

FROM BITTER TO SWEET

**Good advice on how to sweeten one's
life, and how to defeat depression
completely.**

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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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FROM BITTER TO SWEET

— ❖ — 1 — ❖ —

You should know, my beloved brother, that every day begins with a sense of great uncertainty, so much so that a person may feel that it is too much for him and he'll never survive the day. Therefore, man is challenged to sweeten the bitterness of each specific day and make it definitely good. I know that your day started in a bitter depression. You should know that you are not alone in this. It happens to everyone from time to time. Your task is to change the bitterness into sweetness, the hopelessness into hope. This is man's unique attribute: not to destroy himself.

In the very midst of trial and tribulation, he can return to G-d. For there isn't a day without some good in it, but you have to seek it out very

specifically. Therefore, be strong and of good courage as best you can; don't belittle yourself. Above all, don't permit sadness and bitterness to take over, thus depressing you and making you nervous, G-d forbid.

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On a particular day, search hard for the good of that day. Just as there isn't a day without troubles, bitterness, so too, there isn't a day without blessings, sweetness and something to help you. A person has been given the freedom to choose: If he wishes he finds in each day only the negative things, and, on the other hand, he can seek out the blessings and good aspects of a day. Therefore, I ask you now: Why do you choose to see only the bad things? Why not seek out the good? Begin by becoming aware of the kindness which G-d has provided you until now. If you really try, you will find that even in the depth of your troubles and bitterness you are still surrounded by many positive experiences and you have abilities that G-d gives you every day, every hour, even every moment. For everyone has many obvious and hidden blessings.

There are many who suffer pain and physical

disabilities, may they be helped by His mercy, and G-d has spared you from such anguish. Therefore, if you look into your life more profoundly and think about this more often, you will find the many advantages and mercies that are yours. By making it a habit to do this, you will thereby sweeten the bitterness of any particular day and everything will be pleasant for you. Fortunate is the one who does this!



Often, when a person starts his day, it appears like night, without any possibility of experiencing anything good, as if all hope is gone. This can only lead to deep depression. You have to know, my dear brother, that you are wrong: Every day is bright; every day has renewed brightness from G-d; every day you can rise above the dreariness, become stronger with G-d's ever-present goodness — that is if you don't give up and don't give in to your mind's sadness.

I can understand that in your confusion and distorted view of life, you can think that everything is lost and you can't get out of your bad mood — especially on this particular day which you are living. To combat this, know that, indeed, this is the day that you can get rid of your depression if you

really seek G-d. You can change the darkness to light, and G-d will make His glory shine upon you.

The key thing is this: Accustom yourself to speak to Him about whatever physical or spiritual difficulties trouble you. Spell it out to G-d. This will enable you to dispel the clouds of depression and bring light and sweetness and life into your day. Fortunate is the person who doesn't deceive himself in this.



You should know, my dear brother, that everyone in this world has his limitations, his difficulties, and his own specific pains. The greatness of man is his ability to create confidence within himself. Therefore, turn to wise, learned men to strengthen your faith; broaden your perspective and this will change your ways into ways of pleasantness. You will find renewal in your own inner being. Only there, will you be able to fulfill the purpose for which you were brought to this world.



Why must you continue to be so depressed?

I understand you and how you feel now, particularly how you sank into the depth of an emotional pit. You seem to feel unclean because of terrible sins, may the Merciful spare you. Therefore, you must try to realize that by wallowing in bitterness, sinking into a lower depression, into deep sadness, you are not helping yourself. On the contrary, all this will deepen your depression, leading to thoughts like: "Why was I ever born?" "Why do I need to live through such a Hell?" "I wish I were dead," or "Life isn't worth living at all."

Therefore, my dear fellow, you should know that things aren't really that bad. Even if you committed the worst sin, you must not lose all faith in yourself. You can still turn back to G-d's way; the world hasn't come to an end.

Start, right now, to think differently. Forget the past and this will open a new world for you. You will rise above your low opinion of yourself and your sense of being oppressed. Your heart and mind will feel open to new possibilities because you will begin to realize that G-d is a merciful Father Who feels compassion for His creatures, He seeks only kindness. He doesn't even wish to see the wicked die, but rather that they return from their misguided ways. Therefore, develop the habit of speaking to the Merciful G-d and

know that He will hear your prayers, He will have mercy upon you.

The important thing is to pull yourself out of your depression, for it can destroy you — physically and emotionally. The fact is that when depression takes hold of a person, it is the worst thing possible. It darkens a person's day, as if there were no sun and your fate is doomed. Actually, this isn't so. If you accustom yourself to talk to G-d honestly, then your day will brighten in a remarkable way.



