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THE ART OF TRUSTING

I know that this sounds ridiculous, but did you ever return G-d a favor? He did, does, and will always do, so much good for you and your family. Or is it just impossible to do G-d a favor, for He does not lack anything and does not need anything?

The Chida says that there is only one favor that you can do for G-d. And when you do this one thing, He will never forget it. **בַּה אָמַר יְקוֹם זְכוּרָתִי** He will never forget it. **לִדְ קִסָּד נִעוּרֶיךָ אֶהְבֵּת כְּלוּלָתֶיךָ לְכַתּוּב אַחֲרַי בְּמִדְבָּר בְּאַרְצָא לֹא זָרוּעָה**: So said YKVK, I remembered for you the **kindness** of your youth, the love of the days you loved Me like a bride, you followed Me into the desert, through a barren land. (Yirmiyahu 2) G-d forever tells His People that He will never forget the kindness that they did for G-d! What was that kindness? That they trusted in G-d, when it seemed as if He had no goods to supply. G-d compared this to a bride who out of her love to her husband, she followed him, and trusted him, that he would provide her needs. Trust, belief and faith are the only kindness one can do for G-d. (See Chida in Homat Anach ibid.)

At times, we have nothing to give those who are suffering, who lack, who are down and depressed. But the most significant kindness we can offer them is that we believe in them, that they will figure things out, and make it work, somehow. The Midrash tells us a fantastic story. There was a time in King Solomon's life when Ashmedai, King of Demons, overpowered him to leave his palace and live in a faraway place, without his royal clothing and entourage. Due to King Solomon's state of poverty, no one recognized him. This situation

lasted for quite a while, and one time he met an old friend who was very wealthy, who invited him over for a meal, a meal deserving for kings. During lunch, this old friend opened a discussion. "Remember how things were when you were on top of the world?" These words made King Solomon so sad that he lost his appetite! He could not even swallow the bread, because the tears that drenched his face!

The next day, King Solomon met a poor man who recognized him and invited him over to a pitiful meal, with little to offer. Throughout the meal, however, he consoled King Solomon, saying, "The day will come when you will return to your throne, and everything will turn out for the best! G-d promised your father, David, that royalty would remain with his descendants. Your state is temporary. G-d is just rebuking you, and waiting for you to amend your wrongdoings..." This is the meaning of King Solomon's words, **טוֹב אֶרְחַת יָרֵק** טוב אֶרְחַת יָרֵק **וְאֶהְבֵּה נֶשֶׁם מִשּׁוֹר אֲבוֹס וְשִׁנְאָה רְבוּ** *Better a meal of herbs where there is love, than an Entrecote steak where there is hatred.* (Mishlei 15; 17) (Midrash Mishlei 15;17)

What did this man do for King Solomon? He just gave a hungry King Solomon some rabbit food, lettuce and a carrot!? True. But he did the greatest kindness. He believed in the poor king.

We are all created in G-d's image, and that means a lot of things. One of the things it means is that a human being needs that people believe in him/her. People want four things. They want to be



understood, respected, and liked. But more than anything, people want and sometimes need, others to *believe* in them.

Our Rabbis teach that anyone who says the blessing גאל ישראל before praying the Amidah prayer is promised great things. Satan will not prosecute him that whole day. According to R' Yochanan, this ensures one to merit Olam Haba!! (Berachot 4b)

Why is it so great to recognize that G-d is the One who redeemed us from Egypt, before our prayers? What is the importance of this? How can this seemingly meaningless order in prayer, promise one Olam Haba?

Rabbenu Yonah answers that by recognizing that G-d redeemed us from Egypt before asking G-d our requests, one shows that he trusts in G-d. Recognizing G-d as our Redeemer, is the basis for Bitachon, trust in G-d. And Bitachon is the basis for fear and faith in Him. Trusting in G-d is what will give you Olam Haba! It must be the only favor you can ever do for G-d!

