

# Together Forever

Based Upon the Teachings of  
Rabbi Nachman of Breslov  
and of his student Rabbi Nosson of Breslov

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# TOGETHER FOREVER

Valuable advice on how to maintain a good marriage and why you must avoid divorce at all cost.

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Rabbi Nosson of Breslov

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## **1. As Long as You Both Remain Married There Is Hope**

My dear sons and daughters, I urge you to reconsider carefully the grave decision you're about to make, because divorce is not a joke. As long as you both remain married there is hope that matters will improve, but the moment you separate everything is lost, G'd forbid - especially if children are involved. Don't rationalize your actions with excuses such as, "do I have to suffer my whole life because of my children?" When you married you both entered a partnership - for better or for worse - including the responsibility of raising the children. Divorce is only a means of evading that responsibility; it's not a solution! Therefore, I beg you to reconsider the tragic step you are about to take. Don't let your emotions cloud your judgement,

convincing you that your marriage is irreparable. Admittedly, your life has become a living hell, with your house a battleground, as you fight and bicker day and night. Feeling defeated, nothing matters to you anymore, so you're ready to give up. You must not give up! Cling to your faith! Believe that things can change. It's wrong of both of you to feel that the other won't change. If you are determined, you can change everything.

Therefore, before making a rash decision such as divorce, realize that you're playing with a raging fire that will not only consume you, but your children as well. The majority of emotionally disturbed children are products of broken marriages, so don't dismiss the damage your actions will cause with excuses such as "because of my children, I must suffer?" The children's welfare must be taken into account, in your decision, because it is

they who will be left feeling deprived, needy, and orphan-like. And, even if your divorce is amiable, nonetheless, the children are emotionally scarred for life, the stigmatizing effects of which are irrevocable.

I beg you, before going ahead with such a tragic move, seek religious counseling with a tzaddik, a religious authority of outstanding calibre, and get some sound advice on solving your thorny marital problems. No matter what the circumstance, there is a solution to every problem, if competent and professional help is sought. Keep in mind that it was Providence that brought you together, so you are meant for each other. In fact, prior to entering this world, your souls existed as one entity. Upon arrival in this world, however, the soul split into two with the object of eventual reunification, through marriage; an often complicated task accompanied by

emotional pain and suffering. Remember how you agonized over the question, "is this the right one?" Think about how many mountains had to be moved in order to put you both together! Now, because your marriage is teetering and you can no longer bear all the arguments and fights, you curse the day you met. You allow yourself to lose sight of the fact that your marriage serves a higher purpose. Recognize that there is no reality independent of G'd, and that everything and every situation, including yours, is part of G'd's Divine Plan. Where else can one better perceive the guiding hand of G'd, than in the delicate matter of matchmaking - where literally mountains have to be moved to join two disparate personalities. But, what often happens is that the couple, lacking the proper guidance and direction on how to stay married, begin to disagree. Soon enough, arguments ensue and become heated until

the whole house becomes a combat zone. The couple senselessly continue on this warpath, hurting and insulting one another to the point that only divorce is seen as the way out. Were the couple to have simple faith in G'd's control over fate, and stop blaming each other for every little thing, then they would work tirelessly to maintain peace and harmony between themselves. And even if they have made attempts in the past at reconciliation, and even if they involved a third party in their marital brawls to arbitrate, their efforts were probably met with failure due to one fact: a couple needs the spiritual guidance of a tzaddik, a righteous figure, who can skillfully assist them in navigating through the rugged terrain of marital conflict and discord. Remember, peace is synonymous with G'dliness (Shabbos, 10), and G'd himself seeks peace. The Sages taught (Gittin, 90), "Whoever divorces his first wife, even the

altar sheds tears!" In the Zohar (Pikudei, 255) it's brought that there are two chief angels appointed over twelve thousand subordinate angels, all who shed tears when a man divorces his wife, because the seven nuptial blessings uttered under the marriage canopy are in vain.

