

ESSENTIAL RABBI NA'HMAN 17

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



ESSENTIAL

RABBI NA'HMAN

17

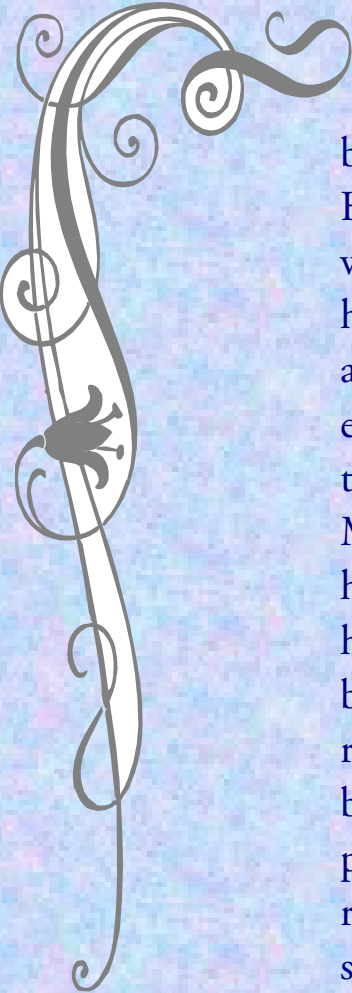
I

Never give up ! Gevalt!!! Never give up hope! There is no despair. Likutey Moharan II, 78

II

Recovering stolen goods

Once there was a wealthy man who had a shop where he lived and kept his stock of merchandise. Thieves came and robbed him of his wealth and possessions, and he lost a large part of what he had. But he collected together the remains and was able to put himself back on his feet again. He purchased some more stock and once again became a shopkeeper. Then more thieves came and robbed him of whatever was left of his previous wealth. Still, he once again gathered together what little he could from the remnants of what was left to him and his wife's jewelry, and he was able to get back on his feet again. He set up a store to provide himself and his household with their livelihood. Again thieves came and robbed him of whatever was left, and he became so impoverished that his house was completely empty. He went and collected together a miserable sum, bought a few bits and pieces, and went around the villages like the poor tinkers who travel about with bundles of goods, needles, pipes and similar small items. He went from village to village trading needles for chickens and eggs among the gentiles, and this was how he earned the family bread. One day he was on his way from the villages carrying his small stock and a few items of food when he was set upon by a bandit. The



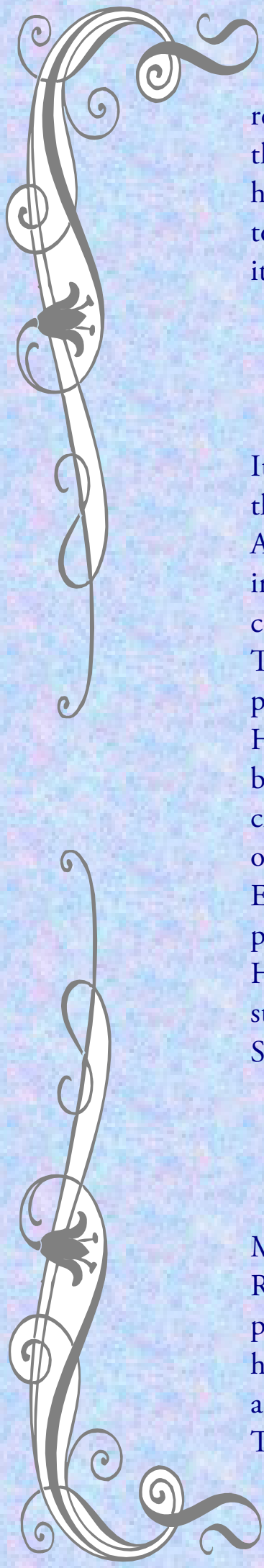
bandit was riding a horse and carrying two enormous bundles. He wanted to rob him and the man began to weep and plead with the bandit. However, he paid no attention and robbed him of the little he had. The man was left with nothing at all, and he wept bitterly. As if his previous troubles had not been enough when he had been stripped of his great wealth! Now they had torn from him even his meager remaining livelihood! Meanwhile, he noticed that the bandit had fallen from his horse. He was trying to get up, but the horse was standing at his side trampling his head with its hooves. The bandit fell back and died. The man went over to look and saw that the robber had fallen to the ground dead. He opened the robber's bundles, and there he found all the merchandise, wealth and possessions that the bandit had ever stolen from him. He returned to his house in peace with his wealth restored. One should never despair. A person may be robbed and plundered time and time again, yet he should never despair of God's mercy and kindness. In the end the robber will suffer a fall from which he will never rise again, while the one who was robbed will recover all the holiness, goodness and devotion that were stolen from him and return to his wealth and eternal goodness. Chayey Moharan #97

