



## *An Excellent Day*

**The alarm clock sounds. You throw off the covers, forcing yourself out of bed once again to face the stresses and strains of yet another day. You dress yourself reluctantly and then halfheartedly head towards the door for another stressful day of work – all while thinking of the unpaid bills and how unfulfilled you feel in so many aspects of your life. Stop right there! Have you noticed the rays of dawn's early light piercing through the edges of a dark, long winter's night? Don't you hear the children's laughter reverberating through the air as they chase each other at the bus stop corner? Aren't you dazzled by the marvelous sight of the myriads of buds lining the branches of barren trees that have spontaneously begun to sprout – silently proclaiming the arrival of long-awaited spring? Before you dash into your car and jump into your daily routine, take a moment and just soak up the majesty of the scenery unfolding before your eyes.**

Ask yourself, “who is breathing life into all of the pulsating creation around me”? Could it be that in your preoccupation with the pressures of life, you have forgotten about G-d? The reason so many people today are miserable and disappointed in their lives is because they are not consciously aware of G-d’s existence. Most people today are weighed down by the stress of mere survival, because they feel that they are shouldering the burden themselves. Again, remind yourself who is controlling all the events and occurrences in your life? Like the spokes in a wheel that connect to the central hub, so are all the events in your life driven by G-d. Once you recognize G-d’s fundamental role in your life, the senseless pain and suffering will suddenly begin to make sense. With G-d as your support system, your whole outlook on life changes. Each day is transformed into an excellent day as it becomes infused with the warmth that comes with the comforting knowledge of being under G-d’s custodial care. All the obsessive concern with petty wants and imagined needs that hound you in your desperate pursuit for security – become stilled by the soothing power of faith. So stop feeling so needy! G-d is above all your needs and he is taking care of you. So what

else do you need? Now is your chance to transform your fret-filled days into excellent, sunshiny days, but first you have to be willing to break your habit of procrastinating. Like with any self-improvement program you're probably tempted to say, "I'll start thinking about G-d tomorrow", but remember, the secret towards making any positive change in your life is to start now and not to push it off to later – as is expressed in Rabbi Nachman's interpretation (Likutei Moharan, Vol. 1, Chap. 272) of the verse in the Psalms, (95,7) "Today, if you shall heed my voice". "If you sense a spiritual yearning from within, and you desire to pursue a more meaningful and religious path in life, then you must convince yourself that you only have today". You must overcome the human tendency to procrastinate. Once you begin making excuses, "Today is not a good day" or "I'm too tired or depressed today" or "I'll feel more up to it tomorrow" your efforts are doomed to failure. Push yourself – just a little – and begin today. Because the truth is that every day is an "excellent day" to welcome change in your life, by welcoming G-d into your life. Delay in taking action today will just lead to more and more delay because procrastination breeds more delay. Imagine what's at stake! Today

you could have savored within the triteness of an ordinary humdrum day, a taste of the Divine. Each day is laden with the potential and new possibilities for growth and development in your relationship with G-d, because G-d makes Himself available to us every day. If you would only appreciate the inherent value of each day and what can be accomplished, you would stop procrastinating and start realizing that today is also an “excellent day”. Once you have successfully broken the habit of procrastinating, you will discover a sense of inner peace and you will also be at peace with others. Because in a deeper sense, procrastination is symptomatic of avoidance behavior we practice when we are in conflict about life issues. Many of us have a history since youth, of morally straying from G-d, and consequently we feel that we have lost any meaningful connection to Him. In fact, this is part of the larger picture of the collective crisis facing the Jewish People today who find themselves in danger of falling into spiritual apathy. This ongoing struggle to keep the embers of faith burning passionately in the face of the cool indifference of the morally ambivalent, surrounding culture, finds symbolic expression in the eternal conflict of the

