

ESSENTIAL

RABBI

NA'HMAN

3

*A translation of selected writings of  
Rebbe Na'hman  
and his main disciple Rav Nosson*

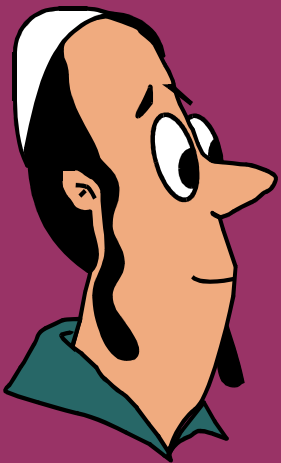




## I

There must be questions There are many searching questions about God. But it is only fitting and proper that this should be so. Indeed, such questions enhance the greatness of God and show His exaltedness. God is so great and exalted that He is beyond our ability to understand Him. It is obviously impossible for us, with our limited human intelligence, to understand His ways. Inevitably there are things that baffle us, and this is only fitting. If God's ways were in accordance with the limits of our meager understanding, there would be no difference between His understanding and ours, and this is inconceivable. Likutey Moharan II, 52 \*\*\* Believing is seeing If you ask a believer to explain why he has faith, he will certainly not be able to give you a reason, because faith is applicable only where one does not understand the reason. Yet, because of his complete faith, whatever the believer himself believes in is perfectly clear and self-evident as if he sees it with his own eyes. Likutey Moharan, I, 62 \*\*\* Rely on God It is very good to rely on God completely. As each day begins, entrust your every movement and those of all who depend on you into God's hands, asking that everything should go according to His will. You will then not need to worry about whether or not things are going as they should, because you are relying on God. If He wants things to go differently from the way you may wish, you will be willing to accept everything the way He wants it. Sichot Haran #2 \*\*\* If you have faith, you are truly alive When you have faith, every day is filled with good. When things go well, it is certainly good. But even if things go wrong and you suffer, this is also good. For you trust that God will have mercy and will eventually send good. Everything must be good, because everything comes from God.

A person who lacks faith is not truly alive, because as soon as something bad happens he gives up all hope. He has no way to comfort himself because, having no faith, he has placed himself outside God's providence and therefore, for him, there is no good at all. If you have faith, you will have a good and beautiful life. Sichot Haran #53 \*\*\* Faith in yourself You must have faith in yourself! You must have enough faith in God's goodness to believe that you are important to Him.



Have faith that you too are precious in God's eyes. So great is God's goodness that each and every person is great and important in His eyes. Being humble does not mean you must put yourself in a state of constricted consciousness. Constantly ask God to bring you to true humility and to have faith in yourself. Some Tzaddikim suffer opposition only because they do not have faith in themselves! Sichot Haran #140 \*\*\* Speak out your faith Faith depends on a person's mouth. We must say that we believe - say it out loud! "I will make Your faithfulness known with my mouth " (Psalms 89: 2 ) . When a person is experiencing a crisis of faith, or even passing doubts, it is very beneficial to say aloud: "I believe!" Simply giving expression to your faith in words is itself an act of faith, and this can bring you to true faith. Likewise you should also be very careful never to say anything which implies even the slightest lack of faith, let alone total disbelief . Even if you are a believer in your heart, never express disbelief even as a joke - not even if you are merely quoting someone else to ridicule their opinion. To do this is very wrong and can be very damaging to your faith. Even as a joke it is forbidden say anything which implies disrespect of God. Likutey Moharan II, 44

## II

The cry of the heart The word K a ShYA - a "difficulty" or "question" - consists of the initial letters of the verse " Sh 'ma Y -K-V-K K oli E kra: Hear, God, my voice - I cry...." (Psalms 27:7) . When you cry out in your heart, this itself is an aspect of faith. You may have many doubts and questions, but when you cry out in your heart it shows that you still have a spark of true faith. Without this spark you would not cry out at all. Your very cry is therefore an aspect of faith. Understand this. This cry can also bring you to faith. The cry itself is an aspect of faith , but it is still very weak. Yet this very cry can elevate and strengthen your faith until all your questions disappear. Even if you have not yet attained this, the cry itself is very beneficial. Sichot Haran #146 \*\*\* Faith in every limb There are various kinds of faith. There is faith that is only in the heart. But a person must have so much faith that it spreads to all his limbs. Thus the Kabbalistic writings mention that when





washing one's hands to eat bread, one should raise them towards the head in order to receive holiness. Your faith must extend into your hands in order to believe that by raising them towards your head you receive holiness. Without faith, it is a meaningless gesture, for "All your commandments are faith" (Psalms 119:86) . If you are strong in your faith, you will eventually come to understand what you believe in. The stronger your faith, the greater your understanding will become. At the outset you have no option but to have faith, because you cannot understand the matter, but through faith you will come to understand it. There will then be new, more exalted levels that will still be hidden from you and beyond your ability to understand. Here again you will have to make the effort to believe. You must always start with faith regarding the levels that are as yet hidden from you, but eventually you will understand them as well. This is an ongoing process. Your faith must be so strong that it spreads to every one of your limbs. This faith will bring you to true wisdom. Likutey Moharan I, 91

