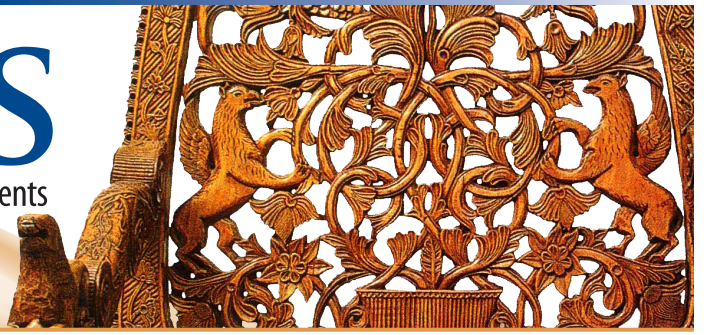


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Standing Next to Holiness

By Yossi Katz

“**THE ESSENCE OF** God’s greatness is that the very person who is most distant from Him can and should serve Him. ... There is a common misconception among young people that this principle does not apply to them, for a person may think he has too deeply tainted himself and has done too much wrong. But the truth is just the opposite: this principle applies especially to him! A person’s main test in life, and the essence of the refining process he must undergo, is that through all the declines and falls, and through all that he experiences, he should not allow himself to become distanced from God, from Torah or from prayer” (*Healing Leaves*, p. 65).

I know it’s not Sukkot season, but I have a related thought. You see, being handy is not one of my good qualities, and while I know others who appreciate the handyman qualities that building a sukkah tends to bring out, I personally get stressed by the experience. A few years ago, I invested in an expensive type of sukkah that was guaranteed to just “snap together,” no tools necessary! Well, all I can say is that I had a difficult time figuring out exactly where the tall and heavy boards were supposed to “snap together.”

Now consider how awkward it was for the Jews journeying for so many years in the desert to be lugging with them all the components of the Tabernacle, assembling and disassembling this structure at every stop. Surely it would have been easier to set up a permanent structure. What was the purpose of all the schlepping?

Additionally, when the Tabernacle was set up, there were very strict rules based on its sanctity regarding who could go where. Someone who violated these rules was liable for the death penalty. Yet after the Tabernacle was disassembled and moved, its previous resting place

retained zero sanctity. If we compare the Tabernacle with its permanent replacement, the Holy Temple, the difference is striking. Even today, the Temple Mount retains a level of sanctity that restricts Jews from entering its precincts. Why was the Tabernacle different?

By building the Golden Calf, the Jews stumbled in the cardinal sin of idol worship. God’s awesome revealed glory that they had just experienced at Mount Sinai during the Giving of the Torah became hidden from them. Because of this, the Land of Israel, the place where Godliness is openly revealed, was also inaccessible to them. Therefore they were forced to journey from place to place in a barren desert, so far removed from the Promised Land that lay just ahead.

But even in moments like these, God does not forsake us. Inasmuch as every place is filled with God’s glory, God chooses to reveal Himself openly only in places of sanctity. Yet even when we are so distant, if we choose to search for Him and call out to Him, there is a place above time and space where we can access the most awesome levels of Godliness, a place of no boundary.

Therefore God commanded us to take gold, silver and copper – the very same materials that were used to construct an idol – and build for Him a temporary home, the Tabernacle. The same materials that brought about so much evil now brought redemption. Despite their having been used for unholy purposes, and in general being materials used for mundane work and trade, God revealed to us that even they could become a transformative instrument. Precisely because the holiness revealed at the places where the Tabernacle stood was so great, this holiness could have no permanent setting.

God’s greatness is unfathomable. Let us always search for it.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot,
Geviyat Chom MeYesomim 3*

Act On It!

By Yehudis Golshevsky

WINE IS FAMOUS—or infamous—for breaking down barriers, and it can sometimes help someone see a truth that he might otherwise have missed.

Two drunks were having a heart-to-heart talk. One gushed to his friend, “My dear brother, you know I love you so much!”

“I don’t know that at all!” his drunken companion replied. “If you really love me, why don’t you show it? You know how down-and-out I am. Why don’t you come to see how much I suffer? How come you don’t do anything to help me in my misery?”

Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov heard this exchange and perceived the hidden truth within the wine-soaked speech. “I have always professed to love my fellow Jews with all my heart, yet I, too, have been derelict in this,” he thought. “If I really care for them, why aren’t I doing more for them?”

From that point onward, Rabbi Moshe Leib worked very hard to help his poor brothers. During the frigid Russian winter, he awoke at midnight to recite *Tikkun Chatzot* and then went out to the forest to chop wood. He would chop as much as the poor required. Only then would he return to the city and continue his Divine service.

“I learned from those two drunkards that if your caring doesn’t express itself in action, it is not real,” he said.

Rebbe Nachman made a similar point about *emunah* (faith): “The verse states about Moses that ‘his hands were *emunah*’ (Exodus 17:12). It is not enough to profess to have *emunah* in one’s heart. We need to act on our *emunah*. If it is genuine, our *emunah* will express itself in the world of action.”

As a wise man explained, “Imagine if a wealthy husband professes to love his wife and says he would do anything for her. She asks him to pick up a piece of jewelry for her. He never gets around to it. Will she really believe that his love is genuine? And if she asks for something simple, like picking up some groceries, and he just makes excuses, she knows for sure that his devotion isn’t real. The same is true in Godly terms. If you won’t act in even the smallest way on your professed convictions, what do they really mean?”

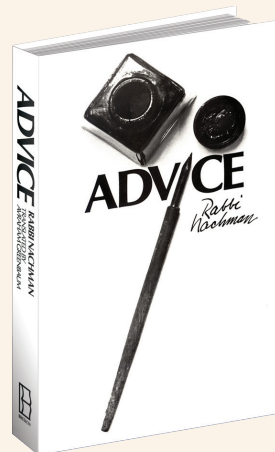
Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:565

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

THE COVENANT. 37. Before a person can receive a new revelation of Torah, he is first tested in the crucible of sexual desire. If he stands up to the test and breaks his desire, it is like breaking the shell that precedes the fruit, and he will be worthy to receive the revelation (*Likutey Moharan I*, 36:6).

38. Be careful not to listen to the words of a person who is wicked and also intelligent. The mere words themselves can arouse sexual desire. They are laden with poison and enter the very body of the one who hears them (*ibid.* I, 43).



39. One who abuses the Covenant will have the taste of bitter waters – the “waters of impurity” and the “seed of uncleanness.” He will be unable to pray with the fervor of total devotion. He will never taste the sweetness of the words of the prayers. The offering he brings – his prayer – will be eaten by a dog.

But when one guards the Covenant in purity, his prayers are sweet waters – the “waters of purity,” the “seed of holiness.” As the words emerge from his lips and enter his ears, their sweetness passes into his very bones and his prayer flows out with fervent passion. Then a lion comes and consumes his offering (*ibid.* I, 50).

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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.