



Developing the Relationship Bein Adom L'Atzmo: The Conversations We Have With Ourselves

Shabbos Shuva Derasha 5783

with Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

Sponsored by Benjamin and Donna Tripp & family in loving memory and L'ilui Nishmas Rabbi Sidney Shoham z"l, הרב משה זיסקינד, and Leon Tripp z"l, אריה לייב, and for a refuah shleimah for חיה אסתר תהלה בת אריאל צפורה.

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The Running Conversation in Your Head

What a close study of "inner speech" reveals about why humans talk to themselves

By Julie Beck

Language is the hallmark of humanity—it allows us to form deep relationships and complex societies. But we also use it when we're all alone; it shapes even our silent relationships with ourselves. In his book, *The Voices Within*, Charles Fernyhough gives a historical overview of "inner speech"—the more scientific term for "talking to yourself in your head."

Fernyhough, a professor at Durham University in the U.K., says that inner speech develops alongside social speech. This idea was pioneered by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who studied children in the 1920s and noted that when they learned to talk to other humans, they also learned how to talk to themselves, first out loud, and eventually, in their heads.

Inner speech, Fernyhough writes, isn't bound by many of the conventions of verbal speech. For one, we can produce it much faster when we don't have to go at the pace required to use tongues and lips and voice boxes. **One researcher the book cites clocks inner speech at an average pace of 4,000 words per minute—10 times faster than verbal speech. And it's often more condensed—we don't have to use full sentences to talk to ourselves, because we know what we mean.**

But it does maintain many of the characteristics of dialogue. We may imagine an exchange with someone else, or we may just talk to ourselves. But that doesn't mean it's not a conversation. Our minds contain many different perspectives, and they can argue or confer or talk over each other.

"We are all fragmented," Fernyhough writes. "There is no unitary self. We are all in pieces, struggling to create the illusion of a coherent 'me' from moment to moment."

I spoke with Fernyhough about how the fragments of ourselves communicate through inner speech, the difficulty in studying the phenomenon, and what it might teach us. A lightly edited and condensed transcript of our conversation is below.

Julie Beck: In your view, is there a difference between "inner speech" and just thinking? Is inner speech a subcategory of thought or are they one and the same?

Charles Fernyhough: I think "thinking" is a tricky word. Thinking means a lot of different things and we're not often very good at being clear what we mean by it. So I try to avoid it—quite a difficult term to avoid. But it's kind of everything the mind does. A certain category of thinking that we call verbal thinking, and that's essentially inner speech, the stuff that we do in words. But I certainly think you can be intelligent and do lots of really clever stuff without language. Babies prove it every day; animals prove it every day.

2. Dr. Jim Loehr - world-renowned
performance psychologist

The power broker in your life is the voice that no one hears. How well you revisit the tone and content of your private voice is what determines the quality of your life. It is the master storyteller, and the stories we tell ourselves are our reality.

— Dr. Jim Loehr

3. Vayikra 16

וְלָקַח אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׁעִירִים וְהָעִמִּיד אֹתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: 7

Aaron * shall take the two he-goats and let them stand before יהוה at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting;

וַנִּתֵּן אֹהֶלֶן עַל־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׁעִירִים גִּרְלוֹת גּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַיהוָה וְגּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַעֲזָאזֵל: 8

and he shall place lots upon the two goats, one marked for יהוה and the other marked for Azazel.

וְהִקְרִיב אֹהֶלֶן אֶת־הַשְּׁעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לַיהוָה וַעֲשָׂהוּ חֵטְאֵת: 9

Aaron shall bring forward the goat designated by lot for יהוה, which he is to offer as a sin offering;

וְהַשְּׁעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרֵל לַעֲזָאזֵל יַעֲמִד־חַי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לַעֲזָאזֵל הַמִּדְבָּרָה: 10

while the goat designated by lot for Azazel shall be left standing alive before יהוה, to make expiation with it and to send it off to the wilderness for Azazel.

4. Ramban

1194-1270

AND THE OTHER LOT FOR AZAZEL. “This was a high mountain — a flinty precipitous peak, as it is said, *a land which is cut off*.”⁵⁰Further, Verse 22. This is the language of Rashi. And in the Torath Kohanim [the Rabbis have said]:⁵¹*Torath Kohanim, Acharei 2:8*. “For Azazel. This means the ‘hardest’ place in the mountains. I might think that it refers to an inhabited place; Scripture therefore says *into the wilderness*.”⁵²Further, Verse 21.

Whence do we know that it be a precipitous peak? Scripture therefore says, *unto a land which is cut off*.”

⁵⁰Further, Verse 22. Accordingly the meaning of the word *la’azazel* is to “a hard” place, [the root of the word *azazel* being *az* — strong], with the letter *za’yin* doubled just like ‘*izuz*’ (strong) and mighty.⁵³*Psalms 24:8*.

Now Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra wrote: “Said Rav Shmuel:⁵⁴*This is Rabbi Shmuel ben Chophni, the father-in-law of Rav Hai Gaon. See Vol. II, p. 84, Note 139.*

‘Although it is [only] with reference to the goat of the sin-offering that it is written [explicitly] that it was for the Eternal,⁵⁵As it is stated in the verse before us: one lot for the Eternal, and the other for Azazel, and in the following verse it is stated that the goat upon which the lot fell for the Eternal be offered for a sin-offering. the goat which was sent away [to Azazel] was also for the Eternal.’ But there is no need for this [comment]. For the goat which was sent away was not an “offering”⁵⁶*I.e., “it was unlike all other offerings” (Ohel Yoseph).* since it was not slaughtered. Now if you can understand the secret of the word after ‘Azazel,’⁵⁷*In Verse 10 it states ‘la’azazel hamidbarah’ (for Azazel into the wilderness). The secret is thus that this is the desert’s portion. you will know its secret [that of Azazel] and the secret of its name,*⁵⁸*“For the name [Azazel] is derived from the word az (strong), which is indicative of the nature of the offering befitting him, and of the strength and might which are in his power” (Peirush Mototh on Ibn Ezra).* since it has companions in Scripture.⁵⁹*I.e., in the purification of the leper (above, 14:7) and of a house afflicted by leprosy (ibid., Verse 53). See Ramban ibid., Verse 53.* And I will reveal to you part of the secret by hint: when you will be at thirty-three⁶⁰*This enigmatic text in Ibn Ezra is generally explained by his commentators [and is so clearly indicated further, by Ramban] as follows: If from the word Azazel [here in Verse 8] you will count ahead thirty-three verses, you will reach Chapter 17, Verse 7, which reads And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices unto the satyrs, after whom they go astray. Here then is the secret of why the goat that was sent away to Azazel was not slaughtered, so that it should not appear as a form of sacrifice to the satyrs (Ohel Yoseph). See my Hebrew commentary, p. 88. you will know it.” [Thus far*

וגורל אחד לעזאזל הר גבוה צוק קשה שנאמר (ויקרא ט"ז:כ"ב) ארץ גזרה לשון רש"י (רש"י על ויקרא ט"ז:כ"ב) ובתורת כהנים (פרק ב ח) לעזאזל למקום הקשה שבהרים יכול בישוב תלמוד לומר המדברה (ויקרא ט"ז:כ"ב) ומנין שיהא צוק (שם פסוק כב) תלמוד לומר אל ארץ גזרה ולפי זה יהיה פירוש מלת "לעזאזל" לקשה והוא כפול הוי"ן כמו עזוז וגבור (תהלים כד ח) ור"א כתב אמר רב שמואל אע"פ שכתוב בשעיר החטאת שהוא לשם גם השעיר המשתלח הוא לשם ואין צורך כי המשתלח איננו קרבן שלא ישחט ואם יכולת להבין הסוד שהוא אחר מלת עזאזל תדע סודו וסוד שמו כי יש לו חברים במקרא ואני אגלה לך קצת הסוד ברמז בהיותך בן שלשים ושלש (אחרי ל"ג פסוקים יז ו) תדענו והנה ר"א נאמן רוח מכסה דבר ואני הרכיל מגלה סודו שכבר גלו אותו רבותינו ז"ל במקומות רבים אמרו בבראשית רבה (בראשית ד"ב:י"ח) ונשא השעיר עליו (ויקרא ט"ז:כ"ב) זה עשו שנאמר (בראשית כז יא) הן עשו אחי איש שעיר את כל עונותם עונות תם שנאמר ויעקב איש תם (שם כה כז) ומפורש מזה בפרקי רבי אליעזר הגדול (פרק מו) לפיכך היו נותנין לו לסמאל שוחד ביום הכפורים שלא לבטל את קרבנם שנאמר גורל אחד לה' וגורל אחד לעזאזל גורלו של הקב"ה לקרבן עולה וגורלו של עזאזל שעיר החטאת וכל עונותיהם של ישראל עליו שנאמר ונשא השעיר עליו ראה סמאל שלא נמצא בהם חטא ביום הכפורים אמר לפני הקב"ה רבון כל העולמים יש לך עם אחד בארץ כמלאכי השרת שבשמים מה מלאכי השרת יחפי רגל כך הן ישראל יחפי רגל ביום הכפורים מה מלאכי השרת אין בהם אכילה ושתייה כך ישראל אין בהם אכילה ושתייה ביום הכפורים מה מלאכי השרת אין להם קפיצה כך ישראל עומדין על רגליהם ביום הכפורים מה מלאכי השרת שלום מתווך ביניהם כך הן ישראל שלום מתווך ביניהם ביום הכפורים מה מלאכי השרת נקיים מכל חטא כך הן ישראל נקיים מכל חטא ביום הכפורים והקדוש ברוך הוא שומע עדותן של ישראל מן הקטיגור שלהם ומכפר על המזבח ועל המקדש ועל הכהנים ועל כל עם הקהל שנאמר (ויקרא ט"ז:ל"ג) וכפר את מקדש הקדש וגו' ע"כ אגדה זו והנה הודיענו שמו ומעשהו וזה סוד הענין כי היו עובדים לאלהים אחרים הם המלאכים עושים להם קרבנות והם להם לריח ניחוח כענין שנאמר (יחזקאל טז יח) ושמני וקטרת נתת לפניהם ולחמי אשר נתתי לך סולת ושמן ודבש האכלתיך ונתתיהו לפניהם לריח ניחוח ויהי נאם ה' אלהים ואתה צריך להתבונן בכתוב במקרא ובמסורת והנה התורה אסרה לגמרי קבלת אלהותם וכל עבודה להם אבל צוה הקב"ה ביום הכפורים שנשלח שעיר במדבר לשר המושל במקומות החרבן והוא הראוי לו מפני שהוא בעליו ומאצילות כחו יבא חורב ושממון כי הוא העילה לכוכבי החרב והדמים והמלחמות והמריבות והפצעים והמכות והפירוד והחרבן והכלל נפש לגלגל מאדים וחלקו מן האומות הוא עשו שהוא עם הזרש החרב והמלחמות ומן הבהמות השעירים והעזים ובחלקו עוד השדים הנקראים מזיקין בלשון רבותינו ובלשון הכתוב (ויקרא י"ז:י"ז) שעירים כי כן יקרא הוא ואומתו שעיר ואין הכונה בשעיר המשתלח שיהיה קרבן מאתנו אליו חלילה אבל שתהיה כונתנו לעשות רצון בוראנו שצונו כך והמשל בזה כמי שעשה סעודה לאדון וצוה האדון את האיש העושה הסעודה תן מנה אחת לעבדי פלוני שאין העושה הסעודה נותן כלום לעבד ההוא ולא לכבודו יעשה עמו רק הכל נתן לאדון והאדון נותן פרס לעבדו ושמר זה מצותו ועשה לכבוד האדון כל אשר צוהו ואמנם האדון לחמלתו על בעל הסעודה רצה שיהיו כל עבדיו נהנין ממנה שיספר בשבחיו ולא בגנותו וזה טעם הגורלות כי אילו היה הכהן מקדיש אותם בפה לה' ולעזאזל היה כעובד אליו ונודר לשמו אבל היה מעמיד

are the words of Ibn Ezra]. Now of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra it may be said that *he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth a matter*,⁶¹ *Proverbs 11:13*. and I will not be the talebearer who revealeth his secret,⁶² *The above verse reads: He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth a matter*. Ramban thus after paying tribute to Ibn Ezra for remaining faithful to the spirit of the second half of the verse, now says that nor will he himself be in violation of the first half of the verse, since the Sages have already revealed that secret in many places. since our Rabbis of blessed memory have already revealed it in many places. Thus they have said in Bereshith Rabbah:⁶³ *Bereshith Rabbah 65:10. "And the 'sa'ir'*⁶⁴ *Literally: "the goat." But this Hebrew term sa'ir was also used by Scripture with reference to Esau [as the text continues], in the sense of "hairy." shall carry upon him,*⁶⁵ *Verse 22. this is a reference to Esau, as it is said, Behold, Esau my brother is a man who is 'sa'ir' (hairy).*⁶⁶ *Genesis 27:11. All 'avonotham' (their iniquities),*⁶⁵ *Verse 22. [read]: 'avonoth tam' (the sins of him who has been called tam, 'a man of integrity'), as it is said, and Jacob was a man 'tam' ('of integrity')."*⁶⁷ *Ibid., 25:27.* It is explained more clearly in the Chapters of the great Rabbi Eliezer:⁶⁸ *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 46. "The reason why*⁶⁹ *This is in connection with what is told in the Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, that "on the day the Torah was given to Israel, Satan said before the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Master of the universe, you have given me control over all the wicked, but over the righteous You have not given me control!' To this the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: 'You will have control over them on the Day of Atonement if they have sinned, and if not, you will have no control over them.'"* Therefore etc. they would give Sammael [i.e., Satan] a conciliatory gift on the Day of Atonement, was so that he should not annul [the effect of] their offerings, as it is said, *one lot for the Eternal, and the other lot for Azazel*, the lot of the Holy One, blessed by He, to be a burnt-offering,⁷⁰ *In view of the fact that the goat for the Eternal was offered as a sin-offering [as stated in Verse*

אותם לפני ה' פתח אהל מועד (ויקרא ט"ז:י) כי שניהם מתנה לה' והוא נתן מהם לעבדו החלק אשר יבא לו מאת השם הוא הפיל להם גורל וידו חלק להם כענין שנאמר (משלי טז לג) בחיק יוטל את הגורל ומה' כל משפטו וגם אחרי הגורל היה מעמידו לפני ה' לומר שהוא שלו ואין אנחנו מכוונים בשילוחו אלא לרצון לשם כמו שאמר (ויקרא ט"ז:י) 'עמד חי לפני ה' לכפר עליו לשלח אותו וגו' ולכך לא נשחוט אותו אנחנו כלל ותרגום אונקלוס (תרגום אונקלוס על ויקרא ט"ז:ח) (כאן) לשמא דהשם ולעזאזל כי האחד לשם ה' ולא לו והשני לעזאזל ולא לשמו של עזאזל ומפני זה אמרו רבותינו (ת"כ פרק יג ט) ואת חקותי (ויקרא י"ח:ד) דברים שיצר הרע מקטרג בהם ואומות העולם משיבין עליהם לבישת שעטנן ופרה אדומה ושעיר המשתלח ולא מצאו בקרבנות תשובה לאומות העולם עלינו כי הם על אישי ה' אבל בשעיר המשתלח ישיבו עלינו כי יחשבו שאנו עושים כמעשיהם וכן בפרה אדומה מפני שהיא נעשית מחוץ למחנה וענינה דומה לענין שעיר המשתלח להעביר רוח הטומאה כענין שנאמר בעתיד (זכריה יג ב) את הנביאים ואת רוח הטומאה אעביר מן הארץ ומה תבין טעם כבוס בגדי המשתלח את השעיר לעזאזל והשורף את הפרה ומה שהזכירו רבותינו (ובתלים קד) בכבוס הבגדים של פרים הנשרפים ושעירים הנשרפים והנה רמז לך ר"א שתדע סודו כשתגיע לפסוק ולא יזבחו עוד את זבחייהם לשעירים והמלה מורכבת וחבירה רבים והנה הענין מבואר וזלתי אם תחקור מה ענין לשכלים הנבדלים ולרוחות בקרבן וזה יודע ברוחות בחכמת גרומנס"א ויודע גם בשכלים ברמזי התורה למבין סודם ולא אוכל לפרש כי היינו צריכים לחסום פי המתחכמים בטבע הנמשכים אחרי היוני אשר הכחיש כל דבר זולתי המורגש לו והגיס דעתו לחשוב הוא ותלמידיו הרשעים כי כל ענין שלא השיג אליו הוא בסברתו איננו אמת:

5. Yoma 67b

תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: "עזאזל" — שמכפר על מעשה עוֹזָא וְעִזָּאֵל.

The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Azazel is so called because it atones for the actions of Uzza and Azael. These are the names of "sons of God" who sinned with "daughters of men" (*Genesis 6:2*) and thereby caused the world to sin during the generation of the Flood.

מה אנוש כי תזכרנו. מה טיבו דבר נש דא. אומר לון, בר נש דיהא בצלמא דידן, דיהא חכמתא דיליה, עלאה מחכמתכון.

כיון דברא אדם, ונפיק בדימוס קמיה, אתו עז"א ועז"אל, אמרו קמיה, פתחון פה אית לן גבך, הא בר נש דעבדת חטי קמך. אמר להו, אלמלי תהוון שכיחי גביהו וכו'. מה עבד קודשא בריך הוא. אפיל לון מדרגא קדישא דלהון מן שמיא.

אמר רבי שמעון, השתא אהדרנא לתיובתיכו. דבלעם אמר נופל וגלוי עינים, אי נימא דלא הוה הכי, ושבוחי קא משבח גרמיה, היך יכתוב קודשא בריך הוא מלה כדיבא באורייתא. ואי מלה דקשוט היא, היך ישתבח ההוא רשע בדרגא עלאה על כל נביאי מהימנותא. ועוד, דהא לא שריא קדושה דלעילא, אלא באתריה דאתחזי ליה.

When God created the world, nobody objected to the introduction of the trees, the cows, the clouds, the oceans, etc., until God created man. Then the Angels staunchly objected and said, Mah enosh ki sizkerenu, What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? (Tehillim 8:5). Man is frail, fallible, and imperfect; why is he worthy of your creation and attention when he is unworthy?

Yet God created man nonetheless. When man made a mistake and obtained a pardon, the two Angels that had objected, Uzza and Azael, approached Hashem and said: We were right, as the man You made has failed You. Hashem said to them, "Had you been with them you would have sinned equally." And He cast them down from their high estate in heaven unto the earth.

