

yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 29 Jun 2009 19:47

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(any questions , insights & suggestions about this thread,feel free to email me at [taryaga@gmail.com](mailto:taryaga@gmail.com))

There are many reasons we need to be where we are and who we are,most are unknown.Why do we even have to be in a situation or have in our soul so much darkness and a pull toward self-destructing negative behaviors?

I saw once an amazing thought in a sefer.Moshe Rabeinu came from a union that after the Torah was given would have deemed him a mamzer(parents being an aunt & nephew).He could not boast of his lineage.This is one reason that let him be the greatest Anov that ever lived.

We who have to deal with the stuff that's in us that we would rather not have in the first place-this pain and shame over the course of time -makes us realize that even when we b'ezras Hashem pull out of the addictions-we will never look at another Yid that is struggling with this in a negative way

We catch a Yid looking where he shouldn't be looking and our hearts are full of compassion.We will daven for him,treat him with respect,gently try to get him out of it.We would never disgrace him-not even in our hearts-because we were there.We know what it's like.In our eyes he is a potential tzaddik.

This is surely one reason Hashem gave us this urge towards baseness with all it's shades of ugliness.Yes you are special-like every Yid is-but never ever judge harshly My son or daughter that is struggling-because I love him or her - he or she is part of Klall Yisroel.Just as indispensable as you are.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by DesertLion - 07 Aug 2012 13:08

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;D :D! Last time I remember you were  
leaving Israel to go to College in the States. How did it all happen so quickly? How is the 'battle'  
going?

Yechida since when did you get married? Mazal Tov  
Hope you're well,

DL

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Re: yechida's reflections  
Posted by yechidah - 07 Aug 2012 16:18

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leaving israel?college in the states?

got the wrong guy

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Re: yechida's reflections  
Posted by DesertLion - 08 Aug 2012 08:51

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sorry sorry lol, i remember that was uri now.

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Re: yechida's reflections  
Posted by yechidah - 08 Aug 2012 13:02

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It's so important

To be happy with one's lot

Even spiritually;

And at the same time

To strive higher

Each and every day

With joy and gratitude

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by Dov - 08 Aug 2012 22:45

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[DesertLion wrote on 08 Aug 2012 08:51:](#)

sorry sorry lol, i remember that was uri now.

Yeah, I always confuse Uri with Yechidah, too.

(just joshing you, DL paisahno...and I actually got to know Uri pretty well in person. Great guy...but shall we say - a bit 'different in style' to Yechida Shlit"a...both great poets, though)

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by tehllimzugger - 09 Aug 2012 10:17

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**Yechida**

*An Ode to the REAL Yechida*

Angel's wings  
Soar  
The heart sings  
Pure  
Got no ambitions  
This place shines

Starry skies  
Reflect  
Shiny eyes  
Perfect

I see silk  
Draped  
Over the tents of  
GYE

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 09 Aug 2012 13:06

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beautiful

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 09 Aug 2012 13:07

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Though silence is a virtue

It is wise humble speech

Beautifying this silence

Words of Wisdom

Encouragement lights the World

True silence is an Art

A craft

A gift to be developed properly

So as not to hurt another person by it

At first one needs to learn

About healthy silence

Borne out of love

But after a while

One needs to cross the boundaries of silence

Into the Art of Loving Speech

Which makes the silence

All the more powerful

Beautiful silence

Is when a person is externally quiet

His soul shines outward

Spreading pure light

To all those around him

For a woman its even more powerful

Externally hidden

Creating more sublime rays of the soul

Though hidden from physical sight

Subtly spreads outward

To touch those around her

With a calm kindness of healing light

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 10 Aug 2012 12:22

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A man is like the tree in the field

But not exactly

For while the root of the tree

Is beneath the earth

Man's root is Above

So in essence

We are an inverted tree

Yet we can learn a lot of great things

From this comparison

For both man & tree

Require watering, seeding, nurturing

To bring forth

The fruits of its essence

And to know

That just as the seed

From which the tree takes root

Is hidden way beneath the surface

So too is Man's seed of greatness

Hidden deep within

This is the beauty of a truly great man

Who loves his people

For he doesn't just see

The outward manifestation

Of fruit developed well or not

He sees what is beneath the surface

The atomic power of the seed

Of the eternal soul

Connected to its essence

To the Creator of All Souls

Just as plant owner

Talking lovingly to their plants

Who somehow listen in their own language

To thrive & grow

From both the physical water and soil

As well as the soul of encouragement

So too

One speaks directly

To the seed of the soul

Beneath the surface

Giving encouragement

To grow and develop

To its fullest potential

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 13 Aug 2012 12:38

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I heard once

That a child's life is

Like a piece of paper

On which every person

Leaves a mark

It's true with every encounter of life

With another human being

We can sketch

Something beautiful

And everlasting

A gift

To the lives we touch

A warm encouraging word

Or wisdom spoken

Gently

Can be carried in one's soul

For many long years

Till it opens up one day

Creating within the soul

A very friendly special place.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 13 Aug 2012 13:24

