

What Do You Do?

Solid straightforward answers to the famous question "What Do You Do?"

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Based on the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

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הכתובת להשיג את הספר הקדוש הזה וכל ספרי אדמו"ר מוהר"ן מברסלב זי"ע וספרי תלמידיו הקדושים To obtain this and other Breslov publications:

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מוסדות "חיכל הקודש" חסידי ברסלב שע"י עמותת "שמח צדיק-קהילת ברסלב בגליל" בהסייתדות ע"י כ"ק מורתיא"ש זצוק"ל רחוב רבי נחמן מברסלב 1 ת.ד. 421 יבנאל 15225 מלפון רב קווי 6708706 040 פסכ: 960876 904

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1.Perplexed

hat do you do when you don't know what to do? How do you continue to function when life makes no sense and meaning is gone; when you're literally stumped? You struggled all along with these issues; you found ways, you forced functioning, you faked it well; denial worked for a while, you distracted yourself, but now nothing works and you can no longer run away; You're having trouble facing others, your wife, your family and worst of all, yourself. Who can you tell? Who will understand? You're frozen in your tracks, your mind races, and your thoughts are muddled. You can't seem to focus and your energies are scattered. Your will



is steadily ebbing. You need help. You crave guidance. Where can you find support? You carried the torch by yourself for too long. Now you desperately need to share the burden with someone, but there is no one and it's breaking you; you want to confide in someone, but with whom?

Remember Who's Knocking

Dear friend, you're probably not in the mood to hear this, but have you thought about G-d? I know what you're probably thinking," Hey, I managed without Him for so long, so why all of a sudden?" But, did you? Isn't that the point? You really didn't manage; weren't you always sidestepping your problems in order to cope? Now it's come to a point where you're not managing and you're not coping, and you don't know what to do.

Up until now, you viewed problems as a nuisance that stood in the way of true happiness. "If only there was a way I could eliminate my problems, life would be a breeze!" So you thought. Days, weeks and years were spent either wishing them away or fighting and resisting them; yet, they just didn't seem to go away. Why?

Could it be that you are seeing problems as problems, and not for what they really are? Did you ever consider that maybe problems are not meant to break you, but rather to make you? After all, where do problems come from? Doesn't everything come from G-d? If you're having a hard-knock life, maybe you ought to consider who's knocking and why.

You see it's not about doing away with problems; rather it's about changing your attitude towards them. This can only occur when you work on accepting G-d as the driving force behind your problems. Without the G-d factor, they seem arbitrary and senseless. Without meaning, you can't survive the pain and you break. But once you realize that G-d uses problems to direct us; educate us and to prompt us into a greater awareness of Him, then you can accept them more readily.

Getting Serious About G-d

"O.K" you say. "Sounds good; it makes a lot of sense; but I still have no head for thinking about G-d; no strength to reach out to Him; it's been too long; I've been burnt too many times; I'm irritable, disappointed and have no patience; everything about my life just seems so wrong; nothing excites me anymore; I'm

so apathetic! I just want to be left alone. I can't cope. I'm not functioning."

Yes, it's hard to open yourself up to G-d, when all you feel like doing is shutting down. But you need help and only He can help you. The fact is that you got yourself into this and only He can get you out; you're in this together. G-d never leaves you alone. He never stops loving or caring about you. Even if you want to give up, He never gives up on you. Your problems are His way of telling you to get serious about your relationship with Him.

Looking Up

"But how do I get close to G-d, when I don't feel anything?" you rightfully ask. Well, first you have to notice Him; you have to know that He's there, by becoming consciously aware of *His* presence in your presence. Try this; step back for a moment and just look up at the heavens. It sounds simplistic; but it's not. Keep looking up; sit with it for a while. Stay with it until you feel a bit calmer, more tranquil so you can think.

You see, up until now your mind was consumed by obsessive thoughts about problems; that's all you could think about; it became your reality. Now, you must break its hold by taking your head out of the sand and start looking at the larger picture. It isn't just about you; you are here today and gone tomorrow; but, there's a whole dazzling universe out there of endless wonder created by G-d that's immortal. And just as He controls all of creation, He controls your destiny as well. So if you're struggling with problems and issues, it's because you're meant to go through this; that's the way He intended it; so why be broken?

The G-d Connection

The anguish you're experiencing over your predicament is only because you haven't connected your pain to G-d. If G-d is absent from the picture, then all you're suffering seems pointless and gratuitous; who's to blame? Who can you turn to say, "Stop, I can't take it anymore?" Where can you find relief? The pain compounds and only gets worse; you feel helplessly out of control and that's when you protest that life seems so unfair.

