



**Yosher – a quality of the heart**

**Deuteronomy 9:5**

It is not because of your virtues and your rectitude that you will be able to possess their country; but it is because of their wickedness that your God יהוה is dispossessing those nations before you, and in order to fulfill the oath that יהוה made to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

לֹא בְצַדִּיקוֹתֵיךָ וּבְיִשְׁרֵי לִבְבְּךָ אֶתְּהַבָּה בָּא לְרִשְׁתָּ אֶת־אֲרָצָם כִּי בְרַשָּׁעוֹת הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מוֹרִישָׁם מִפְּנֵיךָ וּלְמַעַן הַקִּים אֶת־הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב:

**Tur Aruch on Deuteronomy 9:5**

Not because you are righteous in your actions, or even because you have integrity of heart...

לֹא בְצַדִּיקוֹתֶיךָ. שְׂתֵהִיָּה צַדִּיק בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וְלֹא אֶפִּילוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּלִבָּם...

Can integrity be purely an inner state if it never finds expression in action?

**Right in God’s eyes**

**Exodus 15:26**

And He said, If you hearken to the voice of the Lord, your God, and you do what is proper in His eyes, and you listen closely to His commandments and observe all His statutes, all the sicknesses that I have visited upon Egypt I will not visit upon you, for I, the Lord, heal you.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ־שָׁמַע תִּשְׁמָע לְקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִיָּשְׁרָה בְּעֵינֶיךָ תַעֲשֶׂה וְהִאֲזַנְתָּ לְמִצְוֹתָיו וְשָׁמַרְתָּ כָּל־חֻקָּיו כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹת אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּמִצְרָיִם לֹא־אֲשִׁים עֲלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רַפְּאֵה:

**Deuteronomy 6:18**

Do what is right and good in the sight of יהוה, that it may go well with you and that you may be able to possess the good land that your God יהוה promised on oath to your fathers,

וַעֲשִׂיתָ הִיָּשְׁרָה וְהַטוֹב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה לְמַעַן יֵיטֵב לָּךְ וּבָאתָ וְגִרְשִׁתָּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם:

**Ramban on Deut. 6:18**

The plain meaning of the verse says, “Keep the commandments of G-d, His testimonies, and His statutes, and, in observing them, intend to do what is right and good in His sight only.” And [the expression in the verse before us] that it may be well with thee is a promise, stating that, when you will do that which is good in His eyes, it will be well with you, for G-d does good unto the good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. Our Rabbis have a beautiful Midrash on this verse. They have said: “[That which is right and good] refers to a compromise and going beyond the requirement of the letter of the law.” The intent of this is as follows: At first he [Moses] stated that you are to keep His statutes and His testimonies which He commanded you, and now he is stating that even where He has not commanded you, give thought, as well, to do what is good and right in His eyes, for He loves the good and the right. Now this is a great principle, for it is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man’s conduct with his neighbors and friends, and all his various transactions, and the ordinances of all societies and countries. But since He mentioned many of them — he reverted to state in a general way that, in all matters, one should do what is good and right, including even compromise and, going beyond the requirements of the law. Other examples are the Rabbis’ ordinances concerning the prerogative of a neighbor, and even what they said [concerning the desirability] that one’s youthful reputation be unblemished, and that one’s conversation with people be pleasant. Thus [a person must seek to refine his behavior] in every form of activity, until he is worthy of being called “good and upright.”

**ועשית הישר והטוב בעיני ה' על דרך הפשט יאמר תשמרו מצות השם ועדותיו וחקותיו ותכוין בעשייתן לעשות הטוב והישר בעיניו בלבד ו למען ייטב לך הבטחה יאמר כי בעשותך הטוב בעיניו ייטב לך כי השם מטיב לטובים ולישרים בלבותם ולרבותינו בזה מדרש יפה אמרו זו פשרה ולפנים משורת הדין והכוונה בזה כי מתחלה אמר שתשמור חקותיו ועדותיו אשר צוך ועתה יאמר גם באשר לא צוך תן דעתך לעשות הטוב והישר בעיניו כי הוא אוהב הטוב והישר וזה ענין גדול לפי שאי אפשר להזכיר בתורה כל הנהגות האדם עם שכניו ורעיו וכל משאו ומתנו ותקוני הישוב והמדינות כלם אבל אחרי שהזכיר מהם הרבה כגון לא תלך רכיל (ויקרא יט טז) לא תקום ולא תטור (שם פסוק יח) ולא תעמוד על דם רעך (שם פסוק טז) לא תקלל חרש (שם פסוק יד) מפני שיבה תקום (שם פסוק לב) וכיוצא בהן חזר לומר בדרך כלל שיעשה הטוב והישר בכל דבר עד שיכנס בזה הפשרה ולפנים משורת הדין וכגון מה שהזכירו בדינא דבר מצרא (ב"מ קח) ואפילו מה שאמרו (יומא פו) פרקו נאה ודבורו בנחת עם הבריות עד שיקרא בכל ענין תם וישר :**

What does it mean to intend to do what is good and right when one fulfills the commandments? What does the intention possibly add to the action? What is the action without the intention?

