



Change For The Better

Do you remember all the dreams you had as a child? Remember when life was full of possibilities and you felt that you were going places – if not now, then some day? Then suddenly you woke-up one day feeling as if you’ve been standing in the same place for too long, while life has passed you by. Paradoxically, despite the fast-paced, rapidly changing, hi-tech, and career-oriented spirit of the times, many of us still feel trapped in our daily routine, living out an unending, unchanging life-script. Our motto has become, “the more things change the more they stay the same!” As our today’s fade into yesterday’s and our tomorrow’s promise no better, we despair of ever seeing progress in our immovable existences. And as you sigh once again at the dawn of a new day, you should know that the impression of “sameness” that has inexorably gripped your mind has less to do with your standstill life, than with your lack of

faith. Pause a moment from your hectic schedule and reflect on the uniqueness of just today. Then, consider how every aspect and event down to the last detail of each day is not arbitrary but rather, determined solely by G-d. With G-d serving as the conductor of human affairs, suddenly, the dissonant occurrences of daily life, which you formerly perceived as random and senseless, resonate with great harmony. It's the power of faith that grants coherence to the rhythmic highs and lows of life, combining them into one meaningful and masterful composition. Sensing the almost lyrical quality to life's events inspires you to overcome even the direst of circumstances by instilling in you the belief that things will **"change for the better."** As the wisest of all men, King Solomon, wrote, (*Koheles 28,20*) "A man of faith will increase blessings", meaning that a life lived with faith is a blessed life. This is why we find that Rabbi Nachman of Breslov placed a great emphasis on faith and was prompted to indicate (*Sichos Haran Chap. 33*) that, "People regard faith as something insignificant – meaning that they don't consider it as fundamental, however, to me, faith is primary." Indeed, the reason why much of mankind is condemned to lead dead-end

existences is because of their lack of faith, which leaves them too fearful to risk change. Stop being so intimidated by your predicament in life! Make-up your mind; are you going to allow your fate to be ruled by fear or by G-d? Remember, no one has the power to hurt or to harm you without G-d's consent, as is written, (*Yoma 38b*) "By your name will they call you, and to your place will they seat you; a person cannot touch that which is reserved for his friend, and likewise, no kingdom can overlap the other, by even a hairsbreadth." The major obstacle for positive change in your life is an ingrained pessimism, which like a habit, is stubbornly resistant to change. In this state of mind, you've written-off your situation as too far gone, you despair of ever experiencing any good in your life, and you're convinced that things will never go right for you. Wrong! Absolutely, positively wrong! Your life-task is to fortify and build up that most underdeveloped and underused muscle in your soul called "faith", until the idea is firmly planted in your mind that G-d is in full command over your destiny and only He has the power to change your life for the better. Practically speaking, this simply means that you must recognize G-d as the source for all your needs – both spiritual and

material – and you must request them verbally, on a regular basis, in the language you are accustomed. Seems awkward? Recall what the High Priest uttered when he entered the Holy of Holies of the Temple once a year on Yom Kippur, “And may the Nation Of Israel not be dependent on each other for income.” Imagine, during the most sacred and exclusive encounters with G-d, that was sanctioned only once a year, all the High Priest was concerned with was such a mundane matter as income and material support! The lesson is obvious as it is ironic that, one of the clearest affirmations of belief in G-d that can be demonstrated, as well as the greatest of blessings that can be hoped for – is not to rely on the favors of others, but rather, to turn to G-d for all your needs and sustenance. This point is further illustrated in a parable told by the Sages (*Yoma 76b*), “Why did the Manna from Heaven fall *daily* instead of on a yearly basis? This can be compared to a human king who [decided] to set the income for his son at the beginning of the year for the entire year. [Consequently] the son did not appear to his father the entire year, since his father had [already] provided him with income for the that year (so “why must I come to my father?”) [he

reasoned]. The king said: “From this day on I will give him (support) on a daily basis, so that he will be forced to appear before me every day, and request it, so that I may have the pleasure of seeing his face.” Similarly, G-d supplied the Jews in the wilderness with Manna on a daily basis, so that they would be forced to beseech Him daily. Therefore the Sages stated, (*Tanchuma B’Shalach, 20*), “He who created the day, created sustenance [for that day].” A person must accustom himself to appear anew each day before G-d, to pray and supplicate for his needs; whether it’s financial, medical, or any other required salvation, because everything depends on G-d. The same is true regarding spiritual matters; a person must appear before G-d each day and completely repent with such confessions as: “I have sinned, I have caused perversion, I have acted wantonly, I have done evil in Your eyes, pardon me, forgive me, atone for me.” Living in an age of rationalism, naturally these religious concepts and ideas seem to run counter to the dominant climate of intellectualism that prevails. Remind yourself however, how crippled you are by fear of change, how terrified you are to take risks, and how stunted you feel overall, in life. At the risk of running counter to popular thought,

tell yourself that, perhaps it's time to return to basics and to turn to G-d for all your needs. After all, you can't continue to keep your life on hold, while your situation begs for change. You may be surprised to discover that contrary to your former belief, your situation can **change for the better!** What are you waiting for? Conquer your fear and take the plunge, by returning to G-d. Life is too, too short, as King David stated (*Tehillim, 90*), "The days of our lives are seventy years." Rabbi Nachman further explained, "the seventy years are like a quarter of an hour – it all just flits away. A person doesn't grasp that behold it is day, and behold it is night, and then a week goes by, and then a year" (*Likutei Moharan II,61*). Furthermore, this is what the Sages remarked regarding the verse, (*Divrei Hayomim I, 29:16*), "Like a shadow are our days on this earth." They said, "Were it only like a shadow of the wall or the shadow of a tree, but [alas] it's like a shadow of a bird in flight; the time flies by so fast, like the shadow of a flying bird, passing like the blink of an eye" (*Bereishis Rabba, Parshas Tzav, 2*). Take a moment and reflect on the brevity of life. This sobering thought should motivate you to take stock of your life – not to waste your precious few years on nonsense, idle

chatter, gossip, slander, sarcasm, libel, and personal vendettas. Refusing to be deceived, like the majority, by a protracted sense that you're trapped in a routine that will go on forever, you value each day and ride confidently with the hope that things will **change for the better**. Unswerving in your faith in G-d, you aren't intimidated nor do you allow yourself to feel self-conscious by family and friends as you unabashedly return to G-d, with regret over the negative actions of your past. In our decadently commercial and cynical society, where G-d and religion, are virtual outcasts, you can't imagine the impact made in Heaven when you choose to resist the popular trend and turn to G-d. As the Sages remarked, "In the place that penitents stand – there – even completely righteous individuals cannot stand" (*Berachos 34b*). The sheer will, courage, and self-control that's demanded of the true penitent who has heretofore, pursued every pleasure and indulged in every habit, makes him a worthy candidate for immediate pardon by G-d. For there is no greater affirmation and clearer declaration of faith in G-d than when the sinner repents and expresses his sincere regret over the past. The time has come for us to take an objective look at ourselves. Which

one amongst us is not hounded and hassled by pressures in life? Who is not feeling mentally battered and bruised by all the stress and worry over sheer survival today? And how many of us just wake up time and again feeling utterly disappointed in life and in ourselves? We live each day in fear of what the future will bring, with the specter of tragedy, illness, privation, and death hovering above our heads. As the Sages commented, “Prior to a man’s sinning, his [presence] is intimidating and frightening, and the creatures are afraid of him; once he sins, however, he becomes fearful of them all” (*Shir Hashirim Rabba*, 3, 14). The formula is axiomatic: the further you drift from G-d by sinning, the more external fear you experience. The paralyzing phobias, and neurotic anxiety disorders so prevalent today – that has immobilized the psyche of mankind, in a vise of fear of change, risks, and commitment – retarding growth and development – is rooted in a general lack of belief in G-d. Because mankind has rejected or ignored G-d, we suffer the collective delusion that we are stuck in our ruts in life and nothing will change. The answer is that if we restore and rebuild our personal faith in G-d within, we will cure ourselves of our unfounded,