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Aish Article

My enthralling discovery that Henry David Thoreau's ideas have their roots in Jewish consciousness.

by Joseph Bornstein

Ever since my undergraduate days, I've had a deep appreciation for Henry David Thoreau. Of all the great thinkers, the works of Thoreau, one of the main intellectual architects of America's Transcendental Movement of the 1800s, rang most true. He was a man who strove with vigor to live each day in wonder. He was willing to test his ideals in the flesh and blood of life, and to fight for his beliefs.

Thoreau's philosophy offers an unequivocal appreciation that our physical reality has infinite depth and meaning, and that much of our life's task is to engage and experience the physical as a gateway toward a more transcendental connection to reality.

Unlike Hedonism, it does not take physical pleasure as an end in itself, but limits the value of physical pleasure to being within the terms of a transcendent and infinite Truth. And unlike Asceticism, Transcendentalism does not reject all worldly enjoyment as a distraction from Truth, but rather understands that the physical is a necessary part of human experience that serves as the means through which we connect to a higher reality.

If this sounds familiar to you – it should. The resonances with Judaism are unmistakable, and it is not by accident that they appear. The main intellectual founders of the Transcendental Movement, Emerson and Thoreau, both graduated from Harvard Divinity School where they were students of the Torah (what they called the "Old" Testament).

Spending a year learning Torah at Aish HaTorah, I have a greater appreciation of these connections. It is enthralling to discover that Thoreau's ideas have their roots in Jewish consciousness. It turns out I was studying Torah all along!

Here are three spectacular examples of parallels between Torah and Thoreau.

### Interweaving of Thought and Action

"How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not yet stood up to live,"<sup>1</sup> Thoreau wrote. He wasn't just a philosopher; he was also an activist. During the Abolition Movement in the build up to the Civil War, he was an active participant in the Underground Railroad – frequently risking his life in order to help escaped slaves navigate through the forest at night. And when the United States waged war on Mexico to steal land, he protested and ultimately boycotted the U.S. government by refusing to pay taxes. When a friend paid his bail after being jailed for his activism, Thoreau was livid because it undermined the ultimate impact of his civil disobedience.

These are the actions of a man who did not merely intellectualize and pontificate. Indeed, he abhorred the intelligentsia. He understood that ideals must be rooted in action; we must stand-up and engage our beliefs.

Thoreau understood that ideals must be rooted in action; we must stand-up and engage our beliefs. Jews have recognized this truth since our inception as a people. Taking ideals and putting them into action is part of the spiritual DNA encoded in our very souls. It is no mistake that a startlingly disproportionate number of Jews are leaders in movements for social justice, have positions as non-profit heads, philanthropists, and activists. Legislating ideals into impassioned action is part of who we are.

Perhaps Ethics of the Fathers states it most succinctly citing Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa who used to say, "Anyone whose [good] deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but anyone whose wisdom exceeds his [good] deeds, his wisdom will not endure."<sup>2</sup> In this passage Rabbi Chanina is emphasizing that wisdom unaccompanied by good deeds will necessarily deteriorate and that sustaining true wisdom requires real-life application.

Torah is not meant to be a one-dimensional intellectual endeavor. It is meant to be a Torat Chaim – a Living Torah – which calls upon us to transform both ourselves and the world through real change. The two come together. In Judaism, life is not solely about inward personal growth and it is not solely about external practical action. The marrow of life is attained through wrestling with the tension between the two, and synthesizing them.

## Choose Life

In describing his two-year living experiment to establish a framework of life that would focus his efforts toward wholly pursuing the highest truth, Thoreau writes:

I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation [. . .] I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life. 3

This passage challenges the reader to appreciate the fact that each moment of life presents the opportunity to connect to a transcendent reality. Thoreau offers the moral challenge to live awake and with an enduring pursuit toward truth. It is all too easy to allow “non-essential” facts of life to creep their way in and supplant the true life we wish to uphold. As Thoreau explains, “For the most part we allow only outlying and transient circumstances to make our occasions. They are in, in fact, the cause of our distraction.” Instead of becoming mired in hollow business, we must “live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.”

The ethic in this passage echoes the final speech from Moses to the Israelites when he says in the name of God:

For this commandment which I command you this day, is not concealed from you, nor is it far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us and fetch it?’ [. . .] Rather, [this] thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfill it. See – I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil [. . .] I have placed before you blessing and curse; and you shall choose life” (Deuteronomy, 30:11).

