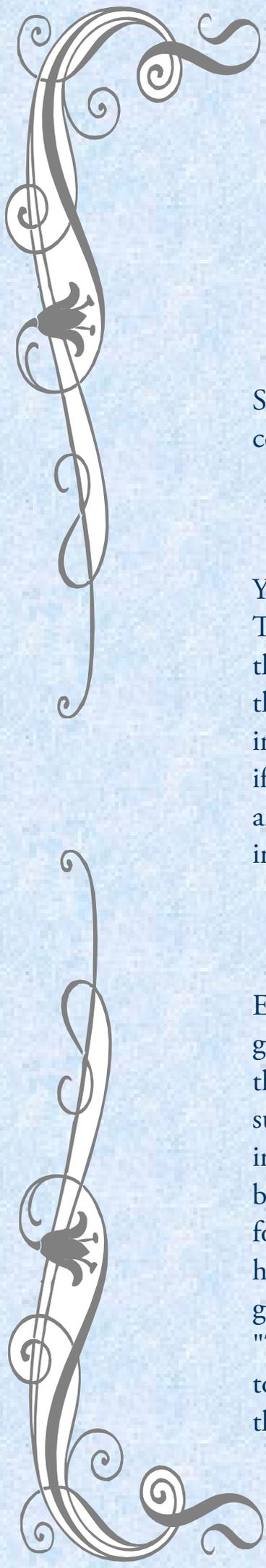


ESSENTIAL RABBI NA'HMAN

26



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



*ESSENTIAL
RABBI NA'HMAN*

27

I

Sometimes a sin can make a person so bitter that he repents completely. Likutey Halachot, Birkat HaReiach 4:2

II

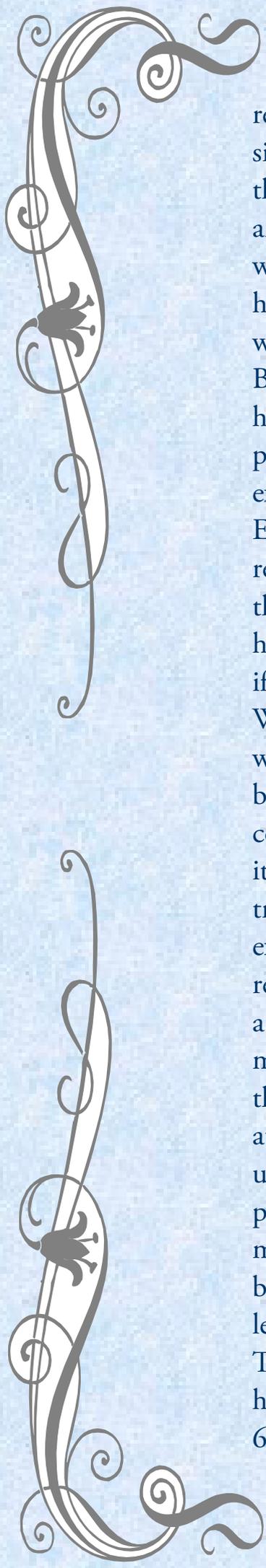
Stop then and there!

You may be in some place when suddenly you have a thought of Teshuvah and a deep longing for God. Stop then and there in that very place and take a moment to focus on the thought and the feeling of longing. Turn them into a prayer. Put your longing into words straight from your heart. Don't wait or move on, even if you are not in your usual place of prayer and study - even if you are going on your way - because if you move on, it could interrupt your train of thought. Likutey Moharan II, 124

