

Pirkei Avot 6:6

Faith in the Sages

Torah is acquired with forty eight qualities and these are....with faith in the sages...

“King David said to his son, Solomon, ‘Know the God of your father and serve Him...if you seek Him, He will be there for you.’”¹ The way to seek God and know Him is by employing the tool of having faith in the sages, particularly by means of “the God of your fathers” –the souls of the *tzakkikim* (the forefathers). Chassidut revitalized the concept of faith in the sages, faith in *tzaddikim*, which begins with the recognition that God plants souls of *tzaddikim* in every generation, described as the “Moses of the generation.” Faith manifests as a connection. Thus, faith in God refers to having a connection with God. Faith in *tzaddikim* means having a connection to *tzaddikim*.

The first word of the Shulchan Aruch (the Code of Torah Law written by Rabbi Yosef Caro in the 16th century) is, “One should overcome” (יִתְגַּבֵּר) whose numerical value is 615, which is also the numerical value of “faith in the sages” (אֲמוּנַת חֲכָמִים), suggesting that even one’s ability to successfully follow *halachah*—Torah law—depends on one’s connection and faith in the sages of past and present generations. In addition, the letters of “One should overcome” (יִתְגַּבֵּר) can be permuted to spell, “with 613” (בְּתַרְיֵג), alluding to the 613 commandments of the Torah. In order to be able to fulfill all 613 commandments, we must overcome our evil inclination, and empower our spiritual image more than our physical bodies. Again, suggesting that, first and foremost, we must strengthen ourselves in the faith we have in the sages, without which there is nothing.²

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov says:³

Through faith in the sages, we can bring our sentence to a positive and just conclusion. For justice is the central axis,⁴ i.e., the middle road, that leans neither to the right nor to the left. This we merit by having faith in the sages, which manifests the principle of, “You shall not stray from the word that they

¹ 1 Chronicles 28:9.

² The filling of the letters of יִתְגַּבֵּר is יוֹד תו גִּמְל בֵּית רִישׁ, whose value is 1431, which is the triangle of 53 (the sum of integers from 1 to 53), where 53 is the value of "rock" (אֶבֶן). This is the secret of the Foundation Stone (from which the world of Torah was founded), explained in the continuation of the Torah in *Likutei Moharan* below. The filling letters, meaning the letters that are added to the root letters of the word are, וּד ו ימל ית יש and their value is "lowliness" (שְׁפִלוּת), which equals 8 times "faith" (אֲמוּנָה)

³ *Likutei Moharan* 1:61.

⁴ Introduction to *Tikunei Zohar*, *Patach Eliyahu*.

tell you, right or left.”⁵ Thus, by having done so, true justice is revealed, just laws are enacted.

Rabbi Nachman further explains that disputes are the result of a blemish in our faith in the sages. But there are actually three types of blemish in this regard. The first is when a person blemishes his faith in the sages because he does not consider all the holy books important (including those that are not in line with his path or the path of his rabbis). The second occurs when the *tzaddikim* of the generation, who in spite of the fact that they normally do have faith in the sages, blemish their faith and fall into quarrels and disputes with other righteous individuals. This happens to them because common people losing their faith in *tzaddikim* and as the verse says, “He bears the sin of the many.”⁶ The third blemish is truly wondrous. Rebbe Nachman explains that even though a *tzaddik* may have perfect faith in other sages, because he lacks faith in the Torah that he himself teaches, he is seen as one who has blemished his faith in the sages!

⁵. Deuteronomy 17:???

⁶ Isaiah 53:12.