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Field Guide for Spiritual Toughness

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Introduction

Each branch of the United States Military adapts to the ever-changing context in which it operates. These adaptations are quick and fierce in battle to avoid loss of life or **bodily harm. Combat adaptations happen at a moment's notice, often while under** duress. While at home, the US Military has the liberty to examine after-action reports and implement necessary changes on a larger scale. A more recent adaptation within the US Military is the addition of Warrior Toughness classes. Each branch knows these courses by a slightly different name, but they all work towards accomplishing a similar goal. They work towards creating warfighters who are cognizant of the mind, body, and soul connection and can call upon every aspect of themselves to accomplish a mission. This field guide serves as a resource for further spiritual development and provides resources rooted in the Jewish practice of Mussar and Mindfulness Meditation that can develop spiritual toughness.

Spiritual toughness may sound like an oxymoron to some. The nature of spirituality, connecting to the Divine or that which is greater than the physical world, is inherently vulnerable work. While resiliency is the ability to recover quickly from challenges or setbacks, toughness is the ability to push through challenges while viewing said challenge as an opportunity for growth rather than a threat. Cultivating spiritual **toughness aids an individual's ability to deal with stress, trauma, or challenges** regardless of the circumstances. Just as developing physical toughness requires practice, spiritual toughness is no different. Mussar provides a Jewish lens on developing spiritual toughness.

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“The starting point for understanding Mussar is the verse in the Torah that tells us: ‘You shall be holy.’”¹ Mussar is the practice of cultivating soul traits through learning and action. Its goal is the cultivation of holiness within practitioners. Soul traits are human characteristics that exist within each human being. For example, every human being can be honorable. Even if they sometimes act without honor, honor still exists within their soul. Every human being can act generously. Even if they sometimes act selfishly by guarding their resources when others are in need, generosity still exists in their hearts. Mussar (**מוסר**) translates directly to discipline. Mussar is not a natural practice; it takes disciplined effort to shine a light on the causes of our internal suffering and reach towards our highest spiritual potential. This lengthy process can be painful as it requires the practitioner to look inward at ways they have faltered and confront the reasons for their missteps.

It is crucial to explore Judaism’s understanding of the soul to understand Mussar as a practice that cultivates holiness through developing soul traits. Mussar teaches the soul is not a stand-alone organ within the body or an independent spirit. A soul is not something an individual can possess; instead, it is the person's essence. Three aspects of the soul make up a person's essence, and the first is the “inherently holy and pure” aspect of the soul, the **נשמה** (*neshamah*). This component of the soul is the purest form of the soul which was breathed into the first human by God and cannot be or tarnished, even by evil deeds.² Second is the source of animation and vigor, **רוח** (*ruach*). **רוח** (*ruach*) is the spirit of life from which human beings experience love, excitement, and

¹ Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar* (Boston, MA: Trumpeter, 2009), p. 17.

² Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, 18.

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elation. However, **רוח** (*ruach*) is not only the source of positivity; it also houses spiritual ailments like depression and anxiety. The third component of soul is **נפש** (*nefesh*). **נפש** (*nefesh*) is the most visible and accessible component of the soul to human beings. The ever-shifting characteristics of love and anger, kindness and cruelty, and generosity and stinginess are found within the **נפש** (*nefesh*). At this level the soul registers the rights and wrongs we do. Within the **נפש** (*nefesh*) exists the base form of every soul trait.

Rabbinic teachings suggest two inclinations within each human being, the inclination for good, **יצר הטוב** (*yetzer hatov*) and the inclination for evil, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*). People are born with both inclinations within them and the free will to decide between doing good or bad actions. Whenever deciding to do something good, we must expect resistance from the inclination for evil, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*). This resistance is what stops us from giving generously, living honorably, or cultivating gratitude. Each time we exercise our free will and choose between acting righteously or letting the inclination for evil, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*) direct our actions, an imprint is left on our souls. When faced with a similar decision in the future, our souls recall the prior experience and lean towards acting in the same way unless great reflection and internal work can be completed. For example, let us look at a combat scenario.

During the War in Afghanistan, three US Marines found themselves in the middle of controversy. A video of these Marines desecrating the corpse of a deceased Taliban soldier was posted on social media, bringing great shame and scrutiny on the US Marine Corps, USCM, and themselves. The USMC was forced to go into damage control including disciplining the three Marines and enacting a public relations campaign to

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rectify their tarnished reputation. Let us focus on the actions of the three marines rather than the response of the USMC. These US Marines had been in the heat of battle, fighting to protect the freedoms offered by the United States of America and save their own lives while engaged in combat. One aspect of combat is emotionally distancing yourself from your enemy, even dehumanizing them in your mind to make the challenging act of firing upon them easier. After engaging with the enemy on the battlefield, three Marines decided to act macho and animalistically mark their territory after terminating the enemy threat.³

In desecrating the corpse of an enemy combatant, these three Marines gave into their inclination for evil, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*). During their moment of choice, they could have honored the dead, even if he was their enemy, or dishonored the dead as they **did**. Upon deciding to desecrate the deceased enemy combatant's body, an imprint was made on their soul, and their inclination for evil, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*) grew because this dishonorable choice had been rationalized. The more we give into the inclination for evil, the **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*), and make dishonorable choices, the more strength it has over the inclination for good, **יצר הטוב** (*yetzer hatov*). The opposite is true as well. The more we choose to act honorably during moments of choice, the more strength the inclination for good, **יצר הטוב** (*yetzer hatov*), builds. Making honorable decisions in moments of choice builds inclination for good, **יצר הטוב** (*yetzer hatov*) muscle memory. Hopefully, you are appalled by the actions of the three Marines in this example, and in your moment of choice, you would make an entirely different decision. Either way, each

³ Judy Royal, "U.S. Marine Pleads Guilty to Urinating on Taliban Corpses," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, January 17, 2013).

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person experiences inflection moments when they have to choose between acting out of the inclination for good, **יצר הטוב** (*yetzer hatov*) or the inclination for evil, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*).

Mussar serves as a training apparatus to help us identify these moments of choice and follow the inclination for good, **יצר הטוב** (*yetzer hatov*). Mussar is a broad practice with no singular correct method of cultivating soul traits and developing our capacity to recognize and better respond to moments of choice. Over generations of Mussar study, a few cultivation methods have become popular tools used by the great sages and newcomers to Mussar alike. The first form of soul trait cultivation is text study. There are dozens of Mussar books on which to base study. This field guide can serve as your basis for text study. If you find meaning in a Mussar practice and want to learn more, explore the bibliography for other Mussar texts. Jewish tradition instructs that we study in pairs, learning from the text and your study partner. The Talmud states that when two partners study together, it is as if iron is sharpening iron.⁴ While studying with a partner is ideal, your context may prohibit that from happening. You may encounter scenarios in which all you have is this field guide, a pencil, and a little downtime. Strive to find a partner with whom to read this text and share your reflections but do not let the absence of a study partner prevent you from engaging in the work of Mussar. Mussar cannot remain in the theoretical world of text study; you must also do the challenging work of exploring your subconscious mind in an effort to understand how you became the person you are today.

⁴ B.T. Ta'anit 7a

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Mussar offers three practices that help comb through the unconscious mind, two of which are utilized in this resource. Traditional Mussar suggests meditation, silence & retreat, and journaling. This resource primarily utilizes mindfulness meditation and journaling to aid the reader with inner exploration. Mindfulness meditation, in essence, **is a practice of “open, compassionate attentiveness to whatever is going on” in our lives.**⁵ (More to come regarding mindfulness meditation in the following pages.) Journaling is another method of extracting thoughts from the subconscious and bringing them to the surface of your mind. Additionally, journaling helps manage anxiety, reduce stress, and can increase self-confidence.⁶ Each chapter of this field guide contains text learning and a variety of meditation guides and journaling prompts.

Mussar also outlines three practices that work opposite to journaling and **meditation. “Instead of dredging up material from the unconscious, these techniques bypass the intellect and the ego’s defenses to send messages and images directly to the deeper reaches of the soul, there to leave a lasting imprint.”** The three practices of this type that Mussar outlines are chanting, contemplation, and visualizations. This resource utilizes contemplations and visualizations. Both contemplation and visualization ask **you to hold vivid images in your mind, leaving imprints of “emotions, perceptions, judgments, and behaviors” on the individual’s soul.**⁷ Visualization asks the Mussar practitioner to hold a vivid image in their mind. In contrast, contemplation asks the practitioner to hold an intense experience in their mind. For example, a contemplation

⁵ Pema Chödrön, “Choosing to Live Whole Heartedly,” in *How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind* (Louisville, USA: Sounds True, 2021), p. 5.

⁶ Klein K, Boals A. Expressive writing can increase working memory capacity. *J Exp Psychol Gen.* 2001 Sep;130(3):520-33. doi: 10.1037//0096-3445.130.3.520. PMID: 11561925.

⁷ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 32.

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prompt may ask the practitioner to contemplate an experience that stimulates generosity, like losing one's house and job and needing to rely upon others. Focusing on the hardship from experiences like these often causes one to empathize with others who are currently experiencing such hardships, ultimately leading to acting with a greater amount of generosity. On the other hand, visualization asks the practitioner to visualize something as if it were real, like the experience of being stuck in traffic, focusing on the cacophony of car horns rather than the fact that you are stuck in traffic. Contemplation, visualization, journaling, and meditation are all tools utilized in this resource to further your own Mussar practice, and Mussar truly is a practice. Cultivating soul traits is not easy or quick work. Cultivation of traits such as generosity or humility takes routine practice. If you dedicate yourself to reading through this resource and engaging with journaling prompts and meditation guides, you will be well on your way to forming your own Mussar practice.

