

First Pillar: The Hand of God

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Fundamentals of Breslov Teaching

In “Seven Pillars of Faith” R. Yitzchok Breiter clarifies the meaning of seven basic ideas or themes which are at the root of all of Rebbe Nachman’s teachings. The concept that underlies the whole work is that of *Hashgochah Protis*, “Individual Supervision”, which means that G-d lovingly supervises every single details of the life and growth of every Jew individually.

But if everything is under God’s control, what is our role as free agents? And if everything in the world, and everything we experiences, comes to reveal Godliness, how are we to take all the contradictory messages we are constantly getting? R. Yitzchok explains how we can steer our way through these paradoxes – by understanding that it is our own ego-bound outlook that causes God to be concealed from us. Our only way to rise above this is through Teshuvah, which we come to by following the teachings of the True Tzaddik

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The foundation of all of Rebbe Nachman’s teachings is to know and understand that everything that happens to us, both spiritually and materially, including what we ourselves do, whether deliberately or unwittingly, willfully or under compulsion – all comes about through the decree of God^[1]*. Even if you want to accomplish something holy, if you are not yet sufficiently worthy and have not sanctified yourself enough to achieve it, things are arranged from Heaven in such a way that you get distracted from it. Some idea gets implanted in your mind that prevents you from carrying out the

holy deed, even if you want to.[\[2\]](#)

This is not because, Heaven forbid, God wants to take revenge, but because of His love: God has infinite compassion over everything He has made. He knows full well that this is the only way to bring you to the ultimate good – through helping you to understand what a low level you are on and how far you are from true good.[\[3\]](#) The thing to do is to cry out to God about all the wrong you have done. Tell God everything. Pour out your heart to Him and plead with Him for your very life. Ask Him to help you get nearer your holy goal.[\[4\]](#) God's way of dealing with us in this respect is one of His most amazing wonders: His understanding of us and our needs is perfect.

This principle is one of the main foundations of all the teachings and discourses in Likutey Moharan, and knowing it is vital if we want to be spiritually strong. It is central to the teaching of "Azamra" (Likutey Moharan I:282) about how we have to judge everyone favorably, other people and ourselves.[\[5\]](#) The way to judge someone favorably, ourselves included, is through knowing that any time a person falls – whether because of something they did deliberately or unwittingly, under compulsion or willfully, it is always sent from Heaven with the purpose of drawing them closer.

However, those who are far from the True Tzaddik do not understand this.[\[6\]](#) Even those who follow the Tzaddik need to work hard to remember it at all times. No matter what you may go through in life, always make a determined effort to prayer to God to bring you closer through your falls and not let you get pushed away further. Heaven forbid. The teaching in Likutey Moharan II:82 "When you go out to battle" – which discusses "order" and "disorder" on the spiritual and material levels, and the concept of "What is our strength" – is also based on this principle.[\[7\]](#) May the merit of making it known help us to go with it. Amen.

[\[1\]](#) “One cannot even cut his finger unless Heaven so decrees” (Chullin 7b)

[\[2\]](#) “Sin clouds the heart of man” (Yoma 39a). Thus, once a person commits a sin, his mind becomes clouded with impurity. Even a single sin clouds the mind and can lead a person away from the truth. With every additional sin the mind and heart become more clouded, giving rise to the ideas that come to distract one.

[\[3\]](#) “One who comes to purify himself will be helped. But he is told to be patient” (Yoma 38b). The difficulties experienced in trying to free oneself of sins and bad habits and return to God are an integral part of the purification one has to go through. This is how one gets to see his true level and become embarrassed enough to come to genuine repentance.

[\[4\]](#) “Whoever sins but is then embarrassed will be forgiven” (Berakhot 12b). Thus, if a person wants to repent and is genuinely embarrassed by his sins, he then comes closer to God. Furthermore, the Talmud teaches: “If your prayer was not accepted, pray again” (Berakhot 32b). Thus the only way to ensure that your repentance is accepted is by constantly praying for it to be accepted.

[\[5\]](#) In this lesson, Rebbe Nachman teaches that we should judge everyone favorable, even sinners. Heaven will then also judge them favorably and this can bring them to repentance. We also have to learn to judge ourselves favorably, for we must have at least a few credits on our side. Even a small amount of merit had a tremendous power to allow one to draw closer to God. “If there are 999 prosecuting angels and only 1 defending angel, that single angel can overcome the other 999” (Shabbat 32a).

[\[6\]](#) “How wonderful are Your deeds, God, Your thoughts are very deep. The boor will not know: nor will the fool understand

this" (Psalms 92:7).

[\[7\]](#) This lesson explains that the reason things do not work out the way one wants is because of one's arrogance. "When a person is arrogant, God removes Himself from them, saying: 'I and he cannot dwell in the same world'" (Sotah 5a). Without God, how can things go right! Therefore, one should humble himself. Then God will be with him and cause everything to work out properly.