

Personalize Your Passover & Prepare For Joy

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April 15, 2024



There is an amazing concept in Judaism, one which radically contradicts the beliefs of much of the world. That is, when a person performs a *mitzva* simply because it is commanded by God, the merit is greater than for one who performs a *mitzva* out of other motives, instead—even out of the kindness of one's heart.

Ideally, we do *mitzvot* and good deeds not only because we are commanded to, but because we love God and have the kind of relationship with Him that makes us want to fulfill his will.

Then there is Pesach.

Fulfilling the *mitzvot* of this Yom Tov requires a tremendous amount of preparation—there are cleaning, shopping, and

cooking, for starters. Even the most laid-back, upbeat person can find it a tad stressful and the mitzva might even end up feeling like something we “have” to do, and not want to, G-d forbid.

And then there is a Breslov Pesach.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov said: “It is written that every person should choose one observance and keep it very strictly with all its fine points...Even with this observance you should not be abnormally strict to the point of foolishness. Certainly, do not let it make you depressed. Simply keep all its finer points *without fanaticism*.”

He also spoke out frequently against all the stringencies that people observed on Pesach, stringencies which actually caused people to become depressed. He said extreme practices, especially those associated with Passover, were based on “confusion and foolishness.”

The Rebbe himself at one point focused excessively on specific Pesach preparations in his sincere desire to avoid the smallest trace of *chametz*.

It got so bad that at one point he felt the only way he could guarantee chametz-free water for Pesach would be to travel to a far spring and collect the water from its source, rather than use a possibly *chametz*-contaminated well near his home. He even considered relocating for the holiday so he could spend Pesach near the spring!

Fortunately for us, the Rebbe understood that this kind of *heimish* reductio ad absurdum was not what Hashem wants of us.

God Is In the Big Picture, Too, You Know

The expression, “God is in the details” is a true one. But we can’t forget that Hashem is in the big picture too. Because we do have to deal with a lot of details as we prepare for

Pesach, it can be hard to remember the big picture. Striking the balance between doing each part of the *mitzva* as sincerely and completely as we can *without* working ourselves into states of tension, irritability, or joylessness can be difficult—after all, we’re human.

It is helpful to keep in mind that the Rebbe compares Pesach preparations to the study of *dikduk*, precise Hebrew grammar. He teaches that most people no longer study *dikduk* because this kind of precision is simply unnecessary. He says: “This is true in all areas. You should not be overly-exacting in seeking out restrictions.”

Rebbe Nachman also said, “True devotion consists mainly of simplicity and sincerity. Pray much, study much Torah, do many good deeds. Do not worry yourself with unnecessary restrictions. Just follow the way of our forefathers. ‘The Torah was not given to ministering angels.’”

Listen to the words of the Rebbe and make them your own in order to tap into a more upbeat way to prepare for Passover.

Personalize Your Prep

A Jew should be accepting of where he or she’s “at”, spiritually speaking, yet also excited to grow. A Jew goes forward step by step (and sometimes takes a half step back), adjusting his balance, and fine-tuning his approach to Jewish observance, without worrying overly about flaws and failings. A person must keep in mind that the Talmud says: *God does not rule over His creatures like a tyrant.*

After all, the overarching *mitzva* of the Jewish festivals is to celebrate them with joy.

Joy is an essential spiritual task.

With joy you can attain fresh, new vitality. Rebbe Nachman tells us: “The joy we experience on Pesach, Shavuot, and

Sukkot gives us a share in the *Inner Light of God*. This brings new life to the soul and the mind..."

Tap into your own personal and authentic joy without getting too stressed out about stringencies and have a Kosher and Happy Passover!