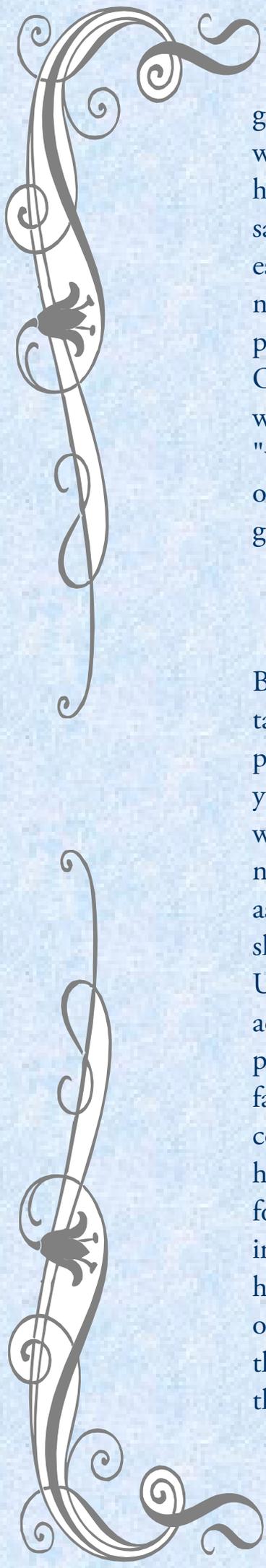
III

The Path of Teshuvah

Every person must minimize his own glory and maximize God's glory. For one who pursues glory attains not God's glory but only the glory of kings, of which it is said: "The glory of kings is subject to investigation" (Proverbs 25:2) . For then everyone investigates who he really is, asking: "Who is he and what is he to be given such honor?" People challenge him, saying he is not fit for this honor. But when a person flees from honor, minimizing his own honor and maximizing the glory of God, he attains the glory of God. No-one then investigates to see if he deserves it, for "The glory of God is to hide the matter" (ibid.) - it is forbidden to question his honor. The only way to attain God's glory is through repentance. And the true sign of a person who has



returned to God is the ability to hear himself insulted and remain silent. He endures even the most murderous abuse with patience, thereby reducing the blood in the left side of his heart (seat of the animal soul) and annihilating his evil inclination. Such a person is worthy of a share in God's glory. Before a person returns to God, he has no being. It is as if he has not yet been created, because it would have been better for him not to have been created at all. But when he purifies himself in order to return to God, he puts himself in order and prepares to become a being. This element of preparation for becoming - coming into being, as it were - explains why the Divine Name associated with repentance is Ehyeh , "I shall be". When a person wants to purify himself and return to God, they tell him "Wait!" (Yoma 38b-39a) . It is true that he should hurry to free his soul and escape the darkness. But he should not allow himself to become discouraged and dejected if he sees that he is far from true prayer and other holy devotions. Waiting patiently is a necessary part of the process. In the end he will be worthy of making amends completely and everything will be rectified. Repentance never comes to an end: it must be continuous. Even at the very moment that a person is confessing , it is impossible for him to say the words , "I have sinned, I have transgressed, I have rebelled." with perfect sincerity free of all extraneous motives. Thus he must repent for his earlier repentance and for the flaw in his previous confession. Even when a person knows that he has repented completely, he must still make amends for his earlier repentance. For what he achieved then was good only in proportion to his perception of Godliness at the time. Now, after his repentance, his perception has undoubtedly been heightened. Compared with his present perception, his earlier perception turns out to have been grossly materialistic. He must therefore repent for his earlier levels - because he degraded the true exaltedness of the Creator to the level of the material. Happy is the man who achieves true Teshuvah. Teshuvah has three aspects: seeing with the eyes, hearing with the ears and understanding in the heart (cf. Isaiah 6:10) . A person must use his eyes to look towards the ultimate