A note about meditation: Meditation is not for everyone. There are numerous barriers to engaging in a mindfulness meditation practice. Perhaps you do not like sitting still. Maybe you are afraid of what you will learn about yourself in the course of sitting quietly with your thoughts. Alternatively, maybe you have a culturally informed pre-existing bias against meditation. Whatever the reason you have not practiced mindfulness meditation in the past, there is no time like the present to try something new. This resource does not intend to turn you from a mindfulness meditation novice to an expert. Instead, it provides mindfulness meditation basics so you can explore mindfulness meditation on your own.

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Beginning your mindfulness meditation practice only requires one thing: you. Your willingness to engage with the guided meditations in this resource could be a first step toward developing your own practice of mindfulness meditation. Once you have committed to trying mindfulness meditation, think about the space you plan to meditate. If it is your first time engaging with mindfulness meditation, finding a quiet room or secluded area with few distractions may be best. (This may be impossible if you are in an operational environment. Try viewing your rack as more than just a place to rest your body.⁸ It can also be a place to quiet your soul.) Once you have found the physical space where you feel comfortable meditating, check in with your mind and body by asking yourself the following questions.

- 1) How are you feeling? What are you feeling?
- 2) How are these feelings physically presenting themselves? Where in your body do you feel them, and what is the physical sensation? Are your shoulders tense? Do you have a lump in your throat? Something else?
- 3) What are you thinking about? What has been lingering on your mind today? Is your mind busy or quiet?

Once you have checked in with your physical and emotional state, move on to sitting in an appropriate meditative position. Other teachers have differing approaches to meditative posture, **but I've found this one basic, clear, and effective.** Proper meditative posture, according to Pema Chödrön, a teacher of Tibetan Buddhist mindfulness practice, “**involves attention to six points: seat, hands, torso, eyes, face, and legs.**”⁹ Here

⁸ Rack is the term used to describe the bed you sleep on in the military.

⁹ Chödrön, *How to Meditate*, p. 30.

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are the posture steps Chödrön suggests that set us up for a positive meditation experience, supporting us in relaxed alertness:

- 1) First, find a well-balanced, sturdy seat. Some people sit on cushions, kitchen chairs, or the hard floor. You want to be comfortable enough to sit still for a short period. Once you have found your seat, move your attention to your hands.
- 2) Try to find a place for your hands to rest on your body that makes you feel aligned. Resting your hands on your mid-thigh with your palms facing up is a great place to start. After you have found your hands in alignment with your whole body, move your focus to your torso.
- 3) While focusing on your torso, invite yourself to sit upright while feeling relaxed. At first, try to draw a straight line from the top of your head, down your spine, to your seat to create alignment. This may feel too upright and rigid at first. If it does, try shifting your torso in small increments, leaning slightly forward and **backward, to find what feels right. “The front of our body should remain open with a strong back, and the whole body should be as relaxed as possible.”**¹⁰ If you feel yourself bending your back and hunching over, focus on opening your heart to realign your torso.

¹⁰ Chödrön, *How to Meditate*, p. 31.

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- 4) Some people choose to close their eyes during mindfulness meditation. However, this may unintentionally close you off from the discoveries of your meditation. Closed-eye meditation often cultivates a “bliss state or a rising above state” rather than a state of being open and present.¹¹ Try meditating with your eyes open early in your mindfulness practice. “Keeping your eyes open leads you toward the recognition that every moment and every place is sacred in the world, and each one offers an opportunity to awaken your life.” If you keep your eyes open during meditation practice, you will learn to acknowledge and move on from visual distractions. This will help you integrate mindfulness into your daily life, especially during acute stress when you cannot close your eyes but need to call on your mindfulness meditation to soothe your soul.
- 5) Try to relax your face by slightly opening your mouth. Keeping your mouth open loosens the muscles in your face and neck while ensuring you do not clench your jaw when faced with challenging thoughts or emotions.
- 6) Cross your legs in front of you if you are sitting on the ground. If sitting cross-legged on the ground breeds too much discomfort sitting in a chair with your feet flat will be more conducive to meditation.

Even if you thoroughly prepare yourself for a moment of mindfulness meditation, you may not feel like it is a beneficial tool. Do not panic or give up. Keep trying to

¹¹ Chödrön, *How to Meditate*, p. 32.

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cultivate a mindfulness practice using this resource as a guide. Each chapter has only one or two guided meditations, each written for a meditation novice.

A final note about using this resource: Yes, this resource is rooted in the Jewish tradition and practice of Mussar. This does not mean that only Jews can utilize or benefit from exploring the chapters and activities. Honor, humility, generosity, and all the other soul traits explored here live within everyone, making this resource applicable to all people, regardless of faith, background, or theological belief. At first glance, you may think this resource strives to turn you into the most generous person, giving away all your worldly possessions. Or you should become the humblest person in your community, acting meek while not taking up the physical or emotional space you deserve. That is not the intent of this field guide. This guide aims to aid the reader in finding the equanimity of each trait discussed.

However, what is equanimity? A calmness of one's soul is the most authentic representation of equanimity. This calmness is sometimes misunderstood as passivity, but this interpretation is incorrect.

On the contrary, seeking equanimity requires an active mind. Equanimity is the trait that aids us in coping with the ups and downs of life. It allows one to be present with what is happening in life by acknowledging the circumstances of a specific moment, finding calmness, and pivoting to action if the context requires one. Rather **than allowing context to determine one's reaction to adversity, equanimity allows the** individual to choose how to respond. Equanimity requires pausing to determine how generous, truthful, or respectful to act in any given scenario.

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Keep the pause of equanimity in mind as you explore this field guide's pages and journaling prompts. As you navigate its pages, you will look deep within yourself and your past experiences to cultivate moments of equanimity in your future.

Chapter 1

Humility - Anavah

At the core of many traditional and contemporary Mussar teachings lays humility, **ענוה** (*anavah*). In his seminal Mussar book, Duties of the Heart, Bahya Ibn Paquda goes as far as to decree that "all virtues and duties are dependent on humility."¹² As humility asks the Mussar practitioner to honestly reflect upon their strengths and areas for growth, cultivating humility allows for an honest Mussar practice. Without this accurate self-awareness it is not possible for other soul-traits to evolve. Ibn Paquda's perspective underscores the importance of cultivating a practice that develops our sense of humility and reflects why this middah, soul trait, is the genesis of this field guide. Our ability to see and reflect upon our lives and identify strengths and areas for growth relies on humility. Without it we may see our areas for growth through rose-colored glasses, not truly understanding them as our growing edges. As with all middot, we can have an excess or deficiency of **ענוה** (*anavah*).

Humility is not extreme. It rests between ends of a spectrum, with one extreme being arrogance and the other self-debasement. Alan Morinis suggests that arrogance is the insatiable appetite for space.¹³ He points out that each statement from someone filled with arrogance begins with "I" and continually revolves around the self. Dr. Brene Brown, who is known best for her research on shame, calls this extreme on the humility spectrum Hubris. "An inflated sense of one's innate abilities that are tied more to the

¹² Paquda Bahya ben Joseph ibn, *Duties of the Heart* (Jerusalem, IL: Feldheim, 1996), 589.

¹³ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 50.

need for dominance than to actual accomplishments." Both of these thinkers, in addition to traditional Mussar texts, link and understand an inflated sense of self as one extreme on the humility spectrum. Self-debasement, shrinking from occupying any space, exists on the other end of the spectrum. How though, do we work towards occupying an appropriate amount of space? Before attempting to learn how much space we are meant to occupy one must have a greater understanding of humility.

Dr. Brown defines humility as "an openness to new learning combined with a balanced and accurate assessment of our contributions, including strengths, imperfections, and opportunities for growth."¹⁴ Her definition paired with Morinis' understanding of humility as occupying an appropriate amount of space help us form a broad definition of the trait. Together, their two definitions create an understanding of humility that is rooted in learning and action. Both Dr. Brown and Dr. Morinis understand self-examination as a major component of cultivating humility. Their **definitions work in tandem. Dr. Brown's definition of humility makes up part one and Dr. Morinis' makes up part two. One cannot determine the appropriate amount of space** to occupy without understanding where we take up too much or too little space, and why we act that way in those environments. Dr. Brown emphasizes the learning nature of humility while Dr. Morinis emphasizes the actions of humility. We can gain an even greater understanding of humility by looking at the life of Ulysses S. Grant.

Grant's time as a soldier, General, then president, demonstrates that humility is a strength within the military. Grant's humility shines through in two examples, one

¹⁴ Brown Brené, "Places We Go to Self Assess," in *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience* (New York: Random House Large Print, 2022), p. 243, 245.

battlefield defeat and one battlefield victory. At the battle of Cold Harbor in June of 1864, Grant oversaw one of the Civil War's most uneven and bloodiest battles. More than 12,000 union soldiers were killed, captured, or went missing while there were only 4,000 Confederate casualties. After initially minimizing the severe losses, Grant exemplified true humility upon reflection: "I regret this assault more than anyone I have **ever ordered...At Cold Harbor, no advantage whatever was gained to compensate for the** heavy loss we sustained. Indeed, the advantages other than those of the relative losses were on the confederate side." ¹⁵ Rather than blame his subordinates, Grant took ownership of the great losses at Cold Harbor.

