

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 Dov - 10 Feb 2010 00:52

[yechida wrote on 09 Feb 2010 20:15:](#)

Meditations of the Rebbe # 170 by Tzvi Freeman

We are all prisoners but we sit on the keys.

Finitude is our cell. The universe is our prison.

Our Jailkeeper is the Act of Being.

The keys to our liberation are clenched tight in

the fists of our egos

Reb Yechida - I have always believed that this is why we *klop al cheit* with a clenched fist.
Thanks again for the posts.

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Re: yechida's reflections
Posted by Dov - 10 Feb 2010 00:55

[yechida wrote on 09 Feb 2010 20:38:](#)

I feel this one is awesome

Finding Love by Jason Westlake

...so no matter what you are told from the inside or outside,
the truth is that there is one place love can be found,
An infinite source of strength we all hold
it is inside us all.

we need to learn how to access it.

I also feel it is awesome.

It is also awesome to read this thread. Thanks again and y'yasher kochacho.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 11 Feb 2010 13:27

thank you dov

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 11 Feb 2010 19:23

This will be the last post on Tanya for a while.

With Hashem's help we will get back to it at a later time

Tanya 27 Part 8

-last part of chapter 27 (Text, and some concluding remarks)

The central point of the above discussion was that through the occurrence of evil thoughts in one's mind, and through one's battle against them, the sitra achra is subdued, causing great pleasure above.

The Alter Rebbe now goes on to say that this subjugation of the sitra achra and the consequent Divine pleasure are brought about not only by one's struggle against the sitra achra when it attempts to lead one to sin (as in our case, where the lack of a struggle against evil thoughts, and the continued meditation on them would constitute a sin). Rather, one produces the same effect by struggling with one's nature in abstaining from permitted matters. For as explained in ch. 6, any permitted action done without the specific intention of leading one to the serving of G d (as, for example, eating in order to obtain strength for Torah study or performing the mitzvot) derives its vitality from the sitra achra. (This term simply means "the other side," i.e., the absence of holiness.) Only an action so directed can draw its vitality from the realm of holiness. Therefore, whenever one refrains from doing even a permissible act (in which this intention is lacking) in order to subdue the sitra achra, he gives rise to Divine pleasure.

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Furthermore, not only by fighting his evil thoughts does one subdue the sitra achra, but even in matters that are fully permissible,

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every act of sacrificing one's impulse, even if only for a short while i.e., if he delays partaking of even the permissible and essential, with the intention of subduing the sitra achra in the left part

of his heart, achieves this end.

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For example: when he wants to eat but delays his meal for an hour or less,

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and during that time he studies Torah.

For if he occupies himself with other physical matters, he does not subdue the sitra achra by postponing his meal, since he is in any case indulging his animal soul; but if he studies Torah during that time then even when the delay of his meal does not gain him any time for Torah study, for he would have studied Torah regardless (as will soon be stated), and despite the fact that he eventually does eat, yet he subdues the sitra achra by the mere effort of postponing his meal, and thereby he brings about the Divine pleasure caused by every subjugation of the sitra achra.

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As the Gemara states: 8 “The fourth hour [of the day] is when all men eat, but the sixth hour is the mealtime for scholars,”

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because they would go hungry for two hours with this intention,

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This is what our Sages meant when they said: 9 “If a man consecrates himself in a small measure here below, he is sanctified greatly from above.”

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This is apart from the fact that when one sanctifies himself in permissible matters, he thereby fulfills the positive commandment of the Torah: 10 “Sanctify yourselves, and be holy.”

Hence, apart from the consolation previously offered the Beinoni — that through “turning away from evil” by combating evil thoughts and desires, he affords G d a pleasure that tzaddikim cannot — his battle with the sitra achra also contains a positive quality in the category of “doing good,” that is likewise not present in the divine service of tzaddikim. 11 This positive quality is the fulfillment of the mitzvah: “Sanctify yourselves...,” which applies only to Beinonim, not to tzaddikim. For the intention of the commandment is that even one’s personal, permissible, and mundane matters should not be attended to out of the desire of one’s animal soul, but for the sake of G d. This directive cannot apply to tzaddikim, who are unencumbered by desires of the animal soul, as the Alter Rebbe continues:

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The meaning of “Sanctify yourselves” is: “You shall make yourselves holy.”