### III

Faith in God, not in the means Many people make the mistake of turning the means through which something comes about into an intermediary between themselves and God. They do believe in God, but they also believe in the intermediary, saying that we have no option but to depend upon a particular means in order to bring about a certain result. For example, they put their faith in their business activities as the cause of their livelihood, placing all the emphasis on their own endeavors as if God would somehow not be able to provide their livelihood without them. Likewise people put all the emphasis on the means through which a cure comes about - the medicine - as if without medicine God does not have the power to heal. That is not so. The Holy One, blessed be He, is the Cause of all causes, and there is absolutely no need for any one particular means. Even while resorting to a given means to try to bring something about, we must believe only in God, and not put our faith in the means. Likutey Moharan I, 62 \*\*\* Know it in your heart "Know this day and consider it in your heart that HaShem is God in

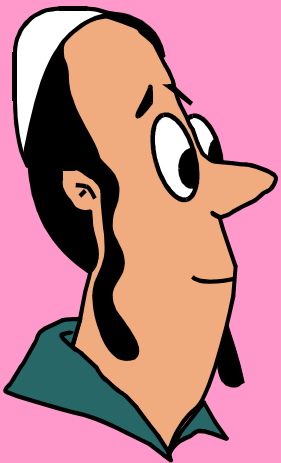


heaven above and on earth below; there is no other" (Deuteronomy 4:39) . The only way to know God is through complete faith. Only faith can bring you to true knowledge and perception of God's greatness: "And I will betroth you to Me with faith , and you shall know God ! " (Hosea 2:22) . Many passages tell us to know God: "Know this day and consider it in your heart ... " (Deuteronomy 4:39) . "Know the God of your father" (I Chronicles 28:9) . "Know that HaShem is God" (Psalms 100:3) . These verses teach us to know and be mindful of God's presence at all times and not to forget Him for a moment. Great kings constantly remind their subjects that they have a ruler. Soldiers in particular are trained to know who their king and master is - "In order that His fear should be on their faces" (Exodus 20:17) - so that they should serve their master unconditionally . Subordinates are constantly told, "Know that you have a lord and master." The intention is that they should keep this in mind and never forget it, in order not to do anything against his will. The same is true of the Kingdom of Heaven . We are told: "Know the God of your father!" Know it and don't ever forget it! "Know this day and consider it in your heart, that HaShem is God!" "Know that HaShem is God!" We need to be reminded time and time again. Everyone knows in general terms that "HaShem is God" . However, the distractions and temptations of this vain world cause many to forget it much of the time. This is why the Torah reminds us: "Know that HaShem is God!" "Know the God of your father!" That is to say: Bring this knowledge deep within yourself until it is bound tightly in your mind and heart at all times. This is the meaning of "Know this day and consider it in your heart that HaShem is God." Perfect knowledge is when you bind your mind to your heart so that you know in your heart that "HaShem is God." When you bring this knowledge into your heart, you will be filled with deep awe, fear and reverence of God and you will not sin. Each person's knowledge and awareness of God are unique to himself according to the horizons of his heart. Our basic knowledge of God derives from what we have been taught by our holy forefathers, who struggled all their lives to divest themselves of all material attachments. They conquered all their negative traits and desires, releasing themselves from



the root of evil. This was how they came to true recognition and understanding of their Creator. They have left this good heritage to us and our duty is to accept it with the utmost joy. "Happy are we! How good is our portion! How pleasant is our lot! How beautiful is our heritage!" (Morning Prayers) . When the Torah tells us to "know" God, it is teaching us to bring this holy knowledge into our minds and thoughts and bind it in our hearts constantly at all times in order that "His fear will be upon our faces so that we will not sin" (Exodus 20:17) . Sichot Haran #217 \*\*\* The good life The non-believers have no life even in this world. As soon as things go against them, and certainly when trouble strikes, they simply have nowhere to turn. Since they attribute everything to nature, they are left with nothing to fortify them. But one who has faith and believes in God has a very good life. Even when trouble strikes, he can still fortify himself with his trust in God, because he knows that everything is for the best. Either this suffering will cleanse him of his sins or eventually bring him some great benefit. For God's intention is certainly for good. Therefore the man of faith always has a good life both in this world and the next. The non-believers, however, have no life either in this world or the next. Those who really know them see that they are always racked with suffering. They endure constant pain and anxiety because things never go exactly as they want. All their days are filled with pain and anger. In this world it is impossible for everything to go the way one wants it. Those who ignore the true, enduring purpose of life, satisfying only their material desires, are doomed to a life of constant pain and suffering without having any way to console themselves.