But once you decidedly open yourself up to G-d and accept that there is no reality except for Him; meaning that everything you see in the world is merely a façade; and furthermore, you recognize that His hand invisibly controls every event and circumstance that occurs in your life – then you can become a more accepting person in general; less resentful about your fate; less resistant and angry at G-d and others, for what they have and you don't; you can let go and let G-d, as you begin mastering the art of living with G-d.

"I was passed over for a promotion in my company, so what? That's what was meant to be and it's for my own good." "My kids are driving me nuts and I can't find marriage partners for them; O.K. I'll just grin and bear it, and be more patient. It's all part of the plan." "Yikes, the Marshall notice came and my family faces eviction from our apartment in a week. I won't fall apart; everything is G-d's doing, and it will be good." "My wife says she doesn't love me anymore and she's leaving me." I'm crushed. Hold on. G-d's behind this too! The doctor read the test and delivered the dreaded diagnosis; the prognosis is not good. I won't panic. This also didn't occur without His say so; I have to be strong; somehow He will get me through this."

Are you getting the picture? Whatever crisis you're going through, G-d is behind it; and despite the fact that He delivers the blow, He is also right by your side to support you and help you get through it. Nothing occurs by itself; He is pulling the strings. All events and phenomenon are a result of His doing.

Can We Talk?

But acceptance is not enough! You must go further. If you're feeling nervous, scared and panicky about a crisis you're facing, don't sit back and take it. Spring into action; take it up with G-d; turn to Him; that's what He's there for and that's what He wants. Just open your mouth and talk to Him. Don't settle for a mere, "help me"; dialogue with Him; have a heart to heart talk. Get into the nitty, gritty of what's bothering you. Get over your awkwardness, and start building up intimacy with Him; start from the beginning of your life and review the painful events that led up to the current crisis. Persuade Him to aid you in confronting your darkest fears, to resolve core issues and to overcome your problems.

It may seem more natural to confide in a therapist, friend or relative; after all, you're seeing and talking to someone directly, face to face. But the truth is that no matter how-well meaning they may be, they are still limited by human frailty; besides, most people have their own issues and problems to deal with so, how can you expect them to be fully attuned to yours? Some will react dismissively because they simply don't have the time and patience to listen to your kvetching; others may be downright cruel, laughing at you behind your back and



gossiping about you with others. So what's the point? What have you gained?

Doesn't it make sense to go to the source of it all? G-d created you and everything around you. He contrived the circumstances and challenges you face; He gets it; He knows the real you, even the dark side; He grasps the complexity of your emotions; your hang-ups, inner fears, vulnerabilities, insecurities and neurosis. He's interested in helping you recover, and wants you to succeed, get better and become closer to Him. He wants to hear from you and cherishes every word that you utter to Him.

If He Knocks, Let Him In

So why is it, that when He knocks on your door, you don't let Him in? Is it because of your shame of having drifted so far from Him? Don't feel bad that you've lost touch with Him; work on it now; work on getting to know G-d and becoming closer to Him. If you are ever to emerge from the morass of confusion and uncertainty that you fell into while desperately struggling to gain control of your life, then you must let G-d in. Stop the pain and neediness already and let G-d lead you to a place of saner living. Switch on the light of awareness and surrender

control to Him. It's all a matter of perspective; correct your distorted view by shifting focus off obsessive concern with yourself and start focusing on G-d.

Putting G-d into your life by putting Him back into your sphere makes all the difference! Remember that G-d's signature underlies all of creation; His invisible presence looms mysteriously behind everything and it's your task to discover Him. The more you uncover His anonymous presence in your surroundings, the less alone you will feel. Keep talking to Him; let familiarity and closeness grow. Life will become easier to bear because the burden will shift off of you onto Him.

Offline with G-d

Granted this is out of the box thinking. In fact, to the regular guy on the street it probably sounds amusing or even weird; "Talk to G-d" he jeers, "Are you for real, man?" Let's face it, how many people today think about G-d? Yes, we know in our heads there's a G-d, but how many of us feel Him in our hearts?; our thumbs are busy furiously pressing keys to text; our ears perpetually plugged into listening devices; our eyes constantly shifting downwards awaiting the arrival of yet another incoming email; Cyberspace holds our hearts and



minds captive; we're always online with everyone, but offline with G-d. We've grown complacent about being engrossed in meaningless distraction, as the verse says, "Rather, your transgressions have separated between you and your G-d" (Yishayahu, Chap. 59, V. 2).

