

Self-Esteem in Judaism

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Self-esteem is a term that reflects a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs (for example, "I am competent," "I am worthy") and emotions such as triumph, despair, pride and shame. Synonyms of self-esteem include: self-worth, self-regard, self-respect, and self-integrity. It is a self-concept, a self-evaluation of what we think about ourselves. It is often not based on actual facts, but how each person views himself or herself. Studies have shown that a person with a high level of self-esteem, who may not be as gifted as he thinks he or she is, generally does better and excels more than the person who is objectively more gifted and talented but has low self-esteem. Therefore, in an age where more people (particularly children and adolescents) think less and less of themselves, achieving proper self-esteem is important for each person. Feeling good about oneself helps each person become happier and achieve success (even by any self-standard) in life. But how is self-esteem achieved? How can a person who has low self-esteem be convinced of his or her own greatness?

As a people, Jews have always had overall high self-esteem. In order to survive intact as a distinct group, a minority culture, in diverse foreign lands, Jews always believed that they were as good (or better) than others. Thus, for example, when other immigrant groups came to the United States en masse, they usually did not adjust and rise socio-economically as quickly as did the millions of Jewish immigrants in the twentieth century who immigrated to the USA. This largely has to do with self-esteem and a general sense of well-being in life. Even today, in all surveys, Jews in the State of Israel are some of the happiest and contented people on earth, with high self-esteem, even though the country has been threatened with utter destruction since its birth more than 60 years ago. How and why is this achieved? How can individual Jews who feel incompetent and unworthy learn to feel the opposite? What messages within Judaism can help each person feel good about himself or herself?

THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH AND EVERY PERSON IN THE WORLD

Traditional Jews realize that there is a "piece" of G-d, as it were, inside every human being.¹ That is what makes man special as a species, and it makes each member of the human race a special unique and important individual as well. The G-dliness inside every person gives him or her enormous value as, according to the Talmud, each person has incalculable worth, regardless of his or her identity or level of intelligence and accomplishment, since a single individual has the value of an entire world.² This general awareness should help every person think better of himself or herself. King David wrote³ that each individual is so special that he or she is just a little lower than the angels. But just one verse before this, he wrote that man is "nothing." This seems to be a contradiction. The Midrash explains⁴ that when people have either a low or proper level of self-esteem, they should know that they have achieved a status so high that only angels are higher. But if a person has excessive self-esteem and as a result thinks too highly of himself, G-d (and King David) tells this person not to "think you are so great" since G-d created the mosquito before you, so you are not really all that special.

¹ Genesis 1:26-27

² Sanhedrin 37a

³ Psalms 8:5-6

⁴ Midrash, Vayikra Rabbah 14a

That each person has a bit of G-d inside him or her is itself is a level of greatness, and should give each person a feeling of self-worth. But the Mishna states⁵ that an even greater feeling of well-being is achieved in that man can be aware of how special he or she really is. It is one thing to be special. It is quite another to realize and be conscious of that unique situation and use that specialness to maximize one's potential.

Maimonides adds to this notion by saying⁶ that man should realize how lucky he is to be part of a species that is so unique. He is the only creature in the world who can truly distinguish between right and wrong, as animals do not have this gift. And because animals are basically pre-programmed at birth, they have very few choices about what to do with their lives. But man has infinite choices before him, and can use his or her life to accomplish whatever he or she desires, without anyone forcing him or her to choose any particular path. That free choice by man in every sphere is a great gift that people should appreciate and take full advantage of. Thus, Judaism teaches that every person is so special and important that he or she is considered at the center of the world. In fact, it is proper to say to oneself and actually believe that the entire world was created for "me and my needs."⁷ Sadly there are many Jews, even observant Jews, who do not appreciate this concept. Thus, they value a Torah scroll much more than they value each person who is viewed as much more valuable than a Torah,⁸ and they, therefore, treat the Torah with more respect than they treat each person. When the Torah passes them, they will stand up, but when a person passes, they often do not stand up. And when the Torah is about to fall, they rush quickly to prevent it from falling. But when an elderly person is about to fall, they do not run quite as fast to prevent that person from falling. This is utterly wrong from a Jewish perspective, as each person is much more valuable than a Torah scroll.

Jews should feel especially lucky and blessed, and should feel particularly good about themselves. Because of the rich heritage passed down to every Jew, all Jews, says the Mishna, should feel like the son or daughter of a king, part of royalty.⁹ For all these reasons, Jews should realize that they are great – in other words, they should feel extremely good about life and about themselves.

