

yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 29 Jun 2009 19:47

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(any questions , insights & suggestions about this thread,feel free to email me at [taryaga@gmail.com](mailto: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 - 04 Mar 2010 19:28

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In His Company

by Dawn Anderson

The importance of listening to His voice...

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There are quiet moments

such as these

when I speak my thoughts to

You –

while

You

listen intently,

not uttering a word

until the moment comes

when I am finally still –

Now,

my turn to listen.

Then I hear it –

Your voice –

Giving direction as

You

guide my footsteps.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 04 Mar 2010 20:04

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A Callous Heart

by Patricia M Eichler

A "Callous Heart is about what to avoid.

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If you ever pray for anything

pray not to have a callous heart

for like a cold piercing wind

it inflicts pain

and feels nothing.

If your ever pray for anything

pray not to look on in indifference

for like the lightening bolt

it strikes below

and delights in it.

If you ever pray for anything

pray not to look down on others

for like swift swirling water

it runs over all

and doesn't look back.

If your ever pray for anything

pray not to be without compassion

for like an exploding volcano

its touch burns all

and it doesn't even care.

If you ever pray for anything

pray not to have hatred in your heart

for like a large earthquake

it shakes the soul

and leaves no room for love.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 04 Mar 2010 20:33

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A Love Letter

by Patricia M Eichler

Being a teacher has shown me the results of promiscuous sex, and it's not a pretty picture. It causes a great deal of suffering.

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Sex doesn't belong in love

letters or in photo-graphs. Actual sex

shouldn't be displayed or written on page. Better

it is etched in the souls of one man and woman. Let

them keep it Holy and sacred and within marriage.

True love feels proper in love letters and in pictures.

Love is faithful, caring, unselfish, kind, and modest.

Love isn't conceited, tempting, lustful, or market-

able. Real love is unconditional and stands the test

of time. Relationships based on sex can't wait

for our wellness. When separate, there will

be no trust, only betrayal. Love notices

beauty in the ordinary and even old age.

It's steadfast and dependable in our

darkest moments. It has a sense

of humor and is accepting

of our follies. Found in

happy marriages and

Well-adjusted

children.

Yes

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 05 Mar 2010 17:33

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Dear Friends



have a wonderful Shabbos

The Boy At The Track

Heino Molls

Many years ago I drove a taxi for extra money. I primarily worked the east end of Toronto. This was back in the days when the Greenwood Racetrack was in operation.

The track was a pretty lively place. Crowds of people were always streaming in and out. I did a lot of business down there dropping off fares and picking them up. When I think of those days, I remember one particular summer about 30 years ago.

Each time a taxi drove up to the front of the track, a group of local kids would run along the sidewalk angling for position by the passenger door. One lucky kid, or to be more accurate the most aggressive kid, would open the passenger door and say "Good luck at the track, Mister!"

The man getting out of the cab would invariably mumble thanks and flip the kid a quarter on his way from the taxi to the entrance of the track.

It was a routine that everybody knew. Sometimes the cops would chase these kids away but they always came back a couple of hours later or the next day.

Throughout the summer, one kid caught my eye. He was bigger than most of them but he was pushed away by even the smallest of all the other kids. He never pushed back. In fact he would even step aside when others pushed forward. He was actually courteous in the midst of all these aggressive kids.

Each time my cab or any other cab drove up it was another chance to be the one to open the door and say, "Good luck Mister!" and maybe get a quarter. This kid never stopped trying. He would watch the cab approach, figure out where it would stop along the sidewalk and then try his best to get to the door. He never made it. He always got pushed aside. But he never gave up.

Then one day his chance arrived.

As I was pulling up to the sidewalk all the kids were scrambling for a cab that had arrived just ahead of mine. They didn't notice me pulling up.

The boy saw me and walked toward my taxi. As I pulled up I made sure to position the passenger door right beside him. He didn't miss a beat. He opened the passenger door with a flourish and said to the man getting out, "Good luck at the track, Mister!"

But the man who got out of my cab did not say thanks. He did not flip him a quarter. He said, "Get out of my way kid!" and he pushed him aside so hard that the boy fell on the sidewalk and I knew it hurt him bad.

I was out of the cab in less than 10 seconds but I knew I would never find the man that pushed this boy down. He was gone in the crowd.

So I looked for the kid. I decided to give him \$20 for the effort and gumption that I had watched him go through. By the time I spotted him he was far up ahead, walking away through the crowd, hands in his pockets and his head hanging down. I could not get to him. The other cabs behind mine were honking their horns and drivers were screaming obscenities at me, telling me to move the cab. The traffic cop was waving at me to get back in my taxi and get going.

The kid was walking the opposite way. By the time I got the cab turned around I lost sight of him. All I could do was pound my fist on the steering wheel.

I never saw him again.

Over time I have thought about that kid. I thought I would like to find him one day and tell him that if only he had stuck around a little longer I would have given him a whole \$20 instead of the lousy quarter he was after, because I was so struck by his spirit.

After 30 years I realized that maybe I learned an important lesson from this kid. And maybe I am supposed to pass it along.

When things seem so hopeless that you are ready to give up, that is the time when things are most likely to turn around for you. One day we will all be recognized for how we tried. Not necessarily for what we did.

So don't ever let up or walk away from integrity, because it will be the reason for your reward.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 05 Mar 2010 18:23

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Machtzis Hashekel is once a year but the lessons from it is eternal

From R Shlomo Carlbach

Machtsis Hashekel

Right now – Purim. The custom before the reading of the Megillah is that we give everybody half a shekel, half a dollar. Let me tell you something so beautiful. The Ten Commandments are a whole Shekel, and the broken commandments are half a dollar – it is a broken thing. You know,

every person has whole commandments which he didn't break yet, and then everybody has little broken commandments deep down in their souls.

And you know what a good friend is? Somebody who puts his broken tablets and my broken tablets together. To a lot of people I often openly show my good commandments but the broken tablets I'm afraid to show. But then on Purim, we're such good friends, we share our broken commandments. Some day the world will be so close we'll tell each other we all fell. We all broke the commandments. But let there be Peace. Let there be Peace --- Let there be Love

You know why the Jewish people count after the moon. The sun is beautiful, the sun is always whole. The real light is the moon – its full, and its also broken. You know the Talmud, the book of all books, begins with page two. Page one – the blank paper – it's a broken page – nothing's written on it. And you know when you finish learning, when you learn a little bit, when you study with the deepest depths of your heart and your soul – you kiss the blank paper.

Because real learning, the real understanding is - Ah, its so deep, its so deep, I know nothing. Its so deep, its so much deeper than all this. So much deeper. You see the world wants peace which makes them whole. They don't want that kind of peace which breaks each other's heart.

Want you to know: Once a year there was a collection for the sacrifice of the Holy Temple. And everybody was giving half a shekel - a broken shekel. And this is how we kept the Holy Temple going. You know what we're telling each other. Ah, it breaks my heart, to be able to buy something for the Holy Temple. Its so deep; its so deep.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 05 Mar 2010 18:30

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From R Shlomo on Pesach

A human being welcoming guests means, you sitting in my house, and while you are eating, it is in my house. The way G -d welcomes us, He takes us in and gives it to us. Every time a Jew comes to Eretz Yisrael, G-d welcomes him. That is why we have mezuzos on our houses. We are saying to G-d, I want this house to be Your house, not just my house.

