

Jewish Ethics Workbook by Moses L. Pava

What does it mean to live an authentic Jewish life in the 21st century? The **Jewish Ethics Workbook** is designed for students, teachers, and everyone interested in learning how to apply Jewish values to everyday life.

This unique book is a product of the ethics seminar that I have been teaching at the Sy Syms School of Business, Yeshiva University for the past ten years. It is based on hundreds of conversations, term papers, and interviews with Jewish students from all over the world. This book contains their true stories and their defining moments.

See how young Jewish men and women struggle to learn how to incorporate respect, care, and moral growth into their lives. Listen in as students strive to enact their Jewish identities at work. Feel what its like to be told suddenly that you have a life-threatening disease, and learn how one young man overcame it. Experience the moral dilemmas of cheating, getting ahead on the job, whistle-blowing, and obedience to authority.

The **Jewish Ethics Workbook** is a window into the real world of living Jewish ethics. Its purpose is to spark a dialogue among students and teachers on how to craft a meaningful Jewish life; a life of purpose, individual integrity, and connectedness.

The complete book contains twelve chapters and a learning guide with discussion questions, essay question, and much more. Over the course of the coming year, Edah will publish one chapter per month. To find out how to purchase hard copies of this material for professional use or for any other questions please contact the author at mpava@aol.com.

About the Author

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Pava's research interests include business ethics, financial accounting, corporate social responsibility, and the interface between religion and business. His work in these areas is frequently cited in both the academic and professional literatures. He has written numerous books and articles on these topics including **Leading with Meaning, Business Ethics: A Jewish Perspective, The Search for Meaning in Organizations, and Corporate Social Responsibility and Financial Performance** which was named by Choice Magazine as an Outstanding Business Book Selection.

In addition, Pava serves as editor of the annual series—**Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations**. He also serves on the editorial boards of **Business Ethics Quarterly** and the **Journal of Business Ethics** and is a frequent contributor to and reviewer for these journals. He has lectured at Wharton, Yale, Stamford Law School, Hebrew University, NYU, and many other prestigious business schools throughout the world. In addition, he has done a considerable amount of public speaking on various topics of broad social interest, as well.

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter One

Defining Moments

*Beloved is man, for he was created in the image of God; still greater was this love in that it was made known to him that he was created in the image of God.
(Avot: Chapter 3, Mishnah 14)*

Aaron was proud of the fact that he had earned his Commercial Drivers License. He had worked hard all spring to pass his driving test, and the special drivers license allowed him to take a job at a Jewish summer camp for mentally and physically disabled children and adults. He was especially excited because this was his first real job. Among his many responsibilities, Aaron was in charge of transporting disabled campers to and from the camp.

It was a great summer job. It paid well, and Aaron enjoyed a real sense of satisfaction from knowing that he was helping out the campers in a tangible way. Some days were more hectic than others; extra pickups, trips to the hospital and pharmacy, and even a trip to a wheel chair repair shop.

Fridays were always the busiest day of the week. When he finally got back to the camp late on Friday afternoons, Aaron barely had time to shave, shower, and dress before Shabbat started.

One Friday was particularly crazy because the other driver at the camp took the day off. Finally, after trips to the infirmary, the hospital, and the post office, Aaron returned back to camp with about thirty minutes to spare before the evening prayer services were starting. Just as he was about to step into the shower though, Aaron's beeper went off. He was needed immediately

in the kitchen. The camp director's wife, Sheila, who was in charge of the kitchen, asked Aaron if he could do one more quick errand. She needed some rice cakes and wanted Aaron to drive back to town and pick some up in the local supermarket. Aaron protested that he didn't have enough time to drive back and forth to town before Shabbat started. Sheila glared back at Aaron and said that she really didn't care if he was late or not. She needed the rice cakes, and she needed them now!

Aaron went straight to the camp director's office and told him what Sheila had said. The director, of course, sided with his wife, and in a loud and angry voice, and in a tone Aaron had never heard him use before, ordered Aaron to do as he was told or else.

Aaron panicked. He didn't want to upset the camp director any more than he already had, and he certainly didn't want to lose his job over a few rice cakes. After just a moment's hesitation, Aaron ran back to the van and drove into town as fast as he could.

Aaron *was* late for Shabbat that week. As he tells it, "In the end, in order not to upset my boss, I had to sacrifice my values and Jewish law."

In retrospect, Aaron realized that he had failed big time. As hard as it would have been, it really had been within his power to say no to his boss and his wife. "All is foreseen; yet free choice is granted" (Pirkei Avot: Chapter 3, Mishnah 15). In analyzing his own situation, Aaron now says:

In later weeks, after thinking over what had occurred, I still was unsettled about the situation. Basically, I came to the conclusion that I violated the laws of Shabbat in order to please my boss; but ultimately all I ended up doing was disappointing myself. I failed my personal convictions and religious values. *When the going got tough, I gave in and*

compromised my beliefs.

What went wrong for Aaron? Why did he violate his own “personal convictions and religious values”? After all, Aaron had attended good Jewish schools all of his life. He identified strongly with his Jewish heritage, and in part, his love of Judaism and his fellow Jews was one of the main reasons that had made this camp job so attractive to him in the first place. Aaron had never broken the laws of Shabbat before. So, why this time?

What makes Aaron’s dilemma so important was not that he’s a “bad” kid. Just the opposite. Aaron’s a good kid. In fact, he’s a lot like the rest of us. He’s hard-working, conscientious, funny, smart, concerned about his community and doing the right thing, and he always wants to please everyone.

I think with a little reflection all of us can come up with situations that we have faced similar to Aaron’s. They may not involve Shabbat, but they do make us question why we acted the way we did. Why did I cheat on that exam? Why didn’t I stop my friends from making fun of a classmate? Why did I drive in a such a reckless and dangerous way? The list could easily be multiplied, but you get the point.

Mitigating Factors: The Case for the Defense

There are obviously many mitigating factors in Aaron’s case. Let’s suppose that you are hired as his defense attorney. What might you argue to the court in Aaron’s favor? Remember, do a good job because the next time it may be you who is on the defense.

Number one: Fridays were always tough for Aaron and this Friday was particularly tough

because his fellow driver didn't show up. Aaron was exhausted and worn out. He couldn't think clearly.

Number two: Aaron's boss, the camp director had told him to do what he was told "or else." Even without being able to think clearly, Aaron could certainly figure out that "or else" implied that failure to pick up the rice cakes would mean that he would lose his job.

Number three: Aaron was scared. This was the first time the camp director had ever yelled at him in this way. This was his first real job and a yelling boss can be a traumatic event.

Number four: Aaron had very little time to think about his decision. As he himself says, he "panicked."

Number five: Under the circumstances, Aaron did the best he could. He drove into town and back as fast as he could. He didn't stick around and personally benefit in anyway from his trip into town.

Number six: It was really the camp director's and his wife's fault. They were the ones who ordered him to go. If anyone should be on trial here, it's them and not poor Aaron. He was just following orders.

To summarize the case for Aaron then: He couldn't think clearly, he didn't want to lose his first job, he was traumatized, and on top of all this, he panicked. Even so, he did the best that he could do under the extreme circumstances, and, in any event, the camp director and his wife are the one's who really deserve the blame.

Yes, But...

To all of this, I think an impartial judge might answer as follows: While the defense does contain

a kernel of truth, the fact remains that in the end, Aaron's decision to drive into town and break the laws of Shabbat was still his own. Wasn't it?

I don't think that Aaron, or any of us, would want it any other way. After all, it is only through the ability to choose for ourselves that we can express our own values, our own principles, and our own identities. It is through our choices and actions that we bring our most cherished values to life. If we let others choose for us, as Aaron did in this case, it is their values that are becoming concrete and real in the world and not ours. To the extent that we allow the Sheilas of this world to control our behavior, rice cakes really do become more important than Shabbat, if just for a few moments.

If we let Aaron off the hook here, he was merely a victim of his circumstances, aren't we really diminishing him (and ourselves) even further? If Aaron wants to observe the laws of Shabbat, this is a decision that he will have to make over and over again throughout his life. This was his *first* test and not his *last*.

Defining Ourselves to Ourselves

One of the most important and unique characteristics of being human is our ability to define ourselves. This is how we create and build meaning in the world. Animals can't do this; plants can't do this; rocks can't do this. Even computers— *that have been able to mimic many human abilities like playing chess and writing music* – still can't define themselves. In a very real sense, our ability to state who we are through our choices and actions is what makes us human.

A defining moment is an opportunity to reveal, test, and shape one's character. In the case at hand, Aaron considered it a defining moment. He was not happy with what this situation

revealed about his character. He felt strongly that if this was indeed a test, then, on this occasion, he failed miserably.

Aaron, however, is not making the common mistake of wallowing in his past errors. It's so easy to think, "I blew it once, I'll probably blow it again." Rather, Aaron is choosing to use this defining moment as a positive opportunity. He wants to use what he has learned about himself from this experience to shape a better and more meaningful future.

"Beloved is man, for he was created in the image of God; still greater was this love in that it was made known to him that he was created in the image of God" (Avot: Chapter 3, Mishnah 14). What does it mean to be created in the image of God? According to Maimonides, it means that we have an ability choose "rationally." While philosophers continue to debate exactly what rationality is, I think it's fair to say that it at least implies that man is endowed with freedom of choice.

What I find so remarkable about Rabbi Akiva's insight quoted above from the Mishnah is that it may very well be the case that we have this freedom of choice, but we're not consciously aware of it. Aaron had freedom of choice all along, he just didn't know it. It was this dramatic episode that helped Aaron come to realize what the gift of growing up is all about. Aaron says:

I was able to learn and grow from this situation. I saw how much my religion means to me, and that I should trust myself if a similar situation arises in the future. I realized that a job is not more important than religion...I have to prioritize what is most important to me. When I look back over my life, I doubt I am going to think, "It was a good thing I went to get those rice cakes" or "Hey it's ok to violate the laws of Shabbat once." Rather I am going to be able to look back and see what I was able to learn from this situation.

In fact, not long after this incident at the camp occurred, Aaron was faced with a similar dilemma. He was scheduled to have a call-back interview for an entry-level position with a world-renown investment bank. The good news was that a call-back interview at this bank usually meant you were going to get the job. The interview was scheduled for lunch on a Friday during the fall. Aaron was assured by the Human Resources Department that the interview would be over by 2:00 PM. This would give him plenty of time to make it home for Shabbat.

Unfortunately, the person that was supposed to interview Aaron was running over an hour late. As Shabbat was now fast approaching, Aaron grew more and more agitated. This time, however, rather than passively going with the flow as he had done just a few months before, Aaron exercised his ability to choose and demonstrated his true loyalties. “At that point, I politely said to the interviewer that I am a Sabbath observer and I apologize, but I must make the 3:00 PM train in order to arrive home prior to the start of the Sabbath.”

There was a lot more at stake this time than just a summer job. This time Aaron’s “career was on the line”, but he didn’t hesitate. “I would like to think that the people at the bank respected me for my beliefs and hopefully will ultimately hire me for my abilities with the understanding that I will work as many hours as necessary, but not on Shabbat.”

Truth be told, Aaron’s story is not one of heroic leadership. He didn’t put his life on the line to save his buddies in war time. He didn’t even get the choice right the first time! And, even though it may have seemed to Aaron that his entire career was in jeopardy, if he doesn’t get this investment bank job (as of this writing he still doesn’t know whether or not he’s lost the job or not), another one will surely come along. Rather this story is a routine and everyday one.

But ironically, I think that's precisely what makes it so important and special. A defining moment is not a once in a lifetime opportunity that we either seize or lose. A defining moment is a moment in time that we consciously choose to bracket off from the everyday, to examine, and to infuse with meaning and purpose. It is a moment in which we experience integrity and connection through reasonable choice and mindful action. It is undoubtedly true as Pirkei Avot teaches us that "one *mitzvah* causes another *mitzvah*, and one transgression causes another transgression" (Chapter 4, Mishnah 2), but for somebody like Aaron who has made a mistake in the past, thinking that our behavior can never be changed can be a dangerous idea. With careful effort, a negative cycle can be broken.

This is exactly what Aaron is now learning:

I believe that the experience I had as a driver taught me the value of my personal beliefs and convictions. I learned from the dilemma to be more confident in my approach to resolving a situation. This approach I believe includes openness, awareness and proper planning.

These three characteristics, "openness, awareness, and proper planning," are some of the important building blocks that provide the foundation for living an ethical life. No one is born with the kind of openness, awareness, and foresight that Aaron is talking about. One *can* cultivate and grow these characteristics, though. But it is constant, hard, and painstaking work.

Conclusion

Joseph Badaracco, a business ethics professor at Harvard University, begins his recent book, **Leading Quietly**, by noting that "Most people, most of the time, are neither saving the world nor

exploiting it. They are living their lives, doing their jobs, and trying to take care of the people around them” (p. 3).

Building upon this insight, Badaracco suggests that real ethical leadership is about solving everyday problems. “These situations don’t come labeled as strategic or critical, and they aren’t reserved for people at the top of organizations. Anyone can face these challenges almost all the time” (p. 5).

Badaracco’s book suggests that those individuals that are “leading quietly,” in the long run, accomplish more than the bold, forceful, and heroic leaders we learn about in school or read about in history books. Badaracco’s quiet leaders are neither courageous nor powerful in the conventional sense. His leaders are more likely to be working behind the scenes than on the center stage. They are careful, patient, and prudent. Most of all, they are effective.

In the end, his pragmatic and plotting leaders get things done and leave the world in a better condition than it was when they started. As Badaracco describes it:

But what do these patient, unglamorous, everyday efforts add up to? The vast majority of difficult, important human problems—both inside and outside organizations—are not solved by a swift, decisive stroke from someone at the top. What usually matters are careful, thoughtful, small practical efforts by people working far from the limelight. *In short, quiet leadership is what moves and changes the world* (p. 9, emphasis added).

In Badaracco’s sense, Aaron is a quiet leader. Even as Aaron is learning what it means to lead his own life, his actions and thousands of others like them, can teach the rest of us what it means to be a religious person in today’s world.

I have purposely chosen to begin this book on ethics with a dilemma that seemingly does not involve ethics at all but rather is about religious ritual, the observance of Shabbat. One of the reasons I have done this is to emphasize the fact that the familiar distinction between ethics and religious ritual is not at all black and white as it might first appear. From a Jewish perspective, conversations about ethics are conducted with a religious vocabulary. Ethics emerges first from religion. The very same ability that helps us to stand up to an investment banker and tell him that we need to leave in order to get home for Shabbat may also, in the future, help us to stand up to the very same investment banker and tell him that we can't participate in a sham business transaction either!

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Two

I Don't Want to Be a Cheater

*If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And, being for myself only, what am I?
(Avot: Chapter 3, Mishnah 14)*

In the previous chapter, I introduced Aaron. As you recall, in a moment of fear and anxiety, he panicked and violated one of his most deeply-held and cherished principles. And, for what? He drove on Shabbat to buy rice cakes for his camp so his summer-job boss wouldn't get even madder at him than he already was.

Aaron learned something about himself from this sad episode, and he used this defining moment to strengthen his resolve for the future. He was not going to make the same mistake twice, and when faced with an even harder test just a few months later, Aaron took a bold and uncompromising position, walking out on a job interview at a prestigious investment bank in order to make it home in time for Shabbat.

Aaron's initial failure is an example of one of the most difficult problems that all of us face. It has been called by psychologists "the problem of the weak will." It occurs whenever the immediate rewards of choosing a particular action overwhelm us. We act in a short-sighted way in order to obtain instant gratification even though we know that in the long run we will come to regret our action. Think about an overweight person eating a piece of chocolate cake or a gambler cashing his weekly paycheck at a Las Vegas casino and gambling it away.

In the end, Aaron teaches an important lesson about never giving up on ourselves, never surrendering. Whenever I talk about this subject with students, I always think of Rocky Balboa in the fight scene at the end of the first Rocky movie.

Round after bloody round, Rocky gets blasted by his opponent Apollo Creed. But, Rocky simply "won't back down," (to quote the rock singer Tom Petty). He gets punched in the head and knocked down over and over again, but he keeps getting up for more. Rocky doesn't think he can win the fight against his opponent Apollo Creed, but he wants to go the distance with the champion of the world.

Emphasizing this ability to keep getting back up after life knocks us down is an important place to begin a discussion about what it means to be an ethical person. After all, no matter how great we are, nobody is perfect, and eventually we will all need a second chance.

But, we can't stop here. Perhaps, more important than not giving up on ourselves is the

question of this chapter: How can we get it right the first time? To answer this, we have to understand a little more about the problem of the weak will.

What is a Weak Will?

Some scientists now believe that humans (and animals) are actually hard-wired to prefer short term gains at the expense of long-term and more permanent rewards. The social scientist, George Ainslie, for example, has noted, “Pigeons will choose a shorter, earlier access to grain over a later, larger one when the shorter one is immediate and not when it’s delayed.” This is the same pattern of behavior that we find over and over again in human beings, as well.

I remember a friend of mine from college who used to consistently put off studying for exams and writing his term papers. My favorite excuse of his went like this. “Well, I can watch Monday Night Football tonight because I have so much studying to do--I’m gonna be up all night anyway.” While there is a kind of perverse logic here, I think his excuse for not studying perfectly captures the essence of the problem of the weak will.

In Aaron’s case, he chose the immediate “reward” of not angering his boss over what he knew to be his true long term interests; keeping Shabbat. In Jewish terms, in this instance, his *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) overwhelmed his *yetzer hatov* (good inclination).

Now, if it is true that all of us suffer from this problem (at least on occasion), and if we are *aware* that we suffer from it (as most of us are), surely there must be something we can do about it. The question really boils down to this: *How do we learn to protect ourselves from ourselves?*

To Cheat or Not to Cheat? That is the Question

Consider the following scenario. Sarah is a college student attending Yeshiva University. She is a bright, hard-working young woman of high ideals and ambitions. She is a double-major in psychology and philosophy. While this doesn’t necessarily mean that she has twice as much work as her peers, it does mean that she has more work than the average Yeshiva University student.

Sarah was in the middle of studying for her midterm exams, and her take-home *gemorah* test was already a week overdue. According to the instructions of her teacher, students were supposed to complete the exam on their own without books, notes, or other aids of any kind. They were encouraged to study the material *before* they looked at the exam, but were prohibited to re-check any materials *after* they had a chance to read the test questions.

This semester had been particularly difficult for Sarah. She was taking several demanding courses and had little or no time to prepare for her *gemorah* test. She had attended most of the *shiurim* (classes) and was relatively confident that she would remember enough of the material to at least pass the exam. But, as she tore open the sealed envelope that

contained the exam and began to read it, her heart started pumping faster and faster. Maybe her attendance was not as good as she remembered? Whatever the case, there were many questions that looked unfamiliar to her.

According to Sarah:

I wanted to perform well. The thought of bombing the midterm and disappointing my *Rebbe* [teacher] was worrisome. As such, the temptation to glance at my notes and to “clarify” a few things I could not remember was very real. I couldn’t help but think that this situation would be much easier if he forced us to take the test in class. It would get rid of the potential for a problem.

Right off the bat, I knew Sarah was in for some trouble. After all, her stated motivation for performing well was not for its own sake, but she wanted to perform well in order not to disappoint her *Rebbe*. In the long run, external rewards are almost always less commanding than internal rewards. That’s why in one of the very first statements in the *Pirkei Avot*, we are taught by Antigonos of Sokho to “Be not like the slaves who serve the master for the sake of receiving a reward, but be like the slaves who serve the master not for the sake of receiving a reward” (Chapter 1, Mishnah 3).

While some of the details may differ from situation to situation, Sarah’s problem is a common one that everyone who has attended school has faced at one time or another. It might not be a take-home exam or a *gemorah* test, but all of us want to perform well and have had the opportunity to cheat with little or no chance of ever getting caught. What to do?

In situations like this, isn’t it amazing how our own mind begins to play tricks on us. Even in this brief snippet from Sarah’s discussion of what happened, you can see how she is beginning to shift the responsibility for her decision from herself to her teacher. If only the teacher had “forced us to take the test in class.” Translation: If I cheat, it’s not my fault. It’s his fault. Sound familiar? I’m sure Aaron would know what Sarah is talking about.

As I stated in the previous chapter, Maimonides believed that our likeness to God lies in our ability to make “rational” decisions and choices. But, you better be careful here. There is a fine line between rationality (think *yetzer hatov*) and rationalization (think *yetzer hara*). In shifting the responsibility from herself to her teacher, Sarah has already begun this process.

Here are just some of the other rationalizations she makes. As always in this book, these are real and exact quotes:

1-“The situation was unique in that my review notes sat underneath my take home test.”

2-“It [the test] was required to be handed in tomorrow.”

3-“The timing of the test could not have been worse. I was in the middle of a difficult midterm season.”

4-“I found myself overwhelmed by the amount of studying and time necessary to prepare for each test.”

5-“If teachers know that students value their grade then they are almost inviting them to cheat on the [take home] exam.”

6-“A take home test leaves a lot of room for moral ambiguity.”

7-“Is it a problem to do the test in shifts, looking at the notes in between? Or is it a problem asking people questions in between parts or about the test? These [questions] are all in the ‘gray area.’”

How to Recognize a Rationalization When You See One

How do you distinguish rational decision making from rationalization? Let’s examine the above list. I think that the closer you examine each of these seven items, the sillier they look. A good way to proceed and hopefully avoid the pitfalls of rationalization in a situation like this is to ask yourself, how would these reasons look to me if I were on the other side. Let’s pretend we’re the *gemorah* teacher here and examine how he might respond to each of the above items one by one.

1’-“Sarah–Take the test in the library. That way your notes won’t be so easily available.”

2’-“It is due tomorrow, but you’ve already had the test for more than a week.”

3’-“When should I give you the midterm? The first day of class?”

4’-“Welcome to the real world Sarah.”

5’-“Let me be as direct as I possibly can, I’m not “inviting you to cheat!” In fact, I’m trying to treat you like the adult you want to be.”

6’-“‘Moral ambiguity?’ Could my directions have been any clearer?”

7’-“Sarah–If you think these questions are in the ‘grey area’ just ask your ten year old sister what she thinks you should do.”

Here’s a good rule of thumb. If it looks like a rationalization and smells like a rationalization then it is a rationalization. Here’s another one. If you think you can’t be lured by the siren song of rationalization, you’re already rationalizing.

Overcoming the Temptations of a Weak Will

Maybe I'm being a little tough on Sarah, but fortunately for her, she was even tougher on herself. In fact, as she began to spell out her rationalizations she was able to catch herself *before* she acted on them. In the end, Sarah did not cheat.

This is how she describes her thinking about how she overcame her own temptations. I quote her at length because she clarifies better than I can:

First, it is a clear violation of *g'nevat da'at*. You are giving off an impression to the professor that is not valid. If your retention of the material or work invested into the class warrants a lower grade, then falsely representing yourself to get a higher grade is a clear violation. Second, it's dishonest. You're not being honest with yourself or your professor. So even if the teacher does not get "fooled" by your work and identify it as forgery, you're still being dishonest. Third, cheating will shape your personality.

The actions you perform shape who you are or become. If you are a person who cheats, then this is how you will start acting [in the future]. First it will be glancing at notes for a take home test, then crib sheets on in-class tests, then midterms, papers etc. But this will not end with school. People that allow themselves to cheat to get ahead will cheat in every aspect of life; in business, in personal matters, etc. It is easy to see that cheating also has an effect on who you are as a person and who you shape yourself to become.

I do not want to be a "cheater" or someone who allows personal gains at the expense of my moral fiber. I was afraid that any act of cheating could snowball into many more and more grievous acts. So it was these thoughts that ran through my head at that very moment that kept me on the straight and narrow and withheld my temptation to cheat (emphasis added).

These powerful and moving words indicate that Sarah has achieved a significant milestone in her moral development. Instead of mere rationalizations, Sarah now gives three important reasons why it is wrong to look at her notes.

First she identifies a specific halachik rule against this kind of deception. Second, she invokes a broad moral concept of always being honest, correctly noting that even if she could fool her teacher, her actions would still be wrong! Finally, Sarah makes the important observation that in the very act of cheating, she becomes a cheater. While this last point sounds like a tautology (it's true because...well... it's true) it actually represents a new way of thinking about ethics and is an important defense against succumbing to the weak will problem. What Sarah has discovered is that ethics is about specific rules of behavior (thou shalt, thou shalt not), but ethics is also about identity (who am I? who am I becoming? who do I want to be?).

One of the reasons why this is such a powerful tool in fighting the *yetzer hara* is that it helps her realize what is really at stake in an ethical dilemma like cheating. Now, when Sarah weighs the costs and benefits of her decision, it's not just comparing the immediate gains from cheating against the pangs of guilt that will surely result from a one time slip up. Rather Sarah now realizes that her real choice is between the gains from cheating versus the fear of permanent damage to her character. Though the perceived gains from cheating don't really change, the cost of engaging in this behavior rises dramatically.

As Sarah puts it starkly, "I don't want to be a cheater." The idea that ethics is about both rules and identity has an ancient lineage. To me, Sarah's thought process is really just a specific application of Hillel's famous dictum, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And, being for myself only, what am I?"

None of this is meant to downplay the importance of ethical rules. In most situations rules alone provide sufficient guidelines and sufficient motivating power. Sometimes, though, it is necessary to call in additional artillery. Thinking of ethics in terms of identity is meant to support ethical rules, just as ethical rules are what help to create an ethical person.

Notice also how in the end, Sarah's motivation switches from an external source—her teacher's approval—to an internal source—What kind of a persona am I? Since Sarah will soon be graduating and she will no longer have the support and help of her teachers, this is a better and safer way to go. Ben Azzai knew this almost two thousand years ago when he taught that the reward of a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah* (Pirkei Avot: Chapter 4, Mishnah 2).

Conclusion

Let's step back for a moment. What can we learn from Sarah's story?

Aaron said in the last chapter "when the going got tough, I gave in and compromised my beliefs." His story taught us that a lack of awareness of our own special human ability to choose can have extremely bad repercussions. Fortunately, Aaron learned this lesson quickly and didn't make the same mistake again and so he also taught us to hang in there.

In this chapter, Sarah shows us that it's possible to get things right the first time.

In the end I did score a respectable grade, but well under my usual performance. However, I am proud of this test. Although I am not happy with the amount of time I was able to prepare this test, this was a moral victory. I was able to stick to my morals and repulse the temptation to cheat. Thank God I can proudly sit here today and proclaim that I am not a person who cheats, and this holds true for the past, present, and future.

Sarah's approach to her dilemma introduces a new way of thinking about ethical problems. She knows that cheating means...well... that you're a cheater. And, no one wants to believe that they're really a cheater. Right?

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Three

Ethical Artistry

“What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours” – this is the average type; but some say this is a characteristic of Sodom.

(Avot: Chapter 5, Mishnah 10)

Sarah knows that ethics is not just about following a set of rules or a pre-written recipe. In many ways, ethics is more like art than science. This chapter extends this idea of “ethical artistry” in a number of concrete ways.

So far in this book I have been putting some of my students under the microscope, and I will continue to do so in this and other chapters because of the important lessons that they can teach us about how to live an ethical life. In this chapter, though I put myself under the microscope, as well. After all, what’s good for the goose is good for the gander. If we fail to examine our own behavior, habits, thought patterns, and motives and continue to treat ethics as an “objective science” like physics or biology, then we will undoubtedly miss some of the most important opportunities for growth and learning.

The Student as Teacher

Yosef, an accounting student of mine, is a short, well-mannered, almost boyish-looking young man, who stands out because of his bright eyes, long *payos* (earlocks), and large, black-felt *yarmulke*, identifying him as a hasidic Jew.

On a Monday evening, not so long ago, I reminded my class that on Wednesday of that week I would be giving them the midterm exam. Immediately, a number of students complained loudly that it wasn’t fair to give them an exam on Wednesday because they would be observing a communal fast day, memorializing Israeli victims of the Palestinian suicide bombers.

The students explained that the full-day fast (no food or drinks) would be over at about 6:30, around the same time the test was scheduled to begin. The students complained that they would be tired and hungry and would not be able to perform as they normally would when they are not fasting. I was surprised by the students’ request. While I had heard about the fast day, I didn’t think it was necessary to reschedule the exam. Of course, I wasn’t taking it, I was only proctoring.

While I was sympathetic to the students’ request, I thought we should stay on schedule. I wanted to protect the academic integrity of the course. I also imagined that some of the students were using the fast day as an excuse to get more time to study. As the students’ demand became more

shrill and less respectful, I exercised my authority, cut off the debate, and began our review session. After class, I did feel a twinge of guilt when some of my colleagues told me that they had postponed their exams to respect their students' desire to fast. This feeling was just a small nuisance and disappeared as soon as I got in my car to drive home.

On Wednesday, as students arrived early to take the midterm, Yosef came in with his usual smile. He was carrying a case of juice and several boxes of cookies to share with the class. He put the food and drinks on my desk and asked me if it would be okay to announce to the class that they could take whatever food and drinks they wanted.

His creativity and generosity immediately broke the tense silence that usually accompanies exam day. Yosef was the only one of us who was able to look at this situation from everyone's point of view. He didn't participate in Monday's whining, but he heard his classmates' concerns. At the same time, Yosef demonstrated a respect for the educational process. If ethical artistry is about deepening our ability to communicate, Yosef's actions certainly qualify. He taught me that a little imagination, concern, and active listening can serve in very practical ways.

I had been wrong. This was not a case of the students versus the professor. This was an opportunity to build bridges, only I hadn't been able to see it that way initially. As it turned out, those students who wanted to fast were able to do so. We were able to stick to the lesson plan, and through Yosef's simple example, the classroom became a loving and caring community, if just for an hour or so. All the while, Yosef, with his quiet leadership, hardly needed to speak more than a few casually chosen words. Yosef's example is special but not unique.

In thinking back about this incident I draw four important lessons. Let's look at these from the simplest to the more profound.

1-Derek Eretz is a two-way street.

I wanted my students to respect me, but I made it much more difficult for them to show me respect by not trusting them in the first place. I still think that a few of the louder students did want to take advantage of the situation (or am I still rationalizing?), but I now realize that the silent majority *was* truly concerned about balancing their regard for the wider Jewish community with genuine concern for their school work.

Trust is a fragile asset. It has been compared to crystal. It's expensive to make, it's very valuable, and it is easily broken (see Badaracco's **Leading Quietly**).

