

yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 29 Jun 2009 19:47

(any questions , insights & suggestions about this thread,feel free to email me at taryaga@gmail.com)

There are many reasons we need to be where we are and who we are,most are unknown.Why do we even have to be in a situation or have in our soul so much darkness and a pull toward self-destructing negative behaviors?

I saw once an amazing thought in a sefer.Moshe Rabeinu came from a union that after the Torah was given would have deemed him a mamzer(parents being an aunt & nephew).He could not boast of his lineage.This is one reason that let him be the greatest Anov that ever lived.

We who have to deal with the stuff that's in us that we would rather not have in the first place-this pain and shame over the course of time -makes us realize that even when we b'ezras Hashem pull out of the addictions-we will never look at another Yid that is struggling with this in a negative way

We catch a Yid looking where he shouldn't be looking and our hearts are full of compassion.We will daven for him,treat him with respect,gently try to get him out of it.We would never disgrace him-not even in our hearts-because we were there.We know what it's like.In our eyes he is a potential tzaddik.

This is surely one reason Hashem gave us this urge towards baseness with all it's shades of ugliness.Yes you are special-like every Yid is-but never ever judge harshly My son or daughter that is struggling-because I love him or her - he or she is part of Klall Yisroel.Just as indispensable as you are.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 31 Jan 2011 20:35

All single men

Looking for a beautiful woman to marry

All married men

Looking for a beautiful woman

That he does not see in his wife

And “thinks” he sees in another

Remember This:

“Hayafa BaNashim”

Which means “the most beautiful of women”

Has the numerical value of 502

It is the same numerical value as

“Arur Haman”-“Cursed be Haman”

Also 502

And yet it also has the same numerical value

As “Boruch Mordechai”-“Blessed be Mordechai”

Also 502

So proceed with caution, single men,

Take a step back, married men

You want a beautiful woman

Think of what you wish for

A bride befitting a Mordechai?

Or a witch befitting a Haman?

They may externally look equally exquisite

Both a whopping “502”

Yet one is the truest blessing

And the other is Hell on this earth!!!

Is it the Haman within you seeing her?

Or is it Mordechai within you that perceives her ?

So single men ,pray to God

So you can “see” clearly

The truth of beauty

And married men

See the beauty hidden in what is before you

And if you can't?

Then tap into the gift of Mordechai

Who saw in Esther

The "Chut Hachesed"

That made her beautiful.

And pray for that gift.

you will find

that you can draw to her

That "Chut Hachesed"

with your own words

and kind deeds

towards her

For without prayer,

You single one

Will see a "stunning" Zeresh

Thinking she is Esther

That is the Hell

You will live with

And without prayer

And lacking some very honest soul searching,

You married one,

Will be in mourning all your life

Thinking that you married a Zeresh

Not even dawning on you

That it was Esther all along....

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 01 Feb 2011 14:27

Even after bad choices

Were made

Screw-Ups

On a

Major scale

Nothing is lost

Life is Perfect

There is a space

Inner chamber of your soul

Where everything is

The way it was meant to be

He invites you inside

That space

Where no mistakes

Can enter

For when they do

They simply have no power there

That little room in your soul

No agony can touch

No regret can soil

No infection can fester

No disease can take hold

That is a place of

Pure Love

Healing and

Acceptance

We are too ashamed

To enter that warm place

To low to feel worthy enough

To experience it

And yet

This is God's gift to us

For by entering that sacred place

Within,

We are affirming God's Greatness

And Humility,

To accept us as we are

And from that acceptance

Comes true growth

And real change

So He pleads with us

No matter how "bad"

Or "low" you feel

We may think He is "angry" with us

Yet we must ignore such false voices

And enter into

That sacred room residing

Within each and every one of us

That room we have been avoiding

All our lives

To finally have the courage

To enter

For from that space

All healing springs forth

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 01 Feb 2011 19:42

for those who have a natural disposition toward enjoying nice clothing and the shopping and wearing of it, here is an interesting perspective on the deeper meaning of clothings and its effect on the soul

From Rav Kook

Tetzaveh: Clothes of Dignity and Beauty

"Make sacred clothes for your brother Aaron, for dignity and beauty. ... They will be used to consecrate him and make him a priest to Me." (Ex. 28:2-3)

Why Do We Wear Clothes?