Jewish People with the Amalekite Nation. In commenting on their treachery towards the Jews on their exodus from Egypt, the verse states (Devarim, 25, 18), “that they [the Amalekites] cooled your passion on the way by striking those that lagged behind, when you were faint and exhausted, and did not fear G-d”. Metaphorically speaking, “Amalek” represents those doubts that creep into your mind in your weakest and most vulnerable moments in life, when facing hardship and difficulties you panic and question the actual existence of G-d. This is exactly what occurred to the Jewish People in the Wilderness whom, out of sheer exasperation, provoked G-d by uttering, “Does G-d reside in our midst or not?” (Shemos 17,4). It is precisely at these times in life, where your resolve weakens, that you begin to slacken in your Torah observance. Playing on your fears and doubts, “Amalek’s” voice can be heard in all your spiritual faltering, until finally you feel so conflicted and weary that you no longer find the strength to struggle. Disgusted and fed-up you look for every excuse not to try again to work on your faith. You tell yourself, “today is just not a good day” or, “I just don’t feel in the mood”. Now we can understand why Moses exhorted Joshua,

“Choose [a force] of men and battle with Amalek tomorrow” (Shemos 17, 9). By drawing a parallel between the name of Amalek and the word tomorrow, Moses was transmitting an eternal message to every Jew in every age who is seeking to improve his life by connecting to G-d. In order to win the battle you must conquer the Amalek within – which is the inner voice that urges you to procrastinate. Ignore his persuasions! Don’t push off anything until tomorrow! For instance, if you want to stop being depressed and start working on being a happier person, then start today. In fact the Sages tell us that, “Happiness in life waits for no one – not everyone who is happy today [is guaranteed] to be happy tomorrow” (Tanchuma Shemini, Chap. 2). Therefore, be smart and stop procrastinating. You want to deepen your connection with G-d – do it today. You want to advance in your studies – do it today. You want to change your negative attitude and be an optimistic person – do it today. The secret to leading an accomplished life is to value each day as worthwhile, and not to fool yourself into believing that tomorrow will be a better day. “But, I really do have the blues”, you insist, or you say “I just feel so low and depressed”, or perhaps you’re just in a

bad mood today. Recall what is stated in the Zohar (Vol. 1, 46a), “ There is no night without a day, and there is no day without a night”, and furthermore it states (Bereshis, Chap 1), “And there was night, and then there was day”. To be functional in life you have to be objective and realistic; no one is immune to problems and fluctuating mood states. However, as the adage goes, “Darkness comes before the light!”. Mixed in the sweetness of every day is some bitterness, and it’s the fundamental challenge of every person, every day, to transform the darkness into light by clinging to faith in G-d’s goodness. Yes, today you may feel bitterly disappointed that you were passed over for a job promotion, or maybe you feel let down by your son’s failing grades at school, or perhaps you are still reeling from the stinging remarks that were hurled at you from your spouse. Nonetheless, don’t give up on this day! Recover quickly from the pain, by getting back-up on your feet and telling yourself, “I only have today – today is still an excellent day!”. To be sure, the road in life is very bumpy and littered with potholes of hassles and disappointments, but don’t let that stop you from continuing the journey. To make progress in life you must not give-up on yourself by giving-in so

easily to the particular set of problems that accompany each day. Learn from the example of the Patriarch Abraham, of whom it is written (Bereshis, 24,1), “And Abraham was old, well on in days”. Commenting on this verse, the Zohar (Vol. 1, 129a) explains that this means that Abraham led an accomplished life because he understood the value of each day. He cherished each day by considering each day an excellent opportunity to accomplish true and eternal goodness. Instead of involving himself in the mundane pursuits of the world, Abraham brought his generation to an awareness of G-d’s dominion over the Universe and the role that He plays in each individual’s life, to the degree that many converted. In fact, Abraham’s single-handed role in introducing the truth of Monotheism into the world was so pivotal to mankind that the Sages equate his success with having created the world (Bereshis Rabba, Chap. 12). Furthermore, the Sages comment that Abraham was so committed to bringing people to an awareness of G-d that he caused the name of G-d to pass over the lips of every person that passed his way (Sotah, 10b). Now, how did Abraham accomplish this monumental task? The answer lies in the words of the verse, “well on in