III TORAH STUDY

The Misnagdim (opponents of the Chassidim) say that the main thing is to study Torah. The Chassidim say the main thing is prayer. But I say: Pray and study and pray. Siach Sarfey Kodesh 1-87

IV Daily study

Everyone should set himself a daily program of Torah study. This applies even to people who are far from holiness and sin



regularly. So great is the power of the Torah that it can free them from their sins. If even the worst sinner would take on himself to study a fixed amount every day, he would be able to escape the evil trap. The power of the Torah is so great that it can accomplish everything. Sichot Haran #19

V

Halachah

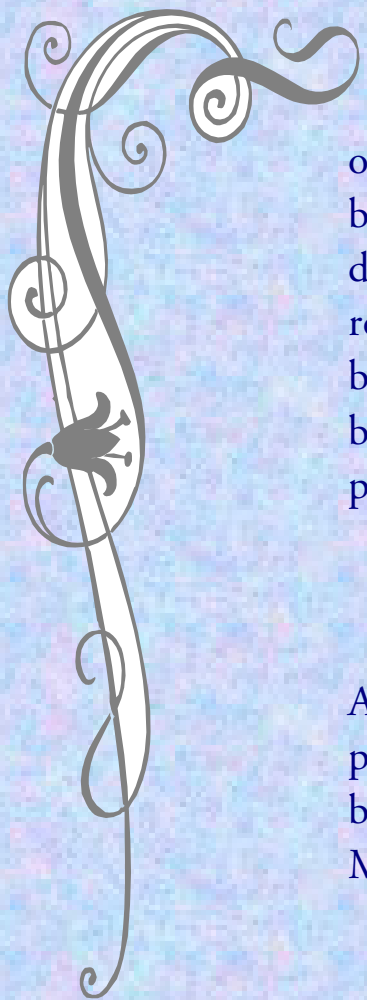
It is very important to study Halachah - the practical laws of the Torah. If you can, study all four sections of the Shulchan Aruch (the classic code of Torah law as it applies in our times) in order from beginning to end. Otherwise, study one of the concise guides that explain the laws of daily life.

The study of Halachah is a great spiritual remedy. When a person sins, good and evil become mixed up. Each individual Halachah is a legal decision that makes a clear separation between what is permitted and what is forbidden, what is clean and what is unclean. When you study Halachah, good is once again separated from evil, thereby rectifying the sin. Every Jew should study Halachah every day. If you are under pressure and have no time, study at least one paragraph of Halachah on any subject, even if it is outside your regular study schedule. Learn at least one law every day of your life. Sichot Haran #29

VI

Chassidut

My book Likutey Moharan is the beginning of the Redemption. Now that it has come out, I very much want people to study it. They should study it until they know it by heart, because it is filled with guidance and has the power to arouse men to God in a way nothing else can compare with. Those who study it carefully have no need for any other work



on ethics and moral guidance. Learning my works is the beginning of the Redemption - may it come speedily in our days. The best way to study them is with two separate routines. The first should be one of brisk study in order to become thoroughly conversant with them. The second should be one of in-depth study, because these works contain the profoundest depths. Chayey Moharan #346

VII

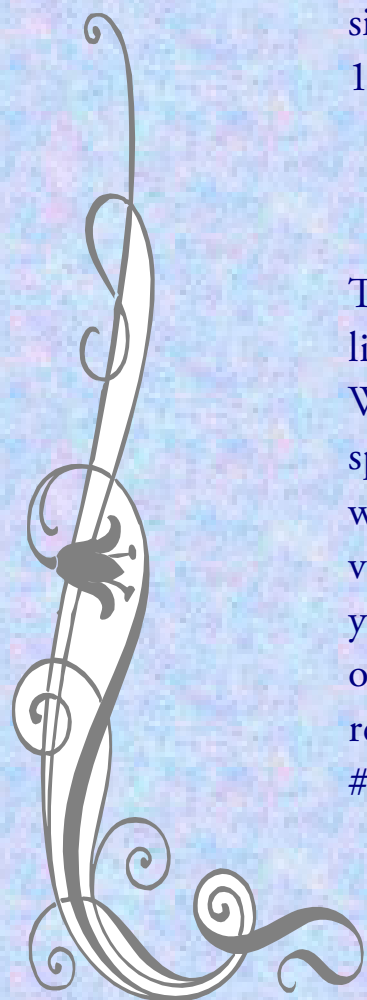
As soon as the most exalted and wonderful Torah teachings are put into a book, they become concealed behind covers. The boards of the binding of the book are the covers. Likutey Moharan II, 36