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF EACH JEW

Along with that infinite value, the same Mishna reveals another secret about each person in the world.¹⁰ It is true that each person should feel special about his or her infinite worth, and it is also true that each person has equal value before G-d (since everyone descends from the same man, Adam). On the other hand, G-d made people in a similar manner to somewhat resemble each other, with two eyes, ears, lips, arms and legs, and one nose, mouth, head, etc. Yet, G-d also created each person unique, with a distinct personality and talents, as well as distinctive physical features such as fingerprints, voice prints, iris scan, footprints, etc. This uniqueness of each person also makes him or her special, knowing that there is no one in the entire world quite like this individual. The Talmud specifically says that each Jew's mind and personality is as unique as his or her face.¹¹ And because every person is different, King Solomon cautioned that each person should be taught in a manner that is specifically suited for him or her.¹² That includes testing, style of teaching and how a student's progress is measured. It is incompatible with Jewish thought to compare students to each other, to teach everyone in the same manner and to hold all children to one standard.

⁵ Mishna Avot 3:14

⁶ Maimonides, Hilchot Teshuva 5:1

⁷ Sanhedrin 37a

⁸ Makkot 22b

⁹ Mishna Shabbat 14:4

¹⁰ Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5

¹¹ Berachot 58a

¹² Proverbs 22:6

Not only is each human being unique, but each species of animals and plants in the world was also created in a unique manner, with a specific and different purpose.¹³ But unlike animals, who are grouped by species (see chapter on [The Differences Between Man and Animal](#)), each human being is a unique, distinct individual, as noted above. It is for this reason that each individual has his or her unique mission in life, as is recited in the Rosh Hashana prayers.¹⁴ Finding one's special purpose and goal, that combines one's talents, environment and all other factors, can be difficult. But, once a person discovers that mission, he or she should try to maximize efforts and maximize potential in fulfilling that goal in life. The path to discovery of that mission, says Rabbeinu Yonah,¹⁵ is to know oneself very well, to understand one's strengths and weaknesses and to come close to G-d by fulfilling that mission. This will give a person great self-esteem, as long as the individual does not attempt a task greater than was meant for his or her talents and abilities.

DO NOT PUMP YOURSELF UP BY PUTTING OTHERS DOWN

Some people may (wrongly) feel that they can feel better about themselves by putting other people down. While this may temporarily make a person feel better, at the end of the day, every person knows his or her true value and worth. Just as you were created in the image of G-d with some G-dliness inside of you, so too was every other person.¹⁶ Based on this verse, the Midrash says that even if you feel that others have put you down, and therefore you feel you have the right to also put others down, you may not.¹⁷ Since everyone has some G-dliness inside, not only is this not the correct manner in which to behave, but by doing so, that person is also putting down G-d Himself in the process. Logically, a person may reason that by hurting the other person, their own self-worth will be enhanced. But that is not how it works in life and in Jewish law. Thus, it is forbidden to curse oneself (since you are a being with G-dliness inside), nor may a Jew curse others if he or she feels they have been wronged.¹⁸ Even if the person being cursed will not find out about it, it is still forbidden to do so (see the chapter [Putting Others Down](#) for a deeper analysis of this idea). That is why the Torah forbids you to curse a deaf person, even though the deaf person will never hear those terrible words.¹⁹ First, each person knows what he or she has done, and the verse ends with the phrase, "You shall fear G-d, I am G-d" to demonstrate that G-d also knows. In addition, the person who curses has diminished G-d, once again, by cursing one of His creations. In summary, then, one is not only forbidden to put others down, but it will never enhance that person's self-esteem in the long run.

What then can a person do to feel better about himself or herself and enhance his or her self-esteem?

HELPING YOURSELF FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF

One of the most important aspects in helping any person do better, feel better and realize his or her great potential, is to know that he or she is not alone. In addition to help from family and friends, there is always another "resource" each person can count on for help – G-d. The Midrash promises that if a person makes even a small effort to make himself a better person, G-d will do the "heavy lifting" and help with the rest.²⁰ The phrase in the Midrash is "You open up a small hole the size of a pin needle, and G-d will make that opening the size of a hall."