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That is to say, although in truth one is not holy and separated from the sitra achra,

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for the sitra achra of his animal soul is still, as at birth, at its full strength and might, in the left part of his heart — the seat of the animal soul and evil inclination,

The word kedushah (“holiness”) means “setting apart,” i.e., separation from the unholy. 12 The verse thus means: One should sanctify himself even if he must yet make himself holy and separate from the sitra achra, for at his present level his heart still desires those things that derive from it,

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yet if even while at this level he subdues and masters his evil impulse and makes himself “holy”, separate from the sitra achra, then, continues the verse:

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“You will be holy.”

The words “be holy” which, in their simple sense, voice a command, can also be understood as conveying a promise,

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meaning that ultimately he will be truly “holy” and removed from the sitra achra,

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through his being “greatly sanctified from above,” as quoted earlier from the Gemara,

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and through his being aided from above to expel [the sitra achra] from his heart, little by little, so that even in his heart he will no longer have any desire for anything originating in the realm of the sitra achra

We all struggle. Each person according to their own unique personality and description. And we all know of the moments of temptation. Whether it is lust or anger or depression or excess anxiety or wrong words or wrong thoughts. At the time that this happens the philosophy of the power of “mind over heart” goes out the window. Even the Baal HaTanya who always talks about “Moach Shalit Al Haleiv” ,mind over heart, recognizes this. He also recognizes that in the face of a strong temptation, philosophical thought does not help at all. Logic does not help at all. He must then recall in his memory the previous commitment to better himself or herself. The power decision already made by you of what your purpose in life is. and you stubbornly say NO!!NO!!NO!! and Hashem will respond.You will not be in the pit forever. True, at first, you may fail. you may even fail for a while. But every time you are struggling and fighting, not wanting to give in, you are saying NO!! against that craving or urge.

And your pure soul (because there is that nekudah in the soul that can never be tainted, no matter what) WILL respond.

Maybe not right by this specific battle.

But over time, the holiness that your soul worked so so hard to attain will come forth, you will feel more and more of this special soul that you have as a result of every hard fought battle that you struggled with. And as a result, you will start to win these battles until winning them will be come a way of life ,and losing them will be a much more of a rare occasion for you. This does not mean your battles will be over. Expect them to come,as part of your life. But these battles, as you start winning them, and gaining confidence in Hashem’s love, and His trust in you. It will

be looked at as a great opportunity, and the joy of that knowledge will help you win..

A big part of this is to know that these battles are not in vain (even the very hard-fought losing ones)

We say the words but we do not feel it

I admit there are times I get very fed up with this battle stuff

I am not interested in the fact that it is good for me, leave me alone, I don't want it

I have trouble believing this is good, especially if I lose, even partially lose, and even if I win, it's just not worth it.

But it's true.

Sometimes it requires pure and simple emunah to integrate into ourselves that this is what Hashem wants us to experience.

The battles.

Part of this acceptance requires humility

That though your soul in essence is pure, and will always be, there is still dark parts to yourself that you have to admit to yourself is there.

Accept this.

You have unhealthy lusts or anger or excess anxiety or jealousy within you

Accept this.

Don't accept that this is to remain in you, because you must work on these unhealthy drives and emotions and thoughts

But you have to accept the truth that you have these things within you.

Acceptance of your darker elements will ultimately save you a lot of grief.

It will hurt you a lot at first, because when you have been beaten up, and your face is swollen and black and blue, or you brought on yourself to weigh 375 pounds, it is very painful and difficult to look in the mirror, and face the fact that this is you.

But you must accept yourself even in that state, and then you can take the first step, with Hashem at your side all the time, He is with you every single second of this long and difficult journey.

And with Hashem at your side (because YOU decide to invite HIM to be there), you will be very surprised to see that what is truly a very difficult and painful journey has a lot of unexpected and very delightful stops along the way.

You will force yourself not to see what you crave to see.

And the day will come, when you will feel Hashem smiling at you, at that very moment

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by Dov - 11 Feb 2010 21:55

Thanks so much again, Yechida!

My journey has indeed been punctuated by many unexpected delights from my own G-d, as you describe. And Hashem surely has more in store for all of us than we imagine. More than the calf wants...

In your words, I see the best parts of my 1st through 7th steps. Other folks may see it quite differently, though. Phiv'im Ponim.

