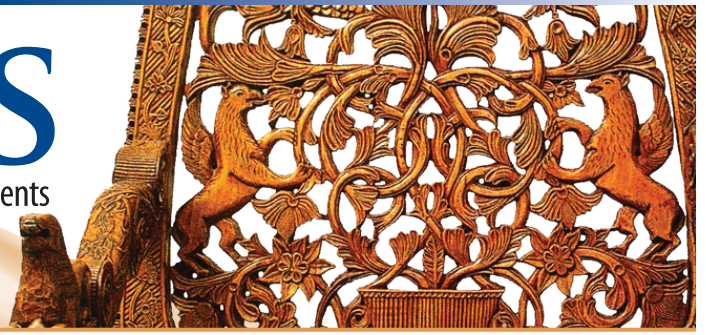


PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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Do It With Mirrors

By Yossi Katz

REBBE NACHMAN TOLD the story of a king who built a palace and asked two men to decorate it. The king divided the palace into two parts and assigned one part to each of them. He also fixed a time limit to complete their work. The first man toiled to teach himself the art of painting and plastering and was able to paint his part of the palace with the most beautiful and unusual murals. But the second man paid no attention to the assignment and did nothing about it whatsoever. As the deadline approached, he realized he had little time left. So he plastered his entire portion with a black substance called *pakist*, a kind of shiny pitch. The *pakist* acted like a mirror, reflecting everything around it.

The king came and admired the first man's part, with its wondrous and beautiful paintings executed with extraordinary skill. The second part was covered with a curtain. When the king approached, the second man stood up and drew aside the curtain. The sun was shining, and all the remarkable paintings appeared in his section in their entirety because of the *pakist*, which reflected everything like a mirror. This found favor in the eyes of the king. (See full story in *Tzaddik* #224.)

Although the second man in this story seemed to come up with a clever solution, wasn't he really just cheating? Why was the king happy with his work?

We find a similar idea in our *parashah*. Moshe was commanded to construct the Menorah out of a single piece of gold. From the upper flower ornaments until its base, the entire Menorah was to be chiseled out of a single piece of gold. The expertise necessary for this eluded Moshe. So he took a large piece of gold, tossed it

into a fire, and the fire produced the Menorah all on its own (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 15:4). Yet if this is the story of the construction of the Menorah, what does the Torah say, "According to the form that God showed Moshe, so did he construct the Menorah" (Numbers 8:4)? Seemingly, the fire had more to do with creating the Menorah than Moshe!

"For a candle is a mitzvah, and Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23). The light of the Menorah symbolizes Torah and spiritual growth. While we have the option to make spiritually positive choices so we can grow and better ourselves, it's extremely difficult to do so because of the awesome power of our *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). Our Sages thus explain, "Were it not that God personally intervenes to help, we would succumb" (*Kiddushin* 30b).

The paradox of Moshe's commandment to personally construct the Menorah out of a single piece of gold is the challenge of our lives. In truth, we do not have the strength to motivate ourselves and completely overcome our *yetzer hara*. But at the same time, just as Moshe did what he could by throwing the gold into the fire and praying to God, we are also required to put in our efforts and turn to God for help.

Our generation is the final one preceding the arrival of Mashiach. The last of the seven *sefirot* is Malkhut (kingship) and its color is black. Just as in Rebbe Nachman's story, our power is weak and we feel lazy. However, we do have recourse: we can create a black mirror and reflect the strength that preceded us. By praying to God and emulating the right path by putting in the effort we are capable of, we can reflect the vision of all the true tzaddikim who preceded us. And the real King will have much *nachas*. Amen!

Based on Likutey Halachot, Kriat Shema 5

Even a Murderer Can Change

By Yehudis Golshevsky

DURING THE CHAOTIC period of the Communist Revolution in Russia and its street warfare between the “reds” and the “whites,” marauding bands looted and harmed civilians all over the country. Moshe Tzadok was a rare Jew who took part in this criminal behavior and even went so far as to murder innocent people.

Later, when Moshe was wanted by the government for his crimes, he fled to Uman and went underground. But when it came time for him to recite Kaddish for his father, he resurfaced. Despite his pleas, every synagogue rejected this man with Jewish blood on his hands – except the Breslover *kloyz*.

After Moshe Tzadok finished saying Kaddish, Reb Yankel Zhitomer came over to him and asked gently, “Since you already said the Kaddish, why not put on *tefillin*?” Patiently, he helped Moshe lay *tefillin* for the first time in many years. This marked a turning point in Moshe’s life. Slowly but surely he did heartfelt *teshuvah* (repentance). Before long, it was common to see Moshe crying while reciting Psalms or *Likutey Tefilot* (Reb Noson’s prayers).

When the Communists closed the mikvahs, Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender said to Moshe, “Moshe! You killed Jews – now give them life! Build a mikvah. This will fix your past.”

Moshe was a wagon driver by trade. He made up his mind to dig into the hard earth below his stable until he found water. After digging down a full 50 meters (164 feet) – an almost impossible feat without machinery – he struck water. His mikvah was the only one in Uman for many years. Moshe also gave food to whoever needed it.

When Moshe Tzadok began to do *teshuvah*, the other townspeople derided the Breslovers for accepting him. “Those Breslovers even took in a murderer!” they jeered.

But afterwards they changed their attitude. “He struggled to build the only mikvah in town; he takes food out of his own mouth to feed the needy. Maybe the Breslovers are right that there is no giving up ... even on such a sinner. He has saved our families and given so much. Isn’t it clear that he truly rectified his ways?”

Siach Sarfey Kodesh IV, 561; V, 253

SIDEPATH

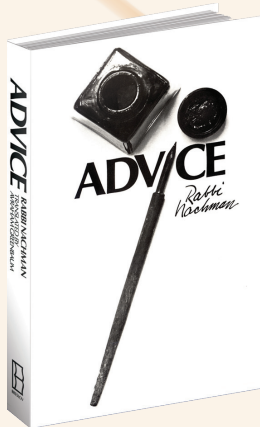
Advice (*Likutey Etzot*) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

BARRIERS. 9. The main thing is that your heart should be strong and firm. Then nothing at all will stop you, certainly not material difficulties – financial difficulties or opposition from your wife and children, your parents or parents-in-law, or the ridicule of other people and their attempts to persuade you otherwise. None of these things will have any power at all if your heart is firm and strong in God (*Likutey Moharan II, 46*).

10. When a person’s heart is firm there is nowhere in the world that he cannot serve God. There is never an excuse to say that in a certain place it is impossible to serve God. When a person’s heart is strong, all the places in the world belong to him (*ibid. II, 51*).

MIKVAH. 1. Immersing in the *mikvah* is the cure for all troubles. The *mikvah* has the power to purify us from every kind of sin and impurity. The spiritual power of the *mikvah* is rooted in the most exalted levels of wisdom and love (*ibid. I, 56:7*).

2. Immersing in a *mikvah* helps to make it easier to earn a living and receive the flow of blessing. Strife and anger are dissipated and in their place come peace, love, deep wisdom and healing, length of days, and the power to arouse men to God (*ibid.*).



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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.

Dedicated for the speedy and complete recovery of Reb Chaim Menachem ben Leah