General Grant did not only show humility in the face of defeat, but he also exemplified this trait in victory. Upon receiving **General Lee's surrender in Appomattox**, Virginia he did not feel like celebrating. "I felt like anything rather than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe one of the worst for which a people ever fought and one for which there is the least excuse. I do not question, however, the sincerity of the great mass of those who were opposed to us." ¹⁶

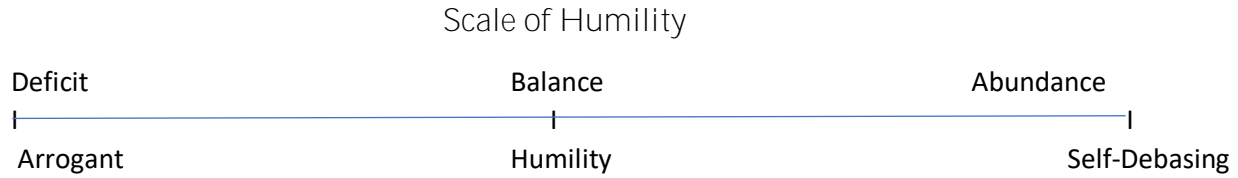
Both in victory and defeat Grant remained humble. In defeat, he took ownership of his mistakes and in victory, he did not gloat. In victory, Grant found strength from within himself to acknowledge his opponent's point of view and his struggle. We may never experience the type of battle fought in the Civil War, but General Grant

¹⁵ US Grant, *Personal Memoirs of US Grant*, n.d.

¹⁶ Mitch Schmidtke, "Humility Is a Strength: The Story of General Grant and Humility," Mitch Schmidtke, May 19, 2018.

exemplifies how humility is needed on the battlefield and in the military. How can we strive to exemplify humility like General Grant?

The first step towards understanding how much space we deserve beings with the practice of **חשבון הנפש** (*heshbon nefesh*), an accounting of the soul. This Jewish practice most commonly associated with the Jewish month of Elul invites us to engage in deep introspection. Practicing this accounting of the soul during the High Holy Day season invites us to look back upon our actions from the past year, but **חשבון הנפש** (*heshbon nefesh*) is not only relegated to Elul. It is a useful tool year-round and aids our efforts to understand where we have deficiencies and excesses of middot. Practicing **חשבון הנפש** (*heshbon nefesh*) weekly, focusing on one soul-trait each week, creates important reflection opportunities. Here are a few questions to think about and journal about to help you explore your experiences with humility.



Here are a few prompts and activities to help you cultivate humility.

- 1) How much physical space do you occupy on a train, in a classroom, or on a ship?

Are you taking up too much space, not enough space, or an appropriate amount of space? Based on the physical space you occupy alone, do you have a deficit, abundance, or balance of humility?

- 2) How do you think people experience you when you have a deficit of humility? Is that how you want to be experienced? What can you do to act more humble?

- 3) **Make a list of things you are objectively good at and things you aren't. Be honest** with yourself. While doing things you are good at how do you maintain humility and avoid feeling arrogant?

- 4) Make a list of things in which you have room for growth? Be honest with yourself. What is stopping you from growing in these areas? How might humility help you grow in these areas?

- 5) In your life, where do you need to take up less space? In what contexts could you take up more space? List at least three places/contexts for each section. After you have made your lists, describe how you can take up more or less space in each context you listed.

Take up Less Space	Take up more space

- 6) As you interact with others, how much verbal or emotional space do you take?
How do you think others perceive the amount of verbal or emotional space you take up?

- 7) Describe a situation in which you have felt that you were occupying too much emotional, verbal, and physical space. When you noticed this, did you step back to allow others to occupy their rightful amount of emotional, verbal, and physical space? How did you feel after taking that step back and allowing others to step up?

- 8) Reflect for five minutes on a humility using these prompts.

- a. Acknowledge your place in the world.
- b. Acknowledge your understanding of humility.
- c. Think of a time when you had a deficit of humility.
- d. Think of a time when you had an excess of humility.
- e. Think of a time when you felt truly humble.

Chapter 2

Gratitude - Hakarat Hatov

Translated directly, **הכרת הטוב** (*hakarat hatov*) means recognizing the good.

This definition of gratitude is best described in Berachot 58a.

“Ben Zoma would say: A good guest, what does he say? How much effort did the host expend on my behalf, how much meat did the host bring before me? How much wine did he bring before me? How many loaves did he bring before me? All that he expended, he expended only for me. However, a bad guest, what does he say? What effort did the host expend? I ate one piece of bread, I ate one piece of meat, I drank one cup of wine. All the effort that the homeowner expended he only expended on behalf of his wife and children.”¹⁷

Our Talmudic example provides a basic understanding of what gratitude is and is not. On a basic level, gratitude is acknowledging the good that you have in your life. In Ben Zoma's example here, gratitude is expressed by acknowledging that **one's** host has gone through lengthy efforts to ensure they are well hydrated and fed. The second half of the text exemplifies a deficit of gratitude. The ingratitude illustrated by Ben Zoma's bad guest is rooted in a belief that his host is only welcoming and willing to serve because they had ulterior motives for preparing and providing food and wine. **The “bad guest”** fails to experience gratitude because they believe that their host would make the same efforts regardless of their presence.

In another part of the Talmud, Pirkei Avot, Ben Zoma provides readers with a one-liner that solidifies his understanding of gratitude. **“Who is rich? one who rejoices in their own lot.”**¹⁸ He suggests that wealth does not result from the quantity of **resources someone has, rather it comes from one's ability to be grateful for what they**

¹⁷ B.T. Berachot 58a

¹⁸ Pirkei Avot 4:1

have. As with many of our soul traits, gratitude does not always come automatically or even easily to our hearts and minds. It takes practice to create a readily available attitude of gratitude.

While gratitude exists within every human being it does not always present itself at appropriate times.¹⁹ To understand why, it is helpful to consider what we know today about how the brain functions. Human reaction to adverse situations is driven by the amygdala, the emotion center of the brain. When faced with moments of acute stressor uncertainty, our amygdala initially sends signals to the rest of our brain and our body which triggers an emotion-based reaction. This reaction is often understood as the fight or flight reaction. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude requires relying more heavily on the frontal cortex, the decision-making and executive function part of the brain. This part of the brain is not automatically activated in the same way as the amygdala. That is why our ability to respond more readily with gratitude requires practice. What does it look like to practice gratitude?

US Army Lieutenant **Colonel Adam Lackey's** gratitude practice helps us understand what an attitude of gratitude looks like. We will specifically look at LTC **Lackey's gratitude practice on base. As LTC Lackey mentally and physically** begins his work day he drives through the base gate and hands his identification card to the gate guard. After checking his ID the gate guard returns it to LTC Lakey. While receiving his **ID LTC Lackey makes "a deliberate effort to look them in the eye and tell them thank**

¹⁹ "Know Your Brain: Amygdala," accessed November 2022, <https://neuroscientificallychallenged.com/posts/know-your-brain-amygdala>.

you” ensuring that he feels the gratitude that he shares.²⁰ To himself, LTC Lackey then outlines each aspect of that mundane interaction that he is grateful for to ensure the **gratitude imprints on his heart. “I’m grateful that I work** at a location that has security. **I’m grateful that I don’t have to be the one standing in the cold/hot checking ID cards. I’m grateful that one more veteran (because most of them are!) has a steady job and is supporting himself or herself while helping others.” LTC Lackey’s ability to outline the** roots of his gratitude is what helps him cultivate the attitude of gratitude. Seeking out opportunities for gratitude, even in mundane experiences, helps one call upon gratitude when an initial response to someone **else’s action may be dismissive or ungrateful.**

In Duties of the Heart, author Bahya Ibn Paquda helps us understand three reasons why a person might fail to see the good in their life. First, humans are too absorbed in worldly things and the pleasure they can derive from them. It is impossible to fully satiate our physical desires or pleasures, so we pursue them endlessly. Second, humans are so used to gifts in their lives that they fail to recognize them consistently. Because these gifts have become a constant in our lives, we fail to see just how grateful we should be for them. We take these gifts for granted. Third, we are so focused on the pain and suffering experienced in life that we neglect to search for the good in the world which has been gifted to humanity. Think back to boot camp. Do you think you experienced any of these barriers to gratitude? It can certainly be challenging to maintain an attitude or practice of gratitude there.

²⁰ The Military Leader, “The Power of Gratitude in a Leader’s Life,” The Military Leader, May 1, 2016, <https://themilitaryleader.com/power-of-gratitude-in-a-leaders-life/>.

At boot camp, you begin each morning at 0500, waking from your slumber in a compartment filled with the 80 or so other people who make up your division. You file to the head, hoping you have enough time to take care of your morning routine and that you don't cut yourself shaving. Once you've completed early morning hygiene you march to Physical Training, PT. For about an hour you engage in the workout of the day, all the while being loudly encouraged by your recruit division commander, or RDC. You're trying your hardest to keep up with the workout but no matter what you do you can't find the strength to maintain pace with the rest of your division. This means your RDC has homed in on you to motivate you with their loud and not always kind words of encouragement. From PT you go back to your compartment, to hygiene, then chow, and then to class.²¹ Throughout your day you move from one training evolution to the next, ensuring each step you take is in lockstep with the people around you, because you know the consequences if you make too many mistakes-- another session of IT or intensive training.²²

Throughout a day in boot camp, you may be continually on edge, making every effort to maintain good order & discipline with military bearing. It is in these moments of acute challenge and stress that we have the opportunity to pause and get in touch with radical gratitude. Identifying and acknowledging the good in our lives even when we might be experiencing fear, anger, or stress. In boot camp, this might mean being grateful that your RDC is shaping you into a warfighter by loudly encouraging you, ensuring that you have experience executing tasks under pressure while people are

²¹ At bootcamp recruits live in compartments, with approximately 80 bunks. Chow is the recruits mealtime where they are instructed to eat silently.

