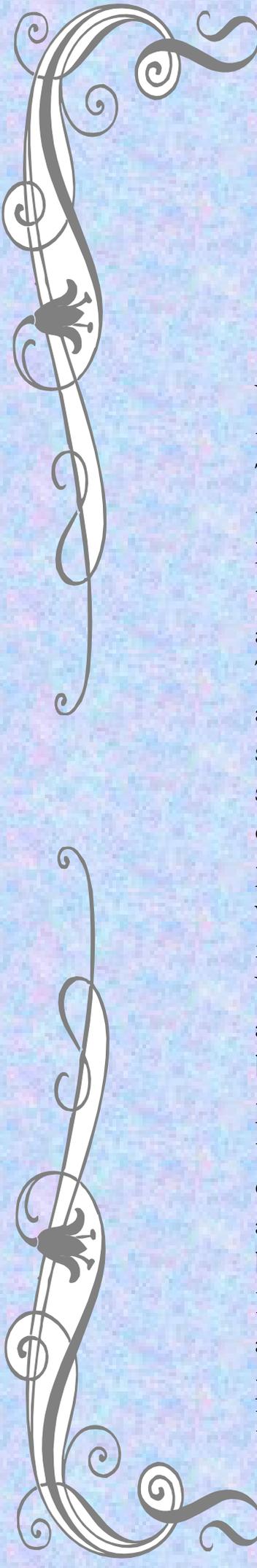


ESSENTIAL

RABBI NA'HMAN

15

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



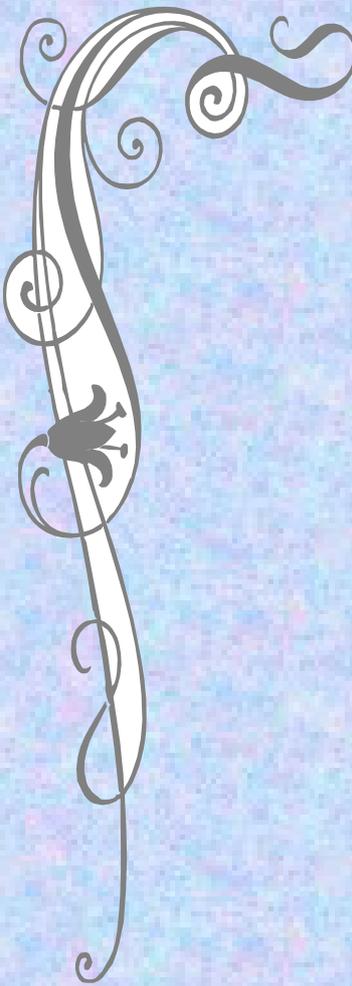
*ESSENTIAL*  
*RABBI NA'HMAN*

15

I

**Efforts are counted as sacrifices**

When people seek to purify themselves and keep the Torah, they often feel overwhelmed with confusion and frustration. They encounter great obstacles in their path and they are uncertain what to do. The more they want to serve God, the harder it seems. Know that all your efforts to do the right thing are very precious in God's eyes even if you do not achieve your goal. All your efforts are counted as sacrifices. Trying to pray is like offering a sacrifice. "For Your sake we are killed every day, we are counted like sheep for the slaughter" (Psalms 44:23) . This verse speaks of prayer as a sacrifice. When a person wants to pray, he encounters many distractions. Even so, he gives himself over completely to his prayers, making every effort to focus all his thoughts on the words he is saying and their meaning. Even if his prayers are not perfect, his very efforts are a sacrifice, as it says: "For Your sake we are killed every day." The same applies to all acts of service of God. You may desire to perfect yourself but find you cannot do so completely. Even so, all your pain and efforts are not wasted. They all count as offerings to God: "For Your sake we are killed every day, we are counted like sheep for the slaughter." You should therefore always do your part and make every effort to serve God as best as you can. What is up to you, do with all your might. Keep trying even if all your efforts seem to be frustrated and all your attempts seem to be in vain. Do everything in your power and God will do what is good in His eyes. Sichot Haran #12



## II

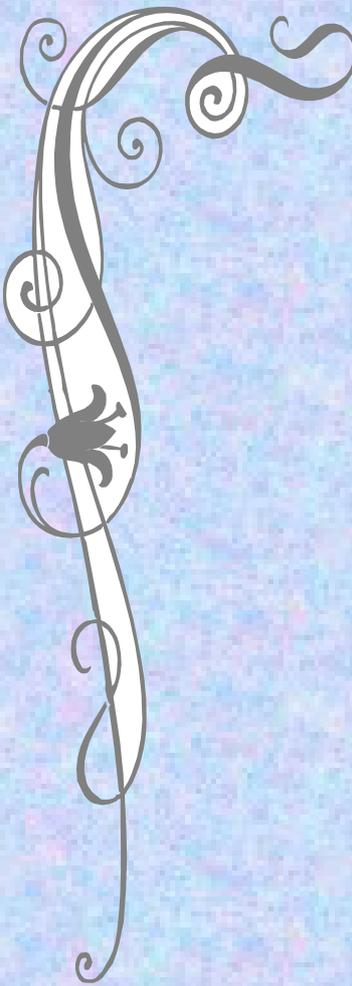
The ways of Teshuvah:

