



Being Orthodox Is Not Just A Hobby: A Vision For Passionate Jewish Living

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

Boca Raton Synagogue

rabbiefremgoldberg.org

theWARofART

Break Through the Blocks
and Win Your
Inner Creative Battles



STEVEN PRESSFIELD

1. *The War of Art* Steven Pressfield



THE UNLIVED LIFE

Most of us have two lives. The life we live, and the unlived life within us. Between the two stands Resistance.

Have you ever brought home a treadmill and let it gather dust in the attic? Ever quit a diet, a course of yoga, a meditation practice? Have you ever bailed out on a call to embark upon a spiritual practice, dedicate yourself to a humanitarian calling, commit your life to the service of others? Have you ever wanted to be a mother, a doctor, an advocate for the weak and helpless; to run for office, crusade for the planet, campaign for world peace, or to preserve the environment? Late at night have you experienced a vision of the person you might become, the work you could accomplish, the realized being you were meant to be? Are you a writer who doesn't write, a painter who doesn't paint, an entrepreneur who never starts a venture? Then you know what Resistance is.

Resistance is the most toxic force on the planet. It is the root of more unhappiness than poverty, disease,

. To yield to Resistance deforms our spirit. It stunts us and makes us less than we are and were born to be. If you believe in God (and I do) you must declare Resistance evil, for it prevents us from achieving the life God intended when He endowed each of us with our own unique genius. *Genius* is a Latin word; the Romans used it to denote an inner spirit, holy and inviolable, which watches over us, guiding us to our calling. A writer writes with his *genius*; an artist paints with hers; everyone who creates operates from this sacramental center. It is our soul's seat, the vessel that holds our being-in-potential, our star's beacon and Polaris.

Every sun casts a shadow, and genius's shadow is Resistance. As powerful as is our soul's call to realization, so potent are the forces of Resistance arrayed against it. Resistance is faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, harder to kick than crack cocaine. We're not alone if we've been mowed down by Resistance; millions of good men and women have bitten the dust before us. And here's the biggest We don't even know what hit us. I never did. From age twenty-four to thirty-two, Resistance kicked my ass from East Coast to West and back again thirteen times and I never even knew it existed. I looked everywhere for the enemy and failed to see it right in front of my face.

Have you heard this story: Woman learns she has cancer, six months to live. Within days she quits her job, resumes the dream of writing Tex-Mex songs she gave up to raise a family (or starts studying classical Greek, or moves to the inner city and devotes herself to tending babies with AIDS). Woman's friends think she's crazy; she herself has never been happier. There's a postscript. Woman's cancer goes into remission.

Is that what it takes? Do we have to stare death in the face to make us stand up and confront Resistance? Does Resistance have to cripple and disfigure our lives before we wake up to its existence? How many of us have become drunks and drug addicts, developed tumors and neuroses, succumbed to painkillers, gossip, and compulsive cell-phone use, simply because we don't do that thing that our hearts, our inner genius, is calling us to? Resistance defeats us. If tomorrow morning by some stroke of magic every dazed and benighted soul woke up with the power to take the first step toward pursuing his or her dreams, every shrink in the directory would be out of business. Prisons would stand empty. The alcohol and tobacco industries would collapse, along with the junk food, cosmetic surgery, and infotainment businesses, not to mention pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, and the medical profession from top to bottom. Domestic abuse would become extinct, as would addiction, obesity, migraine headaches, road rage, and dandruff.

Look in your own heart. Unless I'm crazy, right now a still small voice is piping up, telling you as it has ten thousand times, the calling that is yours and yours alone. You know it. No one has to tell you. And unless I'm crazy, you're no closer to taking action on it than you were yesterday or will be tomorrow. You think Resistance isn't real? Resistance will bury you.

You know, Hitler wanted to be an artist. At eighteen he took his inheritance, seven hundred kronen, and moved to Vienna to live and study. He applied to the Academy of Fine Arts and later to the School of Architecture. Ever see one of his paintings? Neither have I. Resistance beat him. Call it overstatement but I'll say it anyway: it was easier for Hitler to start World War II than it was for him to face a blank square of canvas.

בראשית ב'ז'

(ז) וַיִּצְרֵן יי אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפֶל מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

2. Bereishis 2:7

Genesis 2:7

(7) Then the LORD God formed the Earthling of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the Earthling became a living soul.

ברכות ס"א א:ה'

מאי דכתיב (בראשית ב, ז) וייצר יי אלהים את האדם בשני יודיין שני יצרים ברא הקב"ה אחד יצר טוב ואחד יצר רע

3. Berachos 61a

Berakhot 61a:3

Why is the Torah written, "Then the Lord God formed the Earthling" (Gen. ii. 7) with [the word vayyetzter ("and God formed")] being spelled with two letters yod? The Holy One of Blessing created two impulses, one good and the other evil.

4. L'Nevuchei Ha'Dor 1:1

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook

For the Perplexed of the Generation 1:1

(1) The foundation of the Torah is that man was created "in the image of God". The essential meaning of "the image" is the complete freedom we find in man, [which means] that man must have free will. If there was no free will, there would be no context for the Torah, as Maimonides writes in The Laws of Repentance. If that's so, free will is the basis of the Torah, practically speaking. The knowledge that man is made "in the image of God" comes to teach that the perfection of total free will must exist [as well] in the essence of true perfection, His name should be blessed. This is the intellectual foundation of the entire Torah that all deed relies upon.

לנבוכי הדור א'א'

(א) שהאדם נברא בצלם אלהים זה הוא יסוד התורה. עיקר הצלם הוא החופש הגמור שאנו מוצאים באדם שעל כן הוא בעל בחירה. ולולא הבחירה לא היה מקום לתורה, כדברי הרמב"ם בה' תשובה. אם כן הבחירה היא יסוד התורה במעשה. והידיעה שהאדם הוא עשוי בצלם אלהים, אם כן הרי זה בא ללמד ששלימות החופש הגמור מוכרחה להמצא בעצם השלם האמיתי יתברך שמו, הוא היסוד העיוני של כל התורה כולה שכל המעשים נסמכים עליו.



Villain = Resistance

By Steven Pressfield

<https://stevenpressfield.com/2019/03/villain-resistance/>

Every villain is a metaphor for Resistance.

I know this sounds all-inclusive to the point of outrageousness, but it's true.

In Jewish mysticism, the negative force (translated by my friend Rabbi Mordechai Finley as “a turning toward evil”) that equates to Resistance is called the “yetzer hara.”

In Kabbalistic thought, the soul—neshama in Hebrew—is a divine and entirely good force that seeks to communicate with us on the material plane to our benefit. Kabbalists say that above every blade of grass is an angel whispering, “Grow! Grow!”

But there's a catch.

Between us and the neshama stands an entirely negative force—the yetzer hara, aka Resistance—whose solitary aim is to block the soul from communicating with us and us from communicating with our soul.

That is the “turning toward evil”—the built-into-Creation impulse, even compulsion, to self-obstruction and self-destruction.

Why does the human being need stories? Why do each of us hunger for saga and myth so instinctively?

Because we all feel that “turning toward evil” inside ourselves. We fear it. We hate it. We're desperate for wisdom and insight into how to combat it.

That's what stories are for, and that's why every story has to have a villain.

The antagonist, whether it's the Alien or the Predator or Dr. No or Dr. Lecter or Dr. Strangelove, is a metaphorical version of the yetzer hara, of Resistance.

Resistance is insidious.

Resistance is implacable.

Resistance is indefatigable.

Resistance is protean. It shape-shifts. It lies. It disassembles. Its aim is to destroy us, body and soul.

I thought kids could be raised on a compromising, cultural Judaism. I was wrong

6.

ח' בסיון ה'תשע"ט (09:28 06/11/2019) מאת [Racheli Malek-Buda](#)

The message from my local Shul committee has been waiting on my phone for a few hours now. "How are you?" it reads, "Would you like to give a shiur during Shavuot? This year's theme is Water, and you can take it in whatever direction you choose."

I used to respond to such a request with an automatic "yes." A former seminary student would have no problem writing that sort of lecture. A peak or two at the Rambam and Rabeinu Tam, a nice anecdote from an Agnon story, and you'll have a source sheet for a brilliant lecture you'll never forget.

Instead, I was assaulted by panic, which quickly turned into shame. I didn't know how to tell them that... well... I forgot how to study Torah. I abandoned that muscle. And suddenly, realizing I might have to use it again, I felt it spasm.

In truth, the spasm started earlier, on Friday evening in the Yishuv, when I heard Shabbos zmiros bursting from one of the houses on my street. It was a rare event. I assume that my neighbors were having a Really Really Orthodox family over if they allowed themselves to just... sing zmiros in the middle of the night. Because in our friend group, zmiros aren't really a part of the Shabbos table anymore.

Where have the zmiros gone? I asked myself. We eat together, make Kiddush together, Shabbos is still Shabbos. But the tunes have slowly dissipated over the years, replaced by witty conversation or political debate. They went from being a natural ritual we simply couldn't go without, to some bothersome task we couldn't wait to get rid of. Why should we stop the fun just to sing Deror Yikra? That sort of thought could get you officially labeled a Party Pooper.

