

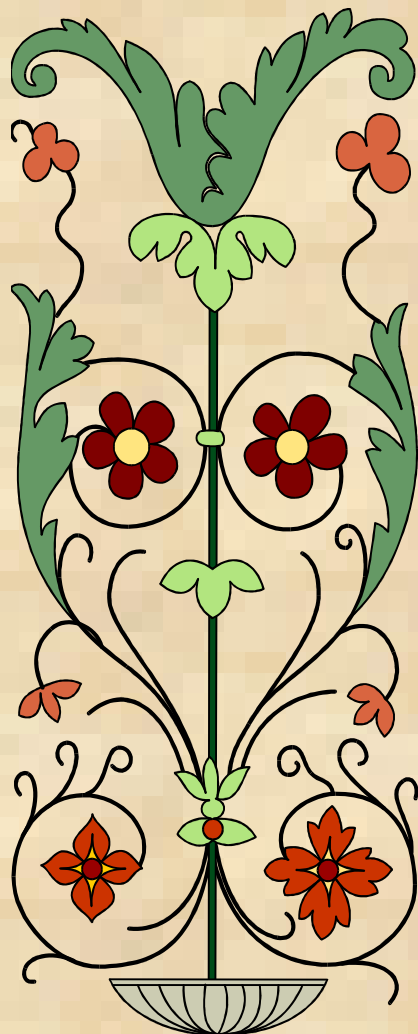
ESSENTIAL

RABBIS

NA'HMAN

4

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



I

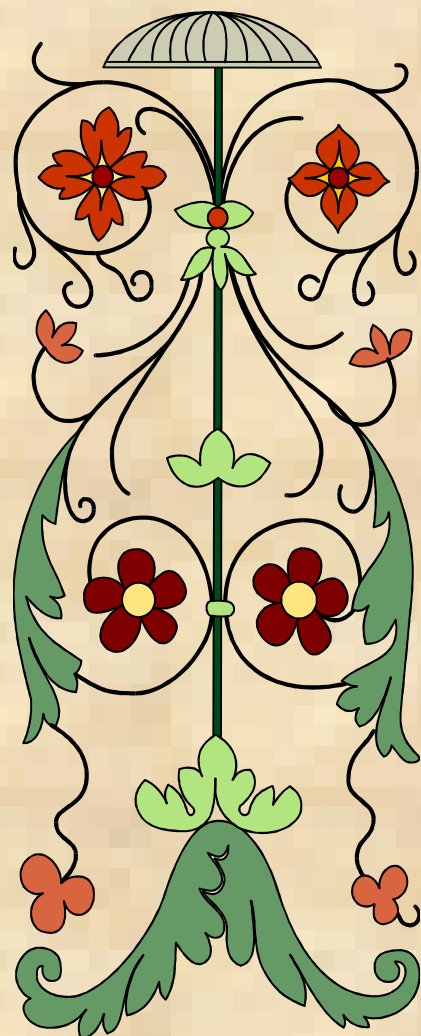
SIMPLICITY

No sophistication is needed in serving God - only simplicity, sincerity and faith. Simplicity is higher than all else. For God is certainly higher than everything else, and God is ultimately simple! Sichot Haran #101

II

The greatest wisdom is not to be wise

Even after all the wisdom and sophistication - even if you possess true wisdom - you must cast aside all wisdom and sophistication and serve God with complete innocence and simplicity, with no sophistication whatever. The greatest wisdom of all is not to be wise at all. The truth is that no-one in the world is wise, for "there is no wisdom and no understanding . before God" (Proverbs 21:30) . The main thing God wants is the heart. Likutey Moharan II, 44

