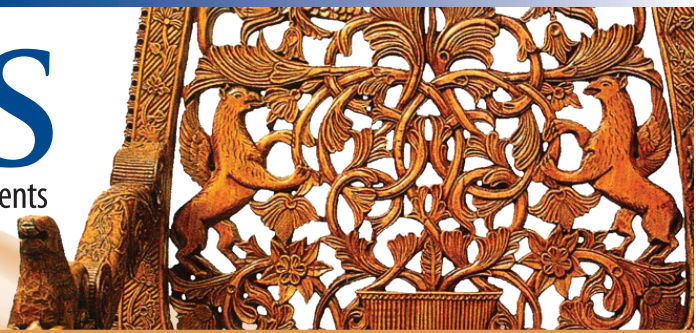


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## When in Rome...

By Yossi Katz

**WHERE IS GOD?** Mankind has pondered this question for an eternity. Interestingly, our Rabbis answered, “He is in the great city of Rome” (Jerusalem Talmud, *Ta’anit* 81). This answer seems very odd. Rome was a city rife with idol worship and immorality. In fact, our Rabbis were alluding to a particular existence of God that is hidden and unfathomable to us humans.

*Pirkey Avot* tells us that God created the world with Ten Utterances (*Avot* 5:1). But if we count from the beginning of Genesis, we see only nine acts of creation that begin, “And God said...” Rebbe Nachman points us to the very first verse of the Torah: “In the beginning God created Heaven and earth.” Since this first act of creation does not record God as saying anything, it is called the Hidden Utterance. This Hidden Utterance is so holy and elevated that all nine of the other utterances of creation receive their vitality from it (*Likutey Moharan* II, 12).

This Hidden Utterance alludes to the existence of God in Rome. There are some places that seem to be utterly devoid of Godliness. These places are so bleak that there is even room to deny God’s existence outright. Yet doesn’t God also sustain these places? This is a great paradox and something that we cannot properly fathom. Rebbe Nachman explains that precisely because these places run counter to God’s honor, they cannot be sustained through the regular, revealed channels. Instead, God sustains them through the Hidden Utterance, which is concealed in this world.

There is a great lesson in all of this. Wherever a person may fall – whether he doubts the existence of God or faces temptation and sins – that place itself is being sustained by God at the level of the Hidden Utterance.

Even though it may seem as though God isn’t there, if you cry out, “Where are you, God? How can I seek You out and connect to You?” you show that God *does* exist, even when all else seems to say the opposite. *There is* Godliness that is sustaining you and giving you the vitality to fall in the first place. You have now transformed your descent into an ascent, showing that God’s honor is ever-present, even when it is completely obscured.

Had the Jews not sinned and made the golden calf, they would have merited to enter the Land of Israel immediately. The Land of Israel is the ultimate place of revealed holiness and Divine perceptions. Instead, the Jews fell into a concealed state of Godliness. But they were given the key to get out: the Mishkan. God commanded them to build it out of “gold, silver and copper” (Exodus 25:3). These were the same materials used in the creation of the golden calf. God gave the Jews the opportunity to take the materials that lead to idol worship and reveal their true source, using them to build a place for the revelation of Godliness.

As they brought the Mishkan along on their journey through the desert, the Jews elevated each of their encampments to a place of awesome holiness, one that assumed the laws of sanctity governing the Holy Temple. However, as soon as they left, their camping ground would revert to its original, unsanctified state.

Life takes all of us to different destinations. Sometimes we find ourselves in Rome. But each of us is a mini Mishkan. We each have the ability, no matter where we travel and no matter how far we fall, to cry out to God. Through this, we can reveal God’s honor and transform even the lowest place into the holiest sanctuary.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Gevivot Chov MeiYetomim*  
3:7

# Borrow the Joy!

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**REB AHARON OF KIBLITCH** was a very happy person. He was so filled with joy that other chassidim envied him. Despite his poverty, he was always happy. No surprise, then, that he was accomplished at bringing joy to a heavy heart. Usually only a few words from him were enough to transform gloom to joy.

He would often dance, celebrating his spirituality. When asked how he could always dance with such enthusiasm, he replied, "Well, naturally, at times the evil within accosts me and says, 'Why are you dancing? What do you have to be happy about now?'"

"I reply, 'Even if I really don't feel happy right now and can't find a reason to be happy at the moment, I can still borrow the joy. I know that in the Ultimate Future, there will be a lot to rejoice about. I dance because the joy I will have then is worth dancing about. Why shouldn't I borrow from that joy right now and express it in dance?'"

A certain poor bride and groom got married without a kopek to their names. They literally couldn't afford food for a festive meal. After the *chuppah*, the guests quietly left the premises. The couple was so devastated that they began to cry.

Someone raced to Reb Aharon and told him their tale of woe. "Is it that awful? What can we do?" he cried.

He rushed to raise money for them to serve a meal. As the food was being prepared, he began to dance. His dances were so wondrously joyous and alive that the couple began to rejoice, too. A crowd gathered to enjoy Reb Aharon's fancy footwork, and soon they were so caught up in his joy that they, too, started to celebrate and gladden the now happy couple.

On another occasion, someone asked Reb Aharon why he didn't attend the weddings of the wealthy and only went to celebrate with the poor. Reb Aharon answered, "It's only fair, my friend. The wealthy have money to buy meat and fish and other delicacies that bring joy to the bride and groom and all their guests. They don't really require my assistance. But at an affair that lacks fish, meat and delicacies, that's where I'm truly needed!"

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh V:215, 236, 238*

## SIDEPATH

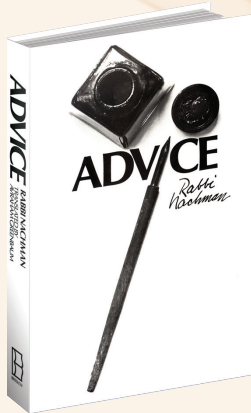
**Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum**

**CONTROVERSY AND STRIFE.** 5. If you are scrupulous about the mitzvah of *tzitzit*, you will be able to stand up against any opposition (*Likutey Moharan I*, 8:5).

6. The people who set themselves in opposition to the tzaddik are called "dead" even in their lifetime because they have no share in the holy life spirit that the tzaddikim alone draw into the world (*ibid.*).

7. At times the wicked become so bitter in their battle against holiness that the only recourse is to fight them with the legal apparatus of the non-Jewish authorities. In fact, it is a positive duty to do so, and to do the utmost to crush the opposition by this means, even if the cost is heavy. It helps to elevate the sparks of true justice from the domain of the *kelipot* and the forces of the Other Side (*ibid. I*, 20:9).

8. Those who ridicule and abuse the genuinely religious are under the influence of Torah they have learned from scholars who lack the necessary integrity. These scholars are termed "Jewish devils" (*Zohar III*, 253) because their Torah is "fallen Torah," which lacks the power to guide men along the path of truth and goodness. There is nothing to be gained from such scholars. Anyone who associates with them will become an atheist (*Likutey Moharan I*, 28:1).



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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.*