

SHAVUOT-TO-GO

5767

Facebook & Friendship – Teen Program

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Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

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Introduction

IM is so **old school**.

MySpace. Facebook. YouTube- these are the some of the latest sites to revolutionize our social world. They present the possibility of connecting with more people than ever would have been possible before, and of finding people who share our interests whom we never would have otherwise found. They have changed the way we make friends, maintain friendships, and even what the word 'friend' means.

This program is not for people who are just content to go along with the latest fad, or for people who are just content to rebel against it. It's **for people who like asking questions**, who like really thinking about the decisions they make, rather than just going along with the crowd, or just going against it.

What is the value of a site like Facebook? What does it **do for my life**? Does it enhance it?

What do **friendships** mean in the Facebook era? What can I expect from these friendships? What should I try to get out of them? What elements of friendship are satisfied by the Facebook world, and for what do I need to look elsewhere?

Do people create profiles to present who they really are, or to present an image of themselves other people will like? How much do we change ourselves to **accommodate others**? How much should we?

How much of ourselves should we be putting out for the world to see, or for others to see? Should we be keeping parts of ourselves private? Or is it healthier to be interested in sharing your life with anyone who might be reading your profile?

These are the questions that you will explore through the course of this program, as you learn through sources which will frame and deepen your conversation. The sources are divided into 4 sections:

- ✓ **Section 1:** Facebook: The Model for Matan Torah?
The value of the Facebook model from a Jewish perspective.
- ✓ **Section 2:** What are Friends for?
What is the meaning and function of friendship and how far do these sites go in providing that meaning?
- ✓ **Section 3:** Who Defines YourSpace?
How much do we take other people into account when creating our profile and our identity, and how much should we?
- ✓ **Section 4:** An Open (Face)Book?
Exploring the balance between sharing with friends and maintaining our own dignity and personal space.



I. Facebook: a Model for Matan Torah?

What's fun about Facebook and similar sites is the way we're able to bring different parts of ourselves together in one location. We have our profile, where we describe the unique individuals we are. We have our groups, where we can meet people with common interests. And we can communicate and connect with all of our friends.

Receiving the Torah and making it our own also involved bringing together all those aspects of who we are...

The screenshot shows a Facebook profile page. The top navigation bar includes 'Profile', 'Edit', 'Friends', 'Networks', and 'Inbox (2)'. The 'Profile' tab is highlighted with a red circle. The main content area displays Hebrew text: 'וְכָל הָעָם רֹאִים אֶת הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת הַלַּפִּידִם וְאֶת קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר וְאֶת הַהָר עֹשֶׂן וַיִּרְא הָעָם וַיִּנְעוּ וַיִּעַמְדוּ מֵרֶחֶק:'. Below this is the title 'שמות כ"ד' and an English translation: 'And all the nation sees the voices and the flames and sound of the shofar and the mountain smoking, and the nation saw and trembled and stood from afar.' This is followed by the reference 'Shemot 20:14'. A dashed line separates this from the next section, which begins with the Hebrew text 'וַיִּהְיֶה קוֹל יוֹצֵא, אֶצֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד לְפִי כחוֹ, וְהַנְּשִׁים לְפִי כחוֹ... וְכַהֲיָא (תְּהֵלִים כַּט) קוֹל ה' בְּכַח, בְּכַחוֹ לֹא נֹאמַר אֵלָא בְּכַח, בְּכַחוֹ שֶׁל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד'. This is followed by the title 'שמות רבה ה' and an English translation: 'How did the voice go out? To each and every Jew according to their particular strength- old people according to their strength, young men according to their strength, children according to their strength, infants according to their strength, women according to their strength, and this is what is written "The voice of God is in strength"- it does not say "in His strength", rather only "in strength", that is to say, according to the strength of each and every person'. This section ends with the reference 'Shemot Rabba 5'.

Profile: How was the giving of the Torah catered to each person's unique profile?
 Why do you think the Torah was given in this way?



Profile edit Friends ▾ Networks ▾ Inbox (2) home account privacy logout

My Groups | Browse Groups | Create a New Group | 7 Group Invitations Help

Search ▾

Photos

Notes

Groups

Events

Posted Items

Friend List Complete?
Find all of your friends.

הסכת - עשו כתות כתות ועסקו בתורה, לפי שאין התורה נקנית אלא בחבורה. כדברי יוסי ברבי חנינא, דאמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא: מאי דכתיב חרב (על) הבדים ונאלו - חרב על שונאיהם של תלמידי חכמים שיושבים בד בבד ועוסקים בתורה. ולא עוד אלא שמתפשים, כתיב הכא ונאלו, וכתיב התם אשר נואלנו. ולא עוד אלא שחוטאים - שנאמר ואשר חטאנו

ברכות סג:

The word 'hasket' implies: Make yourselves into groups [kittoth] to study the Torah, since the knowledge of the Torah can be acquired only in association with others, as stated by R. Jose b. Hanina; for R. Jose b. Hanina said: What is the meaning of the text, A sword is upon the boasters [baddim] and they shall become fools? A sword is upon the enemies of the disciples of the wise who sit separately [bad bebad] and study the Torah. What is more, they become stupid. It is written here, 'and they shall become fools', and it is written elsewhere, For that we have done foolishly. What is more, they are sinners, as it says, and we have sinned.

