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A TALE OF TWO MOTHERS: READING THE SIGNALS WRONG

I recently received a wonderful book as a gift. *“A Canopy of Stars”* by C.B. Weinfeld (2019) is a collection of inspirational stories masterfully written and indeed very inspirational. I am eagerly looking forward to reading the other books in the series. There was, however, one story that troubled me greatly.¹ This story promotes a number of common *chinuch* misconceptions that can have serious negative consequences if not challenged.

The story

The narrator relates how she and Shani, her best friend and neighbor of many years, were both wives of husbands learning in a very prestigious *kollel*. She described herself as “measured and analytical” while Shani was “spontaneous and fun-loving.” Their parenting styles were also dramatically different. She herself was considerably involved in her children’s lives while Shani barely paid attention to hers (“blasé neglect”). She watched her friend focus on caring for herself, “treating her children as an afterthought, barely paying attention to them,” while she herself tried to make her family her “number-one priority.”

Over the years she wondered if all her sacrifices were worth it. Eventually she felt a “bittersweet vindication” when her son Mordy and Shani’s son Benzi, close friends and in the same class for years, reached adolescence. Benzi began exhibiting at-risk behavior, ditching his yeshiva clothing for a pair of ripped jeans and a mohawk haircut, while Mordy was accepted to “Yeshivas Metzuyonim, an A-list Yeshivah where you need lots of ‘pull’ and an excellent reputation to even be considered. I realized that all those years of effort and toil I’d put into my children weren’t wasted. One reaps what one sows, even if it may take a while.”

A number of years went by. Benzi eventually straightened out, settled down and got married to a girl with a similar history. Her own sons were “exceptional *bnei Torah*, learning in a top-tier Kollel ... Life was good, it was more than good. It was perfect.”

¹ “Neighbors” pp. 428-434.

The perfect life came to a crashing halt “when my Mordy, my ‘golden boy’, who had already completed *Shas* and was the father of an adorable little girl, suddenly left the Torah path, without a hint of warning. He had been harboring doubts in *emunah* for many years, he later informed us, and he could no longer handle the pressure of being a perfect *ben Torah*, living a scripted life in a gilded cage.”

Lessons learned

The narrator concludes: “I thought that it was my effort, my *mesiras nefesh* ... that ensured my children will stay on the straight and narrow. Turns out I was wrong. For while we are responsible for the decisions we make and the efforts we put into raising our children, the results were never in our hand. Throughout this indescribable *nisayon*, my friend Shani, whom I so foolishly judged for her parenting choices ... was my rock, my anchor ... I spend many hours ... blaming myself for being oblivious, blaming his *rebbeim* for ignoring the discreet signs, blaming the world. Shani helped me realize that this blame-fest was not only counterproductive and futile, but foolish as well. Acknowledging that there was little connection between effort and results took a huge paradigm shift ...”

Lesson 1 - There is little connection between our *chinuch* effort and results.

Lesson 2 – Blaming oneself excessively [“blame-fest] is counterproductive and foolish.

The narrator continues: “It's so easy to judge your next door neighbor, your friend or sibling for the choices they make, especially when these choices seem to point to a foregone conclusion. Mordy’s painful saga taught me how arrogant I was, playing judge and jury as if I were G-d, when I was merely a puppet in His hands.”

Lesson 3 – It is arrogant to judge others.

Disputing the narrator’s conclusions

Lesson 1 - There is little connection between our *chinuch* effort and results.

The narrator assumed that her friend majorly mishandled the *chinuch* of her children while she herself did everything perfectly correct. When her friend’s son became “at risk” it confirmed her perspective. When her own son later went off the *derech*, it created cognitive dissonance. How could this be? It made no sense! The only logical conclusion she could come up with, is that how parents are *mechanech* their children has no impact on their future. In her words: “while we are responsible for the decisions we make and the effort we put into raising our children, the results were never in our hands.” “There is little connection” between the *chinuch* approach and efforts of the parents and the outcome. After all, “we are all puppets in Hashem’s hands.”

While there is certainly no guarantee that parents' *chinuch* efforts will pay off with the results they are seeking, to say that there is "little connection" is a gross exaggeration and a dangerous attitude. If someone encouraged his sons not to smoke because of the health hazards associated with smoking and then he heard of someone who never smoked getting lung cancer *r"l*, should he conclude that he was mistaken and there is really little connection between smoking and lung cancer since whatever Hashem decrees will happen anyways? Perhaps he should better conclude that while smoking is a major risk factor in lung cancer and should be avoided, there are other factors that also play a role. The fact that Hashem can decide on a certain outcome regardless of our efforts doesn't mean that we shouldn't assume and conduct ourselves with the assumption that, most often, the outcome will be highly affected by the natural *derech hateva* consequences of our behavior.

