

STEP 1: Repairing Our Relationship with Ourselves

Sara Frieberg - Young Israel of Hollywood - Elul 5781

1. Berakhot 17a

After his prayer, Rava said the following: My God, before I was created I was worthless, and now that I have been created it is as if I had not been created, (I am no more significant). I am dust in life, all the more so in my death. I am before You as a vessel filled with shame and humiliation. (Therefore,) may it be Your will, Lord my God, that I will sin no more, and that those (transgressions) that I have committed, cleanse in Your abundant mercy; but (may this cleansing) not be by means of suffering and serious illness, (but rather in a manner I will be able to easily endure.) And this is the confession of Rav Hamnuna Zuti on Yom Kippur.

2. Eruvin 13b

The Sages taught the following *baraita*: For two and a half years, Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagreed. These say: It would have been preferable had man not been created than to have been created. And those said: It is preferable for man to have been created than had he not been created. Ultimately, they were counted and concluded: It would have been preferable had man not been created than to have been created. However, now that he has been created, he should examine (*yefashpesh*) his actions. And some say: He should scrutinize (*yemashmesh*) his actions

3. Rashi on Eruvin 13b

Examine his actions - that he already did and check transgressions he did and confess and return. **Scrutinize his actions**: For example if a mitzvah opportunity comes his way he should consider the loss of the mitzvah versus the reward, for the reward will come in the future. And if a opportunity to sin presents itself he should consider its reward which he is intoxicated by now, versus its loss in the future in order to reject it.

4. Rav. J.B. Soloveitchik: *The Rav Speaks* p. 133

Repentance is grounded in two principles. 1. On the power within man to accuse himself, and his ability to see himself as unworthy and inferior. In the confessional declaration on Yom Kippur

ברכות י"ז א

בְּרַבָּא בְּתַר צְלוּתֵיהּ אָמַר הָכִי: "אֱלֹהִי, עַד שְׁלֹא נִוצַרְתִּי אֵינִי כְּדָאִי, וְעַכְשָׁיו שְׁנוּצַרְתִּי כְּאֵלוֹ לֹא נִוצַרְתִּי. עֶפֶר אֲנִי בְּחַיִּי, קַל וְחֹמֶר בְּמִיתָתִי, הָרִי אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ כְּכֹלֵי מְלֵא בּוֹשָׁה וּכְלִמָּה. יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵי, שְׁלֹא אֶתְטָא עוֹד, וּמָה שְׁחֻטָּאִיתִי לְפָנֶיךָ מְרַק בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הֶרְבִּים, אֲבָל לֹא עַל יְדֵי יְסוּרִין וְחִלָּאִים רַעִים". וְהֵינּוּ וִידוּי דְרַב הַמְּנוּבָא זוּטֵי בְּיוֹמָא דְכַפּוּרֵי.

עירובין י"ג ב:י"ד

תָּנּוּ רַבָּנָן: שְׁתֵּי שְׁנִים וּמְחַצָּה נִחְלְקוּ בֵּית שַׁמַּאי וּבֵית הֵלֵל. הֵלְלוּ אוֹמְרִים: נוֹחַ לוֹ לְאָדָם שְׁלֹא נִבְרָא יוֹתֵר מִשְׁנִבְרָא, וְהֵלְלוּ אוֹמְרִים: נוֹחַ לוֹ לְאָדָם שְׁנִבְרָא יוֹתֵר מִשְׁלֹא נִבְרָא. נִמְנוּ וְנִגְמְרוּ: נוֹחַ לוֹ לְאָדָם שְׁלֹא נִבְרָא יוֹתֵר מִשְׁנִבְרָא, עַכְשָׁיו שְׁנִבְרָא — יִפְשַׁפֵּשׁ בְּמַעֲשָׁיו. וְאָמְרֵי לֵה: יִמְשַׁמֵּשׁ בְּמַעֲשָׁיו.