You must know, my dear, beloved brother: Although you are in such a deep, dark depression and you think that any possible escape from it is gone, you must not give up hope, G-d forbid, under any circumstances. Even if you went astray like a lost sheep; you must seek out the Blessed One, for there is no such thing as “giving up.”

There is no darkness capable of blotting out G-d's light. If you really want to return to Him — the essence of repentance is not to give up. Do not yield your sense of being a person standing on your own two feet, no matter how dirty you may feel from the heel of your foot to the top of your head — from a sense of having sinned. Actually,

this is the principle also involved in the law of returning a lost item; i.e., it comes before you give up hope for its return.

So, too, about yourself: Even if you sank to the worst kind of evil and contaminated your soul with all kinds of filth — despite all that, as long as you want to return to the Blessed One, don't give up on yourself or abandon all desire to do so. You can still return your "lost" soul. You may have permitted the holiness of your very being to deteriorate, but you can still restore it if you do not despair and if you return to the Blessed One. He will receive you. Whoever returns to Him is received with great mercy and kindness.

❧ 7 ❧

The bitterness that comes upon you from time to time is a result of your many sins and faulty behavior against what G-d teaches. Specifically, it comes from the many aspects of harlotry, one of the greatest causes of bitterness and depression. Therefore, my dear, beloved brother, see to it that you return to His ways. Show proper regret over your past behavior, but don't permit yourself to fall too low.

Above all, don't permit yourself to be destroyed by your subconscious guilt over what

you have done until now. This way you will merit to be saved from evil and you will escape the bitterness, sadness, and depression that attacked you.



My dear, beloved brother, you should know that a different kind of bitterness can affect a person each day. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, a person feels very low, with a sense of hopelessness, being trapped and saying to himself, “Would that I hadn’t been born”, “If I die already, it would be better.”

You must accept the fact that such bitterness results from wrong, sinful behavior. Each and every sin or wrong creates a destructive force that eats away at the person and, then, suddenly he doesn’t know what hit him — he is deeply depressed. Therefore, take this advice: As soon as you feel any bitterness, begin to talk it out to the Blessed One; pour out your heart in every detail, just as if you were talking to a friend. By doing this you will get rid of the fantasies, destructive ideas, and evil spirits from inside your heart and mind and you can achieve genuine happiness.

By so speaking to the Blessed One, a new,

powerful light begins to shine on the person — like a bright sun — which brings him or her real happiness. There is no greater joy than knowing that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is with you and at your side. You will realize that the situation is not as bad as you thought. Therefore, see to it that you renew yourself in every way possible. Primarily, be happy; know that G-d is with you and loves you. It is He who gives you life and sustains you.



See to it that you rid your heart of all the questions and doubts that you feel against the Blessed One. Know that the Holy One, blessed be He, still loves you. Whatever thoughts you may have to the contrary come from your many bad actions. For you see, the evil spirit in us hates man — in physical matters, too — and wants to see if a person can take the trials of bitterness each day.

Therefore, see to it that you exorcise all the sadness and depression that have gotten into you. Don't let your subconscious bother you. For as soon as a person does teshuvah and changes his ways, G-d forgives him and completely eradicates any evil he did.

My dear, beloved brother: See to it that you get rid of the bitterness, sadness, and depression that have clung to your heart and mind for so many years, giving you a feeling that all is lost and there is no hope, G-d forbid. A person who has faith will know, without any doubts, that without G-d nothing really counts and that He is the source of life.

Such a person will not be easily shaken, even if he hears a voice from heaven saying, "There is no hope for you, you are lost." A person of faith won't take such things seriously, knowing that he is part of the source of life and he doesn't want anything just for himself — either in this world or in the World-to-Come. His goal should be to have the Blessed One in his heart, which is the highest achievement.

Therefore, see to it that you have the fullest faith in the Blessed One and eliminate all the questions and doubts and perverse thoughts that you have attributed to G-d's feeling about you. This way you will be worthy of a clean heart and find eternal peace and salvation.

My dear brother, why do you embitter your days for no reason? Do you think that by walking around in sadness it will help you? It will cause more and more pain, for a mood of bitterness only brings on more of the same, and it is a vicious cycle, G-d forbid. Therefore, get rid of phases of your bitterness and try to be happy in every way possible — by listening to music, by making other people feel better, by doing something constructive. Don't dwell on your troubles and problems.