²² Training evolution: an exercise or operation that involves multiple participants whose role in the activity will change throughout the course of the exercise.

yelling in a damage control or general quarters environment. In boot camp, radical gratitude might mean being grateful for the knowledge you learned in the suicide prevention and operational stress class. Even though it was your last class of the day and you were beyond exhausted, you understand just how important it is to know the signs of suicidal ideation and unhealthy stress. In each moment of a long boot camp day, there are hundreds of things to be grateful for. It may well not be your automatic response; it is up to you to identify and offer gratitude for them.

Here are some tools to cultivate a gratitude practice that may one day help you maintain an attitude of gratitude.

Gratitude - Hakarat Hatov

1) Create a list of things you often take for granted.

2) Why do you take these things for granted? How does it affect your experience in those moments that you haven't yet cultivated gratitude?

- 3) Over the next several days, create a list of things you feel grateful for at the beginning and end of your day.

Things I'm grateful for at the beginning of my day	Things I'm grateful for at the end of my day

- 4) Describe your emotional outlook after listing things for which you are grateful.

- 5) Think of a moment when you were feeling stressed or challenged. Describe your mindset from the moment of stress as well as possible. Then write out things from that experience that you are now grateful for. Express how being grateful in the moment of stress or challenge might have changed your experience.

- 6) Describe other situations in which practicing radical gratitude would have been helpful. How might radical gratitude have changed your experience?

- 7) Think back to a moment when you felt stressed or anxious. Visualize the scenario in as much detail as possible. What did it sound like? What did it smell like? Where in your body did you hold your stress? What about that context made you stressed or anxious? Try to find three things in that context that you are grateful for. **After you've found three things to be grateful for, practice the recalibrate exercise outlined below.**

-
- a. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- b. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- c. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- d. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

- 8) In the moment practice: When you perceive something negative or stressful say to yourself: **“And this too is for the good.”** What are your internal reactions when you say this? Do you see this as a welcome practice? Why/why not?

Chapter 3

Savlanut - Patience

Semper Gumby, hurry up and wait, stand by to stand by.

Anyone who has served in our nation's armed forces has heard these phrases or some variation. To the initiated, these three phrases signify one of the most frustrating aspects of military service: waiting. When the day's schedule flexes four times in one hour, one might hear a colleague share "Semper Gumby" or "be flexible." When a commanding officer tells you to turn in paperwork that is of the utmost importance, so you complete and file said paperwork in a day only to have that paperwork sit on a desk for five days, a friend will remind you that military service is all about "hurry up and wait." Do your job expeditiously so those who outrank you or whose skills you need can take their time fulfilling their role. When you have had enough of waiting, you might hear a chorus of "Stand by to stand by." Here is another example you may have experienced yourself: You and your team report to complete a task, but you do not know what that task is, and you have been waiting for details. You know that none are coming soon. You are seemingly waiting for the sake of waiting. Once again, you are standing by to stand by. The gross amount of waiting that one experiences across the armed forces requires a deep sense of patience.

Understanding the roots and signs of impatience, a deficit of patience, help us gain a more robust understanding of what patience, סבלנות (*savlanut*), truly is and can be. When faced with delays and forced to wait repeatedly, it is human nature to react with impatience. **"Impatience seldom makes things happen faster or better and usually**

only causes us grief.”²³ However, cultivating patience helps us overcome the initial feelings of impatience. An example from Torah that demonstrates the importance of patience comes from Genesis 25:29-33.

“Once Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the open, famished. And Esau said to Jacob, ‘Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down for I am famished;’ – which is why he was named Edom. Jacob said, ‘first sell me your birthright.’ And Esau said, ‘I am at the point of death, so of what use is my birthright to me?’ But Jacob said, ‘swear to me first.’ So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.”²⁴

This Biblical example, while extreme, shows the danger of impatience. After returning from the field, Esau exclaimed that he was famished, close to death even, and could not wait for the “red stuff.” He demanded Jacob provide him with sustenance and at the exact moment he requested it. Due to his impatience, Esau could not see the potential damage he was doing to himself by selling his birthright for a humble bowl of “red stuff.” Alan Morinis expresses that **“reactions like these only increase our burden by adding a whole extra dimension of inner suffering (and often hurtful behavior) to an already difficult experience”**.²⁵ Esau and Jacob's relationship was seemingly irreparable after this scene (they reconcile in Genesis 33), partially due to Esau's inability to exhibit patience. Esau's reactivity to hunger led to his impatience. Additionally, this narrative helps connect patience and humility.

²³ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p.55.

²⁴ Gen 25:29-33

²⁵ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 57.

Patience, סבלנות (*savlanut*), and humility, ענוה (*anavah*), are inextricably linked.

As defined in the chapter on humility: humility is an openness to new learning combined with the accurate assessment of our strengths, areas of growth, and occupying an appropriate amount of space. A greater understanding and acceptance of where you stand in the world, and how much space you deserve to occupy aids the cultivation of patience. Humility, ענוה (*anavah*), helps us understand what underscores moments of impatience. Honestly evaluating what we tell ourselves during moments of impatience helps us shift away from being victims of our context. For example, if we tell ourselves that arriving to work on time is more important for us than the other motorists on the road we can easily become impatient with traffic. But if we shift to a more humble perspective which understands that our timeliness is no more important than every other motorist's **need to be on time**, we will cultivate a greater sense of patience.

In moments when things do not go exactly as you planned, when you need to cultivate patience, it helps to contemplate what lies within your sphere of concern and sphere of influence.²⁶ Your sphere of concern is extensive. You may be concerned with how precisely the collar devices are aligned on your uniforms, how bad traffic will be on the way to work, or which MRE (Meal Ready to Eat) you will get in the field. It is only natural to be concerned about these; each will affect your experience that day. If your collar devices are off-center, you may not pass uniform inspection. If traffic is worse than expected and you are late to work, you may miss an important department

²⁶ Stephen R. Covey, "Habit 1," in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd., 2020).

meeting. If you get a nasty MRE, you will maintain your daily caloric intake, but it will not be a fun experience choking down chicken a la king or veggie omelet.²⁷

Realistically, only one of these three things exists within your sphere of influence. You influence where your collar device rests on your collar, and it is up to you to measure carefully and pin your collar device according to explicit instructions. You can take proactive steps to ensure you do not get stuck in traffic, such as leaving the house on time, but it is impossible to control the traffic flow once you are on the road. During chow time in the field you will get handed an MRE or you will take the first MRE you see on top of the box they were packaged in. Patience is frequently challenged when events are within your sphere of concern but not within your sphere of influence. You may feel impatient when traffic backs up because people are rubber necking rather than focusing on their drive. Neither their behaviors nor the flow of traffic are within your sphere of influence. Understanding the divergence between what exists in your sphere of concern and sphere of influence helps cultivate patience, and patience is vital during deployments.

During a deployment, many of the luxuries of life are out of reach. You cannot drive your car, you do not have access to your favorite restaurant and are instead eating from the mess hall, and you do not have consistent communication with your loved ones at home. A luxury we have come to take for granted is the ability to text or FaceTime someone when you are missing them. While deployed, there are only sporadic opportunities to connect with loved ones via email or phone. This is one of the burdens you carry while deployed, but it helps cultivate patience. As Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

²⁷ Dale Sutcliffe, "5 Of the Worst Military Mres of All Time," VetFriends, August 3, 2021,

describes **“The patient person is exactly like someone who is carrying a heavy package. Even though it weighs upon him, he continues to go on his way, and doesn’t take a break from carrying it. The same is true in all the relationships that are between people: we see and hear many things that aren’t according to our will, and still we continue to be good friends”.**²⁸

The deployed service member is the pinnacle of Rabbi Wolbe's understanding of patience. Each day they carry a heavy load: they want to talk with family and friends at home, eat the meal of their choice, and sleep in their bed; but they cannot stop their work to experience these activities which for a deployed service member are actually luxuries. The deployed service member must constantly move forward, working towards accomplishing their mission until they can return home. Patience is a critical component of a good deployment. Maintaining patience allows you to focus on tasks that need immediate attention while still looking forward to returning to your loved ones at home.

Exhibiting patience at home is just as important as in the field. Showing patience to **one’s** spouse, children, and friends is vital to maintaining healthy relationships. When we leave for deployments, the world we left at home does not stand still. Children keep growing and spouses create their own home management techniques, all while we are off protecting the freedoms our nation protects. Returning from a deployment to a life that kept moving without us can be jarring and challenging. When we return, we want to seamlessly fit back into life we left behind but that never happens immediately. While

²⁸ Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 58.

we're away family habits shift. We must cultivate and maintain patience while we attempt to reintegrate into family life after deployments.

The Biblical example of Jacob and Esau depicts the high cost of a deficit of patience, or impatience, but what does an excess of patience look like? An excess of patience presents itself as inaction and passive behavior. Someone with a passive mindset might think “it will be what it will be” rather than searching for solution-oriented actions. In the field, negative consequences of your excess of patience or inaction could include reprimand by senior enlisted personnel or commanding officers, mission failure, or even loss of life. At home, the consequences of an excess of patience could include damaged relationships due to inaction around the house. Passive behavior might make a spouse or child feel like you do not care enough about them. The following pages contain prompts that can aid the cultivation of an appropriate amount of patience in your life.

Spectrum of Patience

Deficit	Patience	Excess
Frantic	Patience	Inactive/Passive Behavior

1) Make a list of things or experiences that make you impatient.

2) Describe how your body feels when you become impatient.