I bless you and me, all of us, that whenever we we together with children it should be like after mashiach has come. Before he left this world, Yaakov Aveinu talked to his children. Can you imagine how he was praying? "Ribbon Shel Olam, take care of my children until meshiach comes." He called his children and said, "Chidren, come together I want talk to you and tell you what will happen until moshiach comes." And, the midrash says that he wanted to tell them what was coming and the Shechina left him. Everybody knows that the Shechina did not leave him as a punishment because he wanted to tell his children when Moshiach was coming. He wanted to tell them, "I want you hold out. Even when there is no Shechina. Even when there is nothing, even worse." You know what he told them? Whenever father, mother and children get together, that will be on the level of when moshiach is coming. That will keep you going until Moshiach comes. And even the Shehina leaves, wherever father. mother and children sit together on Seder night, that will keep you going. I don't know if there is a safer (book) in the world as precious as the haggadah. Even the musaf shmoneh esreh of Rosh HaShana, when we pray for G-d's Oneness to be revealed, is very holy, but the words of the hagaddah are even more precious. Eliyahu haNavi composed the haggadah. At every seder, Eliyahu haNavi comes in and thanks everybody for reading the words from his Haggadah.

The "rasha", the evil son, doesn't know how precious he is. He doesn't know how much we need him. The wise son is also very clever, but obviously he also doesn't know how precious he is. So, we tell him, we don't eat after the afikoman. I remember one time, when I left for Eretz Yisroel, my sweetest Dari gave me some chocolate to eat. I didn't want to eat anything after that, until I got off the plane, becuae it was so precious. Precious is so beautiful, it's deeper than beautiful. Precious is so good, it's deeper than good. Adam and Eve thought that the highest level is good. Tree of Life is preciousness. "Ushmartem es haMatzos, Watch over the Matza." We don't eat everything else after the afikoman, because it is so precious.

Do you know how precious every Jew is? Every Jew is so precious. Gevalt, is every Jew precious.

I wish you and me and all of us a good seder night, a precious seder night. I bless us to all to be completely there, like in the Mikva, completely there. I bless us all that we not cut each other up into a smaller size than we we. I bless us that Purimdike preciousness (The Jews had joy and happiness and "Yikar" -- preciousness) be carried over into Pesach. And into Shavous. I bless us all that this year we be privileged to receive the Torah which is so precious, which is called preciousness... And I bless us even after we receive the Torah, that there be no Golden Calf in the world that can take us away from our Torah, from our children. Nowhere else in the world do people clean their house like we do before Pesach. A house in this world does not need that much cleaning. But on Pesach, my house becomes the Third Temple. That is why I must clean this house, not only on this level, but on a higher level, so that it will be a true Temple, holy and

beautiful, a gateway to G-d. Pesach I am in heaven, I am in Yerushalayim. I am sitting with my wife and children. I wish you such a Pesach. Good Yom Tov.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by Dov - 08 Mar 2010 00:36

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Thanks again, sweet Yechidaleh.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 08 Mar 2010 17:06

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portion of a radio program about sexuality from [www.meaningfullife.com](http://www.meaningfullife.com)

Feder: So the point of getting together is not specifically or exclusively just to produce a child?

Jacobson: Exactly. There is something divine about that in itself. That is why you find the sanctity of mating and marriage, which we'll soon discuss, even with people who are older, beyond childbearing age, and even people, whom doctors say cannot have a child. So one would argue, according to the Torah view, "Hey, no perpetuation of the species, what's the point of marriage and sexuality? Just a selfish pleasure?" The answer is no. Male and female uniting is a divine act, a divine experience.

Now this leads me directly into the question you asked. I ask everyone to listen to this objectively, as if it's not ourselves, because as soon as you think about it in relation to yourself, you get emotional, subjective, and I don't necessarily mean you Mike, I mean everyone in general, including myself.

We live in a society, a community, that's strongly influenced by different sexual attitudes.

Sexuality is a real part of our lives. That's why it is critical to attempt to discuss this issue somewhat dispassionately. And then we'll bring it back to a personal situation.

Based on this principle, sexuality, according to the Torah view, is essentially a sacred experience.

Even the attraction of male and female to each other, every element of it, is inherently sacred. That is why, in my book, *Toward a Meaningful Life* (that you mentioned earlier, Mike) I named the chapter on sexuality -- "Intimacy."

And I make the point there that there's sexuality and there's intimacy. I would say sexuality is, let's call it, the physical part of the union; intimacy we'll call the spiritual part of the union. Sexuality without intimacy is essentially somewhat animalistic and primitive. It is missing a crucial ingredient if it remains merely a physical thing, as mundane, say as consuming food.

Now I'm not saying that sexuality is not pleasurable, even divorced of intimacy, but it's by no means fulfilling its potential, and I would even say it has many destructive elements if it's lacking intimacy.

We live today in a crisis of intimacy. People are very sexual, but ask them if they're intimate. Let me define intimacy. Intimacy is not just a sexual act. It's not just about technique, and it's not just in the bedroom. Intimacy is even at the kitchen table. I don't mean sexuality at the kitchen table, I mean, even at work, it's the ability to celebrate your vulnerability. To be with someone in an intimate way means that you can share, your defenses are down, you don't feel the need to protect yourself as you do when you're in the street, or at work, or when we're with people who are like sharks and we need to protect ourselves.

Feder: It's apropos. Because where are people more defenseless than in a sexual setting.

Jacobson: They are, but I must say that people have brought their tools of defenses into the bedroom as well. So sexuality is perceived like an intimate act, but it not always is. In most cases, people are protecting themselves and that's why you find that there's a certain kind of frivolousness in sexuality as well.

People, especially you hear it from the male side, and women are trying to emulate that somewhat, a certain depersonalization which people are proud of. "I'm not committed to you, but I'll have sex with you," that kind of thing.

That is sexuality without commitment.

Now commitment is sometimes seen by some as the price you pay for getting your sexual needs met. It's not seen as something to celebrate. Because commitment means, "Oh, that means I also have to provide for her, or she for me, it means taking out the garbage, there are inconveniences.

Feder: This is what I have to do if I want regular sex.

Jacobson: Right. That type of approach. And unfortunately, that has seeped into our culture, where sexuality has become an end in itself, that the act in itself has become an end. What's missing is that, no, this is a male and female energy that's uniting in a divine way, and therefore in a sacred way. And part of sexuality is intimacy. Therefore, sexuality is not just about technique and physical preparation, but also communication is an integral part of the intimate experience of a male and female uniting. THIS is what the Torah calls marriage. The intimate committed part of the relationship. The vulnerability that you celebrate. The sanctity that you embrace.

That's why I wanted to give a preface. You hear the word marriage—I'll ask the question as a skeptic would, as I do in my book the other way around—"Why should two people get married altogether? Why go through the formality, and the marriage contracts, and marriage licenses and all that stuff, prenuptial agreements...?"

Feder: Well, I wanted to do a whole radio program on marriage sometime...

Jacobson: We will. But I wanted to just state it here. People argue, "Why not just live together?"



Some may answer: Well, the families want a party. -- I'm just being a little facetious. Others will say, there's more of a commitment when there's a contract. And I'll say, Oh really? In other words, it's like a business contract.

But remember, when two people don't love each other, no piece of paper will help them remain truly committed.

Feder: It said in the paper that Marla Maples got cast off because she signed a pre-nuptial agreement, so it was a business deal they made.

