

Editor's Introduction

This book contains an English translation of Rabbi Nachman's original lesson of *Azamra*, "I will sing," in *Likutey Moharan I*:282, which was first given on Shemini Atzeret 5568/October 24, 1807.

Rabbi Nachman repeatedly emphasized the importance of being happy. "It is a great mitzvah to be happy at all times" (*Likutey Moharan II*, 24). *Azamra* is his teaching about the way to happiness — by always seeking out the good points in ourselves and in others.

Simple as is the language of *Azamra*, it also treats of some of the deepest teachings of the Torah, revealed and hidden.

Rabbi Nachman's lesson is accompanied by a selection from some of the writings in the Breslov tradition that are founded on the teachings of *Azamra*. Rabbi Nathan of Breslov (1780-1844) was Rabbi Nachman's closest pupil. His Torah discourse on *Azamra* in *Likutey Halachot, Orach Chaim, Hilchot Hashkamat Haboker I*, is here presented almost in its entirety. In it Rabbi Nathan explores the significance of *Azamra* over all areas of the life of the Jewish People. There are also selections of *chidushim* — new elaborations of Torah teachings — from the writings of later generations of Breslov leaders.

The book concludes with Rabbi Nathan's prayer on *Azamra*, *Likutey Tefilot* 90, composed in the spirit of Rabbi Nachman's request to "turn the lessons into prayers" (*Likutey Moharan II*, 25).

In the merit of the Tzaddikim who have left us this heritage, may we, too, fulfill these teachings until the coming of our righteous Mashiach and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, for the Sanctuary is constructed out of the good points of every Jew. Amen.

AZAMRA!

Likutey Moharan I, 282

אזמרה לאלהי בעודי

Azamra l'elokai be'odee...

I will sing to God with the little I have left.

(Psalms 146:2).

ועוד מעט ואין רשע והתבוננת על מקומו ואיננו

V'od m'at v'ein rasha, v'hitbonanta al mekomo v'einenu.

And in but a little bit the sinner is not;

you shall reflect upon his place and he will not be there.

(Psalms 37:10)

The Good in Others...

KNOW! You must judge all people favorably. Even in the case of a complete sinner, you must search until you find some modicum of good by virtue of which he is *not a sinner*. By finding this small amount of good and judging him favorably you really do elevate him to the scale of merit. You can then bring him to return to God.

This teaching is implicit in the words of the psalm: “And in but a little bit — *v'OD m'at* — the sinner is not; you shall reflect upon his place and he will not be there,” (Psalms 37:10). The verse is telling us to judge everyone favorably. Even if you see that someone is a complete sinner, you must still hunt and search until you find some little bit of good in him. There, in the place this little bit of good exists, that person is not wicked!

This is the meaning of the words of the psalms: “And in but a *little bit* the sinner is not...” In other words, you must seek out the *little bit* of good that still remains in him, for in that place he is

out a single mitzvah or did anything good throughout your entire life?

You may start to examine this good deed only to see that it is also full of blemishes and devoid of purity. The very mitzvah or holy act itself seems to have been prompted by impure motives and bound up with improper thoughts and numerous flaws. Even so, how is it possible that this mitzvah or holy deed contains not even a modicum of good? Some good point *must* be there.

You have to search until you find some modicum of good in yourself to restore your inner vitality and attain happiness. And by searching for and finding some little bit of good that still remains in you, you genuinely move from the scale of guilt onto the scale of merit, and then you can return to God. “And in a little bit the sinner is not; you shall reflect upon his place and he will not be there.”

We saw before, then, that we have to judge *others* favorably, even the wicked, and find their good points so as to take them from the scale of guilt and move them to the scale of merit. This same teaching also applies to the way a person relates to himself. You have to judge yourself favorably and find the good points that still exist in you. This will give you the strength to avoid a complete fall into despair, and indeed, to recover your inner vitality and bring joy to your soul with the little bit of good you find — some mitzvah or good deed you once performed.

The Melody of Life

And in just the same way you must carry on searching until you find yet another good point. Even if this good point is also mixed with many impurities, still, you must extract some positive point from here as well. And so you must go on — searching and

gathering together additional good points. It is through this that melodies are made.

