

Our Sages teach that successful people are those who constantly review and evaluate their deeds. In order to succeed, not only must you determine if your acts were good or bad, but you must also investigate if a behavioral pattern was executed at the highest level of performance. If not, then you must consider adjustments in technique that will yield a perfect score.

Even when going through a procedure on a regular basis – tens, or even hundreds of times – you should alertly evaluate the validity of the deed itself and the quality of its performance.

It only takes a moment to rejuvenate and re-ignite the thought processes to get a new perspective – even on an act which seems set on pulleys and tracks like an elevator in a shaft. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

A Timely Idea

I was carrying the financial burden of our kollel in Williamsburg. It was my job to obtain money to support the students, and therefore I spent a lot of time on the road visiting contributors. One day, on the 9th of *Shebat*, I went to a friend's store to discuss a new fundraising idea: to find donors who would support one entire day of learning in the kollel. On that day, the learning would be dedicated to the benefactor with prayers for, perhaps, his success in business or maybe for the *ilui neshamah* of one of his relatives.

As we spoke, Morris, a Russian Jew I knew, came into the store and walked over to me. He gave me a fifty-dollar bill and told me that he, too, wanted to contribute to the kollel and have us pray for the soul of his mother, Sima bat Chaim, who had died twenty five years earlier on January 27th.

I thanked Morris for his generous contribution and wished him well. I then explained that a Gregorian date was useless for our purposes and that we needed to know the Hebrew date of his mother's death. Unfortunately, Morris had not merited a Jewish education, so he really didn't understand what I was asking for. He just kept repeating, "January 27, 1980," and how important it was to him that someone should pray for his mother's soul.

Then I had a brainstorm. I remembered that one of the kollel members had a computer program with a multi-year Hebrew/English calendar. I found the fellow and we looked up the date – and I could not believe my eyes. The Hebrew date of the *yahrtzeit* was the 9th of *Shebat*, that very day!

Almost thirty years had passed since Morris' mother had died. Who knew if anyone in all those years had ever said Kaddish for her, if anyone had learned one *mishnah* in her memory – and here was our opportunity to do so. We immediately lit a *yahrtzeit* candle for her memory and sat down to learn *mishnayot*. Her name was announced in the kollel, and we said Kaddish and gave *sedakah* in her name.

Who among us can understand Hashem's ways that ensure that a Jewish soul will never be forgotten? (There is No Such Thing as Coincidence 2)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

לְעִילוי נְשָׁמַת לְאֵה בַּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

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שַׁבָּת נִסְבִּים-וַיַּעֲלֶךְ * שַׁבָּת נִסְבִּים-וַיַּעֲלֶךְ

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 61:10-63:9

SEPTEMBER 11-12, 2020 23 ELUL 5780

Candlelighting: 6:52 pm

Morning Shema by: 8:56 am

Evening Shema after: 7:50 pm

Shabbat ends: 7:50 pm (R"Y 8:22 pm)

Watch for an email for full Shabbat schedule of minyanim

Haftarah will be this Saturday night at 8:00 p.m. One should say "Baruch hamabdil ben kodosh l'hol - Blessed are You Who separates from Holy to mundane" before driving a car.

This bulletin is dedicated by the Betesh family
in loving memory of Nat Betesh לְעִילוי נְשָׁמַת נָתָן בֶּן שָׂרָה

A Message from our Rabbi

וַיִּמַּל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת-לִבְּךָ...לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה'...לְמַעַן חִיֶּיךָ
"Hashem your G-d will circumcise your heart...to love Hashem...that you may live" (Debarim 30:6)

In our *perashah* it says that in the future Hashem will circumcise our hearts. What does this mean? The *Hafess Hayim* gives a parable to explain it: Once a man was walking along the river. The river had a swift current. Suddenly he saw a young boy being swept along and in danger of drowning. Our friend immediately took action, jumped into the water and saved the drowning boy. It turned out that this boy was none other than the crown prince, the son of the king. The king was so grateful to him that he gave him one day in the royal treasury to be allowed to take for himself all that he could carry. And carry he did, sacks full of diamonds and gold and precious gems. He became fabulously wealthy. He built a beautiful home in the center of the city. He became a successful businessman, mixed with the elite, and married off his children to the upper echelons of society. Every year he would throw a big party on the anniversary of his new success. One time at the party his close ones asked: What was his most memorable day? Was it the day he finished his home? The day he was married? The day of his children's marriage? He answered, his best day was the day he spent in the royal treasury. It was a great day, filling sack after sack. Another

bracelet, another diamond, all of this meant more and more wealth. He didn't stop to eat or drink; not a moment was wasted.

