



ESSENTIAL

RABBI NA'HMAN

20

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



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I

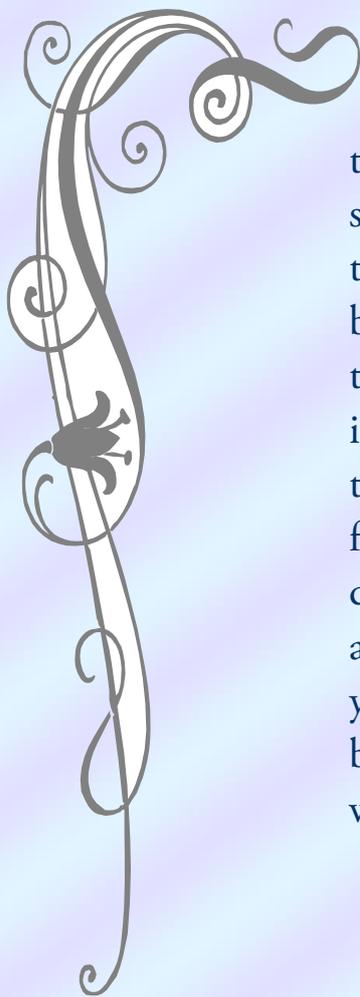
Your thoughts are in your power

Your thoughts are completely in your power. You can turn them in any direction you want. Sometimes your thoughts may run wild and fly to areas from which you should keep away. Nevertheless, it is within your power to take your thoughts in hand, even against their will, and direct them to the true path. Thought is like a horse that gallops off the road and tries to go in the wrong direction. The rider controls the horse with the bridle, forcing it to go in the right direction. As soon as you see your thoughts pulling in the wrong direction, take them in hand and bring them back in the right direction. Likutey Moharan II, 50

II

Man against beast

When a person is attacked by negative thoughts and doubts but fights and struggles to overcome them, this is very precious in God's eyes and gives Him the greatest delight. Royal celebrations sometimes include spectacles of wild beasts fighting each other, with the delighted onlookers watching the strongest beast win. Similarly, our thoughts derive from the Chayot - the "beasts" of the divine Chariot (Ezekiel 1) . Holy thoughts are pure species of animals while evil thoughts are impure beasts. Through God's design , they are pitched against one another, and He has the greatest delight when man succeeds in his struggle to overcome the impure beasts. It is a basic principle that two



thoughts cannot be present in the mind at one and the same time. You can therefore easily banish negative thoughts by sitting doing nothing - by not pursuing the bad thought but concentrating instead on a different thought, be it one of Torah, devotion or even business. For it is impossible to think two thoughts at one and the same time. There is no need to make a war and shake your head from side to side in order to banish bad thoughts. This does not help at all; quite the contrary, it makes them attack even more strongly. Simply pay no attention: do your part and think instead about Torah, prayer or business. Don't glance back at the bad thought at all. This way it will go away by itself. Likutey Moharan I, 233

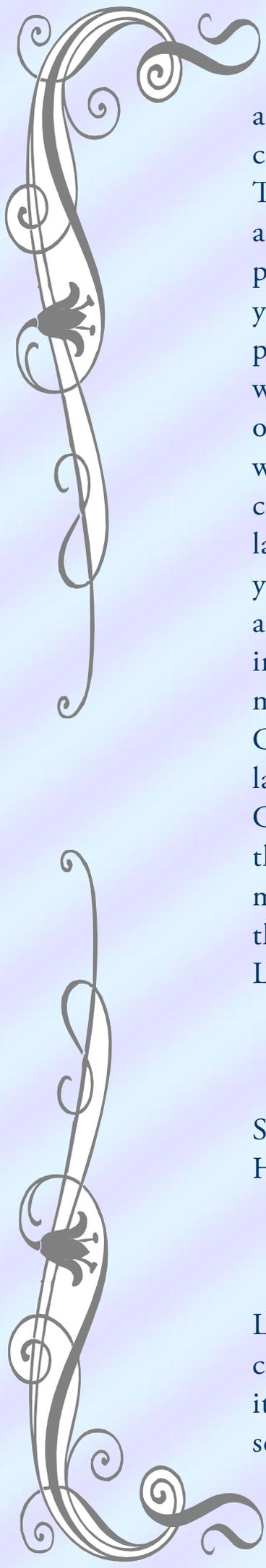
III

The comprehensive evil

Immoral lust is the comprehensive evil. It is the root of all the different kinds of evil found in the seventy nations of the world. Each of the seventy nations and languages is associated with its own particular form of evil - a negative trait or desire with which that nation is especially identified.

