

Breslov Repair Kit: True Love

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...the Rebbe said, “Even when I am not worthy of serving G-d, I am satisfied to let another serve Him. This is a very important thing to grasp.

I heard this from the Rebbe’s own lips and it seems obvious to me. Even though I may not be worthy, I still long for everyone to be truly righteous. I would like nothing better than for all my friends to be great Tzadikim. This would be my greatest expression of love and friendship.

This is how you must love your fellow man. You should want him to attain his true goal in life as ordained by G-d’s goodness. This is true Jewish love.—*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom, BRI*

All you need is love.—*John Lennon, The Beatles*

Is Love A Feeling?

The Shma, an essential Jewish prayer which affirms our personal (and our people's) connection to Hashem, affirms the fact that He is all, everything, one. It also commands us to love G-d with all our soul, heart, and might.

Those who grew up ingrained with non-Jewish beliefs might find this odd or counterintuitive. Isn't love a feeling? How can you command someone to *feel* something?

But in Judaism love is far more than a feeling. Love means that you must wrestle with, subdue, transform, or rise above the part of you which pulls you away from G-dliness. This part is called the "yetzer hara" or evil inclination.

Whether your negative impulses take the form of actions, speech, thoughts, or feelings, Judaism tells us that we actually are able to de-emphasize the less positive, darker part of ourselves, and infuse ourselves with light and joy and love.

In Judaism, love *must* lead to action. In Judaism love does mean having to say you're sorry (at least sometimes). With practice, positivity snowballs and we're able to banish painful feelings and impulses.

Most psychologists would disagree.

The Age of Feelings

In the secular world, especially since the 1960s, *all* feelings, including anger, hatred, jealousy, and so on, are considered normal and healthy. We should experience all these feelings, so they say, because they are authentic. Authenticity is very important in the age of feelings.

Not only are hatred, anger, and so on considered authentic and normal, but some psychologists encourage people to explore these painful feelings. In some cases, therapists encourage

people to re-experience these feelings over and over again, via talk-therapy (and talk-shows.)

Now, of course suppression (burying or ignoring) all painful feelings is not healthy. There are times when each of us must talk about what is bothering us. In some cases, emotional injury is so great that processing (by talking about) the pain is very healing.

But, there seems to be a dangerous phenomenon in modern psychotherapy which is supported by the media. This phenomenon encourages people to repeatedly focus intently on what's paining them, so much so that they actually increase their negative feelings instead of relieving them.

By surrendering to negative feelings, by venting over and over again, you may be allowing these feelings to spiral out of control. Then, the feelings control you.

This, of course, is not healthy for body, mind or soul.

True Love

It's interesting that the negative feelings we have about others (and sometimes ourselves), such as anger, hatred, and jealousy are *all* the opposite of one feeling: love.

(Not the popular version of love, which is really romantic love. That kind of love is really desire, not love.)

We're talking about true love.

True Jewish love, according to Rebbe Nachman, isn't about satisfying your own desires by having someone else fulfill them. True Jewish love is about having the desire to see someone else fulfilled.

For Rebbe Nachman, praying for someone else to grow spiritually, even if our own spiritual achievements pale in comparison, is the essence of love.

The Rebbe teaches us that Jews don't fall in love, we rise in love.

Love is something to be lived up to, and there is simply no secular counterpart.

To the Rebbe, the highest, truest, love is love that cannot coexist with overt or hidden hatred, resentment, anger, or especially envy and jealousy.

Envy is the desire to possess something someone else has. Jealousy is the fear that someone else might take something away from you. Both display a lack of *emunah*, faith.

Hashem gives each person exactly what he or she needs in order to complete their mission here on earth and if you wish you had what someone else has, or wish that they didn't have it at all, that means *emunah* is lacking.

Do I Want Everyone To Be A Tzaddik?

But, we're human. We have twinges of envy and jealousy and sometimes mixtures of the two. She's more popular, he's richer. They've got straight-A children; that couple seems happier than us. His products sell more (maybe there won't be enough customers for mine!); my students look up to her more than me (this makes me inferior), and so on.

The Rebbe tells us that we are not only capable of conquering these feelings, we are capable of much, much more.

But what about spiritual envy or jealousy? Can we have enough strength of character to not be jealous, to even rejoice when someone else achieves a level of spiritual success beyond our own?

In order for us to truly have the kind of love the Rebbe talks about, we have to the love which desires that other people, even *everyone* we know, will become spiritually great. Even if we're not! That is a deep, true love indeed. And that's the

love the Rebbe calls *true Jewish love*.

It's also the ultimate love, the love that feels no pangs at all even if we're the only one left on earth who isn't a tzaddik!