VIII

You can crease and wrinkle my book any way you like when it comes to your own interpretations as long as you don't violate a single paragraph of the Shulchan Aruch . Siach Sarfey Kodesh 1-131

IX

Travel everywhere



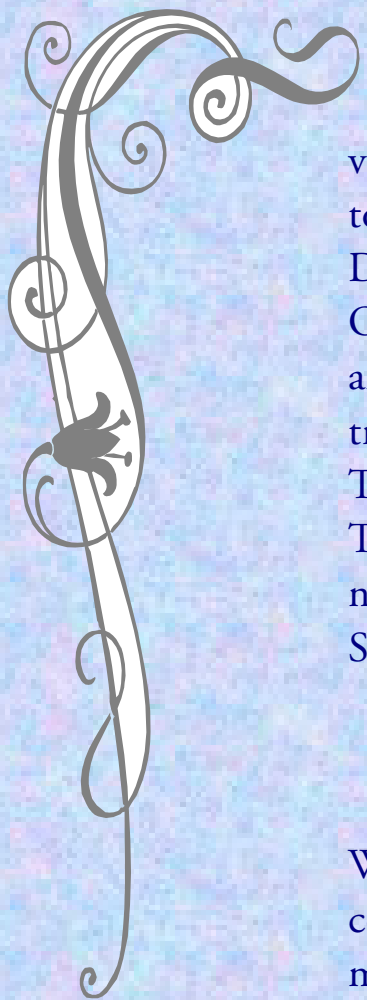
Try to go through all our holy books in the course of your lifetime, so that you will have visited every place in the Torah. Wealthy people constantly travel from place to place, spending enormous sums in order to be able to boast about where they have been. In the same way, in this life you should visit all the holy places in the Torah. Then in your future life you will be able to take pride in having visited every place in our holy literature. For in the world to come you will remember everything you have ever learned. Sichot Haran #28



X

How to study Torah

The best way to learn Torah is by studying fairly rapidly without analyzing every single detail. Study briskly and simply: seek to understand each thing in its own context without confusing yourself about how it relates to other subjects. If there is something you do not understand, it is usually best not to dwell on it for too long. Keep going. In most cases you will eventually come to understand it in the light of what follows. When you study, the main thing is to read the words aloud and in order. Understanding will then come of itself. Do not confuse yourself by trying to comprehend everything at once. You will have much difficulty and end up understanding nothing. Simply focus your mind on what you are studying, reading the words in their correct order and with enthusiasm. Understanding will come of itself. What you do not understand at first, you will comprehend later. Even if there are things you cannot fully understand, this is unimportant because broad knowledge outweighs everything else. By studying rapidly you will absorb a great quantity and you will be able to review each work many times. What you did not understand at first you will grasp the second or third time round, and eventually you will understand everything that it is possible to understand. By following this path you will complete many volumes and have a better comprehension than one who is overly precise. Such a person can become very confused and may even come to abandon his studies completely, ending up with nothing. Accustom yourself to learn quickly without too much attention to detail. This way you will truly acquire the Torah and cover enormous ground. You will be able to complete the Talmud, Codes, Bible, Midrash, Zohar and other Kabbalistic texts and all the other sacred works. It is unnecessary to review everything immediately. It is better to complete each



volume as rapidly as possible from beginning to end and then to review the entire work as a whole.

Don't be anxious if you are unable to complete everything. One can be a faithful Jew even without being able to learn at all. One can be a Tzaddik even without being a scholar. It is true that deep perception cannot be attained without Talmudic scholarship, yet even the simplest Jew can be a Tzaddik. "You are not obliged to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it" (Avot 2:16) .
Sichot Haran #76

XI

Chidushim - New ideas

When you want to develop new Torah ideas, you must concentrate on one subject. Turn it over and over in your mind, knocking and beating on the gate until it opens. Sometimes a thought may fly into your mind in a flash - but then it flies away. You must be a man of valor, pursuing it until it is recaptured. Sichot Haran #58