Jacobson: Well, yes. Because what's happening is that intimacy is becoming more and more compromised, and what's happening is that sexuality is turning into nothing more than another human need. You want to have someone on your arm to go to a party with—there are certain conveniences and my needs need to be met, in other words, sexuality is seen as a need. And a very powerful need, but nothing more.

What I'm trying to suggest is that by taking the approach that you understand this as being a divine experience, what you give is more important as what you get. It's not as much about your needs as much as it's about what you give.

Feder: Maybe this is an interesting point to ask as the next question, which flows into this, which is, if all these things which seem to be very subtle, and some things that you have to live with a lot of experience to understand, then let's talk about teenage sex, which is rampant.

Jacobson: I think it's important to address this in terms of preventive medicine, from the root, so to speak.

We will get into this a little later, when we discuss what can be done today, under the circumstances, about our sexual/intimacy crisis.

But, you see, I don't want to shape the thoughts and philosophy based on a crisis, or based on a certain distorted attitude toward sexuality. To put it bluntly, and I don't like to speak this way,

because I don't want to appear like an evangelist or a preacher, which I'm not, and this show is not meant to be that...we live in a time of crisis in understanding our sexual personalities. We live in a time where we do not fully relate to our intimate personalities. Sexuality becomes increasingly technique, method, conquest, bedroom politics. It's what we see in the newspapers, it's how men treat women, how women in turn treat men.

Now there's much beauty, and I'm not suggesting that there is no great joy out there, but there's a lot of pain. And personally, I've seen much, much pain in this particular area, to the point where many, many people are wondering whether it's worth it. Or, it's worth it to some extent but I'm not going to put myself on the line too much.

Feder: There's a whole movement out there of people choosing celibacy as the way to go.

Jacobson: Okay. That's one extreme. Or, which I think is even worse, is those that are choosing sexuality but not allowing their intimate selves to emerge. They don't want to be hurt. So they're not becoming vulnerable. They're coming with their tools, but they've learned, we've learned in a way to be sexual without being personal. It's almost considered to be a virtue. And some people feel that they just can't do it. They don't know why. I would say it's very healthy that they can't do it. And those who could, have, in a sense, numbed part of their personalities.

Feder: We're going to get to the part of the program soon where we're going to discuss what you think we can do about this, or how to address this, but let me ask you one or two other questions which fit into this whole subject.

One that inevitably comes up is, you were talking the whole program about men and women, then what about homosexuality. There are hundreds of thousands, maybe a couple of million people in this country who identify themselves as homosexual, and maybe even more that don't identify themselves publicly. This is a big question in this country. And if it's man and woman struggling towards each other to reach a higher level, then how is it possible that anyone who is a homosexual could be engaging in even legitimate sex from that point of view, from either point of view, the scientific or the Torah. Hard questions but they need to be asked.

Jacobson: It's important to ask because they're very relevant today and I embrace the questions. I hope you embrace my answers as well as I embrace your questions!

Feder: I'm listening. I'm sitting here listening...

Jacobson: I'll say this and I want to address it in context of what you asked earlier about pre-marital sex and so on. I think that there is a very distorted definition of marriage in people's minds, and that is, that it's seen as an institution, similar to other institutions in our society. What I was trying to present here is that from a Torah point of view, marriage—let's not call it marriage, let's call it sacred union or the sanctity of intimacy and sexuality—the marriage between intimacy and sexuality. That's what marriage is about. Where two people love each other and that love permeates not just the bedroom, and not just their bodies, but it permeates their psyches, their minds and their hearts, and above all, their souls. They share a common vision, they want to build something greater than the sum of the parts, and sexuality is part of that bigger whole.

When two people like that come together, their sexuality is not just a temporary one-night stand, and it's not just pleasure-oriented for the moment. Which is good litmus test, by the way. Any sexuality which does not spill over into your daily life, into your work in a healthy way, that makes your life more harmonious, means that it's sexuality and not intimacy. If it was intimacy, your next day will be a better day, too.

I would go even a step beyond that and say that sexuality divorced of intimacy will not only not spill over into harmony, it will create havoc with the rest of your day. Because either you're searching for your next mate, or you're having your politics with this one. It becomes a very embattled state.

Feder: As they say in debates, the question is still sitting on the table.

Jacobson: I'm getting there. I'm not avoiding the question, I'm just articulating what my understanding is, from a Torah perspective, of what a full, complete union is. And therefore, pre-marital sex is a symptom of other underlying problems. So I'm not going to point my finger that that's the problem.

That's a result of other problems. That's a result of young people in a generation like ours that don't know what sexuality is. What is the reason that we don't find it acceptable for infants to have sex. Even the concept is repulsive. Why? Because they are not ready for such an

experience. They don't know anything. What do they know about that part of their personalities.

So at what age, I would ask the secular scholar, or the government for that matter, or any parent, at what age exactly is the age of maturity. Is the answer, when they know how to inhale? When they can smoke? When they can drive? Because they become more mature chronologically, or is it because you're not in control of them, does that make them no longer infants?

Now I'm not suggesting that everyone's an infant, but I believe that sexuality and spirituality and intimacy are very much interlinked, and you can be 40 years old and still be five years old on a sexual level. Not in sexual experience, mind you, I don't mean that. But on an understanding of what's happening when two people come together. Do we even know? Is it anything more than pleasure? Is anything deeper going on?

And what happens when it creates havoc in our lives. And we realize that we have to go to therapy...

So what I'm suggesting is that we're living in a time, and now I'm leading up to homosexual issue, where our entire sexual identity is completely unknown to most of us, and it's completely trial and error. People get involved, the dating process, teenagers, experimenting, and with all the confusion of adolescence intertwined with drugs and rock and roll and everything else. And what happens is that once you have the experience, it just contributes to divorcing it from intimacy, from true communication.

The essential problem with pornography has always been stated as being depersonalized sexuality. And pornography doesn't always mean very overt pornography. There is pornography in spirit. A general attitude to sexuality. Many of the expos? shows on television...

Feder: And every magazine cover you see on a rack.

Jacobson: Exactly. And I'm not from the fire and brimstone point of view. I think those are all symptoms. When you talk to a person individually, as I'm talking to you, and we're trying to talk to our audience, we're trying to say to you, look, you have a divine calling, a higher calling to live up to. You have a soul. That is part of your intimacy and part of your sexuality. It's not

divorced. Don't think that sexuality is a compartmentalized thing and my spiritual search and my transcendental search is another thing.

There's a soul to your sexuality and there's a sexuality to your soul.

Feder: Are you calling homosexuality a symptom, then?

Jacobson: Exactly. That's exactly what I'm leading to. From my point of view, I don't want to use the word "corrupt," so I'll say distorted sexuality can be distorted heterosexuality, which is in many ways similar to a distorted view that ultimately can lead also to homosexuality.

If two men say to me, hey, we love each other and it's a love no different from any one between a man and a woman, why are you delegitimizing it?

My job is not to delegitimize anything. That's not my responsibility. And once people are emotionally involved, it's very difficult to say anything. But my approach would be, and I know many people that I have discussed this with, who do consider themselves to be homosexuals, I don't attack, so to speak, or directly discuss their homosexual natures. I will discuss what is sexuality? What is intimacy? And divorced of male/female, let's just talk about the concept.

There may be disagreements, but the presentation I would make is that yes, there is such a thing as a distorted view of sexuality. There are sexual aberrations and I'm not ashamed to say that homosexuality is prohibited in the Torah, not because of some taboo or something of other nature, it's because it doesn't fit into, let's call it, the intimate experience that G-d intended for human beings.