I have come to believe that Hashem was smiling at me during my very worst moments, though I blocked that smile and even the whole "face" while acting out - I can't accept that I am His servant while I am serving Lust (or myself). But on the deepest levels...there is no barrier to Hashem and he fills all worlds. So even in the lowest state we are connected to Him and can turn to Him.

Just to turn - without even moving from where we are at all.

Your words help me remember this.

May Hashem help us use the avodah of choosing to occasionally delay our physical or emotional satisfaction, which you explained so beautifully, for good. To use it as a tool for yir'as Shomayim and love of Hashem and to truly be mis'chassed im atzmeinu - not to suffer.

G-d Bless you, chaver!

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 12 Feb 2010 18:07

Thanks Dov

and I found these tools to be of a great help to me as well

This is from Dr Sorotzkin's website

Cognitive strategies for coping

with anxiety provoking thoughts

Benzion Sorotzkin, Psy.D.

December 2005

1)Realize that you have a tendency to see things in a negative light. Be aware of that and if you see something negative, determine if it is really as negative as you see it or if you are limiting your perspective to just seeing the negative side when there is much to the positive side as well. Likewise, there is a good likelihood that your fear of a catastrophic result is highly exaggerated.

2)Realize that you have a lot to lose if you don't face your fear. If you avoid relationships because of a fear of getting hurt, for example, it is helpful to focus on the thought that you don't want to be alone for the rest of your life. In addition, your conviction that you are incapable of overcoming the problem is likely not completely based on facts. Others, who were not necessarily more competent than you, have had this fear and gotten through it. There is no reason why you shouldn't be able to get through it as well. Realize that the fears are normal for you to have because of your particular history, but you CAN get through it, none-the-less. (A doctor related that when he was deciding whether to go to medical school, one of his professors emphasized the hard work that was required, implying that he shouldn't do it. He was pretty much convinced not to go for it but then he realized that others who were not any more capable than him were able to get through it. He didn't see a reason why he would not be able to do it.

So he went and did it!)

3) Realize that you don't have to jump right into the situation that is most anxiety provoking for you. You can face your fear in steps. If you become more knowledgeable of your issues then you will know how to deal with it better if the fear comes up again. For example, try going out on one date without imagining yourself already married and being overwhelmed by all the issues you fear. Rather, focus just on the first step. See how you feel with the person after one or two dates. Do you feel comfortable or not? If not, try to differentiate between the more and less rational fears. Even when contemplating the irrational fears do not be dismissive of them or yourself. Understand what it is in your history that made it almost inevitable that you would have this fear. Only then can you try to see the situation in a more rational light using your new found self-understanding. If after all this you are still not comfortable with the date then end it without feeling guilty or defeated. You probably gained in your self-knowledge from the experience. If you are feeling reasonably comfortable, continue and see what happens.

4) Realize that you don't have to be passive and helpless - reacting to what the environment sends your way as you had no choice doing when you were a child. You can be active in shaping your environment in many ways. For example, you don't have to be passive in allowing your friends to expect you to do favors for them whenever they ask. You can discuss it assertively etc.). This should help make the future seem less dangerous and therefore reduce the need for avoidance.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 12 Feb 2010 18:10

Your Inner Voice

Bob Eilers

My day started just like all the other days for the past 15 years where I get up, make some coffee, shower, get dressed and leave for the train station at preciously 7:35 A.M. to arrive at work by 8:30. While on the train I would always choose a seat away from the crowd so I can read the newspaper in peace and quiet. At work I am always being bombarded with questions from coworkers, suppliers, telephone and then those dreaded meetings so the last thing I need is some stranger to sit beside me and make small talk.

I don't know why but for some reason when I got on the train today it was unusually full, something I don't recall ever happening in the past. With hesitation I sat down in the only seat available beside a middle aged man that had his head down and seemed to be lost in his thoughts. I was glad that he didn't notice when I sat next to him as he just continued to look down towards the floor.

Shortly after the train left for my 30 minute ride downtown I found myself wondering what this man was thinking about. What could be so important that he didn't even see me sit next to him? I tried to forget about it and started to read my paper. However, for some strange reason this "inner voice" kept prompting me to talk to this man. I tried to ignore the "voice" as there was no way I was starting a conversation with a complete stranger.

As you probably guessed I eventually broke down and came up with an excuse to ask him a question. When he raised his head and turned his eyes towards me I could see that he must have been really upset as he had red eyes and still had some tears rolling down the side of his face despite his feeble attempt to wipe them away. I can't describe the sadness I felt seeing someone in so much pain.