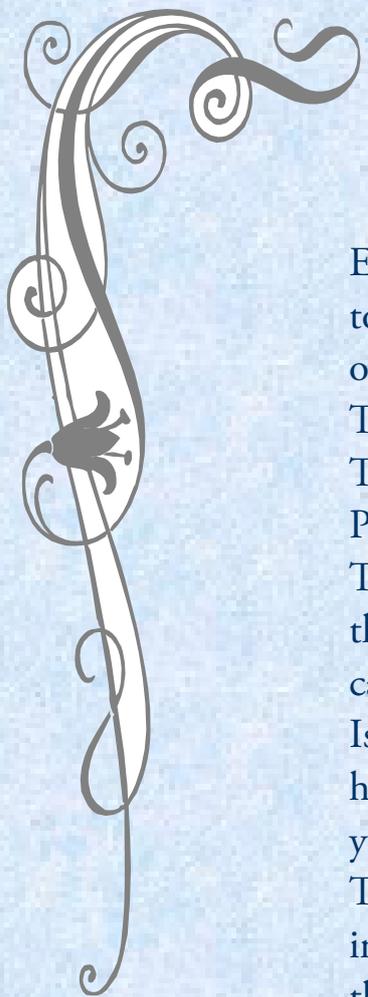


goal and purpose of this world. He must concentrate on this goal with all his heart, resolving to travel there and nowhere else. And he must use his ears to listen carefully to everything that our holy sages said. Then he will be able to return to God. Teshuvah essentially depends on humility. One must make oneself into nothing, like a wasteland over which people trample: one must pay no attention whatsoever to opposition or abuse from others. One should train oneself to be silent and hear oneself insulted without answering back. Such a person is worthy of the name "wise" and will attain perfect Teshuvah, the "Crown" and summit of the Sefirot. This is the way to true and enduring glory - the glory of God. Likutey Moharan I , 6

IV

Humility

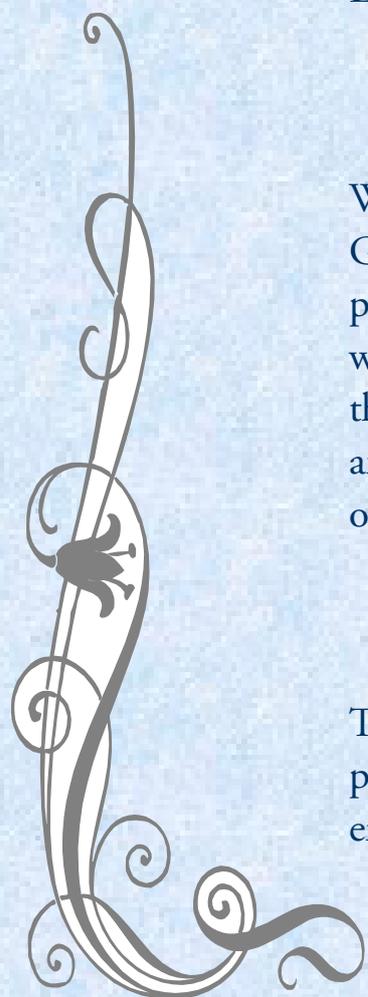
Be totally honest when you speak to God. Accustom yourself to talking so honestly that your heart is aroused and the words start pouring forth with fire and passion. As you draw closer to God you will see your own smallness and insignificance in comparison with His greatness, and you will be filled with humility. Until now you cast your sins behind your back and ignored them. But as you start to acknowledge them frankly, you will feel deep shame at having rebelled against the Master and Ruler of the Universe, Source of all the worlds. At first this humility will not actually be discernible on your face, because sin weakens a person's mental powers, preventing them from radiating on the face. Before repenting , his mind is so weakened that he has no conception of the true gravity of sin and the greatness of the One he sinned against. But as he returns to God and puts aside his folly, gaining wisdom and understanding, his shame becomes increasingly visible on his face. The Tefilin are the sign of humility and attachment to God. The light of the Tefilin is a ray of the light of God's inner countenance. When a person achieves this humility, all his sins are forgiven and he becomes attached to the Tree of Life. Likutey Moharan I, 38



V

The Power of Psalms

Everybody wants to revere God's Name but not everyone is able to repent. Sometimes a person feels no arousal whatever. Even one who is aroused to repent may not reach his unique gate of Teshuvah, and even if he does, it could be that the gate is closed. This is why not everyone attains repentance. But through reciting Psalms, even one who feels no arousal can be inspired to repent. The Psalms can take him to his unique gate and open it up, thereby bringing him to Teshuvah. For this reason King David called himself "the man who raised the yoke... the sweet singer of Israel " (II Samuel 23:1) . Our sages explain that David called himself "the man who raised the yoke" because he elevated the yoke of repentance through his own Teshuvah. David was a great Tzaddik and should not have sinned, but God caused him to sin in order to teach everyone the way of Teshuvah. King David was the prime exemplar of Teshuvah and his pathway is set forth in the Psalms, which he wrote with such a spirit of holiness that everyone can find himself in them and thereby return to God. Likutey Moharan II, 73