Feder: I don't understand why it wouldn't. Let's just say if two men live together for 25 years, forget about the fact that they want to get married, but let's say that they live together for 25 years and there is a beauty to their love, maybe other people can see it, what in any way is different about that than the people who live next door who are man and woman?

Jacobson: Because healthy sexuality, like any healthy behavior, cannot be based solely on

people's subjective feelings. Let me give you an example.

There's a man and woman living with each other, not in marriage, they're just living with each other, and it's very beautiful. Their union may be more beautiful than a couple married in a court of law in a religious ceremony, and they're just bickering with each other and their relationship continues to erode.

Let's just use that as an example.

So the same argument can be made. Here two people are living with each other and there's no marriage. Their relationship is healthy, secure, and wholesome.

And here are people who are married, and they just don't get along with each other. As we see so often today. My approach to all these scenarios would be the same: that all of them are not necessarily living up to the Torah standards for a true marriage. The unhappy marriage I described may be a marriage in the technical sense, but they're not truly married in the spiritual sense of it. Marriage is much, much more than technical. They went through a ceremony. Human beings are human beings, and they can mess it up.

I would say that marriage, as I understand it, is a divine union. If these two people that are living with each other would actually get married in the spiritual sense, in a true ceremony, their union would be even more wholesome than it is now, they would access their deepest intimate potential. It's like the argument where people say, "Here's a religious person who's following Torah law and he's a crook. And here's a person who doesn't follow Torah law and he's an ethical, kind person."

My answer is, don't throw out the baby with the bath water; meaning, do not confuse people with the system. So what I'm discussing here is the system. My argument would be that the question is not what two people say about their relationship. The question is, what is the spiritual perspective on that relationship.

Feder: From whose point of view?

Jacobson: Well, that's why I began this whole program saying that I am coming from a Torah point of view. That there is a system, and again, I'm not trying to force this system onto anyone, I'm presenting it. But I have the right to present a system that has a very clear and distinct approach. And the approach would be that you two men may love each other, but there may be distortions in what you call love. There may be distortions in what is true intimacy.

The fact that you both are happy with each other isn't the only criteria for what makes a relationship work. How would I approach it? I'd tell them, you need to study more about what sexuality is. What male energy is, what female energy is. Now, I know it's difficult, because people who are in such relationships like that say, "This is my natural place. I've tried to be married." I know. I have people that I've studied with who say, "I was married and I tried it. But it kept going against the grain of my nature."

So what did I say to a person like that? I don't reject anyone with that nature. I don't throw them out...I will say to them, as a friend, and we remain friends—gay people come to my classes; some openly, some not openly, but I know of it because some of them have shared with me—and they'll come to a class where I'll say very clearly: we live in a time of a crisis in sexuality. Part of the symptoms is the homosexuality in our times. And I'll say it very clearly.

Many people in society think they're happy. Just because they think they're happy doesn't mean they're happy. Am I here to take away their happiness? No. G-d forbid. But I am here to present a perspective. Do with it what you wish. And that's how I'd present it, as I do right now. And I would say as follows:

That two human beings can love each other, male/male, female/female, male/female. Love has many forms. But when we're talking about the sexual, intimate side, we're dealing with forces that are not completely known to us. There's a mystique. No one really understands sexuality.

What I will say, as I write in my book, that sexuality is Divine energy. It is like entering into the Holy of Holies with G-d. There are forces that are unleashed at that moment that many of us do not have a conscious understanding of.

We do have the pleasure element that we sense. We feel the closeness. Something gratifies us. But that's a very small part of what sexuality is. So the fact that many, many people are having sex in a very frivolous way, in uncommitted ways, or even committed but in what Torah

considers as an aberration, not in synch with our spiritual personalities, or in homosexual relationships or others, that still does not faze me from saying that sexuality is much more than that, and I would, as a friend of yours, suggest that I'll study with you, what is the soul? What is intimacy? Are you living up to your highest potential?

It's the same as if I'd met someone who said to me, "I'm happy! I don't need G-d. I don't need morality. I'm living my life and I'm happy. What do you want from me? Do you want to make my life miserable?"

G-d forbid I don't want to make anyone's life miserable. But I will say to the person, you know, you have 90% potential that you haven't even touched. I'm a friend of yours. I don't want you to be 90 years old and it will be too late for you to access your potential.

The person will say, yes, but that's not your business. That's my business.

If someone does say that to me, I'll still persist and say look, as a friend, I'll remind you once in a while.

Listen, Mike, someone came to my class, and came every Wednesday night for two years, and after two years he stopped coming. A few months passed and I hadn't heard from him, so I thought, I don't know what it is. You know, everyone has their journey.

He calls me up and says to me after two months, "I want you to know that I stopped coming to your class not because you said anything wrong. You didn't offend me in any way and I think your classes are great. I stopped coming because you're making my life miserable. Why? Because I'm still young and I want to have some fun. You're making me too aware. I don't want to know all this. It's too much. It's making me feel guilty. It makes me feel that I have to live up to something greater. I still have a few years, and I want to be a party animal.

Feder: So when he gets around to it, when the pupil is ready, the master appears...

Jacobson: So he did appear a few weeks later, and I didn't mention any names, I said, "I just



want you to know that there's a person sitting here in this class who has brought me to make the following statement: I wish I made more people's lives miserable."

G-d forbid I don't want to make anyone's life miserable. I think, more knowledge, more pain, including myself. You don't always want to know everything. But I do want to say this. I think that at the end of the day most of us would like to live with some integrity, to be true to ourselves. If someone believes that he or she is happy, let them live with that, and I'm not here to disrupt that. But that in itself is not enough reason to say that they've reached their zenith, their goals. Happiness is very relative. I've seen people who have become happy with the worst of circumstances. Like women who have been battered in a relationship. They're happy. Because to go out into the street is worse. So they choose the worst of two evils.

I'm not suggesting that every relationship is that way. But I think that we're quite subjective and we're quite resilient, meaning, that we accommodate, we work with what we have, and unfortunately, most young people today are getting on their platter a sexual identity, or a sexual approach, that's far, far from giving them really healthy options, far, far from allowing them to actualize their greatest potential.

Feder: Okay, let's just take a moment to thank the person responsible for bringing tonight's show to you. Tonight's show has been underwritten by Ivan Stux, whom we applaud for helping us bring this kind of programming to people.

Jacobson: Yes, Ivan Stux has been a close friend and a great benefactor, and has also motivated many others. I want to personally thank him myself.

Feder: All right, so we have only a few minutes left and I'll put it to you this way. There is teenage sex everywhere. There is irresponsibility: children being born everywhere. There's sexuality everywhere you look. We're overwhelmed by it. There are things which you called symptoms, as you called it, everywhere. You say that the lack of intimacy is a kind of tidal wave in this country, it's everywhere. It's something that needs to be addressed. There is, in fact, even the subject of sex education in schools and people don't quite know what to do about that, but the point of it all is, as you said yourself during the course of the program, intimacy and sexuality seem to be divorced, and there's a big problem in the country, and we'd like to end the program with addressing ways in which you see that people can prevent this and to help it out.

Jacobson: Well, much that's being addressed is, as you said, on a symptomatic level. You hear a lot about "safe sex," not to pass along disease, and so on, which is, literally, the very tip of the iceberg. I believe that this is a result of a resignation that has settled in, many have resigned themselves to the fact that we cannot do much about the prevalent attitudes to sexuality, and that's just the way it is, that's the way it's going to stay, so at least keep it as safe as possible.

