

Shabbos Shuva Derasha 5782

Your
Habits
Determine
Your **Future**



**Motzei Shabbos, September 11 at 9:00 pm
with Rabbi Efrem Goldberg**

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The Shabbos Shuva Derasha is sponsored by the Freedman and Cohan families in memory of Helen Cohan and Rabbi Simcha Freedman, who dedicated their lives to supporting and strengthening Klal Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael.

1. *Shaarei Kedush*
R' Chaim Vital
1543-1620

Character traits are not included in the 613 mitzvos, but they are essential prerequisites for the 613 mitzvos, since they can lead either to their proper fulfillment, or their desecration ... Thus we find that a person must be even more careful in staying away from bad character traits than in fulfilling the positive and negative commandments, because when he achieves refinement of character, he will be able to easily fulfill all of the mitzvos.

אין המדות מכלל התרי"ג מצוות ואמנם הן הכנות עקריות אל תרי"ג המצוות בקיומם או בביטולם . . . ונמצא כי יותר צריך ליזהר ממידות רעות יותר מן קיום המצוות עשה ולא תעשה כי בהיותו בעל מדות טובות בנקל יקיים כל המצוות.

2. *Even Shleimah*
Vilna Gaon
1720-1797

All service of God is dependent upon the improvement of one's character since character traits are like clothing to the mitzvos and are the general principles of the Torah. Conversely, all transgression stems from unimproved character traits.

א. כל עבודת ה' תלויה בתיקון המדות, שהן כמו לבוש למצוות וכללי התורה¹, וכל החסאים מושרשים במדות, והמדות מושרשות בארבעה יסודות.²

3. *Orchos Tzadikim*
15th C. Germany

deed is of much value without pure fear. Therefore, all men must be informed that anyone who wishes to attain worthy character traits must intermix fear of Hashem with each trait, for fear of Hashem is the common bond among all of the traits. This may be compared to a string which has been strung through the holes of pearls, with a knot tied at its end to hold the pearls. There is no question that if the knot is cut, all the pearls will fall. It is the same with fear of Hashem. It is the knot which secures all of the good traits, and if you remove it, all of the good traits will depart from you. And if you do not have good traits, you do not have Torah and mitzvos, for all of Torah hinges upon the perfection of one's traits.

לכן יש להודיע לכל, כי כל איש הרוצה להביא נפשו לידי מדות טובות, צריך לערב יראת שמים עם כל מדה ומדה, כי יראת השם היא הקשר שהוא מחזיק כל המדות, ודומה לחוט שהכניסוהו תוך חרי המרגליות וקשרו קשר בתחתיתו להחזיק כל המרגליות; אין ספק, כי בהנחת הקשר יפלו כל המרגליות; כך היראה: היא מחזקת כל המדות, ואם תתיר ממך קשר היראה, יבדלו ממך כל מדות טובות; וכשאין בידך מדות טובות, אין בידך תורה ומצוות, כי כל התורה תלויה בתקון המדות.



4. Pachad Yitzchak
(Yom Kippur)
R' Yitzchak Hutner
1906-1980

"The truth of the matter is that the power of change is the greatest innovation, after the wonder of the creation of Heaven and Earth,"

הכללי. אלא שחידשו לו למשה סדר תפלה גם בעולם התשובה ונתגלה לו דכשם שיש תפלה הפועלת בתוך עולמו של שם הוי' הראשון, כמו כן יש סדר תפלה הפועל גם בתוך עולמו של שם הוי' השני. וחידוש זה של פעולת התפלה בעולם התשובה הוא כל כך עמוק עד שלא יספיק הציווי על זה. חידוש זה צריך להתגלות דוקא במחזה, וירד ה' בענו, מלמד שנתעטף הקב"ה כש"ץ. אלמלא סקרא כתוב אי אפשר לאומרו. אנחנו מתפללים על סיוע בעבודת התשובה כדרך שאנו מבקשים בתפלה על צרכים אחרים. וזה מפני שבנפשנו אינה חיה ההרגשה בהרבותא הגדולה של תשובה. לאמתן של דברים כחה של תשובה היא הרבותא היותר גדולה אחרי הפלא של בריאת שמים וארץ. ועל כן כשם שאין מקום לתפלה במעשה בראשית של שמים וארץ כמו כן היה מן הדין שהתמיה של מה תצעק אלי תחול על ראשו של כל מתפלל בעניני תשובה. אלא שהתעטף הקב"ה כש"ץ והראה סדר תפלה מיוחד לעניני תשובה. ולכן נמצא במנהג ישראל של אמירת סליחות גוון מיוחד דומה לתפלות הקבועות, אשרי, תחנון, תתקבל, המיוחד תפלה זו לסליחה לסוג בפני עצמה ומבדילה משאר התפלות והבקשות בעניני בני, חיי, ומווני. ומכאן היא הבליטה בעילוי אופי התפלה של ימי התשובה. מפני שבימי התשובה יש לנו לכל ענינינו גישה של בעלי תשובה, ולקושטא דמילתא תפלת התשובה נגדרת בנדר מיוחד וממילא יש לה גוון וצורה מסוימה משל עצמה.

5. Mishlei 4:13
Vilna Gaon
1720-1797

הַחֲזִק בְּמוֹסֶר אֶל־תִּרְרָךְ נֶצְרָךְ כִּי־הִיא חַיִּיךָ:
Hold fast to discipline; do not let go;
Keep it; it is your life.

וזהו חידוש מדרגה לדעתנו לא הנסג סגור הפול פתוח זה וכן וכן בזהו ככל: (יג) החזק
במוסר לחזק את המוסר שסמלת בו והחזק את עצמך. אל תרף לסילולפי בעם אל תרף
ל"ט מן המוסר. נצורה כלומר אל תרצה מוסר. חסיד נדרים ומצות על המוסר של
יבא לידי רסיון. כי היא רדיך כי מה קשהו חזי הוא כדי לשבור מה של סבר
עד הנה ויסו המוסר לכן פריך חסיד להחזק וזה לא יתחזק למה לו מים: (יד) באגרת

6. Ohr Yechezkel
Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein

It is extremely difficult to uproot the force of negative character traits; as Rabbi Yisroel of Salant famously stated – it is easier to know the entire Talmud by heart than it is to uproot a single negative trait from its root. This is particularly so because we do not possess only one trait, but many, and each of them is deep and profound. Certainly then, the labor is great, without any measure.

התחזקות בעבודתנו הרוחנית. "המלאכה מרובה", קשה מאד עקירת כח המדות, ומפורסמים דבריו של הגרי"ס ז"ל, כי קל יותר לידע ש"ס בעל פה מאשר עקירת מדה אחת משרשה, ובפרט כי לא רק כח מדה אחת בנו אלא מדות רבות ועמוקות, וודאי שהמלאכה מרובה לאין שיעור, ולמרות כל הריבוי וחיוב העבודה "הפועלים עצלים" ומתחמקים מעשיית מלאכתם, ואל נא נעלה בדעתנו כי אף אם לא נשלים עבודתנו לא יחסר לנו מאומה מהשלימות, מוסיף התנא ואומר "ובעל הבית דוחק", אין הקב"ה מוותר כמלוא נימא ודורש מאתנו השלמת מלאכתנו. וכל שלא ניטול את העצות והדרכים אשר הורנו השי"ת נלך בה, אין תקוה שנשיג את החיובים המוטלים עלינו. "טוב מאד זה מלאך המות" (בראשית רבה, ט, י) ניתנה מיתה בעולם

There's No Such Thing as Free Will

Stephen Cave

But we're better off believing in it anyway. For centuries, philosophers and theologians have almost unanimously held that civilization as we know it depends on a widespread belief in free will—and that losing this belief could be calamitous. Our codes of ethics, for example, assume that we can freely choose between right and wrong. In the Christian tradition, this is known as “moral liberty”—the capacity to discern and pursue the good, instead of merely being compelled by appetites and desires. The great Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant reaffirmed this link between freedom and goodness. If we are not free to choose, he argued, then it would make no sense to say we ought to choose the path of righteousness.

Today, the assumption of free will runs through every aspect of American politics, from welfare provision to criminal law. It permeates the popular culture and underpins the American dream—the belief that anyone can make something of themselves no matter what their start in life. As Barack Obama wrote in *The Audacity of Hope*, American “values are rooted in a basic optimism about life and a faith in free will.”

So what happens if this faith erodes? **The sciences have grown steadily bolder in their claim that all human behavior can be explained through the clockwork laws of cause and effect.** This shift in perception is the continuation of an intellectual revolution that began about 150 years ago, when Charles Darwin first published *On the Origin of Species*. Shortly after Darwin put forth his theory of evolution, his cousin Sir Francis Galton began to draw out the implications: If we have evolved, then mental faculties like intelligence must be hereditary. But we use those faculties—which some people have to a greater degree than others—to make decisions. So our ability to choose our fate is not free, but depends on our biological inheritance.

Galton launched a debate that raged throughout the 20th century over nature versus nurture. Are our actions the unfolding effect of our genetics? Or the outcome of what has been imprinted on us by the environment? Impressive evidence accumulated for the importance of each factor. Whether scientists supported one, the other, or a mix of both, they increasingly assumed that our deeds must be determined by something.

In recent decades, research on the inner workings of the brain has helped to resolve the nature-nurture debate—and has dealt a further blow to the idea of free will. **Brain scanners have enabled us to peer inside a living person's skull, revealing intricate networks of neurons and allowing scientists to reach broad agreement that these networks are shaped by both genes and environment. But there is also agreement in the scientific community that the firing of neurons determines not just some or most but all of our thoughts, hopes, memories, and dreams.**

We know that changes to brain chemistry can alter behavior—otherwise neither alcohol nor antipsychotics would have their desired effects. The same holds true for brain structure: Cases of ordinary adults becoming murderers or pedophiles after developing a brain tumor demonstrate how dependent we are on the physical properties of our gray stuff.

Many scientists say that the American physiologist Benjamin Libet demonstrated in the 1980s that we have no free will. It was already known that electrical activity builds up in a person's brain before she, for example, moves her hand; Libet showed that this buildup occurs before the person consciously makes a decision to move. The conscious experience of deciding to act, which we usually associate with free will, appears to be an add-on, a post hoc reconstruction of events that occurs after the brain has already set the act in motion.

The 20th-century nature-nurture debate prepared us to think of ourselves as shaped by influences beyond our control. But it left some room, at least in the popular imagination, for the possibility that we could overcome our circumstances or our genes to become the author of our own destiny. **The challenge posed by neuroscience is more radical: It describes the brain as a physical system like any other, and suggests that we no more will it to operate in a particular way than we will our heart to beat. The contemporary scientific image of human behavior is one of neurons firing, causing other neurons to fire, causing our thoughts and deeds, in an unbroken chain that stretches back to our birth and beyond. In principle, we are therefore completely predictable. If we could understand any individual's brain architecture and chemistry well enough, we could, in theory, predict that individual's response to any given stimulus with 100 percent accuracy.**

This research and its implications are not new. What is new, though, is the spread of free-will skepticism beyond the laboratories and into the mainstream. The number of court cases, for example, that use evidence from neuroscience has more than doubled in the past decade—mostly in the context of defendants arguing that their brain made them do it. And many people are absorbing this message in other contexts, too, at least judging by the number of books and articles purporting to explain “your brain on” everything from music to magic. Determinism, to one degree or another, is gaining popular currency. The skeptics are in ascendance.

This development raises uncomfortable—and increasingly non-theoretical—questions: If moral responsibility depends on faith in our own agency, then as belief in determinism spreads, will we become morally irresponsible? And if we increasingly see belief in free will as a delusion, what will happen to all those institutions that are based on it? In 2002, two psychologists had a simple but brilliant idea: Instead of speculating about what might happen if people lost belief in their capacity to choose, they could run an experiment to find out. Kathleen Vohs, then at the University of Utah, and Jonathan Schooler, of the University of Pittsburgh, asked one group of participants to read a passage arguing that free will was an illusion, and another group to read a passage that was neutral on the topic. Then they subjected the members of each group to a variety of temptations and observed their behavior. Would differences in abstract philosophical beliefs influence people's decisions?

Yes, indeed. When asked to take a math test, with cheating made easy, the group primed to see free will as illusory proved more likely to take an illicit peek at the answers. When given an opportunity to steal—to take more money than they were due from an envelope of \$1 coins—those whose belief in free will had been undermined pilfered more. On a range of measures, Vohs told me, **she and Schooler found that “people who are induced to believe less in free will are more likely to behave immorally.”**

It seems that when people stop believing they are free agents, they stop seeing themselves as blameworthy for their actions. Consequently, they act less responsibly and give in to their baser instincts. Vohs emphasized that this result is not limited to the contrived conditions of a lab experiment. “You see the same effects with people who naturally believe more or less in free will,” she said.

In another study, for instance, Vohs and colleagues measured the extent to which a group of day laborers believed in free will, then examined their performance on the job by looking at their supervisor's ratings. Those who believed more strongly that they were in control of their own actions showed up on time for work more frequently and were rated by supervisors as more capable. In fact, belief in free will turned out to be a better predictor of job performance than established measures such as self-professed work ethic.

Another pioneer of research into the psychology of free will, Roy Baumeister of Florida State University, has extended these findings. For example, he and colleagues found that students with a weaker belief in free will were less likely to volunteer their time to help a classmate than were those whose belief in free will was stronger. Likewise, those primed to hold a deterministic view by reading statements like "Science has demonstrated that free will is an illusion" were less likely to give money to a homeless person or lend someone a cellphone.

Further studies by Baumeister and colleagues have linked a diminished belief in free will to stress, unhappiness, and a lesser commitment to relationships. They found that when subjects were induced to believe that "all human actions follow from prior events and ultimately can be understood in terms of the movement of molecules," those subjects came away with a lower sense of life's meaningfulness. Early this year, other researchers published a study showing that a weaker belief in free will correlates with poor academic performance.

The list goes on: Believing that free will is an illusion has been shown to make people less creative, more likely to conform, less willing to learn from their mistakes, and less grateful toward one another. In every regard, it seems, when we embrace determinism, we indulge our dark side.

Few scholars are comfortable suggesting that people ought to believe an outright lie. Advocating the perpetuation of untruths would breach their integrity and violate a principle that philosophers have long held dear: the Platonic hope that the true and the good go hand in hand. **Saul Smilansky, a philosophy professor at the University of Haifa, in Israel, has wrestled with this dilemma throughout his career and come to a painful conclusion: "We cannot afford for people to internalize the truth" about free will.**

Smilansky is convinced that free will does not exist in the traditional sense—and that it would be very bad if most people realized this. "Imagine," he told me, "that I'm deliberating whether to do my duty, such as to parachute into enemy territory, or something more mundane like to risk my job by reporting on some wrongdoing. If everyone accepts that there is no free will, then I'll know that people will say, 'Whatever he did, he had no choice—we can't blame him.' So I know I'm not going to be condemned for taking the selfish option." This, he believes, is very dangerous for society, and "the more people accept the determinist picture, the worse things will get."

Determinism not only undermines blame, Smilansky argues; it also undermines praise. Imagine I do risk my life by jumping into enemy territory to perform a daring mission. Afterward, people will say that I had no choice, that my feats were merely, in Smilansky's phrase, "an unfolding of the given," and therefore hardly praiseworthy. And just as undermining blame would remove an obstacle to acting wickedly, so undermining praise would remove an incentive to do good. Our heroes would seem less inspiring, he argues, our achievements less noteworthy, and soon we would sink into decadence and despondency.

Smilansky advocates a view he calls illusionism—the belief that free will is indeed an illusion, but one that society must defend. The idea of determinism, and the facts supporting it, must be kept confined within the ivory tower. Only the

initiated, behind those walls, should dare to, as he put it to me, “look the dark truth in the face.” Smilansky says he realizes that there is something drastic, even terrible, about this idea—but if the choice is between the true and the good, then for the sake of society, the true must go.

Smilansky’s arguments may sound odd at first, given his contention that the world is devoid of free will: If we are not really deciding anything, who cares what information is let loose? But new information, of course, is a sensory input like any other; it can change our behavior, even if we are not the conscious agents of that change. In the language of cause and effect, a belief in free will may not inspire us to make the best of ourselves, but it does stimulate us to do so.

Illusionism is a minority position among academic philosophers, most of whom still hope that the good and the true can be reconciled. But it represents an ancient strand of thought among intellectual elites. Nietzsche called free will “a theologians’ artifice” that permits us to “judge and punish.” And many thinkers have believed, as Smilansky does, that institutions of judgment and punishment are necessary if we are to avoid a fall into barbarism.

Smilansky is not advocating policies of Orwellian thought control. Luckily, he argues, we don’t need them. Belief in free will comes naturally to us. Scientists and commentators merely need to exercise some self-restraint, instead of gleefully disabusing people of the illusions that undergird all they hold dear. Most scientists “don’t realize what effect these ideas can have,” Smilansky told me. “Promoting determinism is complacent and dangerous.”

Yet not all scholars who argue publicly against free will are blind to the social and psychological consequences. Some simply don’t agree that these consequences might include the collapse of civilization. One of the most prominent is the neuroscientist and writer Sam Harris, who, in his 2012 book, *Free Will*, set out to bring down the fantasy of conscious choice. Like Smilansky, he believes that there is no such thing as free will. But Harris thinks we are better off without the whole notion of it.

“We need our beliefs to track what is true,” Harris told me. Illusions, no matter how well intentioned, will always hold us back. For example, we currently use the threat of imprisonment as a crude tool to persuade people not to do bad things. But if we instead accept that “human behavior arises from neurophysiology,” he argued, then we can better understand what is really causing people to do bad things despite this threat of punishment—and how to stop them. “We need,” Harris told me, “to know what are the levers we can pull as a society to encourage people to be the best version of themselves they can be.”

According to Harris, we should acknowledge that even the worst criminals—murderous psychopaths, for example—are in a sense unlucky. “They didn’t pick their genes. They didn’t pick their parents. They didn’t make their brains, yet their brains are the source of their intentions and actions.” In a deep sense, their crimes are not their fault. Recognizing this, we can dispassionately consider how to manage offenders in order to rehabilitate them, protect society, and reduce future offending. Harris thinks that, in time, “it might be possible to cure something like psychopathy,” but only if we accept that the brain, and not some airy-fairy free will, is the source of the deviancy.

Accepting this would also free us from hatred. Holding people responsible for their actions might sound like a keystone of civilized life, but we pay a high price for it: Blaming people makes us angry and vengeful, and that clouds our judgment.

“Compare the response to Hurricane Katrina,” Harris suggested, with “the response to the 9/11 act of terrorism.” For many Americans, the men who hijacked those planes are the embodiment of criminals who freely choose to do evil.

But if we give up our notion of free will, then their behavior must be viewed like any other natural phenomenon—and this, Harris believes, would make us much more rational in our response.

Although the scale of the two catastrophes was similar, the reactions were wildly different. Nobody was striving to exact revenge on tropical storms or declare a War on Weather, so responses to Katrina could simply focus on rebuilding and preventing future disasters. The response to 9/11, Harris argues, was clouded by outrage and the desire for vengeance, and has led to the unnecessary loss of countless more lives. Harris is not saying that we shouldn't have reacted at all to 9/11, only that a coolheaded response would have looked very different and likely been much less wasteful. "Hatred is toxic," he told me, "and can destabilize individual lives and whole societies. Losing belief in free will undercuts the rationale for ever hating anyone."

