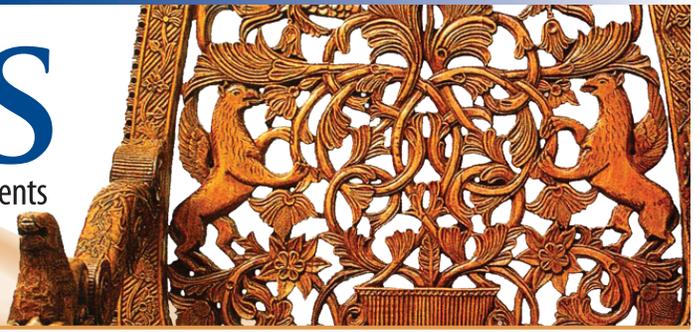


# PATHWAYS

Crossing the Narrow Bridge with Rebbe Nachman and His Students

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## Plan B

By Yossi Katz

**WALKING THE STREETS** of Israel, one of the most common expressions you'll hear is "B'seder." This is generally equivalent to the way we would say, "OK." However, in Israel, this expression has taken on a panoply of different meanings.

"Would you like to meet for coffee at 10?" "B'seder."

"How are you feeling today?" "B'seder."

"You cut my place in line – that's NOT b'seder."

Sometimes someone will even say, "B'seder gamur," which means something along the lines of "Very OK."

Literally, the translation of *b'seder* is closer to "in order," as in things are anticipated to proceed according to plan or the expected result. Which brings us to our *parashah*, which begins, "When you go out to war against your enemy" (Deuteronomy 21:10).

Each of us goes out to war every day. Wars are fought because there is a conflict between two parties regarding how a particular issue should proceed or be resolved. We experience conflicts in our dealings with others, but more importantly, we experience a war of sorts within ourselves.

For example, we plan our day around working through a spiritual or business issue and resolving it a certain way, and then against our will, issues come up. "Dad – the bus never came." *Oy vey!* The result is that we experience inner turmoil, a mental war of sorts. We feel abandoned and sometimes even hurt, as if things "just weren't meant to be."

What's the solution? How can I succeed despite my situation? The verse continues, "and God your Lord delivers them into your hands..." but only when "...you take them captive" (ibid.).

Baseball players often say, "I have no arm." This is because a limb, even if it's still whole and attached to the body, is considered missing if it no longer receives proper vitality from the rest of the body. We call this dead weight. So too, human beings often feel like things just aren't going their way. This is because their life force and vitality is cut off.

Just as a brain-dead body is no longer considered to be alive, our life force and vitality are derived from our intellect. The Hebrew word for intellect is *ChoKhMaH*, which can be divided into two words, *KoaCh MaH* (the power of *what*). This alludes to something we ask every day at the beginning of the Morning Prayers, as we humble ourselves before our Creator: "What is our life? What is our strength?"

We get into trouble by thinking that we're the ones in control. We become like that limb that, while still physically whole, is essentially dead. Real intellect and the subsequent meaning and vitality that we receive are from God alone. When we humble ourselves and our minds in submission to Him, saying, "What is my strength?" we receive from God the ultimate wisdom and clarity that make our lives complete and worth living.

King Solomon said, "The King, bound in *ReHaTim* (chains)" (Song of Songs 7:6). The *Zohar* compares this to the *RaHeTei* (rafters) of our minds (*Tikkuney Zohar* #6). By binding our thoughts to the "King of Kings," we can take God captive, so to speak, and bring our life into proper alignment with the ultimate purpose of things.

When we engage in *teshuvah* (repentance) during Elul, our days may often seem like a war consisting of many battles. We set out to change our lives and plan accordingly, but things always seem to take place against our will. Don't despair! By humbling ourselves and following God's script, we can win the war and merit living a full life with ultimate connection to God.

*Based on Likutey Moharan I, 82*

The Road to Uman

# My Soul Yearns for God

By Eliyahu Cohen

I GREW UP in Montreal in a traditional, but not observant, family. Although I knew that my friends were becoming religious, I didn't realize that they were into Breslov. I just knew that they were becoming close to God. One day, someone brought me a French translation of the Breslov book *Likutey Etzot (Advice)*. I began to read it, and it really spoke to me.

I decided to check out the Breslov Centre in Montreal. When I got there, Rabbi Saadia Elhadad, head of the center, was giving a class on *Likutey Moharan*. I saw the truth in his words and started attending Rabbi Saadia's class regularly.

Soon after I started attending the class, God sent me my soul mate. I had noticed her on Rosh HaShanah, but at the time, she was much more religious than I. I took her out for coffee. The following day, I had to travel to China on business. When I came back, I proposed. We were married in the summer. As soon as the *sheva berakhot* were over, we traveled to Israel. It was wonderful. We went to all the holy places and visited all the holy rabbis.

Back in Montreal, I asked my wife if I could travel with all my friends to Uman for Rosh HaShanah. It was our first year of marriage, and I knew that during that year, I wasn't supposed to leave her. I thanked the One who brought me close to Him when she agreed.

Traveling to Uman was an unimaginable experience. I felt as if an emptiness within my soul disappeared. So many different types of people were there, some connected to God, others totally not religious, yet I sensed that everyone – not just me – felt something inside them changing, that they were becoming whole again. In going to Uman, I felt that my *teshuvah* had become complete.

Going to Uman allowed me to feel. Before that, my Judaism was intellectual. In connecting to Rebbe Nachman, my soul started yearning for God. My soul has emotions, and being in Uman gave me permission to express those emotions. I felt secure there, like a babe in his mother's arms.

*From "Rebbe Nachman and the Knights of the Rosh HaShanah Table"*

## SIDEPATH

*Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum*

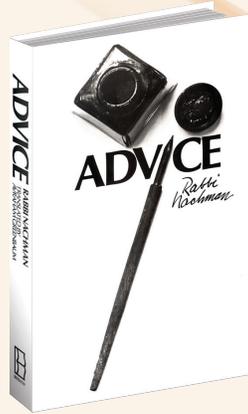
**ROSH HASHANAH.** 1. Whoever hears the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah from a man of true piety can be assured that he will not be afraid of thunder the whole year (*Likutey Moharan* I, 5:3).

2. The blasts of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah revitalize the soul and intelligence of every Jew. Each one receives a new soul and a new level of understanding, each according to his level (*ibid.* I, 35:10).

3. The blasts of the shofar sweeten the severity of God's judgment (*ibid.* I, 42).

4. The purpose of sounding the shofar is to arouse men from their sleep and prevent them from whiling away their days in slumber. When people

are aroused from their sleep, the power of speech bursts forth with tremendous strength. This in turn leads to trust, and those who were barren give birth. Then men are brought to the true fear of Heaven; they are released from sexual lust and the futility of superficial attractions and the "charm that deceives" (cf. Proverbs 31:30). Instead, they attain "fullness of days" in holiness: they learn to lengthen every day of the rest of their lives by adding ever greater holiness and purity. This brings them true spiritual riches and the ability to reach the very heights of contemplation and perception of God (*Likutey Moharan* I, 60:9).



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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*