days". Abraham never chalked-up a day as "bad", nor did he write-it off as a failure. Every day was utilized to its fullest potential and considered an "excellent day". Following in the footsteps of our great Patriarch, you too can climb out of your confused state of mind by not dwelling on the failures of yesterday, and not worrying about tomorrow. Stay focused only on today! Take a small step today in approaching G-d. You don't know how? Simple - just open your mouth and make contact with Him by speaking to Him in your own language. In a generation that is so decadently commercial and promiscuous, and generally apathetical, if not downright cynical about religion and G-d, there is simply no other way to break through the walls of spiritual indifference than by taking action today, and speaking to G-d plainly and openly in your own language. It was not for nothing that the Sages said (Tanchuma Vayera, 1) "G-d told the Children of Israel, 'Be diligent in prayer, because there is no better service - it is even more lofty than the sacrifices, and even if a person is not worthy of having his prayers answered ...yet, because he prays and repeatedly beseeches, I (G-d) will act kindly to him'". But after years of drifting away from G-d through misdeeds

and lack of Torah observance, you've grown increasingly estranged from Him. By having neglected your relationship with G-d you no longer sense His relevance in your life to the degree that like most people, you have consigned Him to oblivion. Without the warm caring and steady assurance, that's the reward of the faithful who feel the presence of G-d, you stumble recklessly through life embittered and upset. In this state of mind it will seem impossible, in the beginning, to evoke any feeling towards G-d and to sustain dialogue. Remember, the plan; concentrate only on today. Have faith that locked into each day is a unique potential to reach out to G-d. You will then, treat each day as an "excellent day", and day by day you will ultimately reach your goal where G-d will shine His light upon you.

## 2.

**W**e live in an age of almost virtual spiritual blackout, where most people cannot fathom what it means to have a relationship with G-d. The concept of G-d has grown stale in the minds of people yet, most of us ache to fill the void of meaninglessness in our lives - a void created by too much self-involvement in pursuit of our

material needs. Nevertheless, you should know that from behind the veil of our indifference, G-d's hand reaches out to us daily, inviting us to share with Him the most intimate and deepest of relationships. Consider the following passage by Rabbi Nachman (Likutei Moharan, Vol. 1, Chap 84), which sheds light on an episode in the Talmud (Megilla, 38a), "The students of the great Sage, Rabbi Nechunia ben Ha'kana, once asked him, 'How did you merit to extend your days (and live long)?' and he responded: 'I was generous with my money!'" Elaborating on this exchange, Rabbi Nachman explains, that although the meaning of G-d remains one of the greatest cosmic mysteries, nonetheless G-d challenges us each day to penetrate the darkness to achieve Divine insight. But to transcend the narrowness of our crude perceptions and to embrace a higher vision of an existence related to G-d, requires the discipline and commitment shown only by a devoted few. Unlike the majority of people, these righteous ones select a life of piety and devotion, instead of indulgence in worldly pleasures. As a result, the focus of their conscious thought is directed towards an awareness of G-d, rather than on themselves. Over time, their minds become trained

to perceive in the material world, the Divine essence that's garbed in earthly veneer. They draw closer and closer to G-d because they allow the mysterious and anonymous presence of G-d to become disclosed to them until they experience G-d as a reality in their life. But most of us, who are caught in our own ego predicament, cannot see beyond the confines of our problems and concerns. And, certainly those who lead a banal existence and morally stray, deprive themselves of any meaning and genuine happiness in life. They are condemned to a life of frustration and confusion, and after time they become so dissatisfied with their fate and unfulfilled with their lot in life that they withdraw socially.

Elaborating on this point the Zohar (Vol. 3, 64b) explains that, every day G-d manifests His presence to every person in different degrees according to their level of piety. However, as darkness conceals light, so is a person's awareness of G-d's presence in the world dimmed by his sinful behavior and poor conduct. Drifting further and further away from G-d, this person gradually loses touch with G-d and becomes insensitive to the sense of G-dly connectedness to his life.

Missing the central concept of the puzzle, he perceives the events of his life as a bunch of random pieces of which fail to combine into any cohesive and meaningful whole. The sense of arbitrariness of life makes him feel very exposed and vulnerable and he begins to misconceive the world around him as a dark and friendless place. Every day, in his mind, is seen as luckless without any redeeming quality. Rabbi Nachman asked, "How can we open the eyes of someone in this position – who is so remote from G-d – that they too, can tap into the latent good of each day, and see how valuable and excellent it really is?" Lacking common ground with a G-d who is perceived only in the abstract, the answer is that such a person must begin down here on earth by reconnecting with his fellow man. He must take up the mantle of love and start displaying generosity and good-will towards his family, neighbors, friends, and people around him. This is what the great sage, Rabbi Nechunia Ben Ha'Kana was referring to, in his deeply meaningful response to his students query, "How did you merit to "broaden" your days?" – meaning how did you ensure that each and every day was valuable and excellent? And he replied, "I gave-in when it came

