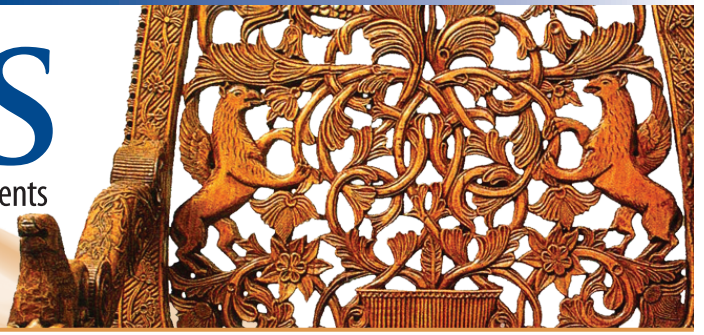


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Wake Up and Live!

By Yossi Katz

*UNABLE TO CONTROL* himself, the viceroy plucked an apple from the tree and took a bite. As soon as he swallowed it, he fell to the ground in a deep sleep and slept a long, long time. The viceroy's servant tried to wake him up, but he couldn't.

Rebbe Nachman's first tale, "The Lost Princess," is a fascinating recounting of the story of our lives. Being such, it incites us to ask a critical question: "Do I truly possess absolute self-control?"

Whether we are aware of it or not, we have all "eaten from the apple" – we have all erred in our own ways and fallen into a deep, spiritual sleep. Why sleep? Because when we are asleep, we don't even realize that we are far removed from reality. Things can be happening all around us, critical events in our lives that we might one day look back at and wonder, "How could I have missed that?" yet we are utterly numb to real life. So how do we wake up? How do we become alive?

We each have our golden calf or other form of idol worship. While these may not be actual idols per se, they distract us enough to sever our connection with God. Many hobbies or acts we engage in pull us away from our true purpose in life, causing us to daydream. The Midrash connects the sin of the golden calf with the red cow, whose ashes have the power to purify. In the words of the Midrash: "This can be compared to the son of a maidservant who soiled the king's palace. They said, 'Let his mother come and clean up the mess'" (*Tanchuma, Chukat* 8). The red cow in whose image the golden calf was formed is compared to the maidservant's mother: it has the power to cleanse from idol worship. But the red cow is longer to be found. How do we sprinkle those ashes even today?

Our *parashah* states, "Take for yourself a perfectly red cow, which does not have a blemish, upon which no yoke was laid" (Numbers 19:2). The *Zohar* (*Chukat*, p. 180) comments that "red" refers to harsh judgments, whereas "perfect" refers to softened judgments. The harsh judgments result from our various misdeeds – since we have become distracted and dozed off, there is a judgment against us separating us from our Heavenly Father. We become convinced that we are distant and that we are not compatible with true spirituality.

Or, maybe worse, perhaps we are in a truly deep sleep and are not even aware that we are sleeping. We may think we're serving God and living a meaningful life, but that's because our self-evaluation is only at a surface level! Who can truly claim to be in a constant state of Godly awareness? But we can soften this judgment by finding our one "perfect" thing, our good point "which does not have a blemish, upon which no yoke was laid."

No matter what we have done (or not done), the essence of a Jew is completely good and pure. For this reason, Rebbe Nachman teaches that there is no Jew who does not possess good points. Every one of us must look deeply into our souls and find the good that is expressed through our thoughts and actions. In order to wake up, we must first understand who we truly are and how special it is to be a Jew. We are sleeping only because we have forgotten our true reality! Like a mother who picks up and restores her fallen child, as we connect with our good point and realize our true essence, we are sprinkled with the ashes of the red cow and the various barriers that have kept us from spiritual growth are destroyed. We can return home.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hashkamat HaBoker 1*

# The Watchful Tzaddik

By Yehudis Golshevsky

WHEN REBBE NACHMAN was a baby, his mother, Feiga, had to travel away from home for a night. His father, Reb Simcha, could not be left in charge of the child, since he was rarely at home. Reb Simcha's practice was to spend days, weeks and months out in the fields and forests in *hitbodedut*, and it was unusual for him to be in Mezhibuzh for any length of time.

At that time, the great tzaddik, Rabbi Chaim of Krasni, was staying at Reb Simcha's home. Feiga asked her guest to keep an eye on her baby while she was away, and he agreed. Eyes half-opened, in profound contemplation of the sleeping infant, Rabbi Chaim kept watch over him the entire night. Even though it was his lifelong practice to arise for *Tikkun Chatzot*, the Midnight Lament over the destruction of the Holy Temple, on that night he remained at his post, focused on the baby, until morning.

When Feiga returned home the next day, he said, "I set aside my devotions last night just so I wouldn't miss a moment of gazing upon the wondrous face of your child!"

Rebbe Nachman was blessed to be raised in the most rarified of atmospheres. His parents' home was a regular meeting point for all the early Chassidic masters, who would come to pray at the nearby grave of his great-grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov. In later years, Rebbe Nachman would confirm that as a young child, he paid close attention to every bit of conversation, study and prayer that took place around him. Thus, he was literally raised on the knees of spiritual giants.

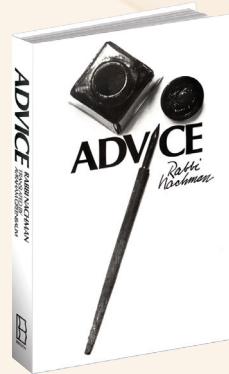
They, in turn, fell in love with the child with the "beautiful eyes" – a quality he had inherited from his ancestor, King David. Though he could hardly be included among their number, they didn't drive him away as they would some other, distracting child. Rebbe Nachman, in turn, was like a sponge, soaking up the Torah and holiness that the visiting tzaddikim exuded. Rabbi Chaim of Krasni – Rebbe Nachman's early "babysitter" – kept a watchful eye on the growing boy. Throughout those early years, he would state time and again that it was clear he was destined for greatness.

*Based on Or HaOrot I:44-47*

## SIDEPATH

Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

**HONOR.** 21. It is very hard for a tzaddik to be widely known. A tzaddik who is revealed and famous has to bear much suffering on behalf of the people. But there are cases where it is the will of Heaven that a certain tzaddik should be revealed and widely known (*Likutey Moharan I, 71*).



22. When the leaders become arrogant, God sends people to make trouble for them and speak out against them in order to break their pride (*ibid. I, 95*).

23. A person who wants honor is a fool (*ibid. I, 194*).

24. The more a person lacks understanding, the more punctilious he is about any affronts to his dignity (*ibid. I, 202*).

25. A person who conducts himself in office with honesty and purity will rise to greatness at the end of his days. Whatever the criteria of greatness in his particular time and place, he will be accorded this greatness (*ibid. I, 236*).

26. One must be very cautious about entering any position of authority. This applies especially to those with fear of Heaven, who have a particularly strong desire to influence others. If they accept a position of authority, they are in danger of losing the blessing of prophecy which they might have been able to attain through their fear of Heaven (*ibid. II, 1:7*).



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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.*