

I AM A JEW!!!

written by Chaim Kramer
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“God takes great pride in each and every Jew,” no matter what he’s done, no matter how far he’s fallen!

Once, there was a Tzaddik who fell into a terrible state of depression. No matter what he tried, he could not bring himself to joy. He considered this good point and that good point, yet nothing made any impression on him. Depression and apathy weighed heavy on his mind. To pull himself out, he tried recalling the goodness and kindness that God had bestowed upon him. Still, he did not feel any elation. Every time he found some reason to be happy, an insidious voice inside him pointed to some negative aspect of that thing to be depressed about.

He thought and thought until finally, one thing did occur to him. “God has made me a Jew!” This was not his doing. There

was no ulterior motive on his part. It was God's doing alone. "I can be truly happy with this," he told himself. "Truly happy!"

He began to feel very happy. And with this happiness, he started pulling himself out of his depression, lifting himself higher and higher. As a result of his great joy about being Jewish he felt himself soaring many, many thousands of miles. He rose and ascended ever higher, flying through the Upper Worlds, until he came to the level of joy Moshe Rabeinu had reached when he received the Torah at Mount Sinai.

But eventually, the Tzaddik's joy began to ebb. Looking around, he found himself back where he started. Well, not exactly where he started, but no more than a few inches removed from it. The Tzaddik could not get over this. He had flown so far in the Upper Worlds, and yet here, in the lower worlds, he was for all intents and purposes in the very same place!

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He then began to understand the importance of finding even a little bit of good, even a drop's worth, within oneself. When a person finds that little bit, that inch of forward movement which a man makes in this lowly physical world, God considers it like thousands upon thousands of miles in the Upper Worlds.

This can be illustrated by drawing a spoke, a circle with a center point from which lines extend. The closer these lines are to the point, the closer they are to one another. The further they extend from the point, the further they are separated from each other. A movement of less than an inch near the center point will be a movement of many, many times that at the circle's outer periphery. Similarly, compared to

the supernal universes, this physical world is no more than a dot in a large circle, the center of the spoke. One iota of movement towards good in this world brings a change in position of thousands and even millions of miles in the Upper Worlds (*Rabbi Nachman's Stories #16*).



"God has made me a Jew!"...

Rebbe Nachman teaches: God takes great pride in each and every Jew (Likutey Moharan I, 17:1). He stresses this, because it is not uncommon for a person to doubt his own worth and worthiness. "Now that I've sinned, how can God take pride in me?" As a result, he begins to slacken in his performance of the mitzvot, and even in his desire to serve God. Because of this, Rebbe Nachman emphasized the importance and worth of each and every Jew. "God takes great pride in each and every Jew," no matter what he's done, no matter how far he's fallen. The Rebbe therefore stressed the need for finding the good points in every single person. This will enable him to find the immense amount of good that he has within him. Finding this good, he can then return to God (cf. *Be'Ebey HaNachal I, 17*).

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In the Ukrainian town of Teplik, there was a Breslover Chassid by the name of Feivel. Every night, Feivel would wake up at midnight to recite *Tikkun Chatzot* (the Midnight Lament). Inspired by the great joy which he felt from having performed this mitzvah, he would then dance ecstatically, fervently singing the words *ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu* (how fortunate we are, how good is our portion) over and over again. Eventually, people started calling him Feivel-Ashreinu.

Whenever Reb Noson happened to visit Teplik, Reb Feivel would joyously come out to greet him. Once, Reb Feivel failed to appear. When Reb Noson asked about him, the people wanted to know which Feivel he was referring to. "Oh! You must mean Feivel-Ashreinu!" they finally said mockingly. "Since you were last here, he passed away." Taking note of the condescending way in which they had referred to the late chassid, Reb Noson took them to task for it. "In the next world, people are punished by being made to repeat the very same acts they performed in this world. I'll tell you this," Reb Noson said. "Reb Feivel's 'punishment' will be to say *Tikkun Chatzot* and dance *Ashreinu* – happy with all the good points he collected in this world!" (*Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 1-786).

(Taken from the book [*Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings*](#); chapter 3 – Joy; pp. 46-48)