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Thoughts and Actions Rabbi David Ely Grundland

The relative value of intentions and actions is often discussed in Torah literature. For example, our sages debate whether thought and intention are both critical to fulfilling a halachic obligation, or simple performance suffices. In some cases, action without proper thought is almost meaningless. Abarbanel (Avot 2:13) writes, for example, that "a prayer without intention is like a body without a soul." More generally, our sages emphasize that Hashem desires the heart. (Talmud Sanhedrin 106b) On the other hand, we are taught that "Learning is not the essence; practice is the essence (Avot 1:17)"; good intentions must be actualized, to be meaningful.

We see the need for both thought and action. What happens when thought and implementation seem to be in contradiction?

Shemot 39:43 declares that when Moshe Rabbeinu surveyed the work performed by Bnei Yisrael, he saw that all they had done was "as Hashem had commanded". Rashi (Shemot 38:22) challenges the accuracy of this statement, based on a talmudic observation. The Talmud (Berachot 55a) notes that when Moshe commanded the building of the Mishkan, he first described all of the vessels that would be used in the Mishkan, and only then did he describe the plan for the Mishkan's actual structure. (Shemot 25-27) However, when Betzalel organized the construction, he changed the order and constructed the body of the Mishkan first, and only afterward did he build the vessels. (Shemot 35-38)

According to the Talmud, Betzalel's reasoning was simple: a person first builds a house and then moves in all of the furniture. Betzalel understood that trying to implement even perfect intentions in a way that will not work is short-sighted. Per Rashi, Shemot 39:43 is correct: under Betzalel's instruction, the Jews did as G-d had originally commanded.

How could it be, though, that Moshe Rabbeinu, who received instructions directly from Hashem, would have less insight than Betzalel? Or conversely, how could Betzalel alter the order of Moshe's directives and still be described as fulfilling everything "as Hashem had commanded"?

Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira (Eish Kodesh, Pekudei 5700) gives a striking answer. Moshe's role was theoretical, instructing others to construct the Mishkan, and therefore his prophecy regarding the Mishkan was clouded. Betzalel, on the other hand, was required to implement the Mishkan practically, and so he was given prophecy on a more clear and pure level. As Rabbi Shapira writes, "Moshe said to Betzalel: You were in the Divine shadow. The shadow of G-d is the world in which G-d is hidden and Man acts."

To illustrate the point, Rabbi Shapira discusses how mitzvot are performed. Even if one is a great sage and knows all of the kabbalistic intentions and meditations, even if one is able to contemplate everything properly and invoke various angels that are called to action through the performance of a given mitzvah, if one should fail to perform the mitzvah, nothing will have

been accomplished. In Rabbi Shapira's understanding, Moshe is the sage and Betzalel is the actor. It is the action and accomplishment that earns higher praise from the Torah. [See, too, Midrash Tanchuma Pekudei 11 on Moshe's role in erecting the Mishkan.]

A related idea is expressed by Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (Orot HaTeshuvah 1). He explains that the first stage of teshuvah relates to healing our physical body, declaring that "medicine is also greatly involved in this process." The upshot of Rabbi Kook's full analysis is that physical healing actively leads to spiritual healing, even if that is not the primary goal. Mundane activities are necessary to spur spiritual growth.

Through the ideas of Rabbi Shapira and Rabbi Kook, the importance of balancing thought and action becomes clear. Thought leads to action, and inspires it, but is deficient without that action. Betzalel heard what Moshe thought Hashem wanted, but he merited greater clarity due to his active role. Through his action, the Divine vision was fulfilled.

Often, individuals have visions and hopes, but their journey through the world of action produces something different. May we be blessed to recognize the true value of those actions, and to realize our individual and national visions, bringing about the final redemption!

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The Dawn: Political Teachings of the Book of Esther

**Dr. Yoram Hazony
Shalem Press, 2007**

Who is the author of the book?

Dr. Yoram Hazony (b. 1964) is the President of the Herzl Institute, a research and educational hub established in Jerusalem in 2013. He is also one of the founders of The Shalem Center, a Jerusalem research institute that has conducted nearly two decades of pioneering work in the fields of philosophy, political theory, Bible, Talmud, Jewish and Zionist history, Middle East Studies and archaeology, since 1994.

Dr. Hazony was born in Rechovot, Israel. He graduated from Princeton University with a B.A. in East Asian Studies and completed his Ph.D. at Rutgers University in Political Theory. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and nine children.

What is the goal of the book?