G-d is There for You

That's until trouble strikes. Then, suddenly you are thrust into a tailspin to gain control and make sense out of your dire predicament. But you can't and you don't know what to do? "Reach out to G-d? How can I? I'm not a religious person; I can't relate to all this; I feel funny; why would G-d be interested in me anyway? He doesn't need me?" So, you stew in your problems and it only gets worse. You get nervous and depressed and fall into despair; and why? Because you failed to find meaning in your suffering, by failing to form a meaningful connection to the G-d who's behind it all. You couldn't fathom that He cared about you so you never tried; nonsense; G-d never stops loving or caring about you. It's your own hang-ups and guilt, about how you treated Him that makes you convinced that He turned His back on you and left. It's simply not true; Give yourself a pinch; aren't you alive and well? Who do you think is responsible for that?; as the verse says, "You [G-d] sustain everyone, and the Hosts of the Heavens prostrate themselves to You" (Nechemya, Chap. 9, V. 6). Despite what it seems, G-d hasn't abandoned you and He hasn't deserted the world. He loves you and is available to help you; but it's up to you to overcome your hang ups and reach out to Him.

Give it a shot; open up your mouth and talk to Him; Confide in Him like a friend and tell him what's bothering you. Do this consistently; and remember, when you find yourself falling into the trap of focusing too much on your problems look up at the sky; it will clear your mind and help you shift focus onto G-d; the source of all your problems. This is an easy approach, but no one says it's going to be easy. Be patient with yourself; it takes time to see results. Little by little, the words you utter will penetrate and melt your cold, cold heart; walls will come down; emotions will stir and the love and passion will grow.

Hide N' Seek

Don't feel bad that you have to put all this effort into finding G-d; everyone must; that's part of G-d's plan for man; He doesn't appear obvious at first; He plays "hard to get", so to speak, in order to coax you into searching for Him; He deliberately obscures His presence in the universe for the sake



of testing you; Will you believe in Him even though you can't see Him? Do you prove it, by taking the time and energy to work on your relationship with Him; pleading with Him and urging Him to reveal Himself to you? Lucky are you, because eventually He will. On some level that defies description, you will break through and penetrate the mystery of G-d. On the other hand, if you can't face the truth and stubbornly cling to the notion that everything is merely nature and coincidence, then you will suffer the consequence. How will you make sense of your suffering and pain, if all occurrences and events are arbitrary? If G-d has abandoned the world, leaving a void then mankind is doomed. Picture yourself living in a world of anarchy where "might is right" and everyone seeks to vanguish the next; where jealousy, hatred and lust abound in wild abandon; what chance do you have? Is it any wonder that you're morbidly depressed and despair of any hope? A world absent of G-d is like a room without light; it becomes a very dark and scary place.

G-d is Not as Far Out as You Think!

You're still skeptical! You argue that your problems are very real and immediate, requiring fast and practical solutions; not all this esoteric talk about finding meaning in searching for an elusive G-d; after all, you say, "How relevant is that in my day to day life?" But you're missing the point; it's not that G-d is remote or abstract; rather it's your distorted thinking that has created the impression in your mind of Him as being aloof. He may seem far away to you, but in reality, He's not; He is so down to earth and available to us; G-d is real; He's the only thing that is really real because all reality is G-d; so, why don't you feel it? Why is it so hard to emotionally connect to His reality and to hold that note? Unfortunately, most of us are not consciously aware of how much we are unaware of G-d. We are guilty of the sin of omission; over time we just stopped thinking about Him; we allowed our relationship with Him to grow rusty; we ignored Him for so long that we no longer realize that He's there.

Make Room for G-d

But now you're in trouble. Now you need G-d. But, it's been so long that it seems as if the fire has gone out; the warmth is just not there; intimacy has faded; you struggle to recover lost meaning but it's just not coming. You simply don't feel G-d and you can't summon up feelings for Him; so **what do you do?** Let's hear what the Prophets of old had to say about this: "Turn your eyes heavenward and see Who created all this" (Yeshaya, Chap.



₄₀, v. ₂₆). Simply put, you have to work on making a conscious effort to notice G-d more. And how do you do this? As the prophet suggests, you have to yank your head away from its hypnotic focus on the dizzying distractions around you – cars, cell phones, fashion, games, movies, vacations etc... and look upwards. Look up at the sky; clear away the mental clutter and make room for G-d in your mind.

Look and Be Amazed

Gaze at the heavens by day, and absorb the sheer vastness of the endless blue sky. Peer into the twinkling sky at night and notice how it has been transformed into a galactic light show. Do this with all of nature; take the time to seriously study creation in totality until it sinks in. Appreciate its complexity by devoting painstaking attention to all its intricate detail. It's awe inspiring! No artificial additives or preservatives here, just the "real thing"; 100% pure and natural. The infinite varieties of creatures inhabiting the animal kingdom; the assorted strains of plant life and growth dotting the planet; the composition of man that is so unique that there isn't a person that ever exactly resembles the next; whose handiwork can this be – so wondrous that it's unfathomable to the human mind? Only G-d's. Yes, Creation in its entirety is produced by solely Him

and proceeds in perfect harmony to the wave of His baton alone!

