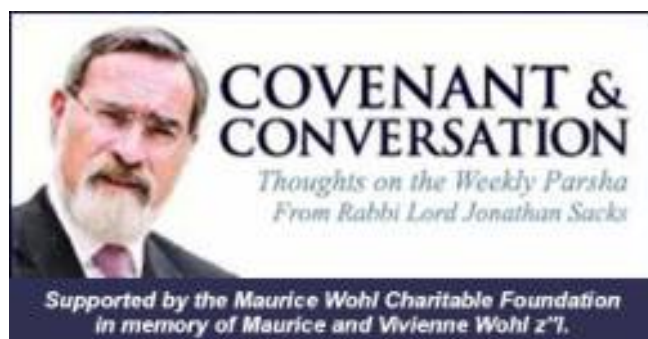


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Emotional Intelligence

In March 2015 I had a public conversation at Yale with the University's President Peter Salovey. The occasion was quite an emotional one. It celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the Marshall Scholarships, created by the British parliament as a way of expressing thanks to the United States for the Marshall Plan, that helped Western Europe rebuild its economies after the Second World War. The scholarships fund outstanding young Americans to study at any university in the United Kingdom. So the gathering that evening was about the links between Britain and the United States, and the role of universities in cultivating that generosity of spirit, epitomised by the

Marshall Plan, that understands the need to build peace, not just wage war.

But it had another emotional resonance. Yale is one the world's great universities. Yet there was a time, between the 1920s and 1960s, when it had a reputation for being guarded about, even quietly hostile to, the presence of Jews among its students and staff.[1] Happily that has not been the case since 1960 when its President, A. Whitney Griswold, issued a directive that religion should play no role in the admissions process. Today it is warmly welcoming to people of all faiths and ethnicities. Noting that fact, the President pointed out that not only was Yale that afternoon hosting a rabbi, but he too - Salovey - was Jewish and the descendant of a great rabbinic dynasty. Salovey is an Anglicisation of the name Soloveitchik.

Thinking back to that occasion, I wondered whether there was a more than merely family connection between the university president and his great distant relative, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, the man known to generations of his students at Yeshiva University as simply, "The Rav." Was there an intellectual and spiritual link also, however oblique?

There is, and it is significant. Peter Salovey's great contribution to the thought of our time is the concept he formulated together with John Mayer in a landmark 1989 article,[2] namely *emotional intelligence* - popularised in 1995 by Daniel Goleman's best-selling book of the same title.

For many decades, IQ, or intelligence quotient, focused attention on a set of cognitive and reasoning tests as the primary measure of

intelligence, itself considered as the best indicator of ability as, for example, a military officer. It took another brilliant Jewish psychologist of our time, Howard Gardner (of Harvard), to break this paradigm and argue for the idea of multiple intelligences.[3] Solving puzzles is not the only skill that matters.

What Salovey and Mayer did was to show that our ability to understand and respond to not only our own emotions but also those of others is an essential element of success in many fields, indeed of human interaction in general. There are fundamental elements of our humanity that have to do with the way we feel, not just the way we think. Even more importantly, we need to understand how *other people feel* - the gift of empathy - if we are to form a meaningful bond with them. That is what the Torah is referring to when it says, "Do not oppress a stranger because *you know what it feels like* to be a stranger" (Ex. 23:9).

Emotions matter. They guide our choices. They move us to action. Intellect alone cannot do this. It has been a failing of intellectuals throughout history to believe that all we need to do is to think straight and we will act well. It isn't so. Without a capacity for sympathy and empathy, we become more like a computer than a human being, and that is fraught with danger.

It was precisely this point - the need for emotional intelligence - about which Rabbi Soloveitchik spoke in one of his most moving addresses, 'A Tribute to the Rebbetzin of Talne.'[4] People, he said, are mistaken when they think there is only one Mesorah, one Jewish tradition handed on

through the generations. In fact, he said, there are two: one handed down by fathers, the other by mothers. He quoted the famous verse from Proverbs 1:8, "Listen, my son, to the instruction of your father (*mussar avikha*), and do not forsake the teaching of your mother (*torat imekha*)."

These are two distinct but interwoven strands of the religious personality.