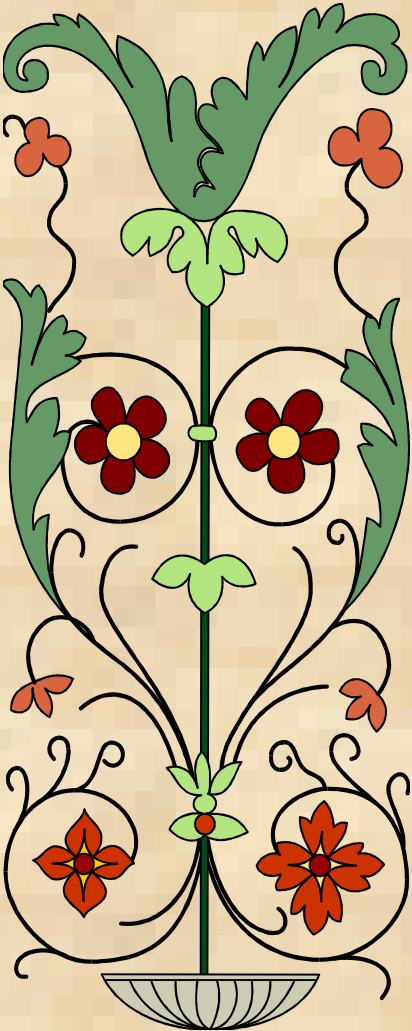


III

The King's beloved child

Throw aside all wisdom and clever ideas and serve God with simplicity. Make sure that your deeds are greater than your wisdom, because the main thing is not study but its practical application. This obviously applies to most ordinary people's clever ideas, which are mere folly, but it even applies to genuine wisdom. When it comes to serving God, even a person whose head is filled with genuine wisdom should set it all aside and serve God simply and innocently.

Sometimes it may even be necessary to behave in a way that seems foolish in order to serve God and carry out His will. We may have to roll around in mud and mire for the sake of serving God and keeping His commandments. This applies not only to explicit mitzvot. Anything that God wants us to do is also called a mitzvah. Sometimes one has to throw oneself into the very mud and mire to perform a certain deed that will be pleasing to God. One whose love of God is



sufficiently strong becomes His dearly beloved child. God will show him abundant love and kindness, permitting him to explore the King's hidden store-chambers and even to understand what is beyond wisdom, including the deepest of all secrets, such as why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper Likutey Moharan II, 5

