

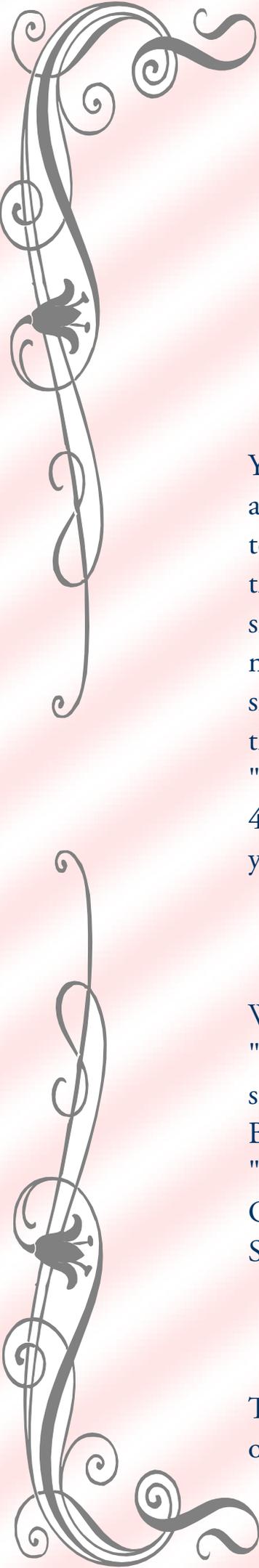


ESSENTIAL

RABBI NA'HMAN

24

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



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I

Feeling others' pain

You should be able to feel another person's pain in your heart - all the more so when many people are suffering. It is possible to know another person's pain and suffering yet still not feel them in your heart. When many people are suffering, you should certainly feel their pain in your heart. And if you do not feel it, you should knock your head against the wall: you should strike your head - your mind and intelligence - against the walls of your heart! This is the meaning of the words: "Know this day and realize it in your heart ." (Deuteronomy 4:39) . You must bring the realization from your mind into your heart. Understand this well. Sichot Haran #39

II

How are you?

When someone asks his friend how he is and the friend says, "Not good", this can be an opening for trouble. Because God says: "You call this not good? I'll show you what not good is!" But if when his friend asks how he is, he answers brightly, "Good, thank God!" even though things really are not so good, God says: "This you call good? I'll show you what good is!" Siach Sarfey Kodesh 1-32

III

Receiving from one another

Talk over spiritual matters with your friends. Each Jew has his own unique good point. Thus when two friends have a



discussion, each can benefit from the other's good point. Sometimes your friend's good point may shine to you during a conversation that is outwardly about mundane topics - because at times even mundane conversations may give rise to new ideas and inspire you spiritually. At times a person's good point may be veiled - and the words of the conversation become a kind of clothing for it. By discussing spiritual matters regularly with your friends you will all be able to benefit from each other's good points. This will enable you to break the "foreskin of the heart" - the lusts and desires that break a person's heart - so that you are filled with holy desire for God. Likutey Moharan I, 34

IV

Working for a civilized world



People should make it their business to talk to others about the purpose of life. For "He did not create (the world) to be desolate, He formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18) . We all have an obligation to try to make this world a civilized place - a world filled with people who are true humans, Children of Adam, as the Torah says: "And fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28) . The world is a civilized place only when filled with true Children of Adam, people who possess awareness and knowledge of God. A world without people who know God is a world of desolation and emptiness. Those who do not have this awareness cannot be called Children of Adam. Just as it is a commandment to have children in order for the world to survive, so it is a commandment to instill awareness and knowledge of God in our children and anyone else whom we are in a position to influence. Teaching our children to know God is the essence of the commandment to have children. It is vital to ensure that future generations will be true Children of Adam and not wild animals who merely look human on the outside. Those who have no knowledge of God and do not feel His power cannot be called Children of Adam, because the



ability to know God is the defining feature of the Children of Adam. Everyone should make an effort to bring his friends to greater knowledge of God and fear of heaven, thereby making his friends his "students" . This way, when his days are complete and his time comes to leave the world, he will be clothed in the words he spoke to his friends, and it will be as if he himself is literally still in this world. Likutey Moharan II, 7

