

# **She's Still There Mom's Group Bible Study Online – Session 2**

Hi Ladies,

You are invited to our “She's Still There” Mom's Group Bible Study Online.

When: Dec 16, 2018 12:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/da43349aed249514dc2040ba88984b7b>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information (like the password) about joining the meeting. Those who are registered will also receive a password protected Bible Study page here on our website to view the study material each week. Please note that this is being offered FREELY to you, although the materials are purchased by Nishmati and copyrighted by the Author, so please do not share your login information out of respect for the author and HaShem. □

## **ABOUT THE BIBLE STUDY**

Every year the CMY Mom's Group has a special Bible study just for us so that we can deal with our own issues, joys of motherhood and get encouragement from each other. This year we have decided to offer this online so that you ladies can also join with us online.

## Who is this Bible Study for?

It is for Moms, number 1... and secondly- it is also for any woman who may feel burnt out in life or feels that they may have missed their chance in doing things that were in their heart but lost sight of. It is also for any woman who just needs to breathe and let HaShem in.

This will be a Zoom Bible Study Online in 4-6 Sessions. You will have homework (watch the Sessions at home before we meet) and if you choose to purchase the book from the author below- read the book as well. If you do not have the book, that is also ok since the video/audio materials in our password protected page here on our website details the books.

We will then go over the study workbook when we met online.

To find out if you are interested in this study before signing up and to purchase the book online from the author- if you want it as well, please visit the author's website below:

[Shes Still There](#)

---

## Weekly Manna – Parashat Mikeitz

### Parashat Mikeitz

*“It happened at the end of two years to the day Pharaoh was dreaming” (Bereishis 41:1)*

This portion begins by telling us that Yosef spent another two years in prison after he interpreted the cupbearer's dream. Rashi and the midrash state that Yosef's imprisonment was extended these two additional years because he asked the cupbearer to remember him. This has always troubled me. Is seeking help from another person such a grave sin? Does it really show a lack of trust in G-d?

Pesachim 64b states that although we should pray for Divine help we should not rely on miracles. That seems to indicate to me that not only is it ok to seek help from any and all sources, it is also proper to take action. So, what did Yosef do that was so severely punished? This poor kid was unjustifiably thrown in jail in the first place. Was seeking an opportunity to get out of there so bad that he should be punished?

Rabbi Abraham Twerski tells a story of a Chassidic Rebbe that might help us understand: There was a Rebbe who was asked for his berachah (blessing) by a person whose business had failed and was in deep debt. The rebbe told the man to buy a lottery ticket. When the man didn't win, the rebbe was deeply disappointed and complained to a tzaddik, "My berachos are ineffective." The tzaddik said, "In the morning service we say, 'Who among all your handiwork, those above and those below, can tell you what You should do?' You should have given that person a berachah that he should prosper. Your mistake was in telling him to buy a lottery ticket. It is not your position to dictate to God how to bring about this person's prosperity." (Twerski on Chumash)

Maybe Yosef's two additional years were not so much a punishment as a natural result of the situation. Maybe G-d honored Yosef's desire to be remembered by the cupbearer. What if the fact that it took the cupbearer two years to do so was simply the time needed to bring about Yosef's salvation by his chosen method? Maybe G-d's method could have saved him that very same day?

G-d is the one who orchestrates our tests, and our salvations. But usually He does so by means we don't anticipate. Even though we can and should do whatever we reasonably can to "help" the situation, we must never forget Who's in charge. Although we might ultimately see the desired results, it rarely comes about the way we expect. If we try to tell G-d how to fix our situation, He might listen to us, and we might pay the consequences. We might delay our salvation!

Whatever G-d has destined for us will come about. But will it unfold in the way He chooses, which is always the best way, or in the way we want Him to do it? Thankfully He doesn't always listen to our advice! That is proof of His mercy. However, there may well be occasions when we, like Yosef, find our sentence extended because that is what we have asked for!

*"Let your trust (bitachon) remain with Hashem, I have made this known to you today, you also." Mishlei 22:19*

## **Bitachon is a foundation for fear of Hashem**

*"On the day that I fear, I trust in You" Tehillim 56:4*

*"In fear of Hashem is a powerful stronghold" Mishlei 14:26*

When reciting certain blessings of Shemoneh Esrei, we bend our knees at the word "Baruch", and straighten up at the word "Hashem". It is explained in Berachos 6b that by bending we demonstrate our fear and awe before Hashem, but when standing upright, we display our bitachon in Hashem – that He will take care of us and all of our needs. As Rabbi Dwek explains in his book "A life of Bitachon", we must strike a balance not only in regard to fear and faith, but regarding hishtadlus (physical effort) and bitachon as well.