This is the essence of all our prayers and an express, first class ticket to Olam Haba. It is putting your faith and trust in G-d into practice. The greatest kindness we can do for G-d is to forever trust His message to us. ***I will answer you. I will be with you. I will not fail you. I will provide for you. I will give you serenity. I will strengthen you. I believe in you. I love you.*** At this very moment, G-d is your personal Redeemer גואל ישראל. (See Rashi Meggilah 17b אתחלתא)

According to Judaism, G-d does not need our prayers to save us from our challenges, concerns,

and issues. According to Judaism, G-d brings us challenges, concerns, and issues because he wants our prayers. He wants us to be kind to him, via trusting in Him. He wants us to do Him a favor, through believing in Him that if we would pray, He could save the day.

G-d returns this favor. *He* believes in *us* that we will ace our purpose in this world, so He keeps us around. אָל אַמְוִנָה (Devarim 32) When you believe in the people in your life, that they will somehow find their way, you give them infinite strength. Mordechai's trust in Esther, his belief in her, gave her the power to keep the secret of her religion from King Achashverosh. כְּאִשֶּׁר הִיְתִיבָהּ בְּאִמְנָה אֶתֵּן (Esther 2, according to one opinion, see Ibn Ezra)

So how do we show others that we believe in them? Here are the selfie steps.

- 1- Tell them how great you vision them in the future, not how low they are at the moment.
- 2- Recognize the G-dliness in them. Even without resources, people have an inner trait called resourcefulness. Resourcefulness is the ability to come up with solutions when it does not seem that there are any.
- 3- Let them know their strengths. Let them know all the good things they have done. And show them how even their weaknesses, are the blessings of G-d in disguise.
- 4- Believe in the power of believing. (see Taanit 8a)

KEEP CLIMBING

R' Abraham J Twerski – *“People often ask me, ‘Is it true that you’ve written over fifty books? How did you find time, with your busy schedule, to write so many books?’ I tell them that I did not really write fifty books. I wrote one book, in fifty different ways. Almost everything I write relates in one way or another to the theme of self-esteem. I define self-*

esteem as a true and accurate awareness of one’s skills, capabilities and limitations.” (By now, he has authored over 60 books.)

There is so much written on self-esteem. What is the Torah’s approach to self-esteem?

There are two sources of self-esteem; external and internal. Rabbi Noach Weinberg once said, “How great you are is not defined by how high you are on the ladder of success. It is defined by how many rungs you climbed.” Some people built their concept of self-esteem on where they are on the ladder; others measure it by the rungs they have climbed.

Ben Zoma teaches, “Who is wise? One who learns from everyone. Who is mighty? One who overcomes his Inclination. Who is rich? One who is happy with what he has. Who is honorable? One who honors others.” (Avot 4;1) What is the underlying thread tying these three seemingly unrelated lessons together?

Ben Zoma is teaching us that true success is internal. The more one’s success is a product of his own input, the more meaningful it will be. For example. There are two ways to support one’s self. A person can have money because he worked hard to get a PhD. And he feels self-esteem because of it. The other case is that in which a person never earned his own money. He also has a PhD, but a different type. He is rich because Pappa Has Dough. Who feels better about his financial status? Who has a healthier self-esteem? The one who achieved, or the one who inherited? Ben Zoma teaches that what makes you great is not external achievements, blessings that were simply given to you. Rather, it is internal achievement that makes you great, that builds your self-esteem. How many rungs you climbed. Self-esteem must be earned.

The world does not respect effort without success. Because people only respect something that can be measured. But effort can’t be seen; and people can measure only what they see. The Torah view is different from that of the world. According to the Torah, where you are on the ladder is not as important as how many rungs you have climbed. And this question is the most important question in your life, everyday of your life. *Are you climbing?*

Why is how much you climb more important than where you are on the ladder?