Are the *seforim* on *chinuch* written by such luminaries as Rav Shlomo Wolbe or Rav Matisyahu Salomon incorrect in assuming that how you are *mechanech* your children does have a major impact on the outcome? It is clear that they aren't merely guiding us on how to discharge our obligation for *hishtadlus* (effort). Rather, the assumption is that if we follow their guidance, we greatly increase the possibility for a positive outcome.¹

Claiming that our *hishtadlus* makes no difference because "we are all puppets in Hashem's hands" is a dangerous attitude to have. Many years ago, there was a horrific traffic accident in Eretz Yisroel where most of those involved were killed. A while later the *mashgiach*, Rav Shlomo Wolbe, discussed this tragedy in a speech at the Bais HaMussar where he said the following. "We can't know Hashem's calculations in these events, but we can know the human calculations. It is common to invoke the terms קרבן ציבור, גזירה משמים, etc. in these situations but often this isn't the case. In many of these cases the drivers were speeding and/or driving recklessly. People need to take responsibility for their actions!"²

Causing parents pain

Those who attribute negative *chinuch* outcomes to errors in parents' *chinuch* approaches are often criticized for being insensitive to the pain of the suffering parent by "blaming parents."³

The desire to avoid causing additional pain to those already suffering from wayward children is certainly commendable, but not at the price of not learning the lessons that these events should be teaching us in order to lessen the chances of recurrence. We can assume that Rav Wolbe's message in the story related above was a painful message to hear for those involved in the accident and their families. Would it have been more compassionate for Rav Wolbe not to

¹ For a discussion of the relationship between השתדלות and השגחה see: **חובות הלבבות** שער עבודת האלוקים פרק ח' וראה בספר "שיעורי חומש": מאת רבי שלמה וולבה פר' וישב לז:יד.
² הובא בספר "סוד החינוך" (תשע"ו) מאת הרב אליהו פרידלנדר (עמ' קסא').

³ See an extensive discussion of this issue in my article on "off the *derech* adolescents" on my website, www.DrSorotzkin.com

have said this and just agree that it was an “act of G-d”? This could have resulted in people driving recklessly with the result of causing pain to many more people.

Over-involvement in children’s *chinuch*

Keeping this in mind, I will venture to suggest that although the deficiencies the narrator noted in her friend’s *chinuch* methods were indeed accurately described as deficiencies that negatively impacted her children, the fact that the narrator took the opposite *chinuch* approach may have been just as problematic. I have often seen people who grew up with harshly punitive parents who go to the other extreme with their own children. They are unable to chastise or say no to their child even when proper *chinuch* calls for it. Unfortunately, this approach is also harmful to their children. Likewise, being overly involved in a child’s *chinuch* could potentially be as harmful, or even more harmful than being insufficiently involved.

It seems quite clear from the story that the narrator was heavily invested in her children being super stars. While most likely there were לשם שמים motivations involved, the desire for *nachas* and reflected glory seems to have also played a significant role.¹ Her “golden boy” picked up on this, perhaps subconsciously, creating a pressure to be a *nachas* machine. This could have played a major role in creating Mordy’s sensation of being a “perfect *ben Torah*” living “a scripted life in a gilded cage.”

Rabbi Yissocher Frand recounts the following story that he heard from Rav Moshe Shapiro:

A man came to visit his nephew in Yerushalayim. This nephew was a young talmid chochom with a large family. The uncle was impressed with how attentive and patient his nephew was with all the children. “How will your children ever repay you for what you have done for them?” asked the uncle. “By giving me a measure of immortality, by carrying my name forward” answered the nephew. Later the nephew asked the Brisker Rov what he thought about the question and his response. The Brisker Rov shook his head in disapproval. “The answer you gave is close to apikorsus. Children have nothing to do with repayment. They are not an investment for future nachas. You can daven for nachas, just like you daven for health and prosperity, but that is not why you have children. Children are about giving. It’s the way Hashem wants us to emulate His ways.”²

