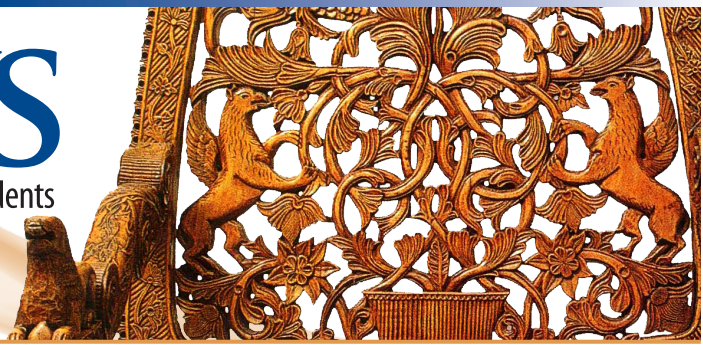


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT VAYECHI • 5773 VOL. 3 NO. 15

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## Superstar—Not!

By Ozer Bergman

“[Yaakov said to his son Yosef,] ‘Please do not bury me in Egypt’” (Genesis 47:29). Why didn’t Yaakov Avinu (our Patriarch) want to be buried in Egypt? He didn’t want the Egyptians to idolize him, to make him into a god (Rashi).

The most important thing, the foundation on which all else depends, is binding oneself to the greatest *tzaddik* of the era, accepting whatever he says, on the smallest matters as well as the greatest, without veering from them, right or left—even if he tells you right is left and left is right (*Likutey Moharan I, 123*).

This is serious business. I have to find quite a rare person, someone light-years beyond “spiritually advanced,” whom I can also trust and believe in so greatly that I accept his version of reality even when it contradicts my senses and sensibility, my “right” and “left.” I better not mess this up! I understand the need to have a guide and a mentor in life and in Jewishness. But isn’t throwing away my knowledge and intuition in order to accept and follow the suggestions of human being idolatry? No, not necessarily.

First and foremost, make no mistake. There is one God and One God Only. God and God alone created and continues to create everything. This is our creed, which we declare twice a day in the *Shema Yisrael*, the first words Jewish parents should teach their children (*Sukkah 42a*), and the words every Jew hopes will be his last (*Gesher HaChaim 2:1*). God tells us that He is the first and the last—He has no father and no son—He is the only God, the only Creator and the only Rescuer (*Isaiah 44:6; ibid., 43:10-11*).

So why would Yaakov Avinu think that the Egyptians or anyone else would make him into a god? Because he was very godly. Commenting on *Genesis 33:20*, the Talmud tells us that God called him “god”! (*Megillah 18a*). On that same verse, the Midrash tells us that Yaakov Avinu said, “You [God] are God on High, and I am god below” (*Bereishit Rabbah 79:8*). In fact, the *Midrash* also tells us that other *tzaddikim* are God-like, doing things that God will do in the Future (*ibid., 77:1*). God Himself says that just as He created Heaven and Earth with His words, exceptional *tzaddikim* do likewise (*Zohar I, 5a*).

Any person with extraordinary, God-like abilities faces the temptation of being worshipped. Even the holy Baal Shem Tov was seduced, nearly falling into this trap (*Shivchei HaBaal Shem Tov #42*). Rebbe Nachman teaches that the responsibility for refusing to accept such a person as a teacher (and certainly as a god, God forbid!) lies with us ordinary folk (*Likutey Moharan I, 61:2*). Since we are responsible for whom we choose, it follows that we have, and must maintain, a clear, independent vision of whom we have chosen.

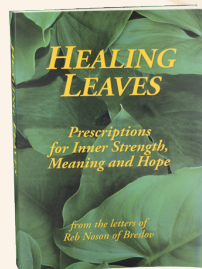
Yaakov Avinu was the first *tzaddik* to be compared to the sun (*Bereishit Rabbah 84:11; Likutey Moharan I, 133*). Even though the sun is much bigger and brighter than anything in the world, its light can be obscured, just like Mt. Everest can be blocked from view by a hand or a coin placed in front of the eye. The truth—that the *tzaddik* radiates light and the demagogue/demigod radiates pseudo-light—can also get obscured by our desires, physical and psychological. In our current exile, we have to take care that “Yaakov” is not “buried in Egypt”—that our perception and evaluation of the *tzaddik* is undistorted by non-Jewish influences.