So how do we know how much physical effort is necessary and how much is excessive? Rabbi Dwek explains that there are two differing viewpoints regarding bitachon: "The Chovos HaLevavos (Shaar HaBitachon 4) holds that it is forbidden to rely on a miracle, and that bitachon requires hishtadlus, physical effort, on our part. On the other side is the Ramban (Parashas Bechukosai), who is of the opinion that we must cast our entire burden upon the Al-mighty." The Gemara (Berachos 35b) cites similar, seemingly opposing views, yet Rav Chaim Volozhin (Nefesh HaChaim 1:5) explains that they are not really opposing views, but simply that it is dependent upon the spiritual level of the person at that moment. Some of us are not on such a high level that we are deserving of miracles, therefore much physical effort might be required to bring about the desired outcome, while others who are on a very high spiritual level, who put their complete trust in Hashem, might merit miracles.

I'm not going to pretend I have all the answers to this or any other question. I don't! But I know from experience and hindsight, that the more I trust Hashem, the more I see His guiding hand orchestrating my life. I can also identify times when I have tried to help Him out, thinking I had a pretty good idea, only to make things more difficult and usually delaying my "salvation".

So, if you need money, go looking for employment, but if you stand firm in your conviction not to work on Shabbat or the Moedim, you will find He will open doors and help you to find the perfect job. The one that allows you the time off, not necessarily your "dream job". If you need a spouse, put yourself out there and make yourself available, but to the right crowd. If you refuse to back down on your standards, and consider only suitors who share your conviction to live a life of faith and trust in Hashem, He will bring the right one into your life. But it might not be the one you would have chosen, or when you would have liked. You get the idea.

Bottom line ladies, we can't just sit on our "tookus" waiting for G-d to drop miracles into our lap. We need to do something. We cannot be fearful of being punished for doing the wrong thing. Fact is, we usually learn our greatest lessons through our failures and wrong turns. We just need to be prayerfully looking to Hashem to guide us to the proper path, and not relying on our own wisdom or ideas. When we see doors closing, we need to stop and thank Hashem for keeping us from going down the wrong path. Wasn't there a song that said "some of G-d's greatest blessings were unanswered prayers"?

It is so easy for us to lose our focus. And like it or not, we must admit we don't always know what the best path to take is. We are not always right!!!! We must, instead, make every effort to keep our thoughts and efforts on things of eternal value. And if we truly have bitachon we will see our salvations materialize, even if in ways we would not have chosen. I pray this season of miracles has been a time of blessing in your lives. I hope and pray that we encourage you each week as we seek to find the beautiful, ever-relevant pearls hidden within the weekly parashat. May the remaining days of Chanukah be filled with light, illuminating the miracles around us, many that maybe we overlook every day! And may that strengthen our bitacon in Hashem, Blessed be He! We can rest assured He knows what He's doing, even if we don't always understand. Chag Chanukah Sameach!

Be blessed and be a blessing,

Rhonda

---

# Weekly Manna – Parashat Vayeshev

## Did they cry?

As I read through this week's portion, that is the question that kept going through my mind. Did they cry? Did Yosef cry? Did Tamar cry? I know I would be crying if I was in their shoes! And I think crying is a natural reaction to life's difficulties.....but in measure. After we have a good cry, we can take from the examples of both Yosef and Tamar some very important lessons.

Sinah (hatred) distorts, blinds, alters, and perverts. When we hate, we misjudge, misconstrue and misunderstand. Anger negatively affects our ability to remain rational.

In his book "The majesty of Bereishis", Rabbi Schnerman writes that Yosef's brothers gave in to emotions that belong to Esav, but have no place in the family of Yaakov. Namely, hatred (37:4) and jealousy (37:11).

*"We can understand why someone hates an enemy, but why should someone hate a person who means him no harm? It is an unpleasant part of human nature that we can sometimes dislike a person who is obviously better than we are. He makes us look bad. He makes us suffer by comparison. He makes our desires look petty and our excuses seem foolish. Such a person, especially if he exercises his obligation to lead, become a nuisance, an enemy of the people. And he is hated."*

Esav kills whomever he hates; that is what makes him Esav. But Yaakov's sons? Much more is expected of Bnei Yisrael!

Onkelos teaches that Yosef was the premier Torah scholar of

the family. Were the brothers possibly jealous of that? Perhaps! But as Rabbi Schnerman points out, the Torah is the property of all, therefore, none of the brothers could be justified in condemning him for excelling in an area where they were free to match him.