When my son wanted to enroll in a religious high school, they announced there'd be a Judaism exam. "Say," I wondered suddenly on our way to his test. "Do you even know Al HaMichya by heart?" **Of course he didn't. After all, the perfectly Orthodox-Light family he grew up in doesn't force the kids to bench anymore.**

And last Shabbos, when the boys refused to go to Shul and I found myself begging them to go with forced moderation ("I don't want to force you, but maybe just go anyway, for me?") It hit me at full force: I failed at educating my children. All of these years, I told myself one could raise children on a cultural religiosity. That if we just send them to a co-ed school and don't pressure them on Jewish issues, we could turn them into the perfect progressive religious Jews. Ones who know Torah but have their doubts about it, who know Halacha but don't necessarily abide by it.

I wonder if my kids will remain religious. I used to think it wouldn't bother me, but as the years go by, the thought is starting to hurt. I remember when, one day, I found out my cousin, who stopped being religious many years ago, suddenly went back to putting on Tfillin every day. "My boy's celebrating his Bar Mitzvah soon," he explained, "I used to know how to lein, I thought I could teach him, but I forgot it all. I suddenly asked myself, 'what am I leaving behind for him? What sort of heritage?'"

"What am I going to leave my children?" That's the alarm clock that started ringing in my life. The religious post-trauma that manages me, that makes me afraid to be angry at my daughter for drawing on Shabbos, lest I be seen in her eyes as some stiff from the Ulpana, succeeded in making me tear away from the walls of my home the one ingredient that every Orthodox-Light Jew wants as a part of their life – the Yiddishkeit.

Slowly, gradually, I feel the Torah being forgotten. How whole prayers I used to know by heart are dimming in my mind. How rituals that charmed me during childhood have turned into nothing but a warped memory. I thought I could instill in my children the ability to be religious in theory. To know the blessings but not say them. To go to Shul but not to daven passionately. I failed.

And now, I have only to admit – if my kids stay religious, it'll be because of their grandfather, who insists they make Kiddush. Because of their grandmother, that won't but them ice cream that doesn't have a Kashrut. Because of the insistent educators we were too scared to be ourselves.

All of our lives we tried to run away from being those parents, who push their kids into going to Shul and get angry when they play outside instead of davening, and now – all we want is for them to know something of these prayers, even a little bit.

I was born on Shavuot. There's no small irony in that fact. The girl born on the day the Torah was received ran away from it like her life depended on it – and now gets it back like a slap to the face. **And suddenly I can understand my father, who insisted we sit next to the table and sing zmiros – not exceptions. He understood what I'm beginning to understand now – that you can't introduce a way of life without repetitive and deliberate assimilation. You can't raise the next generation on episodic folklore. Annoying as it sounds, there's no way to instill substantial religiosity in your children without a pinch of forcefulness or requiring a certain sacrifice. We wanted to raise a generation of sophisticated religious Jews who didn't carry halakhic trauma. Without noticing – we got a generation of know-nothings.**

7. *The War of Art*
Steven Pressfield

Aspiring artists defeated by Resistance share one trait. They all think like amateurs. They have not yet turned pro.

The moment an artist turns pro is as epochal as the birth of his first child. With one stroke, everything changes. I can state absolutely that the term of my life can be divided into two parts: before turning pro, and after.

To be clear: When I say professional, I don't mean doctors and lawyers, those of "the professions." I mean the Professional as an ideal. The professional in contrast to the amateur. Consider the differences.

The amateur plays for fun. The professional plays for keeps.

To the amateur, the game is his avocation. To the pro it's his vocation.

The amateur plays part-time, the professional full-time.

The amateur is a weekend warrior. The professional is there seven days a week.

The word *amateur* comes from the Latin root meaning "to love." The conventional interpretation is that the amateur pursues his calling out of love, while the pro does it for

money. Not the way I see it. In my view, the amateur does not love the game enough. If he did, he would not pursue it as a sideline, distinct from his "real" vocation.

The professional loves it so much he dedicates his life to it. He commits full-time.

That's what I mean when I say turning pro.

Resistance hates it when we turn pro.



8. Eruvin 13b

עומדת לו ת"ר שתי שנים ומחצה נחלקו ב"ש וב"ה הללו אומרים נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא והללו אומרים נוח לו לאדם שנברא יותר משלא נברא נמנו וגמרו נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא עכשיו שנברא יפשפש במעשיו ואמרי לה ימשמשו במעשיו: **בְּתַנּוּ** ^ט הקורה שאמרו

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 his actions that he has performed and seek to correct them. And some say: He should scrutinize his planned actions and evaluate whether or not and in what manner those actions should be performed, so that he will not sin.

9. Maharsha - Makkos

R' Shmuel Eidels

1555-1631

על מחכונתה ושלמותה וכו' ע"ש וענין זה צפרק קמא דעירובין ^{כג} שנחלקו ב"ש וב"ה הללו אומרים נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא והללו אומרים נוח לו שנברא יותר משלא נברא נמנו וגמרו נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא משנברא ועכשיו שנברא יפשפש במעשיו וכו' הקוסיות צמאי פליגי ויתור לשון יותר משנברא ויותר משלא נברא. וע"ק כיון שצ"ה הקב"ה את האדם ע"כ נוח לו שנברא ונאמר צו כי טוב גם מ"ש יפשפש במעשיו שזו היא מצות המקום עלינו. אבל הענין כמ"ש שנתן לנו הקב"ה תרי"ג מצות סס"ה לאוין ורמ"ה עשין וצ"ה הרצוי מצד המקבל כי מצד הנותן צ"ה כולם הם כמנחה אחת וז"ל ^{כד} אנכי ולא יהיה מפי הגבורה שמענום ואמרו צמדרש כל הדברים דבר ה' ומה ת"ל אנכי ולא יהיה לך מלמד שאמר המקום עשרת הדברות בצבור אחד מה שא"ל לצי"ו לומר כן והוא מצוה כי הוא אחד ומצותיו אחד ולא יקבלו רצוי מצדו ית' צ"ה והוא כי במצות אנכי שהיא אמונת היחוד והפוכה לא יהיה לך שלא לשתף ש"ש ודבר אחר נכללו כל הלאוין ועשין אלא שא"ל לאדם לומר כן כי מצד שהוא מוטבע בחומר וזמן צו לו הרצוי וע"כ אמרו כי כל מצות החורה נכללו בעשרת הדברים כמ"ש רבינו סעדי' ושזו כלל כולם במצות אמונה שהיא השורש ומקור לכולם אבל א"ל לנו להבין רק צרצוי ולפי שאלו לא נברא האדם לא היה צו מעשה וא"כ היה צבירותו נד שכר ונד הפסד דהלאוין היו ודאי מתקיימין לולא נברא והשתא שנברא אפשר שלא יזכה ויעבור הלאוין נמצא מפסיד צבירותו והעשין הוא הפך זה שאלו לא נברא ודאי לא היו מתקיימין והשתא שנברא אפשר שיזכה ויעשה ונמצא שיהיה נשכר והשתא פליגי מצד צבירותו חד אמר טוב לו שלא נברא מצד הלאוין אפשר שיהיה נפסד יותר משנברא ויקיים העשיים דנמצא יאל שכרו צהפסדו. וחד אמר טוב לו שנברא שאפשר שיקיים העשין משלא נברא ויקיים הלאוין דיאל הפסדו צשכרו. ואמר צזה דנמנו וגמרו ר"ל שבאו צזה למנין המצות שהלאוין הם יותר מהעשיים וע"כ הסכימו וגמרו לומר שלא נברא האדם צשביל עצמו ויותר היה טוב לו שלא נברא כי הוא קרוב להפסד מחמת הלאוין שהם רעים ורחוק לשכר מצד העשין שהם מועטים ועכשיו שנברא לא נברא אלא לכבוד המקום שנאמר ^{כה} לכבודי