The truth is, says the *Hafess Hayim*, this is exactly how we should feel every day of our lives. When we have a chance to do *misvot*, which our Sages teach us are more valuable than all of the pleasures of the next world, we should be just as excited as our friend in the king's treasure house. The only problem is that our hearts (our minds) are closed up and dulled to this feeling of excitement, simply because we really don't understand this. But all of this will change, and this is the promise of our verse. Hashem will circumcise our hearts and remove this shell over our minds and we will fully connect with this concept. We will relish every *misvah* and rejoice over every word of Torah we learn, all of this during our lives in this world. This will occur in our days when we repent for our sins and make *teshubah*. May we merit to see this day arrive soon, *Amen*. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

No Standing

”אַתֶּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כְּלִכְּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם רְאִשֵׁיכֶם שְׁבִטֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם
...טַפְּכֶם נְשִׁיכֶם... מַחֲטָב עֲצִידָה עַד שְׂאֵב מִיַּמִּידָה”

"You are standing this day, all of you, before G-d: your heads, your tribes, your elders...your little ones, your wives...from the hewer of wood to the drawer of water." (*Debarim* 29:9-10)

In the ethical Torah writings it is often stated that angels are referred to as *omdim* (standing), whereas people are referred to as *holchim* (progressing). By this it is meant that angels are stationary, because they can never improve themselves. Angels are whatever they are as of the time they are created, and do not have the capacity to become "better" angels. Human beings, by contrast, have great potential for self-improvement, and should always be making progress in perfecting themselves.

The book of *Debarim* is essentially one of chastisement, and here Moshe tells the Israelites, "Look how lax you are. You are all standing in a stationary position before G-d, instead of progressing. Everyone seems to have found a niche in which he or she feels comfortable, and no one is making an effort to elevate himself or herself beyond the level of spirituality which has already been achieved."

There is a folk saying that the worm that infests the horseradish must think that this is the sweetest place in the world. It is human nature to idealize the status quo, and making the necessary effort to change requires motivation. The motivation to work harder is usually the product of the desire to acquire more assets or to achieve a position of greater prestige. In the pursuit of spirituality, the motivation to improve oneself must come from a desire to become closer to G-d and to maximize the spiritual potential within oneself. Too often, people lack the aspiration to achieve greater spirituality.

Moshe was particularly sensitive to this issue, and he sought to inspire the Israelites not to be content with anything less than the maximum level of spirituality attainable. (*Living Each Week*)

Hide and Seek

”וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פְנֵי מַהֶם וְהָיָה לָאֵכָל וּמִצָּאָהוּ רְעוֹת רְבוֹת וְצָרוֹת”

"And I shall conceal My Face from them and they will be for consuming and many evils and troubles will happen to them." (*Debarim* 31:17)

When Hashem hides Himself from *B'nei Yisrael* due to our sins, terrible repercussions are sure to follow. The pogroms, massacres, and hate-filled decrees that are part of our history all testify to this reality. Indeed, the *gematriot* of the words "*ra'ot vesarot*" equal the years 676 (1916) and 702 (1942), the nadirs of World War I and World War II, respectively.

About a century ago, a university professor once challenged his students: Did G-d create everything that exists?"

When the students answered yes, the professor said, "Well, if G-d created everything, then G-d created evil. Since we are defined by our works, we can assume that G-d is evil."

One student raised his hand. "Sir, I have a question. Does cold exist?"

"Of course cold exists!" retorted the professor.

"Cold does not exist," the young man replied. "According to the laws of physics, cold is really the absence of heat. The word 'cold' was created in order to describe how we feel if we have no heat."

The student continued, "Professor, does darkness exist?"

The professor responded affirmatively, but once again the student replied, "You are wrong, sir. Darkness is in reality the absence of light. Unlike darkness, light can be measured with prisms. Darkness is a term used to describe what happens when no light is present."

Finally, the young man said, "Sir, one more question. Does evil exist?"

Now uncertain, the professor responded, "Of course it does, as I have already said. We see evil all the time."

"No sir," said the student. "Evil does not exist – at least not unto itself. Evil happens in the absence of G-d. Evil is like the cold that comes when there is no heat, or the darkness that comes when there is no light."

Amid the other students' thunderous applause, the professor sat down.

The young man's name? Albert Einstein. (*Torah Tavin*)

Straight but Cautious

The elevator stopped at the seventh floor and the doors opened slowly. Very slowly. Eli's foot tapped nervously as he waited for the doors to close again.

Suddenly – "Hold it!" called a breathless voice, and another person barreled in. The doors, which had finally begun to slide shut, withdrew again into their slots. Eli turned to the panting man and said, "You didn't have to run. This is an intellectual elevator – it thinks a lot before acting."

Eli and the newcomer held onto their patience by a hair until the doors finally closed. In an attempt to lighten the mood, Marc, another passenger, said jokingly, "I don't understand this elevator. It can only go up and down in a straight path and has probably gone the same route hundreds, if not thousands, of times – so what is it being so careful about? Why doesn't it just move rather than ponder every step like a chess player?"

"This elevator is just like a fellow with whom I share an office. No matter how often he does the same job, he never develops shortcuts and he doesn't move at high speed. He plods along as if he is afraid of a surprise obstacle. I don't get it!"

Well, maybe Marc doesn't understand the concept, but there is an advantage to re-evaluating a job and all the steps needed to get it done *every time* you repeat the task. Repetition breeds mental laziness, and any indolent behavior can turn off your thinking processes and lead to rote performance of a task. You should live life with constant vigilance.