to money matters!" Unfortunately, in the sorry state of affairs that characterizes the social fabric of the Jewish People today – who are plagued by discordance and strife – stridently refusing to see each others point of view (particularly regarding money matters) or to accept each other – the message of Rabbi Nechunia Ben Ha'Kana is ever more urgent! Stop alienating those around you. Lower your rod of hate and start loving your fellow Jew. Only through the power of love can you draw people towards you, and then you will be drawn to G-d. This was the philosophy of our forefather, Abraham, who modeled love of G-d to everyone around him so that they too became drawn to G-d. As is alluded in the statement of the Tikunnei Zohar (Tikkun 70, Page118), "From the right side, the mind is whitened like silver (money)" – implying that a person who adopts a right-sided approach – meaning, that he is decidedly tolerant and accepting of others, is generally more level-headed and balanced. Stepping out of the narrow purview of his own problems and ego, he is able to relate more broadly and realistically to the surrounding world and by extension to G-d. By learning to love your fellow Jew you learn to love G-d and you fulfill the verse, "And you shall love the Lord your G-d"

(Devarim, 6,5) of which the Sages commented, “His love should be for all creatures as was the (love) of his forefather, Abraham” (Sifri V’eschanan 32). This is by no means a simple task. In an age of sophisticated technology, where mankind has traded love for G-d for the affection for the computer and gadgetry of the like, reliance on faith in G-d and love of fellow man seems too simple-minded and trite. Yet we have spawned a generation of socially unfulfilled people who relate better to hardware and who speak more the language of software, rather than communicating to each other in the language of love and feeling. As we increasingly lose ourselves in Cyberspace we drift further from others and retreat inward. This is the greatest crime of our callous generation who are feeling so cold and embittered from the lack of human warmth and affiliation. They are caught in a vicious cycle, because as is typical of human nature, instead of blaming themselves, they paint the rest of the world as cold and unfriendly, and become even more bitter, as is implied in the verse, “Therefore she (the place) was called ‘Mara’ - ‘Bitter’ - because they were bitter!” (Shemos, 15,23). As if pulled by a leash, these depressed souls inexorably follow the warped thinking of their

distorted minds, never imagining of a brighter existence – filled with excellent days – lived by those who live by the faith of the Torah. Yet the truth is, it's only a matter of perception, so that anyone can escape the darkness of his current existence if he could only accept that there is Higher Power in the universe that is beyond himself. Practically speaking, in order to cure your myopic thinking and to start seeing life objectively, in terms of the connection to G-d, you must begin by connecting to others. Taking our forefather, Abraham, as an example, you must treat each person with love and tolerance. Begin in your home, as is stated in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba, 9), "The Torah instructs us to be compromising (and flexible) with our household. If they cause damage – forgive them.....if they spill wine, overlook it; don't instigate arguments and fights by insulting or blaming anyone. In this manner, you will avoid turning a perfectly good day, into a sour one. Otherwise, you will cause everyone in your home to become depressed and to exclaim, "Oh! Look what happened, I guess this is not our lucky day!". You will have spoiled a potentially excellent day – which can never be recovered – where you could have reinforced in

your family's mind that G-d controls every event, by modeling patience and self-control. In fact, seize every and any opportunity to perform some good that presents itself – like being charitable to the poor – and don't let it slip away. Related to this idea, are the words of Rabbi Eliezer (Tractate Shabbos, 153a), who instructed, "Repent the day before you die", to which his students queried, "How can a person know which day they will die?" To which he responded, "Then certainly repent today, for maybe you will die tomorrow! In this manner, all your days will be filled with repentance!" What a stirring lesson for life! If you want to lead a happy and spiritually enriched life – with days marked by excellence, then simply put: Don't procrastinate! Return to G-d this moment, without delay. Begin by opening the lines of communication with Him by conversing with Him daily. Although you lack the understanding to appreciate what you are accomplishing, you should know that every word and syllable that you address towards G-d has profound ramifications in the Upper Spheres. Moreover, when you express regret and contrition over misdeeds of the past, G-d immediately forgives you. So, don't allow yourself to be crushed by the weight of guilt over regretful