בראיתו וגו' שיעשה מצות צוראו וע"כ אמר יפספש צמעשיו שהם העשין ולא די צפור מרע רק צעשה טוב דצביל כך נצרא שהרי הלאוין יותר היו מקויימין בשלא נצרא והשתא כיון דתכלית צריאת האדם לא היה רק לצודו ית' ב"ה הרי אין הלאוין מרובין מהעשין כי מצד הנותן אין כאן רק מצוה אחת שהיא האמונה היא העשה אנכי ה' וגו' שהיא מוקדמת ללא יהיה לך שהיא אזהרת השתוף וד"א שלא נצרא רק לצודו ית' ב"ה וכל מצוה הן לאו הן עשה הרי הוא נכלל מצד הנותן באנכי ולא יהיה לך ב"ה וצפסיקתא אני ישנה ולפי ער זה הקצ"ה אמר רבי חייא בר אבא מנין שהקצ"ה לכן של ישראל שנאמר ב"ה זור לצבי וחלקי אלהים וגו' הכוונה צוה כי כל רמ"ח אברים נגד העשיות ואבר הלז נגד עשה של אנכי כמו שהלז הוא שורש של כל רמ"ח האברים ומיחס כן היא מצות האמונה היא כלל ומקור של רמ"ח העשין ששמענו מפי הגבורה וזה שאמר שמצות אנכי שהיא אמונתו ב"ה הוא ער ונגד לכן של ישראל והדמיון צוה בלאוין שהם שס"ה ואמרו ציומא ב"ה השט"ן הוא שס"ד בכל השנה הוא מסטין חוץ מביום הכפורים הוא נגד לאו של לא יהיה לך ששמענו מפי הגבורה הכולל כל הלאוין כי כולם באו לעבור מצד שתוף דברות אחרים ויוה"כ שאנו כמלאכים ואין בנו שום מעשה ואכילה ושתייה ושום שתוף ד"א והוא מכפר על כל השנה כי הוא כולל כולם ולזה אמר אני ישנה כי מצדי כשאני ישנה והיימי סור מרע בכל השס"ה ימים כמו שלא נצרא ולא הייתי בא לעבור הלאוין וישנה כתיב חסר גימטריא שס"ה אבל אמר לבי ער כי מצדו יצרך ב"ה נצראתי וצריך להעיר עצמו לעשות טוב ולקיים האמונה אנכי ה' וגו' שכל מצות רמ"ח עשיות נכללים בה כדמיון הלז שכל רמ"ח אברים תלויים בה וז"ש ב"ה זור לצבי וחלקי וגו' ר"ל שאמונתי שהוא הנור היא צרמ"ח עשיות כמו לצבי צרמ"ח אברים וע"פ הדברים האלה דרש רבי שמלאי תרי"ג מצות שס"ה לאוין כנגד ימות החמה כמ"ש ולא יהיה לך שהוא מקור כל הלאוין הוא נגד יו"כ שהוא מקור כל ימי השנה ורמ"ח עשין ושורש לכוון האמונה מצות אנכי נגד רמ"ח אברים שהמקור ציניהם הלז והאברים לא נצראו רק בצביל עשיות שהם כלי העשיות אבל הלאוין יותר היו מתקיימין בשלא נצראו האברים כלל אבל היו לאוין שס"ה כמ"ש כנגד ימות החמה שכל זמן שהוא ימי השנה שהוא היקף היומי שייכים לקיים הלאוין וא"ר הונא מאי קרא שיזכה האדם צמורה אחת אם עשאה ע"ש המתכונה שלמה ואמר חורה לזה לנו משה שהם תרי"ג מצויות המקבלים וזה שדקדק לומר לנו אבל מצד הנותן ב"ה אינו רק מצוה אחת והיא עשה אנכי וההפך לא תעשה לא יהיה לך שמענו מפי הגבורה כי מצדו הם כוללים כל מצות החורה וכל מצות החורה כאחד הם חשופים לו:

10. R' Simcha Bunim
of Peshischa
1767-1827

The Gemara (*Brachos* 21) says, ולאי "If only a person davens the entire day!" How can a person do that? It seems impossible!

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zy'a explained: You should pray in your own words before all your deeds. When you travel, pray that Hashem should help you reach your destination. When you work, pray for success. When you learn, pray that you understand. Pray for everything you do. This is the Gemara's intention that one should pray the entire day. He won't be actually praying 24/7, but every deed will be preceded with a *tefillah*, and it will be like he was praying the entire day.

ולאו דוקא בתפילת העמידה אלא כמאמר רבי יוחנן (ברכות כא.) "ולואי שיתפלל אדם כל היום כולו", וביאר הרה"ק רבי שמחה בונם מפרשיסחא זי"ע, שלא היתה כוונת חז"ל שיהא אדם מעוטף בטלית ותפילין ויושב בבית הכנסת כל היום כולו ומתפלל, אלא שירגיל עצמו תמיד להתפלל ולבקש ממנו ית"ש על כל דבר מקטן ועד גדול, ובטרם יעשה אפילו הצעד הקטן ביותר יקדים להתפלל תחילה שיצליח במעשיו, כגון בלכתו בשוק ישא עיניו השמימה ויתפלל תפלה קצרה שישלח ה' הצלחה במעשה ידיו, או כשהוא הולך לקנות דבר מה יבקש מה' שיצליח למצוא את החפץ הצריך לו, וכן בכל פרט ופרט ממעשיו, וזו "עצה לכל בר ישראל שלא יחסר לו מחסורו, ולהיות תמיד דבוק בעבודתו ית', ואל יחשוב אדם שצריך לזה התבודדות בטלית ותפילין, רק בכל מקום שעומד אז אפילו בשוק יראה אם הוא מקום נקי ויבקש מהשי"ת, ובודאי ימלא שאלתו שומע תפלת כל פה, ועי"ז יהיה תמיד דבוק בה" (הובא ב'בית יעקב' פרשת ויצא).

12.

11. *Yeshaya 56:7*

וְהֵבִיאֹתֶימָּ אֶל־הַר קִדְשִׁי וְשִׁמְחָתִים בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתִי עֹלֹתֵיהֶם
וְזִבְחֵיהֶם לְרָצוֹן עַל־מִזְבְּחִי כִּי בֵּיתִי בַּיִת־תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל־הָעַמִּים:

I will bring them to My sacred mount And let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices Shall be welcome on My altar; For My House shall be called A house of prayer for all peoples.”

הגרש"י בורנשטיין שליט"א אמר לי בשם הגאון רבי אהרן לוינ' זצ"ל הי"ד רבה של ריישא: בית של גוי זה פאר והדר. כשגוי יכנס לבית יהודי מה הוא רואה? ספרים, שולחן סטנדר, תמונות של גדולי ישראל וכו' נדמה לו שזה בית כנסת. המליץ הרב מרישא על כך את הפסוק: כי ביתי - בית תפילה יקרא לכל העמים... הבית היהודי נראה להם כבית תפילה. אבל באמת כך צריך להיות. חום של בית יהודי. שמירה של הבית מה שפחות להסתובב מחוץ לבית וכך לשמור על הקדושה והחמימות בבית ולא לחפש תענוגים במקומות אחרים.

13. *Tehillim 27*

אַחַת | שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת־יְהוָה אֹתָהּ אֶבְקֶשׁ שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה כָּל־יְמֵי
חַיִּי לַחַזֹּת בְּנֹעַם־יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכָלוֹ:

One thing I ask of the LORD, only that do I seek: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD, to frequent His temple.

14. *Devarim*

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָבְיָהּ וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בְּדַרְךָ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ
וּבְקוּמְךָ:

Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.

Don't Believe in God? Lie to Your Children

The alternative is to tell them they're simply going to die and turn to dust.

By Erica Komisar
Dec. 5, 2019 7:20 pm ET

As a therapist, I'm often asked to explain why depression and anxiety are so common among children and adolescents. One of the most important explanations—and perhaps the most neglected—is declining interest in religion. This cultural shift already has proved disastrous for millions of vulnerable young people.

A 2018 study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* examined how being raised in a family with religious or spiritual beliefs affects mental health. Harvard researchers had examined religious involvement within a longitudinal data set of approximately 5,000 people, with controls for socio-demographic characteristics and maternal health.

The result? Children or teens who reported attending a religious service at least once per week scored higher on psychological well-being measurements and had lower risks of mental illness. Weekly attendance was associated with higher rates of volunteering, a sense of mission, forgiveness, and lower probabilities of drug use and early sexual initiation. Pity then that the U.S. has seen a 20% decrease in attendance at formal religious services in the past 20 years, according to a Gallup [report](#) earlier this year. In 2018 the American Family Survey showed that nearly half of adults under 30 do not identify with any religion.

Nihilism is fertilizer for anxiety and depression, and being “realistic” is overrated. The belief in God—in a protective and guiding figure to rely on when times are tough—is one of the best kinds of support for kids in an increasingly pessimistic world. That's only one reason, from a purely mental-health perspective, to pass down a faith tradition.

I am often asked by parents, “How do I talk to my child about death if I don't believe in God or heaven?” My answer is always the same: “Lie.” The idea that you simply die and turn to dust may work for some adults, but it doesn't help children. Belief in heaven helps them grapple with this tremendous and incomprehensible loss. In an age of broken families, distracted parents, school violence and nightmarish global-warming predictions, imagination plays a big part in children's ability to cope.

I also am frequently asked about how parents can instill gratitude and empathy in their children. These virtues are inherent in most religions. The concept of *tikkun olam*, or healing the world, is one of the pillars of my Jewish faith. In accordance with this belief, we expect our children to perform community service in our synagogue and in the community at large. As they grow older, young Jews take independent responsibility for this sacred activity. One of my sons cooks for our temple's homeless shelter. The other volunteers at a prison, while my daughter helps out at an animal shelter.

Such values can be found among countless other religious groups. It's rare to find a faith that doesn't encourage gratitude as an antidote to entitlement or empathy for anyone who needs nurturing. These are the building blocks of strong character. They are also protective against depression and anxiety.