Brachot 63b

בעלי אספות - אלו תלמידי חכמים שיושבין אסופות אסופות ועוסקין בתורה, הללו מטמאין והללו מטהרין, הללו אוסרין והללו מתירין, הללו פוסלין והללו מכשירין.

חגיגה ג:

'Masters of gatherings'- this refers to the Sages who sit in groups and learn Torah, these declare something impure, and these declare it pure, these declare it forbidden and these declare it permitted, these declare something unfit and other declare it kosher.

Chagiga 3b

Groups: What's the role of groups in acquiring the Torah? How are the groups formed? What is their relationship to the other groups?

How does this relate to the previous source? Who cares if there are groups, if everyone is just receiving the Torah in a way unique to who they are?



שבזמן שיש שלום בישראל השכינה שרויה ביניהם מפני שכללות נשמות ישראל הם ששים ריבוא והתורה היא ששים ריבוא אותיות שכל אחד מישראל שורש נשמתו הוא באות אחת מהתורה (וזה מרומז בתיבת ישראל כי התורה מסיימת בתיבת 'ישראל' נוטריקון ייש ש' שים ר' יבוא א' ותיות ל' תורה) לכן כשיש שלום ביניהם ואהבה ואחוה וריעות הם עלולים לקבל התורה שעל ידי ההתחברות שיש ביניהם נעשית התורה שלימה וכל אחד נקל לו לקשר עצמו לשרשו שבתורה. ולכן אז בשעת מתן תורה שחנו שם בלב אחד באהבה ואחוה כמו שפירש רש"י י מפני זה זכו לקבלת התורה ולגלוי שכינתו יתברך עליהם פנים בפנים

ספר מאור ושמש - רמזי שבועות ד'ה בחדש

When there is peace amongst Israel, the Divine Presence rests amongst them, since the sum of the souls of Israel is 600,000, and there are 600,000 letters in the Torah, since the root of the soul of every single Jew lies in one letter of the Torah (and this is hinted to by the word 'Yisrael', because the Torah finishes with the word Yisrael, which is an anagram for 'Yesh Shishim Ribo Otivot Latorah' (there are 600,000 letters in the Torah). Therefore, when there is peace amongst them, and love and brotherhood and friendship, they are able to accept the Torah, because through the connection there is amongst them, the Torah is made whole, and it becomes easy for each person to connect themselves to their root in the Torah. Therefore, at the time of the giving of the Torah, when they encamped as with one heart in love and brotherhood, as Rashi explains, because of this they merited to accept the Torah and for the revelation of the Divine Presence to them, face to face.

**Maor VaShemesh (Kalonymus Kalman Epstein 1754-1823)
Rimzei Shavuot s.v. Bachodesh**

What do you think it means that by their connecting with each other, the Torah becomes complete? What does interconnectedness have to do with the wholeness of Torah?

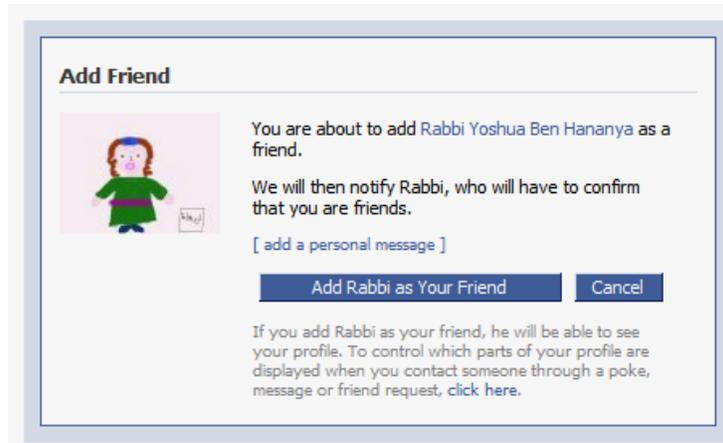
What do you think it means that peace, love, brotherhood, and friendship makes it easier for each person to connect to their root in the Torah?

What do the above sources suggest to you about the value of connecting with other people? About the value of forming groups? About the value of appreciating a person's unique abilities?

Discuss whether Facebook, or sites like it, are a good way to apply those values.



II. What **Are** Friends For?



What is a friend? Are Rabbi Yoshua Ben Hananya and I really friends? What does friendship mean? Has its meaning changed? What do we look for in our friendships?