7. Beis Yaakov
R' Yaakov Leiner of Izhbitz
1814-1878

וכמו שנתבאר בנחש הנחשת (פרשת חקת), וכמו שנתבאר במי השלוח (חלק א' כי תצא), כי כל אומה יש לה כח מה שתבין כי זאת יחסר לה. ולכן כשיאבדו בלא זימנא מקונן עליהם הנביא על כן מעי למואב ככנור יהמו (ישעיה ט"ז י"א). אבל כשישלמו או יתראה כל כח רעתם וממילא לא יוכלו לפעול כי יסור כחם. וכמו שכתוב ומשלם לשנאיו אל פניו להאבדו (עקב ו' י'). שמשלים כל חפצם. וזה היה ענין שעיר המשתלח. כמו שמבואר בזה"ק (וישלה קס"ז ב'). על עשו בהשתחואות שהשתחוה יעקב אליו. דאלו הוה ידע עשו חכמה דא יקטיל ליה לגרמיה. וזה הוא שעיר המשתלח כי בוידוי שמתודה עליו משלים כל כחו וממילא יתבטל. וענין שהיה צריך הכהן להתוודות על הפר קודם הגורל. כי בהידידי היה הכהן נשלם בכל טוב וסר ממנו כל מיני מסכים המכדילים. ואח"כ היה יכול לכוון בגורל אכן עוד לא נשלם בקביעות. לכן קודם שנכנס לפנים היה צריך עוד להתוודות על שחיטת הפר. ואז נקבע בו יתד שלא תמוט. וכל זה הוא ברצון השי"ת שהאדם לא יושלם בפעם אחת. כי עוד השי"ת חפץ בחייו בעולם הזה כדי שיוכל לקנות עוד טובה:

הלא כתבתי לך שלשים במעצות ודעת (משלי כ"ב כ'). הנה ענין הגורל שהוצרך להגדיל על השעירים. כי לא היה הדבר הזה נכנס תחת השכל אנושי. כי להבחין בין טוב לטוב איזה מובחר בזה חלק השי"ת מבינות ללכות ישראל. אבל בין אור לחושך מהפך להפך שם הקב"ה לכדו הוא המכדיל. כי בעולם הזה ההפך מכסה על הכל שאין להבחין. ולכן השעירים לפי שהיו שוין במראה ובקומה ובדמים ובלקחתן כאחד (יומא ס"ב א'). לכן הוצרך גורל. כי האדם בדעת הוא בעל בחירה מצדו לכן יוכל ההסתער לחוף עליו. אבל בידים שהם ענפי הלב שם אין הדעת שולט כל כך. ושם השי"ת לכדו הוא המנהיג לכן היה מכוון בגורל:

והנה ענין שעיר עזאזל שאיתא בגמרא (שם ס"ז ב'). שמכפר על מעשה עזאזל ועזאל. כי הם קטרגו על בריאת עולם באמרם מה אנוש (זח"ק בראשית כ"ה ב'). והנה זה הכח צפון בלב האדם שמקטרג על הויתו. וממילא זה הכח ירצה להביא את האדם לאכדון ותהו לכן ירצה להחמיאו. אכן ברצון השי"ת ירחיק את הצפוני וידיחחו אל ארץ ציה. ויסתיר זה הכח למצולה שלא יוכל לשלוט על האדם. ולכן זה העצה לשלוח את השעיר. אף כי התורה הזהירה ולא יזכחו עוד את זכיהם לשעירים (אחרי מות י"ז ז'). וכאן צותה התורה למעשה כזו. אכן כאמת כזה יתבטל כח הרע שהאדם. כי כל הרע באם יש בו עוד איזה כח טוב אז יש לו כח עוד. ובאם יסולק ממנו כל הטוב אז ישאר פניו.

8. Siddur

שמע קולנו Hear our voice, HASHEM, our God, pity and be compassionate to us, and accept — with compassion and favor — our prayer.¹⁰
Bring us back to You, HASHEM, and we shall return, renew our days as of old.¹¹
Do not cast us away from Yourself, and do not remove Your holy spirit from us.¹²
Do not cast us away in old age, when our strength gives out do not forsake us.¹³
Do not forsake us, HASHEM, our God, be not distant from us.¹⁴
Display for us a sign for good, so that our enemies may see it and be ashamed, for You, HASHEM, will have helped and consoled us.¹⁵
To our sayings give ear, HASHEM, perceive our thoughts.¹⁶
May the expressions of our mouth and the thoughts of our heart find favor before You, HASHEM, our Rock and our Redeemer.¹⁷
Because for You, HASHEM, we waited, You will answer, my Lord, our God.¹⁸

שמע קולנו יהוה אלהינו, חוס ורחם עלינו, וקבל ברחמים ובכרחון את תפלתנו.¹⁰
השיבנו יהוה אליך ונשובה, חדש ימינו בקדם.¹¹
אל תשליכנו מלפניך, ורוח קדשך אל תקח ממנו.¹²
אל תשליכנו לעת זקנה, בכלות כחנו אל תעזבנו.¹³
אל תעזבנו, יהוה אלהינו, אל תרחק ממנו.¹⁴
עשה עמנו אות לטובה, ויראו שונאינו ויבשו, כי אתה יהוה עזרתנו ונחמתנו.¹⁵
אמרינו האזינה יהוה, כינה הגיגנו.¹⁶
יהי לרצון אמרי פינו והגיון לבנו לפניך, יהוה צורנו וגואלנו כי לך יהוה הוהלנו, אתה תענה אדני אלהינו.¹⁸

9. Micha 6:8

הַגִּיד לְךָ אָדָם מִה־טוֹב וּמִה־יְהוָה דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ כִּי אִם־עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט
וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְהִצָּנֶעַ לָכֶת עִם־אֱלֹהֶיךָ: {ס}

“He has told you, O man, what is good,
And what the LORD requires of you:
Only to do justice
And to love goodness,
And ^cto walk modestly with your God; ^c

10. Aruch L'Ner (Makkos 24a)

R' Yaakov Ettlinger

1798-1871



והנה פרט מיכה ג' דברים נגד ג' מיני מצות, שבין אדם למקום, בין אדם לחבירו, ובין אדם לעצמו. נגד לעצמו אמר עשות משפט, שישקול כל מעשיו שיהיו במשפט ושלא יהיה עול בכפו. ונגד בינו לחבירו אמר ואהבת חסד, שהוא גמילות חסדים שבין אדם לחבירו. ונגד בינו לקונו אמר והצנע לכת, ובא ישעיה והיקל בכל הג' דברים, שתחת עשות משפט אמר שמרו משפט דאפילו לא בא מעשה לידו שהיה יכול לעשות משפט בפועל אלא שמר שאם בא לידו יעשנה ג"כ זוכה. ונגד אהבת חסד שהוא גמילות חסדים אמר להקל. ועשו צדקה שהוא פחות מגמילות חסדים בג' דברים כדאמרינן סוכה (מט:), ולמען הראות שאפילו עושה שלא בהצנע זוכה אמר בלשון רבים שמרו ועשו, שמכיח אמר בלשון יחיד דורש ממך, כיון שרוצה שיעשה הכל בינו לבין קונו בהצנע ושלא ידעו בני אדם מה שאין כן אם נעשה ברבים:

Micha lists three elements in accordance with three types of mitzvos; mitzvos between man and God, mitzvos between man and his fellow man, and reflexive mitzvos between man and himself. Regarding reflexive mitzvos, he mentions the requirement of justice, weighing one's actions to ensure that one is wholesome. Regarding interpersonal mitzvos, he includes the requirement of ahavat chesed; regarding ritual requirements, he says that one should walk humbly with God.

11. Maharal
 R' Yehuda Loew of Prague
 1520-1609
 Derech Chaim Avos 1:2

דעת וחכמה אנושית, ולפיכך שלימות האדם עצמו עד שהוא נחשב הבריאה החשובה שיש בה הטוב הוא בשביל התורה, כאשר יאמר על האדם שהוא בעל תורה. ודבר זה אין צריך ראייה, כי בודאי שפלות בריאת האדם כאשר הוא נוטה להיות כמו בהמה, ומעלת הבריאה כאשר הוא נבדל מן הבהמה, ואין זה רק על ידי התורה השכלית שבזה נחשב בריאה שלימה טובה בעל מעלה מצד עצמו כאשר הוא בעל שכל, וכאשר הוא בעל תורה אז הוא טוב מצד עצמו. ואין דבר בעולם שעל ידו נחשב האדם עצמו בעל מעלה רק בתורה והוא מבואר, כי התורה נקראת טוב שנאמר (משלי ד') כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם תורתי אל תעזובו, וכדאיתא במנחות (ג"ג ע"ב) יבא טוב זה משה שנאמר ותרא אותו כי טוב ויקבל טוב זו התורה דכתיב כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם, הרי התורה נקראת טוב וכל מה שנקראת התורה טוב מפני שהיא שכלית לגמרי לא שכל האנושי כמו שאר חכמות, וכמו שבארנו זה במקום אחר והארכנו בזה, כי הדבר שהוא שכלי נבדל מן החומר לגמרי הוא טוב גמור ולכך התורה היא טוב הגמור בפרט, והפך זה

השכל האלהי הברור הוא טוב לגמרי, ולפיכך הדבר שהוא מעלה את האדם מן הבהמית עד שלא יחשב בריאה פחותה היא התורה השכלית, שעל ידי ותורה נעשה אדם שכלי נבדל מן החומר ואז הוא בריאה שלימה טובה וראוי אליו המציאות, ולפיכך שלימות האדם בעצמו הוא ע"י התורה בלבד ולא זולת זה. ולפיכך אמר התנא האלקי, כי זה עמוד אחד שהעולם עומד עליו הוא התורה, מה שהתורה היא משלמת האדם עד שהוא בריאה שלימה מצד עצמו. ואח"כ אמר על העבודה, והעבודה היא עבודה בעצם ובראשונה היא העבודה בקרבנות, ואין דבר יותר ראשון מזה, וכל שאר הדברים שהם עשיית המצות לעשות רצון הש"י נכללים תחת העבודה, רק העבודה היא ראשון וקודם אל הכל, ולפיכך העבודה היא עמוד אל העולם שמוה יחשוב האדם שלם וטוב אל מי שבראו כאשר הוא עובד לו, וצריך שיהיה האדם שלם וטוב לבוראו. וכנגד הג' שצריך שיהיה האדם שלם וטוב עם זולתו, וזהו על ידי גמילות חסדים, כאשר הוא עושה לזולתו חסד חנם הנה אין ספק שבזה הוא טוב לזולתו, ואין דבר יותר טוב מזה כאשר עושה טוב לזולתו בתנא ואז הוא טוב לגמרי.

צריך האדם לקנות מעלת הטוב. ומה שהאדם הוא טוב עד שאומרים עליו כמה בריאה זו טובה, היינו כשהוא טוב בעצמו ור"ל בצד בחינת עצמו יש בו הטוב, וזהו בחינה אחת שאומרים עליו הבריאה הזאת יש לה מעלה והיא טובה מצד עצמה, הבחינה השנית שראוי שיהיה טוב לשמים הוא הש"י אשר ברא את האדם ויהיה עובד אליו עושה רצונו, הג' שראוי שיהיה טוב אל זולתו מבני אדם אשר הם נמצאים עמו, כי אין האדם נמצא בלבד רק הוא נמצא עם בני אדם זולתו, וצריך שיהיה האדם טוב בכל מיני בחינות אשר יבחן האדם, אם בערך עצמו צריך שיהיה טוב שהרי תיכף ומיד במעשה בראשית נאמר בכל בריאה כי טוב, שמוה תראה שהבריאה בעצמה צריך שיהיה בה הטוב, ואם בערך העלה שהוא נמצא ממנו וצריך שיהיה ג"כ טוב בערך זולתו מבני אדם, כלל הדבר צריך שיהיה טוב כאשר יבחן בכל החלקים כי אין זה כזה ובהקדמה ביארנו אלו ג' דברים ג"כ.

ובגמרא בפ"ק דקידושין (מ' ע"א) אמרו לצדיק כי טוב וכי יש צדיק שאינו טוב אלא טוב לשמים ואינו טוב לבריות זהו צדיק שאינו טוב, טוב לשמים וטוב לבריות זהו צדיק שהוא טוב ע"כ, ובודאי מכ"ש צריך שיהיה האדם שלם בעצמו ואם לא כן אינו צדיק כלל, שדבר זה אין צריך לומר כי כל בריאה בעצמה יש בה הטוב, הרי לך שצריך שיהיה הצדיק טוב בכל צד, ולכך התחיל התנא הזה דבריו לומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים, כי כאשר יש באדם התורה הוא נחשב בריאה טובה בעצמו כאשר יש בו התורה השכלית, אבל אם אין בו התורה אין האדם בעצמו נחשב טוב כי חסר ממנו התורה שהיא השלמת האדם במה שהוא אדם והוא נמשל כבהמה נדמה ואין זה נחשב בריאה ואין ראוי לו המציאות, ועל דבר זה אמרו רז"ל בפרק ר"ע (שבת פ"ח ע"א) אמר ריש לקיש מאי דכתיב ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום הששי ה"א יתירה למה לי מלמד שהתנה הקב"ה עם מעשה בראשית אם ישראל מקבלים את התורה אתם מתקיימים ואם לאו אני מחזיר אתכם לתוהו ע"כ, ופירוש זה כי כל הנבראים שנבראו אין בהם חכמה האלקית העליונה, אף כי האדם הוא בעל שכל אין זה רק שכל האנושי שהוא מצורף אל החומר, ואין ראוי לעולם הקיום בשביל הטוב הזה כי פחות ושפל הוא השכל האנושי רק בשביל התורה שהוא השכל האלקי והוא הטוב הגמור, ואז יש מעלה אל העולם כאשר יש בעולם התורה השכלית האלהית ואין זה

והנה התבאר לך כי ראויים אלו שלשה שיהיו עמודי העולם, כאשר אלו ג' דברים משלימים האדם עד שהוא טוב בכל ג' בחינות אשר אמרנו, כי אין במציאות רק השם ית' שהוא מחויב המציאות, והנמצאים שנמצאו מאתו, ובודאי יש לאדם יחס אל בוראו במה שבראו הש"י והאדם נברא ממנו, וראוי שיהיה שומר היחס הזה ואם אין שומר היחס הזה הרי אין בריאתו לכולם, ועוד האדם נברא לעצמו, ואם האדם מקולקל בעצמו ואינו נחשב הרי הוא בריאה של תוהו ואין בו ממש, והשלישי כי האדם הזה אינו יחידי בעולם אבל הש"י בראו עם בני אדם אחרים, ולפיכך צריך שיהיה שומר היחס הזה שיש לו אל שאר בני אדם. לכן אמר שהעולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים, כי על ידי התורה אין האדם בעצמו בריאה של תוהו אבל היא בריאה חשובה, ועל ידי העבודה הוא שומר היחס שיש לאדם אל בוראו שנברא ממנו, ועל ידי גמילות חסדים האדם יש לו חבור אל שאר בני אדם, כי לא נברא האדם בפני עצמו כלל רק עם שאר בני אדם, וכאשר האדם עושה חסד עם זולתו הנה יש לו חבור אל זולתו, ובזה האדם כאשר בראו הש"י, כי לא נברא שיהיה האדם יחידי בעולם, ודבר זה נראה כאשר עושה חסד לזולתו שלא יאמר אין לי עסק עם אחר, ודברים אלו מבוארים. וכבר בארנו הלשון שאמר העולם עומד ולא אמר האדם עומד, כי האדם יסוד ועמוד כל העולם כמו שאמרנו.

בנורא רבא ישידי להו בדגלת אמר רב יהודה
האי מאן דבעי למהוי חסידא לקיים מילי
דנזיקין רבא¹³ אמר מילי דאבות ואמרי לה
מילי דברכות: מִן־תְּנִי¹⁴ "המוציא את תבנו

12. Bava Kamma 30a

13. Maharsha
R' Shmuel Eidors
1555-1631

ח"א דף ע"ב א מאן דבעי למהוי חסידא לקיים מילי דנזיקין בוי. יראה
כי חסיד נאמר על מי שעוסק מעשיו על כל היותר טוב במחמדם ס"ק דע"ז ב"ט
כמעלות הטוב עשרה דברים ג' וזירות מביאה לידי זריות כו' וחסיד כמעלה פליגיה
חסידות מביאה לידי רוח הקודש ולפי שיש לאדם במעשיו הטובות ג' חלקים דהיינו
טוב לשמים, וטוב לבריות, וטוב לעצמו, קאמר רב יהודה מאן דבעי למהוי חסידא
לקיים מילי דנזיקין דלזו לחקן מעשיו שיהיה טוב לבריות ודכא קאמר דלקיים מילי
דאבות דלזו יחקן מעשיו שיהיה טוב לעצמו ומדוע ואמרי לה דלקיים מילי דברכות
דלזו יחקן שיהיה טוב לשמים וכל אחד מהם חסידות נקט כלל בא' ח' מהני ג' מיני
חלוקים במעשים טובים על אדם וק"ל:

Just as justice and humanity shall go forth from the altar, to become the ideal of *society* striving upward to God, so shall morality and modesty go forth to you from the altar, the fundamentals of godliness in *man*. Without morality and modesty, justice and humanity in society will be sought in vain. With גילוי עריות the heights of My altar will never be mounted! ותשתה הארץ לפני האלקים ותמלא הארץ חסם (Bereshis 6:11) is the oldest and gravest experience in the history of man.

Let us now summarize this epilogue to the Ten Commandments. It is directed at the three main sins that undermine our relationship to God. To banish them, to eradicate every trace of them from our midst, is the object of the Divine Lawgiving. These are עבודה זרה, שפיכת דמים, and גילוי עריות — the most serious sins against God, against one's fellow man, and against oneself. Verses 20 and 21: עבודה זרה; verse 22: שפיכת דמים; verse 23: גילוי עריות.

God, society, and man are the subjects of the Divine Torah, and this epilogue proclaims: Just as the content of the Lawgiving is formed not by what is in God's realm above, but by our relationship to God, to our fellow men, and to ourselves, so these relationships alone are the subject of the symbolism of the Sanctuary and its holy things. The subject matter of the altar and of the Torah is none other than man, the construction of the human realm, and its upbuilding on earth — in accordance with God's Word.

14. R' Samson Raphael Hirsch

1808-1882



והלכת בדרכיו - ואהבת לרעך כמוך

כי תשמור את מצות ד' אלקיך והלכת בדרכיו (דברים כה, ט).