THE
WALL STREET
JOURNAL

15.

In an individualistic, narcissistic and lonely society, religion provides children a rare opportunity for natural community. My rabbi always says that being Jewish is not only about ethnic identity and bagels and lox: It's about community. The idea that hundreds of people can gather together and sing joyful prayers as a collective is a buffer against the emptiness of modern culture. It's more necessary than ever in a world where teens can have hundreds of virtual friends and few real ones, where parents are often too distracted physically or emotionally to soothe their children's distress.

Religion or spiritual practices can teach children mindfulness, a sense of physical and emotional presence necessary for mental health. No matter how active my children were when they were young, they knew when they entered our temple for services they had to calm their bodies and relax their minds. Though they complained when they were kids, and still complain at times as adolescents, they have developed the ability to calm themselves when overwhelmed.

Today the U.S. is a competitive, scary and stressful place that idealizes perfectionism, materialism, selfishness and virtual rather than real human connection. Religion is the best bulwark against that kind of society. Spiritual belief and practice reinforce collective kindness, empathy, gratitude and real connection. Whether children choose to continue to practice as adults is something parents cannot control. But that spiritual or religious center will benefit them their entire lives.

אלא לא כאברהם שכתוב בו הר שנאמר אשר יאמר היום בהר
ה' יראה ולא כיצחק שכתוב בו שדה שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוח
בשדה אלא כיעקב שקראו בית שנאמר ויקרא את שם המקום
ההוא בית אל

16. *Pesachim 88a*

Rather, the verse specifically mentions Jacob to allude to the fact that the Temple will ultimately be described in the same way that Jacob referred to it. It will **not** be referred to **as** it was referred to by **Abraham**. **It is written of him** that when he prayed at the location of the Temple mountain, he called it **mount**, **as it is stated: "As it is said on this day: On the mount where the Lord is seen"** (Genesis 22:14). **And** it will **not** be referred to **as** it was referred to by **Isaac**. **It is written of him** that he called the location of the Temple **field** when he prayed there, **as it is stated: "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field"** (Genesis 24:63). **Rather**, it will be described **as** it was referred to by **Jacob**, **who called it house**, **as it is stated: "And he called the name of that place Beth-El"** (Genesis 28:19), which means house of God.

קוּמִי | רְנִי בַלַּיִל [בְּלַיְלָה] לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֶׁמְרוֹת שְׁפָכִי כַמַּיִם לְבֶרֶךְ זָכַח
 פָּנֵי אֲדוֹנֵי שְׂאֵי אֱלֹהֵי כְּפִיךָ עַל־נַפְשׁ עוֹלְלֶיךָ הָעֲטוּפִים בְּרָעַב בְּרֹאשׁ
 כָּל־חֻצוֹת: (ס)

17. Eicha

Arise, cry out in the night At the beginning of the watches, Pour out
 your heart like water In the presence of the Lord! Lift up your hands
 to Him For the life of your infants, Who faint for hunger At every
 street corner.

18. Alei Shor
 R' Shlomo Wolbe
 1914-2005



מאמר תשיעי: קירבת הבורא ית'

פרק ראשון

הדרך אשר בה הת"ח הולך, מביאה אל נוכח פני השם — כך למדנו מדברי המהר"ל בהא דסוטה כב: „ועדיין אינו יודע באיזה דרך הולך“, עיי"ש. עכשיו, עם חתימת חיבורנו, עלינו להתבונן ולהתעורר, כיצד נגיע לזה. „אתה הבדלת אנוש מראש, ותכירהו לעמוד לפניך“: בעת נעילת השערים ביום הכפורים אנו עומדים על אמת זאת, כדי שתשמש יסוד ומטרה בכל אשר אנו עמלים במשך כל ימות השנה.

„לעמוד לפניך“ — להיותנו דבוקים בעבודתו ית', נוכח פניו ית'. כל חיינו — שאיפה ברורה לכך. וכבר כתב הגר"א (מובא בסידור הגר"א), כי מטעם זה תקנו ז"ל בברכת אשר יצר נוסח „אי אפשר להתקיים ולעמוד לפניך“ — ללמד ולהודיע כי אף על הצרכים הבהמיים של גופנו משגיח הקב"ה מכסא כבודו, וממילא אין בכחם לפגום את מגמתנו זו, ולהיפך, גם הגוף מתקדש על ידה. ולא עוד אלא במרכז היודי ביוה"כ עומדת ההכרה, כי באמת גם בעת החטא שחטאנו — לפניך היינו, אלא שלא ידענו, או התעלמנו, ועכשיו אנו מודים בזה, וחוזרים בתשובה למצב זה „לפניך“, ושם רצוננו לעמוד!

„לפניו“ — כלומר: אני, האדם מישראל, עומד נוכח פניו ית', הוא ית' אומר לי „אנוכי“, ואני אומר לו „אתה“! בינה זאת, אישי תלמיד-חכם! אם מעולם לא הודעו למשמעות הדבר שהקב"ה אומר אליך „אנוכי“, ואם מעולם לא הודעו כשאמרת אליו ית' „אתה“ — הרי מעולם לא עמדת לפני קונך ובוראך!

ואל יתבדה האדם לחשוב שיש כאן מליצות ח"ו; כה פשוטים הם הדברים, עד ש"מן, אני של בשר ודם אתה למד, אני של הקב"ה!“ (בר"ר פ"צ, ב). ה"אני" של בשר ודם אינו הגוף שלו אלא רוחניותו, והבורא ית' שכולו רוחני, הוא התגלה עלינו באמרו „אני“!

מכירים אנו אותו ית' — מבריאתו, מתורתו ומהנהגתו. אך מצד כלי-כלתו הוא נסתר מאתנו, ולית מחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל וכלל". ברם, חילוק זה מקומו במחשבה המופשטת. כשאנו פונים אליו ית' בתפלה וכשאנו עומדים לפניו בזכרנו את בוראנו בלבנו, אנו מרגישים כי הוא זה, כלי-כול למעלה מכל מושג — וניכר מתוך מעשיו, בבחינת „אני — והוא“, הוא המתגלה לנו באמרו „אני“, והוא הנסתר בבחינת „הוא“.

העמידה לפניו ית' מחוללת תמיד מהפכה פנימית באדם: משתנה המבט על העולם, על האדם, על החיים ועל המעשה. מה שהיה לו עיקר — נראה טפל, במה

Man on the Moon Every Small Step of a Person Is One Giant Leap for Mankind

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

The 50th Anniversary of the Moon Landing

On the morning of July 16, 1969, Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins lifted off for the moon. Four days later, on July 20th, Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Aldrin set foot on the moon's surface. Armstrong's first words from the surface of the moon were: "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."



Apollo 11 mesmerized the world. According to NASA, 650 million people tuned in to watch the landing 50 years ago. It also changed the way we understood our solar system.

Five decades have passed. The amazement caused by Apollo 11 has not worn off, nor has the vitality and urgency of the lesson below.

The Prelude Mission

Let's go back to the events which **preceded** the landing on the moon.

On December 21, 1968, seven months before the landing on the moon, man finally – for the first time in history -- broke the bounds of the earth, as three Apollo 8 astronauts, Frank Borman, James A. Lovell and William A. Anders, took the first trip **around** the moon.

The flight was initially planned as another earth orbiting checkout of the Apollo hardware. But rumors that the Soviets were plotting to beat us into orbit around the moon caused a last-minute change in plans. On December 25, as the world held its breath, the three NASA astronauts conducted ten orbits of the moon and made it back safely to earth, two days later, on December 27.

This space mission served as an important prelude to Neil Armstrong and "Buzz" Aldrin's actual landing on the Moon, seven months later, on July 20, 1969.

Stump The Rabbi

That very same week, on Thursday, December 26, another far less known event took place, this one in a small studio in New York City. Barry Farber, a popular Jewish radio talk show host (he is today 89; in 2002, industry publication Talkers magazine ranked him the 9th greatest radio talk show host of all time), interviewed Rabbi Zalman Posner, a distinguished rabbi from Nashville. The discussion focused on the Halachik (legal) tradition of Judaism. The symmetry worked well, since Barry Farber is also a Southerner, growing up in North Carolina.

How does Judaism dare to interfere in the private lives of individual human beings, protested the talk show host. How dare the Torah instruct people, say, what to eat and what not to eat?

What really perturbed Mr. Farber, he said, were the punishments the Torah imposes upon would-be transgressors. According to Jewish law^[1], if a Jewish adult willingly consumes food, the volume of an olive, that has been prohibited in the Torah -- pork, lobster, horse meat and the like -- he (or she) is liable to receive thirty-nine lashes^[2].

How can one justify such a violation of human rights? Is it anybody's business if I eat a ham sandwich? How can one take such a document seriously? How can you maintain such a book is Divine unless G-d is pernicious?

The Bureaucracy of Penalty

Rabbi Posner's response on the radio show was that rarely -- if ever -- did a Jewish court have the Torah-right to impose upon a person the penalty of lashes[3]. It was simply almost impossible to ever happen in the real world.

