

Called to Consciousness: Cheshbon haNefesh

**A Resource of Information and
Workshops**



**Submitted by Bonny Grosz to the Academy for Jewish Religion as a
requirement for Rabbinic Ordination
December 21, 2005**

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December 21, 2005**

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Rabbi Maralee Gordon

17 Kislev 5766/18 December 2005

Rabbi David Greenstein
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Dear David and Ora:

I have reviewed and critiqued, and supervised revisions on Bonny Grosz's Senior Project, *Called to Consciousness: Cheshbon haNefesh; A Resource of Information and Workshops*. I recommend that this work be accepted in fulfillment of the requirement of Senior Project for Bonny Grosz.

Bonny's passion for the topic led to her comprehensive research of the literature, and to her development of well thought out programs and resources to take individuals and groups through the actual process of Cheshbon HaNefesh. I feel that she has made an important contribution to Jewish life through this work.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with Bonny on this work.

B'Yedidut,

Maralee

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Called to Consciousness

"You shall be holy because because I, Adonai am holy"
-Leviticus 19:2

If you won't be better tomorrow than you were today, then what need do you have for tomorrow?

-Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

It would have been better for man if he had not been created, but now that he has been created, he must carefully examine his actions.

- Eruvin 13b

Judaism teaches that God governs the world by seven characteristics: wisdom, fairness, justice, kindness, compassion, truth and peace

-Avot d'Rabbi Natan 37:8

PREFACE

Initially, this project was conceived to gather texts and materials having to do with the topic of Teshuvah and to create programs and workshops based on those texts. The workshops and programs would be geared to take place in the month of Elul and during the Days of Awe. As I began to consider this project, read research materials and think ahead to what the project would become, I realized that something was missing. A preliminary step to Teshuvah was missing and that step was Cheshbon haNefesh; Cheshbon haNefesh, an accounting of the soul. How could one most effectively do Teshuvah, without knowing from what one was turning? And further, once the accounting is done, the next logical step would be Tikkun haNefesh, or the repair of the soul. It is not to say that one cannot simply turn oneself to God at any given moment, but rather the most effective turning is done after examining the depths and nature of one's soul, and through taking action toward the repair of any flaws or deficits that one finds during the accounting. The fact is that Cheshbon haNefesh, Tikkun haNefesh and Teshuvah are inextricably bound, and some of the selected texts will be reflective of that. The concentration in this project is on selected texts which indicate how it is that we are to live in the world in order to be the

best human that we are capable of being. Proper teshuvah requires a true “cheshbon hanefesh,” a searching of one’s soul and self-accounting, to know what to rectify. This includes recognition of the greatness of He Who commanded the mitzvot. Such a “cheshbon hanefesh” requires profound contemplation, which in turn demands solitude.

The issue in question is, “How is it that we are to live as we were intended to be, *b’tzelem Elohim*, in God’s image?” In order to achieve that state, we are called to a certain level of behavior and to reside in a certain spiritual “space”. In the ideal, we call that space Love, the reflection of God’s Love. It is the space where God is and it is the place where we strive to be. If Cheshbon haNefesh is about character refinement and Teshuvah is about turning to God, then we see how accounting for our souls, character refinement and turning to God are so inextricably entwined, one is needed to accomplish the other, and together they lead the way to residing in God’s image, in Love and with God.

As one examines the texts for each stage of history (Section 1), one can see the progression from the simplistic indications of Bible text to the more elaborate, formal and rigid edicts of the Rabbinic period, increasing in stringency in the Medieval and Modern periods and, in my opinion, turning to a considerably softer and more spiritual nature in the most contemporary of the works. Although the contemporary authors base their remarks and instructions on the classical texts, some of their interpretations speak to the intellect, and some speak more to the soul, and certainly in a gentler manner (but just as profoundly, I feel) than the original texts. In all of the texts, however, the message is clear: that we must move closer to God by emulating God-like qualities in our daily behavior, and in so doing, we move closer to our true selves -- which consists of the very nature, the very “breath” of God. By behaving in a way that is in keeping with our God-qualities, we cannot help but be less individualized (egocentric), reach out more completely and selflessly to others, and live in a higher state of Love and unity –which are one in the same. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev taught

that our ability to love others is indicative of our ability to love God. "Whether a person really loves God," the Berdichever said, "can be determined by the love that person shares with others."¹ Oddly, it is by going inside oneself, that makes it possible to go more successfully outside of oneself to others -- reaching out for the commonality among us, our likeness to God -- rather than remaining within the limitations and constrictions brought on by our individual personalities.

In the study of Chesbon haNefesh and Tikkun hanefesh, and in attempting to fit them into today's world and the purpose of this project, one must distinguish between the levels of the discipline. My research showed that texts written in the last few centuries (until very recently, perhaps the last 50 or so years) applied mainly to Torah scholars and was quite stringent in its requirements and rigidity. What is appropriate in terms of dedication and educational background for the serious Torah scholar is not immediately adaptable to the audience that I wish to address with the programs put forth in this project. However, I feel that the original text sources are necessary to lay the foundation for educators and those who wish to educate themselves Jewishly, so that they can have a better understanding of the material, the objectives and the traditions, before they present and/or participate in the workshops and programs. My goal is to assist in bringing attention to the concept and process of Cheshbon haNefesh to the general Jewish public and to offer various accessible methods (through the workshops) of incorporating it into the lives of Jews today. In recent years, there has been a renaissance of the concept of Cheshbon haNefesh and a resurgence of the importance of this process for a more general Jewish population than exclusively for Torah scholars.

This project is divided in the following way: a Preface, an Introduction and a Conclusion, an Annotated Bibliography of texts from the Biblical Period until the present day that deal with Chesbon haNefesh, an overview and selection of

¹ P. 49, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days, A Guided Journal; Kerry M. Olitzsky and Rachel T. Sabbath

citations from foundational and significant texts through the ages, original workshops and programs, including a Journal, for the period of the month of Elul and the Yamim Noraim, all based on the various texts. Given the popularity of the topic in recent years, included in the appendix, as resource materials are programs and materials gathered from other Rabbis, educators and various sources (with their permission).

Please note that any quoted materials have been left in their original form, remaining in tact and true to the author's intent.

Cheshbon haNefesh

An Introduction

There are times in this life that we are called to consciousness; times that we are called to reckon with our thoughts and our actions in this world, times to acknowledge and account for our character, assessing how it is that we can improve ourselves. Through the changes we make in ourselves, we can also change the world. In the Jewish world, there are prescribed and opportune times to enter the process that brings us to this state of consciousness that encourages and allows these necessary changes. It is the human duty to be alert to the calling of the soul. Cheshbon haNefesh, an accounting of the soul, is the Jewish call to consciousness.

As we live life in this world of material existence, our first call is to find a way to survive in it. We develop skills that allow us to supply our basic human needs and sustenance, such as food, and shelter, etc... We simultaneously develop the skills of living in a world populated by other human beings trying to do the same. In the quest to survive and beyond, there exists the risk of straying from the essence of the human being, the soul.

Just as there is no human being without a physical body, there is no human life without the soul that inhabits that body. When the body and soul are out of balance, it is a loss for both body and soul. And so the Jewish tradition calls us to consciousness of both body and soul, in the attempt to assist us in maintaining a balance for both. Our physicality maintains our worldly existence, and our soul ties our existence to its source, the Creator. Our challenge in this world is to maintain the holiness of the Divine breath that gives the body life. The soul is recognized, addressed and fertilized by the wisdom of Jewish texts.

What is it that calls us to consciousness? It is our tradition, both oral and written, and our commitment to live that tradition that calls to us. We are a people commanded by God to live in certain ways and behave within certain parameters in this world. And how is it that we are called to consciousness? Our teachings, as documented in texts written throughout Jewish history, remind us of the qualities that we are to strive for and embody; the cycle of our year and our holidays provide us with opportunities to be reminded of this calling as well. And so it is God, through our tradition, who calls us to a state of heightened awareness, to make an ongoing accounting of our consciousness, of the state of our soul.

Another question that must be asked and answered here is: which aspect of the soul is called into account in the process of making this accounting of the soul? The answer lies in the Hebrew term itself, *Cheshbon haNefesh*. Although a discussion of the levels of the soul is not the thrust of this project, it is nevertheless germane to give an explanation in order to understand what level is being so divinely called into account. The soul is what connects us to our Divine Source and is made up of five ascending levels of consciousness, according to the Zohar. They are called: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neschama*, *chaya* and *yechida*. Within these five levels, man contains all of Creation within him, from the loftiest spirituality to the most mundane physicality. The *nefesh* is the level of the soul that interfaces with the body; what is sometimes termed “the animal soul”. It is the *nefesh*, the most basic physical level of the soul that is addressed. As written in Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh¹, it is the animal soul that resides in the body, along with the soul aspect that comes from a higher realm that must do the accounting. And it is the results of the actions of both of these levels of soul working together that must also be accounted for. The two souls (really aspects) unfortunately do not always work in unison and it is a constant effort on the part of both souls to maintain a balance in this world of living the human/animal life

¹ (p.35-40) Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh; Rabbi Mendel of Satanov, 1845; Translation by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein; Feldheim Publishers; Jerusalem – New York; 1995

while striving to live in the ways of God and to remain in the service of God while in human form. So it is that *nefesh*, the animal soul, which is the one that does the doing in this world; it is the *nefesh* which needs to account for itself. This accounting must take place in one form or another, at various times throughout the life of the human being, or the higher soul, the one that God gifted to the *nefesh* for guidance and the purpose of learning and doing good in this realm, will not be able to serve its purpose nor receive its reward. The *nefesh* will squander its time on earth and will condemn itself to remain at this low level and not advance in the levels of souls. Judaism demands this accounting and provides not only specific time periods for this process to take place, but provides techniques for doing so as well.

The most recognized period of time designated for making Cheshbon haNefesh is the Hebrew month of Elul, the month immediately preceding Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year; the celebration of Creation. What better time to take stock, to recreate ourselves than in preparation for the New Year and the solemn holy day of Yom Kippur that follows 10 days later, when we are called both communally and individually before God to “settle our accounts”. For the full month of Elul we are to consider who we have been in the past year, who we are now, and who we aspire to be in the coming year. It is an awesome and profound responsibility to make this accounting and follow up with the actions that will lead us to living a more holy life and thereby helping to create a better world. The mystics would take this one step further and say that our actions would influence not just this world, but the cosmic balance of all existence.

There are other times in the Jewish cycle of time that are also designated for making a Cheshbon haNefesh. As mentioned in the Preface, Cheshbon haNefesh is intimately bound up with Teshuvah and the prescribed times apply to both processes. According to Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi, the periodicity of Cheshbon haNefesh and Teshuvah applies to the different levels of soul as follows: daily, before going to sleep focus on *nefesh*; weekly, on Thursday night focus on *ru'ach*; monthly, on *erev Rosh Chodesh* focus on *neshama*; and

annually, on Yom Kippur focus on *chahyah and y'chidah*.² This cycle of introspection is one that has not been practiced widely in recent times, but our attention needs to be drawn to it so that we are aware of the regularity with which we need to examine and refine ourselves. One might note that the weekly and monthly processes are to take place at night. Reb Zalman speaks to this fact by noting the following:

Or l-arbah'ah ahsahr, bodkeen et he-chahmetz l-or hah-ner.³ When it comes to Pesach, you're supposed to go looking for the leaven in your house. You have to do it at night, with a single candle. So they asked the question, why not look for it during the day? The answer is that during the day you won't pay attention to the shadow places. Therefore you go with one candle when it's really dark. If you think of when is the night of the month, the darkest night for us to take the candle of the soul – *ner Eloheem nishmaht hah-Adam*, the soul of a human being is the candle of the Lord - and to take that candle and start looking – *bah-choreem u-vah-s'dakeem* – to look in all the wholes and all the splits and all the little hiding places and see what *chametz* you can find. You see, periodicity is therefore important and especially the one that has to do with the moon.⁴

After reading the above analogy, we can extend it to the previously mentioned month of Elul. In the cycle of the Jewish year, the nadir of the year occurs on Tisha b'Av (the 9th of Av), just previous to the month of Elul. It is at that point, the moment of deepest communal mourning and despair; spiritually the darkest moment of the Jewish year, that some say the annual Cheshbon haNefesh actually begins. If we do the daily, the weekly and the monthly maintenance, the yearly check-up will not yield so many surprises nor will we be so occupied with the smaller issues; having dealt with them, we will be able to accomplish "a deep cleaning" at a most critical spiritual time. This timing has been passed down through the tradition not to overburden us with more to do in life, but to keep us in frequent, if not constant touch, with the state of our being, the state of our soul. In the more ancient tradition, the Cheshbon haNefesh/Teshuvah process did, in fact, begin at the close of Tisha b'Av. On the climb out of our communal spiritual darkness, we are to seek, note, root out and rid ourselves of our personal "*chametz*".

² p. 4; Yom Kippur Kattan and the Cycles of Teshuvah; Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi; ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal; Philadelphia; 1999

³ Pesachim 2a

⁴ P.13, Yom Kippur Kattan and the Cycles of Teshuvah

Another perspective comes from the practice of Mussar. Mussar demands an ongoing process of accounting, rather than relying on the cyclical. In the past, this ongoing process of Cheshbon haNefesh has always been demanded of Torah scholars as part of their learning and growing as students of Torah and their strivings for a life of righteousness. Prescribed methods evolved over time of doing this accounting – especially in the modern period of Mussar development - some of which are explained with varying detail in the resource materials associated with the workshops in this project and in some of the workshops themselves.

A further explanation of Cheshbon haNefesh is called for.

“Cheshbon haNefesh is an emotional and spiritual stocktaking, in which the individual asks: Where am I in my personal development? Where have I improved? Where is there need for further improvement? If change is called for, then three decisions will be made: 1) admitting - confronting the fact that improvement is needed, that a wrong must be corrected; 2) regretting - meditating on the harm done, who has been hurt, and how severely; and 3) committing - resolving to improve, to transform one's character.”⁵

Using Cheshbon haNefesh properly means taking responsibility for thoughts, speech, actions, as well as possessions and opportunities. In order to take such total responsibility, it is necessary to crystallize a complete self-awareness. Due to its organizational effects, the overall benefit of this self-awareness is the development of the potential of all the good which the Almighty implanted within the Creation that the individual is capable of bringing forth. The results of doing a proper cheshbon haNefesh are developing a fresh view of life, experiencing the excitement of making true conscious value judgments, and reinforcing the long-term goal of self-perfection.

⁵ <http://www.diaspora.org.il/ethics/acc08.htm>

Cheshbon haNefesh makes subtle emotional, as well as intellectual demands upon a person. It requires an honest evaluation of self and situation, and a desire for spiritual development. Ignoring these demands can cause a real internal conflict to arise.⁶

As recourse to some of the conflicts that might arise in the process, it is recommended that the process not be conducted as an “independent audit”; although a form of journaling is helpful.⁷ Since it is almost impossible for a person to regard himself objectively, it is thought that one of the only ways to make a true ‘Cheshbon haNefesh’ is when it is made together with another person (friend or mentor), who can objectively check if the self-accounting made by his friend is an honest, true one, or rather distorted by the person’s subjective view. Needless to say, it is of great importance who one chooses to work with on the accounting of one’s soul. It is not for the other to direct the accounting, to impose their opinion or to edit, but rather to assist by keeping the subject on task, witnessing, mirroring, and helping the subject to see what is occurring in their “blind spots.” This is not a one-step or even short-term process; great care and attention need to be paid to one’s thoughts and habitual actions.

There is an abundance of texts written through the ages that teach of the ideals for which we need to strive; and in recent years there has been a new spate of books and journals that also deal with Cheshbon haNefesh. Aside from the foundational Biblical and Rabbinic texts, There are three volumes that have been established as the seminal works of Cheshbon haNefesh and mussar practice: Chovot Levavot/Duties of the Heart, by R. Bachya ibn Paquda (1040 C.E.), Mesillat Yesharim, by R. Moshe Chayim Luzzatto (1740), and Sefer Cheshbon haNefesh, by R. Mendel of Satanov. The first two volumes are discussed in the Medieval and Modern sections of this project and the third is discussed below. Without

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Again, some of the procedures are detailed in the resource materials to be found in other sections of this work.

doubt there have been other important and classic works, many of which are listed in the bibliography that follows this introduction, yet the three above have been the standards of Mussar.

Sefer Cheshbon HaNefesh , by Rabbi Mendel of Satanov was published in the year 1865, with the encouragement of Rabbi Israel Salanter, the founder of the modern Mussar movement. It has become the seminal work of the modern Mussar movement⁸: Of the many texts written on the topic, this small volume was chosen as the standard for the comprehensive approach to the accounting of the soul and the improvement of the individual by means of working with *middot*, character traits. The central idea put forth is that the *middot* are internal expressions of the soul which root themselves in one's thoughts and manifest themselves through one's actions. There is much discussion of internal versus external awareness of the *middot* and how they can be changed, beginning with the process of thought formation and modes of thought development. Rabbi Mendel tells us that the corrections begin with the supervision of one's thought process, and that thought process is the supervising agent of character refinement. (By no means is it the only aspect of the person that is involved, but

⁸ The Hebrew term *mussar*, while literally derived from a word meaning "tradition", usually refers to Jewish ethics in general, or (and more commonly) refers to the Jewish ethics education movement that developed in the 19th century Orthodox Jewish European community, particularly in Lithuania. Mussar is a path of contemplative practices and exercises that have evolved over the past thousand years to help an individual soul to pinpoint and then to break through the barriers that surrounds and obstructs the flow of inner light in our lives. Mussar is a treasury of techniques and understandings that offers immensely valuable guidance for the journey of our lives. The Orthodox Jewish community spawned Mussar to help people overcome the inner obstacles that hinder them from living up to the laws and commandments - the mitzvot - that form the code of life. That community tends to see Mussar as inseparable from its own beliefs and practices, but the human reality Mussar addresses is actually universal, and the gifts it offers can be used by all people. The goal of Mussar practice is to release the light of holiness that lives within the soul. The roots of all of our thoughts and actions can be traced to the depths of the soul, beyond the reach of the light of consciousness, and so the methods Mussar provides include meditations, guided contemplations, exercises and chants that are all intended to penetrate down to the darkness of the subconscious, to bring about change right at the root of our nature. From its origins in the 10th century, Mussar was a practice of the solitary seeker, until in the 19th century it became the basis for a popular social/spiritual movement.
[<http://mussarinstitute.org/wisdom-way.htm>]

it does serve as the main point of from which to embark on the process.)

Through various techniques which are initiated by the thought process, one accesses feelings and images which have their source within the heart. It is through the access to the heart and to the unconscious that lasting changes and adjustments are made to man's character traits. The character traits, or *middot*, are the manifestations of the *nefesh* in this world. By identifying what we lack in terms of our character, and looking at those *middot* which are already well-honed, we accomplish the task of Cheshbon haNefesh. Mussar is a method to work on the process of Cheshbon haNefesh and further, to advance the process from accounting to enacting and then to refining. The goal of the process is to strive for holiness and to achieve a state of *shlayma*, or wholeness.⁹ Or, perhaps the goal is to keep striving for the perfected state, rather than actually reaching it. After the initial realization of the need to change, which happens in the intellect or thought process, the next step is to be aware that our thoughts turn into actions and that one must now work to change one's habits.

The substance of Mussar is founded upon Toraitic and Rabbinic texts, and the values and principles promulgated by them. The description of desired human attributes appears in a great number of texts and under a wide variety of circumstances. They refer to each of the *middot* that are the foundation of Mussar: Equanimity/*Menuchah*; Tolerance/*Savlanut*; Order/*Seder*; Decisiveness/*Charitzut*; Cleanliness/*Nikayut*; Humility/*Anavah*; Righteousness/*Tzedek*; Frugality/*K'mutz*; Zeal/*Zerizut*; Silence/*Sh'tika*; Calmness/*Nichutah*; Truth/*Emet*; and Separation/*Prishut*.¹⁰ With the enhancement of these character traits in mind, Rabbi Mendel takes the reader through the steps necessary to improve oneself, moving ever closer to the ideal. Much of the process described, especially the initial steps, are familiar to the contemporary reader who is most likely familiar with cognitive behavioral therapy;

⁹ I use the word wholeness as the translation for *shlayma*, but many in the Mussar movement use the word perfection.

¹⁰ P.185 **Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh**; Rabbi Mendel of Satanov, 1845; Translation by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein; Feldheim Publishers; Jerusalem – New York; 1995

though Mussar precedes modern psychology by a good many years. It is important for the person undertaking Cheshbon haNefesh to have both external and internal awareness of his own character traits. This enables the person to enter into the process of thought formation and development. "Character traits are internal expressions of the soul which root themselves in one's thoughts and manifest through their actions."¹¹ And in the following regard, the process departs from modern psychology: complete recognition is predicated on the inner workings of the heart; feelings and images have their source within the depths of the heart. The thoughts are most manifest in the heart. Both Rabbi Mendel and ibn Paquda encourage the subject to examine whether or not the thought is self-serving or *b'shaym hashamayim*/for the sake of heaven. Is the thought in the heart or in the mind? Is it internally or externally imposed? This is another departure point for the religious perspective. From thought, there is a move to action and then the step is to habit. First one must consider and deal with thought and thought process. Next one must consider that which has become habit. A person must seriously realize the force of habit and one's servitude to the force of habit. Three levels of habit are discussed; 1) external habit, 2) those habits that are combined with the character traits¹² and 3) habitual thought¹³. And one must examine one's motivation for the action. Both improper deeds with proper motivation and proper deeds with improper motivation are considered to be in need of correction. To make the corrections, one is to call on a variety of sources for assistance; the Torah, the Sages and God.

"It is well known that man merits Divine assistance in proportion to his efforts to achieve purity¹⁴ – efforts which are the crux of the *mussar* discipline. He must therefore always remember that his acting with improper motivation will ultimately lead him to act for the proper reasons. He must see this as a precondition and always bear it in mind so that it becomes stamped onto his soul and becomes the axis around which all

¹¹ p.3; Sefer Cheshbon HaNefesh

¹² Thought to be the most difficult to change.

¹³ Kiddushin 40a – God does not consider evil thought to be equivalent to actions.

¹⁴ Based on Psalm 62:13 – And You God, show grace for You pay man according to his accomplishments.

his thoughts and aspirations in live revolve. By remembering this, he will be successful in eradicating any vestige of improper motivation that he became accustomed to, and he will then serve God with a pure heart and soul, with constant help from God.”¹⁵

The author then finishes the above statement with a commentary by the Vilna Gaon on the following verse from Proverbs, 4:26: “Straighten the circuit of your feet and all of your ways will be set.” And so it is that the changing of habit and action, it is thought, will eventually influence the thought process – which will permanently eradicate the habit and change the character trait involved. It is the human thought process, with the assistance of the higher soul, and outside sources that is most able to control the animal soul. For it is the animal soul, the *nefesh habahamit*, that is subject to blow in the wind with no will of its own and must come under the influence of the conscious human. That is the core of the purpose of Chesbon haNefesh, to account for and assess the state of our character, our actions and our thoughts and to gain control over them. The constant tension between the animal and human soul/spirit is the task and challenge to undertake. We are to wrestle with and dominate our own animal spirit and instinct until it is under our control; and to what end? The end is so that we may direct ourselves to God. As it is written in Psalms, “I have considered my ways and I shall return my steps to your testimonies.”¹⁶

Many steps of the Cheshbon haNefesh process are contained within the pages of this project in both the workshops and the resource materials. It is both simple and complex; it is both easy and extraordinarily difficult. Perhaps by reading, but mainly by doing can we understand what the process will hold for us personally.

¹⁵ P. 19; Sefer Cheshbon HaNefesh

¹⁶ Psalms 119:59

An Annotated Bibliography

(Divided According to Historical Periods)

Ancient

JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh, The Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation – Second Edition; The Jewish Publication Society; Philadelphia; 1999

Rabbinic

Talmud Bavli (see Rabbinic Citation section)

Medieval

(Post-Talmudic thru 1700)

Chovot haLevavot - Duties of the Heart; R. Bachya ben Joseph ibn Paquda; Translated from the Arabic into Hebrew by R. Yehuda Ibn Tibbon; English Translation by Daniel Haberman; Felheim Publishers; Jerusalem - New York; 1966. (R. Bachya ben Joseph ibn Paquda. This book was the first Jewish system of ethics, written in Arabic in 1040 under the title "Al Hidayah ila Faraid al-Kulub" (Guide to the Duties of the Heart), and translated into Hebrew by Judah ibn Tibbon in the years 1161-80 under the title "Hovot ha-Levavot" (Instruction in the Duties of the Heart).

Hilchot Deot (Laws of Temperment) by Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam; Maimonides; 1135-1204; The title is of one section of the Mishneh Torah, a work that was written from 1170-1180 C.E. and is a foundational text for Jewish halacha/law. In his treatise on the Laws of Temperament, the Rambam deals with five negative and six positive commandments and the emulation of God's ways, various temperaments, stringency, bodily health, services that a sage should insure exist in his town, acceptable conduct for a sage, treatment of others, lashon hara, and grudge-bearing. It is a rich source of behavioral directives and therefore serves as a basis for the process of Cheshbon haNefesh. One can easily derive from the text a standard of behavior with which to compare oneself.¹

Hilchot Teshuvah (The Laws of Repentance); by Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam; Maimonides 1135-1204; Translation and Commentaries by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger; Maznaim Publishing Corporation; New York – Jerusalem; 1987;

¹ See Medieval Citations

The title is of one section of the Mishneh Torah, a work that was written from 1170-1180 C.E. and is a foundational text for Jewish halacha/law. This volume deals with teshuvah as an all encompassing approach to the service of God and faith. It approaches teshuvah not only as repentance from sin, but return, return to the inner Godly core which is the essence of our being.² The book begins with how to perform acts of teshuvah and progresses to tell how to live a life of teshuvah.

Mesillat Yesharim -The Path of the Just; Moshe Chaim Luzzatto; English Translation by Shraga Silverstein; Feldheim Publishers; Jerusalem - New York; 1966.; Moshe Chayim Luzzatto; 1707 – 1776; Italy, Amsterdam, Eretz Yisrael, original publication of this text was in 1740. In this classical text, the author guides the reader through the steps of character refinement leading to the level of holiness.

Iggeret HaGra (The Mussar Letter) of the Vilna Gaon (Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman (1720-1797); giant of his generation - Rabbi, Talmud scholar, and Kabbalist.) This letter was written to instruct his family in the ways of Mussar as the Vilna Gaon was enroute to Eretz Yisrael. It is rife with scriptural citations to validate the call to Mussar and the Godly way of life.

Gates of Repentance - Sha'arei Teshuvah; *Rabbi Yonah of Gerona, Translated by: Rabbi Shraga Silverstein, Feldheim*, The classic work on repentance and religious conduct. The work was written after Rabbi Yonah of Geroni (a nephew of Nachmanides) so ardently opposed the Mishneh Torah of Maimonides that the work was burned in the streets of Paris in 1244. Overcome with regret upon seeing the result of his opposition, which he took as a sign from God, he left for the Holy Land. The literary result of his repentance was Sha'arei Teshuvah, a work on ethics and repentance.

Tomer Devorah (The Palm Tree of Deborah); Rabbi Moses ben Jacob Cordovero; Venice; 1588; b.1522 – d.1570; Translated and Annotated by Rabbi Moshe Miller; Targum/Feldheim; Jerusalem; 1993. Residing in Safad, the Ramak was one of the premier kabbalists of the day and wrote several works including Tomer Devorah in which he utilizes the Kabbalistic concepts of the *Sephirot* ("Divine attributes") to illuminate a system of morals and ethics.

Ma'alot HaMiddot by Rabbi Yechiel the son of Yekutiel the son of Binyamin, the Doctor (1298) This work discusses 24 moral virtues.

Orhot Zaddikim (The Ways of the Righteous) This a classic work of ethics written by an anonymous author of Ashkenazic origin the 14th century under the

² From the translators notes

title of Sefer Middot (The Book of Character Traits).³ The first edition was published in Prague in 1581. The earliest extant copy of this manuscript is held at the Warsaw University Library (Ms. 258) [See Contemporary list for a commentary on this book – A Treasury for Life.]

Sefer Kad HaKemah [Sixty Sermons, Cadus farinae Misc, theol. eth. et ritual. alphab.]; Bahya ben Asher ben Halava; Translated and Annotated by Chavel, Charles B.

Shilo Publishing House, Inc. New York, 1980: **NOTES:** Bahya (13th c.) exegete, preacher, kabbalist. "The clarity of Bahya's style and his easy exposition have made his books...popular... Kad Ha-Kemah contains alphabetically arranged clarifications on the foundations of faith and had a wide circulation." [Ency. Judaica]

Modern

(1700 thru 1950)

Ahavat Chesed; Chofetz Chayim; Translated by Leonard Oschry; Feldheim Publishers; Jerusalem – New York; 1967. This work was compiled by the Chofetz Chayim to outline laws of Chesed and the importance of fulfilling this mitzvah and serves as a guide to understanding the meaning of the commandment to "love kindness" – the laws between man and man. Known as the Chofetz Chayim, Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan, (1838-1933) lived in Radin and was a scholar of reknown, most notable for his campaign against lashon hara and for writing the Mishnah Berurah.

Alef-Bet Book (Sefer HaMiddot-The Book of Attributes); Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810; Ukraine); translated by Moshe Mykoff; Breslov Research Institute; Jerusalem/New York; 1986; This is a collection of teachings (1802-1808), in the form of aphorisms, that are geared to improving and perfecting one's character. These teachings of Rebbe Nachman show the interrelationship between the physical and spiritual worlds.

Anatomy of the Soul; Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810); translated and annotated by Chaim Kramer; Breslov Research Institute; Jerusalem/New York; This volume is a major work by Rebbe Nachman that represents the human anatomy as a reflection of the spiritual and shows how one can succeed in acquiring truly spiritual traits. He maintains that illness and physical imbalance are caused by spiritual imbalance.

³ <http://www.seforimonline.org/seforim7.html>

Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh; Rabbi Mendel of Satanov, 1845; Translation by Rabbi Shraga Silverstein; Feldheim Publishers; Jerusalem – New York; 1995; First published in 1812, it was republished with the encouragement of Rabbi Israel Salanter in 1845. It was acclaimed and later selected as a major work of the Mussar Movement and was published for a third time in 1937. Some say it bears much in common with Benjamin Franklin's autobiography.

"Iggeret ha'Mussar"; (<http://www.aishdas.org/igeresHamussar.pdf>) (The Mussar Letter) of Rabbi Israel Salanter (trans. Rabbi Zvi Miller) This Ethical Letter was most famous of the writings of Rabbi Yisrael Ben Ze'ev Wolf Lipkin (of Salant – Lithuania) (1810-1883), the founder of the Mussar Movement.

Lights of Repentance; Abraham Kook; ed. Ben Zion Bokser; Paulist Press; 1978; This volume was written by Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael and prolific writer on matters of halacha and Jewish thought. The book is not so much about repentance as it is about knowledge of the soul and man's capacity for change.

Contemporary

(1950 thru present)

A Guide for Starting Your New Incarnation: Teachings on the Modern Meaning of Teshuvah; Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi; edited by Rabbi Daniel Siegel; ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal; Philadelphia; 2001; This small volume contains a teaching from Reb Zalman on teshuvah during the High Holiday period. It contains source material as well as Reb Zalman's unique interpretations of those sources.

A Treasure for Life, Commentary and Insights into Sefer Orchos Tzaddikim – Volume One; Rabbi Avroham G. Yachnes; Feldheim; This book of commentaries and insights covers the first four "gates" as originally set forth in Hovot Levavot (see Medieval bibliography)

The Anthology of Jewish Mysticism; Translated from the Hebrew by Raphael ben Zion; Zahava Publications; New York; 1891 (Specifically, the chapter on **Nefesh HaChaim** by Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin). This book presents four selections from classic works of Jewish mysticism with an emphasis on the need to be steeped in the knowledge and tradition of Judaism as a basis for entering the world of mystical thought.

Beginning Anew, A Women's Companion to the High Holy Days; edited by Gail Twersky Reimer and Judith A. Kates; Simon & Schuster; 1997; This book sets forth a large number of reflective writings by women rabbis. "All the pieces in this book participate in the midrashic enterprise, bringing women's voices, women's perspectives, into the quintessential mode of Jewish spirituality, the study of Torah. ... Interest in the marginalized, the oppressed, the silenced and silences is everywhere evident ..."⁴

Business Bible, The: 10 New Commandments for Bringing Spirituality & Ethical Values into the Workplace; Wayne Dosick; Jewish Lights Publishing; The commandments and their demands on man's behavior are translated into the practical, everyday concerns of the business world and our work environment. This book translates ancient wisdom into accessible and pertinent advice for anyone in the business world who has a soul.

