



Hope for the Best

Did you ever try prayer? It really works! Granted you've tried a number of times to pray and nothing happened. Don't give up. Remember the adage, 'If you don't succeed at first, try, try again'. Prayer works only if you work at it, as the Sages said (*Berachos*, 32b), "Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chanina said, 'If a person sees that he prays and is not answered, let him go back and pray again, as is stated in the verse (*Tehillim*, 27,14) , 'Hope in G-d – strengthen and fortify your heart and hope in G-d'". You see, dear friend, most of us in life are going around in circles. Every day we place our hope in *this* scheme, and *that* pill, and in *this* person to get rich, or to land that job, or to cure this pain and that ache, or to make us happy or, to put it short – fill the emptiness in our lives that we ourselves can't. Prayer, on the other

hand empowers *you*; it helps you become self-reliant, by making you realize that you only have G-d to rely on, and nothing else. But, it takes work; it's not enough to know this in your mind; you have to make G-d a tangible reality in your life, by speaking to Him on a regular basis like you would to your friend or a child before his father. With every word you utter, you're connecting another dot in the larger picture of a G-d in whom you are developing total trust, leading to a more confident *you*. You want to build your self-esteem and have some measure of self worth?; then firmly fix in your mind that your fate lies in G-d's hands and not in others, as the Sages said (*Menachos* 29b), "Whoever places their trust in the Holy-One-Blessed-Be-He, it will serve as a refuge in this world and in the next". The minute a person recognizes decidedly, that he has no one to rely on in this world, except G-d, his future automatically becomes brighter. But, as long as he continues to fool himself by placing his trust in external factors, he remains forever standing on shaky ground, faint of heart, enfeebled by shallow faith. Consummate faith – the kind that works and really counts, on the other hand – demands total surrender and complete trust in G-d's

exclusive power to save, bar none. Then you will see wonders and miracles in every aspect of your life! Indeed, life becomes a breeze once the fear factor is removed as Rabbi Nachman said (*Sefer Hamidos*, Chap. Heading “Faith”, Par. 1), “Whoever has trust [in G-d], has no fear”, and furthermore it is written in (*Yeshayahu*, Chap. 12, V. 1), “I will trust, and not be afraid”. The very act of trusting G-d strengthens your conviction in His absolute control, to the degree that you no longer fear anybody or anything, and you’re prepared at any moment, to give up your life for Him, as Rabbi Nachman said (*Sefer Hamidos*, Chap. Heading “Trust”, Par. 7), “Whoever is sure of G-d, the Blessed, the Holy-One-Blessed-Be-He saves him from all calamity”. So, take a moment and step back, and allow your mind to be filled with thoughts of simple faith in G-d. Know and let it be known that nothing, but nothing, either large or small evolves independently, but rather emanates from a Higher Source – and that G-d is the force behind everything that moves and breathes in the universe. There you have it! G-d is everything so what is there to be afraid of? Work on your trust in G-d. The stronger your commitment to G-d, the more you will find yourself surrendering your fate to Him as the

Sages said (*Devarim Rabba*, Chap. 5, Par. 8) “Whoever trusts in G-d is worthy of being like Him [so to speak] – and where do we know this? As it written (*Yirmiyahu*, Chap. 17, V. 7), ‘Blessed is the man who trusts in G-d, and G-d will trust in him’”. Furthermore, Rabbi Nachman said, (*Sefer Hamidos*, Chap. Heading “Trust”, Par. 8), “With trust a person does not need his friend, and no person can humiliate him”. Once you achieve full reliance on G-d, then you don’t need anyone else. When you grow intimately close to G-d – by directing all your thoughts and conversations to Him – as if you were confiding in your closest friend or as child before a father – you automatically begin to relate to reality exclusively in terms of Him. Therefore you’re no longer offended by the insults of others, because you fully accept that in essence, they issue from G-d. With your eyes always turned heavenward, you are unperturbed by the actions of others down here. Imagine achieving such a thorough level of acceptance; it’s certainly a goal worth aspiring to. Then you will know the meaning of a life lived in true tranquility and serenity, free of the neurotic fears and phobias common to those who place their trust in fate, and not in G-d. What does it matter what *he* is doing or what