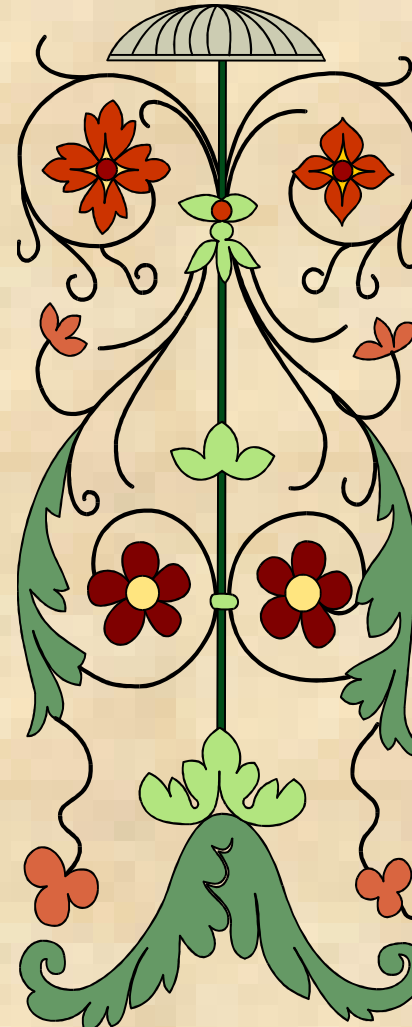
IV

The essence of Judaism

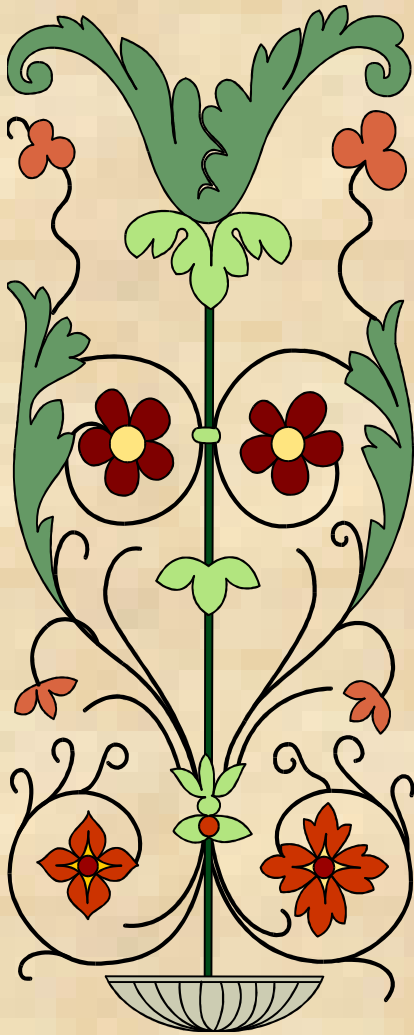
When a person follows his own mind and clever ideas, he can fall into many pitfalls and errors and come to great evil. Tremendous damage has been caused by such people, like the infamous great villains who, through their intelligence and cunning, have led the entire world astray. The essence of Judaism is to conduct oneself in pure innocence and simplicity, with no sophistication whatever. Make sure that whatever you do, God is there. Don't heed your own honor. If it enhances God's glory, do it. If not, then don't. This way, you can be certain you will never stumble. Be careful to act with true innocence and simplicity but not foolishly. Sophistication, however, is quite unnecessary. Simplicity, innocence and faith can bring you to the highest level of joy. Likutey Moharan II, 12

V

Don't be too stringent



Don't follow excessive stringencies in your practice of the Torah. "God does not rule over His creatures with tyranny" (Avodah Zarah 3a) - "The Torah was not given to ministering angels" (Berachot 25b). Our rabbis have taught that it is proper for each person to choose for himself one mitzvah to observe with particular care in all its fine details (Shabbat 118b). Yet even with your chosen mitzvah, you should not be excessively strict to the point of folly. Don't let it make you depressed. Simply try to keep the mitzvah carefully in all its finer points, but without excessive punctiliousness.



As for the other mitzvot, simply follow the essential laws without adding extra stringencies. If only we could keep all the mitzvot of the Torah according to the simple interpretation of the law without seeking to go beyond it! There is no need to look for extra stringencies: this is foolish and confusing. The essence of serving God is simplicity and sincerity. Pray much, study much Torah and carry out many good deeds without seeking out or inventing unnecessary restrictions. Simply follow the path of our forefathers. "The Torah was not given to ministering angels." There is nothing that you absolutely must do or else. If you can, you can. But if you cannot: "God exempts a person under duress" (Bava Kama 28b) . Sichot Haran #235

VI JOY

It is a great mitzvah to be happy always!

Make every effort to maintain a happy, positive outlook at all times. It is a natural human tendency to become discouraged and depressed because of the hardships of life: everyone has their full share of suffering. That is why you must force yourself to be happy at all times. Use every possible way to bring yourself to joy, even by joking or acting a little crazy! Likutey Moharan II, 24