Be Persistent

"Ah, indeed it's impressive", you remark, "but somehow it's not enough; it just doesn't do it for me; in my head, I'm radically amazed, but in my heart I'm left wondering, what does this have to do with me?". Never mind; keep going; don't stop just because you don't feel wowed on the first few tries. It takes time; it takes work; it takes patience. Don't be concerned that initially you feel stiff and awkward; it's natural. Remember, your relationship with G-d has suffered severe neglect; you've been in freeze mode; give your emotions a chance to thaw out. You've grown complacent and used to being callous indifferent. Persevere! You're like a beginner music student; you have to practice those monotonous scales over and over again until you develop fluency.

It may seem repetitive and pointless, but one day it will all come together; your hands will race along the keyboard and the most glorious symphony will emerge. You feel that G-d isn't moved by your plight; all your work looking up at the sky, contemplating creation and focusing on Him has led to



nowhere; it's not true. Little by little it works on you. The callous shell will crack; tender feelings will seep through and passions will stir. And when it does, you'll finally experience the visceral connection you've been yearning for. Questions, doubts, fears insecurities, blame guilt anger and rage will fade and dissipate. The hurt and anger at your painful predicament will subside and give way to love and acceptance. No more confusion; no more gnawing thoughts of "What should I do?"

You're Connected

Sounds too good to be true?; well think about it; it really makes a lot of sense. The more you see reality in terms of G-d, the less that sense of "otherness" will exert itself on your thinking; then you stop blaming the cause for all your problems on "external" factors, because you see everything as emanating from G-d. The clarity of vision and clearness of purpose, you acquire from attaching yourself to the One Above grounds you. Everything is and comes from G-d. He is the source. Once you get this straight and you're thoroughly convinced, you can let go, let G-d and accept the flow of life as it comes. It's a liberating feeling. You will find yourself constantly checking in with G-d; you will rely on Him; you will confide and consult with Him on a regular basis; you will feel grateful and thank Him for

being there for you and providing for you. Even the supposed little breaks in life, like finding a parking spot, passing a test or getting your favorite item on sale are tokens of His love and will serve to bring you closer to Him.

Your love and affection for Him will grow; and you will sense the love being reciprocated in the manner that the universe responds to you in your day to day life; it feels so yummy and good; so safe, so secure, so warm. Love makes us naturally good-hearted; you will want to share this goodness with others. Yesterday you were floundering in the depths of confusion and despair and you didn't know what to do. That's because you didn't factor G-d into your life. He wasn't part of your plan; there was no place for Him in your private affairs; you were stuck in No Man's Land and going down the drain fast. But then you found G-d and gained perspective. Now you bear the responsibility of bringing this message of hope and healing to a generation of so many lost and confused souls. Teach them the plan; help them revive their own relationship with G-d by encouraging them to talk to Him on a regular basis. Advise them to pour out their pain and anguish to G-d for relief. Be supportive; tell them not to get discouraged and give up; Promise them that with time it will only get better. Reassure



them that eventually they too will feel G-d's love; which in itself is an ecstatic experience that's indescribable.

Learning to Help Others by Helping Yourself

But first you must work on yourself; begin by letting G-d into your inner world, as well as into your social life; talk to Him regularly like you would to a best friend; about the big stuff and the little stuff. Your self confidence will grow and the real you will eventually emerge – no, not your former timid self full of fears and hang-ups; no, now you will be a force to be reckoned with; you will be empowered and equipped with the ability to powerfully inspire others.

You will discover that there isn't a nobler quest in this world than to help others get out of their rut? Recalling the bitterness of your own past – where you felt so lost and clueless about what to do; and you had no one to turn to – you will be sensitive to the pain of others; you will be there for them because you remember how no one was there for you; you will take the time and make the effort to work with them; you will be patient and offer them a shoulder to cry on. This will become your mission and it will make you a better person. There is no greater

satisfaction you can derive in life than in sincerely helping others. Now you know what to do so go do it!



2. WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU HAVE A CRISIS AT HOME?

ome sweet home!" Many of us would like to believe that, but the truth is not so sweet for many households today. Down the block, the father just can't seem to make it in life. Your neighbor on the left, his wife won't stop nagging and putting her husband down. Across the street, the house has become a hangout for rebellious teens. And next to them, the family has two autistic kids in special needs schools. The list goes on; there isn't a house on the block that's not dealing with some or even multiple issues. Most families are having a hard time facing it and it's tearing them apart. It's natural for us to want to be free



and not tied down with problems; we all aspire for a pain-free life. But, as a wise man once said, "Not everything you want you get; not everything you get you want!" Nobody is immune to problems; many are suffering.

