

What's Greater Than Wisdom?

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“Each person must cast aside all of his sophisticated ideas and serve God in simplicity and innocence. For a person’s deeds should be greater than his wisdom.” –Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

To some, this is one of the most startling teachings in the Breslov panoply. Simplicity and innocence are not glamorous. And they don’t hold much appeal for a certain kind of brilliant person, the kind whose mind is a natural playground for intellectual hijinks.

That we should serve Hashem with simplicity and that our deeds should be greater than our wisdom, is also challenging for those whose service of Hashem is composed of complex psychospiritual and material devotions. Those who’ve been taught that life is a serious business (it is) and that if

they aren't in a constant state of suffering, struggling under the crushing burden of meticulously serving Hashem, then their service is flawed (It isn't. That's a lie.)

This teaching may also puzzle sincere seekers who are beginning to enter into their service of Hashem. They have questions about which path to follow. Does praying with choreographed flourishes please or impress Hashem? Is sitting through a class on kabbalah that no one (not even the teacher) understands, a ticket to redemption? Is simply doing the mitzvos optional, because after all Breslov Chassidus often emphasizes inner-work such as faith and joy?

Of course, the short answer to the above questions is "no", because simplicity and innocence require truth. And if until now, you've thought that "yes" was the answer, that's okay because change is possible. The present is not the same as the past. Whatever is in the past is certainly the will of God, but your own personal free choice begins *now*. This very moment. And this one.

Rebbe Nachman tells us: You can always begin again.

People Never Change...Or Do They?

Neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life), is one of the most exciting scientific concepts to ever catch up with Rebbe Nachman's teachings. Each one of the lessons in Likutey Moharan offers a tool or teaching you can use to reorganize and rewire your mind. The key to this overhaul is your *ratzon*, your will or desire. If you desire to change, you'll choose to change. If you choose to change, you very likely will.

If until now you've believed in an idea that holds you back, you are free to discard this limiting belief. If you choose to cultivate a love for Hashem that is stronger than your self-image and pride, you'll begin to change the ways in which your mind and heart talk to each other.

You might not be able to fulfill all the mitzvos with intensive meticulousness *and* remain truthful and humble, but you may be able to do the mitzvos with love—if you aren't afraid to let your defenses down a bit and focus on what counts. (Even if you look a bit foolish—and we all look a bit foolish, some of the time.)

Rebbe Nachman says you should be even willing to “roll around in all kinds of muck” in order to please Hashem and do His Will. When your love for Hashem is so strong you're willing to forego your honor, social status, and even popularity; when you're willing to toss aside the constructs of your intellect and follow the wisdom of the Tzaddik, a great gift is waiting for you.

Rebbe Nachman tells us about this gift: Hashem will cherish you as a King cherishes his child. The King will open doors to a treasury for you, a repository of precious insights. These insights will enable you to achieve a higher level of spiritual healing. You'll be one magnificent step closer to home.

Based on Likutey Moharan II, Torah 5:18

*This doesn't preclude doing teshuvah for the harm you've caused from past actions, but if the weight of your past is crushing you, then remind yourself that ultimately, in the deepest place, beyond where your mind and heart can reach, whatever happened was the ratzon Hashem.