The book analyzes Megilat Esther from an unusual perspective: a political one. The author uses his broad philosophical and political background to outline the different political

structures and events in the megilah. This strategy often uncovers fascinating insights. Thus, for example, while the description of the long feast in the beginning of Megilat Esther is usually understood as an implicit comment about the spiritual level of the Jews at that time (see Megilah 12a) or about Achashverosh's use of the Temple's vessels (ibid. 19a), Dr. Hazony focuses on the kind of ruler the feast reveals Achashverosh to be: a striver for rule and control.

In another example, Hazony elaborates on Mordechai's fateful refusal to bow before Haman. Demonstrating how the empowerment of Haman by Achashverosh was not a personal whim, but a calculated move to change the nature of the Persian regime, Hazony shows that Mordechai's insistence can be understood in a new light. Mordechai was not only avoiding the halachic problem of treating a person as an idol, but he was also taking a non-compromising stance against the idolizing of the entire state.

As a whole, this is a refreshing and intriguing point of view, and the book is filled with different ways to apply it to the megilah.

What is the message of the book?

However, Dr. Hazony offers more than a new lens through which to see the megilah; in the last chapter, he tries to collect his findings and decipher a greater lesson that Esther is trying to teach us. He argues that the megilah's primary focus is the transition of responsibility from Divine to human hands. The book's title, "The Dawn", refers to the dawn of human responsibility. When G-d is hiding His face, the author claims, He gives us the opportunities to act, but the acts themselves depend on us.

The Persian catastrophe was prevented because Mordechai and Esther resisted it, using the circumstances created by G-d. In other instances in Jewish history, unfortunately, no Mordechai and Esther presented themselves, and G-d's gifts were not used, and the bloodshed was not stopped. This highly controversial argument, both in itself and as a lesson from the megilah – which seems to this writer to point in the opposite direction – is sure to provoke further thought.

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613 Mitzvot: 497, 498, 499, 501, 502, 503: Kings

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Devarim 17:14-20 presents six mitzvot related to establishing a king:

- To appoint a king (Sefer haChinuch #497)
- Not to appoint a king who is not of Jewish descent (#498)
- The king may not have more horses than are necessary for his chariot (#499)
- The king may not marry more than eighteen wives (#501)
- The king may not amass personal wealth beyond his needs (#502)
- The king must write a Torah, aside from the Torah which each Jew must write (#503)

The purpose of a king is expressed by Sefer haChinuch (#71), "It is not possible to have human civilization without the participants appointing one of themselves as a head upon the others, for them to follow his instructions and uphold his decrees. Since the mind of each human being is unique, and they will never agree on a single approach to any matter... Sometimes they will find great benefit from his advice and desire, sometimes the opposite, but all of that is better than the strife that will cause nothing to be done."

The prophet Shemuel described great powers for kings, when responding to the nation's request for a king. (Shemuel I 8:11-27) These powers include impressing people into service, and confiscating and transferring property. Shemuel might only have been intimidating the nation, though; there is dispute regarding whether the king truly possesses these powers. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim 4:1; Shu"t Baalei haTosafot 12; Nimukei Yosef to Nedarim 28a)

Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim 2:6) emphasizes the importance of royal humility, writing, "Just as the Torah assigned great honor to the king, and all are obligated to honor him, so the Torah instructed him to keep his heart humble and low within himself, as it is written, 'And my heart is low within me. (Tehillim 109:22)' He may not act with undue arrogance toward the nation, as is written, 'Lest his heart become elevated above his brothers. (Devarim 17:20)' He must be generous and merciful for small and great, he must exit and enter at their desire and for their good, and he must care for the honour of the smallest of the small. When he speaks to the community at large he must speak gently, as in 'Hear me, my brothers and my nation (Divrei haYamim I 28:2)' and 'If today you will be a servant for this nation, etc. (Melachim I 12:7)' He must always act with extra humility. We have none greater than Moshe Rabbeinu, and he said, 'And who are we? Your complaint is not upon us. (Shemot 16:8))' He should bear their strain, burdens, complaints and anger as a nursemaid bears a nurseling. The Torah calls him a shepherd, and the manner of a shepherd is explained by tradition, 'As a shepherd herds his flock, with his arm gathering in the ewes, carrying them in his arm, etc. (Yeshayah 40:11)'"

For more on whether G-d approves of monarchy, see Sanhedrin 20b; Sifri Devarim 156; Sefer haMitzvot Aseh 173; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim 1:2; Ibn Ezra, Ramban and Rabbeinu Bechayye to Devarim 17:14-15.

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Biography

Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg

Rabbi Yair Manas

Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg was born in 1915 in Jerusalem, and died there in 2006. Unlike the great majority of leading halachic authorities of the twentieth century, he did not serve as a Rosh Yeshiva or as a Maggid Shiur. Instead, he was a rabbinic judge in Jerusalem's Supreme Rabbinical Court, and served as Rabbi of the Shaare Zedek Medical Center. In this capacity, he dealt with many cutting-edge medical questions, and issued many rulings, some quite controversial. He permitted abortion in certain cases, opposed in vitro fertilization, prohibited cosmetic surgery, and ruled that smoking is forbidden.

