

Boast-worthy

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Recently I've been having trouble sleeping at night (again). Obviously the late-night hours affects my productivity the next day, because I either sleep late or get up feeling sluggish and grouchy. When I sleep late, I wake up with this heavy weight on my shoulders. I feel all this pressure to get everything done with too little time to do it. When I wake up sluggish, I'm unmotivated and often take a nap, which extends the poor sleeping cycle. It can be a frustrating pattern.

What is it about waking up late that makes me feel pressure? Obviously there are some things that legitimately need to get done, but waking up an hour, or an hour and a half, late typically doesn't affect those crucial things. I'm still going to pick up the kids from school on a day like that (if there were such a thing #coronatimes), and take care of all the urgent things I need to do. The only difference is the tasks

that are somewhat optional. Those tasks I want to do for myself – for my personal growth – whether physical, spiritual or emotional. Those are usually the ones that get pushed off on a day when I'm not making the most of my time. But if those things are just optional, or recreational, then why should they stress me out?

Because I identify my self-worth by my accomplishments.

Sounds crazy? I wonder if I'm the only one? □ It's certainly good to be productive but if I only love myself because I finished *this* or I have *that* to show for myself, then my love is a conditional love, which the Mishna in Avos (5:16) says:

אדם שאוהב עצמו בשל מעשיו, אוהב עצמו באהבה זרה
אדם שאוהב עצמו באהבה זרה, אוהב עצמו באהבה קרובה

Any love that is conditional is only transient. Because once the condition is no longer in place, there is no reason to love. We have to love ourselves no matter what we accomplish and not over identify with our ability to produce. This isn't an easy ask, because everyone everywhere judges everyone else by what everyone else does. But so what? No one said this was gonna be easy. If it was easy, don't you think a smart guy like me would be able to do it?!

The truth is that the *tzaddikim* see themselves and others in a totally different light. They don't see themselves as great in their accomplishments. On the contrary, they also feel a longing for more, but their self worth is sourced in one thing only...

Rebbe Nachman tells a story of a certain *tzaddik* who was overcome with a terrible sense of sadness. Eventually this *tzaddik* fell so deep into sadness that he found it

literally impossible even to move . He wanted to encourage himself and pull himself up, but nothing could make him happy or inspired. No matter what he tried to be happy about, the Evil One found some reason to make him depressed about it. Finally, after trying everything, he tried to make himself happy by dwelling on the fact that Hashem created him as a Jew. This is certainly a reason to feel immeasurable joy, because the vast difference between the holiness of even the simplest Jew and the impurity of the gentiles is beyond all measure. The sad *tzaddik* started making himself feel happy about this. He started rejoicing and raising himself little by little. With each passing moment he felt greater joy until he reached such a level of joy that he attained the joy that Moses experienced when he ascended to receive the Torah.

The Rebbe's story is so profound because any happiness from a personal achievement can always be scrutinized and criticized. No matter what the achievement is, there are always shortcomings and deficiencies which can bring sadness. But to be created as a Jew is a gift of Hashem alone. Hashem Himself did it, it's exclusively the work of God, so there is no lacking in that joy. Regardless of what kind of Jew the person may be, there is certainly an immeasurable difference between himself and the gentiles. So there is always a reason to be happy. This is why the *tzaddikim* love themselves and others. This is why Hashem loves His people. Not because we finished shas or gave so much charity. No matter how much we learn or pray, it could never be enough to deserve His love.

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Hashem says, "Israel, I boast about you". He takes pride in us. We're like those children that drive the parents nuts, but then they do one cute little thing and the parents go crazy

over them. Why? Because it's their kid. We're His children. That's a deep love. That's a love that's unconditional. It's great to accomplish. But that's not us. We're greater than any accomplishment. We're Yisrael. We're boast-worthy!

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