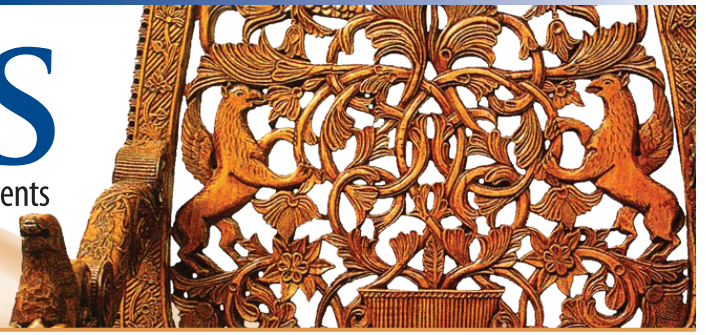


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Master of Deception

By Yossi Katz

**ONE OF THE WORLD'S** foremost journalists, someone millions of people rely on to keep them informed about world events, was accused of fabricating news stories. I think this shocks us because it begs an all-important question: “What is reality and what is nothing but a Hollywood production?” And: “How many other things have the media and other trusted agencies fed us that are total fabrications?” This episode is a stark reminder of the awesome power and deception of falsehood.

God is One; His truth is inseparable from Him. So where do lies, deception and falsehood fit in to the balance of things?

Before the world was created, God's light was everywhere. There was no room for creation or freedom of choice. No other reality existed but God's Oneness. Therefore He concealed His light in order to create our universe. His light is still there, but now we have to choose to uncover it. As a result of this process, the forces of falsehood exist and thrive. They are the forces that allow God's light to stay hidden.

This week's *parashah* features an interesting dichotomy. When one person steals something from another (*gezeilah* in Hebrew), he must repay his victim for the loss incurred. But if he takes something without the other's knowledge (*geneivah*), he has to pay double! This is interesting because taking something from someone in broad daylight often means using intimidation and force, while stealing without the victim's knowledge would seem to be a lesser crime. Why, then, does the Torah double the punishment for the latter?

Those who strive to build a relationship with God quickly realize the difficulties that lie in their way. We

are surrounded by confounding thoughts and ideas. The forces of deception surround us and confuse us. They show us a lack of progress, cause us to be unsure which of the many paths to follow, and bombard us with negative or illicit thoughts that we thought we outgrew long ago. We are ensnared by a thick cover of darkness and unsure where to turn.

This is most obvious when it comes to prayer. We so badly want to call out to God and connect with Him, but we feel hemmed in all sides. The forces of deception do everything in their power to stop us from connecting to the Source, and make powerful arguments against even trying.

But lies have many holes. We can expose their falsehood and dispel the darkness by finding the point of truth within ourselves. No matter what I may have done wrong or whatever negative thoughts surround me, if I turn to God honestly and express my sincere desire for Him, I can dig my way out of the lies that are telling me otherwise. The point of truth is my soul talking. When I tune in to its cry, however muted it may be, no darkness can ever hide me from reality.

Theft is a terrible crime – it means taking something that doesn't belong to you. Yet stealing clandestinely is ultimately worse because the deceit involved creates a false reality that ensnares so many. By looking for truth and exposing the big lie, you not only save yourself but also rescue all the others who are trapped in falsehood. When the thief is caught and his deception revealed, he pays double, because not only must his original robbery be recovered, but also the collateral damage caused by his deceit must be returned. You have the power to expose him!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Geneivah 5*

# Pray Like a Child

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**REBBE NACHMAN'S DEEP** yet completely simple and straightforward immersion in prayer was a wonder to those who were close to him. He prayed in a brokenhearted way, begging for mercy with total self-effacement, like a young child pleading with his father.

Once, when a young man came to the Rebbe to ask for guidance in his private prayers, Rebbe Nachman demonstrated...

"Master of the universe! Please have mercy on me! What will become of me in the end? Is this how I'm going to spend my life? Is this the life that I was created for?" This was how Rebbe Nachman prayed—simply, directly, feelingly—and this is how he taught his students to do *hitbodedut*. To speak one's innermost heart and yearning out before God just as one would with his most trusted friend.

During the final Rosh HaShanah of his life, Rebbe Nachman was already in residence in Uman. He was deathly ill with the tuberculosis that would take his life. He was so debilitated that he could barely leave his bed. His family and students were in constant attendance, trying to alleviate his suffering and hoping to hear his words, and to see him take a turn for the better.

At the time, the Rebbe's grandson Yisrael was with him in the house. The four-year-old was known to be especially clever. Once, as little Yisrael walked by his bed, Rebbe Nachman called out, "Yisrael! Please pray that I'll have relief!"

"Of course!" answered the child. "But first, give me your gold watch!" Rebbe Nachman smiled and said to his disciples at the bedside, "See – the child already speaks like the tzaddikim do! He knows to ask for an object from the petitioner, so that he can perform a soul-redemption when he prays!"

Rebbe Nachman dutifully removed his watch and handed it to little Yisrael. The boy solemnly accepted the item. Then he turned aside and said, "HaShem! HaShem! Please make my grandfather well!"

Everyone laughed at his childish simplicity in prayer. But Rebbe Nachman didn't even smile.

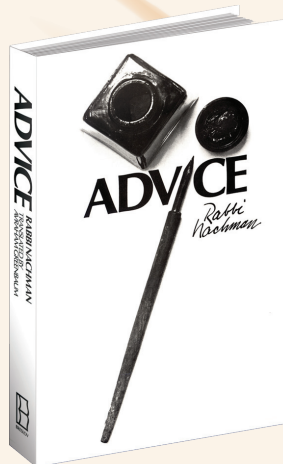
He gestured toward his little grandson and said emphatically, "Do you see? To pray, one must speak with the utmost innocence and simplicity, just like a little child who asks something of his father!"

*Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 113-115*

## SIDEPATH

*Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum*

**SPEECH.** 14. You must speak words of Torah and prayer to the point that your body becomes totally nullified, as if it literally did not exist. To achieve this, you must develop true awe of Heaven (*Likutey Moharan I*, 75).



15. Words of holiness — Torah and prayer — are a very high concept. The kingship of God and the truth of His existence are revealed through them. Holy speech is the "breath of Mashiach." It is *ruach hakodesh*, the Holy Spirit, and includes the concepts of the revival of the dead and of the unification of the Holy One and the Shekhinah (*ibid.* I, 78).

16. Even one who is sunk in the lowest of levels can always remind himself of God's presence if he speaks words of holiness — Torah and prayer. Regardless of his situation, he should make an effort to speak words of Torah and prayer, to meditate and speak to God, and to discuss religious matters with his teacher and his friends. Then he will always be able to remind himself of God's presence regardless of how far he may be from God, even if he falls to the "filthy places." The faculty of speech will never desert him, and he will never be able to forget God. Understand the tremendous power of speech. This idea can save you from destruction (*ibid.*).



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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*