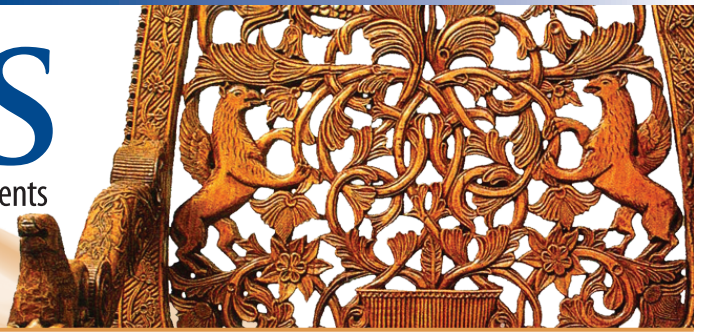


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT KITISA • 5780 • VOL. 10 NO. 21

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## One Good Eye

By Yossi Katz

IT WAS FINALLY Friday afternoon, almost time for Shabbat and some long overdue rest. Jerry had returned from a long overseas business trip and hadn't been at his familiar seat in shul for several weeks. As the men filed in for the *Minchah* service, Jerry was greeted by the Rabbi with a hearty "*Shalom Aleichem*."

Jerry tried to pray properly but his mind wasn't at ease, there was just so much catching up to do. He pictured all the places he had been to and the people he had met. Before he knew it, he was taking three steps back as he completed the *Amidah* prayer. Once again, Jerry heard the Rabbi wishing him "*Shalom Aleichem*."

"Huh?" Jerry thought to himself, staring at the Rabbi. The Rabbi whispered, "True, I welcomed you back from your first overseas trip, but I wanted to welcome you back from this last trip as well!"

We often live our lives subconsciously feeling, "I am the ultimate example of a religious hypocrite." We think, "Maybe I prayed with some intensity and concentration this morning, but already this afternoon my mind was wandering and distant from the words of the siddur." Or, "I may have seen the good points in my friend, spouse or business associate yesterday, but today they couldn't do anything right. I am back to being such a negative person."

We quickly become convinced that we haven't made any progress, and that whatever measure of good we thought we'd accomplished is either nonexistent or wiped out by now. But is this true? We have all been taught that two wrongs don't make a right, but what about the opposite? Am I erasing the good deed I've done by

later doing something that implies the opposite? If my future behavior isn't at the higher standard of my earlier actions, does that mean I was insincere and have only been deluding myself until now?

Well, thankfully, God already answered this question for us! Jewish sources teach that the entire creation and history of civilization was only a prelude for the most important event ever. This event was so great that it was actually the *raison d'être* for everything that came before it. This event was the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

One could assume that the Jewish People had to be spiritually worthy in order to receive this ultimate gift. Certainly they had to be completely sincere and dedicated to following what was written in the Torah. And yet God says about the Jewish People at Sinai, "You have captured My heart with *one* of your eyes" (Song of Songs 4:9). Why only one? Because the other eye was already looking at the Golden Calf, waiting for the moment it could be worshipped! (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:55).

Surely there couldn't be a greater hypocrisy than this. At the very giving of the Torah, there were elements of our nation who already had their eye on defiling all that was written. As our Sages teach, "Idol worship is equivalent to transgressing the entire Torah" (*Shevuot* 29a). And yet God was drawn toward us because of our one good eye!

Good is true and eternal. Nothing I do will ever negate the value and absolute purity of a good deed, thought or desire. Every bit of good that I do is forever cherished by God and safeguarded for my eternal reward. Now is not the time to despair, but to strengthen myself and start again, because whatever good I do from now on remains with me always!

*Based on Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom #123*

# Pray Like a Child

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**REBBE NACHMAN'S DEEP** yet completely simple and straightforward immersion in prayer was a wonder to those who were close to him. He prayed in a brokenhearted way, begging for mercy with total self-effacement, like a young child pleading with his father.

Once, when a young man came to the Rebbe to ask for guidance in his private prayers, Rebbe Nachman demonstrated: "Master of the universe! Please have mercy on me! What will become of me in the end? Is this how I'm going to spend my life? Is this the life that I was created for?"

This was how Rebbe Nachman prayed—simply, directly, feelingly—and this is how he taught his students to do *hitbodedut*. To speak one's innermost heart and yearning out before God just as one would with his most trusted friend.

During the final Rosh HaShanah of his life, Rebbe Nachman was already in residence in Uman. He was deathly ill with the tuberculosis that would take his life. He was so debilitated that he could barely leave his bed. His family and students were in constant attendance, trying to alleviate his suffering and hoping to hear his words, and to see him take a turn for the better. At the time, the Rebbe's grandson Yisrael was with him in the house. The four-year-old was known to be especially clever.

Once, as little Yisrael walked by his bed, Rebbe Nachman called out, "Yisrael! Please pray that I'll have relief!"

"Of course!" answered the child. "But first, give me your gold watch!"

Rebbe Nachman smiled and said to his disciples at the bedside, "See – the child already speaks like the tzaddikim do! He knows to ask for an object from the petitioner, so that he can perform a *pidyon* (soul-redemption) when he prays!"

Rebbe Nachman dutifully removed his watch and handed it to little Yisrael. The boy solemnly accepted the item. Then he turned aside and said, "HaShem! HaShem! Please make my grandfather well!"

Everyone laughed at his childish simplicity in prayer. But Rebbe Nachman didn't even smile. He gestured toward his little grandson and said emphatically, "Do you see? To pray, one must speak with the utmost innocence and simplicity, just like a little child who asks something of his father!"

*Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 113-115*

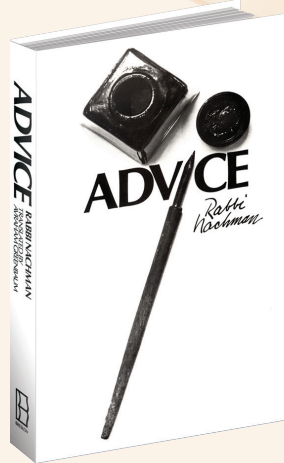
## SIDEPATH

*Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum*

**CONTROVERSY AND STRIFE.** 14. When a person is prone to anger, it strengthens his enemies and opponents. One remedy is fasting. Another is taking pleasure in the delights of Shabbat, especially the Shabbat meals (*Likutey Moharan I, 57:6*).

15. A potent reason for factionalism and quarreling is that people lack sufficient faith in the Torah sages. One who finds himself at the center of an argument, with people raising all kinds of questions about him, should take it as a sign that he does not have sufficient faith in the sages. He should think about the implications of the argument and use it as a stimulus to help him correct the deficiency in his faith (*ibid. I, 61:5*).

16. There are certain tzaddikim in particular who could never be said to have less than perfect faith, yet they are still surrounded by controversy. In the case of such a tzaddik, the reason for the opposition is that "he bore the sin of many" (Isaiah 53:12), and he has to bear the anguish of this controversy precisely because the rest of the world is lacking in faith in the sages. The very controversy that surrounds him enables him to correct the flaws in the people's faith in the sages (*Likutey Moharan I, 61:5*).



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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.*