities)? And why does the same egg that we eat at the mourner's meal right before the onset of Tisha B'Av also symbolize rebirth? As they say, "Should I laugh or cry?"

We can answer this riddle and solve the timing of the Jewish calendar by examining a kosher egg. The sign of a kosher egg is one round end and one pointy end. Isaiah said, "He made my mouth like a sharp sword" (Isaiah 49:2). The pointy or sharp side corresponds to the times we experience great joy and festivity. We can laugh and scream with our mouths. But there is also a "flip side" – the round end of the egg represents the roundness of the human life cycle, which is why eggs are the traditional meal of mourners.

A kosher egg is the symbol of a healthy and wholesome life. When we were little kids, we viewed life as being just a lot of fun and adventure. Unfortunately, when we got older, the tragedies and difficulties of life made us think only of running away. But the real Jewish attitude is to understand that we are here for a purpose. God is constantly bringing the world closer to its rectification. When we are able to understand that this is a difficult process, but at the end we will merit a spiritual rebirth, the difficulties become lined with an awesome feeling of consolation and closeness to God.

Imagine the joy a mother feels after nine months of difficult childbearing, when she can finally hold her baby in her arms. With our *emunah* (faith), we can experience this consolation even now, during the Three Weeks, and also during all of life's challenges. The contrast between summer vacation and the timing of the Jewish calendar creates the feeling necessary to take part in this process. The egg eaten on the eve of Tisha B'Av reminds us that even at the greatest moment of tribulation, redemption is already in play.

*\*This year we do not eat this meal, since the eve of Tisha B'Av falls on Shabbat.*

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Beitzim 5*

# Destination: Israel

By Yehudis Golshevsky

WHEN REBBE NACHMAN's third daughter, Miriam, came of age, she married Pinchas, the son of Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Volochisk. Throughout his life, Rabbi Aryeh Leib yearned to move to the Land of Israel. He spoke about his desire often, but years went by and he never made the move.

Rebbe Nachman had another *mechutan*—his daughter Adel's father-in-law, Rabbi Avraham Dov of Chmelnik. When Rabbi Avraham Dov heard how Rabbi Aryeh Leib would constantly express his yearning to make the move to the Holy Land, he said, "Why does he need to talk so much? You get the money together and you go!"

When Rebbe Nachman heard Rabbi Avraham Dov's reaction, he said, "The tzaddik of Volochisk, who has yearned all his life for the Land of Israel, will eventually get there. But the Rabbi of Chmelnik, who said that it's just a matter of getting the money together and going, will never reach it!"

Eventually, after many years, Rabbi Aryeh Leib gathered together a number of his family members and prepared to move to the Holy Land. Among the descendants he chose to come with him was Miriam's husband, Pinchas. But Rebbe Nachman objected to Miriam joining him.

During those days, bands of marauders were common in the Holy Land, endangering travelers. Rebbe Nachman knew that his son-in-law, Reb Pinchas, was of a delicate constitution and wouldn't have the stamina to fight off attackers. So he preferred to keep Miriam safe for the time being.

About four years later, another son of Rabbi Aryeh Leib decided to move to the Land of Israel. He offered to take Miriam with him so that she could be reunited with her husband. This son was a powerful man, so Rebbe Nachman agreed that his daughter would travel with him. He added, "I'll give her to you!" Rebbe Nachman accompanied them for the first mile of their journey out of the town, and when his students pushed him to ride in the carriage, he said with feeling, "To the Land of Israel, you go on foot!"

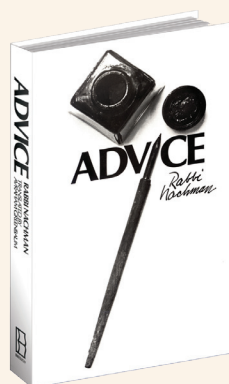
Not long after the two arrived in the Holy Land, Pinchas passed away. He and Miriam had no children. Pinchas' brother married Miriam to carry out the mitzvah of *yibum* (levirate marriage), and Rebbe Nachman's words came to be: "I'll give her to you!"

Based on *Or HaOrot I*, pp. 216-218

## SIDEPATH

Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

**EATING.** 2. If you are conscious that your eating habits are bad, the remedy is to give charity to the Tzaddik and to poor people who are genuinely deserving. The Tzaddik has the power to draw people who are far from God closer, even if they were sunk in idolatry. Eating greedily causes the light of God to be darkened in the world. But through this charity, God's light is spread through the world. The powers of your mind and soul



will be restored and you will see the light of the Tzaddik and learn the love and fear of God (*Likutey Moharan I*, 17:5).

3. When a person attains perfect mastery of the Holy Tongue and guards the holy covenant in purity, he has the power to stir up the sparks of the letters that exist throughout the Creation. All the pleasure he has from eating and drinking

and other enjoyments comes only from the sparks of the letters. His heart is illumined and his face becomes so radiant that people are moved to return to God simply by seeing it. Everyone who looks at his face sees his own reflected there as if in a mirror — and sees, in contrast, how far sunken in darkness he is. Without a single word of preaching, he will want to be released from his darkness — all through seeing this person's face (*ibid. I*, 19:7-9).



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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.