Did I have good reasons to trust my class? I had already spent seven weeks together with them; lecturing, collecting homework, and reviewing numerous accounting problems. In retrospect, I must admit, though, that I had never really gotten to know my students in this class very well. And so, to be perfectly honest, when a few loud students began to demand that I postpone the exam, I automatically overgeneralized and assumed that the whole class was *in* on something. If I didn't trust them this was because I never really gave the class an opportunity to earn my trust. Trust is not the product of a magical spell, but results from expertise, open communication, and

honesty in the context of a caring environment.

This does not mean that a teacher should blur the professional relationship between teacher and student that must always exist in and out of the classroom. The teacher's role is not to naively befriend students or to joke around with them. Rather, a teacher is a leader responsible for designing an appropriate environment conducive for the educational growth of his or her students. Part of the teacher's job then is to encourage mutual trust.

2-Ethics is about knowing when to act and when to refrain from acting.

In both Aaron's and Sarah's examples, the dilemmas were essentially about not doing something that they both really knew they shouldn't be doing in the first place. In Aaron's case, he knew he shouldn't have driven to town so close to Shabbat when there would be no realistic way for him to return before it was too late. In Sarah's case, her intuition told her almost from the get go that she shouldn't cheat on a *gemorah* test.

Yosef's situation is different. He could have purposely ignored the entire classroom conversation about postponing the test (as many of his colleagues did), and no one would have thought worse of him. After all, "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours" – this is the average type..."

Yosef has learned, though, that ethics is active. To Yosef, the attitude of "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours" (at least in some circumstances) is "a characteristic of Sodom." You can't always sit back and protect your own turf. In the real world, the responsibility of living a fully ethical life demands that we act in a positive and proactive way—we need to make things happen, and that's exactly what Yosef did. By bringing in food and drinks that he bought with his own money Yosef showed a mature sensitivity to everyone's needs.

3-You can't just ask who am I? You've got to ask who are we.

In the previous chapter, Sarah avoided the temptation to cheat by realizing that if she did cheat, she would be changing her character--the kind of person she was--if just in a small way.

Yosef is also concerned about his character--the kind of person he is. But, Yosef is also operating on another level entirely. He is not only concerned with his own well-being, he is worried about the well-being of the entire class. Yosef doesn't ignore the situation as most of us did, and he doesn't try to find a solution that will work for him only. Yosef works on a bigger stage. In a very real sense, Yosef is emerging as an ethical leader.

Yosef knows that "He who says, 'What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours is a *hasid* (a pious person).'" So, in the end, it's not what you wear or a hair style that makes you a *hasid*, but who you are on the inside and how you live your life that really matters.

4-Ethics requires moral imagination.

I was not completely wrong in thinking that this situation was a kind of confrontation between me and some of my students, but I was wrong in thinking that this was the *best* way to think about what was happening. Yosef saw this episode as an opportunity to build bridges. Why didn't I see it that way? Simply put, in this instance, I suffered from a lack of moral imagination.

What is moral imagination? Formally, it has been defined as the ability “to step back from one’s situation and view it from another point of view. In taking such a perspective a person tries to disengage herself from the exigencies of the situation to look at the world or herself from a more dispassionate point of view or from the point of view of another dispassionate reasonable person” (Patricia Werhane).

I prefer a much simpler definition, though. Moral imagination is what allows us to continue being ourselves only better! Isn't this exactly what Yosef's gift allowed me and my students to do. By bringing in the juice and cookies, Yosef showed us that we *can* balance a love for the Jewish community with real respect for school work.

To some, it may seem funny to link ethics and imagination. In talking about imagination in this context it might sound like what I'm really saying is that when it comes to ethics, you can make it up as you go along. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Think about some of the great moral heroes of the past century like Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchick, and Theodore Herzl. These individuals were not moral relativists who did what ever felt good at the moment. Rather these were people deeply attuned to the legitimate needs of their respective communities, at the same time they embodied the ethical teachings of their history and traditions. They had the energy and creativity to bring about lasting and positive change not only for themselves and for their own communities, but they now all serve as role models for the whole world to emulate.

To summarize so far, if the discussion in this chapter has left you with the feeling that when it comes to ethics there's no set formula, that's the whole point! Ethics is more art than science.

Shimon ben Shetach as a Moral Artist

Good stories are like ocean-going vessels carrying us away to the far corners of the earth and returning us home from distant continents, filled-with hard-earned and precious cargo.

The stories that pass from brother to sister, and from father to child, contain the ethical values of a people and culture, living values polished by time and experience.

Arguably one of the most often cited and important ethical sources from a Jewish perspective is the following story about Shimon ben Shetach, a rabbinic sage and leader who lived, worked, and taught in the land of Israel in the first century b.c.e.

Shimon ben Shetach was occupied with preparing flax. His students said to him, “Rabbi, stop. We will buy you a donkey, and you won't have to work so hard anymore.”

They went and bought a donkey from an Arab, and a pearl was found on it. The students returned to their teacher and said, “From now on you don’t have to work at all any more.”

“Why?” he asked. The students said, “We bought you a donkey from an Arab, and a pearl was found on it.” Shimon ben Shetach said to them, “Does the owner know about the pearl?” They answered, “No.” He said to them, “Go and give the pearl back to him.”

“But,” they argued, “did not Rabbi Huna, in the name of Rab, say all the world agrees that if you find something which belongs to a heathen, you may keep it?”

Their teacher said, “Do you think that Shimon ben Shetach is a barbarian? He would prefer to hear the Arab say, ‘Blessed be the God of the Jews,’ than possess all the riches of the world. It is written, ‘You shall not oppress your neighbor.’ Now your neighbor is as your brother, and your brother is as your neighbor. Hence you learn that to rob a Gentile is robbery.” (Bava Mezia, ii, 5, 8c, Jerusalem Talmud)

While this story really speaks for itself, I think it is interesting to point out that all of the lessons I learned from Yosef’s actions are already contained in this story. In fact, this was a story that Yosef himself told me he was quite familiar with.

Notice how Shimon ben Shetach’s decision to return the pearl to the original owner demonstrates a kind of *derek erez* or trust toward the Arab merchant. Shimon ben Shetach understands that if he returns the pearl to its rightful owner, the Arab will recognize how unusual Shimon ben Shetach’s behavior is and will come to praise God. Well, maybe and maybe not. The point is that Shimon ben Shetach in trusting the heathen is opening himself up and taking a kind of risk here. The payoff from Shimon ben Shetach’s point of view is high, but there’s no guarantee here, either.

Shimon ben Shetach’s students are correct that from a strictly legal perspective, “all the world agrees” he can keep the pearl. But Shimon ben Shetach knows that when it comes to ethics, there are times when one has to take an active stance. In Jewish thought this is known as *lifnim mishurat hadin* or going beyond the letter of the law.

In addition, the story shows that Shimon ben Shetach is well aware of the fact that you can’t just ask who am I? You’ve got to ask who are we? By returning the pearl to the heathen Shimon ben Shetach is really saying that even a heathen—if he comes to recognize God—might someday become part of the “we”! And, on the downside, if he doesn’t return the pearl to the Arab, it just might be the case that Shimon ben Shetach would become the real heathen in this story.

Finally, if you still don’t quite understand what I mean by the phrase moral imagination, I think this story provides one of the best examples. It’s a kind of model of what moral imagination, at its best, is. Think how tempting it must have been for Shimon ben Shetach to accept the pearl from his students. With his newly obtained riches, he could have retired from the flax business and devoted himself full time to the study of Torah. So, why didn’t he?

Good question. Shimon ben Shetach could easily have defined this situation as a zero-sum game “Either I get the pearl or the Arab gets the pearl.” His creativity lies in the fact that he saw beyond this simple formulation and recognized that this was a positive opportunity for him to demonstrate his unselfish love for his fellow beings. In doing so, he helped to make the world a better place to live for all of us.

Conclusion

What I take away from all of this can be stated quite simply. At one level ethics is about who gets what. Given the rules of the game, ethics tells us how to distribute rewards fairly. At a deeper level though, for those imaginative enough to see it, ethics is about changing the very rules of how the game is played in a positive and more inclusive way. Yosef and Shimon ben Shetach are just two examples of what it means to be an ethical artist.

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Four

Ethical Genius

*Who is mighty? He who subdues his passions.
(Avot: Chapter 4, Mishnah 1)*

There are two theories about leadership. On the one hand, there is the view that in every generation there are a few special men and women—great heroes-- who set the agenda and call the shots for the rest of us. These men and women are larger than life. They think big and they act big because they are big!

On the other hand, there is the view that no one can rise above history like this. Even the greatest heroes, when examined carefully, are carried along by the currents of time. This theory says that real leadership is quieter, more prosaic, and more common. Let's call the first view, the "heroic model of leadership" and the second view, "quiet leadership."

Heroic Leaders

These men and women are exceedingly smart, full of energy, cunning as foxes, and almost always physically strong and alert. These are the men and women that we read about in history text books. In the United States, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Ben Franklin come easily to mind.

Just consider Ben Franklin for a moment. He was a prolific writer, a politician, a diplomat, and one of the founding fathers of the United States of America. Here are a few of his inventions: bifocals, Franklin stove, catheter, lightning rod, odometer, and daylight savings time. He founded the first fire department, the first fire insurance company, and he is given credit with penning the first political cartoon. And, this is only a partial list of his accomplishments!

In Jewish history, there is Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Isaiah, Devorah, Hillel, Rabbi Akiva, Maimonides, and Ben Gurion just to name some of the all time greats. There is no need to recount their outsized accomplishments here since you have probably been learning about them from the time that you first learned to talk.

These men and women from both Jewish and non-Jewish history are the "statistical outliers." They make up history's hall of fame. They don't just respond to circumstances, they are the forces that cause these circumstances. Each leader was outstanding in his or her own way. Ben Franklin's gift resided in his ability to invent. Abraham was the founder of monotheism. Maimonides was an unmatched legal scholar and philosopher (not to mention a world-class physician). Ben Gurion was a politician with few peers.

While all of these heroes were special in their own way, I want to suggest that the one thing that each of these great men and women shared was “ethical genius.” By this, I simply mean that--in their area of expertise--each of these great heroes was able to subdue or channel his or her passions. “Who is mighty? He who subdues his passions.”

This doesn't mean that these individuals *destroyed* or *uprooted* their passions and emotions. These heroes are not Spock-like creatures devoid of feeling. Rather, in subduing their passions they learned how to direct them in a positive way. Their passions become the fuel that provides the energy to create.

Think of the famous story of Abraham destroying his father's precious idols. No one would deny Abraham's flaming passion--who among us would have the guts to destroy his father's idols? But, in time, Abraham was able to channel this overflowing energy and youthful enthusiasm toward the noble goal of spreading monotheism.

Perhaps Nimrod, Abraham's arch-enemy, was just as strong or even stronger than Abraham. The difference though is that history and tradition remember Abraham as someone who learned to master his own power and direct his actions toward a positive goal. Nimrod, however, is best remembered for being a “mighty hunter” and the mastermind behind the building of the infamous tower of Babel. It's stories like these that the author of our Mishna, Ben Zoma, had in mind, when he wrote his famous statement quoted above.

This is not to say that these men and women never failed, after all, they were all humans. But in their special domain of greatness, be it invention, philosophy, or politics, these people harnessed their great power and passion in the service of pinpoint accuracy.

Quiet Leaders

Quiet leaders show up to work everyday. They take pride in their efforts and are modest about their accomplishments. They know what the right thing to do is and they usually do it. Quiet leaders don't try to alter history in a dramatic way. They are not planning a military conquest of any continents in the near future.

Quiet leaders enjoy the company of good friends and the warmth and care of members of their family. When faced with a difficult situation, quiet leaders rise to the occasion. In the previous chapter, Yosef didn't climb any mountains, he didn't discover electricity, and he didn't rule over any countries, and yet he is a quintessential quiet leader.

So far, in this book, I have examined almost exclusively people more like my former student Yosef than the biblical prophetess Devorah. This is by conscious choice because it is my strong belief that, in the long run, we need more down-to-earth role models and fewer super heroes. If the only leaders we ever talk about are the great heroes, it's too easy to get discouraged. “I'm never going to be like Rabbi Akiva, so why even bother?”

And, yet this approach has its limitations, too. If we set the bar too low, we begin to lower our expectations and, eventually our behavior, as well. “You can’t expect me to do *that*, after all, no one thinks I’m George Washington.”

The great heroes are necessary, after all. If we think of them as real human beings and not mythical giants, and if we approach them with a heavy dose of realism and caution, these ethical geniuses are the only ones that can teach us about what is best and most noble in being human. They teach us about our true potential.

By definition, the great heroes are statistical outliers and this implies that very few of us will ever rise to such great heights. It doesn’t mean, though, that we shouldn’t try. It may very well be the case that in time, the statistical outliers of one generation become the norm in the next.

Natan Sharansky: Great Hero *and* Quiet Leader

In March 1977, the Soviet Union’s secret police force--the KGB--arrested Natan Sharansky under the false charges of treason and espionage, capital crimes under Soviet law. His continuing story has been one of the great inspirations for me to write this book on ethics.

Sharansky had applied to government authorities for an exit visa years earlier. His dream and unshakable ambition was to make *aliyah*. Unfortunately, his request was denied for “security reasons.” But, in a bittersweet twist of history, in 1974, his wife Avital *was* able to emigrate to Israel, leaving Sharansky behind just one day after their marriage.

Natan Sharansky was a computer scientist by profession (he graduated from the prestigious Physical Technical Institute in Moscow) and a brilliant chess master by avocation. But, during the mid 1970s, before his arrest, he became better known as a spokesperson for Soviet dissidents and human rights activists. In 1976, he helped to establish the Helsinki Monitoring Group, a movement headed by Andrei Sakharov.

In time, his heroism and altruism thrust him onto the world stage. He became an inspirational role-model for those fighting for the freedom of Soviet citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike. As punishment for his unselfish and uncompromising activities, he was eventually “found guilty” and spent nine years as a political prisoner of the immoral, crumbling, and decrepit Soviet Empire. His only real “crime” was his desire to live a fully Jewish life in the state of Israel with his wife Avital and being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Today, with the Soviet Union gone, it difficult to imagine what it was like being a prisoner of conscience, suffering under one of the most brutal and evil regimes in history. The KGB’s goal from the time they arrested Sharansky was to humiliate and break him, to make him admit that his political activities were wrong-headed and subversive to the Soviet Union.

Despite the fact that it seemed to everyone at the time that the Soviet Union was made out of the hardest rock and would last forever, in his heart of hearts, Natan Sharansky always knew that the

KGB could never humiliate him unless he let them. In his book, aptly titled, **Fear No Evil** (now translated into nine languages), he writes “Only I can humiliate me.”

“Who is mighty? He who subdues his passions.” But, how does it work in real life? Natan Sharansky helps us to understand.

Following his arrest, the KGB met with Sharansky in prison and warned him about his dire circumstances. Unless he recanted from his pro-Zionist position, they told him, he would face capital punishment. His captors lied to him over and over and said that they had sufficient evidence to convict him and kill him. Sharansky was scared, but he did not panic.

Thinking about his own situation, almost as if he were playing a game of chess, Sharansky reasoned as follows:

I came to the obvious conclusion that I hadn't been psychologically prepared for a charge of treason—and especially the horrifying possibility of rasstrel [capital punishment]. My only hope was to quickly become accustomed to that idea, to steel myself against it. Just as the skin on my feet used to toughen up every summer during my childhood, when I walked around barefoot, I now had to toughen up my ears and my heart until the sound and the prospect of rasstrel meant nothing to me. (p. 40)

The path of least resistance for Sharansky would have been to tell the Soviet authorities that he had been wrong, and that he now understood the error of his ways. Others before him had been weaker. Recanting like this would have almost guaranteed him a reduced sentence and might have allowed him to make aliya and to be reunited with his wife Avital. In Israel, he could have repudiated his statements to the KGB and set the record straight.

Natan Sharansky's overarching dream was to resume his marriage to Avital in Israel as soon as possible, but not on these terms!

Sharansky would not give in to the Soviets for three distinct reasons. First, he felt that if he confessed, he would be hurting his good friends who were still on the outside and still working hard for the cause of freedom in the Soviet Union. Simply put, he could not betray his friends. Second, any collaboration with the KGB, even a feigned collaboration, would undercut his strong moral position. Sharansky knew that the reason that the world was concerned about a few Soviet refuseniks and political prisoners was because of the “moral righteousness” of their struggle against evil. To compromise with the KGB would diminish the power of their cause. Finally, if he cooperated with the KGB, it would be understood as a major victory for them and would only encourage the political elite to arrest more dissidents. Sharansky drew his line in the sand and he would never cross it. Never.

There was no way on earth, I could ever return to my former life as an assimilated Soviet Jew, a loyal citizen who said one thing but thought another as he tried to act just like everyone else. That was all behind me now. For the past four years I had been a free man, and it was unthinkable that I would ever give up the marvelous sensation of freedom that

came over me after I returned to my roots. For now I had purpose, I had perspective, I had peace of mind. And although we were separated by time and space, I had Avital. (p. 42)

Sharansky knew that he had committed no punishable crimes. Publicizing human rights violations in the Soviet Union did not violate Soviet law. Throughout his career as a dissident, his actions never compromised the sovereign independence of the Soviet Union nor did it diminish its military power.

Even while he was locked away in the Soviet Gulag, isolated from his family and friends—often in solitary confinement with meager food rations and cold winter winds chilling him to the point that he could not even escape into sleep—Natan Sharansky believed that he was a free man. He would never give up the marvelous sensation of freedom. In finding his roots, in discovering what it meant to him to be Jewish, he had discovered his real identity for the very first time in his life. He was not about to barter this away for anything.

One of the psychological tools that Sharansky used to ease his burden while in confinement was song. Not that Sharansky was a very good singer. In fact, he jokes that he was no good at all. But, now in solitary confinement with no one to hear him or criticize him, he sang the words of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, “The entire world is a narrow bridge, and the important thing is not to be afraid at all” to a haunting melody a visiting American rabbi had taught him just before his incarceration.

Natan Sharansky did not just sing these words in a rote fashion as we who are more comfortable than him often do. He lived and breathed Rabbi Nachman’s words:

This mystical feeling of the interconnection of human souls was forged in the gloomy prison-camp world when our zeks’ [prisoners’] solidarity was the one weapon we had to oppose the world of evil, and when the defeat of any of us had an immediate and painful effect on the others. It was tempered in the punishment cells, where the supportive voices of my friends reached me only if I summoned them through a mental effort and only if our hearts were tuned to the same frequency. This feeling of our great unity and solidarity that knew neither temporal nor spatial limits crystallized during my hunger strike when the voices from *their* world, the voices of the doctor healed me only in order to pour in another portion of the mixture or to remind me it was still not too late to join them (p. 361)

Sharansky did not just survive the Soviet system of total repression and thought control, he thrived. As his body weakened due to unhealthy living conditions and frequent hunger strikes, his spirit strengthened.

In the end, due to the intense political pressure orchestrated by his seemingly shy and unassuming wife Avital, the Soviets let Sharansky go.

Today, Sharansky is living in Jerusalem surrounded by a loving family—Avital and his two daughters Rachel and Hanna—and is a prominent and influential member of the Israeli government.

To me one of the most amazing things about Sharansky has been his ability to evolve—in response to his dramatically changing circumstances—into a quiet leader. In one of his most thought-provoking comments in his book, Sharansky notes that upon his arrival in Israel he, “soon learned that defending one’s freedom in the ocean of love can be no less challenging than defending it in the sea of hatred” (p. 419). To those who believe that quiet leadership is too easy, this statement, authored by one of the great ethical geniuses of our time, is an important reminder of just how hard the give-and-take of everyday leadership can be.

In the Soviet Union, life was harsh, but the moral and political issues were black and white. In Israel, daily life is much less harsh, but the moral and political dilemmas are grayer and less obvious. Since his release from prison, Sharansky has become a more prosaic and everyday leader, but no less of a role model for the Jewish people. In many ways, his being *less* of a superman, makes him even *more* valuable to the rest of us as a guide to everyday ethics.

In 1994, Sharansky co-founded Peace Watch, a group dedicated to monitoring compliance with agreements signed by Israel and the PLO. In addition, Sharansky has become increasingly active in Israeli politics. He founded a new political party *Yisrael Baaliya*, which translates to both “Israel on the Rise” and “Israel for Immigration.” In 1996, Sharansky was elected to the Israeli Knesset, and in 1999 he was appointed to the post of Minister of Interior. Today, he is one of the most articulate spokesman against world-wide anti-Semitism.

Conclusion

In learning about ethics and how to live a moral life, role models are essential. We need the examples of quiet leaders like my students Yosef and Sarah. We also need the other kind of leaders—the larger than life heroes. They show us just how big the human spirit, at its very best, can be. Natan Sharansky’s staunch stoicism and unblinking courage in the face of a totalitarian regime bent on destroying him certainly qualify him as a heroic leader for our time. His work in Israel, although quieter and less publicized, make him a more approachable figure, but no less important. In channeling his energy and “subduing his passions” for the good of the Jewish people and for the world at large, Natan Sharansky continues to teach us what true freedom is all about.

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Five

An Etrog, A Car, and Some Beer

The more flesh, the more worms.

(Avot: Chapter 2, Mishnah 8)

Each of the ethical leaders and would-be leaders introduced in the earlier chapters of this book struggled with the question of identity, asking themselves “who am I?” or “who are we?”

Aaron was surprised and frightened by his boss’s request to drive into town so close to Shabbat and momentarily forgot who he really was. Sarah realized, just in time, that she did not want to risk becoming a cheater and so, in the end, she decided not to look at her notes even though this would have improved her score on the take-home *gemorah* exam. Yosef seized an opportunity to express his own identity. Through his modest gift of cookies and juice, he taught his classmates and his teacher what a caring community looks like. Natan Sharansky wanted more than anything to be reunited with his wife Avital who was already living in Israel. But, he recognized that compromising with the KGB would mean compromising his integrity and this was too high a price for him to pay.

Finding our own voice, discovering our own identity, presupposes as an ability to choose wisely. But no one is born with this ability; despite the famous song, no one is “born free.” You don’t inherit freedom the way you inherit eye color. The experience of freedom develops slowly over time.

The ability to choose is like the ability to read or to write. To begin with, you have to have some basic natural abilities and talents (nothing beyond the ordinary), but you also need to be in the right place at the right time. You need to be exposed to good teachers and role models. And, just as there is no upper limit on how well you master these skills, so too there is no upper limit on learning how to choose wisely. As the philosopher Daniel Dennett has recently put it, “freedom evolves.”

Freedom’s journey begins by becoming more self-aware. It begins when you start to ask yourself, “Well, why did I do *that*?” To answer this question, though, we need to understand something about human motives. Or, to put all of this in much simpler terms, in order to learn how to manage ourselves better, we need to know what makes us tick.

The Great Variety of Human Motives or Why Bother at All?

Ethics is about improving our behavior and ourselves. In order to accomplish this task, it is important to explore the rich tapestry of human motivation and to begin to ask about the

differences between legitimate human needs and illegitimate desires. How do we tell the difference?

This book can't possibly cover all human motives; the list is as long and as varied as we are. Psychologists, for example, have identified all of the following motives and more: thirst, hunger, sex, safety, money, a need to belong, a need to love and to be loved, reputation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, power, the needs to express gratitude and reverence, religion, spirituality, curiosity, a desire to learn and grow, self-actualization, a desire to avoid boredom, the search for meaning and purpose in life, a longing to create, and, last but definitely not least, a desire to make a lasting contribution to the world.

Instead of presenting a formal theory of human motivation here, this chapter will examine the following three vignettes to see what we can learn about this topic and how we can use this knowledge to improve ethics.

Vignette 1– Reuven and The True Value of An Etrog

Reuven needed some extra money. So it was only natural that when his older brother's friend (who was learning in Kollel) asked him if he wanted to manage his etrog business for him, he jumped at the opportunity.

Since the owner of the business couldn't be around to oversee how hard Reuven was working, he decided to pay him a percentage of the total profits. This way, the more etrogs Reuven sold the more money they would both make!

When Reuven picked up the etrogs, there were three boxes. One contained etrogs of average quality. These were priced at \$50. The second box contained better quality etrogs and were priced at \$75. The etrogs in the third box were considered premium and sold for \$100. All of the etrogs were kosher, but to a trained eye there were important differences in appearance and quality among them.

Business was brisk and Reuven had no complaints. One day one of his customers was trying to decide which of the three kinds of etrogs to buy, and Reuven was pointing out why one was more expensive than the other. The customer decided to buy the premium etrog for a \$100 and carelessly put the other two etrogs down on the table with the premium ones. As Reuven was writing up the customer's order, a second customer came in and picked out the \$50 etrog that had been placed on the wrong table.

Reuven had a dilemma. The customer was willing to pay \$100 for an average quality etrog. Should he accept the higher price and not say anything or should he disclose the truth to the customer? Without thinking about it too much, Reuven took the money and kept silent.

Vignette 2–Shimon and The Collision on the FDR Drive

It was well passed midnight and Shimon was driving home alone after a night out with his friends. The movie had been funny and enjoyable, and the pizza was great as always. It was nice, Shimon thought to himself, not having to worry about school work and his part-time job for a few hours.

As his car made its way north up the FDR drive through a quiet mist, Shimon was relieved that there was almost no traffic tonight. As he was fidgeting with his car radio buttons, though, he suddenly noticed a man darting across the highway. He had come out of nowhere!

Shimon was an alert driver and managed to slow down and swerve away from the man, but his reactions were not quick enough. He hit him. Not with the front of his car and not at a high speed, but hard enough to knock the man down.

Shimon stopped the car but was afraid to get out. He was there long enough to see the man moving but not long enough to see if he could walk. Shimon put his car back in drive and clutching tightly to his steering wheel with both hands, he drove away.

Vignette 3—Levi and Drinking Beer in Fair Haven

Fair Haven is a typical suburban community with nice houses and well-manicured lawns. A few years ago, the Fair Haven Jewish Center, the community's largest synagogue, hosted more than a hundreds high school kids. The students came from three states in the region to celebrate Simchat Torah together.

On the afternoon of Simchat Torah, a large group of kids from the event gathered together at one of the homes. Unfortunately, the celebration got out of hand, and one of the boys who was staying at the house overdosed on a combination of beer and drugs and passed out. Just as the ambulance was leaving to rush the boy to the hospital, police arrived and arrested a group of teenagers.

The next Shabbat, the Rabbi of the Fair Haven Jewish Center spoke about the shame and disgrace that he felt, noting that it was the community's and his responsibility to make sure that something like this would never happen again. If news about this got out, Fair Haven's reputation would be soiled.

A year later, the Fair Haven Jewish Center was hosting a similar event. This time, though, the rabbi sent a letter to every family reminding them about last year's catastrophe and everyone's responsibility to make sure that history did not repeat itself.

At first, Levi didn't think much about the letter and what was happening in the synagogue. He was just excited about having his friends from school, camp, and past events coming to Fair Haven.

When he overheard some of his friends talking about who would be staying at their house this year, Levi responded, “Cool, that’s great.” But, Levi had an uneasy feeling about these boys. He knew them from camp and knew that they were both heavy beer drinkers and pot smokers.

Levi didn’t know what do. He felt like he should warn somebody about these two boys, but he didn’t want to blow his reputation at school as a “fun, cool, and popular kid.” He felt an obligation to the Fair Haven community, but he did not want to “snitch” on his friends either. “I’m supposed to have fun, I’m not expected to report this to the rabbi.”

After his mother reminded Levi about the rabbi’s letter, though, he began to think more seriously about his role in all of this. For sure, he personally was not going to take any drugs this year after what happened last year, but maybe he had to do even more.

As Levi continued to struggle with his dilemma, he realized “my reputation and my ego are less important than the reputation of my community and the synagogue as a whole.” He decided to tell the rabbi about the two boys who would be staying at his friends house.

In retrospect, Levi believes that in telling the rabbi, he did the right thing. In his words, “I now had the personality of a person who disregards his reputation and ego in the face of others.

What’s Driving Reuven, Shimon, and Levi

What can these vignettes teach us about our own motives? How can we use these stories to help us make better and wiser choices in the future? Let’s dig down below the surface here and see if we can figure out just what’s going on.

Let’s start with Reuven. His motives are pretty natural and probably among the most common. He’s selling a \$50 etrog for \$100 because he is driven by money and the things that money can buy. Simply put, he remains silent because he wants more of his customer’s money. You don’t have to be a brain surgeon to figure this one out.

If you think about it, money is an amazing invention. Though it is intrinsically worthless—just a piece of paper—it can be easily converted into so many other rewards. It also is unique in that unlike other needs where enough is enough (I just can’t eat another hot dog), with money, the more we have, the more we seem to want. Despite the fact that *pirkei avot* wisely warns us that “the more flesh, the more worms,” when it comes to money, we think more is always better!

The fact that Reuven happens to be selling etrogs of all things is really not relevant. From an ethical point of view, his dilemma would not have been any different had he been selling sport coats or sneakers. Although, I guess the fact that he is charging double the price for an etrog does make the story a little more ironic.

Shimon’s decision to leave the scene of his accident is a little different and obviously a lot more troublesome. He’s not motivated by money but by his need for safety. He’s scared and he wants

to get out of the situation as fast as he possibly can. He's not thinking about the person he hit, he's thinking about what's best for himself in the short run.

What Shimon probably does not realize is that if we understand safety and security not just as *physical* safety and *physical* security but as *psychological* safety, his quick decision to leave will probably never give him what he's really looking for. I imagine he is still haunted by his own behavior.

As we turn our focus to Levi, I think there is a difference in kind between his motives and Reuven's and Shimon's. He explicitly stated that he is acting for the community of Fair Haven and for the synagogue as a whole. If we take Levi at his word, what his story is saying is that one can move beyond a concern with physical needs and even one's own immediate self-interest.

The ability to do this, though, requires a degree of self-awareness, beyond what Reuven and Shimon demonstrated. Comparing the three cases, Levi is the only one who is weighing his options in a reasonable kind of way. He wants to keep his reputation as a "cool" kid, but he also wants to make sure that no one ends up in the hospital this year either. In part, this is due to the fact that he has more time to think about what to do, but it is also a function of his ethical awareness and his expanding concern for other people besides himself. One way of putting this is that Levi *has* interests, while Reuven and Shimon *are* their interests.

To the extent that almost everyone can relate to all three of these stories, it suggests that some needs or some motives are shared by everyone (or almost everyone). In fact, this is exactly what the psychologist Abraham Maslow believed and taught. He identified different kinds of needs including physiological (Reuven), safety (Shimon), and community needs (Levi).