Above all, get into the habit of talking things out to the Blessed One, in complete honesty and directness, as you would speak to a good friend. Do this regularly and it will eliminate all kinds of problems and doubts from your mind and clear your mind of twisted thoughts. Then you will experience the light of the Blessed One, its great splendor. This will help you overcome every difficulty. A person who truly believes in G-d, that there is none besides Him, that He fashions all — and always speaks to Him — such a person will rise above his bitterness, sadness and depression. Such a person will experience genuine happiness, for there is no greater happiness than knowing you have Someone on Whom you can depend, Someone Who listens to you with genuine concern.

Know, therefore, my dear, beloved brother, that no one loves you more, understands you better, and wants to help you, like the Blessed One, blessed be He. Fortunate is the person who comes close to Him, for he then enjoys eternal good.

❧ 12 ❧

See to it, my beloved brother, that you add life to your years. Don't continue to permit bitterness to fasten its grip on you, because it will only waste your days. Therefore, why fall into such depression which will give you nothing but more sadness and aggravation and low moods. Better try to be happy, to give meaning to your life with whatever you can; then you will have a pleasant and blessed life.

❧ 13 ❧

My dear, beloved brother: Look how your days and years pass with nothing to show. What is more, you embitter your life for no reason, thinking that your salvation depends upon people. Thus, if someone doesn't do what you think you want, it breaks you down, it destroys your self-confidence completely until you feel "all hope is lost and there is no way out." You should be aware of the truth: Everything is really

a dream because there is no reality without the Blessed One. You have to develop the habit of talking to Him, to ask Him for the details of what you really need, as one speaks to a friend or as a son speaks to his father.

Know, too, that there is no such thing as “nature.” Everything depends upon G-d’s wondrous watching overall. Therefore, why embitter your life for no reason. All your efforts will gain you nothing — with the wrong attitude. It will yield only sadness and terrible pain, trials and tribulations, Better wend your way to the Blessed One. Tell him all the little things that fill your heart. Then you will experience kindness, salvation, and genuine mercy.

❧ 14 ❧

You must know, my dear, beloved brother, that a person many times goes through the most bitter experiences before he decides to repent and return to the Blessed One and to serve Him. The evil inclination makes it very difficult by giving the person a coldness of spirit and weakness of resolve, giving him the feeling that all hope is gone and that he is just not one for returning to G-d. It is a feeling that you have sunk to the lowest of the low, the very depths of Hell, hopeless. The

evil spirit confuses you with bad advice, so as to distance you from G-d. This is the toughest part for anyone who wants to come close to the Blessed One and really repent, so as to be able to experience a pleasant life, fellowship, and G-d's light.

It is so difficult when you don't know how to put the better thoughts into action. Knowing that this trying effort must come first — to suffer, to have conflicting feeling — then you can prevail over the challenges. This is itself part of the revealing experience, that at first the process is hidden from you.

Therefore, my dear, beloved brother, don't lose confidence in yourself about achieving this and don't ever give up. Don't give up even if you seem to be suffering and you see no easy way to escape the pain and deep trap into which you have fallen. Knowing that it has to be this way before reaching holiness — this itself will sweeten things for you, enabling you to change your sinking feelings to a sense of great uplift. You will then be able to experience a genuine return and bring the light of the Blessed One upon yourself.



You must know my dear, beloved brother, that you have to get close to the tzaddikim — the truly

righteous people of your generation. They will help you destroy the bitterness of your spirit and your conflicts and they will guide you to a full understanding that will sweeten your life. These teachers will enlighten your way with the best advice on how to make the proper effort in your existence on this earth. These multifaceted steps will return you to the Blessed One and to the ways of pleasantness, fellowship, and G-dliness.

❧ 16 ❧

Why, my dear brother, do you embitter your life, for no reason? Don't you realize that depression is a sickness like any other sickness? If you don't make a strong effort to cure it, it will become worse, to the point of becoming incurable. Therefore, abandon depression by getting involved with other people, and try to console and strengthen them. By trying to help others, you will strengthen yourself.

❧ 17 ❧

See to it that you strengthen yourself in every way possible and try to stop your depression which, literally, uproots a person from his very

foundation. Change your self-degradation to self-confidence. Do the very opposite of the feelings with which the evil spirit tends to seduce you. Then you will succeed in getting out of your depression. It tries to make you feel miserable and worried. Do the very opposite! It tries to get you to feel trapped and hopeless. Laugh at it! Know that you must do the opposite of the temptations of the evil spirit and by doing so you will succeed all the days of your life.

The essential thing is to try to flee from your depression, which is the worst thing. Anyone trapped in a depression will find it hard to get out of it, unless you get close to genuinely righteous people who will teach you how to return to the Blessed One and change your bitterness into sweetness.