Rabbi Waldenberg is known as "Tzitz Eliezer", the title of his twenty-four volumes of responsa. Approximately 25% of the responsa concern medical issues. Rabbi Chaim Jachter tells of visiting Rabbi Waldenberg in July 1993, "I vividly recall Rav Waldenberg beaming while showing Rav [Nota] Greenblatt the latest volume of Tzitz Eliezer to be published. Rav Waldenberg, who was 77 years of age at the time, was elated at its publication as if it were the first time his name appeared in print... It is fair to assert that his teshuvot [responsa] were his Yeshiva and his readers his Talmidim."

Rabbi Waldenberg published his first sefer at the age of 19, and received the Israel Prize in 1976 for his work. A posthumously published work regarding the State of Israel, titled "Hilchot Medinah," was opposed by the Beth Din Tzedek of Jerusalem, and by Rabbi Waldenberg's own family. Ironically, Rabbi Waldenberg himself allowed the posthumous publication of halachic texts even when the descendants of the author disagree. (Tzitz Eliezer 20:51)

Because Rabbi Waldenberg did not affiliate with any specific part of the Jewish community, he often passed under the radar. As was noted by one mourner at the time of his death, "For 50 years, he has been quoted by latter-day rabbis who didn't even know he was alive." (<http://bit.ly/1TmUxAL>) Rabbi Jachter notes that tens of thousands of people attended the funerals of other leading sages, while only thousands attended Rabbi Waldenberg's funeral, reflecting the fact that Rabbi Waldenberg was underappreciated. However, when we learn from his works we gain a glimpse into a great scholar, and we become his "talmidim".

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Torah and Translation

Enabling Prohibited Medical Procedures

Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, Tzitz Eliezer 19:33

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

החייב רופא להפסיד ממונו כדי לא לעבור על לאו דלפני עור או של מסייע לדבר עבירה במקרים שנדרש להרדים אשה להפלה שלא כהלכה, או לבצע אולתרה סוונד בנשים הרות להבחין במום בעובר לביצוע הפלה שלא כדין, או לבדיקה לאבחן בחולה אם גזע המוח מת כדי שיוכלו שלא כהלכה לנתחו ולהוציא את לבו או אברים אחרים לשם השתלה...

זו עוד זאת עלינו לדעת כי דברי הרמ"א בסימן תרנ"ו שחייב להפסיד כל ממונו כדי שלא יעבור על לאו, לאו דכו"ע היא. ונוסף למה שלא נזכר מזה ברמב"ם ובמחבר, מצינו במפורש לפוסקים גדולים שחולקים על זה וסבירא להו דבכלל איננו מחויב להפסיד כל ממונו כדי שלא יעבור על לאו תעשה פרט מבע"ז שנא' בכל מאדך.

יעוין ביו"ד סי' קנ"ז סעי' א' דבראשונה פוסק הרמ"א בשם הר"ן דאם יוכל להציל עצמו בכל אשר לו צריך ליתן הכל ולא יעבור לא תעשה, ואח"כ מוסיף הרמ"א ופוסק בשם מהרי"ו, דאע"ג שאמרו כל מי שיש בידו למחות ואינו מוחה הוא נתפס באותו עון, מכל מקום בדבר שיש חשש סכנה אין צריך להוציא ממונו על זה. וכותב ע"ז בביאור הגר"א סק"ה, דאבל מדברי מהרי"ו משמע שם מדבריו דאכל מצות ל"ת אינו מחויב להוציא ממונו דהוכיח מדכתבה תורה בכל מאדך בע"ז ע"ש...

ח ולא זאת בלבד, אלא אפילו להרמ"א ודעימיה שכן מחויב להפסיד כל ממונו כדי שלא יעבור על לאו, מצינו אבל פלוגתא גדולה בין גדולי הפוסקים אם נאמר זה אפילו בלאו שאין בו מעשה... הנה בנוגע להלאו של "לפני עור" ישנם כמה מגדולי הפוסקים, ראשונים ואחרונים, שסוברים שהוא נקרא לאו שאין בו מעשה, כהחניך.

Note: This is part of a longer responsum, on a complex issue. For practical questions, please consult your Rabbi.