However, immoral lust is the sum of all evil: all the different desires found in the seventy nations are, as it were, gathered together and included in this. They all burn together, and the effect is a flaming furnace that fires men with lust. But God has separated us from the nations and exalted us above all languages. We are therefore obliged to distance ourselves from all the different kinds of evil found among them. More than anything we must guard ourselves against immoral lust, which is the sum of all evil. Separating ourselves from this is the foundation of the holiness of Israel . For man has the power to uproot this impulse completely from within himself, and herein lies our sanctity. The key to subduing and breaking your





appetites, especially immoral lust, which is the main challenge, is to strive to gain mastery of the holy language. This means sanctifying your tongue with words of Torah and prayer - both the set prayers and your own personal prayers. Even when you speak in your own native language, your words are considered to be the holy language. The point is to sanctify your tongue by always speaking in a way that is holy. This is what is meant by gaining mastery of the holy language. Through sanctifying your speech you will have the power to subdue immoral lust, which is the comprehensive evil. Moral purity and mastery of the holy language are interconnected. The more words of holiness you speak, the more you will succeed in purifying yourself, and in this way you will make amends for any immorality in the past. By the same token, the purer you become, the more your mastery of the holy language will grow. Conversely, immoral lust is bound up with the abuse of language: each feeds the other. One who guards the Covenant in purity will come to perceive the source of all the blessings that flow into the world, spiritual and material. This root is pure, radiant light. When one attains this perception, all gross material desires simply disappear. Likutey Moharan I, 19

IV

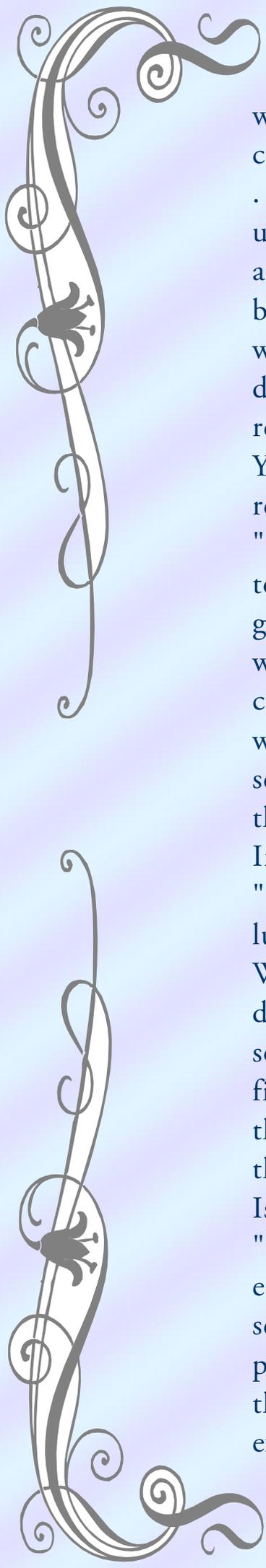
The main test

Sexual temptation is man's main test in this world. Sichot Haran #115

V

The remedy for lust

Lustful desires are man's main test in life: they are sent as a challenge to refine us. When you are subjected to this test it puts you in a kind of "exile". You should cry out to God: scream and cry out to Him over and over again, like a



woman in labor who cries out from the pain of her contractions. Seventy times she cries out (Zohar III, 249b) . You must do likewise and cry out to God again and again until He takes pity and helps you to strengthen yourself and break your desire. New ideas and new perceptions will be born within you. Previously guarded secrets of Torah will now be unveiled for you. The greater your determination to with stand the trial, the greater the revelation you will receive in Torah and devotion to God. You will be able to see the seventy faces of the Torah. The remedy for lustful desires is to say the words of the Shema, "Hear O Israel, HaShem our God, HaShem is One", together with the verse, "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever". The six Hebrew words of each of these two verses add up to twelve, corresponding to the twelve tribes of God. By saying these words you attach your soul to the twelve tribes and separate it from the "mixed multitude" that went up with the Children of Israel from Egypt (Tikkuney Zohar , Introduction) . The mixed multitude derives from the "harlot woman", the "evil maid". This is the source of lustful desire, which is the root of all bad character traits. When a person merely has one stray thought of lust or desire, it is sufficient to recite these two verses. However, some people are constantly plagued with lustful desires and find they cannot get rid of them. They must then bring themselves to tears when they take on the yoke of heaven: they should literally weep as they say the words "Hear O Israel" and "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom ". As soon as a person conquers his lustful desires he can easily control all his desires. This is why the remedy for sexual impurity is called the general remedy. The more a person distances himself from lust, the closer he comes to the radiance of Torah. The converse is also true. This explains why, before a person can receive a new revelation



of Torah, he is first tested in the crucible of this craving. If he with stands the test and breaks his desire, it is like breaking the shell before partaking of the fruit, and he will be worthy to receive the revelation. Likutey Moharan I, 36

WEALTH AND LIVELIHOOD When a person conducts his working activities with faith and honesty, he fulfills the commandment to "love HaShem your God" (Deuteronomy 6:5) , which is the root of all the commandments, and his livelihood will be sent to him without struggle and toil. The commandment to love God "with all your might " (ibid.) is fulfilled by one who overcomes his desire for wealth and does not embark on ventures beyond his means but conducts his affairs fairly and honestly, investing his own money without borrowing from others. This commandment is also fulfilled by a person who gives one fifth of his net income to charity. Likutey Moharan I, 93; 210; Sichot Haran #289