Don't think that by divorce you're gaining, on the contrary, you're only hurting each other and ruining the lives of your children. Your marriage affects the destinies of many people and has many spiritual ramifications, so reconcile at all costs. To save a marriage involves hard work and the willingness to change. Work on your personality by learning to control your temper and to channel hostile impulses into constructive avenues so that they don't erupt into arguments. Marital disputes are often senseless and generally revolve around one point: the need to be



right; he maintains that he's right, and she insists that she's right. Consequently, you both feel that your differences are irreconcilable, and therefore divorce seems to be the only logical solution! I caution you before making such a weighty decision, to give the matter more thought. Consult with an expert, renowned for his righteousness, to discuss every angle behind your decision. Divorce is a very painful decision that's hurtful not only to all parties involved - your family, parents and children - but even to G'd Himself.

Moreover, why not think more in terms of saving your marriage, by taking positive steps towards improving your relationship. Open the lines of communication between yourselves and start developing mutual understanding and cooperation that heretofore, were missing. Your rivalry up until

now is what brought you to the brink of divorce. Under no circumstances should you hastily go through with divorce. Remember, the impact of your actions will be felt for generations and then it's too late. In your scheming mind you may be toying with the idea of trying out divorce temporarily for a week, a month, or for a year - just to see how things will work out - confident that you will always be able to get back together. Plots like this are doomed to failure because the impact of divorce on the relationship and to the family are as devastating as they are irrevocable, as alluded to in Koheles (1:5), "a blunder that can't be rectified". Most instances of emotional disturbance in children are a result of broken marriages. Therefore, weigh the risks carefully before making such a radical decision. If you see the wisdom behind these words and make the

right choice you will know happiness the rest of your life.

## **2. Ignore the Rationales that Make Divorce Sound Appealing**

Not everything you want you get; not everything you get you want. You may not feel compatible with your spouse, but it doesn't give you the license to recklessly destroy your family. Divorce may seem to be the only viable alternative to your beleaguered marriage but, bear in mind that you are jeopardizing your future and there's no turning back. Right now you think you have nothing to lose because you've suffered the endless arguments, shouting matches, and crushing heartache of a marriage gone sour; it's so bad, how can it get worse? Don't

be mistaken! A person doesn't know what pain and suffering means until he experiences the ravages of divorce on himself and his family - especially when children are involved. Don't do it! Don't divorce! Why do you allow yourself to be pressured into a decision to divorce by your supposed friends? Realize that their opinions are expressed only out of self-interest, motivated by jealousy, maliciousness, self-promotion and their need to be controlling. Woe unto the person that seeks to destroy a Jewish home! They are guilty of ruining the lives of the children and the destinies of their generations to come. G'd himself mourns the fate of the two unfortunate souls whose earthly purpose was undermined. The couple's soul's originally existed as one entity, which divided upon entering this world. How many universes had to be traversed and how many circumstances did the Almighty have to contrive to bring

these two disparate beings together in marriage. Now, because of selfish motives, someone callously interferes in G'd's handiwork and breaks up a marriage! Whoever persuades a couple to divorce is an enemy of society who derives malicious pleasure out of seeing the destruction of all that is beautiful in G'd's world. It is G'd, himself, who takes active part in joining couples together, as is taught, "from the day the world was created, G'd is continuously pairing couples together for marriage" (Breishis Rabba 68:4). But in the spirit of free will, G'd gives us the challenge to follow His choice or not. if a person lacks sense, then he follows after the desires of his own heart, choosing the path of destruction and losing everything.

Therefore, ignore all the rationales in your mind that make divorce sound so appealing

and stop entertaining thoughts that your life will improve through separation. Your life will only be more bitter and there's no guarantee that if you marry the second a result of having witnessed graphically the ugly fights and nasty exchanges between their warring parents and respective families, develop into social misfits. In a metaphysical sense, if you divorce, you forfeit your share in the next world because your soul fails to achieve its worldly purpose; the joining of your soul with its soulmate (Zohar; Lech Lecha, 85). So many generations of people could have potentially emerged from your union with your spouse. Were you to appreciate the ramifications of divorce on the destinies of your descendants, you would think twice about taking such a step. Therefore, don't divorce! It's not worth it.

