

# Patience!

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Rebbe Nachman's teachings shed light on so many different areas of our lives, it can be hard sometimes to distill exactly what his "main message" comes down to. One confused novice asked an experienced chassid to provide a single key that would help unlock the full spectrum of Rebbe Nachman's pathway for him. "What should I focus on, practically, that will serve as the frame into which everything I learn will fit?"

The chassid gave an interesting answer. "In one word? Patience. That is the essence of Rebbe Nachman's message and the key to all his teachings."

He went on, "The Talmud offers a parable to help us understand

the patience needed for spiritual change. A person who wants to do *teshuvah* and grow closer to God can be compared to one who approaches an old-time grocer to ask for some balsam oil, one of the most priceless commodities in the ancient world. The scent of this oil was so strong that a woman needed to apply it only once in thirty days.

“In years past, when you bought dry or liquid goods, you brought your own container to be filled by the seller. Balsam oil was fabulously expensive and its aroma was intoxicating. When the customer comes in to fill his little flask, the seller says, ‘Here, let me have that. I’ll fill it for you.’ That way, the seller gets to enjoy the fragrance, maybe even get some on his hands.

“Rebbe Nachman ties this to another teaching, that one who wishes to repent is assisted from on high (*Yoma* 38b; see *Likutey Moharan* I, 6:2). The seeker must be willing to ‘wait at the counter’ while the agent ‘assists him’ – he must wait patiently for G-d’s help. While he waits, he should spend his time wisely, praying for assistance. If he prays, he’ll get it. But he needs a lot of patience.”

The Breslovers who ran businesses had a common practice. While waiting for deals to come through or merchandise to move, they would take advantage of the time and pray. “Please, let the business come ... but not on Friday if it will make me rush into Shabbat. And please send enough money so that I can have the time to serve You!”

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VI:470, V:469*