VI

Torah law and business



All the Torah laws about property and business are relevant to practical business activity. Only one who is conversant with these laws can conduct his business with faith and honesty without stumbling. Likutey Moharan I, 35

VII

Guard your money

Be very careful to safeguard your money and take good care of your possessions. It is ridiculous to be the unlucky type who loses his money through laziness and irresponsibility. A person takes time from Torah and prayer to struggle to earn money in order to support his family. After earning the money, should he become a luckless shlim mazelnik and not take care of it? Money gained honestly must be guarded like the eyes in your head. Sichot Haran #281



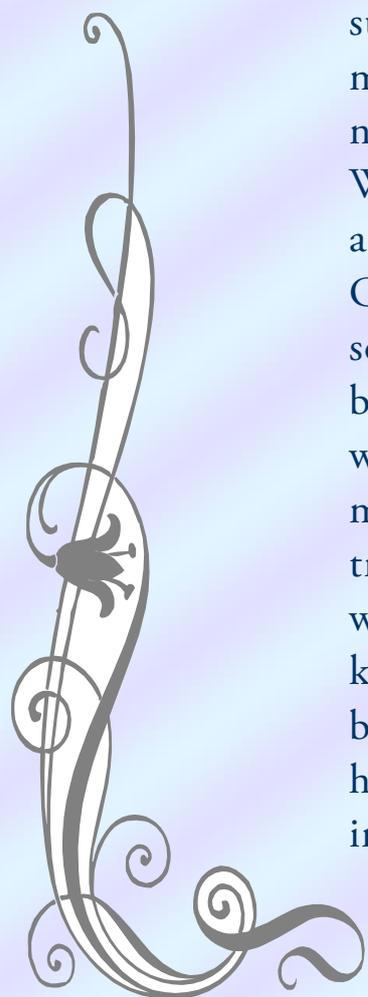
VIII

Contentment

Be content with what you have and take only what you need from this world. When you are content, you can enjoy the full light of God. But "the belly of the wicked shall be wanting" (Proverbs 13:25) - because they are not content with what they have and constantly feel the need for more. Even out of the little that you take from this world, you must contribute a portion to charity. The act of charity whereby the giver benefits the receiver brings about the union of Tzaddik and Knesset Israel in the upper world, sending a flow of blessing and abundance into this world. Likutey Moharan I, 54

IX

Have faith - and live within your means



Have faith that God will help you and provide you with what you need. Those supporting a family frequently lack sufficient income, clothing and other needs. One person may lack a simple garment; someone else may feel that he needs fine clothing and mansions.

Wait for God's help! Don't press the hour, insisting that all your needs must be satisfied immediately. Wait until God shows mercy. If I were impatient when I need something, insisting on having it at once, I would have to borrow money and go into debt. Then I would have to wander around and travel in order to earn enough to repay my debts. I would be just like the many others who have to travel for this reason. Understand this well: Learn to live within your means. Everyone is constantly in need of all kinds of things: this applies even to the very wealthy. It is best to be satisfied with a minimum and to run your household according to your means at the time. You may imagine that your wife and children need clothing. Indeed



they may need it very badly. Even so, don't press the hour and take loans or buy on credit. Wait until the time is ripe, when you are able to pay for what you need. It is better to endure privation than to fall into debt. This applies to food, and all the more so to clothing and housing. It is better to be in debt to yourself and your family - to owe them the clothing - than to be in debt to the storekeeper. In everything connected with making a living you must wait until the time is ripe. For "The eyes of all are to You, and You give them their food in its time " (Psalms 145:15). Sichot Haran #122

X

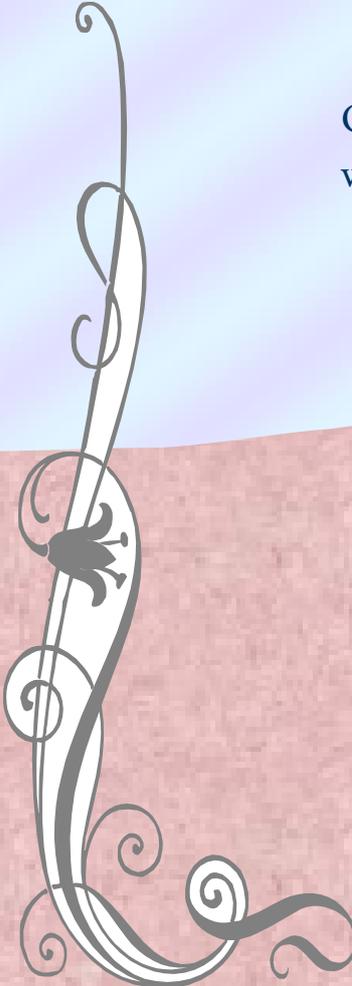
Why worry?

Why worry about making a living? The only thing to worry about is that you may die of hunger if you have nothing to eat. And if you die, what will be so terrible? You have to die anyway. Sichot Haran #250

XI

Work and livelihood

God gives livelihood and people eat for nothing. They work only because of their sins. Siach Sarfey Kodesh 1-274



Shabbat Shalom

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