We all have free choice. If we spend our day pursuing worldly gain and worldly pleasure, we are not going to be Torah scholars or masters of our midot. End of story! No exceptions. Where one places importance, and exerts effort, is where one will excel.

*“According to the effort is the reward” Avot 5:26*

No one is forced to act, for good or bad. G-d does not tamper with our free choice. What does often happen though, is that G-d gives opportunities. To those whose previous deeds have earned them the privilege, He gives opportunities for constructive action. And for those whose previous deed have conditioned them to do wrong, He brings opportunities for evil. We are conduits for spiritual energies, but we choose if the energy we generate is positive or negative.

*“They cause merit to come through deserving people, and harm through bad people” (Shabbos 32a)*

Life unfolds in ways we never expect. I have many times said: “I don’t know if I had a plan, but I’m certain this wasn’t it!”. I say that tongue and cheek, but it is a fact, that life rarely plays out the way I would have orchestrated or desired, plan or not. And yet, I realize my so-called “troubles” are sent to me by G-d. What we need to realize ladies, is that blessings usually come disguised and it is our job to see through the disguise and unmask the blessing hidden within.

This portion tells us two stories, which, from our point of

view, might appear tragic. And yet, are the stories of Yosef and Tamar actually stories of tragedy? Or of Divine favor?

## **Stop and smell the roses**

*“Then they sat down to a meal. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilad their camels bearing gum, balm, and ladanum to be taken to Egypt.” Bereishis 37:25*

Why do we need to know what this caravan of Ishmaelites was carrying? Rashi to 37:25, cites the midrash that teaches this was Hashem’s intervention on behalf of Yosef. By allowing this to be a caravan carrying sweet smelling spices, Hashem was sending a message to Yosef. A message not to give up hope.

## **Hashem cares, therefore there is reason to hope!**

Yosef had faith and trust in Hashem and in His Divine Providence. He realized something we often fail to realize or we forget: that everything that happens to us is all part of the plan – the Divine plan! And the sweet smell was an assurance that Hashem still cared for him.

Our challenge is to seek the silver lining beneath the dark clouds. To find the rose among the thorns.

I’ll be honest, if I were in Yosef’s shoes, I might have a difficult time noticing the sweet fragrance. But ultimately our senses play a major role in allowing us to regain our composure during difficult times. And it is specifically during the difficult times the we must stop and examine every occurrence in an effort to identify the positive signs from Above. Hashem sends messages, but we must look, listen, and even smell for them. Take a deep breath and inhale the sweet

scent. And if necessary, play some calming music, light a candle, take a bubble bath. Do whatever calms you best. And accept the hugs and affirmations He sends your way through others. And don't forget to thank Hashem for the little gifts of reassurance that He still cares! They are always there, if we care to notice.

We might think that as we grow spiritually, we will either become immune to life's difficulties, or that maybe G-d might grant us a reprieve, a sort of reward for good behavior. But Avraham's tests, Yitzchak's challenges, and Yaakov's seemingly never-ending ordeals tell us differently. It is the struggles of life that provide us with the opportunities to grow. As the saying goes: "No pain, no gain".

How we view life's trials and tribulations is a matter of perspective. We can view them as a punishment or as a blessing. As unwanted struggles, or as opportunities for spiritual growth. The trick is to turn our adversity into hope. To learn how to maintain an inner peace and joy when dealing with life's challenges. To acquire the ability to stop and smell the sweet fragrances.

Every single event, even the most minute, is orchestrated from Above for one reason, and one reason only.....to set the stage for the coming of Mashiach. Yosef and his brothers, Judah and Tamar, King David and Bathsheba are all proof of this. We can see with hindsight that G-d orchestrated each of these situations for this ultimate purpose.

The hand of Heaven was at work when Yosef was sold into slavery and taken to Egypt:

*"Our father Yaakov would have had to descend to Egypt in chains and a collar. Said the Holy One, Blessed is He, 'he is my firstborn son, shall I bring him down there in disgrace? .....Rather, I will lead his son before him and he will be forced to descend after him.'" (Bereshis Rabbah 86:2,*

*cf Shabbos 89b)*

Tamar was a righteous woman and she risked her reputation and ultimately her life for the sake of fulfilling what she felt was her destiny: to give birth to the line of Israel's monarchy. G-d orchestrated the whole affair so that the Davidic dynasty and ultimately Mashiach would descend from her line.