כתב הרמב"ם בספר המצוות (מצוה ח), והמצוה השמינית היא שצונו להדמות בו יתעלה לפי יכלתנו, והוא אמרו 'והלכת בדרכיו' כו', ובא בפירוש זה מה הקב"ה נקרא רחום אף אתה היה רחום, מה הקב"ה נקרא חנון אף אתה היה חנון וכו', וביד החזקה (פ"א מהלכות דעות) האריך בזה הרמב"ם וז"ל, וכיצד ירגיל אדם עצמו בדעות אלו עד שיקבעו בו, יעשה וישנה וישלש במעשים שעושה על פי הדיעות האמצעיות ויחזור בהן תמיד, עד שיהיו מעשיהן קלים עליו ולא יהיה בהם טורח ויקבעו הדעות בנפשו, ולפי שהשמות האלו שנקרא בהן היוצר הן הדרך הבינונית שאנו חייבין ללכת בה, נקראת דרך זו דרך השם וכו', וההולך בדרך זו מביא טובה וברכה לעצמו עכ"ל.

והנה הגם שדברים אלו של תיקון המידות להיות חנון ורחום וכיו"ב כבר נצטוונו עליהם מכלל מצות ואהבת לרעך כמוך, מ"מ התם המצוה היא בין אדם לחבירו להשלים צורך חבירו, אבל אינו ענין להשלמת עצמו במדות טובות אלא שיש דין לדאוג לטובת חבירו ואף שאין טבעו מכריחו לזה, אולם כאן המצוה היא בין אדם לעצמו, והוא ענין תיקון המדות שיהיו מדותיו נאצלות ומכובדות ומתדבק במידותיו של בוראו. וזה מתבאר בדברי הרמב"ם שם שבכלל המדות אמצעיות אשר נלמד מוהלכת בדרכיו הוא שלא להיות רעבתן, שזה ודאי אינו ממצוות של בין אדם לחבירו, רק יסוד הענין שיהיו מדותיו מתוקנות, ואדם שרואה שיש בו מדת אכזריות, צריך לחפש עצות לתקנם ע"י לימוד המוסר וכיו"ב.

וכן מבואר בספר החינוך (מצוה תרי"א) שהביא ג"כ מצוה זו, ובתו"ד כתב דשורש מצוה זו ידוע, כי היא ושרשו אחד עכ"ל, וכונתו שא"צ לפרש כאן שורש המצוה כדרך שמפרש בס' החינוך כל מצוה, כי היא ושורשה אחד, ור"ל כי בכל המצות בא לתאר התועלת של המצות עבורינו, משא"כ במצוה זו כל מהות המצוה ותועלתה היא עבורינו, לתקן ולפאר את מידותינו.

ונפק"מ [בין הנך תרי מצוות] גם בדברים שבין אדם לחבירו כגון מידת הרחמנות וההטבה, והוא היכא שאין חבירו חסר כלום עתה, שמצד ואהבת לרעך כמוך אין צריך לחפש אופני הטבה, אבל מצד והלכת בדרכיו צריך, וזהו שכתב הרמב"ם כאן שצריך לכפול ולשלש ולחזור על מעשים אלו תמיד והיינו שצריך לחזור אחר מעשים אלו, כדי שיקבעו המדות בנפשו²⁷.

15. R' Eliyahu Baruch Finkel

1947-2008



16. Gra on Mishlei
R' Eliyahu b. Shlomo Zalman
1720-1797



(ט) אז תבין צדק וגו'. כי כאשר יתן לך ה' חכמה ודעת ותבונה, והיינו להסביר לאחרים כנ"ל⁵⁰, וגם יתן לך שכל ליתן עצה לאחרים, לתמימים וישרים ולהולכים בתורה ולהעוסקין במצוות, ומזה תבין העצות הנכונות, והן צדק ומשפט ומישרים, והוא כנ"ל⁵¹. צדק, מימין, לגמול חסד ולהיטיב לכל הבריות. ומשפט הוא משמאל, שצריך לשפוט את עצמו ולהתגבר על יצרו ולא למלאות תאוותיו. ומישרים הוא דרך הממוצע בינו לבין המקום. וז"ש חז"ל⁵² מאן דבעי למהוי חסידא יקיים מילי דברכות, והוא בינו לבין המקום, כי כל הנהגה מעולם הזה בלא ברכה כאילו גזול להקב"ה⁵³. וחד אמר יקיים מילי דנזיקין, שהוא בינו לבין הבריות. וחד אמר יקיים מילי דאבות הוא מוסר ומידות איך יתנהג האדם בינו לבין עצמו⁵⁴. וכן לכל אחד צריך כל השלוש מידות, כמ"ש למעלה⁵⁵, כי הם נגד הארבעה שאמר למעלה⁵⁶. ונגד "מוסר השכל"⁵⁷ הוא כל מעגל טוב כמ"ש חז"ל⁵⁸ "מאי כל מעגל טוב זו התוכחה", שכל זמן שתוכחה בעולם, טובה וברכה בא לעולם, כמו שאמרנו⁵⁹: איזו דרך שיכור לו האדם יאהב את התוכחה, שזה מביא את האדם לידי כל מעגל טוב. ואמר מתחילה עשרה דברים, כמו שכתוב למעלה⁶⁰, ומזה תבין חב"ד [חכמה בינה דעת] ו"יצפון לישרים וגו'"⁶¹, והם ג"כ עשרה דברים והם: חכמה בינה דעת, ואחר כך שלושה שהן ארבעה: ישרים, ותם, משפט וחסד. ותום ויושר נחשב לאחד⁶², ואחר כך צדק, ומשפט, ומישרים, וכל מעגל טוב היא העשירית. ועשרה שקודם⁶³ הן מלמטה למעלה, וכאן מלמעלה למטה⁶⁴. ואלו העשרה הם נגד מה שכתוב⁶⁵ "ונחה עליו רוח ה' רוח חכמה ובינה רוח עצה וגבורה רוח דעת ויראת ה'", והן ג"כ עשרה כי רוח ה' כולל ארבעה⁶⁶, כמו שכתוב באדרא רבא⁶⁷ ע"ש, הרי עשרה.

17. R' Herschel Schachter



Selective Observance

The *posuk* in *Parshas Shoftim* uses three different phrases to describe a disagreement about halachah - "*bein dama l'dam, bein din l'din, bein negah l'negah*" (17:8). The Vilna Gaon is quoted in the *Sefer Aderes Eliyahu* as having commented that this language indicates that all the *dinim* of the Torah are classified into three distinct categories: *issur v'heter*, *dinei mamonus*, and *tuma v'tahara*. The *parsha* states that if in any one of these three areas there is a *machlokes* among the *chachomim* in town which is ripping apart the community, the issue must be presented to the Sanhedrin in Yerushalayim which should give the *psak* that will be binding on all of *Klal Yisroel*. The implication is that were it not for the fact that the *machlokes* among the rabbonim is causing friction and ripping apart the community, each group would follow their own *poseik*.

The Tosefta (*Sanhedrin* 7:5) tells us that all the laws of the Torah are interconnected and fall into one big pattern to comprise one big mosaic. The *Gemarah* will, therefore, often learn out the details of one *mitzvah* from another *mitzvah*. Nonetheless, the *Gemarah* does put limitations upon this concept of all of Torah fitting into a single pattern. The *Gemarah* says that *issur v'heter* cannot be learned out neither from *tumah v'taharah* (*Yevamos* 103b) nor from *dinei mamonus* (*Berachos* 19b). These sources seem to be implying that each one of the three areas of *halacha* makes up its own pattern; all of *dinei mamonus* fit into one pattern, all of the laws of *issur v'heter* fall into a separate pattern, etc. (see *Sefer Eretz Hatzvi siman* 2).

When we are in doubt as to what the facts of a case are, the *halacha* has a different way of resolving the *safeik* depending on which category of *dinim* the case at hand belongs to. Regarding *issur v'heter*, we assume that any *safeik* regarding a *din min ha'Torah* must be resolved *l'chumrah*. However, when we have

a *safeik* in the area of *dinei mamonus* the *psak* will be in favor of the *muchzok* (possession is nine-tenths of the law) which is *l'kula*. Finally, when the *safeik* is in the area of *tunah v'tahara*, whether the *psak* will be *l'hachmir* or *l'hokeil* will depend on the location where the *safeik* arose - in a *reshus ha'yochid* or in a *reshus ha'rabim*.

In addition to these three areas of *halacha*, the *Gemarah* tells us that there are another three areas that are treated differently. With respect to *dinei n'foshos* the Torah tells us "*V'he'tzulu ha'aida*" (*Bamidbar* 35:25), i.e. we should always bend over backwards to try to acquit the person being judged, and this applies even with respect to the way we *darshan* the *halachos* by reading in between the lines (*Sanhedrin* 69a). In the area of *avoda zara* the Torah tells us "*shakeitz t'shaktzenu*", etc., which implies that we should always bend over backwards to go *l'chumrah* when *darshening* the *pessukim*, and in the area of *kodshim*, the *Gemarah* (*Zevachim* 49-50) discusses at length the fact that the *middos she'haTorah nidreshes bohem* apply differently to *kodshim* from how they apply to the rest of the Torah regarding *lomeid min ha'lomeid* (learning out C from B where B itself was derived from A).

Reb Yehuda Ha'Nasi edited the *mishnayos* and divided everything into six sections. The *sedorim* of *Nezikin*, *Kodshim* and *Taharos* constitute three separate areas of *halacha*.

Some are only careful in observing those *mitzvos* which are *bein adam laMakom* and not that meticulous in *nezikin* (*bein adam lachaveiro*). Others are only extremely careful in observing those *mitzvos* which are *bein adam lachaveiro* while not being that meticulous in observing those *mitzvos* in the area of *issur v'heter* (*bein adam laMakom*). An Orthodox Jew is one who is equally meticulous in all areas.

It is quoted in the name of the Vilna Gaon that many divide all *mitzvos* into two categories: *bein adam laMakom* and *bein adam lachaveiro*. In reality, there is a third category: *bein adam l'atzmo*. We have the *mitzva* of *V'holachto b'derachav* - to preserve the *tzelem ELokim* that was implanted within us at birth by developing our *middos*. The *Gemarah* (*Bava Kamma* 30a) tells us that one who wishes to become a *chassid* should be meticulous in three areas of *halacha* - *avos*, *nezikin*, and *berachos*. These three represent the three areas of *mitzvos* - *bein adam laMakom*, *bein adam lachaveiro*, and *bein adam l'atzmo*.

Unfortunately many people are only selectively observant. Listed among the various *mumin* (wounds or blemishes) that invalidate a *kohein* from being *markiv korbanos* in the *Beis Hamikdash* is *saru'ah*, one whose limbs are not symmetrical (e.g. one arm is noticeably longer than the other, one eye is noticeably larger than the other.) I remember Rav Nissan Alpert's *hesped* at the funeral of *Hagaon* Rav Moshe Feinstein wherein he mentioned that he met many *gedolim* in his lifetime whom he felt that suffered, in a certain sense, from the *mum* of *saru'ah*. Some were very meticulous in one area of *halacha*, but not to the same extent in other areas. And some were especially strong in learning in one area of Torah (*psak halacha*, *Kodshim*, *Nashim* & *Nezikin*, etc.) but not equally as strong in all other areas of Torah. The one and only *gadol b'Torah* he knew who seemed to be equally strong in all areas of Torah and equally meticulous in all areas of *mitzvos* at the same time was his rebbe - *Hagaon* Rav Moshe Feinstein.

18. Devarim 5

וְלֹא תַחְמַד אִשְׁת׃ רֵעֶךָ {ס} וְלֹא תַתְאֲוֶה בֵּית רֵעֶךָ שְׂדֵהוּ וְעַבְדּוֹ
וְאִמָּתוֹ שׂוֹרוֹ וְחִמְרֹו וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ: {ס}

You [men] * shall not covet your neighbor's wife. Likewise, none of you shall crave your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

19. Ibn Ezra

The word *chamad* (coveted) has two meanings in Hebrew.⁴⁴*I.E. is commenting on verse 18, which reads: ve-lo tachmod (neither shalt thou covet).* One is to rob, to extort, to take someone's property by force and compulsion. This is the meaning of the word in *neither shall any man covet (yachmod) thy land*⁴⁵*If neither shall any man covet (yachmod) thy land means no one shall desire your land, then the Land of Israel would be an undesirable land. Hence the meaning of neither shall any man covet (yachmod) thy land must be no one will take your land. (Ex. 34:24).* For if this is not its meaning, then the land is bad. But Scripture only comes to praise the land. The second meaning is to desire in the heart without acting.⁴⁶*On the desire.* Now, *Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house (Ex. 20:14)* is the ninth statement, and *thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife (Ibid.)* is the tenth statement.⁴⁷*This interpretation does not count I am as the first statement of the Decalogue.*

*Therefore, it counts Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house and thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife as two separate statements. According to this interpretation, thy neighbor's house and thy neighbor's wife are connected to each other.*⁴⁸*That is, they have a similar meaning even though they form two separate statements. Hence Scripture can invert these statements. I.E. comments thus because in Exodus the prohibition against coveting thy neighbor's house precedes thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, while the reverse is true in Deuteronomy (Weiser).* On the other hand, *thy neighbor's house* might be a general rule.⁴⁹*In other words, Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house is the tenth statement. Scripture first states the general rule and then goes into detail; that is, Neither...thy neighbor's house includes your neighbor's wife, servant, ox, ass, and all that he owns. According to this interpretation, I am is the first statement and Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house is the tenth.* The fact that Moses in this book [Deuteronomy] in which he explains the Torah, employs *ve-lo*⁵⁰*I.E. lo. titavveh (neither shalt thou covet) (v. 18) in place of lo tachmod (thou shalt not covet) (Ex. 20:14) is proof of this.*⁵¹*That Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house is a general statement, for Moses explains it by using a different term in Deuteronomy.* Many say that one cannot sin with one's thoughts and there is no reward and punishment for what one thinks. However, one can refute them by quoting many verses. I will not prolong my argument. I will merely point to the following: *A heart that deviseth wicked thoughts (Prov. 6:18); thou didst well that it was in thy heart (II Chron. 6:8); And to them that are upright in their hearts (Ps. 125:4).* Moses at the end⁵²*Of his review of the commandments. said, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it (Deut. 30:14).* The main purpose of the *mitzvot* is to perfect the heart. Most of them serve as a memorial.⁵³*They remind the heart what it is to believe. See The Secret of Torah, A Translation of Ibn Ezra's Yesod Mora, translated by H. Norman Strickman, Jason Aaronson, 1995, p. 78: "Some commandments serve as reminders of the fundamental precepts. For example, the Sabbath commemorates creation. Likewise, not permitting one's slave to work on the Sabbath recalls the Exodus from Egypt. Similarly, the Pascal lamb, the matzot, the bitter herbs, the sukkah, the mezuzah, and the tefillin worn on the hand and head. Likewise, the tzitzit."* The distinction made between a sin committed deliberately and one committed inadvertently should convince them.

ומלת חמד בלשון הקדש מתפרשת לשני טעמים האחד גזל ועושק וקחת של אחרים בחזקה ובאונס וכך ולא יחמוד איש את ארצו כי אם אין פירושו כן הנה תהיה הארץ רעה ולא בא הכתוב אלא לשבח והטעם השני לשון תאוה בלב ולא תצא לפועל. והנה לא תחמוד בית רעך. הדבור התשיעי. ולא תחמוד אשת רעך הדבור העשירי. ויהיה בית רעך ואשת רעך נדבקים זה עם זה או בית רעך כלל והעד שאמר משה בספר הזה שבאר את התורה תחת לא תחמוד אמר לא תתאוה. ורבים אמרו כי אין עון במחשבת הלב ואין עליהם שכר ועונש ויש ראיות רבות להשיב עליהן ולא אאריך רק אראה להם לב חורש מחשבות און הטיבות כי היה עם לבבך ולישרים בלבבותם ומשה אמר בסוף בפך ובלבבך לעשותו. ועיקר כל המצות ליישר הלב, ורובם זכר והמזיד והשוגג יוכיחו:

ומצד מידת הגאווה מי שמפריע לי אין לו זכות קיום. עד כדי כך! ואף שרצון זה ודאי סותר לאהבה העמוקה שיש לו לבנו, מקום יש בלב להרכה סתירות].

ע"פ יסוד זה אפשר להבין כמה תמיהות במעשי האבות והאימהות הקדושים ע"ה כדלהלן.

"לא כי צחקת"

בסדר וירא כתוב: "ותצחק שרה בקרבה לאמר וגו' ויאמר ה' אל אברהם למה זה צחקה שרה וגו' ותכחש שרה לאמר לא צחקתי כי יראה, ויאמר לא כי צחקת" (יח, יב-טו). וכמה תמיהות יש כאן. הרי שרה אמנו היתה גדולה בנבואה יותר מאברהם אבינו (שמות רבה א, א מובא ברש"י וירא כא, יב), וידוע שאין נבואה שורה אלא על אדם שאין יצרו מתגבר עליו בדבר שבעולם אלא הוא מתגבר ביצרו בדעתו תמיד (רמב"ם הל' יסוה"ט ז, א), ואין תוציא דבר שקר מפיה? נועדו היתכן לשקר ח"ו לפני השי"ת היודע כל המחשבות או לפני אברהם הנביא המדבר בשם ה'? ועוד, מש"כ "לא כי צחקת" איתא בכראשית רבה (מח, כ) שהשי"ת אמר לה זאת, ומוסיף: "ר' אבא בר כהנא בשם ר' אידי אמר, כמה כירכורים כירכר [כמה חיזוריים חזר — רש"י] בשביל להשיח עמה, ויאמר לא כי צחקת". ולמה היה זה כ"כ חשוב בעיני ה' עד שהוא בכבודו ובעצמו הוצרך להוכיחה על זאת, ומה עלינו ללמוד מזה?

אבל ביאור הענין הוא ע"פ מה שפירש רד"ק על "ותצחק שרה בקרבה", ש"בקרבה" הוא מקום נסתר בקרב לבה, ושם נתעורר ניצוץ דק של צחוק שלא הרגישה בו, ולכן אמרה "לא צחקתי". ולמה לא הרגישה? על זה משיב הכתוב: "כי יראה". כי יש שנמנע מלעשות תשובה מחמת יראת שמים, כי העוון גדול בעיניו ורצה להתעלם ממנו, כי לא יוכל להודות אפילו לעצמו שיש בו עוון כזה. [והנה צחוק זה היה "חטא" רק לפי גודל מדרגת שרה אמנו, כי האם מחוייבים להאמין לכל ברכה שנאמרה ע"י אורחים הנראים כערביים המשתחוים לאבק רגליהם? אבל לפי ערך מדרגתה היתה צריכה לדעת שאין מקרה בעולם, ואם ה' השמיעה דבר כזה אין לזלזל בו אלא להעלות על הדעת שאפשר שיחקיים, כי "היפלא מה דבר?"] וכשנאמר לה מאת ה' "למה זה צחקה שרה וגו'" הבינה שלפי מדרגתה נחשב לה הרהור קל זה לחטא, אבל מפני יראת שמים שבה לא רצתה להודות שאמנם חטא כזה בא לידה, ויראה זו גרמה שתתעלם המחשבה מדעתה לגמרי עד שיכולה לומר — ולהאמין — "לא צחקתי". והקב"ה רצה ללמד לה שלא זו היא הדרך, אלא שצריך להודות על האמת על כל פנים, כמו שביארנו לעיל, כי רק בדרך זו ניתן לתקן את שורש המידה בפנים הלב.