yet crippling fears, and find the courage to change. With a fortified faith, you can weather any storm in life, confident that any situation can **change for the better**. Remember, the job of restoring faith requires action. It's not sufficient to think you believe in G-d. You must act to make G-d a living and vibrant reality in your life by talking to Him, and addressing all your needs and issues to Him. Don't let your guilt over your actions of the past hinder you from approaching G-d. Remember, Rabbi Nachman wrote, "Through faith the Blessed One Be He will forgive you for your sins" (*Sefer Hamidos, Faith, 33*). All of us are haunted by traumatic episodes in our pasts, and who is free from stressful events and distress in life? There is a strain of hopeless despair and disappointment that seems to be coursing through the collective consciousness of our generation. We have to rise to the threatening challenge and fight it. Our only weapon is our indomitable belief in the power of faith to reverse our situation. Against all odds, like never before, we must reinforce our faith in the hope that things can **change for the better**. But our faith is dependent on our mouths (*Likutei Moharan II, 44*), as is stated in *Tehillim* (89), "I will reveal my faith with my mouth." The very act of

speaking words of faith is faith itself! Let's go! Open your mouth and start speaking about faith and words of faith. You want to build up faith in yourself? Go out and encourage others to have faith. Tell all your family and friends that G-d never abandons us. Just like He helped us get through the hard times of the past, He'll pull us through now, also! By pulling ourselves out of the mud through faith, not only do we restore our belief in G-d, but we also find the courage to believe in ourselves once again, which is the key to our survival.

2.

Inner joy and contentment are perhaps the most elusive attainments of our generation today. With the level of crises and personal problems intensifying over the past years, we have been cast into such despondency and despair, that we have forgotten what true joy is. Nonetheless, despite our precarious state, you must take heart and relish the joy in the immutable fact that you have the good fortune to have been born a Jew. This alone should suffice to boost your mood and turn your despair into the hope that things can **change for the better**. To be sure, we are all prone to

pessimism and negative thinking, and the battle is a life-long struggle, but Rabbi Nachman urged that even in the direst of straits, it's forbidden to despair, as he declared (*Likutei Moharan II, 78*), "There is no despair in the world at all!" Yes, we're speaking even about your situation; even if you are trapped in the tightest of corners, with absolutely no means of escape – you are asked to defy logic, statistics, probabilities and all evidence to the contrary, and not despair – the concept simply does not exist! Rabbi Nachman wrote explicitly, "When you observe a unnatural phenomenon, don't say it's a coincidence, rather believe that it is providentially ordained by G-d" (*Sefer Hamidos, Faith, 3*). Similarly, when you are faced with one of life's inevitable dilemmas, and you are convinced there is no way out, don't give in so readily to the despair. Particularly in our generation that is overwhelmingly crushed by all the pain and hurt – whether socially or personally, both from within and without – we must understand that there is a way out. Stop taking your problems so personally, and start realizing that all the vicissitudes of life are deliberately orchestrated by G-d to prompt us into a greater awareness of Him. Your aches and pains, frustrations, hurts and disappointments are

all G-d's way of knocking on the door of your unresponsive soul. So why not answer the call, now! The reason most of us despair when faced with seemingly impossible ordeals, is because we feel that we don't have where or whom to turn to for relief. Well, faith means that no matter what happens to you or whatever situation you're in, you can always turn to G-d. This is the source of our greatest joy and our eternal hope, as Rabbi Nachman wrote regarding the faithless, (*Sichos Haran, Chap.32*) "His life is no life; the moment he is faced with tragedy, he has no one to which to turn." But a Jew lives with the legacy of faith in G-d – Whose providence extends over all phenomenon whether large or small – Who has nurtured and sustained His people throughout the continuous historical threats of extinction, even to the pain of death. When the temperature begins to rise and life becomes increasingly uncomfortable, a Jew reflexively turns to G-d, Who he knows is deliberately testing him through this ordeal out of sheer love, as the Sages said (*Berachos 5a*), "He who G-d desires – is inflicted with suffering; if he accepts it he will be [destined] to see descendants that will live long lives." It is fundamental Jewish belief that out of G-d's sheer love and redemptive