Many commentaries explain the same thing in the matter of King David and Bathsheba. G-d orchestrated the entire incident to provide David with a test. If he passed the test he would have advanced spiritually, and his successor to the throne would have still come from the union of he and Bathsheba, but in an uncontroversial manner. If he failed, as we know he ultimately did, we are provided, through this sweet singer of Israel, with the ultimate model for how to repent and return to G-d's good graces.

The outcome of each situation is predetermined, the only question is how it will unfold. No one is ever forced to act, for good or bad. G-d does not tamper with our free choice. The Divine plan called for Yaakov's family to descend to Egypt. But did Yosef have to lose his brothers love, become a slave, then a king, to be the instrument through which his family would descend into Egypt? However it happened, ultimately, Yosef recognized it was all part of G-d's plan!

*"Besides, although you intended me harm, Hashem intended it for good, so as to bring about the present result – the survival of many people." (Bereishis 50:20)*

Like Yosef, we must try to understand how our current situation could help to fulfill G-d's plan. Although it might seem "bad" when we are going through a trial, we need to remember that G-d intends it for good. We are rarely aware of our role, but be assured, we are all agents for spiritual

energies, although it is usually beyond our ability to understand.

The Patriarchs were tested in ordeals that were contrary to their basic instincts. Yosef is the symbol of peace. His tests were therefore predicaments involving strife and alienation. His tests involved suffering jealousy, hatred, accusations, assault, and loss of freedom at the hands of those who should have loved him, to see if he could remain the seeker of peace and harmony through it all. It is only through such tests that greatness can be established.

Which brings me full circle, back to my opening question. Did he cry?

I believe he did. And yet, he did not allow his sorrow to prevent him from doing the task at hand. Ditto for Tamar. Come on ladies, she made herself into a prostitute, something against her righteous nature. How humiliated she must have felt. I'm sure she cried many tears. But ultimately, she too did what needed to be done. And in the end, she gave birth to "Breakthrough" and "Radiance" (Peretz & Zerach).

Life is messy. And we don't see the beginning from the end, so it is difficult for us to understand how "this" (whatever it is) can possibly be for the good. But if we stay on course, smell the sweet fragrances, and look for the signs that Hashem still cares, we too can, after a good cry of course, "pull up our big girl panties" and get with the program.

Just imagine how much differently Yosef and Tamar might have felt if, while they were going through their ordeals, they had had our advantage of knowing how it all works out. I don't know if they had prophetic vision or not. I know I don't!

However, if I can imagine reasons why a "bad" situation might result in something good, maybe it can help me to not only endure it, but to even thank G-d for the opportunity to

service Him through it.

Ladies, let's become a force to be reckoned with! Let's examine our midot. If we are honest about our strengths and weaknesses, we will then be able to work on improving ourselves. And we will more easily identify the reason for our trials. And we will create positive energies, not negative. We can be the change we desire to see in our world!! Life is not going to follow our plan. That's why we must empty ourselves and allow Hashem to lead us on the path He has prepared for us. To lead us to our pre-determined role. The role only we can play in ushering in Mashiach's return and the Messianic era. May it be soon and in our days!

Be blessed and be a blessing,

Rhonda

Note: Midot literally means "measures", and is used to refer to the measure of our character traits – if you are not a student of Mussar, you should be!! I will be eternally grateful to my Rebbe, R' Yehezqel, for leading me to the path of mussar. Want to learn more about mussar? Leave a comment and let us know!

---

## **Weekly Manna – Parashat Vayishlach**

*"Yaakov was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn." Bereishis 32:25*

I have to ask the obvious questions: was he alone or was there also a man there? And who was this man? Was this man that wrestled with Yaakov a human "man" or was this G-d?

*"So Yaakov named the place Peniel, meaning, 'I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved.'"*  
*Bereishis 32:31*

Rashi tells us this was Esav's angel that Yaakov was wrestling with. Other opinions see his struggle as being internal or with some other heavenly being, possibly even with G-d Himself. Rabbi Trugman (Orchard's of Delight) tells us:

*"Ultimately, as the verse explicitly states, Yaakov fought not only with man, but with G-d. Yaakov's struggle with G-d represents human beings' universal, existential struggle to understand who we really are, why we are here in this world, and how we should comprehend G-d's providence, especially when things do not go the way we expect. On a deeper level, this is the struggle to understand how to make His will our will."*

After this wrestling match, Yaakov was left wounded. The Hebrew word translated "he wrenched" or "he struck" (32:26), is "teka" (tav, quf, ayin) and it contains two letters from Yaakov's name (quf and ayin). R' Trugman explains that this reveals a deep psychological truth. Whenever we do battle, whether with external or internal forces (or both), we do not walk away whole from the encounter. We have been struck and even if we walk away victorious, there are wounds that we will inevitably take with us from the encounter.