Clothing has a dual purpose. Its first function is utilitarian, protecting us from the elements — the cold and the rain, the wind and the sun. In this respect, our apparel corresponds to the fur of beasts and the feathers of birds. Except that the animals have it better. They never need to change clothes, or worry about acquiring new garments when they wear out or no longer fit. Their wardrobe comes naturally.

The second function of clothing, on the other hand, is unique to humans. **Our attire affects our state of mind; it influences how we feel about ourselves and the image that we wish to project.** We feel unhappy when wearing unattractive or ill-fitting clothes, and feel good wearing apparel that is complementary. We feel comfortable in casual clothing, and dignified in formal wear.

This second aspect of clothing has great ethical value. It stresses those qualities that separate us from the animals and their simple physical needs. It enables us to attain a heightened sense of holiness and dignity. By covering our heads, wearing modest dress, and fulfilling the mitzvot of tefilin and tzitzit, we deepen our awareness of God's presence.

David's Punishment

When King David was old, living in his cold Jerusalem palace, he was unable to warm himself in the winter, no matter how many layers of clothing he wore (I Kings 1). Why was it that clothes no longer kept the king warm?

The Talmud explains that David was punished in his old age for a deed he had performed many years earlier. When King Saul was hunting for David in the caves of the Judean desert, David surreptitiously cut off the corner of the king's cloak while King Saul slept. For this act of disrespect towards clothing, David paid a heavy price. "One who treats clothing contemptuously, in the end will be unable to derive benefit from them" (Berachot 62b).

In light of our analysis of clothes, King David's punishment becomes clearer. The two aspects of clothing — its utilitarian and ethical functions — are interrelated. If we fail to appreciate clothing's contribution to human dignity and morality, raising us above the animals, then we have overlooked its principle benefit. It is only due to its spiritual value in acquiring refined traits that we also enjoy its physical benefit — providing warmth and comfort. If clothes were meant only to protect us from the elements, we would have been better off with a good coat of fur.

When David tore the royal garments, he belittled the key purpose of clothing. His punishment demonstrates that, stripped of its ethical function, clothing loses its true value. And then, even its utilitarian value is lost.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 01 Feb 2011 21:36

Candle before me

So peaceful

Even as it strives

Upward,

There is serenity

Warmth & Love

Within its Fiery yearning

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 02 Feb 2011 14:26

Our Culture's root problem

Lies in the "static"

Constant movement outward,

More activity, actions, processes,

That noise that buries

The calm quietness that lies beneath

If only we can learn

To quiet that static

So that the soul

Can be heard

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 02 Feb 2011 17:39

i enjoy your poems, yechida

thanks for sharing them

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 02 Feb 2011 21:42

Thank you Zemiros,

there is a child's rhyme:

Sticks and stones

May break my bones

But names will never hurt me.

An alternate version is:

Sticks and stones

May break my bones

But words will never hurt me

This is false

Here is a great passage from Virginia Woolf's book "To the Lighthouse", her second or third greatest book, that describes the inner power of words and the devastating hurt it can inflict on the human mind and heart

(Mr Ramsey had just made a sharp and insensitive comment towards his wife Mrs Ramsey in regards to their son, and this is the quote...)

"to pursue with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilization so wantonly, so brutally was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that, without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter the unrebuked. There was nothing to be said...."

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 03 Feb 2011 18:15

Each one of us

Different abilities

Diverse tasks

Unique tracks

Leading to

The same destination

The King has

Many levels of subjects

Underneath him

Yet at his Crowning

They all bow down

Submit their will

Equally

As One

Rosh Hashanah

Is only once a year

But spreads across

The course of the year

We can tap into its energy

Each and every day

Connecting to the fountainhead

The source of everything

An inner submission

To the King of Kings

Connecting to Him

“Kabolos Ol”

Acceptance of His sovereignty

Deep in our hearts

Defying and overriding

Any human "logic"

That we have in our minds

The key

Of this submission

To be laced with

Inner Joy

How fortunate

And blissful it is

To be a subject

Of the King of Kings

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 03 Feb 2011 20:25

The Yahrziet of the Alter of Slobodka today

His main nekudah was to stress the greatness God bestowed on every single human being , the Tzelem Elokim , and we need to tap into this greatness,which even Non-Jews have, yet sadly most of the world does not know this.