VI

God hides in the obstacle

When after a life devoted to worldliness a person feels an arousal to God, the attribute of Judgment rises to accuse him and does not permit him to follow God's ways. It does this by confronting him with an obstacle. But God loves kindness and hides Himself within the very obstacle itself. One who lacks good sense sees the obstacle and retreats at once. But one who possesses good sense examines the obstacle and discovers God within it. Likutey Moharan I, 115

VII

Revisiting the past

To come to complete Teshuvah you must pass through all the places where you were prior to your Teshuvah. When you encounter exactly the same temptations as you experienced before,



you must avert your eyes and control your impulses in order not to repeat what you did earlier. This is the essence of perfect Teshuvah: there is no other way. Likutey Moharan II, 49

VIII

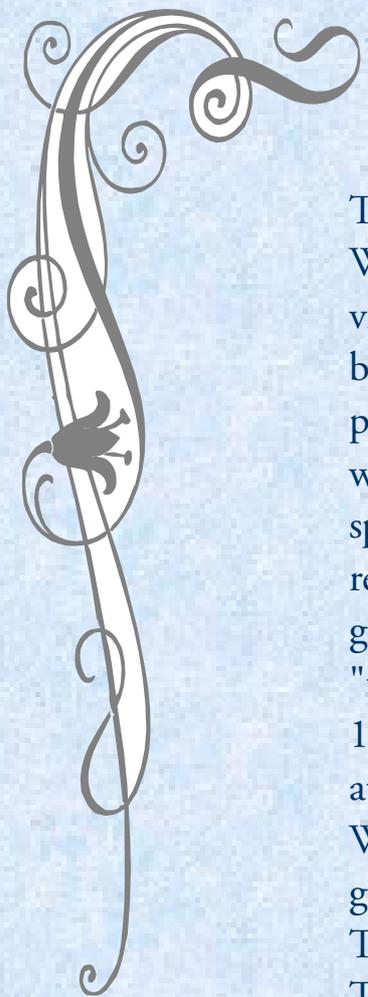
Be a new creation

If you want to return to God you must make yourself into a new creation. You can do this with a sigh! Man never stops breathing - releasing the stale air and drawing in fresh air. Our very lives depend on this. The physical air we breathe has its root above. There is the good air of the Tzaddik and the evil air of the sinner. The Tzaddik constantly draws air from the holy, the sinner draws air from impurity. Therefore, when a person wants to repent, he must make sure to stop the bad air from coming into him. The way to do this is with a sigh, which is a long, deep breath in and out. The sigh begins when you draw in extra air. This is similar to what happens just before a person dies: he draws in extra air and then the spirit leaves him. Every exhalation is the death of the moment that has passed, in preparation for the birth of the new moment. Thus when you take a deep sigh, you release yourself from the bad air of the sinner and bind yourself to the pure air of the Tzaddik in order to receive new vitality. This is Teshuvah, returning from impurity to holiness in order to gain new life. The very body is renewed, because "Sighing breaks a person's whole body" (Berachot 58b) , and therefore the body is remade. Chayey Moharan #37

IX

How precious is a sigh!

How precious is the sigh of a Jew! The very sigh brings fulfillment of his needs. For the world was created through the breath, which is the life spirit: " . and through the breath of His mouth all their hosts" (Psalms 33:6) . The renewal of the world will also be through the breath: "You send Your spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the earth" (Psalms 104:30) . The breath is also man's vitality since his life depends on breathing. "And He breathed in his nostrils the spirit of life" (Genesis 2:7).