If there is a level of “proper in the eyes of God” which is ‘beyond the requirements of the law,’ how are we to know what it is? How is it to be expressed in action?



### **Simple integrity**

**Psalms 97:11**

A light is sown for the righteous, and for the upright of heart, joy.

אֹר זָרַע לְצַדִּיק וְלִישׁוּרֵי־לֵב שִׂמְחָה:

**Ecclesiastes 7:29**

See, only this one have I found, for God made man straight, but they sought many intrigues.

לְבַד רָאִיתִי מִצְּאִתִּי אִישׁ עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם יָשָׁר וְהִמָּה בִקְשׁוּ חִשְׁבֹנוֹת רַבִּים:

**Proverbs 14:2**

One who maintains their integrity fears the LORD; One of devious ways scorns Him.

הוֹלֵךְ בְּיִשְׁרוֹ יִרָא יְהוָה וְגִלּוֹז דְרָכָיו בּוֹזֵה:

**Judges 21:25**

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his eyes.

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הֵיָשָׁר בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה:

What is the link between simple integrity and joy?

What does it look like when you are true to yourself? What does it look like when you “over complicate” your thinking?

What connection might there be between “fear of God,” or any external standard, and the ability to hold integrity? What potential positive and negative elements might there be in this relationship?

Where do you (have you) end(ed) up when you do only that which is right in your own eyes?



**The longer shorter path**

**Psalms 5:9**

O Lord, lead me in Your righteousness; because of those who lie in wait for me, make Your way straight before me.

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִסְתָּר לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרֵי (הוֹשֵׁר) [הַיֹּשֵׁר] לִפְנֵי דַרְכֶּךָ:

**I Kings 9:1-4**

When Solomon had finished building the House of GOD and the royal palace and everything that Solomon had set his heart on constructing, GOD appeared to Solomon a second time, as before, at Gibeon. GOD said to him, "I have heard the prayer and the supplication that you have offered to Me. I consecrate this House that you have built and I set My name there forever. My eyes and My heart shall ever be there. As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked before Me, wholeheartedly and with uprightness, doing all that I have commanded you [and] keeping My laws and My rules,

וַיְהִי כְּכֹלֹת שְׁלֹמֹה לְבִנוֹת אֶת־בַּיִת־יְהוָה וְאֶת־בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת־כָּל־חֲשֵׁק שְׁלֹמֹה אֲשֶׁר חָפֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת: {פ} וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל־שְׁלֹמֹה שְׁנֵית כְּאֲשֶׁר נִרְאָה אֵלָיו בְּגִבְעוֹן: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו שְׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־תְּפִלָּתְךָ וְאֶת־תַּחֲנֻנֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הִתְחַנַּנְתָּה לִּפְנֵי הַקֹּדֶשֶׁתִי אֶת־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בָּנִיתָ לְשׁוֹמֵ־שָׁמַי שָׁם עַד־עוֹלָם וְהָיוּ עֵינֵי וְלִבִּי שָׁם כָּל־הַיָּמִים: וְאַתָּה אִם־תֵּלֵךְ לִפְנֵי כְּאֲשֶׁר הִלַּךְ דָּוִד אֲבִיךָ בְּתֵם־לֵבָב וּבְיִשָׁר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ חֻקֵי וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי תִשְׁמֹר:

**Eruvin 53b**

One time I was walking along the path, and I saw a young boy sitting at the crossroads. And I said to him: On which path shall we walk in order to get to the city? He said to me: This path is short and long, and that path is long and short. I walked on the path that was short and long. When I approached the city I found that gardens and orchards surrounded it, and I did not know the trails leading through them to the city. I went back and met the young boy again and said to him: My son, didn't you tell me that this way is short? He said to me: And didn't I tell you that it is also long? I kissed him on his head and said to him: Happy are you, O Israel, for you are all exceedingly wise, from your old to your young.