I opened his sefer "Ohr Hatzafun" briefly last night and came across this point

"Hakoras Hatov" is not what people think it is. It's not a "beautiful" middah (though, in reality, it is

beautiful).

It's basic humanness, and without it we lack an integral aspect of what it is to be a human being - a Tzelem Elokim

From what I read of him (many artscroll biography books, Reb Yaakov & The Mashgiach to mention two, have a lot of discussion of him, as well as Hillel Goldberg "the Fire Within" and "Illuminating the Generations") he was a very private and complex person who had the ability to detect greatness in people and carefully developed a select few that would lead the next generation. Many Rosh Yeshivas either were talmidim of his or learned in his yeshiva following his derech.

May we merit to learn from his ways

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 04 Feb 2011 14:06

A great gift is

A father

A mother

Who does not

Take into account

Their personal likes

And dislikes

Removing prideful ego

Doing what is best

For their child

Acting in accordance

To what is healthy

For their offspring

Even when it doesn't feel good

For themselves

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 04 Feb 2011 16:38

We need to learn

The deeper dimension

Of "Teshuva"

Returning to God

Is not only

The repentance

Of ones sins

Not merely

The erasing

Of the flows

Of the soul

It's way beyond this

The “return”

Of the soul

To its source above

Its essence, its root

Not only to the state

The soul was in

Prior to its descent here

But even beyond that.

For the descent down here

Draws an incredible source

That is revealed Above

When the soul “returns”

To God

Even while we are yet still alive

On this earth

It's the collective powers

Of the soul that “returns”

Not just certain aspects of soul

But its entirety

Drawing the soul

To its greatest potential

It elevates

The complete Collective Soul

Of Klal Yisroel

Along with it.

This pristine form

Of 'Teshuva"

Requires "Achdus"

Undivided Unity

Bringing our Collective Soul

Of Knesses Yisroel

Back to its true Source

All the more beautiful

Precisely because of its

Descent down here

On this earth

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 07 Feb 2011 13:43

Feedback on the concepts of these series of notes are greatly appreciated-either via PM or at taryaga@gmail.com)

Light Notes # 2 “The Joy of Transformation” (Adar 1 5771)-Tezaveh

Dear Friends,

Not just any oil is suitable for the Menorah in the Mishkan & Bais Hamikdosh.

The oil must be specially refined.

Hand-crushed olives. The purest of the pure. So that it will “raise up the flames”- “raising” signifies a great elevation.

Rav Kook explains that our body is like a wick. It must be refined so that it does not resist the light, but rather works together with the soul.

The oil, which is absorb in the wick that will create the flame must be refined, so that the wick, the body, becomes a worthy vehicle and conduit for the brilliant light of the soul.

The crushing of the olive into this pure refined oil usually has an association with a great degree of suffering. That it is through pain and suffering that forcefully propels us to a more elevated and pure state of mind and soul.

Based on our very human perception, the “Kosis”, the crushing of the olive to pure oil is to our naked eye connected with a demeaning, degrading, horrible and painful process. It seems to us if an olive would be able to feel and talk, it would have been screaming in agony as it was being crushed.

Yet , it is very clear , that this is not so.

This is a terrible misconception.

Reb Moishe Fienstein ztl lamented on this error in our thinking. He has felt that many people from frum families had gone off the Torah path because it was ingrained in them from their youth hearing how “Ess Iz Azoy Shver Tzu Zien a Yid” – “Its so difficult to be a Jew!!!” So that there has been this message that is drilled very deeply into their belief system, a negativity associated with the “Yegiah”-the toil of doing Mitzvos and learning Torah. Often hard work and obligations and toil dampens our mood, drains us, drags us down, --no matter how lofty and beautiful the ideal we are striving for.