Climbing Jacob's Ladder: One Man's Rediscovery of a Jewish Spiritual Tradition; Alan Moranis; Broadway Books/Random House; 2004; The author provides a fascinating, deeply personal account of his journey back to Jewish spirituality through an encounter with the little-known heritage of Mussar. It is a reminder that by changing ourselves we can begin to change the world. As a result of his journey, Mr. Moranis created the Mussar Institute and now teaches Mussar at seminars around the country and provides online courses as well. (<http://www.moranis.ca/index.htm>)

Creating an Ethical Jewish Life, A Practical Introduction to Classic Teachings on How to be a Jew; D. Byron L. Sherwin, Dr. Seymour J. Cohen; Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, VT; 2001; The approach of this book is much broader than the topic of this project, but many of the major Jewish ethical sources are cited in the effort to bring forth their teachings into modern life

Crossing the Narrow Bridge, A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings; Chaim Kramer; Breslov Research Institute; Jerusalem – New York; 1989; This volume's purpose is to serve as an introduction to the teachings of Rebbe Nachman, focusing on the major topics found throughout his teachings. The teachings are given in contemporary and comprehensible language as well and are accompanied by practical "how-to" advice.

Entering the High Holy Days; Reuven Hammer; Jewish Publication Society; Philadelphia; 1998. This is a guide to the history, prayers and themes of the High Holy Days to provide contemporary relevance to today's Jews.

God in All Moments, Mystical & Practical Spiritual Wisdom From Hasidic Masters; Edited and translated by Or Rose (with Ebn D. Leader); Jewish Lights Publishing; Woodstock, Vermont; 2004. This is a collection of Hasidic teachings

⁴ editors notes

gathered by the translator to which his modern commentary is added. The sayings all pertain to the Hasidic genre of *hanhagot*, or spiritual practices.

Illuminating the Generations – From the Middos of the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs to the Mussar Thinkers of Our Time; Rabbi Hillel Goldberg; Mesorah Publications, Ltd.: New York; 1994; An analytical study of the middot of the patriarchs and matriarch, bolstered by citations from Jewish sources throughout the ages is given in an effort to more deeply comprehend the level of understanding and elevation of the subjects of this study.

The Jewish Moral Virtues; Eugene B. Borowitz, Frances Weinman Schwartz, Jewish Publication Society; 1999; Much discussion of the relationship between Torah and Mussar begins this book. (based on the scriptural quote: My child, heed your father's musar, and do not forsake your mother's torah. Proverbs 1:8) In addition to the modern discussion of Jewish morals and values, the text is filled with scriptural citations as both foundation and illumination of Jewish moral code. There is a section in the book devoted to helping the reader to create his own Torah from the wisdom passed on to him throughout his life.

Preparing Your Heart for the High Holidays, A Guided Journal; Kerry M. Olitzky and Rachel T. Sabbath; Jewish Publication Society; Philadelphia – Jerusalem; 1996; This book is written to engage the Jewish soul and to set out a guide to the 40 days leading up through the High Holidays in the form of a journal, providing scriptural quotations and modern inspiration as well as space for the notes of the reader.

“Rosh Hashana Morning 5765”; Rabbi Charles Briskin; Congregation Beth Am; September 16, 2004; A sermon that speaks to the matter of cheshbon.

Rosh Hashanah - Yom Kippur Survival Kit; Shimon Apisdorf; Leviathan Press; Columbus, Ohio; 1992

Seasons of Our Joy, A Modern Guide to the Jewish Holidays; Arthur Waskow; Beacon Press; Boston, Massachusetts; 1982; This book is devoted to the cycle of the year and its celebrations, giving both new and old ways to interpret and celebrate the holidays.

(Specifically the chapters on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.)

Siddur Sim Shalom, A Prayerbook for Shabbat, Festivals and Holidays; Edited, with translations by Jules Harlow; The Rabbinical Assembly/ The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism; New York; 1989

This is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared, The Days of Awe as a Transformational Journey; Alan Lew; Little, Brown and Company; Boston – New York – London; 2003; Rabbi Lew takes the reader on a unique soulful and soul-searching (and sometimes gut-wrenching) Jewish journey from Tisha b'Av through Yom Kippur. This book is a fascinating look at a Jewish process through a Zen lens.

"Who Wants to be a Mensch?"; Yom Kippur; Rabbi Donald B. Rossoff; 2000 / 5761; ©2000 A sermon dealing with the topic of cheshbon hanefesh.

Words That Hurt, Words That Heal, How to Choose Words Wisely and Well; Joseph Telushkin; William Morrow and Company; New York; 1996

Yom Kippur Kattan and the Cycles of Teshuvah; Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi; ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal; Philadelphia; 1999; This small book contains a treasure of personal experiences, less than well known traditions/liturgy, and thoughts on teshuvah as a (not just once-a-year) practice.

Web Sites

All sites were found through using the Google search engine

<http://acrispelulmorning.blogspot.com/>

http://www.aish.com/holidays/the_high_holidays/articles/Making_A_Plan_for_Your_Life.asp

http://www.aish.com/hhGrowth/hhGrowthDefault/Spiritual_Accounting_System.asp

http://www.aish.com/spirituality/growth/Resolutions_that_Last.asp

http://www.aish.com/torahportion/shalomweekly/Bo_5763.asp

http://www.aish.com/torahportion/appel/Take_a_Spiritual_Accounting.asp

http://www.aish.com/passthought/passthoughtdefault/Freedom_and_Responsibility.asp

http://www.aish.com/hhelul/hheluldefault/Becoming_a_Professional_Jew.asp

<http://www.ashrei.com>

<http://www.baalshemtov.com/teach.htm>

<http://www.breslov.org/rnachman.html>

<http://www.darchenoam.org/discussion/CENTRAL.html>

<http://www.decoupageforthesoul.com/livingintuneelul5762.htm>

www.diaspora.org.il

<http://www.ilanamerцер.com/Soul%20and%20Moral%20Tradition.htm>

http://www.kabbalaonline.org/Introductions/firststeps/Levels_of_Soul_Consciousness.as

<http://www.neveh.org/winston/wealthy/wealth08.html>

<http://www.ou.org/chagim/elul/default.htm#elul>

http://www.rabbirami.com/ebooks/Elul_PDF.pdf

<http://www.Shalomcenter.org> (Rabbi Shefa Gold)

<http://www.sichosinenglish.org/books/days-of-destiny/32.htm>

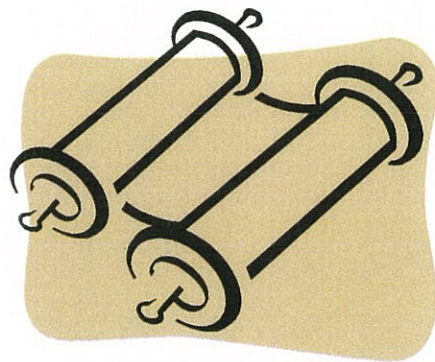
<http://www.sichosinenglish.org/books/sichos-in-english/11/04.htm>

<http://www.torahlearningcenter.com/jhq/question45.html> Adapted from material obtained from www.aish.edu

WUJS site:

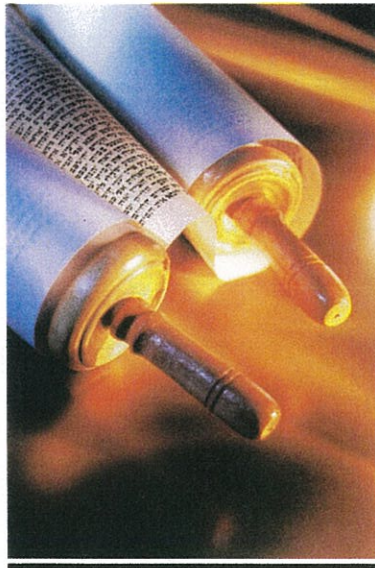
http://www.yasharbooks.com/2004_11_01_archive.html

Introduction To Text Resources



The purpose of the following section is to provide a sampling of evidence in Jewish texts for the obligation to make Cheshbon haNefesh and to hone character traits that are held as ideals for which man must strive in the Jewish tradition. The Biblical and Rabbinic sections present many of the foundational citations for Cheshbon haNefesh. The Medieval and Modern sections present citations from some of the major works of the different time periods and their various perspectives. The Contemporary citations have been chosen to represent some of the newer material that is reviving Cheshbon haNefesh as a spiritual practice in today's world.

The Biblical Period (2000 B.C.E – 70 C.E.)



Introduction To Biblical Citations

The entirety of the TaNaKh, the Five Books Moses, the Prophetic works, and the canonized sacred Writings, contain a wealth of instruction and direction concerning the qualities and characteristics that man must embody to become as he is intended to be, *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. Some instruction is given in a pedantic manner in direct statements from either God or Moses, and some is modeled by positive or negative example. In the books of Genesis, Exodus and Numbers, many of the desirable traits are modeled by the players in the drama; some by their positive behavior and some by their shortcomings and missteps. Although modeling is seen throughout the Five Books of Moses, the majority of positive characteristics are attributed to the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, though exceptions where relatively minor characters also serve as exemplars are numerous. This pattern of modeling and pedantic instruction continues throughout the works of the Prophets and the Writings as well, though there are also examples of more extensive narrative, such as in Proverbs. Whereas it may sometimes seem that the directives are at times vague, they have become more known and clarified through exegesis by the Sages and various commentators throughout the ages.

From the very beginning of the book of Genesis, we are introduced to positive traits and behaviors to emulate through the actions of God: 1) God speaks and creates, so too we have the power to create with the words that we use¹, 2) the ultimate directive to man is given when we read that humankind is to be created "*b'tzelem Elohim*", in the image of God², 3) and in the creation of the Universe as God rests on the seventh day³ and models the importance of rest on the Sabbath. We begin to learn of the importance of being faithful to God's word

¹ Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14

² Genesis 1:26,27

³ Genesis 2:2,3

from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden⁴ for their disobedience, and from Cain and Abel and Noah, the precepts that we should be respectful of the life of our fellow humans⁵, that man is rewarded for his righteousness⁶, the importance of silence and not speaking ill of others⁷, respectfulness⁸, and from Abraham truth⁹.

In addition to from those citations from the TaNaKh which speak directly to desirable character traits and development, the Sages of the Talmud often use biblical proof texts as foundation for some of their own ethical teachings.¹⁰ Thus, biblical citations are the foundation for all that has followed in the literature on Cheshbon haNefesh in all eras.

⁴ Genesis 3:3,11,17,23

⁵ Genesis 4:10, Genesis 9:4,6

⁶ Genesis 6:9 and Genesis 8:1

⁷ Genesis 9:22

⁸ Genesis 9:22

⁹ Genesis 12:12-19

¹⁰ See p.2; Citations From the Rabbinic Period; Called to Conciousness

Anger

Do not be hasty in spirit to be angry. (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

Anger rests in the bosom of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

He who is soon angry deals foolishly. Proverbs 14:17)

Consciousness

A clever wise person will understand his ways (Proverbs 14:8)

Don't be a horse or a mule without understanding. (Psalm 32:9)

God appeared to Abraham and said to him, "I am Almighty God. Walk before me and be perfect." (Genesis 17:1)

Man became a living soul. (Gen 2:7)

My child, heed your father's discipline (mussar), and do not forsake your mother's instruction (Torah). (Proverbs 1:8)

So too know wisdom for your soul. (Proverbs 24:14)

Enhance your awareness and discover that God is good. (Psalms 34:9)

Don't be like an ignorant horse or mule. (Psalm 32:9)

Go to the ant, you sluggard, consider her ways and become wise. (Proverbs 6:6)

God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. (Genesis 21:19)

Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding. (Proverbs 4:5)

Equanimity

In righteousness shall you judge your kinsman. (Leviticus 19:15)

In whatever way a person chooses, therein is he led. (Makkot 10b).

Do not show favoritism in judgment ... fear no person. (Deut 1:7)

Generosity and Compassion

Plant charity for yourself and harvest the fruit according to kindness. (Hoshea 10:12)

Do not put a stumbling block before the blind. (Leviticus 19:14)

He who is kind to the poor [in effect] lends to God, and He will pay him as his just reward. (Proverbs 19:17)

Humility

You might say to yourself, "My might and the power of my hand have gained me this wealth. (Deuteronomy 8:17)

I am but dust and ashes (Gen 18:27)

The man Moses was exceedingly humble, more than any other man on the face of the earth. (Numbers 12:3)

Throw your burden upon God. (Psalm 55:23)

Walk in modesty before your God. (Micah 6:8)

Where were you when I established the earth? (Job 38:4)

Joy

Do not be sad, for joy is in Adonai, your refuge. (Nehemiah 8:10)

Happy is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the company of scoffers. (Psalm 1:1)

The righteous rejoice in God. (Psalm 97:12)

The heart of those that seek God shall rejoice. Seek God and His might constantly seek His countenance. (Psalm 105:3-4)

My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. (Psalm 84:3)

Mitzvot

He who scorns a precept brings misery to himself. (Proverbs 13:13)

Do that which is proper and good. (Deut 6:18)

Beware and guard yourself lest you forget the words that your eyes witnessed.
[at Sinai] (Deuteronomy 4:9)

Reproof

A scoffer dislikes being rebuked; he will not go to the wise. (Proverbs 15:12)

A scoffer does not like to be reprimanded. (Proverbs 15:12)

Teach and correct your friend, then you will not bear responsibility for his sins.
(Leviticus 19:17)

The wise person will listen (to reprimand) and add to his wisdom. (Proverbs 1:5)

You shall rebuke your friend. (Leviticus 19:17)

Silence

My thought did not leave my mouth. (Psalms 17:3)

When there is too much talk, mistakes are not lacking; but he who restrains his lips is prudent. – In a multitude of words, there is no ceasing of sin. (Proverbs 10:19)

For You, silence is praise. (Psalms 65:2)

Sin and Teshuvah

The Lord! The Lord! A G-d compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, ye He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of fathers upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations. (Exodus 34:6-7)

As far as east is from west, that is how far God has removed our sins from us.
(Psalms 103:12)

Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from deceitful speech. (Psalms 34:14)
If you return O Israel you shall return unto Me. (Jeremiah 4:1)

One who conceals his sins will not succeed. (Proverbs 28:13)

They will eat them [The offerings] and will be forgiven. (Exodus 29:33)

I consider my ways and turn myself to Your testimonies. (Psalms 119:59)

While on his bed he thinks evil thoughts; he sets himself on a way that is not good. (Psalms 36:5)

... One who speaks the truth in his heart ... who swears to his own hurt but will not retract. (Psalm 15:1-4)

Oh God, create for me a pure heart, and renew within me a just spirit. (Psalm 51:12)

Yirat HaShem / Fear of God

You shall be holy, for I, the Eternal God, am holy. (Leviticus 19)

When my soul was wrapped in prayer, I remembered God. (Yonah 2:8)

Understand it today and reflect on it in your heart: HaShem is God. (Deuteronomy 4:39)

And from there you shall seek your God, and you shall find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and soul. (Deut 4:29)

Direct your actions toward God, and your thoughts will be right. (Proverbs 16:3)

Evil men do not understand judgment, but those who seek God will understand all things. (Proverbs 28:5)

For it is improper to enter the King's court wearing sackcloth. (Esther 4:2)

Honor God with your wealth and the first fruits of all your produce. (Proverbs 3:9)

I shall praise God among a multitude. (Psalms 26:12)

If the shofar is sounded in the city, will the populace not tremble? (Amos 3:6)

Let the praises of God come from the heavens ... let the praises of God come from the earth. (Psalms 148:1,7)

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come. (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Miscellaneous

You are not to commit corruption in justice, in measure, weight, or capacity; scales of equity, weighing stones of equity, and *efah* of equity and a *hin* of equity you shall have. (I am YHWH your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt!)

Arise before an aged person, and give honor to one mature in wisdom. (Leviticus 19:32)

You shall pursue righteousness, only righteousness. (Deuteronomy 16:20)

You shall remove the covering from your hearts and no longer be stiff-necked. (Deuteronomy 10:16)

Buy truth and never sell – wisdom, instruction and understanding. (Proverbs 23:23)

Fortunate is one who conceals his faults. (Psalms 32:1)

God created man simple, but man made complex calculations. (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

He who seeks out the wise will become wise, but he who befriends fools, will become base. (Proverbs 13:20)

How much better to acquire wisdom than gold; acquiring understanding is preferable to silver. (Proverbs 16:16)

I have placed before you life and death ... and you shall choose life.
(Deuteronomy 30:19)

I shall make you into a great nation ... and you will be a blessing. (Genesis 12:2)

Justice, Justice shall you pursue, that you may live. (Deuteronomy 16:20)

Lest there be among you [someone with] a root of bitter herbs. (Deuteronomy 29:17)

May goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life. (Psalms 23:1)

One who degrades another person is a fool, and a man of understanding will make himself deaf to his words. (Proverbs 11:12)

The hearts of the wise have eyes that see what the fools do not see. (Isaiah 40:21)

Their eyes are plastered over, so they cannot see, and their minds, so they cannot think. (Isaiah 44:18)

You will be above suspicion both before God and before Israel. (Numbers 32:22)

You will eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you will be happy and it will be well with you. (Psalms 128:2)

The Rabbinic Period



Introduction **To** **Rabbinic Citations**

As with all Rabbinic Period work, the rabbis made every effort to interpret and amplify the understanding of biblical precepts, and this applied to character refinement as well. And with their interpretations and revelations, the vision of the ideal character traits of man gained clarity, becoming more defined and detailed. Where the Bible used modeling as a means of transmitting the proper way to be and act, the rabbinic texts tended more to exhortative techniques. Although some lessons are given by direct statement or the reader "listening in" on a conversation between the Sages, there are often exemplary narratives about biblical characters or the Sages themselves that precede or follow the statements to enhance the learning. The Talmud (both Mishnah and Gemarra) and other rabbinic texts raise the examples of desirable character traits in the Bible to a higher level and is more expansive, often relating them to the Sages of the period. The rabbinic texts "modernize" and expand that which might seem to be inapplicable, irrelevant/limited or obscure biblical teachings. For example, the biblical verse that is said to be the very basis of cheshbon hanefesh according to Messillat Yesharim¹: "Therefore, those 'moshelim'² who speak in parables say, 'Come to the city of Cheshbon'."³ The Talmud⁴ takes the verse and interprets it as follows: The 'moshelim (masters) of their evil inclinations say, "Come and let us make a cheshbon of the world. What is the loss incurred by the performance of a mitzvah against the gain obtained, and what is the gain obtained through a transgression against the corresponding loss." What can we understand from the Talmud's interpretation? Since it says, "The 'moshelim' (masters) say, 'Come

¹ Chapter 3 (see bibliography)

² Bards, poets

³ Numbers 21:27

⁴ Bava Batra 78b

and let us make a cheshbon the loss incurred by the performance of a mitzvah as against the gain ...", two truths are explicitly revealed. The first is that it is the masters of Torah, our great Rabbis, who need to do cheshbon hanefesh. Why do they need to do cheshbon hanefesh? We can see this in the second explicitly revealed truth, namely that the purpose of making cheshbon hanefesh is to evaluate the ramifications of a mitzvah in order to decide whether or not to perform the mitzvah. It is only these masters who properly do cheshbon hanefesh. They become involved in a mitzvah, looking at it from all angles, weighing the consequences of doing it or of not doing it, and the manner in which to do it, searching for the sources, both Torah and rabbinic, to support their value judgment and advice.⁵

So it is that the rationale for Cheshbon haNefesh in the world of the Talmudic period is the evaluation of whether or not to perform a mitzvah and what the effects of that mitzvah would be if it is or is not performed. This is somewhat different point of view from the periods that follow. In the Medieval, Modern and Contemporary periods, the rationale for making the cheshbon is more directed to the elevation of the soul and for the purpose of service to God.

Citations from Rabbinic texts are cited in abundance in the texts of the ages that followed them. They are often taken out of context and the original contextual intent is usually not apparent. An example: 'If a man sees that suffering comes upon him, he should examine his conduct'.⁶ Using this phrase out of context might mean that man must rouse himself to consciousness about his character and behavior in life. However, in its original context, it is found in a discussion of the obligation to study Torah. Here is the citation with both its preceding and following paragraphs:

R. Zera (some say, R. Hanina b. Papa) says: Come and see how the way of human beings differs from the way of the Holy One, blessed be He. It is the way of human beings that when a man sells⁷ a valuable object to his fellow, the seller grieves and the buyer rejoices. The

⁵ www.diaspora.org

⁶ Berachot 5a

⁷ Out of poverty and not for business

Holy One, blessed be He, however, is different. He gave the Torah to Israel and rejoiced. For it is said: For I give you good doctrine; forsake ye not My teaching.

Raba (some say, R. Hisda) says: **If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct.** For it is said: Let us search and try our ways, and return unto the Lord.⁸ If he examines and finds nothing [objectionable], let him attribute it to the neglect of the study of the Torah. For it is said: Happy is the man whom Thou chasten, O Lord, and teach out of Thy law.⁹ If he did attribute it [thus], and still did not find [this to be the cause], let him be sure that these are chastenings of love. For it is said: For whom the Lord loves He corrects.¹⁰

Raba, in the name of R. Sahorah, in the name of R. Huna, says: If the Holy One, blessed be He, is pleased with a man, he crushes him with painful sufferings. For it is said: And the Lord was pleased with [him, hence] he crushed him by disease.¹¹ Now, you might think that this is so even if he did not accept them with love. Therefore it is said: To see if his soul would offer itself in restitution.¹² Even as the trespass-offering must be brought by consent, so also the sufferings must be endured with consent. And if he did accept them, what is his reward? He will see his seed, prolong his days.¹³ And more than that, his knowledge [of the Torah] will endure with him. For it is said: The purpose of the Lord will prosper in his hand.^{14 15}

It can be seen from the context, that the citation on its own does not entirely relate its original meaning, although it is an effective one for the purpose of inciting man to make a Cheshbon haNefesh.

The power of some of the citations is reduced by not knowing the context, yet the statement remains powerful on its own; e.g., in the Jewish world, “know before whom you are standing”, is a frequently used phrase. Below you will see it in its proper context.

Our Rabbis taught: When R. Eliezer fell ill, his disciples went in to visit him. They said to him: Master, teach us the paths of life so that we may through them win the life of the future world. He said to them: Be solicitous for the honor of your colleagues, and keep your children from meditation, and set them between the knees of scholars, and when you pray **know before whom you are standing** and in this way you will win the future world.¹⁶

On the following pages is a sampling of citations from the Rabbinic Period that are exemplary of the range of traits and behaviors that were addressed in the texts of the time. They are arranged in categories and chronological occurrence within each category. All Talmudic references are to the Babylonian Talmud unless otherwise noted.

⁸ Lamentations 3:40

⁹ Psalms XCIV: 12

¹⁰ Proverbs 3:12

¹¹ Isaiah 53:10

¹² Ibid. The Hebrew word for ‘restitution’ is *asham* which means also ‘trespass-offering’.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ All text and footnotes cited Soncino translation of the Babylonian Talmud. 5a

¹⁶ Ibid 28b

Anger

Getting angry is like worshipping idols. (Midrash)

Rage deprives one of one's senses. (Pesikta Zuta Va'eira 6:9)

Loss of temper is disrespect for the Divine presence. (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 37:8)

One who tears his clothes or breaks things in anger, is equivalent to an idolater.
(Shabbos 105b)

A person's nature can be recognized through three things: his cup, his purse, and his anger. (Eruvin 65b)

Hatred, quarreling and anger are condemned as unethical and potentially leading to murder. (Pesachim 1:1)

Anger begins with madness and ends with regret. (Ibn Hasdai)

Anger deprives a sage of his wisdom and a prophet of his vision. (Shimon ben Lakish)

Anger in a house is like a worm in a plant. (Rabbi Hisda)

Rage produces nothing but rage. (Kiddushin 41a).

Busha / Embarrassment

Fortunate are we that our youth has not caused us embarrassment in later life.
(Sukkah 53a)

Putting one's fellow man to shame, in the same category as murder. (Bava Metzia 58b)

Consciousness

If a man sees that suffering comes upon him, he should examine his conduct. (Berachot 5a)

Religious precepts require directed consciousness. (Berachot 13a)

One should gauge himself: if he is capable of concentrating, he should pray) but if not, he should not pray. (Berachot 30b)

It would have been better for man if he had not been created, but now that he has been created, he must carefully examine his actions. (Eruvin 13b)

Equanimity

Those who flatter to obtain favors may end up disgraced. (Avot De'R'Nosson 29:4)

Judge every person favorably. (Pirke Avot 1:6)

Which is the proper path that one should choose for oneself? That which is honorable to the one who adopts it and also merits the admiration of others. (Pirke Avot 2:1)

Generosity/ Compassion

Acts of benevolence are greater than giving charity. (Sukkah 49b)
Since he is compassionate, let us be compassionate to him. (Bava Metzia 85a)

Acts of kindness, are greater than acts of charity, and the reward for acts of kindness, is greater than the reward for acts of charity. (Rabbi Eliezer)

Humility

When you pray, know before whom you stand. (Berachot 28b)

The presence of God rests only upon the humble (Mekhilta., Yitro, 9; Ned. 38), whereas the proud is like one who worships another god and drives God away (Soṭah 4b)

I am but dust and ashes (Genesis 18:27) Everyone must say, "The world was created for my sake" (Sanhedrin 37a)

Let your house be a meeting place for the sages, dust yourself with the dust of their feet, and thirstily drink in their words. (Pirke Avot 1:4)

Do not judge your neighbor until you are in his place. (Pirke Avot 2:5)

Be very, very humble. (Pirke Avot 4:4)

This is the way of Torah: eat bread with salt, drink water by measure, and sleep on the earth. (Pirke Avot 6:4)

Wherever you find the greatness of God, there you find His humility. (Rabbi Yochanan)

The Sages say, "You will not find the Torah among arrogant people."

Vanity is a sign of ignorance of Torah. (Kiddushin 49b)

Joy and Happiness

Who is rich? One who is happy with what he has. (Pirke Avot 4.1)

A person has to give account for every lawful enjoyment he refuses. (Yerushalmi Kiddushin. iv. 66d)

Lashon haRa

In all my days I have never had to look behind me before saying anything. (Shabbos 118b)

Mitzvot

A good deed brought about by an evil deed is an evil deed. (Sukkah 30a).

God considers a good intention as though one had performed a good deed. (Kiddushin 40a)

A mitzvah draws along another mitzvah, and a sin draws along another sin. (Pirke Avot 4:2)

Pursue the performance of even a minor mitzvah. (Pirke Avot 4:2)

Patience

With exercising patience you could have saved yourself 400 zuzim (Berachot 20a)

Reproof

The position which baalei teshuvah [penitents] occupy cannot be occupied even by tzaddikim [completely righteous]. (Berachot 34b)

I doubt if there is anyone in this generation who can accept reproof ... I doubt if there is anyone in this generation who knows how to reprove. (Arachin 16b)

I wonder if there is anyone in this generation capable of giving reprimand.
(Arachin according to the reading of Shitah Mekubetzet 16b)

If he has repented, one should not say to him, 'Remember your former deeds ...'
(Bava Metzia 58b)

Sin and Teshuvah

Keep your mouth from sin, your body from wrong, and I (God) will be with thee.
(Berachot. 17a)

In the place where penitents stand even the wholly righteous cannot stand.
(Berachot 34b)

... Dispersal of the wicked is good for them and good for the world, but of the righteous is bad for them and bad for the world. (Sanhedrin 71b)

Contemplating sin is more serious than the sin itself. (Yoma 29a)

He who subjects himself to needless self-castigations and fasting, or even denies himself the enjoyment of wine, is a sinner". (Taanit 11a, 22b)

If a person commits a sin and repeats it, it appears to him as permissible. (Yoma 86b)

The Talmud states that if a person repeats a particular sin, he may be forgiven up to the third time, but not beyond that. (Yoma 86b)

Do teshuvah [repentance] one day before your death. (Pirke Avot 2:15)
Teshuvah [repentance] is so great that it can convert sins [of the past] into merits. (Yoma 86b)

Consider three things, and you will not approach sin. Know whence you came, whereto you are going, and before Whom you are destined to give an accounting. (Pirke Avot 3:1)

Every breach of promise in commerce is a sin provoking God's punishment, every act of carelessness which exposes men or things to danger and damage is a culpable transgression. (Talmud Bavli)

Yirat Shamayim / Fear of Heaven

When you pray, know before whom you stand. (Berachot 28b)

Do not make a prayer mere routine, but a plea for mercy, an entreaty, before the Omnipresent. (Pirke Avot 2:13)

Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for the fear of Heaven. (Megillah 25a)

A man should always be subtle in his fear of God. (Berachot 17a)

Miscellaneous

Hillel the Elder used to say that he had a permanent guest in his house whom it was his duty to feed, namely, the soul which is a guest in his body. (Leviticus Rabba, sec. 34)

An ignoramus cannot be a saint. (Pirke Avot 2:6)

The prayer of a multitude is never turned away. (Devarim Rabah)

Judaism teaches that God governs the world by seven characteristics, wisdom, fairness, justice, kindness, compassion, truth and peace. (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 37:8)

Peace is everywhere recommended, and urged as the highest boon of man. (Midrash Numbers Rabbah xi.)

Whatever you hate to have done unto you, do not do to your neighbor) wherefore do not hurt him) do not speak ill of him) do not reveal his secrets to others) let his honor and his property be as dear to thee as thine own. (Midrash Avot deRabbi Natan)

The dignity of a human being is extremely important. (Berachot 19b)

Respect for one's fellow creatures is of such importance that Biblical prohibitions may be transgressed on its account. (Berachot 19b)

Man is in duty bound to preserve his life (Berachot 32b) and his health. Foods dangerous to health are more to be guarded against than those ritually forbidden.

He who pushes his hour, i.e. who tries to force his good fortune will be pushed by his hour, i.e. will be dogged by ill fortune and whoever is pushed by his hour his hour will be pushed aside for him. (Berachot 64a)

That which is hateful to you, do not do to another. (Shabbat 31a)

The first question asked at the Last Judgment is whether one has dealt justly with his neighbor. (Shabbat 31a).

What is painful to you, do not do unto others. (Shabbat 31a)

... Since we do not know on which day we will die, we should live every day as if it were our last. (Shabbat 153a)

R. Isaac further said: Four things cancel the doom of a man, namely, charity, supplication, change of name and change of conduct. (Rosh Hashanah 16b)

One must remove every cause for suspicion in order to appear blameless before men as well as before God. (Yoma 38a).

If you seize too much, you are left with nothing. If you take less, you may retain it. (Rosh Hashanah 4b)

Either companionship or death. (Tana'it 23a)

A person should show self respect in regard to both his body, "honoring it as the image of God" (Hillel: Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 34), and his garments. (Talmud Shabbat 113b) (Nedarim 81a)

Liars, mockers, hypocrites, and slanderers can not appear before God's face. (Sotah 42a)

The Talmud denounces as fraud every mode of taking advantage of a man's ignorance, whether he be Jew or Gentile, every fraudulent dealing, every gain obtained by betting or gambling or by raising the price of breadstuffs through speculation, is theft. (Bava Batra 90b, Sanhedrin 25b)

Acquire for yourself a friend. (Pirke Avot 1:6)

Get thyself a companion. (Pirke Avot 1:6)

Jealousy, desire, and honor take a person out of this world. (Pirke Avot 4:21)
When Jews are united, God is willing to overlook even serious transgressions. (Talmud)

The Medieval Period

(Post Talmud – 1700 C.E.)



Introduction to the Medieval Citations

The TaNaKH and the Talmud did not make a distinction between halachah (Jewish law) and mussar (ethics). They were one integrated whole. However, influenced by the Muslim world and its concentration on Greek philosophy, Jewish writers, like Bachya ibn Pakuda, created a specific literature which concentrated on moral virtues and actions. These books utilized biblical, midrashic and Talmudic references to focus on living morally.¹ During the medieval period, this new genre of Jewish literature continued to teach values and the development of moral character as a path to God, but the manner of teaching evolved to include particular techniques and pathways to achieving this goal rather than simply indicating the need for their achievement. The various authors represented on the following pages are by no means the only authors to treat the subject, but are representative of the period, and their works are considered to be standards of the genre. They differ stylistically as well as in their approach to the subject of character refinement and its ultimate goal. All of the authors agree that man is commanded to come as close to the image of God as possible, and that the ideal is to strive for this state of being; but what differs is their manner and approach.

Chronologically, the first of the authors is Rabbi Bachya ben Yosef ibn Paquda who writes from a place of great humility and awe, seeking to inspire both himself and others with his words.² This author writes as much from his

¹ http://www.jewishgates.com/file.asp?File_ID=355

² 'I decided to write [the duties of the heart] down in a book ... so that I might expect of myself always to know them, and bring myself to perform them; a book that would ... spur the observant and stir the indifferent; bolster the beginner and show the way to those who are perplexed ... I wrote it to enlighten myself, as well as to stimulate the simple and the negligent among the people of our faith.' (from the introduction of Chovot Levavot)

soul and spirit as from his mind and knowledge of Judaism. It is the voice of the soul that speaks, giving a sense of universality and Divine transcendence in this world. Although solid and worldly advice is given, the voice of the soul pervades the work.

The approach of the Rambam in Hilkhos De'ot, on the other hand, emanates from an unbending sense of faith and strong commitment to halachah. His direct and no-nonsense approach causes the mind, if not the spirit to soar. It is commandedness that is in the forefront of the Rambam's comments on man's temperament and the requirements of human behavior. The God portrayed in Hilkhos De'ot is an immanent God, to be served rather than experienced. For Maimonides, service takes the form of scrupulous adherence to halachah, and the reward for such service is to have a place in the World to Come. According to Rambam, it is not only human's behavior in relation to God and to fellow human beings that is called for, but also a minimalist approach to all physicality in life. Included are clear directives concerning eating and health. The advice of the Sages is heavily relied upon, but an excess of specific citations is not given.

