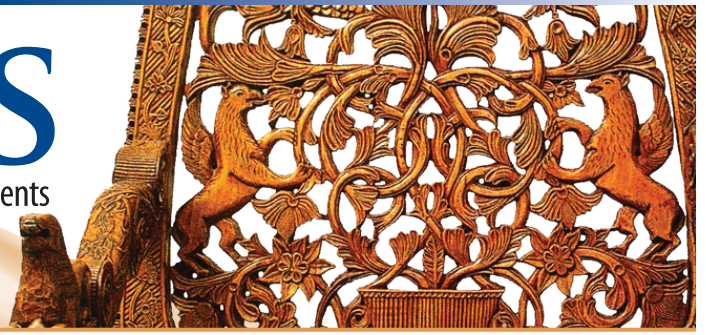


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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The Message in the Menorah

By Yossi Katz

EVERY YEAR WHEN Chanukah time swings around, fond memories of lighting the menorah come to mind. I remember being with my family, singing *Maoz Tzur* and eating latkes with applesauce. But year after year, as we continue to light the menorah, are these experiences just a nostalgic ritual, or do they grow and become exciting and ever more meaningful?

The laws of lighting the Chanukah menorah contain some interesting contrasts. On the one hand, the Arizal teaches, a tremendously awesome light descends when we kindle the menorah. On the other hand, we are told to light the menorah below ten *tefachim* (handbreadths)—a place so low that God's Presence does not descend there. Also, on Shabbat it is a mitzvah to light candles and enjoy their light, but on Chanukah we are allowed to gaze at the Chanukah candles only from a distance. Therefore we light the *shammash* candle so that we don't utilize the menorah's light.

Reb Noson explains that the essence of the Chanukah light is so lofty and removed from this world that we aren't yet worthy of it; we can only admire it from a distance. But the fact that this light can descend into our lowly world, in the middle of the work week and into our very own homes, is simply miraculous. God is sending us a message: Even though we may feel far away from Him and we may not yet be worthy of His light, He is nevertheless shining down to us.

The main mitzvah of lighting is just one candle per household. This is because it's enough for an entire family to look at the light and reflect on this great miracle. But a person who feels distant from God because of all the wrong he has done may not feel worthy of having this great light shine down all the

way to his lowly place. Therefore our Sages teach that a better way (Mehadrin) to light is for each individual to light his own candle. This way, each and every one of us realizes that the further we are, the happier we should be now that God is shining down to us. For if we are truly so distant and yet God has not abandoned us, how great is His love for us and how joyous we should be now!

But the very best way to light (Mehadrin Min HaMehadrin) is for each individual to light his own candle and add another candle every night. During each and every day of our lives, God performs numerous miraculous acts of kindness for each of us. God created us and will in fact finish what He started, bringing about our final redemption. Let us realize that this process has already begun, and that every day He is miraculously bringing us closer, step by step.

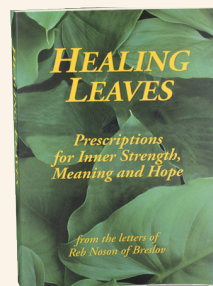
As we gaze at the holy Chanukah lights, let us remind ourselves and affirm our belief that even though we may be far, the journey home is already underway.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhoh Shiluach HaKen #4

HEALING LEAVES

FROM THE LETTERS OF REB NOSON OF BRESLOV

Compiled by Yitzchok Leib Bell



Now, my son, fortify yourself with all your strength to grab hold of your thoughts, however you can! When you are transacting business, put your mind to that; let it be with joy and without anger, sadness, worries or depression. While praying, force your thoughts into what you are saying and bind them to your

words with a tight, powerful bond. If your mind does suddenly fly off in some other direction, grab it forcefully, like a horse by its halter, and pull it back to the holy words of your prayers. (Letter #433)

A Chanukah Miracle

By Gedaliah Fleer

FOUR MONTHS AFTER sneaking into Uman for the first time, American student Gedaliah Fleer returned with an official tour group of Breslovers led by Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Rosenfeld in December 1963. This time, the mayor of Uman himself accompanied them.

The woman who lived in the house adjoining Rebbe Nachman's grave was flustered when she saw a group of tourists, the mayor with his assistant, and several policemen standing outside. Maria, one of the Intourist guides, tried to explain that the tourists had come to pray in her yard. The woman, however, became hysterical and started screaming that there was no grave in her yard.

"Okay," said the mayor. "Perhaps this is not the correct house. Let's look for a grave in someone else's yard."

"This is the correct place," I whispered to Rabbi Zvi Aryeh. "This is the yard, and this is the woman."

Rabbi Zvi Aryeh repeated my words to the mayor. The mayor, his assistant and the Jewish guide started to argue with us. "What's the big problem? If you can't get in to see the grave, forget about it. We'll take you on a tour of the city. Uman is beautiful."

We appealed to Maria. "You see. We told you this would happen."

Maria became furious. "Open the gate immediately!" she shouted at the woman, and then pushed in the gate without waiting for a reply. "Go inside!" she instructed us. No one asked any questions. We entered the yard and I showed the others the exact location of the grave. The woman who lived there was completely confused. The mayor scratched his head in wonder and we, of course, started to recite the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

It is impossible to describe how we felt standing next to Rebbe Nachman's holy grave. We were privileged to remain there for an hour and a half in prayer and hitbodedut. By the time we returned to the bus, a wondrous warmth flowed through our veins.

In Moscow, our hotel rooms faced the Kremlin. Since it was Chanukah, we lit the Chanukah menorah. Our joy was beyond words. Watching the tiny flames that symbolized pure belief in God, bringing the light of Torah into the darkness of Russia, we realized that we had been given the privilege of spreading the Rebbe's light.

From "Against All Odds"

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

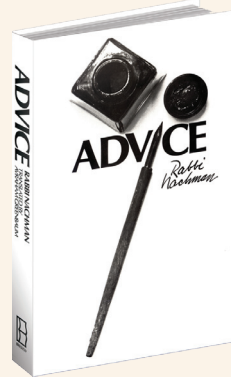
SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

ALIEN PHILOSOPHIES AND IDEOLOGIES. 2. One should always guard one's mind against false ideologies. The only way to achieve fulfillment in life is through the pursuit of genuine wisdom – namely, the wisdom of Torah, which is concerned with Godliness. Compared with this, all other systems of ideology are sheer emptiness; they have nothing to do with wisdom at all (*Likutey Moharan I*, 35:1).

3. When a person is born, his intelligence is limited. When he begins to use it to think about how to serve God, it starts growing. But if a person fills his mind with alien ideas, the intelligence of his holy soul is diminished in direct proportion to the space taken up by these ideas. This unholy "intelligence" becomes the source of all kinds of negative appetites and character traits (*ibid.*).

4. A person has to be so careful to guard his mind and thoughts, making sure he never admits alien ideas or ways of looking at things. All our problems, defects and sins come from abusing the sanctity of the mind by admitting alien thoughts and ideologies. To achieve true repentance and make amends for all one's sins, a person must cleanse his mind of all these alien ideas. Wisdom and intelligence actually are the soul. By clearing the mind of alien ideologies, the faculty of thought is elevated to its source. This is the essence of returning to God (*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.