V

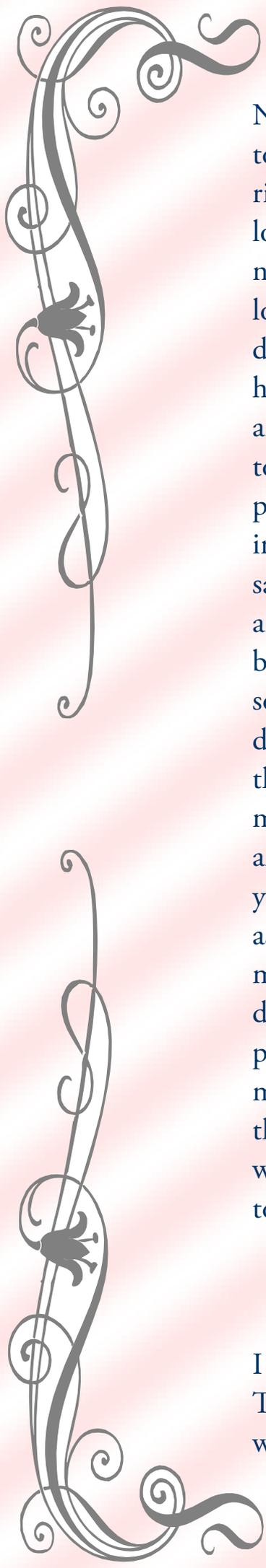
Direct and Returning Light

When a person discusses devotion with a friend, it creates "direct light" and "returning light" . Sometimes the "returning light" comes before the "direct light" , as when the recipient has certain mental limits that prevent him from accepting his friend's words. Even before the recipient receives the "direct light" from his friend, the friend already receives "returning light" . Even if the intended recipient cannot accept his friend's words, the friend can be inspired by what he himself is saying. When his words come forth from his mouth and strike the other, the light is reflected back to the speaker just as when something thrown against a wall bounces back to the thrower. In the same way, when you speak to a friend, you can be inspired by the words that bounce off him even though he himself is unable to accept them. Had you told yourself exactly the same thing, it may be that you would not have been aroused in the least. But by addressing them to your friend, you yourself are inspired even if he is not, because your words are reflected back to you from your friend. Likutey Moharan I, 184

VI

Paying back our debts

There was once a very rich man who possessed countless wealth. He announced that anyone who needed to borrow money should come to him and he would give him a loan.



Needless to say , large numbers of people were only too eager to take up his offer, and they came and borrowed money. The rich man had a notebook in which he kept a record of all the loans he gave. One day , glancing through his notebook , he noticed that he had given out enormous sums of money in loans yet not a single person had bothered to pay back their debts. Naturally, he was very upset. Among the people who had taken a loan was a certain man who had lost his money in an unsuccessful business venture. He had nothing with which to repay his debt. It troubled him greatly that he was unable to pay, and he decided that the least he could do would be to go in person to the rich man and explain the whole problem and say that it was not his fault. The debtor came to the rich man and started explaining how he had received a loan from him but when the time came to repay the debt he was unable to do so because he had lost his money, and he had no idea what to do. "What do I care about the money you owe me?" replied the rich man. "Of what significance is the tiny sum you owe me, whether you pay it or not, compared with the total sum of all the loans, which runs into tens of thousands? What I want you to do is to go to all the people who borrowed from me and ask them for the money. Remind them how much they owe me and ask them why they don't settle with me. Even if they don't pay everything, if each one would just pay back a small part of his debt, that alone would come to thousands of times more than the entire sum you yourself owe." It is clear from this story why, having received so much kindness from God, we all have an obligation to encourage others to turn to Him too. Chayey Moharan #447

VII

Wanting the best for my friend

I still want and long for my friend to be a pure Jew and a Tzaddik even if I myself feel unable to achieve the same. Even when I find myself unable to serve God, I am happy when



another Jew serves Him. I want, long and yearn for all Jews to be pure, true Tzaddikim. Perhaps I feel unworthy in myself, but still, I am happy when my dear friends and associates and all other Jews are true Tzaddikim. Our greatest expression of love and kindness to our friends and all other Jews is to want them to attain their true purpose as ordained by God's good will, because this is the true good for Israel.

