

THE PIKESVILLE TIMES



Good To Know Month of Adar Holiday of Purim

Life is one extended process of change. The helpless newborn has apparently very little in common with the independent, established, and emerging adult. However, there is one constant: the very identity and essence of the person from the day of birth to passing.

The same is true of our Jewish nation. Collectively we have ups and down, spiritually and materially. Yet, our very core identity, G-d's chosen nation, is permanent and unaffected. We have been Egyptian slaves and global nomads in four exiles, with waves of change contributing to a state of much uncertainty. Nevertheless, throughout, our identity as the Jewish nation has held out. The "Etzem," or core G-dly soul of a Jew lodged within, is characteristically a phenomenon of infinity and thus impervious to any possible change.

In effect, when does this national status express itself? The month of Nissan celebrates our freedom, and Tishrei is relegated to our atonement and joy. Adar is a month unrelated to any aforementioned, rather entirely focused on our G-d connection, our soul. In the story of Purim in the month of Adar, Haman threw a lottery to determine when to destroy the Jews. He was unfamiliar with the defining characteristics of the month of Adar, assuming that it was just plain Adar. He was jubilant, knowing that Moses passed away in this month. In fact, this is the true meaning of the Talmud's implication that the redeeming factor (mazal) of Adar is that it is the month when Moses was also born. Moses is representative of the entire Jewish nation, and his birthday is our collective birthday. In this respect, the month of Adar encapsulates the very essence of the Jew that trumps all else; an immutable bond and G-d relationship of the highest order.

This is where Haman went wrong. The special quality of this month undid his scheme. Haman's decree was not about religion. Rather, he was one of those bonafide anti-Semites who endeavored to eradicate every single Jew from the face of the earth. Haman actually was not committed to going after every carrier of a Jewish gene. He was satisfied if Jews were either killed or if others renounced their religion. So, practically speaking, any individual Jew did have a way out. What took place and what is so worth celebrating to posterity is that not one Jew compromised. In those harrowing times, the "essence of the Jew," the "Adar" factor as it were, came to the fore, and the Jewish people stood strong- loyal and royal- with exacting Mesirat Nefesh (self-sacrifice). This devotion is so profound; it constituted "re-commitment" to the Torah, by choice, from our own accord-: קיימו וקבלו היהודים את אשר החלו לעשות

Purim is a time to reflect upon our purpose here on this earth and to resolve unequivocally to be steadfast, knowing that Hashem stands with us under all circumstances.



Welcome to our first edition of
The Pikesville Times!

The Director
Rochel Kaplan

Aleph Learning Institute is a facility-in-the-works in Pikesville, realizing a model institute for adult Jewish learning. Our projected space is meant to serve as a hub for Torah and Judaic study, interactive dialogue, and community. As we fine-tune our game plan, we invite you to share it with us via this inaugural double-issue publication. We begin from the beginning- with Aleph-א, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The word אלף means to learn- acquire and impart wisdom- אאלכך חכמה.

In the popular book, *The Gifts of the Jews*, author Thomas Cahill explores ancient societies –as part of an endless cycle of birth and death; of the rise and fall of empires; the ebb and flow of social progress and then subsequent regress-where time is perceived as a wheel spinning endlessly without altering its course-what has been, will be again. The Jews, on the other hand, dramatically change this perception. According to Cahill, the Jews were the first people to view time linearly, including a beginning (בראשית), middle and end. When Abraham is summoned by G-d to "Go forth," he is presented with a new vision, with a unique destiny – a shift to progression with unknown possibility evolving through time. With linear thinking, history works to move forward constantly or as a spiral continuously climbing upward. The rise and fall of an empire are not simply restoring the world to point A., rather to a new point B. Any new empire may indeed fall again, but the next empire to follow will be built upon the previous one's roof- not its ground zero. Without this fundamental idea, the history of Western society would have been utterly altered. The resulting difference has large implications for the moral and ethical position, which inspired the Declaration of Independence with a hopeful promise for a better tomorrow. Life can either be circling nowhere, random and without meaning, or with a sense of purpose. The Jewish way of marching toward spiritual perfection climaxing in the messianic era added the word "progress" to the human lexicon.