### **3. Realize the Repercussions of Divorce**

Dear friend, have you been seized by madness? Do you realize the repercussions of divorce? Because you've decided that you are incompatible with your spouse you're willing to break apart your entire family, while bringing on them disgrace. The shame and embarrassment both families will suffer will cause them to shun the public eye. You will be the talk of the town as everyone whispers about your misfortune. Maybe a sigh or two will be uttered out of sympathy on your behalf, but that's about it. In the meantime, who are the casualties left feeling hurt and betrayed? Your families, and especially your misfortunate children. So banish any warped ideas about divorce from your mind, no matter how appealing they seem to you.

Concentrate your efforts better on repairing your marriage. Identify negative traits, and the behaviors that stem from them, that need to be modified so that you don't continue to exploit each other. The husband, for instance, needs to learn to curb his natural tendency towards stinginess. Stop digging at your wife for every penny that she spends. On the contrary, in a spirit of generosity, delight in all that she purchases for herself and the family - not to mention the household necessities, like food. Other husbands need to stop resenting their wives for the close relationship that they share with their family.

The husband blindly refuses to accept that these are his wife's parents, to whom she feels love and affiliation, and he cruelly discourages any contact she wishes to have with them. He needs to consider how he would feel if his own child was prevented



from visiting him! There are also sadistic husbands that psychologically degrade their wives, treating them like rags, to the point that they are reduced to the mere status of maids.

Likewise, a wife has to be aware of her behavior and actions in the marital relationship that constitute abuse. Some women torment their husbands by refraining from purifying themselves, so that they remain unavailable to their husbands. This is perhaps the worst form of retaliation, because it leaves the husband with no permissible outlet for his desires, and in his frustration he may resort to forbidden means of satisfaction. There is no forgiveness for a wife that commits this form of abuse and her prayers are rejected by Heaven. Other wives are domineering and controlling, and they have no qualms about humiliating and

denigrating their husbands when they don't get their way. Many wives don't get along with their mother-in-laws, and are envious of the close relationship their husbands share with their mothers. She may constantly nag him to stop visiting his mother, but this doesn't cancel the fact that this is his mother, nor does she have the right to prevent these visits. A wife should ask herself, "how would I feel if my daughter-in-law treated me this way?"

The issues contributing to marital unrest are many, but the mechanics are invariably the same: with a finger of blame pointed at each other, she accuses him of being cold and ruthless; he alleges that she is manipulative and vindictive. Blind to their own faults, both parties feel that their claims are justified, so all hope is lost for a peaceful settlement. In this loveless stalemate, the bored couple

occupy themselves with finding fault with one another, constantly criticizing each other, and thereby making their married life a misery. The future of their marriage rests, then, only on the willingness of both husband and wife to admit to their own mistakes and to recognize inherent negative traits that are preventing their happiness. Otherwise a climate of hate is created in which a marriage can't survive nor can children thrive.

Just realize where all your unbridled anger, stubborn willfulness, and twisted thinking has taken you - to the threshold of divorce! Wouldn't you rather be enjoying the sweetness of marital bliss? Then your whole approach to marriage has to change and you must be willing to correct the abuses of the past. Stop hurting each other and start working towards peace, for your sake and the sake of the children. There isn't a more ideal

condition for blessing to flourish than in a climate of peace (Uktzin, 3; Devarim Rabbah 5,14). Moreover, there is no trait more desirable in the eyes of G'd than peace, especially when it's the result of uniting two opposites. Therefore, give your marriage a chance. Put the spark of love back in your marriage by respecting each other and be forgiving of one another. G'd, in kind, will grant you pardon and shower you both with blessing.

