

Uman: Why YOU?

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Why You?

Why you? Because you owe it to yourself. You owe it to your *neshamah*, your soul. And you owe it to those you love. You even owe it to the entire world. What is it that you owe? You owe being the very best *you* that

you can be.

The soul of every Jew stems from the highest levels of Creation (see *Likutey Moharan* I, 17:2). God sends the soul of each Jew down into this lowly physical world so that it can be purified through holiness and discover its level and route back to its spiritual source. Yet because of the physical restraints imposed upon us by this world, people—almost without exception—find it nearly impossible to perceive this spirituality.

The tzaddik is the exception. He does have a grasp of the spiritual. He can discover his level and route—not only his own, but those of others as well. Some tzaddikim convey their knowledge to us through their teachings, others through their deeds. Observing the tzaddikim, either through their actions or their written lessons, will convince us of their ability to see what is important. A tzaddik knows on what to concentrate his energies and how to focus, and he knows how to then bring his understanding down to a level that even ordinary people can comprehend.

Actually, the ingredient for grasping all that knowledge is missing in us, while the tzaddik has it. We need to work on ourselves and increase our belief that the tzaddikim have attained the spiritual and can bring it as far down as need be to reach us.

Reb Nachman Chazan was Reb Noson's closest disciple and the leading Breslover chassid after Reb Noson passed away. He was once asked if he would talk about a miracle which Rebbe Nachman had performed.

Reb Nachman Chazan's expression became very intense and he exclaimed with great fervor, "A miracle?! You want me to tell you one of the Rebbe's miracles?"

"I! I am Rebbe Nachman's miracle!"

Reb Nachman Chazan felt his service to God to be inadequate. He felt too distant from God to be of any consequence. Yet God had seen fit to draw him close to Reb Noson, who fed him many doses of Rebbe Nachman's medicines. He eventually rose to a great spiritual level, and so he exclaimed, "I am Rebbe Nachman's miracle!" What greater miracle could there be than taking a lowly person like me and getting me to serve God? (*Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Rosen*).

Having acquired this faith in the tzaddik who has an understanding of God's will and therefore knows which direction each of us should take while in this world, it is only natural that we should ask ourselves: What does this mean to me?

Rebbe Nachman teaches: Closeness to God and to oneself is attainable only through the tzaddik. The tzaddik reveals the beauty and grace that exists in the Jewish soul. This soul comes from the loftiest of places; it is rooted on high, in the Thought of God, and stems from the very source of Creation. We come to the tzaddik in order to uncover this beauty and grace, each Jew's hidden treasure.

Rebbe Nachman expresses this idea with a parable:

One evening a poor and impoverished Jew dreamt of a great treasure under a certain bridge that crosses the Danube River in Vienna. He immediately traveled there, hoping to dig up the treasure for himself. But when he arrived, he saw an officer standing alongside the bridge, and so was afraid to search for the treasure. Before he could make up his mind what to do, the officer became suspicious of the loitering stranger.

"What do you want here?" the officer called out as he approached the frightened Jew.

Our hero concluded that it would be best to tell the truth and perhaps he could at least split the treasure with

the officer. "I dreamt that there was a treasure here," he responded. "I've come to dig it up."

"Ha! You Jews! All that concerns you are dreams!" chuckled the officer. "I too had a dream. One night, maybe two weeks ago, I dreamt that there was a treasure at such and such an address, in the yard of a certain Jew. So what?! You don't see me hurrying off to his town, do you?!"

The Jew was astounded. The officer had mentioned his city! His address! His name! And they had both had their dream on the very same night. He rushed home, searched his yard and found the treasure. "Look at that!" he exclaimed. "The treasure was right here next to me all along. But in order to find it, I had to travel to Vienna!"

This is true for all of us, Rebbe Nachman taught. Each person has a treasure inside him, but in order to find it, he must travel to the tzaddik. The tzaddik will show him how and where to look (Rabbi Nachman's Stories #24).

Incredibly great treasures are hidden within each and every Jew. With these treasures he can reach the highest heights. This explains why the Jews have always been so successful, no matter their field of endeavor. Despite all the unfavorable conditions, the Jew has succeeded and prospered at everything he put his hand to and in every place his wanderings have taken him. Rebbe Nachman teaches: Each person has at least one trait in which he excels, one point in which he far surpasses his friend (*Likutey Moharan I, 34:4*).