20. Michtav Mei'Elīyahu
R' Elīyahu Dersler
1892-1953



המחשבות הפורחות במוח

ונשאלת איפוא השאלה: אם אמנם הרושם של מידת הכעס דק ועדין כל כך, איך היה אפשר לאליאב עצמו להכירה ולתקנה? אך יסוד גדול יש בזה. האדם עצמו יכול לדעת אמיתת מדרגתו אם רק יבחין במחשבות הקצרות הפורחות ועוברות במוחו [נכראה בלי שום סיבה. אכן באמת מחשבות קצרות אלו, המציינות רצונות גרועים ומידות רעות, באות מעומק לבו ומגלות משהו ממה שמתרחש בתת-הכרה שלו. אמנם לפי התמונה שיש לכל אדם על עצמו לא נראה לו כלל שמחשבות אלו מתאימות לנקודת-הבחירה שלו, אבל סימן הן שנקודות-תורפה אלו אכן קיימות בעומק נפשו ועדיין לא באו לידי תיקון].

איך להגיב על המחשבות הפורחות

בני אדם נוהגים לדחות מחשבות אלו בכל כוחם ורוצים להתעלם מהן, וזאת מחמת כושתם שמחשבות רעות כהנה עולות בדעתם. הם מתכחשים להן באומרים שאין להן שום שייכות למדרגתם ואינן אלא "פנטזיות" בלי שום משמעות. אבל אנשים הרוצים לעמוד על האמת אינם משתדלים לכסות מחשבות כאלו, אלא אדרבה, הם מפנים להן את מלוא תשומת לבם כדי שידעו את האמת על עצמם. [נשאלתי ע"י אחד מכני החבורה, הרי קורה לפעמים שנולד לאחד בן בכור והוא גאה בו ואוהבו כנפשו, ואעפ"כ לפעמים, כרגע קט, מתנצנצת במוחו המחשבה שהוא רוצה להורגו, ומיד נעלמת כאילו לא היתה. וכי איזו משמעות אפשר לייחס להרהור מוזר כזה? ואמרתי לו, שבטח קרה שהתינוק הפריע שנתו באמצע הלילה או גרם לו הפרעות אחרות, ומידת האנוכיות שלו, שלא תוקנה בשורשה בעמקי הלב, עושה את שלה.

21. Chiddushei Ha'Lev
R' Henoch Leibowitz
1918-2008



וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הַעֲבֹד, אֲוִלִי לֹא תֵאבְדָה הָאִשָּׁה לִלְכֹת אַחֲרַי אֶל הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת, הִהְשֵׁב אֲשִׁיב אֶת בִּנְךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵאת מִשָּׁם [בְּרִאשִׁית כד,ה]

וז"ל המדרש [בראשית רבה נט,ט]: "וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הַעֲבֹד", הָרָא הָא דְכַתִּיב (הוֹשֵׁעַ יב,ח): 'כִּנְעַן בִּידוֹ מֵאֲזִנֵּי מִרְמָה לַעֲשׂוֹק אֹהֲבִי'. 'כִּנְעַן' זֶה אֲלִיעֶזֶר. 'בִּידוֹ' מֵאֲזִנֵּי מִרְמָה' שֶׁהִי' יוֹשֵׁב וּמִשְׁקִיל אֶת בְּתוּ, רֵאוּי' הִיא אוֹ אִינָה רֵאוּי'. 'לַעֲשׂוֹק אֹהֲבִי' לַעֲשׂוֹק אוֹהֲבֵי שֶׁל עוֹלָם, זֶה יִצְחָק. אָמַר 'אֲוִלִי לֹא תֵאבְדָה' וְאֵתָן לוֹ אֶת בְּתִי. אָמַר לִי' אֶתָּה אֲרוּר וּבְנִי בְרוּךְ, וְאֵין אֲרוּר מִתְדַבֵּק בְּבִירוֹךְ".

מבואר במדרש שהמקרא מגנה את אליעזר ואומר עליו "כִּנְעַן בִּידוֹ מֵאֲזִנֵּי מִרְמָה", משום שחשק ביצחק ושקל אולי בתו ראוי ליצחק. ויש להקשות מדוע, והלא אליעזר לא שיקר ולא רימה את אברהם, אלא הסתפק בלבו שמא בתו ראוי, ושאל את אברהם, וגם קבל עליו את פסקו בלבב שלם, אם כן מדוע קורא עליו הכתוב "כִּנְעַן בִּידוֹ מֵאֲזִנֵּי מִרְמָה"?

אלא מוכרח הוא, שזה גופא שהי' לו מקום להסתפק, מוכיח שהיתה בו איזו דקות ממדת הרמאות. שאילולי כן, הי' יודע ומכיר את האמת מעצמו שאין בתו ראוי ליצחק. כי כך דרכו של רמאי, שמרמה לא רק את אחרים, אלא מרמה גם את עצמו. א"כ, מזה שאליעזר לא ידע ולא הכיר את האמת [ואף שהי' עליו להתעורר ולמצוא את הזיווג הנכון ליצחק], מזה מוכח שהיתה בו קורטוב זעיר של רמאות, ולכן קראו עליו את המקרא "כִּנְעַן בִּידוֹ מֵאֲזִנֵּי מִרְמָה" וגו'.

והנה מוצאים אנו היום אנשים שתמיד יש להם ספקות בלב ואינם יודעים ומכירים את האמת לעשות דבר נכון, לכן הם חושבים שאין בהם עוון, כיון שהיו אנוסים שלא הכירו את האמת. ברם, מדברי חז"ל מוכח שזה גופא שלא הכירו את האמת מוכיח על רוע מדותיהם, שאילו הגיעו לשלמות המדות, היו מכירים את האמת מעצמם.

ועיין ברבנו יונה [משלי ג,ג]: "וּבְכָלֵּל עֲנִין הָאִמֶּת, שֶׁאִם יִחְלֹק עִם חֲבֵרוֹ וַיִּנְצַחְהוּ בְּאִמֶּת, יוֹדֵה עֲלִיוֹ. וְכֵן בְּכָלֵּל, אִם יִשְׁפּוֹט בְּנֵי אָדָם עַל פִּי עֵדִים, יִרְבֶּה לַחֲקוֹר הָעֵדִים. וְאִם נִרְאֶה לוֹ כִּי הָדִין מְרוּמָה לִפְנֵיו, יַחְמִיץ אוֹתוֹ וְלֹא יַחְתַּכְנוּ. וְכֵן בְּכָלֵּל, שֶׁלֹּא יִקְבַּל לְשׁוֹן הָרַע, וְלֹא יֵאֱמִין כָּל מֵה שִׁישְׁמַע, פֶּן יֵאֱמִין בְּדַבְרֵי שִׁקְרִים. אֲךְ יֵשִׁים הַדְּבָרִים בְּסִפְּקָא, עַד הֵיוּתָם נַחֲקָרִים אֲצִלּוֹ וְכוּ'. וְכֵן הַמַּעֲלּוֹת הַשְּׂכִלִיּוֹת בְּכָלֵּל הָאִמֶּת, כִּי יִזְהַר מִן הַדְּעוֹת הַמְּשׁוּבָּשׁוֹת וּמִן הַסְּבָרוֹת הַנִּפְסָדוֹת. וּבְכָל חֲכָמָה אֲשֶׁר יַעֲסוֹק וּבְכָל דְּבַרֵּי אֱמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר יִתְבּוֹנֵן, יִרְבֶּה לַחֲקוֹר הָאִמֶּת, לֹא יִלְאֶה בְּמַחֲקָרוֹ, לֹא יֵיעֵף וְלֹא יִיגַע, וַיִּירָא לִנְפְשׁוֹ פֶּן יִקְחֶהוּ לְבוֹ דְּבַר שִׁקֵּר".

מבואר כאן חידוש גדול, ש"שקרן" הוא זה שאינו שונא את השקר. ומאידך גיסא, "איש אמת" הוא זה ששונא את השקר ומואס בו, ולכן יזהר שכל דבר, ואף מחשבות לבו והרהוריו, יהיו אמתיים. ואם יראה האדם שהוא עלול להיות מוטעה ולהאמין בדברים שאינם אמתיים, סימן הוא זה שחסר לו משהו במדת האמת, והוא עלול לשקר. שמכיון שאינו שונא את השקר, לכן לא ימנע מלומר שקר לתועלת עצמו.

22. *Ohr Yisroel* 30
R' Yisroel Salanter
 1809-1883

אָבן בַּמַּצֵּב תִּקּוּן הַיָּצָר. גַּם בְּחִינַת כְּבִישׁת יִצְרוֹ. בַּל יִרְפֶּה יָדוֹ מֵהַחֲזִיק בָּהּ.
 כִּי אִף שְׁנַעֲקָר הָרַע מִקְרָבוֹ. עוֹד מַעֲיֵן נִרְפֵּשׁ טָמוּן בְּחָבוֹ לְהַקִּיר מִיָּמִיו.
 ע"י סִבָּה גְדוֹלָה הַמְעוֹדֶרֶתָם לְהַתְגַּלּוֹת מִמְּחֻבּוֹאָם לְהַתְפַּשֵּׁט לְצֵאת הַחוּצָה
 לְהַשְׁחִית. כְּמוֹ הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הִרְגִּיל אֶת עַצְמוֹ בַּמַּדָּת הַסְּבִלָנוּת לְבַל יִקְצֹף
 מֵאוּמָה עַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשֶׂה נֶגֶד רָצוֹנוֹ וְתוֹעֵלָתוֹ. בְּכָל זֹאת אֵינָנו בְּטוֹחַ בְּדַבָּר
 גָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר כְּנִטָּל הַחֹל יִכְבֵּד עָלָיו לְסַבְּלוֹ. אִם לֹא יִחְתֹּר בַּעֲמָקֵי גְדֻלַּת הָעֵנָן
 לְהִרְס בְּנִיגוֹ הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר קָנָה בַּעֲמָלוֹ. וְאִזּוּ נִצְרָף לְגִבּוֹרָה יִתְּרָה לְכַבֵּשׁ תְּאוֹתָיו
 אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִסְכֵּן בָּהּ. (כִּי כָּבוֹד נַעֲזֵב וְנַעֲקָר מִקְרָבוֹ הִרְגִּל הַכְּבִישָׁה בַּמַּדָּה הַלּוֹז
 אֲשֶׁר קָנָה מִלִּפְנִים בַּעֲת הַיּוֹתָה אֲצִלוֹ בְּבִחִינַת כְּבִישָׁה. יַעַן לֹא הִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהּ
 זְמַן כְּבִיר מַעַת זָכָה לָהּ בְּבִחִינַת תִּקּוּן). וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם לֵעַת כְּזֹאת יִגִּיעַ לְמַדַּח
 הַגִּבּוֹרָה. אֲשֶׁר בִּלְתִּי הִהַרְגֵּל קִשָּׁה לְקִנּוּתָהּ.

The First Nisayon Is Always Hardest

RAV YISRAEL SALANTER explains that the first time a person is faced with a *nisayon* in a certain area, it is very hard for him to withstand it since he is unprepared for it. Later, as he gains experience controlling his impulses, it becomes easier.

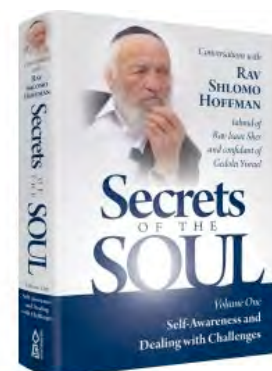
Therefore, it is very difficult to manage hidden desires that lay dormant within us, of which we spoke above. Since he does not know himself and is unaware of these feelings, it is very hard for him to control them when they come to the surface.

For this reason, Rav Yisrael advises that even people who find it easy to learn, daven, keep mitzvos, and do what they are supposed to do, should still keep pressing themselves forward to overcome any contrary desires and should do things that are difficult for them. That way they keep themselves spiritually fit to overcome a *nisayon* that might someday take them by surprise (*Ohr Yisrael*, 30).*

Rav Isaac Sher would give me "exercises" to prepare me for *nisyonos* that might arise in the future. These exercises helped me understand myself better, so that I would know what kind of challenges might be difficult for me. They also gave me practice thinking about things, so that the *nisyonos* would not catch me unprepared.

For example, he asked me, "Thirty years from now, if you and your friend both apply for the same position as Rosh Yeshiva and he is chosen, how will you feel? How will you deal with it?"

23. *Secrets of the Soul*
R' Shlomo Hoffman
 1922-2013



As a young *bachur*, I never thought about such scenarios, but he made me think about them as an exercise to prepare for situations in which dormant emotions such as jealousy might arise. He helped me understand that although I never had an opportunity to be jealous, jealousy was still a part of my character, and I needed to be prepared to deal with it when the time came.

The problem is when a person goes for fifty years thinking that he has no *yetzer* for jealousy or honor, and then all of a sudden a *nisayon* explodes in his face. He then spends all his energies fighting the wrong battle as his *yetzer* suddenly takes charge. He will act inappropriately, blowing things out of proportion, all in the guise of “*kavod HaTorah*,” since he does not even know that he has a *yetzer* of jealousy which is manipulating him.

It is terrible to watch beautiful families torn apart when they start fighting over an inheritance. If you would have told them thirty years earlier that this would happen, they never would have believed it, since they had no idea that they had such a *yetzer* of greed. Greed had never before been such an issue, since they never had a *nisayon*. Had they been more aware of themselves, they could have prepared themselves better.

OVER THE COURSE of many years, Rav Isaac Sher trained me toward achieving self-awareness. He told me of his own inner conflicts and the difficulties he had in overcoming his *yetzer*, so that I would learn how to do it too. First he would talk about his own weaknesses, and then he would talk about mine.

This is one of the secrets that it is important to know.

If an educator directly addresses his student's problems, the student is likely to get defensive and withdraw from the conversation. Instead, the educator should begin by discussing his own problems. This shows the student that the educator is also dealing with his *yetzer*, and there is no reason to be embarrassed or defensive about it. He will see that the educator understands and is empathic to his feelings; that the educator also has weaknesses, is aware of them, and is dealing with them level-headedly, without alarm. The *yetzer* is a reality of life, which we need to learn how to deal with. This is the key to opening a productive, non-offensive discussion about self-awareness, personal growth, and dealing with the *yetzer*.

Over the years Rav Isaac spoke a lot about the difference between people and angels. "Which is greater, a person or an angel?" he would ask. "And what does Hashem expect of you? To be an angel, or to be the best person you can be?"

The Torah tells us to be "*anshei kodesh*" — holy people (*Shemos* 22:30). An angel was created to be perfect, with no *yetzer ha'ra*. All it can do is fulfill the mission for which it was sent. People were not created that way. We were born with a *yetzer ha'ra* and a *yetzer ha'tov*.

"Our job is to serve Hashem with the *yetzer ha'ra* that you try to ignore," he told me. "Why do you think that you are supposed to be an angel with no *yetzer ha'ra*? You are a human being, with a *yetzer ha'ra*, and Hashem commands you to be *anshei kodesh* — to sanctify the imperfect, human aspects of your being. If you succeed in this, you will surpass the level of the angels."

When Rav Isaac told me that I had a *yetzer ha'ra*, he saw that I was offended. Over a long period of time, he shared with me his own struggles against the *yetzer ha'ra*, so that I would understand that these struggles are natural and normal. Everyone has a *yetzer ha'ra*. That is not the question. The question is how we cope with it.

It calmed me to know that even such a great Torah scholar as he also had a *yetzer ha'ra* and also had his own struggles. He told me that he was also offended at first when the Alter of Slobodka confronted him with a certain aspect of his *yetzer ha'ra*, but eventually he realized that the Alter was right.

24. GRA

ביאור הגר"א (משלי כה, יז)

היצר הרע נצרך מאוד לעבודת הבורא, אך שיהיה כבוש תחת ידך להשתמש בו לעבודת ה', ולא לדבר אחר ח"ו.

ביאור הגר"א (משלי טז, לב; בסוף הקטע)

אבל התאוות נצרכות לעבודת ד' ולקיום הגוף.

Ta'avos (desires) are necessary for the service of Hashem and for the preservation of our bodies. We must subdue our ta'avos, but still allow them to exist.

The *yetzer ha'rah* is necessary in the service of Hashem but it must be subjugated under our hand, to be used of *ravodas* Hashem and not for other things.

בעושיין שלא לשמה וכדרכי יהודה (6) דאמר
 רב יהודה אמר רב ילעולם יעסוק אדם
 בתורה ובמצות אף על פי שלא לשמה
 שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה: תנו רבנן

ulterior motives garners reward, as Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: A person should always engage in Torah study and performance of mitzvot, even if he does so not for their own sake, as through the performance of mitzvot not for their own sake, one gains understanding and comes to perform them for their own sake.

בספר נכבד זה מתבארים ענינים חשובים מחכמת המוסר, שלא מצאנום
 בשאר ספרי מוסר שבידנו. ועל שני עקרין חשובים רצוני להעיר את
 המעיין בו, באשר ידיעתם נחוצה מאד להמתחנכים בעבודת המוסר –
 העקר הראשון הוא הבנת דרכי יצירת המחשבה.

ברור לכל, שאם האדם אינו יודע ומכיר את עצמו, לא יועיל לו למוד
 המוסר, כיון שאינו יודע מה חסר לו ומה יש לו לתקן. כן הוא גם היודע
 ומכיר מדותיו הלא טובים – אי אפשר לו להתחנך בעבודת המוסר, כל זמן
 שלא יתברר אצלו באר היטב דרכי יצירת המחשבה ואפני התפתחותה,
 מפני שההפכה החיצונה במדות איננה הפכה שלמה, שהמדות הם רגשים
 פנימיים בנפש, ומתגלים במחשבה ומשתרשים בה, ואחר כך יוצאים
 לפעולות, ועל כן ההפכה הנכונה היא רק בפנימיות המחשבות שבלב.