concern for us, He imposes on us suffering. A person can pass through his entire lifetime, drawn to all the glitter and amusing attractions of our fake commercial society, devoting his life-pursuits to the deceptively vain goals of wealth and honor, and not give one moments notice to his true purpose on earth. More than ever, men of vision and truth are challenged by the threat of the perverted new-age thinking and the decadence of their corrupt morals, as Rabbi Nachman forewarned (*Sichos Haran, Chap.220*), “There will come a time that the whole world will be filled with heresy and atheism, and how will we be able to withstand it?” Supplying the answer, Rabbi Nachman replies (*Ibid, 35*), “The fact that I am saying and revealing to your ears that there will come a time of great darkness that will envelope the earth; the (influence of the) mixed-multitudes (liberals) will spread in the world; (there will be a sharp rise in incidences of) corrupt and perverted behaviors, lies, and extortions; mankind will be deceived by the rise to power of frauds and impostors – but the very fact that I am articulating what will occur, will give you the power with which to withstand.” What ever happens, don’t be afraid. From the midst of your suffering, try to identify the

good, as is written (*Menachos 53b*), “Just as the olive does not give forth her oil, except by being crushed, so too the Jews do not become reformed, except through suffering.” Just as the choicest, most purest, virgin olive oil is not obtained except through pulverization, so too a Jew’s contrition is only elicited by painful means. It’s second nature to a Jew that the moment he experiences pain, he begins to cry to G-d, saying, “Master of the Universe, I’m in trouble, please save me!” And G-d responds in kind by sending him deliverance, which transforms the suffering into true joy. Be sensible, why choose the painful route of joy through suffering? Return to G-d, now – before the sting of the lash – with all the joy you can muster. It’s a fact that when a Jew returns to G-d out of love, rather than out of fear, then all the bad becomes transformed into good, meaning that all his demerits are converted into merits. We now can fully appreciate Rabbi Nachman’s famous dictum (*Likutei Moharan II,24*), “It is a great commandment to be happy always!” Your keys are locked in the car, your son failed his math test, your loved one is seriously ill and hospitalized, your marriage is breaking-up, or you lost your savings in the stock market – no matter what, fight-off your tendency to

slide automatically into depression. Stop singing the blues, and start humming a cheery tune! Be creative and imaginative, and use any means at your disposal to hoist yourself out of your puddle of self-pity and pain, and start laughing. You have no choice; there simply isn't a more effective remedy or strategy in surmounting life's inevitable ups and downs. Don't think you alone are suffering, for no one is immune to problems. Take poverty for instance; who isn't financially anxious today? The Sages said (*Shmos Rabba 31, 14*), "If all the (variety) of suffering (that exists in the world) were placed on one side, and poverty was placed on the other – then poverty would outweigh them all." The blight of poverty is harshest of all. The mendicant roams with the burden of debts slung over his back, pursued incessantly by nasty creditors – and with so much to pay-off he sees no way out except possible suicide. Nonsense! The path leading out of poverty or any other extreme problem in life – where there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel – is to pour out your heart to G-d. Speaking to G-d will give you the comfort and confidence necessary to face your problems and deal with them. Gone will be all the initial hysteria that had you panicking, and now with

clear-headed calm and reassurance, you can tackle your problems head-on. Trust in G-d leads to the joy of deliverance. But through habit and routine we have become comfortably conditioned to sadness, depression and laziness, which blocks our capacity to feel good, as Rabbi Nachman said (*Likutei Moharan I, 189*) “The main [consequence of the] bite of the Primordial Snake was laziness and sadness.” How did the Primordial Snake cause the downfall of Adam and Eve, and blacken the destiny of mankind forever? He introduced sadness into their lives, as it says regarding the first curse Adam received, “and with sadness will you eat” – even after you manage to earn a buck, it will come with much bitter toil and effort – which is the biggest curse; to be sad and aggravated, and conversely, the biggest blessing is to be happy. Joy is such a vital component to human health and well being, that if it doesn’t come naturally you should force yourself to be happy, as Rabbi Nachman said (*Likutei Moharan II, 24*), “The medical experts say that the (underlying) cause for all pathology and disease is depression and melancholy.” All agree that the prognosis of the patient is contingent on his state of mind. For instance, take a patient who is lying pathetically in