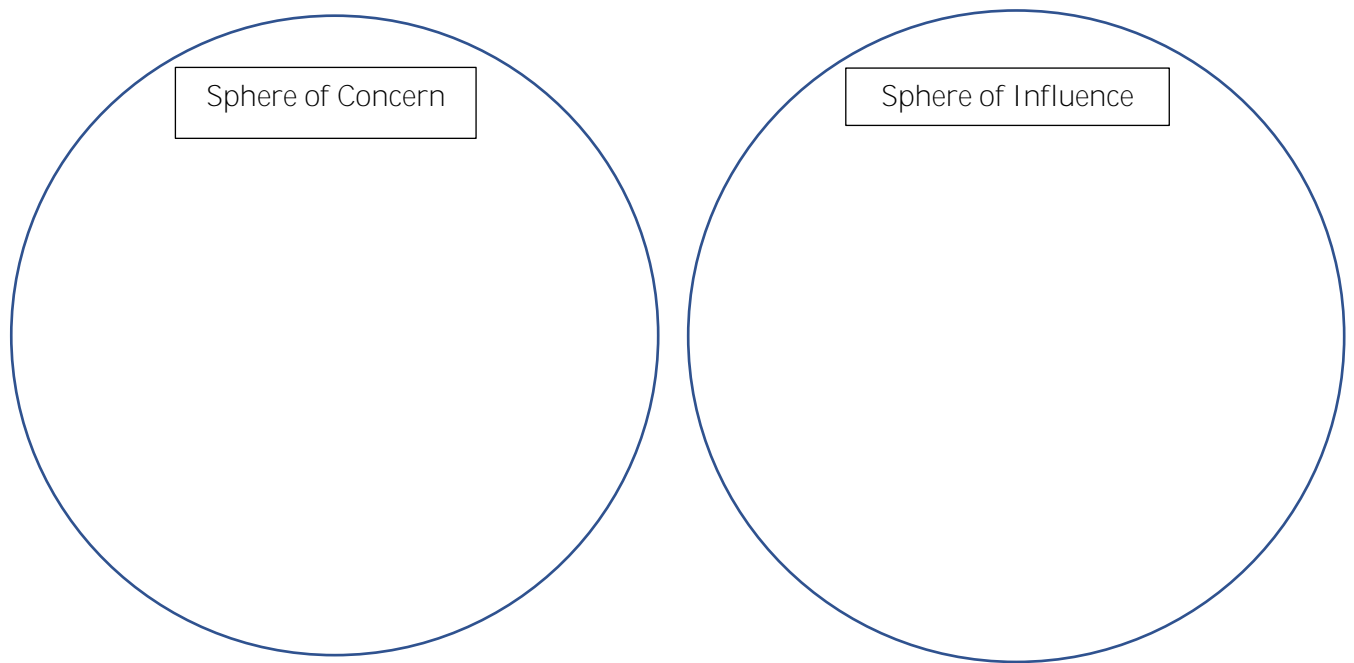
3) How does feeling impatient affect your interactions with others?

4) How does feeling or acting frantic affect your interactions with others?

5) Describe how you feel when you have an excess of patience, when you are feeling passive or inactive.

6) How does feeling or acting passive affect your interactions with others?

- 7) According to your current context, create a list of things that are in your sphere of concern and your sphere of influence.



- 8) From your lists above are there things that overlap and exist in both your sphere of influence and sphere of concern? How do you experience patience or impatience when things exist in both your sphere of concern and sphere of influence?

- 9) How do you experience patience or impatience when things exist only in your sphere of concern?

10) Think of one thing that only exists within your sphere of concern that causes you to feel impatient when you cannot influence it. How do you act when you feel impatience building?

11) How can you maintain patience when something you had perceived to be in your sphere of influence ultimately remains only in your sphere of concern?

12) Recall a moment when you felt impatient. Try to visualize the experience with as much detail as you possibly can. Once the scenario is vividly in your mind, practice the “Recalibrate” breathing exercise mindfulness for three minutes.

- a. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- b. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- c. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- d. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

13) Describe how you feel about the scenario you recalled after practicing the recalibrate exercise.

Chapter 4

Honor - Kavod

Honor, courage, and commitment; these three attributes that make up the US Navy's core values. From the moment you step off the bus at Navy boot camp to the moment you separate from the Navy, these values are at the core of who you are and every act you take. Honor **כבוד**, (*kavod*) serves as the primary attribute in the series because it must be pervasive in all actions sailors take. The Department of the Navy, DON, defines honor as responsibility for professional and personal behavior and mindfulness of the privilege it is to serve fellow Americans.²⁹ DON core values charter then outlines six specific ways sailors should act honorably.

- 1) Abide by an uncompromising code of integrity, taking full responsibility for my actions and keeping my word.
- 2) Conduct myself in the highest ethical manner in relationships with seniors, peers, and subordinates.
- 3) Be honest and truthful in my dealings within and outside the Department of the Navy.
- 4) Make honest recommendations to my seniors and peers and seek honest recommendations from junior personnel.
- 5) Encourage new ideas and deliver bad news forthrightly.
- 6) Fulfill my legal and ethical responsibilities in my public and personal life.

²⁹ "Department of the Navy Core Values Charter," secnav.navy.mil (Department of the Navy), accessed December 2022.

Honor - Kavod

These six actionable directives, which require sailors to act ethically and truthfully, align with and supplement an understanding of honor **כבוד**, (*kavod*) rooted in Mussar. Mussar scholars teach that every person is due honor. Rabbi Chaim of Volzhin suggests that one should honor all people based on the simple fact that they are Divinely created and created in the image of God. This style of honor, rooted in humanity's Divine origins, encourages one to view a person for their whole soul rather than viewing their actions or outward expressions of emotion alone. **Keeping someone's Divine creation** in mind makes it easier to act according to the DON directive. If we believe that each person is created in the image of God, then it is our responsibility to treat them ethically and truthfully.

This honor, while important, is challenging to cultivate and maintain. Human beings fall into the trap of judgment far too easily. Resorting to statements like "how could she act like that?" or "ew, it's so gross that he smokes cigarettes." Each person has created specific standards of behavior from their own experiences that they use to judge others. Even in surface-level relationships, when all we can know about someone are their public-facing actions, we fall into the trap of gauging their behaviors based on our own set of standards and trying to determine if that individual is worthy of our time and deserving of honor. Within this type of surface-level interaction and relationship, there is generally **no attempt to view an individual's whole** divinely created soul.

Why does human nature lead us down this path of judgment? Understanding the root of human judgment is the first step towards cultivating and maintaining honor **כבוד**, (*kavod*) for all human beings.

“Whether we admit it or not, most of us want honor and feel we are not getting it, certainly not in the measure we feel to be our due. So, the factor that drives us to be so critical of others is nothing other than our own search for honor, especially in our own eyes.”³⁰ Acting out of the desire to feel honored by others, humans speak and act in judgment of others.

Pirkei Avot, Judaism’s Talmudic justice commentary, provides excellent insight into how an individual can cultivate honor within themselves and honor others. Ben Zoma asks “who is honored? He who honors his fellow human beings.”³¹ Ben Zoma reminds us of the two-pronged nature of honor כבוד, (*kavod*) and all other Mussar virtues. First, honor is an awareness or state of mind. Second, honor is bound up in action and exemplified in how individuals treat one another. Human nature drives us to seek out the feeling of honor or respect, but cultivating this feeling within oneself is not enough. Mussar attributes are “virtues in action.”³² Striving to act with honor כבוד, (*kavod*) is integral to the cultivation of honor, כבוד (*kavod*). Here are a few ways to maintain mindfulness of the two-fold nature of honor, כבוד (*kavod*) and act with honor in every aspect of your life.

³⁰ AMorinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 109.

³¹ Pierkei Avot 4:1

³² Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 112.

1) In what ways do you find yourself putting others down?

2) Recall an example of when you put someone else down. Think about what is at the core of your attitude of judgment?

3) Describe how you feel when someone judges you.

Honor - Kavod

4) Describe how you feel when you judge someone else.

5) With your previous two answers in mind, why is it easy to turn to judgment of others?

6) Describe one context in which you demonstrate honor towards others.

Honor - Kavod

- 7) Describe one context in which you find it challenging to act honorably towards others.

- 8) How might you work towards acting honorably, without judgment, in more situations?

9) Visualize a moment in the past week when you found yourself judging someone.

Once you have that image in your head practice the recalibrate exercise.

- a. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- b. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- c. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- d. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

10) After visualizing a situation in which you found yourself judging someone and you practiced the recalibrate breathing exercise, reflect on how you might have acted differently if you did not automatically move to judgment. How might the interaction have a different outcome?

Chapter 5

Enthusiasm – Zerizut

Early in my career, I was given a great piece of advice from one of my chaplain instructors. He said to make sure you love your job at every rank. "When you're an O1, ensign, learning what it means to be a chaplain and naval officer, do every aspect of your job passionately. If you do, you'll love your work. When you're an O2, Lieutenant Jr. Grade, getting your feet wet in the fleet and offering the Lieutenant shrug more than you want, complete every aspect of your job with energy. If you do, you'll love your work. When you're an O3, Lieutenant, comfortably navigating your command responsibilities while still providing religious services and pastoral care for your sailors or marines, do your work enthusiastically. If you do, you'll ensure the passion for, and love of the job never dissipate." My instructor had a saying for each rank and duty a chaplain might hold, but these three summarize his intention and the Mussar trait of enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*).