Rabbi Yehudah ben Simon said: Midrash Breishit Rabah 14:7: "The world was created perfect and whole." Alas, Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge. The Zohar explains that standing at Mount Sinai, the Jews received a gift from Almighty G-d introducing radical holiness into the world with Torah, thereby casting off the stain of the primordial sin. And yet, soon thereafter, the people sinned with the golden calf. So, where is the progress? The Lubavitcher Rebbe in *Likutei Sichot* explains that the level reached following Matan Torah that came after the sin of the Tree of knowledge is greater than the perch at which the world stood before the sin of the tree of knowledge. The same is true with the heights that we will reach the future Redemption that come after the sin of the golden calf, relative to the perch at which the world stood at Matan Torah (before the sin of the golden calf).

On a microcosmic scale, in each individual's life journey, one surely experiences ups and downs that ping pong for us with little clarity. However, along this linear path, rest assured, progress is being made. Stop and think through the myriad instances of insanity, and then connect the dots. Take note that you have survived and that you are stronger, smarter, and empowered. We must begin the journey of our soul at your Aleph point and move ever forward and upward, spiraling to greater spiritual heights.

The world at large is not yet perfect. The good news is that progress is cumulative and not relegated to less-than-perfect, forever. There will be a time that the entire world is anxiously anticipating when things will be perfect, and the world at large will have realized its climax. As we work our way there, we stick with what is demanded of us and take-in moments of perfection. Elijah, the prophet, is sent to participate in every Passover Seder and Brit Milah to learn to appreciate the Jewish people's true essence. That while the Jewish people may not be perfect, we have nevertheless-to our incredible praise- held to the covenant with G-d, progressing toward a utopian world. Lchaim!

With Blessing,

The Bar Mitzvah story that reads on . . . a true story from Freiberg, Germany

Rabbi Yanky and Chavie G. of Chabad of Freiberg, Germany, visited their parents vacationing in Daytona Beach, Florida. The local Shliach Rabbi Sholom C. meets the Freiberger with their parents at the Chabad Morning Prayer service. After introductions, the guests decided to share their "Boston Story" with Rabbi Shalom raised in Boston.

[One late night, Rabbi Yanky in Freiberg stops into the local grocery store. Suddenly he feels a tap on his back. A gentleman asks him if he is a Rabbi. Rabbi Yanky explains that he is and that he built a Jewish community in Freiberg. This gentleman Morris, spoke beautiful fluent English, an American from Boston. Morris married out of the faith two times, had children, and now he married a gentile German woman from Freiberg, so he moved to Freiberg. The Rabbi invited him to stop by the Chabad, and he begins attending, learning, praying, and interacting with the Jewish community. He joins Shabbat meals and really bonds with Chabad. He feels at home; our home is your home.

One day Morris comes to Rabbi Yanky and seems very uneasy. The Rabbi asks what he can do for Morris. Morris tells him that when he dies, he would like to be buried as a Jew. Rabbi Yanky, of course, reassures him that he would. "But you are so young, so why speak about your death?"

Morris asks for reassurance of his promise, and the Rabbi acquiesces. Morris

seems to have changed.

On the following visit, Morris comes with a tattered book. It is a Tikkun. This is a book of "musical notes" used to practice Torah Reading as there are no musical notes in the Torah, but there is a tradition from Moses of how the Torah is read. Now the Rabbi is taken aback. How did Morris get this book? Who is Morris? Who are you?

Morris relates: "I grew up in Boston. My mother worked in the office of the Chabad school in Boston. I went to public school. However, one day, my mother said she wanted me to meet the Rabbi to prepare for my Bar Mitzvah. So I met Rabbi Chaim C., who taught me Hebrew reading, and the Torah reading. He even gifted me with a Tikkun (book), as the Rabbi told me that I had talent and read the Torah beautifully. At that time, my mother fell deathly ill, and the Rabbi told them that he would consult with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi M.M. Schneerson. The Rebbe advised that they add the name Chaya, which means life. She lived another 20 years.

