

BS"D

# THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

**Straightforward advice how to build  
your self-esteem and how to really  
get where you want to go.**

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Written by the holy tzaddik  
**MOHORO"SH ZT"L**

Based on the teachings of the holy tzaddik  
**REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLOV ZT"L**

and of his prime disciple  
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# THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

## 1.

Do you feel stuck in life? Does it seem as if your life is going nowhere? Like most people, you probably have great plans and dreams for the future, yet somehow you can't seem to get them off the ground – why? What is emotionally hindering so many people from moving forward in life and realizing their lifelong dreams?

To be successful in anything in life, a person must learn to set aside the past, as Rabbi Nachman once said,<sup>1</sup> “The world looks upon forgetting as a major handicap, while I see it as a tremendous advantage.” Without the ability to forget, a person becomes constantly mired by the failures of the past, impeding any progress into the future. The secret to getting ahead is not to dwell on the past, but rather to put your failures behind you and move on to the next chapter of your life! Yet, it's human nature to look back, and obsess about all the guilt and shame we feel over the misdeeds of the past. Indeed, isn't it the hurt child of yesterday that makes for the dysfunctional adult of today?

Nonetheless, you should know that no matter who you are and what you've done, the doorway leading

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1. *Sichos Haran*, Cit. 26.

towards forgiveness and acceptance is never closed. The problem is that you never cross the threshold because of your lingering shame over the past. Belittled and criticized while young, you have grown up believing that you are undeserving of G-d's love, so you give up and stop trying. Don't let your hang-ups over the past hold you back! You're embarrassed about who you are and feel guilty about what you've done? Forget about it; it's done and over with; make a fresh start, a new beginning – now!

G-d is on your side; He is with you every step of the way. All He wants to see is that you're trying and willing to change, then He will forgive you – instantly. No matter how far you've drifted from Him or how much you may have morally slid, G-d awaits your return with love and patience.

Of course, it's not easy; for years the little voice inside your head has been feeding you messages of self-doubt and defeat, all designed to chip away at your self-esteem. Over and over the same familiar lines have been drilled into your mind: "Look what I've done, I'm the worst person", "Why should G-d listen to me, who am I?" or "I'll never amount to anything, G-d doesn't care about me anyway." Now, how can you escape from the harmful effects of these undermining messages and prevent yourself from always getting broken? The answer is simple: Just press the stop button and bring these negative thoughts to an abrupt halt.

Negative thinking, like a stubborn habit, develops as a result of conditioning from youth and has nothing

to do with reality. G-d is the Master over all our fates and He is the only reality; He'll give up on you only if you give up on yourself. Therefore, there really is never a reason to get broken. Remember, G-d maintains an open-door-policy, standing poised at the entrance at all times, ready to receive anyone wishing to return. So, push the fast forward button and the past will fade into oblivion; then press start and begin anew in the present. Ignore the self-doubts and feelings of worthlessness that automatically stir every time you make a move towards improving your life.

After so many years of failure and disappointment, it's only natural to feel hopeless and pessimistic that your life can change for the better. Understand, however, that the road back to G-d is jagged, with twists and turns, ups and downs, triumphs and failures. Finding yourself stuck in a slump today doesn't cancel all the progress you've made up until now. During your journey back to G-d, you often won't recognize how much you've grown and developed, but with each step you take believe that you're covering lots of spiritual mileage.

You will never fully reach the ultimate destination in your lifetime, because G-d's greatness is unfathomable. Every move you make in His direction is another insight gained, more profound than the previous one, more deeper in perspective. One door of awareness only leads to another, whose greatness eclipses the one before it. Therefore, keep going; open one door after the other, by always making a fresh start, a totally new beginning in approaching G-d.

Don't be satisfied with distance you covered yesterday; and, certainly, don't get broken if you're in a slump and can't seem to get moving today, because you feel depressed and hopeless. Just pick yourself up now, and resume where you left off! Let this be your guiding philosophy for life, and with it you will attain true success, because nothing will ever break you.