A lot of this attitude is our prior conditioning –requiring a new and fresh perspective—a different way of thinking than we have thought in the past.

There are fortunate ones that do not need to do this

I have never spoken with them, but it is safe to say that Rav Dovid Fienstein and Rav Reuvain Feinstein are great men in their own right. True Gedolim in every sense of the word. And yet, I am sure they will admit, that a lot of their Ahavas Hatorah and Simchas Hanefesh of doing Mitzvos is due to the very warm feelings about Yiddishkeit that their very special father instilled in them from a very young age.

Rav Moishe toiled and sweated and put in all his kochos in Avodas Hashem, writing, giving shiurim, answering Shaalos, effort on a superhuman level, And yet in his home it was a joyful and precious experience, and so his children felt the same way.

The warm feeling, the simcha, transforms the toil and the “crushing” of the olive, from a seemingly painful experience into a very joyful one.

We may not have been as fortunate as them, but each one of us has the ability to reframe our experiences, so that with us as well, the “crushing” of the olive will be an experience full with Simcha.

It need not feel so tragic. It need not be racked with intense pain. It can be full of love and joy, even as it's hard work, as a young man or woman dancing with joy at their best friend's wedding. They are jumping, singing, helping to pick the chair of the chosson/kallah ,they are sweating buckets, and finally when they get home they are worn exhausted and tired and drained. And yet , they wouldn't have wanted it any other way. Their hearts are overflowing with joy, And they will remember this chasunah for a very long time.

An Olive is very nice. Some people put it in salads. It's one of the "Shivas Haminim" .Yet Chazal teach us that eating too much of it causes "Shikcha"-forgetfulness

What is absolutely fascinating is that after crushing the olive into pure oil ,it created the opposite quality!!! True, drinking olive oil straight up is very unhealthy. But in small dosages, in its proper application, it represents Wisdom and enhances memory-the very opposite of the Olive, which is the oil's Source!!!

We, in our natural state , are like the Olive.

"Edible" , but not in its ideal state.

There is so much potential inside, so much greatness ,a fiery yet loving flame, eternal, unique, beloved by God!!!

The Olive is crushed!!!

How can He do this?? How can He ask us to do this to ourselves???!!! Why do we need to destroy in order to build ?? How can we annihilate a precious creation, an Olive, for a higher and more noble cause?? It's cruel!! It's unethical!!

But in truth, this is not the case.

The Olive is not being destroyed. It is yearning to bring out its potential ,its true gift to the world. The Olive senses that oil within her, it sees the light that will burn brightly in the Bais Hamikdosh , it sees the precious oil, it's pristine flame within her as its light illuminates the very dark streets on the great beautiful nights of Chanuka.

As you are crushing the Olive, it is not crying ,it is not screaming in agony.

It's full of joy, It's releasing it's specialness, it's uniqueness, its essence,-- to the world.

It's only natural to feel some pain as its shedding its pulp, But that will have it's function as well, and the less refined oil within her is still being used for menachos. and yet her greatest joy is of the purest of the pure, the Oil of the Menorah, illuminating our souls with Godly light forever and ever!!!

We need to take good care of the wick which is our bodies. Keep as physically healthy as possible. "Crushing" the Olive does not mean the destruction of our physical self. Eat 3 healthy meals a day (talking to myself),get enough sleep (talking to myself) and exercise regularly (talking to myself).And yet, there is a "crushing" of our physicality that does not damage the body at all. It enhances it. A mile jog can be a strain on the body but very healthy for it. Guarding your eyes can be momentarily painful as something you are pulled to see passes by. Yet , you look way. This is the "crushing" of the Olive that after that momentary sting passes should fill you with great inner joy. And it will help yours eyes too. Not just in seeing spiritual realities and concepts, but even physically ,you will see the physical world in a much healthier and happier state of great clarity and deep understanding.