Every battle has a price. Our wounds can be in the form of hurt feelings, aroused suspicions that make trust difficult, guilt, sadness, or any number of emotional wounds. The trick is to learn how not to let our wounded emotions destroy us.

I have known many people over the years who have been so wounded by life's battles, that they cannot move forward in an emotionally healthy manner. When a hurt is nursed, it can turn into a bitterness or depression that can be life-consuming, negatively affecting every aspect of a person's life. As difficult as it may be, we need to learn how to "lick our wounds" and continue living despite life's disappointments. We all have wounds. Relationships can become damaged, dreams don't always materialize, goals are sometimes not reached, the physical loss of those we love can leave us saddened.....the list goes on and on. Whatever "angel" we find ourselves wrestling, the battle will leave a wound, and yet we can learn, from Yaakov's example, how we can be made "perfect" or "whole" (shalom) once again.

After his encounter Yaakov walked differently. He was wounded and walked with a limp. Yet, when he arrives in Shechem we are told:

*"Yaakov arrived shalom in the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan – having come thus from Paddan-aram- he encamped before the city." (Bereishis 33:18)*

It is significant that the Torah tells us that Yaacov was "shalom" (usually translated as perfect or whole) by the time he reached Shechem. He had, with the help of G-d, overcome his wound. We are told a few verses later that he "set up a mizbayach there and called it El-elohe-yisrael" (vs. 20). He did not allow his wound to consume him or prevent him from worshipping G-d.

Our wounds can and will consume us if we do not remain focused on G-d and realize that everything that we go through, every single battle, is orchestrated by Divine Providence for our own good. It is from the wounds of life that our greatest potential can emerge; with convictions and strengths we didn't realize we possessed. Most advocates for a "cause" do so

because they can relate. They have “been there, done that”, and have overcome. Realizing, however, how difficult the wounds are to heal, these brave survivors use their experiences to help others in similar situations to overcome.

No matter what wound life has handed you, you can be sure there are others who have undergone a similar situation. And you can wallow in your wounds, floundering in your self-pity, shame and depression; or you can use the experience to arrive at your next destination “shalom” and prepared to help others to heal their wounds.

Life is difficult. It was designed that way. We are here for a short time, and yet, in such a short life we may have to endure many hardships and wounds. It is all part of our tikkun. We are here to rectify something. And there is no need to be embarrassed! The fact that we are here is proof that we have something we need to rectify. Pretending that you have it all together and do not have struggles in your life isn't going to convince any intelligent person. You are only kidding yourself!

There is no such thing as coincidence. Our trials and battles are sign posts guiding us to our specific tikkun. It is high time we realize this and quit behaving like victims. There is nothing new under the sun. No matter what your specific wounds are, they are not too heavy for G-d to lift. Not only can you survive your wounds, you can actually find “shalom” in the aftermath. And you are not alone!

*“Happiness is the art of never holding in your mind the memory of any unpleasant thing that has passed.” -Quote from unknown source*

Yes, I realize this is all easier said than done. But that's the challenge we face. I will share a personal experience to help this all hit home. Many years ago, when I was a “tween”, I was sexual molested. The experience had a profound,

negative effect on me in ways I didn't even realize for many, many years. It was only after I came to the realization that I had allowed the man who had violated me to continue to wreak havoc in my life by not allowing the wound to heal, that I gave the whole thing over to G-d and found healing in forgiveness. Since that time, I have had an unending stream of women enter my life who have undergone similar experiences and I have had the privilege of playing a small role in helping many of them to begin to find their own path to wholeness. And they have strengthened me as well, in knowing that I too was not alone. Sometimes it can be as simple as having someone to share our experiences with. It can be very healing to "get it off our chest", and yet, some things are very difficult to discuss. There is comfort in knowing someone has been in your shoes and can really understand what you've experienced.

## **VICTIM MENTALITY VS. VICTOR MENTALITY**

It is time to stop being a victim, and to stop wasting energy on reopening our wounds. Let them heal, and redirect your energy in positive, Kingdom building activities. Just as Yaakov was healed by Hashem in the end and emerged "perfect", so can we. As we continue reading Yaakov's story, we will see that his life wasn't all smooth sailing from this point on. He endured many more battles and many more wounds. But if he had gone to the next battle still wounded from the one before, can you see how much more difficult it would have been?