Whereas the evidence from Kathleen Vohs and her colleagues suggests that social problems may arise from seeing our own actions as determined by forces beyond our control—weakening our morals, our motivation, and our sense of the meaningfulness of life—Harris thinks that social benefits will result from seeing other people's behavior in the very same light. From that vantage point, the moral implications of determinism look very different, and quite a lot better.

What's more, Harris argues, as ordinary people come to better understand how their brains work, many of the problems documented by Vohs and others will dissipate. Determinism, he writes in his book, does not mean "that conscious awareness and deliberative thinking serve no purpose." **Certain kinds of action require us to become conscious of a choice—to weigh arguments and appraise evidence. True, if we were put in exactly the same situation again, then 100 times out of 100 we would make the same decision, "just like rewinding a movie and playing it again." But the act of deliberation—the wrestling with facts and emotions that we feel is essential to our nature—is nonetheless real.**

The big problem, in Harris's view, is that people often confuse determinism with fatalism. Determinism is the belief that our decisions are part of an unbreakable chain of cause and effect. Fatalism, on the other hand, is the belief that our decisions don't really matter, because whatever is destined to happen will happen—like Oedipus's marriage to his mother, despite his efforts to avoid that fate.

When people hear there is no free will, they wrongly become fatalistic; they think their efforts will make no difference. But this is a mistake. People are not moving toward an inevitable destiny; given a different stimulus (like a different idea about free will), they will behave differently and so have different lives. If people better understood these fine distinctions, Harris believes, the consequences of losing faith in free will would be much less negative than Vohs's and Baumeister's experiments suggest.

Can one go further still? Is there a way forward that preserves both the inspiring power of belief in free will and the compassionate understanding that comes with determinism? Philosophers and theologians are used to talking about free will as if it is either on or off; as if our consciousness floats, like a ghost, entirely above the causal chain, or as if we roll through life like a rock down a hill. But there might be another way of looking at human agency.

Some scholars argue that we should think about freedom of choice in terms of our very real and sophisticated abilities to map out multiple potential responses to a particular situation. One of these is Bruce Waller, a philosophy professor at Youngstown State University. In his new book, *Restorative Free Will*, he writes that we should focus on our ability, in

any given setting, to generate a wide range of options for ourselves, and to decide among them without external constraint.

For Waller, it simply doesn't matter that these processes are underpinned by a causal chain of firing neurons. In his view, free will and determinism are not the opposites they are often taken to be; they simply describe our behavior at different levels.

Waller believes his account fits with a scientific understanding of how we evolved: Foraging animals—humans, but also mice, or bears, or crows—need to be able to generate options for themselves and make decisions in a complex and changing environment. Humans, with our massive brains, are much better at thinking up and weighing options than other animals are. Our range of options is much wider, and we are, in a meaningful way, freer as a result.

Waller's definition of free will is in keeping with how a lot of ordinary people see it. One 2010 study found that people mostly thought of free will in terms of following their desires, free of coercion (such as someone holding a gun to your head). As long as we continue to believe in this kind of practical free will, that should be enough to preserve the sorts of ideals and ethical standards examined by Vohs and Baumeister.

Yet Waller's account of free will still leads to a very different view of justice and responsibility than most people hold today. No one has caused himself: No one chose his genes or the environment into which he was born. Therefore no one bears ultimate responsibility for who he is and what he does. Waller told me he supported the sentiment of Barack Obama's 2012 "You didn't build that" speech, in which the president called attention to the external factors that help bring about success. He was also not surprised that it drew such a sharp reaction from those who want to believe that they were the sole architects of their achievements. But he argues that we must accept that life outcomes are determined by disparities in nature and nurture, "so we can take practical measures to remedy misfortune and help everyone to fulfill their potential."

Understanding how will be the work of decades, as we slowly unravel the nature of our own minds. In many areas, that work will likely yield more compassion: offering more (and more precise) help to those who find themselves in a bad place. And when the threat of punishment is necessary as a deterrent, it will in many cases be balanced with efforts to strengthen, rather than undermine, the capacities for autonomy that are essential for anyone to lead a decent life. The kind of will that leads to success—seeing positive options for oneself, making good decisions and sticking to them—can be cultivated, and those at the bottom of society are most in need of that cultivation.

To some people, this may sound like a gratuitous attempt to have one's cake and eat it too. And in a way it is. It is an attempt to retain the best parts of the free-will belief system while ditching the worst. President Obama—who has both defended "a faith in free will" and argued that we are not the sole architects of our fortune—has had to learn what a fine line this is to tread. Yet it might be what we need to rescue the American dream—and indeed, many of our ideas about civilization, the world over—in the scientific age.

8. Alei Shor 1:156
R' Shlomo Wolbe
1914-2005



The great [Jewish] philosophers established bechira as the cornerstone for the whole Torah.... But from this resulted a common misperception among the masses; that all people actively choose their every act and every decision. This is a grievous error.

התינוק מיומו הראשון מרגיש בהנאה וצער. גם רצון הוא מגלה כבר בהיותו פעוט. שונה היא הבחירה. היא חורגת מתחום האינסטינקטים ודורשת שיקול שכלי, ולכן בלי דעת ובגרות אין בחירה. אם ילד יודע שהוא ייענש אם יקח סוכריות והוא מתאוה להן, הרי יש כאן מאבק בין שתי נגיעות: השאיפה להנאה והפחד בפני העונש. הנגיעה הגוברת בלבו היא המכריעה במאבק זה. להתגברותו של אינסטינקט אחד על משנהו אין לקרוא בשם "בחירה".

אולם נתבוננה־נא בעצמנו, כלומר באדם המבוגר: האם אנחנו מרבים להשתמש בכח הבחירה? טבעים, חינוך, הרגל ונגיעות שולטים בנו כמעט שלטון מוחלט מנוער עד שיבה. יתכן, שאדם יוציא את שנותיו מבלי להזדקק לכח הבחירה! בעל טבעים נוחים, אשר לא זו מחינוך בית הוריו, מצוותיו — "מלומדה", נגיעותיו מחזקות אותו בדרכו (כבוד והערכה כ"צדיק"), נסיונות לא פסדוהו — הרי יוכל להוציא את שנותיו בשם טוב מבלי שהיה בוחר בדרכו מתוך הסכמה שכלית עצמאית!

זוהי דיגמה קיצונית. אבל כשנתבונן בעצמנו ניווכח, כי פעמים נדירות מאד אנו משתמשים בכח הבחירה, "הרשות נתונה" — אך במעשה שולטים בנו הטבעים, החינוך, ההרגל והנגיעות, הן בהכרעות הגורליות בחיים והן בהכרעות הקטנות היום־יומיות, ואיה הבחירה?

רבנו יונה פותר מבוכה זו. הוא כותב בשע"ת ג, יז:

"ודע כי המעלות העליונות נמסרו במצות עשה כמו מעלת הבחירה שנא' ובחרת בחיים, ומעלות תלמוד תורה כו', ומעלות לכת בדרכי ה' כו', ומעלות התבונן בגדולת ה' כו', ומעלות זכרון חסדיו והתבונן בהם כו', ומעלות הקדושה כו' ומעלות העבודה כו', ומעלות היראה כו', ומעלות האהבה כו', ומעלות הדבקות כו', לכל אחת מהנה כמה מדרגות".

מבואר בזה, כי הבחירה איננה כלל וכלל לחם יומי הרוחני של האדם. היא מהמעלות העליונות אשר האדם צריך לעמול כדי להשיגה, ולא נופלת היא מהאהבה והיראה והדבקות אשר פשוט וברור הוא כי קנייתן עולה לאדם בטורח רב. אנו יכולים לזכות לבחירה, ולכן אנו חייבים לקנותה, ולכן הבחירה היא יסוד השכר והעונש.

עמדנו בזה על יסוד גדול בחכמת החינוך של הזולת ושל עצמנו: יש להתחסס אל כל אדם כאילו אין לו בחירה, וכאילו הוא "מוכרת" עלידי טבעי, חינוכי, הרגלי ונגיעותיו! זהו יסודה של "חכמת העולם" אשר מבאר לנו רבנו הגאון ר' ישראל סלנטר וצללה"ה ב"אור ישראל", מכתב ד:

"הכסיל בפעמוני הסכלות יתן זהב תמורתה, המתאוה למאכל ומשתה יצודד במכירתה, ולכל אשר יחפוץ יטנו בחנפי לעגי מעוג, החפץ בכבוד המדומה חפצו היא רשתו!"

גדולי חכמי המחקר הראשונים הניחו את הבחירה כיסוד לכל התורה כולה ולכל עבדת האדם, ואין שום בר־דעת חולק על זאת. אך מזה השתרשה התפיסה אצל המון העם, כאילו כל אדם בוחר בפועל בכל מעשה ובכל הכרעה, וזוהי טעות גמורה. ולא זו בלבד, אלא שאין לנו לסמוך על בחירתנו, ומי לנו גדול כשלמה המלך ע"ה שאמר "אני ארבה ולא אסור" — שרצה להעמיד עבודתו על בחירתו ונכשל (עי' סנהדרין כא, א), כי אין לאדם לסמוך על בחירתו בבואו לידי נסיון. ומאידך — "מעלה עלינו" היא, ומדרגות רבות לה: אפילו כשאדם בוחר במצוה מתוך נגיעת "כבוד" יש בזה דרגת־מה של בחירה, כי היה יכול לבחור גם ב"כבוד" בחברת רשעים וכדומה, ומה שבחר דווקא במצוה, הרי יש בזה הערכה אמיתית כי מעשה מצוה ראוי לכבוד, ויש לו בזה בחירה וזכות. המדרגה העליונה של הבחירה היא הדבקות, היינו ה"לשמה" התמידי. רצון השם הוא, שנצא מהמלומדה לקיים "ובחרת בחיים". — —

The Vilna Gaon explains that certain things can't be changed. Citing the Gemara (*Shabbat* 156a), "He who is born under the astrological sign of T'zaddik (Libra) will be righteous..."² the Gaon then continues:

Rather, free will is given to man to utilize his *ma'at* as he wishes. He can choose to be a *tzadik* (righteous person), *rasha* (wicked person), or *beinoni* (average person), as the Gemara (*ibid.*) says: He who is born under the astrological sign of *Ma'adin* (Aries) will be a blood spiller. Rav Ashi explained: He may be a bloodletter, a thief, a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer), or a *mohel* (ritual circumciser).

The Gaon goes on to explain that each of Rav Ashi's illustrations are telling. If the fellow is a *tzadik*, he will use his blood-spilling inclination to be a *mohel* — for a mitzvah. If he is a *beinoni*, he will be a *shochet*. This is also a blood-spilling profession. It isn't a mitzvah like *milah*, however, if someone wants to eat meat, he needs a *shochet*. So, too, the bloodletter. If, however, he is a *rasha*, God forbid, then he will use his *Ma'adin* potential for murder.

Someone born under the astrological sign of *Ma'adin* may use this potential for any one of the professions discussed above or anything similar to them, depending on his moral stature. However, one cannot change someone fundamentally, transforming him from the sort of person born under the astrological sign of

Ma'adin into the sort of person born under the astrological sign of T'zaddik.

For example: A child whose nature is to be constantly active cannot be transformed into someone who sits and reads twenty hours a day. If we force the child to do so, we will damage or lose him. Later, the child will go his own way and do whatever likes, which might be different from what his parents intended.

The Gaon continues:

The idea is that [King] David is described as a reddish fellow, which is why [the prophet] Shemuel erred upon seeing his face...

Shemuel was terrified by David ha-Melech (King David). He saw that David was "reddish, possessed of beautiful eyes" (*Shemuel* I 16:12). "Reddish" — He was born under the astrological sign of *Ma'adin*. But still he was "possessed of beautiful eyes" — He would only spill blood with the permission of the Sanhedrin.³

The Gaon concludes:

This is the meaning of the verse, "Educate a child according to his way" — according to his *ma'at* and nature you should educate him to do mitzvos — then "even when he grows old he will not depart from it." However, if you force him against his *ma'at*, now he will listen because he fears you; but later, when the time arrives for lifting your yoke from his neck, he will turn from

² The above gemara has nothing to do with present-day astrology.

³ See Midrash Yalkut Shimon, *Shemuel* 124.

10. Michtav Me'Elfiyahu
R' Elfiyahu Dessler
1892-1953

עבודת האדם



קונטרס הבהירה

חלק א: מהות הבחינה.

פרק א': תהליך הבחינה.

נעביר לפנינו, בתור משל, אחת מבחירותינו, ונתקור תיטב בפרטית.

— מי שמעשן סיגריות הרבה, עד שבלילה ירגיש כאב קשה בחזה, בשעה שכואב לו בלילה, מחליט שלא יעשן עוד בשום אופן למחר, כי אם יעשן הלא יהיה לו כאב כזה גם בלילה אחר. כשקם למחרת, אחר עבור שעה קלה מתעורר בו הרצון לעשן, מפני שבסבת ההרגל יש לו הפץ רב בזה. כשעומד ורצון חזק נגד יראת הכאב, אנו מבחינים שאומר לנפשו, אעפ"כ נא אר אחת, כי בזה המעט בודאי לא יכאב לי, ועל סמך זה הוא הילך ומעשן, וכן כאשר בשעה קלה שוב מתעורר הרצון לעשן שנית, יאמר לנפשו עוד הפעם, הלא גם זאת אחת היא, ובה הוא הילך ומעשן כל היום כולו, ובלילה יחזור אליו הכאב, ומה יהיה למחרתו? אף שכבר יודע שאם יקל לעצמו באחת יפול בפת, מכל מקום הוא חוזר ומטעה את עצמו כבחלתו. והנה אלהא הטענה הזו, אילו היו לפניו שני תוצאות, תוצון שלא יכאב לו והרצון לעשן, והנה דן בניגודם בראייה ברורה וכיישוב הדעת, בודאי שמחזיק חזק הוא מוצאן

קונטרס הבחינה. קונטרס זה הוא פיר עבודת כמה שנים. בעיות המהירה

תספר מעולם מקום מרכזי במחשבת אומ"ר ז"ל. בימי המלחמה נתן את ידו לאסוף ולעבד את כל המדובר בפנינים אלה עד אי, ולחברו לקונטרס שלם ומשוכלל, כאשר נעשה בשעתו ב"קונטרס החסיד". מקום חיבור זה היה צ"ש, אשר שם התגורר עם אחריהם מתלמידיו בבת המלחמה, והוכן שם להפלה בשביל חוג התלמידים באנגליה. (חלק ב) — ע"י במדור ג). הקונטרס היה מיועד להפיל גם חלקים אחרים מלבד אלו הנוגעים כאן וכו': "מהות הבחינה", "בחינה וניווט", "בחינה וסייעתא דשמיא" ו גם נאסף חומר רב; אבל לאוכלונו לא זכינו לעיבודו על ידו ז"ל. יסעונו ה' לסדרו ולעבדו כראוי בתוך שאר תפרי רבני זצ"ל שבעצמנו לחוצאם לאור בקרוב בכריכים אחרים בעתיד.

[ח"א ד"ד — ע"י כרך ד' ע"פ 109—93, א. כ.].

העשן: וא"כ במה גובר הרצון החלש? הלא רק על ידי הטענה קלושה זו.

ומעתה יש לשאול: מהו הגורם שיאחזק ואדם בסברא המטענת, ולא

בסברא האמיתית אשר בודאי ידענה היטב? האם הרצון לעשן? הלא הרצון שלא יכאב לו חזק הוא ממנו (כי אם לא כן, הטענה זו למח? ילך ויעשן לו גם אדעתא דיסורין?), מכאן אנו למדים שהאדם יכול הוא להטות דעתו מן האמת, הבורה לו, ולאחזק בדמיון אשר יכסה לו על השקר. שני התוצאות לפנינו, והוא בלב מתעלם מן האמת, (מסיח דעתו מן הסברא האמיתית שבט), ואחזק בשני, (בסברתו המדומה), מי גרם לו את זה? לא התוצאות גורמים, אלא האדם הוא הגורם לעצמו; כי יוכל לומר לעצמו "מה תועלת לי בשקר? הלא המציאות לא תתאים עם דמיוני, וסוף כל סוף אם אשמוע אל הדמיון יהיה לי כאב חזק בלילה" — ואז בודאי לא יעשן. וא"כ בהכרח האדם הוא הגורם לעצמו. ומה נואל התושבים, שהרצון החלש הוא הגורם לאדם לאחזק בטעות — אע"פ שהוא יודע שהוא טעות — ולא יוכל הרצון החזק לגרום כנגדו שיאחזק באמת אשר ידעה? יכול האדם לאחזק באמת, וממילא יעזובנו הרצון החלש, עם כל הדמיונות שהגב עליו; ויכול הוא ג"כ להטות דעתו מן האמת, ולקבל את הדמיונות במקומה, ויתרחק מן הרצון אשר האמת עמו. יכולת זו לכאן ולכאן — היינו בחירה.

ובחירה זו תלויה בו לגמרי, ואין ספק שהטבע אותה, אלא הוא בעצמו הנהו הסבה הראשונה לה. וזה בדוק ומנוסה לאדם אשר גבר על יצרו אפילו רק פעם אחת, שמרגיש בדרך בלבד שהוא עצמו מתרחק מן הדמיון, ומכריע לאחזק באמת בכל חוקי. אבל מי שלא התגבר על יצרו מעולם, הוא לא יוכל להבחין ענין זה כלל, כי נסיונו יורה לו שבכל פעם שהיה לו רצון לדבר רע, תרצון שיעבד אותו באין מוצא; וע"כ לא יוכל להבחין את ענין הבחינה, כי אינו רואה בשרשי מעשיו אלא סבות ומסובבים מבחוץ. וזהו המעשה הבחירה, לנפשים בענין הבחינה: "רעת לכם עונותכם, אתם נפשים בבחינה, כי עבדים מכורים הנכם ליצורכם הרע".

נמצינו למדים, כי חוכן הבחינה הטובה הוא להבחין באחדות האמת, ושאיך מציאות זולת האמת, וזהו הכח של הכרת הבורא יתברך. והבחינה הרעה היא שמבחיין גם את השקר כמציאות, וזהו הכח אשר על ידו נפשים בעיקר לומר ב' רשויות הן: "וא"ל: (שבת ק"ח): "אחזק אל יד שיש בנפשו של אדם? הוי אומר זה הצינה"ר. ואמריו בירושלמי (נדרים פ"ט): "כל השומע ליצור, כאילו עובד ע"י", ואפילו בבחינה רעה היותר דקה, כמו חטא עץ

* ועוד יומן בס"ד ביאר מעמיק ומרחיק לכת לכמה זו בחי"ב מקונטרס זה ע"י מדור ג.

— תעורכים

הדעת של אד"ר אשר דימה שכוונתו לשם שמים, כידוע, מ"מ אמר ח"ל גם על בחירה רעה זו: (סנהדרין לח:) "אדם הראשון אפיקורוס היה".

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פרק ב: נקודת הבחירה.