When Tragedy Strikes

Today we are hearing about shocking occurrences that are happening to families: multiple children sick with the dreaded disease, parent's suffering nervous breakdowns, adjustment disorder or other mental illnesses, such as depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. There is also an acute rise in incidences of autism amongst children. In the realm of finances, a parallel trend of tragic events is plaguing our community. It's not uncommon to hear that many households are facing dire financial distress such as, spiraling credit card debt, Ponzi scheme victimization, mortgage foreclosure, business reversal, incarceration for white collar crimes committed out of desperation and widespread unemployment. Although economic misfortune pales in comparison to tragic import of serious disease, it is nonetheless devastating, as the Talmud says, "Poverty makes him [a person] go out of his mind and violate the will of his Creator" (Eruvin, 41b); as debt gnaws away at the sanity, the indigent never have peace.

But the anguish incurred by illness is incomparable to any other calamity. Once a family member contracts a chronic or terminal illness, or a child is born with a birth defect life is never the same. You can never be carefree when the fear and dread that you may come out of remission constantly looms. What can be more heartbreaking than to watch a loved one waste away and moan in pain from disease? Or, how do you accept that your autistic or developmentally disabled child will never be normal or lead a normal life? It crushes you. Observing a loved one suffer while you feel so helpless can drive you literally mad; you find yourself holding your head between your hands, shaking it from side to side, while muttering over and over in disbelief, "What should I do?"

How can it be described?; the sheer grief that parents and siblings must endure when a family member is mentally ill or afflicted with a serious physical disease. A pallor of sadness suddenly casts itself over them; they become an emotional wreck, as their emotions fluctuate from the high to the lows; one minute they're crying and weeping uncontrollably, and the next their eyes show that downcast look as they sit numbingly silent and mute at the shock of it all. With longing and dismay their expression says it all, "What should I do? What should I do?"



Likewise, picture this: your business soured; you become desperate; you start borrowing sums beyond your reach hoping to pay back when business picks up again; it doesn't, so you start making unwise investments that flop and now your sunk; the creditors start pursuing you; the summonses to court keep appearing on your door; utility companies threaten to shut off service; the Marshalls arrive to evict you and your family and create a whole scene in front of the neighbors. Standing there in disbelief, all you can utter is "What should I do? What should I do?"

And how about this: You're a middle-income, wage earner at a modest size firm. The economy is rough and you're struggling to make it. On top of that you have a tyrannical boss who's out to make your life miserable, and he does. You wish you could leave or transfer, but you can't; you have to swallow it, but it's making you sick; you're bursting inside from anger and bitterness and all you can mutter is "What should I do?, What should I do?"

The list goes on; I'm sure you can relate; the scenery and characters may change but it's all a variation on the same theme; the inevitable tough times in life where your Achilles' Heel is struck; moments of deep darkness where the pain is unbearable; you fall into despair and lose hope; lost and confused you cry out in frustration: "What can I do?, What can I do?"

Crossing That Narrow Bridge

Dear friend, get hold of yourself! Don't lose perspective; all you must do is cross over that narrow bridge. Think about it. You emerge from the womb, you journey across a precariously short tightrope called life, and before you know it's time to return to the ground, and it's all over. A brief a sojourn yet filled with such intense trepidation and tumult! In that short span of time you are barraged with problems and conflicts, far and near; Firstly, it's your own demons that you have to contend with; then you have to referee all the wars waging on the home front; next you have to work on assuaging the flare-ups issuing from conflict with the neighbors; and then there's the inevitable relentless feuding between all the other folk, here and there, because people can't get along with each other. There just seems to be no end, so how do you cope?

The Key is Acceptance

Only by acceptance. And, how do you achieve acceptance? Only by accepting G-d. Most of the time you can't change



reality; but you can change your attitude, by changing your perspective. You must look reality squarely in the face and declare: "This is my destiny; this is what was decreed for me in Heaven and I have to accept it." Stop resisting. Let it go by letting it in. Be strong; encourage yourself in any which way you can; be you own cheerleader; Lift up your mood and just get happy for the heck of it; what else can you do? This is your life, so live it to the max. And most importantly, turn to G-d. Turn to Him and pour out all your sorrow, angst, agony, anguish, frustration and problems that you're undergoing. You will experience cathartic relief almost immediately; and why?; because you connected your pain to G-d. Up until now your pain and frustration were born out of your inability to accept the reality of your situation; hence you resisted it. By acknowledging G-d as the source of your pain, however, you become more accepting of it.

Learning to Cope

Truth to tell, everything is fair in life because it emanates from G-d; but admittedly it can be a bitter pill to swallow; a seriously ill spouse; an Asperger's or autistic child; crushing poverty coupled with mounting debts and being pursued by creditors; who can take all this? How do you survive? Nonetheless, if a

person clings with unswerving conviction to the belief that there is no reality except G-d whatsoever; and furthermore, that there is no way to avoid or escape one's destiny without G-d's say so; then the pain will immediately subside as you gradually make peace with your fate. Once you stop fighting it and just embrace it as what was meant to be, then you can reconcile with any circumstance.

