



Stop, Listen & Learn

Words of Contemplation

By Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok
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Stop! Yes, right from the beginning, stop! Slow down! Your mind is already going too fast.

The major reason why problem solving is often so hard a thing is not because we do not know what to do, but rather because we are confused with so many options and variables of what to do.

Our society has conditioned us to think quickly and rationally. We worship intellect and knowledge. We believe that greater knowledge leads to greater truth. While this principle does indeed bare some merit, we nonetheless have made the mistake of confusing greater knowledge with increased information. It is the opposite that is most often true. The greater the information, the lesser the knowledge one is able to extract from it.

This is the problem often faced by intelligence agencies around the world. There is no lack of information about what the enemy is planning to do next. What there is instead is confusion about all the contradictory statements about what the enemy is planning to do next.

In other words, using the proverb, one is looking for a needle in a haystack. What makes the search even harder is that there a large number of needles in the haystack and out of all of them, only one is the right one. So, how is one to know which needle is the right one? This is the dilemma for intelligence agencies and for intelligent individuals. The way to battle external enemies and the enemy within ourselves is often one and the same.

One can analyze all the trees in the forest and know each one intimately and at the same time “not see the forest through the trees.” In other words, one can get so weighed down with details that one loses sight of and forgets what the original goal is. All this occurs because the mind races too fast, is too distracted by details, and too detached from the original source of true knowing.

Throughout the centuries our Sages warned us against this speed of the mind. In Pirkei Avot (1:1) we are given sound advice: “*havu mitunim ba'din.*” This is usually translated



as *"be deliberate in judgment."* Yet, the word "mitunim" does not mean "deliberate", it means, "to go slowly."

Even in the Kabbalah, this same warning is given. In the Sefer Yetzirah (1:8), in the first chapter which is a training manual for the mind, the advice is given, *"silence your mouth from speech and your heart (meaning here the mind) from contemplation."* In other words, in order to experience spiritual reality, something beyond the intellect must be used. The Mishna continues and says *"if your thoughts race ahead, return to the place."* The "place" spoken of is the heart, the seat of the inner self.

If one wishes to experience the spiritual, one must first learn to be silent. If one wishes to achieve true knowledge in this world (in order to judge daily affairs), then one must deliberate matters slowly. Silence and slowness, these are the keys to success, whereas at the same time, they are the opposites of intellect. This is not merely a spiritual truism; this is also sound psychology, as the following words of Carl Jung will demonstrate.

"The intellect does indeed do harm to the soul, when it dares to possess itself of the heritage of the spirit. It is in no way fitted to do this, for spirit is something higher than intellect, since it embraces the latter, and includes feelings, as well. It is a guiding principle of life that strives towards super-human shining heights." Carl Jung, CW 13, 7

It is the mind, not the body that needs to slow down and to quiet itself. This concept is not hard to understand, it is only one of many concepts understood by the rationale intellect. Yet, because it is only one of many, it is like the one needle amongst the many and thus cannot be seen. It is like the forest that cannot be seen through the trees.

We do not suffer from lack of information, we suffer from lack of direction, and direction does not originate from the mind. Direction comes from the heart! Slow down your thinking and let your heart feel these words, and all of a sudden you'll have the right "needle" and you will see a forest instead of a bunch of trees.

Feeling from the heart is a lost art to most of us. This is why today the majority of individuals somehow feel lost. They are lost in the world, because they are first lost to themselves. How can one find one's way in the world if one cannot even find one's way within one's own heart? How can one be at peace with the world when one is not even at peace with oneself? How can one be at peace with oneself if one does not even know oneself? How can one know oneself, when one is thinking ever too fast to slow down to hear one's own inner voice and feelings?

Bottom line is, we move too fast in this world to even recognize a true glimpse of ourselves. Our minds rush about so fast with so much information, that we cannot hear



the cry of our heart pointing to us that one right direction which is uniquely correct for the individual to walk and at that moment precisely.

"Direction in life is not a simple straight line, fate confronts us like an intricate labyrinth, all too rich in possibilities and yet of these possibilities only one is the right way". Carl Jung, CW 7-72

The voice of the heart is drowned out amongst all the other voices of logical and rational explanations. This sorry state of affairs, where one is lost unto one's own heart is the deepest meaning of what we call Galut, (exile). There is no greater exile than from one's self. There is no greater redemption than one's finding one's self.