Rabbi Yonah of Gerondi, motivated by a deep sense of personal repentance, wrote Shaarei Teshuva. Like that of the Rambam, this is a powerful work that strictly adheres to halachah and mitzvot. At the same time it conveys the tone of the author's repentance. As noted on page 22, the repentance of Rabbi Yonah Gerondi was motivated by his shame at having overly criticized the Rambam, resulting in the burning of not only of the works of the Rambam, but of the Talmud as well.

The final work and author included in this section is Tomer Devorah, written by Moses Cordovero in the flourishing kabbalistic community of Safed during the latter part of the sixteenth century. Through the author's words we read another perspective on the subject, one which reflects mystical concepts that speak of angels and matters of cosmic balance. In this view, it is not simply the reward and punishment of the individual who does or does not perform the mitzvah that is involved, but more seriously, it causes an upsetting of the balance of the

cosmos that occurs when man does not act in accordance with God's decree. Like ibn Paquda, Cordovero portrays a universal and transcendent God. It is for the sake of the soul and the soul's experience that one should live according to the mitzvot, and this is the perspective put forth by Cordovero, e.g., "a man must be very careful to behave so that the Shekinah cleaves always to him and never departs."

This section differs in format from those that precede it and those which come after. Rather than the brief citations given in the other sections, this section contains a few citations and then selected highlights from some of the more well-known tomes of the 11th– 17th centuries, that concerned themselves with *cheshbon hanefesh* and extended to the topic of teshuvah.

This section contains citations from various sources, and more in-depth notes and passages from some of the major texts of the period.

The eye sees and the heart desires. (Rashi on Numbers 15:39)

Seek what you need and give up what you need not. For in giving up what you don't need, you'll learn what you really do need. (Solomon ibn Gabirol)

One who strives for perfection needs to continually bear in mind his character, weigh his actions, and analyze the quality of his soul, daily. When seeing his soul drift off its proper course, he should rush in with a remedy and not allow a bad quality to strengthen itself by a bad deed ... and he should place before his eyes his inferior traits, and continually make an effort to heal them. (Rambam) [cited in the Introduction to A Treasure for Life – see bibliography]

A person who rebukes a colleague...should speak to him patiently and gently, informing him that he is only making these statements for his colleague's own welfare, to allow him to merit the life of the world to come. (Maimonides; Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos De'ot 6:7)

Having kaas (anger) is as grave a sin as idolatry.
(Maimonides; Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos De'os 2).

It is the nature of a person to be influenced by his fellows and comrades.
(Maimonides; Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos De'ot 6:1)

How does one acknowledge sin? One says: I implore you God ... Behold, I regret [what I did] and am embarrassed by my deeds. I promise never to repeat this act again. (Rambam, Hilkhos Teshuvah 1:1)

Among the ways to repent for the one turning is ... to change one's name, as if to say, I am a different person and not the same one who sinned.
(Rambam, Hilkhos Teshuvah, 2:4 - based on Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16b)

One must ask oneself: "What have I done?" (Jer 8:6) What have I become?
(Rabbi Yonah Gerondi, *Gates of Repentance*, First Principle)

The Creator has blown into my nostrils a living soul, wisdom of heart and the gift of reason that I might recognize and fear God ... After having been created for this purpose and having acted in opposition to it, what is life to me?
(Rabbi Yonah Gerondi, *Gates of Repentance*, First Principle)

"There is not a righteous person on earth who does [only] good and does not sin." (Eccles 7:20) However, [the righteous] subdue their evil inclination a hundred times. If they have succumbed to a sin once, they do not repeat it, to prevent becoming loathsome in their own eyes; and [so] they repent.
(Rabbi Yonah Girondi, *Gates of Repentance*, First Gate, p.9)

In the fifth palace (of the Garden of Eden) stand all those who return in perfect repentance ... and even the perfectly righteous are unable to ascend to that palace and to stand there, for it is the highest degree of all with the exception of the degree of the saints (hasidim), which is truly the highest degree of all. (Zohar I, 39a)

If one wishes to add more restrictions onto what the law requires, one may do so for oneself, but not [make such demands] of others (Shulchan Aruch)

Duties of the Heart / Chovot haLevavot

by R. Bachya ben Yosef ibn Paquda

Duties of the Heart was written in Arabic in 1040 under the title **Al Hidayah ila Faraid al-hulub** (Guide to the Duties of the Heart), and translated into

Hebrew by Judah ibn Tibbon during the years 1161-80 under the title **Chovot ha-Levavot**. In this seminal work, the author presents his ideas in the framework of 10 Gates meant to assist the reader's inward growth as well as his growth outward, toward a closer relationship with God. Each gate is representative of a fundamental principal of the spiritual life of man. He states in the introduction to the book: 'I decided to write [the duties of the heart] down in a book ... so that I might expect of myself always to know them, and bring myself to perform them; a book that would ... spur the observant and stir the indifferent; bolster the beginner and show the way to those who are perplexed ... I wrote it to enlighten myself, as well as to stimulate the simple and the negligent among the people of our faith.'

Duties of the Heart has been considered a classic since the time of its appearance in the latter half of the 11th Century. It was and is considered to be a central source of Jewish ethical teachings and practices. It is a volume of great holiness put forth by a master of the spiritual in this world.

R. Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, the Steipler Rav, once wrote: "Whoever has not seen the light of the holy words of **Duties of the Heart** will be missing very much, he will be wanting inside, in the purity of all that is holy."³

For the purpose of this project, I have excerpted explanations and quotes only from Section Eight: Sha'ar Cheshbon haNefesh, The Gate of Self-Accounting.⁴ Having stated in the previous chapter that there are certain conditions that must met as an essential factor in teshuvah (repentance), this chapter sets forth self-accounting as one of those conditions. What follows is a discussion of the different types of self-accounting that assist in a thorough introspection of ones actions and ones heart. The six forms of self-accounting that he lists are: 1) What is self-accounting? 2) Is it the same for all people? 3) In how many ways should a person hold himself to an

³ Approbation to the Lev Tov Edition of Duties of the Heart (p.III Duties ...)

⁴ Any Biblical references cited by the author have been included in the Biblical citation section of this paper.

accounting? 4) What is the benefit in this accounting? 5) Is self-accounting a constant obligation? 6) What actions should follow this accounting?

1) What is self-accounting? Self-accounting is the earnest deliberation on one's own religious and secular concerns, in the privacy of one's thoughts, to discover what he has accomplished – and has yet to accomplish – of his obligations.⁵

2) Is it the same for all people? ... Different people have different obligations, in accordance with their respective powers of perception and in accordance with the different degrees to which they have been graced with favors. ... Whatever he can realize in deed, he should spare no labor and effort to achieve. What he cannot realize in deed, he should master in knowledge, express longing for in his speech and long for in his heart God will then judge him favorably. He, in turn, should be on the lookout for opportunities that will enable him to fulfill whatever he possibly can of God's duties ...⁶

3) In how many ways should a person hold himself to an accounting? I say that there is a multitude of ways in which to make such an accounting. Of these I will point out thirty. (these will be paraphrased)

1) Gratitude for one's birth and existence

2) Gratitude for the gifts of one's physicality and well-being.

3) Gratitude to God for one's intelligence and insights.

4) Gratitude for the gift of Torah to be shown by fulfilling its precepts.

5) Consideration of one's procrastination in fulfilling the mitzvot.

6) Consideration of rebellious tendencies against God and the covenant.

⁵ P.665 Duties Alternate translation: "the act of contemplating your material and Torah-based circumstances" i.e., your worldly and spiritual standing identify what you've already done and what you still have to do".

⁶ P. 669 ibid

7) Accounting of one's failure to have fulfilled mitzvot (especially considering that God has provided for all in his life and his very existence – as well as his chosenness).

8) An accounting of the degree of wholeheartedness with which he devotes himself to God. Here there are two aspects: devotion to the concept of the unity of God and that he is solely devoted to God.

9) An accounting of the different ways of serving God and whether he exerts himself in each area, with its unique demands. a) duties of the heart alone
b) duties of the body and heart together (for example, prayer – do you mean the words that you are saying?) c) duties of the limbs alone – all of these should not be done if not felt in the heart.

10)...We should adorn ourselves before God with His service, outwardly and inwardly, since He observes us equally and continually.⁷ – a matter of reverence.

11) Commune daily with your soul to make an account of the service you owe to God on that day. Do not follow oversight with oversight nor add neglect to neglect ...⁸

12) To what are your enthusiasm and zeal directed? To earthly matters or to higher purposes? If you are using them for material gain, know then that the gain is transitory.

13) Is your potential for service and knowledge greater than your deeds and pursuit of it? And are you taking advantage of your time? The warning is to not leave unrealized or to squander what has been given to you by God. "Do not put off for tomorrow the work you must do today – for then it may be too hard for you – if you should ever see tomorrow and remain among the living.

⁷ p. 669 ibid

⁸ P.705 ibid

It will be still worse if your end comes and the excuses are not accepted, your plea is cut short. For the world is like a fair, where people assemble for a time and then separate. Who does business and makes a profit rejoices, but one who loses has regrets.⁹

14) Take account: is your love for a fellow greater than your love for God? To what extent are you succumbing to the evil inclination?

15) Have you provided for yourself in this world? Have you made provisions for the journey of your life?

16) Are you aware of your mortality and the fragility of life? "One of the wise remarked: 'He who has placed death before him has improved himself.'" ¹⁰

17) Consider and understand the benefits of solitude and the ill effect of associating with fools when it is not absolutely necessary. Consider the amount that you talk without purpose or need. Under this category come the warnings against gossip, slander, deprecation, falsehood, lies, false and trivial oaths, arrogance, scorn, ridiculing, and scoffing. It is easy to fall into bad behaviors when in the company of those who do not live in the ways of God. Three ways to object to evil are given: a) striking with the hand, b) objecting in words c) objecting in your heart.

18) An accounting of one's true position in the scheme of the vast realm of creation if one should get too haughty or prideful.

19) An accounting should be taken of the grace that has been bestowed upon you, having spared you from illness and disasters that befall man.

20) An accounting should be made of one's money – how it was acquired, how it is spent and if one is using it to serve God and one's fellow man.

⁹ P.713 ibid

¹⁰ P. 723 ibid

21) An accounting of one's capacity for religious action should be taken. In order to succeed, one must work at it and constantly expand his capacity to equal the knowledge and understanding that God gives to him. Are you doing what is in your ability, are you sincere about your service?

22) Make an accounting of how helpful you are to others. Acquire faithful colleagues and true friends and choose them most carefully.

23) Check your sense of wonder at the creations of the world and take nothing for granted.

24) Check in on ideas that you have about life and knowledge that you have acquired throughout your years. Are your ideas constantly evolving with growing experience and knowledge, gaining depth? Are you careful to look at old knowledge with new eyes, to go back and re-vision what you previously learned?

25) One must make an account of how devoted he is to this world or the next. The soul and the body require supervision and thought. Too much directed at one will result in the neglect of the other. Pre-eminence should be given to the soul (which is your share in eternity), but the body should not be deprived. Becoming an ascetic can lead to despondency; overindulgence in the physical world can lead to the death of the soul.

26) Consider whom you fear; a human sovereign or God. Do you fear the punishment of not heeding the king's command, while remaining oblivious to God's commands?

27) Make an accounting of how it is that you bear misfortune of body, property or any other form. Do you bear it as one who accepts God's judgment or are you angry with God's decree? Endurance of suffering in good cheer is a virtue, but suffering borne grudgingly brings the bearer no reward and effects no pardon.

28) Consider how it is that you respond to the ramifications of trust in God. When life changes to what seems to be adverse circumstances (in your eyes), how firm does your trust in God stand?

29) Consider the superiority of the soul over the body. How well do you attend to the needs and preeminence of your soul? How aware are you that it is easier to cure the body than the soul?

30) Finally, make an accounting of man's plight as a stranger in this world. "This one came to reside as a stranger, and now he would be a judge!" (Bereshit 19:9). "The land cannot be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for to me you are strangers and temporary residents." (Vayikra 25:23) "The stranger who resides among you must be to you as the native born among you, and you shall love him like yourself." (Vayikra 19:34) So how do you measure in your humility, in your generosity, in your love of your fellow and your readiness to move on if need be? How well do you accept the temporality of your condition? What is your relation to other creatures? How well do you care for what is temporarily in your keeping?

Chapter 4

As a result of the accounting that is done according to the 30 ways prescribed in the previous chapter, one's soul will emerge from the 'dark shadow' and come forth in a greater state of purity. As with any advanced and delicate equipment, one must first acquire a deep and detailed knowledge of its workings before one becomes skilled at using it. "You will be on the level of God's chosen elite, and there will arise in you an extraordinary supernal power, unlike anything you have ever experienced. ... You will then perceive the lofty things and see the deep mysteries by virtue of the clarity of your soul, the purity of your heart and the strength of your sincerity. You will never leave a state of constant joy, in your world here and in your life in the hereafter, because of the greatness that you have gazed upon and the

grandeur of the mystery that has been revealed to you, with God's help that is extended to you." The idea put forth is that as one polishes" one's soul, one becomes a surface that reflects the Divine image. The polishing agents are the previous 30 ways of accounting.

Chapter 5

As the answer to the question of whether it is necessary to engage in this accounting only at certain times or if it should be ongoing throughout one's lifetime, the author responds with a spate of scriptural citations addressing the maintenance of the Torah and God's word, and the need to be constantly in its company, and to become one with God's word. As it is written, "Repent one day before your death" (Pirke Avot 2:1); "At all times let your garments be white" (Kohelet 9:8); "Happy are they who keep judgement, who do what is right at all times" (Tehillim 106:3).

"Hilkhot Deot"

(Laws of Temperament)

by Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam; Maimonides)

This treatise on the Laws of Temperament deals with the emulation of God's ways, various human temperaments, stringency, bodily health, the services that a sage should ensure exist in his town, acceptable conduct for a sage, treatment of others, lashon hara, and grudge-bearing. In typical Maimonidean fashion, it is a wealth of behavioral directives and therefore serves as a good foundation resource for the process of Cheshbon haNefesh. One can easily derive from the text a standard of behavior with which to compare oneself and for which to strive.

Below are a few excerpts from the seven chapters of **Hilkhot Deot**:

From the beginning of Chapter 1, we learn that human character remains unchanged since these words were set down by the Rambam.

There are many temperaments, all of which are different and each of which is distinct, and which are possessed by different people. There are people of angry disposition, who are always annoyed, and there are those who are even-tempered and are never angry, and if they do get angry, it is only slightly and rarely. There are people who are excessively haughty, and there are people who are excessively meek. There are those with many desires who are never satisfied with what they receive, and there are those with a very pure heart and who do not desire even the simplest things that the body needs. There are those with an open heart who would not be satisfied with even all the money in the world, as it is written, "He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver", and there are those with a short heart for whom small amounts are enough and sufficient, and will not persevere to fulfill all their needs. Then there are those who mortify themselves with hunger and collect by hand, and will not even eat from a perutah of their own except with great suffering, and there are those who waste all their money without thinking.

... The way of the upright is [to adopt] the intermediate characteristic of each and every temperament that people have. This is the characteristic that is equidistant from the two extremes of the temperament of which it is a characteristic, and is not closer to either of the extremes.

Any man whose temperaments are intermediate is called wise. One who is particular with himself and moves away from the middle ways to either extreme is called pious. What does this mean? One who distances himself from pride by moving to its complete opposite of meekness is called pious, for this is a characteristic of piety. But if he distances

himself only half-way and becomes humble he is called wise, for this is a characteristic of wisdom. The first pious people kept their temperaments from the middle ways and towards one of the extremes - one temperament they would bias one way, and another the other way [and as appropriate], but this is going beyond what the law requires.

We are commanded to go in these middle ways, the good and upright ways, as it is written, "And walk in His ways, et cetera". As an explanation of this commandment, we have learned that just as God shows mercy so also should we show mercy, that just as God is compassionate so also should we be compassionate, and that just as God is holy so also should we be holy.

From Chapter 2

3- ...They also said that when a man gets angry, then if he was wise his wisdom leaves him, and if he was a prophet his prophecy leaves him, and that the life of angry people is not [really] a life. Therefore, they commanded us to distance ourselves from anger until one is accustomed to not getting any angry feelings at even annoying things. This is the good way. The way of the righteous is to be humble without being humbled, not to answer back when disgraced, to do things out of love and to be joyous in suffering. Scripture says about them, "...but let them who love Him be as the sun when it comes out in its might".

4- .. One should always be silent and not speak, except in matters of wisdom or in matters which are necessary for one to live. It has been said about Rav, our holy instructor, that he never made unnecessary conversation in all his life, but such is the conversation of the majority of people. Even on bodily matters one should not speak too much. About this the Sages commanded us and said that anyone who speaks excessively brings sin, and they [also] said that they have found nothing

better for the body than silence. Similarly in Torah matters and in matters of wisdom; one's words should be few but should say a lot. The Sages commanded us in this respect, and said that one should always speak to one's students concisely. If one's words are many and their content little then they are foolishness, and about this it is written, "For a dream comes through a multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by a multitude of words".

5) Silence is the maturation of wisdom. Therefore, one should not be hasty in answering, and one should not speak excessively. One should teach one's students calmly and with satisfaction, without shouting and without being verbose. Solomon said, "The words of wise men heard in quiet are better, et cetera".

6) ... What one expresses should be what one holds, and what one thinks should be what one says. It is forbidden to mislead other people, even if they are gentiles. ... Even a single word of temptation or misleading is forbidden. One should have lips of truth, correct airs and a pure heart at all times.

7) One should not habitually laugh or joke, nor be sad or miserable, but one should be just happy. ... One should receive all people with a pleasant expression on one's face. ... The general rule of the matter is to go with the intermediate characteristics that each and every temperament has, so that all one's temperaments will be fixed in the middle ways. Solomon said, "Make even the path of your foot, and let all your ways be firm."

From Chapter 3

... The Sages commanded that one should not separate oneself from anything, except from things which the Torah has forbidden, and one should not refrain from using permitted things by means of vows and

oaths. The Sages said, 'Is not what the Torah has forbidden enough that you have to forbid for yourself other things?!' According to this rule, those who always restrict themselves are not on the path of good. About these and similar things Solomon said, "Don't be excessively righteous, nor make yourself over-wise; why should you destroy yourself?"

... one should fix it in one's heart that one's body will be complete and strong in order that one's soul will be upright in recognizing the Lord, for it is impossible to understand and think in wisdom if one is hungry or unwell, or if one of one's limbs hurts.

One should have the intention to do everything in order to find all that one's body needs so that one will be able to be complete in serving the Lord; and even when sleeping; if one slept in order to rest one's mind and body in order not to become unwell, for one will be unable to serve the Lord if one is unwell, then one's sleeping is a form of serving God. Concerning this the Sages commanded that all one's actions should be for the sake of serving God. Solomon said in his wisdom, "Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He shall direct your paths."

From Chapter 4

1) The body being healthy is of the ways of the Lord, for it is impossible to understand or know the knowledge of the Creator while unwell.

The rest of the chapter details the ways in way one maintains physical health.

And the chapter ends with the following: It is not permitted for a learned sage to live in a town which does not have the following ten things: a doctor, a blood-letter, a wash-house, a toilet, naturally occurring water such as a river or spring,

a synagogue, a midwife, a scribe, a warden of charity and a Court of Law which imprisons people.

From Chapter 5

1) Just as a wise person is recognizable in his wisdom and temperaments and is differentiated by them from other people, so also should he be recognizable in his actions: his manner of eating, drinking, copulation, relieving himself, speaking, walking, dressing and the conducting of his affairs with his work and his giving [should all be exemplary]. All of these actions should be as fine and as correct as possible. What does this mean? A learned sage should not be a glutton, but should eat foods according to the health of his body, and should not eat of them more than is necessary to fill himself, and he should not rush to fill his stomach as those do who fill themselves with food until they burst.

... The Sages have said that concerning those people who eat and drink [perpetually] and make all their days festivities it has been said, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die" - this is referring to wicked people eating. ... A wise person, however, should eat only one or two foods, and should eat of them just sufficiently to support life. Solomon said, "The righteous eats to satisfy his soul."

- 1) It is not fitting to eat someone else's food, except at a feast of a mitzvah such as the feasts of betrothal and marriage, but only if a learned sage married the daughter of a learned sage. The early righteous people and Sages did not partake of any meal that was not theirs.
- 2) When a wise person drinks wine he should drink only enough to soften the food that is in his stomach.

7) A learned sage should not shout or scream like an animal or beast when speaking, and should not excessively raise his voice, but should speak to everybody in repose, and when he does so he should be careful that it should not sound like haughtiness. One should always be first in extending greetings so that one's mood will always be inclined towards oneself, and one should always judge others to the side of merit. One should always speak up for the benefit of one's friend and never to his detriment, and one should always love and adore peace. If one sees that what one wants to say will be useful and listened to one should say it, and if not then one shouldn't. What does this mean? One should not reconcile one's friend when one is angry, nor ask him about his vow when he makes it, until one's temperament has cooled and settled. Furthermore, one should not comfort one's [bereaved] friend while the deceased is in front of him, for he is hard-pressed until the burial. One should not change what one says, or add and detract [from one's words], except in words of peace and similar things. The general rule is not to speak except in connection with wisdom, charitable acts and similar things. One also should not chat with women in the market, even if the woman in question is one's wife, sister or daughter.

12) It is forbidden to disown or sanctify all one's property and then bother other people [for support]. One should not sell one's field to buy a house, or one's house to buy moveable objects, or make merchandise worth as much as one's house, but one may sell moveable objects to buy a field. The general rule is that one should adjust one's tendencies to save one's belongings, and to change at the end of one's existence. One's intention should not be to get minimum benefit with each hour, nor to argue or lose out excessively.

From Chapter 6

1) The nature of man is to be pulled by his temperaments and actions after his friends, and to accustom himself to the customs of the people of his country. Therefore, one has to associate with righteous people and to sit always amongst learned people, so that one will learn from their actions. One should distance oneself from wicked people, who go in darkness, so that one will not learn from their actions. Solomon said, "He who walks with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall suffer harm". It is also written, "Happy is the man who does not follow the counsel of the wicked, nor adopts the way of sinners, nor sits amongst scorners. " Similarly, if one was in a country where there were bad customs and whose citizens did not follow the straight path, then one should go to a place whose citizens are righteous and who have good customs.

2) One is commanded to love each and every Jew as one does oneself, for it is written, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". Therefore, one has to count other people's gains and to be as careful with their money as one is with one's own and according to one's self-respect. Anybody who does not respect his fellow has no share in the World To Come.

3) Loving a convert who has entered under the Wings of the Divine Presence involves two commandments - one because he is included amongst one's fellows, and the other because he is a convert. The Torah says, "Love therefore the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt". The commandment to love a convert is similar to the commandment to love God

6) ... It is a commandment to make one's hatred known to the person who wronged one and to ask him why he did what he did and why he wronged one in the way that he did, for it is written, "You shall definitely rebuke your fellow." If he request forgiveness, one has to forgive him. One who forgives should not be too harsh, for it is written, "So Abraham prayed to

God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his maidservants, and they bore children."

8) ... The Sages said that anyone who humiliates someone else in public has no share in the World To Come. Therefore, one has to be careful not to shame someone else in public, whether he is a child or an adult, nor to call him by an embarrassing name, nor to tell him anything which will cause him embarrassment. This is talking about matters concerning Man and his Fellow, but concerning matters between Man and God, if he did not repent [when one rebuked him] in private, one should rebuke him in public, publicize his sins, and aggravate him to his face. We should pour scorn on him and curse him until he returns to the ways of good. The Prophets of Israel used to do this.

9) If one was sinned against by someone else but did not want to rebuke him or speak [about it] to him for the reason that the sin was very small or because one's senses were faulty, but one forgave him in one's heart and one does not hate or rebuke him, then one has the characteristic of piety. The Torah was particular only about hating.

From Chapter 7

1) If one speaks slanderously about someone else one is transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written: "You shall not go around as a tale-bearer amongst your people".

2) Who counts as a slanderer? One who carries matters from one [person] to another and says that so-and-so did such-and-such, or that he heard such-and-such regarding so-and-so is counted as a slanderer.

Even though what he says may be true, it [still] destroys the world.

Concerning this Scripture said, "May the word cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things."

3) The Sages said that there are three sins which 'collect' of a man in this world and deprive him of a share in the World To Come. These sins are idolatry, adultery and murder, but tale-bearing is above all. The Sages further said that tale-bearing is like denying God, for it is written, "Who have said, 'With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord above us?'" The Sages further said that three types of tale-bearing kill - telling, listening and slandering. The sin of listening is worse than that of telling.

4) ... Concerning this Solomon said, "He who blesses his friend in a loud voice, rising early in the morning, shall have it counted as a curse to him", for out of good will come bad. Similarly, concerning tale-bearing with laughter and frivolity and showing no hatred Solomon said in his wisdom, "As a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, so is a man who tricks his fellow and says, 'But I was only joking!'"

6) It is forbidden to live in a neighborhood of tale-bearers, and how much more so sit with them and listen to what they say. A verdict was made on our ancestors in the wilderness because of tale-bearing.

7) One who takes revenge on someone else is transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "You shall not take revenge". ... It is fitting to forgive everything, for all matters of adepts are nonsense and not worth taking revenge over. What is revenge? If [for example] one's friend asked to borrow one's axe [and one refused to give it to him], and then later one went to him and asked to borrow his axe and he says that just as one did not lend him one's own axe so he will not lend one his axe, then he is taking revenge. He should really lend with a complete heart, and not recompense one in the way that he was treated. Similar situations have the same law. David said about his good temperaments, "Indeed, I have rescued him that is without cause my enemy".

8) Similarly, anyone who bears a grudge against another Jew is also transgressing a negative commandment, for it is written, "...nor bear any grudge against the children of your people" ... Therefore, the Torah is particular against bearing a grudge, so much so that one should totally forget the matter and not remember it at all.

"Shaarei Teshuvah" (Igeret HaTeshuva) Gates of Repentance
by Rabbi Yonah Gerondi (1250 CE)

Rabbi Yonah Gerondi was born in Gerona, Catolina in the year 1200 and passed away in 1263. He studied along with the Tosafists in France and later under Rav Shlomo ben Avraham of Montpellier. A controversy concerning the works of the Rambam containing philosophy began in 1232. Gerondi sided with those that opposed philosophy and the philosophers who brought it into the study of Torah. The inquisitors of the time saw this as an opportunity to further assert their hate against the Jews and seized the moment to have the Rambam's works burned, including his works on Jewish law. A few years later the inquisitors widened their path of destruction of Torah literature, and in the same square where the Rambam's works were burned, the Talmud was set to flame. Upon seeing this event, Rabeinu Yonah was devastated, considering this to be divine retribution for his criticism of the works of the Rambam. In the letter from Hillel of Verona, Rabeinu Yonah is said to have exclaimed in the synagogues, "I undertake to prostrate myself at Maimonides' grave and to confess that I spoke and sinned against his books." Upon returning from France to his birth place, Rabeinu Yonah began a campaign to teach Mussar (ethics and morality) to the masses. Later he settled in Barcelona where many students came to learn from his teachings. At the end of his life he set out to live in Eretz Yisrael, but upon

reaching Toledo he was asked to stay to assist them in creating a Yeshivah. The Yeshivah flourished, but after two years he passed away and never materialized his dream to live in Eretz Yisrael. Rabeinu Yonah practiced what he wrote and preached, and was known world over for his good traits and piety. His works from his time and even on to ours are considered underpinnings to achieving a path of truth in Torah and service to God.¹¹

Shaarei Teshuvah is comprised of **four gates**. The **first gate** presents R. Yonah of Gerondi's 20 principles of teshuvah. The **second gate** focuses upon the six instances in which one is likely to be inspired to do teshuva. The **third gate** offers the ten categories of mitzvot it would do well to understand, in order to serve God deeply and knowledgeably. The **fourth gate** discusses the idea of Divine "atonement" or ultimate forgiveness.

Rabbi Yonah's 20 Principles of Teshuvah are:

- 1st: Expressing Remorse
- 2nd: Ridding Yourself of the Sin
- 3rd: Being Sad
- 4th: Manifesting Anguish
- 5th: Worrying
- 6th: Feeling Ashamed
- 7th: Surrendering Whole Heartedly and Being Humble
- 8th: Manifesting Surrender
- 8th: Overcoming Your Physical Cravings
- 10th: Correcting Your Actions through the Agent Used to Sin
- 11th: Scrutinizing Your Ways
- 12th: Examining, knowing, and Recognizing the Seriousness of Each Sin
- 13th: Taking Your Minor Sins Seriously
- 14th: Confessing
- 15th: Praying
- 16th: Amending Your Misdeeds as Much as Possible
- 17th: Expressing Kindness and Truth
- 18th: Keeping Your Sin Before You All the Time
- 19th: Shunning a Sin when Faced with it, and Still Fully Craving it
- 20th: Turning Others Away from Sin as Much as You Can

¹¹ Adapted from

<http://www.teachittome.com/index.php?Command=Class&ClassID=ShTeshuvah&CID=21>

The 24 things for which doing teshuvah is necessary

Below are listed 24 of the instances that Rabbeinu Yonah cites and offers comment on. It is difficult to come to teshuva if you engage in the following actions repeatedly and stubbornly:

1. rumor-mongering,
2. slander,
3. fury ,
4. thinking untoward thoughts,
5. associating with wrongdoers,
6. regularly accepting food from those who don't have enough,
7. staring at instances of nudity,
8. sharing in stolen property,
9. saying, "I will sin (now) and then do teshuva (later)",
10. achieving honor at another's expense,
11. separating yourself from the congregation,
12. belittling your ancestors or teachers,
13. cursing the masses,
14. preventing the masses from doing a mitzvah,
15. causing another to deviate from the path of good and to follow a bad one instead,
16. using a pauper's pledge for personal gain,
17. taking a bribe to pervert justice,
18. finding a lost object and not returning it to its owner,
19. seeing your child going bad and not objecting,
20. eating from the sustenance of paupers, orphans and widows,
21. arguing against the words of sages,
22. suspecting the innocent,
23. hating criticism,
24. maligning mitzvot.

Tomer Devorah

(The Palm Tree of Deborah)

by Moses Cordovero

Moses ben Jacob Cordovero (1522–1570) was one of the most profound and systematic exponents of the teachings of the Zohar, and a leading figure in the circle of mystics in sixteenth-century Safed, the center of Jewish mysticism at that time. **Tomer Devorah** is an ethical treatise devoted to the doctrine of the Imitation of God. The book was first published in Venice in 1588.

The emulation of God and God's attributes is the theme of this tome. It is rich with suggestions and thoughts on exactly how man needs to act, given his responsibilities in this world. Both specifics and generalities are given, as surely the author is aware that all men do not live in the rarified circle of kabbalists, as he did. The text is deep and exquisitely beautiful in its references to the Holy One, the angels and their actions. Examples are given of what the angels do in a certain circumstance and then the text states that this is the reason that man is required to act in the same manner – on an earthly scale.

Below is a selection of quotations from **Tomer Devorah**¹² which gives statements of how man should behave. All are indicative of qualities that should be examined in oneself during the process of Cheshbon haNefesh.

Chapter 1 Attribute 2

For a destroying angel is created whenever a man sins, as we have been taught: 'He who commits a sin acquires a prosecutor for himself,' who stands before the Holy One, Blessed is He, saying: 'So-and-so made me.' As no creature can exist without the divine flow of power how does the destroying angel who stands before Him exist? It would only

¹² [The HTML version of the **Tomer Devorah**, from which this is reprinted, is hosted by Colin Low (cal@digital-brilliance.com), with the kind permission of Mike Graffam.]

be right if the Holy One, Blessed is He, were to say: 'I will not nourish this destroying angel, let him go to the one who made him to be sustained by him.' If He were to say this the destroyer would at once descend to snatch the sinner's soul or to cut it off, or the sinner would be obliged to expiate his offence in creating the destroyer by suitable punishment until the latter is made naught. The Holy One, Blessed is He, does not behave in this fashion. He bears the sign and endures it. He nourishes the destroyer and sustains it, as He does the whole world, until one of the three things happens. Either the sinner repents and makes an end of the destroying angel by the severity of the penances he inflicts upon himself, or the righteous Judge brings the destroyer to naught by bringing suffering or death upon the sinner. Or the sinner descends to Hell to pay his debt.

Chapter 1 Attribute 6

They do kindness one to another so that even if they are guilty they shall be spared and have a remnant. The reason is because He delights in mercy. He delights in the mercy which Israel does one to the other and remembers this aspect even when they are guilty from another point of view. It is fitting, therefore, that man make this quality his own. Even when he is offended or provoked, if the offender has his good points in that he is kind to others or he possesses some other good quality, this should be sufficient to soothe his anger so that his heart is pleased with him and he delights in the kindness he does.