Based on *Likutey Moharan I, 123 and I, 133*  
A gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!

## HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Adapted by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Know and remember this well, my son: man came into the world only to believe in God. This is the reason for his creation and why the entire world and everything in it, which is dependent on man, was created. (*Letter #43*)

“Neither silver nor gold, nor precious stones accompany a person [when he leaves this world]

– only Torah and good deeds,” say our Sages (*Avot 6:9*). While everyone knows this, it is still necessary to review and recall it every day. Our Sages did not say this for no purpose, but rather to remind a person about his eternal goal! (*Letter #222*)

# The Secret of the Redemption

by Yossi Katz

“Jacob called for his sons and said, ‘Come together’... ‘Gather together’” (Genesis 49:1-2). Jacob wanted to reveal the time of the Redemption to his children, but the Divine Presence left him (Rashi).

It was the end of the end of Jacob’s life and he had brought together all of his holy offspring, the twelve tribes. Jacob had accomplished what no one before him had: he merited having only righteous children. In this great gathering of holy *tzaddikim*, Jacob thought he would be able to reveal the secret of the time of the Final Redemption. But just as he began, the Divine Presence departed, signaling that something was missing, something was still not complete.

*Something was missing, something was still not complete*

Jacob originally said to his children, “*Hei’asfu*—Come together.” This term is used when speaking to people who are close by. Jacob was talking to his children who were all great *tzaddikim*. He thought that in the merit of this elite group, he would be able to reveal the secrets of Creation and streamline the timing of the Final Redemption. But now he realized something much deeper: God was holding off the Redemption because of His great compassion for Jews who are still far from holiness.

Realizing this, Jacob now said, “*Hikavtzu*—Gather together.” “Gathering” refers to assembling people who are distant. God’s main enjoyment is when He sees Jews who were previously removed from holiness join the gathering of holiness.

Jacob said, “Gather and listen, sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father.” When the Jews are being gathered, they are referred to as “Jacob,” signifying a lowly state, a state of conflict. Jacob was saying to all the distant souls, “Gather and listen – listen to the words of the holy Torah and return to God.” “Israel” signifies an uplifted state and the means to be victorious. Only when the Jews have gathered together from all their distant spiritual places and are now spiritually united can they be victorious.

*YiSRaEL* (Israel) is an acronym for *Yesh Shishim Ribo Otiot LaTorah*. There are 600,000 letters in the Torah. There were also 600,000 souls present at the Giving of the Torah. When all Jewish souls gather together in spiritual harmony, the time of Redemption will finally arrive. May it happen speedily and in our days! Amen.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Ishut 5:4*

## SIDEPATH

Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom translated by R. Aryeh Kaplan, zt”l

1. “For I know that God is great, our God above all others” (*Psalms 135:5*).

These are King David’s words. “I know” — I alone, for the vision of God’s greatness cannot be shared (*cf. Alim LeTerufah #135*).



You may have a vision, but even with yourself you cannot share it. Today, you may be inspired and see a new light. But tomorrow, you will no longer be able to communicate it, even to yourself. “I know” – I as I am now. For the vision cannot be brought back.

The Rebbe said: Look at the next verse, “All that God wants, He does, in Heaven and on earth.” It is a different thought, speaking of something else entirely. King David says, “I know,” and can go no further, for words are no longer adequate.

A perception of God cannot be communicated. It is so lofty, higher than high (*Ecclesiastes 5:7*), that words cannot express it.

It is written, “Her husband is known by the gates” (*Proverbs 31:23*). The holy *Zohar* states that the husband is the vision of God which each man perceives through the gates that he makes in his own heart (*Zohar I, 103b*). The heart is hidden and the gates do not open to another.

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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.*