

CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF CHAUTAUQUA

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Jewish Psychology - Week 3 – 2020

1. The early sages, who were like angels (may their merit protect us) have already determined that the healing of the soul is like the healing of the body:
 The crucial first step is to identify the location of the illness, whether it is caused by the crassness, grossness and corruption of his physical body or by a failing in his soul-powers, the person being inclined to undesirable traits like arrogance or falsehood and the like. Or, the source of the malady may be habit - inadequate rearing or unwholesome environment having brought on bad habits.
 Without ascertaining the specific site of the illness and the cause of infection, it is impossible to embark on a cure. One can only prescribe an orderly proper conduct in all matters, what to do and what to avoid. To "do good" [Psalms 34:15.] in terms of observing mitzvot, designating times for Torah-study and acquiring good character traits - and also to "turn away from evil." [ibid]
 Most urgent of all, however, is that the patient make himself aware of two things: a) to know that he is ill, and desire most fervently to be cured of his malady; b) to know that he *can* be cured, with hope and absolute trust that, with G-d's help, he *will* indeed be cured of his sickness. (Hayom Yom, 16 Sivan)
2. The true way is to know one's character, truly recognizing one's own deficiencies and one's good qualities. And when one knows his deficiencies - he should correct them with actual avoda, and not satisfy himself merely with bemoaning them. (ibid, 26 Mar-Cheshvan)
3. Assume for yourself a master/teacher/mentor. (Ethics of our fathers 1:6, 16)
4. One cannot examine his own defects. (Mishna, Negaim 2:5)
5. A prisoner cannot free himself from his prison. (Talmud, Sanhedrin 95a)
6. Everyone should have their own personal spiritual mentor. Our sages say, "One who is embarrassed cannot learn." (Ethics of our fathers 2:5) Therefore, if you want to learn how to improve your spiritual life and standing, you must not be embarrassed to ask about and discuss all your concerns with someone who can guide you. (Haichal Menachem, vol. 3 p. 255)
7. That's why, in our quests for personal excellence, we sometimes need to get some outside help. Overwhelmed with blind and sincere loyalty to ourselves, we may not be able to accurately gauge our own failings and triumphs. But other people can. Our Sages advise: "Assume for yourself a master, acquire for yourself a friend" (Ethics of the Fathers, 1:6). In other words, for optimal spiritual growth, get a mentor and a buddy. (Chabad.org, Nechama Golding. Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)
8. Intellect and [Emotional] excitement are two separate worlds. Intellect - a world cold and settled; excitement - a world seething and impetuous. Man's *avoda* is to combine them, unite them. The impetuosity then becomes transformed into a longing, and the intellect into the guide in a life of *avoda* and action.
 (Ibid, 12 Shevat)
9. *...Because the brain rules over the heart (as it is written in Ra'aya Mehemna, Parshat Pinchas) by virtue of its innately created nature.*

For man was so created from birth, that every person may, with the power of the will in his brain — i.e., the will created of his mind's understanding — restrain himself and control the drive of his heart's lust, preventing his heart's desires from finding expression in deed, word and thought, when the mind understands the evil inherent in such deed, word or thought, and [he can, if his mind will it] divert his attention completely from that which his heart craves [and turn his attention] to the exactly opposite direction.

(Zohar III, p. 224a. Maimonides, Guide to the perplexed III, 8. Tanya Ch 12.)

- 10.** *...Immediately upon [the thought's] rising to [the mind], he thrusts it aside as it were with both hands, and averts his mind from it, the instant he realizes that it is an evil thought.*

He will refuse to accept it even as a subject for mere conscious thought, and will certainly not entertain the notion of acting on it, G-d forbid, or even speaking of it.

For he who willingly indulges in such thoughts is deemed a rasha at that moment,

So, too, in matters "between man and his fellow-man." As soon as there rises from his heart to his mind any animosity or hatred, G-d forbid, or jealousy, anger or a grudge, and their like, he will bar them from his mind and will, refusing even to think of them.

On the contrary, his mind will prevail over and dominate the feelings of his heart, to do the exact opposite of that which the heart desires, namely, to conduct himself toward his fellow with the quality of kindness (as opposed to the quality of "severity", where hatred and anger originate), and to display towards his fellow a disproportionate love, in suffering from him to the furthest extreme, without being provoked into anger, G-d forbid, or to take revenge in kind, G-d forbid, even without anger;

but, on the contrary, to repay offenders with favors, as taught in the Zohar, [Zohar I, p. 201a] that we should learn from the example of Joseph's conduct with his brothers, when he repaid them for the suffering they brought upon him, with kindness and favors. (Lessons in Tanya, ibid)

- 11.** But now do not be sad, and let it not trouble you that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that God sent me before you...And now, you did not send me here, but God, and He made me a father to Pharaoh, a lord over all his household, and a ruler over the entire land of Egypt. (Genesis 45:5-8)
- 12.** But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid, for am I instead of God? Indeed, you intended evil against me, [but] God designed it for good, in order to bring about what is at present to keep a great populace alive.(ibid, 50:19-20)
- 13.** Concerning the love [of G-d] it is written at the end of the portion *Eikev*, (Deuteronomy 11:22) "...which I command you to do — to love G-d..." *It is necessary to understand how an expression of "doing" can be applied to love, which is [an emotion] in the heart.*
...there exists a manner of love that is indeed created — by meditating upon those concepts that arouse it. An active verb such as "doing" suits this manner of love, since it is experienced as a result of one's own doing. (Tanya II, Chinuch Katan)
- 14. 1:4** 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. Therefore, the first Sages commanded that one's temperaments should always be such, and that one should postulate on them and direct them along the middle way, in order that one will have a perfect body. How is this done? One should not be of an angry disposition and be easily angered, nor should one be like a dead person who does not feel, but one should be in the middle - one should not get angry except over a big matter about which it is fitting to get angry, so that one will not act similarly again....
- 15. 1:5** 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....
- 16. 1:6** We are commanded to go in these middle ways, the good and upright ways...
- 17. 1:7** How should one regulate oneself with these temperaments so that they become permanent? One should act once, twice, three times - the actions which one does according to the intermediate temperaments - and

always go back over them, until such actions are easy for one to do and will not be troublesome for one, and until such temperaments are fixed in one's soul...

18. 2:2. How do they cure? They tell someone who is of an angry disposition to establish himself, and that if he is hit or cursed he should not react, and he should follow this way until his angry disposition has left him... and he returns to the middle way, which is the good way. Once he has returned to the middle way, he should follow it for the rest of his life... the good way, which is the intermediate characteristic that each and every temperament has. (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Laws of Deot Ch. 1-2)

19. Habit reigns supreme in all matters; it becomes second nature. (Tanya, Chapter 14)

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