From a father, he said, we learn how to read a text, comprehend, analyse, conceptualise, classify, infer and apply. We also learn how to act: what to do and what not to do. The father-tradition is "an intellectual-moral one." Turning to "the teaching of your mother," Soloveitchik became personal, speaking of what he learned from his own mother. From her, he said:

I learned that Judaism expresses itself not only in formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She taught me that there is a flavour, a scent and warmth to *mitzvot*. I learned from her the most important thing in life - to feel the presence of the Almighty and the gentle pressure of His hand resting upon my frail shoulders. Without her teachings, which quite often were transmitted to me in silence, I would have grown up a soulless being, dry and insensitive.

[5]

To put it in other words: *Torat imekha* is about *emotional intelligence*. I have long felt that alongside Rabbi Soloveitchik's great essay, *Halakhic Man*, there was another one he might have written called *Aggadic Woman*. Halakhah is

an intellectual-moral enterprise. But aggadah, the non-halakhic dimension of rabbinic Judaism, is directed to the broader aspects of what it is to be a Jew. It is written in narrative rather than law. It invites us to enter the minds and hearts of our spiritual forebears, their experiences and dilemmas, their achievements and their pain. It is the emotional dimension of the life of faith.

Speaking personally, I am disinclined to think of this in terms of a male-female dichotomy.[6] We are all called on to develop both sensibilities. But they are radically different. Halakhah is part of *Torat Cohanim*, Judaism's priestly voice. In the Torah, its key verbs are *le-havdil*, to distinguish/analyse/categorise, and *le-horot*, to instruct/guide/issue a ruling. But in Judaism there is also a prophetic voice. The key words for the prophet are *tzedek u-mishpat*, righteousness and justice, and *hessed ve-rahamim*, kindness and compassion. These are about I-Thou relationships, between humans, and between us and God.

The priest thinks in terms of universal rules that are eternally valid. The prophet is attuned to the particularities of a given situation and the relationships between those involved. *The prophet has emotional intelligence*. He or she (there were, of course, women prophets: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther) reads the mood of the moment and how it relates to longstanding relationships. The prophet hears the silent cry of the oppressed, and the incipient anger of Heaven. Without the law of the priest, Judaism would have no structure or continuity. But without the emotional intelligence of the prophet, it would become, as Rav Soloveitchik said, soulless, dry and insensitive.

Which brings us to our parsha. In Ha'azinu, Moses does the unexpected but necessary thing. *He teaches the Israelites a song*. He moves from prose to poetry, from speech to music, from law to literature, from plain speech to vivid metaphor:

Listen, heavens, and I will speak;
and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.
May my teaching fall like rain,
my speech flow down like dew;
like gentle rain on tender plants,
like showers on the grass. (Deut. 32:1-2)

Why? Because at the very end of his life, *the greatest of all the prophets turned to emotional intelligence*, knowing that unless he did so, his teachings might enter the minds of the Israelites but not their hearts, their passions, their emotive DNA. It is feelings that move us to act, give us the energy to aspire, and fuel our ability to hand on our commitments to those who come after us.

Without the prophetic passion of an Amos, a Hosea, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, without the music of the Psalms and the songs of the Levites in the Temple, Judaism would have been a plant without water or sunlight; it would have withered and died. Intellect alone does not inspire in us the passion to change the world. To do that you have to take thought and turn it into song. That is *Ha'azinu*, Moses' great hymn to God's love for His people and his role in ensuring, as Martin Luther King put it, that "the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice." In Ha'azinu, the man of intellect and moral courage becomes the figure of emotional intelligence,

allowing himself to be, in Judah Halevi's lovely image, the harp for God's song.

This is a life-changing idea: *If you want to change lives, speak to people's feelings, not just to their minds.* Enter their fears and calm them.

Understand their anxieties and allay them. Kindle their hopes and instruct them. Raise their sights and enlarge them. Humans are more than algorithms. We are emotion-driven beings.

Speak from the heart to the heart, and mind and deed will follow.

1. Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale*, Yale University Press, 1988.
2. Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1989). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9(3), 185-211.
3. Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: the theory of multiple intelligences*, New York, Basic Books, 1983.
4. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, 'A Tribute to the Rebbetzin of Talne,' *Tradition*, 17:2, 1978, 73-83.
5. *Ibid.* 77.
6. There are, to be sure, serious thinkers who have made just this claim, about the superior emotional intelligence of women. See Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, Allen Lane, 2002; Simon Baron Cohen, *The Essential Difference*, Penguin, 2004. See also Carol Gilligan's classic, *In A Different Voice*, Harvard University Press, 1982.



