A translation of selected writings of Rebbe Na<sup>\*</sup>hman \* and his main disciple Rav Nosson

ESSENTIAL

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If you know how Speech has tremendous power. If you know how, you can even whisper to a gun so that it cannot shoot. Likutey Moharan II, 96

# II

## PRAYER

Prayer is the root of all attachment and devotion to God. Prayer is the gate through which we approach God, and through prayer we may come to know Him. Likutey Moharan II, 84

#### III

### Prayer helps for everything

Prayer helps for everything. Even if a person is unable to study Torah, he will be able to do so if he prays for it. Everything good can be attained through prayer: Torah, devotion, holiness... everything good in all the worlds! Amen. Likutey Moharan II, 111

#### IV

#### "The world was created for me"

"Every person must say: The whole world was created for me" (Sanhedrin 37a). If the world was created for me, it is therefore my constant obligation to examine and consider what is needed to repair the world and provide everyone's needs, and to pray for them. Likutey Moharan 1, 5 Be bold The secret of prayer is to be bold. We must have the audacity to ask God for everything we need even if we need to ask Him to work miracles for us. Only with boldness and daring can we stand up and pray to God.

When we consider God's utter greatness - if we can form any conception of it at all - and think of our own smallness and worthlessness, how can we stand up and pray before Him? Even so, when we pray, we must cast our timidity aside and boldly ask God for everything we need. Only with bold assertiveness can we overcome the obstacles and barriers that stand in the way of our service of God. Likutey Moharan I, 30

## V

## Never insist

Never insist on anything in your prayers. Ask for what you want as a request. If God grants it, He will grant it. And if not, then not! Regardless of what you need - livelihood, children or anything else - it is

forbidden to insist stubbornly that God should fulfil exactly what you are asking for, because this is like taking something by force: it is a kind of robbery. Just pray and entreat God for kindness and mercy. Likutey Moharan I, 20 & 196

## VI

## God's kindness

God does us a great kindness by allowing us to use human terms when addressing Him in prayer and by answering our requests. If it were not for His kindness, it would be completely inappropriate to address Him with names, descriptions and praises consisting of mere words and letters. The fact that we are able to do so is all due to God's kindness. The realization that, although God is exalted beyond all human titles and praises, He permits us to address Him in human terms in order to bind ourselves to Him, should be sufficient to inspire us to pray with fervor and passion. This is a sign of His great love and tender mercy. We should therefore at least be sincere when we address Him this way, since it is only through His love and mercy that we are able to do so at all. Likutey Moharan I, 15

#### VII

## You must force yourself to pray

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Pray with great strength, putting all your power into the words of your prayers. You must force yourself to pray. Some people say that a person should not force himself to pray, but the opposite is true. You must force yourself to put all your strength into your prayers.

#### VIII

True devotion is to bind the thought to the word, focusing your mind on the words of the prayers by listening and paying careful attention to what you are saying. This way your inner power will enter your prayers automatically. All your inner power waits for the moment when it is drawn into words of holiness. When you focus your thoughts on what you are saying, this power rushes forth into the words. Simply pay attention to the words and your inner power will enter your prayers without your having to force it. Sichot Haran #66

> IX Working yourself up

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Sometimes you may feel no enthusiasm during your prayers. You should then act as if you feel enthusiasm, making your heart burn with the words of the prayers. This is similar to the way a person can work himself up into such a temper that he actually becomes angry. People then say, "He's making himself angry . " Sometimes when you pray, you must likewise work yourself up into a passion. You must force yourself to put fire and emotion into the words. Eventually the enthusiasm will become real: your heart will burn for God and you will pray with genuine fervor. Sichot Haran #74

## X

#### Leaping into Gan Eden

People say one should pray quietly as if standing before a king. But I say, pray with cries and handclapping. This is the way to leap into Gan Eden with joy! Tovot Zichronot p. 107

## XI

#### Pray early

It is best to pray early in the morning. Prayer is of supreme importance who knows if you will be able to pray later? Make every effort to pray as early as you possibly can. Sichot Haran #31

#### XII

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## Nusach : Styles of prayer

Chassidus is not associated with any specific style of prayer. One can be a Chassid and pray in Nusach Ashkenaz. Siach Sarfey Kodesh 1-90