she has – when only G-d matters to you. When you eat, drink and breathe G-dliness in your every waking hour and all your desires are directed towards G-d, then no one can break you, no one can intimidate you, and nothing will worry you, as Rabbi Nachman said (*Sefer Hamidos*, Chap. Heading “Trust”, Par. 9), “Through trust a person is saved from worry”. I know this sounds all too good to be true. You’re probably wondering how this applies to someone so far away from G-d as yourself. “Can I really climb out of my deep rut and erase years of reckless straying and promiscuous behavior, and work my way back into the warm embrace of G-d?” you ask. Why the guilt alone is enough to drive you into mad despair, and cause you to stop from even trying. But you can! It is never too late to return to the loving arms of G-d. Even if you have sinned enough to be counted amongst the wicked, you have a chance to transcend your squalid past and make a whole new beginning, by the sheer power of trust, as the Sages said (*Yalkut Tehillim*, Allusion 719), “Even a wicked person [if] he has trust in G-d – will be encompassed by compassion”. The redemptive power of trust is so potent that it defies description. It is the driving force behind a

person's faith in G-d, as Rabbi Nachman said (*Sefer Hamidos*, Chap. Heading "Trust", Par. 18), "Through trust a person is drawn to G-d". The secret however, is not to dwell on the regrets of the past – no matter how guilty you feel. Remember, it's your past that has brought you to the present; to the place you are in now – which is the longing to be close to G-d. Therefore seize the opportunity, and find yourself a secluded spot where you can speak privately to G-d as you would to a close friend or as a child before his father – you won't be sorry. A new world will open up before you. Rabbi Nachman could not extol enough the virtues of that individual who raises his voice to speak to his Creator. In fact, Rabbi Nachman explicitly stated that, whether commoner or of noble rank it is impossible to be a truly devout person without engaging in regular conversation with G-d (*Likutei Moharan*, Vol. 2, Par. 100). He would also relate that the select few, eminently great righteous ones – *tzaddikim* – could not have achieved their exalted stature without having adopted the practice of speaking to G-d on a regular basis – which is the gateway towards the Divine. Furthermore, if a person only knew what can be achieved by merely talking to G-d, they

would never stop. The very act of talking to G-d builds your faith in G-d, as Rabbi Nachman explains (*Sefer Hamidos*, Chap. Heading “Faith”, Par. 34), “Through faith you can achieve trust” – and the minute you have achieved both, your entire personality undergoes a profound change, as you shed your insecurities and self doubts. This can only work however, on the condition that you approach the matter with seriousness – otherwise you’re just fooling yourself. Rabbi Nachman already warned (*Sichos Haran*, Par. 51), “Take it from me – don’t let the world fool you, because life can fool a person greatly”. Furthermore, there is nothing more effective for correcting one’s distorted perceptions than prayer and informal conversations with G-d. Because in the very act of searching for G-d, you actually find yourself; so that the encounter with the Divine is a simultaneous encounter with the self. Suddenly, core issues about the meaning of your own existence, your place in the world, and the purpose of life itself will bother you. You will step back to examine the fuller picture. The truth being unavoidable, you won’t be able to hide from yourself anymore. In this sublime moment of truthful awareness, you will honestly face your failures and shortcomings and stop

fooling yourself. By checking in with G-d routinely, you make the necessary reality checks to keep things in proper perspective, so that you don't break down and check out of life. Otherwise, you get so caught up in the maelstrom of life's hectic pace, that you never take the time to verify your aim and true purpose in life. These divine conversations keep you grounded and on track, as Rabbi Nachman said (*Sichos Haran*, Par. 228), "Certainly you find genuinely righteous [individuals] who don't informally converse with G-d, but I call them *"Pleytas"* misguided and confused. So why not clear your way through the forest, by making it a habit of talking to G-d. Discuss every move you make in life with Him and you will never stray. With G-d as your guide-post you will surely emerge from the darkness into the light. Don't wait. Begin now by secluding yourself in a private area and start opening yourself up to G-d by opening your mouth and speaking to Him as you would to a close friend or like a child before his father. Witness the profound impact that this simple act will have on your life, as you begin to feel the stirrings of faith and trust in G-d well-up inside of you. As if led by the hand, the challenges of life will suddenly seem