¹ A certain degree of selfish motivation may be inevitable for parents: (עקב ה:ה) וידעת עם לבבך: בן איש חי – דרושים עה"ת: כי כאשר ייסר איש את בנו ה' אלוֹקֵיךְ מִסֵּרְךְ: קשה, הוה ליה למימר כאשר ייסר אב את בנו? ונראה לי בסיעתא דשמיא, יש אב ממש שילדו, ויש אינו אב ממש. אלא הוא איש דעלמא, ורק גדל את הבן הזה ופרנסו, ולכך נחשב זה בנו, ויש הפרש ביניהם, כי איש דעלמא המיסר את הילד שגדל, שהוא נחשב בנו, אינו מיסרו אלא לטובת הבן, אבל אב ממש, המיסר את בנו, הוא מיסרו לטובת הבן, וגם לטובת עצמו, שאם הבן רע מעללים אזו החרפה תהיה לאביו, וכמו שכתוב: "בן מביש ומחפיר" (משלי יט:כו). והנה כאן אצל ישראל כאשר מיסרם הקדוש ברוך הוא ידמו היסורין ליסורין שמיסר איש את בנו שגדלו, שהוא רק לטובת הבן, כי לאיש הזה המגדלו אינו מגיע חרפה, אם זה יצא רע בליעל, דכתיב (איוב לה:ז): "אם צדקת מה תתן לו", "אם חטאת מה תפעל בו" (שם, ו) [דהיינו שדומה הקב"ה כביכול ל"איש" ולא ל"אב" בכך שאם אדם חוטא הוא מזיק רק לעצמו ולא להקב"ה]. ולא תדמה ליסורי אב את בנו, שיש הנאה וטובה לאב גם כן, וזהו שאמר: "וידעת עם-לבבך, כי כאשר ייסר איש את בנו ה' אלקיך מיסרך", שאם חטאת, אין נוגע לו חרפת חטאיך אליו, חס-ושלום.

² Listen to your messages. NY: Mesorah, 1999, pp. 105-106

You might ask: Don't *chazal* tell us “*mitoch shelo lishmah ba lishmah*” – even if a person's motivation isn't pure it can still bring to positive results. Rav Matisyahu Salomon cautions against such an idea:

Unlike in our relationship with the Ribono Shel Olam, our efforts in *chinuch* [i.e., when we are being *mechanech* our children] have no value without the proper motives and intentions... *shelo lishmah* has no value in *chinuch*. In fact, it is destructive.... When a parent demands a certain behavior from his child... not because it serves the interest of the child but because it serves the parent's own interests, that is not *chinuch*. It will not succeed... When a child senses that his parent is demanding something from him because it suits the parent, he may very well feel used and exploited, he will be upset and angry.... People ask their children to show off in front of friends... how much Mishnayos [they've] learned... The child recognizes right away that the parent is doing it for his own glory. The parent, of course, may tell himself that he is doing it for *chinuch*.... But more often than not, he is only showing off his child because it brings him reflected glory... He may not know it, but his child does, and he is not happy about how he is being used.... The primary purpose of having children is not to have *nachas* from them but rather to help them lead the kind of life that will culminate in their holy *neshamos* entering Olam Haba... The *chinuch* of a child is not an investment that is supposed to bear fruit for the parent....¹

One of the signs that a child feels pressured to please his parents at the expense of his sense of self is when is unable to tell his parents about issues he is dealing with, as we see in this story that Mordy didn't share his *emunah* questions with his parents. He most likely didn't want to disappoint them with the knowledge that he wasn't a perfect child. Mordy later expressed this by complaining that he was “living a **scripted life** in a gilded cage.”

Rav Yitzchok Kirzner made this same point in a powerful manner:

The worst thing parents can do is to [emotionally] tie their children to their apron strings... You create, in the mind of the child who is developing, [the idea] that the only way that the child will be accepted and loved is if he forsakes his pursuit of self for the happiness of the parent. This creates a horrendous distortion ... of the child's normal emotional development. In fact, healthy [emotional] growth involves being able to give up our need for approval when the price for the approval is the giving up of the true self.²

The unhealthy and excessive drive to please parents, as discussed by Rav Salomon and Rav Kirzner seems to have afflicted Mordy to the point where he felt compelled to break out of his gilded cage where he was constantly on display vindicating his mother's parenting style and bringing her *nachas* by playing his scripted role as her “golden boy.”