והנה החובות הלבבות' בשער יחוד המעשה, אחרי שהאריך והזהיר
 להשמר מהיצר הרע במלחמתו עם האדם בעצות ותחבולות לשבש את
 הדעות ולהחליש את המעשים, סים את דבריו, שעקר הכל הוא הפקוח
 על המחשבה שבלב. וזה לשונו בפרק ו: "אבל הזהירות במחשבה
 ושמירתה, ראוי לה שלא תתעלם לפקד מחשבתך ורעיונה ושרעפי לבך,
 כי רב ההפסד והתקון במעשים לא יהיה כי אם מחמתם, כפי תקונם
 והפסדם". עד כאן לשונו. על כן עלינו להחזיק טובה למחבר ספר נכבד
 זה, המשתדל למסור לנו מפתחות חכמה נפלאה זו בעצות ותחבולות, היאך
 לפקח על מהלך יצירת מחשבותיו, שמהם תוצאות כל פעולות האדם –
 תבונות נפלאות בסוד התהוות המחשבה, איך ההרגשים והציורים נובעים
 במעמקי הלב, ואור השכל מצרפם ומזככם עד שיוצר מהם מחשבה
 מתקנה ומשכללה, שעל ידי ידיעות מאירות אלו אפשר לו לאדם לפקח
 על יצירת המחשבה בעמקי סתרי הלב, להבחין כל רגש וציור בראשית
 עלותו במחשבתו, ולראות היאך מחשבת האדם נגזרת אחרי רגשי המדות
 והתאוות, ולהצליח בסיעתא דשמיא בכל עבודת המוסר.

26. Introduction to Cheshbon Ha'Nefesh

R' Isaac Sher

1875-1952



27. *Secrets of the Soul*
R' Shlomo Hoffman
1922-2013

People usually think that they act based on reason. They believe that after the intellect makes a decision to do something, their will then causes the act to be performed. But the truth is just the opposite. The Rambam, Vilna Gaon, and Rav Yisrael Salanter write that usually a person's decisions are made by his will (which might be good or bad). That is the first cause. Only then is his decision justified by his intellect, through which he convinces himself that it is a good idea and forms plans for implementing it. The Rambam has harsh words for this, calling it "Reason serving desire."

Sometimes reason is strong enough to argue against desire. A person can convince himself that it is not worthwhile to fulfill his urge, since he might get caught and punished, or suffer embarrassment, or that the Torah forbids it. But still, the intellect does not decide. It is born from desire. Reason does no more than offer advice to either pursue or deny it.

In Kabbalah, this is phrased as, "Ratzon is above *ta'am* and *da'as*." *Da'as* in this context refers to intellect. *Ta'am* means enjoyable or beneficial. *Ratzon* refers to the inner urge or desire. *Ratzon* is above *ta'am* and *da'as*, since that is where the decision-making process begins. It is an inner force that is before and "higher" than *ta'am* and *da'as*. This is the opposite of what people often think, that their decisions are made by their intellect. Actually, their decisions are made by their *ratzon*.

A person must understand the desires that motivate him and see if they are coming from a good and healthy source, or from a bad and harmful source. If he does not study himself — to recognize the anatomy of his mind, to see how his desires are awakened, how he responds to stimuli, and how his reason assists his desires — he will not know what needs to be fixed or how to fix it.

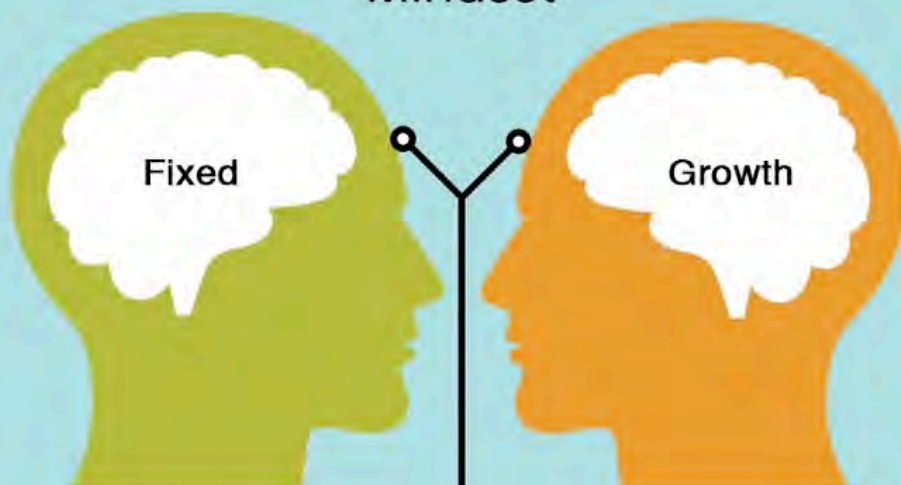
ונשפיל לראות דגמא אחת בחכמינו, זכרונם לברכה, שגלו לנו סוד ביצירת הקנאה שבלב במאמרם ז"ל (סנהדרין צג, ב) גבי שאול המלך, ששמע שבחו של דוד שהוא גדול ממנו לאסוקי שמעתיא אלבא דהלכתא – "חלשא דעתה ואקני בה". למדנו מדבריהם, שיצירת הקנאה בלב באה עם חלישת הדעת, שהוא רגש קל עובר במחשבה, שאין אדם עומד עליו, וחושב שחלישותו בא לו מזה שדאג בלב: למה לא זכה אחר עמלו בתורה להיות מסיק שמעתיא אליבא דהלכתא. אבל היודע סוד זה, היאך נוצרה הקנאה בלב, הרי הוא מבין, שאם בשעה שהוא שומע שבחו של חברו הרגיש חלישות הדעת – עליו לחזק את שרעפי לבו בשכל ודעת להוציא הקנאה מלב ולהטהר ממנה. וכן יראה המתבונן בציורי רעיון לבו, שבשעה שהוא דואג בלב ומחשב מחשבות בחסרונו ומעוט מעלתו בממון ובכבוד; ובתוך אלו המחשבות עולים בלב פתאים ציורים מעשירו וכבודו של חברו האהוב לו – ידע בנפשו שגלוי ציורים אלו בלב הם יצירת הקנאה, שהם שרש פורה ראש ולענה להפסיק ולבטל את האהבה שיש לו לחברו, ועליו לגבר חילים לתקן מדה זו בראשיתה. וכן כשהאדם מכין את עצמו

לעשות דבר טוב בעד הפרט או הכלל, וחושב מחשבות אם לעשות הדבר או לחל – יסתכל בלב לראות את המחשבה הראשונה שעלתה על לבו לזרז אותו לעשות את הדבר – אם היתה מחשבה זרה לתועלת עצמו, אלא שנדחתה מפני מחשבות גדולות וחשובות הממלאות את לבו תמיד, עד שנשתכחה זו ממנו, וישפיל לדעת שהמחשבה הראשונה היא העקרית אצל האדם, ועליו להתבונן בה בינה היאך לתקנה בשרשה ולטהר את לבו. על פי דגמאות כאלו נדע חובת ההאירות לפקד את המחשבה והרעיון ושרעפי הלב שהזהיר החובות הלכות, אשרי השומע לו.

והעקר השני הוא הדעת במהות שלטון ההרגל, שלמדנו מחכמינו ז"ל שכחו גדול מאד. האדם נעשה עבד לשלטון הרגלו, משעבד לעל ממשלתו ונלכד בעבותות הנהגתו.

יחזק אייזיק שעה,
סלבדקא

Fixed vs Growth Mindset



People with fixed mindsets believe that:

- Skills, intelligence and talents are natural.
- Failure is shameful and should be avoided.
- Some people are naturally good at things while others are not.
- You are not in control of your abilities.

Not Necessary or Useful

See effort as a negative thing and something you do when you're not that good

Avoid

Back down and avoid challenges

Avoid

Get discouraged when making mistakes and avoid them

Defensive

Get defensive, take it personally. Ignores useful criticism/feedback

Beliefs

Effort

Challenges

Mistakes

Feedback

People with growth mindsets believe that:

- You have the capacity to learn and grow your skills.
- Failure is a valuable lesson.
- People who are good at something are good because they built that ability.
- You are in control of your abilities.

Important Part of the Process

Focused on the process of getting better

Embrace

More likely to embrace challenges and persevere

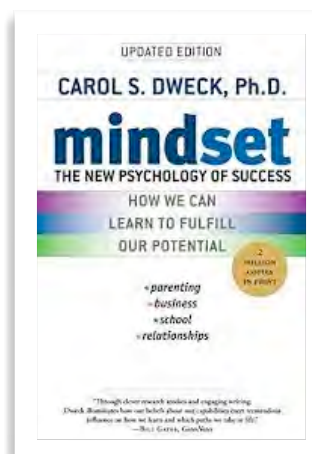
Improve

See mistakes as learning opportunities and ways to improve

Constructive

Appreciate feedback and use it. Learns from criticism

28. Mindset
Carol Dweck Ph.D.





"[Children with a growth mindset] knew that human qualities, such as intellectual skills, could be cultivated through effort."

"Not only were [the children with a growth mindset] not discouraged by failure, they didn't even think they were failing. They thought they were learning."

"What are the consequences of thinking that your intelligence or personality is something you can develop, as opposed to something that is a fixed, deep-seated trait?"

"Robert Sternberg, the present-day guru of intelligence, writes that the major factor in whether people achieve expertise 'is not some fixed prior ability, but purposeful engagement'."

"For twenty years, my research has shown that the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life."

"Believing that your qualities are carved in stone—the fixed mindset—creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over."

"This growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts. Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience."

"Why waste time proving over and over how great you are, when you could be getting better? Why hide deficiencies instead of overcoming them?"

"The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it's not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset."

"The fixed mindset makes you concerned with how you'll be judged; the growth mindset makes you concerned with improving."

"When you enter a mindset, you enter a new world. In one world—the world of fixed traits—success is about proving you're smart or talented. Validating yourself. In the other—the world of changing qualities—it's about stretching yourself to learn something new. Developing yourself."

"Benjamin Barber, an eminent sociologist, once said, 'I don't divide the world into the weak and the strong, or the successes and the failures.... I divide the world into the learners and non-learners'."

"People in a growth mindset don't just seek challenge, they thrive on it."

"We gave fifth graders intriguing puzzles, which they all loved. But when we made them harder, children with the fixed mindset showed a big plunge in enjoyment."

"For [people with a growth mindset] it's not about immediate perfection. It's about learning something over time: confronting a challenge and making progress."

"'Becoming is better than being'. The fixed mindset does not allow people the luxury of becoming. They have to already be."

"People with the growth mindset know that it takes time for potential to flower."

"College students, after doing poorly on a test, were given a chance to look at tests of other students. Those in the growth mindset looked at the tests of people who had done far better than they had. As usual, they wanted to correct their deficiency. But students in the fixed mindset chose to look at the tests of people who had done really poorly. That was their way of feeling better about themselves."

"John Wooden, the legendary basketball coach, says you aren't a failure until you start to blame. What he means is that you can still be in the process of learning from your mistakes until you deny them."

"French executive Pierre Chevalier says, 'We are not a nation of effort. After all, if you have savoir-faire [a mixture of know-how and cool], you do things effortlessly'."

"People with the growth mindset, however, believe something very different. For them, even geniuses have to work hard for their achievements."

"They may appreciate endowment, but they admire effort, for no matter what your ability is, effort is what ignites that ability and turns it into accomplishment."

"The growth mindset does allow people to love what they're doing—and to continue to love it in the face of difficulties."

"Those with the growth mindset found success in doing their best, in learning and improving. And this is exactly what we find in the champions."

"Those with the growth mindset found setbacks motivating. They're informative. They're a wake-up call."

"People with the growth mindset in sports (as in pre-med chemistry) took charge of the processes that bring success—and that maintain it."

Do you worry too much? Stoicism can help

How imagining the worst case scenario can help calm anxiety.

Are you a worrier? Do you imagine nightmare scenarios and then get worked up and anxious about them? Does your mind get caught in a horrible spiral of catastrophizing over even the smallest of things? Worrying, particularly imagining the worst case scenario, seems to be a natural part of being human and comes easily to a lot of us. It's awful, perhaps even dangerous, when we do it.

But, there might just be an ancient wisdom that can help. It involves reframing this attitude for the better, and it comes from Stoicism. It's called "premeditation," and it could be the most useful trick we can learn.

Practical Stoicism

Broadly speaking, Stoicism is the philosophy of choosing your judgments. Stoics believe that there is nothing about the universe that can be called good or bad, valuable or valueless, *in itself*. It's we who add these values to things. As Shakespeare's Hamlet says, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Our minds color the things we encounter as being "good" or "bad," and given that we control our minds, we therefore have control over all of our negative feelings.

Put another way, Stoicism maintains that there's a gap between our experience of an event and our judgment of it. For instance, if someone calls you a smelly goat, you have an opportunity, however small and hard it might be, to pause and ask yourself, "How will I judge this?" What's more, you can even ask, "How will I respond?" We have power over which thoughts we entertain and the final say on our actions. Today, Stoicism has influenced and finds modern expression in the hugely effective "cognitive behavioral therapy."

One of the principal fathers of ancient Stoicism was the Roman statesman, Seneca, who argued that the unexpected and unforeseen blows of life are the hardest to take control over. The shock of a misfortune can strip away the power we have to choose our reaction. For instance, being burglarized feels so horrible because we had felt so safe at home. A stomach ache, out of the blue, is harder than a stitch thirty minutes into a run. A sudden bang makes us jump, but a firework makes us smile. Fell swoops hurt more than known hardships.

What could possibly go wrong?

So, how can we resolve this? Seneca suggests a Stoic technique called "premeditatio malorum" or "premeditation." At the start of every day, we ought to take time to indulge our anxious and catastrophizing mind. We should "rehearse in the mind: exile, torture, war, shipwreck." We should meditate on the worst things that could happen: your partner will leave you, your boss will fire you, your house will burn down. Maybe, even, you'll die.

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This might sound depressing, but the important thing is that we do not stop there.

Stoicism has influenced and finds modern expression in the hugely effective "cognitive behavioral therapy."

The Stoic also rehearses how they will *react* to these things as they come up. For instance, another Stoic (and Roman Emperor) Marcus Aurelius asks us to imagine all the mean, rude, selfish, and boorish people we'll come across today. Then, in our heads, we script how we'll respond when we meet them. We can shrug off their meanness, smile at their rudeness, and refuse to be "implicated in what is degrading." Thus prepared, we take control again of our reactions and behavior.

The Stoics cast themselves into the darkest and most desperate of conditions but then realize that they can and will endure. With premeditation, the Stoic is prepared and has the mental vigor necessary to take the blow on the chin and say, "Yep, I can deal with this."

Catastrophizing as a method of mental inoculation

Seneca wrote: "In times of peace, the soldier carries out maneuvers." This is also true of premeditation, which acts as the war room or training ground. The agonizing cut of the unexpected is blunted by preparedness. We can prepare the mind for whatever trials may come, in just the same way we can prepare the body for some endurance activity. The world can throw nothing as bad as that which our minds have already imagined.

Stoicism teaches us to embrace our worrying mind but to embrace it as a kind of inoculation. With a frown over breakfast, try to spend five minutes of your day deliberately catastrophizing. Get your anti-anxiety battle plan ready and then face the world.

31. R' Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l
1948-2020



If we change the way we think, we will change the way we feel.

Maimonides called his ideal type of human being – the sage – a *rofe nefashot*, a “healer of souls.”¹ Today we call such a person a *psychotherapist*, a word coined relatively recently from the Greek word *psyche*, meaning “soul,” and *therapeia*, “healing.” It is astonishing how many of the pioneering soul-healers in modern times have been Jewish.

Almost all the early psychoanalysts were, among them Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank and Melanie Klein. So overwhelming was this that psychoanalysis was known in Nazi Germany as the “Jewish science.” More recent Jewish contributions include Solomon Asch on conformity, Lawrence Kohlberg on developmental psychology and Bruno Bettelheim on child psychology. From Leon Festinger came the concept of cognitive dissonance, from Howard Gardner the idea of multiple intelligences and from Peter Salovey and Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence. Abraham Maslow gave us new insight into motivation, as did Walter Mischel into self-control via the famous “marshmallow test.” Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky gave us prospect theory and behavioural economics. Most recently, Jonathan Haidt and Joshua Green have pioneered empirical study of the moral emotions. The list goes on and on.

To my mind, though, one of the most important Jewish contributions came from three outstanding figures: Viktor Frankl, Aaron T. Beck and Martin Seligman. Frankl created the method known as Logotherapy, based on the search for meaning. Beck was the joint creator of the most successful form of treatment, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Seligman gave us Positive Psychology, that is, psychology not just as a cure for depression but as a means of achieving happiness or flourishing through acquired optimism.

These are very different approaches but they have one thing in common. They are based on the belief – set out much earlier in Habad Hassidim in R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi's Tanya – that *if we change the way we think, we will change the way we feel*. This was, at the outset, a revolutionary proposition in sharp contrast to other theories of the human psyche. There were those who believed that our characters are determined by genetic factors. Others thought our emotional life was governed by early childhood experiences and unconscious drives. Others again, most famously Ivan Pavlov, believed that human behaviour is determined by conditioning. On all of these theories our inner freedom is severely circumscribed. Who we are, and how we feel, are largely dictated by factors other than the conscious mind.

It was Viktor Frankl who showed there is another way – and he did so under some of the worst conditions ever endured by human beings: in Auschwitz. As a prisoner there Frankl discovered that the Nazis took away almost everything that made people human: their possessions, their clothes, their hair, their very names. Before being sent to Auschwitz, Frankl had been a therapist specializing in curing people who had suicidal tendencies. In the camp, he devoted himself as far as he could to giving his fellow prisoners the will to live, knowing that if they lost it, they would soon die.

There he made the fundamental discovery for which he later became famous:

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: *the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.*²

What made the difference, what gave people the will to live, was the belief that there was a task for them to perform, a mission for them to accomplish, that they had not yet completed and that was waiting for them to do in the future. Frankl discovered that "*it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us.*"³ There were people in the camp who had so lost hope that they had nothing more to expect from life. Frankl was able to get them to see that "life was still expecting something from them." One, for example, had a child still alive, in a foreign country, who was waiting for him. Another came to see that he had books to produce that no one else could write. Through this sense of a future calling to them, Frankl was able to help them to discover their purpose in life, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

The mental shift this involved came to be known, especially in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, as *reframing*. Just as a painting can look different when placed in a different frame, so can a life. The facts don't change, but the way we perceive them does. Frankl writes that he was able to survive Auschwitz by daily seeing himself as if he were in a university, giving a lecture on the psychology of the concentration camp. Everything that was happening to him was transformed, by this one act of the mind, into a series of illustrations of the points he was making in the lecture. "By this method, I succeeded somehow in rising above the situation, above the sufferings of the moment, and I observed them as if they were already of the past."⁴ Reframing tells us that though we cannot always change the circumstances in which we find ourselves, *we can change the way we see them, and this itself changes the way we feel.*

Yet this modern discovery is really a re-discovery, because the first great re-framer in history was Joseph, as described in this week's and next's parshiyot. Recall the facts. He had been sold into slavery by his brothers. He had lost his freedom for thirteen years, and been separated from his family for twenty-two years. It would be understandable if he felt toward his brothers resentment and a desire for revenge. Yet he rose above such feelings, and did so precisely by shifting his experiences into a different frame. Here is what he says to his brothers when he first discloses his identity to them:

"I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for *God sent me* before you to preserve life ... *God sent me* before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So *it was not you who sent me here, but God.*"
(Gen. 45: 4-8)

And this is what he says years later, after their father Jacob has died and the brothers fear that he may now take revenge:

“Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? *Though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good*, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.” (Gen. 50: 19-21)

Joseph had reframed his entire past. He no longer saw himself as a man wronged by his brothers. He had come to see himself as a man charged with a life-saving mission by God. Everything that had happened to him was necessary so that he could achieve his purpose in life: to save an entire region from starvation during a famine, and to provide a safe haven for his family.