Over time, I drifted from my mother's lifestyle and became alienated, marrying 3 times to non-Jewish women. But, I always take my Tikkun with me wherever I go."

Rabbi Yanky asks Morris to read from the Tikkun and is truly impressed with his ability to read with the proper tunes and enunciation. Morris again asks Rabbi Yanky to promise him to bury him as

a Jew. He is given absolute reassurance. A few days later, Rabbi Yanky gets a call. Morris is in the hospital and not doing well. He asks the family to leave the room. "I am very sick." He is holding the Tikkun. Morris recites the Shema and asks the Rabbi to say the Vidduy confession prayer. Morris asks to sing Jewish songs with the Rabbi. He reminds Rabbi Yanky about his promise to bury him in the Jewish way. And Morris slips away. He returns his soul to its maker.

As the alarms signal in the hospital, all the nurses come running. His German wife comes over to the Rabbi and requests that he bury Morris immediately without delay. She got a message from her children to cremate their father, and since she sees his sincerity and love for his religion, his wife insists he is buried as a Jew. The Kaddish is recited.]

In Daytona Beach, Rabbi Sholom C. is crying as he listens to the story related by the guests from Freiberg, Germany. He says: "I just finished saying Kaddish for my father who was the Chabad Shliach in Boston, Rabbi Chaim C. who taught Morris and gave him the Tikkun. It is so touching to hear this regards about my father, full-circle-of how he impacted the life of a Jew-our brother-who then died as a Jew together with the Tikkun from his Bar Mitzvah."

Morris' Tikkun reads on soulfully.

As retold by Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson
10 Shevat 5781



"Let Bookshelves be Your Gardens"

בית מלא ספרים

Larry Ziffer

Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Tibbon (Spain, 1120-1190) said "Make books your companions and let your bookshelves be your gardens. Bask in their beauty, gather their fruit, pluck their roses, take their spices and myrrh. And when your soul may be weary, change from garden to garden, and from prospect to prospect." Our tradition is so rich with love of books and learning!

Do we still value Jewish literacy and Torah study?

One major challenge for the American Jewish community is the tendency to see Jewish learning as a pediatric endeavor. When the first immigrants came to this country, many arrived with attenuated Jewish education. Even so, they knew how important Jewish training would be for children, so they developed Hebrew schools and other informal programs to provide their children with minimal Jewish education. Many of those children inherited the notion that a rudimentary Jewish education is something parents "purchase" for their children.

Due to the perpetuation of this stereotype, we now have several generations of Jews, including some Jewish leaders,

philanthropists and decision makers whose Jewish education is, at best, the equivalent of third grade knowledge (in content hours), in contrast to their graduate and postgraduate degrees in general studies and advanced professional employment. No wonder so many adults do not continue their own Jewish education! Their only recollections are of boring hours and information that was never made relevant to their mature and professional lives. The stereotype endures: a child who does not want to go to religious school complains and the parent responds, "I went to Hebrew school and hated it and you will go to Hebrew school and hate it; that's just the way it is."

Nevertheless, experience demonstrates potential that is so much greater. Ever-increasing numbers of adults are participating in quality adult Jewish education experiences and report that they never realized how stimulating and enriching text study could be. The joy and sense of fulfillment experienced by adult learners is palpable. Many report that for the first time in their lives, they feel a personal connection to G-d. By bringing real spirituality into their lives,

they achieve a new sense of balance and belonging. Their feelings of personal and collective responsibility take on new meaning as they gain a deeper sense of Jewish identity.

Such adults also understand that they cannot "purchase" a Jewish education for their children and grandchildren. Judaism is lived and learned through the lens of authentic Jewish education. Parents and grandparents come to appreciate their responsibilities as role models and active participants in the Jewish education of the next generations. In the Sefer HaMitzvos of the Rambam (Maimonides' Book of Mitzvot), the eleventh mitzvah (of 613) is "to study and to teach the wisdom of Torah. This is called Talmud Torah." It is clear that there are two interdependent parts to this single mitzvah: one must study and teach, study in order to teach. In fact, it is never too late to engage, re-engage or turbo-charge your adult Jewish education. Literacy and learning are essential to living a meaningful and fulfilling Jewish life. It is also the best way to connect with and be an active participant in over 3,500 years of Jewish history, wisdom and understanding.