So, start now by laying the past to rest and renewing your relationship with G-d. Begin by initiating dialogue with Him in the comfort of your own language. Speak to Him plainly and simply, with the innocence of a child before his father or as if you were confiding in a close friend. Don't hesitate to relate to G-d in explicit detail your life story. Talking to G-d about your problems will help you get in touch with deep-seated feelings that have wreaked havoc on your psychological well-being. Like pus oozing from a wound, all the underlying anger, resentment, and guilt that you've repressed will gradually drain from your wounded soul, leaving you emotionally cleansed.

Naturally, in the beginning it will seem as if nobody is listening to you; you will feel as if you're talking to the wall. After years of straying from G-d and erecting defensive walls around yourself, of course you feel out of touch with G-d. You will be convinced that it's useless to reach out to Him; after all you say, "Why should G-d want to hear from me? He doesn't need me." Don't become discouraged! Just press the stop button on those recurring negative thoughts and eject them from your mind.

G-d cares about you and is always ready to take you back, no matter what you did. After all the disappointment suffered at the hands of others, isn't it time to reach out to your Father in Heaven? Your anguished cries mean something to Him and only He has the power to wipe away those tears of sorrow. Even if negative thinking has become second nature to you, and in your chronically depressed state you despair of ever recovering, nevertheless, fight back! Learn to stop taking your pessimistic self so seriously and start trusting in G-d's goodness. Always remember, G-d loves you despite what you've done, because He knows what you can be. G-d's door is always open, just let yourself in!

————— ⇨ 2. ⇩ —————

Making a break with your past in order to live a committed life to G-d is neither comfortable nor easy. The path towards spiritual growth may lead upward, but it's seldom straight. One minute you're confidently scaling the heights of inner awareness, in search of the meaning of G-d, and the next, you find yourself plunging back into the pit of meaninglessness and despair. You finally started to get a handle on conquering old habits and breaking negative thought patterns, and then suddenly you're gripped by those urges more powerfully than ever before, and you relapse.

The cycle repeats itself over and over; for every step forward, five will be taken backward. Your emotions will yo-yo back and forth like a seesaw and sometimes

you will feel as if your very sanity is being pushed to the limit. Don't cave in to the pressure! Tell yourself again and again, "Nothing will sink my ship. The stormy seas may rage all around me, but my spirit will remain buoyantly optimistic. I will carry on with the journey, joyfully, while leaving behind my painful memories on the shores of the past, because I'm bound for the promises of a better future."

Sometimes, it's precisely in man's darkest hour, when he feels so utterly lost and abandoned, that ironically, he can turn to the Infinite One. The weakest of moments can evoke the most heroic display of a man's will and determination, if only he dares to hope against hope, and not give-up. However, the process of accepting G-d in your life can only begin with self-acceptance.

If you want G-d to open doors for you in life, then you got to firmly believe that you're worth having those doors open for! Don't get discouraged by the shameful events in your past. Remember, G-d can be found in our failures, as well as in our successes. In fact, there is really no failure in life, except the failure to recognize His hand in everything that transpires. You are only a prisoner of your past when you neglect to see G-d as the common thread running through the fabric of your life.

But the emotional scars from a troubled youth that block the normal passage into adulthood are not easily erased. Their impact is felt in your obsessive concern with unfinished business from your past, as well as the guilt you have for not having moved forward in life. As you drive yourself deeper and deeper into depression,



you drift further and further away from G-d, Who holds the key that can free you from your tortured past and propel you into a brighter future.

How long can you keep your life on hold while being held hostage by your past? Take some healthy action in your life by letting go of your guilt and unhealthy fixation with the past. The secret to putting yourself on the road to recovery is to make a clean break with the past; tell yourself, "I have no past – I have just been born!" as is written in the Torah, "I was born today."<sup>2</sup>

This slogan needs to be rehearsed over and over in the heart and mind of any Jewish wayward person in our confused generation, who is struggling to find his way back to true belief in G-d and sane living. You may fall a thousand times a day, relapsing into bad habits and dysfunctional behaviors, frustrated that you can't cope in life, but never give up! Don't give in so automatically to those feelings of depression the minute you feel down about your past.