actions of the past; Cast your burden on to G-d, and he will forgive you, as the Sages said, (Toras Kohanim, Bechukosai, 26), "G-d said, as soon as they confess their sins, I immediately retract and forgive them". What are you waiting for? Even though the day is almost over, grab the opportunity and let G-d know what happened and how you feel. Remember what the Sages said (Tractate Pesachim, 4a), "Part of the day is considered like the whole day". In the remaining few moments of today, it's possible to redeem the whole day, if you just find some good deed or act to perform, now. The most basic act is simply to open your mouth and talk to G-d - which is the clearest affirmation of a person's faith in G-d's existence, as is explained in Likutei Moharan (Vol. 1, Chap. 62) "If a person had a clear and pure faith in the existence of G-d, to the exclusion of all else, and He (the concept of G-d) remained steady on his lips, then he would continuously speak to Him. But since (this concept) is not clear to a person, he does not continuously speak to G-d. The ability to maintain and sustain dialogue with G-d depends on how much you sense G-d as real. And the foremost obstacle to perceiving the "realness" of G-d is the commission of a sin, as is written in Sefer

Hamidos (Chapter title “Faith”, section 22), “A person’s transgressions cause him to deny (G-d’s existence)”. That is why it is so important to regret your sins and confess them to G-d; because you are reaffirming in your mind the concept of G-d’s existence and your faith becomes restored. So, appreciate what you can accomplish in a day; use each day to it’s fullest so that each day is an excellent day. Your whole life will change and you will feel like a different person.

3.

**E**very day is like a new generation! As is written in Koheles (1,4), “A generation goes, and a generation comes”, and the Sages comment (Koheles Rabba, Parsha 1), “Every day 600,00 souls are born, and 600,00 souls die”. Each day is so pregnant with meaning, continuously giving birth to unique possibilities. Therefore, value each day as an excellent day by performing as many Torah commandments as you possibly can, with as much joy as you can. The Sages said (Tanchuma, Ki Tetzey, 2), “There are 248 positive commandments in the Torah, corresponding to the 248 limbs in a person’s body. And every day, these limbs cry out to a person, ‘perform good with us for your own

sake so that you merit long life". Homiletically speaking, we see that even a person's own body urges him to utilize his limbs daily to perform the will of G-d, as is restated in the Midrash (Shocheh Tov, Mishlei, 31), "The Children of Israel were commanded to perform 248 positive commandments corresponding to the (sum of) the limbs of the body. And each limb, so to speak, requests that it be utilized in the performance of its designated commandment." Despite the fact that their pleas are inaudible and remain disclosed only to the soul, their impact can be felt in the arousal of passion you feel towards G-d when you start heeding their imperatives. So if you want to increase your intimacy with G-d, then increase your performance of the commandments with joyful emotion. As the Sages said (Vayikra Rabba 34, 9), "[That with the aim of] Instructing us in proper conduct, the Torah taught that when you perform a positive commandment, you should execute it with a joyful heart". And Rabbi Nachman further elaborates (Likutei Moharan, Vol. 2, Paragraph 26), "That [the essence of Moses] is found within each and every one of us, concealed in each and every limb. And, it is [his spark] that arouses each limb to perform the commandment

that's uniquely associated with it." Therefore, don't forfeit this day, because it will never return. Fashion this day into an "excellent day" by dedicating it to G-d, by performing His commandments. For instance, strike up a conversation with G-d - fulfilling the commandment to pray; work on simply having faith - which constitutes the commandment to cling to G-d; learn Torah - of which there is no greater commandment - and you will be fulfilling a Divine commandment with every word you utter: And did you know that every blessing you recite is considered as having performed a commandment, as well as every penny that you drop into the charity box? Honoring your parents is also a Divine imperative. Is it any wonder why the Sages declared (Berachos, 57a), "that even the most illiterate from amongst you is filled with good deeds as the (number of seeds in a) pomegranate". Therefore don't be a fool, by letting the day slip away! We're all tempted to exempt ourselves from even trying because we feel hassled by life's daily pressure. Nevertheless don't surrender the day so easily with the excuse that, "today is just not my day!". No, insist to yourself that today will be an excellent day! Take stock of the myriad of