This single act of reframing allowed Joseph to live without a burning sense of anger and injustice. It enabled him to forgive his brothers and be reconciled with them. It transformed the negative energies of feelings about the past into focused attention to the future. Joseph, without knowing it, had become the precursor of one of the great movements in psychotherapy in the modern world. He showed the power of reframing. We cannot change the past. But by changing the way we *think about* the past, we can change the future.

Whatever situation we are in, by reframing it we can change our entire response, giving us the strength to survive, the courage to persist, and the resilience to emerge, on the far side of darkness, into the light of a new and better day.

NOTES

1. Rambam, Shemoneh Perakim, ch. 3.
2. Viktor Frankl, man's search for meaning, 75.
3. Ibid., 85.
4. Ibid. 82.

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FAITH

MY REFRAMING — THE SKILL OF CHANGE

A Daily Dose of Bitachon by Rabbi David Sutton

NEW!



To develop and strengthen our *bitachon*, we need to override our “*Olam Hazei*” viewpoint, which sees only what is in front of our eyes and feels only what our immediate impulses stir up. I’d like to share a practical, skill-based approach to this goal that mental health therapists use widely to help clients break out of anxious or depressed thinking.

I recently attended a course given by Rabbi Zev Brown, Ph.D., who discussed a psychological approach called CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy). The cognitive aspect relates to our thoughts, the behavior is our actions, and there is an emotional component as well.

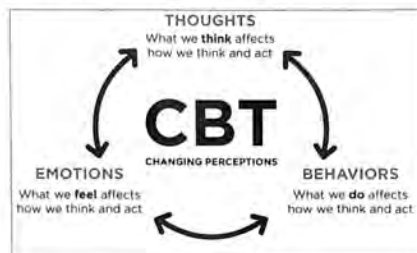
The basis of CBT is that all three elements influence each other. Therefore, we can initiate a change in any or all these areas by starting with one. In other words: How you think affects how you feel and act; how you act affects what you think and how you feel; and how you feel affects how you think and act. Each one impacts the other, as illustrated in the model above.

Rabbi Dr. Brown began his lecture with cognition/thought, and gave a precise *mashal* to explain how changing the thought can

change a person’s physical reaction:

Imagine someone is walking down the street when a person walks over to him and knocks him down, completely unprovoked.

The victim would probably jump up and start screaming at the attacker. “What are you doing? What’s wrong with you?” Any normal person would explode.



Then Dr. Brown asked, “Is that a guaranteed immediate reaction? Is that reaction an innate *middah*? If a person throws someone to the ground, must the victim automatically be upset? Does being thrown on the ground cause him to be upset?”

He answers with a second scenario: Somebody inherits \$30 million. He decides that he’s going to knock somebody down, and if the person he knocks down hugs him instead of berating him, he will give that person \$1 million.

Now imagine that someone hears

about this plan and tells his friend about it. If his friend gets knocked down, he will surely jump up, give the man a hug and a kiss and collect \$1 million.

Let us now readdress the question: What reaction does being thrown to the ground evoke? Does it evoke hugs and kisses or does it cause a tirade? The answer is that the attack itself evokes neither reaction. It is the thought of the person being pushed that decides how he reacts and how he processes the experience.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe says that the *Rambam* places the topic of *middos* in *Hilchos Dei’os*, “*The Laws of Mindsets*,” because our actions are all rooted in our mindset. The *Chovos HaLevavos* imparts this understanding to us as a foundation of *bitachon*. We can have confidence in our ability to master this skill, because thousands of people are doing so right now, in our own times, to break out of their psychological issues. We can use the same skills for the far greater and everlasting achievement of attaching ourselves to Hashem and enjoying the *menuchas hanefesh* that brings. ■

ח. והנה כבר ידוע, שדוד המלך היה במדרגת המלכות ממש שהת"ת מאיר לה, כגונא דנהיר שמשא לסיהרא תמיד בלי הפסק, דהא לית נהורא לסיהרא אלא משמשא, והו ענין אמרו בסמוך: **שׁוֹיְתִי ה' לְנִגְדִי תָמִיד כִּי מִיְמִינִי בִלְאֻמוֹט**, כי מה יועיל שהוא ישים את השם הזה לנגדו, אם לא יהיה ממש ברזא דאמרן. כי גם זהו הטעם שאמר במקום אחר: ה' אורי וישעי ממי אירא, לפי שידע שלא נעזב מן האור הקדוש הזה בשום מקום ובשום זמן, ועל ידו היה מתגבר על כל אויביו ולא היו יכולים החצונים לפתותו לסור מן הימין של הקדושה ולנטות אל סטרא דשמאלא דמסאבותא ח"ו, וז"ש: **"כי מימיני בל אמוט"**. ודוק אמרו **"מימיני"** ולא **מימין** סתם, לפי שיש הימין של החצונים שהוא ימנם ימין שקר, אבל הימין של דוד המלך הוא הימין של הקדושה שהבטיחו עליו השי"ת, כענין שנאמר: נאם ה' לאדוני שב לימיני. ומ"ש **"שׁוֹיְתִי"** ולא **"שמת"**, לרמוז אל לשון השואה ממש בכל הזמנים, בין בעת צרה בין בעת רווחה, בין בעת שפלות בין בעת גדולה, היה שוה תמיד לעמוד בדבקתו והשם הקדוש לנגד עיניו, כמו שמצינו שהיה משורר ומזמר בכל העתים.

34. Kísvei R' Moshe Dovíd Vallé
1697-1777

הַלְכוֹת הַנְּהַגַּת אָדָם בְּבוֹקֵר

סִימָן א

דִּין הַשְׁכַּמַּת הַבּוֹקֵר. וּבִי ט' סְעִיפִים:

א (א) [א] יתגבר [ב] [א] בארי הגה [ה] [ז] (2) (3) שׁוֹיְתִי ה' לְנִגְדִי תָמִיד הוּא כָלֵל גָּדוֹל לְעִמּוּד בְּבוֹקֵר לְעִבּוּדַת בּוֹרְאוֹ **א (ב) [ב] [א] שׁוֹיְתִי הוּא** צְחוּרָה [ז] וְצִמְעֻלַת הַלְדִּיקִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹלִכִים מְעוּרָר [ב] הַשְׁחָר: הַגֵּה [ד] [א] (4) וְעַל כָּל פְּנִים לֹא יֵאָחַר זְמַן הַתְּפִלָּה שֶׁהַצֹּר מִתְּפִלָּים: יְשִׁיבָתוֹ וְהוּא לְבָדוֹ צְבִיתוֹ וְעִסְקִיו וְהוּא לְפָנֵי מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל [ז] וְלֹא דְבִירוֹ וְהִרְחַבְתָּ פִּי כִּרְצוֹנוֹ וְהוּא עִם אֲנָשֵׁי צִיתוֹ וְקִרְוָיו דְּבִירוֹ בְּמוֹשָׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ [ז] כָּל שָׁכֵן כְּשֵׁיטִים הָאֵדָם אֵל לְבֹ שֶׁהַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֲשֶׁר מִלֵּא כָל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ עוֹמֵד עָלָיו וְרוֹאֶה בְּמַעֲשָׁיו כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר [יִרְמְיָה כג, כד] אִם יִסְתַּח אִישׁ בְּמַסְתָּרִים וְאִנִּי לֹא אֶרְאֶהוּ נֹאם ה' [ז] מִיָּד יִגִּיעַ אֵלָיו הִירְאָה וְהִהַכְנַעָה וּפְחַד הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ וּבִשְׁמוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ [א] תָּמִיד [ב] [ז] וְלֹא יִתְבָּרַשׁ [ב] מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי אָדָם [ז] הַמִּלְעִיגִים עָלָיו בְּעִבּוּדַת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ [יג] וְגַם בְּהִנָּע לֶכֶת [יד] [ז] וְשִׁכְחוּ עַל מַשְׁכָּבוֹ יָדַע לְפָנֵי מִי הוּא שׁוֹכֵן [טז] [א] [ז] וּמִיָּד שִׁיעוֹר מִשְׁנֵחוֹ יָקוּם [ז] צִרְיֹת לְעִבּוּדַת בּוֹרְאוֹ [א] יִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְרוֹמֵם:

35. Shulchan Aruch oc 1:1

36. *Tzavas Ha'Rivash*
Ba'al Shem Tov
 1698-1760



"I have placed (*shivisi*)
 God before myself
 continually"

(*Tehillim* 16:8). "I have
 placed (*shivisi*)" is

related to the
 word *hishtavus*,

equanimity. Whatever

happens to a person
 should be the same to

him, whether others
 praise or disparage him;

and this rule applies to all things. When it comes to eating, it should make no difference whether one eats tasty foods or otherwise. Everything should be the same to him, since the Evil Inclination has been completely renounced. In all circumstances one should say, "Does this not come from Him, may He be blessed? And if this is meet and proper in His eyes, should it not be acceptable to me?" One's efforts should be entirely for the sake of Heaven; but whatever happens should make no difference from one's own standpoint. This is a high spiritual level (*Tzava'as HaRivash* 2).

ג. שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד (תהלים טז ח) שויתי (יג) לשון השתוות, בכל דבר המאורע הכל שוה אצלו בין בענין שמשבחין (יד) בני אדם או מבזין אותו, וכן בכל שאר דברים, וכן בכל האכילות בין שאוכל מעדנים בין שאוכל שאר דברים, הכל ישוה בעיניו כיון שהוסר (טו) היצה"ר ממנו מכל וכל.

ד. וכל דבר שיארע לו יאמר הלא זה הוא מאתו יתברך, ואם בעיניו הגון וכו', וכל כוונתו לשם שמים, אבל מצד עצמו אין חילוק. וזה מדרגה גדולה מאד.

אמר השכל, שם ממשלת הדבר וכללו של ענין הוא, שתקבלי עליך מומי שלמעלה מומך מה שאת רוצה שיקבל מומך עליו מוי שהוא למטה מומך, שם עם השתנות הערכים. ומה שהוא טוב בעיניך מומנו וידע לך ממעשהו, קבלי מומי שלמעלה מומך כמוהו.

37. *Chovos Ha'Levavos*
R' Bachya Ibn Pakuda
 1050-1120

שם. עם השתנות הערכים. צריך לעיין מה כוונתו בתיבות אלו. ובחלק מהדפוסים גרסו "עם השתנות הערכים", ואז הכוונה, שאם נשווה ערך הבורא כלפינו לערך עצמינו כלפי שאר בני אדם, אז תחדור לעצמנו מהות העבודה, כי בלי השתוות זו, קשה לראות את מבנה העבודה, כיון שהיחס בינינו לבורא עולם ללא שיעור לעומת ערכנו לשאר בני אדם כמותינו.

ואולי גם לגירסה שלפנינו זו כוונתו, שהנפש תקבל על עצמה מומי שלמעלה מומה וכו' - "עם השתנות הערכים" - על אף השתנות הערכים, מכל מקום תראה הנפש כאילו הערכים שווים ותבין את צורת העבודה.

ומבואר בתוך הדברים, שכדי שהנפש תוכל להשתכנע בצורה שכלית והגיונית, היא צריכה להיות נקיה מרגשות של יראת הרוממות, אלא להיפך, מוטל עליה בדוקא שתשווה את הערכים למונחים הגיוניים וברורים, ואחר שיהיה ברור לה מהי צורת העבודה, תוכל להוסיף שכנוע לעצמה על ידי שתתבונן ביראת רוממותו ית'.

39. Sfas Emes - Vayeitzei



38. Sfas Emes- Lech Lecha
R' Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter
1847-1905

במדבר אה הלק לבסח. כי בלחם ברח יעקב
מפני עשו. אפ"כ כתיב וילא וילך
לא בלשון בריחה כי הנוסח ב' בלחם מציין כי מה'
מלעדי גבר ולא יחלה הדבר במקרה וכו' בחי' יעקב
א"ש הס' כמ"ש רש"י בפסוק תמים תהי' קבל הכל
בתמימות. ולא נשתנה כלל ע"י בריחה זו חיה מדה
השמות שכתב בחצות הלצות. אה הוא התקשרות
בשורש שלחפלה מן השבט כמ"ש בהפריס א' על ז'
ימי הסבס. וזהו עלמו פי' באר שבע המקור. שמשס
טבעין ז' הימים והוא אור שבעת הימים ולפי' שיעקב
הי' לו דביקות שס לכן וילא וילך לבסח כמ"ש. וכ"כ
הולך בהם ילך בסח:

עוד שם¹¹² **כאשר** דיבר אליו, דאבטח
ליה בכולהו

הבטחות. לכאורה זה לקבל פרס, אבל
באמת זה עיקר השבח, שגם השכר, עבד
נאמן יודע שהכל לכבודו ברא¹¹⁴, וזהו
שאמרו¹¹⁵ שכר מצוה מצוה, שהרי הוא
רצון הבורא להשפיע כל טוב ולשמוח
הצדיקים, ובעבור זה הם שמחים בשכרן
יותר מגוף השכר. ועל זה אמרו¹¹⁶ לקבל

פרס, שלא יכוין בהשכר רק לשמו יתברך,
ואתי שפיר מחשב שכר מצוה¹¹⁷, וזהו
בחינת השתוות שמחין ביסורין¹¹⁸, כאשר
רואין שזה רצונו יתברך שמו, ולכן היה
שווה לאברהם מצות הליכה וקיבול
השכר, הכל עשה בהשוואה אחת:



40. It's All the Same to Me R' Moshe Gersht

What is the source of negativity? What is the source of life's dramas?

The drama in our lives is created through the way we experience whatever happens to us: the way we judge what people say to us, the judgments we make about ourselves, and the way we perceive all the situations and conditions we find ourselves in. It's not the situation that creates the person, or the feeling within the person, but rather the way we view life that creates our sense of the situations we encounter.

HOW YOU SEE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT YOU SEE.

This may bring up the question about objective good and negative situations. Later in this book, we will discuss the difference between good and bad. However, in the meantime I ask that you suspend your thoughts about the question of good and evil and instead come with me on a journey to discover whether there is another way of looking at things.

The answer begins with *Hishtavus*. The answer is *now*.

You can live in harmony with all of life and enter into conscious alignment with a higher order. This state of allowing and surrender opens a space inside of you that engenders renewed creativity, connection, and the experience of love to expand. Seeing life through this lens of Oneness lets you see the good and the love laced within creation. There are seven life-changing qualities related to sameness. Harmony, alignment with a higher order, love recognition, allowing, surrender, space, and a lens of Oneness. Let me explain.

Hishtavus means to live in perfect harmony with all of life.

Life is happening. It stops for no one. It has been said that life is God in action. When Moshe (Moses) asked God, "Who shall I tell the people is setting them free from Egyptian bondage?" God responded with the words, "*Ekyeh Asher Ekyeh*," "I am that I am" or "I will be Who I will be." Things *are* as they *are*. They *will be* as they *will be*. To live in the denial of this truth is to deny the presence of God. To live in harmony with this truth is to live in the presence of God.

Hishtavus is to enter into conscious alignment with a higher order. There is a deeper intention behind everything that occurs. Nothing ends with what we see on the surface. There is always

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What does Hishtavus mean, and why is it important?

Hishtavus is related to the word *Shaveh*, which literally means "the same." Thus, meaning "sameness," "Oneness," or "equanimity," Hishtavus is a state of nonjudgmental awareness. You are able to totally accept reality as it is without labeling things as essentially better or worse.¹ It is the beginning of what it means to live in the presence of God. It is the secret of life.

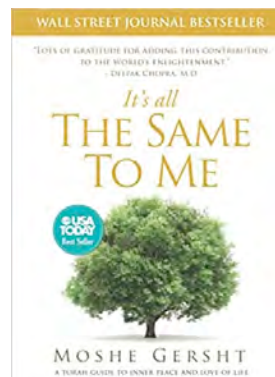
The Baal Shem Tov, known as the founder of Chassidus, describes this sameness as being the fundamental principle upon which all of spiritual development rests. The twelfth-century Spanish philosopher Bahya ibn Paquda writes, in his famous work *Duties of the Heart*, that Hishtavus is the most important spiritual practice and quality one can attain.

¹ Rav Moshe Iserles begins his editorial notes of the Shulchan Aruch with the Psalm "*I place God before me always*" and says that this is the fundamental principle of Torah and the essential quality of what makes the righteous, righteous. The Hebrew word for *I place* is *Shivisi*, which shares the same etymological root as *Shaveh*, which means equal or the same. Thus the fundamental ideal in living a spiritual life is sameness. It is noteworthy that the famous Kabbalists the Arizal and Rav Moshe Dovid Volle all understood this verse the same way.

more behind the scenes. The Creator, Sustainer, and Director of life, as it unfolds, has intentions of the highest good and love. We only see a small fraction of reality. Being open to this spiritual guidance allows for openness in all our experiences, with the people we meet and the places we go. Living with equanimity, you will find a hidden harmony, a sacredness, a higher order in which the knowing, the known, and the knower are one. It is the fertile ground for wisdom and freedom and a space for compassion and love. True sameness produces radiance and warmth of being. There is an ease within that comes when we see a bigger picture. It is being able to hold space for unlimited potential and infinite possibility—an inner knowing that all things lead in the right direction, whether or not it unfolds according to how we think it should.

Hishtavus is recognizing the love that exists everywhere. It is the awareness that the energy of all things and events are flooded with a loving presence of the Creator, despite their outer appearance. It is possible to literally feel the connection between you and all other creations, all part of the love story being told by God. You are totally conscious of the miracle of life and see how love is the epicenter of creation.

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Hishtavus is a state of allowing. To allow things to happen with inner resistance is not weakness. It is strength. Non-resistance doesn't mean letting people walk all over you or allowing your house to burn down. Whatever is happening, instead of wishing it were different, you allow it to be exactly as it is, then take action from that place of allowing.

Hishtavus is a state of surrender. Although we associate the word *surrender* with a negative charge or loss, surrender is a powerful door opener for peace, love, and harmony. We seem to constantly be in a fight with reality. There's never enough time, not enough money, and we're always doing the things we wish we weren't doing. But to surrender means to let go of how you think things *should* be and accept them as how they *are*.