Chapter 1 Attribute 7

This is how man should behave towards his neighbor. He should not feel hatred from his former anger, but when he sees that his neighbor wants to love him he should show him a greater degree of kindness and love than formerly. He should say: 'Behold he is to be compared to the penitents in whose place the perfectly righteous cannot stand.' And he should encourage him to a far greater degree than those who are perfectly righteous, namely, those who have not offended him.

Chapter 2 - Quality 4

That his ears be ever open to hear good but an evil or ugly report be barred from entering them, according to the secret of Supernal Listening; for no cry of judgment nor the flow of evil talk is allowed entry there. So he, too, should listen only to good and useful things; and other things which cause anger to prevail should receive no hearing whatsoever. Just as the serpent, his words and his speech have no entry above, so no ugly thing should be allowed to enter man's ear. This is the meaning of 'Thou shalt not bear a false report'; how much more other ugly things. These should in no way enter his ear, which should listen only to good things.

Chapter 2 - Quality 7

His face should shine constantly, so to welcome all men with good countenance.

Chapter 3 – Wisdom

Wisdom preserves the life of all things, as it is written: 'Wisdom preserves the life of him that has it.' So he, too, should teach life to the whole populace of the world and cause them to possess the life of this world and the next, and provide them with the means of living. To sum up, he should cause life to flow to all.

'How manifold are Your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have made them all.' (Psalm 104:24) So, too, it is proper for man that his wisdom be ready to benefit all. He should be an effective teacher of men, to each according to his powers, influencing each as much as he possibly can without in any way preventing him.

Chapter 7

Therefore, a man should be pleasantly disposed towards his pupils, to teach them as much as they can absorb. And in his merit, beauty will pour its flow into the Pupils according to their capacities, in fit measure.

Chapter 8

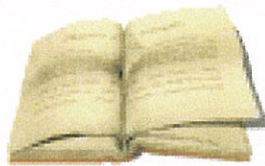
He should further accustom himself, when he debates words of Torah, to have the intention of adorning the Shekinah, to adorn and decorate Her for Beauty, and this is the meaning of Halakhah for Truth. And this is the meaning of a debate for the sake of Heaven, 'Any controversy that is for the sake of Heaven shall be in the end of lasting worth.' Such was the controversy of Hillel and Shammai.

Chapter 9

How should a man train himself to acquire the quality of Sovereignty? First and foremost he should not be proud in his heart because of all that is his, but he should behave constantly like a beggar, standing before his Creator as a poor man begging and offering supplication. Furthermore, a man must be very careful to behave so that the **Shekinah** cleaves always to him and never departs. Fear is very dangerous. 'There are three types of fear: two have no proper root, while the third is the real fear. There is the man who fears the Holy One in order that his children may live or lest he be punished. . . Another man fears the Holy One because he is afraid of punishment in the other world. . . The genuine type of fear is that which makes a man fear his Maker because He is the mighty ruler. . .'

(Zohar, Prologue, 11b, Soncino, Vol. I, pp. 47-49)

The Modern Period (1700 – 1940 C.E.)



Introduction To the Modern Citations

The citations in this section span not only more than 300 years, but a breadth of movements of Judaism; from the Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), to Moshe Chayim Luzzatto (1707-1746), to the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797), to Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810), to Israel Lipkin Salanter (1810-1883), to the Rebbe Yehudah Leib Alter (the Sfat Emet) (1845-1905), and to Rav Avraham Isaac haKohain Kook (1865-1935). These men are representative of various streams of thought of their times, and their statements on the following pages are representative of their thought.

The radical changes in practice and theology brought about by the Baal Shem Tov spoke to the man who was not necessarily a Torah scholar; but rather to the man who sought God, and lacked the formal education and methods previously thought to be necessary to have a personal relationship with the Divine and to reach a higher level of spiritual evolution. For the Baal Shem Tov, it was the hidden light, the sparks¹ in each human being that prevailed above his lack of Torah education, his societal status, or in fact, his deeds in life. It was the chosen mission of the Baal Shem Tov to find and liberate the sparks within each being, and the citations reflect that. And in fact, it is ironic to use any citations of the BeShT in light of his feelings about his own words being written down for posterity.

Once, while the Baal Shem Tov was experiencing an aliyah (elevation) of the Neshamah (Soul) in the heavenly worlds, he encountered the Satan (the Angel in charge of our experiencing difficult situations). The Satan was strutting around studying a Sefer (book) and gesturing so that the Baal Shem knew the sefer contained the Baal Shem Tov's own transmission of the Torah. Upon return to his earthly body, the Baal Shem called together all of his close Chassidim (disciples)

¹ According to the Lurianic Kabbalah

and inquired as to who among them wrote a sefer of the Baal Shem Tov's Torah. One of the Chassidim sheepishly came forward holding a small sefer (book) in which he had carefully recorded Torah teachings which he personally heard from the lips of the words or expressions, as spoken by the Baal Shem Tov, were not the point of what he spoke, but rather just a convenient mechanism to direct spiritual vibrations of different frequencies, depending on the circumstances, to the listener. Today, the stories and teachings of the Baal Shem Tov serve the same function as over 250 years ago. That is, to direct spiritual vibrations into our soul to heal any weak aspect of our soul body and enable us to intensify our service to God, i.e. to serve God while remaining in the spiritual flow that originates in God by living life b'simchah (with a joyful attitude).
(<http://www.baalshemtov.com/teach.htm>)

In Padua, Italy, Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzatto gained renown for his scholarship in Torah, in secular and classical literature, and perhaps most of all as a mystic. It was a combination of his Torah scholarship and his immersion in mysticism that the reader can see in his ethical treatise, Mesillat Yesharim, (The Path of The Just). In the introduction to this work, Luzzatto writes, "I have written this work not to teach men what they do not know, but to remind them of what they already know and is very evident to them ..."² In spite of this remark, the work is filled with novel ideas (*chiddushim*) that are thought to be influenced, if not be directly from the teaching of the *Maggid* (teacher) that Luzzatto channeled during his life.

"The GRA (Vilna Gaon) is reputed to have stated that he examined the first eight chapters of this work without encountering a superfluous word.... The author, besides being one of the most profoundly systemic minds of modern times, was also famous as one of the greatest scholars of Kabbalah; and all the depths of logic and complexities of the spiritual world are contained in his straightforward phrases."³

The author's intention is for Divine service to be a genuine pathway to God through the knowledge of and refinement of the self. Rabbi Avigdor Miller, a translator of Mesillat Yesharim states that the importance of this work lies in not only in it's brilliance and originality, but in it's providing the key to a great paradox

² From the Author's Introduction - translation by Rabbi Avigdor Miller (see bibliography).

³ Ibid. Foreward

of a profound truth: “that it is not *what* one knows which shapes his moral conduct, but *how* one knows it”⁴; this comes from not simply reading the text, but living it. Mesillat Yesharim has remained as one of the seminal works of Jewish ethical texts, being lauded across the spectrum of Jewish beliefs. There is a similarity in style and tone to Chovot Levavot, in regard to its humility and gentleness in the way in which the reader is addressed; and there is a similarity to the style of the Gaon of Vilna with a demonstration of scholarship evidenced by an abundance of proof texts.⁵

Rabbi Eliyahu ben Solomon Zalman (Lithuania), the Vilna Gaon, was renowned as the *gaon*, or genius of his time, as he was the premier scholar not only of Torah and Talmud, and a scholar in secular areas of study as well. The influence of the Gaon on his generation and those to follow was tremendous. In addition to his comprehensive knowledge of Jewish texts, he was also highly schooled in matters secular and the sciences; this was a powerful statement to the Jewish world that a secular education was not only acceptable, but valuable. In addition to his devotion to Torah, he was an adherent of the mussar texts and an ardent advocate of a strict adherence to ethical behavior. He remained the representative of traditional Judaism and Torah scholarship of the time, despite his knowledge of mysticism. He was a staunch opponent of Chassidism and a leader of the *mitnagdim* (opponents), feeling that the ways of chassidut would lead to a diminution of Torah study. As evident in Igeret haGra, his famous letter of ethical instruction, he leaned toward the ascetic side of life, and his writing (at least in this letter) is somewhat in the style of the Rambam. The letter, which can be found at the end of this section, is heavily laden with scriptural citations which give the reader evidence of his scholarly nature; this is a letter to his wife.

⁴ Ibid. Translator's Preface

⁵ Although the Rambam also gives proof texts, he does not give specific attributions.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (Ukraine), the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, was not averse to having his words recorded for posterity and as a result we are left today with volumes of his teachings that were approved by Rebbe Nachman himself.⁶ The teachings of both the Baal Shem Tov and Rebbe Nachman reflect the optimistic theme of serving God with simplicity and joy.

Whereas the Chassidic movement had been relegated to the status of being in *cherem*⁷ by the Mitnagdim (on the very day of the birth of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov – 1772), Rabbi Israel Salanter was born and raised in the traditional orthodox establishment of the day. Under his leadership, Kovno, a known center of reformist and "enlightenment" forces was transformed into a traditional Orthodox community. It was there that he established a "*mussar shtiebel*," a small synagogue where ethical texts were studied, unfortunately arousing some opposition, since it was viewed as separation from the main community. This was the beginning of the modern Mussar movement⁸; the premise of which is that Talmudic study is not an end in itself, but rather it must be accompanied by ethical study and conduct. As far as practice, it differed greatly from the joyfulness and spontaneity of the Chassidim, but Salanter strove to create a new spiritual leadership for Jewish communities, which expressed emotional as well as intellectual qualities. In Mussar practice it is required that moralistic passages from the Bible, Rabbinic literature and medieval literature should be regularly recited in an atmosphere and tone that will affect the student emotionally. The student is expected to constantly subject himself to self-examination, recording his personal shortcomings. Mussar would inject relevance and vitality into traditional Judaism that would provide a more attractive alternative to Reform and secularism and would combine some of the emotional

⁶ They were recorded by Rabbi Nathan of Breslov, who was his disciple and friend from the time that Rebbe Nachman came to Breslov (age 22) until his death in Uman (age 38). Rebbe Nachman told his favorite disciple to begin setting the main points of his teachings in alphabetical order, forming the basis of the Sefer HaMidos. (<http://www.breslov.org/rnachman.html>)

⁷ Literally excommunication, but in this case it was a separation from the traditional mainstream of Judaism.

⁸ The practices of Mussar are the basis for several of the workshops developed for this project.

and spiritual component of Chassidism.⁹ Begun in Lithuania, it failed in the traditional yeshiva, but thrived when Salanter began his own yeshiva. The movement gained popularity and revived traditional Judaism, creating an atmosphere of nurturing for the students' spiritual development in the yeshiva.

The Sfat Emet, the second Gerer Rebbe, was known for his deep and soulful commentaries on the Torah, and that is where we find most of his teachings, within his commentaries on the parshiot. It is through these spiritual messages that we are shown how to work our way closer to experiencing the presence of God within us, as well as in the world around us. For the purposes of this project, citations are given that apply to the state of the soul addressed in man's character.

The last of the citations of this period are from Rabbi Avraham Isaac haKohain Kook, the First Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael just after the turn of the 20th century. The worlds of Chassidut and Mitnagdut truly came together in Rav Kook, as his paternal grandfather was a student at the Volozhin Yeshiva and his maternal grandfather was a member of the Chassidic movement. Rav Kook married together not only these two worlds, but expanded his horizons to include more diverse topics than most of his predecessors. His words brought through the Divine light to all areas of life, including the political. It was his goal to make manifest the infusion of the holy light into everything and all aspects of life. He embodied both the mystical and the pragmatic in a time and a place where both were needed.

Endnote: By all rights, the work of Rabbi Mendel of Satanov, Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh, written in 1845 should be included in this section. It is accepted as the

⁹ Some of this information comes from:
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/salanter.html>

seminal work of Modern Mussar¹⁰. However, this volume has been discussed in the Introduction of this project and is listed in the Annotated Bibliography.

The Baal Shem Tov taught that God acts toward individuals accordingly as they act toward other people. Thus, if people are willing to forgive those who have offended them, God will similarly overlook their misdeeds. If a person is very judgmental and reacts with anger to any offense, God will be equally strict. The meaning of *God is your shadow*, is that a person's shadow mimics his or her every action. (Growing Each Day – Kislev 3; Abraham J. Twerski. [Based on the Biblical citation: *God is your shadow at your right hand (Psalms 121:5)*].

All feelings, even those that we may consider to be contemptible, can be constructive if they are properly channeled. (Baal Shem Tov)

In all that is in the world dwell holy sparks, no thing is empty of them. In the actions of men also, indeed even in the sins that a man does, dwell holy sparks of the glory of God. And what is it that the sparks await that dwell in the sins? It is the Turning. In the hour where you turn from a sin you have embraced, you raise the holy spark entrapped by it to the Higher World of Heaven. (Baal Shem Tov)

And all of the character traits, which are in such need of correction and cultivation -- who will cultivate and correct them if we do not give heart to them and subject them to exacting scrutiny? (Mesillat Yesharim, Introduction)

It is not fear that causes indolence, but indolence that causes fear.
(Mesillat Yesharim, Chapter 9)

For the pseudo-saints give the impression that Saintliness lies in foolishness and runs counter to intelligence and logic; and they lead people to believe that

¹⁰ In 1937, a gathering of Moetzes *Gedolei HaTorah* (Council of Great Leaders of Torah) at the Slabodka Yeshiva felt the necessity to bolster ethical integrity and spiritual awareness. After much deliberation, *Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh* (*The Book of Spiritual Accounting*) was finally selected over *The Book of Proverbs* with explanations by Rabbeinu Yona z'tl, and steps were taken toward its reissue.

Saintliness consists entirely in the reciting of many supplications, in lengthy confessions, in exaggerated wailings and bowings, and in esoteric flagellations

...
(Mesillat Yescharim Chapter 18)

How will our thoughts be purified if we do not if we do not strive to rescue them from the imperfections infused in them by physical nature? (Mesillat Yescharim, Introduction)

Even if a person cannot fully complete his task, still, with his good desire alone he has accomplished something worthy. (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #14)

"Dear God, Save me from wanting what is not mine. Protect me from my own jealousy, from desiring the money or the possessions, the position or the honor that belong to another. Let me trust in You enough to believe that what is meant to be mine will come to me. Let me trust in You enough to be satisfied with all that I have today." (Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav)

"Through humility comes honor/respect." (Sefer HaMiddot - Kavod 8)

"If a person does not have acquaintances and friends, it is as if he is dead." (Sefer HaMiddot - Meriva 63)

Teshuvah elevates all mitzvot, since teshuvah makes mitzvot "good and illuminating". (Likkutei Torah, Shemini Atzeres 85a)

People need to set aside time to study books of Mussar every day – whether a little or a lot – because the greater the person, the greater his yetzer ha-ra. And the antidote for the yetzer ha-ra is the reproof of our sages, of blessed memory. (Mishnah Berurah 1:12)

"Life consists of give and take. Everyone must be a giver and a receiver. Those who are not both are as barren as a tree." ¹¹ (Rabbi Yitchok of Zidachov)

¹¹ A related story: There is an old story about a man who had a strange dream - he was standing in the middle of a room surrounded by thousands and thousands of candles. Some of the candles were burning bright, some were dim, some were almost flickering out. He looked up to discover a man,

A person's drives are related to the degree of one's intellect. (Tanya, Chapter 6)

One who creates a small defect in the body creates a great defect in the soul.
(Maggid of Mezritch)

Every day, every hour, and every moment of my life I have sinned, nearly all manner of sins. God grant that I may find the means and occasion for repentance ... But alas ... the ways of the world, have kept me far from that state. (The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hamelin; Trans. Marvin Lowenthal)

Many individuals pose as humble people, for they realize that arrogance is a despicable trait. Therefore, they try to put on airs as if they were modest and unwilling to accept honor, though they actually crave respect from others and chase after honor. This is false humility, which is in fact arrogance, is idolatry. This chasing after honor is why the exile has not ended. (Likutey Moharan I, 11:8)

The Torah (i.e., spirituality) can find a place only within a humble person. (Likutey Moharan I, 14:5)

A Jew must go through life with this dual recognition: of the greatness of God, on the one hand; and of the smallness of His creatures, on the other. (Sfat Emet)

who seemed to be in charge, tending the flames. He asked, "What is this place? Why all these candles?"

The man replied, "Each candle represents each soul living in the world. The ones burning bright are in the prime of life. The ones low on oil and flickering are people who are dying. When the candle goes out, the person dies."

The keeper of the candles turned his back for a moment, and the man quickly searched for his own candle. He found the candle with his name flickering in the corner. It looked as if it was about to go out. The man panicked, and looked around for some more oil to pour into his candle so it would burn brighter. He started to take oil from another candle that was burning bright -- but a hand stopped him.

"That is not how it works here. Your candle does not burn brighter when you take oil from someone else. On the contrary, your candle burns brighter when you give oil to someone else." The man picked up his flickering candle and poured oil into several other candles. When he put it down, the flame started burning brighter.

The work that we do when we reach out to others – enlivens us, it gives us purpose and meaning. Too often it seems that we can pray our way into a better world, but prayer alone is not enough.

A tale is told of one who was wandering from place to place and saw a certain castle that was on fire. He said, 'Could it be that this castle has no master?' The owner of the castle looked out at him and said, 'I am owner of the castle'. (Sfat Emet from a sermon on Lech Lecha)

If a person understands and remembers always that everything is the Creator's and the Creator is in control of all the Creation, he cannot perform a negative action. (Sfat Emet)

Both the hasidim and the mitnaggedim are in error - the former because they think they have a rebbe, and the latter because they think they do not need one. (Rabbi Israel Salanter)

Promote yourself, but do not demote another. (Israel Salanter)

The Maharal of Prague [Rabbi Judah Loeb, d.1609] created a golem, and this was a great wonder. But how much more wonderful is it to transform a corporeal human being into a mensch! (Rabbi Israel Salanter)

First a person should put his house together, then his town, then the world. (Rabbi Israel Salanter)

"Spiritual life is superior to physical life. But the physical life of another is an obligation of my spiritual life." (Rabbi Israel Salanter)

"A pious Jew is not one who worries about his fellow man's soul and his own stomach; a pious Jew worries about his own soul and his fellow man's stomach." (Rabbi Israel Salanter)

The busy man does evil wherever he turns. His business doing badly, his mind and strength become confounded and subject to the fetters of care and confusion. Therefore appoint a time on the Holy Sabbath to gather together at a

fixed hour... the notables of the city, whom many will follow, for the study of morals. Speak quietly and deliberately without joking or irony, estimate the good traits of man and his faults, how he should be castigated to turn away from the latter and strengthen the former. Do not decide matters at a single glance, divide the good work among you—not taking up much time, not putting on too heavy a burden. Little by little, much will be gathered... In the quiet of reflection, in reasonable deliberation, each will strengthen his fellow and cure the foolishness of his heart and eliminate his lazy habits. (Rabbi Israel Salanter)

One night, as he walked past the home of a shoemaker, Rabbi Salanter noticed that despite the late hour, the man was still working by the light of a dying candle. "Why are you still working," he asked. "It is very late and soon that candle will go out." The shoemaker replied, "As long as the candle is still burning, it is still possible to accomplish and to mend." Salanter spent that entire night excitedly pacing his room and repeating to himself: "As long as the candle is still burning, it is still possible to accomplish and to mend."

Take time, be exact, unclutter the mind. (Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv, Alter of Kelm)

Man wants to achieve greatness overnight, and he wants to sleep well that night too. (Rabbi Yosef Yozel Horwitz, Alter of Novarodok)

The worst thing that can happen to a person is to remain asleep and untamed. (Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv, Alter of Kelm)

Darwin was able to formulate his theory of evolution only because he had never seen a real human being. Thus he could view men as no more than smarter monkeys. "Had he seen my rebbe, Reb Yisrael Salanter, who developed his character traits to a degree of perfection that fully expressed the essence of the Divine Image, he never could have entertained the possibility that human beings evolved from monkeys. (The Alter of Kelm)

There are two books in heaven, one of sins where you gave a sigh when you sinned and one when you didn't, and the difference in punishment between them is greater than the distance between heaven and earth. (Rav Itzele (Peterburger) Blazer, a disciple of Rabbi Israel Salanter)

The way to Life, to "hiyyut", to vitality and a sense of purpose, is via an ability to see beyond the present darkness, the ability to feel that there is a deeper and greater meaning and truth beyond. This is the way of Yaakov, Jacob, known as the man of truth, truth which is obtained by total faith. (The Sefat Emet (Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger)

R. Chayyim of Volozin NEFESH HACHAYYIM
The text engraved on Rabbi Haym's tomb

Chayim in Hebrew means Life

The Babylonian Talmud's Wisdom and Jerusalem's Intellect are the source of **Life**.*

Kabala's glow and the brilliant legends' splendor have chosen **Life**.

The pure to God devoutness, advice, resource and bravery are part of **Life**.

Secrets of many studies and Almighty's knowledge are searching **Life**

In his learning house, among his students are presented the ways of **Life**.

Lament, weeping and wailing is accompanying the rise of the soul of **Life**.

Howl, cry and scream wherever resides the spirit of **Life**.

With scream of angels, God's winds are blowing when carrying the soul of **Life**.

Grace, truth and charity are walking before him in the countries of **Life**.

Holiness, modesty and justice are filling the world through ways of **Life**.

His shining there is inspiring in his place, the tree of **Life**.

God Almighty took him to see God's goodness, in the country of **Life**.

When one forgets the essence of one's own soul, when one distracts his mind from attending to the innermost content of his own personal life, everything becomes confused and uncertain. The primary role of change, which at once sheds light on the darkened zone, is for the person to return to himself, to the root of his soul ... If one should envision that they sought to return to God, without setting themselves in order, this would be a deceptive change, through which God's name would be taken in vain.

(Rav Kook; Lights of Repentance - Chapter 15, paragraph 10)

Sudden change comes about as a result of a certain spiritual lightening bolt that enters the soul whose trace points to the depth of the mysterious.

(Rav Kook; Lights of Repentance – from Chapter 2)

Do not oppose the essential soul when it reveals itself. That self-revelation is constant. Even when the thickest clouds mask the soul's brilliant light, it shines with all its power. It carries the world and every human being to the goal of his fulfillment—a goal that transcends all definitions. (Rav Kook; Oros haKodesh 1, p.173)

Iggeres HaGra - The Vilna Gaon's Letter

*(This letter was sent by the Gaon, R. Eliyahu of Vilna, zt'l while traveling to the holy land of Eretz Yisrael, to encourage and instruct his family in the ways of Mussar. This classic letter was written in a manner which would bring fire into the hearts of his family in the ways of fearing and carrying out the word of HASHEM)
(<http://www.pirchei.co.il/specials/gra/graprn.htm>)*

To edit the following letter would be to do a disservice to the Vilna Gaon and so it is given forth in its entirety. Within it are contained a litany of quotations from scripture to provide support for the Vilna Gaon's plea for a most stringent lifestyle as an example of how to live a holy life. It is clear from his letter that he does not believe that the holy life is to be lived only by the wise and by the sages. The letter states in no uncertain terms that he is a practitioner and an advocate of mussar.

I ask you to refrain from becoming sad, as you truly promised me, and not to worry (or: as Mother promised me - besides, what is there to worry about?). It is common for men to leave their wives in order to travel and wander destitute for years to make money,. But I, thank G-d, am traveling to the Holy Land - which everyone longs to see - the Jewish people's Most Beloved (or: Hashem's Most Beloved, desired by all heavenly and earthly beings). And I am traveling in peace, thank G-d. You are also aware that I have left behind my children, for whom my heart moans, and all my precious books, and I am as a stranger in a foreign country. Yes, I have left everything behind...

It is well-known that this world is all emptiness, that every amusement is worthless, and woe is anyone who pursues vanity, which is worthless. And don't envy the rich, for "riches are hoarded by their owner to his misfortune" (Koheles 5:12); "As he had come from his mother's womb, naked will he return...exactly as he came he must depart, and what did he gain by toiling for the wind?" (ib. 14, 15); "Even if he should live a thousand years twice over, but find no contentment - do not all go to the same place?" (ib. 6:6); "Even if man lives many years, let him rejoice in all of them, but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is futility" (ib. 11:8); "And of joy, what does it accomplish?" (ib. 2:2). Tomorrow you will cry for having laughed today. Do not lust after imaginary honor, for it is worthless, and time is a traitor: it is like scales, which lift the light and lower the weighty. The world is like one who drinks salty water: he thinks it quenches his thirst, but it only makes him thirstier. No one leaves the world with even half his cravings fulfilled (Koheles Rabbah 1). "What profit does one have from all his toils under the sun" (Koheles 1:3)? Remember our predecessors, all of whose love, desire and joy have ceased to exist (see Koheles 9:6), but who are being judged severely for them. And of what benefit is gratification to man - whose end is dust, maggots and worms, as he is bound to die - when all his enjoyments turn to bitterness in the grave? And what is this

world, whose days are full of anguish and pain which prevent one from sleeping? Neither is death a mikveh. Man will be judged for everything he says; even the slightest expression is not overlooked. Therefore I exhort you to train yourself to sit as much as possible, because the sin of the tongue is the most severe, as our Sages said (Tosefta Pe'ah 1): "These are the things...and lashon hara is equivalent to them all." I don't have to elaborate on this most serious sin of all. "All man's toil is for his mouth" (Koheles 6:7). Our Sages said that all man's mitzvos and teachings are not enough to counterbalance what comes out of his mouth. "What should be a man's pursuit in this world? He should be silent" (Chullin 89a). One must seal his lips as tight as two millstones. Idle words are like powerful weapons which can reach from one end of the world to the other. Now this is true concerning mere excessive speech. Where forbidden speech is concerned - e.g. lashon hara, mocking, swearing, vowing, fighting and cursing - especially in the synagogue, and on Shabbos and Yom Tov - for every utterance of this type it is impossible to imagine the pain and suffering one will receive (Zohar)! No word is lost; everything is recorded. Winged beings attach themselves to everyone, recording all they say. "For a bird of the skies may carry the sound, and some winged creature may tell the matter" (Koheles 10:20). "Let not your mouth cause your flesh to sin, and do not tell the messenger that it was an error. Why should G-d be angered by your speech and destroy the work of your hands?" (ib. 5:5).

Purchase all your needs through a messenger, even if this would cost two or three times as much. "Is there a limit to what G-d can provide?" (Bamidbar 11:23). Hashem feeds all creatures, from the greatest to the smallest (see A.Z. 3), and provides all their needs. And on Shabbos and Yom Tov do not speak at all about things that are not urgent, and be brief even with what is important, for the Shabbos is very holy and our Sages barely permitted the exchange of greetings on it (Yerushalmi Shabbos, and Tosfot Shab. 113). See how strict they were concerning even a single expression! Continue to give great honor to the Shabbos as when I was there. Do not cut back [on your Shabbos] expenses, since "Man's entire sustenance [for the year is fixed for him from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur,] except [the expenditure for Sabbaths and Festivals,] etc." (Beitzah 16a). I also implore and plead with you to guide your daughters very carefully to refrain from cursing, swearing, lying and fighting. Rather, everything they do should be done peacefully, with love, affection and gentleness.

I have left behind several Yiddish books on Mussar (morality). See that [the children] read them constantly, especially on the Holy Shabbos, when Mussar is the only thing they should read. Always instruct them according to Mussar books. Don't hold back from hitting them when they curse, swear or lie. Don't be lenient with them, because parents will be punished severely for the corruption of their children, G-d forbid. And even if one constantly teaches them Mussar, but they do not follow it, one's sorrow and shame in the World-to-Come will be great. As it is written (Vayikra 21:9), "She defiles her father" - [in such a case] the son of a

righteous man is called "the son of a wicked man" (Sanhedrin 52a). Similarly in other matters, lashon hara and gossip.

Their eating and drinking should always be preceded and followed by the appropriate blessings. They must be careful to say the blessings, Birkas Hamazon and Krias Shema with proper kavanah (intent). Most importantly, they must not wander outside the home and must obey and respect you and my mother and all their elders. They also need to observe all that is written in the Mussar books.

Raise your own children as well correctly and sensitively, and pay their tutor well, for "Man's entire sustenance for the year is fixed for him from Rosh Hashanah...except TiShReY (Talmud, Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and Yom Tov - Beitzah 16a). I have also left books for them. For Hashem's sake, guide them well and gently. Take care of their health and make sure that they always have enough to eat. First have them learn the entire Chumash, seeing to it that they know it almost by heart. The learning must be done without undue pressure, rather gently, because it is best absorbed when one is relaxed. Give them coins, etc., as a reward. Always focus your attention on these matters and not on others, because all else is trivial. For man can salvage nothing from his labor to take with him (see Koheles 5:14), except two white garments (shrouds). Also (Tehillim 49), "A man will not redeem his brother...Fear not when a man grows rich...For when he dies, he shall carry nothing away...." Don't say, "I will leave a portion for my children" - who will tell you in the grave? The children of man are like grasses of the field, some blossom and some fade (Eruvin 54a). Everyone is born under his constellation and Divine Providence. They are glad when he dies and he goes into the nether world. [At his death] Resh Lakish left his children a kav of saffron, and he applied to himself the verse (Tehillim 49:11), "...and they leave their wealth to others" (Gittin 47a). Woe to all who plan on leaving [wealth] to their children! The only reward from sons and daughters is through their Torah and good deeds. Their sustenance is fixed for them. It is also known that women earn merit by making their children learn Torah, etc. (Berachos 17a). And our Sages said (Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu Rabba 9): "The only proper wife is one that does her husband's will."

Of course, I am writing you words of the Living G-d. Therefore, I am certain that you will follow all that I have written. Nevertheless, I wish to strongly advise you not to deviate from anything that I have written. Read this letter every week, especially on Shabbos before and during the meal, in order to prevent idle talk and, even worse, lashon hara and the like, G-d forbid. I reiterate my request that you guide your sons and daughters with words of kindness and Mussar that will find a place in their heart. This is true especially if we merit to arrive in Eretz Yisrael, because one must be extra cautious to follow Hashem's ways there. Therefore, train them well, since one must work hard on one's speech and character traits, and only through good habits can we control ourselves (Shaarey Teshuvah). All beginnings are hard (Mechilta Yisro). But afterwards, one is

worthy of praise (Mishlei 20:14). For the wicked person knows that he is taking the wrong path, but it is hard for him to change. But this is man's main task, not to go after his desires, but (Tehillim 32:9) "to restrain himself with a bit and bridle when he is being groomed." Man must deprive himself until he dies, not by fasting or asceticism, but by controlling his mouth and desires. This is teshuvah. And this is the whole reward of the World-to-Come, as it is written (Mishlei 6:23): "For the commandment is a lamp and the Torah is a light" - but "the way to life is the rebuke that disciplines." And that is worth more than any amount of fasting and self-affliction! For every second that man controls his tongue, he merits some of the "hidden [by Hashem for the righteous] light," something which no angel or [other] creature can imagine (Midrash). And it is stated (Tehillim 34:13,14): "Who is the man who desires life, and loves days that he may see good? Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceitfully." This will atone for any sin and save one from Gehinnom, as we find (Mishlei 21:23): "He who guards his mouth [from too much eating and drinking] and tongue [from idle words] guards himself from trouble." Also (ib. 18:21): "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Woe to one who gives away his life for one word! Then what advantage is there to one who has a tongue (see Koheles 10:11)? And, "Everything has a cure except, etc." It is most important to refrain from speaking words of praise about anyone. How much more so does this apply to speaking ill of anyone! Why must one speak about others? "The mouth that speaks strangely is a deep pit; he who angers Hashem falls into it" (Mishlei 22:14).

Concerning solitude, the main thing is to remain at home. Even your visit to the synagogue should be very short. In fact, it is better to pray at home, for it is impossible to be spared from jealousy or from hearing idle talk or lashon hara in the synagogue. And one receives punishment for this, as we find (Shabbos 33a), "Also one who hears and is silent..." This is even the more so on Shabbos and Yom Tov when they gather to talk - It is then better that you don't pray at all. Refrain also from going to the cemetery (especially women), as it leads to all kinds of sorrow and sin. It is also advisable that your daughter not go to the synagogue, because she'll see beautiful clothes there, become jealous and talk about it at home. This will lead to lashon hara, etc. She should rather cling to Mussar and not become jealous of anything in this world, where everything is vanity and illusions, appearing and disappearing overnight (Yonah 4:10). "Though he grows as high as the sky, his head reaching the clouds, he perishes forever..." (Iyov 20:6,7). "For property does not last forever, or a crown for all generations" (Mishlei 27:24). And even while it exists it is worthless, loathsome and disdained by any sensible person. Woe to him who is impressed by it. Envy only the fear of Hashem (ib. 23:17). She should not say, "How can I earn a share in the World-to-Come? - I can't do it!" For we have learned (Berachot 17a): "One may do much or one may do little, provided he directs his heart to heaven." For the sake of Hashem, give a fifth of all earnings to charity. Do not give less, as I have already warned you, because that causes the transgression of several positive and negative mitzvahs every minute! It also implies a rejection of the Holy Torah, G-d forbid.