כששני צדדים נלחמים, הנה המלחמה היא במקום מערכתה, כל מה שאחרי צבא העם האחד הוא כולו תחת רשותו ואין לו שם שום ניגוד כלל, וכן מה שהוא מאחורי השני כולו ברשות השני. אם תאחד ניצח פעם בקרב, וידעה את השני מרחק מה, איך בהתחדש הקרב יהיה במקום שיעמדו שניהם אז, אבל במקום שרכש לו הראשון שם אין עוד מלחמה כי הוא ברשותו. הרי שבמעל יש רק חזית אחת, וכמה כל שטח שהי המדינות הוא מקום הקרב.

כן הוא גם בענין הבחירה. כל אדם יש לו בחירה, היינו בנקודת פגישת האמת שלו עם האמת המדומה, תולדת השקר. אבל רוב מעשיו הם במקום שאין האמת והשקר נפגשים שם כלל. כי יש הרבה מן האמת שהאדם מחונך לעשותו, ולא יעלה על דעתו כלל לעשות הניסוי, וכן הרבה אשר יעשה מן הרע והשקר, שלא יבחין כלל שאין ראוי לעשותו. אין הבחירה שייכת אלא בנקודה שבין צבאו של היצירה לציבאו של היצירה. הרבה נכשלים תמיד בלשון הרע, מפני שהורגלו בו, ולא יעלה על דעתם כלל כי רע הוא. ואותם אנשים עצמם לא יבוא לפניהם יצר הרע להציע להם מהשבת חילול שבת, ביטול תפלה, וציצית ותפילין, וכדומה. והיינו משום שבשבת, ותפילין, וציצית, נחתנו והורגלו כל כך עד שאין בניסה שם ליצר הרע.

אמנם נקודה זו של הבחירה אינה עומדת תמיד על מצב אחד, כי בבחירות הטובות האדם עולה למעלה, היינו שהמסקנות שהיו מערכת המלחמה מקומם, נכנסים לרשות היצירה, ואז המעשים הטובים שיוסיף לעשות בהם יהיה בלי שום מלחמה ובחירה כלל, והנה "מצות גוררת מצות" וכן להיפך, הבחירות הרעות מגרשות היצירה ממקומה, וכיוסוף לעשות מן הרע ההוא יעשו בלי בחירה, כי אין עוד אחיזה ליצירה במקום ההוא. והנה א"ל (אבות ד', ב') "עבירה גוררת עבירה", וכן "כיון שעבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה תחתיה לו" (יומא פ"ו).

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וכן הוא בענין החינוך. יש אשר יתחנך האדם להרבה מן הטוב עד שהוא בטוח בו מן היצירה, ונמצא שנקודת בחירתו היא בעניינים יותר גבוהים. למשל, מי שנחתנך בחינוך המורה בין צדיקים ואנשי מעשה, יועיל

לו וחינוך אשר נקודת בחירתו לא תהיה בעשיית עבירה במעשה או במניעת מצות מעשים, אלא בדקות עבודת הלב והכונה. ויש אשר יתחנך בין רשעים, פחוחים, וגנבים, אציל לא תהיה בחירה כלל אם לגנוב או לחזול: ויתכן אשר נקודת בחירתו תהיה רק כשיזמן לו לרצה נפש בעת שיתפס בגניבתו, ושם היא מלחמת יצרו, כי זוהי האמת אשר יבחין בה על פי יצר הטוב שלו במדינתו, ובצעת יצרו הרע יתעלם ממנה. נמצא שאין החינוך משנה כלל בעצם ענין הבחירה, אלא רק את מקום נקודתה, וכל אדם משעת יצירתו ניתן בו הכח אשר יוכל להכיר האמת שידע, לפי ערכו, ולדבק בה ולא להתעלם ממנה אפילו בפני הדמיונות של חשבונות שקר. ואין הפרש בזה בין אם חינוכו הגביה את מקום נקודת בחירתו או השפילה, כי כח הכרת האמת אשר ידע, שזה הוא בכל המצבים.

מעשה, כל אדם יש לו בחירה במקום נקודת בחירתו, אבל מקום הנקודה מוכן הוא מקודם, אם ע"י בחירותיו הקודמות אשר הוא בעצמו השיב על ידו את נקודת בחירתו למעלה או למטה; ואם ע"י הסבות אשר ניתנו לו מן השמים, ששמוחו בסביבה שנחתנו בה מילדותו טרם ידע עוד טוב ורע. (ולמה שינה הש"ת בין אדם לאדם, אשר הקדים לזה סבות אשר ישיבו את נקודת בחירתו במקום גבוה שבצדקתו, ואת השני קבע בתוך עמקי הטומאה? זה יוכן למעייץ במאמר "צדיק ורע לו").

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היוצא מדברינו, ש"ל בחירה אלא בנקודת הבחירה, ומקום נקודה זו נקבע ע"י סבות שקדמו, אבל אין סבות שהוכלנה לפעול על עצם בחירתו ואדם, ודבר זה מפורש הוא בתורה: (דברים ל') "החיים והמות נתתי לפניך" — פ"י, מיוזג המדות, החינוך והסביבה, אשר הם קובעים את הדברים הנקראים לגבי דיוך היום "חיים", טוב, אמת, ו"מות", רע, שקר, אומם: — "נתתי לפניך" — הם "דברים נתונים", נמצאים לפניך מכלי סבה חדשה מצדך, ככל שאר הדברים הנמצאים סביב לך, אבל: — "ובחרת בחיים" — ת ב ח ר ה בחיים, במה שהוא מציאות ואמת, האדם לבדו עושה אותה, בלי שום סבה שתפעול עליו. והנה גם פ"י א"ל (ברכות ל"ג): "מכל בדי שמים" — כל אשר יקרה יקרה לאדם, שהוא מוכן את הדברים שעליהם יש לפעול הבחירה, בין מצד מדינת בחירתו, בין מצד מין הנסיון שנפל לחלקו. בא לו ביד שמים, — "חוק מיראת שמים" שהוא צריך להגביר אותה בלבו מעצמו, שזה מוכרח לו שלא יתעלם מהאמת, הן ביראת העונש, הן ביראה של מדרגות היות גבוהות.

פרק ג. אחריות הבחירה

יש הפרש גדול בין מקום נקודת הבחירה שקבעוהו מן השמים, ובין אשר קבעו האדם בעצמו ע"י בחירותיו הקודמות. עבור מקום הנקודה שקבעו בעצמו, הנה הוא האחראי עליו. כאמרם ז"ל "עבר עבירה ושנה בה הותרה לו, הותרה סלקא דעתך? אלא נעשית לו כהיתר", פי' אע"פ שאינו עובר כעת בדרך הבחירה, שהרי העבירה כהיתר היא בעיניו, מ"מ אחראי הוא, על עברו בפעמים הראשונות, שזה גרם לו לאבד הרגש האיסור, ויענש על אשר עשה לעצמו העבירה כהיתר שעי"ז עובר אח"כ עליה בלי בחירה. אמנם הרע שנתחנך בו האדם, ולא ידע הפכו, הנהו בזה כתינוק שנשבה לבין העכו"ם, ולא יענש אלא על מה, וכפי מה, שהיה צריך ללמוד לדעת ולשוב ממנו, היינו מה שהיה ראוי שתהיה נקודת בחירתו.

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וכל בחירה שבוחר האדם, עושה רושם בכל מצבו לכל ימי חייו, אם מעט ואם הרבה, אם לטוב ואם למוטב, ולא רק בו, אלא באשר יעשה לחינוך בניו, וכל אשר יתפתח מזה עד סוף כל דורותיו, וכל אדם פועל על סביביו, וע"כ רושם בחירתו יהיה גם על כל סביביו, וגם על כל סביבות דורותיו, וסביבות סביבותיהם, עד סוף כל הדורות, בקצרה, כל בחירה עושה רושם בכל העולם כולו, וכל אשר יסתבב מן הרושם הזה, על כולם אחראי הבוחר בבחירתו, וכן בכל אדם ואדם בכל בחירה ובחירה, יש להשתומם כמה יגדל שכר הבחירה הטובה, וכמה תרבה האחריות של הבחירה הרעה!

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פרק ד. חינוך ועלייה

מתבאר לנו מכל זה, שזכיותיו של אדם אינן המצוות והמעשים טובים שנתחנך בהם, אלא בחירותיו הטובות לבד, כי כל אשר נתחנך בו אינו אלא הכנת מקום נקודת הבחירה, שהיא לא נעשית על ידו; והשכר עליה מגיע למחנכיו שקיימו מצות חינוך במה שהעמידוהו על מדרגת-בחירה הזו, כבר הבאנו במאמר "פנימיות וחיצוניות" (*) מה שגילה בזה הגרנצ"פ ז"ל בפרשת לוט: — "חסד היה חלקו של אברהם... וכל מי שראהו, התעלה בחסד

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The place of its composition was Chesham, Buckinghamshire, where Rabbi Dessler had made his home (as had some of his pupils) during the war. There it was issued in the form of duplicated sheets and distributed to the circle of pupils living in various parts of Britain.

The argument put forward in chapter 1, and the concept of the *behirra*-point or level of individual free will, developed in chapter 2 (and

PART I: THE NATURE OF FREE WILL

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Let us try to analyze a typical choice, such as we often make in everyday life.

When he gets up the next morning his addiction soon makes itself felt, and he experiences a strong craving for tobacco. At first he resists the temptation, but it grows stronger with every passing minute. Eventually we notice him saying to himself, "I'll just smoke this one; one ciga-

rette can't hurt me." Soon after he has smoked the first one he again feels the urge to smoke and once more he tells himself, "After all, just one more cigarette can't do any harm." So he goes on smoking all day and during the night he has the pains again. And the next day?

Although he knows quite well that if he allows himself one smoke, the same chain reaction will set in, he is still prepared to deceive himself in the same way.

SUBTERFUGE

Now if he were faced merely with the stark alternatives: to smoke and have the pain, or not to smoke and not have the pain, there can be little doubt which he would choose. The will not to suffer the pain would easily overcome the will to smoke. How does the weaker will prevail? Simply by means of the subterfuge we noted above.

We are entitled to ask: What causes the person to adopt the fallacious argument ("one cigarette can't hurt") and ignore the correct one ("one will lead to another"), which he knows as well as anyone else to be correct? Can it be the will to smoke itself taking over the reasoning process? But surely the will to smoke is less strong than the will not to have the pain?

(This must be so, as we saw above, for if not, why the self-deception? He could just smoke in the full knowledge that it is going to hurt later on.)

"SOMETHING ELSE"

We are led to the conclusion that there must be *something else*, other than the two contending wills, that determines his choice. This "something else" is none other than *the person himself*. He is the one who is capable of deflecting his

mind from the truth, even though that truth is perfectly clear to him. He is the one who decides to adopt the fallacious argument in order to cover up his deviation from the truth. There are two competing wills in his mind, and he deliberately decides to ignore the claims of one, and the true argument it advances, and to adopt the other together with its fallacious argument.

What induces him to do this? Not the competing wills, but the freely choosing person himself. He could say to himself "Look here, what's the point of pretending? Pretense is not reality, and if I go that way I will end up with severe pains in the night." If he does this, he will refrain from smoking. So he has no one to blame but himself.

THE ESSENCE OF BEHIRA

How foolish are those who think that the weaker will, by and of itself, causes the person to adopt the fallacy, knowing very well that it is a fallacy. They fail to explain why the stronger will does not induce the person to adopt the true argument which he is well aware of. The fact is that a human being can grasp hold of the truth, in which case the weaker will departs, with all its illusory arguments. Or he can deliberately ignore the truth and accept falsehood in its place, rejecting the will which has truth on its side. These two alternatives are the subject-matter of *behira*, or free choice.

Behira depends on the person alone. There is no outside cause involved. The prime cause is the person himself. This is well known to anyone who has even once exercised his *behira* and conquered his evil inclination. Such a person feels with the utmost clarity that he has relinquished illusion and opted for the truth.

But someone who has never made the necessary effort to subdue the evil side of his nature will never be able to understand this. He has always given in to his "will" as soon as it presents itself, and he therefore believes himself to be at the mercy of "the stronger will" at all times. He cannot appreciate the reality of *bebira*, because he has never in fact made a *bebira*. He is therefore under the illusion that all human actions are subject to external causes. To those who deny the reality of free will we therefore say: "Your philosophy is merely a reflection of your own heart. You deny free will because you are in fact unfree; you have enslaved yourselves to the evil within you."

To sum up: The essence of good *behirā* is to recognize the unique and indivisible nature of truth; and this in effect is to recognize the Creator. The essence of a bad *behirā* is to accept falsehood as reality, and this in effect is to deny the oneness of God and to accept the falsehood of a duality of powers in the universe. The Rabbis said, "The *yetzzer ba-ra'* is like an alien god in the human heart,"¹ and "Whoever listens to his *yetzzer* is like an idolater."² The Rabbis even call Adam a "heretic"³ for listening to the wiles of the serpent, although he sinned with the best of intentions (as we have explained elsewhere).⁴

the bejira-point

army is under that army's control and little or no resistance need be expected there. A similar situation prevails in respect of territory behind the lines of the other army. If one side gains a victory at the front and pushes the enemy back, the position of the battlefield will have changed. In fact, therefore, fighting takes place only at one location, though potentially the line could be drawn anywhere in the territories of the two contending countries.

The situation is very similar with regard to *bebira*. Everyone has free choice—at the point where truth meets falsehood. In other words *bebira* takes place at that point where the truth as the person sees it confronts the illusion produced in him by the power of falsehood. But the majority of a person's actions are undertaken without any clash between truth and falsehood taking place. Many of a person's actions may happen to coincide with what is objectively right because he has been brought up that way and it does not occur to him to do otherwise, and many bad and false decisions may be taken simply because the person does not realize that they are bad. In such cases no valid *bebira*, or choice, has been made. Free will is exercised and a valid *bebira* made only on the borderline between the forces of good and the forces of evil within that person.

For example, many otherwise observant Jews are prone to speak evil of others, thus transgressing the prohibition against *lashon ba-ra'* without even realizing that it is a grave sin. Yet these same people would not dream of transgressing the laws of Shabbat; their *yetzzer ba-ra'* does not

even tempt them to do this or to miss prayers or not to don *tzitzit* or *tefillin*, because they have been brought up to do these things without question. [There is thus no *behirah* involved in any of these cases. *Behira* comes into play only when one is tempted to go against the truth as one sees it, and the forces on either side are more or less equally balanced. The point at which this equilibrium is reached obviously varies with the individual and depends on many factors, such as heredity, environment, education, etc. But there is no human being who does not have a "*behirah* point" somewhere along the scale.]⁶

FLUID FRONT

It must be realized that this *behirah*-point does not remain static in any given individual. With each good *behirah* successfully carried out, the person rises higher in spiritual level; that is, things that were previously in the line of battle are now in the area controlled by the *yetzer ba-tov* and actions done in that area can be undertaken without struggle and without *behirah*. In this sense we can understand the saying that "one mitzva leads to another."⁷

And so in the other direction. Giving in to the *yetzer hara'* pushes back the frontier of the good, and an act which previously cost one a struggle with one's conscience will now be done without *behirah* at all. The *yetzer ba-tov* is no longer functioning effectively in that area. And so we have learnt: "One sin leads to another,"⁷ and "as soon as one has committed a sin twice, it is no longer a sin for him."⁸

ENVIRONMENT AND BEHIRA

As we have said, education plays a large part in determining one's *behirah*-point. A person may have been brought up to

do many good actions as a matter of course. All this means that his *behirah* point is at a high level. For example, one may have been brought up in an environment of Torah, among people who devote themselves to good deeds. In this case his *behirah*-point will not be whether or not to commit an actual sin but whether to do a mitzva with more or less devotion and *kavvana*. Another may be brought up among evildoers of the lowest grade, among thieves and robbers. For him, whether or not to steal does not present any *behirah* at all; his *behirah*-point might be on the question of shooting his way out when discovered. For him this may be the crucial *behirah*; this is where for him the forces of good and evil, truth and untruth, are evenly balanced. It may well be that murder is something that he knows in his heart of hearts to be wrong; this is the truth as revealed to him by his *yetzer tov*, and it is this truth that he is tempted to deny or distort.

So we see that education and environment cannot in any way change the essential act of *behirah*, but only the location at which it takes place—the position of the *behirah*-point on the moral scale. Every human being possesses the power of perceiving *the truth available to him* at his particular level, clinging to it, and refusing to be deflected from it by the seductive illusions of falsehood. In this there is no difference at all whether his upbringing raised or lowered his *behirah*-point. The ability to adopt the truth *as he knows it* is equal in all situations.

POINT LOCATION

To sum up: everyone has free choice at his *behirah*-point, but the position of the *behirah*-point itself is determined by various factors. This may be affected by his own previous

choices, which may have raised or lowered his *bebira*-point. Or it may be affected by factors outside his control. Divine Providence may have placed him from childhood in a certain environment, higher or lower as the case may be. (To gain some inkling of why God arranges matters so that some have their *bebira* on one level and some on another, read carefully what we have written in the essay "Why Do the Righteous Suffer?")⁹

CHOOSING LIFE

I have put before you life and death,
the blessing and the curse;
choose life, so that you may live . . .

But — “you shall choose life.” “Choosing life,” choosing

THE FEAR OF HEAVEN

"All is from Heaven": all that befalls a person, everything that determines where his choice shall take place, the level of his *bepira* as well as the kind of test to which he will be submitted—all this is from Heaven. The only thing in man's hands is "the fear of Heaven," which is the sense of responsibility to the truth which he can either adopt or reject as he wills. The fear of Hashem—whether the fear of material consequences or fear and awe on higher levels—is essential to prevent one being deflected from the truth. This is the essence of *bepira*.

responsibility

11. Kiddushin 40a

הונא ^א דאמר רב הונא כיון שעבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה הותרה לו הותרה לו סלקא דעתך אלא געשית לו כהיתר אמר רבי אבהו משום רבי חנינא נוח לו לאדם שיעבור עבירה בסתר ואל יחלל שם שמים בפרהסיא שנאמר ^ב ואתם בית ישראל כה אמר ה' ^א איש גילוליו לכו עבדו [ואחר] אם אינכם שומעים אלי ואת שם קדשי לא תחללו ^ב אמר רבי אלעאי הזקן אם רואה אדם שיצרו מתגבר עליו ילך למקום שאין מכירין אותו ויבשש שחורים ויתכסה שחורים ויעשה כמו שלבו חפץ ואל יחלל שם שמים בפרהסיא איני והתניא ^א כל שלא חס על כבוד קונו ראוי לו שלא בא לעולם ^ב מה היא

Rav Huna says: When a person transgresses and repeats his transgression, it is permitted to him. The Gemara questions this statement: **Can it enter your mind that the transgression is permitted to him** because he has sinned twice? **Rather, it becomes as if it were permitted to him,** as he becomes accustomed to this behavior and no longer senses that it is a sin.

12. Tehillim 119:59

חֲשַׁבְתִּי דַרְכֵי וְאָשִׁיבָה רַגְלִי אֶל־עֲדֹתֶיךָ:

I have considered my ways,
and have turned back to Your decrees.

