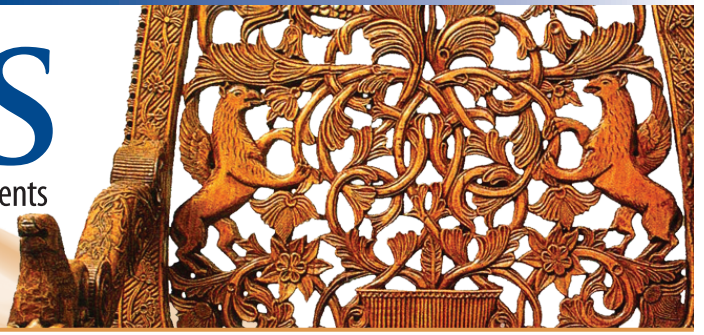


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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The Spiritual Light Switch

By Yossi Katz

ONE OF MY fondest memories of living in Israel as a yeshivah *bachur* was standing outside the doorway of our Yerushalayim apartment and lighting the Chanukah menorah. As there were quite a few of us, we had several menorahs, and it was truly a special sight. My roommate was very musical and had a beautiful voice. We would sit for a long while singing the Chanukah songs and prayers and, as time passed, we young American boys would be joined by many of the local Yerushalmi men. It was quite a scene!

As strange as it is to see American boys and Yerushalmi men singing together, the idea of lighting candles outside one's home would seem even stranger. We usually light the Shabbos candles in the dining room to benefit from their light while eating the Shabbos meals. The idea of standing outside the Jewish home, the place of the Jewish family's sanctity, and doing the mitzvah in the street is very unique indeed.

In the *Shema*, we say that one should speak words of Torah "when you are sitting at home, traveling on the road..." (Deuteronomy 6:7). The home embodies the idea of sanctity and oneness with God. In fact, the Torah begins with the letter *BeiT* (ב) to signify that by fulfilling the Torah's commands, we become connected to the One who is the Master of the house (בית, *BayiT*).

On the other hand, the concept of travel is always fraught with danger. Just as Rachel passed away while traveling, "traveling on the road" symbolizes the inherent dangers and spiritual distancing of going outside the home. However, the *mitzvot* of the Torah help us even the playing field, so we can connect to God not only when we are sitting at home, in shul or yeshivah, but even as

we travel outdoors. Through the *mitzvot*, every external and mundane act we do transforms us and elevates us to the highest place of God's unity.

Therefore the verse continues, "[when you are] going to sleep and waking up" (ibid.). One usually goes to sleep at night. Night is a time of darkness and uncertainty, when God seems hidden or disconnected from us. But we just proclaimed, "God is One!" (ibid. 6:4). We firmly believe that even when we perceive distance between us, we are always connected to Him. Therefore, we connect the darkness of night to the light of day, and extend the oneness of our homes to the distance of travel.

Chazal teach that the Divine Presence never descends below ten *tefachim* (handbreadths) (*Sukkah* 5a). Nevertheless, we place the menorah at this height to show that in this very place where God usually does not reveal Himself, there's no doubt that His unity embodies this space as well. Likewise, we light the menorah near the entrance of the house to symbolize that even as we navigate life's difficulties and feel removed from our natural place of sanctity, God is always with us. We begin lighting the menorah at nightfall to show that darkness is nothing but an illusion. Through our faith in God and the light of the menorah, "night will shine like day" (Psalms 139:12).

The nights of Chanukah are the longest of the year. Like the darkness and the cold weather that characterize this season, life can be bitter and spiritually challenging. But the simple light of a Chanukah candle descends from the greatest of heights to the lowest of places to demonstrate that God is always next to us. When we take a step back from everything that's going on in our lives and turn on this spiritual light switch, we awaken the Jewish spark within us so it can grow just a bit every night, eventually becoming a brilliant flame.

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Shluchin 3

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

MONEY AND LIVELIHOOD. 47. Keep the words of the tzaddikim in mind. Don't deceive yourself, and don't let the world deceive you. In this world no one ends up well. The only good you will enjoy is the good you take with you to enjoy in the eternal world (Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom #51.).

THOUGHTS AND FANTASIES. 1. Don't dwell on bad thoughts or desires at all. These thoughts are rooted in the side of death. If they come into your mind, just reject them and push them out completely, because ultimately they ruin the mind and make it impossible to pray properly and experience genuine joy (Likutey Moharan I, 5:4).

2. A person can't always stop bad thoughts from entering his mind in the first place. But he does have the power to reject them once he becomes conscious of them. ... Don't feel discouraged if you find all kinds of temptations and fantasies continually pressing in on your mind. They are actually providing you with the opportunity to repent and make amends for the damage done in the past. Today you have the power to master your thoughts and temptations. When you do so, the sparks of holiness that fell because of your earlier transgressions are released, and you are able to purify yourself. Your mind and your voice will be purified and you will find harmony and peace. This peace can bring the whole world back to the service of God (ibid. I, 27:8).



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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.