In looking at how Maslow thought about needs together with Reuven, Shimon, and Levi's behavior, it appears, that there is a kind of hierarchy of needs. In many (if not most) situations, our instinct is to satisfy our most basic needs first. It is as if we are pre-wired to satisfy our physiological needs before anything else. In today's world, where money can be converted into just about anything, our default preference shows up, like in Reuven's choice, as, above all, a desire for money.

After our physiological needs are satisfied, our behavior is motivated by a need for security and safety. Maslow would easily understand even if he wouldn't agree with Shimon's unthinking and almost automatic reaction to flee the scene of his accident.

Finally, in those situations where we are no longer hungry or thirsty, and where we feel no external threats to our safety, the need to become a member of a community emerges. Of the three stories, Levi's reflects the most inclusive type of need.

Maslow went so far as to say that it was impossible for "higher level" needs to emerge before "lower level" needs were satisfied. He argued, for example, that a starving person, could think of nothing other than satisfying his hunger. I think it's incorrect to go this far, but I do think that anyone with the ambition of becoming a moral hero should give due respect to his or her

physiological and safety needs. This is not to say that one can not act for higher purposes even in the absence of adequate food and shelter, but one should recognize just how hard this is to accomplish in the real world. Minimally, one must recognize that there are tradeoffs that will need to be made. If Levi really cares about the welfare of his community, he has to make sacrifices.

One of the things that strikes me most about Levi's decision to go to the rabbi (especially when you contrast it to Reuven and Shimon's behavior), is his confidence in his own ability to affect the world in a positive way. This confidence is called self-efficacy and is a foundation for ethical behavior. Without the belief that what we do matters in a fundamental way, it is impossible to sustain enough drive to do the right thing.

Levi's choice was also, in part, a result of his ability to envision and imagine an alternative to last year's fiasco. He knows that there is often a delay between action and outcomes and his decision to go to the rabbi shows a mature patience.

Levi's ability to carefully reflect about his own behavior is testimony to his own strength of character but it is also a product of the environment and the positive role models like his mother and the rabbi.

Reuven and Shimon seem like they're acting in a free and uncoerced way. But, to the extent that neither one of them really thought about what they were doing, they are just reacting to their environments rather than creating them. I see them more like prisoners to their own instincts than truly free agents.

Conclusion

I retell Reuven, Shimon, and Levi's stories not because these three individuals are so different from you and me, but because in them I recognize more of myself. And, I hope that, with the help of a little imagination, through their stories you will come to understand your own stories better, as well.

Reuven, Shimon, and Levi, like the rest of us, are struggling to survive and thrive in a world that seems one moment to be cold, arbitrary, and unforgiving while the next moment it's warm, inviting, and hospitable. One minute a stranger darts out in front of our car showing us to be shallow and self-interested, but in the next minute we find the strength to care enough about our community to do something to help.

Most of the time, with a little effort on our part, a bit of help from our friends, and a lucky break or two, our ability to choose wisely develops over time.

The most fortunate among us, never stop growing. Natan Sharnasky's ability to defy the KGB was not merely the result of happenstance, but was the culmination of a life's journey. His life is remarkable for its intense passion and mindful decision-making.

In order to underscore the great potential of human motivation I close this chapter by quoting once again from Natan Sharansky's **Fear No Evil**. After realizing just how serious his situation was, Sharansky writes:

It was around this time that I composed a short prayer in my primitive Hebrew:...Blessed are You, Adonai, King of the Universe. Grant me the good fortune to live with my wife, my beloved Avital Sharon, in the Land of Israel. Grant my parents, my wife, and my whole family the strength to endure all hardships until we meet. Grant me the strength to endure all hardships until we meet. Grant me the strength, the power, the intelligence, the good fortune, and the patience to leave this jail to reach the land of Israel in an honest and worthy way." (P. 52)

It's easy to fall into the trap of more flesh—more worms, but it's not impossible to escape either.

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Six

Beyond Fair Haven

*Shall the Judge of all the earth not act justly?
(Genesis: Chapter 25, Verse 25)*

With numbing regularity good people were seen to knuckle under the demands of authority and perform actions that were callous and severe. Men who are in everyday life responsible and decent were seduced by the trappings of authority, by the control of their perceptions, and by the uncritical acceptance of the experimenter's definition of the situation, into performing harsh acts. ...A substantial proportion of people do what they are told to do, irrespective of the content of the act and without limitations of conscience, so long as they perceive that the command comes from a legitimate authority. (Stanley Milgram as quoted at StanleyMilgram.com)

The patriarch Abraham, is motivated by his physiological needs and by his desire for security for himself and for those closest to him. Abraham is also motivated, by a powerful need to act not for himself only, but for others, as well. This focus, beyond his own immediate concerns, is expressed in many ways, but most famously in the following episode.

As God is contemplating the destruction of Sodom, Abraham tries to stop Him. As Abraham and God hash it out, Abraham raises a profound question. "Shall the Judge of all the earth not act justly?" This question reflects Abraham's passion and concern for even the most treacherous people on earth. Abraham is willing to put himself in jeopardy-by possibly angering God with his *chutzpa*--in order to try to stop God from destroying the people of Sodom.

Abraham's question hints at a new way of thinking about behavior, and not just God's behavior, but more to the point--our own behavior. To make sense of his question, it must necessarily be the case that Abraham has come to the hard-won realization that truly ethical behavior must conform to broad and potentially universal principles that apply to everyone in exactly the same way. Treat everyone justly. Easy to say, but nearly impossible to apply.

Abraham's ethics are lofty indeed. To truly live the kind of life that Abraham aspires to, one's moral concern must be ever expanding. It must go beyond self, family, and community to include "outsiders," as well. Many people have correctly compared ethics to an ever widening

circle. The hope is that today's outsiders will become tomorrow's insiders. Remember Shimon ben Shetach's decision to return the pearl to the heathen.

If you think back to the previous chapter, we begin to see the very beginning of this kind of growth. Reuven and Shimon are concerned about themselves only, but Levi's decision to go to the rabbi shows that he is pulled beyond himself by a feeling of sympathy for his friends welfare and a feeling of responsibility to the community of Fair Haven.

Judith and Her Mixed Motives

In this chapter, I introduce Judith, a college student who like Levi has grown up in Fair Haven and is motivated by her desire to become an important contributing member of this community, but is now just beginning to realize that maybe this isn't quite enough for her.

With the help of her family, Judith got a great part time job working for US Zionists, a pro-Israel organization dedicated to promoting the universal recognition of Israel's right to exist and to defend herself. The organization, like other Israel-friendly groups, lobbies the US government and provides and disseminates accurate information about the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Judith is quite mature, hard-working, and highly articulate. This was recognized quickly by her superiors, and Judith, although still in college, was given the important jobs of searching the media (magazines, newspapers, and television) for anti-Israel biases and doing research to assist others in writing pro-Israel articles.

Judith loved her work and knew she was gaining invaluable experience. Judith decided that after graduation she wanted to work in some capacity as a Jewish communal leader. Her father was the director of Fair Haven's Jewish Federation, and Judith always admired his idealism and his desire to serve the Jewish community.

After a few months of working at US Zionists, Judith began to learn more about the organization. Judith says:

Unlike many Jewish organizations, this specific organization was [and is] the most virulent in its opposition to a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. The organization has become famous for being one of the few to speak out against the Oslo Accords in 1993, and for constantly pointing out the Palestinian Authority's numerous violations of Oslo, especially when the "world community," including many Jewish organizations, ignored such seemingly minor breaches in hope that Palestinian leadership would sign a final status peace agreement with Israel and would end the conflict.

Judith does not support the Peace Now movement nor does she consider herself "left wing" in terms of her politics. For the most part, she agrees with the "organization's historical and legal portrayal of the conflict" and she recognizes "that the Arab states have perpetuated this brutal 'cycle of violence' through aggression, rejectionism, and propaganda."

Nevertheless, Judith did not agree with the US Zionists extreme policy of not negotiating with the Palestinians. She believed that a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict was the only realistic compromise. Judith points out that the US Zionists position is actually less flexible than Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's position.

Like much of the world community, I support the creation of a Palestinian state in much the West Banks and all of Gaza. For the most part, I support[ed] the Clinton Peace Plan, which was presented in December 2000 and rejected by Chairman Arafat and his negotiators.

The US Zionists organization believes that any compromises like those contemplated in previous Arab-Israeli peace plans would be suicide for Israel. Its current executive director is opposed, under any and all circumstances, to a Palestinian state on the West Bank. Such a state, he believes, will encourage more terrorism and will gravely imperil the State of Israel, putting its very existence at risk

Judith's personal belief, however, is that a Palestinian state "is a *fait accompli* and the only solution to this ostensibly endless conflict." She believes that justice ultimately demands a fair and equitable solution to the seemingly unending war between Moslems and Jews, and that Israel has a responsibility to actively seek out some kind of compromise.

As Judith's work responsibilities expanded, the clash between the organization's clear goal of no-negotiation and her own beliefs that a Palestinian state is inevitable became more acute.

Judith began to examine her own moral principles and stands. Where did they come from? In part, she believed that they drew from her education and upbringing. How many times had she studied the stories of Abraham? In part, they were nourished by her love of Israel. And, finally, she recognized that they were also an echo of her father's moderate political inclinations.

Since Judith was doing such a good job writing up her research findings (she obviously had a way with words), her supervisors decided to let her write some political material, as well. This was a promotion for Judith and revealed just how much everyone at work trusted her. She wasn't just doing routine research work anymore, she was fast becoming part of the team.

In describing her dilemma, Judith demonstrates a degree of honesty and self-awareness that is truly remarkable for a college student. She is an astute observer of her own behavior and motives:

When it came to political writing, numerous issues came up. First, I would be required to espouse an opinion that I did not agree with. Moreover, not only did I reject their political leanings, I felt their opinion is contrary to the interests of the very object which they are trying to defend. With that in mind, how could I contribute in hurting the State of Israel, when my very reason for working at a pro-Israel organization was to strengthen her standing in the Western world and to help find a solution to the conflict?

Yes, I understood the effects of my decision would hardly constitute an earth-shattering effect influencing millions. But since the primary aspect of this organization is disseminating information to its readers and others, if I were to participate in helping the organization publish articles propagating a position I greatly eschew, I would be directly responsible if public support for a Palestinian state declines. So this issue was pretty pertinent.

This is heavy stuff! The way I see it, Judith is being pulled in two directions at the same time. She doesn't ever quite say it explicitly, but she is driven by mixed motives. On the one hand, it must be incredibly satisfying to Judith to be recognized as an integral and useful part of her new organization. For most of her life, she has watched her father dutifully carry out his important work as a Jewish communal leader in Fair Haven. Now, for the first time, she is being recognized and rewarded for her own contributions to her own work community. If she does a good job on the public relations work, perhaps she'll be asked to stay on full time after graduation? This might be the fastest path for Judith to realize her career aspirations. On the other hand, Judith senses an obligation beyond her responsibilities to work. She feels an obligation to the State of Israel, and she wants to be true to her own emerging principles and beliefs. This sense of justice is in many ways less tangible than her desire to contribute and "belong" to US Zionists, but this doesn't make it any less real.

You can see that Judith's dilemma is very different than Reuven, Shimon, and even Levi's. She's not motivated by money, nor is she motivated by a desire for security. To over simplify, she is torn between a desire for community and a desire to live a life in accordance with a more abstract principle—universal justice.

Judith's Choice

Suppose you're one of Judith's friends and she calls you for advice on what to do. What would you tell her? In many ways, this is a classic right versus right choice. So you might tell her:

First Friend:

Listen, Judy, I think you've got an incredible opportunity here. US Zionists is an internationally-known organization. It is a powerful and highly influential group and they've recognized you as an important contributor.

Don't you think you're being a little arrogant in claiming that there is an ethical problem with their views? Maybe the problem is not with them, Judy, but with you. No one can dispute how much they care about Israel, and they've been studying the situation a lot longer than you have. It's not going to be your name on the published documents anyway. In the end, it's their responsibility and not yours.

In any event, Judy, don't blow it. Seize the moment. An opportunity like this doesn't come along all that often. The important thing for you, at this stage in your life, is to get real world experience. If you really want to have an effect, you have to be in the game.

An opportunity of a lifetime is being offered to you on a silver platter. Go for it.

Or, alternatively, you could say:

Second Friend:

Judy, remember what happened to Aaron back in Chapter 1. He panicked and broke Shabbat in order to pacify his boss's wife. Through his unthinking actions he said that rice cakes were more important than Shabbat. Don't make the same mistake that Aaron made!

You said that you think the US Zionist's position harms Israel rather than helps it. You claimed that justice demands a fair solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and that Israel has a responsibility to actively search for some kind of resolution. These are nice sentiments. But, did you really mean them or were you just talking?

Well, put your money where your mouth is. You can't possibly write something up and not really believe it. There's a word for this. It's called being a hypocrite.

Judy, this is the beginning of your career. If you're setting aside your principles now just to keep a part time job, what's going to happen down the road when the stakes are even higher?

So, which is it? Judith's dilemma here, as in all right versus right choices, is that both friends seem to be correct. The optimistic way of looking at this situation is that no matter what she does, she'll be okay. Of course, the flip side of this is that no matter what she does, she'll be wrong, too.

Judith's Solution

Judith is between a rock and a hard place. What did she decide to do? Let's let her speak for herself:

I realized the importance of working to support Israel, even within an organization whose most important creed I eschewed. Israeli Public Relations border on horrid, and it seems the only convincing, workable PR for the Jewish state comes from American Jewish organizations. And I did not disagree with everything the organization espoused.

After thinking about it, it was not a question of good versus bad, but rather a question of good versus less good.

The concept of Palestinian autonomy [the solution favored by US Zionists] is modeled after numerous examples in world history and is hardly an evil alternative. Had the organization proffered a solution of "transfer," it would have been a choice of good versus bad. In that case I would be required to shine a glaring spotlight on the bad and

reject it. But since the solution of autonomy is not bad, just not as good, perhaps I could ignore it while working to exemplify the good.

In the end, Judith's decision was to:

work with the organization to further our agreed goals on the one hand, but on the other hand, to try and change what I felt objectionable. This way I could achieve the best of both worlds. I could promote Israeli interests and (hopefully) convince a major Jewish organization to support what needs to be done. Hopefully this was the right thing to do. This chapter of the story has not yet been completed, but hopefully, it was the correct path.

In all honesty, when Judith first told me about her dilemma and her chosen solution, I was disappointed. In her conclusion, she said that she finally realized that "it was not a question of good versus bad, but rather a question of good versus less good." "So what?" I thought to myself. Adopting an overly moralistic attitude, I fixated on this part of her statement. Even if this is true, why not choose the good option over the less good?

With the passage of time, though, I have come to admire and respect her decision. First of all, if this truly is a right versus right dilemma (as I think it is), one should keep in mind that no matter what--after the fact--there will always be reasons to criticize. This is not the fault of the person making the decision, ultimately this is just what it means to be faced with a decision like this with no easy answers.

Further, I admire Judith's experimental and tentative attitude. She's certainly no fanatic. In her very last sentence, she recognizes that "the story has not yet been completed.." To the extent that Judith continues to monitor her own behavior and feelings as she has done up until this point, Judith will be fine.

If it turns out that in the future, the organization becomes even more radical and does adopt a position "unequivocally condemned by the world community," there is no doubt in my mind that Judith will terminate her association with the group regardless of the personal cost. For now, though, Judith is a fighter and not a quitter. She says that she is going to try and work to change what she feels is objectionable about the organization, and I believe her.

To some extent, it is true that Judith is now compromising, but that is what always has to happen in a right versus right dilemma. But, exactly, what kind of compromise is Judith really making here? At first, I interpreted her behavior (like the second friend above) as an abandonment of principle.

Now, I see that this is simply not so. From beginning to end, Judith is motivated by her twin desires to become a contributing member of her community and to always treat everyone justly. Her compromise is that she realizes now that, in the real world, the justice principle means that she must continue her work in support of the State of Israel, despite the fact that she will probably have to write things that she personally will not agree with. Even if it means getting her hands dirty, she has to keep her eyes on the prize. She isn't putting justice aside, she's re-

interpreting what it means in light of her own development and increasing understanding of an incredibly complex situation.

Most importantly, I have come to trust Judith's ethical intuition. I am viewing her situation as an outsider looking in. She is looking at it as an insider looking out. She's got the better view! She has a kind of tacit knowledge of the situation that can't be substituted for by theory, no matter how elegant the theory is. Will Judith really be able to achieve the "best of both worlds?" I'm not as sure as she is. But in the end, what matters is that she is being honest with herself. Like Levi from the previous chapter she displays a healthy amount of self-efficacy, she is going in with her eyes open, she is maintaining a dose of skepticism while trying to be optimistic, and she is taking full responsibility as the author of her own actions. I'm not sure you can really ask for much more than this from anyone, regardless of age.

Conclusion

Ethics is an ever widening circle. A global community demands that everyone always acts justly towards each other. But just how to apply this in a world that rarely conforms to our wishes and theories?

Abraham never caved in on his demand that even God must act justly. But, in the end, it is worthwhile to recall that he doesn't really get what he wants. While Lot is saved, Sodom is destroyed. If Abraham is continually trying to understand the precise contours of what justice demands, how much more so do we? Ethics is about the process of decision making, as much as it is about the end result.

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Seven

Stuff Happens

And Joseph said to his brothers, fear not, for am I instead of God? You thought evil against me, God thought it for good; in order to do as at this day, to preserve numerous people alive. Now therefore fear not: I will support you and your little ones. So he comforted his brothers and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis: Chapter 50, Verses 19-21)

No matter how careful we are, life never follows our plans. For whatever reasons, stuff happens. As the plots of our lives unfold before us, we continually revise old plans. This is a never ending cycle.

Sometimes the stuff is good, like winning the lottery. “What am I going to do with all of this money now?” Sometimes it’s not so good. “I was sure I got an A on that exam. Now, how am I ever going to get into to med school?”

In large part, the quality of our lives—how they look and feel to us—rests on our ability to improvise as things change. It depends on how well we can *make sense* of what is happening around us. In other words, to exercise our free choice wisely, we have an urgent and constant need to find meaning where ever we can. This search for meaning and purpose in the everyday world is a uniquely human ability and motive. It is the chain that connects up life’s experiences one to another.

Joseph as Improvisor

In Jewish history, the biblical figure of Joseph provides the classic example. On the surface, Joseph’s story makes him look like he’s simply a victim of his circumstances.

His father Jacob loved him more than any of his brothers or sisters. Not because of anything special or unique about Joseph himself, but because “he was the son of his old age (Genesis 37:3). Because Jacob loved Rachel, he loved her son Joseph best among his children. Jacob gave Joseph a special coat, and his brothers--obviously jealous of the unique treatment--hated him and can’t speak nicely to him.

His father, seemingly oblivious to the sibling rivalry, sends Joseph out alone to meet his brothers. Although initially Joseph can’t find his brothers, “a man found him” (Genesis 37: 15) and pointed him in the right direction.

His brothers, blinded by their envy, throw him into a pit, and eventually sell him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Then they go back to their father and lie about the whole episode, telling their father that Joseph was eaten by an evil beast. The brothers produce the bloody coat as proof of their story.

As Joseph is sold again to Potiphar, an Egyptian officer, he must wonder to himself how far he now is from realizing his childhood dreams of power and leadership. Talk about stuff happening to somebody.

Just when Joseph probably thinks that things can't get any worse, Potiphars' wife sets him up and accuses him of attacking her. "See," she screams to her staff, "Potiphar brought in a Hebrew to mock us; he came to lie with me and I called in a loud voice. When he heard that I lifted up my voice, he left his garment and ran away" (Genesis 39: 14-15).

Joseph--stripped of his coat for a second time--must feel like a boat cut loose from its mooring and tossed about by an angry sea. This was not the original plan! As Potiphar angrily drags him away to prison, there is no sun, there is no moon, nor are there any stars prostrating themselves to him.

Joseph makes the most of his situation, and with God's help, he is soon elevated to a position of authority in the prison. For the first time, Joseph begins to prosper.

His reputation as an astute interpreter of dreams grows. Pharaoh himself calls on Joseph to help him and Joseph seizes the opportunity. Not only does he correctly interpret Pharaoh's dream, but Joseph provides Pharaoh with practical political advice on how to make the most of the upcoming seven years of feast and seven years of famine. And so Pharaoh, recognizing Joseph's abilities, appoints him to be the viceroy of Egypt.

But stuff keeps happening to Joseph, even as his luck has dramatically changed. His past is fast catching up with him. "And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he sold grain to all the people of the land; and Joseph's brother's came and bowed down to him with their faces to the earth" (Genesis 42:6).

Probably, for the first time in many years, Joseph remembers his childhood dreams, and although he was always quick to interpret everyone else's dreams, it's only now that Joseph begins to make sense of his own dreams and his own life's purposes.

Joseph does seem to have some fun at the expense of his brothers, but in the end, his actions are a way for his brothers to prove that they have undergone a kind of *teshuvah* or repentance.

Joseph could have easily chosen to take revenge on his brothers. With his immense power, Joseph was now calling the shots. But, what did his youthful dreams really mean? At the dramatic climax of this story, Joseph can no longer refrain himself from revealing his true identity. In order for Joseph to really be Joseph, his brothers must know and acknowledge who he is. And Joseph said to them:

I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt. Don't be angry with yourselves because you sold me. For God did send me before you for the preservation of life. For two years there has been a famine in the land and there are five more years in which there will be no plowing or harvest. And God sent me before you to...save your lives by a great deliverance. And, it is not you that sent me here, but God (Genesis, Chapter 45:4-8).

It might seem odd to say, but one of the hard things about really understanding this story is that it is so familiar to us. As we study it each year, we know already how it's all going to turn out. But if we step back for a moment, and we read this as if we were reading it for the first time, Joseph's decision is really an astonishing conclusion. Joseph, in a foreshadowing of Moses's farewell address to the children of Israel, chooses to choose life, "For God did send me before you for the *preservation of life*."

This is Joseph as an improviser; as an interpreter of his own dreams. In choosing to preserve life, despite his childhood trauma, Joseph has discovered the next link in the chain that connects together everything in his own life with the best that has come before him and the best that is yet to come.

In searching for and finally finding the "correct" meaning of his own life, Joseph becomes a beloved figure in Jewish history so much so that he is known to us today as *Yosef hatzadik*, Joseph the righteous one.

Few people can rise to the heights of a Joseph, but all of us can identify with the way that Joseph eventually created a kind of order out of a seeming chaos. Stuff happens. The question is though how do we best respond?

Zeke's Story

Imagine that you haven't been feeling very well for a few weeks. You've lost weight--more than 30 pounds in three weeks, you're constantly thirsty, and you've been going to the bathroom more frequently than ever before in your life. One rainy Friday afternoon, your mom picks you up from school and takes you to see to your pediatrician to figure out what's going on. After taking a sample of your urine and asking you a few questions, the doctor recommends to your mother that she get you to the nearest hospital as fast as possible.

Just two hours later, the blood tests results come back, and the doctor from the hospital walks in to your room with a gloomy look on his face. Speaking to your parents and not to you directly, the doctor states flatly, "Your son has Juvenile Diabetes. His glucose levels were about 500 where the normal human range doesn't go beyond 120." You learn that you will need to stay in the hospital for the rest of weekend so that the doctors can stabilize you and teach you about injections and insulin.

As Zeke told me this story, he explained more to me about diabetes.

It is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life. The cause of diabetes is a mystery, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles. It is estimated that about 6.3% of the American population is currently living with diabetes. About 5.2 million [people] are unaware that they have it. Diabetes has many life threatening complications that if go unnoticed can be fatal.

Zeke continued to explain that diabetes dramatically increases the likelihood of heart disease and stroke. It is the leading cause of blindness among adults. It is one of the causes of renal disease and lower limb amputations. In general, people with diabetes are more like to suffer from a host of other diseases including influenza and pneumonia. Once they get these diseases, they have a worse prognosis than other patients who don't have diabetes.

Stuff happens, and this time it all happened to Zeke. He and his family were devastated by the bad news. "Constant injections, lessons, and endless tears were now becoming a daily routine and I hated every moment of it!"

Zeke's Search for Meaning

It was time to improvise, but how do you make sense out of something like this? Thinking back about his lonely ordeal more than three years later Zeke says, "I looked deep into myself and discovered that there must be a reason why God had chosen to give me this disease instead of someone else. It was my job to learn from this experience and make a change." The prison Zeke found himself in was not a physical prison like Joseph's, but was the prison of his disease.

The following year, Zeke—now a senior in high school— was feeling much better. When it came time to choose a location for a three month internship program run by his school, Zeke decided to volunteer his services at the Diabetes Association of Greater Los Angeles. This job had its drawbacks, especially the two hour daily bus commute. But Zeke says, "For the first time I felt that I could work hard and actually make a difference."

During the internship, Zeke was extremely motivated to do a good job. He spent endless hours, checking his data entry to make sure that he didn't make any mistakes. What to most people would have been a tedious grind, to Zeke was one of the most meaningful activities of his young life. Because Zeke had personally experienced the trauma of learning that he had diabetes, his routine work was transformed. He was contributing, in however modest a way, to research that was designed to help kids with diabetes live longer and better lives.

After the internship was over, Zeke decided to continue volunteering at the Diabetes Association. "I spoke with the director and told her that I wanted to help in the program that they were going to run in May. This program was going to help the elderly with monitoring all of their health tests and teach them how to ask their doctors the right questions and give them insight on a healthier lifestyle." Upon completion of this project, Zeke felt a wonderful feeling of accomplishment like nothing else he had ever felt in his life.

Today Zeke says that “diabetes constantly plays a role in my life. The decisions that I make based on my experience with the disease are defining moments that leave an impact.”

So how does Zeke cope with a serious and potentially life-threatening disease like diabetes? Zeke has successfully integrated his experience into his life’s story. His disease and his ability to cope with it by giving back to the community is integral to him. “These stories are important to me in understanding my life and the role I play in it.”

Zeke says, “I feel as though God had given me not only a disease, but rather a window of opportunity to make a change in this world for the better.” As I think about Zeke’s mature reaction and as I study his words carefully, I can’t help but think back to the story of Joseph. In Zeke’s attitude and expressions, I hear a faint echo from Joseph’s story. Zeke is discovering his own link connecting him to Joseph’s ancient chain.

Zeke concludes that his “defining moment” is not one of a single occurrence; rather it is a constant flow of events that help me in realizing what kind of a person I really am. I truly believe that through diabetes my ethics and values have made a leap in making an everlasting change in this world. I continue to live hoping to help others in any way that I can.” These are Zeke’s words and not mine, but having gotten to know Zeke for the past few months I truly believe them.

Natan Sharansky Again

Meaning, and the search for it, is a powerful motivating force. But just how powerful is it really? Many psychologists have accepted this idea that human beings do have a need for meaning. They may call it self-actualization, or something like that, but what they’re really talking about is meaning.

Abraham Maslow was one of the most articulate and outspoken psychologists to have made this claim. Nevertheless, he believed that this need for living a meaningful life could not emerge unless lower level needs were already satisfied. He said that the hungry man can’t think about anything else except his own hunger. Perhaps this is true, but it doesn’t mean that humans will always *act* on these thoughts. In fact, there are ethical heroes, both historical and contemporary, who when faced with life’s ultimate challenges will choose with care and reason to put aside their own physiological needs in favor of their vision of what it means to live a life of integrity and connection. Simply put, they believe that some values are worth dying for.

Let’s return to Natan Sharansky. What motivated him to stand up to the KGB? From what source or sources did he derive the energy to stand up against the evil of the Soviet Empire? Life’s circumstances were not always kind to Sharansky. That’s obvious. But how one chooses to react and respond to these circumstances is what life is all about.

What Zeke’s story says implicitly, Natan Sharnasky says explicitly, “The only way out was to hold on fiercely to my own world. No matter how difficult it was, I had to *preserve the link* with

my former environment and my values (p. 47, emphasis added).

Becoming the Author of One's Own Story

But, how does one accomplish this? In prison, Sharansky began to author and edit his own powerful narrative (not literally, of course, but figuratively). "I felt long ago that the meaning of life came be discovered only when you challenge fate and destiny, when you tear yourself away from the numbing iron embraces of 'social,' 'historical,' and other necessities" (p. 374). In other words, Sharansky's advice is that each of us has to find his or her own unique voice appropriate to one's own historical circumstances.

His was a story that connected him to the greatest characters of all time, real and fictional. "Socrates and Don Quixote, Ulysses and Gargantua, Oedipus and Hamlet, had rushed to my aid. I felt a spiritual bond with these figures; their struggles reverberated with my own, their laughter with mine. They accompanied me through prisons and cams, through cells and transports" (p. 361).

In further elaborating on the deep connection he felt with these classical heroes, Sharansky writes:

I was inspired by Ulysses, with his wit, his stubbornness and his enormous curiosity—even on the edge of the abyss. There was Gargantua, whose physical strength and laughter broke through all the borders of this world. And Antigone—pressed by fate, she refused to violate the basic, eternal values, and saw her mission as bringing love, not hate. And Don Quixote—a dreamer who enjoyed life to the fullest, in contrast to the dull players around him. All of these characters, it seemed to me, hurried toward me from various countries and across the centuries. "You see," they told me, "there is nothing new in this world of ours. But how much there is that is worth living for—and, if necessary, worth dying for as well." (P. 83)

He found some of his strongest inspiration in the words of King David. On the eve of his incarceration, his wife Avital had given him, as a gift, a small volume containing the book of Psalms. In jail, it was this book that he kept with him at all times and that he read and re-read. Sharansky quotes Psalm 39 as the model he tried to emulate in defying the KGB:

I resolved I would watch my step
Lest I offend by my speech;
I would keep my mouth muzzled
while the wicked man was in my presence.
I was dumb, silent;
I held my peace
While my pain was intense.

Sharansky imagined himself living in dialogue with the great religious spokesmen, philosophers, scientists, and kings. He knew how they lived their lives must necessarily affect the way he lived

his own life. Further, he boldly imagined that what he did mattered not only to himself, but his actions would somehow also affect the great leaders of the past.

He describes an almost mystical feeling. He calls it a “reverse connection.” According to Sharansky, “not only was it important to me how these characters behaved in various circumstances, but it was also important to *them*, who had been created many centuries ago, to know how I was acting today. And just as they had influenced the conduct of individuals in many lands and over many centuries, so I, too, with my decisions and choices had the power to inspire or disenchant those who had existed in the past as well as those who would come in the future” (p. 361).

