



70 Days for 70 Years

Remember the past to build the future

Rabbi Nachman

Empowerment through Good Points

"Azmara" is one of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov's best known teachings. Here is translation of the original teaching with some words of explanation and additional insights:

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov's teaching of AZAMRA (*Likutey Moharan* 1:282)

Azamra l'Elokai be-odee!

"I will sing to my God as long as I live!" (Psalm 146:2).

Find the good in others...

KNOW that you must judge all people favorably. This applies even to the worst of people. You must search until you find some little bit of good in them. In that good place inside them, they are not bad! If you can just find this little bit of good and judge them favorably, you really can elevate them and swing the scales of judgment in their favor. This way you can bring them back to God

This teaching is contained in the words of King David in the Psalms: "And in just a little bit (*ve-OD me-at*) there's no sinner; when you think about his place, he won't be there" (Psalm 37:10). King David is teaching us to judge everyone favorably. Even if you consider someone to be totally bad, you must still search until you find some little bit of good in him. There in the place of this tiny bit of good, that person is *not* bad! This is the meaning of the words, "And in just a *little bit* there's no sinner..." In other words you must seek out the *littlebit* of good that is still in him. For in that place he is not a sinner. Maybe he's a bad person. Even so, is it really possible that he is totally devoid of even the slightest modicum of good? How could it be that all his life he never once did anything good? By finding one tiny good point in which he is not bad and thereby judging him favorably, you really do raise him from being guilty to having merit. This will bring him back to God. "In just a little bit there's no sinner!"

By finding this little bit of good in the bad person, this place inside him where he is not wicked, through this "...when you think about his place, he won't be there." When you examine his "place" and level, "he won't be there" in his original place. For by finding some little bit of good in him and judging him favorably, you genuinely raise him from guilt to merit. And "when you think about his place, he won't be there". Understand this well.

Find the good in yourself

You must also find the good in yourself. A fundamental principle in life is that you should always try to keep happy and steer well away from depression. When you start looking deep inside yourself, you may think you have no good in you at all.

You may feel you are full of evil, and the negative voice inside you tries to make you depressed. Don't let yourself fall into depression. Search until you find some little good in you. How could it be that you never did anything good in your whole life?

When you start examining your good deed, you may see that it had many flaws. Maybe you did it for the wrong reasons and with the wrong attitude. Even so, how could it be that your mitzva or good deed contains no good at all? It *must* contain some element of good.

You must search and search until you find some good point inside yourself to give you new life and make you happy. When you discover the good that is still in you, you genuinely move from being guilty to having merit. Through this you will be able to come back to God. "And in just a little bit there's no sinner; when you think about his place, he won't be there."

Earlier we saw that we have to judge *other people* favorably, even those who seem totally bad. We must search for their good points in order to swing the scales in their favor. The same applies to the way you look at yourself. You must judge yourself favorably and find the good points that still exist in you. This way you won't fall into despair. The good you find inside you will give you new life and bring joy to your soul.

The Melody of Life

In just the same way you must carry on searching until you find another good point. Even if you feel that this good point is also full of flaws, you must still search for some good in it. And so you must continue finding more and more good points. This is how songs are made.

In essence, music is made by sifting the good from the bad. The musician has to find the "good spirit" and reject the bad. A musical instrument is basically a vessel containing air. The musician produces the sounds by causing the air to vibrate. His task is to move his hands on the instrument in such a way as to produce good spirit, "good vibrations", while avoiding the "bad vibrations" - the dissonant winds of gloom and depression.

When a person refuses to allow himself to fall into despair but instead gives himself new life by finding and gathering his positive points, this makes melodies. He can then pray, sing and give thanks to God.

When a person recognizes the wrong he has done and how grossly materialistic and impure he is, it can make him so depressed that he becomes completely unable to pray. He simply cannot open his mouth to God. This is because of the deep sorrow and heaviness that come over him when he sees the overwhelming distance that separates him from God.