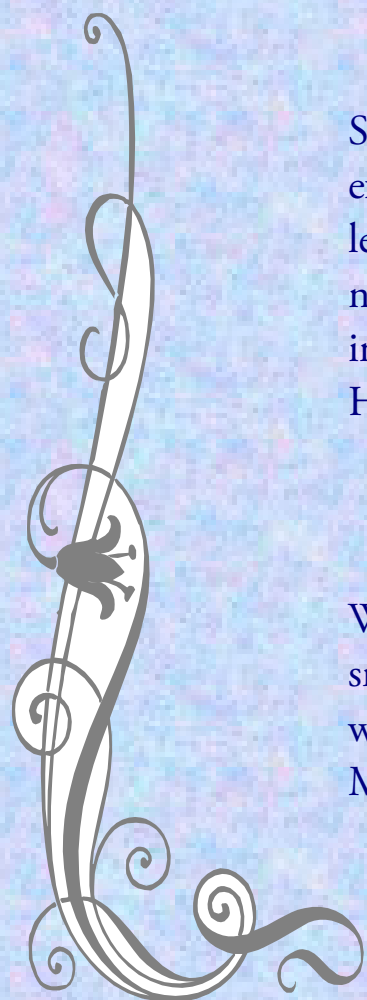
XII

Someone who wants to develop original Torah insights may expound and innovate as much as he wants according to his level of mental attainment. The only condition is that he may not deduce any new law from insights based on expository interpretation (Drash) or mystical teachings (Sod). Sichot Haran #267

XIII

Finding yourself in Torah

When a person draws personal lessons and sees his own smallness and lowliness everywhere that he studies in any Torah work , this is a sign that he wants to do God's will. Likutey Moharan 1, 121





XIV

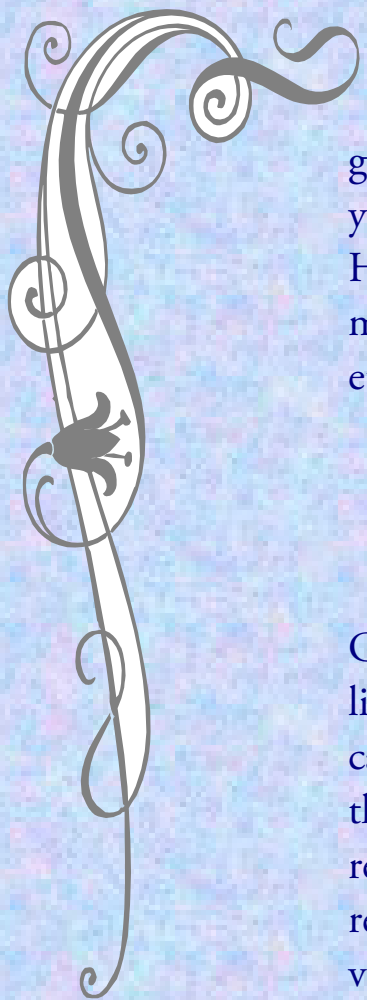
When the bride is beautiful, love is perfect. If you want to be a diligent student of the Torah, be careful never to speak against any fellow Jew. When the bride is beautiful, love is perfect. But when the bride has some flaw or blemish, love cannot be complete.

The Torah is called a bride: "Moses commanded us the Torah, a heritage (*morashah*) for the congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4) . The Talmud says: Read this not as *morashah* , "a heritage", but *me-urasah* - "the betrothed" (Berachot 57a; Pesachim 49b) . "Moses commanded us the Torah, the betrothed of the congregation of Jacob . " Every Jew has his letter in the Torah. The 600,000 letters of the Torah correspond to the 600,000 souls of Israel . If there is a defect in a single Jew, it is also a blemish in the Torah, the root of all Jewish souls , and perfect love of the Torah becomes impossible. But if you are careful not to speak against or find a flaw in any other Jew, the Torah will have no flaw or blemish. You will then be filled with great love of the Torah. Your love will be so great that you will want to study the Torah constantly. "God's Torah is perfect - it restores the soul" (Psalms 19:8) . When people are careful not to speak against their fellow Jews or seek out their flaws, the Torah is perfect, with neither flaw nor blemish. And when "God's Torah is perfect , " then "it restores the soul . " Since the Torah then has no flaw, one is filled with love of the Torah and feels its sweetness, which makes one want to study constantly. Sichot Haran #91

XV

PURITY OF THOUGHT

Man's mind is his very essence. Wherever your thoughts are, that is where you are - all of you. This is why it is so important to avoid all evil thoughts, because otherwise that is where your place will be. You must force yourself to think



good thoughts in order to be worthy of knowing God. Then your place will be with Him and you will be merged with Him. The greater your perception of God, the more fully merged with Him you will become, and then you will attain eternal life. Likutey Moharan I, 21