G-d has decided that in order for we human beings to have free choice and truly fulfill our destiny of being created in His image, we must be faced with seduction, temptation and trials. The battles are real, but they are the means through which we can grow, and ascend spiritually. There is no vessel as whole as a broken heart. Like Yaakov we need to cry out for Hashem's mercy to help us rectify our broken vessels and merit His protection, healing and love.

*"My sacrifice to G-d is a broken spirit;*

*G-d you won't spurn a broken, chastened heart." (Tehillim 51:19)*

Nobody is going to promise you that life is going to be easy. If they do, they are lying to you. Our wounds are part of the plan. Ladies, it is heavy on my heart to see healing and shalom in your lives. If we can help each other to redirect the enormous amount energy it takes to remain bitter, angry and depressed into Kingdom purposes, we can and will make a positive impact in the world around us. We will be a force no one will want to come against! We all know the saying: "Hell has no fury like a woman scorned". Just imagine what kind of fury against the darkness present in our world we could muster up if we could be united and whole. Let's redirect our energies together as we strive to fulfill our potential!

*"I dwell, and with the crushed and humble of spirit"*  
(Yeshayahu 57:15)

Be blessed and be a blessing,

Rhonda

---

## **Weekly Manna – Parashat ToIdot**

*"But the children struggled in her womb...." Bereishis 25:22*

The battle was between Ya'akov and Esav, who are the physical

representations of good and evil. The battle continues ladies, and we are all participants!

If we are to have any hope of victory, we must recognize that there is a battle raging. Without this understanding, we have zero chance of victory. And it is also important to understand that the enemy never rests! Therefore we must remain constantly on guard and always be ready for battle. We cannot afford to let our guard down!

So, you might be asking, what is this battle? And who is the enemy? We are our own worst enemy and the battle is within us. It is the battle of our inclinations.

*“You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” D’varim 6:5*

How do we serve G-d with our all? We must learn to serve Him with both of our inclinations, the “good” and the “bad”.

Everything has two sides. On the surface the ego may appear to be a negative thing, but a person without proper self-esteem (lacking an ego) will find it difficult to muster the energy or desire to make any efforts, in physical or spiritual matters. Without an ego we have no desire for achievement. The ego is only negative when we allow it too much freedom. If our ego tells us we are superior to others, or if it is constantly demanding recognition from others, in need of appreciation, applause and complements, then we need to rein it in. But when we have proper self-awareness and self-worth, our ego is what helps us to appreciate and recognize our strengths and talents. Every single one of us are capable of accomplishing amazing things! But only if we realize there is a battle raging, and we stay alert to the attacks of the enemy.

Just like the human body, our evil inclination needs nourishment. Nourishment comes in the form of energy.

Everything contains energy – positive or negative. Negative energy feeds the evil inclination within us. And the more we feed it, the hungrier it gets. Don't let your evil inclination become a glutton!

*“The belly of the wicked always feels empty.” Mishlei 13:25*

If your evil inclination has already become a glutton, it is time to take it to fat camp. Time for a strict diet!

*“Craving for food is a sign that one has enemies. By breaking one's cravings for food one can gain peace with one's enemies.” Rebbe Nachman – Likutey Moharan (hereafter referred to as L.M.) I, 39*

A calorie is a unit of energy. We tend to associate calories with food, but they apply to anything containing energy. In the world we live in, people are constantly counting and cutting food calories. Look at any label in the supermarket and somewhere it will list the calories per serving.

1 piece of cherry cheesecake contains enough energy to light a 60 watt lightbulb for about 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

If you eat 217 Big Mac's you will have consumed enough energy to drive a car a distance of over 80 miles.

We need energy to survive. It takes energy to breathe, to move, to pump blood through our bodies, etc., and the needed energy comes from the food we consume. Our bodies then “burn” the calories through a metabolic process.

How many calories do we need for our cells to function properly? The number is different for every person. But if you take in more calories than you use, it will be stored as fat. And excess fat causes severe health problems. In “Anatomy of the Soul”, Rebbe Nachman teaches that G-d fashioned everything in creation with two potentially opposing

or potentially complementary energies depending on man's use of them. The body has the potential to either reveal the soul and radiate its holiness, or to conceal and smother the soul.

The world is full of paradoxes. They are built into the system G-d created:

- Good and evil
- Heaven and earth
- Male and female
- Revelation and concealment
- This world and the World to Come
- Mercy and justice
- Sun and moon
- Daytime and nighttime
- Body and soul

And yet, these paradoxes only exist from the point of view of the system G-d created. From our point of view.