a hospital bed dreading that he'll never recover and leave the hospital. Suddenly, the doctor appears on his rounds, and smilingly informs him that he's improving and that he can look forward to being discharged in a few days. Without a doubt, that patient for better or worse, will automatically feel stronger as his dreaded fear turns into hope that his condition can change for the better. Through the power of mind over matter, his body's resistance and natural immunity becomes enhanced so that he can fend off the disease and recover. What are you waiting for? Do you want to be put in a situation where you are half-dead, waiting for a doctor to breathe new life into you, by igniting your last ebbing ember of hope? Act now, while your hearty and healthy and feel the joy! Ah! But typical of most people today, you feel too guilty to be happy. After all, I'm a failure and a disappointment in life, so I'm not worthy of happiness. The pervasive psychological guilt that prevents people from functioning and progressing in life is metaphorically termed "*Amalek*." It was this Biblical Nation that was the first to subtly shake the faith of the Jewish People in the wilderness by insinuating that G-d doesn't exist – causing them, and Jews from time in memoriam,

to utter in exasperation, “Is G-d amongst us or not?” (*Shmos*, 17). Simply by the power of suggestion, “*Amalek*” introduces the insidious doubt that spoils the joy, because faith and joy go hand in hand; once you’re thoroughly convinced that all the natural phenomenon in this world is only an earthly garb for the Infinite One, and that He is the only reality that exists, your confidence is unshakable and your joy knows no bounds. Although most of us have not experienced this high level of insight, there are uniquely righteous individuals, like the *Tzaddikim* who live with this intimate awareness of G-d and are therefore always joyous. In their joyous state they are privileged to Divine Revelation, which is beyond normal human comprehension, as the Sages stated, “Divine Spirit only rests on the gladdened heart” (*Yerushalmi Succah* 5,1). The truly righteous *Tzaddikim*, who are acutely aware of the spiritual rewards of joy, deliberately work on maintaining a level of optimum joy, in order to gain ever-greater novel insight and awareness. You’re still hesitant and unsure, however; you insist on wallowing in your depression and self-pity, waiting for someone to take you by the hand and magically pull you out of your pit. There is no magic to getting help; the

mechanics are simple. G-d is the Merciful Father of all mankind – including you. He stands, so to speak, waiting patiently at the door for the return of all – including you. So why don't you just give it a try? Just open your mouth and simply say, "Father, reveal Yourself to me. Father, I am sorry for all that I did. I hereby accept upon myself that from here on in, I will try to control my temper, I will not strive with others, I will not steal from anyone, I will not commit any misdeed, so please forgive me." As it were, G-d's anonymous presence in the universe does not permit us to witness the impact of our overtures to Him, but if it were, a person would not cease to speak to G-d and return to Him completely. Yet, we see that mankind continues to delay and drag its' feet in returning to G-d? This is because of a counter-force that invariably has stood in opposition to mankind's spiritual aspirations, since the beginning of time. As the Sages said (*Bamidbar Rabba 20,13*), "Balaam (the gentile prophet), was openly wicked and he knew that nothing is effective for a person except repentance and confession. For nothing can mitigate punishment except for repentance; anyone who sins and then utters, "I have sinned", an angel cannot harm him." Therefore Rabbi Nachman

declared that he waged a daily war, so to speak, against Balaam, the wicked, whose spirit lives on in each one of us in the form of the intrusive lustful fantasies and depraved urges that we personally experience – and in the indecent and immodest decadence that permeates society today. It is these competing forces that have driven a wedge between our Father in Heaven and us. Now, how can we counteract our natural inclinations and urges and commit ourselves wholly to G-d. The answer is through the power of joy. Rabbi Nachman said (*Likutei Moharan I,169*), “When a person is consistently happy, the Blessed-One-Be-He, Himself, protects that person from commission of sin and transgression.” Furthermore, the Sages said (*Tanchuma Shmini, 2*), “Joy waits for no one, not everyone who is happy today is [guaranteed] to be happy tomorrow.” Indeed, our lives are not static and no matter how bad or severe our situation is today, things could always change tomorrow. But why wait? You’re not stuck in life, you just think you are! It’s really all a matter of perception. The secret behind joy’s power to inspire change is that it instills you with a belief that things can **change for the better**. This is a message of hope, even if your situation seems