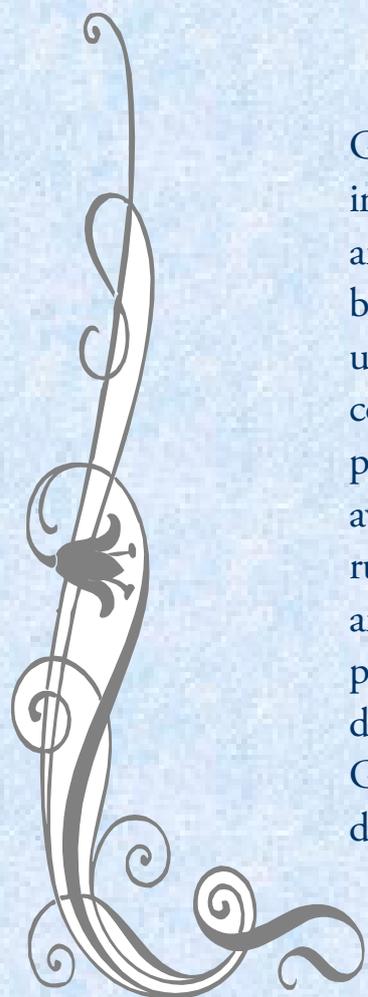


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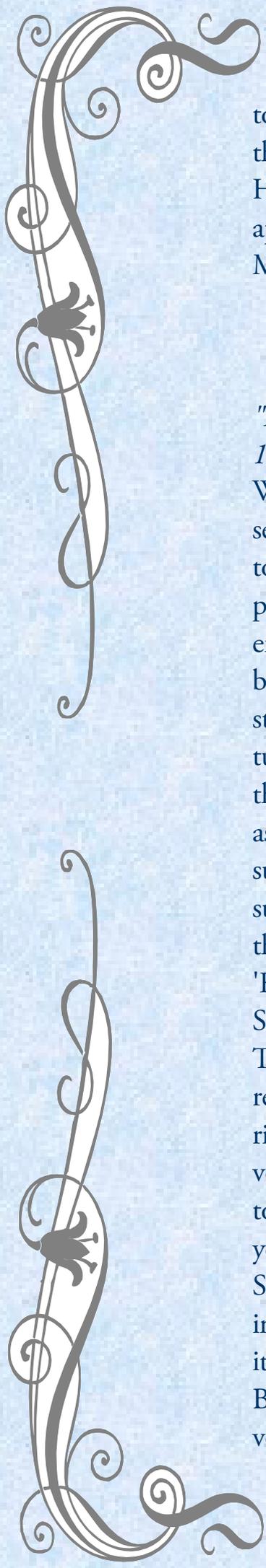
The essential vitality of all things thus depends on the breath. Whenever something is lacking, the main lack is in that thing's vitality, which is the life-spirit keeping it alive. A sigh is a long breath the long breath of patience. Therefore when a person is patient and sighs over what he lacks, he draws life spirit to that which is lacking, because the main lack is the absence of the life spirit. But from where does one receive the life spirit? Know that we receive the essential life spirit from the Tzaddik and leader of the generation. This is because the main life spirit is in the Torah, for "the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2) and the "waters" are the Torah. Since the Tzaddkim are attached to the Torah, therefore the main life spirit is with them. When one who is attached to the Tzaddik and leader of the generation takes a long, deep sigh, he draws life spirit from the Tzaddik, who is attached to the Torah, where the spirit resides. Thus the Tzaddik is called "the man who has the spirit in him" (Numbers 27:18) - because he knows how to relate to each and everyone according to his spirit. Likutey Moharan I, 8

XI

Providence and nature



God shows us great kindness by governing the world with individual providence and through the laws of nature. When people are good, God deals with them providentially, in a way that goes beyond nature. However if God were to oversee the life of an undeserving person in accordance with His providence, no good could ever reach him. Nevertheless out of kindness, God leaves this person to the laws of nature, and as a result, through the law of averages, things may then go well for him. If God's only way of running the world were through providence, rewarding good deeds and punishing sin, this could lead to a total breakdown of providence. For if God were to see someone acting improperly and dealt with him in anger, He might cast him out completely. Instead, God abandons him to nature, and when he improves his ways, He deals with him providentially. But in actual fact we are quite unable



to understand what is "nature" and what is "providence", because the truth is that even the laws of nature are really God's providence. However, the human mind is unable to grasp the paradox that what appears to be the law of nature is really God's providence. Likutey Moharan II, 17

XII

I have strayed like a lost sheep

"I have strayed like a lost sheep: seek out Your servant" (Psalms 119:176).