*“The intention (of the Talmud) is that the universe was created according to the principle of opposites. The unity of the Blessed Name, however, is utterly unique.” Maharal of Prague (Derekh Chaim, page 14b)*

## **SPIRITUAL SLAVERY STEMS FROM IMPROPER EATING**

*“An honorable man can be discerned by the way he uses his mouth.” – Rebbe Nachman*

Our own internal organs can enslave us. When we eat out of lust, we eat like animals. Yet, when we eat with the intention of nourishing the body so that we can develop spiritually, we elevate even the mundane act of eating.

*“Gluttony brings a person to a loss of honor and favor.”*

(L.M. I 67:2)

### Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom #143:

*"There are two ways in which one can eat like an animal. Some eat human food but with an animal's appetite. Others eat like humans but their food is not fit for human consumption. For there are sparks of holiness contained within the food we eat and if these sparks are not properly rectified, both through observance of the mitzvot related to food and through eating with all the proper attitudes, that food is fit only for a beast, not for humans. Eating "like an animal" in either of these two ways can result in illness."*

*"Eating can cause confusion. Immediately after eating, one often feels confused, because the forces of the kelipot (the other side) also receive their nourishment from the food one eats." (L.M. I, 17:3)*

*"The mind develops through the nourishment it receives. When one eats unnecessarily, the superfluous food mars one's sense of judgment. If the body is free of excesses, one is able to experience a clear understanding of how to direct one's life." (L.M. I, 61:1)*

The mind is powerfully affected by the food we eat. Rebbe Nachman also teaches that one's personality traits are dependent upon his diet (Alep-Bet Book, Da'at A:4). Food affects our mind through the energy it receives. This is true both physically and spiritually. Healthy food will help develop the mind. Unhealthy food will have the opposite effect. This is not just a matter of kosher vs. non-kosher, or nutritious vs. "junk" food, but applies equally to eating with a proper or improper attitude.

*"One's lust for food testifies to one's distance from truth*

*[i.e. godliness] and because of a person's lust for food, G-d, as it were, hides His face from him." (L.M. I, 47).*

*"I will hide my face, and he will be devoured..." D'varim 31:17;*

This, Rebbe Nachman explains, means that our "devouring" causes G-d to hide His face. And this explains why, when troubles come upon the Jewish nation, it is customary to fast. Fasting indicates a breaking with one's desire for food, thereby reversing the process and causing G-dliness to be revealed.

When we eat improper food, we are drawn toward material pursuits, even if our conscious desire is to find G-d. Negative eating patterns have a consciousness-lowering effect that subsequently prevents one from growing spiritually.

Overeating (consuming excess energy) causes emptiness. We might feel full, but we are never satisfied! There is no end to the problems that are caused by gluttony. Medical, financial, spiritual and emotional. A person who overeats must go on a diet in order to regain control of his habits, his health and his life. Likewise, if we have lost control of our evil inclination, we must put it on a diet and regain control. We can only then hope to improve our spiritual, physical and emotional health.

We need strength to serve G-d! But how often do we stop to contemplate the effect of the food we are consuming on our spiritual progress? We need to make proper decisions about what food we eat, and in what quantities. And we need to understand the powerful influence eating has upon us.

I would challenge you know what you are consuming. If you don't understand the importance of making kosher, non-GMO, and organic choices, I pray you will do some research and/or seek help. We don't have to become nutritionists, but with a

little effort we can make better choices and live healthier lives. We are here to complete a mission for G-d. If we are constantly submitting requests for “sick days”, it is only a matter of time before our “Boss” is going to replace us. We must eat the proper food with the proper intentions, so that we can maintain our health and energy. We are here on planet earth to serve Hashem. We are not here to enjoy giant portions of whatever food our flesh desires. If we spend more time each day planning, shopping for, prepping, cooking and consuming food (even if it is healthy, kosher food), than we do consuming the Word of G-d, then we need to make some changes!