Hishtavus is a space inside us that allows creativity, connection, and love to expand. Connection and flow happen within the space of sameness. It is not a form of doing. It is a space, an inner stillness that allows for and fosters authentic connection. It is the silence out of which a song is born, the quiet from which breakthroughs and epiphanies emerge.

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sad. This is how it's supposed to be. The only difference is that with sameness, these remain on the surface, while behind them you rest in a deep sense of peace, presence, and love that is unshakable.

I deeply appreciate the way Rav Doniel Katz defines equanimity as "the capacity to maintain an open, connected state, free from emotional turbulence, no matter what daily chaos and challenges you face." Dr. Judith Orloff describes this in two words in her book's title, *Emotional Freedom*.

LIFE IS GOD IN ACTION.

BEING IN HARMONY WITH LIFE ALLOWS YOU TO SEE LOVE AND OPPORTUNITY EVERYWHERE.

What you will find is that equanimity allows you to remain centered in the middle of whatever is happening. It gives you balance, strength, and stability. This stillness is a deep presence of inner calm, well-being, confidence, vitality, and integrity. It keeps us upright in the same way a ballast keeps a ship upright in strong winds. This is an invitation of freedom sowing its seeds. Water it and allow it to grow.

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Hishtavus is seeing life through the lens of Oneness.

According to Kabbalah, there are five levels of consciousness, the highest being *yechida* – Oneness. Instead of seeing division, we see unity. Instead of separation, we see togetherness. Instead of difference, sameness. It is an all-inclusive way of viewing the world.

It does not mean repressing our emotions. It can be easy to confuse sameness with denial, but it is not about denying a particular situation. Rather, it is about accepting each situation for what it is and dropping all resistance. Denial means looking into the face of reality and covering it up with a label that says something to the effect that, "Everything is okay. Don't get angry." Denial leads to more pain, while *Hishtavus* leads the way to freedom.

It doesn't mean you always feel amazing. It might seem that if we're at peace with everything that happens, we will always feel fantastic, but this isn't the promise of sameness. On the outer layer of reality, i.e., life as we know it, things are always changing. Nothing stays the same, nothing lasts forever, and nothing is everything it seems. Because of the nature of life, there are things we experience that make us very happy and things that make us

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Simply put:

All is equal.

It is all the same.

All is one.

All is good.

And all is love.

There is no difference. There is no separation.

Something to ask yourself is whether or not these seven qualities resonate within you as something you have personally experienced. If you have, what was the catalyst? If you have not, can you imagine what might be holding you back? Are there times when you feel rooted in something so strong that you stay firmly planted when the winds of the world blow? The most important book to study is the journal of your heart.

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CHAPTER FOUR

You're Not Who You Think You Are

I have always used the word "ego" to mean arrogant or full of myself. How do you use the word "ego"?

The verse in Deuteronomy says, "And it is I that stands in between you and God." Although the verse itself is speaking about Moshe, the deeper meaning of the verse alludes to the fact that the "I" (what we call the "ego") stands between you and all that is true.

The great sage known as the Alter of Kelm would say, "In the beginning there was one voice. Then there were two. Now

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there is one. Our first step is to at the very least return back to hearing two voices." What he meant was this: In the beginning of our lives, there is only the voice of our soul. The voice of our conscience. Then, as we develop, we gain a second voice: the voice of our ego. The Torah refers to this voice as the *Yetzer Hara*. As we develop further, we lose touch with the sound of our soul, and all that's left is the one voice, the voice of our ego. Our job is to start recognizing that there are two voices. This is the first step on the journey home.

In this regard, the ego is your false sense of self. It's when you experience yourself as merely a body that can feel and think, and nothing more. It is the sense of being disconnected from everything in reality, including God. In the ego state, you believe you are only the sum total of the story of your life; the events you experience, your personality, your social networks, and your talents or the lack thereof. But this isn't the whole truth. It's only a very small fraction of who you are. Most of who you are is not even in your body.

Yetzer Hara literally means "the creative force that is undeveloped; an immature perspective." Relating to life in this constricted way, it gives us a false perception of reality. It is the

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same way a child doesn't understand why eating candy all day is bad or that wearing a seatbelt is good. As long as you continue thinking in this small and narrow way, you will likely continue to choose short-term pleasures over long-term pleasures. The more identified you are with this voice, the more you will naturally avoid anything that could indicate the voice is wrong. In this regard, the ego will do everything in its power to keep you distracted from what's truly important. Think about it like this. If you were to prove this old perspective wrong, that would mean its death. When you identify with the ego, there is a part of you that fears your own ego death. The ego recognizes this threat, and in your subconscious, works very hard at sidetracking you from the Truth.

RECOGNIZING THE VOICE OF THE EGO IS THE FIRST STEP ON YOUR JOURNEY HOME.

In his book *The Power of Intention*, Dr. Wayne Dyer says there are six main characteristics of the ego. The ego believes I am what I have; I am what I do; I am what others think of me; I am separate from everyone; I am separate from everything missing in my life; and, most importantly, I am separate from

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find peace right where we were? When we're looking to escape the present moment, to escape what's happening, including our boredom, we make decisions based on what type of high it will give us. But just as to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, for every high we crave, there is an equal and opposite low. Only in a world at peace can we cease to descend. And it's exactly in this peace that we will find meaningful joy and positivity, light and creativity. The most innovative ideas on the planet were born out of this state. David Burkus of Harvard Business Review explains that *"taking a break from the problem and focusing on something else entirely gives the mind some time to release its fixation on the same solutions and let the old pathways fade from memory. Then, when you return to the original problem, your mind is more open to new possibilities—eureka moments."* Creativity doesn't emerge from the running, it happens in the rest. It happens when you are in flow. Yes, you will continue running, doing, and achieving. Yes, you will continue to live with high positive energy, but it isn't stemming from a need or impulse to fill a void but rather the innate nature of life to create, expand, and love. This is a totally different type of living—one that most people only taste in sporadic moments of joy when they are totally present and in the flow.

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heart. Is there sadness in loss? Yes, of course. Is their joy in birth? Yes, of course. Does it feel really good to be in a happy mood? Is it depressing to be depressed? The answer to all of these questions is obvious. So, indeed, there is great room for feelings and emotions because they are the colors of life. They are the energy we experience and the vibrations we send out into the world around us. They impact how we perform, how we behave, and on a spiritual level, even what we draw to us.

And yet, there can be feelings on the surface and deep peace underneath the surface. Imagine the waves crashing one upon another out in the ocean. On the surface there is constant movement and change. No two moments are the same. But underneath the clamoring of the ocean surface there exists a deep stillness of the unified water below. So is the ocean in constant movement or deep stillness? Both. Equanimity and the peace of sameness can be experienced at the depth of your consciousness while you are aware of different emotions that appear on the surface. The difference is that you do not identify so much with the emotion that it takes over and hijacks your perception. You remain who you are, in the seat of your consciousness, aware of the stirrings.

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Some people mistake sameness as indifference, coldness, hesitation, or withdrawal, but this is incorrect; these are forms of aversion—lack of acceptance. In truth, sameness is a practice of accepting the world as it is and connecting anyway. The still mind accepts the fact of pain in our world. It understands suffering and cruelty as part of the world, which is dominated by ignorance. In stillness, we engage and respond with intention regardless of the challenge.

Read this beautiful passage from Judith Orloff's *Emotional Freedom* that captures the idea so succinctly:

"Emotional freedom doesn't mean becoming bland, numbing our feelings, or spewing them indiscriminately towards others. It entails striving to develop everything that is positive within us as well as being accountable for our full spectrum of feelings, mastering them, and realizing we're so much larger than they are."

What about emotions? Aren't we supposed to feel great, and also sad? Aren't emotions a good thing?

Emotions are a wonderful and important part of our human experience. Through our emotions we gain access to our energy, and all of our feelings flow through our emotional epicenter: the

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You can feel the feelings and yet still have the ability to choose and act instead of reacting to life unconsciously. A person can feel sadness and gratitude at the same time—sadness over the loss of someone and gratitude for the presence he/she had in their life. Surface-level happiness is generated by our interpretation. There is a deeper joy that comes with feelings of peace and love, which are innate feelings existing beyond circumstance. By this I mean they are your natural state. Underneath the baggage we carry, we are all happy people. The soul knows no other experience. Your soul is singing in every moment. The fact that we don't experience our innate happiness consciously is because of the wall blocking us—the wall between who we are and who we *think* we are. It has been said that there is no way to happiness. Happiness *is* the way. You will be happy when you strip away everything that is not of your true nature.

THERE IS NO WAY TO HAPPINESS. HAPPINESS IS THE WAY.

Furthermore, emotions are a measuring stick by which we can measure how we are interpreting reality. When you interpret reality as good, you feel happy. When you interpret reality as negative, you feel sad or angry. But this is only a reflection of how you view and experience the world. Therefore, seeing clearly

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is of prime importance. How you *feel* informs you of what you *believe* right now. The more we integrate this clear perspective into our lives, the more our emotional barometer will reflect our inner state with consistent feelings of joy, peace, and harmony.

Emotions are not a problem. Craving or aversion, which are both forms of attachment, are what create extended pain, or what we call suffering. Attachment comes when we can't let go of something that happened in the past or we decide we won't be happy until something changes according to our expectations for the future. If we crave the continuation or intensification of a joyful experience, then when it inevitably changes, we will experience dissatisfaction in direct proportion to the strength of our craving. Thus, all negative emotions are not defined by what happens to you but by your inner response to what happens. Emotions are real, but they are not reality. They are merely the reality you still choose to see in any given moment.

But what about the fact that life does get hard and some problems are really difficult to manage?

We are generally under the assumption that life *should* be easy. But again, whenever there is a "should" in our mind, it's because we have decided what life should be instead of paying

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attention to what life is. I suffered from this disease called *should*. It used to haunt me. I'd often feel that situations should be different, people shouldn't have done what they did, and I should already be somewhere else and achieving something else. The word "should" belongs to the ego. One of its main tactics is to convince you that things *should* be different. The reality is that things *are* as they are and do not need to be different. How do I know? Because that is how they are.

Instead of fighting the challenge with resistance, feel into the pain and hold compassionate space for your feelings. When you start to feel, you start to heal. Feeling into the pain of a difficult situation is being fully present with your experience instead of wishing it were different. In this acceptance you may find yourself relieved somewhat and are now more able to choose your next course of action.

~79~

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CHAPTER SIX

Do Problems Really Exist?

So does this mean I should accept everything I don't like because that's just how it is? This sounds like I need to be totally complacent and not address my problems.

Challenges can either awaken you or pull you into a deeper sleep.

I believe it begins with clarifying the language we use. Our general assumption is that all challenges are "bad," and in this light we call them "problems." But are there really problems? What if we changed the way we looked at our difficulties? The

~81~

Latin root of the word "problem" is *problema*, which means *throwing forth a question or situation*. Situations arise, and they can be viewed as a question. The question goes like this: *What are you going to do about . . . ?* It's a question about what you are going to do. How you are going to respond. The question is not *how do you feel about this?*

We often walk around assuming the basic question is *how do I feel about this?* And very often the answer we give is *I really don't like this*. When we assume this question, we are bound to go for a bumpy ride. Our inner answer to any question about our feelings sounds something like *good, bad, good, great, amazing, terrible, bad, worse, better, good*, and so on. We set ourselves up to judge and assess everything that happens because there is another underlying question behind *how do you feel*; namely, *is this good or bad?*

What happens when we drop this question and move deeply into a totally new experience? What happens when you see life as being part of something much more vast, grand, and infinitely loving? What happens if the underlying assumption changes to "*All things are good; there are no mistakes in the universe, and I*

~82~

somewhat of insanity. It would serve you better to have an "inner yes" to life, accept, and move forward.

**THE UNIVERSE WILL ALWAYS TREAT YOU THE WAY
YOU TREAT IT.**

THIS IS THE RULE OF MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

Every challenge contains within it a hidden light we just can't see yet. They say we need to learn how to roll with the punches. When approaching this topic, I think of this acronym *R.O.L.L with the punches*. See all the *punches* as:

- Reminders—of what's important and what's real.
- Opportunities—that have not been revealed yet.
- Lessons—to be learned.
- Leading—in a new and significant direction you might never have taken otherwise.

Remember that anything we label as "bad" is really just a portal, a channel, and a reminder of our destiny. Use it. Use the hard experiences as opportunities to go deeper into your true nature, which is the light you truly are. The love that you are. The creative person that you are. The kind person that you are.

~84~

am being taken care of and guided in all situations? What if, for a moment, we choose to see life through a different lens?

We can choose to see our life situation as an enemy, an obstacle, or a means to an end in any situation; this means we're defending, hating, defeating, overcoming, and using life. Or, we can choose to see life (and particularly our "problems") as a friend to love, a detour to embrace, and an opportunity to appreciate and experience.

The Universe is always saying, *I will be whatever you want me to be. I'll treat you how you treat me*. If you see circumstance as a problem, it will be a problem for you, won't it? If you choose to see opportunities, what type of action do you think you'll make in response? We respond with better quality when we see things with a higher-quality perspective. Don't create any more pain for yourself by resisting what is and by wanting to be someone else, somewhere else, or doing something else. We only have two options: accept the unacceptable when there is nothing to do about it, or take action. Sometimes taking action is self-defense. Sometimes it is saying something, and sometimes it means to leave a particular situation. If there is nothing you can *do* about something, then to maintain an "inner no" to life is

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The forgiving person that you are. The powerful person that you are. The soulful person that you are. Let go of whatever is false and grab onto truth.

A practice that is incredibly useful is to keep a *reminder journal*. Mentally scroll through your life and identify the times where it was clear to you that what on the surface appeared as trouble was in fact a reminder, opportunity, lesson, or led you in a new direction toward something important. Keeping track of these experiences strengthens your resolve and consciousness of living with a higher order. You may borrow stories and lessons from others that have inspired you as well. There is no limit to where you can draw inspiration from on your journey toward awakening.

~85~

You may be surprised to learn that one of your best wellness tools is actually a journal. Journaling offers an array of benefits — from easing stress to sparking self-discovery.

“Journaling is mindfulness in motion,” says [Lisann Valentin](#), a Shamanic life coach. It shines a spotlight on the invaluable things in your life that you might not always recognize.

Here are six other wide-ranging benefits of putting pen to paper — or fingers to keypad — along with how to start and actually sustain this helpful habit.

1. Journaling helps to reduce stress

“Journaling can be a great pressure releasing valve when we feel overwhelmed or simply have a lot going on internally,” says [Amy Hoyt](#), PhD, founder of Mending Trauma.

Some research bears this out. For example, in [one studyTrusted Source](#), patients, families, and healthcare practitioners from a children’s hospital reported a reduction in stress levels after completing this journaling exercise:

- write three things you’re grateful for
- write the story of your life in six words
- write three wishes you have

In a [follow-up studyTrusted Source](#) 12 to 18 months later, 85 percent of the participants reported that the writing exercise was helpful. Fifty-nine percent continued using writing to cope with stress.

2. Journaling may boost health and well-being

A 2018 [research review](#) suggests that writing about your deepest thoughts and feelings may contribute to:

- fewer stress-related doctor visits
- [lower blood pressure](#)
- improved mood
- greater well-being

In addition, a [study of 70 adultsTrusted Source](#) with medical conditions and anxiety found that writing about positive experiences, like [gratitude](#), for 12 weeks was linked to:

- reduced distress
- increased well-being

In the same study, after a month, participants reported fewer symptoms of [depression and anxiety](#). After the first and second months, participants reported greater resilience.

3. Journaling encourages space from negative thoughts

When [negative or worried thoughts](#) arise, it’s easy to get caught up in their catastrophic stories. Jotting down your thoughts, however, “creates space and distance to consider them in a more objective way,” says [Sabrina Romanoff](#), PsyD, a clinical psychologist in New York City.

This distance is formally called cognitive defusion, a helpful concept from acceptance and commitment therapy. “The idea is that you are not your thoughts, emotions, or physical symptoms; instead, you are the context in which they occur,” says Romanoff.

In other words, if your thoughts aren’t serving you, you don’t have to believe them. Instead, you can use journaling to see your thoughts as separate from you.

To further underscore this separation as you're journaling, try adding this phrase: "I'm having the thought that..."

4. Journaling provides a way to process emotions

Plenty of people move about their days either not noticing their emotions or actively [pushing them down](#). The problem? Your emotions have a way of still popping up to the surface and affecting your actions — with or without our awareness.

Journaling gives you the opportunity to process your emotions in a safe, contained space. Naming the specific emotions you're experiencing and accepting them [reduces their strength](#)[Trusted Source](#). That way, difficult emotions become less overwhelming and easier to manage.

5. Journaling can help to figure out your next step

Writing down your thoughts and feelings about a situation is the first step in understanding how best to proceed. Once you've calmed down a bit, you might find that your emotions are trying to tell you something: Maybe your anger is a sign that you need to [set a stronger boundary](#) with someone. Or your sadness is nudging you to reach out and strengthen your connections.

Seeing your concerns, questions, and emotions in black and white gives you a clearer picture of your needs. Even a simple list of pros and cons can provide deeper insight into your desires — certainly more so than a jumble of thoughts knocking around in your head.

6. Journaling deepens self-discovery

Think of yourself as a puzzle: You get to discover a different piece or pattern every single day. Journaling provides a much-needed pause to help us reconnect to ourselves and rediscover who we are. When we write, we learn our preferences, pain points, fears, favorites, and dreams.

We are constantly evolving. Journaling helps us to listen, bear witness to these changes, and simply get to know ourselves a whole lot better.

9 super simple tips to start

Whether you're completely new to journaling or returning after a long hiatus, try these tips for building a sustainable habit.

Take a micro-step

At the start, try not to bite off more than you can chew. As Hoyt explains, "micro-steps are less likely to be rejected by the brain, whereas large sweeping changes can feel unsafe, and we may give up." She suggests setting a timer for just one or two minutes a day for your journaling session.

Pick the simplest tools

Since everyone is different, start with whatever method is easiest to incorporate into your routine, says Romanoff, like:

- writing in a blank doc on your laptop
- using a note-taking app on your phone
- putting pen to paper

Try free writing

Start by taking several deep breaths, noticing your immediate surroundings, and writing whatever comes to mind, says [Lori L. Cangilla](#), PhD, a Pittsburg-based psychologist, avid journal writer, and member of the International Association for Journal Writing.

If you've drawn a blank, Cangilla notes, "describe that experience until something else comes forward in your journaling."

Let it all out

Write whatever thoughts and feelings arise, without censoring yourself. "It's your journal, so you can be as petty, blunt, and honest as you wish," says Cangilla. To resist the temptation to edit, try writing as fast as possible, she adds.

Anchor your journaling

If you like structure, journal at the same time every day. For example, says Valentin, write your thoughts when you first wake up or process the day before bedtime.