פַּעַם אַחַת הָיִיתִי מְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ, וְרָאִיתִי תֵינֹוֹק יוֹשֵׁב עַל פְּרֻשַׁת דְּרָכִים. וְאָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: בְּאִיזָה דֶּרֶךְ נֵלֵךְ לְעִיר? אָמַר לִי: זֹאת קְצֵרָה וְאַרוּכָה, וְזֹאת אַרוּכָה וְקְצֵרָה. וְהִלַּכְתִּי בְּקְצֵרָה וְאַרוּכָה, כִּיִּין שֶׁהִגַּעְתִּי לְעִיר מִצָּאתִי שְׁמַקִּיפִין אוֹתָהּ גִּנוֹת וּפְרֻדִּיסִין. חֲזַרְתִּי לְאַחֲרָי. אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: בְּנִי, הֲלֹא אָמַרְתָּ לִּי קְצֵרָה? אָמַר לִי: וְלֹא אָמַרְתִּי לָךְ אַרוּכָה? נִשְׁקַתִּיו עַל רֹאשׁוֹ, וְאָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: אֲשֶׁרִיכֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁכֹלְכֶם חֲכָמִים גְּדוֹלִים אַתֶּם, מִגְּדוֹלְכֶם וְעַד קִטְנֹוֹכֶם



Think about a process in your life which made you who you are. What would have been lost if it had been more straightforward? What would have been gained? Would you still be the same person?

What is the wisdom of knowing that sometimes the indirect route is actually the most direct one?

**Yosef's story**

**Genesis 37:2-3**

These are the generations of Jacob: when Joseph was seventeen years old, being a shepherd, he was with his brothers with the flocks, and he was a lad, [and was] with the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought evil tales about them to their father. And Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was a son of his old age; and he made him a fine woolen coat.

אֵלֶּה הַדּוֹרוֹת אֲשֶׁר יָבִיא יוֹסֵף בֶּן־שִׁבְעֵ-עָשָׂר שָׁנָה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נָעַר אֶת־בְּנֵי בְלָהָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה נְשֵׁי אֲבִיו וַיִּבֶא יוֹסֵף אֶת־דִּבְרֵיהֶם רָעָה אֶל־אָבִיהֶם:

**Rashi on Genesis 37:2**

His actions were childish: he dressed his hair, he touched up his eyes so that he should appear good-looking (Genesis Rabbah 84:7).

שִׁהִיָּה עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה נְעוּרוֹת, מִתְקַן בְּשַׁעֲרוֹ, מִמְשַׁמֵּשׁ בְּעֵינָיו, כְּדִי שִׁהִיָּה נִרְאֶה יָפֵה:

**Rashi on Genesis 37:3**

THE SON OF HIS OLD AGE — because he was a wise son to him” — all that he had learnt from Shem and Eber he taught him (Genesis Rabbah 84:8). Another explanation of בן זקנים — his facial features were similar to his (Jacob’s) (Genesis Rabbah 84:8).

שְׂנוּלֵד לוֹ לְעֵת זְקֻנָּתוֹ. וְאַנְקָלוֹס תַּרְגָּם בְּרַחֲמֵי הוּא לֵה — כָּל מֵה שֶׁלָּמַד מִשֵּׁם וְעִבְרַן מִסֵּר לוֹ. ד"א, שִׁהִיָּה זֵיו אִיקוֹנֵין שְׁלוֹ דוֹמֵה לוֹ:



**Genesis 39:2-6**

The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and whatever he (Joseph) did the Lord made prosper in his hand. And Joseph found favor in his eyes, and he (Joseph) served him, and he (Potiphar) appointed him over his house, and all he had he gave into his hand. Now it came to pass that since he had appointed him over his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was in all that he had, in the house and in the field. So he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he knew nothing about what was with him except the bread that he ate; and Joseph had handsome features and a beautiful complexion.

וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מְצַלִּיחַ וַיְהִי בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרִי: וַיֵּרָא אֲדֹנָיו כִּי יְהוָה אִתּוֹ וְכָל־  
אֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה יְהוָה מְצַלִּיחַ בְּיָדוֹ: וַיִּמְצָא יוֹסֵף חֵן בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּשְׁרֹת אֹתוֹ וַיִּפְקְדֵהוּ עַל־בֵּיתוֹ וְכָל־  
יְשֻׁלוֹ נָתַן בְּיָדוֹ: וַיְהִי מֵאֲזַי הַפְּקִיד אֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ וְעַל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יֵשְׁלוֹ וַיְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת־בֵּית הַמִּצְרִי  
בְּגַלְל יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי בְרִכְתּוֹ יְהוָה בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר יֵשְׁלוֹ בְּבֵית וּבְשָׂדֵה: וַיַּעֲזֹב כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בְּיַד־יוֹסֵף  
וְלֹא־יָדַע אֹתוֹ מֵאֲוִמָּה כִּי אִם־הִלְחֵם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא אוֹכֵל וַיְהִי יוֹסֵף יָפֵה־תָאֵר וַיִּפֶּה מְרֹאֶה:

**Rashi Genesis 39:6**

As soon as he saw that he was ruler (in the house) he began to eat and drink and curl his hair. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, “Your father is mourning and you curl your hair! I will let a bear loose against you” (Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeshev 8). Immediately...