But if you have true faith, your main hope is in the world to come and you therefore have a very good life. Whatever happens to you, you have faith that everything is for good - whether it comes to remind you to repent or to atone for your sins so that you may be worthy of the everlasting good of the world to come. Your sins and wrongdoing may cause you great anguish. You may suffer the worst agonies of regret. Yet your very contrition over your sins actually increases your days and adds to your life, for "The fear of God increases one's days" (Proverbs 10:27 ) . You may experience great pain when you



regret your sins. You may feel deeply ashamed when contemplating God's exalted greatness. You may cringe in fear of punishment. Whatever form it takes, this suffering is caused by your very fear of God, and "The fear of God increases one's days." Your very pain and anxiety add to your days. If you are a person of faith, you will find it easier to repent. True repentance must balance the sin. You have to endure pain and suffering in equal measure to the enjoyment derived from the sin. Since you believe in God, you will never be able to have complete enjoyment from any sin because any wrong you do will be with mixed feelings and in the full knowledge that it will end bitterly. You know the bitter punishment for each sin, so that if you succumb to temptation you are filled with regrets even as you sin. It is therefore much easier for you to repent because you do not have to endure unbearable pangs of repentance since the pleasure from your sin was never very great. For the non-believers, however, repentance is more of a burden. Having suffered little pain or remorse at the time of the sin, they are obliged to suffer when they repent in order to balance the pleasure of the sin. Sicho Haran #102 \*\*\* The main thing is faith! The main thing is faith! Every person must search within himself and strengthen himself in faith. For there are people who suffer the worst illnesses and afflictions only because of fallen faith, because, "God will send you wondrous plagues, great and faithful plagues and great and faithful sicknesses" (Deuteronomy 28:59). The plagues and sicknesses are "faithful" because they come on account of a lack of faith. Fallen faith causes "wondrous" plagues, for which no medicine, prayer or ancestral merit is of any avail... The remedy is to dig down until we find the waters that nurture faith. These are the waters of counsel - the spiritual pathways that enable us to deepen our faith, as it is written, "I will acknowledge Your Name, for You have done wonders, [sending] counsels from afar, nurturing faith" (Isaiah 25:1). True spiritual counsel nurtures faith, enabling it to grow.

The cry from the heart True counsel springs from the depths of the heart. When the crisis of faith is so great that even wordless cries cannot help, one has to cry from the heart alone: "Their heart cried out to God" (Lamentations 2:18). The





heart alone cries without our letting out a sound. "From the depths I call out to God" (Psalms 130:1) - from the depths of the heart. And from the depths of the heart comes guidance, for "like deep waters, so is counsel in the heart of man" (Proverbs 20:5) . When shouts and screams no longer help because faith has collapsed, one must cry from the depths of the heart without letting out a sound. This is how true counsel is revealed, for "like deep waters, so is counsel in the heart of man." And through the true guidance and counsel that are revealed in the world (with each person knowing in his own heart what he must do) faith is able to grow, as it is written, "Counsels from afar, nurturing faith." Then everything can be rectified. For true counsel is a "wonder" - "I will acknowledge Your Name, for You have done wonders , counsels from afar...." This makes it possible to heal the " wondrous plagues" sent by God. Prayer also brings about "wonders", as it is written, "Awesome in praises [i.e. prayer], performing wonders " (Exodus 15:11 ) . The same is true of ancestral merit: "In front of their fathers He performed wonders " (Psalms 78:12) . Likutey Moharan II, 5 \*\*\* The Future Song The destined future renewal of the world will come about through faith. When the world is renewed in the future, it will be governed through wonders and providence alone in a way that transcends nature. For the future renewal of the world will come about through the land of Israel , which in its very essence depends on "the power of His works" (Psalms 111:6; see Rashi on Genesis 1:1) - namely, knowing that God created the world. And in the future the Holy One, blessed be He, will renew the entire world through the land of Israel , for then it will be revealed that God created everything. The essential holiness of the land of Israel lies in the fact that His providence is there all the time: "Constantly the eyes of HaShem your God are upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12 ) . And in time to come, when He renews the entire world through the land of Israel , the entire world will be governed through providence alone, just like the land of Israel . Nature will then be totally nullified and the world will be governed through providence and wonders alone, not according to nature. A new song will then be aroused: "Sing to God a new song, for He has performed





wonders" (Psalms 98:1) . This is the song of the future - the song of providence and wonders. For then the world will be governed through providence and wonders. There is a song of nature: " The heavens tell the glory of God and the firmament relates the work of His hands" (Psalms 19: 2 ) . This is the song and melody of nature praising the span of the heavens. These are the songs and praises we offer to God over the present order, whereby He governs the world through nature. In the future, however, a new song of providence and wonders will be aroused, for the world will then be governed through providence alone. This new song of the future is the Single, Double, Triple and Quadruple song of Kindness through which the future renewal of the world will come about, as it is written: "The world shall be built with kindness" ( Psalms 89:3) . Likutey Moharan II, 8

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