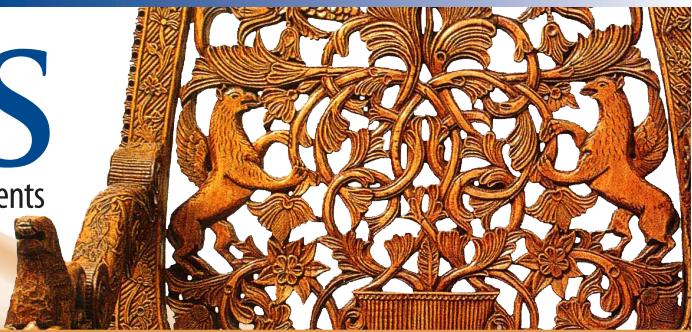


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Don't Be Fooled!

By Yossi Katz

KORACH WAS NO ordinary fellow. He was the leading Levite, a close relative of Moses, a tremendously clever fellow, and also enormously wealthy. In fact, he was so great that 250 members of the Sanhedrin followed him into open rebellion. So how could the great Korach openly rebel against Moses, who was doing nothing other than following the directive of God? How could such a Torah scholar fall so low?

Spiritual growth is like arm-wrestling. The more you press forward, the greater the resistance you encounter. In order to rise from one spiritual level to the next, the *dinim* associated with the new level must first be mitigated. *Dinim* are harsh judgments; they are the protective forces maintaining the balance of good and evil. These forces challenge you to prove that you are sufficiently worthy of reaching this new level. They force you to prove your resilience and worthiness.

Furthermore, Rebbe Nachman explains that even those who have totally eliminated their sensual temptations and purified themselves from the pleasures of this world must still face an even higher level of challenge, one which the Rebbe refers to as a "holy angel," a completely spiritual *yetzer hara*. As a Tzaddik advances from level to level, he must continually face these ever more difficult, spiritual-only challenges.

Unfortunately, Korach didn't realize this. He reasoned that the Jewish people had achieved universal prophecy at Mount Sinai. Each person had heard God speak to him directly. Korach therefore claimed, "The entire congregation is holy, and God is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above God's community?" (Numbers 16:3). Korach was arguing: "Haven't we all made it? At our level, we have subdued our *yetzer hara* and certainly no further *dinim* remain."

Because Korach truly was at a mighty level, the *dinim* at his level were enormous. Additionally, the defining character of his Tribe of Levi is *din*. Everything created

by God is holy and for ultimate goodness, including harshness. However, this is realized only when the harshness is combined with kindness. It is for this reason that the Levite is to serve the Kohen, whose job is to atone for the Jewish People and exhibit kindness. When the Levite serves the Kohen, the former's harsh nature is subjugated to the latter's kindness in a way that the correct balance is achieved. However, because Korach was egotistical, he did not realize that there was still much more room to grow and many *dinim* to conquer. He therefore separated himself from Aaron the Kohen and the *dinim* were unleashed, overpowering him into openly rebelling against and harshly criticizing the entire concept of the priesthood.

At every new level, we are faced with challenges and difficulties. Many mistakenly believe that they have fallen and are upset, expecting that had they truly risen to new heights, they would now find themselves on the easy road. However, this is the universal experience and the path to greatness. These arguments are nothing but a product of the very *dinim* attempting to suppress our growth and fool us into complacency. We have the power to mitigate them by remembering that everything God does is for our best. The difficulties we feel are not because we have failed, but because God is orchestrating a process created to bring us closer to perfection. Rebbe Nachman himself once said that had he realized in his youth that even the Tzaddikim encounter this experience, he would have found it tremendously encouraging. Let us not be fooled!

Korach's fault was that he did not humble himself and subjugate his harsh judgmental nature to the Kohen, so that it could be used in a balanced, positive way. We, too, must learn to humble ourselves, allowing our own critical nature to be subjugated to the encouragement and loving advice of the Tzaddikim so that we may continue to grow from level to level. By living this way, we can mitigate all of the harshness and difficulties in our lives. Amen!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shiluach HaKen 4*

# Make Your Own Miracles

By Chaim Kramer

MANY PEOPLE THINK of Tzaddikim as miracle-workers. In Reb Noson's day, too, everyone had stories of the wonders performed by this or that Tzaddik. Many of the stories were undoubtedly genuine: true Tzaddikim have such powers.

Rebbe Nachman, on the other hand, did not perform miracles except on rare occasions. For him, the greatest miracle of all is the self-transformation a Jew can achieve by himself through his own prayers and efforts. Therefore the Rebbe worked to instill in us the confidence that we, too, can forge a personal relationship with God, so that He will heed our prayers and perform miracles on our behalf. One of Rebbe Nachman's main teachings is that every Jew has the capacity to achieve everything he needs through prayer.

Reb Noson elaborates:

*One must have perfect faith in God – believing that He is the Creator of everything, that He controls and supervises everything, and that He has the power to change the course of events any way He wishes and bless us with everything good.*

{ **Every Jew has the capacity to achieve everything he needs through prayer.** }

*And just as one must have perfect faith in God, so too, one must have perfect faith in himself. He must have perfect faith that God listens and attends to every single word spoken by every single Jew, even the lowest of the low. Every single Jew has the power to accomplish what he needs through praying to God truly and sincerely, as it is written, “God is close to all who call Him” (Psalms 145:18).*

Reb Shimshon of Tulchin was one of Reb Noson's staunchest supporters, giving generously from the proceeds of his business for whatever was needed. Reb Shimshon was childless, and kept asking Reb Noson to help him.

Reb Noson wrote to him, “I don't have the key to children. But then, neither does anyone else. One thing is certain: If there is any way of mitigating the decree and helping you, the Breslover Chassidim can help you more easily than anyone else!”

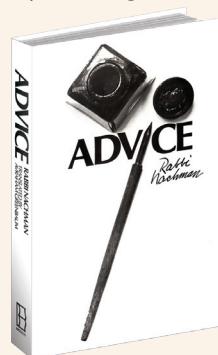
From “Through Fire & Water: The Life of Reb Noson of Breslov”

## SIDE PATH

**Advice (Likutey Etzot)** translated by Avraham Greenbaum

**PRIDE & HUMILITY.** 6. There are certain arrogant people who not only refuse to go to the Tzaddikim personally to ask them to pray on their behalf, but also try to prevent others from going. Such people deprive God of the prayers of the Tzaddikim for which He yearns so strongly (*Likutey Moharan I*, 10:4).

7. Pride is a form of idol worship. The way to crush it is by drawing closer to the Tzaddikim (*ibid. I*, 10:5).



8. To break one's pride is the foundation for attaining wisdom, long life and vitality. The severe face which God shows is sweetened, and one attains faith, joy, the understanding of Torah in its revealed and hidden aspects, and the spirit of holiness (*ibid. I*, 10:11).

9. A person who is arrogant cannot even open his mouth. He lacks the faculty of speech and is unable to speak words that radiate with light. When words of Torah pass his lips, not only do the words themselves fail to radiate within him and draw him to improve, but the Torah itself becomes coarsened and dimmed on his lips (*ibid. I*, 11:2).

10. Arrogance and sexual immorality are connected. One who succeeds in resisting temptation and extricating himself from pride will attain the light that will illuminate his path to repentance. In the end, he will reach an understanding of the depths of Torah (*ibid. I*, 11:3).



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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.*