First, according to Jewish law, lashes can only be administered by a court whose members were ordained by a judge who was, in turn, ordained by a previous judge, and he by a previous judge etc. -- all the way back to Moses, who was "ordained" by G-d at Sinai[4]. Since this form of ordination has ceased more around 1500 years ago[5], no Jewish court since is able to execute the penalty of lashes[6].

Second, even during the times of yore when the courts had this right, the penalty could only be carried out if two witnesses, not related to each other or to the violator, observed the act. A person's own admission would not suffice to penalize him (or her). The two witnesses were scrutinized mercilessly, each one independently, and if the slightest discrepancy was discovered in their testimony, they were invalidated and the victim exonerated.

Third, for a person to receive the lashes, the witnesses were required to warn him prior to his transgression. Not only did they need to warn him not to do the act, but they were also obligated to spell out the punishment he would receive should he proceed to perform the prohibited action. For example, if they observed a Jew about to consume pork, they were required to say to him, "You are prohibited to eat this piece of pork; if you do, you will receive lashes."

Fourth, even after their warning, a person could not become liable to actually receive the lashes, unless he verbally accepted and reiterated the warning. If the violator nodded his head yes, or even stated clearly, "I know exactly what you are saying," and then went ahead to eat the pork, he was exempt of any court penalty. Rather, he needed to respond to the witness warning and say: "I understand what you are saying; I am about to eat this pork knowing that I will receive lashes." Only then can the court ascertain that the violator clearly understood the nature and the consequences of his act, and could thus be held responsible.

Fifth, even after all of this, the violator was still not eligible for punishment unless he began to act within three seconds after the witnesses issued the warning. So, for example, if Harry Goldberg was sitting and enjoying Crab Sushi (the real one), and two witnesses observing warned him that this was forbidden and that if he continued to do so he would be liable for lashes. Harry then reiterated the warning verbally, waited five seconds and continued to eat the crab -- in such a case he would be exempt of any penalty, since we could claim that he might have forgotten the warning.

The obvious implications of this are that it was extremely unlikely for anybody to ever receive lashes. You needed to be a real moron to get yourself lashed by a Jewish court, and if you were a genuine moron you would then be exonerated because of your lack of ability to discriminate between right and wrong.

Furthermore, even if you actually got yourself subjected to the penalty, and you were tied down in court ready to receive the lashes -- if you broke free and ran from the room, Jewish law would not allow the court to return you to the bench. You were free! Where can one find in the history of mankind a judiciary system that functioned in such a fashion?

The Shabbas After

This occurred, as mentioned, on Thursday night, December 26, 1968.

On the following Shabbas afternoon, December 28 (in the Jewish calendar it was Teves 7, 5729), one of the great leaders and sages of our generation, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, held an unexpected assembly with thousands of his disciples at his headquarters in Brooklyn, NY. One of the participants was Rabbi Zalman Posner.

The Rebbe began his address by stating that although initially he did not schedule to hold a gathering ("farbrengen") during this Shabbas, the events of the week inspired him to change his plans. Many questions and reflections were evoked in people's minds as a result of the space mission to the moon and the Rebbe said he was compelled to elaborate on them during this Shabbos assembly.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe then turned his attention to the Thursday night radio interview and the exchange between the Rabbi and the radio show host. "Though the answer contained a grain of truth," the Rebbe said, "it did not offer a completely satisfactory answer to the question."

"Let us assume," said the Rebbe, "that in ancient times the Jewish courts administered the penalty of lashes no more than once in a century, due to the tremendous difficulties imposed by the Torah on the execution of the penalty. Granted. But the question still applies to that once in a century punishment. How dare the Torah instruct that a person be whipped 39 times just because seconds after a warning by witnesses, he consumed prohibited food? How dare we mix into the private eating habits of an otherwise good and decent human being?"

How can we, raised and bred on the ideals of democracy and individual freedom, embrace a value system that would display such lack of tolerance, if even only once in a hundred years? To hurt an innocent human being and say it happens only once in a century doesn't make it less barbaric!

A Mission In Jeopardy

Yet, the Lubavitcher Rebbe went on to explain, if we were to reflect on the major event of the week, NASA's space mission around the moon, we would be far more enlightened.

Before the three astronauts boarded the Apollo, they were instructed how to conduct their daily schedule while on the spacecraft in the most exacting detail. They were told what to wear and how to put on their shoes; what to eat and when to eat; how to sit, how to move around, how to sleep, even how to tend to their bodily needs. Almost every part of their behavior, from the most external to the most intimate, needed to conform to the meticulous instructions outlined by the space experts.

Imagine if during mid flight one of the astronauts would decide to take things into his own hand and, say, light up a cigarette to enjoy a smoke? He would naturally be rebuked and penalized harshly. Is that fair? As an individual is he not entitled to make his own choices and light up a cigarette when he feels like it?

This is obviously a foolish observation. If you were igniting a cigarette, or eating the wrong food, in the privacy of your own home or on a street corner, that would be your business. But when you ignite a flame, or deviate in some other way from the prescribed rules of conduct, amid a mission in outer space, this cannot be seen as an isolated act, affecting merely one individual's life. Rather, we must view this act in its proper context. A seemingly insignificant aberration of a few rules is placing three lives in danger; it is sending a multi billion-dollar investment to the garbage dump and is wasting decades of sweat, toil and energy by a mind staggering number of scientists and engineers in the preparation of the mission. Finally, this little deviation of the rules may destroy, in a single moment, the dreams and hopes of an entire country, perhaps an entire world!

It has taken almost \$24 billion to give Neil Armstrong a chance to walk on the moon for two hours, 40 minutes. The Apollo mission was the culmination of decades of work by an estimated 400,000 people working across dozens of science, technology, and engineering disciplines. All of this would be lost.

For such chutzpah and selfishness you ought indeed to be penalized severely. If you are ready to destroy three human lives; a multi-billion-dollar investment; the tremendous labor of hundreds of thousands of men and women for decades long; if you are prepared to kill a mission eagerly anticipated by the entire world, and why? Just so that you can fulfill a selfish craving to smoke a cigarette -- this is a demonstration of incredible inhumanness, apathy and narcissism.

The Voyage of Human History

Though far less obvious, this is true about our lives as well.

The history of mankind is a single, harmonious voyage, extending from the beginning of creation till the end of time. All of us have been chosen and placed together on a little planet suspended, just like the space shuttle, in mid air, and have been charged with the task of generating a kiss between heaven and earth. Together, all of us living on the planet travel a long, and challenging journey through space and time, assigned with a mission to sanctify the world and turn it into a beautiful and harmonious abode for goodness, love and holiness.

Each and every individual who ever lived -- and will ever live -- is indispensable to the journey of our planet toward redemption. History is a grand play and you must contribute your verse. The human story is a composition in which each of us contributes our notes. If your notes are lacking, history remains flawed and wanting. Your contribution is absolutely necessary. You are indispensable to G-d's vision of the world, chosen to fulfill a mission that you and only you can accomplish through your thoughts, words and actions, on a daily basis.

Our sages put it thus^[7]: "The first human being (Adam) was created alone" (without any other men) in order to teach us, that "Each and every one is obligated to say, 'For my sake was the world created.'" This is not about arrogance. It means that you must assess your value as though you were the only human being in existence. This is not drama, it is actually true, because there is something at stake in your life, in your daily moral choices, which affects the entire planet and the entire cosmos -- past, present and future.

Just as in the space shuttle, one wrong move by a single astronaut can derail the mission, so it is with the "space mission" granted to humanity the day our planet was formed and commenced its journey. Each and every individual plays an indispensable role in bringing our mission to its completion.

How Selfish Can I Be?

The Torah is the manual given to the "astronauts" for their grand mission; it is the Divine blueprint that guides the human being on how to achieve his or her mission of transforming the psyche and the world.

When the Torah tells the Jew not to eat certain foods, should he or she go ahead and eat them, it is not to be seen as an isolated act, affecting merely his own abdomen. If you see yourself in the proper context, you will recognize that your acts generate vibrations throughout the entire cosmos, and impacts the destiny of the entire "spacecraft" and all of history. In this case, repair is possible; but nothing will ever be the same. You are too grand a player to live a mediocre life and dismiss your behaviors as trivial.

When I choose to eat something non-kosher, or to commit another act that is antithetical to the G-dly vision for the Jew articulated in the Torah manual, I am not only abusing my own spiritual and physical self; I am hurting, even if unconsciously, thousands of years of blood and tears of millions of women and men who sacrificed their lives to lead the world on its journey toward peace and redemption. For the mission of creation to be fulfilled, my participation is critical. When I choose to reject the Divine rules for our mission in "space," I am derailing the "space shuttle" from its course, and threatening to plunge the mission into the abyss.

Now, if within seconds after hearing and accepting a clear-cut warning by witnesses as to the nature of your forbidden act, you still go ahead to eat your bacon or shrimp, knowing that by committing this act you are laying waste to thousands of years of human love and blood; knowing that you are hurting the dream and the hope of all of history, so that you should be able to fulfill a selfish craving to eat non-kosher steak instead of kosher steak, such a display of inhumanity warrants indeed 39 whips. In fact, you might even ask: Only 39 whips?