manageable and you will feel a sense of being complete – without anything lacking. Such are the rewards that await you when you allow G-d to enter your life and lead you. The restorative power of faith revives us like a sweet sleep; deprived of it, we cease to function in an organized fashion and we become scattered. This single ingredient is so vital for proper daily functioning, yet sadly it is missing from so many people's lives. Don't let your natural skepticism hold you back from what can make the biggest difference in your life. Accept this advice on face value and start talking up a storm with G-d. If you're having major problems in life and you're at wits end, or if you simply want to pass a test, be more popular, need more money, or just want to feel better about yourself – tell it to G-d. Satisfaction is guaranteed and that's a promise.

2.

As much as we are reluctant to admit it, the lack of money is at the heart of most peoples' unhappiness in life, as the Sages said (*Shemos Rabba*, Chap. 31, Par. 12), "There is nothing more harsh in life than poverty, it is the most trying of

all of life's tribulations". And furthermore, the Sages said (*ibid*): "If all types of suffering would be collectively grouped on one side, and poverty placed on the other, it would outweigh them all". As a case in point, let us take the example from the story of *Iyov* (*Job*), from whose ordeal we can gain a profound sense of the depth of suffering incurred by poverty. The Torah relates that the heavenly prosecutor, Satan, challenges the integrity of *Iyov's* faith in G-d, by complaining that he's a man that has it all – after all, G-d provided Him with fabulous wealth and children, as is written, "Have You not set a protective wall about him, about his household, and about everything that he owns" (*Iyov* Chap. 1, V. 10); "Is it for nothing that *Iyov* fears G-d?" (*Iyov*, Chap. 1, V. 9); "But set forth Your hand and touch everything that is his" (*Ibid*). And as the story goes, G-d offered *Iyov* a choice of being tested with either poverty or suffering, to which he replied: Master of the Universe I will select all the suffering in the world, but just not poverty – because when I go out to the market, and I don't have a penny to spend, what will I eat? But, once he's afflicted what do we find? He begins to complain about the judgment passed against him, as it's written, "If only I could find Him

[G-d]" (*Iyov*, Chap. 23, V. 3). Then *Elihu*, his colleague, challenges him by saying, "Why are you complaining, didn't you request suffering, instead of poverty?" This was your choice, as it's written, (*Ibid*, Chap. 36, V. 21) "Be careful, do not turn to wrongdoing; for this is what you have chosen over poverty". If suffering itself is so unbearable, imagine then how intolerable poverty is? As is widely known, the anguish of poverty can make a person feel as if they're going out of their mind, and cause him to question G-d's ways. The best advice is for a person undergoing such an ordeal is to cling to a simple faith and trust in G-d's infinite wisdom, and eventually he will overcome it. In fact Rabbi Nathan, the chief disciple of Rabbi Nachman, in his writings (*Likutei Halachos*, "Laws of Interest", Law 3, Par. 1), explains that all the worry and concern associated with financial unrest, stems from a lack of basic trust in G-d. Elaborating further, he writes, that at the heart of it, the lack of trust is derived from a person's erroneous belief that income is a function of circumstance, as expressed in the cliché, "being in the right place at the right time". In reality, the Divine flow of sustenance continuously streams down from Above unimpeded. However, the

circumstances under which it arrives in the material world – meaning the time and place – creates the impression in the mind that they are agents of cause determining the outcome. G-d is above time and place, which the human mind cannot fathom. So, in order to provide for us, G-d must manifest His goodness in material form that follows the natural laws that He created, in terms that we can understand – that is why it appears that there are times that you are lucky and you earn, and times when you're not; also there are locations where the earning power seems greater, and others that are not. Without this understanding, however, you become offended by the uneven distribution of wealth amongst people, across different locales which is the source of your financially insecurity. As a result, you mistakenly redouble your efforts and futilely chase after wealth, not realizing that it's a function of G-d's timing and not human effort. If you were wise, you would have faith in G-d's timing, and not strain yourself so much to earn a buck – after all, if G-d wills He can easily supply you with income, without too much effort on your part. To be sure, a person has to make a token effort to earn a living, as the Sages remarked (*Sifri Re'eh*)