*“There is nourishment for the body (food) and nourishment for the soul (e.g., the sense of smell, prayer, the awe of G-d). Partaking of food for the body weakens the soul. How, then, are we permitted to eat? We can nourish the soul by focusing on the spiritual. The more spiritual our motivation when we eat, the more spiritually nourishing our food becomes.” (Reb Noson, Likutey Halakhot, Ma’akhalei Akum 2:1).*

*“Anyone who is thirsty, come and drink. If you are penniless, just come and eat. Come; it is all free. Come, drink wine and milk; it is all on the house – free. Why waste your money on that junk food? Why spend money stupidly? Listen to me carefully and eat nutritious food. Let your body grow with lots of healthy food.” (Yeshayahu 55:1-2 – taken from The Book of Haftarot – an easy-to-read translation with commentary by Sol Scharfstein.)*

Be blessed, be healthy and be a blessing,

Rhonda

---

# Weekly Manna – Parashat Chayei Sarah

The midrash (Parashat Chayei Sarah 60:16) states that as long as Sarah was alive the Presence of Hashem rested above her home, her doors were open wide to guests, her bread was blessed, and the light from her Shabbat candles burned continuously from Erev Shabbat to Erev Shabbat. When she passed away, these four blessings ceased and only returned when Yitzchak brought Rivkah into her tent as his wife.

Rav Samson Raphael Hircsh gleans from here that ***the Presence and blessings of Hashem and the atmosphere of chesed and tranquility in the home are all direct products of the women residing within it.*** (Collected writings of Rav Hircsh, Vol. 8, Pg. 102)

The Talmud in Shabbat 118b tells us that Rav Yose would refer to his wife as his “home”, since it is the wife who sets the atmosphere of the home and it is she who teaches her family to live a life of Torah and mitzvot.

It is our job as godly women to make every effort to ensure that our homes are an oasis of peace, tranquility and harmony. Sadly, we can also be responsible for bringing tension, confusion and anger into our homes, through our actions and words, chaz v’shalom!

## **We have a big job ladies!**

If we do not experience a home full of shalom on a daily basis, then apparently we have no one to blame but ourselves. I know what you’re probably thinking.....that’s easier said than done! Indeed, it is! It takes diligent effort and much

self-sacrifice!

So how do we create an oasis in our homes? By understanding the most important mitzvah according to the Rambam.....the belief in Hashem, and by remembering, as we recite daily, "shehakol nih'yeh biD'varo" (everything exists because of the Word of Hashem). The Kotzker Rebbe explained:

*"Everything puzzling and confusing that people see is called Hashem's back. No one can see His face, where everything is harmonious".*

If we truly believe in Hashem and in His Divine Providence, then everything in this world, and all the events that occur in it must ultimately contribute to our good.

**"Gam Zu L'Tovah" (this too is for the good)!**

Hashem created us only in order to give of His goodness. Which implies to me, that if I view any situation as "bad", it is because I am viewing the situation through my finite senses. Things look bad to me, or they make me feel bad. But is that really the truth of the matter? Maybe the situation is simply a tap on the shoulder from our loving Creator. If my children or my husband are upsetting me, and I react negatively to what I view as a "bad" situation, I will completely disrupt the peace and harmony in my home. But if I instead use the situation to thank Hashem for my annoying children or husband, and pray for their well-being, and for more personal strength to better handle the stressful job of managing a household, maybe the outcome will be completely different. Give it a try.

REMEMBER: Many people do not have anyone to annoy them. Have you thanked G-d lately for your family and friends?

If we are women of G-d, then we should be able to maintain a

spirit of peace and harmony in our homes on a regular basis. Yes, there will probably be times when we just flat out “loose it”, we are human after all, but it should not be the norm. If our family sees us consistently angry, sad, depressed or frazzled, what will be their perception of Hashem? There is no incentive for anyone to pursue a relationship with Hashem, if those who present themselves as already in relationship with Him live messy lives. Our homes, our lives, and our attitudes should be noticeably different than the rest of the world. If they’re not, the problem is with us!

The challenge for us, as women in particular, is to learn to control our emotions and take time out to reflect on the message Hashem is sending our way through the current situation. If someone is annoying us, maybe the message is that we are not giving them enough of our time or attention. Or maybe as His daughter, we are annoying Hashem. How we react in the situation, may determine how our Father reacts to us.

As women, we have a tendency to want to control our situation. What we fail sometimes to realize, is that we are controlling it. Even when it’s messy! We are the only one who can change the environment. The energy we create, positive or negative, is the fragrance distributed throughout our home.

*“It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than in a house in common with a contentious woman.” Mishlei 21:9*

I pray the next time we find ourselves in a less than ideal situation, we stop before we react, and take a moment to reflect on how we can handle things without losing it. Stop and pray. Just watch what happens to the atmosphere around you. If we consciously make an effort to create an atmosphere of chesed and tranquility in our home, we too like our Mother Sarah, can cause the Presence of Hashem to rest above our

home.

*“Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it.”  
Tehillim 34:15*

Be blessed and be a blessing,

Rhonda