

A Helpful Eitzah for BTs

Posted on by [Rabbi Mayer Schiller](#) — [10 Comments ↓](#)

It is now time to turn to some of the means that a BT may use in order to survive and, perhaps, benefit from the buffetings described in [last week's posting](#). Our path towards the Ribbono shel Olam is always fraught with challenges but it is never devoid of the corresponding tools to address them.

At the outset it must be said, and I know that this smacks of being a cliché, that everything we confront in life requires the spiritual fortification of Torah study and mitzvah practice. It is the supra-natural efficacy of Hashem's Will which enables our study of a difficult blatt gemora, or a passionate davening to soothe our souls and give us the combination of clarity and strength that only the Divine tavlin can provide. Often I have found and, you'd think we all would have understood this by now, that moments of sadness, hesitancy, loneliness, defeatism and all the other weapons in the yetzer's hora's arsenal are inevitably scattered by working through a difficult Tosafos or a TaZ.

Now, on to the matters at hand. The following is personal and anyone reading this who has achieved success via a strategy opposite to that soon to be suggested, well, more power to you! I think, as a wide ranging general principal, that many BT's (maybe some FFBs too?) may need to do some derachim-combining. In other words, we may need take bits and pieces of the various paths in avodas Hashem and combine them to produce our individual mix. Yes, I know the other point of view, the famous Yiddish saying to the effect that "A calf who nurses from two cows gets sick." There is truth to this and certainly the easier path, at least at first, is to say, I have one leader, one yeshiva or chasidus, or mesorah and that's all I need. I don't require a veritable Justice League (Justice Society? Are any of us that old?) to lead me. One rebbi, one G-d and one path.

For those who feel this way, I repeat, that's great. But I caution you and advise others to be careful. You may find the insight, wisdom, warmth, passion and internal kindness of Chasidim, for example to your liking but sooner or later you will encounter, say, an attitude to the non-Jew, or an approach to economic responsibility (individual and communal) that may well not be easily swallowed. One may find the Shabbos and Yom Tov as taught in Chasidic works and actually practiced in some of the communities, most compelling, but the endless infighting and resentments amongst and within the groups (and, may we say it, at times encouraged or, at least, tolerated by leadership) to be an ongoing source of pain and doubt. One may find the passionate mesiras nefesh for Torah, the devotion to musar and avodas ha-middos of the yeshiva world to be veritable balm for our souls but find its approach to the totality of the created world, mankind, knowledge, beauty and experience (and, again, insufficient economic stewardship) to be lacking something for us, as BTs.

Again, and this is surely getting redundant, if all is OK and the community you are in is a perfect fit and all's well with the world, well, as they used to say when I was a lad, that's "boss."

However, if it isn't then consider the need to inject, some salt and pepper from, say, the German Orthodox model, as taught by Rav Hirsch or Rav Hildesheimer to your more traditional brew. Or perhaps inject some traditionalism into your Hirschianism. These are, obviously just examples but may illustrate our point. If someone says to you that Slabodka and, Vorki don't mix, this may be true for them but not for you. In essence this is the chiddush of Reb Sharga Feivel in Torah Vodaas and of Rav Hutner in Chaim Berlin that the contemporary condition is such that may need to replenish our souls from assorted wellsprings.

Enough for now. There are yet many areas of the original posting that need to be explored and we haven't even touched on the current topic of parents. So before I go let us just note, that for a BT, as much as and, perhaps, more than other folks, the give and take of respect and love with parents is wondrous and needs always be cherished and maintained.

To be continued . . .

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