Two skills "The living creatures were running and returning " (Ezekiel 1:14). If you want to follow the ways of Teshuvah and return to God, you need to acquire two different skills: the first is the ability to "run forward" at times of spiritual ascent; the second is the knowledge of how to "return" when you encounter a setback . These two skills correspond to how the angels in the prophetic vision were " running and returning " (Ezekiel 1:14). Whether you feel you are advancing or not, or even if you feel you are sliding backwards, always stay strong and follow King David's teaching: "If I ascend to heaven , You are there, and if I make hell my bed, behold You are there" (Psalms 139:8) . "If I ascend to heaven." If you succeed in rising to some high level, don't stay there and content yourself with what you have achieved. You must have the skill to understand and believe that you are obliged to advance even further. This is the skill of "running forward": "If I ascend to heaven, You are there!" Conversely, even if you fall in some way, never give up hope. Seek out and entreat God constantly and strengthen yourself as best you can in the place where you find yourself. God is present even in the depths of hell. Even there you can attach yourself to God: ".and if I make hell my bed, behold You are there!" This is the skill of "returning". Only through the acquisition of these two skills can you go in the ways of Teshuvah. Likutey Moharan I, 6

## III

### The purpose of falling - to go higher

When the time comes for a person to rise from one level to the next, he must first experience a fall. The whole purpose of the fall is to prepare for the ascent. Try to understand this and you will realize how determined you must be in order to serve God. No matter how far you fall, never allow yourself to be discouraged. Remain firm and resolute and pay no attention to the fall at all,



because in the end it will be transformed into a great ascent. This is its whole purpose. This applies to all the different ways one can fall. Each person always thinks that his own situation is so bad that this does not apply to him. People imagine it applies only to those on very exalted levels who are continually advancing from level to level. But you should realize that it holds true even for those on the lowest of levels, because God is good to all. Likutey Moharan I, 22

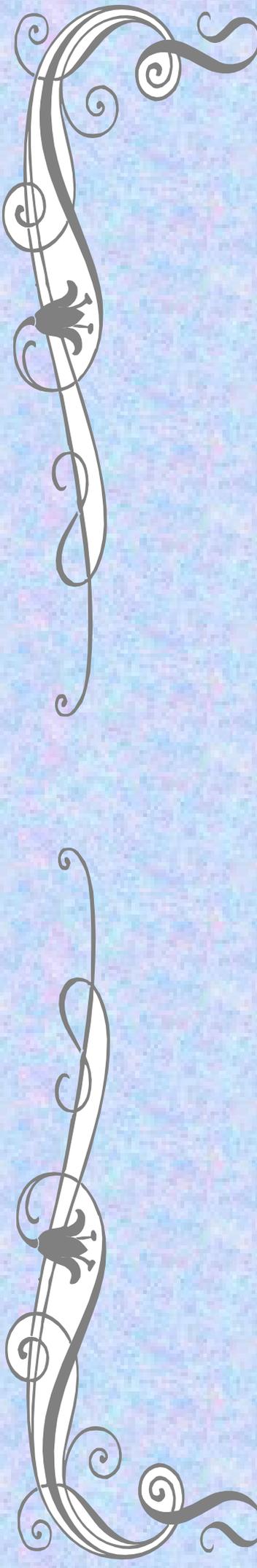
#### IV

Each time a person emerges from one level in order to rise to the next, the unholy forces attack him again in the form of desires and fantasies, strange thoughts, mental confusion, distractions and all kinds of other obstacles. They stand in array against him, refusing to let him enter the gates of holiness. Many sincere people become highly discouraged when they find themselves suddenly confronted by all these desires and obstacles. They start to think that they must have fallen from their previous level because for some time they have not experienced them with the same intensity - since they were dormant. When this happens, you must understand that what you are experiencing is not a fall. The time has come for you to advance from one level to the next. This is why these same old desires and obstacles have reared their heads again. Whenever this happens, it takes great strength and courage not to lose hope but to overcome all the desires and obstacles again. Likutey Moharan I, 25

#### V

##### **Starting again**

When a person falls from his level he should know that this is sent from Heaven. The purpose of the apparent rejection is to draw him closer. The reason for the fall is to spur the person to make even greater efforts to draw closer to God. The thing to do is to make an entirely new start. Start serving God as if you had never started in your whole life. This is one of the most basic principles



of serving God. We must literally begin all over again every day.  
Likutey Moharan I, 261

## VI

One of the great rules in serving God is: Never allow yourself to fall completely. Even if you feel you have failed in some devotion or prayed without proper attention or fallen in some other way, you must still try to keep as strong as you can and make a whole new start. Act as if today you are only beginning to serve God. No matter how many times you fall, pick yourself up and start again. Do this over and over again. Otherwise you will never come close to God. Pull yourself to God with all your strength, regardless of whether you go up or down. No matter how low you fall, make a determined effort to yearn and long to draw closer to God. Cry out, pray and plead with God! Keep trying to do whatever you can to serve God with joy. Without this inner determination, you will never be able truly to approach God. Keep on trying and trying until you are unable to do anything but serve God at all times every day of your life, even without any guarantee of a reward. Sometimes you may think you are so far from God that you will have no reward in the world to come. Even so, you must be willing to serve Him as best as you can even without a reward. Even if you think you are bound to go to hell, you must still do your part in serving God as best as you can. Grab a mitzvah! Learn some Torah! Say a prayer. and God will do what is good in His eyes. It is impossible to come to true service of God without facing all these trials. Every time you fall, you must make a determined effort to pick yourself up and start all over again - even many times each day - until eventually you will advance steadily in God's ways. Amen. Sichot Haran #48

*Shabbat Shalom*