

OLAMI / NLE RESOURCES HIGH HOLIDAY DISCUSSION SESSION

Is It All About Me?

IDEA BASED ON RABBI YAACOV HABER AND THE OU PARDES PROJECT & SOURCES FROM THE OLAMI MORASHA SYLLABUS

One of the looming challenges of the 21st century, exacerbated by digital technology, is the phenomenon of individuals becoming overly focused on career, personal achievement and interests, to the exclusion – even to the detriment – of one’s family and society. The High Holiday Days or Days of Awe – *Yomim Noraim* – are a fitting time to think about one’s personal goals and the nature of one’s relationship to family, friends and society.

How Would You Respond?

A recent study published in Psychological Science (Santos, H.C., Varnum, M.E.W., & Grossmann, I., Global Increases in Individualism. July 13, 2017) suggests that people across the globe are becoming more individualistic over time. Individualism, as opposed to collectivism, relates to how independent and self-reliant (and self-centered) people are. Collectivistic people (and societies) tend to be more communal and family-oriented, and tend to work together instead of independently. Couple this with research that shows a rise in narcissism, and this suggests that people are becoming more isolated and focused on themselves, rather than others.

What are the reasons for this shift toward more individualism and self-centeredness? One trend is that as countries become more economically developed, there tends to be a rise in individualism – more affluence leads to a greater sense of self-reliance and a detachment from others. Another possible explanation proposed by the researchers is that an increase in communicable diseases (such as STDs), and fear of contracting disease, may be fueling the sense of detachment from others.

What about the rise in narcissism? Social media, while it connects us to others, may actually lead to greater self-centeredness as people strive to make their “presence” known. Much of social media is “all about me.” Overly doting, “helicopter parents,” may also be creating greater narcissism in children. Finally, society, with its emphasis on celebrity, appearance, and narcissistic role models and leaders, may be playing a part in the rise in self-centeredness.

So What? If individualism is associated with economic success and a sense of self-reliance, what’s the problem? One outcome of a society shifting toward individualism is a lack of empathy – caring about ourselves and our own welfare, but not caring much about others. This leads to greater economic disparity, and a lack of concern for taking care of the less fortunate.

Another concern is the inability to cooperate with others. We are already seeing this in our polarized political system, where people and parties with opposing views are unable to work together to solve problems. This could become a greater concern in the future, particularly when it comes to dealing with disasters such as global warming and refugee crises. Individualism fuels a “me first” attitude that makes it difficult for people to both see the plights of others who are less fortunate, and also makes it more difficult for us to self-sacrifice for the collective good. (Ronald E Riggio Ph.D., Are We All Becoming More Self-Centered? PsychologyToday.com, July 27, 2017.

Background Cases

Case A

This month, Jess Roskelley, Hansjörg Auer and David Lama [died in an avalanche](#) while alpine climbing on the east face of the 10,810-foot Howse Peak, north of Banff, in Alberta, Canada. They were, respectively, 36, 35 and 28. In the aftermath, our community of climbers has once again laid down on the couch and resumed our conversation about mountaineering's biggest complex: death and tragedy.

All three were at the top of their game. To climbers, the news of their deaths was the equivalent of waking up and learning that Tom Brady, Le'Veon Bell and Antonio Brown had been killed on the gridiron. The difference is that football players don't routinely die during a difficult game. The same can't be said of alpinists. The graveyard in mountaineering's most fabled playground, Chamonix, France, is filled with young men who died climbing in the massif of Mont Blanc.

For many of us, our eyes were still glassy from February, when Daniele Nardi and Tom Ballard disappeared on Nanga Parbat, a 26,660-foot peak in the western Himalayas. Tom's mother, the renowned British climber Alison Hargreaves, had died when he was only 6, also in the mountains, in a storm after summiting K2, the world's second-highest mountain, without supplemental oxygen. At the time, in 1995, she was accused of being a reckless mother. How dare she leave her young son and daughter at home and attempt a mountain that kills 25 percent of those who challenge it? As always, the truth is complicated...

When will the deaths stop? Our collective wonders. I ask it, too, but I know better. They won't. High-end climbing is going to get more risky, not less. The routes are becoming more technically demanding, in more remote areas, and the method of "light and fast"—minimal gear, no fixed ropes, doing the route in a single push—is now regarded as the best style. These trends, and others, have made the sport of alpine climbing very, very dangerous...