We talked for about 20 minutes and in the end he seemed to be doing better. As we were leaving the train he thanked me profusely for being an angel by taking the time to talk. I never did find out what was making his heart so heavy with pain but was glad I listened to the "voice" that day.

Several weeks had passed when I noticed an envelope on my desk after returning from lunch. It was not addressed to anyone and only had the word "Angel" written on it. My receptionist attached a note saying a gentleman dropped it off saying he did not know my name but had described me well enough that the receptionist knew it was for me. When I read the note inside the envelope I was so filled with emotions that I couldn't contain myself. It was a letter from the man I met on the train thanking me again for talking to him and saving his life that day.

Apparently he had some very hurtful personal problems that were so overwhelming he was planning to take his life that day. In his letter he went on to explain that he was a religious person and in desperation screamed out to God that if God really cared about him he would send someone to prevent him from taking his life. In his eyes I was that someone, that Angel sent by God.

Not being a religious person myself I don't know what that "voice" was that made me take a chance and talk to a stranger but I do know that it made a difference in someone's life that day. So the next time you feel prompted for no apparent reason to talk to a friend, relative, neighbor or even a complete stranger please remember my story. You just may make a difference in someone's life when you listen to your inner voice.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by Kedusha - 14 Feb 2010 04:13

Thank you for sharing this, Yechida!

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by silentbattle - 14 Feb 2010 04:20

Wow...and wow...and wow!

Your last post made me cry...we do indeed need to listen when our voices tell us we should speak up. There are a thousand reasons to ignore it - we feel embarrassed, maybe this person doesn't want to talk, doesn't want my help, may even be annoyed with me!

But there's one reason TO do it: Because it's right.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 16 Feb 2010 14:03

Terumah

The concept of the Mishkan is an astounding one. How can a structure of any size house Hashem in it? How can we attempt to contain the uncontainable?

Yet it symbolizes Hashgacha, involvement of Hashem in our physical world. We live in a world with physical houses in which we dwell.

This is Reuvain's house, this is Shimon's house,

Well, this is Hashem's house.

This is where I dwell.

I am here.

True I am everywhere-but you will see Me here.

In the Sefer "The afternoon offering" by Chana Benjamin it expounds on the inner concept of the Mishkan.

The Mishkan is the mirror of the Shechina that is within us. reflecting the inner dwelling of our souls. Our heart is the Mishkan. We invite Him in and He will come inside our hearts.

Today, we have no Mishkan. But we have no reason to feel lost. We have the Mishkan. It is within us. The Alshich says "we should not wonder how Hashem abandoned his holy Tabernacle...because He considered the essence of the of the Mishkan to be the people (of Yisroel, whose souls serves as the palace of Hashem) and the wood and stones used to construct the building"

The purpose of the Mishkan is not to “contain” Hashem. The concept is to show us how to reveal Hashem’s presence within the constriction of physical space and physical walls-and by extension, each one of us should become a residence for the Shechina

Internally, this is another compelling reason to drive lust out of our hearts.

The embracing of the Keruvim demonstrates that in it’s proper place and time,the extremely powerful physical expression of a spiritual love is in fact a very good thing, that not only does not drive away the Shechina, but actually draws it into us, in the heart of both the husband and the wife who love each other, a physical manifestation of a spiritual love.

But when this expression is used in a way that is not Hashem’s plan for us,as He tells us clearly,that He created this drive, in addition to the chain of generations through children, it is also an expression of love of your soul to that specific soul that Hashem placed in your life to love and to bind with and to be as one with. And Hashem tells us that in any other form, as enticing as it seems ,is truly unhealthy for us ,and that He cannot dwell within us if this drive expands to places where He will not be. You say “not fair”. He answers back that I gave you this healthy body that allows you the enjoyment of this sexual function and I am telling you that it can be a tremendous source of pleasure and happiness but on My terms, not yours. I am telling you “Lust in your heart and I am out of here” and as we said many many times that Hashem is with you when these cravings and urges comes up to you because that is not your fault.That is not why Hashem packs His bags.He says “Good bye” only after your decision to let the lust stay because you invited it in as a long term guest, Sholom Aliechem lust, welcome welcome, come in ,make yourself comfortable, you do this insteading of forcing it out (by all the various methods discussed on this site especially the handbooks) and pleading with Hashem to keep it out so that He could come in.