If you will walk in my statutes: This is what is written ([Psalms 119:59](#)), "I considered my ways and I turned my feet to your testimonies." David said, "Master of the universe! On each and every day I would consider and say, 'To place x and to the home of y am I walking,' but my feet would bring me to the synagogues and to the Houses of Study. - this is what is written, "I considered my ways and I turned my feet to your testimonies." Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Acha, "I considered' the giving of the reward for the [fulfillment of] the commandments and the loss for the sins, 'and I turned my feet to your testimonies.'" Rabbi Menachem the son-in-law of Rabbi Elazar BeRebbe Avina said, "I considered,' what You wrote us in the Torah, 'If you will walk in my statutes' and what is written there? 'And I will give peace in the land' ([Leviticus 26:6](#)). [Likewise ([Leviticus 26:14](#))] 'And if you will not listen to me,' what is written there? 'And I will add to punish you'" ([Leviticus 26:18](#)). Rabbi Abba the son of Rabbi Chiya said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan, "I considered' the blessings and 'I considered' the curses - the blessing are from [the first letter,] *alef* to the [last letter,] *tav*; the curses are from [the letter,] *vav* to [the letter before it,] *hay* - and not only that, but they are backwards (in reverse order). Rabbi Avin said, "[The intention is that God is saying,] 'If you merit it, behold, I will reverse for you the curses into blessings.'" When is that? When you observe my Torah. This is what is written, "If you will walk in my statutes."

13. Vayikra Rabba 35:1

אם בַּחֲקֵתִי תִלְכוּ ([ויקרא כו.א](#)), הֲדָא הוּא דְכָתִיב ([תהלים קיט. נט](#)): חֲשַׁבְתִּי דַרְכֵי וְאָשִׁיבָה רַגְלִי אֶל עֲדֹתֶיךָ. אָמַר דָּוִד רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם בְּכָל יוֹם וְיוֹם הָיִיתִי מְחַשֵּׁב וְאוֹמֵר לְמָקוֹם פְּלוֹנִי וּלְבֵית דִּירָה פְּלוֹנִית אֲנִי הוֹלֵךְ, וְהָיוּ רַגְלֵי מְבִיאֹת אוֹתִי לְבֵתִי כְּנִסְיוֹת וּלְבֵתִי מְדֻרָּשׁוֹת, הֲדָא הוּא דְכָתִיב: וְאָשִׁיבָה רַגְלִי אֶל עֲדֹתֶיךָ. רַב הוֹנָא בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי אַחָא אָמַר חֲשַׁבְתִּי מִתֵּן שְׂכָרְךָ שֶׁל מִצְוֹת וְהַפְסַדְךָ שֶׁל עֲבֻרוֹת, וְאָשִׁיבָה רַגְלִי אֶל עֲדֹתֶיךָ. רַבִּי מְנַחֵם חֲתָנָא דְרַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בְּרַ אֲבִינָא אָמַר, חֲשַׁבְתִּי מַה שְׂכַתְבְּתָּ לָנוּ בַּתּוֹרָה: אִם בַּחֲקֵתִי תִלְכוּ, וּמַה כָּתִיב תָּמָן ([ויקרא כו.ו](#)): וְנָתַתִּי שְׁלוֹם בְּאַרְץ, ([ויקרא כו.יז](#)): וְאִם לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי, מַה כָּתִיב תָּמָן ([ויקרא כו.יח](#)): וְיִסְפַּתִּי לִיִּסְרָה אֶתְכֶם. רַבִּי אַבָּא בְרִיהַ דְרַבִּי חֵיָא בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן אָמַר, חֲשַׁבְתִּי בְּרָכוֹת חֲשַׁבְתִּי קְלָלוֹת. בְּרָכוֹת מֵאֵל"ף עַד תי"ו, קְלָלוֹת מִן וי"ו עַד ה"א, וְלֹא עוֹד אֶלָּא שֶׁהֵן הַפּוֹכּוֹת. אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבִין אִם זְכִיתָן הַרְיֵנִי הוֹפֵךְ לָכֶם קְלָלוֹת לְבְּרָכוֹת. אֵימַתִּי כְּשֶׁתִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתִי, הֲדָא הוּא דְכָתִיב: אִם בַּחֲקֵתִי תִלְכוּ.

It is taught in the *Tosefta*: They said about **Hillel the Elder** that when he was rejoicing at the Celebration of the Place of the Drawing of the Water he said this: **If I am here, everyone is here; and if I am not here, who is here?** In other words, one must consider himself as the one upon whom it is incumbent to fulfill obligations, and he must not rely on others to do so. He would also say this: **To the place that I love, there my feet take me**, and therefore, I come to the Temple. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, says: **If you come to My house, I will come to your house; if you do not come to My house, I will not come to your house, as it is stated: "In every place that I cause My name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you" (Exodus 20:21).**

לו תניא ^א אמרו עליו על הלל הזקן כשהיה שמח בשמחת בית השואבה אמר כן אם אני כאן הכל כאן ואם איני כאן מי כאן הוא היה אומר כן למקום שאני אוהב שם רגלי מוליכות אותי אם ^ב תבא אל ביתי אני אבא אל ביתך אם אתה לא תבא אל ביתי אני לא אבא אל ביתך שנאמר ^ג בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבא אליך וברכתך ^ד אף

15. Eitz Yosef
Rabbi Chanoch Zundel of Bialystok
d. 1867

בכל יום ויום הייתי מחשב כו'. דקשה להו מה חשבון דרכים הוא שיביא האדם למצות. אדרבה המחשבה בדרכי האדם ישיבנו אחור מדרכי ה'. ולזה פירש ת"ק שבהיותו מחשב בדרכיו. רגליו היו משיבות אותו משם. ומוליכות אותו לבתי כנסיות שלא מדעתו. לרוב הרגלו בהם. ולפ"ז פ"א אם בחקותי תלכו שע"י ההרגל תהיו הולכים מעצמכם. מ"מ אני מעלה שכר עליכם כאילו את מצותי תשמרו בכוונה מכוונת. וזהו שאמר ואשיבה רגלי אל עדותיך במקום דהו"ל למימר ושב רגלי. לרמזו שאמר שיתן לו הקב"ה שכר כאילו אני אשיבה רגלי. והרד"ל כתב וז"ל מפני שהיה רגיל ואוהב לילך שמה תמיד לכן היו רגליו מובילות אותו מעצמן שמה כענין מ"ש הלל (סוכה נ"ג). למקום שאני אוהב לשם רגלי מוליכות אותי עכ"ל:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה רְאֵיתִי אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עַם־קָשֵׁה־עֹרֶף הוּא:

The LORD further said to Moses, "I see that this is a stiffnecked people.

16. Shemos 32

17. Rashi

קשה ערף. מחזירין קשי ערפם לנגד מוכיחיהם וממאנים לשמע:

STIFF-NECKED — They turn their stiffened necks towards those who reprove them (i.e. they turn their back upon them) and refuse to listen.

קשה עורף

18. Chochma U'Mussar
R' Simcha Zissel Ziv
Alter of Kelm
1824-1898

טובות משכחות זהב, וזה יגיד על יקרת האבן.

הנה בענין חטא העגל, ידוע כי כבר הי' נפסק וזהמת עין הדעת בעת מתן תורה, ובחטא העגל חזרה הוזהמא, ויתנצלו מעדים, וידוע דרשת חז"ל ע"ז (שבת פח.) וגם, "אין לך פורענות שלא יתערב בה עון העגל (מנהדרין קב.) וע"כ מה"ם חטאו גדול. ומצוה לזכור בכל יום זה החטא. ומקרא מפורש (שמות לב, ח.) „וּישַׁתְּחוּ לוֹ יִיזְבְּחוּ לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה א' יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגו'". התבונן נא כי קרה כל זאת זה לא כבר אחרי המעמד הנכבד. ועכ"ז מקרא אומר אח"כ „ראיתי את העם הזה והנה עם קשה עורף הוא". נתבונן בינה כי לא זכר את עצם החטא הגדול הזה, אבל זכר אלא רק כי עם קשה עורף הוא. ביאור הדבר, כי אינו יכול להפוך ערפו לשמוע. פי' לחזור מהרגלו אשר כבר הורגל בה. ור"ל כי בשביל זה הוא רחוק מתשובה. ומח אמר להלן „ועתה הניחה לי וגו' ואכלם" ר"ל. הרי כי מדת קשיות שינוי הטבע קשה מהחטא הגדול של העגל. כי לולא זאת המדה לא היו ראויים לכלי'. וכן להלן (לג, ג.) „כי עם קשה עורף אתה פן אנכלך בדרך" ר"ל. וכן בפסוק ה' שם „אתם עם קשה עורף רגע אחד אעלה בקרכך וכליתיד" ר"ל. ובשביל זה הוא שנגזר עליהם „ויתנצלו בני ישראל". היש דרוש יותר גדול וארוך מזה, לראות כמה צריך האדם להיות מוכן להתלמד לשנות טבעו. ויצא לנו גודל חובת עסק המוסר. ובזה נזכר לכל טוב מלה אכ"ר.

בני יקרי מ"ל ר' נ"ז נ"י כאור שבעת הפנים. ביום ה' העבר דברנו ענין אחד על אז"ל (אבות ו, ד.) „מים במשורה תשתה". ואף ששמעת כבר דברים בזה, אבל לא דברים כאלה. והיוצא מתוך הדברים הי' איך שאין אנו מכירים מעלה לאשורו כלל וכלל. ואין קץ למכותו ית' אלינו. בשבת בערב דברנו מענין רציעת אוזן עבד עברי. ודבר חדש בענין מוזה עד שר' שמעון נתפעל ואמר (קדושין כב.): שחי' דורש המקרא הזה כמין חומר-בשמים. מתוק מדבש הוא. ואין ביכולתי עתה להביא הדברים על הגליון. (עיין לעיל מאמר רמז). בש"ק דברנו בבית בעת אכילה. כי כל אדם לא ידאג לבניו יותר מלעצמו. וכל כמה שידאג לעצמו בכזה ידאג לבניו. ע"כ מי שאינו דואג לעצמו על עוה"ב. לא יחוש ג"כ לדאוג לזולתו ולבניו על עוה"ב. אבל מי שדואג לעצמו על עוה"ב הוא ידאג כמו כן לזולתו האהוב לו, ומכ"ש לבניו. וזה סבת הדברים מה שהרכבה בני אדם אינם מוסרים נפשם על חנוך בניהם, ובפרט על חנוך עוה"ב, כי אין להם הרגש בחנוך עצמם לדאוג ע"ז, ולא יחושו איפוא על אחרים יותר מלעצמם, ומכ"ש על חנוך עוה"ב. והנה תהלה כי בעלי מוסר דואגים על חנוך עצמם בזה ובכא, וכמו כן מוסרים עצמם על חנוך זולתם, ומכ"ש על בניהם. ע"כ חזרתי בעת אכילה מה שדברנו בבית, דבר גורא מאוד מאוד, והוא ענין קצר בכמות ורכ באיכות. הקדמנו לזה הקדמה גדולה, להכין אזנים לשמוע היטב, כמו שעושים לאבנים



הן למשה מבחי' עקביים והגלי מדרגות עליונות מזה וכמאמר ה"ל הגלי החיות כנגד כולן]:

פרק יד והנה מדת הבינוני היא מדת כל אדם ואחריה כל אדם ימשך שכל

אדם יכול להיות בינוני בכל עת ובכל שעה כי הבינוני אינו מואם ברע שווה דבר המסור ללב ולא כל העתים שוות אלא סוד מרע ועשה טוב והיינו בפועל ממש במעשה דבור ומחשבה שבדם הבחירה והיכולת והרשות נתונה לכל אדם לעשות ולדבר ולחשוב גם מה שהוא נגד האות לכו הפכה ממש כי גם בשעה שהלב הומד ומתאוה איזו תאוה גשמית בהיותו או כאסור ה"י יכול להתגבר ולהסיר דעתו ממנה לגמרי כאמרו ללכו אינו רוצה להיות רשע אפי' שעה אחת כי אינו רוצה להיות מובדל ונפרד ה"י מזה אחד בשם אופן כדרכיב עונותיכם מבדילים וגו' רק אני רוצה לדבקה בו נפשי רוחי וגשמתי בהתלכשן בשלישה לבושי ית' שהם מעשה דבור ומחשבה בה' ותורתו ומצותיו מאהבה מסותרת שכלבי לה' כמו בלב כללי' ישראל שנקראו ארבי שפך ואפי' קל שבקלים יכול למסור נפשו על קדושת ה' ולא נופל אנכי ממנו כדאי אלא שנכנס בו רוח שמות ונדמה לו שבקביר' זו עזדנו ביהדותו ואין נשמתו מובדלת מאלהי ישראל וגם שוכח אהבתו לה' המסותרת בלבו אבל אני אינו רוצה להיות שומה כמדתי לכפור האמת. משא"כ בדבר המסור ללב דהיינו שיהא הרע מאוס ממש בלב ושנאוי בתכלית שנאה זו אפי' שלא בתכלית שנאה הנה זה אי אפשר שיהיה כאמת לאמיתו אלא ע"י גודל

וחוקף האהבה לה' בבחי' אהבה בתענוגים להתענג על ה' מעין עוה"ב. ועל זה אמרו ה"ל עולמך תראה בחיך כי ואין כל אדם זוכה לזה כי זהו כעין קבול שבר וברכתיב עבודת מתנה אתה את כדונתכם וגו' כמ"ש כמ"א. ולכן אמר איוב בראת צדיקים וכו' וכדאיתא בתקונים שיש בגשמיות ישראל כמה מיני מדרגות ובחי'. חסידים גבורים המתגברים על יצרם מארי תורה גביאים כי צדיקים כי ע"ש:

וזהו יובן כפל לשון השבועה תהי צדיק ואל תהי רשע דלכאורה תמוה כי מאחר שמשביעיים

אותו תהי צדיק למה צריכים להשביעו עוד שלא יהיה רשע. אלא משום שאין כל אדם זוכה להיות צדיק ואין לאדם משפט הבחירה בזה כל כך להתענג על ה' כאמת ושיהיה הרע מאוס ממש כאמת ולכן משביעיים שנית אל תהי רשע עב"פ שבזה משפט הבחירה והרשות נתונה לכל אדם למשול ברוח תאוותי שכלבו ולכבוש יצרו שלא יהיה רשע אפי' שעה אחת כל ימיו בין כחי' סוד מרע בין כחי' ועשה טוב ואין מזה אלא תורה דהיינו הלמוד חורה שכנגד כולן. אך אעפ"כ צריך לקבוע לו עתים גם כן לשת עצות בנפשו להיות מואם ברע כגון בעצת חכמינו ז"ל אשה חמת מלאה ציאה בו'. וכהא גוונא. וכן כל מיני מפעמים ומעדרנים נעשים כך חמת מלא כי'. וכן כל תענוגי עוה"ז החכם רואה הנולד מזה שסופן לרקוב ולהיות רמה ואשפת וההפך להתענג ולשמוח בה' ע"י התבוננות בגדולת א"ס כ"ה כפי יכולתו אף שיודע בנפשו שלא יגיע למדרגה זו כאמת לאמיתו כי אם בדמיונות אעפ"כ הוא יעשה

את שלו לקיים את השבועה שמשביעים תהי צדיק
 וה' יעשה הטוב בעיניו. ועוד שההגל על כל דבר
 שלמון ונעשה טבע שני. ובשירגיל למאס את הרע
 יהיה נמאס קצת באמת ובשירגיל לשמח נפשו בה' ע"י
 התבוננות בגדולת ה' הרי באתעודתא דלתחא
 אתעודתא דלעילא וכולי האי ואולי יערה עליו חת
 ממרום ויזכה לבח' רוח משרש איזה צדיק שתתעבר
 בו לעבוד ה' בשמחה אמיתית כרתיב שמח צדיקים
 בה' ותתקיים בו באמת השבועה שמשביעים
 תהי צדיק :



20. Commentary of
 R' Adin Steinsaltz
 1937-2020

Furthermore, habitude reigns supreme in any sphere and becomes second nature.

When we become accustomed to something, habit becomes second nature. Though not as strong, perhaps, as “first nature,” it is nonetheless inseparably embedded in our souls.

Therefore if he accustoms himself to despise evil, it will to some extent become despicable in truth; similarly, when he accustoms himself to gladden his heart in God, through reflection on His greatness—

This will move from the realm of the theoretical into a regular mode of thought, and his soul will gradually become altered, not essentially but partially. Though he will not detest evil entirely and essentially, only to some extent, this loathing of evil will nonetheless be true.

From overweight and unhappy to awesome Internet guru

21.

The Washington Post

By Brigid Schulte

March 31, 2015

In 2005, Leo Babauta was 70 pounds overweight. He smoked cigarettes and ate junk food. He was disorganized and deeply in debt. Now, the father of six is trim, and runs triathlons and even ran a 50-mile ultra-marathon. He eats a vegan diet, cleared out clutter and his inbox, eliminated debt, saved up an emergency fund and wrote a bestselling book, *The Power of Less*, and a novel. All the while blogging about it on [Zen Habits](#), named by Time as one of the top 50 websites, with more than one million monthly readers. He shares his Zen approach to change.

Q: Humans are creatures of habit, and often keep doing things we don't really even want to do, or know aren't good for us. How do you change that?

Babauta: Sometimes we stick with habits, even habits we don't like, like smoking or eating junk food, because it's much more comfortable to stick with what you're used to, than go through the discomfort of change.

A lot of what helps are small, micro changes.

Instead of trying to change your entire diet at once, which is very uncomfortable, try making a little change, push your comfort zone just a little. Add a couple vegetables to your dishes. Get used to that, then that becomes your new comfort zone.

I did that. And changed my life completely. But slowly and gradually

Q: What was the first micro change that you made?

Babauta: I was living in Guam at the time, with my wife and our six kids – though we only had five at the time, and now we live in San Francisco. I was just unhappy with my habits. I was working way too much. I didn't have time for my kids. We were living paycheck to paycheck, really struggling to make ends meet. I was really unhappy with myself, and unhappy with my ability to stick to anything.

I was motivated to make changes not only for myself, but also to show my kids what a better life would be. That's always been a big motivator for me. I knew if I continued to smoke and eat junk food, they would grow up and do the same thing. I wanted to change for them.

I started by giving up smoking. Every time I had the urge to smoke, I'd just sit there. What I didn't realize, is that was a form of meditation. And then, when I found myself stressed, instead of smoking, I'd go out for a run. That was my stress release.

Running became another form of meditation. I would watch these thoughts arise, 'You should stop running, because it's too hard.' Then, I would turn to the present moment, and think instead, 'It's amazing that I'm outside. I'm usually in front of my computer. I'm moving my body, and it feels great.' Though it was uncomfortable, I started appreciating great things about it.

Now, quitting smoking is a huge undertaking, because there are a lot of triggers for smoking and other bad habits like that, like stress eating, and being around other smokers. So I don't recommend taking that on as the first micro change!

Q: So your first micro change was to quit smoking – which is not so micro a change! Then you started to run. What came next?

Babauta: I found that every little success changed my self image. That was a big thing too. Really being unhappy with yourself drives these downward spirals – you feel really bad, which drives you to a habit you don't like, like smoking or shopping or eating, that makes you feel even worse.

So when I made a small change and succeeded, I created this positive spiral. The more I succeeded at something, the more I began to trust myself. And then the more I succeeded. I was motivated to succeed, that was huge for me, too. I wanted to trust myself and feel better about myself.