One truth goes to the heart of death in our community: You can't fall out of love with something. Having known two of the three men who died on Howse Peak, I know that climbing made them feel alive. The question is—could we feel alive enough if we stopped? Most climbers think not. I agree. (Francis Sanzaro, [Are Mountain Climbers Selfish?](#) [Nytimes.com](#), April 27, 2019)

Case B

Even though I'm surrounded by entrepreneurs, including those in my family, there is still always talk about starting a family and having kids. My female colleagues are determined to run a business and have kids. At this age, it's what starts happening. I've received numerous baby shower invitations and comments that if I have kids soon, then we can plan playdates together. It's easy to start feeling left out and panicked that your friendships may diverge because you are not rushing to get a bun in the oven. Whether it is friends or family, there's no need to feel guilty about choosing your career over kids. Here's why.

There's No Need To Conform To Social Norms

While I've heard about a biological clock ticking away, the problem is that, for me, I don't hear anything. Having children is not something I feel passionate about. In the past, it might have been taboo to say that out loud for fear you would be labeled as selfish or mean. The reality is that those people who do not feel strongly about having children

should not have them. Otherwise, they are just doing it because it is the social norm or they have too much pressure from family and friends. In reality, some people are not cut out to be parents and are actually doing the right thing in not taking on something that they will come to resent later. Every child deserves loving parents who love what they do.

Your Company Is Your Child

On the other hand, running my own business and the career I'm developing is what I feel passionate about and where I feel I can truly succeed. It's where I want to put my energy and where I feel I can actually help people more than bringing a child into the world. I know that I am good when I focus on one large thing at a time. My personal experiences of trying to multitask have not gone well. And, when I see women trying to be Wonder Women, I also don't see them succeeding at raising both types of children. Or, if they do appear successful, these women looked run down and burned out. Neither of those options is appealing.

My partner and I agree that having a family isn't something we want to do now, and quite possibly never. At this point in our lives, we don't own a pet either. That's because we both have careers in mind that involve traveling and long hours. If you have a partner, it's important to make sure they are on the same page as you in terms of family and career goals.

If one is secretly pining for kids, then it's not going to work and will end badly. Having someone who thinks like me and is focused on their career also means we understand the long hours or other career responsibilities that take us away from handling other tasks at home. If we were both to focus on our careers but also had pets and kids, there would be additional stress surrounding who would take on what responsibilities.

*I believe it is hard enough to get by financially in certain areas of the country like Silicon Valley (where I live) with just a career on my plate. Add children, pets, and all their needs to the budget and it seems next to impossible. That again breeds more stress than necessary in my opinion. Also, in starting a business to fulfill certain dreams, there are costs and risks involved where it would make me more nervous and hesitant should I have kids who need that money that I'm now putting into a business. Choosing my career over children means that I'm going to absorb all the results of the risk rather than put some little person in a position where they don't have all the things they need while growing up. In my mind, trying to do both on a shoestring budget is more selfish than just focusing on a startup. (Angela Ruth, *Why It's OK to Choose a Career Over Kids*, Forbes.com, August 22, 2017)*

Questions and sources for discussion:

What is considered healthy self-interest and in contrast, selfish behavior?

1. Wikipedia – Definition of selfish behavior.

Selfishness is being concerned excessively or exclusively, for oneself or one's own advantage, pleasure, or welfare, regardless of others.
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2. Morasha Chaburah – Healthy self-interest and selfishness are a matter of degree.

There is nothing wrong with having self-interest. In fact, it is essential to have an interest in oneself, for if you care about yourself, then you have the ability to extend your circle of concern to include family, friends and the world at large. Self-interest is actually the basis of the central Jewish principal, <i>ואהבת לרעך כמוך</i> , <i>And you shall love your friend as you love yourself</i> , (Vayikra 19:18). A healthy self-interest is where you learn to care properly about yourself, and then by extension, for

your family, friends and the world at large. Being selfish is when someone overly focuses on oneself to the extent that is narcissistic, causes otherwise preventable harm, and/or shirks essential responsibilities to family, friends and the world at large.

3. Sifra 2:12 – A fundamental Torah principle.

And you shall love your friend as you love yourself: Rabbi Akiva said, “This is a fundamental principle of the Torah.”	ואהבת לרעך כמוך, רבי עקיבא אומר זה כלל גדול בתורה.
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4. Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 243 – Defining the mitzvah to love each Jew: showing compassion to a person and his assets.