[Music, in essence, is created through the separation of good from evil — through selecting the good wind (Hebrew: *ruach*, which also means “spirit”) and rejecting the winds of gloom and despair. Thus, in playing a musical instrument — which is itself a vessel containing air — the sounds are produced by causing the air to vibrate. The skill is to move the hands on the instrument in such a way as to select the good vibrations — the “good wind” — which make music, and avoid the bad vibrations — the “winds of gloom and depression” — which make for dissonance and mere noise.³]

When a person refuses to let himself fall, but instead he revives his spirits by searching out and finding his positive points, collecting them together and sifting them out from the impurities and evil within him — melodies are made. Then he can pray and sing and give thanks to God.

It is a known fact that when a person becomes depressed over his gross physicality and evil deeds and sees how distant he really is from holiness, it generally makes him completely incapable of praying. He cannot even open his mouth. This is because of the depression, sadness and heaviness which come over him when he sees the overwhelming distance which separates him from God. But through following the path of finding the good points, it is possible to give oneself new life. Even though a person knows that he has committed ruinous acts and numerous transgressions, even though he is aware of his great distance from God, he must nevertheless search through and through until he finds the good points which still

3) For a fuller discussion see *Likutey Moharan I*, 54; also *Advice, Melodies; Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom 273*.

exist in him. This is how he can revitalize himself and bring himself to happiness. For it is certainly fitting that one should feel an ever-increasing joy at every good point emanating from the holy nature of his Jewishness, which one finds in one's self. When one restores his spirits and brings himself to happiness through following this path, then he will be able to pray, to sing and give thanks to God.

Azamra l'elokai be'ODEe. "I will sing to my God with the little I have left." With this "I will sing" with the little I still find in myself in accordance with the teaching of the verse we discussed before: "In but a *little bit (OD)* the sinner is not." It is by virtue of this good point that I will be able to sing and give thanks to God. This explains the meaning of *Azamra*, "I will sing." I will sing the songs and melodies that are created by collecting the good points as explained above.

[Rabbi Nathan writes:

Our Rebbe told us emphatically to go with this teaching, for it is a major foundation for all who want to draw closer to God and not lose their eternal reward completely, God forbid.

In most cases where people are far from God, the main reason is because of depression and sadness. The depression comes because these people start to look down on themselves when they see for themselves the great damage they have done through their actions. Each person knows inside the afflictions of his heart and his pain. As a result they come to look down on themselves, and in most cases, they despair of themselves completely. Because of this, they do not pray with concentration at all and do not even practice what they are still capable of.

A person must use all his intelligence to fight this. For wherever a person falls in his view of himself, it may well be true that the fall is occasioned by bad actions which he really did do. But the fall itself, and the consequent depression and sadness which come over him, are nothing but the work of the Evil One. He tries to weaken a person's

resolve with the aim of throwing him down completely. It is, therefore, necessary to be very firm and always go with this teaching of *Azamra* — to search oneself at all times for some little good, the good points, etc. Through this it is possible to revive oneself and make himself happy and look forward with confidence to help from God and ultimate success. He will be able to pray and sing and give thanks to God — “I will sing to my God with the little I have left” — and through this return to God with true sincerity, just as the Rebbe explains.]

The Prayer Leader

And know: the one who is capable of creating these melodies, namely collecting the good points which are to be found in each Jew, even the rebellious — *he* can lead the communal prayers. For the prayer leader is called the *shaliach tzibur*, the messenger of the people, and he must be sent by all the people. That is, he must gather every good point that is to be found in every single one of the worshippers. All these good points must be merged within him. When he stands in prayer, he does so with all this good. This is what the concept of the “messenger of the people” means. The one who fulfills this role must have within him this exalted aspect of being able to gather together the good points so that all these points will be drawn to him, merging within him.

He who can compose these melodies by being able to judge all men favorably, even the wicked and those of little worth, through constantly searching and seeking to find good points in all of them whereby melodies are composed... the Tzaddik who attains this level can be the cantor and the people’s messenger, leader of the communal prayers. For he has what is needed to be a truly fitting messenger of the people in that all the good points are drawn to him and merged within him. He is capable of gathering all the good points that are to be found in each and every Jew, even the rebellious.