Is a doctor obligated to lose his wealth in order to avoid violating the prohibition of "Do not put a stumbling block before the blind" or "Aiding in transgression", in situations in which he is called upon to anesthetize a woman for non-halachic abortion, or to aid in an ultrasound for a pregnant woman to analyze a fetal defect for non-halachic abortion, or for an examination to check whether a patient's brainstem has died so that they will be able to operate on him against halachah, to remove his heart or other limbs for transplant?...

7) We must know, too, that the position of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Orach Chaim 656), saying to lose all of one's wealth in order not to violate *lifnei iver*, is not universally held. Aside from its omission by Rambam and Rabbi Yosef Karo, we have seen great authorities explicitly disagree, ruling that one is not obligated to lose all of his wealth to avoid violating a prohibition, other than idolatry, for which [Devarim 6:5] says, "with all of your resources."

See Yoreh Deah 157:1, where Rabbi Isserles first rules, citing Ran, that one who can save himself [from violating a prohibition] by spending all he owns is obligated to give it all and not sin. Then Rabbi Isserles adds a ruling from Mahari Weil, saying that although the Sages have said that anyone who can protest [transgression], and does not, is guilty of the sins performed by others, still, one is not obligated to spend his wealth where some danger would be involved. The Vilna Gaon (Biur haGra 157:5) wrote there that from Mahari Weil's words it seems that there is no obligation to spend one's wealth to avoid any prohibition, from the fact that the Torah said "with all of your resources" specifically regarding idolatry...

8) Further, even per the view of Rabbi Moshe Isserles and his camp that one must lose all of his wealth to avoid violating a prohibition, we have still seen a great debate among the greatest authorities as to whether this is stated even regarding a sin of omission... And regarding *lifnei iver*, there are great authorities, early and recent, who consider it a sin by omission, like Sefer haChinuch.

This Week in Israeli History: 4 Adar II 5752 (Mar. 9 1992)**Rabbi Jonathan Ziring****The Founding of Meretz***4 Adar II is Monday*

On 4 Adar II, 5752 (1992) the far-left Israeli political party, Meretz, was founded. Three left wing parties, Mapam, Ratz, and Shinui, merged to create this party which refers to itself as “the left of Israel.” The name of the party is a combination of the names of Mapam and Ratz, and Meretz’s slogan includes the name of the third party – “a government with vigour (*meretz*); the strength to make change (*shinui*).”

The Israeli system is known for the rapid changes that take place within the government. Each of the parties that formed Meretz had once been independently powerful (Mapam alone had at times held 19 of the Knesset’s 120 seats), but eventually the three needed to merge to survive.

At its height, Meretz held 12 seats. In the previous election, it barely passed the minimum threshold of 4 seats, achieving only 5. Despite its small size, though, Meretz has a very public presence. Meretz is a secular party that believes in a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and emphasizes social justice, human rights (especially for ethnic and sexual minorities), religious freedom, and environmentalism. Meretz is extremely vocal in its criticism of the current right-wing government of Israel. Meretz also garners much criticism for its unpopular positions.

Whatever one’s politics, Meretz highlights the spectrum of positions that exist in Israeli culture and government.

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Weekly Highlights: Mar. 12 – Mar. 18 / 2 Adar II – 8 Adar II

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Mar. 11-12				
After Hashkamah	R’ Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Midrash Rabbah	Clanton Park	
8:50 AM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Parshah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Before minchah	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	
Sun. Mar. 13				
8:45 AM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
8:45 AM	R’ Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	
9:15 AM	R’ Shalom Krell	The Book of Shemuel	Associated (North)	Hebrew
10:00 AM	R’ Aaron Greenberg	Chullin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	For Chaverim
Mon. Mar. 14				
9:30 AM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Women’s Beit Midrash	Ulpanat Orot	University Students
8:00 PM	R’ David Ely Grundland	Daf Highlights	Shaarei Shomayim	Beit Midrash Night
8:00 PM	R’ Elan Mazer	Was Purim “Redemption”?	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Beit Midrash Night
8:00 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Dental Emergencies on Shabbat	Shaarei Shomayim	CME-Approved Open to non-dentists
Tue. Mar. 15				
9:30 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Chabura: Bitul and Chefs	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University Chaverim
10:00 AM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Women’s Beit Midrash	Ulpanat Orot	Not this week
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Iyov: Elihu Continues	Shaarei Shomayim	
Wed. Mar. 16				
10:00 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Midrash and Matriarchs 5: Leah the Hated?	Beth Emeth	Register with nancywallack@gmail.com
2:30 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of Bereishit	Location: Contact carolleser@rogers.com	Not this week
8:00 PM	R’ Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Contemporary Halachah	Shaarei Tefillah	Not this week
Thu. Mar. 17				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: An Early Rebuke	49 Michael Ct.	For women
Fri. Mar. 18				
10:30 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Eruvin: Lech and Korah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced