

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

CLEAN HANDS

Rav Shimon Schwab, who led Khal Adath Jeshurun for over 35 years, once spoke out strongly against the “audacity” and “shame” of Jews who observe *mitzvos* such as Shabbos and *kashrus* meticulously, yet who engage in dishonest business dealings.

“A Jew cannot choose to follow one set of halachos and disregard another,” he declared.

He condemned the “ugly traits” of “gross materialism, blatant selfishness, insatiable love of wealth and brazen disregard for common decency.”

This, he said, was true even when they are accompanied by “excessive charity and benevolence.”

Rav Schwab ended his speech with the rousing call, “Let us proclaim, loud and clear, that we shall have no part of such sickly ‘Yiddishkeit.’ Our aim is to strive for *kiddush Hashem*, and in order to reach this goal we shall band together and march together, we and our children, with clean hands and pure hearts, toward the dawn of geulah, speedily in our days.”

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gem

OF THE WEEK

THE POWER TO CHOOSE

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

The most significant result of realizing *yichud Hashem* is the need to love Hashem *bechol levavecha*—i.e., with both the *yetzer hara* and *yetzer tov*. The capacity to be attracted to things that are evil or physical was been given to us by the same G-d who gave us the capacity to be drawn to things that are noble and good. Both inclinations are manifestations of His love. It is Hashem Who wove the two together into our human potential.

That Hashem created us vulnerable to the pull of evil does not mean He loves us any less. On the contrary, the existence of the *yetzer hara* is proof that He loves us, for in it lies all our dignity.

Without the capacity to feel drawn to evil, there would be no morality. Our essence would consist of bodily desires, like animals—attracted only to what it needs to function. If baseness and evil held no charm for us; if they left us indifferent or even repelled us; if goodness attracted us with irresistible magnetism and did not require self-control, then yes, we would never do anything evil, but we would also never do anything good. Any good that we

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

U'KESHARTAM L'OS:
NIGHT AND DAY



The mitzvah of *tefillin* is really two separate *mitzvos*—one for the *shel yad* and one for the *shel rosh*. Each of the *batim* contains the four *parshiyos* in which the mitzvah of *tefillin* is written in the Chumash.

The *shel yad* contains all four *parshiyos* on one scroll, whereas the *shel rosh* has four separate compartments, each containing a scroll with just one *parsha*.

The mitzvah of *tefillin* is found in the Shema because *tefillin* is a part of *kabbalas ol malchus shamayim*.

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom

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EMUNAH LOGIC, EMUNAH EMOTION

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation


Why don't we automatically feel afraid of committing an *aveirah*, if we believe that there is reward and punishment for everything we do? Rav Itzele Peterburger explains this at length.

This world was created in order to give human beings an opportunity to have a share in Olam Haba. In order to rightfully earn it, we must have what is known as "free will." This means that the Creator does not control what the individual does and, as the Rambam states, there is nothing pulling him one way or the other, to good or evil. Although Hashem controls everything in this world, it is His will to leave the ability to choose exclusively in each individual's hands. Then, if the person makes the right choices, he will be deserving of the great and unimaginable happiness of Olam Haba.

But if a person would fear Hashem naturally, as we do fire and weapons, there could not possibly be any free will. Would a driver speed in full view of a police officer? Would a person who hears the cry of "fire" not exit the building?

Hashem created us with a natural instinct to fear anything that could bring harm—with one exception. *Yiras shamayim* is the only form of fear that does not come to us naturally. Even someone who is a sincere *maamin* can go through life ignoring his *emunah*, doing that which is contrary to what his *seichel* tells him is the truth.


Every day in Aleinu, we recite the words "*Veyadata hayom vehashevosa el levavecha ki Hashem hu haElokim*"—you shall know today, and answer to your heart, that Hashem is G-d. To "know" is to understand with one's intelligence, logic and *seichel*. But to "answer to one's heart" is to internalize that knowledge until it is felt in the emotions as well. Rational *emunah* does not automatically penetrate to one's feelings. But it can be done.

Based on this idea, Rav Yisrael Salanter founded the *mussar* movement. The study of *mussar sefarim* like Mesilas Yesharim and Shaarei Teshuvah, using a tune that arouses one's emotions, can help one internalize *emunah* into the heart. A similar effect can be gained through a passionate recital of *brachos* and *tefillos* every day. As Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky used to say, the best *mussar sefer* is a *siddur*. 

did do would not be of our free will. It would only be a result of natural, physical compulsion. Without a *yetzer hara*, man would have no moral dignity.

The truth is that no human quality is, in itself, good or bad. Every quality, from the most physical to the most spiritual, can be good or bad. It is good if we use it within the limits and purposes assigned by Hashem; it is bad if we misuse it by exceeding those limits or by using it for the wrong reasons.

Thus, to love Hashem with all our hearts—with both *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hara*—means to devote all our thoughts, along with all our personality traits and aspirations, solely to the fulfillment of His Will, using them all to serve Hashem. The way we use our qualities should bring us closer to Him.

The nature of this mitzvah—to love Hashem with all our heart—means that we must be ready to gladly give up our dearest wishes if they are not what Hashem wants. In the depths of our hearts we must know that all of Hashem's attributes are love: He takes away with love just as He gives with love. 

Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.




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BRAVE FACE



What happens in the brain when we feel fear?

In Parshas Shoftim, the Torah says that a soldier who is afraid should go home. Fear begins deep in the brain, in a part called the amygdala. This small, almond-shaped structure scans everything you see and hear for danger. If it senses a threat, it sends out an instant alert, before your brain finishes thinking it through, and triggers a fight-or-flight response. The heart beats faster, breathing speeds up, and muscles tense. The body gets ready to run, hide, or fight. At the same time, parts of your brain that handle logical thinking slow down—too much fear can cloud judgment. Understanding fear helps us recognize how Hashem designed our brains to help us survive, and know when to step back and when to push through. 

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