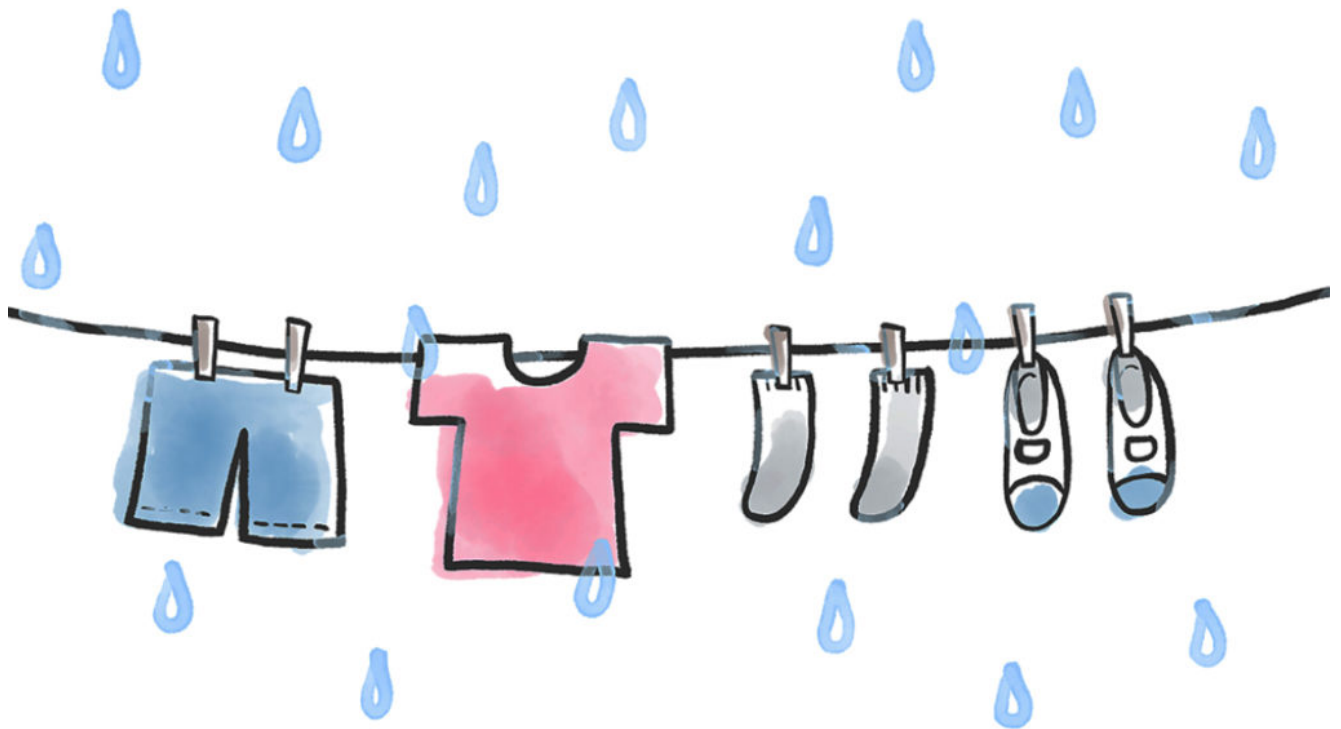


# Hanging Laundry in the Rain

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Today, I told my husband that I'm going to write a book and call it, "Hanging Laundry in the Rain." Then I realized, why bother writing a book (takes so long to write, takes so long to read), when you can just write a blog post? And I felt much better. Because I actually was hanging laundry in the rain while all of this was running through my head, and I realized that it's a good metaphor, and that Rebbe Nachman taught about it without calling it by this (admittedly) prosaic name.

Why do I hang laundry in the rain? It seems counterproductive, doesn't it? First of all, my dryer is out of gas, so I've been hanging the wash. But who hangs laundry in the rain? I do, because I can. Twelve years ago, our neighbors built a porch as an extension from the building which overhangs our front windows; it blocked a lot of light, but also covered the laundry lines...enabling me to hang the wash in the rain. It

gives me a lot of pleasure, this making good use of something that I might have otherwise considered a nuisance. If it wasn't for the overhang I would have to set up lines crisscrossing our entire living space, which would be even worse. Of course, it takes a lot longer to dry when it's hanging in the rain, but who cares? At least it's not fogging up my house!

Hanging laundry in the rain is the task that seems to be futile, except that it turns out not to be futile at all. It may hang there like wet shaggy dogs for the duration, but it actually means that when the sun comes out, the clothes (and the linens, and the towels) are already exactly where they need to be, ready to be warmed up and dried.

In Likutei Moharan II:48, we were given a gift by Rebbe Nachman, and Breslovers call it "The Letter." It begins with general words of encouragement and clarification about the path of growth in serving G-d, and how it may seem at first that all of one's good intentions are futile, since progress is elusive. Later on in the lesson, Rebbe Nachman gets personal:

*"The main thing, my beloved brother, is to be very strong and courageous; grab hold of yourself with every bit of strength that you have and remain firm in your Divine service, and do not pay attention to what I've already mentioned [i.e. that it seems that the more you want to come closer to G-d, the farther away you are, and that G-d does not seem interested in your efforts]... It's when a person is on the verge of entering into holiness that the negative tries to overwhelm him... Whoever wants to enter into G-d's service must remember this well, and strengthen himself in kind, and do whatever he can to hold his own. In the right time—whether it takes days or years—you will certainly, with G-d's help, enter into the gates of holiness, because G-d is full of mercy and He very much desires your service. **And know, that every ounce of effort that you make to remove yourself even the least little***

*bit from the bonds of your lower material nature so that you can devote yourself to His service, all of them gather together and join as one to come to your aid when you really need them—that is, at some point when trouble is really upon you, G-d forbid... From here you can understand just how important it is for you to hold strong and never give up, G-d forbid, no matter what happens. And the main thing is to be happy at all times, and enliven yourself in any way you can even if it means being a little bit silly...to cheer yourself up, because this is a very great thing."*

Sometimes in my Divine service I not only feel like I'm hanging laundry in the rain; I truly am. Sometimes it may seem as though I'm spinning my wheels, but I know that I'm not. It may be raining now, but the sun will be shining soon. The efforts aren't wasted; they're just temporarily in abeyance.

Hang in there!