desperate and dire. So why be depressed? Kick up your heels, and jump for joy! Joy will bring you to faith and faith will bring you to prayer. Remember, G-d controls everything and He loves you! Approach Him for whatever you need, and don't move until you get satisfaction. In the often troubling waters of life, there is no island of refuge except prayer, as the Sages said (*Berachos 6b*), "Whoever establishes a (permanent) place for his prayers, the G-d of Abraham will assist him." What's the connection? Our forefather Abraham, was unique in that he was historically the first person to reveal G-d to the world. In a world populated exclusively by idol worshippers – even his father, Terach, was a manufacturer of gods – Abraham had to single-handedly lead the Monotheistic movement. Did you ever ask yourself, who did Abraham have to turn to in time of need? The remarkable success of Abraham was a result of his arrival at the conclusion that he could only rely on G-d. Similarly, when a Jew arrives at the conclusion that he has no one else upon whom to rely, except G-d, then he too receives assistance from the G-d of Abraham. In the spirit of the Patriarch Abraham, who established his place to pray at every hour and every moment, we too

should accustom ourselves to exclusively request our needs only from G-d, and not despair. Additionally, the Sages stated (*Tanchuma Vayera, 1*), “G-d told the Jews, ‘be conscientious regarding prayer. For there is no greater service than it. It is more lofty than the sacrifices, and even if a person is not worthy of his prayers being answered or to have kindness bestowed on him – because he prays and continuously petitions, I will perform kindness for him.’” The process is self-reinforcing – when you pray you increase your level of faith in G-d. The more belief you have in G-d – meaning you feel G-d’s realness – then the less alone you feel, and the happier you will be. Faith is like a lamp in the darkness of your deepest fears. And just as with the flip of a switch, you can turn the darkest room into light, turning to faith can dispel all your worries and fear and **change everything for the better.**

3.

The Nation of Israel is imperiled today, and her integrity is threatened by lack of unity. The internecine conflicts between religious movements, political warfare waged amongst the various splinter parties, communal in-fighting, and family feuding are all being played-out in imitation of the

Biblical Generation of Dispersion whose infamous end may be repeated if we don't stop insisting "I am right and the other guy is wrong." With the embattled nation teetering on near collapse, polarized into secular and religious camps, physically and culturally threatened by enemies from without, never has there been a greater need for a call to unity and a cessation of strife. Putting all causes and justifications aside, what objective gain is there in fighting with your brother, and certainly what gives you the right to pursue and stalk any Jew? Come to your senses already, and realize that underlying the tragic and blood-soaked history of the Jewish People is the repetitive motif of dissension and discord, subtly instigated by the spirit of *Amalek*, that assumes a different form in every age. Using the tactic of "divide and conquer", he stokes the coals of conflict in all the villages and hamlets, between the city dwellers and across the nations, penetrating even the inner sanctums of government and leadership as well. Therefore it is important to recognize the trend, and to refrain from any form of conflict and strife against any Jew, as Rabbi Nachman said (*Likutei Moharan I, 181*), "When a few rise-up against a lone person, they can cause his downfall." The baseless hatred

between fellow Jews is lethal and must be eradicated. How sensible is it that we are so meticulous not to transgress the prohibition against consuming pork, yet we are careless about transgressing the prohibition of despising a fellow Jew – which is far worse. Aren't we tired already from centuries of strife? Who is not weary from the current politically deadlocked situation? Why not try peace and watch how the situation can **change for the better**. Remember the words of the wise man, "One fight can drive away one hundred incomes." That's right, a single instance of conflict between two people can cause a hundred families to lose their sustenance and support, and be plunged into debt. How so? For instance, Rueben has a dispute with Shimon and they begin to quarrel. Now each party has a set of brothers that are employed by the other party, and each of these sets of brothers have brother-in-laws and other family members that are dependent on them for support. As a result of the hard feelings, each party fires the other ones relatives, with the resulting consequence that one hundred people are now left without support. Observe the tragic consequence of one single argument! This has been the tragic saga of the Jewish People since her birth

as a nation, which has only served to reinforce the impression in her collective consciousness that her future is bleak, there will never be any light at the end of the tunnel, that the situation can only get worse, and that curses of today will always exceed those of the day before. The Sages taught (*Shmos Rabba*, 30), “Nothing good emerges from conflict, and peace is not born of strife. Cain harmed his brother because of a [mere] dispute.” Furthermore they stated (*Bamidbar Rabba* 18), “How devastating is conflict – anyone who assists in [promoting] strife – the Holy One Blessed He extirpates his memory. G-d’s policy is clear: controversy is despised and peace is desirable. So choose peace and everything will **change for the better**, as the Sages said (*Bereshis Rabba* 38,6), “So great is peace that even if the Jews worship idols, if there’s peace between them, G-d says, so to speak, I will not exert my authority over them, due to the concord existing between them.” In fact, a climate of peace fosters mutual understanding and objective thinking so much so, that Rabbi Nachman wrote (*Likutei Moharan I,27*), “It will bring about that one [Jew] will explain to the other the higher purpose in life, [prompting him to ask] what value is there in fighting? After all we are Jews, the