Larry Ziffer is consultant to the Charles Crane Family Foundation. He is the former CEO of Baltimore's Center for Jewish Education, having worked for 40 years as a Jewish communal professional. He received his ordination from Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and his Masters in Social Work from the Wurzeiler School of Social Work.

Tu-B'shvat New Year

for Fruit Trees



"For the Lord, your G-d is bringing you to a good land, with brooks of water, fountains, and depths, emerging in valleys and mountains; a land of wheat and barley, grapevines and figs and pomegranates; a land of oil producing olives and [date] honey." Deut. 8:7-8

It's important to know that we did not miss out even if a holiday has already passed. Its lessons and import are eternal, and its spiritual growth is learned and applied anytime. Moreover, since the focus of Tu B'shvat pertains to the special fruits with which Israel is blessed-seven kinds- we joyfully partake of them throughout the year. In particular, there is the date or palm fruit. With its sweet honey, the sweet date leaves us with a sweet message to carry us through hard times.

Deep down, there is a part of us, our soul, which is always tranquil and harmonious. That is because our G-dly soul is one with G-d and knows none of the earthly struggles that the animal soul contends with. Much of our lives are spent getting in touch with that part of us that is completely at peace with itself. This life mission takes much effort and is the focus of our true purpose. Our sages of the Talmud state that a certain kind of date tree only blooms after seventy years. This alludes to the fact that a state of harmony and perfection, personally or collectively, is a life-long journey. In effect, when that effort blossoms, the outcome, like the sweet date, is sweeter than any other fruit.

Dates are associated with the Prophetess Deborah, who is described as judging the people "Under the date palm." Through her efforts, there emerged an era of tranquility and peace: "The land was at rest for 40 years." The date is also symbolic of the Messianic era when the fruits of our labor throughout exile will finally be realized.



Mommy Goggles

by Ruti Rosenbloom

Gavi Rosenbloom obm

I am a person who happily blends in with the background and I would rather speak about you than me. So I begin sharing these words with a prayer they should give purpose to you, dear reader.

This past Sukkos our family soared the highest heights of happiness, then suddenly found ourselves crushed and shattered in grief from the sudden loss of our dear son, Gavi Rosenbloom, A"H. What I realize now more than ever, is every moment with our children, at any age, is precious and each child has a unique mission in this world. How will I internalize the messages our son brought us to uplift and unify the world? What lessons can be learned and will I take them upon myself for change? How do I keep his spirit vibrant and relevant?

The morning after Isru Chag, someone knocked on my door. It was less than 2 hours since we last spoke to Gavi. I just finished making waffles for my younger children, who were sitting around the kitchen table, enjoying them. Knocking on the door abruptly, the state troopers were a surprise and I imagined a road block of some sort. However, a tragic story unfolded and they thought the boy from this tale was my son. It couldn't be, I thought, and began questioning them for validation. I spoke to the officer at the sight of the accident by phone, two hours away, in Eastern Maryland. Officer Rola couldn't find his wallet, but the car was registered to my son. Finally, Rola told me the only thing found on the person was a dollar and a quarter in his pocket. I asked if there was a penny, too? Surprised, he asked how I knew this and I explained to him it was for charity.



The night before, Gavi prepared to manage a job for his father. He grew up around the alarm business and was excitedly planning to manage his first job. I was worried about him traveling so far a distance and met him by his car just before he left our driveway. He was holding his tefillin bag on his right side and his keys in the other. More focused on preparing his plans than aware of me, standing in front of him, I interjected his thoughts by offering "shaliach mitzvah gelt", charity to help with safe travels. Eagerly, he accepted the tzedaka and assured me he had everything needed and would spend the night by a friend's house. At last, he said, "love you, Mommy". I reciprocated with similar sentiment and we agreed to share Yom Tov stories when he came back home.