People can easily cease serving God, especially if they become trapped in some evil craving or sin. Many such people hate those who are still trying to serve God and want to see them give up . They discourage and disparage them, telling them that they too will give up . There are numerous people who were once highly devoted but have since lapsed in various ways. On the other hand, many of today's younger generation have a great longing for God and have started praying with earnest intensity and studying zealously. When those fallen Chassidim see these young people, they ridicule and abuse them. They do everything they can to discourage them, telling them that their service is not genuine. All this is out of jealousy - because they themselves have fallen and want everyone else to be like them. However, the truth is that one should want the opposite. Even when a person feels unable to serve God, he should be happy when others are making an effort. Sichot Haran #119

VIII

Bad Influences

Other people have tremendous power to influence a person and deter him from serving God and from drawing close to the true Tzaddik. The power of other people is greater even than the power of a person's own evil urge. The power of a particular individual's evil urge reaches only as far as the specific world in which it is rooted. Man, however, includes all the worlds. For this reason the obstacles caused by other people can be greater than those of the evil urge itself. If you



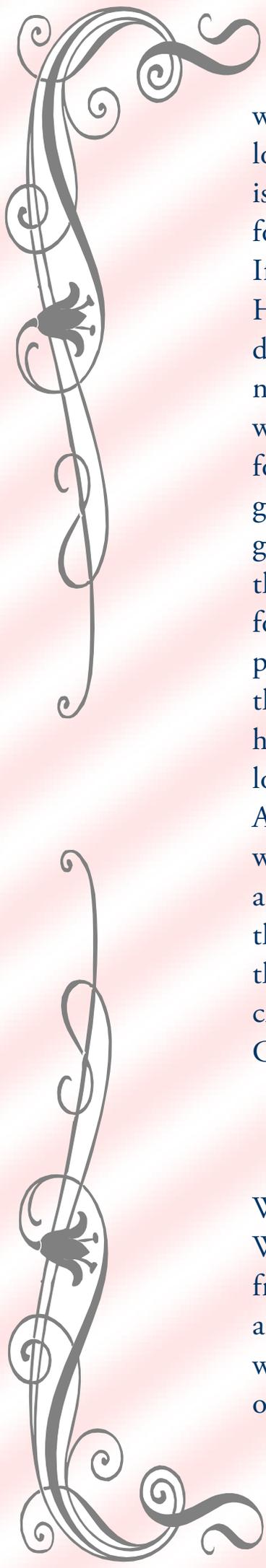
were all alone with nobody else to stand in your way, you would always direct yourself to the path of life. You might still suffer inner turmoil, anxiety and other obstacles, but you would eventually reach the right path. Even if you were to commit a sin, you would certainly come to regret it and remain on the true path. The worst of all obstacles is the confusion caused by other people. You yourself may personally know certain individuals who act as self-appointed experts in philosophy or use science to mock at everything holy. Such sophistry can be extremely confusing to others as it teaches that all values are relative and therefore everything is permitted. Such ideas deter people from the path of life. There are others who may appear to be observant yet display a certain sophisticated cynicism that can be quite as harmful as philosophy, if not worse. Most Jews are aware of the dangers of philosophy and avoid it, knowing that it can pull them down into the deepest pit. However there are many who are not on their guard against the kind of sophisticated cynicism that emanates from the mouths of people who seem to be observant and disguise their message in the language of truth, as if they are in possession of the absolute truth. These are the ones who can cause the most harm, confusing a person and holding him back from true service of God.

Happy is the man who walks the path of truth without any kind of sophistication - a person who is "simple and upright, fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:1) . Sichot Haran #80-81

IX

False love

The seeming love and friendship that exist among the non-observant and the common mass of people are really empty: this is not true love. Each one is interested only in himself. Any expressions of love and friendship are purely in order to impress for some ulterior purpose, but in reality everyone is jealous of everyone else. However, the love amongst those



who are honest, sincere and God-fearing, and particularly the love between the Tzaddik and his followers, is priceless. This is true love, the very essence of love. The love of the Tzaddik for his followers is very, very great: he desires their true good. If he could, he would give them all the good of all the worlds. He would like them to have even the good of this world, despite the fact that the good of this world is really not necessary since the main good is the enduring good of the world to come. Even so, the Tzaddik seeks the good of his followers even in this world, and wants them to have all the good things of this world - beautifully decorated homes, gardens and the like, if only to vex the wicked, who have all these things. How much more does the Tzaddik desire his followers' spiritual good! If he knew that they recited their prayers with the proper devotion and that God had joy from them he would certainly be very gratified. And the love which his followers have for the Tzaddik is also very great. Their love for him is strong and intense, and it too is true love. Amongst the rest of the world - the common masses, the wicked and the gentiles - it may be that love and friendship are perceived as being more important than anything else. Yet the truth is that they never experience genuine love. Only those who are honest and God-fearing and privileged to be close to the true Tzaddik know the meaning of true love.