opportunities to fulfill the commandments and execute them with all the energy and joy you can muster. Maybe this inspiring promise will spur you on and get you moving: The Midrash says that, “If a person performs one commandment, G-d grants him one angel, if he performs two, he’s granted two angels, and if he performs many then he is granted a half of band (of angels)” (Shemos Rabba, 32,6). The sun is setting; you’re tired and you promise yourself you’ll begin tomorrow. Stop right there! Remind yourself that this day will never return and you will not pass this way again. In the last remaining hour of this day, transform the whole day into an excellent day by finding some redeeming action to perform. For instance, if there were arguments today in your house, don’t go to bed until you resolve the skirmish peacefully. Recall what’s written (Sotah, 17a), “If a man and a woman dwell together in love then the Divine Presence resides between them”. And the same principle applies to any conflict that’s lingering; if you are still holding a grudge against another person, then don’t pull the covers over your head until you resolve in your heart to forgive him. You’re still skeptical? Certainly in our cynical generation that’s chronically apathetic, where most

people are broken and dispirited from the lack of meaning in their largely empty lives, it's more tempting to just roll over in bed and promise yourself, "I'll do it tomorrow". Be honest! You know that tomorrow will never come. Remember, this is your life – don't waste it. There is no tomorrow – no day after – no next year – there is only today. Now! – is the optimum moment to reverse the negative trend in your life by taking the first step in approaching G-d. If you stay stubbornly focused on the "here and now", you will be surprised at how much good you can accomplish in a day. Like a fine and aged wine, the days of your life will be rated as superb and excellent – packed with so much goodness, as is homiletically expressed in the Midrash, "There are 365 days in the year that correspond to the 365 prohibitions in the Torah – and each day cries out to a person, 'don't do evil, don't commit a transgression on my time'" (Tanchuma, Ki Tetzey 2). Take the challenge! There isn't a better time, nor will there be one. Even if there remains only a few hours left to the day – confide in G-d and tell him how you feel. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (Likutei Moharan, Vol. 2, section 25) recommended that, "A person accustom himself to speak to G-d (on a regular basis) as if

he's speaking to a friend, or like a son to a father". Ideally you should find a secluded area, such as the woods or the field, that's conducive for private time with G-d. Initially you will feel awkward and shy - as doubts begin to enter your mind such as, "does G-d really want to hear from me?". Let's face it! After years spent morally straying from G-d, pursuing only pleasure and indulging in sarcastic humor and cynical joking, it's only natural to feel skeptical and distant. Don't get discouraged! Just grab on to G-d's coattails, so to speak, and don't let go. Be adamant and tell G-d everything and all, about yourself. Ultimately your stony heart will melt, releasing such passionate desires for G-d that you never knew existed. Really it's that simple! Just try it. Sometimes in life, it's the simplest of acts, such as performing a commandment sincerely and unpretentiously, that paradoxically elevates you to the most exalted levels of holiness. And this equally applies to every Jew, because we are all in reality, a part of G-d, as the Midrash relates, "Whoever accepts upon himself (to perform) a commandment with faith, is worthy of having the Divine Spirit rest on him" (Midrash Aggada). Defining "Divine Spirit" in terms we can understand, Rabbi Nachman (Likutei Moharan,

Vol. 1, Chap. 21) explains that, “when a person sanctifies and purifies his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth – meaning that he uses his five senses in a disciplined and controlled manner, exclusively for holy purposes – then his mind can envision – in what appears to others as just ordinary – a sense of G-d that is extraordinary and sublime. So stop feeling like a stranger to G-d. Get reacquainted, today. Begin by peeling away the layers of distance and time that has separated you from G-d, until you finally feel the reality of Him in your life – of which there is no greater joy or pleasure!

4.