In the Pirkei Avot, we discover that the best teacher or student is like a sieve (and not a funnel)—“which lets the course flour pass out and retains the fine flour” (Chapter 5, Mishna 15). This describes Sharansky’s approach to tradition.

In fact, in one especially poignant moment, Sharansky finds himself struggling with Galileo’s decision to recant to the Inquisition. Sharansky considers Galileo one of the all time greats, but this doesn’t mean that his behavior should be accepted and emulated in every case.

Sharansky finds fault in Galileo’s capitulation, however much Galileo did not really mean what he said. He believes that because Galileo was so great, his precedent to cave in when confronted with his “unorthodox” beliefs, even though it is three and a half centuries old now, provides a poor model for those of us who have come after. “His very fame undoubtedly multiplied the number of individuals in various times and places who cited his great name in order to justify their own moral failure, caused by an inertia of fear, and who argued that what they told the authorities was less important than the fact that “it moves” (p. 362).

Ironically, Sharansky, even though he staunchly disagreed with Galileo, was able to learn from him. He strengthened his own will to fight on by reminding himself that his own actions will soon become a precedent to the next generation.

As important as Sharansky found his dialogue with these historical figures from both his own Jewish heritage and the broader western tradition, Sharansky does not paint himself devoid of real feeling and emotion. He’s no stick figure.

If one’s story is only a kind of philosophical dissertation then it is doubtful that it will be able to provide sufficient impetus for it to do what we want it to do. In the end, everyone of our stories has to answer the question “why bother at all?” Quite literally, it is our special stories that move us.

Think back to Joseph. His decision to forgive his brothers and to save their lives is no doubt something that he, in his calmest moments, would find intellectually satisfying. But, if we study Joseph’s story more carefully, there is a deep and abiding love for his brothers that Joseph can no longer contain. “Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him. Let every man go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known to his

brothers. And he wept aloud” (Genesis 45: 1-2).

Zeke’s story was also one that was not only intellectually satisfying to him, but more importantly, it was a story that allowed him to express his bottled-up emotions. In helping others, he was helping heal himself more than anyone else.

In the end, Sharansky, too, found his sense of purpose not just in how he thought, but in how he felt. On this point, Sharansky is about as clear as anyone could be. Throughout his years in the Gulag, his one fixed point was the love he felt for his wife Avital:

The coordinates in my life changed many times, and there were moments when I doubted almost everybody. Archimedes called for one fixed point to move the world. For twelve years I continually relied on my own fixed point—Avital—even as our globe was spinning, throwing us madly from one situation to another. (p. 121)

I guess it’s obvious, but it’s still worth stating explicitly. A meaning or a purpose that is devoid of real, live human relationships is no meaning at all. In searching for meaning, we’re not looking for just any old link in the chain, but we’re looking for the golden link. When you finally find it, you know it’s right because it is intellectually defensible and emotionally satisfying.

You know you will have found the golden link when you can answer yes to all of the following questions:

Is my interpretation of events true to my historical roots?

Does it honor my tradition but not idolize it?

Does the story that I am telling allow me to live fully in the moment?

Does it recognize that today’s actions will lead to tomorrow’s realities?

Does my story make me a more complex person?

Does my interpretation enlarge my sense of community?

Does it bring me closer to those I love?

Can I explain my version of what is happening to an impartial judge?

Am I proud to take responsibility for my story?

Finally, if I act upon my interpretation of events, will my action get me to where I want to go?

Conclusion

Joseph, Zeke, and Natan Sharansky were all victims. Joseph was the victim of his brothers’ jealousy. Zeke was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. Natan Sharansky became a pawn in the politics of the cold war.

What Joseph, Zeke, and Natan Sharansky have in common is their mindful decisions not to define themselves as victims. Each of them found a positive meaning to their suffering. Joseph realized that his youthful dreams meant that he would be given the opportunity to help save his family from a deadly famine. Zeke used his disease as an opportunity help others with the same

disease. Sharansky became a powerful symbol of the power of one person to stand up against the state.

The meaning that each of these people discovered became a powerful motivating force in their lives. Joseph, Zeke, and Natan Sharansky learned how to look at themselves and their own lives in a kind of detached way. Each of them cultivated a kind of profound acceptance. They did this not to live a detached and emotionless life, but to live a deeper, richer, and more purposeful life, a life of integrity and connectedness.

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Eight

Respect

Let the honor of your fellow man be as precious to you as your own. (Avot: Chapter 2, Mishna 10)

What happens when we lose the human ability to honor and respect one another? How bad can things get?

I keep a newspaper article from the **Jerusalem Post** on my desk at school so that every student who comes into my office can read it. The article appeared in 1996, about a month before Yigal Amir's murder of Yitchak Rabin. The title of the article is "They Will Share the Guilt."

The article, written by two Jewish writers associated with the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, hints about the possibility of Rabin's assassination. In the article, the authors document the harsh and incendiary public statements of a prominent rabbi attacking Rabin's political policies, implying that Rabin, a former military hero of Israel, was now a traitor to the state.

The authors suggested, with deadly accuracy, that if and when Rabin is assassinated, it is precisely these leaders--who are undercutting the most basic premises of Israeli democracy--who will be to blame.

Re-reading this article with the advantage of 20-20 hindsight is uncomfortable and disturbing, but it also provides a powerful argument in favor of recognizing our responsibility to strengthen society's fragile democratic institutions and values. These values include respecting others, non-coercion, transparency, equal rights, freedom of expression, pluralism, compromise, individual and communal responsibility, and many others.

For those who still insist that Yigal Amir was a crazy young man acting alone, this article provides a powerful wake-up call. Amir did murder Rabin, but he did so in order to realize his teachers' anti-democratic ideals. In thinking back about what happened, one can easily trace the slippery slope from a basic lack of respect for a fellow human being (I disagree with your politics to you're a traitor) to his cold-blooded murder (you're dead).

Moral Decay

Rabin's assassination is a particularly severe symptom of moral decay in the Jewish community. Unfortunately, it is not the only symptom.

Consider the damage and loss of trust within and towards the Jewish community caused by the well-publicized Satmar School Scandal in Brooklyn, New York. According to the New York

Times and Jewish Week reports, after a five year investigation, the once well-respected, Rabbi Hertz Frankel, principal of the Beth Rachel school, pleaded guilty to felony charges involving no show teachers, fund diversions, false job titles, and clear breaches of separation of church and state.

Rabbi Frankel, with the help of high placed public school officials, designed an elaborate scheme to bilk the public school system out of \$6 million. Among other crimes, Rabbi Frankel provided the school district with lists of women with appropriate academic credentials to be put on the districts payroll. These teachers, though, never worked at the school. Rather school officials cashed the checks and used the money to pay other women-lacking the appropriate professional credentials—who were deemed by Rabbi Frankel to be better teachers and role models for his young students. The women, whose names were being inappropriately used, happily accepted this arrangement since they were able to use the health insurance benefits these jobs provided. Rabbi Frankel explained the ruse tersely, “We only want Satmar teachers for Satmar girls.”

On April 9, 1999, Rabbi Frankel was sentenced to three years unsupervised probation, and Beth Rachel had to pay a fine of \$1 million. Although a significant portion of the school district’s money remained unaccounted for, Rabbi Frankel and his attorney, Nat Lewin, claim that he was more a victim than a criminal, noting that Rabbi Frankel did not personally benefit from these activities and that three officials at the school district actually approved the scheme.

Even after entering his guilty plea, Rabbi Frankel seemed unapologetic. In a New York Times interview, Rabbi Frankel continued to insist publicly that “the ends justify the means,”-- his words not mine.

If Rabbi Frankel and his attorney were the only ones who held to this view it probably wouldn’t be worthwhile to spend too much time on this issue. Unfortunately, as we all know, the attitude that the ends justify the means is a well-accepted dictum in some quarters.

For example, just a few months after Rabbi Frankel pleaded guilty, in an unrelated incident, Rabbi Elimelech Naiman, a former deputy director of Brooklyn’s largest Jewish community council (COJO), was sentenced to two years in jail for misappropriating more than \$300,000 in government funds. Rabbi Naiman’s excuse is remarkably similar to Rabbi Frankel’s. He did not personally benefit from the misappropriated funds, but, his defenders argued, the monies were used for appropriate organizational ends (as if this makes everything okay).

In the real world, of course, it is impossible to completely separate the ends from the means. Justifying illegal and unethical actions in the name of some higher principle is the argument of last resort and is always symptomatic of a deeper problem. Means *are* ends, and ends *are always* means for other, more distant, ends.

Is There an Antidote to Moral Decay?

These three incidents document what happens as the concept of a binding morality loses its force; society unravels. I believe there is an antidote to the kind of moral decay described in the

above unfortunate incidents and it is embedded in Rabbi Eliezer's statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter. "Let the honor of your fellow man be as precious to you as your own." This seemingly simple prescription is a kind of moral minimum necessary for any community that aspires to call itself moral.

When Rabbi Frankel states that "the ends justify the means," he is demeaning and dehumanizing his fellow citizens from whom he has already stolen millions of dollars. He is saying, in effect, his own interests trump everyone else's. He believes this to such an extent that he thinks it's okay for him to steal in order to make sure his students are given what he thinks is the best possible education. This, of course, is the exact opposite of Rabbi Eliezer's prescription and hardly the legacy Rabbi Frankel himself would really want to leave to his students if he thought about it for very long.

Ironically, as Rabbi Frankel withholds his honor and respect from his fellow citizens, he dishonors and shows disrespect to himself and his own tradition even more! One of the lessons then from these kinds of stories is that it is impossible to disentangle one's own honor and respect from the honor and respect one shows to others. That's why in another Mishna, the Pirkei Avot teaches us in the name of Ben Zoma, "Who is honored? He who honors others" (Chapter 4, Mishna 1). Or, in Rabbi Frankel's case we might formulate this mishna in the negative, Who is dishonored? He who dishonors others.

But, how do we begin to learn how to honor and respect others in our everyday lives? The story that Josh told me provides a good example to consider.

Nathan's Secret

Josh is a 21 year-old college student who works most weekends as a counselor at a home for mentally disabled adults in Brooklyn. The home is run by a well-known state-funded Jewish agency. It is hard work, mentally and physically. Josh recently described it to me as follows:

The home in which I work consists of eight, older, high functioning Jewish males. On an average weekend, there are three counselors working. Our job is to help the clients go about their daily functions. We eat with them, help them shave, and make sure that they shower properly.

Josh is an intelligent and capable young man of high ideals and aspirations. Why has he decided to work in such a high pressure and no-glamour environment? It's certainly not for the working conditions, salary, or prestige. Josh works at this Jewish agency because he finds his work there meaningful and, as he puts it, "emotionally rewarding." Despite all of its difficulties, Josh loved his job working with mentally disabled men. In fact, his manager was considering retirement, and Josh had high hopes of replacing him in the not too distant future. As a young man with few family or financial obligations, he could afford a job, at least for the short term, where the pay was low but the psychological rewards were high.

Although Josh recalls that he was apprehensive when a new counselor was hired to work with

him, in a short time, Josh and the new hire, Nathan, were getting along quite well. Nathan was about the same age as Josh, and they quickly discovered that they both enjoyed some of the same hobbies like reading science fiction novels and skiing. They liked spending time together at work and joking around with each other whenever their job assignments allowed it. There were never those awkward silences where Josh or Nathan might feel uncomfortable with each other.

About a month after Nathan had started working at the home, Nathan was feeling more confident and self-assured. On Friday night, after completing their chores for the evening, Nathan and Josh began a lively conversation about their religious beliefs.

Both Josh and Nathan realized how their choice of work was strongly influenced by their shared heritage and upbringing. Josh and Nathan had both gone to Jewish day schools where *gemilut chasidim* (acts of loving kindness) were constantly emphasized as an essential and non-negotiable aspect of Judaism.

They also made the discovery that their parents shared a passion for philanthropy and were always trying to help out the least well-off members of society. Whenever someone in synagogue did not have a place to eat Shabbat dinner, Josh's parents would always invite them over. Nathan's parents were known best for their work in helping out recent Russian immigrants by finding them furniture and other daily necessities. If either of them had any complaint about their parents, it was that maybe sometimes they spent *too* much time helping others!

As this conversation continued into the early morning hours, it took an odd and unfamiliar turn. Suddenly, Nathan made what seemed like a strange observation to Josh. Here's how Josh described the discussion. "Nathan mentioned that a situation arose where he felt it necessary for his spiritual growth to desecrate Shabbat to take a subway to a specific *schul* [synagogue] in midtown to see how they *davened*."

Josh was baffled and confused by Nathan's remarks. Why would Nathan want to desecrate Shabbat? And, how would this help his spiritual development? Weren't there plenty of *schul*s in Brooklyn? What was so special about this particular synagogue in midtown Manhattan?

I had no idea what he was talking about and he tried to change the subject, but I pressed the issue. Finally, he confessed; the *schul* that he wanted to go to was a gay and lesbian *schul*. I was quite shocked. I suddenly felt a little weird about the massage that he had given me earlier.

Josh had never met a gay person before, and although it seemed strange to him at first to learn that Nathan was gay, he quickly "got used to working with Nathan." Josh was certainly surprised and caught off balance, but upon reflection, this news didn't really change his opinion much of Nathan. According to Josh, Nathan was still the same Nathan, and it certainly did not affect his ability to perform his job duties.

When Josh's boss heard that Nathan was gay from another counselor, though, he was upset and wanted to fire Nathan immediately. As Josh tells it,

The problem was that they had no reason to fire him for he was a good worker. If they got rid of him with no good reason he could sue the organization for discrimination and they could lose their government funding...My manager wanted me to lie and back up his claim that Nathan was lazy and took a lot of long breaks and generally shirked his responsibilities.

With so many leaders and role models in both the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds saying and acting as if the ends really do justify the means, it is no wonder that Josh felt so conflicted. On the one hand, he wanted his promotion and he knew that if he lied to help his boss, the manager's job would probably be his in the not too distant future. Besides, perhaps, Nathan *really was* a potential danger to the clients (or, was this just a rationalization?). On the other hand, Josh had come to appreciate Nathan and had grown fond of him. Again, in Josh's words, "I asked myself, what type of person am I? I am an honest God fearing Jew. What does such a person do in this situation?"

After some serious soul-searching, Josh realized that a God fearing Jew *doesn't lie and bring harm to others*. "So I chose not to do it. I told my manager that I just could not do it. He was quite annoyed and our relationship was never the same from then on."

In the end, Josh tells me, Nathan was fired anyway and Josh himself was passed over for the job promotion. "As for me," Josh says, "I feel content that I made the right decision. I believe that I am now a better person for it. I tested the principles for which I stand and reaffirmed them. I am stronger and now ready to face a new more difficult challenge."

As I think about Josh's tale, I can't help but contrast his attitude to Rabbi Frankel's. Josh simply does not accept the idea that the ends justify the means. In fact, Josh escapes Rabbi Frankel's ill fate because he continues to respect and honor Nathan as a fellow human being even after he learns that Nathan is not exactly who he originally thought he was. Despite the fundamental differences between them, Josh continues to see a precious dignity in Nathan's person.

Josh's story makes vivid the power and tension inherent in Rabbi Eliezer's statement. It's easy to show respect to those people who look and think just like you, the real moral challenge and contemporary need is to learn how to respect those people who aren't like you.

Josh's Secret

Respect and honor are the basic building blocks for all social groups, whether it be a married couple, a family, a synagogue, a city, a country, or even a "global community." Regardless of the size, every group requires its members to treat one another with basic human decency.

As I was writing this chapter, I took a break to pick up my daughter from school. Driving down to pick her up, I was stuck in an unusual traffic jam. Apparently, some time earlier in the afternoon someone had driven into the traffic light and knocked it over. As I finally passed through the intersection, I saw the traffic light lying on the ground. I couldn't help but think of

this damaged and broken traffic light as a metaphor for the loss of respect in a community. Without the traffic light, bedlam reigned. The first guy to the intersection wins!

We now know what Nathan's secret was, but what's Josh's secret? What is it that Josh knows that his boss has apparently forgotten? Here's a list of seven possibilities:

1-In order to respect someone else, you have to respect yourself first. Josh knew that if he caved into his bosses demand and lied about Nathan's job performance that he would not only be diminishing Nathan's dignity, but he would be harming himself, as well. It takes great confidence and self-assurance in your own beliefs and attitudes to stand up to someone like Josh's boss.

Where does this self-respect come from? In Josh's case it was probably his upbringing, his parents, his elementary and high school teachers, and his own emerging sense of identity. Josh is clearly a thinking person and someone who takes himself seriously.

2-In order to show respect, you may have to make a sacrifice. Or, as they say, "no pain--no gain." In Josh's case, he was willing to jeopardize his job promotion in order to help Nathan. This doesn't mean that Josh is worse off after the fact. In fact, Josh believes he's better off and he puts it plainly. "I believe that I am now a better person for it. I tested the principles for which I stand and reaffirmed them. I am stronger and now ready to face a new more difficult challenge."

3-Showing respect for someone else makes you respectable. I don't know a lot about Josh's boss. I've never met him, and I don't even know his real name. The one thing I can tell you about him, though, is that noone would think of featuring him in an ethics text book as an example of an ethical leader.

Josh, by contrast, *is* a quiet leader. In the end, he couldn't save Nathan's job and he didn't get his own promotion, but, in a small way, his example of courage and his strength of character make it easier for the rest of us to stand up for what we believe in. If Josh can do it, so can we.

4-You can't always look to an authority figure for ethical guidance. In Josh's case, it's the authority figure who puts him in his difficult situation to begin with. It's his boss who is asking him to lie to make it easier for him to fire Nathan.

Here's a thought experiment. Suppose Josh's identical twin brother was working in an identical home and was faced with an identical dilemma. But, unlike Josh, his twin decides to lie about Nathan saying that he doesn't show up to work on time and is delinquent in carrying out his chores. Suppose further that his brother defends his actions by stating that "well...it's okay. I'm just following orders. It's part of my job."

To me this would be a chilling defense, especially as I remember those infamous historical figures who used this exact logic to defend some of the most evil crimes in history.

In the end, what Josh's story shows in its quiet way is that ultimately each one of us is

responsible for his or her own actions. When it comes to ethics, we must necessarily take ownership of our own actions. So even though Josh was fortunate to have been brought up in a positive and nurturing environment, it is now his turn to stand up and decide what kind of person he's going to be.

5-Respect is not love. As I think about Josh's story, a few things jump out at me. First, Josh never socialized with Nathan outside of the work environment. Second, Josh makes no mention of staying in touch with Nathan after he was fired. Third, Josh doesn't justify his actions in terms of trying to help Nathan retain his position. His stated motivation is that he will not make up lies that will harm someone else...anybody else.

6-Respect is not approval. Nowhere in his description of what happened with Nathan does Josh explain his attitude about homosexuality. In a kind of nervous, humorous aside, he does say that he "felt kind of funny about the massage" that Nathan had given him earlier but Josh doesn't really seem to be too bothered by this.

I think the reason why Josh doesn't discuss his attitude about homosexuality as he discusses this situation is because he realizes that this would miss the entire point of his dilemma. To bring in the issue of homosexuality would be to mis-frame what is happening. In Josh's mind the ethical issue is black and white. His boss wants him to lie and he knows that this would be "bearing false witness." The difficulty for Josh was simply whether or not he "was strong enough to make that [the correct] choice."

To be able to maintain this distinction between respect and approval is not easy. So many of us become overly moralistic when we see someone doing something that we don't like. And, often times, these powerful feelings make us forget the respect that every human being is due.

7-Respect may not always be enough. Although, I think in Josh's case respect probably *was* enough. I think by simply refusing to lie Josh did what he had to do, and what he could reasonably be expected to do given these circumstances.

Nevertheless, it is worth raising the question of whether he could have done more here. Just how far does respect require us to go? Josh might have decided to be more proactive. For example, he might have warned his boss that he would defend Nathan if it ever came to that in court. Or, Josh might have tried to contact Nathan after he was fired and reassure him that he believed Nathan was doing a good job. Perhaps Josh could have discussed this issue with some of his co-workers. Josh might have taken Nathan's questions to him about going to the gay *schul* more seriously. As Josh tells the story, he never responded to these obviously painful questions.

I think the reason why respect may not always be enough is that it's such a fragile attitude to maintain. It's extremely difficult to continue to respect someone day after day in the absence of a deeper emotional attachment. If we respect someone without caring about them, it's way too easy to underestimate what respect really requires from us.

I know as a teacher that I have a special responsibility to respect everyone of my students,

regardless of my personal likes and dislikes. But, in the interest of full disclosure, I can tell you that it is infinitely easier to respect someone that you actually care about than someone you dislike. It is possible to respect someone with out caring about them, but keep in mind that there is a danger in this, as well.

Conclusion

This chapter began with two question. What happens when we lose the human ability to honor and respect one another? And, How bad can things get? According to Jewish tradition, pretty bad. The ancient rabbis believed that one of the reasons why the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed was because of *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred). If we understand this *sinat chinam* as an expression of a lack of human respect, the message here is a powerful one. Simply put, without mutual respect a community cannot keep it together. If so, we must continually ask ourselves, what it is that respect entails?

It is easy to acknowledge from a purely intellectual viewpoint that every single one of us is created in God's image. This is why we are all equal. What is much more difficult is to live your everyday life mindful of this core belief. Does our daily behavior mirror our faith? Josh is just now learning how important this question can be.

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Nine

Caring

*Make for yourself a friend and judge everyone charitably.
(Avot: Chapter 1, Mishnah 6)*

In the previous chapter, Josh provided an example of what it means to respect or to honor someone. One of the main reasons for discussing Josh' dilemma was to underscore the difficulty of implementing this principle in the real world. The difficulty is that ethics demands from us not only that we respect the people that are *most like us*, but it also requires us to respect people that are *different from us* in one way or another.

Josh's boss wanted him to lie about Nathan's ability to perform his work at the home. Josh may or may not have approved of Nathan's homosexuality—we don't know because Josh didn't feel this issue was relevant in this situation—but Josh was not willing to harm him even if it meant given up his job promotion. After all was said and done, Josh felt good that he had stood up to his boss. So, although its difficult to respect others it's not beyond our capabilities.

Respect is an antidote for moral decay. But respect alone may not always be enough. As philosophers like to say, it is a *necessary* condition for community but not a *sufficient* condition. Care, at its best, includes respect, but is something deeper and more inclusive.

In the dictionary, to respect someone is “to avoid harming” or “interfering” with him or her. To care for someone is “to like him or her” or “to feel affection.” Josh respected Nathan, but it is at best unclear if he cared about him (in this technical sense).

From a Jewish perspective, it would be an impossible morality that always expected everyone to like everyone else (respect is usually hard enough). Nevertheless, ethics does ask us to work hard and consistently at extinguishing our unjustified prejudices towards one another. This task requires much effort and a high degree of self-awareness and self-scrutiny. These are the kinds of prejudices that hold us hostage to unexamined and negative assumptions about whole classes of people (usually the kind of people that we meet only infrequently). What often makes this work so hard is how deeply ingrained some of these prejudices can be.

To the extent that your successful at this task of uncovering these unjustified negative attitude towards others, one can easily imagine respect blossoming into care and friendship. Joshua ben Perachiah taught “make for yourself a friend and judge everyone charitably.” I'd like to turn this Mishna around and interpret as follows: Judge everyone charitably (stop being prejudiced) and *this is exactly how* you will make for yourself a friend. As you'll see soon, this is what worked for Jon.

Jon's Fear

I've known Jon for a few years now. He's a good student. He's bright, friendly, and he works hard. This past summer, Jon worked as an intern at a brokerage firm in New York City.

Jon's assignment for the summer was to call potential investors and to interest them in a bond fund which, at the time, was paying pretty good interest rates. Jon, with his outgoing personality and pleasant speaking style, enjoyed the work despite its routine nature. He knew that he really didn't want to make "cold calls" for a living, but Jon felt that just being in a professional environment would help him no matter what he does after graduation. Besides, no matter how boring the work really was, he could talk it up when it came time to interview for a full-time position.

The firm that Jon was working at was going through a down cycle the summer he was there. This really didn't affect Jon too much. Actually, since the firm had just laid off a number of full-time employees, Jon got to share a pretty nice office with a couple of other interns. What was even better was that the two interns he shared the office with were good friends from college.

Jon and his friends attend Yeshiva University, a Jewish university that requires students to take a rigorous Judaic Studies program along with their secular courses.

The summer Jon was working at the brokerage firm, he and his friends were preoccupied by the horrible news coming out of Israel. It seemed that almost everyday there was news of another suicide bombing. Jon and his friends had all been to Israel just a few years before and all of them have friends and family who are still there. When Jon and his friends weren't on the telephone selling bonds they were usually discussing, debating, and arguing about what Israel could do. Jon couldn't fathom the "cruel and barbaric ways of the Muslims," as he put it to me. They talked incessantly about Israel and its problems, not that they thought they could really change Israeli or Palestinian policies, but Israel was what they cared about.

About a week into the summer, Jon's boss came in and introduced a new intern who would be sharing the office with him and his friends. The boss said, "meet the new intern – Mohamed – he will be assisting you with the project." Without missing a beat, an uncomfortable and self-conscious Mohamed asked his new co-workers to please call him Alan.

Jon describes his own reaction to this news as follows. "We all looked at each other in shock, we were not accustomed to working with Muslims as many sects of Muslims hate Jews. After a minute of silence I finally approached Alan and introduced myself."

Of course, another reason why Jon and his friends had never worked with a Muslim is that all three of the young men had attended Jewish day schools from kindergarten through high school, and were now attending a Jewish university. Given this, there really wasn't much opportunity to meet Christians, let alone Muslims!

"Working with the new intern produced an uncomfortable situation," to say the least. "Reading

all the articles and seeing all the pictures after every suicide bombing caused us to hate every Muslim even if we had not met them before. This made us dislike Alan from the moment he stepped into our office.”

From the time Alan started working with Jon and his friends, the animated political conversations which had so characterized the first week of work stopped immediately. The tiny community of Jon and his two friends was altered forever. With no warning, here was this unknown, strange, and exotic figure who had been thrust into their midst.

Jon and his friends trusted one another from day one. They shared a common heritage, a common background, and similar personal histories. They dressed alike, talked alike, and had many other mutual friends outside of the office. They didn't necessarily share all the same values and ideas—that's why their conversations during the first week were so interesting—but at the end of the day, they knew in their heart of hearts that they all belonged to the same “moral community.”

Despite differences, and even substantial differences in some cases, these three friends shared a deep and maybe even “spiritual” sense of connection. But, at what cost?

For sure, Jon and his friends tried not to mistreat Alan in anyway (translation: they tried to “respect” Alan). On the other hand, they did exclude Alan from their inside jokes, and he was left behind everyday at lunch to fend for himself. Simply put, Alan was not a member of their small work community.

Pangs of Guilt

Jon, though, began to feel pangs of guilt about how he was treating his brand new co-worker. At first, Jon tried to manage the guilt by “remembering all the suffering and pain the Muslims were causing to the Jews in Israel.” This strategy didn't work. As much as Jon feared Alan, he couldn't help but feel sorry for Alan, too. Perhaps Jon imagined himself as Alan. How would he like to be treated if the situation was reversed?

So Jon tried another tack. “I tried to think of reasons why Alan might be different than the Muslims that I had learned to hate. I conjectured that Alan was a non-religious Muslim and did not associate himself with the Muslim community.”

In other words, Jon wondered and hoped that perhaps Alan had cut himself off from his own community. To Jon, this would make it easier to begin to trust Alan and to be more open with him.

Interestingly, a close reading of Jon's statement shows that Jon himself knew that his hate for Muslims was not something that had originally come from inside of himself, but was something that he had picked up along the way, as he correctly put it, “I had learned to hate.” But, what one has learned, one can unlearn.

Jon's hope that Alan wasn't a real Muslim proved to be false. As the days went by, it became clear that Alan, like Jon, was a deeply religious person. He prayed five times a day and scrupulously observed the laws of Ramadan.

Jon's emotions though kept getting the best of him. Maybe he was remembering the same song that Natan Sharansky kept singing while he was locked away in the Gulag. "The entire world is a narrow bridge, and the important thing is not to be afraid at all." Despite Alan's religious practices and background, Jon still felt that he needed to go out of his way and be nice to Alan. He now argued with himself that Alan "was not a suicide bomber nor was he a part of the Muslim sects that act in evil ways." As he focused on this emerging insight and began to see Alan as a unique person with his own desires, fears, and hopes, Jon started to overcome his initial dislike of Alan.

During the early weeks of the summer, Jon was obviously torn between his love and devotion for the state of Israel and his obvious desire and obligation to respect a fellow worker, no matter what his culture and background might be.

Borrowing from the sociologist Philip Selznick's categories, Jon felt the tension between the differing pulls of piety and civility, although I doubt he would put it in these terms. Selznick writes, that "The norms of civility are impersonal, rational, and inclusive, whereas piety is personal, passionate, and particularist."

To me, piety seems to be the more natural and primitive instinct. I like the way the philosopher George Santayan described it. "Piety, in its nobler sense, may be said to mean man's reverent attachment to the sources of his being and the steadying of his life by that attachment."

Piety is more emotional than rational. One loves one's family and home, one's own people and its traditions. Piety is the humble recognition that your personality is rooted deeply in the happenstance of your background and upbringing. Everyone has a history that predates his own birth and conscious choices. It is human nature to identify with and accept with gratitude the gifts of one's community and its traditions.

By contrast, civility can be formally defined as "behavior befitting a citizen." Civility doesn't appear naturally, rather it is the end product of hard and sustained work. It is an acquired trait, rather than an inherited trait. Selznick describes civility as "moderation in pursuit of one's own interests, and concern for the common good. In civility, respect, not love, is the salient value."

Most importantly, for my purposes, the goal of civility is to enlarge and strengthen the moral community. It strives not for a parochial ethic restricted to insiders, but for a universal morality where the boundary between insiders and outsiders is finally wiped away.

Jon's love and deep loyalty to the State of Israel is part of the very definition of who Jon is.

Jon's attitude toward Alan, by contrast, is much more tentative and experimental. Jon's felt obligation to reach out to Alan reflects Jon's developing awareness of a world beyond the one he

has known since childhood. This other world is mysterious, unpredictable, and scary. Still, there is an attraction and a growing intellectual realization that despite the surface differences between Alan's world and his own, at a deeper and more fundamental level, the similarities between Alan and him are more profound, or at least, they might be.