You must know my dear, beloved brother, that your principal hope for getting out of your depression is your closeness to the really righteous of your times. Without them, you can really be totally lost in the deep depression that envelops you each day. Each and every Jew has a sinister side every day, which tries to darken his life in deep bitterness, sadness, and depression.

There are superficial thoughts that seek to cover up all the good qualities to be found in each and every Jew. These reflections can only cause deep depression.

Conversely, when a person searches and finds something good in himself, it will prevent any form of depression. It will encourage him to find more that is good in himself, and it will strengthen him to come close to the genuinely righteous, to listen to their council. The sinister side of a person raises counter-arguments to what the righteous advise you. This can only lead you to depression and the blackest of darkness. It prevents you from studying Torah, from praying as you should, and from performing the commandments of the Blessed One. This is all caused by depression. Indeed, there are those who are so depressed and without hope that they don't study or pray at all, nor do they perform the commandments of G-d.

Therefore, the best advice is to seek out the righteous people and listen to them and their advice. Do whatever they tell you. In this way, you will sweeten your bitterness and blackness of heart. Everything will turn good, pleasant, and joyous. All this can happen because of the wise teaching of the righteous, who can strengthen and fortify who are depressed. They reveal unusually

wonderful ideas on how to change bitterness to sweetness.

Happy is the person who proves worthy of coming close to wise, righteous people of his generation, those who take succor from the most righteous, the incredibly learned and brilliant of a generation who are here to improve the world with the acceptance of G-d's kingship.

❧ 19 ❧

You must know, my dear, beloved brother, that your lack of self-confidence, suffering, and depression are all really like an empty wind. The fact is that for man, as long as he is alive, the entire world is open to him and his improvement depends on himself. The point is not to be a batlan — an empty-head — and stand up for what you are! Don't permit yourself to sink in spirit in any way.

You should know, too, that even the greatest and most outstanding of the righteous people also experience thoughts of bitterness and depression, just as you do. However, they strengthen themselves by recognizing the power of man over himself. Therefore, see to it that you recognize and act on your strength; rejoice in every way possible, and thus, you will change your bitterness into sweetness.

You should know, my dear, beloved brother, that there is no one greater than the person who, by nature, may be inclined to sadness and depression, yet nevertheless he changes it into a powerful force of happiness. The Holy One, blessed be He, is very proud of such people. Such a person brings all potential good into reality. He fulfills the purpose of the Creator, because the Blessed One is the very essence of Oneness. It is not appropriate to call Him by any other name. With Him all is light, happiness, and joy, He created many worlds until He decided upon this one. The rejected worlds have all the sadness, bitterness, and depression.

Man's essential purpose is to divert all the bitterness and darkness to the Blessed One and to bind all creation to Him Who is the essence of completeness. The truth is that man, by his many sins, puts G-d's light and unity into a shadow that hides the Source. This can only lead to depression, and when a person returns completely to the Blessed One and clings to Him for strength, he can then bring upon himself and all the world closeness to G-d's light, life, sweetness, pleasantness, and the splendor of G-d's strength.

Therefore, fortunate is the person who is capable of complete teshuvah, returning to

the ways of the Blessed One. In this way, man reestablishes and strengthens the world's unity, which is the unity of the Blessed One. Such a person is, indeed, fortunate.

❧ 21 ❧

My dear, beloved brother: Be strong! Don't belittle yourself so much. It is true that you have lived through many crises and upheavals, and you sank to the depths. Nevertheless, you must know that the broken heart and depression that you seem to continue will not help you in any way. You are only punishing yourself.

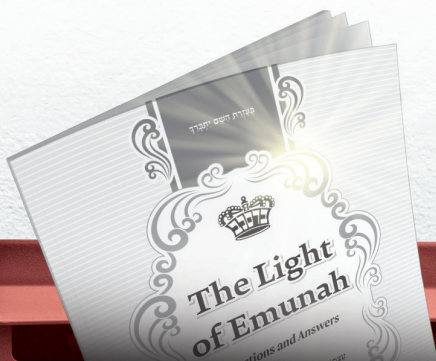
You should know that the principal way of returning to the Blessed One is actually by the practice of joy, for strength and glory is His and He dwells only in happiness. Therefore, if you want to return to the Blessed One, see to it that you eschew sadness and depression and change it all to joy and trust.

❧ 22 ❧

My dear brother! See to it that you bring out the best in yourself and that is: always to be joyous; to convert the weariness and sighs into

happiness, the depression into pleasantness and sweetness. You should know that in the World Above, there are voices each day that announce: Happy is the person in the world below who changes darkness into light, bitterness into sweetness, He is fortunate and so is his destiny.





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