But the main way to merit Olam Haba is by guarding one's tongue. That is worth more than all the Torah and good deeds. This is the meaning of (Isaiah 32:9) "tranquil women" (Berachos 17a), because the mouth is the holiest of the holy. Among my books is a copy of Mishlei with Yiddish translation. For the sake of Hashem, have them read it daily. It is better than any Mussar book. They should also read Koheles a lot, because it points out the vanity of this world, and other books as well. But G-d forbid that reading should be the objective! Reading Mussar alone does not necessarily move one to act differently. Going out into the world without a good understanding of it defeats the whole purpose. It is like one sows without having plowed; the wind and birds will carry the seeds away, because they aren't closed off and protected. So is he who merely reads Mussar like him who plants without a fence; pigs will eat and trample on everything. Some plant on stone. This is comparable to a heart of stone which cannot be penetrated unless it is struck until it breaks open. That's why I wrote you to hit our children if they don't obey you. "Train a lad in the way he ought to go" (Mishlei 22:6). This is an important principle of education.

I also wish to appeal to my son-in-law to adhere to all the above. Read to the children as I have stated and learn for the sake of Heaven. Become well-versed in it for Hashem's sake. Don't pay attention to those who say that it is unnecessary for the child, G-d forbid. To the contrary, "Train a lad, etc." It is easier to remove the skin of a nut before it hardens into a shell.

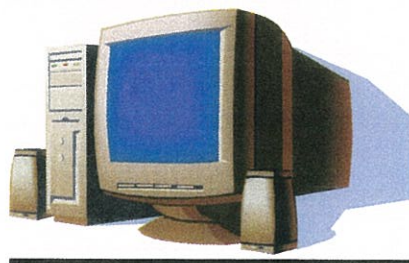
Most importantly, it is through such study that one merits everything, as our Sages stated (Avos 6:1): "Rabbi Meir said, 'Whoever studies Torah for its own sake merits many things; furthermore, the whole world is worthwhile for his sake alone.'" You should study Tractate Avos, especially Avos D'Rabbi Noson, and Tractate Derech Eretz, since Derech Eretz (good manners) are more important than Torah study. Honor both your mother-in-law and your children's great grandmother. Also always treat everyone with politeness and respect..

My Dear Mother, I know that you don't need my advice, because you are very modest. Nevertheless, I wish someone would read this letter to you, for it consists of words of the Living G-d. I beg of you not to grieve over me, as you promised me, and G-d willing, if I merit to arrive at the gate of heaven in the holy city of Jerusalem, I will pray for you as I promised. And if we deserve it, we shall all be reunited, please G-d. I also ask my wife to honor my mother, as the Torah dictates, especially since she is a widow to whom it is a grave sin to cause even the slightest pain. I also ask you, Mother, to please cause peace to reign between you, and that you should strive to bring happiness one to the other. This is a great mitzvah incumbent upon everyone, as we find (Reishis Chochmah): "When man is judged, he will be asked, 'Did you make your fellow a king over you?'" We see that one must gladly enhance his friend's honor. In fact, the main goal of the Torah is to bring joy to man. Even if one of you should happen to act improperly, excuse each other and live in peace for Hashem's name. I also ask of you, Mother, to supervise and guide my children with gentle words, so that they

will accept them. I instruct my sons and daughters to honor her, and not to fight among themselves at all, but to settle everything peacefully. May the Master of Peace grant you, my sons, daughters, sons-in-law, brother and all Israel life and peace.

Your loving Eliyahu the son of R. Shlomo Zalman ztz"l

The Contemporary Period (1940 – Present)



Introduction To Workshops and Programs



The workshops and programs presented on the following pages were created to address and explore various aspects of Cheshbon haNefesh (and Teshuvah), via a variety of learning styles. One person may do well with journaling and record keeping, where another may integrate the material more effectively through song or interactive group activities; one person may require the intimacy of working one-on-one, and another may respond more fully in a group setting.

Each program contains detailed facilitator instructions as well as all handouts that are specified in the instructions. Additional resource materials and information on the subject of Cheshbon haNefesh can be found in the section of this project that is labeled: Additional Resource Materials.

Facilitator Notes for All Programs

Things to consider

Location

- It is best to select a non-classroom setting for this program if at all possible.
- There should be sufficient space for individual privacy, small group privacy and whole group assembly. – it would be helpful to have a place to write.

Ambience

- Possibly play a niggun softly in the background to set the mood.
- Have alternative/ various comfortable seating arrangements available.
- Do not have glaring lights or have the room too dark.

Supplies

- Name tags
- White board/Easel with markers and eraser
- Paper and pens
- Copies of the program and all appropriate handouts
- Evaluation form

Food

- Serve only water or juices and only healthy munchy things if necessary and have them available at the beginning so they do not (call too loudly) serve as temptation during the program. [Also, snacks may serve as a way to make people more relaxed if they arrive early and may serve as an ice breaker.]

To Begin

- Introduce yourself and the program and invite people to settle in as a group - AND TO TURN OFF THEIR ELECTRONICS
- Remember that there are no right or wrong answers in this program.

- Make sure that people know that the entire program is important to the process and that people should not leave early.
- Give the opportunity to speak by asking some general questions, such as, "What brings you to this workshop?", or "What made to come to the workshop tonight?"
NOTE: Hearing the responses of others usually help to put some people more at ease.
- Be personal about why YOU are there.
- Use their answers to bring a focus to the beginning.
- Don't let anyone talk too long, INCLUDING YOU!
- Let people know that this is not a one time event, but rather a process and suggest ways of following up: personal work, work with a friend or partner, attend follow-up programs, connect with a spiritual advisor, speak with you after the program for other options.
- After the introduction, you can begin with a moment of silent reflection if you (and the group) are comfortable with that. If it works, you might want to end that program in the same way.
- You might ask people to write down a word to describe how they are feeling at the beginning of the session – and then at the end, for comparison.
- Mention that it is important to not filter responses during the program – not to censor feelings that may arise. In this program it is more important to respond with feelings than "thinkings". With feelings, the heart can open – with thinking; we remain in a place of judgment. In this program, there is to be no judgment.
- Acknowledge all the wisdom and knowledge that everyone has brought with them and that is very important to the process that they access that.
- Remind them:
 1. SHARING IS OPTIONAL but helpful
 2. Confidentiality
 3. Respectfulness
 4. No fixing, no judgment

The object of the workshop is to get in touch with your soul, your deeper self, and staying there long enough to do some work.

Timing

It is essential to not allow any one piece to run too long, since this will affect the outcome of the entire program and diminish the results for people.

Opening

Activity 1
Activity 2
Break (optional)
Activity 3
Closing

Self-Study Packet For Cheshbon hanefesh

And all of the character traits, which are in such need of correction and cultivation --
who will cultivate and correct them if we do not give heart to them and subject them to exacting scrutiny?
(Messilat Yesharim, Introduction)

Description: Preparing for the High Holidays includes making Cheshbon haNefesh, an accounting of the soul. In order to know who it is that will be standing in our shoes before God at such and awesome moment in time, one must do some honest soul-searching. The purpose of this packet is to assist the individual in making such an assessment. By reviewing the questionnaire and answering the questions with as much candor as possible, it should provide a full picture of your spiritual life. The questionnaire is intended for self-evaluation, but it is recommended that one find a mentor or partner with whom they can check in to evaluate and help balance their own perceptions.

Questions to Consider for making Cheshbon haNefesh

It is important to understand that this is a process that should take as much time as you need for it to take. Customarily, the entire month of Elul preceding Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur is devoted to making cheshbon hanefesh, although it can certainly be done at any time of year.

The questions below are divided into three categories: The first concerns that which most deeply affects the self, the second is that which affects the self in relation to others, and the third is that which affects the self in relationship with God. These questions are not generally those which we ask ourselves on a daily basis, and some will affect you more deeply than others. It is not necessary to answer all of them; make note of those that you want to omit as well. It is advisable to look for patterns and trends in your responses to the questions as this will prove to be helpful in the assessment, the action plan and the final results. You may approach this questionnaire in any way that you like; one suggested way is as follows:

- 1) Before you begin the process, it would be helpful to find someone with whom you might discuss your results along the way.
- 2) You might want to begin this exercise in a notebook dedicated especially to this effort.
- 3) Begin with the first column on the left, the questions that relate to the self. Read through the list (it is a long one) before you begin to answer. Although it is not necessary to answer the questions in order, there is logic behind the order and some questions are in groups, but the order in which you answer them is up to you. You will note that some topics are more difficult to address than others; you might want to work yourself up to some of the more challenging ones. In your notebook, write your answers to the questions, or whatever thoughts come up for you as you read the questions.
- 4) Repeat with the middle column of questions.
- 5) Repeat with the right-hand column of questions.
- 6) Now is the time to look for patterns in your responses¹. When you see any, make note of them on a separate page in your notebook, or on the worksheet at the end of the questionnaire.

¹ Is there a pattern of avoidance of certain issues in my life? Is there a certain category or categories of issues that I have not given much thought to in life? Is there a pattern of conflict within myself? In relation to others? Is there a pattern of my thoughts not being in integrity with my actions?

| Beyn adam l'atzmo (the self) | Beyn adam l'chaveiro (person to person) | Beyn adam l'makom (between self and God) |
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| <p>How do I reflect my values in life? What could I do without so as to better realize/reflect my values?</p> <p>Am I open to new ideas from others? Do I allow myself to think outside the box?</p> <p>Do I enable things that I know to be wrong?</p> <p>What do I keep secret, even from myself?</p> <p>How can I find ways to discover my self-deception?</p> <p>How do I avoid self-deception?</p> <p>How can I discover the parts of me that I hide from myself?</p> <p>How can I assist myself to stay on the correct spiritual path?</p> | <p>What kind of advice do I give? Am I cautious when I give advice? How certain am I that my advice is sound before I give it?</p> <p>Am I careful not to dishonor others? Do I dishonor others to make myself look better?</p> <p>Do I humiliate myself by trying to impress others with how great I am?</p> <p>Do I act in a way in such a way that my actions belie my intentions?</p> <p>Do I demand more of others than I demand of myself?</p> <p>In what ways do I show myself to be a blessing in the world? To others?</p> | <p>How do I allow the yetzer hara (evil inclination) to influence me? How could I be more vigilant?</p> <p>What is my commitment to teshuvah?</p> <p>Do I recognize that some things are beyond my control? Do I turn those things over to God?</p> <p>How alert am I to the favorable "coincidences" that occur in my life each day?</p> <p>Do I pray for what God wants? Or do I pray for what I want?</p> |

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| <p>Do I do what is necessary for the community without making it known?</p> <p>How do I allow my own negativity to affect my spiritual life? And what can I do to eliminate the negativity?</p> <p>Do I behave with the dignity that I owe myself as a human being?</p> <p>Do I eat to live? Or do I live to eat?</p> <p>How can I raise the intention of my eating?</p> <p>How forgiving am I? Do I realize that failure to forgive leaves me with useless negative emotions?</p> <p>Do I derive wisdom from studying Jewish traditions?</p> <p>Do I make serious efforts to avoid making the same mistake over and over? (If not) What might I do to eliminate this pattern?</p> <p>In what way can I renew my efforts to achieve things of which I had previously despaired?</p> <p>Do I have an understanding of why I do things that I regret?</p> | <p>Do I cultivate at least one friendship of trust and intimacy?</p> <p>How do I allow the outside world to have a negative affect on me?</p> <p>Do I detect existing conflicts and address them? Or do I project them onto reasonable but untrue causes?</p> <p>To what extent do I tolerate wrong behavior by others? My own? To what extent do I enable it?</p> <p>How am I moved (or not) to act for the sake of my ancestors? For future generations?</p> <p>Do I act responsibly and in consideration of future generations (of Jews)?</p> | <p>Am I moved to teshuvah by the sound of the shofar (at the time of Eilu)? Do I allow myself to hear the sound of the shofar? Do I have the desire to be moved by it?</p> <p>Of what use am I to God? How do I fulfill God's purpose for me?</p> <p>How do I actively serve God?</p> <p>How can I open my heart to God and ask for help to do all that I need to do to better myself?</p> <p>Do I see(k) God in all things in the Universe? How can I increase my sense of God in the Universe?</p> |
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| <p>How can I avoid doing things that I regret?</p> <p>How can I discard unproductive behavior patterns to allow a better self emerge?</p> <p>To whom do I belong?</p> <p>Where am I going?</p> <p>Where have I been?</p> <p>What do I carry with me?</p> <p>Are my possessions a means to my goal? Or are they an end in themselves?</p> <p>Of all of the things I have done in the past, what is of value to me today?</p> <p>What is it that truly shines in my life?</p> <p>How can I enrich my life with greater meaning?</p> <p>In what ways can I bring more joy into my life? Even when I don't feel like being joyful ...</p> <p>What could I do to reduce my stress level?</p> <p>Do I carry too heavy a load because I worry about things that I cannot do anything about?</p> | <p>Is my criticism of others constructive or destructive? Am I prepared to further assist those whom I criticize?</p> <p>How can I judge fairly without concern for my own interests?</p> <p>How prejudiced am I in making judgments?</p> <p>Do I continually reach out to help others?</p> <p>Am I respectful of those who are more religiously observant than I am?</p> <p>Am I respectful of those less religiously observant than I am?</p> <p>Do I encourage others to call attention to things about me to which I need to pay attention?</p> | <p>Why should I bother to seek God, when God cannot be known?</p> <p>With what awareness do I live each day knowing it is a Divine gift?</p> <p>Do I remember to praise God throughout the day?</p> <p>How often do I consider God in my actions?</p> <p>How often do I consider Torah in my actions?</p> <p>Do I feel that my actions have the power to restore holiness in the world?</p> |
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| <p>What measures can I take to reduce my worries and to live more in the present?</p> <p>What can I do to simplify my life? How can I live in a more childlike state of wonder?</p> <p>Do I accept new challenges without fear of failure? How can I get myself to accept new challenges without fear of failure?</p> <p>What can I do to increase my feelings of self-worth?</p> <p>Am I able to speak my truth in spite of the fact that it might be painful to me?</p> <p>Do I sacrifice truth for comfort?</p> <p>Do I set spiritual goals for myself?</p> <p>Do I spend as much time striving toward spiritual goals as I do toward material goals?</p> <p>What do I forfeit by abusing my gift of speech?</p> | <p>Am I receptive to constructive criticism?</p> <p>Do I speak untruths about others? Do I speak of others disparagingly, whether or not the facts are true?</p> <p>Do I discuss the business of others whether it has to do with me or not?</p> <p>Do I speak OR listen to words of gossip?</p> <p>Can I identify with those who need to ask for help?</p> <p>Do I consider myself to be superior to those to whom I offer help or give charity?</p> | <p>Do I act in a way that brings holiness into the world? (at least sometimes?)</p> <p>Do I express my thankfulness to God for the blessings in my life?</p> <p>How confident am I that God will continue to look after me?</p> <p>Do I direct my heart and soul into my work? Or do I direct my heart and soul to spiritual matters?</p> <p>How closely is my work related to the way in which I serve God?</p> <p>Do I develop the spiritual aspects of my life?</p> |
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| Which is greater, my capacity to give or to receive? | How involved am I with the Jewish community? And HOW am I involved with the Jewish community? And what kind of Jewish community is it with which I am involved? | Do I leave space in my life for my neshamah/soul to be nurtured? |
| How am I involved in both giving and receiving? | | Do I pray? How do I pray? How often do I pray? Do I pray by rote or from my heart? How easy is it for me to pray? |
| Do I have the dignity to think before I act? | How do I strengthen others? How am I strengthened by others? | Do I feel that God has abandoned me when things are not going the way I feel they should go? |
| How often do I choose to go for immediate gratification rather than what is in my best interest? | Do I act toward others in the way that I wish God would act with me? | How often do I say a blessing before or after I eat? (formal or not) |
| Am I cognizant of the value of every moment? Do I make every moment count? | Am I able to humbly make amends to those whom I have offended/wronged? | How do I show my appreciation for life? |
| Do I have the courage to recognize and admit my wrong doings? | Are my apologies sincere? | How often do I experience moments of awe and wonder? |
| Do I give my body more than it can handle? | Am I dependent upon people whom I do not respect? | |
| Do I give my soul less than it needs? | | |
| How do I nourish my soul? | | |
| Am I my own authority? | | |
| How does my fear keep me from seeing what is in front of me? | Do I try to learn from everyone and everything, whether the lesson is positive or negative? | |

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| Does panic and worry sometimes impair my ability to see what is truly before me? | Do I tend to act according to my own common sense or according to how I think others might expect me to act? | Where do I find wonder in my life? In the world? |
| Do I allow ulterior motives to compromise my principles? | How do I respond to provocation? Do I practice restraint? Do I act, or react? | How aware am I that all that I have, is not entirely of my own efforts? |
| For what principles or causes would I be willing to give my life? | | |
| How do I respond to temptation? | How often do I consider the long-term consequences of my actions? | |
| Do I focus my attention on what I can do here and now to the best of my ability? | How often do I act on the advice of others? | |
| How aware am I that I am free? | | |
| To what do I enslave myself? | Are my actions taken with consideration of more than just what is right and what is wrong? | |
| How often do I think myself foolish for the actions of yesterday? | | |
| Do I consider how I will look back on my actions of today? | Do I act and speak in ways that empowers others? | |
| Do I find myself repeating mistakes of the past or unhealthy decisions/behavior patterns? | Do I act and speak in ways that strengthen people's faith? | |

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| <p>Do I learn from experience?</p> <p>Do I remember what is important?</p> <p>Am I able to forget what is not important?</p> <p>Do I wait to be greeted? Or do I always greet others first?</p> <p>Which is greater in me, pride or humility?</p> <p>How readily do I dismiss things I don't like to hear?</p> <p>Am I willing to bear the cost of what is important to me?</p> <p>Are the words I speak meaningful or is it meaningless noise?</p> <p>Do I speak truth or lies?</p> <p>Do I consider a crisis an opportunity for growth? Do I allow it to strengthen my character?</p> | <p>How do I withdraw from others?</p> <p>Does a negative self-image keep me from engaging with others?</p> <p>Do I have as many friends as I would like to have? Why? Why not?</p> <p>How do I pool my strength with others? (In what format and in what way?)</p> <p>How reliant am I on authority figures? Do I seek to have authority over or dominate others?</p> <p>Do I wait to be greeted? Or do I always greet others first?</p> | |
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| Am I content to live with only the essentials of life? | How skilled am I at removing myself from negative people and negative situations? | |
| What would I do today if I knew it was my last day of life? | | |
| Do I make extra efforts to not hold onto improper thoughts? | Do I give money instead of giving of myself? | |
| What do I feel is missing from my life? | Do I try to learn from the mistakes of others? | |
| How often do I listen to the voice of my mind? -neshamah How often do I listen to the voice of my heart/emotions? - ruach How often do I listen to the voice of my body? - nefesh | Do I share the benefit of my experience with others who may benefit from it? | |
| Do I value my intelligence and honor it? Or do I behave foolishly and belittle my intelligence? | Am I able to listen to others clearly, without injecting my own experience? | |
| Do I hear my inner voice(s)? Do I listen to it? How important is it to me to listen to it? | Do I actively seek to do no harm to others ... even to those who have offended me? | |
| Where do I find wonder in my life? In the world? | | |

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| <p>Do I focus on the future or on the past?</p> <p>Do I fear the future or welcome it?</p> <p>Do I fear the past or honor it?</p> <p>How easily am I diverted from my goals by challenges that arise?</p> <p>Is work a means or a goal for me?</p> <p>Do I make a habit of turning my faults into virtues?</p> <p>Do I dwell on my mistakes, or do I turn them into successes?</p> <p>Do I erupt in anger when I feel offended, or do I delay my response until I evaluate the situation?</p> <p>Do I quickly seek to remedy something I have done in error? Or do I allow that error to lower my guard/standards and continue to err?</p> <p>Do I make every effort to gain mastery over my evil inclinations?</p> | <p>Do I need to look behind me before I speak?</p> <p>Am I careful to avoid offending people even if I feel that they are wrong?</p> <p>Do I act impulsively even though such behavior does not usually end well for me?</p> <p>Do I act in certain ways so that people will like me? Do I do things for people to win their affection?</p> <p>Do I allow myself to acknowledge my accomplishments to myself and others?</p> <p>Do I make every effort to remember that I hold myself accountable and responsible for my actions?</p> | |
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| <p>How open am I to change? At what cost?</p> | <p>How do I manage to keep in touch with my own feelings while remaining sensitive to the feelings of others?</p> | |
| <p>Am I open to experiences that enhance my spiritual growth?</p> | <p>How often am I amazed by something or someone around me?</p> | |
| <p>Am I able to keep my worries in perspective, or do I magnify them beyond what is necessary? [Or do I let them overpower me?]</p> | <p>What do I do when someone makes me uncomfortable?</p> | |
| <p>How do I protect my body from harm? How do I do harm to my body?</p> | <p>How do I show my appreciation for life?</p> | |
| <p>Do I utilize every moment constructively? Do I spend idle moments when I could be directing my thoughts toward something positive?</p> | <p>Do I act in certain ways so that people will like me? Do I do things for people so that I will win their affection?</p> | |
| <p>How do I feel about my Jewish identity? Do I do the right thing because it is the right thing to do? Or do I do the right thing because I am aware of the potential consequences if I don't?</p> | | |

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| Do I allow myself to acknowledge my accomplishments? | | |
| Do I make extra efforts to not hold onto improper thoughts? | | |
| Do I hold myself accountable and responsible for my actions? | | |
| What do I feel is missing from my life? | | |
| How aware am I of what is unique about me? | | |
| How easily am I able to let go of the past? So that I can go to the future ... | | |
| What do I do insincerely? Do I say things that I really don't feel in my heart? | | |

Worksheet for Cheshbon haNefesh Questionnaire

Elul Journal Workshop



Let us seek out our ways and examine them, and we will return to God."

Lamentations 3:40

The goal of this workshop is to familiarize the workshop participants with:

- 1) The purpose and processes of the month of Elul, its importance and history, the importance of Cheshbon haNefesh as a preparation for the upcoming holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur;
- 2) The contents and purpose of the Journal, including some of the sources of the quotes in the Journal; and
- 3) To introduce people in the process of Cheshbon haNefesh in a way that is accessible to those who may never before have engaged in it.

The program involves both individual and group work, relying not only on the input of the facilitator and the provided materials, but also upon the engagement and input of the participants. Activities involve some singing, personal reflection, discussion and some writing. The program provides an introduction to and stimulus for work to be done independently for the duration of the month of Elul.

Elul Journal Workshop

Facilitator's Guide

The **schedule** for this workshop is based on a **2 hour** period.

(At the discretion of the facilitator, a 10 minute break may be taken between steps 3 and 4, or the workshop may conclude 1 hour and 50 minutes. This is based on the greater amount of time taken in the estimated time for each activity)

Materials for this workshop are the **Journal** itself and **handouts** with background material on Elul, and it's practices. Don't forget to provide nametags, paper for notes and pens/pencils.

Suggestion: Have a niggun playing in the background as people enter to set the tone. Either use a tape/CD or have someone singing in the room to encourage others to join in.

1 – (10-15 minutes) Presentation of information on Elul and its practices. (see handouts.) - Participants can read from the shorter of the two handouts (the other can be read at home), or open the discussion by asking participants to offer what they might know about it and then read.

2- Be clear that all ideas are welcome and any sharing done is to be kept within the confines of the room; nothing is to be repeated without explicit permission.

3- (5-10 minutes) Explain the purpose of the Journal in the context of Elul. The set up: Each day has a quote and a quote inspired question as a trigger for making the days' entry. Inserted between Elul and Tishrei is a piece about the sound of the shofar and at the end of the Journal there are suggestions for some spiritual practices that could be adopted and added to one's life during this period – and beyond. There is an appendix of brachot/blessings to accompany #7 on that list.

4- (5-10 minutes) Distribute the Journal and allow a few minutes for the participants to look it over.

5- (10-15 minutes) For the purpose of reemphasizing the connection of the Journal and the process with the High Holy Days ahead, read aloud and discuss the Shofar segment (see Journal – after Elul16)

6- (20 minutes) In order that the participants become familiar with (and not intimidated by) the material in Journal and get an idea of how they might approach the work, it will be beneficial to do the following work in the workshop: Divide the Journal into segments (a certain number of days) and designate an individual (or small group) to each of the segments. Have each individual (or group) choose from amongst the quotations in their segment and decide which one speaks to them, or makes them uncomfortable, etc. (If it is done in groups have one person take notes on the thoughts of the group.) [The number of participants may determine the way in which the activities are carried out. use your own judgment.]

7- (25-30 minutes) Entire group discussion of the thoughts of each of the groups or individuals. It is also appropriate at this time to discuss some of the sources of the quotes. (See appendix A)

8- (10 minutes) Use this time for a wrap-up of the evening's activities and for any further suggestions or input of the group.

9- Conclude with a niggun (can be the same as the one used for the opening)



Elul Chant Workshop

Description– Through alternated periods of chant, guided meditation and silence, ending with a period of reflection (either verbal or written, depending on the desire of the group), the program is designed to bring participants through an Elul experience of *teshuvah* and *cheshbon hanefesh*, of turning to and drawing closer to God and bringing that experience into their world. (See final note)

Objectives: The participants will experience the power of chant and meditation as spiritual practices, and combine it with both guided and silent meditation to take the participant through an experience of the Elul process of *cheshbon hanefesh/teshuvah*.

Elul Chant Workshop

Leaders Guide

Materials – Chant sheet, writing materials, tape/CD of chants (to take home), handouts on Elul, Cheshbon HaNefesh, Teshuvah

If at all possible, set the mood in the room to one of comfortable seating, low light and perhaps a few candles. Have the tape playing in the background as people enter quietly. Indicate without words that they should take their seat, read the handout silently and finally begin to chant with you. (Handout #1 will introduce the workshop and Handout #2 is the song sheet)

Note: The number of times each of the chants is sung is up to the leader and the group.

Return Again, Return again, Return to the home of your soul (2X)

Return to who you are, Return to what you are,

Return to where you are ...

Born and Reborn again

(Repeat)

(Music: S.Carlebach, words: Raphael Kahn)

(1 minute silence)

As we take leave of the world in which there is little time to tend to the soul and we enter a place, a space where the soul is nurtured by the physical, we can begin to address the Light within us. We call to our souls to “step forward”:

Awaken, arise, to the wholeness of your being.

Awaken, arise, to the beauty of your soul. (both lines 2x)

Hit'oriri, hit'oriri ki va orech

Kumi ohri (both lines 2x) ©HTS

(2 minute silence)

And now, with our daily cares and chores having slipped away for a while With our soul, our essence called forth, we are able to direct ourselves more fully to the Source of our soul, to the Source of all creation. And as we do so, we connect to our Source, the great Light, the Source of all that is ... as we call God by some of Her many names

(2 minute silence)

In the Light

When I sing the name of God my spirit rises
From the depths she soars through the night

Shaddai, Shekhinah, Adonai, Tzeva'ot
Havaya, M'kor, Chayim
Tzur, Makom, Eyl, Elyon
Yah, Ruach, Elohim

[Calling on the name of God is a way to lift ourselves out of depression. The Hebrew language is full of names for the many aspects of God. When we remember the Source of all Life, we know that we are not alone and the Light begins to shine on our darkness. ©HTS]

(2 minute silence)

Having called to God, we have been turned ... all we can see now is the Light, the Light that guides us and directs us at all times and in all places. Placing that Light before us always, there is no wrong turn that we can make in life. Our course will stay sure, our direction will not falter, we have only to keep the Light before us and follow

Hashiveinu Ehylecha v'nashuva
Let us turn to You, and we will be turned
(text from Lamentations, melody R. Shefa Gold)

(2 minute silence)

Here I stand with You before me, knowing that to follow Your Light is to see the way in life; to have my path lit, to see the direction to my personal service to You and to my destiny and purpose.

Shiviti Shechinah l'negdi tamid
I put the Divine presence before me always
(Psalm 16:8, melody: R. Shefa Gold)

(2 minute silence)

'Surely You will make known to me the path of life' and I know that the 'fullness of joy is in Your presence'* In a place of joy it is always easier to serve, and it is always easier to be. In a place of joy, we can serve with joy ... we can walk more easily through life and we can see more clearly our purpose in being.

Ivdu et Yah b'simcha, bo'u l'fanav birnana (2x)
Serve the Holy One in joy, come to God's presence through song.
(Psalm 100:2) ©HTS

(2 minute silence)

To live out our destiny, to live in joy, we all require healing from that which has wounded us emotionally, that which challenges us physically, and that which depletes us spiritually. We all need healing and here, before You, is the place that is safe and comforting and full of the Light that can bring healing to each of us ... and so that is what we ask for: healing so that we may be in this world in joy ...

Ana B'kho'ach gedulat yeminkha tatir tzerura
Baruch shem k'vod malkhuto, l'olam va'ed

The above are the first and last lines of the Ana B'khoach prayer. It is a Kabbalistic incantation recited at times of transitions – before Shabbat, before dying, when someone is in need of help or healing. ©HTS

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(2 minute silence)

We give thanks for the healing and for all of the gifts that we receive in this life. We bless the Source of all of our blessings and know that we are truly blessed.

As we bless the Source of Life, so are we blessed.

As we bless the Source of Life, so are we blessed.

And the blessing gives us strength and makes our vision clear.

And the blessing brings us peace and the courage to dare.

(©Faith Rogow)

(2 minute silence)

Standing in the Light as we are now, completely blessed and radiant, we take the joy and healing and the guidance that we

have received, into ourselves, we breathe it, we absorb it until it is all a part of who we are in the worlds. With all of this we are now better able to be in the world ... with all of our being, to do in the world Bringing our blessings and joy into our actions, helping to make them manifest in all that we do ...

V'hi noam Adonai Eloheinu aleinu
Ooma'a'sei Yadeinu kon'nah Aleinu
Oo ma'a'sei Yadeinu kon'neihu

(Psalm 90)

(May the beauty of the Divine Presence be with us now.
May our conscious effort be integrated into who we are.
May our conscious strivings bear fruit.)

(2 minute silence)

(softly)

Return Again, Return again, Return to the home of your soul 2X

Return to who you are, Return to what you are,

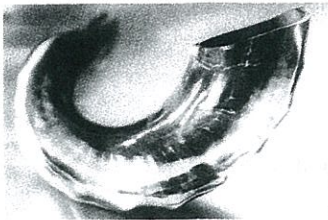
Return to where you are ...

Born and Reborn again

(repeat)

This practice, known as *hitpa'alut*, is an integral element of Mussar practice. It is believed that the repetition of holy phrases the content and intent of the phrases eventually bypasses the intellect and the message goes to the heart. For true transformation to take place, it must occur in the emotional self and reach deep into the unconscious. The emotions can act as a lever to pry open the heart. True changes must "take root at the most profound level where the light of the intellect never shines".¹

¹ Based on and quoted from: Climbing Jacob's Ladder; Alan Moranis; Broadway Books; 2004 (Chapter 3)



Songs and Chants

Return Again, Return again, Return to the land of your soul (2X)
Return to what you are, Return to who you are,
Return to where you are ...
Born and Reborn again

(repeat)

(Music: S. Carlebach; words:Raphael Kahn)

1– Awaken, arise, to the wholeness of your being.
Awaken, arise, to the beauty of your soul.

Hit'oriri, hit'oriri ki va orech
Kumi ohri

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2– Sheviti Shechinah I'negdi tamid
(I put the Divine presence before me always)
(Psalm 16:8, melody: R. Shefa Gold)

3–Hashiveinu Ehylecha v'nashuva
(Let us turn to You, and we will be turned) (from Lamentations)

4– Ivdu et Yah b'simcha, bo'u l'fanav birnana
(Serve the Holy One in joy, come to God's presence through song)
(from Psalm 100) @HTS

5–Ana B'kho'ach gedulat yeminkha tatir tzerura
Baruch shem k'vod malkhuto, l'olam va'ed

These (#5) are the first and last lines of the Ana B'khoach prayer. It is a Kabbalistic incantation recited at times of transitions – before Shabbat, before dying, when someone is in need of help or healing.

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6–_When I sing the name of God my spirit rises
From the depths she soars through the night

Shaddai Shekhinah Adonai Tzeva'ot
Havaya M'kor Chayim
Tzur Makom Eyl Elyon
Yah Ruach Elohim

Calling on the name of God is a way to lift ourselves out of depression. The Hebrew language is full of names for the many aspects of God. When we remember the Source of all Life, we know that we are not alone and the Light begins to shine on our darkness.

©HTS - Hanna Tiferet Siegel

7– As we bless the Source of Life, so are we blessed.
As we bless the Source of Life, so are we blessed.
And the blessing gives us strength and makes our vision clear.
And the blessing brings us peace and the courage to dare.

©Faith Rogow

8– V'hi no'am Adonai Eloheinu aleinu
Ooma'a'sei Yadeinu kon'nah Aleinu
Oo ma'a'sei Yadeinu kon'neihu

(from Psalm 90)

(May the beauty of the Divine Presence be with us now.
May our conscious effort be integrated into who we are.
May our conscious strivings bear fruit.)