To love each member of Israel with a “soul love,” i.e. that one should have compassion for a Jew and his property just as one has compassion for himself and his own property. As the verse states, “And you shall love your fellow as you love yourself” (Vayikra 19:18).	לאהוב כל אחד מישראל אהבת נפש, כלומר שנחמול על ישראל ועל ממונו כמו שאדם חומל על עצמו וממונו, שנאמר [ויקרא י"ט, י"ח] ואהבת לרעך כמוך.
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5. Sefer HaChinuch, Ibid. – Treat a person the way you would want to be treated yourself.

The elements included in this mitzvah follow the general principle that one should treat another person in the way he would treat himself, e.g. protecting his property, preventing him from being harmed, speaking only well of him, respecting him, and certainly not glorifying oneself at his expense.	ודיני מצוה זו כלולים הם בתוך המצוה, שכלל הכל הוא שיתנהג האדם עם חבירו כמו שיתנהג עם עצמו, לשמור ממונו ולהרחיק ממנו כל נזק, ואם יספר עליו דברים יספרם לשבח ויחוס על כבודו ולא יתכבד בקלונו...
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The Torah states the mitzvah of Ahavat Yisroel in the positive, “And you shall love your neighbor as you love yourself” whereas Hillel in Talmud Shabbat 31a teaches the principle from a negative perspective, “Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to your friend.” What is Hillel coming to teach?

6. Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 243 – Loving your neighbor as yourself also means not hurting others.

The Sages have said, “Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to your friend.”	ואמרו זכרונם לברכה [שבת ל"א ע"א] דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד. ואמרו בספרי, אמר רבי עקיבא זה כלל גדול בתורה, כלומר שהרבה מצוות שבתורה תלויין בכך, שהאובחב חבירו כנפשו לא יגנוב ממונו ולא ינאף את אשתו ולא יונהו בממון ולא בדברים ולא יסיג
In the Sifri, it is stated that Rabbi Akiva said, “This is a fundamental principle in the Torah,” meaning that many commandments are related to this one, in the respect that one	

who loves his fellow will not steal his belongings, nor be unfaithful with his wife, nor will he defraud or insult him, nor trespass upon his property, nor cause him damage in any way. Thus, the fulfillment of many other commandments is dependent upon the fulfillment of this one.	גבולו ולא יזיק לו בשום צד. וכן כמה מצוות אחרות תלויות בזה, ידוע הדבר לכל בן דעת:
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What is the Jewish framework to develop a positive perspective of self that leads to genuine concern for family, friends and the world?

7. Ethics of the Fathers, 1:14 – Principles to gauge interpersonal relationships.

Hillel says, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?"

8. Rabbi Yaakov Haber, Lev Avos, TorahLab, 2007, p.35.

The words in the Mishnah above, *If I am not for myself, who will be for me? etc.*, mean that an individual needs to recognize that there is no one else in the world who can discern someone else's personal mission except for the person himself. And to succeed in his mission he needs to work hard, for no one else can accomplish his goals.

On the other hand, the words in the above Mishnah, *But if I am only for myself, who am I?* mean that a person was not created solely to develop himself and pursue his personal mission. Rather, he was also created to strengthen the entire world. Therefore, the individual does not have any advantage over anyone else; he needs to join and work together with the community at large to fulfill communal goals.

9. Sefas Emes, Commentary on Tractate Avos, Chapter I:14.

One can say that the Mishnah teaches the following idea: There are three aspects to life – the world, time and the human being... Everything depends on the rectification of a person, for through each person's actions the world can achieve completion. That is what is meant by the words, *If I am not for myself, who will be for me?* Yet, the words, *But if I am only for myself, who am I?* show that focusing only upon one's personal perfection is not sufficient. An individual must also engage in perfecting the entire creation. Finally the Mishnah teaches, *"If not now, when?"* to show that time itself needs to be rectified with each passing moment. Therefore, when a person contemplates how the perfection of the three aspects of life – the world, time, and the human being – are dependent upon him, he shouldn't tarry in this Divine work.

10. Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Sanhedrin 37a – Every individual is a world unto himself.

Therefore, man was created alone to teach that destroying one life is tantamount to destroying an entire world; and sustaining one life is tantamount to sustaining an entire world. Therefore, every individual is obligated to say, "The world was created for my sake."	לפיכך נברא אדם יחידי, ללמדך שכל המאבד נפש אחת ... מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו איבד עולם מלא וכל המקיים נפש אחת ... מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו קיים עולם מלא לפיכך כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר, בשבילי נברא העולם.
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11. Rabbi Shalom Brezovsky, Nesivos Shalom, Vol. I, Netivei Da'at, Chapter 6:2, p. 30 – The obligation to figure out one's unique mission.