רש"י על עירובין י"ג ב:י"ד

יִפְשַׁפֵּשׁ מַעֲשָׁיו - שֶׁעָשָׂה כִּבְר וּיְבִדּוּק עֲבִירוֹת שְׁבִידוֹ וַיְתוּדָה וַיִּשׁוּב: יִמְשַׁמֵּשׁ בְּמַעֲשָׁיו - כְּגוֹן אִם בֵּא מִצְוָה לִידוֹ יִחַשֵׁב הַפְסַד מִצְוָה כְּנֹגַד שְׂכָרָה וְלֹא יִנְיָה לַעֲשׂוֹתָהּ בְּשִׁבִיל הַהַפְסַד שֶׁהָרִי שְׂכָרָה עֵתִיד לְבוֹא וְאִם בֵּאֵת לִידוֹ עֲבִירָה יִחַשֵׁב שְׂכָרוֹ שֶׁמִּשְׁתַּכֵּר בָּהּ עַכְשָׁיו כְּנֹגַד הַפְסַדָּה הָעֵתִיד לִיִּפְרַע מִמֶּנּוּ:

“But Thou art righteous in all that is come upon us; for Thou has acted truthfully, but we have wrought unrighteousness,” the wonderful power of total, unreserved self-accusation is expressed. 2. On the great ability of each individual to cleanse himself, to grasp that the boundless spiritual forces hidden away within the human personality (including that of even the greatest sinner) drive one towards return to God. On the ability of man to raise himself to the greatest heights, if he but wishes it, though he has sunk to the abysmal depths of impurity. The second principle is just as important as the first. A person is unable to repent if he lacks the courage to blame and to condemn himself. Regret is impossible without recognition of sin. On the other hand, one cannot imagine recognition of sin and commitment for the future unless man believes in his creative faculties and ability, and in the powers of his soul that help him to sanctify himself.

5. Rav Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, vol. 1 p.168:

Every person must know that he has importance. Not imaginary importance where one “values oneself through one’s own evaluation,” a phrase used by Mesillat Yesharim to describe haughtiness. Rather, importance with deep and trembling ramifications. [The Gemara, Sanhedrin 37a, states] “Each person must say: the world was created for me.” Rashi [explains] Meaning that I am as important as a whole world... “Like the entire world” – This is the one- time life experience of a particular person – there was never a person like him and nor will there ever be a person like him throughout history. I, with my special character strengths, the child of my parents, born at a specific time period, and in a certain environment – certainly there is a unique challenge that is placed upon me. I have a special share in the Torah, and the entire world is waiting for me to actualize that which is incumbent upon me. For my role cannot be exchanged with anyone else in the world!

Without a consciousness of one's importance, there can be no work in the Torah...

The beginning of all personal work is specifically the experience of human exaltation, because one who does not base oneself on the concept of the importance of man from his creation, and deals with himself entirely to widen his knowledge of the evil within him and to torment himself regarding it, he will become subsumed with despair more and more, and in the end he will come to terms with the evil, with no hope to repair it....

6. Pirkei Avot 2:13

(13) Rabbi Shimon said: ... And be not wicked in your own esteem.

כל אדם חייב לדעת, שיש לו חשיבות, לא חשיבות מדומה שהוא “מחשיב עצמו בעצמו”, כפי שהמסילת ישירים מגדיר את הגאווה (בפרק יא), אלא חשיבות בעלת-משמעות עמוקה ואף מזעזעת. “כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר: בשבילי נברא העולם” — רש”י: “כלומר: חשוב אני כעולם מלא... (סנהדרין לז, א) “כעולם מלא” — זוהי חוית חד-פעמיותו של האדם, שלא היה עוד כמותו ולא יהיה כמותו עד סוף כל הדורות. אני עם המיזוג המיוחד של כוחותי, בן לאותם אבות, נולד בתוך אותה תקופה ובאותה סביבה- בודאי עבודה מיוחדת מוטלת עלי, חלק מיוחד לי בתורה, וכל הבריאה מחכה לי שאתקן את המוטל עלי, כי את עבודתי לא אוכל להחליף עם שום אדם אחר בעולם!... בלי תודעת חשיבות — אין עבודה בתורה... התחלת כל עבודה פרטית — היא דווקא חויית רוממות האדם, כי מי שלא עמד מעולם על רוממות האדם מיצירתו, וכל עסקו עם עצמו הוא רק להרחיב ידיעותיו על הרע שבו ולייסר עצמו על זה — ישקע בייאוש עוד ועוד, ובסוף ישלים עם הרע — מאפס תקווה לתקנו...