*Chazal*³ reveal that Elisha ben Abuyah (“Acher”) himself revealed the underlying factors that caused him to go off the *derech*. His father was one of the notables of Yerushalayim. All the *talmedei chachomim* of the time were at Acher's *bris*. His father, Abuyah, was

¹ *With Hearts Full of Love*. NY: Mesorah, 2009, pp. 45-47

² *Coping with the Loss of Love (Tape RL-12)*

³ Tosofos, Chagiga 15a.

amazed by the extensive *kovod haTorah* extended to Rav Eliezer and Rav Yehoshua. He was moved to exclaim “if this is the greatness of *kovod haTorah*, then I want my son to be a *talmid chacham*.” Acher explained that since his father’s primary motivation was for honor and not *lesheim shomayim*, this caused his son to go off the *derech*. Wonders the Rav Yosef Tzvi Salant (*Be’er Yosef*), this seems to be an impossible standard to impose. Who can begin learning with completely pure motivation? In fact, Chazal teach us that *metoch shelo lishma bo lishmo*, that you can begin to learn driven by the desire for honor and eventually you will come to learn for the sake of learning. What’s more, the *lo lishma* motivation was Acher’s father and not his own, so why did it undermine Acher’s learning?! In addition, how did Acher know about his father’s motivation at the time of his bris? Likewise, it seems unlikely that after Acher sank to such a low level he would be so sensitive to the harmful spiritual impact of impure motivation!¹

It seems to me that the issue here wasn’t with “run of the mill” *lo lishma* motivation. Rather, it was a much larger issue. If Acher’s father was so impressed with *kovod haTorah*, why didn’t he dedicate his own life to learning Torah? Why did he dedicate Acher’s life!? It seems that he wanted the honor associated with Torah without having to give up his own worldly pursuits.² He wanted to gain the honor vicariously through his son. As Rav Salomon cautions, this is a prescription for disaster. Acher knew of his father’s motivations because it permeated his father’s interactions with him. Acher wasn’t bemoaning the spiritual damage caused by his father’s impure motivation. Rather, he was expressing his resentment at the devastating emotional damage his father’s selfish motivation inflicted on him.

The *של"ה* relates³ that Acher was the biggest *מומר להכעיס* (someone who transgresses out of spite) ever. One wonders, what caused Acher such a degree of anger to throw away his impressive levels of spiritual understanding out of spite? I would like to suggest that as Acher grew up and became increasingly aware that he was being used as a means to enhance his father’s honor, his resentment grew and grew until it eventually transferred to Acher’s image of Hashem.

Rav Matisyohu Salomon vividly describes this process in the context of children who are excessively criticized, but the same dynamic occurs when the child’s resentment is triggered by being used:

It is not an easy thing for anyone to sit through a whole day of school, especially a child, and the mother has to be waiting to shower him with *rachmanus* when he comes home.... If, however, the home to which he returns is stressful and judgmental, if he goes to sleep with resentment and frustration... his resentments will be directed toward his parents, his brothers and sisters, his *rebbeim* and teachers, the Torah and even the Ribbono Shel Olam, Heaven forbid. And then we’re surprised when some children become dropouts. I don’t call them dropouts. I call them pushouts. How can we blame them when they were pushed out by the way we treated them, albeit without malicious intent?⁴

¹ These last two questions were contributed by my brother עה"ת יוסף מגד ספר מחבר ספר מגד יוסף עה"ת שליט"א, מחבר ספר מגד יוסף עה"ת שליט"א, מחבר ספר מגד יוסף עה"ת שליט"א, מחבר ספר מגד יוסף עה"ת שליט"א.

² I once heard from an אדם חשוב that “It isn’t true that people today are not ready to be *moser nefesh* for Torah. It is just that they want to be *moser* their sons’ *nefesh* for Torah, not their own.”

³ שני לוחות הברית שער האותיות, עמק ברכה. - My thanks to my brother, Rav Yosef, for calling my attention to this source.

⁴ *With Hearts Full of Love* (Mesorah, 2009), p. 73.

The danger of perfectionism

It seems that the pressure Mordy felt to bring honor and nachas to his mother drove him to develop perfectionistic tendencies as a means to please his mother. As he later put it: he “could no longer handle the pressure of being a **perfect ben Torah**, living a scripted life in a gilded cage.” I have elsewhere extensively documented the factors that encourage perfectionistic tendencies and the significant emotional and spiritual damage that such tendencies often result in.¹

Hashkafah issues

Mordy reported that “he had been harboring doubts in *emunah* for many years.” It is common for at-risk adolescents to express doubts regarding *emunah*. This has led many to conclude that this is the primary cause for their alienation from *Yiddishkeit*. They therefore propose teaching more *hashkafah* in *yeshivos*. In my experience the *Yiddishkeit* issues are the **result** of an emotional alienation from the parents rather than the cause for their rejecting their parents’ values.² To paraphrase an expert on child neglect and abuse: “It is through pondering religious questions about G-d that people ask their most important questions about their parents: Why did they hate me... why did they beat me... what do they want from me, what did I do wrong to deserve such torture?”³ Without minimizing the significance of *hashkafic* issues and the importance of teaching *hashkafah* and honestly answering children’s *hashkafic* questions, I am convinced that children wouldn’t react to these questions by abandoning their family’s way of life if they had a reasonably close and supportive relationship with their parents.