The Art of Prayer

This doesn't mean that the reality, as painful as it is, will necessarily change, but your attitude will. Faith puts life in perspective; it makes it easier to deal with things; you move through life easier knowing that all you have to do is just cross that proverbial narrow bridge. But don't get it wrong; faith is not a fatalistic outlook on life; no, on the contrary; it empowers you; it informs you that you always have to whom to turn in time of need; you can appeal to G-d for help with issues and problems with which you are struggling; there's a sense of comfort that G-d, who is the source of everything, is accessible by way of prayer; you don't just have to sit there and take it; pray, beseech, persuade, petition G-d through formal prayer and informal conversation with Him; beg Him to deal with you compassionately and improve your situation and make it more



bearable. Sadly, the art of prayer has become so alien to our culture; yet paradoxically, it is the answer to all our problems; the inherent power of prayer is so great that it has the potential to change the course of destiny and move mountains.

Prayer Moves Mountains

Therefore, if tragedy has struck or your family is in crisis; health wise, financially or otherwise, why not give prayer a try? Give it a shot! Open your mouth and talk to G-d. Speak in whatever language you're comfortable with; share with G-d all your pain and sorrow. Tell Him how much you're struggling with difficult issues and how hard your situation is; ask Him to help you resolve them. Most of us are unaware how powerfully reinforcing is the act of prayer; it has the reciprocal effect of increasing our faith in G-d; the more we pray the more our faith grows. And that is vital; because if your situation is so dire that you need mountains to move – they can – if your belief in G-d is strong; and your belief in G-d is only as sturdy as the amount of time and effort you invest in prayer and conversation with G-d. Don't expect results overnight; there are prayers that are accepted after an hour; there are prayers that are accepted after a day; some take a week and others months or even years. The main point is not to despair and give up. Just keep going. Reach out to G-d again, again and again. Don't be haughty; you need help so beg Him for compassion and to take pity on you. Be stubborn. Don't jump ship; just keep at it and don't move until you see results; and you will; those mountains will ultimately move as long as you don't!

Overcoming the Barriers to Faith

I know it's hard to believe; particularly in today's climate of cynical mistrust of religion; but consider this as your test: Can a rational thinker like yourself step out of the box, take a chance and actually believe in miracles? It's not easy. You pride yourself on being a progressive, intellectual thinker with just the right dose of healthy skepticism; you're not one for being easily won over by supernatural claims. Yet, it is precisely your beliefs that are limiting you, not freeing you, as the Prophet warned, "It is your iniquities that are [serving] as a barrier between you and your G-d" (Yeshaya, Chap. 59, V. 2). This is the price you pay for living in an agnostic society that places a premium on human endeavor and denies G-d's control. Now you need Him, but you can't access Him because you have been conditioned for years not to believe in Him. This is why our generation struggles so much with the concept of prayer; for how can the prejudiced heart open up, to feel a G-d that it has ousted?; you go through



the motions of prayer; but you don't believe that anybody is actually listening to you. It just seems so much easier to just give up and stop trying.

Be Stubborn in Your Approach to G-d

But what's the alternative? Face it; you desperately need G-d more than ever. Therefore, you have no choice; if you want to reach G-d you have to be stubbornly fierce, almost brazen in your approach to Him and not give up. Ignore your doubts and limiting beliefs; stand your ground and don't stop asking Him for whatever you need, again and again and again. And if your situation is really dire don't despair; G-d's compassion is great, as the Talmud states, "Even if a sharp sword is resting on the neck of a person, [he] shouldn't despair [that he will be shown] mercy" (Berachos, 10a). Hard to believe, but it's true; He hears you; He hears every word and nothing is missed. But are you listening? Are you hearing the message? You hold the promise of the power of prayer in your mouth and the choice is yours: Are you going to be weak and give up, or are you going to give-in and stubbornly approach G-d to get what you need? Go after it; unload your problems on G-d and watch how He will take the load off of you; you need salvation and mountains to be moved; pray enough; believe enough and they will move.

3. What Do You Do to Have Financial Success?

The Secret to Success: Do Nothing

ear friend, in these financially rough times, we are all desperately scrambling to find ways to make more money; some are switching careers, some are going back to college, others are trying out quick get-rich schemes and yet others are consulting all sorts of "How to" best-seller books on the subject. Judaism has its own unique, but little known strategy, running completely counter to the work hard-earn hard dogma driving the working force today. Contrary to popular thinking that earning more is a function of working more, Judaism submits that by doing nothing; you paradoxically increase your income. Yes, you heard right; you earn by doing nothing, no work at all.