As all of us soon realize, there is no roadmap to get us from piety to civility and home again. In many ways, it looks as though piety and civility contradict one another. The more one is attached to one's traditions the less likely one will be inclined to accept a universal morality. I think this is exactly what made Jon's decision so difficult for him.

On the one hand, Jon felt a tug to reach out to Alan and include him in his small work community. On the other hand, the last thing Jon wanted to do was to be disloyal to his own people and to himself. Might befriending a Muslim at a brokerage firm in New York City while Jews in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv are being blown up by Muslim suicide bombers be an act of betrayal?

Digging Deeper

As Jon continued to reflect on his situation, he dug deeper and deeper into his own religious and ethical tradition. What else can any of us do but continue to examine who one really is? This is one of the great lessons Natan Sharansky teaches us:

For the activist Jews of my generation, our movement represented the exact opposite of what our parents had gone through when they were young. But we saw what had happened to their dreams, and we understood that the path to liberation could not be found in denying our own roots while pursuing universal goals. *On the contrary: we had to deepen our commitment, because only he who understands his own identity and has already become a free person can work effectively for the human rights of others* (p. xxii, emphasis added, **Fear No Evil**, New York: Random House, 1988).

Paradoxically, the more carefully Jon thought about what it means to be an authentic Jew, the clearer and more vivid his obligation to Alan became. It turned out, at least for Jon last summer, that piety doesn't contradict civility but rather piety is the foundation of civility.

As Jon thought about his predicament, he told me about the ancient story of Shimon ben Shetach, a rabbi who lived about 2,000 years ago. It happened once that the students of Shimon ben Shetach purchased donkey for him from an Arab. On the way back to Shimon ben Shetach, the students found an expensive pearl buried in the donkey's saddle bag. Upon reaching their teacher, the students told Shimon ben Shetach the good news. "Your are a wealthy man now, teacher, and you don't have to work for a living anymore, but can devote yourself full time to the study of Torah." Shimon ben Shetach looked at his students and said "what kind of person do you think I am?" "But," his students said, "everyone agrees that if you find a lost object belonging to a heathen you may keep it." Shimon ben Shetach was unmoved by this argument. "I would rather return the pearl to the heathen and have him bless God than have all the riches in the world."

As Jon explained it to me, Shimon ben Shetach's story shows that religion is not just about following the rules, but it provides us "models of aspirations," as well. Nobody told Shimon ben Shetach that he had to return the pearl, he just knew it was the right thing to do.

Jon finally decided that the Jewish concept of *Kiddush Hashem*, usually translated as the sanctification of God's name, was appropriate for his situation with Alan.

I began to think that maybe we should go out of our way to be nice to Alan by including him into our conversations and inviting him to eat lunch with us. Instead of ignoring Alan, which made us seem unfriendly to people who were not like us. I thought that going out of our way to be nice to him would create a big *Kiddush Hashem*. To create a *Kiddush Hashem* is one of the most precious things a Jew can do.

I began to realize that not all Muslims are associated with evil acts. I began by helping him with his job and I began to have some personal conversations with him. We discussed our backgrounds, families, hobbies, and goals in life. By the end of the summer, we became very friendly even though he was a religious Muslim and I was a religious Jew.

I would like to suggest to Jon, perhaps, it wasn't *in spite* of their religion that they became friends but it was *because* of their religion that they became friends. The story Jon tells about his own deliberations and thought processes would suggest that this is the case. Of course, we don't know what motivated Alan throughout this whole ordeal, but I would guess that he felt some of the exact same tension and confusions that Jon was feeling. And, perhaps he too allowed himself to become friendly with Jon for some of the same kinds of reasons—although no doubt formulated in a very different religious vocabulary.

Jon told me that he now thinks the business world "is one of the best places to create this *Kiddush Hashem*. This can be done in many different way and each person must find his way of accomplishing a *Kiddush Hashem* in the business world."

A pure secularist might suggest that we need to keep a strict separation of religion and business. She might argue that the civility, tolerance, and acceptance that is required in the modern pluralistic organization demands adherence to a universal code of ethics independent of one's parochial interests and backgrounds.

If this is the case, I think the secularist is asking for the impossible. A universal code of ethics can only exist if there already exists a universal moral community. To create this moral community requires that all of us start from where we are. Universal ethics is not something that comes from the top down, rather it is built—piece by piece—from the bottom up.

This is not to suggest that secularists must adopt a religious vocabulary like Jon or Alan in order to participate in this process. Just as a religious person needs to go back home again in order to participate fully in the broader society, so too a secular person needs to examine her own roots

and sources of morality, whether they be philosophical, literary, or even scientific.

Will Jon and Alan's friendship survive even more bombings and bloodshed? Noone can no. This will be up to Jon and Alan and how they decide to read and interpret their respective traditions. I think that Jon's final insight that "each person must find his way," should be a guiding light here.

How do we build and enlarge the moral community? Through hit and miss, Jon and Alan figured out a secret...one person at a time. And, how do we strengthen our own resolve to participate in this process? Perhaps the very first step is to enlarge and improve our own conceptions of our own identities. To go two steps forward, we need to go one step back. Maybe while Jon and Alan were learning how to sell bonds they were also learning something much more profound about themselves and about what it means to help build community.

Conclusion

I love Jon's story because it is such a hopeful one. To me it beautifully captures Joshua ben Perachiah's *mishna*: "make for yourself a friend and judge everyone charitably."

It turns out that these are not two distinct statements but a set of directions. Judge everyone charitably (stop being prejudiced) and *this is exactly how* you will make for yourself a friend. Jon overcame his initial prejudices against Alan and *this is exactly how* Alan became his friend. Jon accomplished this not by betraying his tradition, but by more fully understanding what it means to be Jewish.

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Ten

Journey Onwards

Each tribe was unwilling to be the first to enter the sea. Then sprang forward Nachshon the son of Amminadab and descended first into the sea. (Sotah 37a)

The children of Israel were thrown out of Egypt, almost against their will. But, as the Torah tells us, Pharaoh changed his mind one last time. “What is it we have done that we sent Israel away?” (Exodus 14:5), Pharaoh rhetorically asked, as he ordered the final attack on his former slaves.

The children of Israel are pinned against the sea. The strong scent of rebellion was in the air. “Moshe, let us alone so that we may serve Egypt” (Exodus 14:12).

Every man said to the other, “I will not go down into the deep waters.” Nachshon ben Amminadab, alone, stood up and silently plunged into the raging sea. The entire tribe of Judah followed his courageous example.

The talmud at Sotah 36b, in the name of Rabbi Yehuda, fills in the details and teaches us that it is because the tribe of Judah “sanctified God’s name” at the sea that Judah was granted dominion in Israel. Nachshon, until now, a relative unknown, demonstrated his unswerving faith. His *emunah* was a spark for others so much so that the chapter concludes by stating that the entire people of Israel “believed in God” (Exodus 14:31).

Nachshon overcame any doubts he may have had. He alone obeyed Moshe’s command to “journey onwards” (Exodus 14:15). Nachshon certainly must have feared for his own life, but in overcoming this fear, Nachshon demonstrated his worthiness.

Leaving it at this, however, misses the real point of this famous *misdrash*. Nachshon and all of the children of Israel faced an even greater fear than that of drowning in the sea.. An interpretation closer to the spirit of this text and the surrounding verses suggests that every man said to the other “I will not go down into the deep waters” not because of a fear that the waters would *not* split, but just the opposite. The real fear was that--it just might be the case--that the waters *would* split. Let me explain.

The children of Israel correctly sensed that this was not just any old moment in time, but this was the *point of no return*. If the waters split and they pass through to the other side of the sea, they will never be able to go back to Egypt. In the future, they may dream of returning, but the way back to where they have lived their entire lives has been forever closed. That’s scary!

The splitting waters are a path to freedom, but they also represent a permanent barrier to returning to Egypt. The Torah is explicit on this point. That's why God took them on a long-cut. "God guided them not through the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, perhaps the people will repent when they see war, and they will return to Egypt" (Exodus 13:17).

Choosing the path of no return is no easy task. At the binding of Isaac, for example, Abraham passed just such a test.

The "sanctification of God's name" does not reside in the fact that Nachshon believed in and relied on miracles. That can't be it. This story follows the dramatic ten plagues. Who other than a Pharaoh, whose heart has been hardened by an act of God, might still doubt God's ability to perform miracles? Miracles, in turns out, are the easy part.

Choosing a life of freedom over slavery is the real test here. In plunging into the sea and journeying onwards, Nachshon overcame his fear—not that the waters would *not* split—but the very real fear that the waters *would* split. Nachshon's action is a direct response to the explicit suggestion that the children of Israel return to Egypt. He doesn't argue and he doesn't debate the point with those that would like to return. In jumping into the sea, the option of returning to Egypt is removed once and for all. Nachshon and everyone else knows that the sea will part once, but never again.

Moshe's Tough Choice

When it comes to the most difficult ethical choices in life, it is never easy. Taking one path, like Nachshon ben Amminadab did, always means giving up on another. When you "journey onwards" it is almost as if you leave your old self behind. This is one of the reasons why the amazing story that my former student Moshe told me was so painful for him.

The story is amazing not so much because it is unique, but more because of how reflective and insightful Moshe is in telling his story. All of my students are exceptionally intelligent, but Moshe is one of the most thoughtful and mature students it has been my pleasure to know.

Moshe was born and raised in Bnei Brak, one of the most traditional and "isolated" Jewish communities in the world.

When I say isolated, I refer to isolation from the outside world. Televisions, for example, and even radios were taboo, as well as anything else which held, even in potential form, any suggestion contradictory to orthodox Jewish principles and morals. My life was fairly simple with well-defined rules which stemmed from Jewish law codes. Yet, there was always a yearning in my heart to see what was on the "other side" of the fence. I thought to myself if it is prohibited, then it must be quite good and appealing.

For most of his life, Moshe had never watched television or listened to the radio and until quite recently, Moshe did not speak a word of English. In the eighth grade, Moshe entered yeshiva. He says, "This was a new and exciting time in my life and I took it very seriously...a little too

seriously.”

Moshe began to study books of *mussar* or, as he translates it, books of “self-affliction and personal growth.” “I took the study of *mussar* very seriously and worked on particular aspects of my character which I felt needed improvement. I would look into myself and try to assess my strengths and weaknesses and see how I could combat bad habits and strengthen good ones even more.” This process began when Moshe was 14 years old!

Moshe was incredibly tough on himself. “I would not give myself credit for my hard work, and even if I felt a sense of achievement, I would force it down as unholy pride.” For four years, Moshe was unrelenting. He would study day and night, purposely limiting his sleep and his food intake – “for the purposes of self-restraint, personal growth, and to save time.”

Boys Just Want to Have Fun

At age of 18, Moshe simply could not take his self-imposed regimen anymore. He was burnt-out. “I had lost my motivation. I just wanted to be a normal guy and have fun. I wanted to just play sports, hang out with girls, and do all the other thrilling and normal things guys my age do.”

He began to sleep-in, he fell behind in his studies, and he was increasingly depressed about just about everything. His feelings for Judaism cooled. “I started to think of leaving orthodoxy, or, if you will, the only way of life I knew, and becoming secular.” For Moshe, “it was all or nothing, black or white, good or bad, holy or not!”

As Moshe contemplated his life-altering decision, he realized that the secular life was probably not as great as he imagined it to be. “The desire I had for the secular world was romanticized and enlarged from within because it was forbidden to me. The grass is *always* greener on the other side.”

He also knew how hard it would be on his parents and friends. “Of great concern to me was the welfare of my family and friends who would be devastated by such a move on my part.”

Moshe was agitated and extremely lonely. “I spent many sleepless nights tossing and turning in my bed.” He says that the hardest part of his ordeal “was the fact that I had to struggle with it all by myself. I had *noone* who I felt I could talk to, since on such a matter I could trust noone.”

Moshe was angry and full of fear. He worried that he would not be able to make it in the secular world. He was concerned that his parents would disown him. He knew that this was one of those decisions that would take him beyond the point of no return. If he took the plunge, there would be no going back to the way things had always been.

Here’s how Moshe summarized his situation at the time:

On the one hand, I felt that Judaism is the truthful way for me to live and that I just had to take my situation as nothing more than an overwhelmingly hard challenge, but

nonetheless stay within Judaism's way of life. On the other hand, I felt angry at the lack of understanding from particular people who to me represented Judaism. They were rotten to the core as human beings. Also, I thought that it was morally wrong for me to live a lifestyle which I hated, and I was miserable in, just so my parents would be happy. That is surely not God's will of me.

Moshe continued to think through his dilemma on an intellectual and rational level, weighing both sides of the argument as carefully as he could. But, with 20-20 hindsight, Moshe says that, in the end, his decision to leave orthodoxy was forced by a deeper, emotional pull. "It almost felt like it was God Himself who pulled me, against my will, away from my sheltered life, so that I could see the real world as it is, for better or worse." Is this a kind of rationalization? Maybe, but I don't think so, and neither does Moshe.

The Big Move

Moshe contacted an organization that is designed to help people like him who are thinking about leaving the *chareidi* world. He met with a guidance counselor who advised him on some of the consequences of his decision. A few months after meeting with the advisor, Moshe had resolved, once and for all, to leave his familiar community.

I finally made the big move! On the first day of what would have been my fifth year in yeshiva, in the beginning of the *zeman* or semester, I left my home with my suitcases. My parents ordered a taxi for me. Last kisses good-bye. My mother: "*Shtiyg* away (learn well and grow spiritually) sweetie." "Okay, *Eema* (mom)."

Instead of going to the yeshiva, I told the cab driver to take me to the bus station. I called a representative of the organizations and told them they must find me a home or I will stay in the street that night.

That very same night, Moshe stayed with an elderly woman who was associated with the organization he had contacted. He couldn't believe his good fortune. The woman didn't just have a television set, she had cable, too! "I recall the joy I felt then. It was heaven on earth; I spent all night switching from MTV Europe to the NBA basketball game and then quickly back to MTV! Not to miss! Could it be a video clip of Madonna up next?"

The next few months went by quickly. Moshe moved into a youth hostel, found a job at a car wash in Tel Aviv, and enrolled in a public school with evening hours. The euphoria of the first night quickly vanished, as Moshe learned that the "real world wasn't always pretty."

Almost immediately after his move, Moshe began training for his military service. In a few more months, he would join the Israeli army. He hoped to make it into an elite commando unit, and he knew that to qualify he would have to be in top physical condition. The incredible energy he had once directed toward *mussar* was now channeled into his demanding and frequent workouts. Moshe was anxiously looking forward to serving his country. "I wished to be in the best unit possible and to give my all on behalf of my brethren and country." So much for having a good

time, I guess.

About three weeks before he was to enter the army, Moshe contacted his family and told them about his intentions to join the army. Moshe's parents informed him that his grandparents, who lived in the United States, had invited him to come visit them and would pay for his trip. Moshe thought that perhaps this would be a nice break. He decided to go, "but with a clear intention to return shortly to Israel to take the entrance exams for the commando units." His grandparents promised him that he could continue his training in the U.S. at the local Jewish Community Center just as easily as in Israel.

This was clearly a time of turmoil for Moshe. How could it not have been? "A new and great dilemma started to unfold again in my life, while the first one was not yet solved."

Moshe began to have some serious doubts about going back to Israel and joining the army. He began to entertain the idea of staying in the United States, at least for a while. In the United States he could try to find some kind of middle ground in his life, some room to breathe.

Most poignantly, Moshe felt that if he returned to Israel, given the cultural expectations there, he would have to give up his religion completely and this was something that he wasn't sure he was prepared to do.. He would be "living in Israel as a secular Jew with all of its implications." If he stayed in the United States, "I could live with freedom to do what I want."

Moshe described his thought process as follows:

I felt that the opportunity to learn English and go to college would head me in the right direction towards financial stability. Also, while in college I could explore different fields and find out more about the world and what's available to me. I thought of being a philosophy major to find answers to some questions I had.

In the end, Moshe decided to enroll at Yeshiva University's Sy Syms School of Business.

Throughout my time in the States, I slowly found my self, and gained a new, different and deeper appreciation for Judaism. I took things slowly this time, making sure not to jump too far ahead of myself. I now feel that I found myself to a large extent, though naturally, there is always room for growth. I feel like my decision to stay was, thank God, indeed the right one. Yet I sometimes wonder...

A Life of Integrity

The story that Moshe tells is just the first chapter in his moral biography. No one, not even Moshe himself, knows how this story will continue and end. Throughout his ordeal, Moshe is searching for something. I'm not sure that he knows exactly what it is that he's looking for, and as an outsider, neither am I. Nevertheless, as I read and re-read Moshe's story, it is the word "integrity" that keeps coming back to me. This is one of the reasons why I think his story is worth studying with care.

I think we need to go slow here because integrity is one of those over-sized words that can mean almost everything and almost nothing simultaneously. What does integrity entail? And, how does Moshe's story help us get a better handle on it?

The dictionary tells us that integrity is the quality of being honest and upright. I think it's more, though. Integrity is a kind of balance. It includes many different elements: curiosity and wonder, honesty, patience, humor, a willingness to take risks, authenticity, and a desire to learn and to grow.

Maybe one way to define integrity is the process of combining these different elements into something whole. Taking some of this and some of that, and putting it together in a way that is just right for you, in a way that finally makes sense; that is real and durable and life affirming. Integrity is part discovery and part invention. It is an ongoing and never ending process.

All of the elements of integrity that I have identified are important individually, but possessing too much of one without the others is debilitating. Being curious is good, but being too curious can get you into big trouble. Being patient is a virtue, but there must be a limit even to patience; there comes a point where one must take action. Too much humor and life becomes a big joke. Taking risks is necessary, but foolish and unnecessary risk-taking can be dangerous to your well-being. Even honesty taken to the extreme can be silly and even quite hurtful (that outfit looks horrible on you—it makes you look even stupider than you really are). As the book of Kohelet has it, “Everything has its season, and there is a time for everything under the sun. A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot” (Chapter 3: 1-2). So, too, with integrity.

Curiosity and Wonder

As Moshe tells his story, his curiosity and wonder are driving him right from the beginning. As he put it, “there was always a yearning in my heart to see what was on the ‘other side’ of the fence.” Having lived his entire life in the sheltered world of Bnei Brak, Moshe had an incredible urge to explore the world out-there for himself. He loved his parents and he was grateful to his community, but for Moshe the world beyond Bnei Brak has a special allure and attraction that demands exploration.

Honesty

Even while Moshe is curious and full of wonder about the outside world, he is always honest with himself and his expectations. He knows that he is “romanticizing” his view of secular life and he also realizes that part of the allure of leaving the *charedi* world is that the “grass is always greener on the other side.”

Patience

Moshe demonstrates his patience throughout his whole story. His decision to make the “big

move” is not one that he arrives at in an impulsive way. It is one that he has contemplated for a long time. It is one that he has tried to look at in an objective and rational way to the best of his abilities. In addition, his final decision to stay in the United States and pursue his education also reflects a quiet patience.

Humor

Moshe’s description of himself flipping through the cable channels hoping to get a glimpse of a Madonna video conveys a sense of humor and perspective. This was surely one of the most difficult and anxiety-inducing nights of his young life. But, even while Moshe takes himself seriously (or, even too seriously, as he himself put it), he can also see and laugh at life’s absurdities from time to time.

A Willingness to Take Risks

Like Nachshon, Moshe knows that the decisions that he is making are life-altering. He knows that whatever he chooses, he has gone beyond the point of no return. The path back to his isolated existence at a yeshiva in Bnei Brak has been closed. Whatever happens, things will never be the way they were.

Authenticity

Authenticity is another one of these really huge words (like integrity itself). Something is authentic if it is genuine. But what does it mean to live an “authentic” life?

Most importantly, you must be true to yourself and to your history. The problem is, though, that sometimes being true to yourself seems like you’re betraying your history, and at other times, being true to your history might seem like your giving up on yourself and your own unique dreams and visions.

This desire for authenticity is expressed over and over again in Moshe’s story. “I felt that Judaism is the truthful way for me to live...” But, at the same time, “I thought that it was morally wrong for me to live a lifestyle which I hated, and I was miserable in, just so my parents would be happy.”

A Desire to Learn and Grow

To me this is the heart and soul of what a life of integrity is all about. One has to find a philosophy, and a practice, and a community that will enable him or her to continue learning and growing throughout life. The more self-conscious one is about this the better.

This is why I’m so inspired by Moshe’s story. Certainly noone would have blamed Moshe had he decided to stay put in Bnei Brak. He loved his parents, he wanted to stay true to his Jewish beliefs of his childhood, and he enjoyed his friends. I’m sure that had he taken this route, that even in Bnei Brak he would have continued to discover his own way towards a life of integrity.

But, for him, given his gifts and ideals, I think it would have been extremely difficult.

I also believe that had he chosen to return to Israel immediately to join the Israeli army and to live a completely secular life that he would have enjoyed a degree of fulfillment in serving to defend his country and people. I also believe he would have eventually found his way back to his roots, and to what for him is a more genuine and authentic life. But, again, this would have been denying too much of his own self and traditions for too long a time.

Moshe's choice to stay in the United States and to further pursue his education to some might seem a kind of cop out, almost selfish. I don't see it that way. His decision to slow things down and "not to get too far ahead of himself this time" betray a worthy and practical wisdom. In recognizing that everything is not "all or nothing, black or white, good or bad, holy or not!" Moshe has taken a huge step forward in his moral development. He says now that "there is always room for growth." And, to me, arriving at this insight and living it everyday is the whole point of integrity!

Conclusion

In the end it is still fair to ask whether or not Moshe has achieved that perfect blend of curiosity and wonder, honesty, patience, humor, a willingness to take risks, authenticity, and a desire to learn and to grow. Does he display the unflinching courage of a Nachshon to make those decisions that take us beyond the point of no return?

But, maybe in searching for perfection and in comparing Moshe to the moral geniuses of the past, we're asking far too much of him, or anyone else for that matter. Perhaps a better question is whether or not he has achieved a good enough blend. Rather than answering this question definitively let me allow Moshe to defend himself here:

Since in the end I must make and live with the outcome of the final decision, I dealt with it myself. I did make many mistakes along the way, which could have been avoided. Nevertheless, I gained the ability to take charge and make decisions myself, which is a most valuable tool in my possession. As I continue to move through life, I hold on to the lessons I learned and apply them when necessary. As long as I continue to grow from my mistakes by making the right choices the next time around, it's indeed worthwhile.

In high school, Moshe thought life in Bnei Brak was "fairly simple with well-defined rules." But, I'm not so sure it's even that simple in Bnei Brak for those that decide to stay. My last encounter with Moshe was at graduation. I saw him from afar mingling among the hundreds of students and parents. As I approached him, I noticed that he was flanked by two elderly people, both short and looking somewhat out of place and almost lost in their traditional *chareidi* garb. I said "hello" to Moshe and he introduced me to his father and mother. Despite the language barrier, we tried to communicate with each other as best we could. In my less than perfect Hebrew, I told Moshe's parents what a pleasure it had been having him as a student and what a mature and intelligent young man he was. Moshe's father shook hands with me and politely thanked me. As he released my hand, Moshe's father gently smiled and whispered, "we know, we know."

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Eleven

Moral Growth

In a place where there are no “persons,” strive to be a “person.” (Avot Chapter 2, Mishnah 5)

Aryeh is like Moshe in many ways. They were both born and raised in Israel. They speak Hebrew better than English. Brought up in religious homes, they share a deep attachment to their heritage and their people.

Aryeh, however, grew up as a religious Zionist, and his parents, teachers, and friends all expected him, as a matter of course, to fulfill his three year mandatory military service. Aryeh was looking forward to serving his country, realizing just how important a responsibility this is for an Israeli citizen. Even so, Aryeh, like almost all 18 year olds, was apprehensive and nervous about his impending army duty. Aryeh describes his feelings:

I knew that the army is a test for ones physical, spiritual, and ethical limits. The army breaks you apart to pieces and puts you together according to the army code. There is no “thank you” or “please.” In the training processes of being a soldier, the army transforms you to a new person. Rules and orders become life, *the individual person is asked to leave for three years*. Nobody cares about my opinion and if I really want to test the rules the jail will make it very costly (my emphasis).

Aryeh is physically strong, optimistic, bright, resourceful, and good with people. It is no surprise to me then, that he was an exceptionally good soldier and that his superior officers quickly recognized his skills and abilities. Aryeh says that his first year and a half seemed to go by quickly. Suddenly, he was a “pazamnik”— a soldier with time of service and was expected to take on new and important duties.

Aryeh was now 19 years old, with loads of enthusiasm but virtually no real world experience— unless you count high school exams and intramural basketball games. Now, though, with his promotion, he quickly found himself in charge of a special unit responsible for securing the safety of Arab villages in the West Bank. “Being in charge of a West Bank village,” he explains, in his typically understated fashion, “ is not a simple task.”

I had to train, check, and send soldiers every week to the villages, and to be sure that they are doing their job. The villages are usually in a very remote place in the West Bank and quite dangerous.

Not surprisingly, Aryeh tells me that this was not a job that his soldiers looked forward to. Nevertheless, every single member of his unit was required to serve on the West Bank on a periodic basis. This rule was simply a matter of basic fairness. Almost all of Aryeh’s men,

regardless of their personal desires, served with competence, distinction, and courage. Securing the West Bank villages was unpleasant business, but, as the young soldiers knew, it was absolutely necessary for the defense of the State of Israel.

Yitzchak's Refusal to Serve

Yitzchak, however, was an exception. According to Yitzchak's army file, Yitzchak had come from a "troubled family." Both of his parents were now old and quite sick. Being crippled, they could not take care of themselves and relied upon Yitzchak for some of their basic living needs like cleaning, preparing food, and bathing.

For this reason, the Israeli army had arranged what is called an "easier service" for him. The army assigned him to a base that was close to his home and gave him the right to return home for evenings whenever he was not "needed" for army services.

Aryeh's superior officer had little sympathy for Yitzchak's "special needs," and he felt that Yitzchak had been taking advantage of the army's generous accommodations. In the superior officer's opinion, Yitzchak had been a problem soldier right from the beginning of his army service. He had severely disciplined him on many occasions, frequently sending him to the base's military prison. "My superior officer does not like being a social-worker. He has many tasks to fulfill and time for soldiers' problems is not on his agenda."

The last thing that Aryeh's superior officer wanted to do was to baby sit for Yitzchak. "Yitzchak did not know how to communicate and his voice, manner, and language were not appropriate" for the military. So, among the many duties and responsibilities Aryeh had inherited as part of his promotion, Aryeh also got Yitzchak!

Here's how Aryeh described him:

Yitzchak was a classic story of a soldier who was on the way out of the army if he continued to disobey orders. Yitzchak was very offensive and tried to make it clear to me that I am a nobody and that he was not afraid of me and the system.

On a personal level, Aryeh did not like Yitzchak much either, but, unlike his superior officer, he did feel sympathetic to Yitzchak's family responsibilities. As Aryeh saw the situation, Yitzchak, despite his lack of social graces, in the end, was usually more or less cooperative, and he carried out chores like driving and serving guard duty adequately.

The real problem, from Aryeh's point of view, was that when it came to his turn to serve on the West Bank, Yitzchak simply refused to budge. "He told me very clearly that he is not going to the West Bank for his duties and that he is not afraid of jail."

Aryeh could have easily resolved this dilemma by going to his superior officer and telling him about Yitzchak's refusal to serve. In fact, this might have given Aryeh some brownie points and a faster rank promotion, as his superior officer was looking for one more reason to throw Yitzchak back into jail and maybe even get rid of him permanently.

Aryeh, however, did not want to take the easy path here. Who would really win if Yitzchak was punished one more time or dishonorably discharged from the army? Here's how he described his dilemma:

There was no doubt in my mind that Yitzchak did not deserve the best consideration given his behavior; however, he had a very difficult life and it is easy to judge people who are in bad shape. Nevertheless, I knew that there were ways for me to make the strain easier on him without changing the real performance of tasks, but the question is what is the price I might pay and should I help him? If I really love my fellow Jew the same way I love myself, the system should be the last stakeholder I should consider. However, maybe the system is the way we were told during the first year in the army?

I-The Case Against Yitzchak

The case against Yitzchak is relatively straight-forward. The army has its rules and regulations without which it simply cannot function. To the extent that you accept the legitimacy of the army and its goal of defending the country, don't you automatically accept the legitimacy of its rules too? As Aryeh notes, "If the system had to deal with everyone's problems, the Army would not be able to fulfill its duties."

In this specific case, the rule that everyone had to serve on the West Bank seemed eminently fair to Aryeh. After all, he and all his friends had already served there on numerous occasions. "The duty is dangerous, long and tiring." But as Aryeh knows well, somebody has to do it.

Further, by simple logic, if Yitzchak does not serve on the West Bank, another soldier in the unit will have to fulfill his duties and "carry the burden." What if something happened to the soldier who was substituting for Yitzchak because Yitzchak didn't want to serve? How could Aryeh take on this kind of responsibility?

On top of all of this, on a more practical and self-interested level, even if Aryeh wanted to help Yitzchak and his family, why should Aryeh have to pay the cost? After all, if Aryeh's superior officer finds out that Yitzchak is not serving on the West Bank, Aryeh himself will have to face the consequences of a possible punishment.

II-The Case for Yitzchak

On the other hand, Aryeh strongly felt he had several good reasons to bypass his superior officer and allow Aryeh permission to skip his West Bank service. First, and most fundamentally, Aryeh was hardly the ideal soldier to send on a potentially dangerous assignment. His unprofessional conduct is merely bothersome and inconvenient at the military base, but it might have much more serious consequences for his own safety and the safety others out in the field. In Aryeh's words, "villages in the West Bank need responsible soldiers" to serve there.

Second, Yitzchak's parents would suffer tremendously, if Aryeh reported Yitzchak's

insubordination to his superior officer. Aryeh had seen mounds of army documentation that showed how much Yitzchak's family suffered when he was not able to go home and care for them during the evenings. Aryeh did not know Yitzchak's parents, but, as he imagined their sad plight, he felt a moral pull and a Jewish responsibility to help them if it was at all possible.

Third, Aryeh felt that if he eased the burdens on Yitzchak, and began to treat him in a more humane way, that Yitzchak might become more "responsive." Aryeh could not be sure about this, and he was not naive. Nevertheless, quoting the Torah's commandment to "love your neighbor as you love yourself," he felt it was worth at least one try. Putting Yitzchak in the military prison would not help "in this case because it does not change the problem." Besides, the army itself had already set the precedent of allowing special treatment and consideration for Yitzchak.

Right Versus Right Dilemma

This is a classic right versus right dilemma. There is no easy answer here. Aryeh is being pulled in two opposite directions simultaneously. As a soldier and as a member of tightly regimented organization, he has an obligation to carry out the rules of the army to the best of his abilities—no questions asked. Both his superiors and his underlings are counting on him to be a team player.

But, what about his personally felt responsibilities to Yitzchak and family? "*The individual person is asked to leave for three years.*" So says the army during basic training, but can Aryeh afford to leave aside his own humanity and his own individuality for such a long period of time? "I was told in the training processes of being a soldier, that nobody cares about my opinion." Can this really be a philosophy upon which the Israeli army is built?

I call this a right versus right dilemma because both arguments—the cases for and against Yitzchak—are strong and compelling. Aryeh clearly has an obligation to the army and a responsibility to carry out its orders especially when he himself understands the rationale behind the rule he is being asked to enforce. But, just as clearly, Aryeh has an obligation to his own sense of what is right and what is wrong. Reporting on Yitzchak to his superior officer will serve no positive function. Yitzchak's parents will suffer, Yitzchak himself will become even more alienated, bitter, and withdrawn. And, even if the end Yitzchak does serve on the West Bank, he is hardly the kind of soldier anyone would want there.

A right versus right dilemma provides both an opportunity and a risk. On the positive side, to the extent that you can adequately grope your way through the complex maze of a right versus right decision and find your way out the other end, you have demonstrated a degree of *moral growth*. It will strengthen you and give you confidence for the future. You will begin to see the world in a new way. The world may seem bigger and more complex, but you will be more at home and at ease in it.

On the down side, you may get lost in a right versus right maze. You may discover yourself going around and around in circles, ending up where you were at the outset, or, worse yet, backtracking and losing ground. This will weaken you and erode your confidence. The world

will seem less coherent, chaotic, and a less hospitable place.

Aryeh had made a commitment to himself during basic training that:

when control will come to my hands, I will do my best to treat people in a professional way. I also believe that being a religious Jew and treating people *lifnim mishurat hadin* (beyond the strict letter of the law) is a must, especially in a system like the army. So, I decided that when I will have some say in the system, my judgement will come into place and I will try to make a difference.

Is this a promise that Aryeh could really keep? Or, was it simply a youthful boast born out of an immature idealism and lack of knowledge about how the world really works?

It's Go Time...

First, and foremost, ethics demands personal integrity. To be true to himself, Aryeh needed to find some kind of balance between his organizational responsibility and his own sense of personal responsibility. To completely ignore one responsibility in favor of the other is to miss out on the opportunity for moral growth, and worse yet, it would be symptomatic of a kind of moral decay.

I think, in the end, Aryeh did find a workable balance and a solution that he could live with. Here's his description of what he finally decided to do:

I do not think that the Israeli Army is not ethical; however, the system can clearly destroy a person's life without feeling the consequences. So, I decided that my duty is to try to make the Israeli Army a Jewish Army where if a Jew is in need, he or she finds help.

This is my altruism by helping a person who I am not required to assist, but *lifnim mishurat hadin* it is a must for me to help him. Yitzchak never went to the West Bank, he did all of the other tasks I asked him and helped others whenever they needed it. He highly appreciated my approach and had a lot of respect to *Hashem* for helping him. My superior officer was happy because everything was working like a clock under my control. Other soldiers in the unit were happy because Yitzchak was doing more of the [unpleasant] tasks they have to do. Yitzchak finished his service and I was sleeping well at night.

What Aryeh Learned and What We Can Learn From Him

In order to grope your way through the complex maze of a right versus right dilemma, you have to first recognize it as such.

Ethical conundrums do not come with labels stating–“I’m a right versus right dilemma.” Responsible moral actors must be constantly aware of their environment and must continually ask themselves about the nature of their situation. My gut feeling is that many of Aryeh’s peers would have walked right through this situation without even realizing the high stakes game they were involved in. A first step then is to “scan” and “frame” a situation appropriately.

Abstract rules treat people as abstractions.

The rule in Aryeh’s unit was that everyone had to take turns serving on the West Bank. The rationale for this rule is that because everyone is equal, everyone should be treated in the same way. Few people would argue against a rule like this.

The problem is that while it is true that everyone has equal moral worth, not everyone has equal abilities, nor are everyone’s situations ever exactly the same. Simple rules, although sometimes necessary and often useful as a point of departure, force us to ignore context and relevant details when we think they must be applied in a rote and mechanical way.

To the extent that it is true that rules treat people as mere abstractions, they tend to dehumanize persons and to purposely limit attention to a tiny fraction of a broad and messy reality. The rich, thick, and complex details of real life, that may or may not be relevant in a given situation, are ignored.

Ethics demand a more complex formulation of our moral responsibilities. We need to approach the world not just with a set of simple and easy to remember rules in hand, we need also a way to factor in the concrete particulars and the unique and relevant characteristics of a given situation. For this reason, simple rules need to be interpreted and applied in a creative, humane, and responsive way. The ease and comfort of applying a simple but abstract rule in an unthinking way should never be allowed to trump the broader and more inclusive moral principle of treating every single person as a special and unique individual.

You need to look not just at the letter but at the spirit of the rules.

Aryeh knows well that the rule is that everyone should serve in the West Bank; this is basic equity. But, he also knows that the *point* of this rule is that everyone should be treated in the same way so that soldiers will not be jealous and angry with one another thus destroying the morale and effectiveness of the unit.

The truth of the matter is that the Army has *already* made an exception for Yitzchak by assigning him to a base near his home and by allowing him to frequently return home to help his parents. Aryeh is not breaking the rule on a whim or for personal gain, nor is he doing it to promote his own subjective vision of what ethics is all about. His goals are to improve the effectiveness of his unit in light of the Army’s own aspirations as demonstrated by the special treatment granted to Yitzchak *and* to treat everyone with equal respect and dignity.

Given the fact that none of the other soldiers ever complained to the superior officer, it is

reasonable to conclude that they must have understood Yitzchak's special circumstances, too. In fact, as Aryeh describes the situation, the soldiers actually were "happy" because Yitzchak willingly accepted much of the grunt work back at the base.

Apparently, given Yitzchak's need to help out with his parents, his fellow soldiers were willing to allow for the trade-off. In part, I would suggest, that this was due to Aryeh's leadership skills, especially recalling how ill-tempered Yitzchak could be.

There is a cost (or at least a potential cost) to being ethical.

Aryeh must be willing to stand up and pay for any of the consequences that follow from his decision. In his case, the situation happens to have a happy ending. There were no problems in any of the villages under Aryeh's command. Yitzchak's fellow soldiers did not complain to the superior officer about preferential treatment. Yitzchak himself did respond positively to the humane attention that Aryeh devoted to him. And, most importantly, Yitzchak's parents were not abandoned in their time of need.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Sometimes things will not turn out as we hope. If you are breaking a rule, as Aryeh was in this case, you must openly accept authorship for your actions, be prepared to defend them reasonably, and pay for the consequences. This is true in the case at hand and it is true more generally in every case of "civil disobedience," as Martin Luther King, Jr. so eloquently reminds us in his famous "Letter From a Birmingham Jail."

In a place where there are no "persons," strive to be a "person."

Actually the literal translation of this saying (usually attributed to Hillel) is "In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man." I prefer, though, to interpret it more generically. In this way, the original intention is both preserved and broadened.

But, what does it mean here? Among other things, I believe that this saying speaks directly to Aryeh's dilemma. Remember that message from basic training. "The individual person is asked to leave for three years." Well, it turns out that one of Judaism's greatest sages would beg to differ with Aryeh's superior officer. According to Hillel, one must constantly strive to become a person. What is entailed in being a person. Here's how one ethicist has put it:

Personal statesmanship is governance of the self in the light of moral ideals and not only in conformity with moral rules. Its great aim is to find a healing balance between nonattachment and attachment, alienation and reconciliation. If we go too far in one direction we suffer loss of self; in the other direction we slight the claims of others.

While the language is lofty and somewhat difficult to penetrate, I believe that Aryeh's actions are a nearly perfect example of what this philosopher is talking about. I confess that it was only after I read his case that I have begun to understand this statement.

Aryeh is not saying "anything goes."

Many critics point out that there is a huge danger in telling people not to apply simple ethical rules in a simple and straight-forward way. The problem, they say, is that this is a kind of moral relativism. One might argue that what Aryeh's case really shows is that when it comes to ethics, we just make up what ever feels right to us at the moment.

It is true that Aryeh's decision, along with many of the other examples that we've looked at in this book, emphasize the need for creativity and human initiative when it comes to resolving ethical dilemmas. But this creativity, imagination, and artistry as I've been calling it, is constrained and bounded.

In every case, moral imagination is limited by human nature, accepted tradition, the needs of the community, the realities of life, the uncontested goals of organizational life, integrity, concern for others, and our highest aspirations as embedded in principles like "love your neighbor as you love yourself." Aryeh is not ignoring the "ethics of our fathers," he's trying to apply them in a meaningful way in a changing world. Aryeh himself puts it this way, "The Torah helps us understand what it takes to be a Jew, yet the real test is the daily experiences we have to go through. The test is never easy." It's one thing to pledge allegiance to one's ethical heritage, it's quite another thing to struggle to apply it in the contemporary world in an authentic manner.

Conclusion

What does it mean to be a "good soldier?" Typically, this phrase means "do what your told." Aryeh, however, has a different take on this. Being a good soldier to Aryeh means taking the goals and purposes of the army seriously. It means supporting the system and getting the job done. It means following orders and treating everyone equally. It also means, though, bringing one's whole self to work. Being emotionally attuned to the realities of a situation. Being ethically aware and sensitive. Being able to use one's reason and intellect to recognize which values are more important than others. Finally, and most importantly, Aryeh believes that in a place where there are no persons, one must constantly strive to be a person, even in the army.

Did Aryeh do everything that he could have done in this situation? Could he have convinced Yitzchak to serve on the West Bank and have found some other way to help him take care of his parents? If he had been tougher on Yitzchak would Yitachk himself have benefitted in the long run? Could he have been more forthright and open with his superior officer? Perhaps he had a responsibility to directly confront his superior officer and tell him what he was doing? I'm not sure about these questions and Aryeh probably isn't either. The point though is not to achieve certainty or perfection, the point is to discover, at least, a temporary balance; a solution that allows one to grow rather than to retreat. To Aryeh, this is what it really means to be a "good soldier."

The Jewish Ethics Workbook: Chapter Twelve

Conclusion: Some Personal Reflections

The entire world is a narrow bridge, and the important thing is not to be afraid at all. (Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav)

Looking back at the stories in this book, I am struck by the many and varied obstacles that stop us on our quests for leading meaningful lives. In every story there is always an obstacle, something in the way, blocking us from getting to where we think we should be.

These obstacles include fear, our own rationalizing minds, a lack of trust, physical constraints, a wish to fit in with our friends, lack of respect or care for those different from ourselves, an unexpected illness, loneliness, and a basic uncertainty about what the truly ethical course of action might be.

We have seen from these stories that there is no set formula to overcome these obstacles. The stories that my students describe are not intellectual puzzles that can be solved like algebraic equations once and for all.

Sometimes it is obvious what the right course of action is. If you're driving your car and you hit someone by mistake, you not only have an ethical obligation to stop, you have a legal obligation, as well. In a situation like this, it's black and white. But this kind of formal response, however true from a lawyer's point of view, misses the entire point. The real question is, what does it feel like to hit someone with your car? How can I overcome or channel my fear and anger, my frustration, and my instinct to flee, when I'm in the moment? To begin to understand what it means to live a life of integrity, it's not enough to play the wise and detached spectator and view life from the outside looking in, but we must experience life's ups and downs from the inside looking out.

Outside In

In teaching ethics, we try to move away from the world and disengage ourselves from it. We try to place ourselves high above the fray to gain a more accurate view of what is happening below us. We look, if not for universal principles, then for the most general and all-inclusive formulations. As objectively as we can, we categorize, analyze, and make all kinds of distinctions. We move from topic to topic, from environmental issues to employee relations, from sex discrimination to product safety. We try to get students to see connections they might not readily see on their own. We provide reasonable arguments to convince students to make sound ethical choices.

But how useful is this approach when you are faced with a real-world ethical dilemma? As all of us know, ethical problems look and feel so differently from the inside than they do from the

outside. While getting the “right” answer on a test in the classroom is relatively easy, figuring out the right thing to do in real-life and then actually doing it is incredibly difficult.

Inside Out

Overcoming our obstacles and acting in an ethical way requires a schooled-intellect, but it also requires caring and empathy, patience, emotional intelligence, and an ability to read and understand others’ motives, as well as one’s own. Living an ethical life requires a strength of character, a deep sense of purpose, shrewdness, a feeling of being connected to others, and a supportive and loving community. It’s not only about making isolated decisions one at a time, as it might seem from sitting in on an ethics class, but it’s about crafting a worthy life plan and living it out everyday among family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Being in the moment, it is almost impossible to see things in an objective way. Telling someone in the midst of a crisis to act in such a way as to “maximize the world’s happiness” or to follow the 18th century philosopher Immanuel Kant’s famous “categorical imperative” hardly seems useful.

From the inside it seems that there are no easy to apply universal principles because each case feels so unique. There are no separate topics; every decision impacts every other decision. In the real world you never know with certainty if you’ve made the best, or even a good, choice. What may seem today as efficient and clever, may in the long run seem foolish and immature. Preferences and values evolve over time.

It is because of this, that each of us needs to think carefully, *and for ourselves*, about our true aspirations. What are the values that I choose to make my own and to make real through my actions? What kind of a life do I want to live? We don’t ask and answer these questions once and leave it at that, but we must continually strive to fine-tune and adjust our philosophy in real-time, in a constantly changing world.

In this last chapter, I offer some of my own thoughts on living a good Jewish life. These are my aspirations and I don’t expect them to be yours or anyone else’s. I don’t include this discussion to convince you that my way is the right way or the only way, but I include this material as part of an ever growing dialogue where all of us are equal participants. This is how *I* see the world from my unique perspective. How do *you* see it?

Aspirations

1-Accept

The first of my ten aspirations is acceptance. Acceptance is the acknowledgment that the world is what it is. It is not the way I would like it to be, nor is it the way I think it should be. *But, it is what it is.*

Acceptance is the opposite of magical thinking. When I engage in magical thinking, I see the world through the filter of my own fantasies. I see what I want to see, what I wish to be there. I perceive only what I imagine that the world can be like. I forget (or I don’t want to remember) that the world can surprise me. These surprises can be for the better, or they can be for the worse.

Acceptance is not something that happens all at once. As I travel through life, I experience its mysteries, joys, horrors, sadness, and silliness. When the volume gets too high, I shut life out, and this works for a while. Like a young child, I pretend that I didn't really hear that or I didn't really see that. I hide. But I can close myself off only for a little while. Acceptance is saying to myself, "it can't be, and yet it is."

Acceptance is not passive. I may accept something even when I hate it with my whole being. Acceptance is not about the future, it is about the present. I can't change what already is no matter how hard I try.

Acceptance is the first of the ten aspirations because it is the reality check. It is the only platform upon which a truly meaningful life can be built. It is only through acceptance that I can be a source of positive change for myself and others in an intelligent way. Magical thinking is the most powerful narcotic. It is a giving up on myself and the world. It is a slow suicide. Acceptance is a wake-up call. It demands courage and constant vigilance. In accepting the world, I am born to it for the second time.

2-Appreciate

The great thinkers ask, How can it be that there is anything at all? To live with my eyes open is to be constantly surprised. Appreciation is not seeing the world through rose-colored glasses. It is, despite everything, an overflowing feeling of thankfulness that I am alive and a part of all of this.

I don't know if it is really possible to live every moment mindfully—to be constantly aware and to be continually alive. I live so much of my life on automatic pilot. I'm here, but I'm not here. I am so afraid of what I will see. My thoughts are somewhere else. Even as I write these very words, my mind drifts away and comes back to them only hesitantly and with great effort. Appreciation can be built only upon acceptance. I can't appreciate that which is not. I can only appreciate that which is.

Appreciation is a *choice* we need to make everyday. We don't have to appreciate, but we do have the ability to appreciate. It is an openness to the world. It is a kind of reverence. It is being in the world and being constantly amazed by this simple fact. It is an awareness that I am not alone. It is an overcoming of my fear, if only for a few precious moments.

3-Respect

I can't respect you, if I don't respect myself first. Respect can be simple or profound. It can mean taking care of myself and others in the most mundane ways. Eating right, exercising, getting enough sleep, sticking up for my rights, caring for my home and environment.

Respect can also mean taking myself and others seriously. It is learning and recognizing what it means to be human. It is a kind of trust and a kind of faith that what I do matters in a fundamental way and makes a lasting difference in the world in which I am just a stranger and

sojourner. My effect may not be huge, but it is perceptible to me and those closest to me. It is hard to respect ourselves when we are so prone to make mistakes. Therefore, respect requires an ability to forgive and to move on.

It is the recognition that we are precious and unique beings. Everyone of us is irreplaceable. To respect oneself is to turn acceptance and appreciation in on oneself and out towards other human beings.

4-Be patient

Of the ten aspirations I list, patience may be the most difficult for me to attain. I want it and I want it now.

How does one learn to be more patient? It requires me to constantly broaden my horizons. In order for me to be more patient, I have to see and imagine the big picture. Where I am right now, in this place at this moment, is not all of reality. This *is* where I am now (and I accept that), but it is not *always* where I am.

If it's so hard to be patient with myself, how much harder is it to be patient with those around me?

Patience teaches me that just when I think I've mastered acceptance, appreciation, and respect I've got to start all over again.

Again and again, I need to relearn what it really means to say that it is what it is. Again and again, I must learn what it really means to be thankful that I am alive. Again and again, I must learn what it really means to take myself and others seriously.

Patience is the ability to tolerate suffering without the deadly poison of resentment. It is the ability to see oneself in an objective way.

It is the ability to appreciate one's unique perspective in the world. I am the only being in the universe that sees reality from the precise point that I occupy. But I must constantly remind myself there are an infinite number of other perspectives from which I can not see it.

5-Listen

I am not the only being in the universe with thoughts, and hopes, and desires, and feelings, and needs. I am not the only being in the world with a special perspective. How many times do I have to relearn this before I can grow up?

I stop what I am doing right now and listen to you. I don't just hear the words or see the body language. I must be silent and figure out what you are trying to tell me. I must purposely turn off my own voice and listen to yours. Am I the only one that finds this excruciatingly difficult?

You are reaching into my soul. You are calling me and trying to get me to see you just as you are right now, not as I wish you to be. You want me to share your pain, your fear, your laughter, your happiness, your sadness, your surprise, your wonder, your joy, your amazement. You want to learn from me and you want to teach me.

More than anything, you want to let me know that you see me, you hear me, and you feel with me. You are like me in so many ways, but you are not me and in the end I fear I will not hear everything you want to tell me. I am afraid that no matter how hard I try, I hear my own voice and call it yours.

Only when we begin to listen, can we begin to be with someone else. Listening is not just about words, it is about letting you in and going in to be with you.

Listening is scary, but not listening is even scarier because then I really am alone.

6-Respond

These words that I am stringing together right now are a response. The words themselves are not my words. They belong to all of us. I am temporarily rearranging them. Trying to order them in a way that signals my thoughts and feelings to you. I am crying out, "I am here. And, I hear you." Responding can be as simple as a momentary acknowledgment that I know that you too are a human being—just a passing glance into your eyes. A brief moment of recognition, a sharing of a secret. My eyes are a mirror in which you see your own humanity, just as I can see my humanity reflected in your eyes.

Responding can be beginning a relationship with you. "Let's work together on this project of mutual interest. Let's help each other and not just use each other." Responding is my acting in the world in an ethically appropriate way. Responding means being responsible.

At its best, responding can also be a life-long commitment and partnership, a covenant. I vow to you everyday that I will be here always with you. To listen to you, to hold you, to support you, and to even let you go, if that's what you really want. But I will never forget you.

7-Find Meaning

Finding meaning is building a temporary home in the universe, a kind of *sukka*. It is satisfying life's most elusive but precious goal even if just for short time. I try to define meaning but just as I think I've captured its essence, it's gone. I can not keep hold of it. It is here and then it is gone.

There is a kind of meaning that I can discover. It is out there. It is waiting for me. But, unless I make it my own, somehow put my own primitive mark on it, it's not real. To find meaning is to find a unique purpose, but it is more. It is to express that purpose in the everyday world. Finding

meaning is not just an intellectual exercise it is a way of life, a way of being in the world.

Meaning evolves over time. What was meaningful yesterday, may no longer be meaningful today. To continue to worship yesterday's meaning is to idolize it. You can't build meaning by yourself. If meaning is not somehow shared it is a pretend meaning, just a figment of my imagination. Meaning is what allows me to live a life of integrity *and* connection. To live a meaningful life is to live a spiritual life.

8-Persist

There are overwhelming moments in my life when evil becomes so real and so tangible. I see evil, I feel it, I touch it, I hear it, and I smell its terrible stench. It has been there all along, only I didn't notice it.

Life's taken for granted meaning disappears. What seemed so important yesterday is trivial today. I go through the motions, but why? I am without hope. A friend literally becomes a deformed monster overnight. Other friends become silent and can't stand to see what I am forced to see so clearly. They abandon me in my hour of need. No philosophy can help me. No words can soothe me. No book can comfort me.

There have been moments in my life where I have believed in nothing except for those precious few who hang in there with me. In them, I never lose faith. Never. They are my only thread connecting me to this world.

But I will not cave in. I persist. I pick myself back up. With the precious few, we rebuild what has been shattered by the monster. As the song says, "They can stand me up at the gates of hell, but I won't back down." If there is no meaning out there, with your help, we will build it from the ground up.

In time the monster is diminished. He becomes smaller and smaller. Now, he is pathetic and sad, and I almost feel sorry for him, but it is not for me to forgive him. He is still there, but he is harmless. He is gone. And, we go on together...

9-Enjoy

Enjoyment is not just the satisfaction of physical needs, although it certainly is that too.

Enjoyment is the feeling of accomplishment that comes from living up to my aspirations. Enjoyment is not the goal, but it is more like the happy byproduct that comes from completing other goals. There is enjoyment in listening, in responding, in finding meaning. Even in persisting there is a special kind of enjoyment (although I would never seek it out).

10-Love

Love is the last of the ten aspirations because it is the most important. All of the other aspirations point to love.

To love is to live. Love is being here with you, right now. Nothing else matters. Nothing else exists.

Love is the most powerful of all the emotions. If you are patient and if you persist, it eventually overwhelms sadness, grief, fear, and even pure hate. To love, in its deepest sense, is to grow up together.

Love requires luck, but it also requires hard work. You don't really fall in love, you choose to make love and then you work on it for the rest of your lives. And, the best thing of all about love is that it knows no bounds.

In the end, love is not in me and love is not in you, but love is that tiny but ever growing part of reality that contains and sustains us both. There is nothing magical about it.

Some Final Thoughts

Years ago, I wrote an essay analyzing the biblical story of Yosef and his brothers in Egypt. In that essay, I suggested the possibility that Yosef's brothers may have discovered Yosef's identity before Yosef reveals himself to them. If this is the case, then when Yehuda confronts Yosef at the climax of the story, Yehuda already knows who the viceroy is.

I liked this interpretation then and still like it, even if it is a stretch, because if it is true, Yehuda is not threatening the viceroy with words (as is sometimes suggested), but he is having a dialogue with Yosef. They are not talking at each other as strangers do, but they are talking to each other as brothers should. While Yosef and Yehuda are both unique individuals, they are also mutually aware of the deep connection and history that they share.

In my mind, this conversation is the first recorded dialogue centered on Jewish ethics. This is, in fact, the model of how we do ethics from a Jewish perspective.

Yehuda's impassioned speech becomes more humane, given that he has listened to the many hints about his identity that Yosef has dropped along the way (picking on Shimon in particular, inquiring about the welfare of the brothers' father, and sitting the brothers in the correct birth order.) Yehuda picks up on these signals, finally understands his brother, and sees him for who he is. He begs Yosef to return Benjamin.

Yehuda does not know if Yosef will forgive the family. But, at least they are engaged in a dialogue Yehuda verbally acknowledges the sin which they had committed. In response to this deeply moving scene, Yosef is moved finally to end the charade and formally acknowledge what his brothers have already picked up on. Yosef hears the strength of Yehuda's words because Yehuda himself hears the echo of Yosef's cries.

The obstacle and vivid memories of hate separating Yosef from his brothers would seem insurmountable. One of the great lessons in Breishit is that obstacles are permanent barriers only if this is what we truly wish.

Natan Sharansky tells us that while he was imprisoned he found hope in the words of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav. “The entire world is a narrow bridge, and the important thing is not to be afraid at all.” This statement can be interpreted in many different ways. I think of this narrow bridge as the voice of dialogue that connects together the unique experiences of each one of us. And, it is this narrow bridge that we are all so fearful of that constitutes the final goal of Jewish ethics.

Chapter 1 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-This chapter begins with a quote from *Pirkei Avot*. Why do you think a book about contemporary Jewish ethics begins with a quote from this particular source from our tradition?

2-The statement from *Pirkei Avot* with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “Beloved is man, for he was created in the image of God; still greater was this love in that it was made known to him that he was created in the image of God”(Avot: Chapter 3, Mishnah 14).How does the author of the chapter interpret this *mishnah*? How is it connected to Aaron’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?

3-Would your analysis of this case differ if Shiela had asked Aaron to get medicine for her children instead of rice cakes? Would it make any difference what kind of medicine Shiela needed?

4-In the chapter, the camp director sides with his wife Shiela? Why do you suppose this is the case? Does it surprise you?

5-Does the chapter state whether or not this is a religious camp or not? Is this fact relevant to how you understand this story?

6-Suppose the tables were turned and Aaron was not an observant Jew. Would it be fair for a religious camp director to require his driver to observe ritual law?

7-Why is this chapter called “Defining Moments?”

8- “If we let others choose for us, as Aaron did in this case, it is their values that are becoming concrete and real in the world and not ours.” Explain this statement and provide at least one example of your own.

9-In the bible, we read, “And when the people saw that Moses delayed a long time in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together in front of Aaron and said to him, ‘Arise, make us gods, that will go before us...’ And Aaron said to them, ‘Pull off your golden earrings and bring them to me...’ And he took them from their hand, and formed it with a graving tool and he made it a molten calf” (Exodus: Chapter 32: 1-4). In what ways is Aaron’s camp experience similar to this story and in what ways is it dissimilar?

10-“Ethics emerges first from religion. The very same ability that helps us to stand up to an investment banker and tell him that we need to leave in order to get home for Shabbat may also, in the future, help us to stand up to the very same investment banker and tell him that we can’t participate in a sham business transaction either!” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

II-Essay Questions

1-If you were in Aaron's situation, what would you have done?

2-According to Maimonides, true *teshuva* (repentance) occurs "When an opportunity presents itself for repeating an offense once committed, and the offender, while able to commit the offense, nevertheless refrains from doing so because he is penitent [feeling regret for having done wrong], and not out of fear or failure of vigor..." Does Aaron's decision to leave his job interview in order to make it home before Shabbat qualify as true *teshuva* under this definition?

3-"Quiet leadership is what moves the world." Do you agree or disagree and why?

4-Someone who is careful in observing shabbat and kashrut will also be careful in ethical matters. Do you agree or disagree and why?

III-Connections

The following excerpt is from a proposed amendment to a congressional bill. The amendment was authored by Stephen J. Solarz and Pat Schroeder. (Source: Congressional Record, May 11, 1987).

Mr. SOLARZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer an amendment to the Defense Department authorization bill which would ensure that members of the Armed Forces will not be forced to choose between their sincere religious beliefs and a desire to serve their country. I am offering this amendment with my esteemed colleague from Colorado, PAT SCHROEDER. Our amendment would allow a member of the Armed Forces to wear religious apparel while in uniform provided that the apparel is neat and conservative and that it not interfere with the performance of the member's military duties.

The need for congressional action rose in response to the case of Capt Simcha Goldman. An orthodox rabbi, he was disciplined for wearing his yarmulke while on duty because it was a violation of the Air Force dress code. That code prohibits the wearing of headgear while indoors. Orthodox jews, by the dictates of their religion, are required to cover their heads at all times. Rabbi Goldman did not want to choose between his religious convictions and the desires to serve his country so he appealed the judgement against him. The U.S. Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court ruled against him. The Supreme Court's decision--by the narrowest of margins--5 to 4--ruled that the Air Force's perceived need for uniformed dress overrode Goldman's first amendment right. Opponents of this amendment argue that it would threaten uniformity and reduce military cohesion.

If you had been a member of Congress, would you have voted for this amendment or not? Please be as specific as possible.

IV-Personal Journal

1-Describe an event in your life that turned out to be a defining moment for you.

2-Describe your personal strengths and weaknesses. How do these character traits protect you, if at all, from the kind of situation Aaron faced?

3-When it comes to ethics, the person I have learned the most from is ...

4-Describe a recent action that you have taken, or an action that you might take in the near future, that would strengthen your character.

V-Group Project

Directions: Each member of the group must interview a parent or a grandparent about a defining moment that he or she experienced. How did the defining moment shape his or her future life? The group members should compare stories and describe some of the common features in all of the stories. Each group will present a 15 minute summary of their findings to the whole class.

Chapter 2 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-The statement from *Pirkei Avot* with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And, being for myself only, what am I? (Avot: Chapter 3, Mishnah 14) How does the author of the chapter interpret this *mishnah*? How is it connected to Sarah’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-The chapter introduces the “problem of the weak will?” What is it and what are some additional examples?

3-Are students more likely to cheat on a take home exam? Do you think it’s fair for a teacher to give a take home exam?

4-What is the difference between rationality and rationalization?

5-Sarah rationalizes that this situation was one of “moral ambiguity.” What does this mean? While this phrase does not seem to apply in this situation, can you think of another example where it might be appropriate? Or, is the phrase “moral ambiguity” always an example of rationalization?

6-Why is cheating an example of *geneivat daat*?

7-Sarah said there were three reasons why she didn’t cheat. How does the third reason differ from the first two?

8-What is the difference, if any, between “cheating” and “being a cheater”?

9-Sarah claims that she will not cheat in the future? After reading this chapter, are you convinced that this is true?

10-Does everyone really have a *yetzer hara* and a *yetzer hatov*?

11-What is the single most important reason for scoring well on an exam?

II-Essay Questions

1-It's always wrong to cheat. No amount of rationalization will ever justify cheating. True or false. Explain your answer.

2-People who cheat in school are more likely to cheat later in life. True or false. Explain your answer.

3-The following statement was endorsed by a unanimous vote of the Roshei Yeshiva of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and affiliate of Yeshiva University (March 31, 2003).

Cheating is an egregious halakhic and ethical violation. When students turn aside as others cheat, they communicate to their peers that they find such behavior tolerable...Any student who becomes aware of cheating during the upcoming period of final examinations, be it before, during or after the fact, should report the incident to the office of the dean...This is the case even in situations where only one student witnessed the violation. Each witness should report all relevant information, taking care to report exactly what he witnessed, including the identify of the perpetrator(s) if he can identify him/them. The reporting student is ensured confidentiality under all circumstances. Students who cheat and are reported on should understand that their friends did so because they [are] unwilling to tolerate an immoral culture around them.

The RIETS faculty believes that demanding students to report on classmates known to be cheating will improve the ethical climate of the university. Do you agree or disagree with this belief? Do you think there might be other ways to reduce cheating that could be used either with this proposal or as a partial substitute for it?

4-Ben Azzai taught that the reward of a *mitzvah* is the *mitzvah* (Pirkei Avot: Chapter 4, Mishnah 2). What does this mean?

III-Connections

In business, some of the most important things that bosses look for are integrity and strength of character. Consider the following statement from a former chief executive officer of one of the biggest companies in the world:

In reference to the qualifications of new board members, [our] corporate governance guidelines emphasize “the qualities of strength of character, and inquiring and independent mind, practical wisdom and mature judgment.” It is no accident that we put “strength of character” first. Like any successful company, we must have directors who start with what is right, who do not have hidden agendas, and who strive to make judgments about what is best for the company, and not about what is best for themselves.

Do you believe that this statement captures what it really means to be a leader in today’s world? Would your opinion of this statement change if you were told that the author was Kenneth Lay, the chief executive officer of Enron, whose company was engaged in one of the most notorious corporate scandals in history?

IV-Personal Journal

1-Have you ever cheated? If so, why? If not, why not?

2-When are you most likely to start coming up with rationalizations for your behavior?

3-In the *mishna* with which the chapter began Hillel asks a rhetorical question, “being for myself only what am I? If you had to answer this question, how would you?”

4-Describe a recent action that you have taken, or an action that you might take in the near future, that makes it less likely that you would cheat if given the opportunity?

V-Group Project

Directions: Develop a set of five rules for your class or school on the topic of cheating.

VI-Vignette--How Bad Does Josh Want an A?

Josh was tired. He had been up most of the night studying for his Principles of Accounting final. Josh was a good student, but because of his very hectic schedule, he now had little time to prepare for this exam.

Josh had received a B+ on the midterm and was hoping for at least an A- on the final. He believed that this aspiration was quite reasonable as other students who had taken Professor Kava had told him that the final was usually easier than the midterm. Whether or not this was really true is another story.

Professor Kava had not made any of his previous exams available for the students to have as a practice exam. Josh felt this was unfair. Other teachers, in other sections of the same course, had provided old exams to help students. With just one day left before the final exam, Josh decided to call his older brother Steve for some help. Steve was now working as an accountant with one of the major accounting firms.

Josh's brother Steve had been an exceptional student when he had Dr. Kava just two years before. "Calm down," Steve said. "It's just an accounting exam. It's not like it's real life or anything."

"That's easy for you to say. You've already got a good job. I've got to get through this and I'm running out of time," Josh whined.

Steve loved playing the part of big brother. "I'll tell you what, Josh. I've got my old exam somewhere around here. What if I fax it up to you?"

"That would be great." Josh felt calmer now than he had in days. A few minutes later he was in the library working on the old exam. "This really isn't so bad," he muttered to himself. "I'm just not sure about question 3."

Josh tried to find his roommate, Ben, who was also a student in Dr. Kava's class. Josh showed him the old exam and asked him if he knew how to do question 3. Ben, who had received the highest grade in the class on the midterm, looked at the old test and smiled. "Ya, no problem. I went through this whole exam last night. I sure hope we get an exam this easy tomorrow."

Avi had overheard this conversation and began to chuckle to himself. "I don't know about that. I have a good feeling that your test is gonna be much harder."

Ben and Josh looked up from the old test and asked Avi how he knew so much about their test. He didn't even have Kava for accounting. "Well, from what I hear, a few guys in the class bought a copy of this year's exam from one of the security guys." Maybe Josh was naive, having grown up far from the New York metropolitan area, where many of his classmates were from. "I don't believe you," he said.

"Don't believe me. It doesn't really make any difference to me. But, hey, if I wanted an A as bad as you do, I know what I'd do. And, it sure wouldn't be wasting my time on question 3. I can guarantee you one thing, that's not going to be on the exam."

Early the next morning, about a half hour before the exam was scheduled, Dr. Kava got a phone call from the Academic Vice President. "I've got some bad news. I think some of the students may have a copy of your exam." Dr. Kava dejectedly hung up the phone.

Chapter 3 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-The statement from *Prieki Avot*, with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “‘What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours’ – this is the average type; but some say this is a characteristic of Sodom” (Avot: Chapter 5, Mishnah 10). How does the author of this chapter interpret this *mishnah*? How is it connected to Yosef’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-Why didn’t the teacher just postpone the exam?

3-“Trust is a fragile asset.” What does this statement mean? Why is this observation so important in this chapter?

4-In what specific ways is this case different than Aaron’s and Sarah’s situations?

5-Why do you think the author believes that Yosef’s actions created a loving community “if just for an hour or so?”

6-Who was Rosa Parks? In what way did she show “moral imagination?”

7-Do you agree that Theodore Herzl was a moral artist?

8-How does Shimon ben Shetach’s decision to return the pearl to the heathen demonstrate *derek eretz*?

9-In what ways was Yosef’s dilemma similar to Shimon ben Shetach’s? In what ways was his dilemma different?

10-If Shimon ben Shetach was correct and his students were wrong, why does the midrash bother to record the students’ position–“all the world agrees that if you find something which belongs to a heathen, you may keep it”?

II-Essay Questions

1-In your opinion, what are the three most important characteristics of a loving community?

2-In *pirkei avot* we learn that *derek eretz* comes before Torah. In what specific ways does the story of Shimon ben Shetach demonstrate this insight?

3-This chapter concludes as follows: “Ethics is about changing the very rules of how the game is played in a positive and more inclusive way.” Here’s why this statement is true...

III-Connection

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Jeffrey Swartz, the Chief Executive Officer of Timberland:

I found a *Gemara* in *Berakhot* in which Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai and Rabbi Yishmael are having a discussion. Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai is talking about agriculture. He says, “Hey!” (and I’m obviously paraphrasing just a tiny bit here)—“If a man were to spend his time winnowing and sowing and reaping and threshing at the time of the blowing wind, what will become of Torah?”

I looked at that and thought, uh-oh, he’s talking to me. I work hard during the day. I travel all over the world for Timberland. I’m busy. I’m home for *Shabbat*, thank God, but I’m busy. I don’t know what will become of Torah. Good question. Is there an answer? So I read on, and Rabbi Yishmael says yes, there is an alternative. He calls it *minhag derekh eretz*.

I remember something I learned from my rabbi. Only one time each day do you say a blessing for studying the Torah. “*La’asok b’divrei torah*.” *La’asok, ish asaikim*—the same *shoresh*, the same root—*asak*, meaning business or duty. I finally understood what Rabb Yishmael was trying to tell me. It’s not about stealing five minutes of Torah here, or five minutes of Torah there. *La’asok b’divrei torah*, to be immersed in the words of torah. That’s not just when you’re sitting with the *Gemara* in front of you; and it doesn’t require heading into the cave like Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai and his son. My simple understanding of it means that my job as an *ish askim*, as a businessman—everything I do, when I hire somebody, when I work with a customer, when I sit in a boardroom—that’s supposed to be *la’asok b’divrei torah*. You only say that blessing once during the day because it’s supposed to last every minute of the day.

At Timberland what we do is make boots. But *who* I try to be while I do what I do, is an *ish askaim*. (Quoted from the “Moral Responsibility of Corporations, by Jeffrey Swartz, **The United Synagogue Review**, Spring 2000, p. 21.)

Questions:

1-Go to the Timberland home page. To what extent do the corporate activities of Jeffrey Swartz's company reflect the beliefs stated in this quote? Be as specific as possible.

2-Is it really possible to bring one's Judaism into the marketplace?

3-Is this an example of moral imagination as described in the body of this chapter?

4-Find the passage that Swartz is referring to in the *gemora*. Is his reading of this passage true to the actual words of the text? How does this passage compare to the story of Shimon ben Shetach quoted in the body of the chapter?

IV-Personal Journal

1-When it comes to ethics, my Jewish hero is ...

2-When it comes to ethics, my non-Jewish hero is...

3-The person in my family who best exemplifies ethical artistry would have to be...

4-Think of someone with whom you would like to have a more trusting relationship. What have you done or what could you do to achieve this goal?

V-Group Project

Develop and implement a project that helps the world become a more loving place, "if just for an hour or so." Your project should be creative and should help at least one other person.

VI-Vignette

Black or African American: What's the Difference?

Akiva has always been a good student. So it was no surprise to his parents when he decided to go

to college. Both of his parents were Sephardic Jews, born in Morocco, and had lived there until they were almost 20 years old. Neither of them had the opportunity to attend college, nor did any of Akiva's three older brothers choose to go. Each of them were now working in the family's successful construction business. Construction was hard physical work, but as the family business gained a reputation for consistently high quality output and honesty, the company prospered so much so that the family was able to purchase a beautiful home in Englewood, NJ, one of the most prestigious suburbs in the New York metropolitan area. The new house was within easy walking distance to the synagogue and this was something that was very important to the whole family.

Akiva's father, Ezra, was proud of the fact that his son was a college student, but he was equally proud of Akiva's brothers who were as hard working and ambitious as he himself was. Ezra knew that if it you wanted to make it in America, you had to be willing to work hard and get your hands dirty.

As Akiva began his senior year in college, he started thinking about what he would do after graduation. Many of his friends were going on to graduate schools of one sort or another. For the first time in his life, Akiva began to seriously consider law school. As Akiva put it, "There are many things in this country that I would like to be different and I feel that a legal education would empower me to make a difference."

Ezra was not as happy about the prospects of law school as he had been about college four years earlier. He felt that it was time that Akiva got on with his life. Nevertheless, Akiva took the LSAT exam and got a decent score. Ezra told Akiva about his reservations and explained to him that in his view, unless you got into a top 10 law school, it's pretty much a waste of time. He believed that you could make a lot more money in business than you could as a lawyer graduating from a mediocre law school. If you want me to pay for law school, his father explained, get into a top 10 school, otherwise, you're on your own, son.

As Akiva opened his first law school application, he got to the section where they ask about race. "I came to the most misunderstood name: African American or Black. Now, while I am not Black in any sense, I am African American. Both of my parents were born in Africa." The possibility of checking off the box for African American was a compelling option for Akiva and just might solve his problem. Akiva knew that his LSAT scores were good, but not quite good enough to get him into the very best law schools. If he said that he was African American, though, this might make the difference between getting in and not getting in. In Akiva's words, "The term African American is a term that is used to be politically correct. There is no doubt in my mind that they are referring to black people, however to call someone a black is a little derogatory. Now, if you truly think about it, I am more African American than most black people. Most likely their families have been in the US for more than one generation. I am only one generation removed from my African status. Now, even though I know law schools are referring to Blacks when they write African Americans, is it unethical [for me] to check that box off?"

Question: Is this an example of moral imagination, or something else altogether?

Chapter 4 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

- 1-The statement from *Pirkei Avot* with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “Who is mighty? He who subdues his passions.”(Avot: Chapter 4, Mishnah 11) How does the author of the chapter interpret this *mishnah*? How is it connected to Natan Sharansky’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?
- 2-In Jewish life today, who are the heroic leaders?
- 3-Heroic leaders are “statistical outliers.” What does this phrase mean?
- 4-Why is the author of this chapter ambivalent about using heroic leaders as our role models?
- 5-Who is Natan Sharansky? Using your own words describe what happened to him while he was living in the former Soviet Union.
- 6-How was it that Sharansky was able to stand up to the Soviet Union for such a long time?
- 7-Do you believe that Sharansky was willing to die for his ideals?
- 8-Even though Sharansky was in jail, he describes himself as being free. What does he mean by this? Is it really possible to maintain one’s freedom while one is in jail?
- 9-While Natan Sharansky was in jail, he sang the following song: “The entire world is a narrow bridge, and the important thing is not to be afraid at all.” What does the symbol of a narrow bridge mean to you?
- 10-Sharansky notes that upon his arrival in Israel he, “soon learned that defending one’s freedom in the ocean of love can be no less challenging than defending it in the sea of hatred.” Is Sharansky exaggerating here or do you think this statement is literally true for him?

II-Essay Questions

1-Even the greatest heroes, when examined carefully, are carried along by the currents of time. Do you agree with this statement or disagree? And, why?

2-Great heroes are better role models than quiet leaders because....

3-Quiet leaders are better role models than great heroes because...

4-How might Abraham have defended his decision to destroy his father's idols? Was this an act of passion or was it a well-calculated decision on Abraham's part?

5-In Israel, daily life is much less harsh, but the moral and political dilemmas are grayer and less obvious than they were in the former Soviet Union. What are the major moral dilemmas that Israel, as a nation, faces?

6-Maimonides wrote in the **Mishna Torah** that the one should always strive for the "middle way." In his words:

The way of the upright is [to adopt] the intermediate characteristic of each and every temperament that people have. This is the characteristic that is equidistant from the two extremes of the temperament of which it is a characteristic, and is not closer to either of the extremes. Therefore, the first Sages commanded that one's temperaments should always be such, and that one should postulate on them and direct them along the middle way, in order that one will have a perfect body. How is this done? One should not be of an angry disposition and be easily angered, nor should one be like a dead person who does not feel, but one should be in the middle - one should not get angry except over a big matter about which it is fitting to get angry, so that one will not act similarly again. Likewise, one should not have lust except for those things which the body needs and without which cannot survive, as it is written, "The righteous eat to satisfy his soul". Similarly, one should not labour at one's business, but one should obtain what one needs on an hourly basis, as it is written, "A little that a righteous man has is better, et cetera". Nor should one be miserly or wasteful with one's money, but one should give charity according to what one can spare, and lend as fitting to whoever needs. One should not be [excessively] praised or merry, and nor should one be sorrowful or miserable, but one should be happy for all one's days in satisfaction and with a pleasant expression on one's face. One should apply a similar principle to the other temperaments - this is the way of the wise. (Chapter 1: Mishnah 4)

Is the middle way always appropriate? Would this have been good advice for Sharansky while he was imprisoned in the Soviet Union? Would this be good advice for him today as political leader in Israel?

III-Connections

In April of 2004, Natan Sharansky, Head of the Israeli Delegation to the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism, concluded his speech by stating the following:

For real progress to be made there, the free world must be willing to pursue a policy of linkage against states that support anti-Semitism.

The effectiveness of a policy based on linkage was powerfully demonstrated a generation ago after a group of dissidents inside the Soviet Union, including myself, decided to form the Helsinki Group in the wake of the Helsinki accords – the very agreement which led to the establishment of the OSCE.

With the help of courageous leaders in the West who were willing to link their relations with the Soviets to their treatment of their own people, the Helsinki Group helped ensure that the Soviets could not take one step in the international arena without their human rights policies becoming an issue. As a result, real progress was made. Today, linkage can be used to marginalize the extremists in the Moslem world and to encourage and support the moderate Moslems who can and should be our partners in bringing understanding and peace between people and religions.

It has been said that anti-Semitism begins with the Jews, but does not end with them. Well, in looking out at everyone who has come today to stand with the Jewish people in combating an evil that endangers the entire civilized world, I am proud to say that the fight against anti-Semitism begins with the Jews, but it does not end with them.

Armed with moral clarity, determination, and a common purpose, I know that this is a fight that we can, must and will win.

Give some concrete examples of what Sharansky would like the international community to do with regard to problem of contemporary anti-Semitism. Is this speech an example of Sharansky as the “heroic leader” or Sharansky as the “quiet leader?”

IV-Personal Journal

- 1-What value or values would you be willing to die for?
- 2-Who is your all-time favorite hero from Jewish history?
- 3-Who is your all-time favorite hero from American history?
- 4-Who is the person in your extended family that you most admire?

V-Group Project

Directions: Each member of the group must conduct a brief survey asking five friends or relatives who their Jewish hero is. The group members should tabulate their results and share them with the whole class. What did each group discover about Jewish heroes?

VI-Vignette

To Disclose Or Not to Disclose, That is the Question

Jon Pryor had been working as an investigative reporter for the *Jewish Newspaper* for two years. After graduating Columbia University's School of Journalism, Pryor decided to forgo a number of seemingly more prestigious job offers to accept his current position. Pryor loved writing and certainly had high ambitions, but he also had a deep desire to serve the Jewish community, as well.

In his two short years with the paper, Pryor had already established himself as an important and constructive voice in the Jewish community. His articles on Jewish education, Israel-Diaspora relations, anti-Semitism, and Jewish political power in the city were impeccably researched and nearly universally well-regarded.

It was not surprising then to Pryor's well-seasoned Editor, Sam Wise, when Pryor uncovered a potentially explosive story concerning Irving B. Macher, one of the Jewish community's most beloved and active philanthropists. In fact, many people considered Macher the front runner for a highly contested leadership position at a major Jewish organization.

Pryor told Wise that he had learned through the grapevine that Macher's first marriage, which ended five years ago, had been a disaster. According to Pryor's sources, including Macher's first wife, Macher had been cheating on his wife from the get go. But, that was not all. His former wife also alleges that Macher physically and emotionally abused her on more than one occasion. Finally, Macher did agree to a divorce, but only on his terms. In order to receive her "Get" Macher's wife had to agree to a divorce settlement which left her with almost nothing in terms of financial support. Macher's wife freely uses the term "blackmail" in describing her former husband's behavior.

Sam Wise has been around a long time and is anything but naive. "Jonathan," he started, "Let's slow down here. Suppose all of this is true. Is it really newsworthy?" "I know Irving and I know his current wife", Wise continued. "They're the happiest couple I know."

"Your story is five years old, it's about his personal life, not his professional activities, and sounds more like *lashon hara* (gossip), than anything else."

Pryor nodded but pressed on. "The story is old, but it's still relevant. This is about character. How can you trust this guy if he's beating his wife? Besides, this is an issue which needs raising in our community, and this is a perfect opportunity."

Sam Wise looked like he was thinking. Suddenly, he got up from his desk walked over to Pryor and said, “Listen kid, I’m killing the story and I’m doing it for you. If we go with this story, nothing will really change. Yes, maybe it will bring Macher down, but he’ll bring you and me and a lot of other good people down with him. You got a long and great career ahead. Don’t blow it on this schmuck.”

Question: What would you do if you were Jon Pryor?

Chapter 5 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-The statement from *Pirkei Avot* with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “The more flesh, the more worms.” (Avot: Chapter 2, Mishnah 8) How does the author of the chapter interpret this *mishnah*? How is it connected to three vignettes? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-In your opinion what are the most important needs?

3-Is it really possible to distinguish between “legitimate human needs and illegitimate desires?”

4-Describe Reuven’s dilemma. The author claims that “from an ethical point of view, his dilemma would not have been any different had he been selling sport coats or sneakers.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

5-Describe Shimon’s dilemma. What do you think is motivating Shimon to flee the scene of an automobile accident?

6-Describe Levi’s dilemma. In the end, why does Levi go to the Rabbi?

7-What is self-efficacy? Why does the author believe that it “is a foundation for ethical behavior.”

8-In what way is patience important to ethical decision making?

9-According to the author, “Reuven and Shimon seem like they’re acting in a free and uncoerced way. But, to the extent that neither one of them really thought about what they were doing, they are just reacting to their environments rather than creating them. I see them more like prisoners to their own instincts than truly free agents.” Does this mean that Reuven and Shimon don’t have free will?

10-Maslow believe that it was impossible for “higher level” needs to emerge before “lower level” needs were satisfied. Do you agree or disagree?

II-Essay Questions

1-Explain how Natan Shransky's prayer helped him deal with what must have seemed like an intolerable situation to him.

2-The ability to choose is like the ability to read or to write. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.

3-The best way for the Jewish community to deal with the problems of teenage drinking and drug use is to.....

4-Instead of leaving the scene of his car accident, Shimon should have....

5-What are the five human needs that Abraham Maslow identified? (Hint: You may have to go to the internet to find out the answer to this question.)

III-Connections

The following story appeared in a Jewish Newspaper:

For Eric, the Bar Mitzvah circuit was more than a chance to celebrate life-cycle events with friends and family. It was also an opportunity to gain access to alcohol. "Drinking got me out of myself. It made me feel bigger, stronger and cooler," Eric recalled in an interview recently. "I'd be drinking every weekend at the Bar Mitzvahs that were happening. I would steal bottles from the Bar Mitzvahs and bring them home."

Now 19, Eric is a college student at a Long Island university near where he grew up, but back when he was 13 years old, he was the boy sneaking a few drinks as his peers danced and played party games.

"I think at the time I didn't care," he explained. "I just looked at it as a way to get free liquor. The fact the people's families were there and I looked like an idiot didn't mean much to me."

The former Jewish day-school student would have to sink low before he realized that he had a problem. Through middle school, he experimented with all kinds of drugs -- heroin, cocaine, angel dust -- even selling for a while to support his habit.

Eric sobered up two month before he turned 16, when his school and his parents intervened and placed him in a treatment center. The spiritual guidance he needed to remain sober, however, came a few months later, at another school, when he met a speaker from Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others, a support group for Jewish addicts, which he still remains affiliated with.

"It never occurred to me that most normal people have a drink and then go dance and

then have another drink. That wasn't what it was about for me."

Eric's experience is an extreme case, but it's a reminder that Jewish kids -- like their non-Jewish counterparts across the country -- are gaining access to and experimenting with alcohol and drugs at an earlier and earlier age.

More proof of this came in February 2002, when the National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University made headlines with its report "Teen Tipplers: America's Underage Drinking Epidemic," much of which focused on the fact that girls were catching up with boys in the amount of alcohol they were consuming.

But another significant point that appeared in the report was that while 27 percent of high school graduates in 1975 reported using alcohol in the eighth grade or earlier, approximately 36 percent of the class of 1999 had done so. And most of these kids were not just sneaking a sip. Some 24.1 percent of ninth-graders were reporting that they had participated in binge drinking -- five or more drinks within a few hours of each other -- once in the past 30 days.

The trend has addiction counselors and community activists more than concerned. (Excerpt from "It All Starts with a Drink: Youth behavior gets riskier and riskier at younger and younger ages," by Brian Mono, **Jewish Exponent**, Philadelphia, June 27, 2002, Vol. 211, Iss. 26, p. 1.)

Question: Are drinking and the use of illegal drugs really a problem among Jewish teenagers? If so, can anything be done about it?

IV-Personal Journal

1-A-I believe that drinking too much is not only a medical problem but it is also an ethical problem. B-I believe that drinking too much is a medical problem only. Pick A or B and explain your thinking.

2-I personally know someone who is addicted to alcohol or drugs. I believe my responsibilities to this person include:

3-Do you think you would ever leave the scene of an automobile accident that you had caused like Reuven did?

V-Group Project

Develop a short list of rules for your synagogue's youth group with regard to the issue of teenage drinking and drug use. Make sure your list includes directions about what to do if you are aware of abusive drinking and drug use.

VI-Vignette

Mindy Isaacs was four and a half minutes older than her sister Esther, and not a single day went by that Mindy did not remind Esther of this fact. They were twins, but hardly identical. Mindy and Esther were now in 11th grade—both students at the Girls High School of Queens, one of the best modern orthodox high schools in the country.

Mindy was taller and bigger than her younger sister. She was talkative, funny, and sociable. In fact, it came as no surprise to anyone when Mindy was elected class president this past September. Esther was petite, shy, and bookish. She was pretty, but not particularly popular at school. Esther was more concerned about her grades and getting into a good college than anything else. She was extremely intelligent and knew that she had a good chance at getting into a top Ivy League school. Her grades were good and her SAT scores were great.

Mindy was much less concerned about college, not that she wasn't smart, but she knew she would be happy where ever she went.

Both girls felt that they a good shot at winning the prestigious *Baruch Cohen Israel Award*, and both girls really wanted the free summer trip to Israel that the winner would get. The award had been established 10 years before and was given to the 11th grader who wrote the best essay. The topic of the essay was – Defining Moment: What Being Jewish Means to Me. Both Mindy and Esther worked long and hard on their essays and were anxious as Chanukah was approaching because on the first night of Chanukah the winner would be announced at the school-wide party.

Although Esther was four and a half minutes younger than Mindy, Esther's essay placed first and Mindy's second. Mr. and Mrs. Isaacs were proud of both of their children that night and happy that they both could articulate so clearly what being Jewish meant to them.

Esther had written about how in 8th grade she had learned that honesty was the best policy. Her teacher had given her a higher score than she had really earned on a chumash test. Esther had to decide whether or not to tell the teacher. Not telling felt like lying to her, but telling would cost her a full grade on her report card. In the end, after much soul-searching, Esther decided that as an observant Jew she had to tell her teacher.

Although secretly Esther had hoped that her teacher would not penalize her for being honest, in fact, her teacher did give her the lower grade. After this incident, though, Esther go to know her Israeli Chumash teacher better. They developed a real and lasting friendship and that is how Esther first came to love Israel and Israeli society. That's why the trip to Israel was so important to her.

In announcing the winner, the judges stated that Esther's essay was well-written and obviously, deeply personal. It *was* well-written, and it *was* deeply personal. The only problem was that this had all happened to Mindy and not to Esther!

When Mindy read the essay she felt betrayed and hurt. "This was my story and not hers." While her father seemed to take her side, Mindy's mother favored Esther. "Well, dear, she wrote the

story and not you.”

That night, Mindy resolved to go to the principal and discuss the matter further but by the next morning she didn't know whether or not she could do this to her sister.

Chapter 6 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

- 1-The statement from Genesis with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “Shall the Judge of the earth not act justly” (Genesis: Chapter 25, Verse 25) How does the author of the chapter interpret this *verse*? How is it connected to Judith’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?
- 2-This chapter also begins with a quote from the social psychologist Stanley Milgrom. What does this quote mean? Does the quote apply to Judith?
- 3-Why do you suppose the title of the chapter is “Beyond Fair Have”?
- 4-Judith does not consider her self “left wing.” In general terms, what does it mean to be left wing or right wing on political issues? What does it mean to be left wing with regard to Israel? What does it mean to be right wing with regard to Israel?
- 5-In the chapter it states that “the clash between the organizations’ clear goal of no-negotiation and her own beliefs that a Palestinian state is inevitable became more acute.” As clearly as possible describe this clash with your own words.
- 6-In what way is Judith’s dilemma similar to Levi’s? How is it different?
- 7-Summarize the arguments of the “First Friend.”
- 8-Summarize the arguments of the “Second Friend.”
- 9-Is Judith’s solution more similar to the advice of the “First Friend” or is it more similar to the advice of the “Second Friend?”
- 10-Do you think Judith is compromising her principles? If so, why do you think she’s doing this? In other words, what is motivating Judith in this chapter?
- 11-The author uses the phrase “getting her hands dirty.” What is meant by this? Do you think Judith is getting her hands dirty? Is there anyway to avoid getting your hands dirty in a right versus right dilemma?
- 12-In the last chapter, the author introduced the concept of “self-efficacy.” What does this mean? Does Judith display this characteristic?

II-Essay Questions

1-In what context does Abraham ask God, “Shall the Judge of the earth not act justly”? Why was this particular question so relevant?

2-A-I would love to work for an organization like US Zionists. B-I would hate to work for an organization like US Zionists. Pick either A or B and write a short essay to explain your thinking.

3-A-I agree with Judith’s solution. B-I disagree with Judith’s solution. Pick either A or B and write a short essay to explain your thinking.

III-Connections

The following is a brief description of Stanley Milgram’s most famous social psychology experiment:

Controversy surrounded Stanley Milgram for much of his professional life as a result of a series of experiments on obedience to authority which he conducted at Yale University in 1961-1962. He found, surprisingly, that 65% of his subjects, ordinary residents of New Haven, were willing to give apparently harmful electric shocks-up to 450 volts-to a pitifully protesting victim, simply because a scientific authority commanded them to, and in spite of the fact that the victim did not do anything to deserve such punishment. The victim was, in reality, a good actor who did not actually receive shocks, and this fact was revealed to the subjects at the end of the experiment. But, during the experiment itself, the experience was a powerfully real and gripping one for most participants. (Excerpt from Stanley Milgram.Com.)

Some people have used Milgram’s experimental result as a kind of explanation of how it was possible that ordinary Germans followed Hitler’s evil orders and decrees during the holocaust. Do you agree or disagree?

The above quote states that “controversy surrounded Stanley Milgram. Why do you think that some people feel his experiment is itself unethical?

IV-Personal Journal

1-My most rewarding work experience occurred when I...

2-I’ve had an experience similar to Judith’s. I was faced with the following dilemma...

3-I doubt I would ever experience anything like Judith’s experience because...

V-Group Project

Directions: Each member of the group must interview a parent or a grandparent about a work experience where they faced an ethical dilemma. How did they resolve the dilemma? The group members should compare stories and describe some of the common features in all of the stories. Each group will present a 15 minute summary of their findings to the whole class.

VI-Vignette

A Taxing Dilemma

Rob's accounting professor had been the first to suggest tax as a career possibility. Rob loved the puzzle-like quality of his textbook accounting problems and demonstrated exceptional quantitative skills. His nearly perfect GPA in accounting accurately reflected his native abilities, organizational skills, and high level motivation.

Rob enjoyed his training and the obvious professionalism at BIG Accounting, one of the leading accounting firms in the world, and was anxiously looking forward to a rewarding career there.

His first few months at BIG Accounting passed quickly. He was eager to learn and wanted to please his new bosses.

Working on an individual tax return and still unsure of himself, Rob questioned his supervisor about a highly questionable deduction. Smiling broadly, the manager explained, "Oh, don't worry about *that* Rob. The odds on the IRS noticing it are next to nil. Anyway, if you really think about it, it's novel but hardly a frivolous interpretation."

A few days later, Rob was working on a second client's return. Examining the two previous years returns Rob noticed an inconsistency that had to be the result of an error. Again Rob's boss reassured him. "Listen Rob, we called the client on that a while ago, explained the consequences, and recommended he refile. He's a good client and we need him so be careful here."

