

כְּשֶׁאָדָם נִכְנָס בְּעִבּוּדַת הַשֵּׁם, אֲזִי הַדֶּרֶךְ

All Distance Is Really Closeness

THE TEACHING

What should a person do when he tries to come close to Hashem and feels only pushed away? Rebbe Nachman says this is simply the way: one who begins to serve Hashem (עֲבוּדַת הַשֵּׁם) is shown distance (הַתְּרַחֲקוּת), as if Heaven will not let him in. But in truth “כָּל הַתְּרַחֲקוּת הוּא רַק כָּלּוֹ הַתְּקִרְבוּת”, all that distance is really closeness.

So he must strengthen himself greatly (הַתְּחַזְקוּת), be stubborn in holiness, never give up his place, and know that every small step away from the physical is precious above. And be joyful always.

MAIN POINTS

- Days and years go by. He works hard, cries out and pleads, and still feels far, full of coarseness and confusing thoughts (עֲבִיּוֹת וּבְלִבּוּלִים). It seems Hashem does not look at him at all. Do not look at any of that. All the tzaddikim went through it, we heard it from their own mouths; had they not strengthened themselves, they would have stayed where they started.
- Even if you feel very far, every small movement away from the physical toward Hashem is great and precious; even a tiny step runs thousands of miles in the upper worlds. So be glad, for sadness (עֲצָבוּת) does great harm: “עֲצָבוּת הִיא סִטְרָא־אֲחֵרָא” (וזהר נח), “sadness is the other side.”
- Be very stubborn (עֲקִשׁוּ) in serving Hashem: do not give up your place, the little you have begun, whatever happens. Sometimes a person stands right at the doorway of holiness, and just then the opposing side attacks with great force. That is the moment to hold on.
- Every small step you take is gathered and joined together, and comes to help you in a time of need. Hashem is full of compassion (מְלֵא רַחֲמִים) and very much wants your service.
- A person must cross “נֶגֶשֶׁר צָר מְאֹד מְאֹד”, a very narrow bridge, and the main thing is not to be afraid at all.
- There is a tree whose leaves take a hundred years to grow; whatever passes over it, passes, and at the end it bursts open with a great noise, like a cannon. Understand the lesson well.
- Go with the teaching “אֲזַמְּרָה לְאֵלַי בְּעוֹדִי”: search for some merit, some good point (נִקְדָּה טוֹבָה) in yourself, and be glad with it. Remember what the Baal Shem Tov did at sea. Never despair, and be joyful always, even through a little silliness (מְלִי דְשִׁטּוֹתָא) or dancing.

A PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY · OUR OWN REFLECTION

Feeling far is not a sign that Hashem has pushed you away. It is part of the road. Hold your place, take one small step, and stay joyful.

In the full shiur: 1. When Heaven Seems to Push You Away · 2. The Narrow Bridge

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