<p>Before anything else, a person is obligated to reflect upon and search out what is his unique mission for the sake of which he descended to this world ...</p>	<p>בראש כל האדם חייב להתבונן היטב ולחקור ולדעת מהי חובתו המיוחדת בעולמו, מהו הענין המיוחד שבשבילו ירד לעולם...</p>
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12. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, Vol. I, p. 168 – The profound importance of each individual and his purpose in life.

<p>Every person needs to know that he has importance. Not an imagined importance that he “considers himself as special”... rather a deeply profound importance that is even shocking.</p> <p>The Talmud states, “Each and every person must declare, “The world was created for me” (Sanhedrin 37a). Rashi explains that this means I am considered as important as the entire world ...</p> <p>“Like the entire world” – This is the one-time life experience of a particular person – there was never a person like him and nor will there ever be a person like him throughout history. I, with my special character strengths, the child of my parents, born at a specific time period, and in a certain environment – certainly there is a unique challenge that is placed upon me. I have a special share in the Torah, and the entire world is waiting for me to actualize that which is incumbent upon me. For my role cannot be exchanged with anyone else in the world!</p>	<p>כל אדם חייב לדעת, שיש לו חשיבות. לא חשיבות מדומה שהוא "מחשיב עצמו בעצמו" ... אלא חשיבות בעלת משמעות עמוקה ואף מזעזעת.</p> <p>"כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר: בשבילי נברא העולם"- רש"י: "כלומר: חשוב אני כעולם מלא, לא אטרד את עצמי מן העולם בעבירה אחת". (סנהדרין לז, א)</p> <p>"כעולם מלא" – זוהי חוית חד-פעמיותו של האדם, שלא היה עוד כמותו ולא יהיה כמותו עד סוף כל הדורות. אני עם המיזוג המיוחד של כוחותי, בן לאותם אבות, נולד בתוך אותה תקופה ובאותה סביבה- בודאי עבודה מיוחדת מוטלת עלי, חלק מיוחד לי בתורה, וכל הבריאה מחכה לי שאתקן את המוטל עלי, כי את עבודתי לא אוכל להחליף עם שום אדם אחר בעולם!</p>
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13. Talmud Bavli, Tractate Baba Kama 30a. – A diligent person strives to excel in three areas: concern for others' welfare, personal ethics, and blessings.

<p>Rav Yehuda taught: A person who wants to be diligent should fulfill the principles in the laws of damages. Rava said he should fulfill the teachings of Ethics of the Fathers. Some say he should fulfill the laws of blessings.</p>	<p>אמר רב יהודה: האי מאן דבעי למהוי חסידא, לקיים מילי דנזיקין; רבא אמר: מילי דאבות; ואמרי לה: מילי דברכות.</p>
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Why should a person focus on these three areas? They represent the three distinct arenas of spiritual development.

14. Maharal, Derech Chaim to Avot 1:2 – We seek achievement in three spheres of spiritual endeavor: the personal, the religious, and the interpersonal.

<p>Man's capacity for goodness can be divided into three parts: His own intrinsic goodness; his goodness in his relationship with G-d; and his goodness in his relationships with his fellow human beings ...</p>	<p>ומה שהאדם הוא טוב... הבחינה האחת היא כשהוא טוב בעצמו... הבחינה השנית שיהיה טוב לשמים... השלישית שראוי שיהיה טוב אל זולתו מבני אדם אשר נמצאים אתו...</p>
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15. Olami Morasha Chabura – The three categories of mitzvot.

<p>All the mitzvot serve to create a connection to G-d, but they do not all do so in the same way. Conceptually speaking we can divide all the mitzvot into three categories that cover the three basic spheres within which all our activities transpire. The first concerns the relationship between man and G-d (<i>bein adam l'Makom</i>), the second concerns the inner relationship between a person and himself as he strives to develop and refine his character (<i>bein adam l'atzmo</i>), and the third concerns interactions with others (<i>bein adam l'chavero</i>).</p>
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16. Mishnah, Avot 1:2 – Kindness toward others is one of the three pillars of the world.