Every day, every hour, every moment force yourself to make a fresh start, a totally new beginning in approaching G-d. To be sure, the road back to G-d is bumpy, and replacing old and familiar negative behaviors with new and positive ones can feel scary and strange. But the key to overcoming your resistance to change, which stands as a barrier to faith, is not to lose faith in yourself. Why be so concerned about what others might think when all that matters is how much you mean to G-d? Remember,

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2. *Psalms*, 2:7.

G-d's door is always open – even for you. If you learn to internalize these words, then you will find the courage in your heart to live the life you were meant to live, and no one can ever break you.

But on the road to return, there are miles and miles to go; and countless of times in life, you will become discouraged and feel tempted to turn back. Every step of the way, G-d tests a person's resolve to see how sincere he is in his conviction. Even the greatest figures and righteous leaders among us are not spared the rod of affliction, nor do they escape from having their faith tried in the crucible of life. And what the public is generally not aware of is that many of them are made to suffer more because of their lofty positions.

How many righteous men have had their reputations dragged through the mud by the conspiring efforts of a jealous few, who were bent on making their lives a sheer misery. Perplexed by the senseless persecution and crushed by all the hurt and betrayal, their sorrow gives way to despair – as they momentarily lose confidence in themselves and their accomplishments. Pushed to the ground, their eyes turn suddenly heavenward – and as they become consciously aware of G-d's existence, their spirits become revived, because they remember that G-d's door is never shut. As faith triumphs over suffering, not only do they transcend the wavering in their own belief, but they powerfully inspire those who have practically given-up their faith in G-d and religion.

Therefore, don't be so puzzled when you see the lives

of righteous leaders riddled by strife and controversy. It is precisely because of G-d's redemptive concern for even those who reject Him and His desire for their return, that He allows the righteous to be provoked and harassed by them; for how can they lead others out of the darkness, if they haven't been there themselves?

Sensing their own vulnerability, mirrored in the collective crisis of faith seen in today's society, makes them partners in the pain and suffering of our generation. And, by finding a way out of their own predicament, through the revival of their weakened faith, they open the door of return to so many in our times, who have surrendered their wills to the dictates of their passion out of hopelessness and despair. So, stop feeling intimidated by life because of your past failures. G-d will forgive and forget, but it's up to you to make the first move, by turning the page over to a new chapter in your life.

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↔ 3. ↔

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Take a moment to consider that every human being – including yourself – is endowed with extraordinary talent and hidden potential. So why are you so broken? Why are you allowing an overwhelming sense of failure about the past to drive you into such deep and inescapable despair? Recall the words King David penned centuries ago, and perhaps they will help you snap out of your depression, “If I soar to the sky, You [G-d] are there, and if I make my bed in the lowest depths, behold You are

[also] there.”<sup>3</sup> Even if you’ve hit rock bottom, G-d will not abandon you; He is standing by your side, ready to offer support, as the verse continues,<sup>4</sup> “Even there Your hand will guide me, and Your right one will hold me.”

Furthermore, even if your situation in life is so dark and hopeless that it seems that no light will ever shine at the end of your tunnel, as expressed in the verse,<sup>5</sup> “Would I say, ‘Surely darkness will shadow me’ – don’t believe it!” It’s just your imagination playing on your fears that’s trapping you into a false sense of hopelessness. In reality, there is no room for despair, because the doors of Heaven are eternally open.

Remember, G-d is omnipotent, as it is written, “Even the darkness cannot conceal [anything from G-d], and the night shines as [clear] as day – because darkness and light are the same [to G-d].”<sup>6</sup> If you’re feeling held back in life, it’s not G-d Who is holding you back; rather, it’s your limited perception of His role in your life that is imposing constraint on your growth and development. Once you realize that you have no one in the world except G-d and that He is always there for you, the barriers blocking change will automatically be lifted.

So don’t be satisfied with your dwarfed perceptions of G-d. Transcend the narrowness of your own self-belief, by understanding that just as there is no end to

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3. *Psalms 139:8.*

4. *Ibid. v. 10.*

5. *Ibid. v. 11.*

6. *Ibid.*

fathoming G-d's greatness, there is no limit to what you, as a person can achieve; remember, what paradoxically underlies each and every person's intrinsic need to find oneself is the endless search for G-d. And, although life may be filled with ups and downs, never become discouraged.

