

PERSONAL
GROWTH



GROWING AHEAD

STAYING RESOLVED ABOUT OUR RESOLUTIONS

On January 1st, every year, millions of people make New Year's resolutions. And every year millions do not live up to those resolutions. Though nearly 40% of all Americans make New Year's resolutions, almost 90% of resolutions do not last long term.

- ❖ WHAT COMPELLS PEOPLE TO MAKE RESOLUTIONS?
- ❖ WHAT MAKES SOME RESOLUTIONS SUCCEED AND OTHERS FAIL?
- ❖ IS IT WORTH MAKING RESOLUTIONS EVEN IF WE KNOW WE WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP THEM?



THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT INSPARATION

In the passage below from Rabbi Akiva Tatz's Living Inspire (Chapter Two entitled "Inspiration and Disappointment or why a good time never lasts) a Torah perspective on inspiration is presented and explained. It may help you understand why holding on to inspiration is sometimes more difficult than you expected.

LIVING INSPIRED BY RABBI AKIVA TATZ

The natural pathway of all life experiences begins with inspiration and soon fades to disappointment. Let us analyze this phenomenon and understand it.

Human consciousness and human senses are tuned to an initial burst of sensitivity and then rapidly decay into dullness. Sights, sounds, smells, even tactile stimuli are felt sharply at first and then hardly at all --a constant sound is not registered; one suddenly becomes aware that it was present when it stops! We are incapable of maintaining the freshness of any experience naturally - only in the dimension of miracle is that possible: the



sacrificial bread in the Beis Hamikdash, the Temple, remained steaming fresh permanently to manifest the constant freshness of Hashem's relationship with the Jewish people. The natural pathway is that things which are fresh become stale?

One of the Torah sources for this idea lies in the sequence of events surrounding the exodus from Egypt. At an extremely low point in our history, during the intense misery of slavery in Egypt, literally at the point of spiritual annihilation, the Jewish people were uplifted miraculously. Ten plagues revealed Hashem's presence and might

culminating in a night of unprecedented revelation with the tenth. This spiritual high was amplified by many orders of magnitude at the splitting of the sea — there lowliest of the Jewish people experiences more than the highest prophet subsequently. And suddenly, once through the sea, they were deposited in a desert with forty---nine days of work ahead of them to climb to the spiritual status of meriting the Sinai experience, the giving of the Torah. Mystically, a desert means a place of intense death---forces a place of lethal ordeals. No water means no life.

What is the meaning of this pattern? The idea is that in order to save the Jewish people in Egypt, outside help was necessary. Hashem appeared and elevated us spiritually although we did not deserve it intrinsically, *we had not yet earned it.*



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But once saved, once inspired, once made conscious of our higher reality, the price must be paid, the experience must be earned, and in working to earn the level which was previously given artificially, one acquires that level genuinely. Instead of being shown a spiritual level, one *becomes* it.

And that is the secret of life. A person is inspired artificially at the beginning of any phase of life, but to acquire the depth of personality which is demanded of us, Hashem removes the inspiration. The danger is apathy and depression; the challenge is to fight back to the point of

inspiration, and in so doing to *build it permanently into one's character.*

The plagues in Egypt and the splitting of the sea are dazzling beyond description, but then Hashem puts us in the desert and challenges us to fight through to Sinai. In Egypt He demonstrates destruction of ten levels of evil while we watch passively; in the desert He brings ten levels of evil to bear against us and challenges us to destroy them.

...It is like a father teaching his child to walk: first the father supports the child as he takes his first step, but then the father must let go; there is no other way to learn, and the child must take a frightened and lonely step unaided. Only then, when he can walk independently, can he feel his father's love in the very moment which previously felt like desertion.

Unfortunately most people do not know this secret. We are misled into thinking that the world is supposed to be a constant thrill and we feel only half-alive because it is not.