#### **4. Put Matters In Their Proper Perspective**

Your marriage is suffering a crisis. The situation has grown dire. Your options, you feel, are limited, if not nill, so divorce has become more likely. Stop right there! Divorce is not the answer; it does not solve marital

problems. It's a cop out from a relationship in which you feel that communication is lacking, mutual understanding is obsolete, and passion is gone. You feel ripe for change and divorce is your chance to find just that right person. You're in for a surprise, because the truth is you'll get your change, but it will be a change for the worse. Divorce is not a means of solving interpersonal problems nor is it a positive step towards personal growth. If you sincerely wish to solve your marital problems and want to save your marriage, then the change has to come from within. In your manner of relating, now try using a rational and intelligent approach, by acting positively towards each other. Look for ways to be supportive of one another, cultivate mutual respect and revive the romance by speaking tenderly with your spouse, using terms of endearment. The whole atmosphere in your home will transform into one of warmth and

love. The tension caused by endless and bitter fights, will dissipate, and so will the taunts of your neighbors. Gone will be the days when you charged so brutally and wildly at each other, locking horns with your spouse, until you found yourselves on the verge of divorce. Then you will have the peace of mind to understand what a mistake divorce could have been and how destructive it is to the lives of your children. Had you placed your happiness before the welfare of your children, you would have lived to regret your actions as your troubled children slipped into the delinquent street life of drugs, crime, and promiscuity. And, eventually as they are serving time in prison, you would wake up asking, "how did my kids get so messed up?" You'll only have yourselves and your reckless actions to blame, because children emulate their parents and trust whatever their parents say. Don't be selfish - have some

consideration for your children and their welfare. Don't sacrifice the lives of your children just because you insist that your happiness comes first. When a person kills another person, and even more so, when he kills many people, he is considered a cold-blooded murderer; all the more so, when one murders his own children!

Is it worth forfeiting the lives of your children just to feel that sense of satisfaction you get out of hurting your spouse? Isn't it time you outgrew your childish and petty behavior? I-zt your mind, stifled by crude and narrow thinking, awaken itself to the awareness of G'd's control over your life and all of reality. If you are in distress, then reach out to Him and He will come to your rescue. All the pain, suffering and dissapointment you've experienced in your life, which has embittered you and made you into a stingy,

cruel, hostile and begrudging person, is because you've distanced yourself from G'd. Once alienated from G'd you are left feeling that your entire destiny is in your hands alone. With this exaggerated sense of self-importance and control over your destiny you imagine that life will go on forever, and feeling superior to others you give yourself the license to berate, abuse, and humiliate them. If you possessed clear and genuine faith, however, and were unmistakably decided about G'd's absolute control over all the events in your household and G'd's sole role in making your match, then you would return to Him. You would be overcome with remorse over your corrupt views and misguided notions, that you adopted in your frivolous youth, which now allow you to even consider divorce. Therefore put matters in their proper perspective, by making yourself conscious of the fleeting nature of life; one



minute you're here and the next you're gone! Every day a person is confronted with the harsh realities of life in the form of dreadful diseases that take even the lives of the young, in a most unspeakable manner. Picture in your mind a critically ill patient lying on his deathbed; all the doctor's have given up hope; he has just hours to live. Do you think that he would even give a thought to the idea of divorce? He would have to be a fool to consider such a thing at this moment. It is only the couple's failure to appreciate the precariousness of life, and the urgent need to imbue it with meaning by serving G'd and having faith, that permits them to wrangle with each other until they're prepared to divorce. Therefore, be sensible by casting all silly thoughts about divorce from your minds. Reconcile between yourselves at all costs by demonstrating to each other a willingness to change. Don't be one-sided, expecting only