#### XIII

## Finding yourself in the words

When reciting Psalms and prayers, make sure you find yourself in everything you say. It is simple and easy to find yourself in all your prayers: you don't need to be clever. The Psalms in particular were written for the entire community of Israel and for each and every individual. All of a person's internal wars and struggles and everything else he endures are all expressed in the Psalms , which mainly relate to the war against the evil urge and its forces. These are the main enemies seeking to keep a person from the path of life and drag him down to the deepest hell if he is not on guard against them. The entire Book of Psalms is about this war. The foundation of all the different pathways to God lies in reciting Psalms and other supplications and offering our own personal prayers from the heart, entreating Him to draw us closer to His service. This is the only way to win the war. Happy is the man who persistently prays and entreats God at all times and in all situations, because he will certainly win the war. Much good advice exists about different ways of coming closer to God, but in most cases it is very hard to carry out the actual advice. Therefore the main thing is prayer and supplication. Regardless of who you are or the circumstances in which you find yourself, always try to offer some prayer and request to God to take you from darkness to light and bring you to complete repentance. Give Him no quiet until He answers you. Even if you cry to God for a very long time and He still seems very far away, if you are persistent in your prayers, He will certainly answer you eventually and draw you to His service. Likutey Moharan II, 101

#### XIV

#### The galbanum

Even if you consider yourself a sinner, you must still keep firm and make every effort to pray. Tell yourself: Maybe I am far from God because of all my sins. Yet if so, there can be no perfect prayer without me. Didn't the Rabbis teach that "every prayer that does not include the sinners of Israel is not a true prayer" (Keritot 6a). This is because prayer is like an incense offering, and the Torah requires that the incense must contain galbanum even though , by itself, it has a foul smell.

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Therefore even though I consider myself a sinner, I am an essential ingredient in the prayers and the service cannot be complete without me. If I am a sinner, I must strengthen myself all the more to pray to God. I must have trust that in His mercy He will accept my prayer, since the perfection of the prayer depends on me - the the galbanum in the incense. Just as the foul-smelling galbanum is a vital ingredient in the incense, so too my tainted prayer is a vital ingredient in the prayers of all Israel. Without it, they will not be complete. Sichot Haran #295

#### **XVI**

#### The difference between spiritual and physical work

The greatest of all religious devotions is still easier than making a living and trying to acquire worldly possessions! How much effort a merchant devotes to getting to the market on time! The moment Shabbat is over, he starts getting busy. First he has to find a wagon. Next he must hurry and load up his wares. Then he has to travel through the night, driving sleep from his eyes and breaking his whole body as he sits on top of the loaded wagon. After all this, he has to stand on his feet for the whole day in the freezing cold... The merchant has to endure all this hardship and discomfort for the sake of a mere possibility: perhaps he will make a profit! He might equally well lose everything including his expenses, which is what usually happens. To make a living in this world, people go to the greatest lengths, enduring extreme hardship - all because of the slender hope that they might make a smallprof it. The greatest possible religious devotion is prayer. And yet, when we stand up to pray, we pray and we manage to complete the prayer!!! Chayey Moharan #558

#### **XVII**

#### Gathering flowers

When a person stands in prayer, reciting the words of the prayers, he is gathering beautiful flowers and blossoms, like someone walking in a meadow picking lovely flowers and blossoms one by one until they make a bunch. Then he picks more, one by one, until they make another bunch, and he puts them together. So he goes on, picking and gathering more and more lovely bouquets. So it is in prayer: one goes from letter to letter, until several letters are joined together to make a syllable. One does the same to make whole words. Then one joins together two words, and goes on, picking and gathering, until one completes a whole blessing. Then one goes on picking more and more, and passes from the first blessing of the Amidah prayer - the blessing of the fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - to the second, which speaks of God's might. One then proceeds to the third blessing, which speaks of His holiness, and so on. Who can adequately praise the great splendor of the gleanings and gatherings one makes with the words of the prayer? When speech comes forth, it comes from the soul. The utterance comes forth and is heard by the ears, for "you must let your ears hear what you bring forth from your mouth" (Berachot 15). The utterance then begs and pleads with the soul not to leave it behind. As soon as the first letter comes forth - the Beit of the word Baruch , "Blessed" (opening word of the Amidah prayer) - the letter begs and pleads with the soul not to part from it. The letter says to the soul: "How could you allow yourself to become separated from me, considering the great bond of love between us? See my precious beauty, my radiance, my splendor and glory! How could you tear yourself away from me and leave me? True, you have to continue with the prayer and gather more precious treasures and delights.

