

Calmness does not mean being complacent, indifferent, apathetic, unconcerned. Calmness does not mean lying on a hammock between two palm trees, sipping a Pina colada. That calmness is artificial. Calmness means to be totally in control of all your senses, even when you are working towards your goals, maximizing your capabilities and strengths. Contrary to popular belief, Teshuva and calmness are not opposites: they are one and the same. The only way to real Teshuva, begins from a point of calm. That is the only Teshuva that lasts. Fear of G-d is not anxiety. It is recognition of what is real. It is awareness of the reality of the world.

Lack of calmness is the underlying reason why so many people have a hard time to fight their Yetzer Hara, to take out time to learn, to pray, to connect in Elul, to forgive in Elul. Tension, anxiety, and lack of calmness are the Yetzer Hara's three most failproof ammunition. Just think about it. The whole year, you are so busy running from fear to fear, you don't even have a second to hear your soul! Financial fear, Social status fear, F.o.m.o. (fear of missing out), Fear of the unknown, fear of what people might say, fear of being vulnerable, fear of change, fear of sickness or loss, fear of death, fear of retirement, fear of loneliness, fear of being rejected, or fear that I might miss another deal... The list does not end. And when you are not calm, you can't hear your soul. Soul can only be heard when subconscious is silent.

In Parashat Shoftim, the Kohen takes out the fearful from the army before battle. Even though the lives of all the soldiers are at risk, and everyone had fear, any *added* fear, fear of loss of a new vineyard, loss of new house, loss of a new wife... could cause the soldier a drop more stress than needed. Calmness is the only way you can fight, pray, learn, do Teshuva, and most importantly, be a healthy person to be around. Fear is actually something you can catch from your colleagues. It is called "secondhand stress". Extra tension or anxiety has no place at the front lines of battle. Neither does it have any place in Elul.

Fear is an emotion that is almost always inaccurate. The statistics of the danger, the percentages quoted by the one who is afraid, are mostly off. Most anxieties are just misinformed emotions. Are you scared of sharks when you swim in the ocean? If you said yes, are you afraid of bathtubs? I don't mean to scare you, but did you know that more people die from drowning in bathtubs than from sharks? Deer collision are more common to cause death than airplane crashes, and still people are more afraid of flying than of driving. Why? Because people fear the unknown. People fear not being in control.

The fear that David was talking about was real, imminent danger. In David's every blind spot lay war, enemy, ambush. From his youth, David's brothers would send him to shepherd the family flock out in dangerous areas of the wilderness, so that he would be eaten alive by the bears and lions. They suspected that he was mamzer, and they wanted him dead, not to bring shame or suspicion to the prestigious Ben Yishai family. Kind David was chased to near death by his own father-in-law, who David respected so much. Later, he entrusted the Moabite king to watch his family. He thought he could trust the Moabites, for his grandmother Ruth was a Moabite princess. But King of Moab killed all of David's family, instead! (Imagine the trauma, the guilt that David could have felt, for mistakenly trusting Moab! Nonetheless, he did not let his mistakes take over his life. He was never afraid!) David was chased to near death by his beloved son, Avshalom. David's rabbi, Achatofel, advised David's rebellious son Avshalom how to kill David. David was cursed a horrible curse from the Gadol Hador, Shimi Ben Gera. Still, David stuck steadfast to his mantra, בזאת אני בוטח. *In this G-d I will trust.* Although King David is speaking about fear of imminent danger, David's trust in G-d turns fear to light. For King David, fear was like oxygen. Because that is what made him close to G-d. *G-d brought the fear, and G-d can bring His salvation.* This is Bitachon, this power of זמח, the power of calm, Midat Hamalchut, is what Moshe Rabbenu prophesized will be the superpowers of David. תָּאֵת לַיהוָה יִיאָמֶר שְׁמַע יְקִיבֵל קוֹל יְהוָה וְאֶל-עַמּוֹ

תְּבִיאָנוּ יְדִיו רַב לּוֹ וְעֵזֶר מִצָּרָיו תִּתֵּן (Devarim 33: See Rabenu Bachye)

Rosh Hashana, also, is imminent, the "statistics of danger" are accurate. There is so much at stake. As Mishna Berura writes, "Even though we trust that we will come out of judgement with merit, still, we need to be afraid from the fear of judgement, and this will bring us to be remembered for merit." (584;1)

Here are the selfie steps, the self-help steps to becoming calmer.

