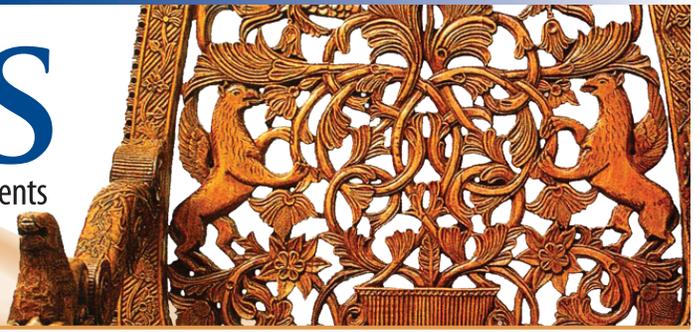


PATHWAYS

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 Gift of Uman

By Shimon Gross

SHIMON GROSS (a pseudonym) is a Chassidic businessman residing in London. He traveled to Uman for the first time in the winter of 2000.

I was invited to join a group of chassidim touring the gravesites of the tzaddikim in the Ukraine. We arrived in Uman late Thursday night. Friday morning, we got up before dawn to pray with the sunrise.

I remember walking down the streets of Uman at that time of the morning. Everything was still dark, it was freezing cold and there was snow everywhere. Before praying, we immersed in the mikveh opposite the *tziyun* (Rebbe Nachman's grave). I was the last one to leave the building.

Upon leaving the mikveh, I heard music in the stillness. The music grew louder as I approached the *tziyun*. I realized that it was coming from the room of the Kohanim,

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a detached room near the *tziyun* where the Kohanim could pray. I looked in through the window and saw a guy who looked like a hippie sitting in front of an open book of Psalms, strumming his guitar and singing the words of King David at the top of his voice. He seemed to be so immersed in his prayer that he was oblivious to the world.

At that moment, I understood the gift of Uman.

Uman gives each person the opportunity to connect to God, no matter his or her level of observance. That morning, I prayed differently than I had ever prayed before.

I'm not a Breslover chassid, but since then, I've traveled to Uman several times, including Rosh HaShanah. It's not easy to leave my family behind, but Rosh HaShanah in Uman is an experience that will remain with me forever.

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

SIDEPATH

Advice (Likutey Etzot) translated by Avraham Greenbaum

ENCOURAGEMENT. 39. Even in the lowest pit of hell, it is possible to be close to God (*Likutey Moharan* II, 78).

40. If you believe it is possible to destroy, believe it is possible to repair (*ibid.* II, 112).

PERCEPTIONS OF GODLINESS. 1. Sometimes we see a person experience a sudden burst of enthusiasm during his prayers. A stream of words suddenly pours from his lips with tremendous fire. In His love, God opens the light of the Infinite and it radiates to him. When the person sees the radiance – and if he himself doesn't see it, his guardian angel sees it – his soul takes fire with a passion to bind himself to the light of the Infinite. As long as the revelation lasts, the words pour forth with intense devotion. He surrenders himself, throwing his entire energy into them. For these moments he becomes nullified before the Infinite, and he is in a state of unknowing. He himself has no knowledge even of himself.

But it is impossible to remain in such a state. ... During his lifetime the only way to attain this state is in a mode of "running and returning" (*Ezekiel* 1:14). ... Only when the time comes for God Himself to take one's soul is it possible to remain in this state of self-nullification, and then he will be merged with the Infinite completely in accordance with his merits (*Likutey Moharan* I, 4:9).



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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.