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But how can you separate yourself from me and forget me? At least see to it that, wherever you go afterwards, you never forget me or become cut off from me." All the more so when one finishes a whole word: the word pleads and entreats in the same manner, caressing and embracing the soul, refusing to let the soul move on. Yet the truth is that one must go on: there are many more words to be said and many more blessings and prayers to be recited before the conclusion of the service. The solution is to make the whole prayer into one - to make it into a single unity, so that each individual utterance contains all the utterances making up the whole prayer. From the beginning of the prayer to the end it should all be one, so that when you reach the very last word of the prayer you will still be standing at the very first word of the prayer. This way you can pray the entire prayer and never be separated from even the first letter of the prayer. Likutey Moharan I, 65

#### **XVIII**

#### Shining truth into the darkness

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"The wicked walk on every side" (Psalms 12 :9) . This means that the unholy surrounds the holy, because "God made the one corresponding to the other" (Ecclesiastes 7:14). This applies especially to someone who has already succumbed to the temptation to sin and is so attracted to the unholy that this is where his place is, God forbid. "The wicked" - in the form of strange thoughts, feelings and temptations - have this person surrounded "on every side." When such a person experiences a spiritual arousal and wants to return to God, he finds it very difficult to pray and express himself to God because of all the strange thoughts and feelings surrounding him on every side. Each person experiences this in his own way. One finds it impossible to bring out the words before God with the proper reverence, love and vitality. None of one's words and prayers are able to penetrate the screens and barriers separating one from God, and they remain down below. Only when a person repents with genuine honesty and sincerity will he be able to express himself acceptably with words of reverence and love springing from the depths of a heart truly aroused. Then his radiant words will break through all the barriers and coverings. And with them all the words and prayers that remained below until now will also ascend. How does one achieve this? The key is through truth, and everything else depends on this. You must follow the path of truth - on your own level. For, "The seal of the Holy One, blessed be He, is truth!" (Shabbat 55a, Yoma 69b). Truth is the foundation of everything from beginning to end. Truth is the head, the

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מעוצב:צבע גופן: אדום כהה, גופן עבור עברית ושפות אחרות: 18 נק'

מעוצב:גופן: 3 נק', צבע גופן: אדום כהה, גופן עבור עברית ושפות אחרות: 3 נק'

מעוצב:גופן: 1 נק', צבע גופן: אדום כהה, גופן עבור עברית ושפות אחרות: 6 נק'

מעוצב:גופן: Black Arial, מודגש, צבע גופן: אדום כהה, גופן עבור עברית ושפות אחרות: 26 נק', מודגש

מעוצב:גופן: Black Arial, צבע גופן: אדום כהה, גופן עבור עברית ושפות אחרות: 10 נק'

מעוצב:גופן: Black Arial, נטוי, צבע גופן: אדום כהה, גופן עבור עברית ושפות אחרות: 16 נק', נטוי

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middle and end of the entire creation. When a person attains truth, it is as if God's own light is clothed in him, since truth is God's seal. Someone like this can rightly say, "God is my light and my salvation" (Psalms 27:1) . Because God shines to him, he can find plenty of openings to escape the darkness and exile in which he is imprisoned. In reality many openings exist there. The Rabbis said, "If a person comes to defile himself, there are many openings for him" (Yoma 38b, Menachot 29b). If there are many openings through which a person can fall, it follows that there are also many openings through which he can escape. It is just that "the fool goes in darkness" ( Ecclesiastes 2:14 ) : he simply does not see the exits, and he remains tied and bound, unable to escape. That is, until he succeeds in speaking to God truthfully. When he does this, the words radiate with light and God shines to him. It is only then that "the opening of Your words shines light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Psalms 119:130). For the shining words themselves - words of truth - show the person the opening. "It gives understanding to the simple" - because those simple people who are caught in darkness and cannot see how to get out will thereby understand and see the opening and then they can escape the darkness. "Saying to the prisoners, 'Go forth!' and to those who are in darkness, 'Be revealed!'" (Isaiah 49:9) . But the truth has to be the complete truth: clean, clear and without blemish. Anyone with sense and understanding should pray all his days to be able to say one true word to God the way he should, even just once in his life. If you are trying to pray but cannot say a single word because you feel you have sunk in to confusion and darkness, try to say what you say with truth, even on the most elementary level. For example, say the words "God help me!" truthfully, even if you cannot say them with any real enthusiasm. Just say the words honestly in whatever way you can. With a true word you will be able to see the openings in the darkness and escape into the light so as to pray properly. Likutey Moharan I, 112

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בת שלום

Tizku leMisvot ... beSimcha