1. Identify and Control. Identify the stressor, and find a way to control it. If you cannot control it, trust in G-d that only He can control it.
2. Slow Down. Especially in Elul. Your life is going too fast. A red traffic light means G-d is telling you to slow down.
3. Be Kind to yourself, first. גִּמְלַל וּפְשׁוּ אִישׁ חֲסֵד (Mishlei 11; 17) Make sure that you eat well (quality over quantity), sleep well (even if you are saying Selihot), and listen to your body, so that you know what it can handle.
4. PRAY! Talk to G-d. If you are afraid, if you want to cry, speak to Him. He brought you the danger, that is just the way He opens up a conversation sometimes.

TESHUVA FOR THE ORTHODOX JEW

Teshuva for the Orthodox Jew is usually more about quality than about quantity. For the Orthodox, Teshuva is more about improving how you do what you do more than it is changing what you do. *But Rabbi, my plate is too full! I am doing too much already! I do not have more time/energy/money/headspace to do more! I am maxed out!*

Teshuva is not about *doing* more. It is about *being* different. It is not about the *what*. It is about the *how*.

Improving on the *how* in G-d's service is not an investment of time/energy/money/headspace as much as it is one of emotional intelligence. About being in total control of your emotions. What you focus on. What state of mind you are in. No matter how much you did or you are doing. Let me give three examples.

Calmness is not something out there, dependent on something external or artificial. Calmness results from a decision that you make, from a commitment. It needs to be one of the highest goals you set for yourself. It is something that you need to practice. Because calmness is the only way you can connect to G-d.

In Eshet Chayil, we sing, יָדֶיהָ שְׁלָחָה בְּכִישׁוֹר, Her hand she sent to the spike. Who is this referring to? To Yael. Yael did not kill Sisra with a sword. As it says תִּשְׁלַחְנָה לְיָתֵד תִּשְׁלַחְנָה her hand she sent to the spike (or tent peg). (Shoftim 5 26) And why did Yael kill Sisra with the tent peg and not with the sword? Because in the Torah,(in our Parasha) it says, לֹא-יִהְיֶה כָּל-יִגְדָּל עַל-אִשָּׁה A woman should not bear masculine accessories . (Yalkut Shoftim 5, 56)

Yael saved the Jewish Nation at war from the evil general, Sisrah. G-d performed a miracle at the war, and the 900 iron chariots of Sisra got flooded in the valley during the miraculous thunderstorm. Sisrah fled to hide out in the tent of Yael, the wife of Heber Hakeni, Sisra's friend. She then slept with him 7 times, to make him weak. (R' Akiva was a descendant of the third relationship. Rama Mipano) Yael offered him some milk, to make him sleepy. And then, she took the tent peg to kill him. She did



not use Sisra's sword. She was allowed to do what she did with him based on three factors. A. She was saving the entire Jewish people, B. He was a non-Jew, and C. She had no pleasure from sinning with him. *But she did not need to use a sword.* Using a sword is forbidden, as war is a masculine occupation. It is forbidden for a woman to wear armor, as armor is considered to be exclusively masculine. (Nazir 59a, see Rashi. Also, Shu" A YD 182;5) So, she used the wooden tent peg, instead.

Why was this small element of Yael's superhuman act worthy of such a great amount of attention? Because Yael kept her cool in serving G-d to the max at the time of an emotional whirlpool. Despite the fact that she was allowed to transgress the laws in order to save the Jewish Nation, she was able to minimize those permitted transgressions. It was the same superhuman act. But her finesse in the how, in choosing to use the wooden tent peg was what got her into the Eishet Chayil Hall of Fame. יְדֵיהָ שָׁלְתָה בַּפִּישׁוֹר.

We are all at war. An internal war against our Evil Inclination. In this war to do the right thing, our ability to control our emotions, to perform at our best in the 613, makes all the difference. And it is the small things that count. *If Yehonatan, son of King Saul, would have offered David just two loaves of bread, when David was fleeing from K. Saul, he would have circumvented all the tragedies that followed. The Kohanim in the city of Nov would not have been killed, and Doeg would not have been lost, and Shaul and his three sons would not have died.*" (Sanhedrin 104a) Despite the everlasting love that Yehonatan had for David, his willingness to give up his rights to the throne to David and even to risk his life for David... still. The Torah holds him responsible for not offering David two loaves of bread for the road. It is the small things that count. It is the small things that make all the difference. A drop more consideration. A drop more awareness. A drop more Kavannah.