The Magic of Shabbos

It's quite logical and makes a lot of sense; think about it; since the dawn of Creation, Man has been plagued by the challenge of survival. As society began to increasingly deny G-d, it moved away from reliance on Him, and fell under the tyranny of labor and toil; for seven days a week man slaved; work, work, and more work. The Torah on the other hand, demands that one day a week be must dedicated to doing absolutely nothing workrelated; no examining stock quotes, no taking home work from the office; no day-trading or managing investments; no billing insurances; no collection of rents, no calling the numbers for jobs listed in the classified section; in short absolutely no work or business related activity permitted. How redeeming! The Shabbos serves as a weekly reminder to you and declares to the world, that sustenance comes only from G-d and not through human device. To the modern mind such thinking is unheard of; nay even crazy! Yet how brilliant and sublime!; the magic of Shabbos; one day devoted to clearing your mind of obsessive concern with money, and instead focusing on what's really important: Your relationship with G-d. For centuries the Jewish People have displayed their loyalty to G-d, by sacrificing a day of work in order to observe the Shabbos. The Zohar teaches us that the Shabbos is synonymous with G-d's name (Zohar, Vol. 2, 89b). Furthermore the Talmud underscores the overriding importance of Shabbos observance by informing us that, "Whoever observes the Shabbos, even if he has transgressed every transgression in the world, even idol-worship, [by virtue] of observing Shabbos he is forgiven for all his sins" (Shabbos 118a).

Observing Shabbos is Serious Business

For the uninitiated, Shabbos observance admittedly is a daunting challenge that requires lifestyle readjustments; you can't travel in a vehicle on Shabbos; you can't light fire or turn on electrical appliances; you can't cook on Shabbos etc... But you must understand that Shabbos observance is such a fundamental part of being a Jew that it's not considered optional; it's a must; and it carries serious consequences when its laws are flouted. Many Jews are caught unaware that certain mishaps and problems they are facing are a direct consequence of having transgressed the laws of Shabbos.

The Talmud states that, "Fire is only found in a place that the Shabbos is being violated" (Shabbos, 119).

Not Observing Shabbos Doesn't Pay

Despite the fact that the ramifications for not keeping Shabbos can be quite severe, many still succumbed to weakness and insecurity and worked on Shabbos. Although they may have enjoyed initial monetary success, somewhere down the



line they inevitably suffered a setback: a factory burned down, or their finances fell into the red or they experienced some other major financial reversal. The sorriest part is that many did not relate their misfortune to their having given up Shabbos observance.

You may argue that so many businesses and people today are well-off and highly successful, despite the fact they don't observe the Shabbos? Wait, that's only for now; somewhere down the line the picture changes; if they should have known better, they may face a tragic consequence, or simply their fortunes may decline. Bitter, angry and shocked they may end up questioning, "Why did this happen to me?", all whiles forgetting that they violated the Shabbos, as the saying goes: Violating the Shabbos makes a dent in the heart, dent in the pocket and a dent in one's success and fortune.

Shabbos is A Gift

O.K, so you're struggling with the concept of keeping Shabbos; it's counterintuitive and it goes against your sensibilities; what, by abstaining from work or pursuit of my career one day a week, I'm actually going to profit and earn wealth? Sounds incredulous! But it isn't. G-d in His infinite

wisdom much greater than ours, prescribed for us one day of the week, Saturday, as a day of rest; it's for your own good; Be grateful and just comply; He fashioned the Universe in six days, and He rested, so-to-speak, on the Seventh; and now He requests that you acknowledge this by doing the same. It's a privilege granted to you, so why the insolence? When someone presents you with a gift do you throw it back in their face? For heaven sakes, He is your Father in heaven; He created you; He sustains you; you're dependent on Him for every breath you take; so why aren't you taking the bait? Accept the gift with due joy; enjoy the weekly reprieve from the pressures of the office, by resting on the Shabbos; it won't take long for you to realize the wisdom behind observing this special day; before you resisted it, now you look forward each week for its arrival.

Not Caving In To Pressure

Admittedly for some of you, the challenge of keeping Shabbos will be a struggle because of formidable peer pressure; observing Shabbos when others aren't makes you the odd man out; but integrity triumphing over conformity is the stuff greatness is made of.