¹³ Psalms 104:24

¹⁴ Musaf Service for Rosh Hashana

¹⁵ Rabbeinu Yonah, Shaar HaAvoda 1

¹⁶ Genesis 5:1

¹⁷ Midrash, Beraishit 24:7

¹⁸ Mishna Shavuot 4:13

¹⁹ Leviticus 19:14

²⁰ Midrash Rabbah, Shir HaShirim 5:3

In fact, Judaism stresses in many places that feeling good about oneself and how a person is judged (and should judge oneself) is a function of effort, and not accomplishment. A Jew should not feel diminished in any way if he or she does not accomplish as much as he or she wants, or even by how much is expected, as long as he or she tried maximumally and gives all possible effort. That is why the Talmud specifically states that achieving more or achieving less in any realm is not the main goal or way to judge a person.²¹ (The context there was Torah study, one of the highest values in Judaism.) Rather, a person is judged by how much effort was exerted in the endeavor. Therefore, to feel better about oneself, a person has to answer one simple question from a Jewish perspective: did you try your best? If the individual did, then the achievement is secondary and even unimportant. It is interesting that it is specifically at a ceremony of achievement of Torah study that this concept is highlighted by the Rabbis, in the wording of the text that a Jew recites upon completion of a Talmud tractate. In differentiating between non-Jewish values and Jewish values, that text says²² that non-Jews run to non-Torah related pursuits and Jews run to Torah-related pursuits. Then it says that both non-Jews and Jews put in effort. But non-Jews are not rewarded for the effort alone, but only how much was accomplished (as this is the standard in the world at large), while Jews are rewarded for effort alone. Therefore, a person should feel great if one gives his or her all, even if nothing or very little was achieved.

The same idea is related to possibly the greatest Jew of all time – Moses. The Torah states that Moses was the humblest of all people in the world.²³ On this verse, one commentary asks²⁴ how could it be possible that Moses, who was the greatest prophet, the only one who spoke face to face with G-d,²⁵ who stood up to Pharaoh, and stayed in Heaven for forty day and nights without eating in order to write the Torah,²⁶ could think of himself as worthless, with low self-esteem? One answer he espouses is that indeed Moses recognized his enormous talent and worth and how special he really was. But, realizing that all his talents and greatness were from G-d, Moses did not think of himself as great because he himself did not do anything special, but his accomplishments were due only to G-d's help. Furthermore, Moses tried to use all his talents and gifts to help others. If we learn from Moses and attribute anything we are good or great at to G-d and then use our abilities to help others, we will inevitably feel good about ourselves – but in the proper way, with modesty, like Moses. Therefore, Moses may had very high self-esteem, while still remaining the most humble man on earth.

Another way that we can improve our self-esteem is not commit one of the basic sins in the Torah. Unlike any other commandment, it says that Jews have to run away from a falsehood (see chapter about [Telling a Lie](#)), as well as the prohibition not to lie.²⁷ Part of the prohibition about lying is not to lie to oneself! A person should not deceive himself or herself and think that he or she is worse or less talented or gifted than one actually is. A person also cannot lie and think that he or she is better than one actually is. But certainly, it would also be forbidden to put oneself down unnecessarily. Therefore, each person must do an honest reckoning of one's personality, achievements and actions, and then judge oneself honestly. Most people with low self-esteem judge themselves too harshly. In judging one's actions, it is important that each individual do just that – judge actions, but not thoughts. It is important, in judging oneself, that each person does not compare himself or herself with others. Why not? First, as was demonstrated above, each person is different, with unique qualities and potential. Second, just as we fool ourselves by often misjudging our accomplishments, talents, etc., we also misjudge the accomplishments and greatness of others. We often wish to emulate others, when these people are actually not worth emulating. When Rabbi Yosef was approaching death, he briefly entered the world beyond before he

²¹ Berachot 5b

²² Text from the ceremony upon completion of a Talmud tractate

²³ Numbers 12:3

²⁴ Ketav Vekabblah commentary on Numbers 12:3

²⁵ Deuteronomy 34:10

²⁶ Exodus 34:28

²⁷ Exodus 23:7, Leviticus 19:11

returned. He reported²⁸ that in the “World to Come” over there, the reality that we seem to believe is truth here, in this world, is exactly the opposite of the objective truth and reality in the World to Come. Thus, there are those who are thought of highly of in this world, but in the world of objective truth are not thought of as anything special, and vice versa. Thus, we have to be honest in how we compare or contrast ourselves with others.