Hussar text Orchot Tzaddikim, Ways of The Righteous, suggests that enthusiasm **is the cornerstone of all Mussar traits. "You must know that the trait of enthusiasm is** the foundation of all the traits, for one cannot constantly be learning. One must eat, drink, sleep, and attend to his other needs. Therefore, he requires enthusiasm and alacrity to then return to his learning. And let one not think in his heart: the day is yet long and the year is long, for in this respect our teachers of blessed memory have said **'Do not say, when I will be free, I will learn', maybe you will not be free and you will not learn...Come and see how great is the power of enthusiasm that leads to these goodly traits!** Therefore, one must be watchful and enthusiastic for all the mitzvot and run to

learn early and late.”³³ Orchot Tzadikim and other traditional Mussar texts argue that one should execute activities with enthusiasm for the purpose of returning to studying Torah. Judaism places such a high value on studying Torah that it's vital to enthusiastically complete daily activities to return to that studying. And when one finishes their daily tasks, they should study Torah with that same enthusiastic fervor, enthusiastically finding meaning in each letter and word they examine. Not all of us are yeshiva students, constantly yearning for more Torah study. Some of us may not even enjoy learning Torah for the sake of learning. For this reason, we must explore other purposes of enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*).

Stephen Hawking once said, "half the battle is just showing up."³⁴ The renowned theoretical physicist makes a great point; you can only begin to work if you show up to do the work. But what of the half Dr. Hawking doesn't talk about, the half that consists of the actual work? This second half of the equation is where enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*) is necessary. The ease with which tasks can become commonplace or monotonous is quite scary. Take a moment to think back to your first days in A School,³⁵ when you learned the ins and outs of your rate and the jobs you'd be tasked with as a young enlisted servicemember.³⁶ You likely felt excited to learn new skills that would benefit the team that you were joining. Now fast forward to the end of your first year at your first command. Did you still feel the same excitement about your job and

³³ Rabbi Gavriel Zaloshinsky, ed., "The Gate of Zeal," in *Orchot Tzadikim: The Ways of the Tzadikim*, Feldheim (Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 1995), pp. 283-294.

³⁴ Stephen Hawking said this in relation to his 55 year battle with ALS.

³⁵ Training that commences right after Navy Bootcamp. In A school new sailors learn the trade skills necessary to complete their jobs.

³⁶ Rate is the term used instead of rank for enlisted sailors in the Navy and Coast Guard.

responsibilities? Or had the formerly exciting tasks become mundane? Cultivating and maintaining enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*) in your work aids in the avoidance of monotony. But how can we cultivate enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*) and hopefully avoid getting bogged down in the monotony of the day-to-day grind? We start by examining enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*) in the Torah.

The biblical narrative of Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac provides one example of enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*). God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son: **“Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.”**³⁷ This challenging section of the Torah presents numerous learning opportunities but, here we will focus on Abraham's actions after receiving the command from God. In the next verse of the Torah, we read **“So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him.”**³⁸ As difficult as we, the readers, imagine it must have been for Abraham to take each of these steps preparing to sacrifice his son, Isaac, the Torah emphasizes that Abraham **didn’t wait to act on God’s command. “His sense of service was so complete that he did not hesitate in to spring into action.”**³⁹ Abraham approached his task, regardless of its potential traumatic and devastating outcome, with enthusiasm. Abraham took the initiative; he sprang into action the very next morning rather than hesitating to

³⁷ Genesis 22:2

³⁸ Genesis 22:3

³⁹ B.T Pesachim 4a

complete his divinely ordained task. Abraham exemplifies the value of acting enthusiastically even in the face of pain and adversity. While we know Abraham as one of our Biblical patriarchs, he was still a father. After God had gifted Abraham and Sarah with their Isaac, God then proceeds to rip away that very gift. Abraham did not question **God's command, he simply followed God's command enthusiastically by acting on the** command early the following morning. His enthusiastic action teaches us the importance of staring potential pain or heartache in the eye so we can accomplish divinely ordained tasks. Each time you start a deployment, you stare down potential pain and heart ache. There are countless uncertainties during a deployment, but this does not stop you from enthusiastically completing the deployment to the best of your abilities. Abraham provides our biblical example of enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*), but the Immortal Chaplains provide a modern military example of its importance.⁴⁰

In the early morning of February 3rd, 1943, the USS Dorchester was struck by a German Torpedo.⁴¹ One Catholic chaplain, one Jewish chaplain, and two Protestant chaplains had eagerly answered God's call to serve their nation during World War Two and were aboard the vessel as it transited from New York to Greenland. Though the four chaplains had vastly different backgrounds, they all acted with enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*) when their ship was fatally struck on that frigid February morning. As the Dorchester began listing 30 degrees to starboard, the four chaplains and their shipmates knew the damage to their ship was irrevocable. But in the frigid waters of the North

⁴⁰ Admin, "WWII's Immortal Four Chaplains Remembered: The National WWII Museum: New Orleans," The National WWII Museum | New Orleans (The National World War II Museum, February 20, 2013).

⁴¹ Command Sergeant Major James H Clifford, "No Greater Glory: The Four Chaplains and the Sinking of the USAT Dorchester," The Campaign for the National Museum of the United States Army, accessed January 2023.

Atlantic Ocean, abandoning ship meant almost certain death. With a deficit of life jackets and cold weather gear aboard, the four chaplains did not hesitate to put their fellow soldiers' lives ahead of their own. Sailors saw one chaplain handing out life jackets to those abandoning the ship. Another gave Last Rites and absolution to soldiers as they went over the rails into the freezing waters. Yet another gave his life jacket and gloves to one of the fearful soldiers praying for survival and rescue. The four chaplains' dedication to service and their readiness to act in the face of certain death, helped soothe the nerves of their fellow soldiers and undoubtedly saved countless lives that early morning. These four chaplains went down with the ship and gave their lives so that 230 of their fellow soldiers could be rescued.

Biblical Abraham and the Immortal Chaplains of WWII demonstrate enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*) in its purest form. They exemplify being quick to action, not hesitating in their moments of challenge. They all find and sustain the necessary energy to complete their trying tasks. They do not wander off course or pull up midcourse to take the easy way out of the situation. The individuals in both examples could not have exhibited such exemplary enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*) without the internal development of the trait. Just as practicing gratitude aids in cultivating of an attitude of gratitude, practicing enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*), is essential to cultivate an ongoing attitude of enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*).

Bobby McFerrin's 1988 hit single 'Don't Worry be Happy' presents one model for practicing gratitude. In his song, McFerrin articulates various problems one might encounter while the hook suggests a simple coping mechanism, don't worry, be happy.

Worry, anxiety, and fear detract from enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*) as well as happiness.

"Anxiety is often what underlies other things we do that sap our enthusiasm."⁴² It is not necessarily the anxiety that stems from encountering danger, but the generalized anxiety that defines an individual's relationship with the world. For example, the general anxiety of disappointing a superior officer can cause you to focus so acutely on the potential negative outcome that you lose the ability to attack your task with enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*). In moments such as these, reminding yourself to enthusiastically engage in your task can help refocus on the joy and meaning within your task rather than the potential negative outcome. Attempting to refocus away from anxiety helps center thoughts and emotions on the present rather than the future.

In many cases, human beings focus on what comes next, like the next step of a project or what needs improving, rather than on the goodness of the situation. Focusing on the present and being grateful for it accelerates the cultivation of enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*). **"When you truly realize that you receive gifts every day, and when that** recognition penetrates the spirit, then you will be spurred into action to be of service and do good and make good of yourself simply because it has become palpably clear to you that you are holding gifts in your hands. Living with awakened gratitude delivers fuel to make our actions more energetic."⁴³ Here are a few prompts to help cultivate your own practice of enthusiasm, **זריזות** (*zerizut*).

⁴² Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 133.

⁴³ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 137.

Scale of Enthusiasm/Enthusiasm

Deficit Balance Abundance

Laziness Enthusiastic Action Anxious excitement

- [illegible]

-
-
-
-
-

Enthusiasm - Zerizut

- 3) Describe how you prepare yourself to work on this task or role, and for your work on other things that do excite you.

- 4) Describe a role or responsibility that you approach with a low amount of enthusiasm. Try to express why you feel such little enthusiasm or even dread about acting in this role or completing these actions.

- 5) Describe how you prepare yourself to work on things that don't excite you. If you are thinking about a task that does not require preparation, describe how you mentally accomplish a task that does not excite you.

- 6) Before starting a task, practice the “Recalibrate” breathing exercise for three minutes.

- a. Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven
Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- b. Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven
Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- c. Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven
Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- d. Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven
Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Enthusiasm - Zerizut

- 7) After completing the task, reflect on what you were feeling and what your energy level was as you engaged in this task. Did your enthusiasm for the task increase, decrease, or stay the same compared to previous experience with this task?

- 8) Is there any wisdom you learned from practicing the recalibrate breathing exercise before completing a task that you can carry with you into future tasks?

Chapter 6

Generosity – *Nedivut*

Few people make such great personal sacrifices for the betterment of their nation than those who serve in the military. Individuals who choose to serve give up many freedoms they have sworn to protect. They give up the freedom of movement in the cities they choose and, in return, accept moving every three years. They give up consistent family time and, in return, accept long deployments. The sacrifices that the **individuals of our nation's armed forces make are countless, and they exemplify a great sense of generosity, נדיבות (*nedivot*).**

As the goal of Mussar is to help individuals live holy lives, generosity, **נדיבות** (*nedivot*), ideally, should not purely come from a sense of obligation. It should be rooted in a spiritual willingness, a generosity of the heart, **נדיבות הלב** (*nedivot halev*). Contemporary Mussar teacher Alan Morinis teaches that there are two types of generosity, **נדיבות** (*nedivot*). First, a generosity driven by the heart's inclination to give, known as **תרומה**, (*t'rumah*), which translates to gift. This type of giving does not come **from a sense of obligation. Instead, "it's a movement of the soul and it generates an open-handed response."**⁴⁴ Second, a generosity rooted in a sense of obligation known as **צדקה**, (*tzedakah*). These two styles of generosity, **נדיבות** (*nedivot*), work in tandem to create an open heart and soul.