(I thought that this may be the deeper reason for the fact that all of these penalties have ceased from Jewish life over the last two millennia. Since as the generations progressed, it became increasingly difficult to feel how our individual acts may affect the entire universe, our violations of Torah laws do not bespeak narcissism as much as they express ignorance. Thus, the punishments of old have become inappropriate.)

The Little A

The journey to the moon, then, was not only about "one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." It taught us something even more critical: each step of every person, at every moment, is a giant leap for mankind. The question is in which direction.

Only you and I, and all of us together, can provide the answer.[8]

[1] Rambam Hilchos Maachalos Asuros chapter 2.

[2] For the sake of accuracy I should note that Mr. Farber kept on referring to the number of 38 lashes. This was, obviously, an error. The correct number is 39, see Talmud Makos p. 22; Rambam Hilchos Sanhedrin 17:1.

[3] The five points outlined below are all discussed in Rambam Hilchos Sanhedrin 16:1-4; 12:13; Hilchos Eidus chapters 1-2; 3:2 and Talmudic references noted in the commentaries.

The Talmud goes so far as to compare the punishment of whipping a human being to killing him! (Sanhedrin 10a; Rambam Hilchos Sanhedrin 16:1). Thus, all of the extraordinary procedures required to impose the death penalty, were required prior to the lashes penalty as well (Rambam *ibid.* 16:1; 4; 11:4).

According to Rabbi Ishmael, a court of 23 members was required to impose lashes, the same amount required to issue a death sentence (Talmud Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 1:2; Cf. Tosefos Sanhedrin 10a.) However, the established verdict is that a court of three suffices (Sanhedrin *ibid.* Rambam Hilchos Sanhedrin 5:4; 16:2.)

[4] The nature of this unique ordination is discussed in Rambam Hilchos Sanhedrin chapter 4.

[5] It is interesting to note that in the 1500's, one of the well known sages in the Holy Land, Mahari Bei Rav, attempted to renew this type of ordination in Jewish life. He wished to establish Jewish courts whose members would enjoy the status of "Musmachim," fully ordained rabbis (this attempt was based on an innovative ruling by the Rambam Hilchos Sanhedrin 4: 11.) His plan was counterattacked by many a leading sage of the time and never came to full fruition. (For a full discussion of the event, see Kuntres Hasmicah at the end of Shaalos Utshuvos Maharlbach.)

[6] In a similar vein, the possibility of Jewish courts imposing death penalties ceased around 1995 years ago. For a Jewish court to impose the death penalty there must be a Temple (Beis Hamikdash) existing in Jerusalem, and the Jewish Supreme Court numbering 71 members must be established near the Temple. Since this condition did not exist forty years before the destruction of the second temple, the death penalty was abolished from the Judaic Judicial system (Rambam Hilchos Sanhedrin 14:11-13).

[7] Mishnah Sanhedrin 37a.

[8] I interviewed Rabbi Zalman Posner back in 2009, who shared with me all the details of the story. (He passed away in 2014). The dialogue between Barry Farber and Rabbi Posner was not quoted verbatim in the essay from the radio transcript. For the address of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, I used the Yiddish unedited transcript written at the time (Sichos Kodesh 5729 vol. 1), and the memory of Rabbi Posner who was present.



20.

First-Ever Survey Of Modern Orthodox American Jews Reveals Fragmented Community

In Nishma Research survey of 4,000 Modern Orthodox Jews, 97% rank cost of Jewish schooling the community's most serious challenge

21.

By [HANNAH DREYFUS](#)

September 27, 2017

The millennial generation's growing detachment from Israel, creeping doubts about theological fundamentals, declining numbers in the pews and a more significant backing for female clergy than one might expect — these are just a few of the findings gleaned from a first-of-its-kind study on the Modern Orthodox community, a diverse and vocal group that represents approximately 4 percent of the American Jewish population.

The survey, titled “Nishma Research Profile of American Modern Orthodox Jews,” is being reported on for the first time here. The survey's results—spanning hot-button issues from the day school tuition crisis to acceptance of LGBTQ Jews to the roles and status of women—quantified what some have conjectured to be a growing divide between liberal strains of Orthodoxy and the denomination's more conservative ones.

An analysis of observance found that 39 percent of respondents reported becoming more observant over the last decade, while 23 percent of respondents reported becoming less so, pointing towards a “net rightward shift” of 16 percent. (These numbers reflect the overall self-perception of respondents; a separate section of the survey measured observance by keeping Shabbat, kashrut, putting on phylacteries every day — among males — and observing the laws of family purity among married couples).

Those who reported decreasing levels of observance came exclusively from Orthodoxy's more liberal camps, the self-identified “liberal” and “open” Orthodox. Those in more conservative camps — self-identified as “right centrist,” “centrist” and “modern” Orthodox — all reported increasing levels of observance. Liberal segments of the community also reported a much higher percentage of their children becoming less observant.

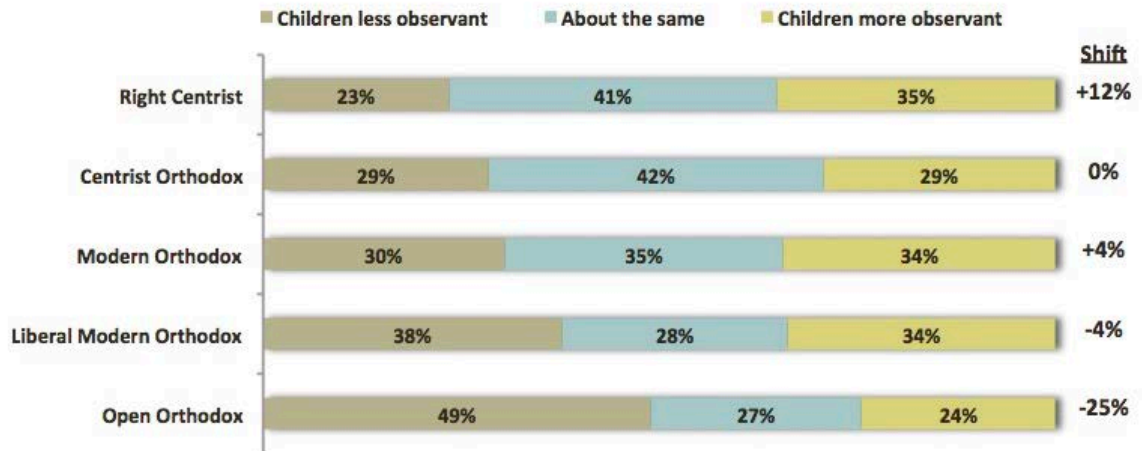
“The fabric of Modern Orthodoxy is being stretched,” said Mark Trencher, lead researcher and author of the report. Trencher, a former public policy analyst and market researcher, said that the data indicates a “growing schism” in the Orthodox community. “The community is becoming fragmented,” he added.

Nishma Research is a sociological and market research firm that studies targeted segments of the Jewish community. (Most recently, the research group conducted an in-depth survey of those who have left the Orthodox fold, a community colloquially referred to as “Off the Derech,” or path.) The new survey, which used a web-based, opt-in survey rather than a random sample, analyzed the responses of 3,903 American Modern Orthodox adults 18 and older.

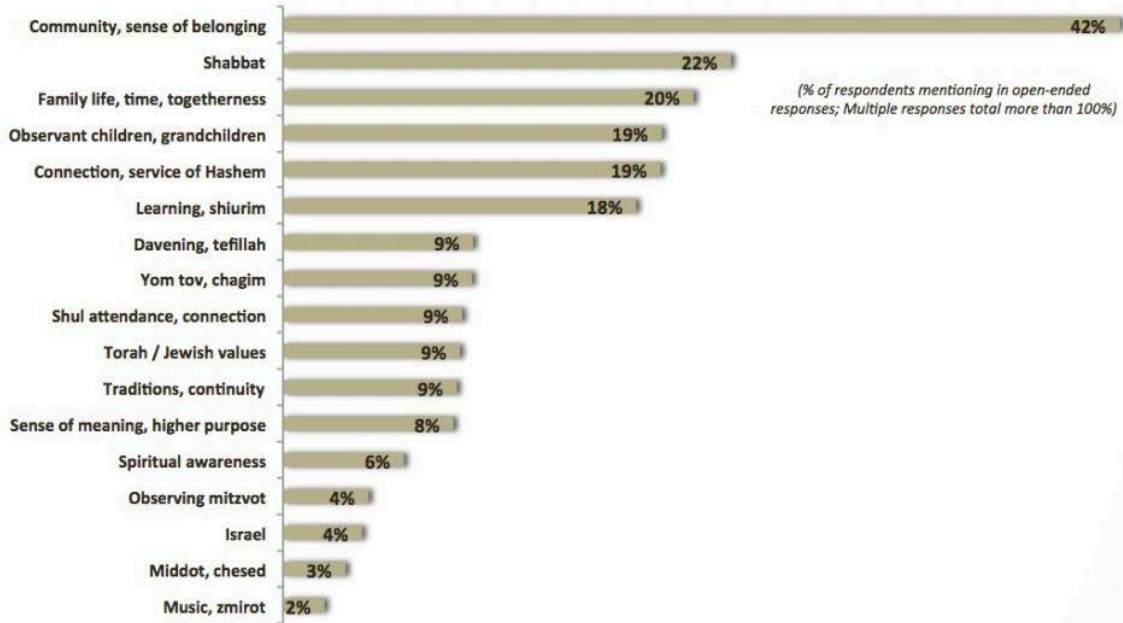
Steven M. Cohen, research professor of Jewish Social policy at HUC-JIR and a member of the study's advisory panel, said the survey's “polarization hypothesis” — that the left is moving further left and the right further right — mirrors a broader sociological trend within other American religious groups.