In addition, it is natural that everyone has bad or evil thoughts that are never acted upon. People with low self-esteem often punish themselves for these thoughts. Judaism, in general, believes that a Jew is judged by what he or she does, and not by one’s thoughts, according to the Talmud.²⁹ After an evil action, the thoughts are added to the sin. However, thoughts alone almost never indict a Jew and are not considered culpable. Therefore, a person should not put himself or herself down for just thinking (unhabitual) bad thoughts. In addition, a person should be honest about his or her own potential, as part of the prohibition not to lie to oneself. People with low self-esteem often think that they have limited potential, and feel themselves inadequate in a particular area. But by the very fact that each individual was born a human being, they automatically have enormous potential, as opposed to the life and nature of animals, which have very little potential to grow (in a non-physical sense) after birth.³⁰ Each person, knowing that he or she has unlimited potential, should help every individual dream big and try to accomplish that dream. Even if the accomplishment falls short, that should not minimize any person’s self-esteem. Yet, every human being should understand the unlimited potential given to him or her by G-d, and this should help a person think better of himself or herself.

Low self-esteem is even recognized in Jewish law as a legitimate concern. If a woman has low self-esteem because she was born with a large nose, and this really bothers her and causes great psychological pain, then Jewish law³¹ permits this woman to violate the Jewish prohibition forbidding a Jew to intentionally cause himself for herself physical harm and a create a wound, and allows this person to have cosmetic surgery – simply in order to feel better about herself and raise her self-esteem.

IN THE END, THOUGH, IT IS ALL UP TO ME

A person with low self-esteem can study the sources to realize each person’s individuality and greatness. This person can understand that G-d will help those who attempt to help themselves. A person may have very supportive parents and friends telling him or her that he or she is a better person than he or she believes. But in the end, the change has to start with each person. Every individual has to help himself or herself in all areas, especially with regard to self-esteem. This idea can be demonstrated by many different sources within the Jewish tradition.

If a person tries to find something – himself or his self-esteem – and says I tried but had absolutely no success, then the Talmud says that we do not believe him – i.e. that this person did not try hard enough. If a person truly attempts to find something – anything important – he or she will get there if he or she puts in enough effort.³² The Mishna says that the gain is equal to the pain,³³ – i.e., the more effort a person puts in, the more reward or result he or she will see (not necessarily tangible reward, as we saw above that in Judaism, people are not judged by accomplishments, but only effort). As we also saw above, each person’s actions and each person’s mission will be brought before G-d for judgment.³⁴ But each person has to try and accomplish only according to his or her unique ability, not to any other standard. G-d will judge based on one’s effort to accomplish.

²⁸ Pesachim 50a

²⁹ Kiddushin 39b

³⁰ Maharal, Drush on the Torah 9b, 11b

³¹ Responsa, Igrot Moshe, Choshen Mishpat 2:66

³² Megillah 6b

³³ Mishna Avot 5:22

³⁴ Musaf service on Rosh Hashana

This concept was clearly demonstrated by a certain Eliezer, who was a terrible sinner in every aspect of his life, according to the Talmud, and had a very low opinion of himself.³⁵ Even others had a low opinion of him, as one of the prostitutes he used to visit regularly said that you, Eliezer, are such a bad person and such a chronic sinner, that there is no chance that you will ever repent and become a good person. This woke up Eliezer, and he tried to repent. He tried and he summoned all parts of nature to help him repent, but they refused. At the end, Eliezer realized that repentance and raising his own self-esteem were only up to him (as a first step). As he repented he died, and was called by G-d "Rabbi Eliezer" because his repentance was complete. Among the many lessons this passage teaches us, it demonstrates that if a person wants to better himself or herself, no matter how low one feels, it is possible, but the repentance has to begin with that person's own desire and recognition that it can be done.

The opposite story concerned the ten spies sent by Moses to spy the Land of Israel. Each of these people was a leader of his tribe and was called a "special" and distinguished person in the Torah.³⁶ How, then, did these men fall so quickly and bring back a bad report about the Land of Israel, which caused the people to believe them and sin? The Torah gives us a clue to the answer: it was due to low self-esteem that they developed, despite their previous high position among the Jewish people. When telling over their exploits to the Jews, these spies describe the inhabitants of the Land of Israel as "giants" of men. The verse says that "We were like insects in their eyes, and also in our own eyes."³⁷ We can understand how these people imagined how the others pictured them, but how did they know for sure how they appeared and were evaluated? Rashi offers one explanation³⁸ that the spies actually heard the inhabitants speaking about the spies as "ants." But other commentaries simply say that this was all in their imagination. And nowhere later on, when the next generation actually fought and conquered these people in the Land of Israel, does it say that all the Canaanites were giants. Since they felt so humbled and imagined themselves to be so low, both physically and psychologically, the Torah ends with the words "and so we were in our own eyes." This experience turned these leaders into ants – in their own minds. They now had such low self-esteem, all imagined, that they could no longer say anything positive about their experience or the Land of Israel as a place that G-d would help them conquer. So it was low self-esteem that turned these experienced leaders into scared individuals. We can learn from this that only if a person feels himself or herself to be worthy will he or she indeed become that worthy person.