כִּי־נָן שָׂרָא עֲצָמוֹ מוֹשֵׁל, הִתְחִיל אוֹכֵל וְשׁוֹתֵה וּמְסַלֵּס בְּשַׁעְרוֹ, אָמַר הַקָּב"ה אֲבִיךָ מִתְאַבֵּל  
וְאַתָּה מְסַלֵּס בְּשַׁעְרֶךָ, אֲנִי מִגְרֵה בְּךָ אֶת הַדָּב, מִיָּד:

**Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36a**

What is the situation where Joseph sanctified God's name in private? As it is written: “And it came to pass on a certain day, when he went into the house to do his work” (Genesis 39:11). Rabbi Yohanan says: This teaches that both Joseph and Potiphar's wife stayed in the house, as they intended to perform a matter of sin. With regard to the phrase “when he went into the house to do his work,” Rav and Shmuel engage in a dispute with regard to its meaning. One says: It means that he went into the house to do his work, literally. And one says: He entered the house in order to fulfill his sexual needs with her. The verse continues: “And there was none of the men of the house there within” (Genesis 39:11). The Gemara asks: Is it possible that in such a large and important house like the house of that wicked man that no one was in there? The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: That day was their festival day and they all went to their house of idol worship; and she told them that she was sick and could not go, as she said to herself: I have no day on which Joseph will attend to me like this day. The verse states: “And she caught him by his garment, saying: Lie with me” (Genesis 39:12). At that moment his father's image [deyokeno] came and appeared to him in the window. The image said to him: Joseph, the names of your brothers are destined to be written on the stones of the ephod, and you are to be included among them. Do you desire your name to be erased from among them, and to be called an associate [ro'eh] of promiscuous women? As it is written: “But he who keeps company with harlots wastes his riches” (Proverbs 29:3), as he loses his honor, which is more valuable than wealth. Immediately: “And his bow abode [teishev] firm” (Genesis 49:24). Rabbi Yohanan says in the name of Rabbi Meir: This means that his bow, i.e., his



penis, returned [shava] to its strength, as he overcame his desire. The verse about Joseph continues: "And the arms of his hands were made supple" (Genesis 49:24), meaning that he dug his hands into the ground and his semen was emitted between his fingernails. "By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob" (Genesis 49:24): Who caused his name to be etched onto the stones of the ephod? It was only the might of Jacob. "From there, from the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel" (Genesis 49:24) means: From there, because of Joseph's ability to withstand this trial, he merited to become a shepherd [ro'eh] of the Jewish people, as it is stated: "Listen, O Shepherd of Israel, who leads like the flock of Joseph" (Psalms 80:2). It is taught in a baraita: Joseph was deserving of having twelve tribes descend from him, the same as twelve tribes descended from his father Jacob, as it is stated: "These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph" (Genesis 37:2). This implies that everything that happened to Jacob was destined to happen to Joseph. However, he did not merit this because his semen was emitted from between his fingernails.

יוסף מאי היא — דכתיב: "ויהי כהיום הזה ויבא הביתה לעשות מלאכתו", אמר רבי יוחנן: מלמד ששניהם לדבר עבירה נתפחונו. "ויבא הביתה לעשות מלאכתו". רב ושמואל, חד אמר: לעשות מלאכתו ממש, וחד אמר: לעשות צרכיו נכנס. "ואין איש מאנשי הבית וגו'", אפשר בית גדול כביתו של אותו רשע לא היה בו איש? תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל: אותו היום יום חגם היה, והלכו כולן לבית עבודה זרה שלהם, והיא אמרה להן חולה היא, אמרה: אין לי יום שניזקק לי יוסף כיום הזה. "ותתפשהו בבגדו לאמר וגו'", באותה שעה באתה דיוקנו של אביו ונראתה לו בחלון, אמר לו יוסף! עתידין אחיך שיכתבו על אבני אפוד ואתה ביניהם, רצונך שימחה שמך מביניהם, ותקרא רועה זונות? דכתיב: "ורעה זונות יאבד הון". מיד — "ותשב באיתן קשתו", אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי מאיר: ששבה קשתו לאיתנה. "ויפזז זרועי ידיו" — נעץ ידיו בקרקע ויצאה שכבת זרעו מבין ציפורני ידיו. "מיד אביר יעקב", מי גרם לו שיחזק על אבני אפוד — אלא אביר יעקב. "משם רעה אבן ישראל", משם זכה ונעשה רועה, שנאמר: "רועה ישראל האזינה נהג כצאן יוסף". תנא: היה ראוי יוסף לצאת ממנו שנים עשר שבטים כדרך שיצאו מיעקב אביו, שנאמר: "אלה תלדות יעקב יוסף", אלא שיצא שכבת זרעו מבין ציפורני ידיו.