As I wrote in an earlier article: “The Torah is transmitted via the *mesorah* from parent to child. When the relationship with the parents is defective, the transmission is corrupted, setting the stage for the child’s rejection of the *mesorah*.”⁴

Likewise, Maran HaRav Shach states that:

The underlying purpose of the *mitzvah* of *kibud av v’eim* is to ensure the transmission of the *mesorah* from generation to generation, since our *mesorah* is dependent on children valuing the teachings from those from the previous generations. If children become alienated from their parents, then the next step is for them to become alienated from their teachings and thus break the chains of the *mesorah*.⁵

¹ See my articles on Perfectionism on my website, www.DrSorotzkin.com

² See the “Parsha section” on my website, Parshas Shemos, from Rav Motel Katz.

³ Lloyd DeMause (2002), “The evolution of the psyche and society.” *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 29, 238-285. (p. 245).

⁴ See an extensive discussion of this issue in my article on “off the *derech* adolescents” on my website.

⁵ ספר "אורחות הישיבה" (הרב אשר ברגמן, תשס"ה, עובדות וכו' ממרן הגרא"מ שך, עמ' שצה): "...מה שאמרו הקדמונים כי יסוד מצוות כאו"א הינו על מנת לשמר את מסורת התורה והאמונה מדור לדור, שהרי כל אמונתנו ותורתנו מתבססת על ההערכה וההשמעות לדורות הקדמונים. אם מתנכרים להורים... הרי שהשלב הבא הוא לנתק את שרשרת הדורות לחלוטין.

Needless to say, it is therefore incumbent on the parents not to behave toward their children in a manner that would make it almost inevitable that they will become alienated from their parents. This point is also emphasized by the *Sefer Chassidim* [see footnote].¹

HaRav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg underscored this perspective in a powerful message to *mechanchim* at a Torah Umesorah Convention:

Listen to me carefully please. We are living in an age where the most important thing we as parents have going for us is the personal contact and caring we have with our children. We no longer have any other method of discipline... [If you] send them out ... you are hurting yourself worse than you are hurting them... Since the greatest effect we have on our children is through our personal relationship with them, the first and most important thing that a mother and father must do for that relationship is to win their affection, loyalty, and care. And you cannot do anything that in any way diminishes that feeling of affection, loyalty and care. You must give that first and greatest priority of all.²

Interestingly, a recently published report by a distinguished scholar on a major study on the transmission of faith from one generation to the next came to the same conclusion. For almost four decades, Vern Bengtson and his colleagues conducted the largest-ever study of religion and family across generations. They have followed more than 350 families composed of more than 3,500 individuals whose lives span more than a century--the oldest was born in 1881, the youngest in 1988--to find out how religion is, or is not, passed down from one generation to the next. They found that despite enormous changes in American society, a child is actually more likely to remain within the fold than leave it. And, while outside forces do play a role, the crucial factor in whether a child keeps the faith is the presence of a strong family bond. Parents who take their faith seriously and interact with their children during their formative years in a warm, affirming, and respectful manner are more likely to pass on their religious tradition, beliefs, and practices.³

Lesson 2 – Blaming oneself excessively [“blame-fest] is counterproductive and foolish.

The narrator relates “Shani helped me realize that this blame-fest was not only counterproductive and futile, but foolish as well. Acknowledging that there was little connection between effort and results took a huge paradigm shift ...”

Engaging in excessive self-blame is indeed counterproductive and futile. The purpose of feeling guilty is to motivate us to improve and not to overwhelm and emotionally paralyze us, since such feelings are more likely to induce further negative behavior.⁴ But that doesn't mean

¹ ספר חסידים (סימן תקס"ה): כתיב איש אמו ואביו תיראו לשון רבים ולא כתיב תירא לשון יחיד - שהאב והאם בכלל תיראו, שלא יכעיסו את הבן כל כך עד שלא יוכל להתאפק וימרוד בהם.