Remember, G-d's door is never closed. This message has the power to inspire change in yourself and to motivate others today who feel stunted in their personal development, as a result of the absence of G-d in their lives. But the key is not to let yourself become trapped in a cycle of negative thinking that can lead to despair. Combat pessimistic thoughts by making light of them and by reminding yourself of G-d's boundless compassion for your plight.

Keep yourself connected to G-d by speaking to Him on a regular basis in your native language. Don't get discouraged if you don't see immediate change. Prayer requires diligence and persistence, as our Sages have said, "If a person sees that his prayers have gone unanswered, let him go back and pray again,"<sup>7</sup> as it is written, "Hope in G-d, strengthen and fortify your heart, and have hope in G-d."<sup>8</sup> This is because in order for prayer to work, you have to thoroughly believe in its power to work. As long as there remains even the slightest trace of hesitation or ambivalence in your belief, then your faith lacks integrity and your prayers lose their efficacy.

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7. *Berachos* 32b.

8. *Psalms* 37:34.

Surviving the fierce challenges of life demands total commitment – not hollow faith! Once you turn your back on all extraneous considerations and commit yourself to total reliance on G-d, the veil will be lifted and your entire perspective on life will change. Suddenly, you will realize that G-d’s door was never really closed – you just needed faith to find the opening. Consider these words carefully, because one never knows what’s waiting for them down the road in life.

During those inevitable weak moments when you’re feeling especially vulnerable, rejected by others, overly needy, or just plain old sorry for yourself, remember this simple piece of advice: There is no one who thoroughly understands you as G-d does; there is no one who loves you as unconditionally as G-d does; there is no one who needs you as G-d does! When others have long shut the doors of their heart to you, G-d’s door will remain forever open. So go ahead, release yourself from the tyranny of reliance on others by realizing that key to your happiness does not rest in their hands, but only in G-d’s.

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↔ 4. ↔

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Life is not easy! All people will inevitably experience frustration and hardship in their life. The greatness of a person, however, is measured by his ability to withstand the pressures of life and not to fall apart. Nonetheless, most people assume that their problems are the most insoluble and worst of all. And, because they are convinced that their problems reflect their worthlessness,

they become broken and dysfunctional, sabotaging their chances for future success. Susceptibility to this type of toxic thinking occurs when you are blind to G-d's role in your life.

When the burden of survival is perceived as resting solely on your shoulders, life can seem very intimidating. Sensing your vulnerability, you take the minor frustrations of daily living too personally, using them as proof that things never go right for you in life. However, the moment you firmly decide that there is never a reason to despair; and no matter how bad the situation becomes, there is always hope – almost immediately you will see the world in a different light, as new vistas open for you.

The pervasive sense of dread that loomed so darkly in your life will now give way to hearty and cheerful optimism, as you feel **the sky's the limit**. Therefore, it's imperative that you eliminate any trace of your past from your mind – this minute!

The reason so many people today feel stuck in life and condemned to live dead-end existences is because of their inability to sever their ties to their warped pasts. They continuously resurrect the ghosts of the past and relive traumatic events, allowing them to haunt them. Their fixation with a past gone sour creates the distortion in their minds that all the doors of opportunity are shut; that their situation is hopeless and their future bleak; and, finally, it casts them into a very deep and almost inescapable depression.

This neurotic style of thinking is a direct result of too many years of self-involvement wasted in auto-erotic indulgence, instead of in healthy self-development. Nonetheless, you don't have to continue suffering. Combat negative thinking by affirming that the doors of hope are never shut. The potential to straighten out your life always exists, if you summon up the courage to detach from your past completely, and start over again. Imagine yourself as being reborn, as it is written, "Today I have been born."<sup>9</sup>

In fact, this is the secret underlying the whole recovery process: the ability to step out of the confines of narrow self-interest and to come to an awareness of G-d's central role in your life. When you stop thinking of yourself less in terms of your past problems and more in terms of your connection to G-d, then your entire perception of reality changes. Imbued with a higher purpose, you automatically shed your distorted perceptions of the past as you begin to experience meaning in life, dedicated more to serving G-d, instead of the self. Open your eyes to the world around you, and behold life from an aspect beyond the scope of just your limited perception.