Now, the next morning, as I spoke to these officers, present, and by phone, reality sunk into my brain and I let out a cry from deep within. Without a doubt, I knew it was him. The dollar represents 100% and 26 is the numerical value of Hashem's loftiest name. Hashem took him back.

My husband spoke to our son on speaker phone just an hour before as they planned to implement Gavi's business plans. This was his first time running his own project. The night before, my husband told me the following. He had never seen Gavi so mature and focused. As they drove home from the job sight, my husband fed him simple food, tuna-filled peppers, as they listened to classic Jewish melodies on the bluetooth from Gavi's phone. Gavi turned towards his father and said, "Ta, years from now we will remember this moment together".

Perhaps tired from his work the day before it seems he fell asleep for a moment. Shocking and sudden, a moment was all it took, as human and car were no match for a simple tree.

From the news of his passing until now, I never cried so much. In Likkutei Ammorim, Ch. 45, The Alter Rebbe describes Rachel Emeinu as Malchus, a queen of all souls. Then, describes Yaakov Avinu, as Tiferes, compassion. When Yaakov met Rachel, he realized their potential synergy, immediately. Mama Rachel cried in grief and asked for miracles. The tears of grief and refusal to accept reality persuaded Hashem to change his plans. I understand her cries now, as I daily weep for my son and yearn for his return.

I found myself challenged and conflicted. The same source of my blessings has shown me a pain I would never want someone to suffer. Where was my emunah in Hashem? Only my awareness that He chose this and I struggled to understand why with tremendous anger. In those first days, I did not know how to daven to Hashem. I felt betrayed. At the same time he gave me comfort by opening my mind to the idea of true geulah. Am I doing enough to prepare a world in harmony? He wants my tears and cries for a better world, not my understanding. I accept we have no control only the mechanisms we arrange for comfort. Physically, we live separately; yet, when I search from my soul, we unite as one people. I felt unity in the many who visited us to comfort. It was not my loss, it was our loss. He needs our tears.

So sweet and so kind, Gavi was a pleasure to spend time with because he thought of others and included everyone without judgement. One of my earliest memories of his kindness was sharing cupcakes. When Gavi turned 2 years old, I brought cupcakes to his classroom. Each one, with a swirl of yellow frosting and sprinkles, was excitedly delivered, by Gavi, into a pair of small hands. Not a lick of a finger or a sprinkle consumed until he made a visual check and count. Then, he sat in a chair and took one for himself.

There were many phases in his life. The world didn't understand him like I did. They didn't see how hard he worked on himself. He would find himself in trouble and no one could quite explain how he got there. I knew he was curious and sometimes he didn't watch where he was going in a discussion or plan. Above all, I saw the essence of his soul filled with kindness and love for everyone.

One time, late at night, Gavi, 7 years old, paced by the door. Surprised to see him there, I asked why he had not taken the bags outside? He wouldn't answer. He just paced. His father was growing impatient and so we asked several times, why he was pacing and not taking out the garbage. Finally, he spoke out and shared his fear of the dark. Embarrassed by his fears, he was trying to build confidence while pacing. I was completely surprised and sympathetic.

I explained to him next time he had a candy to try and save a portion. When he wanted to take a nap, first learn for 5 minutes, and so on. In this way he could understand he was capable of more than he knew. Gavi internalized this message so deeply, he utilized this as a skill to overcome obstacles later in life. If he could master himself he would overcome fear.

Rabbi Shalom DovBer, known as the Rebbe Rashab, (1860-1920), developed a system of education and yeshivos, named Tomchei T'mimim. Comparing the concept of tefillin, which are required by every Jewish man, no matter how simple or educated, he believed every child deserves a Torah educa-

tion. He tasked parents to dedicate time each day, to connect and think of how to actualize their children's fullest potential.