⁴⁴ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 150.

Giving a gift, **תרומה** (*t'rumah*), is not defined by the action of giving; instead, it is defined by the energy with which one responds to a situation. In a moment when one's "heart is so enflamed with magnanimity that it would be painful not to give" they energetically find ways to act generously.⁴⁵ In our contemporary context, money is our primary currency, leading some to believe that generosity only comes in the form of financial donations, but giving can take many forms. Because giving a gift, **תרומה** (*t'rumah*) can be spontaneous, it requires a broader understanding of what can be given generously. An act of generosity, **נדיבות** (*nedivut*) can look wildly different depending on the context one is in when acting generously. A gift, **תרומה** (*t'rumah*) can look like a young person jumping up to offer their seat on a bus to an elderly passenger who just boarded, and it can look like a young soldier taking time to kick a soccer ball with local kids while out on patrol. Or, a gift, **תרומה** (*t'rumah*) can look like taking time out of a busy day to sit and talk with someone who is down on their luck while struggling to make ends meet. The exact action one takes to deliver a gift, **תרומה** (*t'rumah*) is less important than the fervor with which one take the action.

While generosity is an admirable trait to cultivate it is not always easy for us to practice. At times, human beings hesitate before acting generously with their money, effort, or time. One might think, 'I cannot give out this money because I need it to feed my family.' Alternatively, they might think, 'I cannot stop to talk with this stranger because I have got so much to do that I cannot afford to take the time right now.' These rationalizations that stop someone from acting generously are signs of a "spiritual

⁴⁵ Morinis, in *Everyday Holiness*, p. 151.

ailment,” which presents symptoms of rationalization and an underlying problem of a blocked heart.⁴⁶ Generally, human nature leads individuals to block their hearts to separate themselves from others. Humans tend to create these barriers when there is overwhelming emotion to process. Those in need are not alone in suffering when an individual has a blocked heart. Realistically, the individual with the blocked heart suffers first. Living with a walled-off heart means living a less fulfilling and meaningful life than one might desire.

However, a blocked heart is not the only factor that inhibits generosity, **נדיבות** (*nedivut*). Ego also gets in the way. Ego pushes one to view the world as a zero-sum game. If someone else wins, then I lose. The ego makes one think there is a finite amount of money, love, compassion, or any other asset and creates a drive to acquire as much of each asset as possible. Ego encourages people to look at resources with an assumption of scarcity rather than abundance. This makes one work to acquire and maintain as much of a resource as possible, even if it is detrimental to others. Jewish tradition groups these forces of resistance under one phrase: the evil inclination, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*). The evil inclination, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*) in the form of ego and a blocked heart, may seem insurmountable, but practice in the form of obligated generosity **צדקה**, (*tzedakah*) helps overcome these barriers.

A commandment to act generously towards family, family, and strangers comes directly from the Torah. **“If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kin in any of your settlements in the land that your God is giving you, do not harden**

⁴⁶ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 152.

your heart and shut your hand against your needy kin. Rather, you must open your hand and lend whatever is **sufficient to meet the need.**⁴⁷ At first glance, this direct translation of the Hebrew verse suggests that one should give only to their relatives if they are in need. In order to fully understand the scope of the command, it is essential to view all people as divinely created in the Image of God. In his commentary, Or HaChaim, Chaim ibn Attar suggests that this verse exists to remind humanity that it is not just to judge someone based upon their economic prosperity.⁴⁸ His suggestion calls on humanity to see individuals for their whole divinely inspired soul and treat them accordingly. This entails acting generously and remembering the obligation to give to those in need. The Shulchan Aruch, one of the most widely accepted codes of Jewish law, further details the obligations of generosity, **צדקה** (*tzedakah*).

Being ego driven and rationalizing not giving generously is less than ideal. According to the Shulchan Aruch, giving between one-tenth and one-fifth of one's finances is most laudable under ordinary circumstances.⁴⁹ The law code even states that one who gives less than ten percent is stingy. On the other end of the generosity spectrum, the upper limit of giving is set at 20 percent because "it will be no benefit for a **person to become impoverished because of excessive giving.**"⁵⁰ Regularly practicing obligatory generosity, **צדקה** (*tzedakah*) brings one face to face with the evil inclination, **יצר הרע** (*yetzer hara*). This repeated confrontation with ego or a blocked heart challenges us to create patterns of giving that counteract the most logical

⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 15:7-8

⁴⁸ Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 15:7

⁴⁹ Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh, De'ah 249:1-3

⁵⁰ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 156.

rationalizations. Regardless of the dollar amount one gives, generously giving due to obligation serves as practice for giving a gift, **תרומה** (*t'rumah*). When one exposes their heart to repetitive acts of giving, even obligated giving, it leaves a mark on one's heart. Overcoming a blocked heart through obligatory generosity, **צדקה** (*tzedakah*) and giving gifts, **תרומה** (*t'rumah*) creates a society that prioritizes the needs of others over the needs of the self. Cultivating and practicing generosity, **נדיבות** (*nedivut*) helps create less selfish and more grateful people and a less selfish, more grateful, and holy society. The very act of giving, money or otherwise, "ultimately makes one more charitable, merciful, and loving."⁵¹ Below are a variety of prompts that will help cultivate an appropriate amount of generosity, **נדיבות** (*nedivut*).

⁵¹ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 158.

Generosity – Nedivut

- 1) Describe a moment in which you felt spontaneously moved to act generously with your time, money, or effort.

- 2) Describe how you felt after spontaneous giving.

- 3) Describe a few situations in which you have felt obligated to act generously.

Generosity – Nedivut

4) Describe how you felt after obligated giving?

5) Is there any difference in how you have experienced the act of giving in situations in which you felt obligated vs. a spontaneous desire to give?

6) Describe a moment in which someone was in need for your generosity, but you could not or would not aid them. How did you convince yourself that your time, money, or effort was better spent elsewhere?

Generosity – Nedivut

- 7) Reflect on the scenario you called to mind: How could you have acted more generously?

- 8) Assess your current financial generosity. Are you giving between ten percent and 20 percent of your income? If you feel that you are giving too much, too little, or none at all, how can you prioritize financial generosity?

- 9) Think back to a moment when you felt a need to act generously but your heart was so overwhelmed with emotion you felt a need to protect it from potential hurt, in essence, separating your emotional experience from someone else's emotional experience. Visualize that moment in as much detail as you can. Think about the smells, sounds, images, and emotions that overwhelmed your senses. Once you have that image in your mind practice the recalibrate breathing exercise outlined below.

- a. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- b. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- c. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

- d. **Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven**
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

10) Describe your emotional state after practicing the recalibrate exercise. Do you still feel like you need to **guard your heart from someone else's emotional experience?**

11) In the future, how might you pause, then respond generously in situations where generosity is not your natural inclination?

- 12) **Strive to act generously at least once a day. Write about five days' worth of**
generosity here. Describe your emotional state before and after acting generously.

Day 1	
Day 2	
Day 3	
Day 4	
Day 5	

Chapter 7

Chesed – Generous Sustaining Benevolence

In the second verse of Pirkei Avot, Shimon the righteous makes a bold but informative claim. He says, “**The world stands on three things: Torah, acts of service, and acts of loving-kindness**”.⁵² While loving-kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*) is the final item on this short list, the weight of its presence there cannot go unnoticed. In his explanation of the Mishnah, Dr. Joshua Kulp outlines the two potential interpretations of this verse. First, it may mean that the world could not exist without these three things.⁵³ As if the world was a table and these three things were the legs of the table, the world rests upon these Torah, acts of service, and loving-kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*). Second, God created the world for the sake of these three things, which means that the world could not exist if there were no Torah or people who continued to study Torah. Without continued acts of service, the world would not continue existing because God created the world for acts of service to be completed. Without acts of loving-kindness **חסד** (*chesed*), the world would cease to exist because God created it for people to complete acts of loving-kindness. Whether you support the first or second explanation, denying the importance of loving-kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*), is impossible.

We first look to our Divine exemplar to further our understanding of loving-kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*). Of the 245 times loving-kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*) is written in the Torah, approximately 2/3 of these **references describe God’s character and actions**. For example, in Exodus 34, as Moses stands atop Mt. Sinai with the two tablets containing

⁵² Pirkei Avot 1:2

⁵³ Joshua Kulp, “English Explanation of Pirkei Avot,” Sefaria, accessed February 2023.

the ten commandments, God came down in a cloud and stood with Moses, proclaiming: “God, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in loving-kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*) and faithfulness.”⁵⁴ Each of the almost 165 examples of God’s loving-kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*) describes the Divine as a sustaining presence.

Another example of God’s sustaining presence is humanity’s mere existence. We continually misstep, question God, and transgress against one another and the Divine, but God continues to sustain life. God creates space for humanity to learn and grow from its mistakes rather than smiting us for them. From our Divine example, we understand that the highest level of loving-kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*), honing our definition of **חסד** (*chesed*) to “generous sustaining benevolence.”⁵⁵ What does it mean to act with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*)? One demonstrates generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) without any expectation of reciprocation or gratitude. Acts of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) require a selflessness that put the other’s needs before their own and involves some form of sacrifice. Each act of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) must be rooted in deep kindness.

