

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
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Foundation

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life

LESSONS

FEELING GOOD WILL

Rav Mendel Kaplan was once approached by a recent *baal teshuvah* who was returning home to visit his parents. The young man wanted to know the nature of his spiritual obligations during his visit, and Rav Mendel replied, “Your mitzvah while you are at home is to honor your parents. You must find things to do that they will appreciate, such as washing and waxing your father’s car.”

Rav Mendel was once approached by a wealthy man who was seeking advice on how to formulate his will. He wanted to know how money he should leave to his children, who were not religious, and how much he should leave for charity. “Leave the majority of your assets to your children,” Rav Mendel advised him. “If you leave too much money to charity, it will cause your children to feel ill will toward Yiddishkeit. On the other hand, leaving most of your money to them will cause them to look favorably on your beliefs. They may even begin observing Shabbos as a result.”

Shortly after his passing, someone else brought Rav Mendel’s car to his usual auto shop for repairs. One of the non-Jewish workers recognized the car and asked, “Where is the rabbi?” When he was told that Rav Mendel had passed away, the man began to weep. “I know I am a simple mechanic,” he said, “but the rabbi always treated me like a special person. He would take interest in my life and would make me feel like a million dollars. No one in the world made me feel as good as he did.”

Adapted from A Life Worth Living by Rabbi Shraga Freedman, with the permission of the publisher



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

HAMAARIV ARAVIM:
KEDUSHA AT NIGHT



The structure, significance, and ideas of the *brachos* surrounding the evening Shema are essentially the same as those we say during Shacharis. The variations are due to differing perceptions and ideas we have about the evening. The Kedusha of the angels is omitted, which might be explained by *midrashim* that state that *malachim* proclaim Kedusha only in the daytime. As the highest pronouncement of Hashem’s glory, Kedusha should only be spoken during the day, when we can perceive nature and the rule of G-d in its full splendor. It is omitted at night, when the world of nature is hidden from the grasp of our senses.

Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk

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JUDGMENT AND JOY

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation


With summer drawing to a close and Elul upon us, our thoughts turn to the serious side of life. In just a few weeks, every human being in the world will stand before the Creator in judgment, and each person's destiny for the next year will be decided. It is a frightening thought, one that will hopefully arouse us to examine ourselves, see where we need improvement, and prepare to deserve a positive fate.

Rav Itzele Peterburger, one of the great *talmidim* of Rav Yisrael Salanter, was known for his great *yiras shamayim*; he was known to have fainted when the *chazan* announced the day of Rosh Chodesh Elul. He used to visit the Russian court during Elul to watch the defendants squirm in their seats, driving home the realization that we all sit in judgment on Rosh Hashanah.

But Elul also has a bright and encouraging side. It is well-known that Elul is hinted to by various *pesukim*, most famously *ani l'dodi v'dodi li*, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." This pasuk is found in Shir Hashirim, an extended allusion to the love relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people, and its *roshei teivos* spell out "Elul."

This is not a coincidence. Elul has been a time of great favor since the forty days that Moshe Rabbeinu prayed for forgiveness for Cheit Ha'eigel. Those days culminated on the tenth of Tishrei, which was established forever as a Day of Atonement.


When our ancestors heard Hashem speak to them at Har Sinai, they asked Moshe Rabbeinu to serve as their go-between for all future messages, since the experience of prophecy was traumatic. Nevertheless, they longed for closeness to Hashem to hear Him speak. "Strengthen me with cups of wine, revive me with apples, for I am lovesick," says Shir Hashirim. Targum comments that when they no longer heard Hashem directly, they were sick with longing for Him. They found relief by going into the *beis midrash* to learn the word of Hashem.

Elul, too, is a frightening time, but it is the time of the year when Hashem draws ever closer to us, supporting us as we perform the desired *teshuvah* and merit a *kesiva v'chasima tova*. 

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.




wonder WORLD

DIRT CHEAP II



What animals live in dirt?

Dirt is home to a quarter of the species on earth. One gram of soil can harbor up to 10 billion organisms, more than the number of people on the planet! One of the real heroes of soil is the humble earthworm. Its activity offers many benefits, from increased nutrient availability and better drainage, to creating a more stable soil structure.

However, only about 1% of the microorganisms in soil have been identified so far. This includes many single-celled organisms, such as bacteria, as well as fungi. There is so much about the organisms that live in our soils that we still don't understand, and many think that further research could lead to important scientific developments. 

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