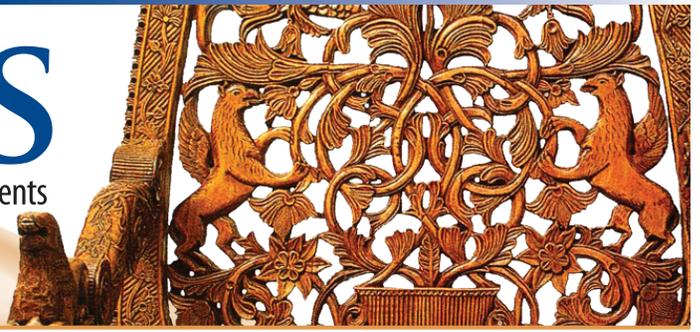


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## A New Day, A New Way

By Yossi Katz

**THE FIRST MISHNAH** in *Berakhos* discusses the correct time for saying the Shema at night. The Mishnah says it is from the time the Kohanim enter the Beis HaMikdash and purify themselves in order to be able to eat the *terumah*, which is after sunset. Why do the Kohanim have to wait for the sun to set in order to become purified, if they've already gone to the mikvah and become purified from that? What is the connection between the Shema and the idea of becoming purified?

The mitzvah of Shema is really the mitzvah of belief and faith in God. That's why we say, "Hear, Israel! God is our Lord. God is One." Everything that happens in our lives is all connected to God's Oneness; it is all Divine providence.

We then say, "These words that I am commanding you today should be on your heart." Our Sages explain that "today" means the laws of the Torah should be new *today*, as if they were given *for today*. Not like the laws of a king issued many years ago that still remain on the books, even though they aren't relevant anymore. Each time we do a mitzvah, we create an awareness of how God is relative to our lives at this very moment.

How can we maintain this awareness of God? That's the idea of what we say before the Shema, "God renews constantly, each day, the Act of Creation."

Rebbe Nachman teaches that every day is an entirely new creation—it's not dependent on anything that came before. Therefore when we receive our soul back each morning, we receive it with a renewed sense of hope and longing. Every day is a new creation, a new opportunity.

For this reason, the Torah prescribes different waiting periods for different types of impurity. For some types of impurity, a person has to wait only one day. For a more serious impurity, such as death, he has to wait seven days, because death is the ultimate separation from the awareness of God. So a person needs seven days, which is seven new days of Creation, in which to rebuild a sense of feeling and hope, and reconnect with the presence of God.

The *Zohar* says this is the same idea behind the seven-week waiting period between Pesach and Shavuot. Each day we must begin again and renew our sense of awareness of God. At the end of this process, we are deserving of the great spiritual heights of the Giving of the Torah.

Therefore the Kohanim had to wait until nighttime to eat the *terumah*, which is a very holy food. They needed a new day in order to cleanse themselves of their past and all their spiritual baggage.

Meanwhile, as we wait day after day and we are not in a state of purity, we have to continually renew ourselves with hope and longing for God. The process of waking up day after day after day, which is the process of the Counting of the Omer, cleanses us to receive the awareness of God. In the end, we will be pure to reach the chuppah with God, receive the Torah, and rise to awesome new heights.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhot HaShachar 5*

# Spiritual Healing

By Yehudis Golshevsky

Rebbe Nachman said, “My daughters were blessed with *ruach hakodesh* (Divine inspiration) that verges on prophecy. But of my daughter Sarah, I don’t speak at all!”

Sarah, affectionately known as Sorke, was the apple of Rebbe Nachman’s eye. She wasn’t a confidante like Adel; she was someone altogether different. We still have the text of two letters that her father sent to her, and stand amazed at the language he used in his opening salutation:

“My daughter and beloved friend, modest and wise, praiseworthy and upright, *Maras* [an honorific like Madam] Sarah, may she live long!”

In one of Rebbe Nachman’s letters to his *mechutan* (Sarah’s father-in-law), he begged, “Please take good care of my daughter’s health, because my soul is bound up with hers.” On another occasion, Rebbe Nachman wrote to Sarah and said that he would be happier if she and her husband would move closer to him so that she could take her meals together with him and share her wisdom and fear of God. This letter was flowing with her praises, but after she finished reading it, Sarah broke down in tears.

The Chassidim who were with her at the time were in a state of shock at her response, as she cried, “Don’t you see? My father thinks that I’m in such a low state that he needs to praise me to lift up my spirits!”

After her marriage, Sarah moved to her husband’s town of Kremenchug, where she suffered from ill health and chronic pain. Rebbe Nachman was deeply concerned with her welfare at all times, and had occasion to visit her or to receive her in turn. Once, when she suffered from terrible tooth pain, Rebbe Nachman told her that she must put herself in a state of joy to heal herself.

“But how can I rejoice when I’m suffering?” she asked.

Rebbe Nachman answered, “You start with make-believe joy: you force yourself. But you’ll find that your make-believe joy will transform into true joy. And when your feet lift up to dance all by themselves, your pain will leave you and you’ll be healed!”

Sarah followed her father’s advice. Some time later that day, the Chassidim saw that she had drawn the curtains in her house so that she could dance freely without being seen...and her toothache did, in fact, disappear!

*Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 186-196*

## SIDEPATH

*Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum*

**HITBODEDUT.** 19. When you speak to God, arouse your heart to the point that your soul all but flies out of you. This is true prayer (*Likutey Moharan II, 99*).

20. You should get into the habit of talking to God as if you were speaking to your teacher or your friend. For God is close by. He can be found everywhere. The whole earth is full of His glory (*ibid.*).



21. How good it is if you can pour out your prayer before God like a child complaining and pestering his father. And it is good if you stir your heart so much with your words that the tears literally pour down your cheeks like a child crying to his father (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom #7*).

22. It is possible to scream in a “still, small voice” (I Kings 19:12) without anyone hearing you.

Not a sound emerges from your lips. You just imagine in detail exactly how you would scream (*ibid.* #16).

23. A broken heart is precious in God’s eyes. It would be good if one could go through the whole day with a broken heart. But this would easily lead the majority of people to fall into depression, and depression is very destructive. Therefore the best thing is to set aside a certain period each day to pray with a broken heart, and then to spend the rest of the day in joy.



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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.*

*Dedicated in the Memory of (L’ilui nishmat) Yehudis bat Shimon*