Next time you look at the Shabbos candles , contemplate this .Even if you use wax candles, not oil, you can see the great potential of your own flame within the flickering soft candlelight as it shines through you.

And so, I will conclude with this that wrote last week

"Candle before me

So peaceful

Even as it strives

Upward,

There is serenity

Warmth & Love

Within its Fiery yearning”

This is something we can learn from the candle

How to be serene and peaceful, even as we have this fiery yearning to strive upwards towards the Heavens

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 07 Feb 2011 13:45

The candle , mentioned in "Light Notes 2" ,will lead you to where you need to be lead

“In the Path

A person desires to go,

He is lead from Above”

This does not mean

The “desire” of the

End-point destination

Rather ,it is the “desire”

Of the journey itself

The roads, paths, highways, inns, trails

That will fulfill his soul

So that even

When you have so much further to go

A journey that will take a lot of time

A lot of forging ahead

He is at peace

Calm,joyful,appreciative

Full of love

Embracing

The life journey

He is embarking upon

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 08 Feb 2011 13:25

Helping Another

Creates a vessel

To accept Blessing & Success

For oneself

It's a paradox

But it works

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 08 Feb 2011 13:36

Important Aish article

God vs. Prozac

Prominent scientists show the efficacy of trust in God to treat anxiety.

by Sara Yoheved Rigler

David Rosmarin was a sophomore in college in 1999 when he began to feel anxious. His nervousness -- about academic stresses and social woes -- was probably typical of all college students everywhere, but when David experienced difficulty falling asleep at night, he

considered going to the campus psych to get medication.

After one of his weekly Torah learning sessions, David consulted Rabbi Nissan Applebaum about the sleep he was losing. "Rabbi, would it be a good idea for me to speak to a mental health professional like a psychologist or psychiatrist about my anxiety?"

Without replying, Rabbi Applebaum rose from his seat and ran out of the room. Confused yet intrigued, David followed him. "I watched," recalls David, "as he proceeded to photocopy pages from a book, preparing a sheath of papers for me that would change my life."

When he was finished, Rabbi Applebaum placed a copy of a 61-page document into David's hands. The first page read: "The Gate of Trust in God." The pages were an excerpt from the book Duties of the Heart, written by Rabbi Bachaya Ibn Pekuda in 11th Century Spain. "I don't know if you should speak to a mental health professional about your anxiety," the rabbi said to David, "but I do know that reading these pages will help you. Learn them for 10-15 minutes each night before you go to bed, and contemplate deeply what is written here."

David followed the rabbi's "prescription." As he recalls:

To my surprise, within 8 weeks, not only was I able to fall asleep without difficulty, but my anxiety had almost completely vanished. Even more remarkable was that the improvement in my psychological state had occurred despite the fact that none of the anxiety-producing factors in my life had been ameliorated. In actuality, at this later period of time, I was faced with a grueling exam schedule, worse social woes than before, and I remained completely uncertain about my future! What had changed was my attitude towards my difficulties and towards life in general. I had increased my level of trust in God, and had gained the spiritual acumen necessary to navigate through the world of anxiety. In the same way that a medical patient faithfully places himself in the hands of a highly skilled and competent physician, I had realized that the events of my life were ultimately controlled by God's highly capable hands and that at the end of the day, I had little to worry about.

This ancient piece of Jewish wisdom elucidated a secret method of eliminating human anxiety based on spiritual wisdom.

After graduation, David entered an MA program in psychology. When faced with preparing a Master's Thesis, David remembered his own experience contending with anxiety. He started re-reading "The Gate of Trust in God," this time analyzing the text from a psychological perspective. "Less than three pages into my reading," David remembers, "I realized that the text could be understood as a complete psychological theory of the etiology of human anxiety. This ancient piece of Jewish wisdom elucidated a secret method of eliminating human anxiety based on spiritual wisdom. I presented the material to my academic supervisors who were equally impressed by Rabbi Bachaya's insights."

DO RELIGIOUS BELIEFS HELP HANDLE STRESS?

In fact, David had stumbled into the growing field of the psychology of religion, which has published almost 1,800 psychological studies in the past two decades, investigating questions such as:

Can religious beliefs/practices be a source of coping in times of stress?