Never Give Up on Any Jew

Towards the end of Haazinu, Moses exhorts the people: "...Apply your hearts to all the words that

I testify against you today, with which you are to instruct your children, to be careful to perform all the words of this Torah, **for it is not an empty thing for you, it is your life**, and through this matter shall you prolong your days on the Land to which you cross the Jordan, to possess it."¹ Rashi, quoting the Sifri, explains that Moses was teaching that there is nothing in the Torah that does not teach a valuable lesson. He brings a seemingly insignificant verse in Toldot, "The sons of Lotan were: Hori and Hemam; **Lotan's sister was Timna.**"² The Sages reveal the background behind these words. Timna was a descendant of a royal family and she was determined to join the family of Abraham. When the Patriarchs rejected her, she resorted to becoming a mere concubine to Eliphaz, a son of Esau. This demonstrates the greatness of Abraham that great leaders desired to join with his seed. The Sages tell us that this example provides an important lesson.

Rav Moshe Feinstein asks; what exactly is the significance of this lesson that proves that there is nothing empty in the Torah. He writes; "What is the difference to us whether the non-Jewish Kings wanted their seed to join with his [Abraham] or not? He answers that this teaches us a very significant point - It demonstrates that one should not give up by saying that nothing will help with regard to those people who are distant from the Torah path. Rather if a person would teach others effectively and act in such a way that demonstrates the greatness of the Torah lifestyle then even the most distant people can return to God. Abraham was exemplary in both these aspects; he exerted great effort in teaching the values of belief in One God, and his personal

example demonstrated the correctness of his beliefs. As a result, the most distant people wanted to join his family. This teaches us that we should never give up hope that our fellow Jews can return to Torah if they are exposed to its wonders.³

Great *talmidei chachamim* have always taken every opportunity to emulate Abraham Avinu's efforts to bring people close to God even when there would seem to be little hope that their efforts would succeed. The well-known Torah lecturer, Rav Mendel Kaplan, made great efforts to befriend and teach secular Jews whenever he encountered them. His outreach even extended to children: A non-religious secretary in the yeshivah once brought her nine-year old son with her to work. When Reb Mendel saw the little boy playing in the hall, he called him over, pointed to a Chumash and asked, "Do you know what this is?" "Sure" the boy answered, "it's a Bible." "No," answered Reb Mendel, "this is a Chumash." He then pulled up two chairs and sat with the boy for an hour, teaching him Chumash on a level that the child could understand and appreciate. Later that day someone asked him why he had devoted so much of his precious time to a nine-year old boy. Answered Reb Mendel, **"I hope that I've a planted a seed that will grow years from now."**⁴ In this way, Rav Mendel refused to give up on this child just because he grew up in a secular environment. Rather he made a seemingly futile effort at learning with him because of the possible long-term consequences. Whether his efforts essentially bore fruit is of secondary importance. The main lesson is the attitude of not giving up hope and the willingness

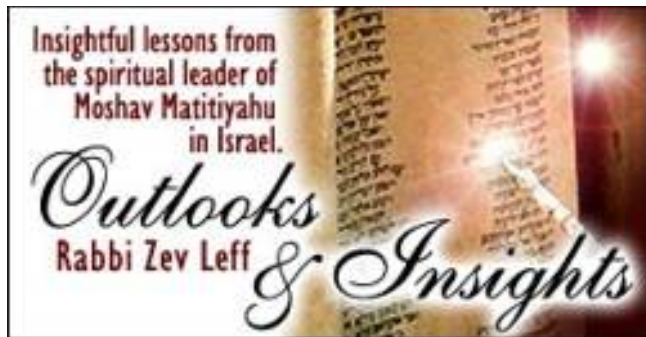
to try in any way possible to give a positive experience of Yiddishkeit to an unaffiliated Jew.