There were seven prophetesses, *Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Chanah, Avigail, Hulda, and Esther.* (Megillah 14a) Deborah lived in the time of Yael. How did Deborah become a prophetess, and

merit being the author of one of the Ten Songs of Tanach? The Yalkut Shimoni hints to the answer in his words.

Although Eliyhau Hanavi was present at the time, Deborah became the prophetess and the Judge of the Jewish Nation. G-d promises us, and testifies by the heavens and the earth, that both a gentile and a Jew, a man or a woman, a slave or a maidservant can have Ruach Hakodesh. Bestowing Ruah Hakodesh is dependent upon a person's actions.

What was so special of Deborah's actions that she deserved Ruach Hakodesh? She is known for being the wife of Lapidot. Her husband was a simpleton. But she wanted him to have a portion in Torah learning. Deborah donated the wicks for the Mishkan in Shiloh, and she would make them, and send her husband to the study hall, so that he would be a part of the righteous and merit Olam Haba.

What? From making wicks she became a prophetess? That's all you need to do to achieve Ruach Hakodesh?!

Eliyahu the Prophet teaches us Deborah's secret. She was מתבוננת, she focused on making the wicks to be especially thick wicks, to bring about the most light in the Mishkan of Shiloh and the study hall there. G-d sees the intentions of the heart, and He said to her, Deborah, you intended Me to have a lot of light. So too, said G-d, that He would make Deborah's light spread throughout Yehuda and Jerusalem. (Y Shimoni Shoftim 42)

It was Deborah's *focusing*, not to make just *any* wicks. Not even her making the *thick* wicks. But it was her *concentrating* all her efforts on serving G-d. It was her complete dedication to making the wicks, specifically in such a way as to serve G-d to the max. The focusing, the intensity of devotion, is what made her different. The how.

G-d wants quality. So, what do we need to focus on? Here is the trick. Listen closely, because if you cross the wires, you can blow your battery.



The 613 are divided into 248 positive and 365 negative commandments. The service of G-d, of the heart, is split into two. Fear of G-d and Love of G-d. If you want to improve your *positive commandments*, i.e. learning Torah, Birkat Hamazon, Tzizit, Tefillin, honoring parents, your best bet is to focus on upgrading the quality by adding LOVE of G-d into those acts. (See Ramban, Yitro) If you try to keep the positive commandments by adding FEAR of G-d, you will burn your battery. FEAR is reserved for the negative commandments, like not speaking lashon hara, not mixing meat and milk, not desecrating Shabbat, etc. To improve on the quality, we need to add LOVE to the positive commandments, and FEAR to the negative commandments.

Even in the realm of the material, studies and experience in all life areas teach us, quality over quantity. To manage your time to the max, it is not how many things you cram in, but accomplishing your most important tasks first, “Important over Urgent”. In learning, it is not about amassing knowledge (quantity), but about attaining wisdom (quality). Knowledge comes and goes, but wisdom lingers. With family and friends, quality time has more value than quantity time. In dieting, you need to increase the quality of what you eat, not just reduce the quantity.

And in serving G-d, as well. לְמַה־לִּי רַב־זְבָחֵיכֶם יֵאמָר. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me, says G-d?* (Yeshaya 1; 11) G-d wants from us quality over quantity.

OLAM HABA EYEBALLS

I recently realized what my biggest life problem is. Why I can't focus in davening and learning. Why I can't forgive and forget. Why I can't make those important decisions in life when faced with crisis, or deal with conflict and chaos. It is a problem with my eyeballs.

I've been printing 1000 parsha sheets of self-introspective Torah for the last 8 and a half years. I was told so many times by publishing companies, “Rabbi Farhi, if you would only write more stories... People LOVE stories! You'd make best sellers!” But the answer, I realized, is that I am always writing stories. Every introspective Torah idea I write is the underlying story behind my life story and the stories of many others. This article is the idea behind ALL of our stories. It is the Olam Haba Eyeball story.