It’s hard. Tell Him it’s hard for you. He knows it’s hard but He wants you to talk to Him. Ask Him to grant you the gift of the healthy expression of this drive. the way You want me to use it. But invite Him in. You can bring Him into your private office if you have one, or dining room, and talk it over with Him. Ask Him to stick around. because its rough without Him. Tell Him this lust is driving you nuts and ask Him to help you deal with it. Help me to get rid of the unhealthy elements of it, and allow me to express the healthy good expression of it that You would want me to express. Celibacy is for christian priests who end up molesting young boys because they wrongly deny themselves the healthy expression of a normal human drive. Bochorim who struggle must be assured that Hashem has intimacy as part of their life plan, and not a small insignificant part of the plan either, and by staying clean during their unmarried years (which is

made much easier by the advice here on this website especially the handbooks) will make the relationship with their future wife a much more rich and healthy and intensely felt intimacy, when the time comes,when Hashem decides that you should enter that stage in your life. Precisely because you threw out the cheap false imitation in your single years. And if you are already married, you have no idea what is enhanced, when you throw all this garbage out. Initial pain in dropping this garbage, but what you get instead is the long term deepest gift. This garbage was part of the reason that you did not see the good qualities in your wife that you could not see until now.

This is the purpose of the Mishkan. To tell us that although Hashem is Infinite, He wants us to create a "space" for Him to dwell. Even when we had a Mishkan, the primary Mishkan was within our hearts.

Especially now this is all we have.

To borrow from dear Pintele, "Bilvovi Mishkan Evneh"

Do you realize how precious it is to build a space for Hashem??

He does not need a fancy place. No fancy kitchen. He is happy with your simple abode. He is not attracted to the style that is "In". a simple spiritual table, a few chairs, and a comforting light that you yourself lit, and that simple light becomes the true comfort that Hashem will give you as He arrives in your humble kitchen.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by imtrying25 - 17 Feb 2010 12:22

Yechida, i wish i had the time to go through all your posts, because all the ones i do go through are absolutly amazing. Thanks again!

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 17 Feb 2010 13:35

thank you for you chizzuk

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 17 Feb 2010 13:36

I have quoted often the words of Keirkegaard

He was a christian who challenged to established christianity of his day.

As an example:

In a series of pamphlets entitled The Instant, Kierkegaard now

turned agitator and addressed himself directly to the people.

Little by little, Christianity had been weakened by removing all

the difficulties of faith. "In the splendid palace chapel a stately

court preacher, the cultivated public's elite, advances before an

elite circle of fashionable and cultivated people and preaches

emotionally on the text of the Apostle, 'God chose the lowly and

despised' – and nobody laughs!" "This is the falsification of

which official Christianity is guilty: it does not make known the

Christian requirement – perhaps because it is afraid people

would shudder to see at what a distance from it we are living.”

Here Kierkegaard broke with all that had gone before; he was now engaged “not in communication, but assault.” “Strictly speaking, it is not I who am ringing the alarm bell; I am starting the fire in order to smoke out illusions and knavish tricks; it is a police raid, and a Christian police raid, for, according to the New Testament, Christianity is incendiarism.”

The main reason I quote him is that more than any other non jewish philosopher or thinker that I read, he impressed the most BY FAR, in his brutal honesty and in his fearless search for truth. Not that he is always right, and not that his intentions were always noble (he admits to his weaknesses and limitations) and his writings are often complex and obscure and sometimes contradictory. But even with all these faults he stand above almost every non jewish thinker that I read. and over some jewish non –thinkers too.

Here he talks about the importance about making a right decision. All the right intentions in the world will not accomplish anything without the decision accompanying it.

Yes, we must ask Hashem’s help every step of the way. to help us make right decisions, to aid us every single second, but Hashem wants us to make these decisions, to commit in a practical way, to a more improved and better life .

To quote:

How wretched and miserable it is to find in a person many good intentions but few good deeds. And there are other dangers too, dangers of sin. With all your good intentions, you must not forget your duty, neither should you forget to do it

with joy. And strive to carry your burdens and responsibilities in a surrendered way. If you don't, there is a danger of losing your decisiveness; of going through life without courage and fading away in death.