<p>The world rests upon three things: Upon Torah study, upon Divine service (i.e., prayer and sacrifices), and upon the practice of chesed (loving-kindness).</p>	<p>על שלשה דברים העולם עומד: על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים.</p>
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17. Maharal, Derech Chaim, ibid. – Chesed is the highest form of goodness.

<p>Why does the world stand specifically upon these three things and not others? [The Maharal then explains how each of these three values maintains the world; we will look at his explanation of kindness. –Ed.] The reason is that everything that was created only deserves to exist in as much as it is inherently good. It is the goodness in each object that allows it to exist ... For this reason we find that after the creation of each object during the six days of Creation, it is written that G-d saw that it was good ...</p> <p>Man's capacity for goodness can be divided into three parts: His own intrinsic goodness; his goodness in his relationship with G-d; and his goodness in his relationships with his fellow human beings ...</p>	<p>למה על אלו דברים ולא על דברים אחרים? ... כי הנבראים נבראו בשביל שיש בהם הטוב... רק מצד הטוב שיש שנמצא בכל אחד הקיום... לכן תמצא בכל מעשה בראשית שאמר וירא ה' כי טוב...</p> <p>ומה שהאדם הוא טוב... הבחינה האחת היא כשהוא טוב בעצמו... הבחינה השנית שיהיה טוב לשמים... השלישית שראוי שיהיה טוב אל זולתו מבני אדם אשר נמצאים אתו...</p>
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<p>Chesed corresponds to this third aspect of man's life; for it is eminently clear that when man performs kind deeds for his fellow men without expecting any reimbursement, he is being good towards them. There is, in fact, no greater good than when one bestows kindnesses upon others from his own volition – in doing so he is truly and really “good.”</p>	<p>וכנגד השלישי שצריך שיהיה אדם שלם וטוב עם זולתו זהו גמילות חסדים; כאשר עושה לזולתו חסד חנם הנה אין ספק שבוה הוא טוב לזולתו. ואין דבר טוב מזה כאשר עושה טוב לזולתו בחנם ואז הוא טוב לגמרי.</p>
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18. Rabbi Avi Cassel, Olami – Chesed is looking to provide what another person truly needs.

<p>When I was studying in Yeshivah in the suburbs of Baltimore, each Friday afternoon we would leave the campus to take care of errands. The only way to travel was relying on the kindness of people who had cars to give us a lift. We stood at the gate of the Yeshivah and drivers would stop and ask where we needed to go. There were two types of drivers: Those who offered rides to the destination where they themselves were going, and those who went out of their way to take us where we needed to travel. Both are good deeds, but the latter is the epitome of chesed.</p>
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19. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, Volume II, p. 198 – Giving Tzedakah is an act of chesed and challenges us to learn to understand what another person really needs.

<p>There are no objective standards in the field of Tzedakah. Just as people differ in their personalities, so do their needs differ. Someone who wishes to be a true practitioner of loving-kindness must train himself to see and listen to what the other is lacking.</p>	<p>באשר יחסר לו אין נורמות. כשם שדעותיהם שונות כך מחסוריהם שונים. הרוצה להיות איש חסד צריך להתלמד לראות ולהאזין מה יחסר לו.</p>
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20. Rambam, Avot 3:15 – Many small positive actions do more to change a person's character than one grand positive action.

<p>Good character traits do not come to a person by the greatness of a deed but rather by the frequency with which he does it. To acquire good character traits one needs to do good deeds over and over; doing one great act will not inculcate good character traits. For example, one who gives one poor person 1000 gold coins at one time and nothing to another poor man will not acquire the trait of generosity to the same extent as the one who willingly gives one gold coin a thousand times. The reason is that the latter did a thousand acts of generosity, thereby acquiring the trait of generosity, whereas the</p>	<p>המעלות לא יגיעו לאדם לפי רוב גודל המעשה אבל לפי רוב מספר המעשים. והוא שהמעלות אמנם יגיעו בכפול המעשים הטובים פעמים רבות ועם זה יגיע קנין חזק, לא כשיעשה אדם פעל אחד גדול מפעולות הטובות כי בזה לבדו לא יגיע לו קנין חזק. והמשל בו, כשיתן האדם למי שראוי אלף זהובים בבת אחת לאיש אחד, ולאיש אחר לא נתן כלום, לא יעלה בידו מדת הנדיבות בזה המעשה הגדול האחד כמו שמגיע למי שהתנדב אלף זהובים באלף פעמים ונתן כל זהוב מהם על צד הנדיבות, מפני שזה כפל מעשה הנדיבות אלף פעמים והגיע לו קנין חזק וזה פעם אחת התעוררה נפשו התעוררות גדולה לפעל טוב ואחר כך פסקה ממנו.</p>
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former's soul experienced a one-time inspiration to perform a tremendous act of generosity, and this inspiration subsequently departed.	
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21. Vilna Gaon, Even Shleimah 2 – What is life for if not for character refinement?

