

Finding the Good

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Once, when Reb Nosson, z"l, ran into Reb Meir of Teplik, z"l, he took the opportunity to ask Reb Meir about another man from Teplik. The fellow townsman had recently started coming to learn with Reb Nosson, and he wanted to know more about him.

Reb Meir answered in an offhanded manner—it was clear that he didn't think much of the man.

Reb Nosson protested, "Listen to me. If you view people in a critical manner you will end up denigrating the entire world. One who looks at others in a disparaging manner can literally start at one end of town and judge every Jew unfavorably. Eventually, you will conclude that no one is truly up to par. You are the only genuine Jew in the town."

"But I am also not the way a real Jew should be," sighed Reb Meir.

“If you are not good enough, with all the many positive things you do and all the work you put into yourself, then who is?”

Reb Nosson told him to turn off his negative scrutiny and search for the positive instead. “If you see folks in an optimal light by focusing on their positive points you will find good in even the worst possible people. When you learn to spotlight the good, you will begin to find it in everyone—even yourself!”

But we may wonder how to find the good in others and ourselves and actualize it.

On another occasion, Reb Nosson gave us an important key to how to find the good in anyone. “I can find merit in even a very wicked person. I am speaking about finding an abundance of merit, enough to fill many pages. I can do this because I know the terrible hardships that people endure in this life.”

Rebbe Nachman, z”l, once had a follower who had a very difficult time seeing the good in himself. The Rebbe gave him a little push. “Well, according to what you are saying, you have no positive redeeming feature whatsoever!”

This gave the student a much-needed jolt. “What do you mean?” he spluttered. “Surely I am not as bad as that. I certainly have good points.”

As soon as the man began to speak about his positive aspects, Rebbe Nachman gave him a smile. “So why do you say you have no good points? You most certainly do, as you just said yourself!”