Fine. Anything that keeps people healthy is good. Short term. But on a deeper level, with an issue like this, it's hard to make quick suggestions, but I will say this: that the younger age you begin with this type of sensitivity to healthy intimacy, the better it is. We start developing our sexual attitudes at a very young age, by example, in our homes, in schools, what we see on TV. So the younger the better, as they say: When we are young we are like warm wax, where every experience is etched and engraved into our personalities, shaping and hardening as we grow and the wax hardens, thus bearing fruit that has such a profound impact much later in life.

I think as far as speaking to parents and educators, particularly of the young, it doesn't mean to give overt sexual education to a 3-year-old, but you can teach healthy intimacy to a 3-year-old. What I mean is you can teach a 3-year-old how to communicate in a trusting way.

Feder: Or how to let your defenses down.

Jacobson: Right. That even as you develop your defenses, always be in touch with your vulnerability, be in touch with your child. It's a nurturing environment that just allows you to trust your voices as you grow older. Because one of the single, most important challenges in life are the disappointments. We grow older and we get disappointed, so we protect ourselves. It's like we go into a deeper shell. So my shell's hardened. When your shell's hardened, your sexuality is going to get more and more divorced of your intimacy. Because you still remain sexual. We're not talking about someone who chooses celibacy. We're talking about someone who chooses sexuality, but their sexuality is in a shell. The person remains in a shell, and they allow their sexuality out for a night, for a few years...

The education process must contain teaching young people, and I include older people as well, what it means to be a sensitive human being. And essentially it comes down to the fact that you have a soul. A soul that was created in the divine image. You are, in a way, half a soul, and there's someone out there who's like a long lost friend, to your soul. And that's your counterpart. Male and female.

We must tell ourselves, our children, each other: You are responsible for your divine image, for your soul, for your intimacy. Let us make it a call for our times to sanctify our attraction to the opposite sex. How many people actually think about this attraction in a sacred way? For many people, attraction is about leering or flirting, but there's something sacred there. The sanctity is that there's a divine calling. A divine calling that takes the shape of male/female attraction, but there's much more there than just whistling. It's much more than just trivial experience. There's a certain sanctity to it. And the sanctity is very much linked in how you treat human beings. Because ultimately, we hear this constantly, it's a matter of respect. Is there really respect from one sex to the other? Do most men really have true respect for a woman? Or is she just an object? And respect for a woman means that you respect the divine image in that woman, and vice versa.

There's the rebound effect of a woman treating a man in kind. So it becomes a vicious cycle. Remember, it's not just a question of respecting the opposite sex, it's a question of respecting all human beings. It's a sensitivity that a person is special not because you're attracted to him or her, it's respect because there's a divine image in every human being.

This requires a new emphasis in our education, because our current education system doesn't teach us that. It teaches everything that's the opposite: to value people for their looks (just look at any glamour magazine) and so, on a final note, it's recognizing the divine image in yourself and in other people, and remembering that life is much more than just a nice, entertaining ride for a few minutes. It has a divine and higher destiny to it.

Feder: Thank you.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 09 Mar 2010 14:23

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2 thoughts from R' Kook

may all my friends here experience such joy

The Holy Mixture of Pleasure and Joy

When humility and awe are revealed, they bring forth pleasantness and joy. Refined pleasure comes from the foundation of humility, and pure joy from the foundation of awe. And the revelation of the countenances of these illuminated visions results from the influence of their lights upon each other: "I call to them to stand together." From the holy mixture of these branches comes a supernal might, extremely powerful, which motivates all aspects of life with a holy grandeur.

Orot Hakodesh III, p. 187

Delight And Joy

Delight and joy must accompany your every spiritual endeavor.

Only when you delight and rejoice in each fine and positive deed will you have the enthusiasm to act in the most ideal manner and add to your deeds every day.

Only when the delight and joy in your heart are bound to your fine and positive actions will they be anchored in you.

Eder Hayakar, p. 117

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 09 Mar 2010 20:55

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Beautiful poem

I feel like he is talking to me personally

The Battle Rages Within Me by R Kook

The battle rages within me.

My heart is filled with a yearning that is  
spiritual, high and broad.

I want divine sweetness  
to flow through me, all of me,  
not to get pleasure from the delight in it,  
but because  
this is how things should be,  
because  
this too is what reality is,  
because this is the core of life.

So I am always moaning like the sea,  
Inside I am roaring,  
loudly,  
Give me divine light,  
The delight of the living God and His joy,  
The great experience of visiting the palace of the King of the worlds,  
Mighty One, my God, my Father,  
To whom all of my soulful love is dedicated,  
The fear of Whom elevates me.

And my soul lifts higher, floats upward beyond anything that is low,  
Trivial-mindedness and limitations,  
Which the life of nature,  
Of the body,  
Of the environment,  
And of reality consensus  
constrict it,  
Squeeze it in tongs,  
Put it in irons.

A river-flow of positives comes,  
endless Torah-ideas and insights,  
clusters of thoughts.

And the most precise convolutions about letters and words  
comes and surrounds my soul that is pure,  
that is free,  
floating lightly as a cherub,  
pellucid as the essence of heaven,  
pouring like an ocean current of brilliant light.

But I have not yet attained this level:  
to gaze from beginning to end,  
to understand the sweetness of the message,  
to feel the honey of every subtlety,

to gaze forward using the light  
within the darkness of the world.

I am filled with painfulness,  
And I look forward to being saved, to light,  
to being supernally uplifted,  
to the appearance of knowing and illumination  
and to the dripping dew of life,  
even in these narrow conduits  
from which I will draw and satiate myself.  
I will take delight in the sweetness of Hashem.  
I will know the pure, ideal Will,  
the supernal, concealed supernal Might,  
that fills every letter and point of a letter,  
every Talmud discussion and discussion,  
and I will rejoice in Your commandments that I love,  
and I will speak of Your decrees.

Orot Hakodesh IV, p. 402

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Re: yechida's reflections  
Posted by yechidah - 11 Mar 2010 21:56

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Keep talking to Hashem

In His Company

by Dawn Anderson

The importance of listening to His voice...

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There are quiet moments

such as these

when I speak my thoughts to

You –

while

You

listen intently,

not uttering a word

until the moment comes

when I am finally still –

Now,

my turn to listen.

Then I hear it –

Your voice –

Giving direction as

You

guide my footsteps.



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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 29 Mar 2010 13:12

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dear brothers and sisters,

I am giving myself a little space from posting for a while, hoping that somehow silent void will bring forth greater light and hope, but right before pesach I will say blessed is this wonderful place which ahavas yisroel reigns, blessed is each and every one of you who have the courage to fight hard for what is right and good within us, blessed are all of you who give chizzuk to each other, blessed is yechida to have had the honor to be amongst wonderful Yidin as yourselves, and blessed are all of you for who you are, because despite the struggles, or perhaps because of them, how beloved you are in the eyes of Hashem for each and every step towards recovery of our true selves.

These holy precious days.

Hashem tells each and every one of us, I am ready to take you out of the tumah of mitzraim.

I am ready to bring you to Me.

and dear brother and sisters, you will see this with your own eyes and feel this in your hearts and souls.

what a feeling it will be for all of us.

falling into His loving embrace.

and never letting go.....