Five Ways To Change Your Fate

Will you hear our regrets? Will you release us from being prisoners of habit? Will you accept our prayers...and tune in to our heart's intent? (from Kol Nidrei service)

Because the world is a different place each moment I am alive, there is unlimited potential for change. (Olitzky and Sabath, Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days)

Turning, prayer and deeds can change our fate.
(Machzor)

Description: This 2 hour workshop introduces the participants to the Talmudic concept of changing one's fate through choice and change. During the workshop, through presentation of the material, individual work and group discussion, participants discover how to apply the concept to their own life and how they can enact changes for themselves.

Objective: Participants will be introduced to and learn the Talmudic passage from tractate Rosh Hashanah 16b concerning the ability and ways to change one's fate. Participants will explore the Talmudic options given and discover and develop a strategy to change their own fate.

Five Ways to Change Your Fate

Rosh Hashanah 16b Workshop

Facilitator's Copy

- Facilitator should read through the materials, including Handout 4
- Introduce and read through the text.

Our tradition teaches that we can have a direct and active role in changing our fate for the coming year. While our desire to change our lives is particularly strong during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we can choose to make important changes all year long.
- Summarize the 5 ways to change your fate.
 1. Tzedakah – Change the world
 2. Tze'akah – Cry out
 3. Shinui hasheim – Change my name/identity
 4. Shinui ma'aseh – Change what I do
 5. Shinuui Makom – Change my place/environment
- Promote discussion of initial impressions of participants –
how does the above list strike them. (5 10 minutes depending
on the size of the group)
- Present handout 2 for some initial ideas of how to act on the
5 ways and go over the list aloud. Allow time for comments
and discussion if necessary.
- Present Handout 3 and 4 to participants.
 - Divide the group into smaller units for discussion of the material and
to come up with their own ideas and suggestions to employ each of
the five ways –use 3
- Gather the entire group together for a sharing and discussion of the ideas of
each group. Sharing is optional if some feel it is too personal.
- Handout 4 is to be used as a resource for the work or to be taken home as
further information to study.

The Text

Babylonian Talmud Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16b

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ראש השנה דף טז עמוד ב

... ואמר רבי יצחק: ארבעה דברים מקרעין גזר דינו של אדם, אלו הן: צדקה, צעקה, שינוי השם, ושינוי מעשה. צדקה - דכתיב משלי י' וצדקה תציל ממות, צעקה - דכתיב תהלים קז' ויצעקו אל ה' בצר להם וממצקותיהם יוציאם, שינוי השם - דכתיב בראשית יז' שרי אשתך לא תקרא את שמה שרי כי שרה שמה, וכתיב וברכתי אתה וגם נתתי ממנה לך בן, שינוי מעשה דכתיב יונה ג' וירא האלהים את מעשיהם, וכתיב יונה ג' וינחם האלהים על הרעה אשר דבר לעשות להם ולא עשה. ויש אומרים: אף שינוי מקום, דכתיב בראשית יב' ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך מארצך, והדר ואעשך לגוי גדול.

R. Isaac further said: Four things cancel the doom of a man, namely, charity, supplication, change of name and change of conduct. Charity, as it is written, And charity delivereth from death.¹² Supplication, as it is written, Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.¹³ Change of name, as it is written, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be;¹⁴ and it continues, And I will bless her and moreover I will give thee a son of her. Change of conduct, as it is written, And God saw their works, and it continues, and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them and he did it not.¹⁵ Some say that change of place [also avails], as it is written, Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and it proceeds, and I will make of thee a great nation.¹⁶ And the other [— why does he not reckon this]? — In that case it was the merit of the land of Israel which availed him.

Handout 2

The following suggestions are reprinted with permission from CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership:¹

Help me to take a good look at my life and give me the courage to make changes I want to make.
Guide me on my journey as I strive to make good changes, in myself and in the world I live in.

- 1- If I have chosen **Tzedakah**: I can use my talents and resources to create more justice in the world. What will I do this week that can make an immediate difference?

[Contribute to reputable tzedakah funds or sign up to begin volunteer work.]

- 2- If I have chosen **Tze'akah**: I can cry out about all that is unfair, but there are other equally effective ways: letters, petitions, social action, tears. Even prayer. How will I strategize to increase the possibility that my most pressing cry is heard?

[Develop for yourself, new and more passionate, meaningful ways of prayer.]

- 3- If I have chosen **Shinui hasheim**: I may want to alter some aspect of my identity. In what ways can I expand beyond the way others define my professional title (Dr., chairperson, lawyer, CEO ...) or relational title (colleague, friend, parent, child ...) to include my own personal dreams and aspirations.

[It is a traditional practice to actually change one's name at the New Year when hoping to change one's fate.²]

- 4- If I have chosen **Shinui ma'aseh**: I may want to break some old, familiar patterns of behavior, such as the way I relate to my family or colleagues. If I decided to establish a new pattern at home, at work, or in the community, how could that increase the possibility that it becomes habitual?

[One might change one's habits or practices, or perhaps take on a new religious observance. One might also take action to repair a broken relationship or situation and take action to assure that he does not repeat the offending behavior or action.]

¹ That which is in brackets, does not come from CLAL

² See Handout 3b for a textual documentation of the custom of name change.

- 5- If I have chosen **Shinui Makom**: This doesn't mean I must literally leave where I am, though it could. What adjustments in the place I live and work – such as a photo on a desk, a mezuzah on a doorpost, an opened door, an adopted kitten, a ramp – could change my feelings, purpose and possibilities in the place that I'm in?

[Without making changes to oneself, a simple change in the place/environment is not always effective. By changing one's perspective, one may then reinforce it by changing one's environment. Although an extreme temporary change of venue can go far to change one's perspective.]

Workshop Suggestions

1 – Tzedakah

2 – Tze'akah

3 – Shinui haheim

4 – Shinui ma'aseh

5 – Shinui makom

We are told that Hashem changed Avram's name to Avraham (Bereishis 17:5) and then changed Sorai's name to Soroh (Ibid. Posuk 15). Based upon the juxtaposition of his latter Posuk describing Sorai's name change to the Posuk stating that she will eventually have a child (Ibid. Posuk 16), the Gemara in Rosh HaShanah (16b) derives that changing a person's name is one of the things which can alter a bad decree which may have been passed against that person. Interestingly, the Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah (Parsha 44 Siman 15) derives this fact that changing one's name can nullify a bad decree from the earlier Posuk, describing Avram's name change to Avraham. The Midrash in Koheles Rabbasi (Parsha 5 Siman 4), while stating likewise that the value of Shinui HaShem--changing one's name--is learned from the Posuk relating to Avraham Avinu, mentions Sorai as well, concluding that a decree had been made that Avram and Sorai would never have child; Avraham and Soroh, however, would indeed have a child.

In explaining the reason why changing one's name can cancel a bad decree, the Maharsha on the above cited Gemara in Rosh HaShanah (Chidushai Aggados to Rosh HaShanah Ibid. s.v. Arba Devarim) quotes from the Semag (Mitzvos Aseh 17) that when one changes one's name, one declares that he is, in effect, a different person, and not the same person who committed the deeds which generated the unfavorable decree. The Eitz Yosef, in his commentary to the above cited Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah (Ibid. s.v. Af), explains it similarly, saying that person declares that he is now, with his new name, not the same person he was, and, consequently, not the person against whom this bad decree has been passed. The Maharsha (Ibid.) then adds that after one has changed one's name, one should recognize that in actuality, it was not his original name, but his sins that caused Hashem to decree unfavorable things for him, and he should therefore become inspired to do Teshuvah and change his ways, and in that way become a truly different person. The Ran in Rosh HaShanah (3b in Rif s.v. Shinui HaShem) also stresses that changing one's name can annul a bad decree because this act will inspire the person to do Teshuvah. The Rambam thus rules (Hilchos Teshuvah Perek 2 Halacha 4) that part of the process of doing Teshuvah is to change one's name, meaning, to declare that he is now a different person, not the one who committed so many sins See Perek 7 Ibid. Halachos 6, 7).

In the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah Siman 335 Sif 10), the Ramo, based on this idea that Shinui Hashem can cancel an unfavorable decree, writes that there is a practice to give a new name to a sick person when blessing him and davening on his behalf. The Aruch HaShulchan (ibid. Sif 12) writes that this means that he is given a new name in addition to, not as a replacement for, the name he already has. This is the case despite that fact that the Gemara in Berachos (13a) indicates regarding Avraham Avinu that it is improper to refer to him by his original name at all. He then states (Ibid.) that this name change is done when the illness is very severe, although he offers no guidelines as to how to determine that status. The Gesher HaChaim (Chelek 1, Perek 1, Sif 3, Ot 4) likewise writes that many observe this custom to change the name of a dangerously ill person by adding on a new name, and he then adds that the changing of the name is accompanied by the recitation of Tehillim in the presence of a Minyan and various other special Tefillos,

Handout 4 (p.2)

including a special Yehi Ratzon recited specifically when giving someone an additional name, as printed in many Siddurim. As a side point, it is interesting to note that this idea in general of reciting Tehillim in order to be protected from anguish and harm is codified by the Rambam (Hilchos Avodas Kochavim Perek 11 Halacha 12).

As to precisely how to choose the new name to be added, Rabbeinu Yehudah HaChassid implies in the Sefer Chassidim (Siman 244) that it is done by means of a Goral, a kind of lottery, meaning that a Chumash (or a Tanach) is opened up, and the first name that one comes across is the new name given to the sick person. It is noteworthy that the Birkei Yosef, in his commentary to the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah Siman 179 Sif Katan 8), quotes those who say that one can seek "advice" in general by opening up a Chumash or a Tanach and studying the Pesukim which one comes across. The Sefer Ta'amei HaMinhagim (Kuntras Acharon to Siman 217, Inyanei Berachos Ot 7, Amud 105) quotes, however, that if the first name one sees is that of a wicked person, one may not give that name to the sick person, since the Gemara in Yoma (Ibid. 38b, and see Ibid. Tosafos s.v. D'Lo) indicates that one should not use the name of a wicked person. He then quotes from the Chida (Sefer Dvash, Maareches 300 Ot 4) that there are certain other names which should not be used for this purpose, and certain names which should be used. The common practice today is to give the sick person a name which somehow symbolizes life, health, strength, or some other type of Beracha which expresses the hope that the person will recover from his illness.

The Gesher HaChaim (Ibid. Ot 5) further writes that the new name being added should become the person's first name, and his original name(s) now become(s) the middle name(s). He then explains that whether or not the person will continue to be referred to by the new name will depend upon whether he recovers from the illness, and upon the nature of his recovery. If he recovers even a little bit, and is able to get up from this illness and establish himself with his new name for at least thirty days, even if he then gets sick again and dies after these thirty days, since he had established himself after having recovered from his illness for at least thirty days with this new name, that name remains associated with him forever. It is thus written on his tombstone, and is used when a Keil Molei Rachamim is said, when Yizkor is recited, and when Mishanyos are learned in his memory, and so on. If, however, the person does not recover from the illness, meaning that he does not establish himself after having gotten up from the illness for at least thirty days with this new name, then he is referred to and remembered only by his original name, and the new name is ignored.

The Sefer Ta'amei HaMinhagim cited above (Ibid.) quotes from the Shaloh (Kitzur 335, Inyanei Sefer Torah) that whether or not the person recovers following the addition of the new name likewise determines whether this name will be used when the person and his sons are subsequently called to the Torah. In the Shulchan Aruch (Even HaEzer Siman 129 Sif 18), the Ramo rules regarding a Get that if one of the parties had a name added on because of an illness, the new name and any nickname associated with it is to be mentioned first. The Pischei Teshuvah (Ibid. Sif Katan 53, 54) discusses some details of

Handout 4 (p.3)

this ruling; the Be'er Heitev (Ibid. Sif Katan 32) explains under what conditions the person's children will have to use the added name if they need a Get, and what should be done with this name if the sick person himself wants to divorce his wife while he's still sick. Interestingly, these Poskim do not mention the thirty day period. It is worth noting that the Sefer Ta'amei HaMinhagim (Ibid.) quotes authorities who stress that one must be very careful about changing someone's name, and that it should not be done lightly, but rather in the presence of a Talmid Chochom and a Tzaddik who will have the proper Kavanos.

<http://www.tzemachdovid.org/thepracticaltorah/lechlecha.shtml>



From Rabbi Pressman

Rabbi Daniel Pressman

Teshuvah and the Possibility of Renewal

I'd like to share my Erev Rosh Hashanah sermon with you, because it offers some spiritual tools that we can all use year round.

"Rabbi Isaac said: Four things change a person's fate, namely: *tzedakah*, crying out, changing one's name and changing one's conduct."

Why is *tzedakah* such a powerful tool for self-renewal? We know that it's an intrinsic good - but what is its spiritual impact? How does it help us change?

Think about what happens internally, spiritually, when we give. It teaches us how to open our tight little fist and let go of something. It teaches us that we can do with less. Giving does not diminish our core selves. Our possessions do not define us. When we give, we align ourselves with God's wishes for the world. *Tzedakah* softens our hearts and opens our souls.

Tzedakah - Crying out. This is usually understood as prayer - so why doesn't it say *tefillah* like the *UnanahTakef*? *Tzedakah* is deep soul prayer, *kishes* prayer, a shout, an outcry. It resounds with passion and pain.

To change spiritually we need to blaze a path of fervor in our worship, to allow our feelings to rise up to God. It's not about intellectual understanding of the prayers. It's pouring our yearning into the holy vessel of the words of prayer so that they shake our souls and storm the gates of heaven.

Shinui habein - Changing

your name - means letting go of the names you call yourself, that limit and immobilize you. Whenever you name yourself, "The Person Who Can't Change," you slam the doors of renewal. We all do this. We say, My name is, "The One Who Can't Say I Love You. My name is, "The One Who Thinks Apologizing Equals Weakness." My name is, "The One Who Isn't Religious."

Furthermore, if we chafe at these names' confining bonds, we have to be careful not to trap other people by naming them. Have you ever tried to change yourself and fought resistance from those closest to you? People can feel threatened by change. They like knowing our name and having our number. So if we want to change *our* names, we have to allow others to do the same. Changing your name is liberating. It breaks the lock on the door to our better selves.

Finally, *Shinui mitach* - Changing what you do. This is Judaism's wisdom concerning human behavior. Deeds count more than intentions. So work on your actions.

It's like the old joke about the man who comes to the doctor and says, "Every time I do this, my shoulder hurts." The doctor, of course, says, "So don't do that!"

But changing a habit is one of the most difficult things to do. It requires self-awareness, persistence and focus. I came upon an old Jewish technique for reflecting on our behavior from the *Sefer Hasidim*, a 12th century pietistic work. A good technique for

deciding whether to do something or to refrain. When one has to decide - one should imagine that another person asked his or her advice on the matter. Usually when one is advising another, one sees clearly and without personal interest and prejudice to cloud the issue. What one would advise another - is how one should act himself."

I love this teaching because it is so shrewd about human nature. We are all experts in other people's self-improvement. *Shinui mitach* asks us to be equally wise about ourselves.

We can also learn from Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev. At night, when he would go to sleep, Reb Levi Yitzhak would say, "Dear God, I'm sorry for the ways I strayed from your will today. I promise, tomorrow, I'll do better." Then God said, "But Levi Yitzhak, you said the same thing yesterday." And he quickly replied, "But today I mean it."

Shinui mitach takes many days of saying "But today I mean it."

So there you have it: four ways of changing. *Tzedakah*, cultivating our ability to share, to let go, to not be defined by our stuff. *Tzedakah* - crying out to God, expressing our deepest feelings and longings. *Shinui habein* - breaking the chains of the names we call ourselves that trap us in our past. *Shinui mitach* - freeing ourselves from entrenched behavior.

And so may we all grow toward our best selves, nourished by the wisdom of our tradition and the inner light that God gave us. Amen.

13 Point Check-Up

(A workshop for one or two sessions)



Description: This workshop provides a glimpse of, and introduction to the Mussar method of cheshbon hanefesh. The basic Mussar method is introduced and begun through the facilitator's assistance. **(It is essential for the facilitator to first read the resource materials included in this packet.)** It can be done in either one 3-hour session or two 2-hour sessions. The amount of the material to absorb is large and the nature of the material is intensive. This is not recommended as a first experience with cheshbon hanefesh for the facilitator, as questions will arise which will necessitate personal experience on the part of the facilitator. The workshop requires sensitivity to both its reflective and interactive elements and a careful balance must be maintained between the two to achieve a successful outcome for the participants.

Objectives: Participants will achieve an introductory understanding of the principals and workings of the Mussar method of cheshbon hanefesh. Participants will achieve a working familiarity with the middot. Participants will incorporate the knowledge of the middot into their own lives and learn to use the middot and the method to refine their own character.

13 Point Check-Up Workshop

Facilitator Copy

- 1- Brief statement about Elul and Cheshbon HaNefesh. (see Resource Material on Elul/Cheshbon HaNefesh)
- 2- Introduce the concept of Middot and Character refinement (see Resource Material) and discuss.
- 3- Introduce worksheet – go over categories first.
(compare to the other lists of middot – handout 2a)
- 4- Give instructions for the worksheet.
 - Have each participant number the traits in the order of priority of importance to them (can be done as individuals or in small groups – allow 15 minutes, 20 for a group)
 - Place posterboards with the middot around the room while the participants are working.
 - Upon regathering have the individuals or groups compare their lists with the others and explain the orders of their choices.
 - Have each individual choose their top 3 or 4 middot (the ones they feel that they most need to work on) and compose 3 or 4 more “mantras” that might help in working to improve oneself in that area. These are to be written on post-it notes, and when participants have finished writing, they will post their notes on the appropriate poster board.
 - Then, have the participants go around the room, read the boards and copy down notes that they would like to use for themselves.

- Allow time for discussion – have this discussion be led by the group as much as possible
- End by asking participants to commit to at least 2 or 3 of the middot for the duration of Elul.

5- Post-workshop instructions

- Take time to go through all of the middot, noting where there is room for you to make improvements. Choose only 2 or 3 to work on this month, but do make notes on the others for future reference. (Refer to Handout 2b to assist you in the process.)

Materials needed: Poster board, post-it notes, pencils/pens, handouts, tape

13 Point Check-Up Worksheet

Here are 13 character traits for a human being to focus on to better himself, as suggested by Rabbi Yisrael of Salant, the founder of a Jewish self-improvement program called the "Mussar movement."

1) TRUTHFULNESS [EMET]

Be truthful in all you say.

2) QUICKNESS [ZERIZUT]

All that you have to do, do without wasting time.

3) DILIGENCE [CHARITZUT]

Do all that you are supposed to do conscientiously.

4) RESPECT [KAVOD]

Be extremely careful with the honor and feelings of others.

5) TRANQUILITY [MENUCHA]

Do everything quietly, without undue confusion or excitement.

6) GENTLENESS [NACHAT]

The words of the wise are spoken softly and peacefully.

7) CLEANLINESS AND PURITY [NIKAYON]

Keep your body and your clothing clean and pure.

8) PATIENCE [SAVLANUT]

Whatever happens in life, be patient.

9) ORDER [SEDER]

Do everything in an orderly and disciplined way.

10) HUMILITY [ANAVA]

Recognize your own faults and weak points, but do not dwell on the faults and weak points of other people.

11) RIGHTEOUSNESS [TZEDEK]

What is hateful to you, do not do unto anyone else.

12) THRIFT [KIMUTZ]

Do not waste a single penny unnecessarily.

13) SILENCE [SH'TIKA]

Judge the value of your words before you speak.

List adapted from: Building Better Character by Yaffa Ganz
INNERNET MAGAZINE <http://innernet.org.il>

The 13 – Point Check-Up

Information on Middot, Mussar and Cheshbon Hanefesh

Middot vs. Mitzvot -- Rav Chaim Vital

"The character traits are not included within the 613 commandments because they are essential preparations for keeping or transgressing the 613 commandments. Because they are foundations and roots they are not counted. It turns out that one must be more careful about improper character traits than about keeping mitzvot." (Rav Chayim Vital zt"l -- Shaarei Kedusha 1:2)

~

"For it is your life: For a person is alive in order to break a [negative] character trait that he has not broken until now. Therefore one should always strengthen one's self; for if he does not strengthen himself, why is he alive? (Vilna Gaon's commentary on Mishlei 4:13)

~

The Main Purpose of Man's Creation -- Saadia Gaon and the Baal Shem Tov

"Go out from your land ('Lekh lekha'). . . and Rashi explains, 'I will make your nature known in the world.' I heard from my teacher (the Baal Shem Tov) may his memory be blessed, who quoted Rav Saadia Gaon: For the main purpose of man's creation in this world is to break his bad character traits. . . For instance, if he has a hot personality and by nature gets angry easily he should try and break his anger as much as possible . . . "(Baal Shem Tov on the Torah – Parshat Lekh Lekha 3:4)

~

Clinging to Hashem -- the Baalei Hamussar and Chasidut

"As much as middot take up a central place from a human perspective, and they are the splendor of the elevated man Even more so, this is the case in the approach of the baalei hamussar who, as we have seen, see character as the whole of man. Middot take up an incomparably more central place according to the approach of Chasidut, because the goal of Torah and mitzvot is to come to deveikut (clinging) with Hashem. The sages said, "Cling to His middot" because middot are the foundation of clinging to Hashem. Until one has perfected his middot he is not able to connect up with Hashem (Netivot Shalom: vol. I, Purifying Middot, introduction, p. 76)

~

"The Torah Was Given to Purify Man" -- Midrash Rabba

"The sages expound on the verse: "The word of Hashem is pure ("tzerufa"), a guard for all those who take refuge in Him." The word "tzerufa" is taken to mean, purify, forge, and the verse reads, The word of Hashem purifies What does it matter to Hashem, asks Rav in the Midrash, whether one slaughters an animal from the front (kosher slaughtering) or from the back (not kosher)? It must be that the Torah was given to purify man. " (Bereishit Rabba 44:1)

The necessity of doing a *cheshbon hanefesh* (spiritual accounting) was most eloquently articulated by the saintly Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato in his classic work, *The Path of the Just*.¹

"In reality, this is one of the clever devices of the evil inclination - to mount pressure unrelentingly against the hearts of men so as to leave them no leisure to consider and observe the type of life they are leading. For it realizes that if they were to devote even a slight degree of attention to their ways, there is no question but that they would immediately begin to repent of their deeds and that regret would wax in them until they would leave off sinning altogether. (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, *Mesilat Yesharim*. Translated by Shraga Silverstein, 2d rev. ed., Jerusalem: Feldheim Publishers, 1966, p. 31.)

To summarize, a man should observe all of his actions and watch over all of his ways so as not to leave himself with a bad habit or a bad trait, let alone a sin or a crime. I see a need for a person to carefully examine his ways and to weigh them daily in the manner of the great merchants who constantly evaluate all of their undertakings so that they do not miscarry. He should set aside definite times and hours for this weighing so that it is not a fortuitous matter, but one which is conducted with the greatest regularity; for it yields rich returns. (Ibid., p. 37)

What emerges from all this is that a man must constantly - at all times, and particularly during a regularly appointed time of solitude - reflect upon the true path (according to the ordinance of the Torah) that a man must walk upon. After engaging in such a reflection he will come to consider whether or not his deeds travel along this path. For in doing so it will certainly be easy for him to cleanse himself of all evil and to correct all of his ways.

As Scripture states (*Proverbs 4:26*) , *Consider the path of your feet and all*

¹ In 1937, a gathering of Moetzes *Gedolei HaTorah* (Council of Great Leaders of Torah) at the Slabodka Yeshiva felt the necessity to bolster ethical integrity and spiritual awareness. After much deliberation, *Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh* (*The Book of Spiritual Accounting*) was finally selected over *The Book of Proverbs* with explanations by Rabbeinu Yona z'tl, and steps were taken toward its reissue. In a similar spirit, we present this adaptation of a portion of the original, as a systematic approach to practical character improvement.

of your paths will be established and (Lamentations 3:40) , Let us seek out our ways and examine them, and we will return return to G-d. " (ibid., p. 43)

From the words of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, ztl, it is resoundingly clear that spiritual accounting is an essential and indispensable component of successful Torah living.

Unfortunately many people who are sincerely impressed with the necessity of spiritual accounting fail to engage in it. Some have no idea how to go about it. Others have a concept of what needs to be done but employ it only sporadically. Still others may even possess a system but fail because of the classical difficulty that plagues all good things - simply getting started.

This adaptation, drawn mainly from the well known work on spiritual accounting, *Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh*, is an attempt to help people overcome the aforementioned difficulties. The book elaborates on the following topics:

- I. Select the proper attributes for your analysis.
- II. Understand the charts used for recording your actions on a daily, weekly, quarterly, and yearly basis.
- III. Prepare yourself mentally for the work.
- IV. Carry out and record the results.

With the additional help of classic ethical training texts, available to everyone, the reader, with the help of G-d, can begin his spiritual analysis immediately.

The following is Adapted by Rabbi Chaim Faecher from *Sefer Chesbon Hanefesh*:

Cheshbon hanefesh is a complex process which requires scrutiny of, and sensitivity to, its many possible pitfalls.

Firstly, many people endeavor to make a cheshbon (accounting), yet in spite of their efforts to discover the truth, they reach incorrect conclusions.

Secondly, even if correct conclusions are reached, they may have been based upon incorrect reasoning.

Thirdly, even if based on correct reasoning, the conclusions reached may not be sufficiently justified.

Fourth, even if the conclusions reached are sufficiently justified, the resulting action might have been more qualitative if all the information relevant to the action was considered.

For instance, most people in endeavoring to determine whether or not it is a simple matter for a businessman to give charity would conclude that it is a simple matter. Since he has money, therefore he is able to give charity. This is an incorrect conclusion. The truth is that for a businessman to give charity is not a simple matter at all. Before a businessman makes a donation he says, "I must speak to my accountant." Only by relying upon the

conclusions of the accountant's cheshbon (reckoning) can the businessman determine if he can give and how much he can give. The basis for the comparison of Torah to business is "If you seek it like silver and search for it as treasure, then you will understand the fear of HaShem and find the knowledge of the Al-mighty." (Proverbs 2:4,5).

Using cheshbon hanefesh properly means taking responsibility for thoughts, speech, actions, as well as possessions and opportunities. In order to take such total responsibility, it is necessary to crystallize a complete self-awareness. Due to its organizational effects, the overall benefit of this self-awareness is the development of the potential of all the good which the Al-mighty implanted within the Creation that the individual is capable of bringing forth. The results of doing a proper cheshbon hanefesh are developing a fresh view of life, experiencing the excitement of making true conscious value judgments, and reinforcing the long-term goal of self-perfection.

Cheshbon hanefesh makes subtle emotional demands upon a person. It requires an honest evaluation of self and situation, and a desire for spiritual development. Ignoring these demands can cause a real internal conflict to arise. Cheshbon hanefesh can reveal attempts to cheat in life or chase after prohibited desires. The spiritual person faced with this revelation will confront these sensitive areas and work to improve and affect a real change of character.

Similarly, cheshbon hanefesh makes subtle intellectual demands. This can be understood by the following analogy. Most businessmen pay a lot of money for a good accountant. His expert advice can mean the success or collapse of an entire enterprise. The accountant points out loopholes and tax shelters and warns against false honesty in order to make the most of time and money, guiding toward what is permitted and beneficial and avoiding what is counterproductive. This reveals an important insight - a businessman must be flexible and clever in utilizing all legitimate means to acquire the object of his desire. The same is true for the successful practitioner of cheshbon hanefesh. The successful practitioner of cheshbon hanefesh must be flexible and clever in utilizing cheshbon hanefesh since it is one of the legitimate means of acquiring the object of his desire, Torah wisdom, mitzvahs, and love and awe of Heaven.

Imagine for a moment that HaShem puts a successful businessman into a yeshiva and gives him three precious resources to utilize - Torah, time, and himself - and two measurements of profit and loss - mitzvahs and Olam Haba. Since such a businessman understands the absolute necessity of a professional accounting system in the business world, and desires to assure maximum profitability according to the new measurements, surely he would take no action in his new enterprise until he had searched out and implemented the spiritual counterpart of his accountant's cheshbon, cheshbon hanefesh. Would any less be expected of someone immersed in Torah study, mitzvahs, and love and awe of Heaven?

It is clear in light of the above, that cheshbon hanefesh is not primarily valuable as a tool of convenience for Torah students in the early stages of their development. In Mesilat Yesharim (Chapter 3) the author quotes the following verse as being the basis of cheshbon hanefesh: "Therefore, those 'moshelim' who speak in parables say, 'Come to the city of Cheshbon'." (Numbers 21:27). The Talmud (Bava Bathra 78b) interprets the preceding verse as follows: "The 'moshelim (masters) of their evil inclinations say, 'Come and let us make a cheshbon of the world. What is the loss incurred by the performance of a mitzvah against the gain obtained, and what is the gain obtained through a transgression

against the corresponding loss." What is to be understood from the Talmud's interpretation? Since it says, "The 'moshelim' (masters) say, 'Come and let us make a cheshbon the loss incurred by the performance of a mitzvah as against the gain ...'", two truths are explicitly revealed. The first is that it is the masters of Torah, our great Rabbis, who need to do cheshbon hanefesh. Why do they need to do cheshbon ha-nefesh? Because of the second explicitly revealed truth, namely that the purpose of making a cheshbon hanefesh is to evaluate the ramifications of a mitzvah prior to performing or not performing it. It is only these masters who properly do cheshbon hanefesh. They become involved in a mitzvah, looking at it from all angles, weighing the consequences of doing it or of not doing it and the manner in which to do it, and searching for the sources, both Torah and rabbinical, to support their value judgment and advice. A recent Torah master, the brother of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhyn would carefully study all the Torah sources pertaining to a specific mitzvah before performing it.

Furthermore, a spiritual master also needs to continue cheshbon hanefesh throughout his lifetime in order to assure the continuation of his self-actualization as well as maintain his mastery of mitzvah performance. Maintaining such mastery is otherwise impossible. This can be understood from a comparison. After losing weight through dieting, one must control his caloric intake in order to keep in shape and grow towards perfection in weight related areas. Similarly the Torah master must control many factors in order to maintain his mastery and grow in it. This he does by way of cheshbon hanefesh. Thus, the complete significance of cheshbon hanefesh for the Torah master is understood.

The Talmud has revealed that cheshbon hanefesh is one of the tools of the craft of Torah. Now, just as any master craftsman not only requires that his tools be in optimal working condition but also requires complete understanding and sensitivity to these tools, so, too, the master of the craft of Torah requires the same of his tools, including cheshbon hanefesh. How, in light of all this, can the Torah student achieve his goal of becoming a master of the craft of Torah, a Torah sage? He is not yet a master, he does not have the knowledge to do cheshbon hanefesh, nor does he possess the required relationship to cheshbon hanefesh. In order to fulfill one of the necessary requirements of becoming a Torah sage - doing cheshbon hanefesh properly, the Torah student aspiring to become such a master of the craft of Torah elicits special help from the Al-mighty through the merit of his working hard while he is still a non-master to attempt to comprehend and do cheshbon hanefesh. In other words, the Torah student's preliminary endeavors to comprehend and do cheshbon hanefesh constitute a training period for what follows, his actual doing of cheshbon hanefesh. There is no other way to succeed.

The 13 – Point Check-Up

1. From *Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh, Spiritual Accounting*

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Truth (<i>emes</i>) | 8. Patience (<i>savlanus</i>) |
| 2. Zeal (<i>z'rizus</i>) | 9. Order (<i>seder</i>) |
| 3. Resolution (<i>charitzus</i>) | 10. Humility (<i>anava</i>) |
| 4. Separation (<i>prishus</i>) | 11. Righteousness (<i>tzedek</i>) |
| 5. Tranquility of the Soul (<i>m'nuchas hanefesh</i>) | 12. Frugality (<i>kimutz</i>) |
| 6. Soft spoken (<i>nichusa</i>) | 13. Silence (<i>sh'tika</i>) |
| 7. Cleanliness (<i>n'kius</i>) | |

2. From *Orhot Tzadikim, The Ways of the Righteous*

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Humility (<i>anava</i>) | 8. Remembering (<i>z'chira</i>) |
| 2. Love (<i>ahava</i>) | 9. Silence (<i>sh'tika</i>) |
| 3. Mercy (<i>rachamim</i>) | 10. Truth (<i>emes</i>) |
| 4. Joy (<i>simcha</i>) | 11. Repentance (<i>t'shuva</i>) |
| 5. Graciousness (<i>ratzon</i>) | 12. Fear of Heaven (<i>yiras shamayim</i>) |
| 6. Zeal (<i>z'rizus</i>) | 13. Shame (<i>busha</i>) |
| 7. Generosity (<i>n'divus</i>) | |

3. From *Mesilat Yesharim, The Path of the Just* (traits 1-9), and *Orhot Tzaddikim, The Ways of the Righteous* (traits 10-13)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Watchfulness (<i>z'hirus</i>) | 8. Fear of Sin (<i>yiras chet</i>) |
| 2. Zeal (<i>z'rizus</i>) | 9. Holiness (<i>k'dusha</i>) |
| 3. Cleanliness (<i>n'kius</i>) | 10. Truth (<i>emes</i>) |
| 4. Separation (<i>prishus</i>) | 11. Repentance (<i>t'shuva</i>) |
| 5. Purity (<i>tahara</i>) | 12. Shame (<i>busha</i>) |
| 6. Saintliness (<i>chasidus</i>) | 13. Joy (<i>simcha</i>) |
| 7. Humility (<i>anava</i>) | |

Charts taken from www.diaspora.org.il

Cautionary Notes on the process:

Potential stumbling blocks in doing spiritual accounting:²

1. **Stopping** - even with the system of *Sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh*, a person may simply stop doing accounting after the initial stage of enthusiasm.
2. **Shallow accounting** - although continuing, some people allow their accounting to degenerate into a mechanical activity and do it in a cursory, shallow fashion.
3. **Disproportionate accounting** - some people judge themselves without relating to the norms of their spiritual generation, the immediate circumstances of their personal life, and the stage of their personal spiritual advancement.