I also found accountability was huge for me. When I was quitting smoking, I had some online forums. When I started running, I wrote a column about my training for my first marathon in the largest newspaper in Guam. I didn't want to give up, because I didn't want to let people down.

That's why I started Zen Habits. To continue having accountability for my own changes.

I encourage people to start a blog, or use Twitter, or Facebook. It can really motivate you and stick to things if you tell other people, and commit to being trustworthy to yourself.

Q: You write about failure a lot. Once you started, was it all smooth sailing?

Babauta: I fail all the time. I tried to quit smoking seven times and failed seven times before I finally made it stick. When I first failed, it was a hit to my self image. But then I started to observe and learn from failure, rather than think I failed because something is wrong with me.

I'm constantly making mistakes. And now, rather than think I failed, I think it's part of the continual process of learning how habits work, the way we work, the way our minds work.

Q: What's your best advice for making micro changes?

Babauta: I tell people to start by picking and committing to a small daily practice. I like something you can do in the morning before the day gets crazy. Something you can do in two to five minutes. Wake. Do a few push ups. Go for a walk. Meditate. Five yoga poses. Drink a cup of tea. Or journal. A gratitude journal is amazing

Whatever you pick, be fully committed to doing it. Don't miss a day. But if do, don't miss two days in a row. And while you're doing it, the important thing is not to just try to get it over with, but be there, present with that task. So if you're drinking a cup of tea, don't just down it and get to your email. Actually stop and be there with the tea and fully experience it. Appreciate it. You'll notice your mind start to wander, but the practice is to come back repeatedly to what you're doing.

Once you've practiced one micro change for one month, you can apply bits of it to other parts of your life.

The thing about change, people will want to start out very ambitious. I say start small and leave yourself wanting more. That's more sustainable if you want a lasting change.

A Brief Guide to Overcoming Instant Gratification

By Leo Babauta

22. zenhabits.net

It's no secret that we live in the Age of Instant gratification.

That's not news. But Paul Roberts has written an excellent essay at The American Scholar looking at the breadth of this phenomena on our society — it's a must read.

A sample quote from Roberts' essay:

'The notion of future consequences, so essential to our development as functional citizens, as adults, is relegated to the background, inviting us to remain in a state of permanent childhood.'

And while he concludes that we need to change as a society, not just individuals, I'd like to show a path for individual change that might highlight a larger path for us as a whole.

This is a personal guide to overcoming the instant gratification to which we've all grown accustomed. Why? What's wrong with instant gratification — isn't it true that You Only Live Once and that Life is Meant to Be Enjoyed?

Yes, life is meant to be enjoyed, but perhaps not wasted. Let's take a look at a couple different ways of living to see what I mean.

The first way is Instant Gratification: pleasurable food, the riches of the Internet, video games, TV, drink, online shopping ... anything we want, anytime we want it.

No limits, no restraints. This first way leads to debt, clutter, bad health, distractions, mindlessness. I've lived it, and it took me a long time to climb out of it.

The second way of living is the opposite: eat simple food in moderation, enjoy the Internet but with limits so that we can focus on important work, get away from TV and computers once in awhile to enjoy nature and being active and exercising, shopping less and having less possessions, finding focus and being mindful. It's not that we don't indulge in the treats of the first way, but we do it with a little restraint, and consciousness.

This second way leads to simplicity, health and fitness, focus, achievement, mindfulness, appreciation for all the gifts of life.

The first way is the result of the childish mind that we all have. The second way is the way of mindfulness and consciousness.

How to Overcome Instant Gratification

If the first way sound perfectly fine to you, there's no need to read on. But if you're interested in a bit of conscious living, a more mindful life, simplicity and health ... how can we cope with the urge to be instantly gratified?

Here are the simple steps:

1. Watch the urges. We all have urges, to check on email or social media, to eat something sweet or fried, to procrastinate or find distractions. They arise in all of us, but that doesn't mean we need to act on them. The first step is to see the urges arise. What I've done is carried a pencil and piece of paper around, and put little tally marks on the paper each time I've had an urge. It's a great tool for mindfulness.
2. Delay. Instead of acting on the urge right when it arises, pause. Don't act right away. Put some space between the urge and your action. Let your heartbeat return to normal, your breathing become a bit deeper. Calm down.
3. Make a conscious decision. If you decide to indulge in a sweet, that's perfectly fine ... but do it consciously, not just following every whim and urge. Decide that this is a healthy thing for you to do, that you can afford it, that it's a compassionate act for your body. Each decision is best made consciously, instead of just trying to gratify our desires.
4. Learn over time. There will be many times when you give in to your urges — that's OK. We all do it. There's nothing wrong with giving in sometimes, but the key is to see how that makes you feel afterward, and learn whether the decision was a good one or not. The next time the decision comes up, think back to the previous time, and make a conscious decision not to make yourself feel greasy and bloated (for example), if that's how you felt last time. Over time, your decisions will get better if you pay attention to how they turn out.
5. Enjoy the moment without following the urge. Life is meant to be enjoyed, but there are different ways to enjoy it. You can eat that donut, or you can breathe, pass on it, and mindfully enjoy a handful of berries. Both are delicious! Both can be done mindfully. One is healthier. Either decision can lead to equal happiness if done mindfully and consciously.

And that's the simple guide. It's not an easy method by any means, but I can attest that living in a more conscious and mindful manner is a wonderful way of being. And the benefits I've found have been too numerous to name.

May your day be lovely and mindful.

Mindfully Coping with Urges & Addictions

By Leo Babauta

Many of us have something that we'd like to change in our lives, but it can be pretty difficult to overcome addictions or strong urges.

The things we want to quit, and the urges we want to overcome, can span a pretty wide gamut:

- Addictions like drugs, alcohol, smoking, or food
- Video games, porn, Internet activities, phone usage
- Shopping/online shopping
- Sugar/sweets, cheese, sodas, potato chips, etc.
- Chewing nails or other nervous habits

Of course, none of these activities is necessarily horrible, but lots of us would like to change behaviors around one or more of these. Urges stand in our way. So how can we deal with these urges and addictions? It's tough. I've found that it takes a combination of mindfulness and behavior-change strategies.

Let's dive in and see how we can create a multi-pronged approach to coping with these urges and addictions.

Urge Surfing

A mindfulness technique that has proven effective for dealing with addictions is called "urge surfing," a widely-used technique developed by psychologist and addictions-pioneer Alan Marlatt. It's something I used successfully when I quit smoking cigarettes more than a decade ago, and I've used it many times since then for other types of urges.

Here's how I practice it:

1. Notice when you have an urge. Pause instead of acting on it, and just sit with it mindfully.
2. Notice where the physical sensation of the urge is located in your body. Is it in your stomach? Chest? Mouth? Focus on that area of your body and try to mindfully notice the sensations you feel.
3. Allow them to rise and peak, and then crest and subside, like a wave. Just watch them, as if you're watching a wave. It's not anything to panic about, it's just a sensation rising and falling.

You can do this for a minute or two, or even longer. After the urge subsides, it might come back, and you can repeat this. You can also move on to other areas of your body where you notice urge-related sensations. Why this works: We interrupt the part of our brain that just acts immediately on urges, and shift to a new part of our brain. This pattern interruption is crucial to dealing with urges. We also learn that the urge isn't anything urgent, isn't a command, but rather just an interesting sensation that we can distance ourselves from.

Changing Our Environment

Another strategy that works incredibly well is changing your environment:

1. Removing temptations from your environment. When I wanted to change my diet, I tossed out all junk food.
2. Removing yourself from the tempting environment. Don't go into your office kitchen area if you want to avoid the snacks. At an office party, you can move away from the cake area.
3. Changing the environment to make you less likely to give in to temptation. For example, at a burger restaurant, I might tell my kids that I'll give them \$20 if they see me eat a French fry. I never eat French fries when I do this.

I find the first option to be the best, when I'm able to control my environment (living and working at home alone is a great example of when you can do that). If I can't control my environment, I try to do one of the other two options.

Why this works: If there aren't any temptations around, or they're hard to get to, the urges are much less strong. Seeing cake in front of you, or being around people smoking or doing drugs or alcohol, makes you

much more likely to have an urge to do those activities. If we can engineer our environment to make it less likely to be around temptations, we'll have fewer or weaker urges to deal with.

Coping Abilities

Addictions are often our way of coping with stress or other difficulties. If we get into an argument with our spouse, lose a loved one to cancer, get yelled at by our boss ... we need some way to cope with those stresses.

Over the years, we've learned to use the addiction as a coping mechanism. So now when the stress comes up, we get strong urges to do the addiction. We can't just remove the addiction, then, because we're still going to have stress to cope with. We need to put something healthier in its place to deal with stress in our lives.

So when we try to quit an addiction, and stress comes up, we need a new healthier coping mechanism. And when the urge comes up, we need to do the new coping mechanism instead of the old habit.

Some examples:

- Meditation (surfing the urge, above, is one kind of meditation)
- Going for a walk or run
- Some other kind of exercise or sport
- Talking to someone
- Taking a bath
- Having tea
- Doing yoga

Pick one, and try to do it whenever you have stress. Soon you'll have a healthier way to cope.

Why this works: If you put another coping mechanism in place, you'll need your addiction less, and the urges will be less strong over time.

Raise Your Baseline: Sleep, Support, Emotional Health

When we are tired, depressed, or lonely ... we just don't have the willpower or emotional baseline to deal with stress, urges, addictions. We'll give in, forget about urge surfing, forget about changing our environment or creating a new coping mechanism. Nothing seems to matter.

So raise your baseline:

1. Get adequate sleep and rest. Make this a priority, or none of the rest will matter. Shut off devices at a certain time each night, write out your to-do list for tomorrow, brush and floss, and then meditate while going to sleep.
2. Get some support. Friends you can talk to, professional support, a support group online. Lean on them and talk about your difficulties, and listen to them in return. Creating this kind of connection means you're less likely to feel isolated.
3. Deal with feelings of depression, loneliness, sadness. Solutions to these is a whole book in itself, so I won't cover them here, but if you're not emotionally healthy, the addictions are much more likely to stick around (or relapse). So make working on your emotional health a priority as well. The sleep and support, and healthier coping mechanisms, are good starts here.

Why this works: Increasing your baseline means you're going to be stronger at dealing with your urges.

Putting It All Together: A Plan

With all of that in mind, here's a plan you might start implementing ...

Each week, pick one or two of these to focus on:

1. Get good sleep. See the tips in the section above.
2. Get support. Again, friends, online support groups, local support groups, professional help.
3. Practice surfing the urges. You don't have to be perfect at this, just practice.
4. Start to change your environment. Toss out the stuff that makes you tempted, or block the sites that tempt you.

5. Start to work on your emotional health. A gratitude practice is a good start for many people, though professional help might be recommended for some.
6. Pick another coping strategy: deep breathing, yoga, meditation, going for a walk, talking to someone else, hot tea, self-massage are my favorites. Choose a couple to try out.
7. Find your weak points and change the environment or create a strategy around that environment. For example, can you remove yourself from the environment or enlist the help of others to stop you from giving in to temptation?

Again, don't worry about doing this all at once ... pick a couple each week and work on them, then another couple the next week, and so on. Revisit ones that need more practice or fine-tuning.

Look at this as a learning exercise, where you're not going to just quit a habit overnight, but get better and better at dealing with the urges and addiction over time.

I'll tell you something, from my own experience: it's possible. If you know how much damage this causes you (and your relationships, work, etc.), then you'll put the effort in to stop hurting yourself in this way. And that is a loving thing.

23. *Vayikra 10:12*

וידבר משה אל אהרן ואל אלעזר ואל איתמר בניו הנותרים קחו את
המנחה הנותרת מאשי יהוה ואכלוה מצות אצל המזבח כי קדש
קדשים הוא

Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar:
Take the meal offering that is left over from the LORD's offerings by fire
and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy.



24. *R' Shmshon Raphael
Hirsch
1808-1888*

הנותרים. Elsewhere (Commentary to *Shemos* 16:19), we analyzed the difference between נותר and נשאר. In our view, that which is נותר was likewise destined for destruction. Consider, for example, what our verse says next: המנחה הנותרת מאשי ה'; the מנחה is characterized as being נותר from the מזבח, as we indeed find, כהנים משולחן גבוה קא זכו (*Bava Kamma* 13a). Hence *Toras Kohanim* (here) learns from the expression בניו הנותרים that Elazar and Isamar, too, were on the verge of falling for this sin, but they recovered and were saved.

25. Devarim 12:2

אֲבַד תֵּאַבְדּוּן אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּקְדָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עֲבָדוּ־שָׁם הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם
יֹרְשִׁים אֹתָם אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם עַל־הָהָרִים הָרָמִים וְעַל־הַגְּבֻעוֹת וְתַחַת
כָּל־עֵץ רֵעָנָה:

You must destroy all the sites at which the nations you are to dispossess
worshiped their gods, whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under
any luxuriant tree.

אבד תאבדון. אבד ואחר כך תאבדון, מכאן לעוקר ע"ז שצריך
לשרש אחריה (עבודה זרה מ"ה):

אבד תאבדון YE SHALL UTTERLY DESTROY — Destroy and again
destroy! (i.e. utterly destroy). From here we learn that he who eradicates
an object of idol-worship must thoroughly uproot it (i.e. remove every
trace of it) (Sifrei Devarim 60:1).

26. Rashi

27. Mizrachi

אבד תאבדון אבד ואח"כ תאבדון מכאן לעוקר עבודת כוכבים
שצריך לשרש אחריה. בספרי דאל"כ תרי זימני אבד תאבדון למה
לי ואע"ג דאיכא למימר דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם כדאמר ר'
אלעזר גבי הענק תעניק לו ור"ש גבי העבט תעביטנו ה"מ היכא
דמוכח קראי אבל היכי דלא מוכח קראי מדרש דרשינן כדאיתא
במציעא ופירוש שצריך לשרש אחריה הוא כמו ששנו בספרי מניין
אתה אומר שאם קצץ אשרה והחליפה אפילו עשר פעמים שחייב
לקוצצה ת"ל אבד ואח"כ תאבדון:

ברש"י אבד תאבדון מכאן לעוקר ע"ז שצריך לשרש אחר". והוא
כלל לכל עקרית מדה ותאוה רעה. לבד הביטול במעשה. צריכין
לעקור כל רשימה רעה בלב. והאמת כי לזה צריכין סיעתא דשמיא.
ואפשר לכך נאמר מקודם אבד לשון ציווי ואח"כ תאבדון. שע"י
הביטול במעשה ומבקשין לעקור השורש. זוכין לסיוע הקב"ה. והיא
הבטחה שאח"כ תאבדון. ועיקר הפירוש שצריכין לשרש אחר"ה הוא
כי תכלית הכוונה בכל דבר צריך להיות לענין הנוגע בשורש למעלה.
כי אין הכוונה כדי לתקן עצמו לעלות למדרגה. רק כדי לבער שורש
הרע ולתקן שורש הטוב כמאמר שצדיקים מקיימין העולם כו'. וז"ש
שצריך לשרש אחר". והוא בעזר הבורא ב"ה וב"ש כמ"ש משה
תמחה אתם מלמטה ואני למעלה כו' וז"ש אבד תאבדון כנ"ל:

28. Sefas Emes
R' Yehudah Aryeh Leib
Alter
1847-1905



29. Atomic Habits James Clear

knitting each week. Once your pride gets involved, you'll fight tooth and nail to maintain your habits.

True behavior change is identity change. You might start a habit because of motivation, but the only reason you'll stick with one is that it becomes part of your identity. Anyone can convince themselves to visit the gym or eat healthy once or twice, but if you don't shift the belief behind the behavior, then it is hard to stick with long-term changes. Improvements are only temporary until they become part of who you are.

The goal is not to read a book, the goal is to *become* a reader.

The goal is not to run a marathon, the goal is to *become* a runner.

The goal is not to learn an instrument, the goal is to *become* a musician.

Your behaviors are usually a reflection of your identity. What you do is an indication of the type of person you believe that you are—either consciously or nonconsciously.* Research has shown that once a person believes in a particular aspect of their identity, they are more likely to act in alignment with that belief. For example, people who identified as “being a voter” were more likely to vote than those who simply claimed “voting” was an action they wanted to perform. Similarly, the person who incorporates exercise into their identity doesn't have to convince themselves to train. Doing the right thing is easy. After all, when your behavior and your identity are fully aligned, you

* The terms *unconscious*, *nonconscious*, and *subconscious* can all be used to describe the absence of awareness or thought. Even in academic circles, these words are often used interchangeably without much nitpicking (for once). *Nonconscious* is the term I'm going to use because it is broad enough to encompass both the processes of the mind we could never consciously access and the moments when we are simply not paying attention to what surrounds us. *Nonconscious* is a description of anything you are not consciously thinking about.

are no longer pursuing behavior change. You are simply acting like the type of person you already believe yourself to be.

Like all aspects of habit formation, this, too, is a double-edged sword. When working for you, identity change can be a powerful force for self-improvement. When working against you, though, identity change can be a curse. Once you have adopted an identity, it can be easy to let your allegiance to it impact your ability to change. Many people walk through life in a cognitive slumber, blindly following the norms attached to their identity.

“I'm terrible with directions.”

“I'm not a morning person.”

“I'm bad at remembering people's names.”

“I'm always late.”

“I'm not good with technology.”

“I'm horrible at math.”

... and a thousand other variations.

When you have repeated a story to yourself for years, it is easy to slide into these mental grooves and accept them as a fact. In time, you begin to resist certain actions because “that's not who I am.” There is internal pressure to maintain your self-image and behave in a way that is consistent with your beliefs. You find whatever way you can to avoid contradicting yourself.

The more deeply a thought or action is tied to your identity, the more difficult it is to change it. It can feel comfortable to believe what your culture believes (group identity) or to do what upholds your self-image (personal identity), even if it's wrong. The biggest barrier to positive change at any level—individual, team, society—is identity conflict. Good habits can make rational sense, but if they conflict with your identity, you will fail to put them into action.

On any given day, you may struggle with your habits because you're too busy or too tired or too overwhelmed or hundreds of other reasons. Over the long run, however, the real reason you fail to stick with habits is that your self-image gets in the way. This is why you can't get too attached to one version of your identity. Progress requires unlearning. Becoming the best version of yourself requires you to continuously edit your beliefs, and to upgrade and expand your identity.

This brings us to an important question: If your beliefs and worldview play such an important role in your behavior, where do they come from in the first place? How, exactly, is your identity formed? And how can you emphasize new aspects of your identity that serve you and gradually erase the pieces that hinder you?

THE TWO-STEP PROCESS TO CHANGING YOUR IDENTITY

Your identity emerges out of your habits. You are not born with preset beliefs. Every belief, including those about yourself, is learned and conditioned through experience.*

More precisely, your habits are how you *embody* your identity. When you make your bed each day, you embody the identity of an organized person. When you write each day, you embody the identity of a creative person. When you train each day, you embody the identity of an athletic person.

The more you repeat a behavior, the more you reinforce the identity

associated with that behavior. In fact, the word *identity* was originally derived from the Latin words *essentia*, which means *being*, and *identidem*, which means *repeatedly*. Your identity is literally your "repeated beingness."