regarding the verse (*Devarim*, Chap.15, V. 18), “And I will bless you in all that you do” – that since we live in the physical world, G-d’s support and sustenance must be rendered in the form which our minds can grasp, such as currency or wages, earned through working or trading. The mistake most of us make, however, is that we think it’s the job or the business that furnishes support, and not G-d. Get it straight, income comes directly from G-d, through His guiding hand, and therefore one can never predict what will make him wealthy. Therefore, don’t get restless and be in a rush to get rich, and likewise, don’t overwork yourself in your job or career, as if that alone will increase your income. In most instances, you will be disappointed to find that not only did you fail to earn, on the contrary you lost, as is written, “Whoever pushes the hour – the hour pushes him back” (*Berachos*, 64a). Remember, the only reason for engaging in business or going to work, is to fulfill G-d’s dictum of conducting business in “good faith” – meaning with the intention of establishing a channel to receive G-d’s support and sustenance in material form, as implied in the verse, “And I shall bless you in all that you do” – whatever job you perform, be

what it may – even if it's menial labor or an easy desk job, G-d will cause you to earn. Hard to believe? How many people throughout the years have you seen struggle, moving from one job to the next, trying this career and that, starting and shutting one business after the other, yet never making it – and then suddenly G-d out of His infinite compassion grants them success that they've been yearning for, for decades. And don't we read almost daily in the papers, of some rags-to-riches story, where some commoner suddenly, struck it rich overnight, in some unexpected way. Be smart! Cast your financial worries, doubts and insecurities aside, and start relying on G-d for support. Realize that all the efforts you expend on chasing lucrative careers, building complex businesses, or trading on the high stakes bonds and commodities markets are futile, because when your destined time comes, G-d will provide you anyway, with your needs – easily, without strain – despite your efforts. Come to your senses already and stop overworking yourself. Not only is the stress and worry not helping you earn, on the contrary it's causing you to lose. Remember, above and beyond the illusive constructs of time and place imposed by the human mind, exists the true

reality of G-d. From that purely abstract state shines forth the light of G-d with such blinding intensity that it defies human sensibility. Unable to experience Him directly; G-d must conceal Himself within the natural order that is governed by time and place. It is up to us to gradually uncover G-d's undisclosed presence, within the universe – to which all of creation alludes. So, although you may think that it's your job, career, investments, and location that are causing you to earn, in reality, it's G-d's invisible hand that is providing support. So, work we must – because the inner workings of G-d are hidden there – or else how else can we come to know Him? But, once you mature in faith, and you're fully aware of G-d's control, there is no longer any difference between here and there, earthly time and timelessness, place and void – the disguise comes off, revealing only G-d. Earning a living comes easy, without strain, once you recognize its true and only source. But like the dog that bites the stick, how many of us stubbornly refuse to recognize the hand that's waving it? So mankind, persistent in its denial of G-d's role in the universe, is condemned to fall victim to the irony of time and place. We will put ourselves through years of schooling and

training, work long hours for low wages, chase after this scam offer and that, hop from one job to the next, and waste our hard earned dollars dreaming that we will win the lottery – only for most of us to end up old, gray, and unhappy – with nothing to show for all our efforts. How absurd! This is what happens when you place your faith in the wrong things, instead of G-d. Still, faith is not a quick fix – don't expect to become a millionaire overnight. You must work on your faith and be patient, because "Whoever pushes time, time pushes him back, and whoever allows time to hold him back, time will be held back before him" (*Berachos*, 64a). When you're too restless and you want it big and fast, you're demanding it on *your* time; not on G-d's. By not trusting in G-d's timing and following the plan, you invariably set yourself up for disappointment – time literally, so to speak, will push you back. Feeling always pressed for time and pressed to earn, you'll be flying to Hong Kong this week, to chase some business leads your friends told you about; next week you'll be preaching to others about the miraculous get-rich overnight possibilities of the latest scam – if they would only attend the meetings and sell products. And if that doesn't work, you'll simply

