

The Narrow Gate and Freedom

"Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate that leads to destruction is wide and the road broad, and many enter through it. But the gate that leads to salvation is narrow and the path confined, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13–14)

True freedom is not mere licence, but a moral awareness rooted in free will, virtue, and responsibility. Freedom does not mean recklessness; rather, it signifies existing with conscious fidelity and deep responsibility—towards oneself and towards life itself. This responsibility includes not only actions that benefit the individual, but also those that bless others.

Thus, true freedom means becoming still enough to hear one's inner voice, courageous enough to face one's own darkness, and mature enough to bear the consequences of one's choices with joy.

According to Syriac culture, when a person forgets the sacred breath received from God—the very essence—he clings excessively to the world. His inner light fades, the voice of the soul grows faint, and the balance between body and spirit collapses. As the soul weakens, the body grows heavier; desires, passions, and insatiable cravings expand until they enslave the human being.

At such a threshold, one finds oneself before a gate: the Gate of Truth.

This narrow gate, in the counsel of Christ, signifies salvation through detachment from worldly bonds. The gate is not broad, nor adorned; it is narrow and plain. For the more one clings to the world, the more pride one harbours, the heavier one becomes—and the less able one is to pass through.

This narrow gate is the way of shedding false layers: masks, burdens, hollow expectations. It is the way of purification. And true freedom belongs only to those who dare to pass through it.

Why, then, is it so difficult?

Because modern humanity struggles to hold the delicate and vital balance between matter and meaning. Bodily appetites swell, while the voice of the spirit grows faint. Humanity has learnt to feed the body, to set tables, to store abundance, yet it has neglected the soul, leaving the inner life in thirst.

Yet Christ said: **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”** (Matthew 4: 4)

Bread sustains the body, but what nourishes the soul is the word of God: divine goodness, wisdom, truth, and love. This word may take the form of prayer, hymn, a compassionate act, a word of comfort, a cultural endeavour, or an artistic touch. Every breath of kindness that keeps the inner light alive is the very speech of God breathed into us.

When our gaze is always turned outward, the inner world falls silent. We decorate the external, neglecting the inner garden. Thus, the heart’s gate narrows, the passage closes, and the burden of life grows heavier.

This is humanity’s true struggle today: the body is satisfied, yet the soul starves. The tables are full, yet the hearts are empty. Humanity’s true sustenance is not the fleeting blessings of this world, but the divine goodness, wisdom, and love that God breathes into us at every moment. Whenever we remember and multiply these gifts, the gate opens; when we forget, it closes.

The Secret of Passing Through the Narrow Gate

To enter the Narrow Gate begins with accepting one’s own life as it is. Syriac wisdom teaches that life is a gift from God. Some are given easy roads, others

difficult. Some are born into abundance, others into poverty. Some carry solitude, others heavy responsibility. Yet each condition is a teacher—reminding the human being of balance, essence, and patience.

When life grows heavy, one seeks refuge in a breath: a prayer, a friend's table, a monastery courtyard, a hymn, a wise saying, or a heartfelt conversation. These nourish the soul, lighten the body's load, and restore the inner balance.

Preserving the Balance of Soul and Body

Syriac wisdom declares: if the soul is not fed, the body exults; and when the body exults, the soul's light grows dim. Balance is preserved by tempering excess desire and feeding the soul.

The ancients spoke of **“passing a camel through the eye of a needle”**—for unless the ego passes through the narrow place, the soul cannot shine. Humanity always cries for “one more”; and the more it craves, the more it is bound.

Passing through the Narrow Gate means shedding excess and simplifying expectations. To demand too much from spouse, family, children, or others only narrows the gate. Each person is human only in their own measure; to expect more is to close the passage.

The Power of Self-Control

In Syriac culture, the way to preserve inner balance is through self-control and self-discipline. One must listen to the inner voice; weigh words before speaking; pause before acting. At the threshold of desire, one must ask: **Do I truly need this? Does it nourish my soul, or is it only a burden upon the body?**

Self-control is knowing what one seeks. Self-discipline is resisting needless desires. Without these, the soul cannot remain alive; the endless hunger of the body drags the human being astray, disturbs the balance, and closes the gate.

Escaping the Role of the Victim

To take refuge in victimhood is to silence the inner voice. Always there is a culprit: life, people, even God. Yet the breath of God dwells within the human being. When one hands over this inner strength to others, the light dims and the soul falls silent.

True freedom does not come from external conditions, but from within. To remember at every moment the divine breath within us is to see our limitations not as prisons, but as opportunities for growth.

Making Peace with Life

Passing through the Narrow Gate requires walking without resentment, with fewer complaints. In old Syriac villages and monasteries, people lived with little, for abundance always burdens the soul. Life changes, but the eternal meanings of the soul remain. When our perspective changes, the spirit grows stronger, the body lighter, and the gate opens.

The Narrow Gate is the awareness of the weight of desire. One day it is a house, the next a car, then a title. Such things are thought to give strength, yet the greater the craving, the weaker the soul. True strength lies not without, but within.

Inner Freedom

As Isaac of Nineveh (7th century) said: **“One who is not free within can never be free without.”**

True freedom begins with breaking the chains of desire. The soul is nourished by responsibility; the ego is restrained. As the soul grows strong, the body obeys. Then one lives in the world, yet is not of the world.

This is what it means to “*die before dying*”: to shed the ego like a shell and keep the essence alive with light. Such a person becomes like a great tree, rooted in the depths of the soul, giving shade and refreshment to all with its branches.

The one who preserves the balance of soul and body, disciplines the ego, and keeps the inner light alive is the one who passes through the Narrow Gate. The more one passes, the lighter one becomes; the lighter, the freer.

Thus is born the true human, the perfected human —mature and wise.

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