

It's All About Desire

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Every synagogue is considered a mini *Beit HaMikdash*. We are told that in the future, during our redemption, all these synagogues that served as places of refuge during the Diaspora will rise up and travel to the Holy Land, where they will be combined with the eternal *Beit HaMikdash*. Therefore, many of the symbols displayed in our synagogues serve the purpose of memorializing the vessels of the *Beit HaMikdash* and remind us that we will be privileged to gather within the walls of the *Beit HaMikdash* once again.

Hanging near the front of every synagogue is the *ner tamid* (eternal light). The *ner tamid* is a memorial of the *ner ma'aravi* (western light) of the Menorah which the Kohanim lit in the *Beis HaMikdash*. In the Temple, this light was to be

kindled during the evening hours – a time symbolizing darkness and tribulation. However, the Kohen would arrive to find that the light remained miraculously aflame. The warm glow of this light contains the hidden secret of Jewish survival throughout our darkest times.

The Hebrew word for soul, *nefesh*, also means to want and to desire. The pure Jewish soul craves spirituality and is passionately aflame with a desire for closeness to God. This is why in Judaism we always associate a candle with the soul; for example, we light a candle on a *yahrtzeit*. The Jewish soul, with its desire for God, lives on for eternity.

The beginning of our spiritual journey, or any time we decide to strengthen and renew ourselves, is invariably strewn with obstacles. We experience dark and dreary days, challenges that make us want to give up. Where do we find the reserves of strength necessary to trek on? We must access the source of our souls – namely, our desire for God.

King Solomon teaches, “A righteous man will fall seven times, and rise” (Proverbs 24:16). Seven refers to the seven different types of challenges that our evil inclination tests us with. Even the tzaddik, at his lofty level, falters to an extent, and certainly we do. This is all part of life.

But no matter what happens to us, and no matter how far we fall, we must never let go of our burning desire for God. We must look at each day as a new opportunity to attach ourselves to Godliness and regenerate our spiritual drive. If we can hold on to this desire no matter what happens, our soul will be our candle, illuminating every kind of darkness in this world.

Rebbe Nachman said that he wanted us all to become tzaddikim just like him (see *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #165). This is extremely difficult to understand. Even Reb Noson, the Rebbe's greatest disciple, never reached the Rebbe's awesome level, so

how can we?

I once heard the following explanation from a great Breslov teacher. Our Rabbis teach that if someone intends to do a mitzvah but is unable to complete it, it is considered as if he did the mitzvah (*Berakhot* 6a). True, none of us will be able to reach the spiritual heights of Rebbe Nachman. However, we can want to be a tzaddik as much as Rebbe Nachman wanted to be a tzaddik. Even though I make a lot of mistakes, even though I may sin, my passionate desire for God can help me accomplish what *I* have to.

So the next time you're in shul and see the *ner tamid*, look up!

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Birkhat HaShachar 5

A Gutn Shabbos! Shabbat Shalom!