I wanted Gavi to focus on learning. Yet, at some point in middle school, he only cared to learn football. I cannot cover the basics in the rules of the game, but I listened to him and tried to participate in the talk as best I could. He was excited to share and we spent hours talking. I would ask questions and he would share with me the great players and moves which make the game fantastic. Eventually, he wanted to learn more Torah and he did. He would ask himself questions and search for answers, sometimes in holy books, with the same zeal he did for football in those early days.

In eighth grade, Gavi realized he actually enjoyed learning Torah. He was inspired to learn continuously, all day. With much effort, he managed to stay on task and was accepted into his choice yeshiva. At first, it seemed his dedication would bring direct reward, and he took on extra curricular learning. The feedback from yeshiva was encouraging. Then, a bit before Purim the calls of concerns from school came in. Eventually, they were convinced he had ADHD. Never before had this particular issue been addressed. It made sense as he would spend hours working on some projects, while neglecting others. He would struggle daily to find his pencil and forget to tell me important announcements until the last moment. I took him out and sought care for the issue. It was a new world of realization for both of us. He tried to go back to the yeshiva a bit later, but felt left behind by the program and his peers. Some suggested, maybe, he just needed to work harder to overcome such obstacles.

I knew he was trying with all he could muster. He accepted any coaching or medication. He met with Rabbi Fuchs from TA and was asked if he wanted to go and if he would dedicate himself to learning. Gavi sincerely committed to this. TA gave him a place to grow into himself with learning opportunities, love and acceptance. Gavi appreciated every teacher who saw his potential. He valued those teachers in his life, long after class was over. We spoke about his challenges regularly and strategized how to overcome them. Every situation needed new planning techniques and his ability to handle challenges came in waves. Sometimes, he mastered all his activities and other times he walked a thin line. Many teachers and family didn't understand his struggle and lost patience with him. He could be impulsive and lose track of time. What kept him motivated were the teachers, friends and relatives who appreciated him for his qualities.

A checklist for life can be helpful, more important is to realize there is more dimension than a list, in preparation for our pathways to maturity. No matter the circumstance, as his mother, I weighed the scales between checklist and understanding his essence. The scales tipped in both directions until leveling out. I find him honest and he would share personal struggles with me. Therefore, I advocated for him regularly and defended his honor. I knew he had more to give the world and with time he would succeed. My family coined a name for my approach... they called it, "Mommy Goggles". No matter what happened, I would stand by him. This gave Gavi confidence, too and wherever he put energy, I cheered him on. Eventually, Gavi learned to be the best of himself.

The ultimate in parenting is finding the treasure within the essence of our sons and daughters. Our children do not need to be like everyone else. They need our support to find the unique beauty within. We bring into this world true and long lasting souls. I feel fortunate to see him the way I did even when life obstacles came in the way. I will try to be less judgmental and will continue to wear "mommy goggles".

To be continued...



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Thank you!



Coach Tania Speaks...

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I am a lawyer by training and a Co-Active Coach certified from the Coaches Training Institute (CTI), the Harvard of coach training schools, and the oldest and largest coaching training organization globally. I am also a certified Gallup Strengths Coach and an active member of the International Coach Federation (ICF).

An overachiever myself, my personal history helps me bring empathy to the coaching process: · Won the Vienna Table Tennis Championship and 4 medals at the European Maccabi Games · Changed careers (from law to psychology) · Lived in 12 cities and 4 countries · Trained at the world's leading coaching institutions.

I use evidence-based coaching assessments, frameworks and tools, combined with intuition. As a coach, I've worked with executives, attorneys, and other high performers. My clients come from Google, Facebook, the Federal Reserve, Genentech, Deloitte, Salesforce, and other leading companies.

Tania speaks her mind...

TPT: How did you get into coaching?

TF: I have always been a curious person, someone fascinated by people. I am a positive person who naturally sees the potential in people. I love to imagine a world where everyone can fulfill their own capabilities. Then I discovered a career that was the perfect fit - Coaching. It was, as they say, love at first sight! I threw myself into researching the profession and found that I was learning more about the human psyche than from any book, workshop, or academic degree. I was fascinated to discover the impact coaching had on the brain. Learning to coach and studying neuroscience has taught me to train people to change their mindset and behaviors.