As general counsel for success in producing more qualitative accounting and the perfecting of character traits, one should join a group or have a partner that sits at a set time to review their work on *cheshbon hanefesh*. This gives the individual the benefits of group interaction; i.e., opportunity for discussion, giving and receiving correction and advice, group support, and continued growth.

Make note of your progress in a journal on a daily, or at least weekly basis. The purpose is to spot broad trends that you may not otherwise recall or notice. Then you will be able to pull out of those "larger spiritual setbacks."

Accounting

- 1- Each morning choose which one of the middot that you will focus on for that day.
- 2- Take a few minutes to focus and recite the kavannot/intentions that created for it. Consider how you might make use of these during the day. Think about when you might have occasion during the day that you might need to call upon them for help.
- 3- Every night before going to sleep, think about how you spent your day, and when opportunities came up for you to enact your new intention. Determine whether you met resistance or were unable to improve any of the traits. Also consider the times you were successful. Make note of your progress and/or setbacks in your journal.

² Based on the words of The Rosh Yeshiva of the Diaspora Yeshiva, Rabbi Mordecai Goldstein
www.diaspora.org.il

Middot

The thirteen middot (character traits) as outlined by Rabbi Mendel of Satanov in his book *Cheshbon ha-Nefesh*.^[1];

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | <u>Equanimity</u> | <i>Menuchat ha-nefesh</i> | הַנֶּפֶשׁ מְנוּחָה | Rise above events that are inconsequential — both bad and good — for they are not worth disturbing your equanimity. |
| 2 | <u>Patience</u> | <i>Salavanut</i> | סְבִלְנוּת | When something bad happens to you and you did not have the power to avoid it, do not aggravate the situation even more through wasted grief. |
| 3 | <u>Order</u> | <i>Seder</i> | סֵדֶר | All of your actions and possessions should be orderly — each and every one in a set place and at a set time. Let your thoughts always be free to deal with that which lies ahead of you. |
| 4 | <u>Decisiveness</u> | <i>Harizut</i> | חֲרִיצוּת | All of your acts should be preceded by deliberation; when you have reached a decision, act without hesitating. |
| 5 | <u>Cleanliness</u> | <i>Nekiyut</i> | נְקִיּוּת | Let no stain or ugliness be found in your possessions or in your home, and surely not on your body or clothes. |
| 6 | <u>Humility</u> | <i>Anavah</i> | עֲנָוָה | Always seek to learn wisdom from every man, to recognize your failings and correct them. In doing so you will learn to stop thinking about your virtues and you will take your mind off your friend's faults. |
| 7 | <u>Righteousness</u> | <i>Tzedek</i> | צְדָקָה | What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. |
| 8 | <u>Frugality</u> | <i>K'mutz</i> | קְמוּצָה | Be careful with your money. Do not spend even a penny needlessly. |
| 9 | <u>Diligence/Zeal</u> | <i>Zerizut</i> | זְרִיזוּת | Always find something to do — for yourself or for a friend and do not allow a |

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------|-----------------|--------|--|
| | | | | moment of your life to be wasted. |
| 10 | Silence | <i>Shtikah</i> | תיקה | Before you open your mouth, be silent and reflect: "What benefit will my speech bring to me or others?" |
| 11 | Calmness | <i>Nichutah</i> | ניחותא | The words of the wise are stated gently. In being good, do not be called evil. |
| 12 | Truth | <i>Emet</i> | אמת | Do not allow anything to pass your lips that you are not certain is completely true. |
| 13 | Separation | <i>Prishut</i> | פרישות | Strengthen yourself so that you can stop lewd thoughts. Draw close to your [spouse] only when your mind is free, [occupied only] by thoughts of fulfilling your conjugal duties and procreating. |

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The additional five middot in the Addendum to Rabbi Mendel of Satanov's *Cheshbon ha-Nefesh*.

| | | | |
|----|---------------------|---------|---|
| 14 | Temperance | הסתפקות | Before taking food into your mouth, consider what benefit it has for your personal health or the fulfillment of a precept. |
| 15 | Deliberation | מתינות | Let your heart not be precipitate nor your mouth hasty. Rather, pause several times while speaking or acting so as to deliberate and calm yourself. |
| 16 | Modesty | צניעות | Distance yourself from all that is ugly and unseemly, from lust and from anything which lead people to be suspicious of you, and you will find favor in the eyes of God and man. |
| 17 | Trust | בטחון | If worry comes to your heart, take it as a warning from God who loves you. Examine your deeds and take counsel with those whose advice you seek. When you have fulfilled His will, trust Him and your serenity will |

| | | | |
|----|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| | | | return. |
| 18 | Generosity | גְּדוּלוּת | Accustom yourself to finding satisfaction in acting kindly towards others and in seeing the meanness of being stingy. |

There are also forty-eight middot outlined in *Pirke Avot 6:6*.

[1] Rabbi Mendel of Satanov. *Cheshbon ha-Nefesh*. (1812). Translated by Dovid Landesman. Feldheim Publishers, New York, 1995.

Musar Practice

1. Commit yourself to the study of Musar for at least thirteen weeks. Work on each of the thirteen middot outlined in Rabbi Mendel of Satanov's book *Cheshbon ha-Nefesh* for one week. Once you have finished the first thirteen week cycle, start again with the first middah.
2. On awakening every morning, remember the middah on which you are currently working. Recite the phrase that you found to help you remember that middah.
3. Set a specific time and place for daily Musar work. Late at night or early in the morning, when most everyone else is asleep, is the time of least distraction. Whatever time you set, keep it consistently. Use the time to review your previous day in terms of your middah.
4. Focus on how your practice of your middah affects others in your life.
5. Use a checklist to keep track of your work on the week's middah.
6. Find a phrase that reminds you of your middah and repeat it (or sing it, if possible) to help in cultivating that character trait. For example, for the middah of Truth one might sing, *V'tahayr libaynu l'ovd'cho be-emet*, ("Purify our hearts to serve You in truth").
7. Keep a daily journal in which you record an incident or two from the day that showed when you did (or did not) apply the middah of the week.
8. Study Torah daily — Tanach, Talmud, or the works of Jewish spiritual writers. Examine these texts through the lens of your middah.
9. Keep a "commonplace book" in which you write quotable passages from books that you are reading along with your reflections on those passages. Record phrases that you find in your reading that you can recite to help you to keep your middah.
10. Find a Musar buddy with whom you can speak at least once a week. Exchange personal anecdotes of how the middah has played out in your life that week. Speak with your Musar buddy in the middle of the week, after you have some experience with the middah, but still have several days left to apply the insights and inspiration that will inevitably come from your conversation.

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Background Material

Optional Handout

Iggeret haMussar - The Mussar Letter by HaRav HaGaon Rabbi Yisrael Salant,
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Translated by Rabbi Tzvi Miller

Man is created to be free in his imagination and bound by his intellect. But, his unbridled imagination draws him mischievously in the way of his heart's desire without fear of the certain future - the time when G-d will examine all of his affairs. He will be afflicted with severe Judgment; there is no one else to be seized in his place. He alone will bear the fruit of his sin; the transgressor and the punished are one and the same. It is very bitter. No man can say: this is my illness and I shall bear it.

The calamities of this world are sorrowful, however, the punishments of sin are far more severe. The soul of man will be extremely anguished, a day will seem as a year. Woe to the imagination, this evil enemy! It is within our hands, within our power to repel him by giving an attentive ear to the intellect, to grasp the truth and measure the reward of sin against its loss. Yet what can we do, the imagination is a flooding river and the intellect will drown unless we place it on a ship. The ship is the awakening of Fear of G-d in the soul and the great dread of His punishments in our spirit.

In all matters and things there is the general and the particular. If we do not study the general then we cannot understand the particular. For the particular must have the qualities of the general, yet, there can be a general without the specific qualities of the particular. Hence, the beginning of everything is the general; and the particulars emanate from this.

Now, let us please consider our obligatory service to our Creator, may He be blessed. Should we not consider what is the general - from which the particulars emanate?

Without knowledge or contemplation, we can recognize that we are aware of the belief that the A-mighty is the Judge, rendering to each man according to his actions. This is the beginning step in our service of G-d, may He be blessed. If a man's ways are bitter and evil, he will be afflicted with severe punishments, either in this world or the next world - the eternal world; no one can gauge the quality and quantity of this severity. And if his ways are pure and his conduct is straight, he will be blessed with sublime delights in this world, and more in the next world - with wondrous pleasures far beyond our ability to understand and feel.

This is mentioned in Tractate Makos 24a: Habbakuk came and unified the entire Torah into one concept - the Tzaddik (the righteous man) lives by his faith. Also in Tractate Baba Basra 78b: Therefore the rulers say, "Come let us make an accounting - the loss of a Mitzvah versus its reward, and the reward of a transgression versus its loss."

Yet, most unfortunately, this general awareness of faith remains hidden within us, concealed in the depths of our hearts. We are devoid of conscious awareness, unless we dedicate ourselves to till the ground of our hearts through the expansive thoughts of Musar.

Without making this effort, our general faith does not project its glory over the bodily passions, to bind them with the constraint of fear. The particulars of our conduct do not emanate from the general principles of faith, safeguarding us from the most obvious transgressions. We constantly succumb to principal transgressions that reach to the Heavens - endless transgressions of speech, countless unethical business practices, and the worst of all, the neglect of Torah study. In short, there is no soundness in any part of our body. Especially, in light of the statement of our Sages in Tractate Sukka 52:a, The greater the person, the greater the evil inclination. Thus, we perpetrate grave and consequential transgressions. Yet, because of the darkness in our hearts, we are as the blind - we do not see their enormity. Only if we view them through a viewing glass - the healthy intellect looking through the lens of the faithful Torah - only then do we perceive the great overwhelming seriousness of our transgressions.

Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, allude to this in Tractate Yuma 9b: Why was the First Temple destroyed? Because of the following three things that occurred there - idol worship, immorality, and murder. Yet in the period of the Second Temple, they were involved in Torah study, and Mitzvos and acts of Kindness - so why was it destroyed? As a result of the baseless hatred that was there. Rav Yochanan and Rav Eliezer both said, "Since concerning the First Temple, their transgressions were revealed - their time of redemption was revealed. In the Second Temple, where their sins were not revealed - their time of redemption was not revealed."

The concept that the sins of the First Temple period were revealed, means that the transgressions were severe and apparent to the eye of the observer. Whereas, in the period of the Second Temple, these transgressions could only be detected by exacting contemplation of their immense severity, and of their ceaseless branching out into more and more transgressions in every aspect of our lives.

The passage in Tractate Yuma 9b continues: The Rabbis asked which was better - the First or Second Temple period? They answered: Look with your own eyes - the First Temple was restored after seventy years; whereas the Second Temple has not yet been rebuilt. This is an application of the principle we mentioned above: The greater the person, the greater the evil inclination. Thus, during the Second Temple period, when they were involved in Torah study, Mitzvos, and acts of Kindness - their evil inclination was enormous. It caused them to fall into potent transgressions. The awful evil of these sins is known to those who contemplate the truth.

Now, in every situation in which a man finds himself - what is he to do? The day of death is hidden from everybody. It comes suddenly, and the A-mighty evaluates every act that the individual has done, as it was recorded in the Ledger. G-d evaluates the days of one's life, not one day is missing. More bitter than death will be his end, with no refuge and no escape. As it says in Ecclesiastes 9:4, He who remains connected to any life at all, has hope - for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For, as long as a man is alive, he has security and hope that he may direct his heart to Repentance; but, when he dies, his hope is lost.

This being so, as long as our souls remain within us, we should quickly correct our course to the good. Yet, there is a great obstacle which blocks our path: We do not fear the day of death, even if we mention it with our own mouths. This is stated in Tractate Shabbos 31b, Perhaps you will say death has been forgotten? Also, if we see with our eyes the death of people like ourselves, it does not motivate our soul to repent with our full heart to our Creator. Yet, ultimately, we will come before Him for Judgment, and he will rebuke us, for all the evil we have committed. This most common reaction is just the opposite of what it says in Ecclesiastes, 7:2, It is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting - for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to their hearts. Our numbness is due to the multitude of sins that have dulled our hearts – they have become as hard as a stone.

Thus, as it is stated in Tractate Yuma 39a: “Do not defile yourselves with them or become defiled through them.. “ (Leviticus 11:43). Do not follow the primary meaning of defiled, rather follow the secondary meaning – dulled. Therefore our transgressions are hidden from us and we do not readily recognize them. As is stated in Tractate Kiddushln 40a: When a person transgresses and repeats the transgression - it becomes as if it were permitted to him - and these sins will surround him on the day of Judgment. Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, mention this in Tractate Avoda Zara 18a: The sins that a person casts under his heels - surround him on the day of Judgment. Alas! Have we lost our hope, G-d forbid? Is there no remedy for us, Heaven forbid?

Only one thing have we found; it is wisdom and not an art. Let us discuss it a little, and it will benefit us greatly.

Let us contemplate with our hearts the subject of transgressions. We will see that there are two categories. One stems from unbridled desire, to love the momentary pleasure without considering the result even though it will ultimately be bitter. We find an example of this in worldly affairs. The foolish man and particularly the sick person whose intellect is weakened, loves to grab food which is sweet to his palate, and he forgets that this will bring him to a deterioration of his illness. Therefore our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said in Pirkei Avos 4:1: Who is the wise man? The one who foresees the future. It also says in Sota 3a: A man does not transgress unless a spirit of foolishness enters within him. This is the sum total of all his work in his service to the Blessed One - to contemplate the fear of heaven contained within the fear of punishment. This is accomplished by means of Musar books and the Aggadic literature of our wise teachers, of blessed memory. These teachings should be internalized to the extent that a person will hear with his ears and almost see before his eyes the great punishments, both quantitative and qualitative. As our Rabbis, of blessed memory, state in Tractate Sandhedrin 7a: “A judge should always picture a sword between his legs and Gehenom open beneath him. This visualization assists the judge to be intellectually straight; and it also applies to everyone else, to guard oneself from the evil mishap of severe transgressions. If he will do this and his heart will understand - he will repent, and it will be a healing balm to him.

How great is the evil of man upon the earth! There are none who seek righteousness and none who think about the Fear of G-d. No one sets fixed and organized times to toil in

understanding the Fear of G-d, to draw up the waters of understanding from the belief that is hidden and concealed in the inner recesses of his heart. And still further, to broaden and fortify this belief, to give it strength and power, and to place the burden on his shoulder, to rule over the limbs of his body acting according to the Torah without overstepping any boundaries. This is the second category of transgressions and there is no example found amongst worldly affairs. On the contrary, in worldly affairs, there is no one whose troubles hover over him, who does not take the time to consider how to save himself. Desire is not the cause of this type of transgression. It is a wonder and it is called wondrous that a person does not apply his heart to contemplate the Fear of G-d and the teachings about His punishments. These types of transgressions cannot be from the first category, because desire is not strong enough to cause them. Rather, they are generated from the spirit of impurity that induces man to sin. This is especially true about the transgressions of speech, for what benefit does the speaker derive from doing them.

We can apply these two categories of sin to find a compromise between two schools of thought, concerning the definition of the evil inclination and the good inclination. The first, more common view, asserts that the evil inclination is the force of impurity in man that induces him to transgress. Whereas, the good inclination is the force of holiness in man that guides him to do good. This view is the most prevalent view. The second view asserts that the evil inclination is the force of human desire that looks to each sweet thing in its time. It gathers these pleasantries and clings to them and loves them. Whereas the good inclination is the straight intellect that looks beyond these things to see the result - the awe and Fear of G-d, may He be blessed, and the precise measure of His awesome judgments. This individual chooses the advantageous way, to conquer his desire, so that he will be sated with delight and with wondrous pleasure in the time to come. The glory of this pleasure is beyond description.

We see that the affairs of man constantly vary - each person clinging to different transgressions. There are those whose transgressions are more inclined towards neglect of Torah study than unfaithful business practices; and there are those who are more inclined towards unfaithful business practices than neglect of Torah study. No person is like another when it comes to transgression. Yet, if the evil inclination were only the force of impurity, and not desire, why is everybody not corrupted equally, and in the same way? However, if we assume that the evil inclination is also the power of desire, then we can explain the vast range of human behavior. Since the desires of man are dependent upon his temperament, and his temperament is influenced by the circumstances of his life; therefore, each person's transgressions vary according to the unique elements of his life.

Yet, even this vast range of temperaments and desires cannot explain the phenomena of human conduct. Don't we see with our own eyes people committing transgressions which actually oppose their natural desire? For example, everybody acknowledges that self-aggrandizement is repulsive, yet a person will abuse his own value system in the pursuit of self-aggrandizement. This conflict in personality is caused by the impurity of spirit and not by desire.

We now understand that the evil inclination is both the power of desire as well as the

impurity of spirit. Likewise, the good inclination is the healthy intellect that sees the results of a person's deeds, as well as the holiness of spirit within man.

Behold! The two aspects of man, the physical and the spiritual, are in accordance with the two components of man's creation - his body and soul. Not only are the bodily aspects apparent to the physical eye, but even the aspects of the soul are known only from the functioning of the body. The physical strategies and designs to maintain the soul within the body are exclusively performed by the body. This is accomplished through a wholesome diet and protection from danger. For it is not natural for the soul to yearn to remain within the confines of the body.

Likewise, in the service of the Eternal, may His name be blessed, the primary spiritual device to empower the good inclination with both the force holiness and the clarity of intellect, and to repel the evil inclination with its forces of impurity and desire, is dependent upon the corporeal aspects. That is to say, this is also accomplished by nourishing the body with "good foods" – the contemplation of the fear of G-d and the Musar which emanates from the pure Torah.

This concept is taught by our Rabbis, of blessed memory, in Tractate Baba Basra 16a: Job endeavored to exempt all of mankind from judgment. He spoke before the Eternal "Master of the Universe! You created the ox with cloven hoof and you created the donkey with uncloven hoof. You created the Garden of Eden and you created Gehennom. You created righteous people and you created evil people. Who can overcome your power"? Job's friends answered him, "You have denied fear of the Eternal and you have diminished the power of prayer". The Holy One, Blessed Be He, created the evil inclination and also its remedy - the Torah.

Based on this encounter, our Sages, of blessed memory, taught us that the remedy of the Torah is the fear that emanates from it. This is derived from the words, "You have denied fear of the Eternal...". This refers to the physical aspect of fear - viscerally perceptible. Thus the healing remedy for all the ills of the soul, is the focusing of man's heart and soul on the fear of punishments taught in the Torah. Whether in general, to know and understand from the Torah that corresponding to each transgression there is a devastating and awesome punishment, and corresponding to each Mitzvah there is a reward of unimaginable elevation. Or in particular, and this is the prime factor, to study the laws of Torah that pertain to each transgression. For instance, for arrogance, the sections of the Torah germane to arrogance; for unethical business practices the sections of the Torah that treat the ethics of business affairs; and so too, for each Mitzvah and each transgression, its appropriate Torah teachings.

The stronghold and prime element in the utilization of the healing powers of the Torah to cure the disease of the evil inclination, is the intense, concentrated, and deep study of the laws of the particular transgression. Man naturally refrains from many transgressions, and he will not submit to them even under pressure or duress. On the other hand, there are more stringent transgressions, that one will easily commit. For instance, a great portion of our brethren, the Children of Israel, will not eat bread without washing

their hands even at a time of great hunger and distress. However, concerning the more serious sin of slander, they will easily transgress - even without the strong drive of desire normally associated with transgression.

We see from this example, that it is essential in guarding from transgression to persist in good conduct until this good conduct becomes second nature. Therefore, even if one sincerely strives to walk on the paths of Musar, to dedicate himself with all his feelings and thoughts to refrain from speaking slander - even so, he is likely to fail. As long as he has not transformed his nature and his habits of conduct to the extent that he has no natural tendency to speak slanderously, he will still succumb more easily to slander than to eating without washing of the hands. This is the pattern in all types of transgression, each one in accordance with the individual, his time and place. Each place varies according to its situation. Every district has certain transgressions which the community easily refrains from and naturally avoids.

We know that the transformation of nature is generated by study and consistency of habit. Therefore, the main principle and the strong pillar to prepare oneself to guard against transgression and to perform Mitzvos is the study of the law germane to that transgression or Mitzvah. This study must be pursued in great depth and detail. This method of study affects a strong acquisition within the soul; his character will gradually change so that the transgression is naturally distant from him.

For an illustration, in our district, praise to the A-mighty, the injunction to abstain from non-kosher meat is naturally implanted within the souls of Israel. So strong is this proclivity that no one has to force his nature and desire to abstain from non-kosher meat - it is foreign to him. There is no kosher butcher who would not consult a competent, Halachic authority concerning the status of any questionable meat. Even if his inquiry would cause him a significant loss, the Fear of G-d is within him - in his nature and his ways. This generates the attitude: "G-d forbid, that I should do evil, and deceive my fellow Jews."

However, in the multitude of our sinful business dealings, we find just the opposite. Most people do not seek advice concerning a suspicion of stealing from their fellow. Often times they oppress victims, even before legal claims are fairly evaluated. Some people, even after legal decisions are made - execute deceptive or strong-armed tactics. Doesn't the Torah view all these things equally - all of them are classified as transgressions, according to the Torah and its' judgments. Thus, whether in a case of non-kosher meat, or "you shall not steal", or "you shall not oppress your fellow", all of these are equally transgressions of the Torah.

It is naturally ingrained in the soul of Israel - all non-kosher meat is forbidden to him; and whatever meat is declared non-kosher by a Halachic authority - he will distance himself from it and conduct himself only according to the Torah. So too in money matters - whatever the Torah classifies as belonging to his fellow, if someone else besides the owner has it - this is stealing, and he transgresses "you shall not steal". We see, in the multitude of our transgressions - even the scholars and also, almost all the G-d Fearing people are not

cautious to refrain from this sin. And yet, so serious is this transgression, that Yom Kippur and even death, do not grant Atonement.

Yet, if a man will direct his heart and soul to learn in depth the Laws germane to business matters from the Talmud and the Halachic Authorities, each person according to his ability - a character transformation will take place. If the focus of his study is to internalize the knowledge of the forbidden and the permitted, then his study will be particularly effective to guard him from stealing. Even if at first he is unable to desist from all infringements of stealing, he should not despair - for this is due to the strong desire to steal, as well as, the prevalent practices of society. He should know with certainty how great is the power of Musar, that slowly a vast acquisition of knowledge and new habits will take root in his Soul. Eventually, questions concerning Kashrus and questions concerning stealing will be equally important in his eyes.

Even if the man has fallen to transgressions that are not generally committed, like adultery - appropriate study will change him. If the evil inclination has so overcome him, that he considered the sin permitted, may G-d have Mercy - the essential remedy is the same deep study of the relevant laws, with intention to fulfill them. This will slowly bear fruits to empower his Soul to be on guard from descending to Gehenom; or at least, he will not brazenly commit the sin. He will have strength and resolve manifested through much study of the relevant Laws, associated with the accustomed transgression. Eventually this will help him acquire a different nature and the notion to transgress will not arise in his heart; even if the situation is difficult.

Amongst the Torah's remedies for the evil inclination, is there also a spiritual aspect of healing. As it says in Tractate Sota 21a: All the time that a person studies Torah, the Torah saves him. It makes no difference which subject he is learning. If he is studying the Laws of property damage - it will save him from speaking slander. Even if the Torah topic he is perusing does not pertain to the transgression - the spirituality of the Torah will guard him.

If we look with a penetrating eye, we see that the central strategy for the cure of the evil inclination lies within the physical aspect - the contemplation of the Fear of G-d, and the study of the appropriate laws. Whereas, the other remedy, the spiritual aspect, comes in only subsequently; and therefore is classified as a secondary cure. The Mitzvah to study Torah is separate and independent of our current discussion and the parameters of obligation in this Mitzvah are delineated in the Laws of Torah Study. The degree to which the evil inclination is overwhelming, does not change how much Torah a person is obligated to learn. Rather, one needs to fulfill his obligation of Torah study, regardless of the condition of the evil inclination. Furthermore, it may not be within his power to learn more than his requirement. Hence, when he properly fulfills his Mitzvah of Torah study, at least the spiritual remedy for the evil inclination will accordingly be extended to him.

However, the physical aspect - the contemplation of the Fear of G-d and the study of the relevant laws, is a primary remedy. A person needs to conduct himself with regard to this primary remedy in the same manner as he does with the healing of bodily disease. That

is to say, the degree of the illness is proportionate to the degree of the remedy - in quality and quantity. Also, in disease of the Soul, the cure is based on the degree of the illness. As long as this evil inclination is attacking him, to that extent is there a demand to increase contemplation of the Fear of G-d and the study of the appropriate Laws. If man does not use this physical remedy, then also the spiritual remedy - the study of Torah will not render much influence over the illness of the evil inclination. This is comparable to the health of man, in that the spiritual function - the Soul - is sustained by the corporal functions.

The enemy that ambushes man is the evil inclination. It works on him to turn his heart to stone. Man is rendered so blind that he does not sense his awful transgressions, nor his shortcomings. Hence, he does not endeavor to save himself. He does not contemplate on the Fear of G-d, to seek an effective remedy - the physical aspect of healing.

In order to heal himself, then, a man should direct his heart to bring merit to the public by arousing them to contemplate the Fear of G-d and Musar. It is human nature to observe other people's shortcomings, and recognize that they need much Musar. Thus, he should strengthen himself with all of his power to inspire the public study of Musar. When many people will be helped and the Fear of G-d will be increased, then the merit of many will be dependent on him. Consequently, ever so slowly, the study of Musar will guide him on the path of Righteousness. Thus, his public teaching of Musar will be a physical, as well as, a spiritual healing to him. As our Sages, of blessed memory, said in Tractate Yoma 87a: "Everyone who brings merit to the public - no sin will come to his hand.

How exceedingly great should this Mitzvah be in the eyes of man! He should put his heart and Soul to guide people to study Musar - to save their Souls from Gehenom. It says in Tractate Shabbos 151b: All who have mercy on the creations, Heaven will have mercy on them. There is no greater mercy than to remind and inspire people to study the Fear of G-d. Then, with their eyes they will see and their ears will hear, and their heart will understand the great stumbling block before them. They will sigh about the time of Judgment. Then they will return to G-d, may He be Blessed, so that they will depart from evil and do good. The man that is so inspired to do this, will share a goodly portion in everything that is generated from his efforts. He will delight in the Eternal delights - that no physical eye has ever seen. It is beyond human understanding to fathom and perceive the quantity and quality of the reward of this Mitzvah. The effort is relatively small and the reward is great - beyond all our ability to value and measure. Every man should put his eye and the power of his intellect to this great thing - and he will be a Master of his Soul!

Equanimity

Patience

Order

Decisiveness

Cleanliness

Humility

Righteousness

Frugality

Diligence / Zeal

Silence

Calmness

Truth

Separation

Temperance

Deliberation

Modesty

Trust

Generosity



Elul

Background and Practices

The possibility of teshuva is ever-present. But in the month of Elul, as the summer ends and the holiday season (Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot) approaches, the tradition calls on everyone to become introspective.

Elul, say the Rabbis, has its roots in the beginnings of Jewish collective memory. After the sin of the Golden Calf and the shattering of the Tablets of the Decalogue, Moses ascends Mount Sinai. The Midrash determines that Moses's final descent, after forty days and forty nights on the mountain, was on Yom Kippur (10 Tishrei), when he brought the Second Tablets. Thus, the month of Elul was, and remains, the ideal time for cheshbon hanefesh and to pray for forgiveness.

This mood of spiritual inventory is expressed through some beautiful customs. From the beginning of the month (except for Shabbat) it is customary to blow the shofar (ram's horn) at the end of the morning services. Rabbi Moses ben-Maimon (RaMBaM) writes of the sound of the shofar that it is a call to repentance, as if to say:

"Arise, sleepers, from your sleep! And you slumberers, awaken from your slumber! Search your deeds and return in repentance and remember your Creator! Those who forget the truth in the vanities of the time and waste all their years in vanity and emptiness that will not avail or save, look to your souls and improve your ways and actions! Let each of you leave his evil path and his thought that is not virtuous."

The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashana is a commandment rather than a custom; therefore, on the day before Rosh Hashana, the shofar is not blown, in order to mark a boundary. Furthermore, this breaking off of the shofar helps "to confuse the Satan," which, in Jewish tradition is the prosecuting angel in the Heavenly Court. Seeing we have apparently abandoned our repentance, the Satan will desist in his accusations against us.

An important part of the Elul observance is the recitation of prayers of forgiveness, called slichot. Early in the morning, often before the break of day, worshippers make their way to the synagogue to pour out their hearts in supplication. The Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy (Exodus 34:6-7) are intoned several times throughout the slichot. In addition, many prayers composed throughout the middle ages especially for this service are uttered. There are many variations of the slichot, depending on the community. Sefaradi Jews (from Spain, northern Africa and Asia) begin their slichot at the start of the month, while Ashkenazi Jews (from Europe) begin in the last week of the month, usually with a midnight service on the Saturday night before Rosh HaShana. Twice a day at the end of services, it is customary to recite Psalm 27 which begins with the words "God is my Light and my Salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" This reinforces the concept of repentance as a courageous and uplifting effort.

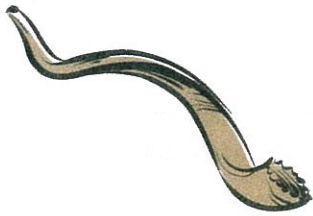
The Kabbalists (mystics) see references to Elul in several verses of the Bible. If you look up these verses you will see the letters aleph-lamed-vav-lamed in the initial letters of consecutive words, which spells Elul. It might be said that these verses deal with topics that are applicable to the mood of Elul:

- "If God let [the sin] come to his hand, then I will appoint a place for you to flee there" (Exodus 21:13) --- acknowledges that sin is the result of God's granting humans free will, and extends an offer for refuge in repentance.
- "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all soul " (Deuteronomy 30:6) --- is about removing the emotional barriers that prevent repentance.
- "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (Song of Songs 6:3) --- underscores the mood of love in prayer.
- "... sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor" (Esther 9:22) --- is a reminder of the power of charity to avert God's decree.

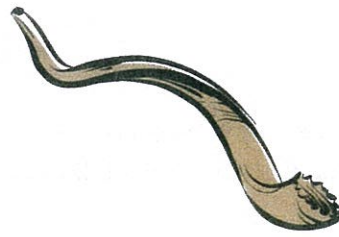
Although the first of Tishrei is known as Rosh HaShana --- the head of the year -- - the Talmud lists as many as four beginnings within the cycle of the year. For example, the 15th of Shevat is the New Year for Trees, which determines the age of trees for many agricultural commandments. In the ancient world it was customary to date all documents according to the reign of the current king, and a new year began, not on the anniversary of his ascendancy, but on a fixed "new year for kings": a Jewish king's year began with the first of Nissan, because the festival of Passover during that month marks the creation of the Jewish people; a non-Jewish king's year began with the first of Tishrei, which marks the creation of humankind.

The formation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden highlights God as King. Before their appearance, God could only be considered as Creator, but to be King there would have to be beings with the ability to accept God freely. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve exercised their free will to transgress the command not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and so they were judged and sentenced. Rosh HaShana thus combines the universal themes of God's sovereignty, the day of judgment and the power of free will, all of which are central to the day's prayers.

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Elul



The days of *Elul* are called the days of "Divine forgiveness and kindness". This is embodied in the word *Elul*. It is written in the Song of Songs (6:3) *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li. . .* (I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me. . .). The acrostic of the first letters of this phrase spells *Elul*. The last letters of the words of the phrase are all "*Yud*". The numerical value of "*Yud*" is 10. $4 \times 10 = 40$, the number of days that Moshe spent on Mt. Sinai the when he received the second set of the Ten Commandments. [According to Midrash] he went up on *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, as God pardoned the people for the event of the Golden Calf. When he came down forty days later it was *Yom Kippur*, the day of ultimate expression of the reunification of God and His people. These days of *Elul* are therefore the beginning of a special time of favor and conciliation.

The Baal ShemTov called the days of *Elul* 'the days when the King is in the field'. He explained with a parable. Normally, in order to gain an audience with the King, one must go through a lengthy procedure. He must travel to the capitol city, arrange an appointment, and then get permission to enter the palace. Even when permission is granted it may be days or weeks before he is finally allowed to enter. When he does finally get to see the King, the audience is likely to be short and very formal. The citizen, not used to the royal surroundings doubtlessly feels out of place, and maybe even regrets his decision to see the King. From his great fear and uneasiness, he may forget to put his request before the King.

