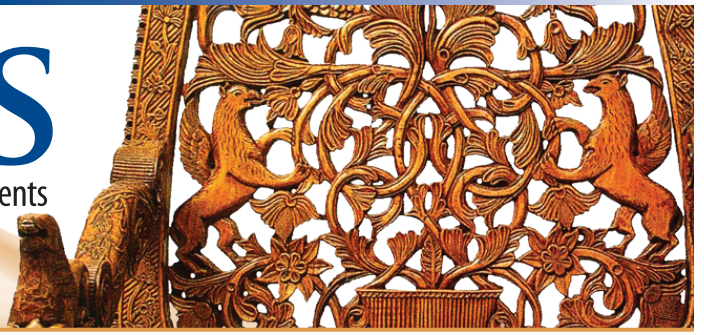


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## How We Can Bring Mashiach

By Yossi Katz

WE THINK OF Moses as being the ultimate prophet, someone who spoke “face to face” with God and stood between Heaven and earth. Therefore we assume that when he experienced a prophecy, its message and interpretation were obvious to him. Indeed, in this week’s *parashah* Moses states, “This is the word that God has commanded” (Numbers 30:2). Rashi explains that only Moses was able to say “this,” describing the vision that God had given him with absolute clarity, while the capabilities of the other prophets were much more limited.

Yet even for Moses, there were many prophecies that he received only from a blurry distance. One such prophecy concerned the plague of the death of the Egyptian firstborn, when he said, “So says God, ‘Around *chatzot* (midnight), I am going out in the midst of Egypt’” (Exodus 11:4). Why was this prophecy the one that God chose not to reveal clearly to Moses? And why could God not have revealed the exact time of *chatzot* to Moses?

Reb Noson teaches that the time of *chatzot* alludes to the time of the Final Redemption. Precisely at *chatzot*, many of the great tzaddikim rise to mourn the destruction of the Temple, as our Sages teach, “Whoever mourns the destruction of the Temple will merit seeing its rebuilding.” Moses did not know when *chatzot*/the Final Redemption would come; his vision was blurred. And so is ours. We don’t know how or when this prophecy will be fulfilled. And we despair: If so many great tzaddikim have served God with absolute piety and righteousness, and still Mashiach hasn’t come, how can we merit bringing about his arrival?

Our Sages make a puzzling statement: “Mashiach will not come until we have given up all hope of the redemption” (*Sanhedrin* 97a). The Maharsha explains that the Jewish people will be so downtrodden that it will be beyond the realm of our imagination for Mashiach to arrive. But isn’t the belief that Mashiach could come any day one of the fundamentals of our faith? And why would giving up hope bring about his arrival?

In actuality, the Talmud is not talking about us giving up on believing in the redemption. Instead, it refers to us believing that the redemption will come in our merit. We are being taught that God will send the Mashiach because of His righteousness and charity, not because we truly deserve him. God’s exact calculation for the time of the redemption was even beyond the perception of Moses.

We can draw tremendous encouragement from this. For God does not insist that we serve him by becoming spiritual giants, Rosh Yeshivas or Kabbalists. We have already been blessed with those great tzaddikim, and Mashiach still has not arrived. Rather, God asks us to humble ourselves and say, “Even though my actions are lacking and I am not worthy of bringing Mashiach, nevertheless, I will strengthen myself and do what I’m capable of, because I have faith in God’s compassion.”

For example, if I’ve wasted time and haven’t been diligent during my study session, or if I spaced out for most of *Shemoneh Esrei*, I will make the effort to grasp whatever time I have left to study or pray with concentration, because I trust in God’s charity and not in my own merit and power.

If there is one thing that should be obvious to our frail generation, it is that we are completely dependent on God’s kindness. Our belief in this last ingredient is exactly what God is waiting for to finally bring us home.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hilkhos Matanah 5*

# The Faithful Chassid

**THE BRESLOV MOVEMENT** survived and thrived in Communist Russia due to the bravery and self-sacrifice of its chassidim. We cannot fathom the pressures and persecution that these men and women endured to keep their faith alive and follow Rebbe Nachman's teachings, but endure them they did, keeping the Rebbe's flame burning through the most difficult times.

The story of R' Naftali Tzvi Dubinski is a case in point. He came to Uman at the age of 17 and joined R' Baruch Getche's group of *ovdim* (devotees) who spent their nights in *hitbodedut*, their mornings in prayer, and their days in Torah study.

R' Naftali Tzvi's wife died in childbirth, leaving him with one son, Yaakov. In 1937, R' Naftali Tzvi was arrested and sentenced to eight years in a Siberian slave labor camp for the "crime" of convincing a Jewish boy to stop working on Shabbat. Completely isolated during this period, he had no idea what happened to his six-year-old son during World War II.

In fact, his son was being raised by R' Yochanan Galant, a joyous and warm-hearted Jew who had no children of his own. R' Yochanan raised young Yaakov to be God-fearing and, with tremendous self-sacrifice, kept him out of the anti-religious Soviet school system. In honor of his adoptive father, Yaakov changed his last name to Galant.

Following his release from Siberia, R' Naftali Tzvi moved to Prunz. He was reunited with his son only in 1954, when they met in Uman for Rosh HaShanah. At that point, his son was in his early twenties and married. R' Naftali Tzvi emigrated to Israel in 1971 at the same time as his son and grandchildren.

R' Naftali Tzvi may have lost his chance to raise a family, but he did not lose his faith in God. In Jerusalem, he would often go up to the roof of the Breslov synagogue in Mea Shearim for *hitbodedut*. One day, the wife of R' Nachman Strakes heard someone crying out to God from the roof and commented that that was exactly the way R' Naftali Tzvi used to cry out in Uman – not realizing that R' Naftali Tzvi had arrived in Israel and was the one she was hearing!

*From "Against All Odds"*

## SIDEPATH

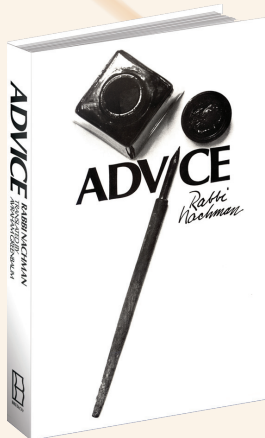
*Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum*

**SHABBAT.** 11. Shabbat, the World to Come, and truth are all one concept. Through it the wicked are brought down and the true greatness of the tzaddikim and those who are genuinely pious is revealed. When this happens, the whole world draws closer to God and men begin to call upon His Blessed Name. The faculty of speech is perfected, speech becomes holy, and people experience true prayer (*Likutey Moharan I, 66:3*).

12. A person who experiences the holiness of Shabbat can attain true humility – which means seeing his own lowliness and being so aware of the greatness of the Jewish nation that he is prepared to sacrifice his very life for them, as Moses did (*ibid. I, 79*).

13. On Shabbat, everyone experiences a certain enhancement of their perception of Godliness, and through this their capacity to show compassion to other people increases. For a person's capacity to be compassionate is related to the degree of his perception. And when he shows compassion to others, Heaven is compassionate towards him (*ibid. I, 119*).

14. We eat on Shabbat not to gratify our physical appetites, but in order to open the channels of blessing for the other six days of the week (*ibid. I, 276*).



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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.*