When a person sins, it makes a big difference if he comes to his senses at once and repents, in which case it is easy for him to return to his place because he has not yet strayed too far from the good path. For when a person sins, he turns from the straight path and enters a different, twisting pathway. A multitude of wrong turns branch off into ever deeper error and corruption. The person may stray so far and become so entangled that it is very hard for him to turn back and get off the wrong track. God's way is to call a person the moment He sees him straying from the path of good sense, asking him to turn back. He calls each person in the way most suited to him. To some He beckons with a hint. To others the summons is literally a cry. Some people kick, and He must strike them in order to call them. For "the Torah cries out before them: 'Fools! How long will you love foolishness?'" (Proverbs 1:22, Zohar Shemini 36a).

The Torah is God's voice calling and begging those who sin to return to Him. As long as a person has not strayed too far from the right path, it is easy for him to return because he still recognizes the voice. This is because only a short time has passed since he was close to God and heeded His voice, the voice of the Torah. He has not yet forgotten it or strayed too far along those other devious paths. Similarly, when a sheep strays from the path and the shepherd immediately calls it, as long as the sheep has not yet strayed too far, it still recognizes the shepherd's voice and immediately responds. But once the sheep strays far from the path, it forgets the shepherd's voice and no longer recognizes his call. The shepherd also gives up

searching because the sheep has been lost for such a long time . Similarly, when a person has been going in the wrong direction for a long time , having strayed far from the true path into all those corrupt, devious and confusing pathways, it is hard for him to repent. But know that sometimes a person journeys so far along those corrupt and devious paths that his very wandering brings him close to his original place and it only needs an easy test to bring him back to his starting point . But when God calls him and arranges the test, the person does not recognize the voice and feels no need to return. That is the difference between young and old people. One who is still young and has not grown old in his sins can return more easily, because he is still closer and has not forgotten the voice that calls. This is the meaning of the verse, "I have strayed like a lost sheep: seek out Your servant" (Psalms 119, 176) . "I have strayed like a lost sheep": I have strayed from the good path like a lost sheep that has strayed from the road. This is why I beg of You: ".seek out Your servant, because I have not forgotten Your commandments". Hurry and search for me as long as I still remember the voice of the Torah and mitzvot. Hurry and search for me immediately, because I have not yet forgotten Your mitzvot: I still recognize the call of the mitzvot of the Torah. That is why I beg You to take pity on me and search me out quickly, as long as "I have not forgotten Your mitzvot" and still recognize the voice of the call of the Torah and the mitzvot. For when a person grows old in his sins, it is very hard to seek him out as he has already forgotten and no longer recognizes the voice of the Torah and the mitzvot. We must therefore beg God to hurry and bring us back to Him before we completely forget the call of the Torah and mitzvot. This was King David's prayer: "Search out Your servant, for I have not forgotten Your mitzvot". Likutey Moharan I, 206

XIII

THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Wherever I go, I am always only going to the land of Israel . I am only here in Breslov temporarily. Chayey Moharan #156



XIV

From level to level

A true Israelite is one who constantly advances from level to level. Each advance to greater holiness can be accomplished only through the holiness of the land of Israel . Likewise our prayers ascend only through the land of Israel . When a person reaches the level of the land of Israel , he is worthy to be called "a man of strength and valor". Before one attains this level, "Let not he that girds his armor boast like he that removes it" (I Kings 20:11) . However after winning the battle, he does indeed deserve to be called "a man of war". Likutey Moharan I, 20

XV

Houses and apartments.

What do I mean by the land of Israel ? I mean the actual country of Israel with its houses and apartments! Chayey Moharan #15

