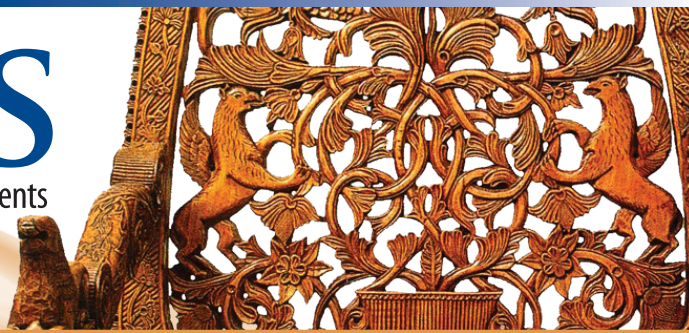


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Shining in the Dark

By Yossi Katz

AS WE BEGIN to read the Torah once again, various episodes are recounted. These are not just the random happenings of the world so many years ago, but reflect an exact plan of events that God, in His tremendous wisdom, designed to take place in the most calculated way. By carefully probing and analyzing these episodes, we can discover tremendous insights into the world around us.

Interestingly, God chose to first create the world in a state of darkness and only afterwards created light. Why didn't He create both of them from the very beginning? Furthermore, the Torah lists night as preceding day: "God called the light 'day,' and the darkness He called 'night.' There was evening and there was morning, one day" (Genesis 1:5). Why does Jewish time always begin with night?

In the beginning, God's light was omnipresent. In order to create the world, He needed to "make room" for His creatures to exist. The Kabbalah teaches that God constricted His light to the sides, leaving a "vacated space" in which Creation could take place. This initial act of darkness effectively concealed His Godliness from creation and is the cause of His hiddenness in the world to this day. Only later did God channel His endless light to the now vacated space (see *Eitz Chaim* 49, 64).

We see this same model of constriction and revelation in nature. For example, when someone wants to grow a fruit, he must first plant a seed in the earth. The seed starts in darkness and then sprouts over-ground. The tree grows and develops branches, twigs and leaves before it actually produces the fruit. The fruit itself receives nourishment through the branches, the trunk, and other parts of the tree that are inedible.

Similarly, a baby is formed in the darkness of the womb. As it grows and develops, it receives all its nourishment through the umbilical cord and placenta. After birth, these organs—the very life-force of the fetus—will be discarded as waste. In this case, too, a new creation starts in darkness and only later comes to light.

"The earth was formless and empty, with darkness upon the face of the depths, and the spirit of God hovered above the surface of the waters" (ibid. 1:2). This means that God's throne of glory was hovering in the air above the waters (Rashi, ibid.). The throne of God is the mother of life, the place where all of our souls were formed. But since God first created the outer shell of darkness, we are often blinded and cannot perceive the pure and shining roots of our souls.

Because of the darkness, we also have trouble finding God. To reveal God in His hidden world, we must first remove the outer shells and coverings of everything in creation and every challenge that we face in our lives. Yet when we try to discover Him in places that are seemingly detached from holiness, the very remoteness of these places causes our spiritual forgetfulness. More than anything else, our place in life causes us to act in ways utterly removed from the greatness of our souls.

Our Sages teach, "Do not judge your friend until you have reached his place" (*Pirkey Avos* 2:4). Who is fit to judge? Only God Himself can judge, because every place is contained within Him; only He can truly say He is familiar with all of the various places that we find ourselves. In God's eyes, our struggles are understandable. Therefore, He judges us favorably, and waits for us to cry out to Him so we may regain the memory of our true roots.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Orlah 4

The First Pilgrimage

By Chaim Kramer

THOUSANDS OF CHASSIDIM used to visit Rebbe Nachman when he was alive, but after his passing in October 1810, the leaderless Breslovers began to drift away. One way Reb Noson sought to strengthen the Chassidut was by arranging the first pilgrimage to the Rebbe's *tziyun* (grave) in Uman, which would become an annual practice every Rosh HaShanah thereafter.

With typical initiative, Reb Noson went about gathering people for a minyan at the *tziyun*. A few days before Rosh Chodesh Shevat (January 26, 1811), he convinced a few chassidim in Breslov to join him, including Rav Aharon, the Rav of Breslov, and his son Reb Zvi Aryeh. Then Reb Noson hired coaches and told the drivers they would be making several detours along the way.

At one side stop in Sidkovcy, he stopped at the home of a certain Reb Yaakov, who had been with Rebbe Nachman the previous Rosh HaShanah. Reb Yaakov warmly greeted them and Reb Noson said, "Here we have a partner in our merchandise, our heritage." Reb Yaakov gave them food and lodging, and promised to join the pilgrimage to the Rebbe's grave every Rosh HaShanah.

Their next stop was Dashev, home of Reb Shmuel Isaac. They were unable to see him because he spent the entire day in his private room, praying and studying. Reb Noson left Reb Zvi Aryeh in Dashev to let Reb Shmuel Isaac know of their plans, along with money for a coach to bring them both to Uman.

Reb Noson's group arrived in Uman early on Erev Shabbos and prayed at Rebbe Nachman's *tziyun*. That night they ate the Shabbos meal together and were very joyous. Reb Shmuel Isaac and Reb Zvi Aryeh arrived close to Shabbos. Reb Zvi Aryeh recalled what happened next.

Reb Shmuel Isaac, a man in his mid-forties, had just arrived after a whole day of travel. Nevertheless, he went to the Rebbe's *tziyun* and prayed there in the ice-cold weather of the Ukrainian winter until well after midnight. The other Breslover chassidim spent the night in the *beit midrash* with Reb Noson.

The next morning, Reb Shmuel Isaac was told that Reb Noson had spent the night talking about Rebbe Nachman. When he heard about the joyous atmosphere at the Shabbos Rosh Chodesh meal, he said, "I was at the Rebbe's *tziyun*. But with that joy, Reb Noson drew the Rebbe to himself!"

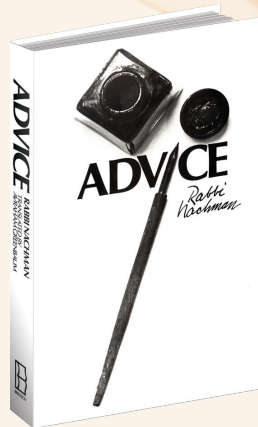
From "Through Fire and Water"

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

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 18. The whole body of Torah law dealing with business affairs is relevant to practical business activity. Anyone who wishes to conduct his business with faith and honesty must be expert in all the laws of business in order not to slip up in any of them (*Likutey Moharan* I, 35:6.).



19. A person who genuinely wants to conduct his business with faith and honesty must guard his faith very carefully from any possible flaw. He must be as scrupulous as Rav Safra (see *Makkot* 24a), and he must "speak the truth in his heart" (Psalms 15:2). Even if he merely decided something in his heart, he must not change it later on. If he guards his faith carefully, his soul and intellect will be refreshed and

renewed through his faith (*ibid.* I, 35:7).

20. When a person conducts his business with faith and honesty, it is as precious as the daily offerings and incense brought in the Holy Temple, which caused the husks to fall away and all the sparks of holiness trapped within them to ascend. His mind is elevated and refreshed, and it is accounted as if the Holy Temple had been rebuilt in his time (*ibid.* I, 35:8).



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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.