You can also anchor your journaling to a well-established habit to make it more likely you'll stick with it. For example, journal:

- before or after a nightly prayer
- when you're in the car rider line
- during a commercial break on TV

Connect the dots

To sharpen your self-awareness, you can jot down your feelings around a specific situation, day to day. For example, you might simply write:

- This is what happened today.
- I'm experiencing these feelings about it.
- I'm thinking these thoughts.

Avoid re-reading painful entries

Cangilla advises against revisiting the raw details of difficult situations. If you feel you aren't done with a situation, she says, you can refocus on:

- what you're grateful for in the situation
- how you'll apply what you've learned from it

Explore a prompt

Prompts are a powerful way to get to know yourself better. They're also great when you aren't sure what to journal about.

Try these ideas from [Lori Ryland](#), PhD, LP, a psychologist and chief clinical officer at Pinnacle Treatment Centers:

- Write your favorite memories from childhood or your children's lives.
- Go out into nature, and write about the experience.
- Describe something you fear doing and why.
- Describe something you love doing and why.
- Describe yourself, including your personality and roles at work and home. Then describe yourself from the perspective of a close friend or family member.
- If you wake up tomorrow having everything you want, what does this look like? Where are you? Who are you with? What are you doing with your time?

Switch shoes

If you're journaling about a disagreement, try writing with empathy. Consider the other person's perspective and motives behind some of their actions, says Romanoff. Putting yourself in their shoes may help you gain clarity on the situation, reduce resentment, and possibly even find a solution.

42. *Nega'im 2:5*

כָּל הַנִּגְעִים אֲדָם רוֹאֶה, חוּץ מִנִּגְעֵי עַצְמוֹ. רַבִּי מֵאִיר אָמַר, אִף לֹא נִגְעֵי קְרוֹבָיו. כָּל הַנִּגְדִּים אֲדָם מִתִּיר, חוּץ מִנִּגְדֵּי עַצְמוֹ. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר, אִף לֹא נִגְדֵּי אִשְׁתּוֹ שְׂפִינָהּ לְבִין אֲחֵרִים. כָּל הַבְּכוֹרוֹת אֲדָם רוֹאֶה, חוּץ מִבְּכוֹרוֹת עַצְמוֹ:

All negaim may be examined by a person, except his own. Rabbi Meir ruled: not even the negaim of his relatives. All vows may be released by a person, except his own. Rabbi Judah says: not even those vows of his wife that affect relationships between her and others. All firstlings may be examined by a person, except his own firstlings.

וְכָל הַפּוֹסֵל פָּסוּל וְאִינוֹ מְדַבֵּר בְּשִׁבְחָא לְעוֹלָם וְאָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל בְּמוֹמוֹ

פּוֹסֵל

43. *Kiddushin 70a*

He further said: **And anyone who disqualifies** others by stating that their lineage is flawed, that is a sign that he himself **is of flawed** lineage. Another indication that one's lineage is flawed is that **he never speaks in praise** of others. **And Shmuel says:** If one habitually claims that others are flawed, **he disqualifies himself with his own flaw**. The flaw he accuses them of having is in fact the one that he has.

44. *Avos 1:6*

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה וְנִתַּי הָאֲרֵבֶלִי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן פְּרַחְיָה אָמַר, עֲשֵׂה לְךָ רֵב, וְקַנֵּה לְךָ חֵבֵר, וְהָיוּ דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת:

Joshua ben Perahiah and Nittai the Arbelite received [the oral tradition] from them. Joshua ben Perahiah used to say: appoint for thyself a teacher, and acquire for thyself a companion and judge all men with the scale weighted in his favor.

45. *Rabbeinu Yonah*

וקנה לך חבר. לשלשה דבר' אדם צריך אל החבר הטוב. האחד לדברי תורה כמו שאמר הרבה למדתי מרבותי ומחבירי יותר מרבותי. והשני למצות שאף כשאינן חבירי חסיד ממנו ופעמים שגם הוא עושה אשר לא כדת. כשהוא נהנה בדבר עושה העבירה. אבל אין חפצו ורצונו שחברו יעשנה כי אין לו הנאה בזה וכמו שאמרו (**קדושין סג**): ואין אדם חוטא ולא לו. נמצאו שניהם חוזרין בתשובה כל אחד על פי חברו. והשלישי לענין העצה שיקחנו להיות לו מעיר לעזור בכל ענינו ולקחת ממנו עצה טובה ולהיות בן סודו אחר היותו עמו בברית ולא יגלנו לאחרים לבל יפרו מחשבתו ואף לא לנראים אליו כאהבים כי צורת האהבה נכרת על פניהם. ועל זה אמר שלמה ע"ה (**משלי ט"ו כ"ב**) הפר מחשבות באין סוד וברוב יועצים תקום. ומה שאמר **וקנה לך חבר** בלשון (נקה) [קניה] שאם לא ימצאנו בחנם יקחנו בכסף ויבזבו נכסיו כדי להשיג אל חבר טוב או שיקנהו בפיוס דברים ובלשון רכה ולא יקפיד בדבריו ויסבול אמרי פיהו אף כשיאמר דבר כנגדו אל ישיבהו מענה. שבלא כן לא ישר באהבה שהדעות חלוקים הם ופעמים יבקש דבר אוהבו כנפשו יאמר ראה זה לא אכשר ואם לא יעשה כן (ויעבירהו על כל פנים) תפרד החבילה. וזהו שאמר שלמה ע"ה (**משלי י"ז ט**) מכסה פשע מבקש אהבה ושנה בדבר מפריד אלוף. ר"ל המכסה כשיפשע חברו מבקש אהבה כי על ידי זה תתקיים אהבתם שיסבול פשעיו. ושנה בדבר אם חברו אומר כנגדו וחוזר אותו ואומר ראו מה אמר פלוני מה דבר עלי מפריד אלוף (על כל פנים) מפריד אלוף ממנו ר"ל אוהבו:

"**acquire for yourself a friend**": A person needs three things from a good friend. One is for words of Torah, as it stated ([Taanit 7a](#)), "I have learned much from my teachers and more from my friends than from my teachers." And the second is for commandments. As even if his friend is not more pious than he and there are times that he does what is not in order. [Yet it is only] when he derives pleasure from something that he does the sin, but it is not his desire and his will that his friend do it - as he derives no enjoyment from this. And it is like they said ([Kiddushin 63b](#)), "And a man will not sin if it is not for himself." It comes out that both of them will repent, each one according to the word of his friend. And the third is regarding advice that he can take, that he be 'one who arouses (a counselor) for help' in all of his affairs and to take good counsel from him and to be his confidant. Since he is his ally, he will not reveal [his secrets] to others so as not to confound his plan - and not even to those that appear to him to be friends; for is the appearance of love evident on their faces? And about this Shlomo, peace be upon him, stated ([Proverbs 15:22](#)), "Plans are foiled for want of counsel, but they succeed through many advisers." And that which he said, "**acquire for yourself a friend**" with an expression of [acquisition] (euphemism) is [to say] that if he does not find him for free, he should acquire him with his money and expend his assets in order to get to a good friend; or that he should acquire him with words of appeasement and with a soft way of talking. And [so] he should not be exacting about his words and he should tolerate the words of his mouth; even when he says something against him, he should not return a response. As without this, he will not keep [the friendship], since the opinions [of people] are different. And sometimes he will seek something, [but] his friend who is like himself will say, "See, I do not [consider] this to be fit." And if he doesn't [listen to his friend] (he will certainly pass him up), the [friendship] will unravel. And this is what Shlomo, peace be upon him, stated ([Proverbs 17:9](#)), "He who seeks love covers errors, but he who harps on a matter alienates a leader." He meant to say, one who covers when his friend errs, seeks love - as through this, their love is preserved, as he tolerates his errors. But if he harps about the matter with his friend, he speaks against him and repeats it and says, "See what this one said; what he said about me, he 'alienates the leader' - he(certainly) alienates his leader from him, meaning to say, his friend.

How to Overcome the Negative Voice in Your Head



CLAY SKIPPER January 24, 2022

46.

We've all got a voice in our head. (Maybe you can hear yours, right now, reading these words.) And though you're intimately familiar with that inner voice, since it talks to you all day long, you might be surprised to learn just how incessant it is. According to one study, it can spew up to four thousand words a minute. If you're awake for sixteen hours, that's more than 3.8 million words every day. That's because that voice does so much for you: It helps you keep information in your head (remembering, say, a phone number or items on a grocery list), simulates and plans for upcoming events, like a date or an interview, coaches you through problems, and even narrates your life to make sense of your experiences. It's a good thing. Mostly.

"We're talking about this fundamentally important feature of the human mind, which is the inner voice," says [Ethan Kross](#), a psychologist and neuroscientist who studies introspection at the Emotion & Self-Control Laboratory he founded at the University of Michigan. "It does lots of good stuff for us but sometimes becomes our worst enemy." It tips into worst-enemy territory, Kross says, when it becomes *chatter*. "Chatter is the dark side of the inner voice," he continues. "Sometimes stuff happens, we turn our attention inward to try to make sense of the problem, but we don't come up with solutions. Instead, we start spinning. We worry, we ruminate, we catastrophize, we get stuck in the negative thought loop."

Chatter is what happens when athletes choke, when their inner voice becomes so loud and critical that it disrupts their ability to perform otherwise routine and automatic feats. It's also what jolts you awake in the middle of the night, keeping you fixated on that awkward exchange from earlier in the day or wondering if maybe that afternoon headache was the sign of an advanced neurological disease. You've likely experienced it during the pandemic, worrying about how and when you might catch the virus. Chatter makes it hard for us to focus on our work and be present in our relationships, and has even been shown to negatively impact our physical health to such a degree that it can alter our DNA. Scary stuff.

But Kross thinks that your inner voice doesn't have to be a burden. Which is why, last year, he wrote a book called [Chatter: The Voice in Our Head, Why It Matters, and How to Harness It](#). Using tools he's picked up from his own experience and from the work he's done in his lab, he wants to not only provide useful ideas for how to cope with chatter at this particularly uncertain moment; he's also hoping to normalize chatter, to help us realize that negative talk comes standard with the rest of our human software. As Kross puts it, "When people say, 'Oh my god, I'm experiencing chatter, is something wrong with me,' I say, 'No, welcome to the human condition.'"

GQ: You have a long list of techniques in the book that can be helpful in drawing us out when we're stuck in negative thought loops. Which ones do you find most useful?

Ethan Kross: Chatter is like a microscope. It zooms us in on our problems. All we can think about is the stuff that's driving us nuts. What can be useful are strategies that help us zoom out, help broaden our perspective, and help us think about it more objectively.

One tool is something called distanced self-talk, which involves trying to give myself advice like I would to a good friend, and actually using my name to help do it. "Here's what you're going to do." It's much easier for us to give advice to other people than to follow our own advice. Distanced self-talk shifts our perspective. It puts us into this coaching mode. We stop thinking about these issues we're facing as threats that we can't handle, and instead think of them as challenges that we can.

Another distancing strategy is called temporal distancing, or mental time travel. I'll think about how I'm going to feel about this thing that's bothering me some time down the road. If I wake up in the middle of the night, and think, *Oh my God, what about this thing?* I'll think, *How am I going to feel about this in the morning when I'm fully recharged? How am I going to feel about this a week from now, or a month from now, or a year from now?* It makes clear that what you're going through is temporary. It'll eventually pass.

What have you changed your mind on, or evolved your thinking on, in the year since the book came out?

There are a lot of myths out there about how to manage ourselves that are not grounded in reality, and that are important to correct. The idea that venting is a way to manage our feelings—well, that's a myth. There's lots of data that suggests that that is not true. Also, the idea that we should always be in the present. The human mind did not evolve to always be in the present. We have this ability to travel in time in our minds, and that's often vilified in popular culture: *Oh no, your mind's wandering, bring it back to the present, you're not in the moment.* If we were always in the moment we wouldn't be doing things like building space ships to go to Mars, or developing vaccines that are protecting us from this pandemic.

To be clear, I think there is enormous value in being in the moment at times. Meditation can be very helpful to some people. But what we often do, unfortunately, is overcorrect. Rather than, "This can be useful in conjunction with other things some of the time," it's like, "This is what you should do always." It's problematic because it's impossible for a person to always be in the moment. So it's giving people goals that are unattainable, and not necessarily healthy.

One of the ways I've found meditation to be useful is that it helps you contain uncomfortable feelings, so you don't get swallowed by them when your chatter starts to pick up.

Some forms of meditation teach how to accept your negative thoughts and feelings, and recognize that they're passing mental events. That's a great tool. But houses don't get built with individual tools. No carpenter comes to a job with just a hammer. You've got a whole toolbox. So why limit ourselves to one individual tool? That's the big idea I'm trying to convey.

It seems like part of the line to toe here is knowing when to engage with your chatter, and knowing when to just let it go. I'm just wondering if every time I start contemplating what tool I should use, if that might end up being counterproductive. As opposed to being like, "Okay, you're just doing some rumination, let it be, and eventually it'll pass."

I would just say that's a different tool, that acceptance. Although, interestingly, what you just described was a version of distance self talk. You used the second-person pronoun *you*—"You're doing it again, it's going to pass"—and temporal distancing. The actual process of what it means to accept a thought means talking to yourself with your other-person language, and recognizing the impermanence of what you're going through.

Many of us are using these tools in our lives already. For example, a lot of people have the intuition that they should talk to other people when they're experiencing chatter, so they're doing that already. But they're venting about their emotions. They're talking to people who are just keeping the chatter brewing, rather than helping them suppress it. So that's one place where science can help you do something that you're already doing, but much more effectively.

The other thing that knowing about science can do for us is it can allow us to be much more proactive and deliberate with respect to how we manage our chatter. For instance, I didn't realize this until after I was working on the book and covered some of this research, but I'm not someone who used to keep a very organized office, or home. There's a trail of towels, pajamas, throughout the house, in my closet. Stacks of books and papers in my office. When I experience chatter, though, I always put stuff away, I organize.

Turns out there's science that explains why I and many other people clean and organize when we're experiencing chatter. When you're experiencing chatter, when you're ruminating or worrying, you feel like you don't have control over your circumstances. The thoughts are taking over, and you no longer have agency, and that doesn't feel good. Human beings love control. So organizing and cleaning compensates for that experience.

If somebody does come to you, how do you help them suppress the chatter instead of facilitating their venting?

When people come to us with their problems, they're typically coming to us because they have two needs. They have social and emotional needs. They're looking for people to empathize with them, to help them normalize their experience and realize there's nothing wrong with them. But then they're always looking for people to help them actually resolve this turmoil they're struggling with.

The way you help people satisfy those needs is, first, taking the time to listen actively and empathetically. You learn about what they've gone through, you show that you care. Then at a certain point in that conversation, after you've done those things, you start nudging them to try to get them to broaden their perspective on the issue. So you might ask questions like, "You've gone through this in the past, how have you dealt with this?" Or, "Think about how you're going to feel about this a week from now, or a year from now." Doing the kinds of things we talked about earlier, but just cuing the person to do it, trying to get them to zoom out.

The art form to doing this well is that, depending on the person and the problem they're struggling with, it's not always clear when to shift from just listening to helping advise them. When my wife comes to me about something she's ruminating about, at some point I'll say, "Totally get it, I understand why you're feeling this way. Can I offer my view on this, or say something like that?" Some of the time, she'll be like, "No. Just keep listening. I'm not done telling you how I feel." Then I keep listening for a while and I try again. At other points she'll be like, "Yes, please, what do you think I should do? Tell me." So you want to just feel that out. That is the art form involved in doing this well.

Knowing this lets you think strategically about who you should call for help, who you should talk to. Not everyone who we know and love is a good chatter advisor. On the flipside, if someone comes to you for support, be mindful of these two goals that you're trying to achieve.

47. R' Aryeh Kaplan

1934-1983

Mediation and Kabbalah



1. THE SCHOOLS

It is universally accepted by the Kabbalists that the first ones to engage in these meditative methods were the patriarchs and prophets, who used them to attain enlightenment and prophecy. Although there are many allusions to this in the Bible, the scripture is virtually silent when it comes to providing explicit descriptions of their methods. Still, if one looks at the appropriate texts, one can gain considerable insight into the methods that were in use in the time of the prophets.¹

The earliest direct statement regarding method comes from the First Century, from the early Talmudic period. Here we find some of the greatest Talmudists engaged in the mystical arts, making use of a number of meditative techniques to attain spiritual elevation and ascend to the transcendental realm. Many of these techniques consisted of the repetition of divine names, as well as intense concentration on the transcendental spheres. What little we know of their methods is preserved in a few fragments, as well in a remarkable complete text, *Hekhalot Rabatai* (The Greater Chambers), of which the main parts are presented for the first time in translation in this book.

It was during this period that some of the main classics of Kabbalah were written. These include the *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Formation), the Bahir and the Zohar. These involved even higher levels than those described in the *Hekhalot*, and for the most part, only the barest hints are provided as to how these levels were reached.

With the close of the Talmudic period, these methods became restricted to a few very small closed secret societies. Both the Bahir and the Zohar remained completely unknown outside of these societies, and were not revealed until the late Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries respectively. The publication of the Bahir in particular gave impetus to the study of the mysteries, and a number of individuals began to openly teach the secret methods

2. METHODS

Meditation is primarily a means of attaining spiritual liberation. Its various methods are designated to loosen the bond of the physical, allowing the individual to ascend to the transcendental, spiritual realm. One who accomplishes this successfully is said to have attained *Ruach HaKodesh*, The "Holy Spirit," which is the general Hebraic term for enlightenment.

The best-known contemporary method of meditation is that which involves a mantra, a word or phrase that is repeated over and over for a designated period of time. One concentrates on the mantra to the exclusion of all else, thus clearing the mind of all extraneous thoughts and divorcing it from the normal stream of consciousness. In this method, the mantra may be repeated verbally, or the repetition may be completely mental. This type of meditation is found in the Kabbalah, especially among the earlier schools. In the *Hekhalot*, for example, one begins his spiritual ascent by repeating a number of Divine Names 112 times.

Mantra meditation is an example of structured, externally directed meditation. It is externally directed, insofar as one concentrates on a word or phrase, rather than on the spontaneous thoughts to the mind. Since it involves a specific practice, repeated for a fixed length of time, it is considered a structured meditation.

Another example of structured externally-directed meditation is contemplation, where one gazes at an object, placing all of one's concentration on it. In occult practices, the best-known type of contemplation involves gazing into a crystal ball.² Other types of contemplation involve mandalas, pictures or letter designs, where one gazes upon them, emptying the mind of all other thought. In Kabbalah meditation, the simplest contemplative device is the Tetragrammaton itself, and this is discussed even in non-Kabbalistic works.³ More





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