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 09 Apr 2010 13:20

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From Reb Shlomo Carlbach ztl

"So you know, I can spend my lifetime being angry. Or I can spend my lifetime Fixing [doing tikkun]. Fixing. This lifetime -- today, you and I -- we're here to Fix." And, ah -- do we have time a little bit -- Yeah, we have time. First of all, there are two things I have to give over to you. What is the medication against anger. Against hatred. Against everything. There's only one medication -- one little vitamin pill -- and the vitamin is called joy. There is no other way.

You know, when you're sad, you hate everyone. Yourself, G\_d, your father, your mother, and everyone. When you're full of joy, I love the whole world. You know, if I'm sad, someone steps on my toes, my sad mind begins to work -- oh, he's an anti-Semite, he's stepping on my toes, I'm sure he hates Jews, who knows what he did, maybe he's even a murderer, and I got to be careful. "You know the way my mind wanders" when I'm sad. But if I'm full of joy: I say, Hey, you have strong feet. Right. Unbelievable.

"You know: The Holy Sanzer said: He only met one person who was completely out of anger. Takes a lifetime to work on it. You don't push a little button and it works. It's hard work. Mamash, you have to fill your heart with joy.

You know, the heilige REB HERSCHEL RIMINOVER -- give everything away. People came from all over the world and asked him for his blessings, he could have been a millionaire, but he give everything away.

And his shabbosdike halat his coat was torn. The hasidim come and give him hundred rubles for a new coat, he always gives it away. Finally the followers decided, they're gonna give him a coat. A long shabbosdike coat, was made out of silver, and with gold, it was beautiful they were so proud.

That Friday night, the person who brings him the soup, is a little bit of a shmendrik, he didn't know how to balance it -- he poured the whole soup over the Rebbe's new halat maybe ruining it. And the SANZER was there -- also one of the holiest Rebbe's. You know what the heilige Rimonover said -- to the waiter -- [Reb Herschel Riminover said]: -- "Hah -- it feels so warm."

"Let me tell you something: If I'm standing in front of a bank -- and I just -- took out 5 million dollars [from the Magic Money Machine, which often does the Unexpected, especially in Israel ] and someone steps on my toes, what do I do. I start to argue? Who cares, right. I'm full of joy. Life is so beautiful.

So I want you to know: !What makes a person most sad: when you think you can't fix it anymore. What makes a person full of joy: when it's suddenly clear to you: you can always fix it.! You can always fix it. You know how much we can fix: not only previous lifetimes. We can fix the world, going back to Adam and Eve. You and I: we might be -- little nothings. But we're not.

We have unbelievable powers."

And from the following story one can see how the Holy Rebbe of Sanz reached this high level of JOY with no reason.

The Sanzer's Operation

The story is that Reb Chaim Sanza had a lot of trouble with his foot. Finally it came to such a point that he needed an operation. It was a a very painful operation and the doctor wanted to give him something ... put him to sleep, give him an injection.

So the doctor said to Reb Chaim, "I have to give you an injection because it's very painful." Reb Chaim says, 'I'll make a deal with you, you don't have to give me an injection... you can do your thing, and let me do my thing, but do me one favour. I will do what I have to do and I don't know how long the operation will last. If I don't open-my eyes after the operation, don't disturb me Maybe I will be lying on the operation table for a few more hours, it is because I must: do what I have to do ... don't disturb me. Promise me that you won't." The doctor promised him.

Then Reb Chaim Sanza closed his eyes and looked like he was not in this world. After the operation was over the doctor says. "I'm really afraid that he died during the operation. Reb Chaim's children said, "Leave it up to our father, he is okay--if he says he is okay, he is okay."

For the next four hours Reb Chaim Sanza was lying on the operation table and then he opened his eyes and said, "How was the operation, okay?" The doctor then says, "I hope you don't mind me asking you, but what did you do, what did you really do?"

So he says like this "I want you to know, my holy master, Naphtali Ropeschitzer, taught me something ... We know how to feel joy on the level of the world, right? We always need a reason for joy, to feel pure joy, right? We live in a world of reason. I have a reason for joy, and I have a reason for pain. Everything is reason. My holy master taught me something, that I can receive

Joy for no reason.

But he says that I cannot always be there, but when I'm there, I'm really there. So once you told me I was going to have a lot of pain, I just got myself on the level of receiving pure joy. That's what it is."

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 09 Apr 2010 14:40

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For all those that only look at pure Torah sources on these matters, then by all means disregard and skip this post.

Because this piece was written by a Buddhist monk .But I must say that many of the concepts here I have seen in Torah sources as well as it being a lot of common sense and basic truths about the inner dynamic of sexuality. And I believe that a lot of what he writes,(not all of what he writes ,because Judiasm does not endorse celibacy ,and Judiasm acknowledges that desire is something that has positive elements that could be elevated) if integrated in ones mind, and utilized properly, can save and enhance many marriages as well as help us not to use sex in a unhealthy and destructive way.

(Down the road,.I would like to speak to some Gedolim about some of these and other Eastern concepts that I have read. because on one hand ,it is very unfortunate that a lot of their ideas and writing are mixed with the nonsense of idolatry and such non-sensical practices. But on the other hand they have a lot of wisdom and insight not well known in the West, that not only does not contradict Torah but I suspect that many of their ideas were originally taken from Torah or atleast from the ancient wisdom of Avraham Avinu. But a layperson as myself is not qualified to sort out the precious jewels from the coarse rocks and dirt. I would need to speak to a true spiritual Torah leader for guidance but this is something I was thinking a lot about doing. For example the author of this article has an entire book on anger that has many wonderful ideas and advice. This book has priceless gems in it .but it also has some dirt as well as some buddist terminology and also a small percentage of what is written is clearly not in accordance to Torah.

but is a great shame that it is not used at all )

## THE THIRD PRECEPT: SEXUAL RESPONSIBILITY

by Thich Nhat Hanh

"Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I undertake to cultivate responsibility and learn ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long- term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct."

So many individuals, children, couples, and families have been destroyed by sexual misconduct. To practice the Third Precept is to heal ourselves and heal our society. This is mindful living.

The Fifth Precept -- not to consume alcohol, toxins, or drugs -- and the Third Precept are linked. Both concern destructive and destabilizing behavior. These precepts are the right medicine to heal us. We need only to observe ourselves and those around us to see the truth. Our stability and the stability of our families and society cannot be obtained without the practice of these two precepts. If you look at individuals and families who are unstable and unhappy, you will see that many of them do not practice these precepts. You can make the diagnosis by yourself and then know that the medicine is there. Practicing these precepts is the best way to restore stability in the family and in society. For many people, this precept is easy to practice, but for others, it is quite difficult. It is important for these people to come together and share their experiences.

In the our tradition, we speak of the oneness of body and mind. Whatever happens to the body also happens to the mind. The sanity of they body is the sanity of the mind; the violation of the body is the violation of the mind. When we are angry, we may think that we are angry in our feelings, not in our body, but that is not true. When we love someone, we want to be close to him or her physically, but when we are angry at someone, we don't want to touch or be touched by that person. We cannot say that body and mind are separate.

A sexual relationship is an act of communion between body and spirit. This is a very important encounter, not to be done in a casual manner. You know that in your soul there are certain areas -- memories, pain, secrets -- that are private, that you would only share with the person you love and trust the most. You do not open your heart and show it to just anyone. In the imperial city, there is a zone you cannot approach called the forbidden city; only the king and his family are permitted to circulate there. There is a place like that in your soul that you do not

allow anyone to approach except the one you trust and love the most.