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- ❖ HAVE YOU EVER BEEN INSPIRED AND THEN LOST THAT INSPIRATION?
 - ❖ HOW DID YOU REACT IN THAT SITUATION?
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INSPIRATION IN THE WOMB

Living Inspired chapter 2 continued:

נדה ל:
ומלמדין אותן כל התורה כולה בא מלאך וסטרן על פיו, ומשכחו כל התורה כולה

In *aggadic* writings we are told that the unborn child is taught the whole Torah in the womb. An angel teaches him all the mysteries of Creation and all that he will ever need to know in order to reach perfection, his own *chelek* (portion) in Torah. A lamp is lit above his head, and by its light he sees from one end of the world to the other. As the child is born, however, the angel strikes him on the moth and he forgets all that he has learned and is born a simple and unlearned baby, the obvious question is: why teach a child so much and then cause all the teaching to be forgotten?



But the answer is that it is not forgotten; it is driven deep into the unconscious. A person may be born with no explicit knowledge, but beneath the conscious surface, intact and rich beyond imagination, is all that one wishes to know! A lifetime of hard work learning Torah and working on one's personality will constantly release, bring to consciousness, innate wisdom. Often when one hears something beautiful and true one has the sensation, not of learning something, but of recognizing something! A sensitive individual will feel intimations of his or her own deep intuitive level often.

The pathway is clear - a person is born with a lifetime of work ahead, spiritual wisdom and growth are heard-earned. But the inspiration is within: you were once there! And that inner sense of inspiration provides the motivation, the source of optimism and confidence that genuine achievement is possible, even assured, if the necessary effort is made.

STRATEGIES FOR STAYING INSPIRED

Staying inspired is something that everyone struggles with. Concretizing inspiration may be one of the most important skills in life. It will help you in your spiritual life, your school life, your work life and in your personal relationships.



In an article in Harvard Business Review entitled: “What Really Motivates Workers: Understanding the power of progress” by Teresa M. Amabile and Steven J. Kramer, a study was done to find out what keeps people inspired and working hard at the workplace.

This is what they found: ” □ □ □ □ □ □

“On days when workers have the sense that they’re making headway in their jobs or when they receive support that helps them overcome obstacles, their emotions are most positive and their drive to succeed is at its peak. On days when they feel they are spinning their wheels or encountering roadblocks to meaningful accomplishment, their moods and motivation are lowest”

Here are the five factors that appear to drive motivation the most, the events workers said they experienced on their very best days:

- ❖ Making progress 76%
- ❖ Collaboration 53%
- ❖ Organizational support 43%
- ❖ Interpersonal support 25%
- ❖ Doing important work 19%

Let’s examine the importance of some of these factors:

MAKING PROGRESS

הוא היה אומר, לא עליך המלאכה לגמורת ולא אתה בן חורין להבטל ממנה.

אבות ב: טז

It is not incumbent upon you to finish the work, but you do not have the liberty to ignore it.

Avos 2:15

University of Chicago psychologists Minjung Koo and Ayelet Fishbach examined how people pursuing goals were affected by focusing on either how far they had already come (to---date thinking) or what was left to be accomplished (to---go thinking). People routinely use both kinds of thinking to motivate themselves. A marathon runner may choose to think about the miles already traveled or the ones that lie ahead. A dieter who wants to lose 30 pounds may try to fight temptation by reminding themselves of the 20 pounds already lost, or the 10 left to go.



Intuitively, both approaches have their appeal.

But too much to---date thinking, focusing on what you've accomplished so far, will actually undermine your motivation to finish rather than sustain it.

Koo and Fishbach's studies consistently show that when we are pursuing a goal and consider how far we've already come, we feel a premature sense of accomplishment and begin to slack off. For instance, in one study, college students studying for an exam in an important course were significantly more motivated to study after being told that they had 52% of the material left to cover compared to being told that they had already completed 48%.

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- ❖ HAVE YOU EVER STRUGGLED WITH MAKING PROGRESS ON A LONG TERM GOAL? WHAT DID YOU DO TO STAY MOTIVATED?
 - ❖ DO YOU THINK THE STRATEGY ABOVE WOULD HELP YOU? WHY OR WHY NOT?
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DOING IMPORTANT WORK: LOVING YOUR WORK

In a famous experiment, researchers ran a lottery with a twist. Half the participants were randomly assigned a lottery number. The remaining half were given a blank piece of paper and a pen and asked to write down any number they would like as their lottery number. Just before drawing the winning number, the researchers offered to buy back the tickets. The question researchers wanted to answer is, "How much more do you have to pay someone who 'wrote their own number' versus someone who was handed a number randomly?" The rational answer would be that there is no difference (given that a lottery is pure chance and **therefore every**



ticket number, chosen or assigned, should have the same value). A more savvy answer would be that you would have to pay less for the tickets where the participant chose the number, given the possibility of duplicate numbers in the population who wrote their own number. The real answer? No matter what location or demographic the experiment has taken place in, researchers have always found that they have to pay at least five times more to those who wrote their own number.