So what about the decision, which was after all meant so very well? A road well begun is the battle half won. The important thing is to make a beginning and get under way. There is nothing more harmful for your soul than to hold back and not get moving.

The path of an honest fighter is a difficult one. And when the fighter grows cool in the evening of his life this is still no excuse to retire into games and amusement. Whoever remains faithful to his decision will realize that his whole life is a struggle. Such a person does not fall into the temptation of proudly telling others of what he has done with his life. Nor will he talk about the "great decisions" he has made. He knows full well that at decisive moments you have to renew your resolve again and again and that this alone makes good the decision and the decision good.

In the end, the archenemy of decision is cowardice. Cowardice is constantly at work trying to break off the good agreement

of decision with eternity. When the minister preaches a sermon against pride, he has many listeners. But if he wants to warn his listeners against cowardice, things look very different. His listeners look around to see if there is any such miserable fellow among them. A cowardly soul – after all, that is the most miserable thing one can imagine, that is something one simply can't endure. We can put up with one who is spoiled or decadent in some way or another, even if he is proud, but only if he is not a coward.

And yet the separation of cowardice and pride is a false one, for these two are really one and the same. The proud person always wants to do the right thing, the great thing. But because he wants to do it in his own strength, he is fighting not with man but with God. He wants to have a great task set before himself and to carry it through on his own accord. And then he is very pleased with his place. Many have taken the first leap of pride into life, many stop there. But the next leap is different.

How? The proud person, ironically, begins looking around for people of like mind who want to be sufficient unto themselves in their pride. This is because anyone who stands alone for any length of time soon discovers that there is a God. Such a realization is something no one can endure. And so one becomes

cowardly. Of course, cowardice never shows itself as such. It won't make a great noise. No, it is quite hidden and quiet. And yet it joins all other passions to it, because cowardice is very comfortable and obliging in associating with other passions. It knows very well how to make friends with them.

Cowardice settles deep in our souls like the idle mists on stagnant waters. From it arise unhealthy vapors and deceiving phantoms. The thing that cowardice fears most is decision; for decision always scatters the mists, at least for a moment. Cowardice thus hides behind the thought it likes best of all: the crutch of time. Cowardice and time always find a reason for not hurrying, for saying, "Not today, but tomorrow", whereas God in heaven and the eternal say: "Do it today. Now is the day of salvation." The eternal refrain of decision is: "Today, today." But cowardice holds back, holds us up. If only cowardice would appear in all its baseness, one could recognize it for what it is and fight it immediately. A prior act, rather than of a sudden decision?" Ah, not decision, but continual striving, continuous endeavor; what a glorious expression. What a glorious deception!

Whereas decision reminds us of the end to come, cowardice turns us away from finality. Hence, cowardice is adaptable and

takes pride in being able to meet various opinions in different ways. If, for example, someone's ideas are first-rate, then cowardice will argue: "Well if such a one as you is so well equipped, then why hurry? Why limit yourself so?" What pride! And the thing of it is that for such a person it is not that the task is too easy but that it is too difficult.

Or consider the person whose advantages are few. Cowardice is now quick to sing a different tune: "What you've got is far too little to make a good beginning." This, of course, is particularly stupid. If we always need more to begin with we would never begin. But "God does not give us the spirit of cowardice, but the spirit of power, and of love and of self-control"

Cowardice does not come from God. One who wants to build a tower sits down and makes an estimate as to how high he can build it. But if no decision is ever made then no tower is ever built. A good decision is our will to do everything we can within our power. It means to serve God with all we've got, be it little or much. Every person can do that.

In the end, failure to decide prevents one from doing what is good. It keeps us from doing that great thing to which each of us is bound by virtue of the eternal. This does not mean that everything is decided once a decision is made, nor does it mean

that only in great decisions is one lifted to a higher plane – a place where one now no longer needs to bother about little things, petty things. Such thinking amounts to nothing more than a fine show.

We must not support high and important things while ignoring the practical, daily stuff of life. Indeed, decision is something truly great; the life of eternity shines over decision. But the light of eternity does not shine on every decision. Decision may be once and for all; but decision itself is only the first thing. Genuine decision is always eager to change its clothes and get down to practical matters. The real significance of decision is that it gives us an inner connection. Decision gets us on our way, and here there are no longer little things. Decision lays its demanding hand on us from start to finish. Cowardice, on the other hand, wants only to concern itself with the really important, big things, not in order to carry something out wholeheartedly but to be flattered by doing something that is noble and great. Yet hiding behind the exalted is nothing but an excuse for not conquering all the little things one has omitted, simply because they were little.