משנה אבות ב'י"ג

(יג) רבי שמעון אומר... ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך:

7. Rambam on Pirkei Avot 2:13

When a man thinks of himself as lacking [virtue] and low, a negative [act] will not seem [too] big in his eyes for him to do it (i.e. beneath his dignity).

רמב"ם משנה אבות ב' י"ג

כשיחשוב אדם עצמו חסר ופחות לא יגדל בעיניו חסרון שיעשהו

8. Rabbeinu Yonah on Pirkei Avot 2:13

And do not be wicked in your own eyes: That he not be an evildoer in his own eyes, [such] that he not be able to repent. As it comes out that this one gives up on repentance - and if a sin comes to his hand, it is (as if) it is permitted to him, since it comes to his mind that it is light compared to the heavy ones that he has previously transgressed.

רבינו יונה על פרקי אבות ב' י"ג

ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך. שלא יהא רשע בפני עצמו שאינו יכול לחזור בתשובה. שנמצא זה מתיאש לבו מן התשובה ואם באת לידו עבירה הותרה לו. לפי שמעלה דעתו שהיא קלה כנגד החמורות שעבר עליהן.

9. I Samuel 15:17

(17) And Samuel said, "You may look small to yourself, but you are the head of the tribes of Israel. The LORD anointed you king over Israel,

שמואל א ט"ו י"ז

(יז) וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל הֲלוֹא אִם־קִטַּן אֶתָּה בְּעֵינֶיךָ רֹאשׁ שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתָּה וַיִּמְשַׁחָהּ ה' לְמַלְכָּה עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

10. Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski M.D., *Let Us Make Man* p. 20

The Divine reprimand to Shaul indicates that in his great piety and profound humility, Shaul had gone too far and had crossed that hairbreadth beyond which the virtue of humility ends and the dangerous self-effacement of personal negativity begins. It was this type of improper self-effacement that led Shaul to allow himself to be overruled by the wishes of the populace. It was also this self-effacement that led to his futile attempt to defend his actions and that precluded the prompt admission of having done wrong that could have been his salvation.

11. Duties of the Heart, Sixth Treatise on Submission,

(9) The reprehensible one - that a person prides himself on his wisdom or a righteous man on his good deeds. This causes the wisdom and righteousness to become magnified in his eyes, so that he is satisfied with what he has already accomplished, and thinks that it is enough for him the good reputation and praise he has achieved from his fellow men. This will cause him to look down on others, despise them, and speak badly of them, to belittle the wise men of his generation in his eyes, and glorify himself in the shortcomings and ignorance of other people. Our Rabbis of blessed memory call this: "one who seeks honor by putting down others (has no share in the world to come)". One like this will never be submitted nor humble.

The praiseworthy [category of pride in one's spiritual achievements]: As the pride of the wise in their wisdom or the righteous in their good deeds, is that which leads one

חובות הלבבות, שער שישי - שער הכניעה

ט'

המגונה שיתגאה האדם בחכמתו והצדיק במעשהו וגורם זה שירבה בעיניו ויספיק אצלו מה שקדם לו מהם ולחשוב שדי לו במה שיצא לו מן השם הטוב והשבח אצל בני אדם ולבזות בני אדם ולגעול אותם ולספר בגנותם ולהיות חכמי דורו וגדוליהם פחותים בעיניו ולהתפאר בקצור חבריו וסכלותם וזה הוא הנקרא אצל רז"ל מתכבד בקלון חבירו ובזה לא יהיה נכנע ולא עניו

...והמשובח כשמתגאה החכם בחכמתו והצדיק במעשהו הודאה לגודל טובת הבורא עליו בהם ושמחה בעבורם ויגרום לו להוסיף ולהשתדל

בהם

to thank God for granting these gifts and to take joy in them; to become even more determined to seek further levels of wisdom and piety ...

12. Dr. Nethaniel Branden: How to Raise Your Self Esteem

Apart from problems that are biological in origin, I cannot think of a single psychological difficulty—from anxiety and depression, to fear of intimacy or of success, to alcohol or drug abuse, to underachievement at school or at work, to spouse battering or child molestation, to sexual dysfunctions or emotional immaturity, to suicide or crimes of violence—that is not traceable to poor self-esteem. Of all the judgments we pass, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves. Positive self-esteem is a cardinal requirement of a fulfilling life.