This result reveals an inconvenient truth about human nature: When we choose for ourselves, we are far more committed to the outcome - by a factor of five to one.

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- ❖ HOW CAN YOU USE THIS STRATEGY TO STAY INSPIRED?
 - ❖ IS THERE A WAY THIS STRATEGY CAN BE USED TO STAY MOTIVATED EVEN WITH RESPONSIBILITIES YOU DID NOT CHOOSE?
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COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT

אין התורה נקנית אלא בחבורה
ברכות סג:

Torah can only be acquired as part of a group
Talmud Bavli: Brachos 63b

COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT TEAM WORK

BY J. RICHARD HACKMAN

This is an excerpt from an article on Harvard Business Review's blog from the author of: Collaborative Intelligence: using Teams to Solve Hard Problems.



MISPERCEPTION: HARMONY HELPS. SMOOTH INTERACTION AMONG COLLABORATORS AVOIDS TIME-WASTING DEBATES ABOUT HOW BEST TO PROCEED.

Actually: Quite the opposite, research shows. Conflict, when well managed and focused on a team's objectives, can generate more creative solutions than one sees in conflict--free groups. So long as it is about the work itself, disagreements can be good for a team. Indeed, we found in our earlier research on symphony orchestras that slightly grumpy orchestras played a little better as ensembles than those whose members worked together especially harmoniously.

MISPERCEPTION: IT'S GOOD TO MIX IT UP. NEW MEMBERS BRING ENERGY AND FRESH IDEAS TO A TEAM. WITHOUT THEM, MEMBERS RISK BECOMING COMPLACENT, INATTENTIVE TO CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT, AND TOO FORGIVING OF FELLOW MEMBERS' MISBEHAVIOR.

Actually: The longer members stay together as an intact group, the better they do. As unreasonable as this may seem, the research evidence is unambiguous. Whether it is a basketball team or a string quartet, teams that stay together longer play together better.

MISPERCEPTION: IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE LEADER. THINK OF A TEAM YOU HAVE LED, OR ON WHICH YOU HAVE SERVED, THAT PERFORMED SUPERBLY. NOW THINK OF ANOTHER ONE THAT DID QUITE POORLY. WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM? IF YOU ARE LIKE MOST PEOPLE, YOUR EXPLANATION WILL HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE PERSONALITY, BEHAVIOR, OR STYLE OF THE LEADERS OF THOSE TWO TEAMS.

Actually: The hands--on activities of group leaders do make a difference. But the most powerful thing a leader can do to foster effective collaboration is to create conditions that help members competently manage themselves. The second most powerful thing is to launch the team well. And then, third, is the hands--on teaching and coaching that leaders do after the work is underway.

MISPERCEPTION: BIGGER IS BETTER. LARGER GROUPS HAVE MORE RESOURCES TO APPLY TO THE WORK. MOREOVER, INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL RELEVANT CONSTITUENCIES INCREASES THE CHANCES THAT WHATEVER IS PRODUCED WILL BE ACCEPTED AND USED.

Actually: Excessive size is one of the most common-and also one of the worst impediments to effective collaboration. The larger the group, the higher the likelihood of social loafing (sometimes called free riding), and the more effort it takes to keep members' activities coordinated. Small teams are more efficient-and far less frustrating.

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- ❖ HAVE YOU EVER COLLABORATED ON A PROJECT? WAS IT A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE?
 - ❖ HOW DO YOU PLAN ON USING THE POWER OF COLLABORATION TO STAY INSPIRED?
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CONCLUSION: MAKE IT REAL

The Hebrew word **הפץ** can either mean a desire or a concrete object. Some commentators explain that this is a reminder that to attain and realize your desires you need to concretize them into something real. Simply a thought, inspiration, ambition, or idea will not last unless you make it real.

You have the experience. You have the strategies. Only one question remains.

HOW WILL YOU MAKE IT REAL?
