

The Narrow Bridge

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Hold On! *The Narrow Bridge*

Meshivat Nefesh #31

Even people who aren't too familiar with Rebbe Nachman's teachings are likely to have heard his famous encouraging shout out to us: *"Know that a person has to cross a very narrow bridge in this world. And the main thing is that he shouldn't fear."*

There's even a song that's been popular for a long time that uses those words, but when I began to learn Rebbe Nachman's work I noticed that the popular version differs slightly from the original. In the popular version, we find that it ends, *"lo l'fached klal"*—"he shouldn't fear at all."

In the original, Rebbe Nachman said, "*She'lo yitpached klal*"—the Hebrew verb is reflexive, and it literally means, "*he shouldn't **make himself fear** at all.*" A reflexive verb is used when you want to express that you're doing something to yourself. Not that someone else does it to you, or that you do it to someone else, or that it just happens to you. But that you do it to yourself.

If the *tzaddik* has already told me that I can expect that life is going to seem daunting at times, but that I have no real reason to fear...the main thing is not to get myself into a state of panic and doubt.

This world might be like a very narrow bridge—scary to cross, pretty dangerous—but the only time I'm truly in danger is if I lose my equilibrium because of my own fear.

Dear God,

Please help me to remember,

*even at those moments when I feel suspended over the abyss,
that my fear of falling is what trips me up.*

If I can only hold on

*to the certainty that You're with me,
of what could I possibly fear?*

The bridge is narrow...

but it runs all the way to the other side.

(Based on Likutey Moharan II:48)