

What's There To Do

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Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught...

What does a person have to do in this world? All that is needed is to pray and study and pray.."

([Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom](#) #287)

What does this mean to me?

I feel as though Rebbe Nachman is making two basic statements here; the first challenges our assumptions, because as far as we can tell we're here in this world to do many things, not only to "pray and study and pray." Don't we have other mitzvot to fulfill? A living to earn? Goals to accomplish? By cutting down what we have to do here to two essentials—"praying" and "learning"—we get to focus on the essence of our mission here.

Praying is what we do to communicate with G-d; learning is what we do to discover what He has to communicate with us.

A further lesson is the book-ended phrase, "pray and study and pray." I was taught that this means that there are two levels of prayer; the first is praying before learning, so that we should learn what we need to and understand it properly. And the second prayer is that we come to fulfill all that we have learned. Reb Nosson explains that this second level of prayer is called "the *Eishet Chayil* – the Woman of Valor – who is a crown to her husband." The higher level of prayer—the *Eishet Chayil*, since prayer is associated with the feminine—is conceivably loftier than Torah study, because "the main thing is not the study, but carrying the study out into action." That second prayer is the way that we come to fulfill that which we learn, which is the highest of all goals.

A prayer:

*O G-d, please help me comprehend
that life in this world is fleeting—
hardly more than a fantasy.
At this moment I am here,
as are those around me.
Where will I be—
where will they be—
in an hour,
in a day,
in a year or in ten?
Help me hold in my mind
an image
of the World that awaits me—
of the Life Eternal
that will follow my stay
in this place of momentary fascination
and reverie.
(The Gentle Weapon, p. 86*)*

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*“The Gentle Weapon: Prayers for Everyday and Not-So-Everyday Moments – Timeless Wisdom from the Teachings of the Hasidic Master, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov” by Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, Adapted by Moshe Mykoff & S.C. Mizrahi with the Breslov Research Institute, 1999. Permission granted by Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, VT,
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