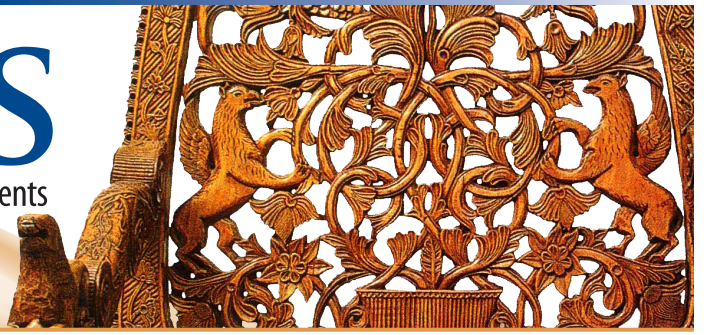


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Do It With Mirrors

By Yossi Katz

REBBE NACHMAN TOLD the story of a king who built a palace and asked two men to decorate it. The king divided the palace into two parts and assigned one part to each of them. He also fixed a time limit to complete their work. The first man toiled to teach himself the art of painting and plastering and was able to paint his part of the palace with the most beautiful and unusual murals. But the second man paid no attention to the assignment and did nothing about it whatsoever. As the deadline approached, he realized he had little time left. So he plastered his entire portion with a black substance called *pakist*, a kind of shiny pitch. The *pakist* acted like a mirror, reflecting everything around it.

The king came and admired the first man's part, with its wondrous and beautiful paintings executed with extraordinary skill. The second part was covered with a curtain. When the king approached, the second man stood up and drew aside the curtain. The sun was shining, and all the remarkable paintings appeared in his section in their entirety because of the *pakist*, which reflected everything like a mirror. This found favor in the eyes of the king. (See full story in *Tzaddik* #224.)

Although the second man in this story seemed to come up with a clever solution, wasn't he really just cheating? Why was the king happy with his work?

We find a similar idea in our *parashah*. Moshe was commanded to construct the Menorah out of a single piece of gold. From the upper flower ornaments until its base, the entire Menorah was to be chiseled out of a single piece of gold. The expertise necessary for this eluded Moshe. So he took a large piece of gold, tossed it into a fire, and the fire produced the Menorah all on its own (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 15:4). Yet if this is the story of

the construction of the Menorah, was does the Torah say, "According to the form that God showed Moshe, so did he construct the Menorah" (Numbers 8:4)? Seemingly, the fire had more to do with creating the Menorah than Moshe!

"For a candle is a mitzvah, and Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23). The light of the Menorah symbolizes Torah and spiritual growth. While we have the option to make spiritually positive choices so we can grow and better ourselves, it's extremely difficult to do so because of the awesome power of our *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). Our Sages thus explain, "Were it not that God personally intervenes to help, we would succumb" (*Kiddushin* 30b).

The paradox of Moshe's commandment to personally construct the Menorah out of a single piece of gold is the challenge of our lives. In truth, we do not have the strength to motivate ourselves and completely overcome our *yetzer hara*. But at the same time, just as Moshe did what he could by throwing the gold into the fire and praying to God, we are also required to put in our efforts and turn to God for help.

Our generation is the final one preceding the arrival of Mashiach. The last of the seven *sefirot* is Malkhut (kingship) and its color is black. Just as in Rebbe Nachman's story, our power is weak and we feel lazy. However, we do have recourse: we can create a black mirror and reflect the strength that preceded us. By praying to God and emulating the right path by putting in the effort we are capable of, we can reflect the vision of all the true *Tzaddikim* who preceded us. And the real King will have much *nachas*. Amen!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Krias Shema 5*

# Klap Freilich!

By Yehudis Golshevsky

Weddings are such joyous affairs. Yet today's weddings are fairly tame compared to the way they used to be. In prewar Europe, the average Jewish wedding was an all-night event. Musicians were hired to play a full program of lively tunes and people would dance happily for many hours. The joyous atmosphere was infectious. Reb Noson once attended the wedding of a very distant relative, although he usually didn't attend the affairs of distant relations. When asked why, he explained that he went to attain joy.

During the wedding season, musicians worked extremely long hours, night after night. When there were several consecutive weddings, it became quite a challenge to keep up the pace. Not surprisingly, the parents of the bride and groom kept a sharp eye out for a musician who was slacking off. As far as they were concerned, they were paying for his time and were determined to get their money's worth.

Yankele the drummer was extremely exhausted. He had played many nights in a row and hadn't gotten much rest. From the start of the wedding it was clear that he was tired, but he just kept going. He worked to keep up his usual tempo, and for many hours he somehow managed. But then he dozed off.

It took a few moments for the father of the bride to notice something was amiss. The moment he realized the drum had stopped playing, he strode up to the drummer and administered a stinging slap across his face. "Yankele!" he cried. "*Klap freilich* – Beat [your drum] with joy!"

The smack jerked Yankele out of his slumber. He was so shocked and exhausted that he cried a little, but he immediately resumed beating his drum to the tune in a lively manner.

Rebbe Nachman was at that wedding and witnessed this harsh rebuke. He commented, "Even when we get a *klap*—a slap from on high—we have to keep on being *freilich!*"

Reb Noson added, "This is a lesson for our service of God. Even though a person feels as if he's been flung away from God, sustaining many 'slaps,' still, he must pick himself up and hit back against the forces of negativity with joy!"

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh II:543*

## SIDEPATH

Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

**CLOTHES.** 2. A person who fails to protect his garments from stains causes a division between the Holy One and the Shekhinah. Such a person is like a rebel against God's kingship, and his whole livelihood will come to him with great exertion and difficulty (*Likutey Moharan* I, 29:3).

3. By making a beautiful garment for a Tzaddik, the Shekhinah is clothed in radiant garments, and the severe face that God shows to the world becomes sweetened (*ibid.* I, 42).



4. See to it that your clothes are always in good condition. Never wear clothes that are torn. Torn clothes are an indication of weakness in the fight against evil, because the concept of clothing alludes to the mystery of the *chashmal* (Ezekiel 1:27), which is bound up with the idea of watchfulness (*ibid.* I, 127).

5. The Evil One and the forces of the Other Side grab people by their clothes. They burden people with all kinds of worries about clothing. The trouble people have to go to for various items of clothing they need can easily become a serious distraction from religious devotion. Someone who is firm in his faith will not be concerned about this. Even if he has nothing to wear, he will do what he can to serve God to his full capability. In the end, God will look down from the Heavens and see what he needs (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #100).



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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.*