

# Avodas Hashem

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Sometimes it seems as if we've been given a break. Our Avodas Hashem starts getting easier for a while. The pull towards materialism seems to have subsided. We may start thinking that all of our efforts have paid off, and that we have finally reached a plateau in our service of HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

All of sudden, they come back. Not only have they returned, but they seem stronger than ever. We suddenly are confronted with worldly desires that we don't seem to have had before. New fantasies take over our reality. Troubling and foreign thoughts start to take over our minds. We become confused and perplexed from all that's going on. New and increasingly difficult obstacles begin to stand in our way, preventing us from truly engaging in Avodas Hashem.

We start to wonder to ourselves, have I fallen? Everything was so easy just a short while ago. Have I fallen from all those levels that I worked so hard to achieve?

Rebbe Nachman teaches us that no, all that's happening is not a sign of having fallen. It's a common mistake to think this way, and many people who are sincerely involved in Avodas Hashem make this error. Just recently everything was going so well, and they don't understand why all this is happening to them.

But the truth is that the reason for this is because they are ready to go up a level and to ascend to greater heights. It is a rule in Avodas Hashem that before anybody can climb to a new level, he must first be confronted with a totally new trial. At the threshold of each new level it always seems as if he's back to ground zero, as if he's never even started.

This doesn't only apply to people in a higher level in their

service of Hashem. Everybody who is trying to go on the path of Avodas Hashem, even if he's on a very low level, even a person who thinks that he's totally materialistic, is always rising from one level to the next.

We must all learn to be confident, and not to feel bad at all when this happens. We must learn to go further, and to break through them once again on the new level, as we already have on the previous levels.

Rebbe Nachman gives us some practical advice to help us deal with these ordeals. He says that we should try to be glad about our good points. We should be happy about the fact that we are Jews, and that we have merited being close to Tzaddikim who are directing us in the proper path, by which we certainly have what to hope for. Through this joy we can break through these trials and obstacles in each new level.

Based on Meshivas Nefesh 6, 8

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