Whatever your identity is right now, you only believe it because you have proof of it. If you go to church every Sunday for twenty years, you have evidence that you are religious. If you study biology for one hour every night, you have evidence that you are studious. If you go to the gym even when it's snowing, you have evidence that you are committed to fitness. The more evidence you have for a belief, the more strongly you will believe it.

For most of my early life, I didn't consider myself a writer. If you were to ask any of my high school teachers or college professors, they would tell you I was an average writer at best; certainly not a standout. When I began my writing career, I published a new article every Monday and Thursday for the first few years. As the evidence grew, so did my identity as a writer. I didn't start out as a writer. I *became* one through my habits.

Of course, your habits are not the *only* actions that influence your identity, but by virtue of their frequency they are usually the most important ones. Each experience in life modifies your self-image, but it's unlikely you would consider yourself a soccer player because you kicked a ball once or an artist because you scribbled a picture. As you repeat these actions, however, the evidence accumulates and your self-image begins to change. The effect of one-off experiences tends to fade away while the effect of habits gets reinforced with time, which means your habits contribute most of the evidence that shapes your identity. In this way, the process of building habits is actually the process of becoming yourself.

This is a gradual evolution. We do not change by snapping our

* Certainly, there are some aspects of your identity that tend to remain unchanged over time—like identifying as someone who is tall or short. But even for more fixed qualities and characteristics, whether you view them in a positive or negative light is determined by your experiences throughout life.

fingers and deciding to be someone entirely new. We change bit by bit, day by day, habit by habit. We are continually undergoing microevolutions of the self.

Each habit is like a suggestion: "Hey, maybe *this* is who I am." If you finish a book, then perhaps you are the type of person who likes reading. If you go to the gym, then perhaps you are the type of person who likes exercise. If you practice playing the guitar, perhaps you are the type of person who likes music.

Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. No single instance will transform your beliefs, but as the votes build up, so does the evidence of your new identity. This is one reason why meaningful change does not require radical change. Small habits can make a meaningful difference by providing evidence of a new identity. And if a change is meaningful, it actually is big. That's the paradox of making small improvements.

Putting this all together, you can see that habits are the path to changing your identity. The most practical way to change *who* you are is to change *what* you do.

- Each time you write a page, you are a writer.
- Each time you practice the violin, you are a musician.
- Each time you start a workout, you are an athlete.
- Each time you encourage your employees, you are a leader.

Each habit not only gets results but also teaches you something far more important: to trust yourself. You start to believe you can actually accomplish these things. When the votes mount up and the evidence begins to change, the story you tell yourself begins to change as well.

Of course, it works the opposite way, too. Every time you choose to perform a bad habit, it's a vote for that identity. The good news is that

you don't need to be perfect. In any election, there are going to be votes for both sides. You don't need a unanimous vote to win an election; you just need a majority. It doesn't matter if you cast a few votes for a bad behavior or an unproductive habit. Your goal is simply to win the majority of the time.

New identities require new evidence. If you keep casting the same votes you've always cast, you're going to get the same results you've always had. If nothing changes, nothing is going to change.

It is a simple two-step process:

1. Decide the type of person you want to be.
2. Prove it to yourself with small wins.

First, decide *who* you want to be. This holds at any level—as an individual, as a team, as a community, as a nation. What do you want to stand for? What are your principles and values? Who do you wish to become?

These are big questions, and many people aren't sure where to begin—but they do know what kind of results they want: to get six-pack abs or to feel less anxious or to double their salary. That's fine. Start there and work backward from the results you want to the type of person who could get those results. Ask yourself, "Who is the type of person that could get the outcome I want?" Who is the type of person that could lose forty pounds? Who is the type of person that could learn a new language? Who is the type of person that could run a successful start-up?

For example, "Who is the type of person who could write a book?" It's probably someone who is consistent and reliable. Now your focus shifts from writing a book (outcome-based) to being the type of person who is consistent and reliable (identity-based).

This process can lead to beliefs like:

"I'm the kind of teacher who stands up for her students."

"I'm the kind of doctor who gives each patient the time and empathy they need."

"I'm the kind of manager who advocates for her employees."

Once you have a handle on the type of person you want to be, you can begin taking small steps to reinforce your desired identity. I have a friend who lost over 100 pounds by asking herself, "What would a healthy person do?" All day long, she would use this question as a guide. Would a healthy person walk or take a cab? Would a healthy person order a burrito or a salad? She figured if she acted like a healthy person long enough, eventually she would become that person. She was right.

The concept of identity-based habits is our first introduction to another key theme in this book: feedback loops. Your habits shape your identity, and your identity shapes your habits. It's a two-way street. The formation of all habits is a feedback loop (a concept we will explore in depth in the next chapter), but it's important to let your values, principles, and identity drive the loop rather than your results. The focus should always be on becoming that type of person, not getting a particular outcome.

THE REAL REASON HABITS MATTER

Identity change is the North Star of habit change. The remainder of this book will provide you with step-by-step instructions on how to build better habits in yourself, your family, your team, your company, and anywhere else you wish. But the true question is: "Are you becoming the type of person you want to become?" The first step is not *what* or *how*, but *who*. You need to know who you want to be. Otherwise, your quest for change is like a boat without a rudder. And that's why we are starting here.

You have the power to change your beliefs about yourself. Your identity is not set in stone. You have a choice in every moment. You can choose the identity you want to reinforce today with the habits you choose today. And this brings us to the deeper purpose of this book and the real reason habits matter.

Building better habits isn't about littering your day with life hacks. It's not about flossing one tooth each night or taking a cold shower each morning or wearing the same outfit each day. It's not about achieving external measures of success like earning more money, losing weight, or reducing stress. Habits can help you achieve all of these things, but fundamentally they are not about *having* something. They are about *becoming* someone.

Ultimately, your habits matter because they help you become the type of person you wish to be. They are the channel through which you develop your deepest beliefs about yourself. Quite literally, you become your habits.

Chapter Summary

There are three levels of change: outcome change, process change, and identity change.

The most effective way to change your habits is to focus not on what you want to achieve, but on who you wish to become.

Your identity emerges out of your habits. Every action is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.

Becoming the best version of yourself requires you to continuously edit your beliefs, and to upgrade and expand your identity.

The real reason habits matter is not because they can get you better results (although they can do that), but because they can change your beliefs about yourself.

י. ע"פ כל הנ"ל יתבאר היטב הדין
 ד"רשות משנה" ברמב"ם פנימיות ה-
 ענינים:

"שור" – קאי על הנפש הבהמית שב-
 אדם, שצריך לשמור עליה שלא תעשה
 דבר בלתי רצוי ח"ו, ואדרבה, יש לנצל

גם את כח ה"שור" שבאדם (נפשו ה-
 בהמית) לדברים של טוב וקדושה.

וכיון שגם הנפש הבהמית שבישראל
 היא מקליפת נוגה שיש בה טוב ורע,
 הרי יש בטבעה גם מדות טובות, ועוד
 זאת, שמצד עצם טבעה אין הנפש ה-
 בהמית שבישראל מתאוה לדברים אסו-
 רים אלא רק לתאוות היתר. והזו ענין
 שור תם ("המשנה ועשה מעשה שאין
 דרך כל מינו לעשות כן תמיד") כעכו-
 דה, והיינו כשמתאוה לדברים אסורים
 (שאין זה טבעה של נפש הבהמית שב-
 ישראל) ועד שנכשל ר"ל בעבירה, שאז
 הי"ה בגדר "תם", וענין "שור המעד" הוא
 כאשר "הרגיל בשינוי פעמים רבות",
 שחזור על מעשה זה כמה פעמים עד
 שמתרגל בו (ונעשה לו כהיתר) – ש-
 "נעשה מועד לאותו דבר שהרגיל בו",
 היינו שההנהגה הבלתי רצויה נעשית
 אצלו כמו טבע.

והנה בדרך כלל, הסדר לבטל דין
 מועד בבהמה הוא ע"י שהחזרה בה מדבר
 שהועדה לו... שור שהועד ליגח וחזר
 שלא ללגח... ה"ז תם לנגיחה ומאימתי
 היא חזרתו עד שיהיו התינוקות ממש-
 משין בו ואינו נוגח... וכן הוא ברוחניות
 הענינים, שכ"י שטבע נפשו הבהמית
 יחזור ל"תמותה" (שתתבטל ממנו רגילות
 זו) צריך להתייגע עם נפשו הבהמית
 לבטל תוקף תאוותיו כ"י עד שמתבטל
 טבע רע זה (שהרגיל את עצמו בו), ועד
 שיוכל לבחון את עצמו שלא יפול בזה
 עוד פעם (ע"י מחיל"י ד"תשובה גמור-

רה"ק היא שבא לידי דבר שעבר בו,
 "באותו מקום כ"י", ומ"מ אינו נכשל).
 ז. ועל זה יש הוראה ולימוד מהדין
 ד"רשות משנה", שיש עוד אופן לבטל
 דין "מועד" מנפשו הבהמית, ולהגביה
 מההשקעה ברע ח"ו, והוא ע"י הענין
 רשיוני רשות. דגם אם האדם לא עבד
 עם נפשו הבהמית עד שזיכנו, אלא ש-
 שינה רשותו, שהשקיע את עצמו בכל
 מהותו בעולם חדש וקדוש, אם בלימוד
 התורה או בעבודת התפילה או במעשים,
 אזי בדרך ממילא הועברה ממנו שליטת
 היצר בענין זה שהי' מורגל בו "חזר
 לתמותה".

[וע"ד שנת' במ"א בפירוש תוכן ה-
 ענין דא' מדרכי התשובה הוא, "שינוי
 השם", וכמ"ש הרמב"ם, "ומשנה שמו
 כלומר אני אחר ואיני אותו האיש שעשה
 אותו המעשים", שהגדר תשובה זו הוא
 – שינוי הגר"א. דכלל ענין התשובה
 המכפרת בא על ידי עזיבת התא, חרטה
 על העבר וקבלה על להבא, וכאשר
 תשובה זו היא באמת (עד ל"תשובה
 גמורה כנ"ל) אזי מתכפר לו עונו:

אבל הענין ד"משנה שמו" הוא, ד-
 כאשר האדם משנה כללות מציאותו,
 וכמ"ש הרמב"ם שם, "ומשנה מעשיו כולו
 לטובה", הרי זה שאין מענישים אותו על
 העבירות שעשה אינו מפני שביטל את
 חטאיו, אלא לפי שנעשה מציאות חדשה,
 "איני אותו האיש שעשה אותו המעשים"
 ובמילא האדם שעבר העבירות אינו לפי-
 ניונו כדי להענישו].

משפטים

א. כתב הרמב"ם בפ"י מהל' נזיק
 ממוני: "שור שהועד ונמכר או ניתן ב-
 מתנה חזר לתמותו שהרשות שנשתנתה
 משנה דינו" (ומקורו בגמ' דפליגי אמר-
 ראם אם רשות משנה אם לא, והרמב"ם
 פסק כמ"ד ד"רשות משנה").

והנה דין זה ד"רשות משנה" הביא
 הרמב"ם גם לעיל בפ"ד שפ"י, וז"ל: "שא-
 לוי כשהוא תם והועד בבית השואל
 והחזירו לבעליו חזר לתמותו הואיל
 ונשתנתה רשותו בטלה ההעדה והבעלים
 משלמין חצי נזק והשואל פטור שהרי
 החזירו".

וצע"ק טעם השינוי בלשון הרמב"ם,
 דגבי שינוי רשות דמכר או מתנה נקט
 "שהרשות שנשתנתה משנה דינו", וגבי
 שואל כתב "הואיל ונשתנתה רשותו
 במלכה ההעדה".

גם צע"ק לשון הרמב"ם בסיום הלכה
 זו (גבי שואל) "והשואל פטור שהרי חזר
 ויר"ו, דלכאורה הול"ל שפטור לפי ש-

(1) הי"ו.

(2) מגיד משנה שם.

(3) ב"ק מ. כ. – לפני רשות שואל (וראה לקמן
 בפנים).

וראה לעיל שם (למ. ב), שזו טעם פלוגת
 התנאים גבי אפסדופוס (וראה שם מ. א). אבל בענין
 זה פסק הרמב"ם (כאן) כ"י יוסי דהיה בחוקטו (וראה
 לקמן סעיף ה' והערה 46). וראה מגיד משנה כאן,
 שלדעת רב פסא אין פלוגתא זו תלוי ברשות משנה,
 והרמב"ם פסק כרב פסא. ע"ש.

(4) רב פסא.

(5) הי"ט.

(6) ומקורו בבביתא (שם מ. טע"א) ובפירוש רב

פסא (שם מ. ב), כמ"ש במגיד משנה שם.



בטל דין מועד מהשור ו"חזר לתמותו"
 ובמילא אין חייבים יותר מחצי נזק
 (ופשיטא דחייב חצי נזק דתם חל על
 הבעלים).

ואף שמקור הרמב"ם הוא בלשון
 הברייתא "בעלים משלמין חצי נזק ו-
 שואל פטור מכלום", הרי שם לא נאמר
 הטעם "שהרי החזירו", ויש לפרש שה-
 טעם הוא לפי שחזר לתמותו, משא"כ
 הרמב"ם מפרש הטעם שהשואל פטור
 "שהרי החזירו".

ב. ויובן זה בהקדם הביאור וההס-
 כרה בהך דינא ד"רשות משנה", דלכאור-
 רה תמזה מה טעם נאמר דשינוי רשות
 יבטל דין מועד מהשור – הרי "מועד"
 פירושו (בלשון הרמב"ם) "העושה מעשה
 שדרכו לעשותו תמיד", ותם שנעשה מו-
 עד היינו דכאשר "הרגיל בשינוי פעמים
 רבות נעשה מועד לאותו דבר שהרגיל
 בו", ולמה נתבטל דין מועד מטעם שינוי
 רשות?

(7) נסמן בהערה הקודמת.

(8) וזה שהוצרך בבביתא שם לסיים, ושואל
 פטור (דלכאורה מאי פסל), הוא בכדי להודיש
 הניצוד לרישא דברייתא (והוא ברמב"ם שם פ"ד
 הי"ח). שאלו בחזקת תם ונמצא מועד בעלים משלמין
 חצי נזק ושואל משלם חצי נזק, דאף שבנדון מ-
 שלמים הבעלים חצי נזק (אף שהשור הוא ברשות
 השואל), הנה בסיפא השואל פטור מכלום (ורק
 הבעלים משלמים חצי נזק).

והשאלה בפנים היא על לשון הרמב"ם שנקט
 כטעם הדין "שהרי החזירו", דלכאורה טעם הפטור
 הוא לפי שחזר לתמותו ואין ח"ו לחייבו (משא"כ
 ברישא שנשאר מועד ברשות השואל – ראה לקמן
 סוף ההערה 45).
 שם פ"א הי"ד.

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Key to Changing Habits Is In Environment, Not Willpower, Duke Expert Says

By Duke Today Staff

People whose New Year resolutions include losing weight, starting an exercise regime or otherwise changing their behavior should look outward -- to their environment -- instead of relying simply on willpower, says a Duke University psychologist who studies habits. Although people like to think they are in control of what they do, almost half of human behavior takes place in the same location pretty much every day and comes to be cued by that environment, according to studies conducted by Wendy Wood, James B. Duke professor of psychology and neuroscience. "Many of our repeated behaviors are cued by everyday environments, even though people think they're making choices all the time," she says. "Most people don't think that the reason they eat fast food at lunch or snack from the vending machine in late afternoon is because these actions are cued by their daily routines, the sight and smell of the food or the location they're in. They think they're doing it because they intended to eat then or because they like the food." Alcoholics and addicts have long been counseled to avoid things that trigger their cravings, such as frequenting bars. But research by Wood and others indicates that environmental cues control much of the behavior in healthy people as well. For example, Wood conducted studies demonstrating that people repeat well-practiced actions regardless of whether they intend to do so. She finds that people with a habit to purchase fast food at a particular place tend to keep doing so, even if their intentions change and they no longer wish to do so.

"Once you form a habit, it takes willpower to inhibit the triggered response. If you don't have the energy to override the response, you tend to repeat what you've done in the past," Wood says. In another study, Wood found that college students who transferred to a new university were able to break their television-watching habit if the TV were in a different location at their new school. Students who found the TV in the same location were less successful at breaking the TV habit, she says. The implication for people trying to stop bad habits or develop new ones is that they should pay attention to their environment in order to sustain a new behavior over time, Wood says. She says she has found that physical locations are some of the most powerful cues to behavior. Someone who needs to take a pill each day might place it by their toothbrush, for example. Or a person who wants to stop eating fast food might change travel routes to avoid passing the restaurant.

"You need to change the context. You need to change the cues. And that requires understanding the triggers to your own behavior," she says.

rewards you for your chess skills, playing chess will seem like a very attractive thing to do. If you work in a job where everyone wears expensive suits, then you'll be inclined to splurge on one as well. If all of your friends are sharing an inside joke or using a new phrase, you'll want to do it, too, so they know that you "get it." Behaviors are attractive when they help us fit in.

We imitate the habits of three groups in particular:

1. The close.
2. The many.
3. The powerful.

Each group offers an opportunity to leverage the 2nd Law of Behavior Change and make our habits more attractive.

1. Imitating the Close

Proximity has a powerful effect on our behavior. This is true of the physical environment, as we discussed in Chapter 6, but it is also true of the social environment.

We pick up habits from the people around us. We copy the way our parents handle arguments, the way our peers flirt with one another, the way our coworkers get results. When your friends smoke pot, you give it a try, too. When your wife has a habit of double-checking that the door is locked before going to bed, you pick it up as well.

I find that I often imitate the behavior of those around me without realizing it. In conversation, I'll automatically assume the body posture of the other person. In college, I began to talk like my roommates. When traveling to other countries, I unconsciously imitate the local accent despite reminding myself to stop.

As a general rule, the closer we are to someone, the more likely we

are to imitate some of their habits. One groundbreaking study tracked twelve thousand people for thirty-two years and found that "a person's chances of becoming obese increased by 57 percent if he or she had a friend who became obese." It works the other way, too. Another study found that if one person in a relationship lost weight, the other partner would also slim down about one third of the time. Our friends and family provide a sort of invisible peer pressure that pulls us in their direction.

Of course, peer pressure is bad only if you're surrounded by bad influences. When astronaut Mike Massimino was a graduate student at MIT, he took a small robotics class. Of the ten people in the class, *four* became astronauts. If your goal was to make it into space, then that room was about the best culture you could ask for. Similarly, one study found that the higher your best friend's IQ at age eleven or twelve, the higher your IQ would be at age fifteen, even after controlling for natural levels of intelligence. We soak up the qualities and practices of those around us.

One of the most effective things you can do to build better habits is to join a culture where your desired behavior is the normal behavior. New habits seem achievable when you see others doing them every day. If you are surrounded by fit people, you're more likely to consider working out to be a common habit. If you're surrounded by jazz lovers, you're more likely to believe it's reasonable to play jazz every day. Your culture sets your expectation for what is "normal." Surround yourself with people who have the habits you want to have yourself. You'll rise together.

To make your habits even more attractive, you can take this strategy one step further.