"It is, unfortunately, only too clear that if the individual is not truly regenerated in spirit, society cannot be either, for society is the sum total of individuals in need of redemption", The Undiscovered Self, Carl Jung pg. 63

One can only find G-d, when one knows who it is that is seeking the Divine Face. How can one find G-d, when one cannot even find oneself? One can be staring G-d directly in the Face and not know it because there is no "one" to be aware of and feel what it is one is actually doing. This is our terrible dilemma, before we can conquer our worlds, we must first conquer our inner selves, and for most, the inner self is the most unexplored and dangerous of places.

Inside the inner self, the brave man can become a coward, and the handsome one can become ugly. Inside the inner self, the wise can become foolish, and the rational can become confused. One needs merely to look at one's dreams to see how different the images and pictures in our minds differ from the external reality of our waking state. Yet, it is in our dreams, when our minds do lighten up a bit that we are given a glimpse of our true inner selves. We grasp it, if just for an instant just how ill and weak we are on the inside.

Most care not to know about their inner states. The logic behind this lack of concern is because of our over-emphasis upon this external world of ours. Critics, maybe even you, say that the tangible is what is real and what must be dealt with. Therefore, the other stuff is meaningless psycho-babble, and a terrible waste of time and energy even to ponder.

Wouldn't it be nice if all our problems could disappear with such a simple dismissal? The problem is that like a shadow, our inner self never ever goes away. It is always there, just behind us, lurking just underneath the surface of our conscious minds. Like a specter, our inner truths haunt us until at moments of decision or crises we are left paralyzed, by fear, indecision, or simply by just plain confusion and lack of ability to



choose the proper course of direction. This too proves the old adage, “you can run, but you cannot hide.”

Stop already! Do not concern yourself with understanding the words you are reading. Pay attention instead to what they are saying! Feel this message, don't just think about it. Take your time! Be “matun.” Silence your mouth, still your heart. Learn to feel. Only in this way will your heart be able to direct you to the proper thoughts. Without this inner compass all alternatives look equal and the rational mind can pick and choose which path appears the best. Yet, appearances can be deceiving, what logically looks best often is not the best.

Facing life and making decisions with only one's rational intellect is like living life on a gamble. One never knows what the outcome will be. Worse than this, one who is guided exclusively by logic disavowing the heart is in essence living life blindly. Every step could be a dangerous pitfall. Such a one lives life by a miracle. It is only by the Grace of G-d that such a one manages from day to day. And our Sages have warned us, we should not rely on miracles.

Come they may as G-d so chooses, yet our Sages advise us not to expect miracles, for miracles ever so rarely come. Indeed, the messes we face in life are most often self-made. The clean-ups therefore must also be our own. Only in rare cases does G-d ever intervene with a miracle. Waiting for such Divine intervention, when we should be taking action on our own is a sure way to face defeat and suffering.

“You shall love HaShem your G-d with all your heart.” It does not say, with all your mind. *“And these words I command you today shall be upon your hearts.”* Again, the heart is mentioned, and no mention is made of the mind or intellect. We recite these words twice daily in the Shema Yisrael prayer, yet do we hear their message? Do we know what it is that we are saying?

Torah is something to be felt in the heart, and only then to be contemplated by the intellect. Without this there is no direction for the mind. Without this there is only inner noise that brings disturbance rather than inner silence that brings true binding with G-d. The heart moves slow and is silent in running. The head / intellect races forth and roars. Silence the intellect, slow the mind, feel the heart, and find G-d.

In our many sins, words of Torah often enter only the intellect and seldom the heart. Close now the books and open now the heart. Commune with your inner self. You'll be surprised what you'll find and who you'll meet. You will find the answers for all you seek in life. You will find yourself, and most important you will find G-d.

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And where is the Almighty Creator to be found? He is right there next to you, next to the real you, in the shadow, dwelling inside your heart. Being that you have spent so much time in your mind and not enough time pondering your heart, G-d's presence has gone unnoticed by you. This is the meaning of "Hastarat Panim" (the concealment of the Divine Face).

Change this now, and change your life. Don't think about it. Feel it! Do it!