

# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Wake Up and Live!

By Yossi Katz

*UNABLE TO CONTROL* himself, the viceroy plucked an apple from the tree and took a bite. As soon as he swallowed it, he fell to the ground in a deep sleep and slept a long, long time. The viceroy's servant tried to wake him up, but he couldn't.

Rebbe Nachman's tale of "The Lost Princess" is a fascinating recounting of the story of our lives. Being such, it incites us to ask a critical question: "Do I truly possess absolute self-control?"

Whether we are aware of it or not, we have all "eaten from the apple" – we have all erred in our own ways and fallen into a deep, spiritual sleep. Why sleep? Because when we are asleep, we don't even realize that we are far removed from reality. Things can be happening all around us, critical events in our lives that we might one day look back at and wonder, "How could I have missed that?" yet we are utterly numb to real life. So how do we wake up? How do we become alive?

We each have our golden calf or other form of idol worship. While these may not be actual idols per se, they distract us enough to sever our connection with God. Many hobbies or acts we engage in pull us away from our true purpose in life, causing us to daydream. The Midrash connects the sin of the golden calf with the red cow, whose ashes have the power to purify. In the words of the Midrash: "This can be compared to the son of a maidservant who soiled the king's palace. They said, 'Let his mother come and clean up the mess'" (*Tanchuma, Chukat* 8). The red cow in whose image the golden calf was formed is compared to the maidservant's mother: it has the power to cleanse from idol worship. But the red cow is longer to be found.

How do we sprinkle those ashes even today?

Our *parashah* states, "Take for yourself a perfectly red cow, which does not have a blemish, upon which no yoke was laid" (Numbers 19:2). The *Zohar* (*Chukat*, p. 180) comments that "red" refers to harsh judgments, whereas "perfect" refers to softened judgments. The harsh judgments result from our various misdeeds: since we have become distracted and dozed off, there is a judgment against us separating us from our Heavenly Father. We become convinced that we are distant and that we are not compatible with true spirituality.

Or, maybe worse, perhaps we are in a truly deep sleep and are not even aware that we are sleeping. We may think we're serving God and living a meaningful life, but that's because our self-evaluation is only at a surface level! Who can truly claim to be in a constant state of Godly awareness? But we can soften this judgment by finding our one "perfect" thing, our good point "which does not have a blemish, upon which no yoke was laid."

No matter what we have done (or not done), the essence of a Jew is completely good and pure. For this reason, Rebbe Nachman teaches that there is no Jew who does not possess good points. Every one of us must look deeply into our souls and find the good that is expressed through our thoughts and actions. In order to wake up, we must first understand who we truly are and how special it is to be a Jew. We are sleeping only because we have forgotten our true reality! Like a mother who picks up and restores her fallen child, as we connect with our good point and realize our true essence, we are sprinkled with the ashes of the red cow and the various barriers that have kept us from spiritual growth are destroyed. We can return home.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Hashkamat HaBoker 1*

# Shabbat Afternoon High

**SHABBAT AFTERNOON IS** the climax of the holy day, the time we can achieve true closeness with God. The *zemiroth* (table songs) that we sing at the Third Shabbat Meal reflect our desire and longing to consummate that relationship: *Mizmor LeDavid* (God is my Shepherd) and *Yedid Nefesh* (Soul's Beloved). After disengaging from weekday grind on Friday night, enjoying delicious meals and a refreshing sleep, Shabbat afternoon finds us in full "Shabbat mode," open to experience the true meaning of the day.

\* \*

Three tzaddikim passed away on Shabbat afternoon: Moshe our teacher, who received the Torah on our behalf; King David, author of Psalms, who personifies prayer; and Yosef, the only one titled "Tzaddik." The tzaddik, by virtue of his morality and generosity, connects the brain and the heart, Torah and prayer.

Shabbat afternoon is an *et ratzon*, a time of extra Divine favor. It is a time when all that we know (Torah/Moshe) and all that we feel (prayer/David) is meant to be awash with the desire to meld into giving to Creation, receiving from the Creator, and giving to His creation (the function of the tzaddik/Yosef).

It is a time to rise and realize what Creation can be before stepping back down into your body, ready to live that promise. It is the time God commits to creating the universe for another week.

\* \*

Shabbat is an ideal time for *hitbodedut*. Rebbe Nachman prescribes this practice of private prayer to God every day, but Shabbat lends a special cast to the experience. Shabbat and holidays were made expressly to give us a "day of rest," a day when making and taking the time to settle our minds would be easier. The extra sanctity of these days adds something to *hitbodedut*, even if you can't always taste it.

The ultimate goal of *hitbodedut* is *bitul* (self-nullification to God). One setting that is conducive to entering a state of *bitul* is Shabbat. The quiet of Shabbat, provided by refraining from the forbidden activities and ceasing to think of weekday concerns, together with the additional prayers that focus on the greatness of God's work, produces a great calm and *yishuv hadaat* (settled mind). And Shabbat comes every week.

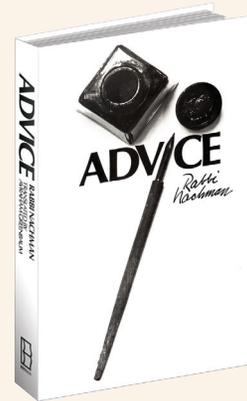
Based on "Where Earth and Heaven Kiss: A Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Path of Meditation" by Ozer Bergman

## SIDEPATH

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

**PRIDE & HUMILITY.** 11. There is a form of humility which is the ultimate in arrogance. This is when a person acts humbly because he knows that people look down upon those who flaunt themselves. All he wants is to gain their respect and approval. His humility is for show: he really wants honor. ...

The exile of the Jews from our land was caused by "seven idolatrous temples" (*Gittin* 88). This is a reference



to pride. Even today, people are still chasing after honor and prestige, and this is why the exile still has not ended (*Likutey Moharan*: I, 11:7).

12. You must be humble before those who are greater than you, before those who are on your own level, and before those who are less than you. And at times — if you are the smallest of the small — you must make yourself humble even in front

of yourself: you must look upon yourself as if you were on a lower level than you actually are (*ibid.* I, 14:5).

13. Intelligence, power and material possessions are the three main things that give people a sense of superiority. You must rid yourself of any trace of arrogance you may have in these three areas. Whatever intelligence, power or wealth you have been blessed with should give you a sense of meekness and humility (*ibid.*).



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PO Box 5370 • Jerusalem, Israel • 972.2.582.4641

PO Box 587 • Monsey, NY 10952 • 1.800.33.BRESLOV

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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.