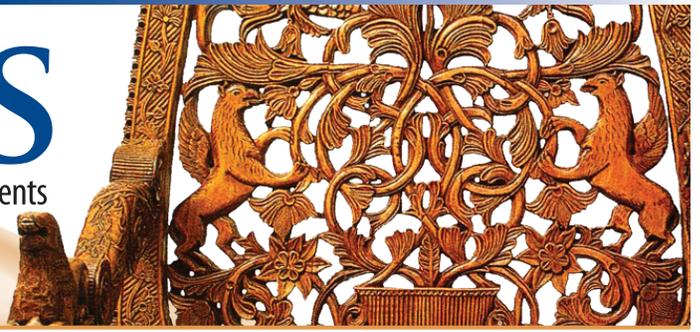


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

PARASHAT RE'EH • 5778 • VOL. 8 NO. 39

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## Get Rich Quick!

By Yossi Katz

**WEALTH IS SOMETHING** that most people spend their days dreaming about. But how does one actually become wealthy?

In 1999 the executive chairman of Google (then the CEO of Novell), Eric Schmidt, said in an interview with *Forbes*: “Lots of people who are smart and work hard and play by the rules don’t have a fraction of what I have.” Schmidt acknowledged that the scale of inequality generated by the new wealth “makes me uncomfortable.” Why? “I realize I don’t have my wealth because I’m so brilliant. Luck has a lot to do with it.”

Is that so? Does luck actually spur on accumulating great wealth? Perhaps it’s just plain old hard work and effort?

Wealth is generated by God. However, when wealth reaches this world, it is disbursed via two “bank accounts” called the “time account” and the “place account.” For example, there are seasons when a person is financially successful, and other times when business is simply dead. A person may do very well at one location and dreadful at another. This is all due to how Divine bounty is filtered down to our world.

Very often we mistakenly think, “What if He forgot about me this month?” We begin worrying and using all our mental faculties to brainstorm about how to salvage our predicament. We might even lower ourselves to doing backbreaking labor or various other unworthy tasks, all in the hope of making a few bucks. In reality, we’re just pushing the envelope while gaining nothing. God is ready, willing and able to help – but right now is either not the time or the place for His blessing. A little patience (and some prayer) is all that’s needed.

Our Rabbis also teach that in order to receive our personal “disbursement,” we must first create a “vessel”

to hold our bounty. We create this vessel by dedicating effort toward earning a living. How much effort should we contribute? The Kotzker Rebbe once remarked that we were cursed with the words “By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). But there is no mitzvah to fulfill the curse with absolute dedication! Thankfully, even minimal effort satisfies this curse’s requirements.

This is why our *parashah* says, “HaShem your God will bless you in all that you do” (Deuteronomy 15:18). This implies that even if all you do is very little, still, you will be blessed.

But it goes even further. The source of wealth is God, and God is above time and place. By remembering and being faithful to the true Source of wealth while engaging in our efforts, we connect our work with the ultimate source of income and expedite the whole process. However, by worrying and overworking, we sink further into the restrictions of time and place and distance ourselves further from the Source, making things even more challenging and time-consuming.

Haven’t we all invested enormous effort into a project, thinking for certain we would succeed, only to be utterly disappointed? And haven’t we laughed at other, simpler efforts and then witnessed tremendous success? So why can’t we just sit back and enjoy the show?

The secret ingredient to wealth is *bitachon* (trust in God). *Bitachon* is so great that one who has it need not make any other effort whatsoever! That being said, *bitachon* is our main vessel. The more we learn to trust in God, the more we can rely on His blessing and concentrate our lives on spiritual matters. For starters, we can begin by simply thanking God and remembering the many times He has helped until now. In this way, we will merit both material and spiritual wealth. Amen!

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Ribis 3*

# Alone in a Boat

By Yehudis Golshevsky

**NEAR THE TOWN** of Medvedevka, Ukraine, was a village called Husyatin. It was surrounded by the green fields and grazing flocks that characterized the region, and the Zbruch River, bounded by forests and farmsteads, flowed nearby.

In that small village, the newly-married Rebbe Nachman (who was then barely into his teens) lived with his young wife in the home of his in-laws, studying Torah while his wife's family supported the new couple.

During that time, Rebbe Nachman continued to practice his personal devotions in secrecy, preferring that his in-laws and other members of the community think he was like all the other young men, and maybe even more frivolous than that. He would go for solitary walks along the riverbank, among the cattails and reeds, spending hours in private communion with God.

He would often take a small boat out on the water and allow it to drift into the growth along the bank, so he could be hidden under a canopy of branches and leaves while he poured out his heart before his Creator.

Sometimes, when the wind and the current were strong, Rebbe Nachman's small craft was in danger of capsizing. In later years, the Rebbe would use that image to help his students understand what it means to pray with all your heart:

“When you stand before God to pray for your needs, to be saved from your lower nature which always lies in ambush, you should feel as though you're like a man alone in a tiny boat on the open sea, with the abyss right below you, ready to swallow you down ... When your prayer emerges from that sense of imminent danger, the crying out is completely different—it bursts out of the heart with heat and honesty.

“And the truth is that this is the nature of our situation as human beings here in this world –always hovering between heaven and earth, like a craft tossed up and down on a stormy sea. We are suspended over the abyss, and the wind is high ... the danger is great ... and our only hope is to cry out, and cry out to God for help!”

*Based on Or HaOrot I, pp. 103-106*

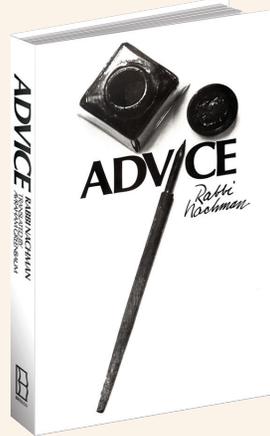
## SIDEPATH

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

**ENCOURAGEMENT.** 34. The evil inclination bites a person again and again. Repeatedly it tempts him and tries to lead him on. One may refuse to listen and turn away. Even so, it comes back and bites him a second time, a third, a fourth. But if one is absolutely determined, obstinately refusing to bow to it in any way, then eventually the evil inclination will just leave (*Likutey Moharan II, 51*).

35. When a person reaches a very exalted level of holiness – for example, when he draws closer to the true Tzaddik – at times it can happen that precisely at this moment he experiences an impure emission, God forbid. He should not lose heart because of this: it may well be a sign that he has indeed entered such a level, and it can be very beneficial to him (*ibid. II, 117*).

36. There is no reason for despair at all. The very fact that a person sees how far he is from God should itself give him a way to find encouragement. At least he knows that he is far from God. It is possible that he could have been so far that he would not even have known that he was far. The fact that he knows it is itself precious in God's eyes. This alone should encourage him (*ibid. II, 68*).



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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.*