“Polarization increases the diversity within Orthodoxy,” said Cohen. The study shows “greater diversity than the image of the Orthodox appears.”

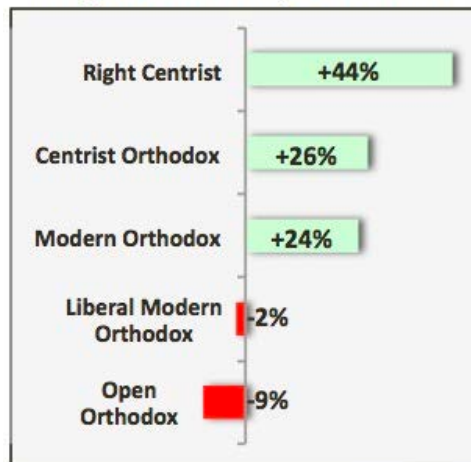
Orthodox Children Create Their Own Religious Paths



Why Be an Orthodox / Observant Jew? – What Gives the Most Satisfaction, Joy or Meaning



Changes in Levels of Personal Religious Observance, Past 10 Years



Nishma Research Releases Two New Studies of the American Orthodox Jewish Community

ejewishphilanthropy.com/nishma-research-releases-two-new-studies-of-the-american-orthodox-jewish-

eJP

November 1,
2019

22.

Nishma Research has released two new studies of the Orthodox community:

- The Successes, Challenges, and Future of American Modern Orthodoxy – This study probes the challenges and benefits facing Modern Orthodoxy that result from of its interaction with secular society, its priorities and the societal values that are leading to divisiveness within the community.
- The Journeys and Experiences of *Baalei Teshuvah* – This study examines the factors leading non-Orthodox Jews to become observant, their challenges and the nature of their continuing journey.

Among the study findings:

The Successes, Challenges, and Future of American Modern Orthodoxy

- Modern Orthodoxy's worldview involves melding Jewish observance with secular knowledge and participation. While nearly all (88%) experience positive interactions with secular society, nearly all (88%) also have experienced conflict, and more than one-third (37%) compromise to some extent, most often in areas of *kashrut* and *Shabbat*.
- People want change, and the top issues raised by those who advocate for change are increased roles for women and acceptance of LGBTQ. But many are opposed to change, and the two areas where they do not want change are the exact same issues. Modern Orthodoxy is being stretched by what are seen as both positive and negative views and values of secular society.
- Fragmentation is growing, and more than one-third (34%) believe “there is no longer a single, cohesive Modern Orthodox community. Modern Orthodoxy should acknowledge this and would perhaps be better off splitting into separate camps.”
- The historic near-universal attendance at Orthodox Jewish day schools seems to be slipping, as 31% say they might consider public school as an option. 55% agree that their Orthodox community school systems are successful in creating committed Orthodox Jews, while 34% disagree.
- There is widespread concern about individuals leaving Orthodoxy (63%), and even more concern that communal leaders are not adequately addressing the issue (67%).

The Journeys and Experiences of *Baalei Teshuvah*

- 42% of Modern Orthodox identify as *baalei teshuvah* (becoming Orthodox at or after *bar/bat mitzvah* age), a number consistent with what the 2013 Pew Study had found.
- The top reasons *baalei teshuvah* give for why they became Orthodox are intellectual attraction or curiosity (53%), seeing Orthodoxy as more authentically Jewish (52%) and more truthful (35%), and connection to Jewish roots and heritage (36%).
- By a very wide margin, the top challenge *baalei teshuvah* faced in becoming Orthodox was in their relationships with their parents and family (37%). These relationships were far more challenging than learning and knowing what to do as an Orthodox observant person (16%), social aspects and friends (13%), and *kashrut* (12%).
- Half of *baalei teshuvah* have continued to become more observant over time, but one in four says they have become less observant and gradually more lenient. Additionally, the vast majority (83%) say that they have “held onto” things from their pre-Orthodox life, which are not commonly found in the Orthodox world, most often citing left-of-center political views (20%) and socially liberal views (12%).
- About three-fourths of all Orthodox Jews see their community as very accepting of *baalei teshuvah*. However, *baalei teshuvah*'s comfort levels with davening (prayer), Jewish learning and day-to-day Orthodox living are significantly lower than those of people raised Orthodox, even after many years,

GIVING THE NAME

Upon reaching the words in bold type, the reader pauses while all present recite them aloud; he then repeats them and continues:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ *Our God and the God of our forefathers, preserve this child for his father and mother, and may his name be called in Israel* (baby's Hebrew name) *son of* (father's Hebrew name). *May his father rejoice in the issue of his loins and may his mother exult in the fruit of her womb, as it is written: 'May your father and mother rejoice and may she who gave birth to you exult.'*¹ *And it is said: "Then I passed by you and saw you downtrodden in your blood, and I said to you: 'In your blood, live!' and I said to you: 'In your blood, live!'"*² *And it is said: 'He remembered His covenant forever; the word of His command for a thousand generations – that He made with Abraham and His vow to Isaac. Then He established it for Jacob as a statute, for Israel as an everlasting statute.'*³ *And it is said: 'Abraham circumcised his son Isaac at the age of eight days as God had commanded him.'*⁴ **Give thanks to HASHEM for He is good; His kindness endures forever! Give thanks to HASHEM for He is good; His kindness endures forever!** *May this little one (baby's Hebrew name) son of (father's Hebrew name) become great. Just as he has entered the covenant so may he enter into the Torah, the marriage canopy, and good deeds.*

קריאת השם

Upon reaching the words in bold type, the reader pauses while all present recite them aloud; he then repeats them and continues:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ ואלהי אבותינו, קיים את הילד הזה לאביו ולאמו, ויקרא שמו, בישראל (baby's Hebrew name) בן (father's Hebrew name). ישמח האב ביוצא חלציו, ותגל אמו בפרי בטנה. ככתוב: ישמח אבך ואמך, ותגל יולדתך. ונאמר: ואעבר עליך ואראך מתבוססת ברמיה, ונאמר לך ברמיה חיי, ונאמר לך ברמיה חיי. ונאמר: זכר לעולם בריתו, דבר צנה לאלף דור. אשר ברת את אברהם, ושבעתו לישחק. ויעמידה ליעקב לחק, לישראל ברית עולם. ונאמר. וימל אברהם את יצחק בנו, בן שמנת ימים, כאשר צנה אתו אלהים. הודו ליהוה כי טוב, כי לעולם חסדו. הודו ליהוה כי טוב, כי לעולם חסדו. זדה הקטן גדול יהיה. (father's Hebrew name) בן (baby's Hebrew name). בשם שובנס לבִּרְיָת, בן וּבְנֵי לְתוֹרָה, וּלְחֻפָּה, וּלְמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים.



24. Tradition
Symposium on Rupture
and Reconstruction

In the last twenty-five years, many of the phenomena Prof. Soloveitchik identified have continued, but arguably for a different reason. In many ways the world is a radically different place a generation since his essay was first published. Nevertheless, “Rupture and Reconstruction” continues to provide a framework and vocabulary to address those changes.

While Soloveitchik sought to objectively describe a phenomenon without issuing a moral judgment of it, one couldn’t help but sense his frustration, disappointment, and concern with the “swing to the right.” Twenty-five years later, it is worth considering, which should we fear more today, a swing to the right or to the left? Which poses the greater threat to our centrist values and ideals, a world that lauds stringency and restrictiveness or that celebrates leniency and permissiveness? Which is more frustrating and disappointing, the segment of the community that seeks to narrow definitions of orthodoxy or those that continuously broaden them?

Twenty-five years after examining the swing to the right, it is the pivot of some towards the left that concerns me for what will be wrought a generation from now. When considering the pull in both directions it seems clear to me that holding the center is more important than ever.

וכדי להבין את הפתרון להתחמקות הללו, עלינו להקדים ולראות שיש בעולם שני דרכי חינוך, ובלשון כתבי האריז"ל והספרים הקדושים העוסקים בענייני חג הפסח, מוגדרים הדברים כשני מהלכים, האחד מקטנות לגדלות, והשני מגדלות לקטנות, ובעזרת ה' נסביר את הדברים לפי הבנתנו, ונראה איך שבעצם היסוד הזה מבואר בתורה ובהגדה ורמז במצוות הסדר - גם על פי דרך הפשוט.