So stick to your principles and don't cave in to pressure. When you stop needing to impress others, you are free to be more yourself and do what's right. Of course it takes guts to go against the grain; but let's suppose your business suddenly collapsed or you declared bankruptcy; do you think for one moment that all these society people you need to impress would rally to your side? You know the truth; when the chips are down that's when the real side of people emerges; most of them won't know you and won't be there for you; some will even get a secret thrill over your misfortune, and the creditors no doubt, will pursue you mercilessly. So do yourself a favor; ignore societal pressure – they don't mean so much to you as you think – and start observing the Shabbos; it's for your own good. You will discover that ironically, by closing your business on Shabbos, you are in effect opening the doors of material blessing; it's hard to describe; it sounds like you have to give up so much, but the truth is you end up getting so much more; you never lose when you obey G-d's will; on the contrary, you become blessed as the verse says, "The blessing of G-d is what makes [you] wealthy" (Mishlei, Chap. 10, V. 22), upon which the Talmud expounds, that this refers to the blessing of Shabbos (Yerushalmi Berachos, Chap 2, Law 8). The Shabbos has an inherent power of conferring blessing on all those who observe it.

Honor the Shabbos and It Will Honor You

As if by extension, believing in the power of Shabbos goes hand-in-hand with belief in G-d; the two are inextricably bound. Therefore when you celebrate the Shabbos with utmost enthusiasm and joy, it signifies your implicit trust and reliance on G-d.

When you open yourself up to Shabbos; then G-d opens up to you and bestows upon you material and spiritual blessing, as the Talmud teaches, "Whoever delights in the Shabbos, is given an inheritance without limit" (Shabbos, 1183). And furthermore, "Whoever delights in the Shabbos is granted his heart's desire" (Ibid). Let's face it, observing the Shabbos takes guts.

But then what greater proof of trust in G-d is there than when you forfeit the opportunity to make a dollar for the sake of Shabbos; and even more so, when you do it willingly and joyfully.

So break loose from the oppression of "work you must" thinking, by cashing into the more serene "In G-d we trust!" believing; keep the Shabbos. G-d in turn, will shower you with unlimited love, success and bounty. After weeks, months and years, a special connection between you and G-d will develop;



you will become a man of faith, refined with noble bearing respected by G-d and man alike.

No Time to Lose; Start Keeping Shabbos

Dear friend, there it is! You now possess the secret of earning genuine wealth. It probably caught you off guard and it wasn't what you expected. It is a G-d-given gift inherent with all the tips blessing and perks you've been seeking to improve your wealth and finances; what are you waiting for? If you were told that in some far-off land a treasure was waiting for you, would you hesitate and dilly-dally or, would you take the first plane available to get there? So here G-d has presented you with the secret to getting rich without even needing to leave the threshold of your house; no travelling, no digging, no searching, no great expeditions to undertake. Make the decision once and for all; start observing the Shabbos, and be careful not to violate its precepts; no travelling in a vehicle, no lighting fires, no cooking etc...and watch how a windfall will arrive at your doorstep.

The Shabbos Connection

Over time, you will come to realize that everything is tied to Shabbos. If you are suddenly confronted by a crisis or tragedy - medical, financial, child-rearing issues, friction with the neighbors and the like - and you're clueless about what to do; it's time to examine your vigilance in guarding the holiness of the Shabbos. Remember, Shabbos is the source of all blessing, wealth and success for the entire week; your level of observance and measure of enthusiasm impacts your fortune over the next six days. The choice is yours; you can remain in the company of the many sorry youth of today to whom Shabbos has become one big joke and as such, they've frivolously thrown it away; or you can treat it with due seriousness and become a link in the uninterrupted chain of those who throughout history underwent great personal sacrifice not to desecrate it. Unfortunately those that are weak or foolish and give up, pay dearly for their actions either now or later; unless they are remorseful and repent; because G-d is generally uncompromising when it comes to Shabbos observance.

A Taste of the World to Come

So take an honest look at yourself. Have you been lax in your observance of Shabbos? Do you recognize the connection between your laxity in observing Shabbos and all the problems that have cropped up in your life? Examine the pattern

carefully; it's like a chain reaction; first, it begins with you personally; you know, that sense that you can't find yourself or your place in society; next, your marriage starts to falter as you and your wife stop getting along; then your kids start acting up, becoming rebellious and impossible to control; naturally your health begins to fail from all the stress and distress; and, if as to add injury to insult, those around you don't care to show you an ounce of sympathy; on the contrary, all they do is heap on you blame and criticism. Don't let this become your sorry state. Do yourself a favor; Guard the Shabbos and the Shabbos will guard over you! You can't afford not to. Remember, Shabbos is synonymous with G-d's name. Keeping the Shabbos is the best PR for promoting G-d awareness in the world. And G-d will respond in kind, by granting you special consideration; He will guide you, watches over you, cherish and hug you, showering you with all that you desire. Not a bad deal! But don't take it from me; test it out for yourself; accept upon yourself the commitment to observe the Shabbos all the way; don't be afraid; Shabbos is one of the ways you can open yourself up to G-d and He will, in turn open Himself up to you: Fortunate for you because you will get a taste of the next world, while yet in this world. Now you know what to do so go and do it!

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