But finding your good points can give you new life. Even if you know you have done wrong and caused damage and that you are far from God, you must search until you find the good that is still inside you. This will give you new life and make you truly happy. You are certainly entitled to feel the greatest joy over every good point you find in yourself, because each good point comes from the Jewish soul in you. The new life and joy you will have from following this path will enable you to pray, sing and give thanks to God.

Azamra l'Elokai be-odee, "I will sing to my God as long as I live". The phrase "as long as I live" is a loose translation of the Hebrew word *be-ODEe*, which refers to the good that still (*OD*) remains in me. For as we saw earlier, "In just a *little bit (OD)* the sinner is not." In virtue of this good point I can sing and give thanks to God. I will sing the songs and melodies that are created by collecting my good points, as explained above.

Rabbi Nachman's closest student, Rabbi Noson, writes:

The Rebbe told us emphatically to go with this teaching. It is a major foundation for all who want to draw closer to God and not lose everything, God forbid.

Usually when people are far from God, the main reason is because of sorrow and depression brought on by the negative view they take of themselves when they see the damage caused by their behavior. Each person knows his own inner pain. Some people take such a low view of themselves that they fall into complete despair. As a result they put no effort into prayer and do not even try to practice what they are still capable of.

One must fight this in every possible way. When a person takes a poor view of himself, it may well be true that this is because of bad things he really did. But the depression that comes over him as a result is nothing but the work of the devil, who tries to weaken a person's resolve until he throws him down completely. You must therefore be very firm and always go with this teaching of *AZAMRA* and search for your good points at all times. This is the way to give yourself new life and make yourself happy, knowing that God will help you. You will be able to pray and sing and give thanks to God and return to God with all your heart, as the Rebbe explains.]

The Prayer Leader

And know that the one who can create these melodies by finding the good points in every Jew, even the worst, is fitted to be the prayer leader. The leader of the communal prayers must represent the whole congregation. He must find and gather all the good points in each of the worshippers. All these good points must be joined together in him so that when he stands before God in prayer he comes with the power of all this good. The prayer leader must have the power to attract all this good and gather together all the good points so that they are joined together in him.

When a Tzaddik has the power to make melodies by judging everyone favorably, even the worst, through constantly searching for their good points, this Tzaddik is fitted to be the prayer leader. For he has what is needed to be a truly fitting representative of the people. The good in them is drawn to him, for he has the power to gather all the good points in each and every Jew, even the worst.

A Holy Sanctuary

Know that every generation has its shepherd, who is the Moses of that generation. For Moses was "the faithful shepherd". This shepherd makes a sanctuary. And know that little schoolchildren receive the undefiled breath of their mouths from this sanctuary.

When a child first learns to read and starts studying the Torah it is customary for the child to begin with the words, "And He called to Moses" (Leviticus 1: 1). The reason why the child begins here is because the book of Leviticus opens at the point when the building of the Sanctuary (as described in the book of Exodus) was complete.

It was then that God called Moses and started speaking to him from the Sanctuary: "And He called to Moses." The children begin studying from here because it is from here that they receive the breath of their mouths. This is where they start to read, therefore, and enter into the study of Torah.

And know that each and every one of the tzaddikim in each generation plays the role of this shepherd. Each one is a Moses, and each in his own way builds a sanctuary from which the little children receive the breath of their mouths. Every tzaddik according to his nature and the nature of the sanctuary he builds has children who receive from there. Each tzaddik has a certain number of children who receive the breath of their mouths from him - each in accordance with his nature.

But to know all this - to know of each and every Tzaddik, which are the children who depend upon him and how much they must receive from him, to understand all that is involved in this and the generations that will come from them until the very end - know that the one who can compose melodies can comprehend all this.

Rabbi Noson adds:

Understand these words well. It is impossible to explain everything. Each person's life is unique, but this teaching is universal: it applies at all times in life, in youth and old age. The lesson of *AZAMRA* can always revive us. Happy are those who take it to heart.