Envisioning reality through the prism of G-dly concern will cure you of the myopic self-absorption that lies at the heart of all neuroses and dysfunctional behavior. Isn't it time to stop going around in circles in pursuit of yet another psychological theory, with its deceptive promises of ultimate inner-awareness and

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9. *Psalms 2:7.*



self-fulfillment? The peace of mind and serenity that you're so desperately seeking can be only achieved by embracing a simple faith. Because once you accept G-d's central role in your past, the roadblocks of shame and hurt are removed, clearing the path towards self-acceptance. The sheer comfort of having G-d's arm, so to speak, around your shoulder will naturally release you from the grip of irrational thoughts and crippling shame that seizes you because of your incessant guilt over the actions of the past.

Contrary to popular thought, opportunity doesn't knock only once, because G-d is always available; His door is always open. Don't be shy! Approach G-d by speaking to Him on a regular basis as if you were speaking to a close friend or like a child before his father. Be patient! Getting back in touch with G-d, involves peeling off layer after layer of guilt and shame that for years has separated the real you from Him. So, make an about-face to all the hurt and rejection over the past, and march forward into a brighter future.

— ⇨ 5. ⇩ —

In an age of pleasure-seeking, where G-d, seemingly, has been cast into an irrelevant corner of our psyche and His presence obscured by obsessive material pursuit, the dire need for Sabbath observance has never been greater. Despite the remarkable breakthroughs in technology that have made life relatively comfortable, most of us are gnawed by a visceral sense that something is missing in our lives.

When the Sabbath is observed in its fullest sense – meaning that you make a conscientious effort to behave differently on the Sabbath than on any other day of the week, by acting in a joyous manner and abstaining from secular pursuits, to the point of not even speaking or thinking about them – it has the power to unlock your hidden potential. As a furlough from the stress and worry of life’s daily pressures, and just sheer relief from the humdrum of ordinary daily routine, Sabbath observance is at once both therapeutic and rejuvenating.

Once a week, the Sabbath experience compels you to break out of the shackles of narrow-mindedness and to open yourself up to a sense that there is some greater meaning to your life. Your view of reality shifts into proper perspective, with G-d occupying the center of your life – instead of yourself; suddenly, what formerly seemed impossible becomes possible. As stated in the Talmud,<sup>10</sup> “All those who observe and delight in the Sabbath will be granted an inheritance without constraints.”

Indeed, the moment you defy adversity, by being happy and rejoicing solely for the sake of the Sabbath, you affirm that there is hope; that the door of opportunity is always open; and that you will and can escape from any of life’s predicaments. With a sturdy assurance that G-d’s door is always open, you no longer feel helpless, but empowered to face any of life’s challenges. The impact of your new-found confidence will reflect in the

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10. *Sabbath 118.*

increased material and spiritual satisfaction you will begin to the savor in your daily life.

Therefore, be meticulous in your observance of the Sabbath and guard yourself from violating its laws. Much of the chronic apathy and the sharp rise in cases of depression plaguing society today are directly attributable to the spiritual blackout that has resulted from the decline in Sabbath observance. On the other hand, the effervescent joy that this holy day imparts can boost you to such a level of optimism, that invariably it will bubble over into the other days of the week.

What are you waiting for? Experience the sublime taste of the Sabbath and watch your whole life change. Sabbath observance is so beneficial to a person's spiritual welfare that the Talmud states, "Anyone who observes the Sabbath, even if he is [steeped in] idol worship to the degree of the generation of Enosh [in the Bible], will be pardoned."<sup>11</sup> How redeeming! As a weekly refrain from the shrill of self-defeating messages of shame and guilt, that have been playing in your mind for years, the promise of the Sabbath is that G-d's love and forgiveness will be yours, if you only learn to love and forgive yourself.

Like a bridge over troubled waters, the Sabbath helps you get over the mistakes of the past and get on with your life. Remember, G-d is always there for you, if only you would open the door. How long do you want to continue languishing in the darkness of inner

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11. *Ibid.*

confusion? Why not bask in the light of the Sabbath by observing it with all the joy you can muster? Then you will discover G-d's door swinging open for you, leading to the hope of a better tomorrow.