The same is true of our body. Our bodies have areas that we do not want anyone to touch or approach unless he or she is the one we respect, trust, and love the most. When we are approached casually or carelessly, with an attitude that is less than tender, we feel insulted in our body and soul. Someone who approaches us with respect, tenderness, and utmost care is offering us deep communication, deep communion. It is only in that case that we will not feel hurt, misused, or abused, even a little. This cannot be attained unless there is true love and commitment. Casual sex cannot be described as love. Love is deep, beautiful, and whole.

True love contains respect. In my tradition, husband and wife are expected to respect each other like guests, and when you practice this kind of respect, your love and happiness will continue for a long time. In sexual relationships, respect is one of the most important elements. Sexual communion should be like a rite, a ritual performed in mindfulness with great respect, care, and love. If you are motivated by some desire, that is not love. Desire is not love. Love is something much more responsible. It has care in it.

We have to restore the meaning of the word "love." We have been using it in a careless way. When we say, "I love hamburgers," we are not talking about love. We are talking about our appetite, our desire for hamburgers. We should not dramatize our speech and misuse words like that. We make words like "love" sick that way. We have to make an effort to heal our language by using words carefully. The word "love" is a beautiful word. We have to restore its meaning.

"I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment." If the word "love" is understood in the deepest way, why do we need to say "long-term commitment"? If love is real, we do not need long or short-term commitments, or even a wedding ceremony. True love includes the sense of responsibility, accepting the other person as he is, with all his strengths and weaknesses. If we like only the best things in the person, that is not love. We have to accept his weaknesses and bring our patience, understanding, and energy to help him transform. Love is maitri, the capacity to bring joy and happiness, and karuna, the capacity to transform pain and suffering. This kind of love can only be good for people. It cannot be described as negative or destructive. It is safe. It guarantees everything.

Should we cross out the phrase "long-term commitment" or change it to "short-term commitment"? "Short-term commitment" means that we can be together for a few days and after that the relationship will end. That cannot be described as love. If we have that kind of relationship with another person, we cannot say that the relationship comes out of love and care. The expression "long-term commitment" helps people understand the word love. In the context of real love, commitment can only be long-term. "I want to love you. I want to help you. I want to care for you. I want you to be happy. I want to work for happiness. But just for a few days." Does this make sense?

You are afraid to make a commitment -- to the precepts, to your partner, to anything. You want freedom. But remember, you have to make a long-term commitment to love your son deeply and help him through the journey of life as long as you are alive. You cannot just say, "I don't love you anymore." When you have a good friend, you also make a long-term commitment. You need her. How much more so with someone who wants to share your life, your soul, and your



body. The phrase "long-term commitment" cannot express the depth of love, but we have to say something so that people understand.

A long-term commitment between two people is only a beginning. We also need the support of friends and other people. That is why, in our society, we have a wedding ceremony. The two families join together with other friends to witness the fact that you have come together to live as a couple. The priest and the marriage license are just symbols. What is important is that your commitment is witnessed by many friends and both of your families. Now you will be supported by them. .

Your strong feelings for each other are very important, but they are not enough to sustain your happiness. Without other elements, what you describe as love may turn into something sour rather soon. The support of friends and family coming together weaves a kind of web. The strength of your feelings is only one of the strands of that web. Supported by many elements, the couple will be solid, like a tree. If a tree wants to be strong, it needs a number of roots sent deep into the soil. If a tree has only one root, it may be blown over by the wind. The life of a couple also needs to be supported by many elements -- families, friends, ideals, practice.....

In Plum Village, the practice community where I live in France, every time we have a wedding ceremony, we invite the whole community to celebrate and bring support to the couple. After the ceremony, on every full moon day, the couple recites the Five Awarenesses together, remembering that friends everywhere are supporting their relationship to be stable, long-lasting, and happy. Whether or not your relationship is bound by law, it will be stronger and more long-lasting if made in the presence of a Sangha -- friends who love you and want to support you in the spirit of understanding and loving kindness.

Love can be a kind of sickness. In the West and in Asia, we have the word "lovesick." What makes us sick is attachment. Although it is a sweet internal formation, this kind of love with attachment is like a drug. It makes us feel wonderful, but once we are addicted, we cannot have peace. We cannot study, do our daily work, or sleep. We only think of the object of our love. We are sick with love. This kind of love is linked to our willingness to possess and monopolize. We want the object of our love to be entirely ours and only for us. It is totalitarian. We do not want anyone to prevent us from a prison, where we lock up our beloved and create only suffering for him or her. The one who is loved is deprived of freedom -- of the right to be him or herself and enjoy life. This kind of love cannot be described as maitri or karuna. It is only the willingness to make use of the other person in order to satisfy our own needs.

When you have sexual energy that makes you feel unhappy, as though you are losing your inner peace, you should know how to practice so that you do not do things that will bring suffering to other people or yourself. We have to learn about this. In Asia, we say there are three sources of energy -- sexual, breath, and spirit. Tinh, sexual energy, is the first. When you have more sexual energy than you need, there will be an imbalance in your body and in your being. You need to know how to reestablish the balance, or you may act irresponsibly. According to Taoism and Buddhism, there are practices to help reestablish that balance, such as meditation or martial arts. You can learn the ways to channel your sexual energy into deep realizations in the domains of art and meditation.

The second source of energy is khi, breath energy. Life can be described as a process of

burning. In order to burn, every cell in our body needs nutrition and oxygen.....

The third source of energy is than, spirit energy. When you don't sleep at night, you lose some of this kind of energy. Your nervous system becomes exhausted and you cannot study or practice meditation well, or make good decisions. You don't have a clear mind because lack of sleep or from worrying too much. Worry and anxiety drain this source of energy.

So don't worry. Don't stay up too late. Keep your nervous system healthy. Prevent anxiety. These kinds of practices cultivate the third source of energy. You need this source of energy to practice meditation well. A spiritual breakthrough requires the power of your spirit energy, which comes about through concentration and knowing how to preserve this source of energy. When you have strong spirit energy, you only have to focus it on an object, and you will have a breakthrough. If you don't have than, the light of your concentration will not shine brightly, because the light emitted is very weak.

According to Asian medicine, the power of than is linked to the power of tinh. When we expend our sexual energy, it takes time to restore it. In Chinese medicine, when you want to have a strong spirit and concentration, you are advised to refrain from having sexual relationships or overeating. You will be given herbs, roots, and medicine to enrich your source of than, and during the time you are taking this medicine, you are asked to refrain from sexual relationships. If your source of spirit is weak and you continue to have sexual relations, it is said that you cannot recover your spirit energy. Those who practice meditation should try to preserve their sexual energy, because they need it during meditation. If you are an artist, you may wish to practice channeling your sexual energy together with your spirit energy into your art.

During his struggle against the British, Gandhi undertook many hunger strikes, and he recommended to his friends who joined him on these fasts not to have sexual intercourse. When you fast for many days, if you have sexual relations, you may die; you have to preserve your energies. Thich Tri Quang, my friend who fasted for one hundred days in the hospital in Saigon in 1966, knew very well that not having sexual intercourse was very basic. Of course, as a monk, he did not have any problem with that. He also knew that speaking is an energy drain, so he refrained from speaking. If he needed something, he said it in one or two words or wrote it down. Writing, speaking, or making too many movements draws from these three sources of energy. So, the best thing is to lie down on your back and practice deep breathing. This brings into you the vitality that you need to survive a hundred-day hunger strike. If you don't eat, you cannot replenish this energy. If you refrain from studying, doing research, or worrying, you can preserve these resources. These three sources of energy are linked to each other. By practicing one, you help the other. That is why anapanasati, the practice of conscious breathing, is so important for our spiritual life. It helps with all of our sources of energy.

Monks and nuns do not engage in sexual relationships because they want to devote their energy to having a breakthrough in meditation. They learn to channel their sexual energy to strengthen their spirit energy for the breakthrough. They also practice deep breathing to increase the spirit energy. Since they live alone, without a family, they can devote most of their time to meditation and teaching, helping the people who provide them with food, shelter, and so on.

They have contact with the population in the village in order to share the Dharma. Since they do

not have a house or a family to care for, they have the time and space to do the things they like the most -- walking, sitting, breathing, and helping fellow monks, nuns, and laypeople -- and to realize what they want. Monks and nuns don't marry in order to preserve their time and energy for the practice.

"Responsibility" is the key word in the Third Precept. In a community of practice, if there is no sexual misconduct, if the community practices this precept well, there will be stability and peace. This precept should be practiced by everyone. You respect, support, and protect each other as Dharma brothers and sisters. If you don't practice this precept, you may become irresponsible and create trouble in the community at large. We have all seen this. If a teacher cannot refrain from sleeping with one of his or her students, he or she will destroy everything, possibly for several generations. We need mindfulness in order to have that sense of responsibility. We refrain from sexual misconduct because we are responsible for the well-being of so many people. If we are irresponsible, we can destroy everything. By practicing this precept, we keep the Sangha beautiful.

In sexual relationships, people can get wounded. Practicing this precept is to prevent ourselves and others from being wounded. Often we think it is the woman who receives the wound, but men also get deeply wounded. We have to be very careful, especially in short-term commitments. The practice of the Third Precept is a very strong way of restoring stability and peace in ourselves, our family, and our society. We should take the time to discuss problems relating to the practice of this precept, like loneliness, advertising, and even the sex industry.

The feeling of loneliness is universal in our society. There is no communication between ourselves and other people, even in the family, and our feeling of loneliness pushes us into having sexual relationship will make us feel less lonely, but it isn't true. When there is not enough communication with another person on the level of the heart and spirit, a sexual relationship will only widen the gap and destroy us both. Our relationship will be stormy, and we will make each other suffer. The belief that having a sexual relationship will help us feel lonely is a kind of superstition. We should not be fooled by it. In fact, we will feel more lonely afterwards. The union of the two bodies can only be positive when there is understanding and communion on the level of the heart and the spirit. Even between husband and wife, if the communion on the level of the heart and spirit does not exist, the coming together of the two bodies will only separate you further. When that is the case, I recommend that you refrain from having sexual relationships and first try to make a breakthrough in communication.

There are two Vietnamese words, *tin* and *nhia*, that are difficult to translate into English. They both mean something like love. In *tin*, you find elements of passion. It can be very deep, absorbing the whole of your being. *Nhia* is a kind of continuation of *tin*. With *Nhia* you feel much calmer, more understanding, more willing to sacrifice to make the other person happy, and more faithful. You are not as passionate as in *tin*, but your love is deeper and more solid. *Nhia* will keep you and the other person together for a long time. It is the result of living together and sharing difficulties and joy over time.

You begin with passion, but, living with each other, you encounter difficulties, and as you learn to deal with them, your love deepens. Although the passion diminishes, *nhia* increases all the time. *Nhia* is a deeper love, with more wisdom, more interbeing, more unity. You understand the other person better. You and that person become one reality. *Nhia* is like a fruit that is

already ripe. It does not taste sour anymore; it is only sweet.

In *nghia*, you feel gratitude for the other person. "Thank you for having chosen me. Thank you for being my husband or my wife. There are so many people in society, why have you chosen me? I am very thankful." That is the beginning of *nghia*, the sense of thankfulness for your having chosen me as your companion to share the best things in yourself, as well as your suffering and your happiness.

When we live together, we support each other. We begin to understand each other's feelings and difficulties. When the other person has shown his or her understanding of our problems, difficulties, and deep aspirations, we feel thankful for that understanding. When you feel understood by someone, you stop being unhappy. Happiness is, first of all, feeling understood. "I am grateful because you have proved that you understand me. While I was having difficulty and remained awake deep into the night, you took care of me. You showed me that my well-being is your own well-being. You did the impossible in order to bring about my well-being. You took care of me in a way that no one else in this world could have. For that I am grateful to you."

If the couple lives with each other for a long time, "until our hair becomes white and our teeth fall out," it is because of *nghia*, and not because of *tin*. *Tin* is passionate love. *Nghia* is the kind of love that has a lot of understanding and gratitude in it.

All love may begin by being passionate, especially for younger people. But in the process of living together, they have to learn and practice love, so that selfishness -- the tendency to possess -- will diminish, and the elements of understanding and gratitude will settle in, little by little, until their love becomes nourishing, protecting, and reassuring. With *nghia*, you are very sure that the other person will take care of you and will love you until your teeth fall out and your hair becomes white. Nothing will assure you that the person will be with you for a long time except *nghia*. *Nghia* is built by both of you in your daily life.

To meditate is to look into the nature of our love to see the kind of elements that are in it. We cannot call our love just *tin* or *nghia*, possessive love or altruistic love, because there may be elements of both in it. It may be ninety percent possessive love, three percent altruistic love, two percent gratitude, and so on. Look deeply into the nature of your love and find out. The happiness of the other person and your own happiness depend on the nature of your love. Of course you have love in you, but what is important is the nature of that love. If you realize that there is a lot of *maitri* and *karuna* in your love, that will be very reassuring. *Nghia* will be strong in it.

Children, if they observe deeply, will see that what keeps their parents together is *nghia* and not passionate love. If their parents take good care of each other, look after each other with calmness, tenderness, and care, *nghia* is the foundation of that care. That is the kind of love we really need for our family and for our society.

In practicing the Third Precept, we should always look into the nature of our love in order to see and not be fooled by our feelings. Sometimes we feel that we have love for the other person, but maybe that love is only an attempt to satisfy our own egoistic needs. Maybe we have not looked deeply enough to see the needs of the other person, including the need to be safe, protected. If we have that kind of breakthrough, we will realize that the other person needs our

protection, and therefore we cannot look upon him or her just as an object of our desire. The other person should not be looked upon as a kind of commercial item.

Sex is used in our society as a means for selling products. We also have the sex industry. If we don't look at the other person as a human being, with the capacity of becoming a Buddha, we risk transgressing this precept. Therefore the practice of looking deeply into the nature of our love has a lot to do with the practice of the Third Precept. "I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct." Adults who were molested as children continue to suffer very much. Everything they think, do, and say bears the mark of that wound. They want to transform themselves and heal their wound, and the best way to do this is to observe the Third Precept. Because of their own experience, they can say, "As a victim of sexual abuse, I undertake to protect all children and adults from sexual abuse." Our suffering becomes a kind of positive energy that will help us become a bodhisattva. We undertake to protect all children and other people. ....

THICH NHAT HANH is a Zen Buddhist monk, peace activist, scholar, and poet. He is the founder of the Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon, has taught at Columbia University and the Sorbonne, and now lives in southern France, where he gardens, works to help those in need, and travels internationally teaching ``the art of mindful living." Martin Luther King, Jr., nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967, saying, ``I do not personally know of anyone more worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize than this gentle monk from Vietnam."

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