I see my world as the world I see. But the real world is the Olam Haba world. G-d created the world with the intent that we wear Olam Haba Eyeballs. ברוך אלוקינו שבראנו לכבודו... וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נִטַע בתוכנו It is a lifetime of work. To live a life of נצח. To transcend time. But so many times, I foolishly stick to Olam Hazeh Eyes, because they are so “sticky”. It is like the fellow who is stuck with a

stock of Nasa Eclipse Eyeglasses. You have use of those only before and during the eclipse. No one will buy that stock today. The faster you get rid of that useless stock, the better. Olam Hazeh Eyes work for you only when you have a nice car, a nice paycheck, and things go your way... But when the “eclipse” is over, you don't want to be stuck with those glasses. Get rid of them as fast as you can! All the pain you have in life is because you are trying to hold on to those stupid eclipse glasses. The faster you get rid of your Olam Hazeh Eyes, the easier it will be for you to focus on davening and reconnect. The faster you will be able to make those important life decisions. And the faster you will find serenity.

The stories of our rabbis are all Olam Haba Eyeball stories. R Yisrael Salanter sees a candle late at night at the shoemaker's shop, and the shoemaker bangs away with the last drip-drop of his candle. He tells R Yisrael, “As long as the candle is still burning, I can keep fixing.” R' Yisrael, with his Olam Haba Eyeballs, says, “As long as I am alive, נר ה' נשמת אדם, I can still fix my soul...” R' Yisrael! What is the connection? What is the relevance? But R' Yisrael has different eyeballs

than most of us. And that is what he saw. What he heard. What he lived. All of the Chafetz Chaim stories. They are all Olam Haba Eyeball stories. About conceptualizing.

Imagine, for a second, that you meet Tarzan in the jungle. You pull out a map of Israel, point to Jerusalem, and tell him, this is where I live. If you go north, you will get to Rosh Hanikra. Go south, and you hit Eilat. Go west, and you hit the ocean. East, and you hit Jordan. He looks at you, and says, “What is this map thing? This is just a piece of paper with different colors, lines, numbers and letters (!?)”, because he sees only a two dimensional piece of paper. He does not understand that the map on the piece of paper represents a three-dimensional world, charting places and the distances between them. But to you, there is something much deeper than that page. Olam Haba is seeing our 3d world with a fourth dimension. The spiritual dimension.

Our parents, our grandparents, lived more Olam Haba Eyeball lives. The Lower East Side Jews that gave up their parnassah, getting the pink slip each and every Friday, and still staying strong, positive and proud, all had Olam Haba Eyeballs. For many of us, Olam Haba sounds scary, unknown, distant, so we stick to our Olam Hazeh stories, our Olam Hazeh Eyeballs, lacking the spiritual dimension. And then, we can't be the Jews we want to be, and we just can't figure out why not. The worst things can happen to us when we stick to our Olam Hazeh eyes. Because the only way we can be the Jew we want to be is if we are calm, courageous, and consistent. And to be those “three C's”, we need to be able to transcend the other 3 C's: circumstance, conflict and crisis. We need Olam Haba Eyeballs, with the spiritual dimension in them.

In this week's parasha, the Torah tells us about the mitzvah of Shiluach Haken. ‘You can take the baby birds from the nest, but you have to send away the mother. Do this, so that your G-d will give you good, and you will merit longevity’. Elisha Ben Avuyah sat in the valley of Ginosar, learning Torah. He was the Rebbi of Rebi Meir, and R' Meri was the anonymous Tannah of Shas and one

of the pillars of Torah Sheh b'al Peh, the Oral Torah. So, just imagine who R' Meir's Rebbi was. And as he learnt Torah, he noticed a fellow climbing up a fig tree, to take a nest of chicks, while sending away the mother bird. The man climbed down the tree, but did not make it to the bottom before getting bitten by a venomous snake. End of story, end of life. No longevity, no good life, and Elisha is left confused. He looks at his Book, he looks at the circumstance and can't make sense of the contradiction. So, Elisha gives up the Book, and becomes Acher. The other one. And lives a life that is the opposite of Judaism, until he cries on his deathbed, hoping that maybe G-d will accept his Teshuva.

