

THE PARAMETERS OF FAITH (PART II)

written by Chaim Kramer
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...and faith in oneself. When a person's faith is lacking, he must expend a lot of exertion in his devotions to God (*Likutey Moharan* II, 86). Reb Noson writes that when Rebbe Nachman addressed this lesson to him, he was quite shocked. "I always thought of myself as having faith," said Reb Noson, who could not understand the Rebbe's implication. When he mentioned this to the Rebbe, Rebbe Nachman said to him, "You may have faith, but you have no faith in yourself!" (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #140).

From Rebbe Nachman's remark we learn that a lack of confidence in oneself is also a lack of faith. Said positively: Faith also means self-faith. This manifests in a number of ways.

- To believe that I, as an individual, am very important in God's eyes.
- To believe that no matter how far I may be from God, I have the power to return.
- To believe that no matter how I presently conduct my life, I have the inner strength to change my habits.
- To believe that I, too, have the ability to become a Tzaddik.
- To have the self-confidence necessary in dealing with others.

Reb Noson writes: While it is true that "All beginnings are difficult" (*Mekhilta, Yitro*) – know, one who nears completion of a certain devotion to God encounters even greater difficulties (*Likutey Halakhot, Masa U'Matan 3:6*). However, each of us has tremendous inner strength and we can always finish – provided we really and truly desire to. All it takes is the willpower to complete the devotion. Everyone has this willpower. It just needs to be drawn out of us (*Likutey Halakhot, Masa U'Matan 3:6*).

There are Tzaddikim who face opposition because they lack faith in themselves, or in the original Torah insights which they reveal. Since they do not believe that their insights have worth in God's eyes, they themselves are lackadaisical about their insights. However, the strife which comes their way forces them to study their ways and this reminds them of their true worth (*Likutey Moharan I, 61:5*). Thus, Rebbe Nachman makes it clear that by lacking self-confidence, a person causes his own difficulties.

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We are often confused about the best way to serve God. Sometimes we feel that one way is best, only later to be convinced that another way would be better. This can make us very confused. About this Rebbe Nachman said, "Why confuse yourself? Whatever you do, you do. As long as you don't do any evil!" (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #269).

The Rebbe himself served God this way: he would pick a certain path in his devotions and for a number of months never wavered from that path. Even if other possibilities crossed his mind, he would ignore them and follow only the path he had chosen. After having spent some time serving God that way, he would evaluate his objectives and achievements. Only then would he decide whether or not to make a change (*Likutey Moharan* II, 115).



Most faith resides in the heart..

Evaluate a plan, make a decision and stick by it. Don't be

wishy-washy every day. “Is it okay?” “Am I doing the right thing?” Have confidence in yourself that you have enough intelligence to choose a path and stick by it for a while. Otherwise you’ll never get started. And remember, you can *always* change.

Faith has different levels. Most faith resides in the heart, but the main level is the one in which faith extends throughout one’s entire body. This is why, after washing our hands for bread before the meal, we raise our hands opposite our face – to draw holiness (*Sha’ar HaMitzvot, Ekev*). How can we draw this holiness? Only by having the faith that our actions have the power to draw this faith (*Likutey Moharan I, 91*).

Rebbe Nachman teaches: A person must hold three types of “conversations” each day. One with God, one with his rabbi or spiritual mentor and one with a close friend. Each person has to awaken a good point within himself. He “converses with God” on this point. Then he brings it to potential by meditating and speaking about his weaknesses and strengths before God. Next, he must also draw from his friend’s good point. This can be accomplished by conversing with him every day. The third point he must receive is the “general point,” the good which is presently beyond his capabilities but which is found in people greater than he, i.e., his spiritual mentor (*Likutey Moharan I, 34:8*).

Thus, if we have faith – in God, in the Tzaddikim and in ourselves – we can always find an outlet for our emotions and feelings, always find ways to better ourselves and repair any wrongdoings of the past. We can better face the future, knowing that we stand on a very solid foundation of faith.

(taken from the book [**Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman’s Teachings**](#), chapter 5 – Faith, pp. 77-79)