The following story demonstrates how one can never know what aspect of Torah can ultimately bring a person to teshuva. A young Jewish woman from a totally secular background went travelling around the world. She visited the Western Wall and whilst there, she was reluctantly persuaded to attend one Torah class. The topic happened to be about the Mitzva of returning lost objects. The class was somewhat interesting but did nothing to convince her to make any life changes or even to remain for further classes and she left Israel. Some time later she travelled on to the East and joined a Buddhist sect where she became a student of a guru. On one occasion they were walking together when they saw a wallet lying on the ground. The guru picked it up and continued on his way. Surprised, she asked him about his actions and he answered with the well-known phrase, "finders, keepers". Suddenly, she had a flashback of the class that she had heard months earlier where a very different approach was espoused. She then appreciated the sensitivity of the Torah lesson that she had learnt which demonstrated the Torah expressed for other peoples' objects. She now realized that there may be something to her religion of birth. This began a path that led her to return to her Jewish heritage.

We have learnt from a seemingly insignificant verse a vital lesson – that we should never give up hope that a person will come to a recognition of the truth of the Torah. This obligates us to do whatever we can to plant seeds that can facilitate their return.

1. Devarim, 32:47

2. Bereishit, 36:22.
3. Darash Moshe, Haazinu, 32:47
4. 'Reb Mendel and his Wisdom', p.258



Four Free Days

The Midrash (Yalkut Emor 651) comments on the verse, *"You should take for you on the first day,"* that Sukkot is the first day for the accounting of sins. Many explanations are offered to explain this difficult Midrash.

The Shlah HaKadosh explains that in the four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot, people are so busy preparing for Sukkot that they have no time to sin. Others say that the influence of Yom Kippur and its power to expiate sins extends into these four days. Rabbi Yehonasan Eibshitz writes in Ya'aros Dvash that the *gematria* of "the Satan" is 364, from which the Sages learn that the Satan, the evil urge, has power 364 days of the year, and not on Yom Kippur. The letter "*heh*" signifies that on five of the remaining days the Satan has reduced control. These are the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot (counting a portion of the first day of Sukkot as the fifth day).

The effect of Yom Kippur is so overwhelming and inspiring that a Jew is catapulted to a level far beyond his real attainment. We are judged

according to our level, and therefore someone on a higher level is judged more harshly for the same sin than someone on a lower level. Thus if God were to judge us immediately after Yom Kippur according to our level at that time, the result would be an unduly harsh judgment.

Just as before Rosh Hashana we are given a minimum of four days of *Selichot* in order to prepare ourselves to enter Rosh Hashana as a blemishless sacrifice, so we are given four days after Yom Kippur to settle back to our real level. The accounting of our sins during these four days is then retroactively calculated according to the level we reach on the first day of Sukkot. These four days are like a decompression chamber given to a deep sea diver.

Another aspect of these euphoric four days is the fact that we are so charged emotionally and so busy preparing the materials for Sukkot, that even when we sin, those sins are rarely premeditated or calculated. Similarly, the preparations are also executed in a frenzied mood of elation that leaves little time or place for calculation and meditation. To a certain degree, this elation is positive. It corresponds to the days after that first Yom Kippur in the desert in which the materials for the Mishkan were donated and the people gave with unbridled emotion, without any calculation of necessity. Finally Moshe had to call a halt to this unbridled giving and announce, "Enough."

MOSES' DEATH

This powerful emotion is the raw material to be shaped with reflection into a Mishkan. The Torah relates in this week's parsha that God bid Moses to ascend Mount Nevo to expire *"in the midst of*

the day." The entire people had said they would try to prevent Moses' death. The obvious question is: What could they have done to prevent Moses from dying?

The answer is: nothing. But the people were so emotionally charged with love for Moses – despite the month-long rebuke to which they had been subjected – that rational calculation did not exist. By commanding Moses to go up at midday to show their helplessness to prevent his passing, God, at the same time, publicized this commendable desire of the Jewish people. Later, the unbounded love for Moses was refined and shaped into the loyalty which the people transferred to Joshua.

The four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot correspond to the four letters of God's Ineffable Name. Our feelings during these four days are raw material to be shaped in calm reflection, and transformed into our calculated service of God on the first days of Sukkot.

May we utilize the special opportunity of these four days to prepare for Sukkot and the mitzvah of *lulav*, symbolic of our victory on Yom Kippur, and by channeling the intense emotion with which we emerge from Yom Kippur so that it extends its influence into the entire year.

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