Let us understand what self-esteem is. It has two components: a feeling of personal competence and a feeling of personal worth. In other words, self-esteem is the sum of self-confidence and self-respect. It reflects your implicit judgment of your ability to cope with the challenges of your life (to understand and master your problems) and of your right to be happy (to respect and stand up for your interests and needs).

To have high self-esteem is to feel confidently appropriate to life, that is, competent and worthy in the sense just indicated. To have low self-esteem is to feel inappropriate to life; wrong, not about this issue or that, but *wrong as a person*. To have average self-esteem is to fluctuate between feeling appropriate and inappropriate, right and wrong as a person, and to manifest these inconsistencies in behavior—sometimes acting wisely, sometimes acting foolishly—thereby reinforcing the uncertainty.

13. Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, Angels Don't Leave Footprints, p. 11

Someone with self-esteem feels that he has the wherewithal to deal with life. He has the ability to think, learn, make decisions, and cope with whatever situations life will present him.

14. Pirkei Avot 1:14

He [also] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self [only], what am I? And if not now, when?

משנה אבות א':י"ד
הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אָנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׁאָנִי לְעַצְמִי,
מָה אָנִי. וְאִם לֹא עִקְשָׁיו, אֵימָתִי:

15. Rambam on Pirkei Avot 1:14

He said, "If I myself will not be the one that arouses my soul to virtue, who will arouse me, as I have no one to stimulate me from outside," like we have elucidated... "And since it is in my power to incline my soul to any side that I want, what deed have I done from the good deeds." It is as if he is [questioning] himself and saying, "What am I?" [This is] to say, "What is [becoming of] me? I am not complete, even if I did this matter." ...

רמב"ם משנה אבות א':י"ד
אמר אִם לֹא אֵהִיָּה אֲנִי בְעַצְמִי הַמְעוֹרֵר נַפְשִׁי
לְמַעַלְהָ מִי יַעֲרִיחַ שְׂאִין לִי מְעוֹרֵר מִחוּץ כְּמוֹ
שְׂבָאֲרָנוּ בַּפֶּרֶק הַשֵּׁנִי וְאַחַר שְׂבָרָשׁוֹתַי לְהַטּוֹת נַפְשִׁי
לְאִיזָה צַד שְׂאֲרָצָה אִיזָה מַעֲשֵׂה עֲשִׂיתִי מִן הַמַּעֲשִׂי
הַטּוֹבִים כְּאִילוֹ הִיָּה מַחְסֵר עֲצָמוֹ וְאוֹמֵר מָה אֲנִי
כְּלוֹמֵר מָה בָּא מִמֶּנִּי וְאֵינִי שְׁלֵם וְאֵע"פ שֶׁעֲשִׂיתִי
זֶה הֵעֲנִינוּ...

16. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

(Therefore, Adam the first man was created alone, to teach you that with regard to anyone who destroys one soul from the Jewish people, i.e., kills one Jew, the verse ascribes him blame as if he destroyed an entire world, as Adam was one person, from whom the population of an entire world came forth. And conversely, anyone who sustains one soul from the Jewish people, the verse ascribes him credit as if he sustained an entire world. ... Therefore, since all humanity descends from one person, each and every person is obligated to say: The world was created for me, as one person can be the source of all humanity.

משנה סנהדרין ד'ה'

לפיכך נברא אדם יחיד, ללמדך, שכל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו אבד עולם מלא. וכל המקיים נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו קיים עולם מלא.... לפיכך כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר, בשבילי נברא העולם.

17. Rashi on Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5

“The entire world was created for my sake” – I.e., “I am as important as an entire world: I will not cut myself off from the world on account of a single transgression.”

רש"י – משנה סנהדרין ד'ה'

בשבילי נברא העולם – כלומר חשוב אני כעולם מלא לא אטרד את עצמי מן העולם בעבירה אחת.

18. Pirkei Avot 3:15

(15) Everything is foreseen yet freedom of choice is granted, And the world is judged with goodness; And everything is in accordance with the abundance of deed.

