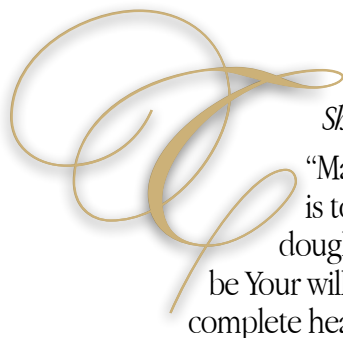


Singer-Jordan Edition
Pinchas

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The *Gemora* says that Rebi Alexandri used to finish his *Shemonah Esrai* with the prayer:

“Master of the Universe, You know very well that our desire is to perform Your will. What prevents us? The ‘yeast in the dough’ (*yetzer bara*) and the oppression of nations. It should be Your will to save us from them in order to do Your laws with a complete heart.” (*Brochos* 17a)

The first time I read that I thought to myself, “Lucky him. If only I could say the same thing about myself!” It took a couple of more years of learning to understand what he meant. . . what he was telling people like me. He was saying to us, “If you don’t feel like serving God, it’s not because you will is not to. It’s because your will to serve God is being smothered by your body’s instinctual and seemingly insatiable drive for physical pleasure. Peel that away and, you will instantly feel your drive to serve Him.”

The *Rambam* says something similar:

What is the process for coming to love and fear God? When one contemplates His actions and His wondrous and great creations and sees in them His wisdom, that it has no limit and no end, *immediately* he will love and praise Him, and desire tremendously to know His great Name. (*Yad Chazakah, Yesodei HaTorah, 2:2*)

The *Rambam*’s addition of the word “immediately” implies that a person’s love of God is already there, part of a person’s soul. Neutralize your body’s voice by overwhelming it with the wisdom of God and your love of God will burst forth as your soul takes command.

My *Rosh HaYeshivah* used to tell us, “Do what you *want* to do, not what you *feel* like doing.” It was just another way of saying, follow your soul, not your body. If they happen to be on the same page, then you will know true happiness. But until they are, be prepared to sacrifice the whims of your body on the altar of your true will, for the sake of your soul.

Because they are one and the same thing, your will and the soul’s drive. The soul is a spark of Divine light and, as such, it is a reflection of the will of God. It is the Godly drive put into us to give us the means to elevate our bodies and the world around us

to be Godly as well. This rectifies us and Creation. It is the soul that drives a person, and it is singleminded in its purpose.

How then can the body overwhelm the soul and take control of a person's life, to the extent that they will forget they have a soul? How can a person identify with the desires of their body of the will of their soul?

It's a long *kabbalistic* story, but the long and short of it is that it was the result of eating from the *Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra*. Prior to the sin, all the souls destined to come into the world until the Messianic Era were part of Adam *HaRishon's* soul. When he sinned, they "fell off" of him (except for his own personal soul) into the *Klipos*, the reality of spiritual impurity. This caused a kind of spiritual filth to encase each soul so that even after leaving the *Klipos*, their effect continued and became what we call the *yetzer bara*.

It's like adding black paint to pure white paint. Even a little will cause the white paint to lose its purity and become grayish. Likewise, every soul that has ever left the *Klipos* has done so tainted, blemished, leaving it spiritually weakened and vulnerable to the instinctual drives of the body.

Atzaddik like Pinchas is someone who has, usually through Torah and *mitzvos*, reversed this trend by rectifying their soul and letting it regain command. Such a person is someone who has reconnected to their true and essential will, something that the vast majority of mankind almost never does. And God confirmed this by saying: *Pinchas ben Elazar ben of Abaron HaKohen has turned My anger away from the Children of Israel by his zealously avenging Me among them, so that I did not destroy the Children of Israel because of My zeal. (Bamidbar 25:11)*

There was nothing self-serving about what Pinchas did in last week's *parsha*, God told the Jewish people. The body is self-serving. The soul only serves God...and truth. Arrogant people serve themselves. Humble people serve others. Most of us waver between the two extremes, depending on the situation and how we feel about it and ourselves at the time.

But you can only be truly happy when you are truly yourself, and you can only truly be yourself when you are following your true will. This means being in touch with your soul, which is what we're here to do. I know, I know, looking at the world you'd never know that. Everyone is so busy following the whims of their bodies and forgetting about their soul, the *real* source of inspiration in life.

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