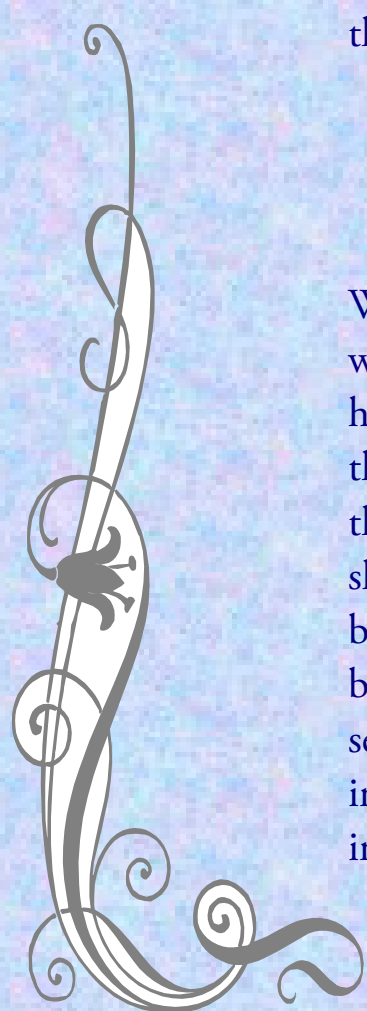
XVI

Guard your thoughts

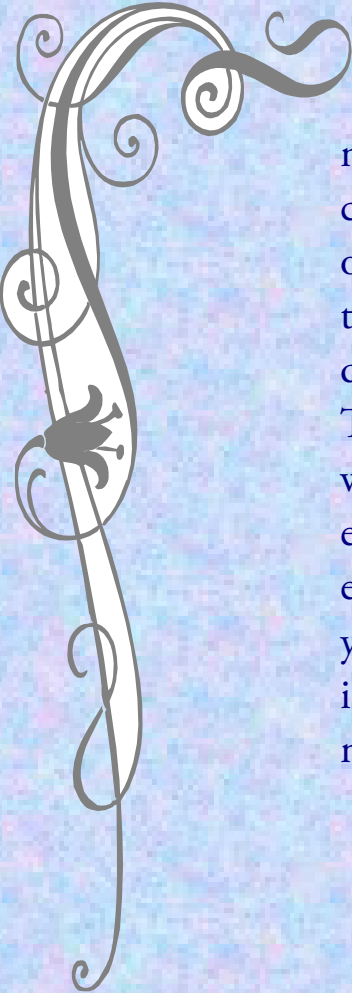
Guard your thoughts very carefully, because thought can literally create a living thing. The higher a faculty, the further it can reach. You can kick something with your foot, but you can throw it even higher with your hand. With your voice you can reach even further, calling to someone far away. Hearing reaches further still - you can hear sounds like gunfire from a very great distance. Vision reaches even further: you can see things high in the sky. The higher the faculty, the further it can reach. Highest of all is the mind, which can ascend to the loftiest heights. You must therefore guard your mind and thoughts to the utmost. Sichot Haran #46

XVII

Wisdom is the root of everything



Wisdom is the root of all things: "You made them all in wisdom" (Psalms 104:24) . Every person must therefore guard his mind against alien ideas. Fulfillment in life can come only through the pursuit of true wisdom - the wisdom of Godliness, the Torah. Compared to this, all other systems of wisdom are sheer emptiness; they are not wisdom at all. When a person is born, his understanding is in a state of contraction. It only begins to develop when he starts using it to think about how to serve God. But when a person admits alien thoughts and ideas into his mind, the holiness of his mind and soul is diminished in direct proportion to the space they occupy. All kinds of



negative character traits develop from this alien mentality and cluster around it. This is why one must be so careful to protect one's mind and not admit alien thoughts and ideas. To achieve true repentance and make amends for all your sins, make a determined effort to expel all alien thoughts from your mind. The conscious mind is a manifestation of the soul, and thus when a person sanctifies his mind and thereby his soul, everything is elevated and returns to its source. This is the essence of repentance. It is not sufficient merely to guard yourself against alien ideas. Constantly try to bring new vitality into your mind as this will revive and refresh your soul. For the mind is a manifestation of the soul. Likutey Moharan I, 35

XVIII

Truth and the need to win

A person who always wants to win the argument is very intolerant of truth. The truth may be staring him in the face, but because he is determined to win at all costs, he ignores it completely. If you want to find the real truth, you must rid yourself of the urge to win. Then you will be able to see the truth if you wish. Likutey Moharan I, 122



Shabbat Shalom

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