give-up your nine-to-five paycheck and start day-trading like all your friends who convinced you about the fast millions to be made. Come on now! Stop pushing the train so much – it won't go any faster. You're feeling hard-pressed financially? Had enough of struggling so much already? Then just relax and let go. Remember, in the journey of life, G-d is the supreme conductor. He charts the course of all mankind's destiny, and He determines the speed and velocity by which we head for success. There are no shortcuts. If you try to outpace G-d, you'll only end-up derailed. Don't rush time! Better to keep on track and wait your turn. Ultimately, you will pull into your station in life – and just in the right time.

Earning a living becomes less tough and will seem to flow more easily and faster, when you stop being impatient and cease worrying so much. Contrary to popular thinking, "making it" in life, does not depend on making the "right moves". In fact, being too self-conscious about your image, and less focused on G-d's control, actually makes you a partner in sabotaging your own chances for success.

Ironically, it's the popularly false notion that you have to chase after income, that is stressing you out, when in fact your furious pursuit after income is what is really chasing it away. Most of us are operating under the typical delusion of time and place, that if we work hard long hours or we land *that* job in *that* city or state we will get rich. Yet, on a deeper level, when you finally realize that working and earning a living is a means of finding G-d, your whole perspective changes. The sudden awareness that all along income is G-d's hand and not your own, suddenly frees you from the desperate urge to pursue money any way, anyhow, and at any cost. The game is called-off as you realize that all efforts at earning are just a pretext to allow G-d's sustenance to stream in. In reality, however, if your conviction is so strong that income comes only from G-d, then no secondary channel for streaming-in income is necessary at all: Trust in G-d itself becomes the channel for income (*Likutei Moharan*, Vol.1, Chap. 76). Once a person rids himself of any side interests and focuses only on G-d, he passes the test. He has no expectations from others, because he believes that G-d provides for him directly. Once you're convinced that G-d is the primary source of all

income, then what, where and how you make money becomes secondary. Earning becomes a breeze. Do you need added pressure in your life? Why continue running after other people's favors in life when you know G-d's address. G-d is only as far as the lips of your mouth, so start talking to Him and tell Him what you need. The days of senseless worrying and panic are over. The main thing is to trust in G-d. Hoping in Him is **hoping for the best**, and He will deliver.

3.

There are many things in life that we just don't understand and maybe never will. Without support, however, life can seem like an endless stream of problems leading only to frustration. It's not enough that you are confused and struggling to find meaning in life, but there's also a wife to please, children to raise, bills to pay, health issues, and just plain pressure from the society we live in. Nonetheless, no matter how little sense it all makes and how complex your life issues are, there is only one way to get through it – that is a simple faith in G-d! As random and arbitrary as circumstances in life may seem,

behind it all, is the invisible hand of G-d controlling everything; nothing occurs by itself or without Him, and everything G-d does is for the best, as the Torah teaches, (*Berachos*, 60a), “Even if there are things which we cannot understand, even so – the Holy-One-Blessed-Be-He is full of compassion. He has mercy on us and His desire is only for our eternal good”. It is this fundamental belief that G-d cares that gives us our strength, as stated in *Tehillim* (Chap. 18), “He said “I love you”, and I will be strengthened”. I can weather any storm and face the worst situations in life, only with the knowledge that ultimately, G-d is full of compassion, and will have mercy on me. The choice is yours! You can choose to accept these words and your life will be altogether different, or you can be stubborn and suffer the hard way. Without faith it’s almost impossible to get through life but with it, you can soar to the heights, as Rabbi Nathan of Breslov explained, “With absolute faith you can [even] transcend [the limits] of the human intellect.” (*Likutei Halachos, Rosh Hashanah*, Law 6, Par. 3). What do we mean? Without going too deeply into esoteric matters, we can catch a glimpse of the underlying dynamics of faith, within the metaphysical framework of what

Kaballah terms the ten “Divine Emanations”. For our purposes, it's sufficient to note that G-d allows us to conceive His abstract presence in the make-up of the universe, in the form of a hierarchy of attributes ranging from the highest level, *Kesser* (crown) to the lowest *Malchus* (kingship). *Malchus* is the aspect generally associated with faith, which is the only portal to which one can begin to enter into the meaning of G-d. Without faith one cannot have any conception of what holiness means, nor perform any meaningful act to connect himself to G-d. Yet, paradoxically, faith lies beyond the realm of what the mind can grasp, which is its ultimate challenge. To embrace faith means to suspend your own judgment and to override your crude and limited intelligence, relying solely on the teachings of faith, as passed down to us from our Forefathers and the Sages. But, contrary to popular belief, faith is not blind; believing is seeing, so that eventually what was formerly hidden, paradoxically becomes revealed, through a sustained and steady faith. Faith is not static, it's a dynamic process whereby the more you have the more profound does your perception become – rounding-out the picture. As you apply yourself more and more to faith, what was

formerly unfathomable becomes now understood; knowledge and awareness of the Divine grows; referring again to the Kabbalistic paradigm, as you climb to higher and higher levels, you are actually ascending the hierarchy of the ten spiritual rungs of that particular level, because within each of the ten levels exists another, inner ten sub-levels. The lowest rung of each successive macro-level is faith – which is the first to greet a person as his awareness grows – because without it he cannot possibly fathom nor penetrate the mystery of G-d. What it boils down to is that a person must gird himself with a simple, unpretentious, and unsophisticated faith in G-d. With all his heart he must believe that the Almighty is a compassionate father, who rules the world with righteousness and judgment, calculated with fairness and exactitude. Remember, wherever you are standing today in matters of faith is not necessarily a reflection of where you will be tomorrow. Faith is not a fixed process; as you cling harder and harder to faith, you are spiritually progressing from one of the ten inner levels to the next, starting from the lowest, “*Malchus*”, until the zenith – which is the highest, termed “*Kesser*”, characterized by a

sense of supreme desire for an intimate connection with G-d. Keep going, however, because in the realm of the spiritual, the levels are infinite, so that one door of awareness only leads to another. While completion of all ten subsidiary levels of one macro-level, leaves you standing at its highest point, nonetheless you will have suddenly arrived at the bottom point of the next one – which is higher and deeper in profundity. All growth and development in life however, takes time and comes with a modicum of suffering and pain. So, as you journey on the path of faith be patient and forbearing: Face all the challenges with rectitude, and resist becoming corrupt. The vicissitudes of life and its inherent disappointments are uniquely designed according the particular make-up of your soul; you can't proceed to next level of the journey without first resolving the unfinished business of your past – particularly if it was sordid and shameful. The development of the child into the adult parallels the growth in faith; with age your desires become more sophisticated and mature, so too with each stage of faith that you reach, your desire for G-d becomes increasingly more mature and refined. Then you are ready to take on the next level of faith, opening doors of

awareness even more deeper and abstract than before, arriving to the conclusion that ultimately, the object of all knowledge lies in the fact that we can't know – but, only believe! Again, be aware that the successive levels of faith that you must attain in life are always preceded by trial and ordeal. Your faith must be shaken before it can be refined. So, yes, it is normal that many things in life will defy logic and make no sense to you at all. Doubts and questions about G-d's way will indeed, insinuate themselves into your heart and confuse your mind. Nonetheless, close your eyes and suspend your judgment. Cling so tight to your insuperable faith in G-d as if you could see it with your own eyes and comprehend it with your mind. Don't worry! The awareness comes, because your original faith will bring you there. So the process goes, with faith serving as the vehicle for carrying you from always a lower level of awareness to a higher one. Faith is the only mode of transportation through the rough terrain of life's struggles. Equipped with faith you will always **hope for the best!** Because belief in G-d's control over even the minutest event and action that occurs removes the dreaded sense of arbitrariness to life. Confronted

with pain and suffering you can overcome it by sheer knowledge that it's all in G-d's hands.

Furthermore, Rabbi Nachman said: "By having faith the Holy-One-Blessed-Be-He forgives you for all your sins" (*Sefer Hamidos*, Chap Faith, Par. 33). Faith in G-d draws His compassion, and opens your eyes to His glorious Kingship in a most awesome and wondrous way. You become more sensitively aware to how His presence encompasses the world and shines throughout the universe, as stated in the Torah, "And the land was illuminated with His glory" (*Yechezkel*, 43). The material world, nature, all circumstances and events are all mere disguises of G-d's infinite presence. There is really nothing in existence – whether in the natural, animal or human form – than G-d. What our eyes perceive is just a façade, but with faith we can pierce through the mirage and overcome anything. Hoping for the best, is hoping for G-d and getting His love, in return. Faith may be simple, but the mechanics are hard: It's a lifetime of work! Briefly, in Kabbalistic terms, the universe is comprised of four spiritual worlds. From the lowest to the highest, they are labeled as follows:

Assiya, Yetzilah, Beriyah and Atzilus. And, within each world exists the “*Ten Emanations*” in hierarchical form. As you spiritually grow, you move up the hierarchy of one world only to find yourself at the doorstep of the next. So, for example after reaching the highest point of “*Kesser*” – “Crown” in the world of “*Assiyah*”, you will have arrived at the lowest Emanation, “*Malchus*” of the next world, “*Yetzilah*” and so on and so forth. Remember, “*Malchus*” – Faith, is always the doorway leading the next world, because as you go deeper, you must increasingly accept G-d in your life. Keep going! Peel away one layer of awareness after another. Since the “*Ten Emanations*” correspond to the limbs of the human body, it is used as a metaphor to express the progress up the ladder of faith. So that, after *Malchus*, you advance next to the “*Yesod*” – Foundation, which corresponds to the human reproductive organ, symbolizing chastity. It is at this level that you work on practicing sexual restraint, because a chaste life is the foundation of faith. Although not widely appreciated and understood in modern society, sexual purity is an underlying testament of one’s faith, as Rabbi Nachman stated, “faith and sexual purity are co-

dependent” (*Likutei Moharan*, Vol. 1, Chap 31) Furthermore, it is written in *Tehillim*, “And My covenant shall remain true to him” (Chap 89, 29). Next, you ascend to level of “*Netzach*” and “*Hod*” – “Eternity” and “Majesty”, which correspond to the feet. It’s at this point that you gain clearer perspective and become grounded, so you make better choices in life. A certain sense of balance then begins to infuse your life, which is termed “*Tiferes*” – “Harmony”. Gone will be the tendencies towards extremism as you successfully blend liberal and conservative trends in your personality into proper measure. The ground is then fertile for acquiring pure knowledge known as “*Daas*”, which is a combination of “*Chochmah*” and “*Binah*” – “wisdom” and “understanding”. The whole process then culminates in the last stage, constituting the highest level that can be attained which is “*Kesser*” – “Crown”. This is indeed, a crowning achievement. Along with the awareness of G-d that you will experience at this level, comes a profound and ineluctable desire for intimate connection with G-d. But it doesn’t stop here. Cosmologically, you’ve only traversed the stages of one world. Now, you must begin

the process all over again in the next and higher world and so on and so forth. As you rise higher and higher, you begin to sense that the journey is endless, because nested within each level are so many other levels. G-d is so unfathomable that you become paradoxically aware that as far as you go, there are so many miles more, that it seems as if you've never begun. Each new door of awareness only leads to the next, which make the previous one seem to pale in comparison. Automatically you shed your former perceptions, suspending your own judgment, as you realize with the oncoming ones that you are nothing. Ultimately, you will arrive at the conclusion that the object of knowing G-d is that you can never know Him. Pristine faith is unpretentious without sophistication and intellectual arrogance. You must tirelessly work to purge your mind from illusion and free it from the workings of the imagination. Stop deceiving yourself and recognize the truth that, next to G-d, you know nothing. Coming to terms with how little you know, will paradoxically open the door, each time to a little more awareness of G-d. Take heart, you're not losing out; on the contrary you only stand to gain in feeling that

much closer to G-d. Then you can overcome anything in life. It's really up to you. Don't give up – give in to the fact that there is nothing in this world except for G-d. Hoping in G-d is **hoping for the best** that life has to offer. Do you need anything else?