In fact, we have proof that their low self-esteem falsely led them to the wrong conclusion about how the Canaanites felt about them. Thirty-eight years later, when the second group of (two spies) entered the Land of Israel, the person who hid them, Rachav, states the feeling of all the Canaanites: "I know that the L-rd has given you the land, and that your terror has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you."³⁹ For forty years, after the Splitting of the Sea defeating the Egyptians and the defeat of Amalek, the Canaanites were living of fear of the Jews. But the Jewish people and the spies thought differently because of their low self-esteem.

The same phenomenon occurred with the first king of the Jewish people, Saul. When he assumed the kingship, he was not only physically tall, but he had strong self-esteem. But when things did not go his way, his self-esteem became smaller and smaller, which was not justified. When Saul allowed the Amalekites to live, against the specific instructions of G-d, Samuel the prophet asked him why he had done so. Saul answered that he had to listen to the "polls" because this was what the people wanted. Samuel then calls Saul a "small person," not worthy of being a king of Israel.⁴⁰ Saul had lost his self-confidence and had lowered his self-esteem until he could no longer function, and was eventually

³⁵ Avodah Zara 17b

³⁶ Numbers 13:2-3, with Rashi commentary on verse 3

³⁷ Numbers 13:33

³⁸ Rashi commentary on Numbers 13:33

³⁹ Joshua 2:9-11

⁴⁰ I Samuel 15:16-19

deposed as king. Self-esteem is dependent, once again, on each person's feeling based on the objective facts, and a person needs to fight a feeling of inadequacy, like the one that Saul developed.

Maimonides stresses a similar idea in another context. He says⁴¹ many foolish people in the world believe that their destiny is already decided for them, and that their future is really not up to them, as many people with low self-esteem believe. Maimonides points out that what each person does with his or her life is totally up to himself or herself. If a person wants to achieve the greatest heights (however that person defines it), it is possible if a person has the proper self-esteem and puts in the maximum effort to achieve. Each person can be as great as Moses or the opposite. But no one should think that it is not up to them.

Knowing and doing are two different things. An individual can understand intellectually how to achieve strong self-esteem, but doing it is a much harder task. How does a person go from knowing, to acting upon that knowledge? Each person has to find his or her own way. The Rabbis give one suggestion: help others with their self-esteem, and yours will come. Rabbi Yochanan says that every person should try to make others smile and try to help others to feel important.⁴² That will help you achieve a sense of self-importance and a healthy self-esteem. That is also why it is a Jewish law that a very poor person who subsists only on donations is, nevertheless, obligated to give some of what he or she has received to another poor person, even poorer than he or she is.⁴³ Why? The knowledge that someone is worse off than you, and that you can help them always enhances a person's dignity and self-esteem.

TOO MUCH SELF-ESTEEM IS NOT A JEWISH VALUE AND NOT HEALTHY

Some people have too much self-esteem, and think that they are so terrific and even better than everyone else. They do not measure themselves by any objective standards, and believe that no one is as good as they are. There is one word for this characteristic, of having too much self-esteem – haughtiness. How does Judaism feel about people who have this trait of haughtiness, brought on (very often) by too much self-esteem?