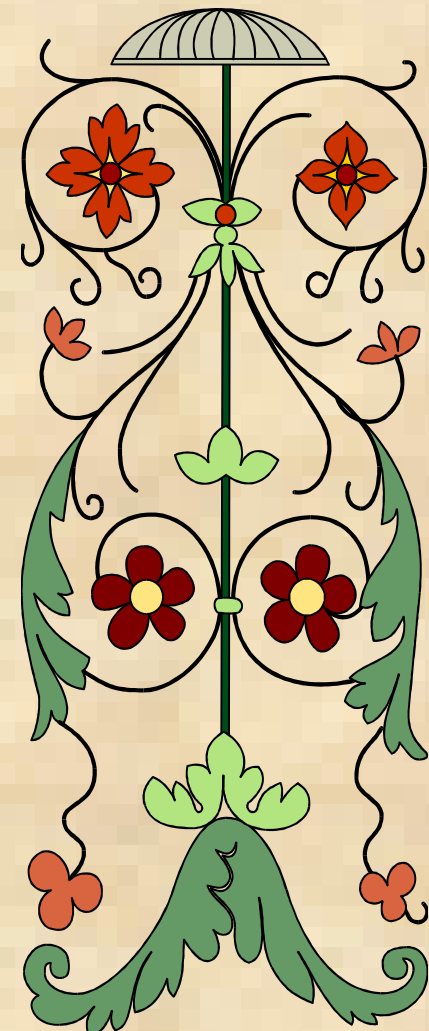
VII

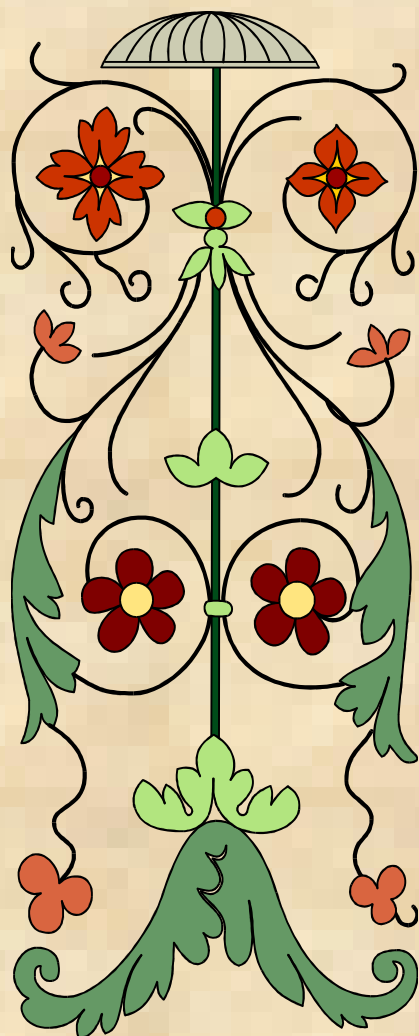
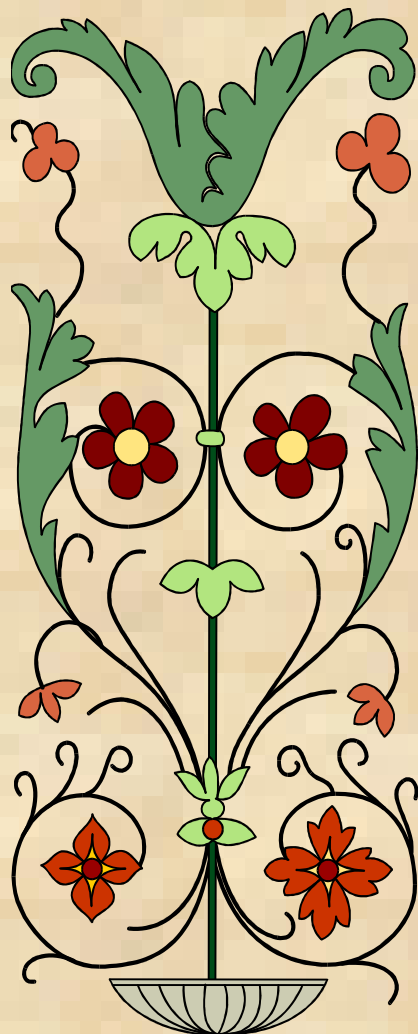
If you are happy, the whole world benefits . Netiv Tzaddik 71

VIII

A happy front

Even if you are upset and unhappy, you can at least put on a happy front. At first you may not feel genuinely happy in your heart. Even so, if you act happy you will eventually attain true happiness and joy. Sichot Haran #74





IX

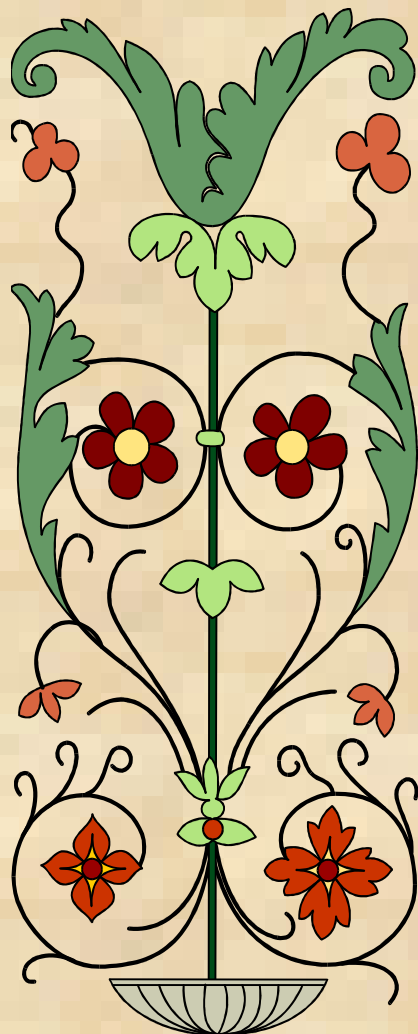
Good humor

Having a sense of humor is good on three conditions: 1. You do not insult others. 2. You are not vulgar. 3. You do not present yourself in a good light to the detriment of others. Siach Sarfey Kodesh 1-13

