

REMAINING A JEW

written by Chaim Kramer
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Rebbe Nachman was against philosophy and secular wisdom which teach a person to question God and lead him to atheistic ideologies. These philosophies have been around for thousands of years, yet not one good Jew has resulted from these “wisdoms” (*Rebbe Nachman’s Wisdom* #5).

The root of man is spiritual, but once he descends into this physical world man tends to lean to the physical “wisdoms.” When these thoughts take root in a person’s mind, they grow and occupy space. How can we then expect to find God, find spirituality, if we have descended into the depths of atheism”

(*Likutey Moharan* I, 35:1).

The reason we seek “wisdoms” has to do with the fact that Supernal Wisdom is the source of all Creation; as in (Psalms 104:24), “All was created with wisdom.” We are actually seeking our source. However, we should seek our *proper* source (*Likutey Moharan* I, 35:1). Wisdom and intellectual achievements should not be seen as a goal unto themselves. Rather, they should be a vehicle for bringing us to the Source of wisdom – God Himself – and not a vehicle that distances us from Him.

Faith applies only when we cannot understand. Through study and prayer we come to understand more of God and His greatness, and can *know* more about Him. However, the key to the gate of understanding is only faith. Without this key, we can never attain true wisdom (*Likutey Halakhot, Netilat Yadayim li'Seudah* 6:1).

And, even if we have slipped and fallen into atheism and heresy, we must never give up. “I have sunk so far, how will I ever return?” “How will I ever be able to cleanse my mind?” Reb Noson said, “No matter what I hear from a Jew’s lips – even things that are not in accordance with our faith – I know that deep in his heart, he will always be a Jew” (*Kokhavey Or*, p. 79 #35). The faith each one of us has in the inner recesses of his soul is forever. We must draw from this inner faith and keep on drawing from it, again and again. Eventually, we will attain pure faith.

Through study and prayer we come to understand more of God and His greatness, and can know more about Him!

A person once came to Rebbe Nachman complaining about the problems and questions he had in regard to faith. He felt that he wanted to serve God and have faith in Him, but doubts kept returning. The Rebbe said to him, “All Creation came into being because of people like yourself. God saw that there

would be people who will have to struggle, sometimes against all odds, in order to maintain their faith. For these people God created the world (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #222).

Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Rosenfeld began disseminating Breslover Chassidut in America in the late 1940s. Throughout the many years that he taught, he would always speak of the importance of faith. He succeeded in instilling this faith into hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people. Rabbi Zvi Aryeh would always say that the first step in teaching Judaism is faith. With faith, one can recognize the true beauty of Judaism. He will then understand that he can be a Jew, and how much he can rise and elevate himself in this world. But without faith, a person is nowhere. Thus, Rebbe Nachman teaches, "Whoever has no faith, his life is not a life!" (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #32). My Rosh Yeshivah would say, "Whoever has faith has no questions; whoever has no faith never has answers" (*Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Rosen*).



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"Why does Rebbe Nachman express such resistance to philosophy?" a friend of mine in New York asked. Typically, I answered with a question of my own:

"Do you push your young child to get good grades in elementary school?"

"Yes, of course!"

"For what purpose?" I wanted to know.

"So he can get an education."

"What will he do with it?"

"Go on to college," my friend answered with an air of certainty.

"For what purpose?"

"So he can live his life as well as possible. Earn a living. Pay his bills. Provide a comfortable life for himself and his family."

"Sounds logical," I said, reasoning out loud. "You start the child off from a young age and instill him his educational values during his sixteen or more years in school. Then, from when he's about twenty, he is able to provide for himself, his family and maybe contribute to society for a period of forty or fifty years."

"Only one more question. How long do you want your son to be Jewish?!"

Rebbe Nachman's whole being was Judaism. He thought it and lived it. And therefore, Judaism is what he stressed. Anything that might alienate a person from Judaism, he rejected. Look how much emphasis is placed today on general education. Yet there are people who consider just a few hours of Jewish schooling a week sufficient, expecting that this will be enough for their children to remain true to Judaism and Jewish values for a lifetime.

(taken from the book: [Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical](#)

[Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings](#); chapter 5 – Faith; pp. 83-85).