the other person to change. As an incentive, consider if it's worth the risk, in this very short existence of ours, to break up your family and to invite on them disgrace and humiliation. Ultimately, you will arrive at the recognized truth that breaking up is not a means to solve marital problems. What your troubled marriage is lacking is friendship, love, unity, and cooperation. G' d favors the couple that chooses the path of reconciliation because they establish a domain based on love and unity in which G'd's invisible Presence desirably rests. Moreover, G'd enters into partnership with the couple in the act of procreation as is taught, "three partners are involved in creating man: G'd, the father, and the mother" (Kiddushin, 30). As you both take pride in the growth and development of your children, don't overlook G'd's central and decisive role in the whole process. Cultivate an awareness of G'd's

presence amongst your family members by attributing all that occurs in the household to G'd's will. Even in the face of adversity or financial hardship, don't cast blame on each other nor be overly stingy, rather look Heavenward for relief, because G'd supports and sustains all of creation. The matter of all finances are in G'd's hands, not subject to the dictates of Man. So just concentrate on leading as fulfilling a life as you can, in accordance with His will. Take this message to heart and with G'd's help, you will be convinced to recant your tragic decision to divorce. Then the prospects for your family's future will be bright, as your home transforms into a paradise where children can thrive and flourish.

## 5. A Couple Needs Spiritual Guidance

All the wholesome and candid views expressed thus far were aimed to dissuade you from embarking on that ill-fated course leading towards divorce. Rather than destroy your life and literally the lives of your children, why not simply make the necessary repairs to your marriage and stick together! Make up your minds firmly that from here on in you will not hurt each other. As the husband, you are obliged not to get your wife so upset and nervous that she falls into depression and despair. In general, don't degrade her, especially not in public nor in front of the kids. Similarly, the wife must refrain from putting down her husband and not seek to dominate him. Even if he is a poor provider, it is no excuse to degrade and humiliate him, because income is only

determined by the Almighty. On the contrary, a wife should rush to the side of her husband who is struggling to make a living, and as a woman of valor, she should only be supportive and encouraging. How many families were destroyed, because the husband lost his job and the wife proceeded to berate her husband and nag him for money. Demonstrating profound insensitivity, she ignores the fact that her husband wants to work, except he was laid off like so many others. Instead of offering hope and encouragement that the situation will get better, she insults him publicly and in front of the children, raising his ire to the point that he lashes out at her and thus the marital battle begins, as was taught, "when the pantry is empty the domestic squabble begins" (Temurah, 16). Therefore, a wife must be patient with her husband and devote much attention to him, while at the same

time encouraging and supporting him. With soft and gentle words, work to cheer up your disconcerted husband, and inspire hope by explaining to him that this is just a test by G'd to see if we turn to Him in our hour of need. Similarly, a husband is required to raise his wife's hopes, keep her spirits up, and constantly encourage her. He must absolutely guard himself from ever putting his wife down, or shaming her in front of the children, the family, or anybody else.

The time has come for both of you to change your outlook on your marriage and to try different approaches in relating to one another. Be supportive of one another, and learn to respect each other by attempting to understand how the other one feels. Live up to your roles as helpmates just as G'd intended, when he put you together. Like it or not, your marriage partner was pre-

ordained in Heaven. Every day a Heavenly voice proclaims: "so and so is matched with so and so" (Moed Koton, 18). G'd's will shall be done and nothing, but nothing can stand in it's way. Say what you want, but this is the destined pair and G'd will contrive and devise all the necessary conditions and circumstances so that ultimately they both say "I do". Therefore, why oppose G'd's will? If you you've married it signifies that you were meant for each other, so why all the resistance? And if you think that divorce is your chance to escape, be aware that your life will become a living hell on earth, literally! Therefore be sensible and accept your fate that you were destined for each other. Don't try to alter your fate, rather make constructive changes in your marriage. Forget about divorcing! Begin a new chapter in your marriage life, by acting in goodwill, as rational adults who love and support each other. Then

the healing can begin and G'd's Presence will rest in your home. If you would but only allow this simple, yet powerful message to penetrate your hearts, you would at once recognize the painfulness of your choice and recant. Choose peace and you will be choosing hope, because peace is synonymous with G'd. With His blessing and promise for a brighter tomorrow, you will both remain together forever.

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