X

Finding the good points

You must search for the good in yourself. When you start looking deep within yourself, you may think there is no good in you at all. You may feel you are full of evil: a negative voice inside you may try to drive you into depression. But you must not allow yourself to fall into depression. Search until you find some little good in you. For how could it be that you never did anything good in your whole life? When you start to examine the good you have done, you may see many flaws. Maybe you did what you did for the wrong reasons and with the wrong attitude. Even so, how could it be that your mitzvah or good deed contains no good at all? It must contain some element of good. You must search and search until you find some good point within you to give you new life and happiness. When you discover the good that is still inside you, you literally swing the scales from guilt to merit. This will enable you to return to God. The good you find inside you will give you new life and bring joy to your soul. Having found one good point, you must continue searching until you find another. Even if you think this good point is also full of flaws, you must still search for some good in it. In the same way, you must continue finding more and more good points. This is how songs are made in essence, music is made by sifting the good from the bad. The musician has to find the "good spirit" - the good air - and reject the bad. A musical instrument is a vessel containing air. The musician produces the sounds by causing the air to vibrate. His task is to move his hands on the instrument in such a way as to produce good spirit, "good vibrations", while avoiding the "bad vibrations" - the dissonant winds of gloom and depression. When a person



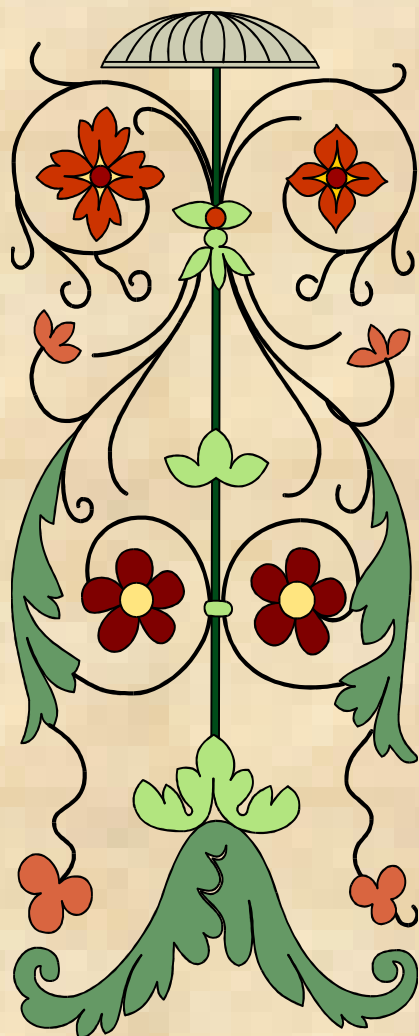
refuses to allow himself to fall into despair but instead vitalizes himself by seeking out and gathering together his positive points, this produces melodies, and he can then pray, sing and give thanks to God. When a person recognizes the wrong he has done and how grossly materialistic and impure he is, he can become so depressed that he is completely incapable of praying. He simply cannot open his mouth to God. This is because of the deep sorrow and heaviness that overcome him when he sees his overwhelming distance from God.

But finding your good points can give you new life. Even if you know you have done wrong and caused damage and that you are far from God, you must search until you find the good that is still inside you. This will give you new life and make you truly happy. You are certainly entitled to feel the greatest joy over every good point you find in yourself, because each good point comes from the holy soul within you. The new life and joy you will gain from this path will enable you to pray, sing and give thanks to God. Likutey Moharan I, 282