Therefore, don't be fooled. It may well be that with great decisions others will marvel at you. All the same, you miss the one

thing that is needful. You may be honored in this life, remembered
by monuments set up in your honor, but God will say to
you: "You unhappy person. Why did you not choose the better
path? Confess your weakness and face it."

Perhaps just in this weakness God will meet you and come to
your aid. This much is certain: the greatest thing each person
can do is to give himself to God utterly and unconditionally –
weaknesses, fears, and all. For God loves obedience more than
good intentions or second-best offerings, which are all too often
made under the guise of weakness. A decision
is to be made. Dare to act on the good that lies buried
within your heart. Confess your decision and do not go ashamed
with downcast eyes as if you were treading on forbidden ground.
If you are ashamed of your own imperfections, then cast your
eyes down before God, not man.

Better yet, in weakness decide
and go forth!

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Re: yechida's reflections
Posted by yechidah - 17 Feb 2010 15:04

from www.meaningfullife.com

friend forwarded me your last article (True Communication: The Secret of Anochi). Very powerful piece. As a therapist I was very intrigued by your description of true communication, how a soul reaches into another soul. I see that as the key to all healing. I was wondering whether you have ever developed any more specific therapeutic guidelines based on Torah thought, in the spirit of soul communication.

Blessings to you and your wonderful work,

Gloria P.

Dear Gloria,

Thank you for your very kind words, and I bless you in return for success in healing many souls. Here is an excerpt from a paper that I once wrote titled The Basic Principles of Therapy, from a Torah perspective. Please see this as a draft. And I welcome your feedback and comments.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THERAPY

(from a Torah perspective)

1. Problems are never what they seem to be. Aggravation and upsetness is never for the reasons people say or even think.
2. Inter-personal difficulties originate in intra-personal ones.

3. The root of all conflicts is the dichotomy between body and soul.

4. The subjective self is unable to totally rise above itself to discover the true root of his/her issues. One needs an objective and intelligent observer to help him examine himself (the necessary criteria for an observer, see below #10).

5. Every human being was created independent; a self contained entity with a unique role. In the image of G-d who is one and indivisible.

6. Every person's soul remains pure and intact. And good. Abuse and harm - all forms of distortion - can only occur in the channels that connect the soul to conscious or sub-conscious experience. The difference between people is not in their having a soul but in their awareness of it.

7. Every one has the capacity to access their unscarred soul. Every one must assume responsibility for themselves (rather than blame another for their problems). The help they need is only in accepting that responsibility and unraveling the distortions and resulting confusion, and charting a course toward positive growth.

8. The teacher and helper's (therapist's) role is just that: helping the individual achieve clarity, accept responsibility and learn the proper method to access their soul. Like a gardener, who tears out the weeds allowing the flowers to emerge.

9. Two major obstacles in this process are: a) Denial. The inability to recognize the existence of a problem, which of course compounds the problem many times over and has a snowball effect of adding on layer after layer of new distortions and complications. Half the cure is awareness of the illness. b) Confusion caused by the mix of healthy and unhealthy behavior mechanisms. This makes it extremely difficult to distinguish between the two, which in turn adds to the denial process.

10. The basic necessary requirements of a good teacher and therapist:

a) Care and sensitivity. b) Empathy. c) Wisdom. d) Knowledge and experience, competence and skill, in the study of human nature. e) Trusting. f) Humility. g) Absolute respect for human dignity and independence; that every person has to assume personal responsibility for his behavior. In Jewish terms: Complete faith in G-d and the divine soul in each person created in G-d's own image. h) Total conviction that all human experiences are part of a process of growth. i) Flexibility and imagination. Appreciating and respecting the differences between people and thus not fit them in to any mold (while not compromising #h). j) Recognition of one's own limitations and subjectivity. k) Methodology and technique. l) Acceptance without question of all the above requirements.