The Talmud explains that Acher made this mistake, because he did not know how R' Yaakov explained that verse of the Torah. ‘Longevity’ is referring to life in the Next World; the good life is referring to the Next World. Acher didn't know this, so he rejected everything that he had believed until then, because of what seemed to him to be a glaring contradiction. But didn't Elisha know that there is a Next World?

The answer is, yes, he did. But this world is full of contradictions not to be resolved until we get to the Next World. So, to get by sane, it is not enough to know that Olam Haba exists. You need Olam Haba Eyeballs. You need to be someone who, when you speak about a good life, you are referring to a spiritual life. A good wedding is a spiritual wedding. A good marriage is a spiritual one. So, when the Torah says that a person who performs the mitzvah of Shiluach Haken is going to have long life, a good life, **OF COURSE IT IS TALKING ABOUT THE NEXT WORLD!!!** Acher missed that point, because he did not have the Olam Haba Eyeballs, and that led to his demise.

Trying to describe Olam Haba is like trying to paint a picture for a blind man, or play a tune to someone who is deaf. The Talmud refers to Olam Haba as a place that is **יום שכולו ארוך**, A day that is entirely long. R Dessler explains what “A day that is entirely long”, means. Every minute of Olam



Haba is Eternal. How so? Because every minute is above Past, Present and Future.

Take a piece of paper with a little hole in its center and place it over a map, the hole over Jerusalem. All you see is Jerusalem, nothing else is seen, although it is there. Move the paper with the hole to Rosh Hanikra, and Jerusalem can't be seen. Take off the piece of paper, and the whole map is exposed, at once. The whole Israel. In this world, we can experience only the present. The past, the future, cannot be experienced in the present. But take off the paper, and you see past – present – future, all as one, with no boundaries. That is one minute of Olam Haba, experiencing past, present

and future, all at the same time. To be an Olam Haba person means to be able, in your mind, to transcend past, present and future and not get stuck on any one of them. It means being fully aware of the fact that what we are aware of now is not the whole picture. There is much more than the 'now'. To be able to say, "Make G-d King" over all three, ה' מלך ה' מלך ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד.

On Rosh Hashana, according to the Ramchal, this is what we are judged on. If we are Olam Haba people, if we will have Olam Haba Eyeballs, and if we will have an Olam Haba life, a spiritual life. And this is our prayer:

זכרנו לחיים... למענך אלוקים חיים

YOUR OWN NEW TESTAMENT

The *Ben Sorer Umoredh* is the child we know who went astray from his parents, and went astray from the ways of the Torah. We all know that the word *sorer* means to go astray. But what does the word *moredh* mean? Rashi and the Targum explain this word as rebellious. But usually, that word means teaching. What did this rebellious child teach? And to whom?

The Yalkut Gershuni writes that this boy is not only a bad kid. He gets others to join him in crime, so that he won't burn in hell alone. He teaches others his Torah, as he teaches himself his own Torah. For a person to become a sinner, he needs to create his own Torah. He needs to make his own New Testament, to justify his inappropriate behavior. Even Eichman justified his behavior, saying that he was just following orders.

The more I coach, the more I realize that everyone has their own story. I realized that productivity and performance are closely connected to the 3 S's. State, Structure, and Story. Our State of Mind, will have a powerful effect on our performance and productivity, in any given situation. The Structure that we are in has an equal effect on our performance and productivity. But the most powerful effect on performance and productivity is

the Story. How did you get into this area of productivity or performance? Why are you there? When did you start and when will you end? Who are you up against, and who is on your side? Where is this story taking place?... Most of the time, the client is not even aware of all the parts of his own story, until he gets into some sort of bottleneck between his motivation and his goal.

Studies have proven that story telling is an extremely potent form of persuasion and motivation. Stories set your brand. Stories build your identity. And people sometimes give up everything they have, because they cannot give up on their version of the story. Even G-d wrote the Torah in story fashion, because that is the way the human mind connects with concepts. When one spouse calls me for help with Shalom Bayit, I know that the only way I can help them is if I can listen to both stories, find the contradiction between the two stories, and figure out how they can both buy into a third story. When I help a yeshiva student with his conflicts in religious observance, it is usually not the religion that he wants to be coached on. It is about his personal story in the religion, his story with his relationship with G-d. "What is your story?" is a powerful question. Everyone has a story, a perspective on