Both passages place us in a constant and direct relationship<sup>4</sup> to truth, making it incumbent upon us that we strive to adhere to that reality. There is the overwhelming mandate to live with vigor and not get lost in falsity that is equivalent to a living death. Thoreau contends that “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation” because the majority of us have not dedicated ourselves to “choose life” – we do not abide by the truth we hold dear, and so we are, in a sense, not living to our greatest potential. For each of us, what it means to really choose life boils down to the most intimate and personal question possible. It is each person’s responsibility to determine if s/he is working whole-heartedly to grow and pursue truth.

We might ask ourselves such questions like: When we read the news are we genuinely seeking important facts, or are we following a routine and seeking distraction? When we sit down to a cup of coffee after a long day, are we using that time proactively or as an escape? Do we allow our lives to be focused on material and transient possessions, or do we focus on only the most important and meaningful aspects of life?

## True Wealth

In his first chapter describing the proper structuring of one’s life, Thoreau discusses the problem of overemphasis on worldly gain:

What I have heard of Bramins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun. . . or chained for life at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires . . . – even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes I daily witness. . . .

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of . . . . But men labor under a mistake. The better part of man is soon ploughed into the soil for compost.

By drawing parallels between legendary acts of penance around the world and the townsmen’s toils to win luxury and comfort, Thoreau conveys the profound degree to which we become overtaken by the world of practical demands and financial success. He even goes as far as to call it a kind of slavery, writing, “[W]orst of all [is] when you are the slave-driver of yourself! Talk of the divinity in man! Look at the teamster on the highway. . . Does divinity stir within him? His highest duty to fodder and water his horses!”<sup>5</sup>

Through simplicity, we are given the freedom and space to focus on what is truly important in life. In providing his definition of true wealth, Thoreau advocates for a life of simplicity writing, "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to leave alone" (79). He refers to the luxuries and comforts of life as "positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind", noting that the great sages of history all lived humble and simple lives. The idea is that through simplicity, we are given the freedom and space to focus on what is truly important in life and to make those pursuits our real life priority.

This ethic is closely mirrored by Ethics of the Fathers when Ben Zoma is recorded as saying, "Who is the rich? He who is satisfied with his lot."<sup>6</sup> This pithy statement reminds us that true happiness is not to be found in money but in our appreciation of what we have. As it says in Ecclesiastes, "One who loves money will not be satisfied with money" (5:9).

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The confusion that Ethics of the Fathers and Thoreau are warning against is the allure that worldly pleasures have upon us. Rather than using money as a tool to build the foundation for a good life, it is all too easy to treat money and the luxuries it affords as ends in themselves. The result is as described in Ecclesiastes that "one who has one hundred wants two hundred." In other words, once we start to treat money as the goal, then the demands of physicality will never cease!

This message is especially important to us in our current era of consumerism where status and honor are often perceived as being gained through wealth and worldly achievement rather being based on the integrity of the actual person.

Before becoming an observant Jew and building my relationship to Reality through the framework of Judaism, these values presented by Thoreau rang true to me, but I always retained a certain reservation. Though I agreed with much of his philosophy and was inspired by his poetic style, one man's personal philosophy was not something I could fully invest myself in. But upon discovering these ideals within the framework of my own heritage, that stretches back thousands of years to Sinai, a fundamental shift has taken place. These ideals now speak to me in a deeper way. My hesitation is gone and I can commit to striving to live-up to these ideals. These ethics are no longer just one man contemplating the good and the evil; they now carry the power of the spiritual heritage and ancestry to which I am inextricably connected.

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 14 Aug 2012 12:45

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Written when I was suffering from a sinus infection

Sinus Infection

Very painful

Many lessons to learn

Being grateful for

The non-infected

That painlessly goes unnoticed

Most of the time

Teaching me to emphasize

With those who suffer from chronic pain

Even when not from a serious illness

The suffering

That should not go unnoticed

Thanking God who gives us

The medicines,

He heals everything Himself,

Sometimes clothed in natural treatments

As long as one is aware and grateful

To the Source of all healing

One is to be grateful to His messenger

The honest doctor

God wanting us to appreciate

Those Whom He sends

& to hope for our nation

To finally be free of pain

With the coming of the Final Redemption

Speedily in our days

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 15 Aug 2012 12:50

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Rejoice with Shabbos

For Shabbos will rejoice with you

Becoming One with Shabbos

The world is seen by your eyes

As a World of Shabbos

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Re: yechida's reflections

Posted by yechidah - 16 Aug 2012 12:46

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Sinking feeling



Of loss & disappointment

Isolates oneself from

The beautiful potential within

Locked in a prison

Of invisible walls

That can melt away

By the overflowing compassion

For the entrapped child

Soothing the pain

With encouraging hope

As he slowly steps away from his shackles

Allowing himself

The healing light

Of his Creator's love

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