

# Azamra: The Mountain & The Secret,

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## Instant Azamra

In the [previous post](#), we said that it's important to understand the concept of Azamra and how following this practice empowers us and brings us to joy, and why joy is so important. In a nutshell:

1. Look for the good points in others.
2. Look for the good points in yourself.
3. When you do, you'll be less prone to depression, more open to joy.

4. When you're more joyous, it's easier to pray.
5. When you pray, you connect with God.
6. When you connect with God, you are fulfilling a vital life mission (which brings more joy.)

There are other rich and important lessons in Azamra, such as the role of the Tzaddik and prayer leader, and profound and lyrical revelations about innocence and more. But if you're new to this lesson, the essence of Azamra is learning how to view yourself and others with an *ayin tova*, a good eye, even if you have to search quite hard to find the good.

## **Mt. Azamra**

It sounds so simple. *But actually practicing Azamra might be one of the greatest spiritual mountains you'll ever climb.*

That's because the overt mission of the *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination, is to woo us away from living each day with spiritual joy, and to increase doubts, self-destructive cravings, loathing, jealousy and depression. (The *yetzer hara*'s deeper mission is to inspire us to overcome and rise above it and return to God, but that mission is hidden beneath many layers.)

Depression is by far the most profoundly soul-shattering emotion because a depressed person cannot talk openly with God. Sure, a sad person, one who has some regrets or occasional sorrows, can cry out to God, but a bitter, shut-down, depression takes a person over—mind, body, and soul.

A depressed person has no hope. A depressed person has no faith. And, a depressed person is unable to love. All our important relationships are rooted in love, whether that love is between parent and child, husband and wife, teacher and student, Tzaddik and chassid, or you and God.

When we examine our faults closely,\* when we do a *cheshbon*

*hanefesh*, an accounting of our character and actions, we may become overwhelmed by what we see. We might think: I did this! I thought that! Oy, can I ever repair what I've done?

Rebbe Nachman says we can: *If you believe you can destroy, believe you can repair.*

Still, when confronted with our flaws, many of us either project them onto other people or slide into depression and stagnation. It is actually quite difficult to really, truly believe we can fix things. That's why it's so important to look for our good points, identify them, and build on them.

## **The Secret**

There have been several popular, secular books that shall remain unnamed, which have captured the imagination of wishful people everywhere, even, sadly, people who believe in God and Torah. These books, despite their focus on fairly infantile self-gratification, material desires, and magical thinking, do point out a compelling truth, one that Rebbe Nachman revealed over two centuries ago: *You are where your thoughts are.*

Whatever you focus your attention on becomes your reality. You attract more of it to you. If you focus on your bad points, your flaws, your failures, the squidgy dark underside of your soul, you bring yourself down into that darkness.

If you focus on the good deeds you've done, the kind thoughts you've had, the prayers you've prayed, the words of encouragement you've shared, and the tears of compassion for others you've shed, you bring yourself into a joyous heart-space.

Therefore, if you want to fulfill the essential *mitzvah* of serving God with joy, you need to chase after your good points.

## **The Summit**

Once you've summited Azamra the first time, it gets easier. For example, when you silence that negative voice that condemns your neighbor for leaving her garbage cans on your property, and you remember and envision her generosity when her peonies are in bloom (she brings you a fresh bunch for Shabbat), the next time your mind will automatically go to those peonies.

Once you remember that yes, you might not be as honest or kind as you'd like, and maybe you aren't as regular in your prayers as you could be, but you do make an effort to give charity regularly, you'll experience a joy that lifts you a bit closer to God. And with time, you'll get close enough so you can talk, connect, and build a relationship with Him.

\*It is appropriate to examine ourselves and talk about our failures with God for a limited amount of time each day. However, for most of us, at least 23 hours out of 24, if not more, should be focused on being joyful.