King Solomon says that G-d despises people who are so haughty, who think themselves so high and great, with too much self-esteem.⁴⁴ The Mishna tells each Jew do be very humble (not to have low self-esteem, but like Moses, as explained above, to know and accurately measure one's greatness, but attribute it to G-d and use one's terrific talents to help others). Maimonides rules this not only as a goal to seek in life, but also as a Jewish law.⁴⁵

But how does a person achieve this difficult task once he or she has achieved a healthy self-esteem, and keep too much self-esteem in check? One Mishna says⁴⁶ that a Jew should not look at his or her needs first, but should look first to what G-d wants from each Jew. And if G-d's will comes in conflict with that person's desires or needs, G-d's will always come first. Another Mishna also has some sound advice for anyone who has achieved great things in life but thinks that he or she is indeed great, full of too much self-esteem. (The Mishna speaks about Torah learning, but this advice can apply to all spheres of life and success.) If a Jew achieved much, do not feel that it is something so terrific, because this is why each person was created.⁴⁷ G-d endowed each person's talents (to learn, to excel in music, business or any

⁴¹ Maimonides, Hilchot Teshuva 5:2

⁴² Ketuvot 11b

⁴³ Maimonides, Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 7:5

⁴⁴ Proverbs 16:5

⁴⁵ Mishna Avot 4:4, Maimonides Hilchot Deot 2:3

⁴⁶ Mishna Avot 2:4

⁴⁷ Mishna Avot 2:8

other field). If he or she succeeds, they are only doing what G-d expects of them. An individual should use one's talent and success to help others, but not feel too great about oneself.

How does the traditional Jew remind himself or herself (especially in ancient times) that the focus is about G-d and not about him? In almost every agricultural endeavor (in the time of the Torah when most of the economy was connected to farming), the Torah says that before a Jew can enjoy the fruits of his or her labor, before a person pats himself on the back for his achievements, one first gives something back to G-d, and acknowledges that it was G-d that made this all possible.⁴⁸ Therefore, in an agrarian society, where possessions were not measured by how much money is in the bank, but by crops and sheep, before a person could eat any food he had produced with his hands and months of toil, he or she first had to give a small percentage to G-d. This is Jewish law with regard to grain, domestic animals that are born and any other physical achievement in that society. We could and should learn to translate that pattern to many activities today, besides the usual 10-20% for set aside for Tzedaka-charity in Jewish law. Sefer HaChinuch explains the reasons for these commandments in the manner described above.⁴⁹ One lowers one's own self-esteem if one realizes that no achievement could have been accomplished without G-d's help.

In order to preclude people developing a self-esteem that was too strong, the Rabbis also advise acting like Hillel, who was very modest, and not the personality of exactitude that was displayed by Shammai.⁵⁰ On the other hand, Hillel was no shrinking violet who thought very little of himself. As he entered a Sukkot celebration, Hillel once remarked,⁵¹ "If I am here, all is here." (This statement should not be understood on the simple level, since a modest person would never say something so outlandish. The explanation is beyond the realm of this volume.) But a healthy balance must be struck between a good, healthy, self-esteem and too much or too little self-worth, both of which cause the person problems. That is why right after stating that man is "nothing," equal to a mosquito, the next verse states that man is just a little lower than the angels.⁵² A person with low self-esteem should concentrate on the second verse, while a person who has too much self-esteem should study the first verse.

The prophet Jeremiah warned about the person who has so much success in areas such as knowledge, strength and finances. These achievements can easily go to the person's head and raise his or her self-esteem to an unacceptable level. Therefore, he says that a person should not attribute achievements to oneself, but only to G-d, and only he who concentrates on becoming closer to G-d can truly be proud.⁵³ And a little anxiety in this area – lowering one's self-esteem – is good for a person, to help prevent that individual from becoming evil.⁵⁴ Finally, although the verse, in its simple reading, seems to say "G-d's Torah is perfect and revives the soul,"⁵⁵ the term "*Meshivat Nafesh*" can also be translated as "self-esteem." Thus, when a person realizes that it is G-d's Torah, not his or her Torah, and that all efforts in life should be G-d-centered, then that individual's self-esteem will be perfected.

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⁴⁸ Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 23:10, Numbers 15:20, Deuteronomy 18:4

⁴⁹ Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 606

⁵⁰ Shabbat 30b

⁵¹ Sukkah 53a

⁵² Psalms 8:5-6 with Midrash, Vayikra Rabbah 14:1

⁵³ Jeremiah 9:22-23

⁵⁴ Proverbs 28:14

⁵⁵ Psalms 19:8

worked in all areas of formal and informal Jewish education and has developed numerous curricula including a methodology how to teach Jewish Values using mass media. Recently, he founded the STARS Program (Student Torah Alliance for Russian Speakers), where more than 3000 students in 12 Russian speaking countries learn about their Jewish heritage for five hours weekly. Rabbi Amsel previously served as the Educational Director of Hillel in the Former Soviet Union. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and has four children and four grandchildren.