Rob still looked concerned. His manager, still smiling, reassured him, "A few more months experience and you'll get used to this *schmutz*." Rob had never heard this colorful Yiddish word *schmutz* before, but he was fairly confident he knew what it meant.

The following month Rob and a group of first years were invited to lunch with one of the senior tax partners. "I hope you're all learning a lot," the partner said using his best impression of Uncle Charlie from the old TV show *My Three Sons*. "By now you've probably realized the real world's a lot more complicated than your accounting text books at school. You know, I've always believed *tax is more art than science*."

Apparently that line is the firm's unofficial motto. It's exactly what Rob's boss said when he handed him back a tax return he had completed with three new (and substantial) deductions

seemingly invented out of thin air. “I know more about the client’s deductions than the client does. Make these changes before you leave tonight!” The friendly smile of the first few months had disappeared. Rob’s manager seemed fed up and tired with him. When Rob seemed to hesitate, if just for a second or two, his manager stated coolly and with out making eye contact, “This is our business...Rob. Our only responsibility is to the client. Check out the code of professional ethics.”

This was the last straw for Rob. In the most difficult decision of his young life, Rob quit the firm the very next day and began looking for a new job in a smaller practice.

Chapter 7 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-1-The statement from Genesis with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “And Joseph said to his brothers, fear not, for am I instead of God? You thought evil against me, God thought it for good; in order to do as at this day, to preserve numerous people alive. Now therefore fear not: I will support you and your little ones. So he comforted his brothers and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis: Chapter 50, Verses 19-21) How does the author of the chapter interpret these *verses*? How are they connected to Zeke and Natan Sharnansky’s stories? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-In the story of Joseph, why doesn’t he take revenge on his brothers?

3-Why do you think Joseph is called *Yosef Hatzadik*, Joseph the righteous one?

4-How did Zeke react to the fact that he had juvenile diabetes?

5-Zeke says, “I feel as though God had given me not only a disease, but rather a window of opportunity to make a change in this world for the better.” What does getting a disease have to do with changing the world for the better?

6-In what ways do you think Psalm 39 helped Natan Sharansky cope with his ordeal? If you were in a similar situation what one book of the bible would you like to have with you?

7-Throughout his years in the Gulag, Natan Sharansky’s one fixed point was the love he felt for his wife Avital. Do you think having one fixed point is always helpful? Can you imagine a situation why having such a fixed point might be detrimental?

8-“In searching for meaning, we’re not looking for just any old link in the chain, but we’re looking for the golden link. When you finally find it, you know it’s right because it is intellectually defensible and emotionally satisfying.” What does the author mean by the “golden link?”

9-The very last sentence of this chapter states, “They did this not to live a detached and emotionless life, but to live a deeper, richer, and more purposeful life, a life of integrity and connectedness.” Integrity and connectedness are sometimes seen as opposite characteristics. Sometimes, more integrity means less connectedness, and more connectedness means less integrity. Give an example of each of these situations.

II-Essay Questions

1-Write a short essay about what might have happened to Zeke had he not found meaning in his disease.

2-Write a short essay describing the main thesis or theme of this chapter. What does it mean to say “stuff happens.”

3-In this chapter, Joseph is described as an “improvisor.” What does it mean to improvise? Give some concrete examples of improvisation.

4-Natan Sharansky states that he felt like he was having dialogues with some of the great characters of the past. He includes Socrates, Don Quixote, Ulysses, Gargantua, and Hamlet. Who would you include on your list and provide a sentence or two explaining each choice.

III-Connections

Consider the following news story:

N E W Y O R K, July 26— An overweight Bronx man wants four famous fast food chains to pay for serving him the finger-licking food that helped make him fat.

Caesar Barber, 56, a maintenance worker who weighs about 270 pounds and stands 5-foot-10, claims McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's and KFC jeopardized his health with their greasy, salty fare. He filed a class action lawsuit on Wednesday in the New York State Supreme Court in the Bronx on behalf of an unspecified number of other obese and ill New Yorkers who also feast on fast food.

Barber's lawsuit is the first broad-based action taken against the fast food industry for allegedly contributing to obesity. He claims the fast food restaurants, where Barber says he used to eat four or five times a week even after suffering a heart attack, did not properly disclose the ingredients of their food and the risks of eating too much.

"They never explained to me what I was eating," Barber said on ABC's Good Morning America.

His lawyer, Samuel Hirsch, said the multibillion-dollar fast food industry has an obligation to warn consumers of the dangers of eating from their menus. "It's a question of informing the consumers," he said. "[The companies] profited enormously."

The fast food chains were negligent in selling food high in fat, salt, sugar, and cholesterol content, the lawsuit claims, despite studies showing a link between consuming such foods and obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, elevated cholesterol intake, related cancers, and other health problems.

As a result of the fast food companies' actions, Barber suffered injuries — he has had two

heart attacks and is diabetic — and is entitled to unspecified damages at a jury trial, the complaint reads.

A food industry spokesman says he is surprised Hirsch can make his legal argument with a straight face. (Excerpt from “Whopper of a Lawsuit Fast-Food Chains Blamed for Obesity, Illnesses” By Geraldine Sealey at <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/fatsuit020725.html>)

Question: Is Caesar Barber trying to shift the blame for his own careless behavior onto the fast food industry? Does the fast food industry share any responsibility for what has happened to Barber?

IV-Personal Journal

1-Just like Zeke, stuff has happened to me. For example...

2-What is your “one fixed point?”

3-Integrity and connectedness are important values in my life because...

V-Group Project

Directions: The group project is to write a “chain essay.” What this means is that each member of the group is responsible to write one paragraph as follows. The first person in the group should think of a hypothetical situation similar to Zeke’s (note it doesn’t have to be about getting a disease) and write a one paragraph description of it. The second person should read the first paragraph and continue the essay by writing a second paragraph. He or she might discuss how the person in the hypothetical situation reacted to the news. The third person should read the first two paragraphs and continue the essay by writing a third paragraph. He or she might write about what happened next. This process should continue until everyone in the group has had a chance to write one paragraph.

VI-Vignette

A Test Case For a Young Business Person

Gabe Levine graduated business school at the top of his class. Although Gabe did exceptionally well in school, most of his friends think of him more as a doer than thinker. He was extremely active on the school newspaper and was president of his university's entrepreneurial club. Upon graduation, Gabe started his own company, a dot.com called BETTER GRADES. Gabe's driving insight came to him one night during his senior year as he was feverishly trying to finish up a term paper. Gabe knew he needed some additional research before he was ready to write, but he simply didn't have the time. "If only I had a research assistant..." he imagined. A groggy Gabe reluctantly finished the paper and almost immediately forgot about it. He didn't forget about his idea, though.

He was able to raise funds to start his business by persistent convincing and pestering among members of his extended family. He was helped by exuberant economic expectations of the period, especially for anything that had to do with the fast growing internet. Gabe's plan was to act as a kind of middleman, matching desperate students with less desperate students, particularly graduates students with exceptional abilities, extra time, and a need for some additional cash.

Phase 1 of his business plan required him to identify, contact, and hire potential research assistants or on-line consultants, as he called them. His criteria were plain and simple. Every on-line consultant had to be currently enrolled in a nationally recognized graduate school, maintaining a grade point average of 3.33 or above. In addition, each candidate had to furnish a job recommendation from a current professor.

With approximately 100 on-line consultants in place, Phase II began. Gabe advertised in the top 50 University Newspapers and through the internet. His advertisements were also plain and simple, promoting the fact that he had hired an experienced group of researchers from some of the top name schools in the country. He identified the names and affiliations of all his on-line consultants.

Gabe charged \$60 per hour for his on-line consultant's time, paying the consultants \$40 per hour and pocketing the difference. "While this is a seasonal upscale business," he would say, "you do the math. One hundred consultants times 10 hours per week, time \$20 per hour...Not bad."

Initially, business was brisk and things were running relatively smoothly. In time though, customer complaints began to grow and business deteriorated. It turns out, while many students needed research assistance, many more students needed more fundamental help writing their papers.

Gabe talked to many of his customers and on-line consultants in an attempt to figure out a strategy to re-focus his company. He decided to expand and re-invigorate the product. Rather than merely selling research assistance, he now advised his on-line consultants to provide "model papers" for the students to use in writing their papers. It worked. Soon business was better than ever, even though a number of his original on-line consultants quit. The biggest difficulty Gabe faced now was simply hiring enough consultants and tending the problems which

naturally arise with any business growth. Or, was it?

Chapter 8 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-1-The statement from *Pirkei Avot* with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “Let the honor of your fellow man be as precious to you as your own. (Avot: Chapter 2, Mishna 10) How does the author of the chapter interpret this *mishnah*? How is it connected to Josh’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-Do you agree with the author’s view that Yitzchak Rabin’s assassination is an example of “moral decay?” What is moral decay?

3-“Even after entering his guilty plea, Rabbi Frankel seemed unapologetic. In a New York Times interview, Rabbi Frankel continued to insist publicly that ‘the ends justify the means.’” Do you believe that there are circumstances where the ends to justify the means? Is the case of Rabbi Frankel one of these situations?

4-What is the antidote to moral decay according to the author of this chapter?

5-What is Nathan’s secret? Should Nathan have revealed this secret to his boss before he was hired? Why do you suppose Nathan revealed his secret to Josh?

6-Does Josh believe that Nathan is doing a good job or not?

7-“After some serious soul-searching, Josh realized that a God fearing Jew *doesn’t lie and bring harm to others.*” Do you agree with Josh about this?

8-Why does the author of this chapter believe that sometimes respect may not be enough? Do you agree or disagree? Do you think that Josh should have done more for Nathan in this situation?

9-In discussing his dilemma, Josh never talks about his own attitude towards homosexuality. Why not?

10-The very last sentence of the previous chapter states, “They did this not to live a detached and emotionless life, but to live a deeper, richer, and more purposeful life, a life of integrity and connectedness.” Integrity and connectedness are sometimes seen as opposite characteristics. Sometimes, more integrity means less connectedness, and more connectedness means less integrity. Do you think that this insight applies to Josh’s dilemma? In other words, is Josh trading away “integrity” to increase “connectedness”? Or, vice versa?

II-Essay Questions

1-Why do you suppose Yigal Amir assassinated Yitzchak Rabin? Do you believe that political assassination can ever be justified from an ethical point of view?

2-The thesis of this chapter is that respect is an antidote to moral decay. Do you agree or disagree with this thesis? Write a short essay explaining your view.

3-“You can’t always look to an authority figure for ethical guidance.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write a short essay explaining your view.

III-Connections

A-Rabbi Dr. Asher Meir is Research Director at the Business Ethics Center of Jerusalem. He recently wrote as follows:

There are indeed profound paradoxes in the seemingly straightforward ideals of toleration and freedom. These ideals raise perplexing questions: Should I be tolerant even of intolerance? Should I support freedom even for tyranny?

A commitment to tolerance means an acknowledgment that no single person can encompass the totality of truth. Reality is so vast, so complex, that a myriad of distinct individual viewpoints are necessary in order to enable us to begin to comprehend it. The Talmud prescribes a special blessing on seeing 600,000 people at once, blessing God Who comprehends the "wisdom of secrets." The Talmud's explanation for this blessing is that "Just as each person's face is different, so are each person's beliefs different." Only when we have thousands upon thousands of people together do we begin together to approach an understanding of the world's inner being. This variation among human beings is not only acceptable -- it elicits a unique blessing.

Yet this doesn't mean that all beliefs are valid! The Sages of the Talmud certainly acknowledge that some beliefs are completely false and dangerous. They identified a few fundamental ideas as being so contrary to the very foundation of Jewish belief that they stated that those who hold them endanger their place in the World to Come.

When probing the limits of toleration, we must ask ourselves: Is this opposing view an additional, alternative piece of the puzzle of existence? Is it one more facet of the "wisdom of secrets"? Or does this view attack the foundation of existence?

This unique approach allows us to remain passionate in our own beliefs, while remaining tolerant of many other points of view because we recognize some essential insight or lesson they convey.

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Rabbi Dr. Asher Meir, JCT Center for Business Ethics

(Source:http://www.aish.com/societyWork/work/The_Jewish_Ethicist_Discriminating_Against_Discrimination.asp)

Question: Do you believe that this viewpoint is consistent or inconsistent with Josh's decision?

B-Consider the following statement:

Job discrimination, for any reason, is un-American, unfair, and unwise. Our nation's economic success depends on having the most qualified, dedicated, and competent people as part of the workforce, regardless of sexual orientation. Too many gay and lesbian Americans still face job discrimination because of their perceived or actual sexual orientation. This should not be allowed to happen in our modern society.

Workplace discrimination affects hundreds of thousands of gay and lesbian Americans. This issue goes to the core of what it means to live in a free society. Freedom depends on people having the opportunity to pursue any career they wish. Any person's progress in the workplace should depend solely on his or her skills and ability, not their sexual orientation. There has been important progress in recent years to make the workplace friendlier for gay and lesbian Americans. The Human Rights Campaign reports that among the Fortune 500, 328 companies (65%) have non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation. Even Wal-Mart, which defines conservative old-fashioned American values, now offers protection for its gay and lesbian employees. (Source: <http://www.logcabin.org/logcabin/workplace.html>)

Question: Why do you think attitudes towards gays in the workplace is changing so dramatically? Is this a Jewish issue?

IV-Personal Journal

1-What would you have done in Josh's situation?

2-What is your attitude toward homosexuality?

3-What is your attitude toward homosexuals? Is there a real difference between this question and the previous question?

V-Group Project

Your group should develop a one or two paragraph statement on discrimination in the workplace.

VI-Vignette

Do the Ends Justify the Means?

In the summer of 1999, Mrs. Vivian Silvervault's attorney contacted the Director of the

Autumnville Jewish Nursing Home, Jill Smart, to discuss a gift proposal in the amount of \$3 million.

The Autumnville Jewish Nursing Home is considered a state of the art facility located in an upscale suburb of New York City. The Nursing Home serves both Jewish and non-Jewish clients. The current ratio is approximately 50-50.

The attorney explained to Ms. Smart that all donated funds must be used for a Medical Ethics Center to be located on the grounds of the nursing home. The Medical Ethics Center which would include a Medical Ethics Officer, would serve a dual function. First, according to Mrs. Silvervault's instructions, it would serve as a location where the nursing home's medical and nursing staff could obtain help in answering the increasing number of ethics related questions. In addition, the Center would also educate the broader Jewish community about the importance of this topic. The attorney explained that the proposal was extremely important to Mrs. Silvervault for personal reasons regarding her own mother's medical care at the time of her death.

Ms. Smart had been trying to interest Mrs. Silvervault, the sole heir to the Silvervault Department Store fortune, to commit to a major donation for some time. Ms. Smart was extremely interested in the proposal, in spite of the fact that she was personally opposed to the specific idea of a Medical Ethics Center. Ms. Smart strongly believed that the proposed Medical Ethics Center would turn out to be more of a nuisance than a practical resource for her medical and nursing staff. From her experience and discussions with doctors and nurses, she had concluded that they would view a Medical Ethics Officer as an intruder rather than as a valuable contributor in providing health care to the Nursing Home's residents.

In spite of her reservations, Jill Smart decided to bring the proposal before the Autumnville Jewish Nursing Home's Board of Directors. In fact, Ms. Smart argued vigorously to the Board about the need to highlight an ethical perspective in the delivery of healthcare services, basing her argument on her belief that nursing homes and other medical facilities must view residents and patients as human beings and not just inputs into a production process. Ms. Smart was able to convince the board about the importance of this proposal in spite of heated opposition from a number of medical doctors and an attorney who serve on the Board.

One year later, Ms. Smart decided not to rehire the Medical Ethics Officer for a second year. As she explained to the Board, "This was an experiment that failed. Our staff resisted advice from the Medical Ethics Officer and viewed his suggestions as unrealistic, at best." In addition, Ms. Smart noted "It is now clear that the educational aspect of this project really goes beyond the mission of this institution. We will keep the new medical ethics library, that's important, but we just can't afford the Medical Ethics Officer." The cost savings in eliminating this position were substantial. With these funds Ms. Smart hired two new full time nurses to work the ever growing Alzheimer Unit.

Chapter 9 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-1-The statement from *Pirkei Avot* with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “Make for yourself a friend and judge everyone charitably.” (Avot: Chapter 1, Mishna 6) How does the author of the chapter interpret this *mishnah*? How is it connected to Jon’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-What is the difference between respect and care?

3-The author writes that “From a Jewish perspective, it would be an impossible morality that always expected everyone to like everyone else (respect is usually hard enough).” Does this statement contradict the Torah’s commandment to “love your neighbor as you love yourself?”

4-Why do you think that Mohamed asked his co-workers to call him Alan?

5-Why do you think that Jon started to feel guilty about how he was treating Alan? Was this an appropriate emotional reaction?

6-Define piety. Define civility. Do you believe that it is possible to be both pious and civil?

7-“For the activist Jews of my generation, our movement represented the exact opposite of what our parents had gone through when they were young. But we saw what had happened to their dreams, and we understood that the path to liberation could not be found in denying our own roots while pursuing universal goals. *On the contrary: we had to deepen our commitment, because only he who understands his own identity and has already become a free person can work effectively for the human rights of others* (p. xxii, emphasis added, **Fear No Evil**, New York: Random House, 1988).” How does this quote from Natan Sharansky help us understand Jon’s dilemma?

8-Jon thinks that the business world is one of the best places to create *Kiddush Hashem*. What do you think he means by this?

9-Do you think that Jon and Alan’s friendship can survive? What will it depend upon?

10-The author concludes the chapter by noting that Jon became friends with Alan not by betraying his tradition, but by more fully understanding what it means to be Jewish. Explain.

II-Essay Questions

- 1-Give an example of how it might be possible for a person to overcome unjustified prejudices towards someone new?
- 2-Do you believe that Jon really has some sort of ethical or moral obligation to go out of his way to be nice to Alan? Or is Jon being overly moralistic here?
- 3-Does the fact that Alan is a deeply religious Muslim make it more or less likely that Jon will come to like him?

III-Connections

A-The following statement appeared on the The Inner Dimension web-site, presented by Gal Einai Institute:

The customary translation of *vehavta l'reyacha kamocho*--"you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18)--seems to imply that all "neighbors," regardless of creed, are to be loved equally. This implication, based upon the inadequate translation of *reyacha*, is not accurate.

First let us observe the context in which the above phrase appears in the Torah: "You shall not hate *your brother* in your heart. You shall not take revenge or feel resentment against *the children of your people*, you shall love *your companion* [*reyacha*] as yourself." From this it is clear that "your companion" refers to the same category as "your brother" and "the children of your people," all explicitly referring to one's fellow Jew.

Thus we see that in the Torah, the Hebrew word *reyacha* explicitly means "your fellow Jew." It does not refer to anyone outside the Jewish faith. "Neighbor" is not an accurate translation for the word *reyacha*.

The Jew is commanded to respect all human beings. The Torah prohibits any negative behavior toward a non-Jew, so long as he is not an enemy. He is instructed, however, not to become too close a companion to him. Thus the above verse, *vehavta l'reyacha kamocho*, "You shall love your neighbor as your self", does not imply a universal neighbor.

Questions: Does this statement accurately reflect the "Jewish view?" Are there other interpretations of this commandment?

B-Consider the following midrash:

Now when that great calamity came upon Job, he said unto the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the Universe, did I not feed the hungry and give the thirsty to drink? And did I not clothe the naked?"

Nevertheless the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Job: "Job, thou has not yet reached half the measure of Abraham. Thou sittest and tarriest within thy house and the wayfarers

come in to thee. To him who is accustomed to eat wheat bread, thou givest wheat bread to eat; to him who is accustomed to eat meat, thou givest meat to eat; to him who is accustomed to drink wine, thou givest wine to drink. But Abraham did not act in this way. Instead he would go forth and make the rounds everywhere, and when he found wayfarers *he brought them into his house*. To him who was unaccustomed to eat wheat bread, he gave wheat bread to eat; to him who was unaccustomed to eat meat, he gave them meat to eat; to him who was unaccustomed to drink wine, he gave wine to drink. Moreover he arose and built stately mansions on the highways and left there food and drink, and every passerby ate and drank and blessed Heaven. (Emphasis added, Abot de R. Natan, 7 as translated by J. Goldin).

In the dictionary, to respect someone is “to avoid harming” or “interfering” with him or her. To care for someone is “to like him or her” or “to feel affection.” One way of understanding this midrash is to suggest that Job respects, but Abraham cares! Comment.

IV-Personal Journal

- 1-What would you have done in Jon’s situation?
- 2-Describe a situation where you met someone who you initially disliked but later became friends with.
- 3-Do you have any Christian friends? Do you have any Muslim friends? If not, why do you think this is the case.

V-Group Project

Describe the five most important characteristics of a good friend.

Chapter 10–Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-The statement from the Talmud with which the chapter begins reads as follows: “Each tribe was unwilling to be the first to enter the sea. Then sprang forward Nachshon the son of Amminadab and descended first into the sea.” (Sotah 37a) How does the author of this chapter interpret this *midrash*? How is it connected to Moshe’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-In describing his ordeal, Moshe says, “it was all or nothing, black or white, good or bad, holy or not!” Why do you think Moshe saw his decision in such stark either-or terms?

3-Moshe knew how hard his leaving would be on his parents and friends. “Of great concern to me was the welfare of my family and friends who would be devastated by such a move on my part.” Do you think Moshe is being honest with himself? Is he really concerned about his parents and friends? Or, is his real concern his own welfare?

4-Moshe was agitated and extremely lonely. “I spent many sleepless nights tossing and turning in my bed.” He says that the hardest part of his ordeal “was the fact that I had to struggle with it all by myself. I had *noone* who I felt I could talk to, since on such a matter I could trust noone.” Why do you suppose Moshe was so lonely?

5-“I finally made the big move! On the first day of what would have been my fifth year in yeshiva, in the beginning of the *zeman* or semester, I left my home with my suitcases. My parents ordered a taxi for me. Last kisses good-bye. My mother: ‘*Shtiyg* away (learn well and grow spiritually) sweetie.’ ‘Okay, *Eema* (mom).’” Do you think Moshe’s actions as described here are unethical? Is it always wrong to lie?

6-Moshe felt that if he returned to Israel, given the cultural expectations there, he would have to give up his religion completely. Why does Moshe think this way?

7-In the end, do you think Moshe did the right thing? To what extent does an Israeli citizen have an obligation to serve in the armed forces?

8-If Moshe had come to you for advice while he was staying with his grandparents, what would you have told him?

9-What does Moshe mean when he writes “I gained the ability to take charge and make decisions myself, which is a most valuable tool in my possession.” Doesn’t everyone have freedom of choice?

10-Do you think Moshe is trying to live a life of integrity or is he just running away from his problems? What is integrity?

II-Essay Questions

1-Is there a biblical story that is similar to Moshe's? What can be learned from comparing Moshe's story to the biblical story?

2-It might be okay to lie sometimes, but only under very special circumstances. Here are two examples where it would be okay...

3-What are Moshe's two most admirable characteristics? What are Moshe's least admirable characteristics?

III-Connection

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Dr. Daniel Tropper founder and president of Gesher, an organization dedicated to bridging the gap between religious and secular communities in Israel:

The visions of the ideal Jewish state remain as conflicted today as ever, the need to find a balance between democratic and halakhic imperatives as urgent. Without a compromise accepted willingly by both sides, the dissatisfaction, anger and fear fermenting just below the surface will erupt. And when that happens, we will find two adversaries far more alienated from one another and far less understanding of the other's position. The opportunity to heal and bridge, however, is still available. Indeed, we would be wise to use this wonderful hiatus in confrontation to educate toward tolerance and Jewish commitment.

This Tisha Be'av we should reflect on how to overcome internal strife and rivalry and develop a Jewish consensus which passionately preserves the Jewish character of the state while recognizing the pluralistic nature of its society. What's needed are new and innovative programs stressing both our glorious Jewish heritage and the significance of Western democratic values. (The Jerusalem Report, July 26, 2004, p 46)

Requirements:

Go to the Gesher web site and summarize the philosophy of this organization.

Do you believe that the work of this organization can contribute in a positive way to helping to bridge some of the perceived gaps between religious and non-religious Jews in Israel?

IV-Personal Journal

- 1-What would you have done in Moshe's situation?
- 2-What would you have told Moshe if he had come to you for advice?
- 3-The event in my life that most closely resembles Moshe's is the following...

V-Group Project

1-Moshe contacted an organization that is designed to help people like him who are thinking about leaving the *charedi* world. He met with a guidance counselor who advised him on some of the consequences of his decision. A few months after meeting the advisor, Moshe had resolve once and for all to leave his familiar community.

Prepare a 5 minute skit to fill in some of the gaps in Moshe's story. The skit should depict the conversation between Moshe and the guidance counselor. What do you imagine these two people said to each other?

VI-Vignette

A Question of Integrity

Mark Israel was tired and irritable when he arrived home at 11:00 PM from a contentious board meeting of the local centrist orthodox high school.

His wife, Esther, greeted him with a smile and an offer to microwave his dinner for him. Mark was in no mood to eat. The meeting had been called a week before to discuss plans for the school's expansion. The school had been growing dramatically the past few years and everyone agreed it was time to build a modern campus to accommodate the increasing needs of the student body.

Mark looked at his wife and spoke. "The only item on the agenda was the new building. But before we even had a chance to talk about it, Gabe Levine, the guy they're naming this building after, rather dramatically got up to speak."

Mark tried to do a plausible imitation of Mr. Levine for his wife. "Before we get to the issue of the new campus and how precisely we're going to finance this project, I'd like to bring up another issue. It pains me to say this but there have been many complaints, especially among some of my good friends, made against our principal, Rabbi Cohen. I know this issue has come up before and I know many of you are strong supporters of Rabbi Cohen, but I believe it's time we take a good hard look at weather or not he's really our man, especially if we're going ahead with this expansion. I've been in business for a long time and I know when it's time to bring in new blood."

"I couldn't believe my ears," Mark nearly yelled at his wife. "Rabbi Cohen has been with this school for 20 years. He built this school from scratch when nobody else thought it was possible. The teachers love him and the kids love him. But he doesn't know how to make nice to Levine and his cronies. Levine won't talk about the new building until we agree to fire Rabbi Cohen."

Only he doesn't even have the nerve to use the word 'fire' - Levine says we should ask him to 'retire early'. Can you believe this guy?"

Esther felt sorry for Mark and asked him, "What can we do?"

"I'll tell you what we can do," Mark hollered. "We can tell this guy to go to hell. Until now, ninety percent of the board members supported Rabbi Cohen. He's an educator's educator! We don't need Levine and we don't need his lousy money."

"I'm not so sure about that," Esther responded quietly after a long pause. "Maybe there could be some kind of compromise. You know, Rabbi Cohen is getting older. Maybe he could use an assistant principal or some other kind of help. Would that satisfy Levine?"

With this Mark erupted. "Whose side are you on? Why should this guy call the shots just because he's got the money? If they fire Rabbi Levine because of this bozo - I'm gone - I tell you - I'm gone."

Chapter 11 – Learning Guide

I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-1-The statement from the Pirkei Avot with which the chapter begins reads as follows. In a place where there are no ‘persons,’ strive to be a ‘person. (Avot Chapter 2, Mishnah 5) How does the author of the chapter interpret this *mishnah*? How is it connected to Aryeh’s story? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-What are the five most important stakeholders in Aryeh’s story?

3-What are the five most important facts in Aryeh’s story? State them in chronological order.

4-In describing army life, Aryeh’s states:

Rules and orders become life, *the individual person is asked to leave for three years.*
Nobody cares about my opinion and if I really want to test the rules the jail will make it very costly (my emphasis).

Why do you think Aryeh believes that the army asks you to leave for three years?

5-Why do you think that Aryeh is so much more sympathetic to Yitzchak’s plight than his commanding officer?

6-In the chapter the author provides both the case for and against Yitchak. In your opinion which of these two cases is stronger? Explain.

7-Aryeh knows well that the rule is that everyone should serve in the West Bank; this is basic equity. But, he also knows that the *point* of this rule is that everyone should be treated in the same way so that soldiers will not be jealous and angry with one another thus destroying the morale and effectiveness of the unit. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

8-How does Aryeh resolve his dilemma?

9-How would you describe a right versus right dilemma?

10-In the broadest terms, what do you think it means to say that there is a cost to being ethical?

II-Essay Questions

1-Compare and contrast Moshe's dilemma from Chapter 10 to Aryeh's dilemma.

2-"You need to look not just at the letter but at the spirit of the rules." What are the strengths of this view and what are the weaknesses?

3-To be a good soldier means...

4-The following is a famous midrash about Hillel the elder:

It was reported about Hillel the Elder that every day he used to work and earn one tropaik, half of which he would give to the guard at the House of Learning, the other half being spent for his food and for that of his family. One day he found nothing to earn and the guard at the House of Learning would not permit him to enter. He climbed up and sat upon the window, to hear the words of the living God from the mouth of Shemayah and Abtalion; They say, that day was the eve of Sabbath in the winter solstice and snow fell down upon him from heaven. When the dawn rose, Shemayah said to Abtalion: Brother Abtalion, on every day this house is light and today it is dark, is it perhaps a cloudy day. They looked up and saw the figure of a man in the window. They went up and found him covered by three cubits of snow. They removed him, bathed and anointed him and placed him opposite the fire and they said: This man deserves that the Sabbath be profaned on his behalf.

Was Hillel breaking the rules of the Beit Midrash by climbing on the roof and listening in on the conversation? How is this case different than sneaking into a movie and watching for free?

III-Connection

Read the following excerpt from Martin Luther King's Letter From a Birmingham Jail:

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all"

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades

human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distort the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and awful. Paul Tillich said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression 'of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

In this letter Martin Luther King Jr. mixes politics and religion. In your view, does this violate the US constitution's notion of separation of church and state? If so, why? If not, why not?

IV-Personal Journal

1-Give an example where you faced an ethical dilemma, but didn't realize it until it was too late.

2-Describe a case where you were able to follow the following dictum: "In a place where there are no 'persons', strive to be a 'person.'"

3-The most difficult "right versus right" problem that I ever faced was...

V-Group Project

Suppose that Aryeh decided to confront his superior officer by talking to him directly instead of circumventing him.

Prepare a 5 minute skit depicting this hypothetical conversation between Aryeh and his superior officer. What do you imagine these two people might have said to each other? Would this conversation have helped resolved this dilemma in a more satisfactory way?

