



Ruach Chaim Living with Spirit Lifting Up our Lives in Trying Times

Mussar Gathering - January 26, 2025

Seeking Balance and Wisdom through Mussar in Turbulent Times

By Rabbi Amy Eilberg

Opening Song

Ozi v'zimrat Yah Ado-nai vay'hi li liy'shu'ah

God is my help; I am confident and unafraid.
God is my strength and my song, and I will be relieved.

1. *Hakarat Hatov* – Gratitude

*Modeh/Modah ani lefanecha melech hai vekayam shehehezarta bi nishmati b'hemla.
Rabbah emunatecha!*

I thank You, living and eternal sovereign, for Your kindness in restoring my soul. How great is Your faithfulness.

* * * * *

Baruch Ata Hashem Eloheinu Melech/Ru'ach Ha'olam asher yatsar et ha'adam b'chochmah, uvara vo nekavim nekavim, chalulim chalulim. Galuy v'yadu'a lif'nei chisei chevodecha, she'im yipatei'ach echad meihem o yisateim echad meihem, ee efshar lehitkayem vela'amod lefanecha. Baruch Ata Hashem, Rofei chol basar umafla la'asot.

Blessed are You, Nameless One, our God, sovereign of all worlds, Who shaped the human being with wisdom, creating for us all the openings and vessels of the body. It is revealed and known before your Throne of Glory that if one of these passageways opens when it should be closed, or becomes blocked when it should be open, one could not stay alive and stand before You. Blessed are You, Hashem, Healer of all flesh, One Who does wonders.

* * * * *

*Elohai neshama shenatata bi tehora hi. Ata berata ata yetsarta ata nefachta bi.
V'ata m'shamra b'kirbi.*

My God, the Soul which You gave me is pure. You created it, You formed it, You breathed it into me; You guard it within me.



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Modim anachnu lach . . .

We thank You, for You are ever our God and the God of our ancestors;
You are the bedrock of our lives (translation, *Siddur Sim Shalom*).

Reflection Questions

1. What are the places, people and practices that generally open you to grateful awareness?
2. How can gratitude practice support us in turbulent times?

2. *Chesed* - Lovingkindness

<p>Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 14a Rabbi Simlai taught: "The Torah begins with deeds of lovingkindness and ends with deeds of lovingkindness."</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי, סוטה י"ד ע"א דרש ר' שמלאי תורה תחלתה גמילות חסדים וסופה גמילות חסדים.</p>
<p>Tomer Devorah, 1:4 (R. Moshe Cordovero, 1522-1570, Safed)</p> <p>[And since all Israelites (read: human beings) are related to each other,] it is only right that a person desire one's neighbor's well-being, that one look kindly upon the good fortune of one's neighbor and that one's neighbor's honor be as dear as one's own; for you and your neighbor are one. This is why we are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves.</p>	<p>... ולכך ראוי לאדם להיות חפץ בטובתו של חבירו ועינו טובה על טובת חבירו וכבודו יהיה חביב עליו כשלו, שהרי הוא - הוא ממש. ומטעם זה נצטוונו "ואהבת לרעך כמוך."</p>



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<p>Rav Shlomo Wolbe, <i>Alei Shur</i>, Vol. 2, p. 198</p> <p>I declare, "The world is built of your love." (Psalms 89:2) Every act of <i>hesed</i>, even a small one, is an actual act of building and creation, enlivening the spirit of the downtrodden and the broken-hearted.</p>	<p>... ואני אמרתי עולם חסד יבנה" (תהילים פ"ט, ב') ... כל מעשה חסד, אפילו בדבר קטן, הוא מעשה בנין ויצירה ממש, להחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים.</p>
<p>Rav Shlomo Wolbe, <i>Alei Shur</i>, Vol. 2, p. 200</p> <p>When the Blessed Holy One created humanity in the divine image, God did not only give of God's glory to humanity, adorning us with qualities of intellect and soul, but created us in the divine image, in the sense that God also gave us the power of the "radiant face." In the radiance of the human face is hidden a treasure of blessing and mercy ...</p>	<p>והנה כשברא הקב"ה את האדם בצלמו, לא רק שחלק מכבודו לבשר ודם להעטירו במעלות של שכל ומידות טובות, אלא גם בזה בראו בצלמו, שיש באדם כח של הארת פנים. גם בהארת פניו של אדם טמון אוצר של ברכה ... וחנינה</p>

Reflection Questions

1. What happens inside you when someone offers you a kind word or action?
2. How do you feel when you do an act of kindness for someone else?
3. What do such acts of kindness generate in relationship and in community?

Suggested Sacred Phrases

Olam Hesed Yibaneh (Psalms 89:3)

I will build this world from love
And you must build this world from love
And if we build this world from love
Then God will build this world from love

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Written by Rabbi Menachem Creditor



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אָן אַ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמִים:

Only goodness and Chesed will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of God for many long years. (Psalms 23:6)

כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶד:

God's Chesed is eternal.

Ahavah Verachamim Hesed Veshalom
(Words and music, Ben Singer)

3. Menuchat Hanefesh - Equanimity

Jeremiah 17:7-8

בְּרוּךְ הַגִּבֹּר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בִּיהוָה וְהָיָה יְהוָה מִבְּטָחוֹ:

Blessed is one who trusts in God, whose trust is God alone.

וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ | שֶׁתּוֹלַע עַל-מַיִם וְעַל-יִבְלֵי יִשְׁלַח שָׂרָשָׁיו וְלֹא יִרָא [יִרְאָה] כִּי-יָבֵא חֹם וְהָיָה עָלָיו
רַעֲנָן וּבִשְׁנַת בָּצָר לֹא יִדָּאָג וְלֹא יִמָּיֵשׁ מִמַּעֲשׂוֹת פָּרִי:

Such a person shall be like a tree planted by waters, sending forth its roots by a stream.
It does not sense the coming of heat, its leaves are ever fresh;
It has no care in a year of drought, it does not cease to yield fruit.

From Havdalah Service

*Hinei El Yeshu'ati Evtach v'lo efchad
Ki ozi v'zimrat Yah Adonai vay'hi li liy'shu'ah.*

God is my relief; I am confident and unafraid.
For God is my strength and my song, and I will be relieved.



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Reflection Questions

1. What image, word, place or activity can generally bring you to a place of steadiness, balance, and safety?
2. What helps you remember to reach for such a resource to support you?

Sacred Phrases to Cultivate Equanimity

שְׁוִי־תִי יְהוָה לְנֶגְדִי תָמִיד כִּי מִיְמִינִי בַל-אֶמוּט:

I place God before me always; God is at my right hand; I shall never be shaken.
(Psalms 16:8)

בִּידוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי בַעַת אִישׁן וְאֶעִירָה וְעַם רוּחִי גִוִּיתִי ה' לִי וְלֹא אִירָא.

In your hand I place my soul when I wake and when I sleep.
(Adapted from Psalm 31:6; last line of *Adon Olam* prayer)