children of the same G-d, as it is written, “You are children to the Lord your G-d” (*Devarim, 14*). Just as a father is disgusted when his children fight, so too G-d finds conflict between Jews intolerable. For a nation desperately searching for answers to the painful question of why it is condemned to suffer so much – which has only led to national despair and a gloomy sense that there’s no end in sight – it must take a long hard look from within. Rabbi Nachman said (*Sefer Hamidos, Shalom 2*), “Through the pursuit of peace, one merits honor in this world, and life in the next world” – meaning that when a Jew fosters awareness of G-d around the world – of which the Sages remarked (*Shabbos 10b*), the name of G-d is synonymous with peace – it’s considered as if he is fostering peace. He then gains the admiration of his fellow man, because peace-loving individuals are naturally beloved. Additionally he merits life in the World to Come – which is of a purely spiritual nature. By now the answer to our national dilemma is obvious. In order to bring a final close to all the tragic suffering and improve the lot of the nation, we must repair the national unity. When peace is brokered between each Jew and his brother, then the climate will be ripe for faith. As we know, one of G-

d's names is "peace" and our Sages said (*Vayikra Rabba* 9,9), "So great is peace, that all the blessings are included in it." Prayer is also predicated on peace, which is the reason cited by the Rabbi Nachman (*Likutei Moharan* I,239) as to why the Holy Ari"zal instituted the practice that before commencing prayer we should accept upon ourselves the positive commandment to "Love thy brother as yourself." Speech can only emanate from a mind that is in a state of inner peace. When a person is in conflict with his fellow man, his mind becomes absorbed by the issues of the dispute, and he cannot devote his undivided attention to the matter of prayer. Therefore, if a person desires to pray effectively – so that his situation will **change for the better** – he must resolve any conflict with his fellow Jew to prevent any mentally intrusive thoughts. Salvation is really in our hands! As the Sages commented (*Devarim Rabba*, 5,12), " So great is peace, that G-d will not announce the [moment of] redemption without peace." We are all clamoring for the final redemption and demanding that it come, so what is holding it up? Again it's the spirit of the old foe, *Amalek* – who embodies all our self-doubts and doubts in G-d's love for us, which makes us so

nervous and insecure that we begin to regard each other with suspicion, rather than with brotherly love. Bearing this in mind, our priorities are in need of serious readjustment; instead of making futile peace overtures to the gentile nations, peace accords between ourselves must be at the top of the agenda. Road maps to peace with the gentiles only lead to disaster, as Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai unequivocally declared: It's axiomatic that Esav hates Jacob" (*Sifri Beha'alo secho, 9,10*). Esav, who traditionally represents the nations of the world, despises the Nation of Israel, and nothing will alter this fact. Two thousand years of senseless persecution and horrible torture of every unimaginable kind, irrefutably proves that reconciling with the nations is only an exercise in futility, as the Sages taught (*Shabbos 89a*), "From the moment the Torah descended on Sinai, [so did] the enmity of the Gentiles descend on the Jews." The current peace talks are similarly a waste of time and energy. Isn't the Torah's description of Yishamel as a "wild man" sufficient for us to abandon the hope of ever dwelling in peace together? Why do we seek to beautify the gardens belonging to other people, when we have enough work in our own backyard? There is more to be

accomplished by reconciling with each other, then to force peace down the throats of our enemies who seek to devour us – regardless of what type of Jew we may be. It is time for us, the Jewish People, to cure ourselves of our inferiority complex and to recognize our rightful place in the destiny of mankind. Each Jew is a precious jewel, set in the diadem of the King of kings, our loving father, G-d. (*Likutei Moharan, I,6*) When the Final Redemption comes, speedily in our days, the Messiah will honor us with his presence, but only after we merit it, by the honor we will show for each other.