² Chinuch Insights from the Rosh HaYeshiva – Transcripts from Q & A sessions at the Torah Umesorah Conventions, Edited by Doniel Frank (pp. 2-3).

³ *Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down across Generations.* (2013) by Vern L. Bengtson, pp 149 & 194.
⁴ ראה בספר *שיחות מוסר (רבי חיים שמואלביץ)* מאמר נה' "מאיגרא רמא לבירא עמיקתא" ומאמר כח' "נכבדות" בקטע בו הוא מדגיש את חשיבות הרגשת ה"נכבדות" כדי להימנע מחטא. וז"ל: וכן הוא דרכו של יצר הרע... בתחילה הוא משתדל להשפילו בתחומי ההיתר [ואולי יש להוסיף גם בתחומי העבירות הפחות חמורות] וכשהדבר עולה בידו, הרי האדם ברשותו להכשילו בכל דבר חטא... העבודה המוטלת על האדם

that one shouldn't learn the necessary lessons from unfortunate events or deny connections between our behaviors and negative outcomes. If a heavy smoker develops serious health issues related to smoking, he is likely to have feelings of guilt and shame. Hopefully these feelings will motivate him to stop smoking and to take other steps to improve his health. If he becomes overwhelmed with guilt and shame (a “blame-fest”) he is likely to become despondent and increase his smoking!¹

Lesson 3 – It is arrogant to judge others.

The narrator reports that another lesson she learned from this tragic story is that it is wrong to be arrogant and judgmental of others. It is certainly true that one shouldn't be arrogant and judgmental. However, it is crucial to differentiate between being judgmental and making a judgement. It is common for compassionate people to confuse these two issues. In their effort to avoid being judgmental they will avoid making a judgement. This is a serious error. One can make the judgment that smoking is a very bad idea while not being judgmental of those who find it difficult to stop smoking.

The narrator was not being judgmental when she expressed her judgement that her friend was excessively “hands off” in being *mechanech* her children. In contrast, if she had attributed her friend's *chinuch* mistakes to her being irresponsible or not caring about her children etc., **that** would be considered being judgmental. And if she had interacted with her friend with a sense of superiority, that would be considered arrogance.

Forming a judgment on the proper approach to *chinuch* isn't synonymous with being judgmental if one gives people who don't practice this approach the benefit of the doubt (דן לכף זכות) that they do so out of ignorance or because it is too difficult for them or other such factors.

Conclusion

Reading this story evoked deep feelings of empathy for the narrator, who invested a tremendous amount of energy, time, and effort to properly be *mechanech* her children. Just when she felt confident that she could reap the fruit of her labors she had the rug pulled out from under her! However, the tragedy will only be compounded if the wrong lessons are learned from this story, leading to even more tragedies.

היא להתעלות ולהיות נכבד וחשוב, וע"י כך הוא נשמר מן החטא... [מאמר כח', עמ' קיז]. והאופן היחידי להינצל מאיסור הטיה [של נר בשבת] הוא להרגיש "אדם חשוב"... כי "אדם חשוב" אינו עלול לעשות דבר אשר אינו כפי ערך חשיבותו בשום אופן.... נכבדות היא סתירה לשפלות... [עמ' קיט]. וראה **במכתב מאליהו** (ח"ד, עמ' 263) – בושא באה מהרגשת סתירות פנימיות, ויש בה כח גדול להביא את האדם לידי תשובה. אבל מצד אחר, יכול האדם לבוא על ידה לידי עזות וחוצפה, כי הרגשת הסתירה באופן חזק מאד יכולה להביאו למרוד נגד בוראו לגמרי ח"ו, כדי להשקיט בכח את קול המצפון. וראה בספר **זכרון אליהו** (מזקני הרה"ג ר' אליהו מאיר בלוך זצ"ל) עמ' שכב' – אי-שקט פנימי מביא לפעמים לידי מעשים נתעבים, שהם פועל-יוצא של התלבטות פנימית של יסורי-מצפון. וראה **רבי צדוק הכהן מלובלין** (פרי צדיק, דברים, לחמישה עשר באב): היצר הרע משליך עצבות על האדם ושפלות בפיתויו שאינו נחשב לימודו ועבודתו כלום. ולזה נצרך גאון שידע שעל ידי תורתו ועבודתו מוסיפין כביכול כח בפמליא של מעלה... וזה הוא הגאות לשם שמים כמו שנאמר "ויגבה לבו בדרכי ה'"....

¹ See my article on “The pursuit of perfection” for a discussion of this issue.