והנה כמובן בעולם שלפנינו מכירים אנו תהליך 'מקטנות לגדלות', כל תינוק מתחיל להתפתח ולצמוח מקטנות לגדלות, ואין אנו מכירים תופעה הפוכה שאדם נולד גדול והולך ומתקטן, אבל בהתפתחויות כוחות הנפש ובבחינת הלידה של 'תולדותיהם של

וכעת נבאר את הדרך ההפוכה הפונה מגדלות לקטנות.

הדרך הזו לא מובחנת כל כך אצל הציבור שנולד בבתיים של שומרי תורה ומצוות, ואשר תהליך הצמיחה שלהם החל בדרך של חינוך, בדרך של מקטנות לגדלות, אלא מצויה היא אצל ציבור 'בעלי-התשובה', או 'גירי-צדק' אשר בבת אחת החליטו לעבור מעבר חד, מחיי הפקר לחיי קדושה, ועברו תהליך הפוך מההליך הקודם, וזהו סידרו:

ד] התעוררו בהם תהיות על יעוד חייהם ומשמעותו, והתוודעו לדבר ה' ותורתו, והאמונה התבהרה לפניהם, כאילו שנגלה לפניהם מלך מלכי המלכים והראה להם את נוכחותו בעולם ואת ציפיתו מברואיו, והרגישו מיד שכל עולמם הישן נעצר, אין להם כעת אלא את הביטול לרצון ה', למלאות את חובתם בעולמם, זו היתה כל מגמתם בשעה שעשו את הפסיחה וקפצו אל ה'. וזהו הענין של 'גדלות שני'.

ג] ולאחר שעברו לעולמם החדש התעוררו בהם השאלות באיזה מקצוע ולימוד לעסוק וכו', ויש להם ברירה לברר את הדברים לפי המוערך על העולם ההמוני, אך היות והם בנטיה של פרישה מההמון ובכיוון של הקשבה למצפונם, מסתבר שימהרו לגלות את חפץ לבם האמיתי. וזהו הענין של 'קטנות שני'.

ב] והנה מה שביקשו לעבור אל האמת, הרי היה בגלל שביקשו להשיג הרגשה טובה של יושר ונאמנות, וההנהגה הזו יותר שייכת ליראה, ומתעורר הרצון להרגיש גם את האהבה והחשק, והיות והם נמצאים במקום הראוי לתכונות נפשם ורצון בוראו מהם, ברור שימהרו להרגיש את הטעם הטוב הנלווה לעבודה שכזו וישיגו את האהבה הזו. וזהו הענין של 'גדלות ראשון'.

א] ולאט לאט מתרגלים לחיות כמו כל היהודים המחונכים לכך מקטנותם, וחייהם מנוהלים לאור דברי השולחן-ערוך, לא מתבוננים אם יש לי חשק או לא, אלא מה שצריך לעשות - ברור שכך עושים, וזהו כעין המצב של 'קטנות ראשון' שפועל לפי פקודת אביו.

26. Amos

הִנֵּה | יָמִים בָּאִים נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא־רָעַב
לֶלְחֶם וְלֹא־צָמְאָ לַמַּיִם כִּי אִם־לְשִׁמְעַ אֶת דְּבַרִּי יְהוָה:

A time is coming—declares my Lord GOD—when I will send a famine upon the land: not a hunger for bread or a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the LORD.

I'm empty and aching, and I don't know why.
Simon And Garfunkel

27. R' Moshe Dovid Walle
1697-1777

יא. הנה ימים באים נאם ה' אלקים והשלחתי רעב בארץ לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמוע את דברי ה'. הנה כבר ידוע שהימים של הרעב הם ממש ימי הגלות והסיתום, שאז הרע של הקליפה והגס הגס שבה הוא השולט ומביא את הרעב, שהא מלה מורכבת רע-עב ברזא דארמן. ומ"ש: "לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים" וגו', הטעם הוא, שהרי בזמן הגלות והסיתום אין שום רעב וצמא ממימיה ולחמה של תורה, כי אדרבא לא נתחברו ספרים כל כך ארוכים ורבים כמו בזמן הגלות שרבו הדרשנים בהם ועשו ספרים הרבה אין קץ. אלא שיש בהם פטומי מלין הרבה מאד, והאמת שהוא הנקרא ממש "דברי ה'" הנה היא מעט מזעיר בכל ספר וספר. וזהו הטעם שישראל שהם זרע אמת אינם מוצאים קורת רוח ברוב הספרים שכתבו המחברים שלהם לפי סברתם ורובי המחלקות ותהי האמת נעדרת בהם, מפני הקליפה הסותמת שלא הניחה לעבור אורות האמת בעת שליטתה. וזהו שגורם: לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כמ"ש, אלא רעב וצמא לשמוע את "דברי ה'", שהוא סוד האמת ממש, והוא גם כן נבואה ורוח הקדש וכלא רזא חדא שהרי כשפתח האמת פתוח אז באים בריות כל מיני השגה של נבואה ורוח הקדש. כמו שהיה בימיו של רשב"י, ולכן קרא לחבריו זכאי קשוט, לפי שזכו אל האמת הברור. אבל כשפתחה נעול וסתום, אין חזון נפרץ אין עוד נביא ולא אתנו יודע עד מה, ודבר זה גורם טלטול לכל הניצוצות הקדושות שהם מזרע אמת, לילך אחריה לבקש אותה בכל מקום, לפי שאין להם נחת רוח בכל הדירושים ובכל הפירושים שנעשים לאלפים ולרבבות, והאמת אין אתם. וכבר ידוע מ"ש החכם הרומז לזה: טוב מעט בצדקה מרוב תבואות בלא משפט. וזהו הטעם שדבר הכתוב בהושע: אחרי ה' ילכו כאריה ישאג, שמשמע אחרי האמת כמ"ש, כי לתאוה יבקש נפרד.

28. Nesivos Shalom
Slonimer Rebbe

הנסיון, המסי"ב לעשות נח"ר לפני השי"ת. וכמו שפירשו רבוה"ק זי"ע, היום יעמיד במשפט כל יצורי עולמים אם כבנים אם כעבדים, שע"ו גופא המשפט, אם הם כבנים או כעבדים. והיינו שגם אם יהודי מקיים את כל התורה והמצוות עדיין אין זה אלא כעבדים, המקיימים את אשר אדונם מצום, אבל המעלה העיקרית כשהוא בבחי' בנים, שעומד בכל הנסיונות, אף אלו שאינם קשורים לציוויים מפורשים, שזה מורה ומוכיח את גודל אהבתו להשי"ת, שעובד לו ית' כבן לאביו. וכל שכן מה שיהודי מקבל יסורים באהבה, שזה מורה על בהירות אמונתו שהכל מהשי"ת אביו הרחמן.

AND I WILL GLORIFY HIM



By Eytan Kobre | JUNE 19, 2019

Herman Wouk "made G-d a bestseller"



...Wouk was raised by observant parents and much influenced by his learned grandfather from Minsk. But in his twenties, he began working as a radio scriptwriter and drifted away from observance.

Eventually, he came under the influence of Rabbi Leo Jung, rabbi of The Jewish Center in Manhattan and an important mainstay of authentic Judaism in the first half of the 20th century. Wouk began accompanying the rabbi on his daily walk around the Central Park reservoir; through "hot days and cold, through sunshine, fog, snow and rain," he wrote in a 1996 piece for Jewish Action, "we marched around the oval cinder path, enjoying the air and the view of the skyscrapers.... We talked at length, too, about the ideas and commitments of the Jewish faith."

With World War II's approach, Wouk went off to the Naval Academy and then did an extended tour of duty in the Pacific, keeping up a steady correspondence with Rabbi Jung. At one point, Rabbi Jung wrote to him that:

"When you come back you will have to make up your mind once and for all whether you want to travel the path of Torah-true Judaism with its responsibilities, inconveniences, and possible handicaps in your career, or whether you want to retain an emotional appreciation of Jewish faith and an attitude of appeasement and partial conformity...."

Rabbi Jung challenged Wouk to **"decide once and for all on abiding loyalty to the din Torah... [and] achieve that inner serenity which I know you are seeking."** And indeed, he did make up his mind, fully re-embracing *shmiras hamitzvos*.

And as he began to find fame and fortune as one of America's most widely-read novelists, he also began thinking, at Rabbi's Jung urging, about how he might "turn his pen to the service of Judaism." Rabbi Jung directed him to Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch's *The Nineteen Letters*, but he "was overawed by its learning and zeal, neither of which, I felt, I could possibly match."

Yet the seed Wouk's mentor had planted in his mind bore fruit, and 13 years later, he published what Eleff calls one of the "signature defenses of Orthodox Judaism in the twentieth century." Meanwhile, in the mid-1950s, he had begun attending the Gemara shiurim of Rav Moshe Feinstein in Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem on New York's Lower East Side.