**N**o man is an island. G-d placed us in this world to relate to others and to coexist with each other. If you really want to feel good about yourself so that at the end of the day you can testify that you had an “excellent day”, than do something good for another person. You see G-d wants us to need each other, and there is nothing more precious in His eyes than altruism. In fact, the righteous ones are defined by the acts of good that they perform to others, as the Midrash says, “A person cannot be labeled ‘good’, unless he (does) good” (Midrash Tehillim 7,8). Moreover, it’s written, “Say (he is a)

righteous person, because (he does) good” (Yeshayahu, 3,10). And the converse is also true; a cruel and violent person who commits acts of aggression is labeled a wicked and evil person. Subconsciously, this person suffers from low self-esteem and is unhappy with himself. Unfulfilled in life and bitter about his days, he antagonizes all and everyone around him, and they in turn, retaliate and attack him – a description, that aptly portrays the offspring of Ishmael of whom it is written (Bereshis 16, 12), “His hand against everyone and their hand against him”. Suffering from a “persecution complex” these people play up the part of the victim, chronically complaining that everyone is harassing them. They conveniently forget who started with whom, and their own instigative role in fanning the flames of conflict. Don’t let this be your sorry lot in life. The secret to a gratifying and truly rewarding life is one in which you spend your days dedicated to philanthropy, as the adage goes, “You’ve got to give, in order to get!”. In fact, philanthropy is so highly regarded as a fundamental Jewish practice that it’s written (Yalkut Hoshea, allusion, 522) that, “G-d said that the good deeds that one (Jew) performs to another is more precious to me than all the sacrifices that

(King) Solomon offered to me". G-d's concern above all else, is the concern we Jews have for one another. There is no clearer expression of love for G-d than when one Jew displays care and consideration for his fellow Jew. After all we are G-d's children, as is written (Devarim, 4,1), "You are the children to the Lord, your G-d". In a climate of baseless hatred, where rivalry and discord, threatens to keep the Jewish People irrevocably divided, how can we be so confident that the Judaism that we are practicing honestly reflects a love of G-d? Rabbi Nachman warned (Sichos Haran, Cit. 51) "The world fools us! See to it that you don't fool yourselves; You're whole life can be lived in error". A person can be lofty in Torah scholarship, didactic in his Torah observance, and scrupulous in his performance of the commandments, but if he thinks less of any Jew - then his service is not an act of loving G-d. Love for your fellow - every Jew - is equated with loving G-d. If your fellow Jew is in distress, such as economic hardship, then open your hand and give him charity. Displaying compassion to your fellow Jew demonstrates your love for G-d, as the Sages said (Tractate Kesubos, 68a), "Whoever averts his eyes from (the opportunity) to contribute to charity,

it's considered as if he worshipped idols". And furthermore, the Zohar (Vol. 1, 104a) informs us that, "Whoever G-d loves - he sends them a poor person". If you hear the knocking of the poor at your door, go out and greet him heartily and with good cheer. Consider it a unique opportunity to let G-d know how much you love Him, by displaying compassion on His child. How many parents have unfortunately sent their children, instead, to the door to inform the beggar that the father or mother are not around - not thinking that perhaps G-d is observing and just maybe, he may cause them not to be around anymore, permanently! The Sages warned us to treat the poor with proper dignity and respect as is written (Vayikra Rabba,34,10), "The poor person stands in your doorway, and the Holy One Blessed Be He stands by his right side and grants you a reward; but, if you don't give him charity, know, that (G-d) whose positioned on the right side, as is stated in the Psalms (109,31) "For He (G-d) is positioned on the right-hand side of the poor man" - will collect from you". If you've been feeling depressed lately and have got the "blues", there is no better cure than to seek ways to help-out others. Turn your lousy days into excellent days, by being less self-involved and more involved

with others. The tendency to be so overly self-concerned is part of the “me generation” philosophy that has resulted in the splintering of the Jewish People into factions. The rampant discrimination has put us at risk of being “divided and conquered” by the enemy from within. Witness today the rifts and constant in-fightings between political parties, religious communities, synagogues, families, and fellow Jews – all in the name of G-d, under the banner of, “We are right” or “We have the truth”. Foolish people that we are! If there is any hope of unifying the Jewish People and witnessing finally the arrival of the Messiah, then we have to stop promoting our parties, or our groups, or even ourselves, and start putting G-d first. We are ready for redemption when we stop emphasizing our differences and start seeing each other as children of the same Heavenly Father.