The prime purpose of man's life is to constantly strive to break his bad traits. Otherwise, what is life for?	עיקר חיות האדם הוא להתחזק תמיד בשבירת המדות, ואם לאו – למה לו חיים?
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How does one balance the demands of career, family and communal needs?

22. Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, Careers, Hobbies & Sports for a Ben Torah, Aishaudio.com – Select a vocation that will allow you to maintain priorities in life.

When you select a vocation, make sure that it leaves you ample time for Torah study, for thinking about what life is really all about, for living a full Jewish life. Make sure you don't lose sight of life's purpose and make your vocation the sum total of your life, and make sure the career you take allows for this.
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23. Dr. Joshua Mark, The Power of the Positive, Targum Press – Differentiating between healthy and excessive perfectionism.

Perfectionism has gotten a bad name. Popular self-help gurus say that striving for perfection is unhealthy. We are warned to "take it easy," "be cool," and "don't worry; be happy." Anti-perfectionism has become so popular that it's a wonder society still functions. I often wonder how the peddlers of mediocrity would respond if a neurosurgeon or a car mechanic decided that perfection was no longer worth it!

The truth is, of course, that there is much room for perfection. We all value a job well done. To dismiss the effort toward perfection is to deny ourselves one of the great pleasures of life. On the other hand, the desire for excessive levels of perfection can be deadly. Since perfectionists have exaggerated superstitions about failure, they avoid anything that will take them to growth and success. Failure and imperfection are so threatening that they would rather not take risks. Of course, without risk-taking there can be no achievement. Failure to achieve leads to demoralization. Despair and depression quickly follow ...

So what's the difference between healthy perfection and excessive perfectionism? An excessive perfectionist sets standards beyond reach and reason, whereas a healthy perfectionist sets high standards, but still within reach. An excessive perfectionist is never satisfied by anything less than perfection, while a healthy perfectionist enjoys the journey to the goal as well as the outcome. An excessive perfectionist becomes dysfunctionally depressed when he or she experiences failure and disappointment, while a healthy perfectionist bounces back from failure and disappointment quickly and with energy.

How can we strike a balance between healthy striving for excellence and excessive perfectionism? In my own experience, it is most sensible to select no more than two areas for perfection. Look at your life and what is important to you — study, community

projects, prayer, relationships, charity, and career are all examples of areas you can choose to excel in.

24. Rabbi Pinchas Stopler, Introduction to Made in Heaven by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, pp. XIII-XIV – A good marriage is the social structure to build great individuals.

In the family structure we find the one human, social institution that is most indispensable for creating and forming the individual. Without the family, it is impossible to create a healthy individual, not only biologically but in any sense. When we create a child we literally “play” G-d.

The drama of a man's partnership with G-d in creation does not end with the birth of a child. After birth, too, the father and mother must live together within the family unit. Thus children can be reared and educated in such a way that they will develop into men and women who are capable of fulfilling their human and spiritual destinies. Each person is to a large extent what his parents and family make him; if they are successful parents the children may even be better than they are. Jewish parents have always hoped to rear children even more successful than themselves, each more capable of fulfilling his own individual human and spiritual destiny.

In the historic Jewish view the family, and not the synagogue, is considered the basic institution of Jewish life and society.

The Jewish family has long been a model of harmony, love, and stability... Jews see family as the essential force in the development of a G-d-fearing individual and the creation of a home in which G-d dwells. Marriage is so significant that it is the point of origin of all mankind. It is the one human institution which can bring to fruition man's greatest hopes and dreams.

25. Rabbi Maurice Lamm, The Jewish Way in Love & Marriage, pp. 128-9 – Raising a family is a primary goal of marriage.

Like marriage, the family has been part of the world since the dawn of civilization... Is there a school in which one can learn love as well as one can in the family? Here ordinary people love others even more than they do themselves, and children receive unqualified love merely because they are there. Where else in society will young people learn trust, the cement of interpersonal relationships, if not in a family setting? ... The family teaches young people the axioms of moral life and how to celebrate... For human life to endure, it is clear that a primary goal of marriage is procreation.

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