Once a year, the King leaves his capitol to visit the various regions of his Kingdom. Now a King can't just enter a city unannounced. When he reaches the outskirts of the city he is to visit, his entourage sets up a camp while a special delegation goes ahead to the city to make preparations for the King's visit.

In the meantime, the King is in the field; relaxed and enjoying the early fall weather. He doesn't stand on the same formality that he does when in the palace. The common folk are allowed to come out to greet the King and receive his blessing.

During *Chodesh Elul*, the King is in the field and he is easily accessible. We need only make the effort to go out and greet Him.

The customs of *Elul* are meant to help us tune into the spirit of the times and to attune ourselves.

Tekiat Shofar

The Shofar is blown every morning. In the words of the Rambam, the *Shofar* calls out, "awaken you sleepers from your (spiritual) slumber. Search your ways and return to God in *Teshuva*."

From the second day of Rosh Chodesh we begin to blow the *Shofar*. The custom in most places is to blow after the *Shacharit* (morning) prayer, although some blow after the *Maariv* (evening) prayer as well.

The source for the blowing of the *Shofar* comes from Rabbenu Asher, the Tur who explained that when Moshe Rabbenu went up to *Mount Sinai* the second time to get the tablets of the Ten Commandments, it was *Rosh Chodesh Elul*. As he ascended, they blew on *Shofars* to indicate that Moshe Rabbenu was going to be gone for 40 days (until *Yom Kippur*- according to Midrash). They shouldn't make a mistake again with a Golden Calf.

On the day before *Rosh HaShanah*, the *Shofar* is not blown. There are two reasons. One is to make a separation between the blasts which were designated for *Rosh HaShanah* by the *Torah*, and those which were instituted by the Sages during *Elul*. The second reason is to confuse the prosecutor (*Satan*), into thinking that the Day of Judgment has already passed!

The *Shofar* can be made only from a ram's horn and not from the horn of a cow or ox. One of the most compelling reason is brought in the *Talmud* (*Tractate Rosh Hashanah* 26a) "The prosecution cannot also act as the defense." The horn of a cow, which is a reminder of the Golden Calf, cannot plead Israel's case before the Master of the World.

Nevertheless, why then do we blow the *Shofar* of a Ram specifically. Rabbi Abahu asked, "Why do we only blow on the *Shofar* of a ram?" Answered The Holy One Blessed Be He, "Blow for Me on a ram's *Shofar*, and on account of it I will remember the binding of Isaac (and the ram that was sacrificed in his place). I furthermore will consider it as if you bound yourselves up before me like Isaac." (*Talmud Bavli Tractate Rosh Hashanah* 16a)

A few years ago, on the night of *Rosh HaShanah*, the Biala Rebbe, *shlit"a* explained the significance of this passage. The sound of the *Shofar* stirs up the heart of every Jew to break down the barriers that divide himself from his Creator. He is aroused to serve Him with complete self sacrifice. Just as Isaac put his life on the line in order to fulfill the will of his Creator, so is the inner desire of every Jew to do the same. The sound of *Shofar* urges him to do so.

How does the *Shofar* do this? At the revelation on *Mt. Sinai*, the *Torah* states that there were to be long *Shofar* blasts. (Shemot 19:13,19) Rashi comments that the *Shofar* blown at Mt. Sinai was the same *Shofar* that came from the head of the Ram that was offered in Isaac's place. The Ramban (v. 13), wonders how Rashi could say such a thing, wasn't the Ram completely consumed as a burnt offering on *Mt. Moriah*? The Ramban answers that the *Shofar* that was heard on *Mt. Sinai* wasn't the actual horn from the

Ram of Isaac. Its sound was the sound of the 'dread' and 'awe' of Isaac who laid on the altar before *God*. It is the expression of his willingness to give up everything for *God* even his life! It is a sound which penetrates deeper into the heart and soul than any speech. This is the call of the *Shofar*.

Shalom between Jews

Increasing friendship and Shalom is the work of the month of Elul. The *Maharil*, known as the compiler of Ashkenazic customs, writes that it is customary to include special greeting in the Month of Elul when one writes a letter to a friend.

It is the practice to include the following blessing: *K'Tiva V'Chatima Tova*. (May you be inscribed for a good year). Today, with so many people writing to each other via e-mail, there is a remarkable opportunity to uphold this custom. This custom has special importance since one of the most important aspects of the Days of Awe is for friends to reconcile their grievances with each other. This aspect of human relations called in Hebrew: *Bein Adam L'Chaveiro* (between man and his friend), can only be maintained when those with grievances ask one another personally for forgiveness. Until that takes places, not even the automatic atonement of *Yom Kippur* will be of any help to him.

Taking the time to wish another best during Elul, will encourage the eventual reconciliation between the aggrieved persons. This is the real purpose behind the custom of sending greeting cards at the New Year.

Travelling to See a Tzaddik

The days of *Elul* are days of journeys, inner spiritual journeys as well as journeys of miles and kilometers traversed across the hills and highways of America and Israel. Being in the presence of Holy people is influential and inspiring.

Saying Psalms

It is customary to recite Psalm 27 each day and evening of the month of Elul.

It is brought in *Sefer Matei Ephraim* by R' Ephraim Zalman Margolies (considered to be the authoritative handbook for the laws and customs of the months of *Elul* and *Tishrei*), that there is a custom to say an extra measure of Psalms during Elul.

R' Elimelech of Lizhensk, the *Noam Elimelech* writes, that sometimes, unfortunately, *Tefillah* (prayer) doesn't work. At that point we need something called *Tehillah* (praise,

adoration). This world of *Tehilla* is totally Light, there is no darkness, no *din* (judgment), only total *Chesed* (compassion). For this reason King David called his book *Tehillim*, a book of *tehillot*. With it one can accomplish anything, for it is pure light, a straight connection to the Holy One Blessed be He.

The sefer *Elef L'Magen*, a commentary on the *Matei Ephraim*, says one who says *Tehillim* on a regular basis can avoid all kinds of spiritual encumbrances, from upon himself, his wife and children, and from upon his whole community. He brings upon himself all manner of divine influence, good blessings, success and heavenly compassion. It is customary to increase the recital of Psalms in Elul.

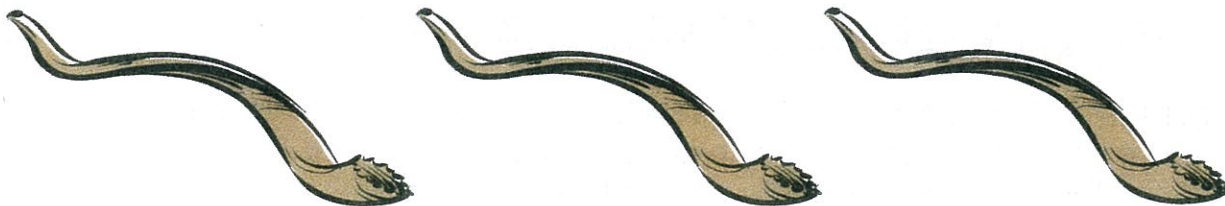
Saying Psalm No. 27

This Psalm is added to the morning and afternoon services.

Learning Ethics (chassidut and mussar)

Improve your ways in preparation for the days of Awe.

Source: <http://www.nishmas.org>



The Month of Elul

The month of Elul is the last of the months in the general Jewish calendar year. It precedes the Days of Awe, commencing with the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah. For this reason the month is characterized by a somber mood reflecting what the rabbis have called the Days of Reconciliation. During the month of Elul, it is customary to make a special effort to improve relationships with one's friends and acquaintances as a token of unbounded love, symbolized in the Hebrew acronym of the first letters of the word ELUL. These letters spell out the Hebrew verse from the Song of Songs (6:3): "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine."

Days of Forgiveness

According to tradition, Rosh Chodesh Elul marks the day when Moses ascended the mountain with the new Tablets of stone, having first pleaded for the grave sin of the Israelites who had worshipped a golden calf in the desert. Divine mercy is offered, and forty days later Moses descends the mount with the Second Tablets as a mark of renewed Divine favor. These 40 days, from Rosh Chodesh Elul until the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, have thus been fixed for generations as days of repentance and forgiveness.

Prayers and Supplications.

Thus, not only is an effort made to improve relationships, but with the approaching Days of Awe, it is customary to set the mood of self-reflection that will culminate in days of prayer and supplication. This period is marked by the recitation of numerous selichot (penitential prayers). The Sephardic community recites Selichot each morning of Elul and the Ashkenazic community recites the Selichot prayers on the Saturday night that precedes Rosh Hashanah.

The Shofar is Sounded

Like a warning bell, from the second day of the month, the shofar (usually a ram's horn) is customarily sounded after the morning prayers. This recalls the blasts blown when Moses ascended the mountain for the second time: it was a reminder to Jews not to fall into temptation again. As it is written: "Shall a shofar blow in the city and the people not tremble?" (Amos 3).

A Special Psalm

Also, from the 2nd day of Elul, Psalm 27 is recited after prayers in the synagogue. The author acclaims: "A psalm of David - the Lord is my light and my salvation... for he will hide me in his tent." The Midrash explains the appropriateness of this recitation during this period: "The Lord is my light" - on Rosh Hashanah; "and my salvation" - on Yom Kippur; "for he will hide me in his tent" - on [the festival of] Sukkot.

THE MANDATE TO CHANGE OURSELVES

Changing ourselves is the very basis of Jewish life. It is the theme that opens Jewish history. The first communication that is described in the Torah between God and Abraham is a strange introduction for a man who sacrificed his life in the service of his Creator. "Lech Lecha -- Go to yourself," (9) after all, is an eviction notice, "from your country, your place of birth and your father's house." The commentaries question the order of the terms. If Abraham would be forced to leave his country, he would, of course, be removed from his parent's home - unless his father had an awfully large house. "Lech Lecha," explains Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, is the removal of a set of influences that comprise our basic make up.

There are three major influences that shape human behavior. "Artzecha" -- your country, describes the contemporary societal influences that affect our standards and perceptions. "Molad't'cha," literally, your birth place, describes where we were at the time of our birth; in other words, the biological factors that definitively shape the dispositions with which we are born. (Clearly, there are people who are more likely to become angry, and others who are naturally disposed to depression.) Lastly, there is "beit avicha," your father's home, perhaps the most influential of the three. Our sense of ourselves is well-shaped by the nurturing messages (or the lack of them) that we received at the time of our youth.

The message of Lech Lecha to Abraham is not one of leaving, but of arriving. It is the allowance of an awareness that Abram may become Abraham; that he has the very basic ability to change himself into someone even greater than he was. This contributes understanding to the literal translation of "Lech lecha" to "Go to yourself." Abraham is commanded to find the qualities which Abram had never been disposed to and which had never been the lessons of his father's home. In a word, Abram is commanded to embark upon a personal journey to become Abraham, to change himself in a way that could only be possible by reaching within to the force of his unlimited soul. If we were to remain the sum total of societal influences, biological factors and familial circumstances, what purpose could be found in our creation?

With this mandate at the incipience of our peoplehood, we are taught that change is the reason for our existence. We are required to know that we have the ability to transcend our natural boundaries, to change ourselves by becoming greater than the sum total of our nature and our nurture.(10) The basic concept of "free will" is predicated upon the intrinsic ability that we are given not to invariably respond as we were "programmed." In light of all the weighty elements or "baggage" that we are given to carry, this obligation to change is no easy task. Yet, our very success in this world depends upon it.

COPING? -- OR CHANGE?

In the arena of modern secular psychotherapy, change is not usually a goal. Coping and personal acceptance are more the standard of treatment. This is, of course, in concert with the "inevitability" of our personhood designed by the uncontrollable elements of nature and nurture. For Jews, however, change is part and parcel of our mandate. True, it is often effective to understand the underlying elements or situations that helped to forge the negative elements of our present. Every good general seeks to understand the enemy before confronting it. But for us, those qualities, however transferred, are part of a Divine burden assigned to a soul that is uniquely structured to respond to that particular challenge. Rooted within our belief system is the unswerving faith that no problem is placed within the script of our lives without our first receiving the strength to respond to it.

I have had the opportunity to counsel many individuals who were predisposed to some very negative tendencies. It is usually fairly simple to help people recognize that their destructive tendencies are wrong and hurtful to themselves and their families. Real transition, however, takes place when they are able to perceive of those negative tendencies as a personal challenge afforded them by their Creator. Focusing on understanding the basis of their perceptions, and searching for that soul strength to transcend the very heavy challenge of their personality, allows them to overcome themselves and be someone greater than they were created. In that sense, the Torah supplies the most impressive and effective form of therapy.

The Hebrew word for change, "leshanot," is the very same word for learning (i.e., in the word "Mishna"). That most important component of our connection to the world of Torah has as its root the ability to change ourselves. Broken down even further, the word "sheini" appears. "Sheini," which means "a second," is the goal of change. Like Abraham, we are given the capacity to transform ourselves into a sheini, another person. One step further in dissecting the word, supplies "shein" or tooth. What better part of the human body to illustrate the ability to change, than the tooth that chops and reshapes the food to release its nourishment? Perhaps this is why we respond to the wicked son at the Passover Seder with the harsh, "...and you shall blunt his teeth," because he has refused to change himself into the image of his Creator the purpose for which he was created.

Changing ourselves is so basic to our being that the unit measure of our lives is described by the word "shana." This word for a "year" is, of course, the same as the Hebrew word for "change." The first commandment given to the Jewish people in the Torah is the consecration of time in the form of Kiddush Hachodesh, the arrangement of the months of the shana. A month, a chodesh, is derived from the word "chadash," or new.

Every quantum of time must be seen as a new opportunity, not merely a stagnant continuation of the past. The consecration of time is the celebration of our ability to make one moment different, unique from the other. In numerous commandments, we are called upon to sanctify. Sanctification is the process of changing something into something somewhat greater than it was before.

Excerpted from **The Power of Change**

by R' Elimelech Goldberg

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by Yisroel Roll

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[Psalm 100, which we say every morning, is a prayer of thanksgiving.] The Talmud tells us that the thanksgiving offering, which was brought by an individual in the Temple in gratitude for a personal miracle that had happened, is going to be the only sacrifice still offered after the coming of Mashiach. The reason is that "giving thanks" is the foundation of my relationship with God. When I realize I have received the gift of being privileged to play a role in God's world, my daily existence takes on new meaning. In this psalm I don't only thank God for the extraordinary miracles that He has performed; I say thank you to God for the miracle of life itself.

Making a blessing on a fruit or other food is not so much for God as it is for me. When I realize that God is personally giving me a gift of this fruit -- because He wants to display His kindness towards me -- then I energize my relationship with Him. He has given, and is always ready, willing, and able to give. God holds out His hand and I shake His hand in acknowledgment of His gift by making a blessing.

It is man who brings the produce full circle to its Source with his thanksgiving offering. Man observes the wonder of this world and elevates the physical world, i.e., an apple, by recognizing God as its Source. Thus, blessings on food in particular, and prayer in general, keep us in a constant state of amazement of the world by causing us to connect even the mundane physical world with its spiritual Source.

Where does an apple come from? A tree. Where does the tree come from? A seed in an apple. Where did that apple come from? A previous tree. Where did that tree come from? An apple from a previous tree. The biological chain goes back to the very first tree. Had there been a break in the chain of tree, apple, seed... anywhere in history, I would not be enjoying this apple. All future apples were "in God's mind" at the creation of the first apple in the Garden of Eden.

When I make a blessing over an apple, I pause for a moment and am awestruck by the notion that God directed the entire course of nature and history in order to give me -- yes me -- this apple. God had me in mind when He created the first tree. When I make a blessing I am saying, "Thanks for the chain of apples, God. Thanks for thinking of me."

In Psalm 100 we say, "Serve God with joy." Every second of our lives can be infused with energy and meaning if we relate everything that happens in our lives to God. When things go well -- I thank God. When things are tough -- I thank God for thinking that I am worth prodding or guiding to higher levels of achievement through

this crisis or challenge. This is real joy: an inner tranquility, an inner peace, which is a by-product of this type of meaningful relationship with God.

Now, sometimes I am not in the mood to serve God with joy. I may not be feeling well, my kids may be acting up, I may be under pressure at work, and I may not have been able to get to my weekly Torah study in two months. In these circumstances how can I serve God with inner tranquility? On what basis can God command me to serve Him in joy if the ordeals He has presented me with bring me to a state of travail and depression?

The commentaries teach us that serving God with joy does not mean that I should be smiling and laughing in the face of adversity. The goal is to face and to go through the ordeal or trial knowing that this is precisely what God wants me to be working through at the present moment. Through the difficult issue with which He is confronting me, he is teaching me that my soul needs to be going through this difficulty right now so that I can grow and develop my character, and through this process come closer to achieving my potential, i.e., the development of my personality. This particular trial is the purpose for my being in the world right now. The only way I can attain true inner tranquility and peace is by facing and working through this issue. And this very realization should produce an inner calm despite the outer pain, frustration, and anxiety.

Of course the test I am currently facing itself challenges my faith in God. That, in fact, is the test -- to be challenged in my faith, to grapple with my pain and doubts, to learn something from the process and thereby pass the test by maintaining my faith. True joy can only be attained by ascending from one level of character development to the next. The process of changing from one mind-set or set of values, and moving on to the next mind-set or level is what we mean by "growth." The growth or development process is itself the source of true joy.

When people face and grapple with their problems, the growth they achieve through the pain and suffering is a refinement of character which is spiritual -- and thereby true joy. In every situation, in the midst of the ordeal that I am facing, I have an opportunity to mentally visualize what type of growth God is seeking from me. The realization that God Himself has assigned this challenge out of His desire for my spiritual growth creates an attachment with God that produces joy.

It is through facing this challenge that I will make my personal contribution to the world. For example, our forefather Jacob went through the ordeal of overcoming his own hesitations and deferring to his mother's Divine direction -- by deceiving his father Isaac and receiving the blessing of the firstborn. And as a result of that ordeal the world was given the eternal principle: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, the hands are the hands of Esav." This principle teaches the world that the voice, the power of the "word," is more powerful than the hand, or sword. This has been the message of the Jew to the world. It only came about through Jacob facing his ordeal and making his contribution despite his misgivings and personal quandary.

Rashi tells us that when Jacob fled from Esav and lived with the immoral Lavan for 20 years, he was still able to keep the Torah's 613 commandments despite the negative influences of his environment. It was an ordeal to be faced with the tricks and deceit of Lavan. But it was Jacob's adherence to Torah values in the face of Lavan's immorality which was Jacob's eternal contribution to the world. If he could do it, there is precedent for me to follow...

It is through Jacob's being away from his parents for 22 years in the house of Lavan that we learn the principle of "measure-for-measure." He was punished for his failure to honor his parents for those 22 years by having his own son Joseph removed from him during the 22 years that Joseph spent in Egypt. Through this torturous test the world learns the principle of the balance of justice in the world. Jacob's ordeal gave rise to this principle.

[More examples abound:] It is through the ordeal of being pressed by the seductive advances of the wife of Potifar that Joseph obtains the title "Joseph the Tzadik." He resisted the temptation and went to prison falsely accused but having maintained the principles of morality. He could only have taught us this eternal lesson had he gone through the ordeal.

The Holy Temple in Jerusalem came about as the result of King David's ordeal. David sinned by counting the people directly in a census. A plague ensued and 70,000 people died. David was instructed to build an altar at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite and to pray for the atonement of his sin and for his people there. That threshing floor became the place upon which the Temple was later built.

My natural reaction to an ordeal, pain, and suffering may be a feeling of anger or frustration. These are normal external reactions to the physical and emotional strain. But these feelings must remain external reactions to the ordeal. The anger and frustration must never be allowed to penetrate so deeply into my psyche that they bring me to despair or depression. The successful passage through the process of the trial will teach me and others an important lesson -- which is the purpose of my ordeal.

In a sense, I must step back from my predicament while it is happening and look at myself from God's perspective. Going through this ordeal with a consciousness that this is God's will, and that working through it is actually my purpose in life at this particular moment, will give me strength to persevere. The perseverance and growth will create a sense of inner joy in the midst of the external sadness. The growth in character that results from weathering the process of the test will bring me to a new level of inner peace.

When a woman goes through the pain of labor and childbirth, it is the labor itself which urges the baby along the birth canal. Therefore, the physical travail and pain of the process of childbirth are necessary to actually produce life...

The message is clear. The ordeal itself, if it is successfully met, is the redemption. Even though I might not know why I am going through a particular difficulty, the realization that the process itself is necessary to attain a required development of my character or personality, gives me the strength to withstand the test. What looked like pain is actually the medium which led to my change in character, which in turn creates within me joy -- the sweetness of achievement, growth, and thus, inner peace. The transition from one level of personality to the next gives rise to real inner joy. The external sadness produced by the ordeal remains superficial to my internal realization of my "service of God with joy" -- when I extract spiritual growth from my ordeal.

MODERN MUSAR

Mudah u-Midot -- Self-awareness and Virtues

The modern musarnik is committed to living a life of *virtue*. In order to do so, he or she must be willing to be very introspective, very much self-aware. Such a person will be able to look honestly and courageously at him/herself, and judge whether he or she has been as ethical when interacting with others as was legitimately possible. *The more one lives a life of virtue, the more one's self-esteem grows.*

Two Helpful Guidelines: 1) Judaism teaches that God governs the world by seven characteristics: wisdom, fairness, justice, kindness, compassion, truth and peace (*Avot d'Rabbi Natan 37:8*). Measure your actions against these characteristics. 2) *Love your neighbor as yourself* (Leviticus 19:18). The great rabbinical leader Hillel stated this teaching as follows: *That which is hateful to you, do not do to another* (*Talmud, Shabbat 31a*). Before you carry out an act, put it to this test: Would I want someone to treat me this way? If the answer is yes, then go ahead. If the answer is no, do something else.

Daily Hanhagah: Fulfill at least 18 (Chai = Life!) deeds of kindness and fairness each day.

Vidui - Confession

This is perhaps the most challenging component of **modern musar**. By making a confession, we assume responsibility for our misdeeds. And this means recognizing that we are all fallible. It means accepting that you, *yourself*, sometimes do the wrong thing...at times accidentally, at times inadvertently or perhaps insensitively, at times purposefully. When you can consciously admit this to yourself and at least one other person, then and only then can you begin to take responsibility for your impact on those around you. Only when you can make vidui honestly, can you grow in integrity. And that is what **modern musar** is all about.

Daily Hanhagah: Whenever interpersonal tension arises, assess the extent to which your own behavior might be responsible. When you have been in the wrong: admit it, apologize, and pledge to do better next time. This is *t'shuvah* - repentance - and it always leads to personal growth.

Savar - Reasoning

One's intellectual strivings strengthen one's ability to apply reason. This implies more than increasing knowledge, although that is clearly a good thing. Even more important, however, is growing in wisdom. There are strategies that one can employ in order to do so. In modern musar they involve studying Jewish wisdom teachings and then testing those teachings against the background of our own personal experience, and also assessing the extent to which they might be generalized to all people. Moreover, since there are virtually always some circumstances wherein a teaching may not apply, understanding why is no less important than knowing when that teaching does apply.

To do this, we apply the wisdom discipline (HoCHMA). We ask: 1) Where is the HOLiness in this teaching? In what ways is it insightful, true and noble? 2) How might this teaching be CHallenged? What are its weaknesses? Under what circumstances might it not apply? 3) How might Modify the teaching to make it even more illuminating? And finally 4) What, then, are the likely Anticipated outcomes of acting on the basis of this teaching? And then what...and then what...?

Occasionally **virtue** and **wisdom** may clash. While it is always virtuous to employ wisdom, it is not always wise to be virtuous. Example: Jewish law stipulates that if two people are lost in the desert, and only one of them has water, and it is not enough for both of them to make it to safety, the owner of the water should keep the water and save himself. While it would be very virtuous for him either to give the water to his companion, or to insist that they both share the water and hope for the best, it is clearly wise for the owner of the water to keep it and thereby save at least one life - his own. Therefore, the practitioner of **modern musar** must weigh virtue in the balance of wisdom, and wisdom in the balance of virtue.

Daily Hanhagah: Select a wisdom teaching each day and apply it whenever you find it may be helpful. Under what circumstances might it not be helpful? How would you modify it? What will be the results?

Ruchaniut - Spirituality

Only when our strivings for goodness, nobility and wisdom are attached to "something greater" will they take firm root. Knowing that such behavior is Godly is highly motivating. Beginning with oneself, the perhaps influencing one's immediate circle of family and friends, and then hopefully one's community, **modern musar** attempts to turn the tide of callousness and shallowness that characterize contemporary society. At every level, the task is extremely demanding. When we ground our commitment to **musar** in a belief that God mandates it, our efforts are more likely to be sustained.

Therefore, a modern musarnik will find it helpful to strengthen his or her prayer and meditation skills, through communal worship (on Shabbat and holidays) and private spiritual practice.

Daily Hanhagah: In a quiet, private space, spend at least five minutes praying or meditating. Increase the length of time as you are able.

Rabbi Howard O. Laibson

B'TZELEM ELOHIM - CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE: THE SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS BY WHICH GOD FUNCTIONS

Jewish tradition illustrates the precise values through which God functions in the world (*Avot d'Rabbi Natan 37:8*). This information helps us to understand what it means to be created in God's image; more importantly, it instructs us how we can therefore imitate God. Interpreting *Hosea 2:20-21*, the Rabbis (in the passage cited above) came to understand that God acts according to these seven characteristics: wisdom, righteousness, justice, kindness, compassion, truth and peace.

* * *

Wisdom: *Chochmah* refers to using our knowledge in a manner that is effective and beneficial. When we employ *chochmah*, 1) we assess an idea's relative benefits and liabilities; 2) we reflect on how our perceptual filters influence our judgment; 3) we then refine our assessments; and 4) we anticipate outcomes

as they effect specific individuals and people in general. It is the application of *chochmah* that brings a sense of balance to our lives, whenever the six characteristics mentioned below complete for our allegiance, and whenever our needs, desires and duties come into conflict ... which, of course, is daily!

Righteousness: *Mishpat* refers to following rules and procedures (so long as they are applied equally to all and do not violate essential Jewish values). The idea here is rather simple: for society to function effectively, rules and procedures must be followed to ensure fairness. This means putting things back where you found them, cleaning up your own messes, apologizing when you hurt someone, not taking things that belong to others, and all of the other things we need to know that we learned in kindergarten.

Justice: *Tzedek* refers to that deeper, more profound sense of fairness which is built into our very being. When the weak, poor or helpless are oppressed, that sense of unfairness we feel deep in our *kishkes* reflects our awareness of *tzedek*. Whenever we see or hear of an injustice done to someone and we think and feel that something out to be done to right the wrong, to reset the balance of fairness, then we are responding to the call of justice.

Kindness: *Chesed* refers to that attitude which assumes the sanctity -- equals to our own or those we love - of every person, and which then calls us to respond in a caring manner. *Chesed* results from our taking seriously the notion that each person has within them a spark of the Divine, thus moving us to treat him or her with respect. *Chesed* results from our *loving our neighbor as ourselves* - from our treating others in the same manner in which we would want to be treated under similar circumstances.

Compassion: *Rachamim* refers to a deeper empathy that we feel for others who are in crisis. When we respond to another's pain with a sense of pain ourselves, we demonstrate *rachamin*. When we seek the good in everyone and remember that the weaknesses we see in others are often found within us as well, we demonstrate *rachamin*.

Truth: *Emet* brings us to an awareness of reality - to recognize simply that what is, *is*. Therefore, *emet* requires that we look deeply at ourselves and how our values, attitudes and biases filter how we perceive the world - a process that is at once challenging and liberating. However, *emet* is not *blinding* truth. *Emet* directs us to share the truth when it will be helpful to someone, but not if it will only hurt someone.

Peace: *Shalom* means much more than merely the absence of conflict. It means *wholeness*, *completion*, possessing *integrity*. When we act as if our lives have a sense of purpose, then we have *shalom*, even if our lives are filled with strife. We come to be able to accept life's challenges and crises with a degree of grace.

* * *

According to Jewish tradition, these seven characteristics describe how God governs our world. It is incumbent on us, therefore, to imitate God and reflect these characteristics in our own dealings with others. In this manner, we can fulfill the Torah's commandment: "you shall be holy, for I, the Eternal God, am holy" (Leviticus 19).

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<http://www.tilb.org/>

לדוד ה' אורי (תהילים כ"ז)

לדוד ה' אורי וישעי ממי אירא ה' מעוז חיי ממי אפחד. בקרב עלי מרעים לאכל את
בשרי צרי ואויבי לי המה כשלו ונפלו. אם תחנה עלי מחנה לא יירא לבי אם תקום עלי
מלחמה בזאת אני בוטח. אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש שבתי בבית ה' כל ימי חיי
לחזות בנועם ה' ולבקר בהיכלו. כי יצפוני בסכה ביום רעה יסתרני בסתר אהלו בצור
ידוממני. ועתה ירום ראשי על אויבי סביבותי ואזבחה באהלו זבחי תרועה אשירה
ואזמרה לה'.

שמע ה' קולי אקרא וחנני וענני. לך אמר לבי בקשו פני את פניך ה' אבקש. אל תסתר
פניך ממני אל תט באף עבדך עזרתי היית אל תטשני ואל תעזבני אלוקי ישעי. כי אבי
ואמי עזבוני וה' יאספני. הורני ה' דרכך ונחני בארה מישור למען שוררי. אל תתנני
בנפש צרי כי קמו בי עדי שקר ויפח חמסם. לולא האמנתי לראות בטוב ה' בארץ חיים.
קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה'.

LeDavid Hashem Ori (Tehilim Kaf Zayin)

LeDavid Hashem ori veyishi mimi ira Hashem ma'oz chayyai mimi efchad. Bikrov alai mereiim
le'echol et bsari tsarai veoyvai li heima kashlu venafalu. Im tachaneh alai machaneh lo yira libi im
takum alai milchama bezot ani boteach. Achat sha'alti me'et Hashem ota avakesh shivti beveit
Hashem kol yemei chayyai lachazot benoam Hashem ulevaker beheichalo. Ki yetsafneini besuko
beyom ra'ah yastireini beseter ahalo betzur yeromemenu. Ve'ata yarum roshi al oyvai svivotai
ve'ezbecha be'ahalo zivchei teruah ashira veazamra l' Hashem.

Shma Hashem koli ekra vechaneini veaneini. Lecha amar libi bakshu panai et panecha Hashem
avakesh. Al taster panecha mimenu al tat be'af avdecha ezrati hayita al titsheini ve'al ta'azveini
elokei yishi'i. Ki avi ve'imi azavuni ve'Hashem ya'asfeini. Horeini Hashem derkecha unecheini
beorach mishor lema'an shorerai. Al titneini benefesh tsarai ki kamu bi eidei sheker veyifeiach
chamas. Lulei he'emanti lir'ot betuv Hashem be'erezt chayim. Kaveh el Hashem chazak
veyaametz libecha vekaeh el Hashem.

The Lord is My Light (Psalms 27)

The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of
whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my
flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should camp against me, my heart shall not fear:
though war should rise against me, even then I will be confident. One thing have I desired of the
Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to
behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple. For in the day of evil he shall hide me
in his pavilion: in the covert of his tent he shall hide me; he shall set me up a rock. And now shall
my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore I will offer in his tabernacle
sacrifices of joy; I will sing, and I will make melody to the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: be gracious to me, and answer me. Of thee my heart has
said, Seek my face. Thy face, O Lord, I seek. Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away
in anger: thou hast been my help; abandon me not, nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. For
my father and mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me up. Teach me thy way, O Lord,
and lead me in an even path, because of my enemies. deliver me not over to the will of my
enemies. For false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out violence. Were it
not that I believed I should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the
Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: and wait on the Lord.

Psalm 27

Adonai is my Light and my Help;
whom will I fear?
Adonai is the Strength of my life;
who can make me afraid?

When evil people draw near to devour my flesh --
it is these foes and enemies who stumble and fall.

Even if an army rises up against me,
my heart will have no fear!
Even if a whole war besets me,
I will still feel secure.

One thing I ask from Adonai,
one thing I seek:
to dwell in Adonai's house all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of Adonai,
to explore Adonai's sanctuary.

Adonai will shelter me in a Sukkah
on an evil day;
Adonai will conceal me in the secret shelter of a tent,
raise me up safely upon a rock.

My head is high above my enemies around me;
I sacrifice in Adonai's tent, to the blasts of trumpets,
singing and chanting a hymn to Adonai!

Adonai -- *sh'ma*/hear my voice when I call!
Have mercy on me and respond!

You seek my heart,
My heart seeks You --
I seek Your Presence.

Do not hide Your Face from me;
Do not turn Your servant away in anger!
You have always been my Help
so do not abandon me, do not forsake me,
my God, my Saving One.

Even if my father and mother abandoned me,
Adonai would gather me in.

Teach me Your ways, Adonai,
Guide me on a straight and level path,
because of my watchful enemies.

Do not hand me over to my foes;
ignore the false witnesses and unjust accusers
who rise up against me,
breathing violence!

I believe I will yet see Adonai's Goodness
in the Land of Life.

Hope in Adonai!
Be strong inside, and let your heart be brave!
Yes, yes, hope in Adonai!

Translation by Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, CSW (C) 1995