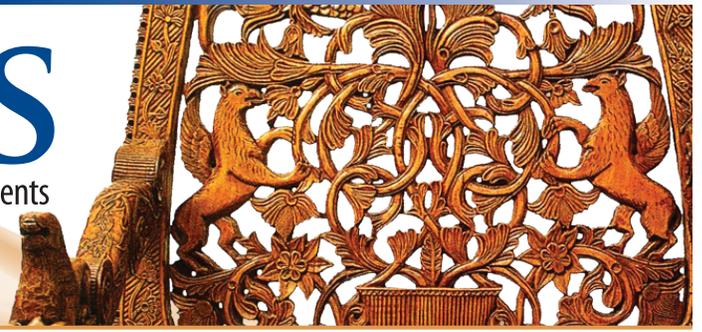


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## No Looking Back!

By Yossi Katz

**RONEN GREW UP** as a typical secular Israeli kid. After completing army service, he went off to explore the “magic” of India and everything it offered. While touring the country, he became friendly with some of the lower elements of society and kept up with them after returning home.

Back in Israel, a former party-mate became Torah-observant and inspired Ronen to follow him in his new path. Soon enough, Ronen found himself a newly observant wife and settled down to raise a family. Unfortunately, as the burden of supporting his family and lifestyle weighed down on him, Ronen was compelled to reach out to some of his old friends and do a little business trafficking Indian dope to Switzerland. To his great regret, he was caught with the goods in his suitcase and was locked up in a notoriously dangerous Indian jail.

Stuck between a corrupt and inefficient court system and a jail cell occupied by jihadi terrorists, Ronen decided he must escape. But try as he might, every time he was about to implement one of his expert escape plans, something went wrong and he was forced to desist. Ronen finally gave up on his plans and sincerely turned to God as his only hope. He poured out his heart to God and placed his trust in Him alone.

One day, feeling ill, Ronen was taken to a prison hospital. He decided to fiddle around with the bathroom window and it unexpectedly shattered all over the floor. Ronen realized that no matter what happened, he was going to be accused of attempting escape. With no choice, he leaped out the window and ran. There was no turning back! (To find out the rest of Ronen’s true story, read the incredible *Escape from India*.)

Not only is this Ronen’s story, but it is the story of the Jews enslaved in Egypt, and the story of our own personal enslavement and redemption.

After hundreds of years of slavery, in the blink of an eye, a savior named Moses comes and, through incredible miracles, redeems the Jewish people. Our *parashah* tells us that when they went out of Egypt, “and also provisions, they did not procure” (Exodus 12:39). Imagine, for 210 bitter years the Jewish people lived in Egypt and had no collective memory of life anywhere else. Yet in an instant, the redemption arrives and they must hurry out without any time to take along some supplies.

Why? Couldn’t God have given them enough time to properly prepare? I can’t possibly imagine going on a day trip with my family in which my wife doesn’t bring along enough supplies to last for a week!

The answer is that when a person has a slave mentality – whether he is physically enslaved, or spiritually enslaved to negative influences, or emotionally attached to an undesirable frame of mind – he can’t think clearly. His plans and provisions will surely be influenced by his compromised state of mind, and before he knows it, he will find himself locked up all over again.

Much like Ronen’s story, we must often wait for what seems an eternity for our salvation to arrive and yet remain hopeful. But in addition to being patient, it is vital for us to also be ready. When God sends us the inspiration to change and move forward, we must be aware of His sign and willingly take the plunge. Yes, certainly in the long run we need a lasting plan, but now is not the time for contemplation. Now is the time to jump to freedom and not get caught looking back.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Giluach #3*

# The Hired Gun

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**REB PINCHAS** WAS teaching Breslov wisdom to the youth in Kiblitsh, and many townsfolk were upset.

The kosher butcher in Kiblitsh was known as Chaim Katsav. He was also known as “Chaim *She’yeish Bo*” (Chaim Who’s Got It), because he was a giant of a man and extremely strong. Money meant everything to him, and he was easily swayed. The entire town feared him.

Some parents decided to pay Chaim to take Reb Pinchas out the picture – by any means necessary. They were convinced that even death would be a fitting punishment for his sin of “converting” their youth to Breslov, and would also send a powerful message to steer clear of Breslovers in the future.

They explained to Chaim that he would be well-paid in this world and the next to “take care of” Reb Pinchas. “After all, you have lived a very coarse life. If you do this simple mitzvah, you’ll earn eternal reward! It will be easy since he is very frail. All you need to do is give him one little cuff and he won’t trouble us ever again.”

“I will do it this very Shabbat when he is sitting with his students during the third meal,” promised Chaim.

On Shabbat afternoon, Chaim went to take care of the matter. When he entered the room, Reb Pinchas immediately understood why he was there. He began speaking powerful words of *chizuk* (encouragement) that he hoped would soothe Chaim’s weary soul. “I can wait a little to hear what he is saying first; it’s no rush,” reasoned Chaim.

As he began to hear the wonderful words Reb Pinchas shared, Chaim became enthralled. Reb Pinchas was saying that there was hope for every single Jew, no matter what! No matter what he had done, he could rectify everything and become a good Jew!

Chaim began to feel great regret for believing that it would be a mitzvah to kill this pure Jew. He also wondered whether this message could possibly apply to him. He had lived a very unworthy life. Could even he repent and become a righteous Jew?

With burgeoning hope in his heart and tears in his eyes, he approached Reb Pinchas...

*(to be continued)*

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh V:213*

## SIDEPATH

*Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum*

**ALIEN PHILOSOPHIES AND IDEOLOGIES.** 14. There are many searching questions about God. But anyone with a modicum of genuine understanding will see that it is only right and fitting that such questions exist. For how can we, with our limited human intelligence, understand how God governs the world? Of course there are things that baffle us. The utter greatness and exaltedness of God is magnified only when we find there are questions we cannot solve (*Likutey Moharan II, 52*).



**MARRIAGE.** 1. Intense prayer can help a person find his marriage partner (*ibid. I, 9*).

2. Dancing at a wedding sweetens the force of the harsh judgments in the world (*ibid. I, 32*).

3. There are deep Kabbalistic reasons for the custom that the bride sends the groom a *tallit*, and for crying out “Shabbat” and making humorous remarks at the wedding celebration. There is also deep significance in other wedding customs like veiling the bride and pelting the groom with baked goods, interrupting the groom’s Torah discourse and giving him a gift for his discourse, and the entertainers bending themselves over double. There are awesome reasons for all of these things, and they express the will of God (see *Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom #86*).

4. When we acknowledge God and give Him praise, it has an influence that helps those who need to find their marriage partner to do so. The same is true when we study the legal codes (*Likutey Moharan II, 2*).



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PO Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641  
PO Box 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

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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.*