What are these treasures? For one person it might be his sharp mind; for another, his compassionate heart. One friend might excel in his faith, another in his honest business practices, a third in his indefatigable joy, a fourth in his simplicity, a fifth in his charity. The list is endless. The foundation of all Chassidic teaching, as revealed by the Baal Shem Tov, is that God is immanent in everything in creation, and that the

ultimate purpose of each thing that He created, from the most spiritual to the most physical, is to bring you and me closer to Him.

Which trait and characteristic do you excel in? What is your area of excellence, and how can you use it to make yourself the person you were created to be and bring you close to God?

For this, you need advice. You need proper counsel. This is where the need for binding yourself to the tzaddik comes in. To find your point of excellence—your hidden treasure—you must follow the tzaddik’s advice through thick and thin and to the best of your ability.

How is this done? Can it be done?

The Talmud teaches: Bind yourself to God’s Attributes. Just as He is compassionate, so should you be compassionate. Just as He is gracious, so should you be gracious... (*Shabbat* 133b).

The bond that we seek to create with the tzaddik is a spiritual one. In this sense, it is similar to the bond that each Jew wants to create between himself and God. Just as we can spiritually attach ourselves to the Holy One by following God’s example—assuming His Attributes—and in this way become Godly, we can bind ourselves to the tzaddik by following his example and attributes—in other words, accepting and abiding by his counsel and advice. By doing what he says and as he does, we become attached to him spiritually, and then we ourselves become tzaddik-like.

The Rebbe also teaches that the key for achieving spirituality is listening to the tzaddik—to everything that he says—and not swaying from it even an iota. Just accept his teachings with full simplicity and faith.

This is the meaning of the Mishnah: “Get yourself a *rav* (a rabbi), free yourself from doubt...” (*Avot* 1:16). A

person who is attached to his *rav* can get all the direction he needs. He only has to ask. So, get yourself a *rav*. Get yourself a *tzaddik* to whom you can turn for counsel and advice. Not only will this free you from doubt and uncertainty, but the *tzaddik* to whom you are bound will also guide you onto the correct path for the rectification and perfection of your *neshamah*. The *tzaddik* knows the source of each person's soul and the place on high to which it has to reach, so he can give you proper direction. He can reveal the treasure that already exists within you, and he can reveal the inner beauty and grace of your soul, causing it to rise to its source.

Our Sages teach, "Tzaddikim are greater after their passing than when they are alive" (*Chullin* 7b). The power and ability which the *tzaddik* possesses to rectify souls is even greater after he passes away from this world. Thus, when he was on his deathbed, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai began to weep. His disciples could not understand why such a great and holy man would have to cry. "There are two paths before me," Rabbi Yochanan told them, "one to Gan Eden and one to Gehinnom. I do not know which path I will be led upon" (*Berakhot* 28a).

Rebbe Nachman asked: Do you really think that Rabbi Yochanan was worried that he would be sent to Gehinnom? Rather, Rabbi Yochanan was concerned that perhaps he had not reached the level of being worthy to enter Gehinnom and remove some souls from there while he himself was on his way to Gan Eden (*Tzaddik* #602). The *Tikkuney Zohar* states: The *tzaddik* enters Gehinnom to remove all those souls that considered repenting but did not. The *tzaddik* intercedes on their behalf (*Tikkuney Zohar* #32). The Ari similarly teaches that the *tzaddikim* work to correct, rectify and elevate all the souls of those who need rectification, even after they themselves have passed away (*Shaar HaKavanot, Mizmor Shir LeYom HaShabbat*). In fact, this is their main objective, to see that

every soul is rectified. Rebbe Nachman added: When Mashiach comes, he will rectify everyone (*Avaneha Barzel*, p. 21, #4).

On the night before he passed away, Rebbe Nachman told his followers, "What is there for you to worry about, seeing that I am going before you." Reb Noson added: "Even those who did not have the privilege of knowing the Rebbe during his lifetime can still rely on him, provided they come to his holy grave, put their trust in him, study his holy teachings, and accustom themselves to follow his ways" (*Tzaddik* #122).

So, why now and why you? The answer is that like every other Jewish soul, your *neshamah* yearns to carry out the mission with which it has been tasked. God sent your soul down into this lowly physical world so that it can be purified through holiness and discover its level and route back to its spiritual source. That purification and rectification, as well being guided to the route of one's return, are the reasons for binding oneself to a tzaddik.

As such, they are the answers to "Why Rebbe Nachman?" "Why Uman?" "Why Now?" and, "Why You?"