משנה אבות ג' ט"ו

(טו) הכל צפוי, והרשות נתונה, ובטוב העולם נדון. והכל לפי רב המעשה:

19. Rambam on Pirkei Avot 3:15

... And this is his saying, "and freewill is given." He means to say that freewill is given to every man...And he said that the judgement of God, may He be blessed, with people, however, is with kindness and good ... And afterwards he said that the virtues do not come to a man according to the quantity of the greatness of the deed, but rather according to the great number of good deeds. And this is that indeed the virtues arrive by repetition of the good deeds many times. And with this does a strong acquisition come - not when a man does one great deed from the good deeds; as from this alone, a strong acquisition will not come to him. And the parable with this is that when a man gives a thousand gold coins at one time to one man to whom it is fitting and he does not give anything to another man; the trait of generosity will not come into his hand with this great act, as [much as] it will come to one who donates a thousand gold pieces a thousand times and gives each one of them out of generosity. [This is] because this one repeated the act of generosity a thousand times and a strong acquisition of it came to him [in this way]. But

רמב"ם משנה אבות ג' ט"ו

... והוא אמרו הרשות נתונה ר"ל כל אדם רשות נתונה לו... ואמר שדין השם יתברך עם בני אדם אמנם הוא בחסד ובטוב ...
ואחר כך אמר שהמעלות לא יגיעו לאדם לפי רוב גודל המעשה אבל לפי רוב מספר המעשים והוא שהמעלות אמנם יגיעו בכפול המעשים הטובים פעמים רבות ועם זה יגיע קנין חזק לא כשיעשה אדם פעל אחד גדול מפעולות הטובות כי בזה לבדו לא יגיע לו קנין חזק והמשל בו כשיתן האדם למי שראוי אלף זהובים בבת אחת לאיש א' ולאיש אחר לא נתן כלום לא יעלה בידו מדת הנדיבות בזה המעשה האחד הגדול כמו שמגיע למי שהתנדב אלף זהובים באלף פעמים ונתן כל זהוב מהם על צד הנדיבות מפני שזה כפל מעשה הנדיבות אלף פעמים והגיע לו קנין חזק וזה פעם אחת לבד התעוררה נפשו התעוררות גדולה לפעל טוב ואח"כ פסקה ממנו... וזה ענין אמרו לפי רוב המעשה אבל לא לפי גודל המעשה...

[the other] only aroused his soul with a great arousal towards a good act, and afterwards it ceased from him...And in this comparison and this matter is that which he said, " **in accordance to the majority of the deed**" - and not in accordance to the greatness of the deed.

20. On Teshuva; A Psychotherapist's Perspective, By Aliza Scharf-Bendov, LCSW

<https://thejewishvoice.com/2019/08/on-teshuva-a-psychotherapists-perspective-2/>

Compassion is the act of viewing oneself in a comprehensive way—excluding nothing, no ugly or less desirable part of ourselves or others. This does not of course mean, condoning or agreeing with negative behavior. It simply means going beyond the reflex of judgment and self-condemnation to a place that gives the negative parts of one's self a seat at the table, to be seen, heard and understood. Sound simple enough? Not when you actually try. Take a moment to sit down and apply this idea while reflecting on aspects of yourself you are unhappy with and want to change in yourself. Are you able to deeply accept and confront the fact that you are flawed without putting yourself down?

21. Summary of Branden's 6 Pillars of Self Esteem:

1. LIVING CONSCIOUSLY. This requires us to be fully in the present moment.
2. ACCEPT YOURSELF. Yes, you have flaws and attributes. You also have the opportunity to enhance who you are, by accepting everything about yourself. In fact, it is the only sustainable way.
3. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR EXPERIENCES. Only 10% of life is what happens. The remaining 90% is how you respond to those happenings.
4. ASSERT WHO YOU ARE. Honor what you think, feel, believe, need and want.
5. LIVE PURPOSEFULLY. Make an agreement with yourself to reach your highest potential and reason for existing, while you maintain balance in your life.
6. MAINTAIN INTEGRITY. Know what your principles are, and stick to them.

22. Tzidkat HaTzadik, Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, 154

Just as person is required to believe in God, so too is he afterwards required to believe in himself.

צדקת הצדיק קנ"ד

כשם שצריך אדם להאמין בהש"י כך צריך
אה"כ להאמין בעצמו.