Join a culture where (1) your desired behavior is the normal behavior and (2) you already have something in common with the group. Steve Kamb, an entrepreneur in New York City, runs a company called

Nerd Fitness, which “helps nerds, misfits, and mutants lose weight, get strong, and get healthy.” His clients include video game lovers, movie fanatics, and average Joes who want to get in shape. Many people feel out of place the first time they go to the gym or try to change their diet, but if you are already similar to the other members of the group in some way—say, your mutual love of *Star Wars*—change becomes more appealing because it feels like something people like you already do.

Nothing sustains motivation better than belonging to the tribe. It transforms a personal quest into a shared one. Previously, you were on your own. Your identity was singular. *You are a reader. You are a musician. You are an athlete.* When you join a book club or a band or a cycling group, your identity becomes linked to those around you. Growth and change is no longer an individual pursuit. *We are readers. We are musicians. We are cyclists.* The shared identity begins to reinforce your personal identity. This is why remaining part of a group after achieving a goal is crucial to maintaining your habits. It’s friendship and community that embed a new identity and help behaviors last over the long run.

2. Imitating the Many

In the 1950s, psychologist Solomon Asch conducted a series of experiments that are now taught to legions of undergrads each year. To begin each experiment, the subject entered the room with a group of strangers. Unbeknownst to them, the other participants were actors planted by the researcher and instructed to deliver scripted answers to certain questions.

The group would be shown one card with a line on it and then a second card with a series of lines. Each person was asked to select the line on the second card that was similar in length to the line on the first card. It was a very simple task. Here is an example of two cards used in the experiment:

CONFORMING TO SOCIAL NORMS

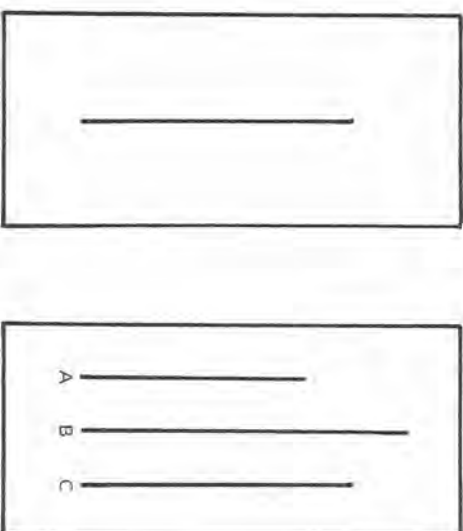


FIGURE 10: This is a representation of two cards used by Solomon Asch in his famous social conformity experiments. The length of the line on the first card (left) is obviously the same as line C, but when a group of actors claimed it was a different length the research subjects would often change their minds and go with the crowd rather than believe their own eyes

The experiment always began the same. First, there would be some easy trials where everyone agreed on the correct line. After a few rounds, the participants were shown a test that was just as obvious as the previous ones, except the actors in the room would select an intentionally *incorrect* answer. For example, they would respond “A” to the comparison shown in Figure 10. Everyone would agree that the lines were the same even though they were clearly different.

The subject, who was unaware of the ruse, would immediately

33. Rambam
Hilchos Dei'os, Perek 6

It is natural for a man's character and actions to be influenced by his friends and associates and for him to follow the local norms of behavior. Therefore, he should associate with the righteous and be constantly in the company of the wise, so as to learn from their deeds. Conversely, he should keep away from the wicked who walk in darkness, so as not to learn from their deeds.

This is [implied by] Solomon's statement ([Proverbs 13:20](#)): "He who walks with the wise will become wise, while one who associates with fools will suffer." Similarly, [[Psalms 1:1](#)] states: "Happy is the man who has not followed the advice of the wicked."

A person who lives in a place where the norms of behavior are evil and the inhabitants do not follow the straight path should move to a place where the people are righteous and follow the ways of the good.

If all the places with which he is familiar and of which he hears reports follow improper paths, as in our times, or if he is unable to move to a place where the patterns of behavior are proper, because of [the presence of] bands of raiding troops, or for health reasons, he should remain alone in seclusion as [[Eichah 3:28](#)] states: "Let him sit alone and be silent."

If they are wicked and sinful and do not allow him to reside there unless he mingle with them and follow their evil behavior, he should go out to caves, thickets, and deserts [rather than] follow the paths of sinners as [[Jeremiah 9:1](#)] states: "Who will give me a lodging place for wayfarers, in the desert."

א דרך ברייתו של אדם להיות נמשך בדעותיו ובמעשיו אחר רעיו וחבריו ונוהג כמנהג אנשי מדינתו. לפיכך צריך אדם להתחבר לצדיקים ולישב אצל החכמים תמיד כדי שילמד ממעשיהם. ויתרחק מן הרשעים ההולכים בחשך כדי שלא ילמד ממעשיהם. הוא ששלמה אומר (משלי יג כ) "הולך את חכמים יחכם ורעה כסילים ירוע". ואומר אשרי האיש וגו'. וכן אם היה במדינה שמנהגותיה רעים ואין אנשיה הולכים בדרך ישרה ילך למקום שאנשיה צדיקים ונוהגים בדרך טובים. ואם היו כל המדינות שהוא יודעם ושומע שמועתן נוהגים בדרך לא טובה כמו זמננו. או שאינו יכול ללכת למדינה שמנהגותיה טובים מפני הגיסות או מפני החלי ישב לבדו יחידי כענין שנאמר (איכה ג כח) "ישב בדרך וידם". ואם היו רעים וחטאים שאין מניחים אותו לישב במדינה אלא אם כן נתערב עמהן ונוהג במנהגם הרע יצא למערות ולחוחים ולמדברות. ואל ינהיג עצמו בדרך חטאים כענין שנאמר (ירמיה ט א) "מי יתנני במדבר מלון ארחים":

34. Pirkei Avos 1:7

נטיי הארכלי אומר, הרחק משכן רע, ואל תתחבר לרשע, ואל תתיאש מן הפרענות:

Nittai the Arbelite used to say: keep a distance from an evil neighbor, do not become attached to the wicked, and do not abandon faith in [divine] retribution.

35. Rambam
Hilchos Temura 4:13

All of these ordinances are to subjugate one's evil inclination and improve one's character. Similarly, most of the Torah's laws are nothing other than "counsels given from distance" from "He Who is of great counsel" to improve one's character and make one's conduct upright. And so it is written Proverbs 22:20-21: "Behold, I have written for you in the Torah prominent matters, to inform you of the veracity of the words of truth, so that you will respond truthfully to those who send to you."

קִדְשׁ. וְכָל אֵלּוּ הַדְּבָרִים כְּדִי לְכַף אֶת יִצְרוֹ וּלְתַקֵּן דַּעוּתוֹ. וְרַב דִּינֵי הַתּוֹרָה אֵינָן אֶלָּא עֲצוֹת מֵרַחוּק מְגֹדֹל הָעֵצָה לְתַקֵּן הַדַּעוֹת וּלְיִשֵּׁר כָּל הַמַּעֲשִׂים. וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר (משלי כב כ) "הֲלֹא כָתַבְתִּי לָךְ שְׁלִישִׁים בְּמַעֲצוֹת וְדַעַת". לְהוֹדִיעַךָ קִשְׁטִי אֲמָרִי אֲמַת לְהַשִּׁיב אֲמָרִים אֲמַת לְשִׁלְחִיךָ:

36. Chazon Ish
Emunah U'Bitachon



The practice of being particular in the performance of halachic details, which goes against a person's natural leanings, creates a habit of placing the staff of rule in the hand of wisdom, and the reins in the hand of the mind. It empowers the heart to be continuously subdued to the inner sense of a higher conscious, and conditions him to be a man of spirit, utterly distant from all vulgarity ... If the Torah corrects character traits by virtue of its toil and by the acquisition of its wisdom, as the laws of the spirit dictate, there is a further aspect of the Torah, a light beyond human cognition whose revelation in the Torah cleanses a person's soul, and sensitizes him to taste the subtleties of wisdom and the pleasantness of light. He therefore loves humility by nature, and, conversely, hates haughtiness; he loves kindness and hates cruelty; loves patience and hates anger. For the entire being and desire of a wise person is to correct his character traits, and he is greatly distressed by his bad inclinations. A wise person feels no greater pain than when he stumbles in a base character trait, and feels no greater joy than the joy of correcting his character traits.

ההרגל בדקדוק הדין נגד מדותיו הטבעיות ונגד נטיותיו בתולדתו, מרגילין אותו לשום את שבט מושלים בכף התבונה ואת הרסן ביד השכל, ומגבירים בלבו ההכרה התמידית להכנע להרגש הפנימי ולמצפון האציל, ומכשרתו להיות איש הרוח, ומרחיקתו מן הגסות תכלית הריחוק ... ואם התורה מתקנת המדות בעמלה ובקנין החכמה כמשפט חקוק בחק הנפש, עוד יש בתורה סגולת אור אשר לא יושג בשכל אנושי, ואשר אור הסגולה הזה מאיר ומזכך את נפש בעליו לראות אור נוגה ונועם טוב טעם ודעת, ואוהב את הענוה בטבעו, ושונא את הגבהות בטבעו, אוהב את החסד בטבעו, ושונא את האכזריות בטבעו, אוהב את הסבלנות ושונא את הכעס, כי כל ישעו וחפצו של החכם לתקן מדותיו ומצטער על נטיותיו הרעות תכלית הצער, ואין כאב לחכם ככאבו על הכשלו במדה של גנות, ואין שמחה לחכם כשמחתו על תיקון מדותיו.

37. Atomic Habits
James Clear

“If you’re having trouble determining how to rate a particular habit, ask yourself: ‘Does this behavior help me become the type of person I wish to be? Does this habit cast a vote for or against my desired identity?’”

“With enough practice, your brain will pick up on the cues that predict certain outcomes without consciously thinking about it.”

“Once our habits become automatic, we stop paying attention to what we are doing.”

“The process of behavior change always starts with awareness. You need to be aware of your habits before you can change them.”

“Pointing-and-Calling raises your level of awareness from a nonconscious habit to a more conscious level by verbalizing your actions.”

“The Habits Scorecard is a simple exercise you can use to become more aware of your behavior.”

38. Rav Samson Raphael
Hirsch

Hitpallel, from which “tefillah” is derived, originally meant to deliver an opinion about oneself, to judge oneself or an inner attempt at so doing such as the hitpa’el (reflexive) form of the Hebrew verb frequently denotes ... Thus it denotes to step out of active life in order to attempt to gain a true judgment about oneself ... about one’s relationship to God and the world, and the world to oneself ... In English we call tefillah “prayer,” but this word only incompletely expresses the concept “to pray,” i.e. to ask for something is only a minor section of tefillah.



דעת עצמנו

מבוא

"ידיעת עצמו" אי אפשר ללמוד. זוהי חויה הפוקדת את כל ברדעת בעמדו על דעתו. אין הדרכה להשגת חויה זו. היא עומדת בין השער הקודם והשער הזה. היודע קצת מדות טובות וקצת מדות רעות הפועלות בקרבנו, אינו יודע עצמו כלל. כאשר נפקחו עינינו לעמד על אפשרויות העלית הטמונות בנו, ויחד עם זה אנו רואים את כל הנשיות והנגיעות, כל המדרמה וההשתתה המקננות בקרבנו, לבלי מצוא לעצמנו מקום מקלט פנימי הבטוח מכל שלילה — זוהי "הכרת עצמנו". פילוסוף אחד קורא לזה: "ידידת הגיהנום בעורנו בחיים".

שלא נגעה בה שאיפה אנוכית. אדם החזיק את עצמו, אם לא לצדיק, לכה"פ "שבתך בתוך מדרמה" — אמר ידמיה (פרק ט, ה): אין אף נקודה טובה אחת לבינוני ישר והגון — ולפתע נפקחו עיניו והוא מכיר, איך שלכל פעולותיו יש שורש אנוכי וכל מעלותיו מחולות השחתה, ממש "כל האדם כוזב" — כולו כוזב: או נשטטה הקרקע מתחת רגליו והוא רואה הגיהנום פתוחה לו מתחתיו בחיים חיותו. מתוך זיעזוע זה הוא מתחיל לגוש ולחפש דרך-חיים יותר אמיתית.

נחזור לעצמנו: אוהב ושווא של אדם משוחחים על אדם זה שעה ארוכה. כל אשר האהוב מנסה להצדיק, מפריך השווא את כל טענותיו ומוכיח כי אין בו אף שמץ של מדה טובה. והנה אדם זה עומד מאחורי הלל ושומע את כל השיחה הזאת — מה תהא תגובתו? האם יהיה גדהם על מדת שנאתו של אויבו, או מרוגז על אי-הכרת מעלותיו, או נדכא על שלא הצליח להראות עצמו באור יותר חיובי? — המכיר עצמו יגיד בשלחה: "כל טענותיו של שווא אינן חדשות לי — הכל אני יודע ומרגיש בעצמי..."

מה עלוב לעומת זאת שלי-הנפש החי בדמיונות ואינו יודע על עצמו מאומה! לראות נבוכה אינו מעיז את מבצר הדמיונות בו הקיף את עצמו אינו מוכן לפוצץ! וגורע מזה — הריצה לקנות לעצמו שם, "עובד", ומדי פעם מחטט בעצמו לראות מהיכן נובעת הריגשה מסוימת ונכנס ל"למדנות" על מקורן של מדות. ונוסף על כל דמיונותיו עוד ריצה להתעשר בחזאי עובד ו"בעל-מוסר"!

בתחילת כל עבודה עצמית עומדת ההכרה העצמית. מי שלא זכה לה מעודו — שעד העבודה הפרטית סגור בפניו. הוא יחיה בשלחה את חיוו הרוחניים, ייכשל

כאשר רבים נבשלים, יעשה מעשים טובים ככל אדם מישראל ואין הקביה מקפח שכן כל בריה, בריעליה ואיש אמת לא יהיה.
מי שזכה להכרת-עצמו, מוכרח עלי-ידה לבא לידי עבודה פוריה ולידי שינויים מעמיקים, בהנהגה ובמדות. הפוקים הבאים גורעים לתיאורם.
במערכת ההכרה לא תתברר העבודה הפרטית עצמה. מגמתנו כאן היא, לברר הכחות ושכבות הנפש, ההכנת המעשים ודרכי ניתוח המעשים.

הידיעה עצמה על עצמנו מרוממת. לפני שאנו מכירים את עצמנו, אנו נמצאים בתוך התחום. בהכירנו את עצמנו אנו מוצאים את עצמנו כבר על-יד התחום — ההכרה העלית אותנו מתוכו. אדם שאינו מכיר עצמו, הוא עצמו וזה עם כל נגיעותיו ורצונותיו. עצם ההכרה מפרידה בינינו לבין נגיעותינו, ואם כי עדיין הם פעילים בנו, ומלחמה לנו עמהם, הרי ה"אני" שלנו עומד מעל לרצונות אלה. לפני שנים רבות נתגלה בעיר אשכנזית במרתף אחד אדם שמעולם לא ראה אור השמש. לא ראה אדם ולא יצא אי-פעם מהמרתף. כאשר למד לדבר, נתברר כי מילדותו הוחזק בבדידות גמורה באותו מרתף. אדם זה, כאשר נוכח לדעת כי כל שנותיו בילה במרתף, כבר היה מחוצה לו. כל עוד שהיה חי שם היה נבצר ממנו להכיר כי מעונו הוא מרתף עלוב, כי בעיניו היה זה כל העולם כולו, שהרי לא ידע מחיים אחרים.

— כן היא הכרת אדם את עצמו: בראותו נבוכה את שבתו בתוך מרמה על כל מדרותיו הרעות — כבר הוא נמצא מחוץ להן וכבר נמצא בלבו ציור מחיים פנימיים רחבים. זהו מכיר כי המדרמה וההשתתה היא מרתף עלוב...
ואחרי ההכרה כבר נוכל לחפש שביל בחיים, ויהיה זה שביל צר מאד, אבל אמיתי, מרוחק מהמרמה — והיה זה שכרנו.

פרק רביעי

מעשים קטנים

הגנו ניגשים ליסוד הראשון של העבודה: כיצד עובדים תוך עקיפת כח המרידה? רבותינו בבית מדרשו של מרן הגר"י נייע ליסודי אותנו את ערכם של מעשים קטנים. הרי חז"ל ברור מיללו:

„וזהו דבר המצוי קלה כבחמורה שאין אותה יודע מתן שכרן של מצוות“ (אבות ב. א).

„וזהו עקב השמיעון — ושיה למה אירא בימי יע עון עקבי יסובני, אמר דוד רבש"ע איני מתירא מן המצוות המורות שבתורה מפני שהן המורות, אבל מתירא אני מפני הקלות שמה עברתי עליהם מפני שהם קלות ואמה אמרת הוי דבר במצוה קלה כבחמורה לכך נאמר וזהו עקב השמיעון.“

מה רב טובך — זהו שכרן של מצוות קלות“ (תנחומא עקב, א'). „וזהו עקב השמיעון — אם המצוות הקלות שאדם דש בעקביו השמיעון, ושטר ה' כ"י — ישמור לך הבטחותי“ (רש"י ריש עקב). „אמר ריש בן לקיש מאי דכתיב עון עקבי יסבני — עונות שאדם דש בעקביו כעוה"ן מסוכן לו ליום הדין“ (ע"י ית, צ"א).

בעולם ועיר אנו מוצאים את עצמנו כאן בכל הנוגע לשכר ולעונש. והלא שלא הוא: אנו רגילים כל כך להתגדל ולהאדיר את עצמנו והמחשבות — וכאשר אני מגיעים לעולם המעשה, הכל תלוי במעשים קטנים דווקא! אך זוהי החכמה של בני האדם. גם העולם הגדול אינו נבנה מגושים ענקיים אלא מאטומים כה זעירים שאין בכח העין לתבונת אותם, וגופנו מורכב מתאים אשר רק במיקרוסקופ המגדיל פי מאה אלף יכולים לראותם. כן גם בנינו הרוחני של האדם: הוא מורכב ממעשים שאדם דש בעקביו, אם לטוב אם לרוע.