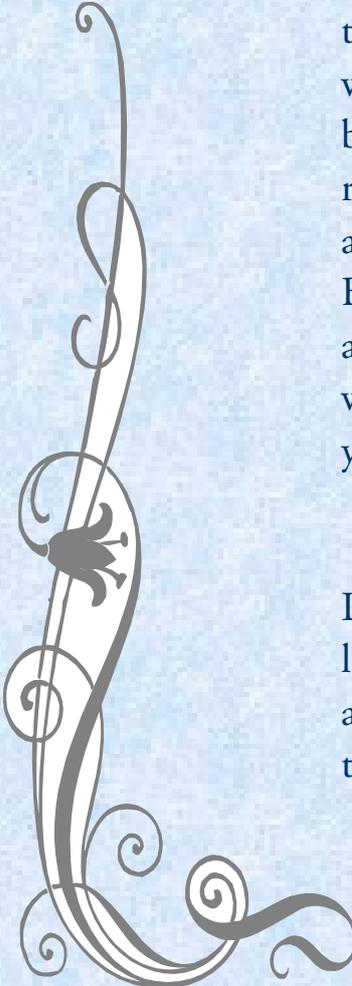
XVI

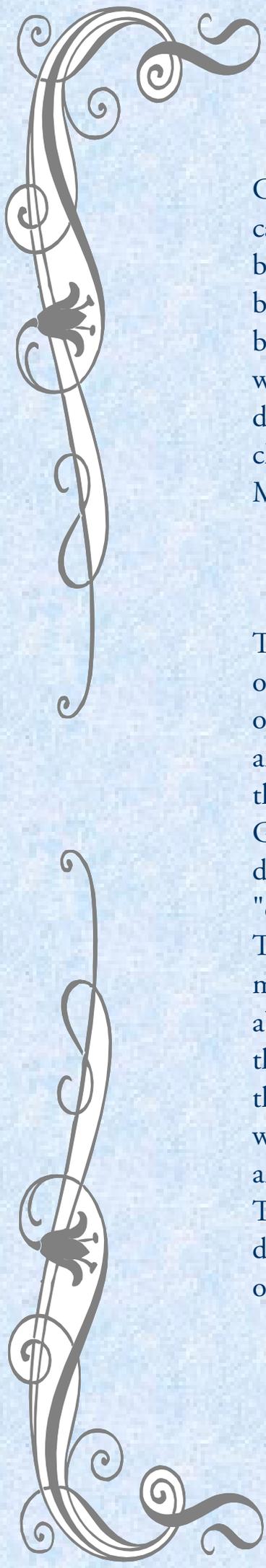
Why go to Israel ?

The only motive for going to the land of Israel should be spiritual: to draw closer to God. One who goes there with this intention will certainly benefit. Merely by setting foot in the land, he will become absorbed in and transformed by its holiness. For this reason even one who walks four cubits in the land of Israel is assured that he will inherit the world to come (Ketubot 111a) . But if a person's motive has no connection with devotion to God and purification from evil, how will the land of Israel help him? It will vomit him out "as it vomited out the nation that was before you" (Leviticus 18:28). Likutey Moharan I, 155

XVII

Longing Pray that God should give you longing and desire for the land of Israel , and then you will succeed in getting there. Pray also that He should plant yearning for the land in the hearts of all the Tzaddikim. Likutey Moharan I, 155





XVIII

Charity for Israel

Charity given for the land of Israel is greater than charity for causes elsewhere. When you give charity for the land of Israel you become included in the air of the land of Israel , which is "holy breath without the taint of sin" (Shabbat 119b) . Through this breath the forces of severity and darkness are banished from the world. One can also thereby escape alien thoughts and distractions during prayer, and one's mind and thoughts become clear and refined. This is the repair of the holy Covenant. Likutey Moharan I, 37

XIX

To distinguish between light and darkness

The land of Israel is the very summit of holiness, encompassing all other levels of holiness. It is there that we can completely free ourselves of the notion that the world is governed through nature and come to know and believe that everything happens only through the hand of God. When man knows this he becomes like God, acquiring the ability to distinguish between light and darkness. "Light" refers to the deeds of the Tzaddikim while "darkness" refers to those of the wicked (Bereishith Rabbah 2) . Telling stories about the Tzaddikim help s cleanse and purify the mind. But for every story about a Tzaddik we find a parallel story about a wicked person , because the realm of evil is a reflection of that of holiness. Thus we are told that Pinchas flew in the air, and the same is said of the wicked Bilaam, except that in his case it was through witchcraft. The ability to distinguish between light and darkness enables us to distinguish between stories about true Tzaddikim and those that are not. To separate the light from the darkness requires the ultimate level of faith. This can be attained only in the land of Israel . Likutey Moharan I, 234

Shabbat Shalom