TPT: How does a coaching session differ from a therapy session?

TF: Firstly, it is important to state that life coaches are not mental health professionals—they do not diagnose any clients' conditions. Rather, coaches identify and describe current problematic behaviors so the client can work to modify them. Therapists focus on "why" certain behavioral patterns occur, whereas coaches work on "how" to achieve a goal. The coaching process is focused on the present moving forward, rather than analyzing their client's past as a tool for understanding present behaviors. A coach will help clarify goals and identify obstacles and problematic behaviors to create action plans to achieve desired results.

Another major difference lies in the fact that coaching relationships tend to be shorter than therapy. The process of coaching takes the client's current starting point as an acceptable neutral ground- there is no "fixing" a person. After all, many of us have limiting beliefs, get stuck, and need support in finding the best path forward. A coach enables the client to take control of their life and steer it toward their stated objectives. There is much overlap between therapy and coaching. Ultimately, we aim to help clients make positive changes in their lives and become more productive.

TPT: Who is coaching for?

TF: Coaching is for anyone who wants to learn more about themselves, to grow and expand. Coaching is for anyone who wants more out of life, yearns to fulfill their potential, is tired of deferring their dreams, and is ready to go for it.

During these challenging times, a lot of people are especially in need of support. I recently coached a company director, a high achiever, working overtime to make up for others' "sloppiness and laziness", constantly judging herself and others. As we dived deeper she realized her common limiting thoughts such as, "I know the right way," "If you can't do it perfectly, don't do it at all." She realized she felt constantly frustrated and disappointed with herself and others, not living up to ideal standards. Through coaching she realized how these self-imposed standards were the source of her ongoing anxiety and frustration. Then she got Covid and suffered tremendously. When she began to recover, we resumed our coaching sessions. Once she identified her inherited beliefs and half-baked assumptions, she began thinking more broadly. She created a new narrative beyond her blinding fears allowing her to uncover who she really wanted to be. As a result, she felt tremendously empowered and alive. Today she is inviting feedback; she has become more flexible and has successfully built a strong and dynamic team.

During this pandemic, many of us feel stuck. Many things have been taken away from us; our passions, connections, and access to things that gratify us. We can easily feel a lack of control and a sense of helplessness, becoming trapped in our stories and perceptions. Especially during such challenging times, we need to reframe, shift perspective, redefine ourselves and our situation. As Viktor Frankl puts it, "everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's own attitude in any given set of circumstances."

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When a man and woman unite in marriage, their personal union draws its power from the cosmic marriage that underlies the whole of existence — the bonding of the divine masculine and feminine energies emerging from the Creator's Infinite Light to generate existence, a world, and life.

Indeed, the entire Seder Hishtalshelut--the kabbalistic blueprint of the spiritual infrastructure of creation—is modeled on a male-female dynamic: masculine "lights" (*orot*) unite with feminine "vessels" (*keilim*), masculine "wisdom" (*chochmah*) unites with feminine "understanding" (*binah*), male "holiness" (*kedushah*) unites with female "immanence" (*shechinah*), and so on. On each level, masculine and feminine energies unite to "give birth" to the next link in the chain of spiritual "worlds" that channel the flow of divine vitality into our world.

his male/female dynamic pervades every level of existence. The relationships between spirit and matter, heaven and earth, G d and the people of Israel, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, the Jewish people and the Shabbat, soul and body, mind and heart—all these are "marriages" in which the coming together of contrasting forces results in the creation of life on every level.

The significance of this correspondence is twofold. On the one hand, "From my flesh I perceive G d" (Job 19:26) — we can use our own marriages as a metaphor and model through which to better understand the divine reality. This works in the reverse as well: because we know that human marriage derives from the cosmic marriage of G d and creation, studying the mystical texts which scrutinize these divine processes allows us to better understand the foundations of our gender differences, how to bridge the gender divide, and how to become better husbands and wives to our spouses and better actualize the tremendous potential of marriage.

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