Is weekly attendance of religious services linked to levels of anxiety and depression?

Do religious individuals have better or worse outcomes in psychological treatment than non-religious individuals?

Can spirituality and religiousness be integrated into clinical practice for the treatment of psychological problems?

A recent example of one such study was reported in Canada's National Post on March 4, 2009. The study, led by Michael Inzlicht, a University of Toronto psychology professor, had been published in the journal Psychological Science. The researchers measured activity in the part of the brain - the anterior cingulate cortex - that registers stress. Subjects were asked to perform a stressful exercise, called a "Stroop task."

Prof. Inzlicht said that initially they were simply trying to understand what factors would activate these brain waves, not investigate religious belief. At first, they asked people to describe themselves as being liberal or conservative. Then they asked others to describe their level of self-esteem. Neither of those parameters correlated with the activation of the "stress brain waves." Only when the researchers asked about a belief in God and religiosity did a pattern develop. Those with the deepest religious belief were more likely to let mistakes roll off their backs, while those who tend toward atheism were more likely to suffer stress and anxiety after committing an error. Prof. Inzlicht reported that no atheist in the study showed low anxiety and no religious person showed high anxiety.

Prof. Inzlicht called the study "statistically significant," and said that the results could act as a predictor to how people might react to real-world stress situations, such as today's crumbling stock markets.

THE SCIENTIFIC TRUTH ABOUT RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Freud insisted that religion was inversely associated with positive psychological health. Esteemed psychologist Albert Ellis, ranked by his peers as the second most influential psychotherapist in history, in the 1980s claimed that people who have strong religious convictions are going to have less tolerance to uncertainty, be less resilient, suffer more from anxiety, and be more prone to neuroses.

In the 1990s, psychologist Kenneth Pargament faced off with these giants and suggested testing their claims scientifically by conducting actual psychological experiments, without a religious or anti-religious agenda. Dr. Pargament made an empirical science of the psychology of religion, and has published two books and over 150 scientific papers. He has received numerous awards from the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association. In general, his studies have shown that spirituality is an important resource for people in times of stress, and connection with God can be ameliorative for symptoms of stress, worry, and depression. After reviewing Dr. Pargament's research, Dr. Ellis publicly retracted his statements and grudgingly admitted that, from a psychological standpoint, religion is "not necessarily a bad thing."

"The average child today between the ages of 11 to 13 is as anxious as the average psychiatric patient was in the 1950s." In truth, as secularization in society has increased, so have the levels of anxiety and depression. As Robert Leahy, clinical professor in psychiatry at Cornell University, recently pointed out in an interview with Dennis Prager: "We're experiencing a major historic trend in the increase in anxiety... The average child today between the ages of 11 to 13 is as anxious as the average psychiatric patient was in the 1950s." Dr. Leahy also noted: "There is research that shows that people having a belief system and a community that supports that have actually a better and happier life."

For the past five years, David Rosmarin has worked in a PhD program with Dr. Pargament, and recently received an appointment at the Harvard Medical School as a Clinical Fellow in the Department of Psychiatry. Rosmarin has published numerous studies in academic peer-

reviewed journals and presented at several national conferences on the relationship between religion/spirituality and anxiety, stress, and depression. [See <http://www.jpsych.com>] Although many such studies have been done among Christians, Rosmarin has pioneered studies in the Jewish community. Consistently, his research has found that trust in God as well as religious practices (e.g., prayer, religious study, attending services) is associated with lower levels of psychological distress.

SKY ROCKETING PRESCRIPTIONS

Prescription rates for all psychotropic [mood-altering] medications among non-institutionalized adults in the U.S. have steadily increased over the past 20 years. In fact, their use doubled in less than a decade between 1994 and 2002. The use of multiple psychotropic medications almost tripled in the same short period.

These anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medications have side effects such as sexual dysfunction, nausea, and -- ironically -- nervousness and insomnia. Other common medications for mood/anxiety disorders such as tri-cyclic anti-depressants and MAOI's can have much more serious side effects, such as coma and death.