The more basic form of **חסד** (*chesed*), loving-kindness, holds similar characteristics of generous sustaining benevolence but has a key difference. Loving kindness is the giving of oneself with love and compassion while generous sustaining benevolence is giving of oneself with a full measure of love and compassion. When

⁵⁴ Exodus 34:6

⁵⁵ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 187.

acting with loving-kindness, one does not act with 100% of the love and compassion they have in that moment. It does not call upon all the love and compassion in your heart to guide your action. This does not mean that when acting with generous sustaining benevolence you fully empty your metaphorical tank of love and compassion. Instead, all the love and compassion in your heart guides your action. Both tiers of **חסד** (*chesed*) require selfless sacrifice to ensure the betterment of others.

As all humans are created in God's image, **בצלם אלוהים** (*b'tzelem Elohim*), all humans can be givers or deliverers of **חסד** (*chesed*) because “God, our template, is a giver.”⁵⁶ However, not all giving qualifies as an act of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*). For example: If your teammate is loading ammunition for your division's day at the firing range and you help them after completing your task of setting up sweeping up brass from the previous range session, you are not acting with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*), you are acting with a more basic level of loving-kindness.

Nevertheless, let us imagine for a moment that your friend was loading ammunition, and your task had taken you to the other side of base to set up a large room for a morale and welfare, MWR, event. The act of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) occurs when you walk across base to the firing range to help your friend complete his task after setting up for the MWR event.

⁵⁶ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 188.

Primarily, the difference between a person who does acts of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) and a person with a generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) personality is proactivity. An individual who performs acts of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) as they are presented does not seek opportunities to act in such a way. They are passive until the opportunity presents itself. Someone with a generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) personality *seeks* ways to act according to this personality trait. **They are “so infused with the spirit of חסד (*chesed*)”** that the quality defines their outlook on the world.⁵⁷ Someone with a **חסד** (*chesed*) personality even seeks out ways treat people who act cruelly with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*). Cultivating and maintaining a personality of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) requires practice and overcoming potential barriers.

One of the primary spiritual tests individuals face every day is whether or not to act with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*). Each day we are confronted with opportunities to step up and act with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) at the center of our hearts or stand by and do nothing. Here are a few examples of spiritual tests someone might experience.

- Caring for someone you do not like.

⁵⁷ Morinis, *Everyday Holiness*, p. 189.

It is impossible to like every person in your division or battalion. Based on the law of mass numbers, there will be people with whom you work with whom you do not get along. However, that does not mean you abandon them in their time of need. Everyone who has ever served in the US Military knows someone who has experienced divorce, the tragic and untimely death of a friend or family member, or post-traumatic stress disorder. Moreover, these are only a few of the problems our fellow service members deal with during and after their military service. If our friends struggled to cope with these spiritual ailments, we would quickly run to their aid. However, if someone we do not care for is struggling with one of these personal challenges, would we be as quick to act? More than likely, we would find rationalizations to maintain distance between their problems and ourselves. You might say to yourself: **‘their friends will help them out’ or ‘they already know about the military’s counseling resources; what could I do for them?’**. Cultivating and maintaining a personality of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) makes it easier to run towards the person in need and check in on their wellbeing, even if you are not friends.

- Visiting the sick or injured.

When you don the cloth of the nation, you understand that you are now a part of **your nation’s war**-fighting team; this means you and the people you surround yourself with are willing to put life and limb at risk to defend the freedoms your nation protects. Unfortunately, not everyone you train with or go to war with goes home unscathed. While it may not be possible to visit the injured from your division because they might have been flown to a far-off hospital for treatment, you can still

visit the injured or sick in your local medical facility. While visiting the sick or injured in local medical facilities is physically easy, you may still find reasons not to **visit them. Perhaps you tell yourself: ‘I really cannot stand being around that much death and dying,’ or, ‘I would just get in the way of the corpsmen, doctors, and nurses trying to save lives.’**

Overcoming these spiritual tests where you do not feel 100 percent comfortable is difficult but essential. When you care for a teammate, you are not friends with, or visit the field hospital to spend time with the wounded, you stretch your ability to act with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*). You are not expecting anything in return from those towards whom you act kindly; you are purely coming to their side in their moment of need.

At times, acting with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) empties your spiritual and emotional tank. For example, think about someone supporting a relative struggling with addiction. At some point, the supportive individual must contemplate **whether or not they are enabling their relative’s addiction or helping them keep a roof over their head.** The supportive individual may feel that their spiritual and emotional tank has been emptied, having given love, compassion, care, and financial assistance to their addict relative. In moments like these, and others less extreme, one must search for the equanimity of, **חסד** (*chesed*). When we give too much, we put ourselves at risk of burnout or even a feeling of disdain toward those who receive our generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*). When we do not give enough of ourselves, we may feel like we do not have deep connections with others or are acting selfishly. This makes us think

about protecting ourselves while acting with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*).

The essence of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) urges us to do two things. One, treat others with love and compassion. Two, maintain a reservoir of love and compassion in our hearts to ensure we act with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) toward ourselves. This presents a challenge: how much generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) should I show toward others so I can still be kind and compassionate to myself? Answering this question requires a deep look into your needs as an individual while prompting two more questions. First, how much love and compassion do you need to feel fulfilled? Second, how much generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) can you deliver before you feel burned out and have nothing left for yourself? Understanding our own needs and limits helps us determine whether or not we are rationalizing away from acting with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) because we need to protect ourselves or if we are acting selfishly.

Finding a way past rationalizations can be challenging but keeping Rabbi Hillel's famous quote in your heart may help. In Pirkei Avot 1:14, Rabbi Hillel says, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"⁵⁸ Rabbi Hillel reminds us of the centrality of selflessness in acts of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) while teaching we must still care for ourselves. Each time we act with generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) we automatically

⁵⁸ Pirkei Avot 1:14

Hesed – Generous Sustaining Benevolence

devote aspects of our self to the needs of another rather than our own. If we continually empty our tanks with acts of generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) then we leave no spiritual or emotional energy left to care for ourselves.

When we allow rationalizations to direct our actions away from generous sustaining benevolence, **חסד** (*chesed*) we act in self-interest, protecting ourselves from potential pain or heartache. When we embrace healthy challenges, we can cultivate a personality **חסד** (*chesed*). Here are a few prompts that can help you prepare to take on those challenges.

Hesed – Generous Sustaining Benevolence

- 1) Consider the scenarios above, visiting the sick or injured and caring for someone you do not like. Do you feel internal resistance to these actions? What kinds of feelings are these that you notice arising? What kinds of thoughts do you notice arising with them, that might result in your not acting with *chesed*?

- 2) Think back to a moment when someone treated you with generous sustaining benevolence or loving kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*). Describe the interaction and how it made you feel.

Hesed – Generous Sustaining Benevolence

- 3) Rabbi Hillel reminds us that we must care for ourselves and for others. Do you find yourself caring for yourself or others more? Try to describe why you find yourself following this path.

- 4) Identify ways in which you practice self-care.

- 5) Identify ways that you care for others.

Hesed – Generous Sustaining Benevolence

- 6) In your personal and professional life what are some scenarios in which you could extend generous sustaining benevolence or loving kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*) to others? Have you extended this type of action to others before? If so, how did the interaction go? If not, what was stopping you? What might motivate you now?

- 7) Recall a moment when you could have acted with generous sustaining benevolence or loving kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*) but chose not to. **Practice the “Recalibrate”**

breathing exercise outlined in the chapter on mindfulness for three minutes. During each 30 second pause repeat the phrase: “If I am only for myself, what am I?” Here is the basic structure.

- a. Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

“If I am only for myself, what am I?”

- b. Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

“If I am only for myself, what am I?”

- c. Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Pause for 30 seconds.

“If I am only for myself, what am I?”

- d. Exhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven
Inhale...two...three...four...five...six...seven

Hesed – Generous Sustaining Benevolence

- 8) What was at the core of your decision to not act with generous sustaining benevolence or loving kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*)? How did your decision not to act with generous sustaining benevolence or loving kindness, **חסד** (*chesed*) affect you and others?

Continuing The Work

Congratulations! You committed to and completed the soul-searching and learning in this Field Guide to Spiritual Toughness. However, this does not mean that your spiritual growth is complete. Mussar is meant to be a lifelong practice. Maintaining a Mussar practice aids in the reflection of and growth from new experiences. The tools used in this guide-- journaling, meditation, visualization, and contemplation-- are only a few of the methods of soul trait cultivation. Just because you used the journaling space in this field guide does not mean you have to stop journaling. Feel free to use the journaling prompts in this field guide on your own in a separate journal. This field guide focused on seven soul traits identified in Mussar. These seven traits-- humility, gratitude, patience, generosity, patience, respect, enthusiasm, and loving kindness-- are only a few of the soul traits explored within the greater study and practice of Mussar. Here are a few reading suggestions for further Mussar and Mindfulness learning and work:

- 1) Changing the World from the Inside Out: A Jewish Approach to Personal and Social Change, written by David Jaffe.
- 2) A Responsible Life: The Spiritual Path of Mussar, written by Ira Stone
- 3) Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience, written by Dr. Brene Brown
- 4) How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends With Your Mind, written by Pema Chodron
- 5) Practicing Peace, written by Pema Chodron

These texts can serve as additional platforms for your ongoing learning and growth, and spiritual toughness does require ongoing learning. Think for a moment about how

Continuing The Work

you develop muscle and physical stamina. Developing muscle and physical stamina requires an ongoing commitment to exercise. Committing to an exercise plan makes you more likely to experience muscle growth and extended stamina. The same concept applies to spiritual toughness. Maintaining your spiritual development routine means you will maintain and grow spiritual toughness.

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