

## LESSON 2.2 – Patience self-study

READING: *Everyday Holiness*, Chapter 8: Patience

PRACTICE: switch your phrase, journaling and *kabbalah* to focus on Patience.

PHRASE:

- *Every person has his hour, and everything its place.*
- עשה כרצונך – *Oseh Ritzono kirtzonecha* – Make God's Will your will (Pirkei Avot 2:4)

Welcome

We hope you are settled into all the elements of this program and that they are working smoothly for you now.

In our last message, you were assigned to read and consider Chapter 8 of *Everyday Holiness*, on Patience. Since then, you have also had your *va'ad* meeting on this inner trait, and we hope you have learned a great deal about the Jewish view of this important *middah*.

As we begin the second session on Patience, we are providing you with materials, exercises and practices to guide you in a direct, experiential encounter with our subject, that it may enter your heart and lead you in the direction of change.

In other words, it is now time to switch your Mussar **practice** to focus specifically to the subject at hand, which is Patience.

### PRACTICE

Recall that whenever we assign self-study and practice, we will assign three practices. These are:

- A morning phrase to recite
- An evening journaling assignment
- A *kabbalah* (exercise) to perform during the day

You are to switch to *patience* in your ***Accounting of the Soul*** practice. That means that you will now take on an affirmation phrase that reflects the notion of *patience*, and in the evening you will record episodes in your diary that also touch on issues of patience and during the day you will do a *kabbalah* [exercise] to cultivate patience.

### 1) Accounting of the Soul (*Cheshbon ha'nefesh*) morning phrase for patience / *savlanut*

Here is a phrase for your morning affirmation:

- *Every person has his hour, and everything its place.*

Can you see why that is important to the practice of patience?

If you prefer a line in Hebrew, here is one

- עשה רצונו כרצונו – *Oseh Ritzono kirtzonecha* – Make God's Will your will (from Pirkei Avot 2:4 that we encountered in the *va'ad* meeting)

You may use one of these phrases, or create or choose a phrase of your own that captures the essence of “patience,” as you understand it.

### 2) Accounting of the Soul (*Cheshbon ha'nefesh*) journaling for patience / *savlanut*

Every evening, briefly note in your Mussar journal anything you can recall from your day that reflects when you were patient, or someone was patient with you. And the opposite—when were you impatient, or someone impatient with you? Did you find yourself driving behind a slow driver and considering rash moves to get past? Was the person in line ahead of you at the supermarket or café infernally slow? Or was it you who took action in some situation where waiting on others might have been more skillful and effective? Or jumped to act without much thought at all?

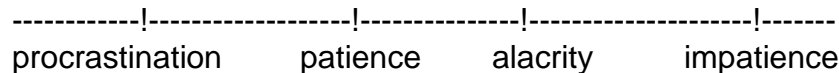
What do you see?

Because we don't make a practice of writing on Shabbat, please make your notes on Friday earlier, before sunset.

### 3) *Kabbalot* for Patience

Also beginning now are new exercises that the Mussar teachers call *kabbalot* (singular: *kabbalah*). Here the assignment gets personal because different exercises are appropriate to different people, depending on where they tend to fall on the continuum between procrastination (which is a way of saying “excessive patience”) as one extreme and recklessness (which characterizes a complete lack of patience) as its opposite.

This continuum can be shown on a graph:



The word “alacrity” is not in common usage these days, but it captures perfectly the positive counterpart to patience. Whereas patience involves sustaining yourself within an oppressive situation, alacrity (in Hebrew, *zerizut*) involves taking action with brisk and cheerful readiness.

Your first assignment is to place yourself on this graph. Don’t worry about being precise. Just reflect on where your tendency lies, as a matter of pattern or habit. Do you have a general predisposition to dally and wait rather than take action, or do you lean the other way, not wanting to be delayed even a second in your pursuit of whatever it is you are after? We are looking for what is the norm for you, and not unusual situations that aren’t really typical.

Placing yourself on this graph is essential to taking on the *kabbalot* that follow because we are assigning three different sets of exercises: one set for each of people tending toward inaction, those who tend to leap first and think later, and those in between.

#### a. *kabbalot* for procrastination

Prepare in advance a planned substitute that you will call on instead of procrastinating or being inactive in your daily life, especially in those certain areas where that tends to be your habit. Many people are up-and-at-‘em when it comes to mealtime or watching a favorite show but drag their feet in other situations. Which situations are those for you?

Once you are clear in your mind about where you tend to be overly patient (to put it nicely), design a different response for yourself and commit to doing just that. It could be:

- I will return telephone calls to my mother (or father or child or grandparent) within 3 minutes of picking up the voicemail.

Or

- I will begin my homework assignment within 30 minutes of getting home.

Or

- I will put a specific time to exercise on my calendar and will begin exercising precisely at that time.

Create a *kabbalah* like this that works for and applies to your own situation.

b. *kabbalot* for impatience

Choose 15 minutes of your day, a time in which you're engaged with others, and specifically engaged with other people with whom you tend to get impatient. It could be your family or your colleagues at work or even certain social friends. During this quarter-hour period, your practice is to "bear the burden" of everything you hear and experience that you don't like or even find offensive. Even if someone directly insults you or does something that would normally make you upset, your exercise is to bear the feelings that burden you and not to lose your composure. If you must respond, do so patiently and calmly and without any emotional charge.

As you do this, pay careful attention to the inner feelings that bubble up within you. Experience the feeling of those emotions and being in control of them. Over the course of the week, try to place those 15 minutes of patience practice into different situations that bring you in contact with different individuals.

Important note: This is only an exercise that you do for the purpose of stretching your capacity in this area. We are not advocating accepting abuse as a good way to live. We are saying that being master of your inner emotional reactivity, even in a situation in which you are provoked, is an ideal to strive for.

c. *kabbalot* for the patient person who also has alacrity

Sometimes we can be complacent. "I'm patient," we say to ourselves. Then we look at the example of someone like Rav Preida, who is reported in the Talmud as having had to teach a student the same lesson 400 times. For every lesson he taught! As one Mussar teacher<sup>1</sup> wrote about Rav Preida, the rest of us should "bury our faces in the dust" to see what he did as compared to what we are satisfied that we do. Our complacency disappears like mist before the sun.

Challenge yourself. Give yourself a *kabbalah* that stretches you. If you feel you are generally patient and you draw that conclusion from the fact that you don't lash out when your will is stymied, your *kabbalah* could be to challenge yourself to be cheerful when forced to wait. OK, so you don't react. Can you accept the situation while whistling a happy tune?

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<sup>1</sup> R' Yosef Yozel Hurwitz, the Alter of Novarodok.

Alternatively, if taking action in a timely way is your tendency, you could challenge yourself to hold back to see if anyone else in your environment will take action. Maybe your alacrity is causing you to take up too much space?

Or you can challenge yourself to be even more prompt and willing to spring into action.

All of these *kabbalot* are examples of valid exercises you could take on. Or you can use these models to design an assignment for yourself along lines that work for you. The principle is first to know yourself, and based on that knowledge, to give yourself a *kabbalah* that will help you grow in the direction of wholeness and holiness.

We hope our **Seeking Everyday Holiness** program is opening your eyes and your heart.