

Ah, Simplicity!

written by Yehudis Golshevsky

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Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught...

My achievements came mainly through simplicity. I spent much time simply conversing with G-d and reciting the psalms..." The Rebbe deeply yearned to serve the Creator like the uneducated common people. He often said, "Ah! Simplicity!" The Rebbe also said, "I have spoken with many great tzaddikim. They all said that they attained their high level through absolute simplicity. They would do the simplest things, secluding themselves and conversing with G-d. This is how they attained what they did.

([Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom](#), #153)

What does this mean to me?

Rebbe Nachman's approach to simplicity doesn't contradict his profound gifts as a scholar and a tzaddik—quite the contrary. He maintained that through avoiding sophistication and taking an almost childlike direct and heartfelt path to G-d, it is possible to reach the highest of levels. For simple people, this is the natural path. For scholars, it is an attitude that needs to be cultivated, since it is a reversal of the way in which we are normally trained. There is a story that really speaks to me that can help get the idea across, brought in the *Sefer Chassidim*: There was once a simple Jewish cowherd who was so unlearned that he was unfamiliar with the siddur as well. He had a great love of G-d, however, and so every day he offered up the same prayer. "Dear G-d, I make my living by herding the cattle of others. But I love You so much. If You had cows, I would herd them for free!"

A traveling scholar once overheard this simple man's prayer and was very upset by the cowherd's rough expression. What kind of a fool would say such a thing to G-d? He undertook to educate the man; showed him the *siddur* and marked out the most essential prayers with strips of paper, and taught him the proper order of prayer. He gently rebuked the cowherd and explained that such a crass and silly prayer was unfit, and that he should express his love of G-d through the siddur from now on. The next day, the cowherd went out to the field with his charges and when he felt the desire to pray he took out the *siddur*. He opened it, and when he did so all of the slips of paper fell to the ground. At a loss, and feeling ashamed of his old prayer, he said nothing at all. That night, the scholar had a dream in which he heard, "Go back to the cowherd and tell him to return to his old prayer—it brought more satisfaction on high than you can imagine!"

A prayer:

*Please, G-d, may I be worthy
Of going in a simple way.
Along the path of pure faith,
Of keeping Your Torah,
With love and truth.
Help me not be fooled
By the false wisdoms
Which fill this world.
For they prevent me
From thinking about my purpose
And true goal in life,
Which is to come close to You.
([Between me & You](#), p. 116)*

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