ידועה זאת צריכה לחולל מהפכה במחשבתנו. כרגיל, אדם הרוצה לתקן את העולם חושב על שיטה החובקת ורעות עולם, או על אידיגון עולמי לשלום או לצדק. הרוצה לתקן את עצמו חושב גם כן על מעשים גדולים וכבירים של חסידים או קדושים. אבל מעשים זעירים שאינם מבקשים כלל על האדם — איזו שלימות יכולה לצמוח מהם? אולם, האמת כך היא: דווקא ממעשים קטנים נבנת האדם. ונקט לנו ראיה מתכמת הרפואה: הבטות של חומר מרפא בתרופה אחת היא זעירה עד מאד. אולי מיליגרם, אם התרופה הזוהי מכילה כמות יותר גדולה, היא הייתה מזיקה לאדם במקום לרפואתו. ואולי הייתה אפילו מסתה

אותו; הרי מציאו כי רעלים מסוימים אשר בכמות יותר גדולה ממש מרעילים — אם נותנים אותם בכמות זעירה עד מאד יש להם השפעה מרפאת. בדיוק כך הוא במעשה עבודה במידות. על כגון זה אמר הנביא: „כי מי בו ליום קטנות“, והפסוק גומר: „עניי ה' המה משוטטים בכל הארץ“ (זכריה ה, י). עניי ה' המשוטטים בכל הארץ אינם מבזות דבר קטן ברוחניות, ולכן גם אתם אל תבזו מעשה קטן:

די בלימוד זה כשלעצמו, אך לנו יש עוד ענין גדול במעשים הקטנים: הם אינם מעוררים את כח המרידה! המקבל על עצמו איזה דבר גדול המכביד עליו — ברבות הימים הוא ירגיש היטב את כח המרידה ההולך ומתגבר עליו. אבל מעשה קטן שאינו מכביד כלל על האדם, אין בו כדי לעורר אותו. ויש לי על זה ציור מוחשי: אחר מלחמת יום הכפורים ססתי למצרים. בהגיע המטוס לתחום מצרים ראיתי שהוא מנומך מאד, ממש כמו מטרים מעל לקרקע. חשבתי כי אולי חל איזה קלקול במנועים, ושאלתי מה קרה לו. אמרו לי כי עכשו אנו בתחום הראדאר המצרי, ולא כדאי שהוא יבחין במטוס יהודי, לכן הוא מנומך טוס למטה מגובה הראדאר, כי הראדאר מבחין רק במטוס הטס למעלה מהגובה שלו, ובמטוס הטס מתחת לגובה אינו מבחין. והוא הציור: גם לכל המרידה יש „ראדאר“, וגם הוא מבחין רק במעשים שהם מעל לגובה, ובמעשים קטנים שהם מתחת לגובה אינו מבחין... .

זהו היסוד הראשון בעבודה המוסרית: אין לעסוק בשום אופן במעשים המכבידים עליו. כל הדרך מעשית שנציע בפרקים הבאים בע"ה תהיה במעשים קטנים. וצריך כל אחד לשפוט בעצמו מתי דבר אחד מכביד עליו ומתי יניח אותו. המתחיל בעבודה ישאל איך מעשים קטנים כאלה יכולים לנטוע בטבעו איזו מידה. וכאשר ימשיך באותה פעולה חודש ויותר אף ישאל כי אותה פעולה נהפכה אצלו לשיגרה ואינו מרגיש בה כל טעם, ואף אנו נאמר לו: הדבר תלוי לאיזו מטרות הוא עוסק בפעולות אלו; אם כוונתו היתה להוסיף עוד „פרומקייט“ על הפרומקייט שלו — בודאי שאין להמשיך הפעולה הזאת לא טעם ולא רית. אך אין פנינו מועדות בכל העבודה להוסיף פרומקייט, אלא לקנות הבנה במידות ואף לקנות המידות עצמן שתיהפכנה טבע אצלנו. אמנם בדברים קטנים אנו עוסקים. אבל גם בדברים קטנים נוכל להתלמד יותר ויותר בעמקי המידה שבה אנו עוסקים. אך דבר זה כבר שיך ליסוד השני שעליו מיוסדת העבודה המוסרית. הוא יסוד ההתלמדות שיתבאר בע"ה בפרק הבא.

ומה עם כח המרידה עצמו — האם אין לו תקנה? אכן, ברבות הימים, ברוב עבודה, כאשר התעורר כלב האהבה — היא תהיה תיקונו.

It is normal for a person who wishes to rectify the world to think of a grand method that encompasses great breadth, or of a global organization for peace or justice. Someone who wishes to mend himself also thinks of great and impressive actions of kindness or holiness. What completion can arise from small deeds, which barely require effort to accomplish?

Yet, the truth is that a person is built specifically from small deeds. The practice of medicine serves to illustrate the point: The quantity of the active ingredient in a given medicine is tiny, perhaps one milligram. If the medicine would contain a larger amount of this ingredient, it would cause someone damage rather than heal him. He might even die. ... This is the first principle of working on oneself: by no means should the method of labor be burdensome.

41. *Chagiga* 17a

תַּפְּשִׁתָּ מְרֻבָּה לֹא תַפְּשִׁתָּ תַּפְּשִׁתָּ מוֹעֵט תַּפְּשִׁתָּ

The Gemara answers by implementing the following principle: **If you grasped many, you did not grasp anything; if you grasped few, you grasped something.**

1% BETTER EVERY DAY

1% worse every day for one year. $0.99^{365} \approx 00.03$
1% better every day for one year. $1.01^{365} \approx 37.78$

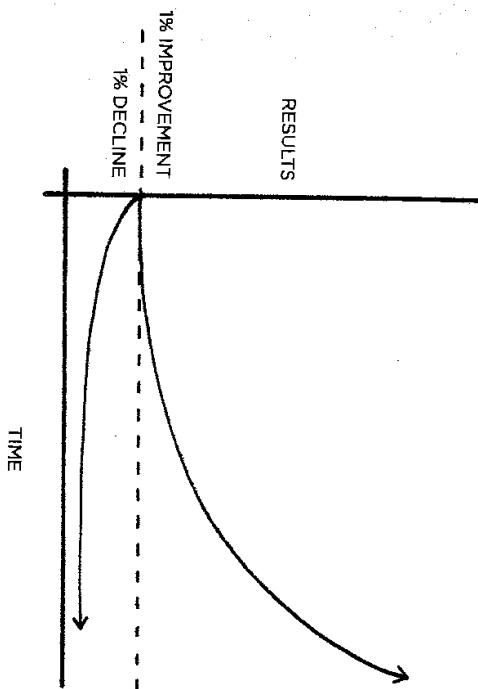


FIGURE 1: The effects of small habits compounded over time. For example, if you can get just 1 percent better each day, you'll end up with results that are nearly 37 times better after one year.

Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. The same way that money multiplies through compound interest, the effects of your habits multiply as you repeat them. They seem to make little difference on any given day and yet the impact they deliver over the months and years can be enormous. It is only when looking back two, five, or perhaps ten years later that the value of good habits and the cost of bad ones becomes strikingly apparent.

This can be a difficult concept to appreciate in daily life. We often

dismiss small changes because they don't seem to matter very much in the moment. If you save a little money now, you're still not a millionaire. If you go to the gym three days in a row, you're still out of shape. If you study Mandarin for an hour tonight, you still haven't learned the language. We make a few changes, but the results never seem to come quickly and so we slide back into our previous routines.

Unfortunately, the slow pace of transformation also makes it easy to let a bad habit slide. If you eat an unhealthy meal today, the scale doesn't move much. If you work late tonight and ignore your family, they will forgive you. If you procrastinate and put your project off until tomorrow, there will usually be time to finish it later. A single decision is easy to dismiss.

But when we repeat 1 percent errors, day after day, by replicating poor decisions, duplicating tiny mistakes, and rationalizing little excuses, our small choices compound into toxic results. It's the accumulation of many missteps—a 1 percent decline here and there—that eventually leads to a problem.

The impact created by a change in your habits is similar to the effect of shifting the route of an airplane by just a few degrees. Imagine you are flying from Los Angeles to New York City. If a pilot leaving from LAX adjusts the heading just 3.5 degrees south, you will land in Washington, D.C., instead of New York. Such a small change is barely noticeable at takeoff—the nose of the airplane moves just a few feet—but when magnified across the entire United States, you end up hundreds of miles apart.*

Similarly, a slight change in your daily habits can guide your life to a very different destination. Making a choice that is 1 percent better or 1 percent worse seems insignificant in the moment, but over the span

* I geeked out and actually calculated this. Washington, D.C., is about 225 miles from New York City. Assuming you are flying on a 747 or an Airbus A380, changing the heading by 3.5 degrees as you leave Los Angeles likely causes the nose of the airplane to shift between 7.2 to 7.6 feet, or about 86 to 92 inches. A very small shift in direction can lead to a very meaningful change in destination.

instance, walking into a restaurant is a decisive moment because it determines what you'll be eating for lunch. Technically, you are in control of what you order, but in a larger sense, you can only order an item if it is on the menu. If you walk into a steakhouse, you can get a sirloin or a rib eye, but not sushi. Your options are constrained by what's available. They are shaped by the first choice.

We are limited by where our habits lead us. This is why mastering the decisive moments throughout your day is so important. Each day is made up of many moments, but it is really a few habitual choices that determine the path you take. These little choices stack up, each one setting the trajectory for how you spend the next chunk of time.

Habits are the entry point, not the end point. They are the cab, not the gym.

THE TWO-MINUTE RULE

Even when you know you should start small, it's easy to start too big. When you dream about making a change, excitement inevitably takes over and you end up trying to do too much too soon. The most effective way I know to counteract this tendency is to use the *Two-Minute Rule*, which states, "When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do."

You'll find that nearly any habit can be scaled down into a two-minute version:

- "Read before bed each night" becomes "Read one page."
- "Do thirty minutes of yoga" becomes "Take out my yoga mat."
- "Study for class" becomes "Open my notes."
- "Fold the laundry" becomes "Fold one pair of socks."
- "Run three miles" becomes "Tie my running shoes."

The idea is to make your habits as easy as possible to start. Anyone can meditate for one minute, read one page, or put one item of clothing away. And, as we have just discussed, this is a powerful strategy because once you've started doing the right thing, it is much easier to continue doing it. A new habit should not feel like a challenge. The actions that *follow* can be challenging, but the first two minutes should be easy. What you want is a "gateway habit" that naturally leads you down a more productive path.

You can usually figure out the gateway habits that will lead to your desired outcome by mapping out your goals on a scale from "very easy" to "very hard." For instance, running a marathon is very hard. Running a 5K is hard. Walking ten thousand steps is moderately difficult. Walking ten minutes is easy. And putting on your running shoes is very easy. Your goal might be to run a marathon, but your gateway habit is to put on your running shoes. That's how you follow the Two-Minute Rule.

Very easy	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Very hard
Put on your running shoes	Walk ten minutes	Walk ten thousand steps	Run a 5K	Run a marathon
Write one sentence	Write one paragraph	Write one thousand words	Write a five-thousand-word article	Write a book
Open your notes	Study for ten minutes	Study for three hours	Get straight A's	Earn a PhD

People often think it's weird to get hyped about reading one page or meditating for one minute or making one sales call. But the point is not to do one thing. The point is to master the habit of showing up. The truth is, a habit must be established before it can be improved. If you

can't learn the basic skill of showing up, then you have little hope of mastering the finer details. Instead of trying to engineer a perfect habit from the start, do the easy thing on a more consistent basis. You have to standardize before you can optimize.

As you master the art of showing up, the first two minutes simply become a ritual at the beginning of a larger routine. This is not merely a hack to make habits easier but actually the ideal way to master a difficult skill. The more you ritualize the beginning of a process, the more likely it becomes that you can slip into the state of deep focus that is required to do great things. By doing the same warm-up before every workout, you make it easier to get into a state of peak performance. By following the same creative ritual, you make it easier to get into the hard work of creating. By developing a consistent power-down habit, you make it easier to get to bed at a reasonable time each night. You may not be able to automate the whole process, but you can make the first action mindless. Make it easy to start and the rest will follow.

The Two-Minute Rule can seem like a trick to some people. You know that the *real* goal is to do more than just two minutes, so it may feel like you're trying to fool yourself. Nobody is actually aspiring to read one page or do one push-up or open their notes. And if you know it's a mental trick, why would you fall for it?

If the Two-Minute Rule feels forced, try this: do it for two minutes and then stop. Go for a run, but you *must* stop after two minutes. Start meditating, but you *must* stop after two minutes. Study Arabic, but you *must* stop after two minutes. It's not a strategy for starting, it's the whole thing. Your habit can *only* last one hundred and twenty seconds.

One of my readers used this strategy to lose over one hundred pounds. In the beginning, he went to the gym each day, but he told himself he wasn't allowed to stay for more than five minutes. He would go to the gym, exercise for five minutes, and leave as soon as his time was up. After a few weeks, he looked around and thought, "Well, I'm

always coming here anyway. I might as well start staying a little longer." A few years later, the weight was gone.

Journaling provides another example. Nearly everyone can benefit from getting their thoughts out of their head and onto paper, but most people give up after a few days or avoid it entirely because journaling feels like a chore.* The secret is to always stay below the point where it feels like work. Greg McKeown, a leadership consultant from the United Kingdom, built a daily journaling habit by specifically writing less than he felt like. He always stopped journaling before it seemed like a hassle. Ernest Hemingway believed in similar advice for any kind of writing. "The best way is to always stop when you are going good," he said.

Strategies like this work for another reason, too: they reinforce the identity you want to build. If you show up at the gym five days in a row—even if it's just for two minutes—you are casting votes for your new identity. You're not worried about getting in shape. You're focused on becoming the type of person who doesn't miss workouts. You're taking the smallest action that confirms the type of person you want to be.

We rarely think about change this way because everyone is consumed by the end goal. But one push-up is better than not exercising. One minute of guitar practice is better than none at all. One minute of reading is better than never picking up a book. It's better to do less than you hoped than to do nothing at all.

At some point, once you've established the habit and you're showing up each day, you can combine the Two-Minute Rule with a technique we call *habit shaping* to scale your habit back up toward your ultimate goal. Start by mastering the first two minutes of the smallest version of

* I designed a habit journal specifically to make journaling easier. It includes a "One Line Per Day" section where you simply write one sentence about your day. You can learn more at atomichabits.com/journal.

When it comes to building new habits, you can use the connectedness of behavior to your advantage. One of the best ways to build a new habit is to identify a current habit you already do each day and then stack your new behavior on top. This is called *habit stacking*.

Habit stacking is a special form of an implementation intention. Rather than pairing your new habit with a particular time and location, you pair it with a current habit. This method, which was created by BJ Fogg as part of his Tiny Habits program, can be used to design an obvious cue for nearly any habit.*

Fogg's habit stacking formula is:

"After I [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT]."

For example:

- Meditation. After I pour my cup of coffee each morning, I will meditate for one minute.
- Exercise. After I take off my work shoes, I will immediately change into my workout clothes.
- Gratitude. After I sit down to dinner, I will say one thing I'm grateful for that happened today.
- Marriage. After I get into bed at night, I will give my partner a kiss.
- Safety. After I put on my running shoes, I will text a friend or family member where I am running and how long it will take.

The key is to tie your desired behavior into something you already do each day. Once you have mastered this basic structure, you can begin to create larger stacks by chaining small habits together. This allows you to

* Fogg refers to this strategy as the "Tiny Habits recipe," but I'll call it the habit stacking formula throughout the book.

HABIT STACKING

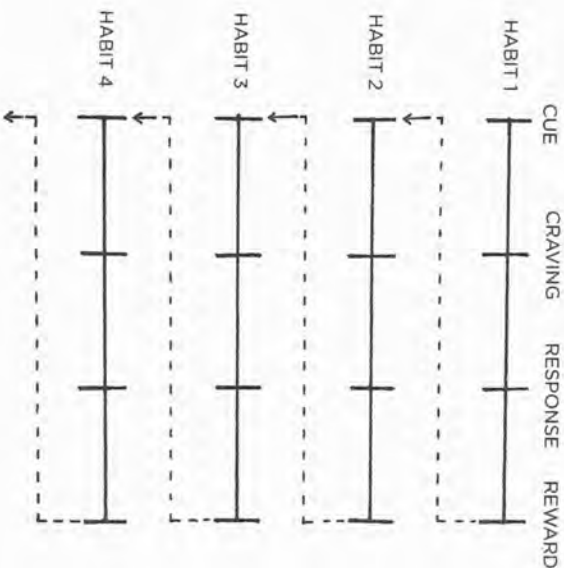


FIGURE 7: Habit stacking increases the likelihood that you'll stick with a habit by stacking your new behavior on top of an old one. This process can be repeated to chain numerous habits together, each one acting as the cue for the next.

take advantage of the natural momentum that comes from one behavior leading into the next—a positive version of the Diderot Effect.

Your morning routine habit stack might look like this:

1. After I pour my morning cup of coffee, I will meditate for sixty seconds.
2. After I meditate for sixty seconds, I will write my to-do list for the day.

3. After I write my to-do list for the day, I will immediately begin my first task.

Or, consider this habit stack in the evening:

1. After I finish eating dinner, I will put my plate directly into the dishwasher.
2. After I put my dishes away, I will immediately wipe down the counter.
3. After I wipe down the counter, I will set out my coffee mug for tomorrow morning.

You can also insert new behaviors into the middle of your current routines. For example, you may already have a morning routine that looks like this: Wake up > Make my bed > Take a shower. Let's say you want to develop the habit of reading more each night. You can expand your habit stack and try something like: Wake up > Make my bed > Place a book on my pillow > Take a shower. Now, when you climb into bed each night, a book will be sitting there waiting for you to enjoy.

Overall, habit stacking allows you to create a set of simple rules that guide your future behavior. It's like you always have a game plan for which action should come next. Once you get comfortable with this approach, you can develop general habit stacks to guide you whenever the situation is appropriate:

- Exercise. When I see a set of stairs, I will take them instead of using the elevator.
- Social skills. When I walk into a party, I will introduce myself to someone I don't know yet.
- Finances. When I want to buy something over \$100, I will wait twenty-four hours before purchasing.

Healthy eating. When I serve myself a meal, I will always put vegetables on my plate first.

Minimalism. When I buy a new item, I will give something away.

("One in, one out.")

Mood. When the phone rings, I will take one deep breath and smile before answering.

Forgetfulness. When I leave a public place, I will check the table and chairs to make sure I don't leave anything behind.

No matter how you use this strategy, the secret to creating a successful habit stack is selecting the right cue to kick things off. Unlike an implementation intention, which specifically states the time and location for a given behavior, habit stacking implicitly has the time and location built into it. When and where you choose to insert a habit into your daily routine can make a big difference. If you're trying to add meditation into your morning routine but mornings are chaotic and your kids keep running into the room, then that may be the wrong place and time. Consider when you are most likely to be successful. Don't ask yourself to do a habit when you're likely to be occupied with something else.

Your cue should also have the same frequency as your desired habit. If you want to do a habit every day, but you stack it on top of a habit that only happens on Mondays, that's not a good choice.

One way to find the right trigger for your habit stack is by brainstorming a list of your current habits. You can use your Habits Scorecard from the last chapter as a starting point. Alternatively, you can create a list with two columns. In the first column, write down the habits you do each day without fail.*

For example:

* If you're looking for more examples and guidance, you can download a Habit Stacking template at atomichabits.com/habitstacking.

43. *Pirkei Avos*

בן עזאי אומר, הוי רץ למצוה קלה כבחמורה, ובורח מן העברה.
שמצוה גוררת מצוה, ועברה גוררת עברה. ששכר מצוה, מצוה.
ושכר עברה, עברה:

Ben Azzai said: Be quick in performing a minor commandment as in the case of a major one, and flee from transgression; For one commandment leads to another commandment, and transgression leads to another transgression; For the reward for performing a commandment is another commandment and the reward for committing a transgression is a transgression.

44. *Kohelles 4:9*

טובים השנים מן-האחד אשר יש-להם שכר טוב בעמלם:

^dTwo are better off than one, in that they have greater ^ebenefit from ^etheir earnings.

45. *Torah Temima*

טובים השנים וגו'. טובים השנים העוסקים בתורה מן האחד שעוסק לעצמו, כי אם יפלו האחד יקים את חברו, שאם שכח אחד מהם הלכה – חברו מחזירו, והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק – זה הרב שהוא מחזיר להם טעותן ^{לה}.
(שם)