While medication may sometimes be necessary to help people in distress, in light of these dangers, David Rosmarin wondered whether his own experience with increasing trust in God could help others. "I decided that I must try to use the knowledge I have to help people to reduce the amount of anxiety they experience in their lives."

Together with Rabbi Leib Kelemen, Rabbi Noach Orlowek, and Dr. Pargament, David Rosmarin developed a program for treating stress and worry in the Jewish community. The program is a spiritually-based intervention founded on the same "Gate of Trust in God" that helped him so much as a nervous college student, as well as other classic Jewish texts. The program is done through the Internet, so it can be completed anonymously by anyone at any location and at any time. It requires no therapist, just the commitment of a half hour every day for two weeks.

For his dissertation, David Rosmarin has built a free, online portal that is testing the program's efficacy against an established and well-utilized intervention called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (See www.jpsych.com/dr for information). Currently, about 60 people have completed their involvement with the study, and many of the individuals receiving the spiritually-based treatment have attested to the benefit they received from it. I did the first half-hour

segment, and personally found it life-changing.

To test the efficacy of the program by statistical analysis, David Rosmarin needs another 30-50 Jewish people to participate in his study. If you are interested in participating, please visit:

www.jpsych.com/dr/

BELIEF IN GOD AND THE EXODUS

The "trust in God" fostered by this program has three key components:

Belief that God is all-knowing (and therefore knows what you need)

Belief that God is all-powerful (and therefore can change physical reality)

Belief that God loves you (and therefore acts for your benefit)

As Mr. Rosmarin points out, it makes sense that a person who believes in an omniscient, omnipotent, and loving God will not be consumed by worry or depression.

Or does it? Isn't it possible to believe in an omniscient, omnipotent, and loving God who created the world, but doesn't care if I lost my whole pension fund in the meltdown? Isn't it possible to believe that God loves the world, but isn't going to intervene in my unemployment troubles?

Here's where the Exodus comes in. As any observer will notice, Judaism is obsessed with the Exodus. While the salvation from Haman's genocidal scheme is mentioned only once a year at Purim, and the salvation from the Syrian-Greeks is mentioned only once a year at Chanukah, the redemption from Egypt is mentioned not only at Passover, but every Shabbat in the Kiddush and every day in the morning prayers. In fact, it is a mitzvah to remember the Exodus every day. Why?

The Jewish belief in God has two essential parts:

God created the world.

God intervenes in human history.

God intervenes not only in epic global events, but also in the daily circumstances of your life. Just as the first principle means that God created not only the Himalayas, but also your fingernails, so the second principle means that God intervenes not only in epic global events, but also in the daily circumstances of your life. In Judaism, the Exodus is a code word for the far-reaching concept that God micro-manages the world, that Divine Providence oversees and intervenes, that God is a hands-on God Who cares.

From the human side, the Exodus is a testimonial to the Jewish People's trust that God would indeed take care of them. Between Egypt and the Promised Land was nothing but a vast desert, without sufficient water or food to sustain a multitude. Exiting from slavery in Egypt was like escaping Alcatraz by jumping into the shark-infested ocean. As God would say to Israel centuries later through His prophet: "I remember the love of your youth, how you followed me into the wilderness, into an unsown land." Thus, on Passover, we recall not only how God intervened to save us, but how we trusted that the mega-miracles of the Exodus would be followed by God's protracted daily sustenance.

Passover is indeed the holiday of faith in God. The matzah represents both "the bread of affliction" and "the bread of freedom." The Seder is full of symbols of both suffering and redemption. The message we must imbibe is that suffering and redemption are inextricably linked, that God gives us suffering in order to make us spiritually fit to receive redemption. On Seder night, we rise to a level of faith where each one of us affirms: "You know our suffering, You can act to redeem us, and I trust that because You love us, You will do what is for our ultimate good."

As David Rosmarin declares: "With the financial markets in crisis and with growing security concerns around the world, stress and worry have gone through the roof -- particularly in the Jewish community. Increasing belief in God may help to decrease a lot of distress."

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