Chayey Moharan #471

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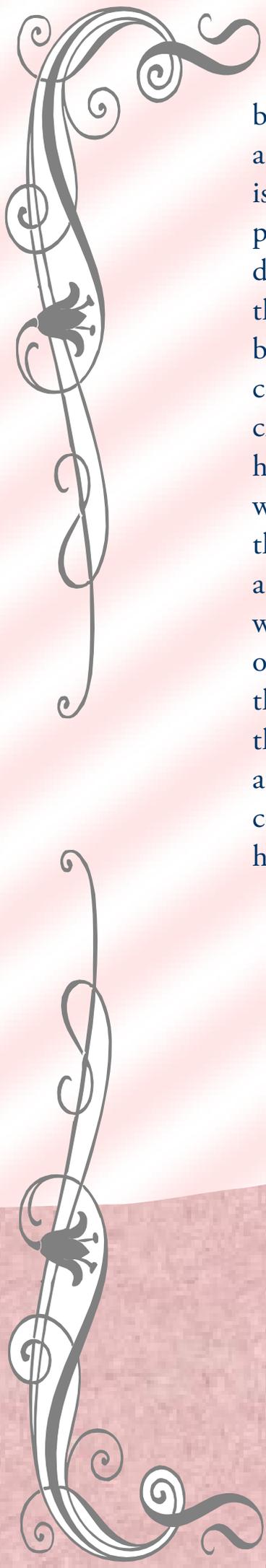
Why we should pray for our friends

We should pray for our friends when they are in trouble. Why our prayers for friends are effective can be understood from the story of a certain king who was angry with his son and sent him away. The prince came and placated his father, who agreed to have him back, but afterwards the prince again offended his father, who sent him away again. The prince



again placated his father and the same thing happened several times.

Once the prince did something that made his father extremely angry. The king thought to himself: "What point is there in sending him away if later on, when my anger subsides, he comes and placates me again? This time when I send him away, I will so arrange things that he will not even have access to me so as not to be able to placate me." The king appointed one of his ministers as an intermediary between himself and the prince, instructing the minister that when the prince came seeking to placate him, he was not to allow him entry. The prince came several times asking to be admitted to his father in order to placate him. However, the minister would not let him enter, for those were the instructions the king had given him. This happened again and again. Eventually the minister saw the prince's great longing for his father and saw how much he was suffering because of not being able to gain entry to his father in order to placate him. The minister thought to himself: "If this is how much the prince misses his father, presumably the king is also suffering a great deal because his son cannot come to him. For the greater the desire of he who desires, the greater the desire aroused in the object of his desire." The minister felt extremely sorry for both the king and his son, and he himself also suffered, because he said to himself: "Surely I am the cause of all this, since I am the barrier that keeps them apart: I am the one causing both the king and the prince to suffer." The minister thought to himself: "There must be some way to bring about a reconciliation. Surely the king does not want his son to suffer forever without being able to reach him, and the king himself must be suffering as a result." The minister realized that it was all up to him. "I myself will go to the king to plead for the prince. I will ask the king to forgive him and allow him back." This is exactly what the minister did. He went to the king and told him how much the prince was longing for him,



begging the king to forgive him. The king immediately agreed and restored the prince to his place. The meaning of the story is obvious. Whenever one of our friends is suffering, physically, mentally or spiritually, we should say, "Without doubt I am the cause of this. Because of my sins, I myself am the barrier between the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, and the world. For the Holy One, blessed be He, constantly desires to bestow blessings of goodness upon His children. But because of my sins, I am the barrier that is holding all this back. The solution is for me myself to plead with the King on behalf of my friend." When a person does this, he will certainly not succumb to arrogance. The root of arrogance is when a person prides himself on having qualities which his friend lacks. But when a person believes that the only cause of his friend's deficiency, spiritual or material, is the barrier that he himself has erected between his friend and the Holy One, blessed be He, Who wants to bestow blessings at all times, he will certainly not become arrogant. On the contrary, his pride will be broken and he will achieve genuine humility. Chayey Moharan #447

Shabbat Shalom

In loved memory of

Odette 'Haya

bat Daniel haCohen