XI

True humility

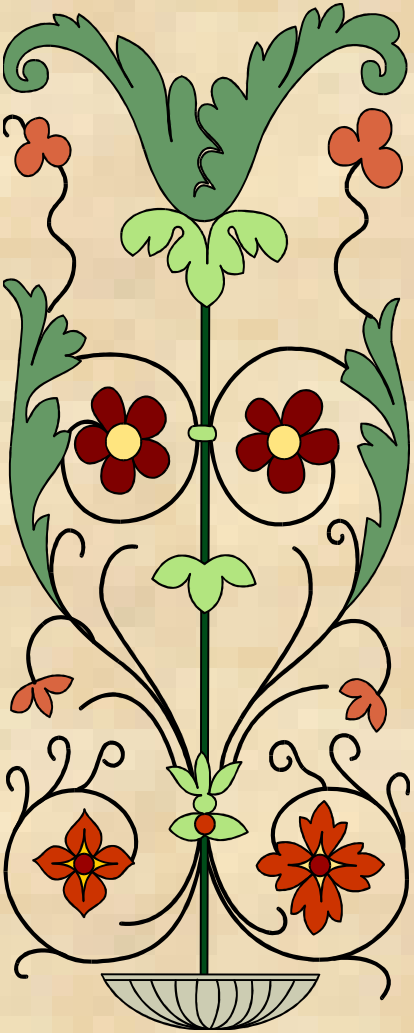
A person should never let his own smallness insignificance and humility cover up his true greatness. For sometimes a person downgrades himself to excess and forgets that he still has many amazing attributes. Siach Sarfey Kodesh 1-34



XII

A settled mind

The main reason why people are far from God is because their minds are not settled and they do not pause to consider the purpose of their existence. But when a person is happy, his mind becomes settled and he is able to understand things clearly. Someone who is anxious and depressed finds it impossible to direct his thoughts where he wants. It is hard for him to calm and settle his mind. Only when a person is happy can he direct his thoughts wherever he wants and settle his mind. Joy is the world of freedom - "for you shall go out with



joy " (Isaiah 55:12) . Through joy we become free and leave our exile. When a person maintains a happy, joyous attitude, his mind and thoughts become free and he is no longer in exile. He can then direct his thoughts as he wants and settle his mind so as to focus on his goal and draw close to God. Likutey Moharan II, 10

XIII

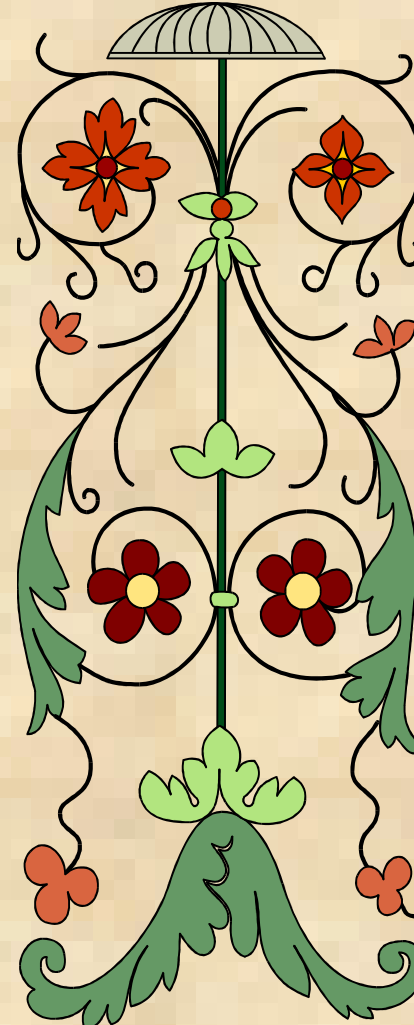
Join the dance

Sometimes a group of people happily dancing together take hold of someone who is standing miserable and depressed on the outside. They pull him into the dance circle despite himself, forcing him to rejoice with them.