The process of therapy generally breaks down into the following steps:

1. Establishing trust and opening a channel of communication.
2. Hearing the problems and helping define them from the student or client's perspective.
3. Guiding the client to slowly redefine the problems from a more honest and objective perspective. Including an examination of the client's responses and blind-spots.
4. Establishing that the client is responsible for himself [if he is not, than he needs another form of help]. Defining what that responsibility entails.
5. Specifying and defining unequivocally the roles of therapist and client. Making it absolutely clear that the therapist is trained only to help the client help himself. The therapist provides care and support, but is not a crutch and does not initiate the cry and need for help. It is not a personal, reciprocal relationship. These points have to be emphasized time and again, as deemed necessary.
6. Recognizing if this particular therapist-client dynamic is not going to work. This can be for a variety of reasons, including sometimes the humble recognition on the part of the therapist that the best therapist can only help one who is willing to help himself, which often needs the client to have hit rock-bottom and desperately seek help. No therapist can replace that cry for help.

7. Developing a process of movement and growth with the intended goal to rise up above yourself and relate to a higher reality. This must be done in a step by step basis, timed at the pace of the client, enabling him to internalize it.

8. Defining the objective in simple terms. Consistently reviewing the goal and illustrating how all the many elaborate steps in reaching the goal are but a means to that higher end. Establishing this is crucial in the process, firstly because it gives the client (and the therapist) a sense of direction and keeps him from wandering off due to different distractions. Second, it treats the client with respect, knowing that he is being guided to help himself, and empowers the client with the feeling of control over his own life.

9. Persistence and tenacity, never losing sight of the initial goal.

10. Consistency in the devotion and care for the client.

11. Assurance and reassurance of progress. Acknowledging the potential and, indeed, need for setbacks; but recognizing that the primary goal is not how quick and how far one reaches, but steady movement rather than inertia. Emphasizing that any movement, frontwards or backwards, any sensation, pain or pleasure, anger or joy, is better than lethargy and numbness.

12. Frequent review (with an objective party) of the therapist's decision-making process. With special emphasis on the therapist's attitudes and feelings.

13. Recognizing when to let go. When to allow the client to walk (or fly) on his own, even at the expense of falling. Only then can he truly learn to walk on his own. Actually this should be rephrased: During the entire therapeutic process the client should be walking (and falling) on his own with gentle guidance from the therapist. The therapist must recognize if the client is becoming to dependent on the therapist and then help him become self-dependent.

Pitfalls to be wary of from the client's side:

1. An overly manipulative client who wants to engage the therapist in battle or enjoys mind-games.

Solution: If the therapist is unable to make any progress due to the client's attitude - confront (sometimes gently) the client. Establish the reasons for his attitude and if it can be overcome. If not - make it clear to the client why the therapy cannot continue under such circumstances.

2. Overdependence on the therapist. This is a particularly sticky problem because: a) the client needs to trust the therapist and often has trust issues with a pattern of no one to depend on in life, b) of the frequent need for "transference."

Solution: Absolute faith and respect of an individual's personal space and responsibility, recognizing that no one (even with the greatest effort) can ever enter into the "alone" space (the most intimate space) of another individual. That is how G-d created humans. In the words of Hillel: "Im ayn Ani Le Mi Le," "If I am not for myself who will be for me." The trained and G-d-fearing therapist knows that "Im ani l'atzmi moh ani," "If I am for myself what am I," doesn't compromise the "I", but only comes to teach us that with the help of another one can learn to enhance and access their own "I".

Only with absolute acceptance of G-d can a human therapist learn to rise above himself and help another with total devotion, and give the client confidence that his dependence on the therapist will not compromise the client's "I". (see also below)

Pitfalls to be wary of from the therapist's side:

3. An overly manipulative therapist. Especially an intelligent one who can manipulate the client, even if it's in the client's best interest. Where do you draw the line between healthy and unhealthy manipulation?

4. The sense of control that a therapist assumes over the client's life hearing the client's most intimate issues, without any reciprocity.

5. The affirmation a therapist gets from the client's trust in him which can lead to a reverse dependence or "counter-transference."

Solution (to #3-5 above): In addition to the obvious methods of constant case review particularly with an objective supervisor, the Torah requires of the therapist an uncompromising selflessness, total egolessness, to the extreme that the therapist has to be the harshest judge of himself, and he must subject himself to total scrutiny by someone he respects and trusts.

The therapist's approach in dealing with a client must be with the greatest awe and humility, recognizing the enormous responsibility he carries of being allowed to enter into the most sacred, intimate recesses of the soul of G-d's child. He has to visualize G-d standing over him at all times and watching carefully: how are you dealing with my child? Nothing less is required of the therapist.

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