זה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ **This is my G-d, and I will build Him a Beit Hamikdash.** The word “This” teaches that at the splitting of the sea, each and every Jew pointed to G-d. R’ Chaim Shmulevitz brings out a principle of major importance for spiritual growth. “The maidservant prophesied and saw at the Sea what the prophet Yechezkel never saw his whole life!” (Mechilta Beshalach 15 2) *Even though she had a prophetic vision, even though she experienced great recognition of G-d’s existence, the maidservant stayed a maidservant, while Yechezkel is of the greatest of prophets. Why?*

To become a prophet like Yechezkel requires a great deal of dedicated effort. Very high level of Torah knowledge and perfection of character. The maidservant did not work to achieve this high voltage of recognition of G-d’s Might. So, after the experience, she returned to her Maidservant status. At the end of our Parasha, a very short while after the Jewish people experienced the great revelation of G-d at the Sea, they found themselves in the desert with no water to drink. They questioned G-d, הֲיֵשׁ יְקִנֵּךְ בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם-אֵין, Is G-d amongst us, or not? This caused Amalek to come and attack.

But, wait a second. Didn’t they just have a revelation of G-d? One that was like no other revelation ever, before or after?! How could they question G-d????!! The answer is that the maidservant remained a maidservant. She experienced a revelation on a high spiritual level, but because she did not “climb”, herself, to get there, at the end of the revelation, she remained unchanged.

R Chaim Shmulevitz continues...This is how we can understand how Micha took his idol with him from Egypt, through the Red Sea, had it in his backpack at Har Sinai and never got rid of it. Because he never worked on himself. G-d put him on high levels, without his ever investing effort to achieve them, himself. He lacked the effort, so he never became great.

If we get to the top of the mountain without effort, it is much harder to stay on top. מִי־יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר-ה’ וּמִי־יֵקֶום בְּמִקְוֵם קְדֹשׁוֹ *Who will go up on the Mountain*

of G-d? But, *staying* on top is an entirely different question. *And who will stand in His holy place?* We say this in prayers, the first day after Shabbat, and at the end of our prayers on the High Holidays, when G-d puts us on high levels, even though we have not reached those levels through our own efforts. It is one thing to reach the top of the mountain. Staying on top is something entirely different. What you worked hard for stays with you forever.

The Me'am Loez lists 15 miracles of the Mannah in the desert. It was truly the most amazing thing. Still, the Jews complained about it in parashat Behaalotcha. *We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt, free of charge, the squash, the watermelon, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.* What? Why were they complaining about these foods, if they had the Manna?

The answer is that they never reached, through their own toil and striving, the level that G-d put them on. They were still at the level of an Egyptian slave. G-d wanted them to be ready for Har Sinai and the Giving of the Torah. So, He put them on the top of the ladder. But really, they never acquired that high level through their own effort, so they did not "own" their spiritual status.

The Talmud teaches that the reason why the prayers of the earlier Rabbis were answered much faster than ours is not because they were greater Torah scholars, but because they were Moser Nefesh for their Torah (Berachot 20a). How great you are is not how much you know. How great you are is how much you are willing to give up for what is important...

R Simlai taught that when the baby is in the mother's womb, he is taught the whole entire

Torah. And these days are the best days of the baby's life. And once it comes to the air of the world, the angel comes and slaps him on his mouth, and the child forgets all of the Torah (Niddah 30b).

Why does he forget everything he learns? Wouldn't it be great if we never forgot the Torah? The answer is that you never grew from Torah that you did not work hard to achieve.

But why did G-d make the climb more important than the rung?

The Talmud teaches us that in spirituality, in the world of your soul, there are rules to success. אמר רבי יצחק, אם יאמר לך אדם: יגעתי ולא מצאתי – אל תאמן, לא יגעתי ומצאתי – אל תאמן, יגעתי ומצאתי – תאמן. *R Yitzhak said, if a person tells you, I exerted effort and I did not find, do not believe it. I exerted no effort at all, and I found – do not believe it. I exerted effort and I found, believe it. (Megillah 6b).*

G-d made the climb more important than the rung, because He wants your Emunah. When you are climbing, striving, working hard with your whole heart and soul – that is when you build your Emunah. יגעת ומצאת האמין. We connect with G-d the most from our efforts and our struggles. And that is how we grow and build self-esteem, from our connection with G-d. If you achieved a goal without working hard for it, you never grew internally. You never built within yourself trust in G-d or in yourself. And if you do not grow internally, you will not make new goals, greater than the old ones you have reached. Because one goal leads to another.

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