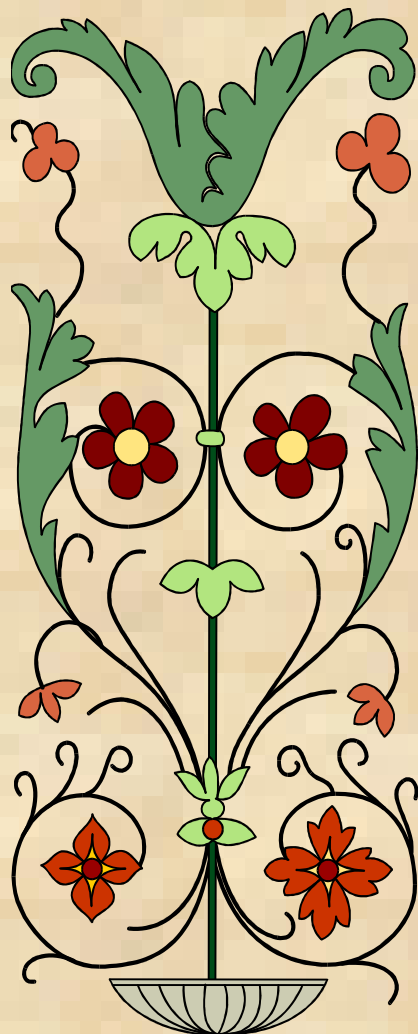
Similarly, when a person is happy, his pain and sadness may move to the sidelines . But a higher level is to pursue the sadness itself and "pull it into the dance circle," turning it into joy. If you truly set your mind to it, you will find that even amidst your worst troubles and suffering there is always a way you can turn all your sadness into joy. True joy is when you forcibly transform your very sadness and depression into happiness. Likutey Moharan II, 23

XIV

The difference between brokenheartedness and depression



Having a broken heart and being depressed are two quite different things. Depression is rooted in the unholy "other side" and God hates it. But being brokenhearted and contrite over one's sins and shortcomings is very dear and precious to God. It would be very good to be brokenhearted all day. But this could easily throw most people into gloom and depression. You should therefore set aside some time each day for heartbreak. Seclude yourself with God for a given time and break your heart with regret over your sins. Then be happy for the rest of the day. Sichot Haran #41



XV

Being gloomy and depressed is like being angry with God for not satisfying one's desires. But someone with a broken heart is like a small child pleading with his father or crying out and complaining to him for being distant. Sichot Haran #42

XVI

After heartbreak comes joy

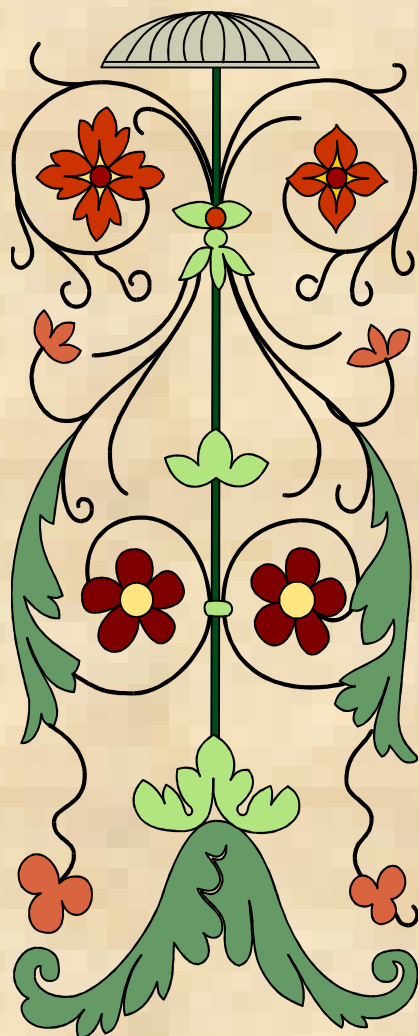
Being happy later on is a true sign of having a broken heart. Sichot Haran #45

XVII

Hold onto the good times

You should always try to be happy and serve God with joy, and even if you sometimes fall short of your level, you can still encourage yourself by thinking of earlier times when you did have a taste of the light.

A number of blind people can all take hold of one sighted person and follow him trustingly. A blind man trusts his stick and follows it even though he sees nothing. How much more should you follow your own self - because the light did shine on you previously, arousing and inspiring you to serve God. Maybe you feel you have fallen and that your eyes and heart are closed. Even so, you should still hold onto those earlier days. Just as you were aroused and encouraged to serve God then, strengthen yourself now by following the sense of arousal you felt then. God will soon help you and His light will shine on you again. Likutey Moharan I, 222



שבת שלום

וחג פסח כשר ושמח