

House of Sages

JUDAISM AND THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

10TH AUGUST, 2025

COME & LEARN

***“TRACHT GUT VET ZEIN GUT,”
“THINK GOOD AND IT WILL BE GOOD.”***

- The Lubavitcher Rebbe



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SOURCE 1 – LIKUTEI MOHARAN PART II 24:1

Written by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, founder of the Breslov Hasidic movement

It is a great mitzvah to always be happy, and to make every effort to determinedly keep depression and gloom at bay.

מְצוּה גְדוּלָה לְהִיּוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָה תָּמִיד, וְלִהְתְּגַבֵּר לְהִרְחִיק הָעֲצָבוֹת וְהַמָּרָה שְׁחָרָה בְּכָל כּוּחַ.

SOURCE 2 – GENESIS 4:23

Context: After Cain murders Abel the Torah lists the subsequent generations, when mentioning Lamech and his family there is a verse that stands out as it is not simply listing who married whom and who their kids are.

And Lamech said to his wives,
“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
O wives of Lamech, give ear to my
speech.
I have slain a person for wounding me,
And a lad for bruising me.

וַיֹּאמֶר לָמֶךְ לְנִשְׁיוֹ עָדָה וְצִלָּה
שְׁמַעְנָן קוּלִי נָשִׁי לָמֶךְ הָאֲזִנָּה
אָמַרְתִּי כִּי אִישׁ הִרְגֹתִי לְפַעְעֵי וְיֶלֶד
לְחִבְרָתִי:

SOURCE 3 – SFORNO ON GENESIS 4:23

Ovadhiah ben Jacob Sforno, also known as Sforno, was an Italian rabbi, commentator, and physician who lived from approximately 1470 to 1550.

speech: I have to express my mental anguish.

אָמַרְתִּי. שֶׁאֶסְפֵּר צַעֲרִי:

Discussion Questions:

Why do you think the Torah takes a pause from listing generations to share this brief interaction between Lemaech and his wives?
What does Sforno’s commentary add or explain?

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SOURCE 4 – TALMUD YEVAMOT 63B

Context: In tractate Yevamot a section quotes statements from the book of Ben Sira, this is one of those quotations.

Do not suffer from tomorrow's trouble, אֵל תִּצַר צָרַת מָחָר, כִּי לֹא תִדַע מָה
that is, do not worry about problems that יֵלֵד יוֹם. שְׂמָא מָחָר בָּא וְאִינְנוּ, נִמְצָא
might arise in the future, as you do not מְצַטְעָר עַל הָעוֹלָם שֶׁאֵין שְׁלוֹ
know what a day will bring.

SOURCE 5 – LAMENTATIONS 3:21-23

Context: Lamentations consists of poems expressing the profound grief and sorrow over the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of its people. However, midway through the author pauses grieving and reflects a different attitude.

But this do I call to mind, therefore I זֹאת אֲשִׁיב אֶל־לִבִּי עַל־כֵּן אוֹחִיל:
have hope: חֲסִדֵי יְהוָה כִּי לֹא־תִמְנוּ כִּי לֹא־כָלוּ
The kindness of the LORD has not רַחֲמָיו:
ended, His mercies are not spent. חֲדָשִׁים לִבְקָרִים רַבָּה אֲמוֹנָתְךָ:
They are renewed every morning—
Ample is Your grace!

SOURCE 5 – PIRKEI AVOT 3:15

Everything is foreseen yet freedom of הַכֹּל צָפוּי, וְהָרְשׁוֹת נְתוּנָה, וּבָטוּב
choice is granted, And the world is הָעוֹלָם נְדוּן. וְהַכֹּל לִפֵּי רֹב
judged with goodness; And everything is הַמַּעֲשֵׂה:
in accordance with the majority of the
action.

Discussion Questions:

What do these sources teach us about how people should approach challenging situations? What attitudes are encouraged or discouraged?

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SOURCE 7 – LIKUTEI TEFILOT, VOLUME 1

Context: Likutei Tefilot is a collection of 210 prayers composed by Rebbe Natan Sternhartz, foremost student of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. This prayer is titled “Overcoming Anxiety”

Dear God, rescue me from the toil of my hands. Nullify all my depression, worries and anxiety, particularly my worries concerning earning a living. Because of my many sins and evil desires, my heart is overcome with heaviness, depression and anxiety, and earning a living has become a difficult burden. As a result, the spirit of my heart has closed down so that its pulse cannot radiate properly through my limbs.

וְתַחַמַּל עָלַי וְתַצִּילֵנִי מֵעֲצָבוֹן יְדָיִם, וְתַבְטֵל מִמֶּנִּי כָּל מִיָּנִי עֲצָבוֹת וְדָאָגוֹת וּמְרָה שְׁחוּרָה, וּבִפְרֹט עֲצָבוֹת וְדָאָגוֹת מְטַרְדֵּת הַפְּרָנְסָה תְּסִיר וְתַבְטֵל מִמֶּנִּי בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּימִ. כִּי בְּעוֹנוֹתַי הַרְבִּימִ מֵעֵצֶם הַכְּבֹדוֹת וְהָעֲצָבוֹת וְהַמְרָה שְׁחוּרָה אֲשֶׁר הִתְגַּבְּרָה עַל לִבִּי עַל־יְדֵי תַאֲוֹתַי הָרָעוֹת, וְנוֹסֵף לָזֶה עַל וְטַרְדֵּת הַפְּרָנְסָה, עַל־יְדֵי כָּל זֶה נִטְמָטֵם רוּחַ לִבִּי, עַד אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ הַדְּפֵק שְׁבַל־לִבִּי אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לִילֵךְ תְּנוּעָה מִסִּדְרָת בְּכָל הָאֲבָרִים כְּרָאוּי.

As a result, my hands and limbs have grown heavy. And because of that heaviness, the spirit of my heart grows ever weaker, until my depression leads to so much heaviness, weakness and a sealed heart that I am close to death, Heaven forbid; “there is but a step between me and death.”

וּמַחֲמַת זֶה יְדֵי וְאֲבָרֵי כְּבֵדִים מְאֹד, וּמֵעֵצֶם הַכְּבֹדוֹת נֶחְלַשׁ רוּחַ הַדְּפֵק יוֹתֵר, וְכֵן חוֹזְרֵת חֲלִילָה. עַד אֲשֶׁר מֵעֵצֶם הַכְּבֹדוֹת וְהַחֲלִישוֹת וְאִטְם הַלֵּב מִגֹּדֵל הָעֲצָבוֹת, כִּמְעַט שֶׁתִּצָּא נַפְשִׁי חַס וְשָׁלוֹם, כִּי כִפְשַׁע בִּינִי וּבֵין הַמּוֹת.

SOURCE 8 – RABBI JONATHAN SACKS, THE UNIQUE JOY OF PURIM

“There are two kinds of joy. There’s expressive joy, the joy you experience and communicate because that’s how you feel. But there’s also therapeutic joy, the joy you will yourself to feel in order to protect yourself against negative emotions... . It’s about surviving, and beyond that, thriving, even as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.