With A Little Help From My Friends

The Beatles
© Joe Cocker

Do you need anybody?
I just need someone to love.
Could it be anybody?
I want somebody to love.



אמר רבי יוחנן : כל ימיו של אותו צדיק היה מצטער על מקרא זה + תהלים קכ"ו + שיר המעלות בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים. אמר : מי איכא דנייס שבעין שנין בחלמא? יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא, חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא, אמר ליה : האי, עד כמה שנין טעין? - אמר ליה : עד שבעין שנין... יתיב, קא כריך ריפתא, אתא ליה שינתא, ניס. אהדרא ליה משוניתא, איכסי מעינא, וניס שבעין שנין. כי קם חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה קא מלקט מינייהו. אמר ליה : את הוא דשתלתי? - אמר ליה : בר בריה אנא. אמר ליה : שמע מינה דניימי שבעין שנין. חזא לחמריה דאתיילדא ליה רמכי רמכי. אזל לביתיה, אמר להו : בריה דחוני המעגל מי קיים? - אמרו ליה : בריה ליתא, בר בריה איתא. אמר להו : אנא חוני המעגל. לא הימנוהו. אזל לבית המדרש, שמעינהו לרבנן דקאמרי : נהירן שמעתין כבשני חוני המעגל, דכי הוי עייל לבית מדרשא, כל קושיא דהוה להו לרבנן הוה מפרק להו. אמר להו : אנא ניהו, ולא הימנוהו, ולא עבדי ליה יקרא כדמבעי ליה, חלש דעתיה, בעי רחמי ומית. אמר רבא, היינו דאמרי אינשי : או חברותא או מיתותא.

תענית כג.

R. Johanan said: This righteous man [Honi] was throughout the whole of his life troubled about the meaning of the verse, A Song of Ascents, When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream.¹¹ Is it possible for a man to dream continuously for seventy years? One day he was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree; he asked him, How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit? The man replied: Seventy years...

Honi sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept a rocky formation enclosed upon him which hid him from sight and he continued to sleep for seventy years. When he awoke he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and he asked him, Are you the man who planted the tree? The man replied: I am his grandson. Thereupon he exclaimed: It is clear that I slept for seventy years. He then caught sight of his ass who had given birth to several generations of mules; and he returned home. He there enquired, Is the son of Honi the Circle-Drawer still alive? The people answered him, His son is no more, but his grandson is still living. Thereupon he said to them: I am Honi the Circle-Drawer, but no one would believe him. He then repaired to the Beth Hamidrash and there he overheard the scholars say, The law is as clear to us as in the days of Honi the Circle-Drawer, for whenever he came to the Beth Hamidrash he would settle for the scholars any difficulty that they had. Whereupon he called out, I am he; but the scholars would not believe him nor did they give him the honour due to him. This hurt him greatly and he prayed [for death] and he died. Raba said: Hence the saying, Either companionship or death.

Taanit 23a

Why is friendship so important? Why did Honi, and the Beatles, need it so much?



Lean on Me

Al Green

Lean on me, when your not strong, and I'll be your friend,
I'll help you carry on. For it won't be long, 'till I'm gonna need
somebody to lean on.

You just call on your brother, when you need a hand, we all
need somebody to lean on. I just might have a problem that
you'll understand. We all need someone to lean on

If, there is a load, that you have to bear, that you can't carry,
I'm right up the road, I'll share your load, if you just call me.

קהלת פרק ד

(ט) טובים השנים מן האחד אשר יש להם שכר טוב בעמלם :
(י) כי אם יפלו האחד יקים את חברו ואילו האחד שיפול ואין שני להקימו :
(יא) גם אם ישכבו שנים נחם להם ולאחד איך נחם :
(יב) ואם יתקפו האחד השנים יעמדו נגדו והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק :

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour .For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up . Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone ?And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken .

תורה תמימה קהלת פרק ד פסוק ט

(ט) טובים השנים וגוי' - טובים השנים העוסקים בתורה מן האחד שעוסק לעצמו, כי אם יפלו האחד יקים את חברו, שאם שכח אחד מהם הלכה - חברו מחזירו טובים השנים וגוי' - טובים השנים שנושאים ונותנים בפרקמטיא מן האחד שעוסק לעצמו כי אם יפלו - שאם יפול ויסתכן אחד מהם חברו מעמידו, והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק - כשהם שלשלו [שם]:

'Two are better than one'- Two who are involved in learning Torah are better than one learning by himself, for if one falls, the other can fill him in, if one forgets the halacha, his friend can remind him.
'Two are better than one'- two who deal in business together, for if one falls, his friends will get him back on his feet.

What is the purpose of friendship according to the above mekorot? How does the song relate to what is expressed in Kohelet?



STAND BY ME

© Ben E. King

When the night has come
And the land is gone
And the moon is the only light we'll see
I won't be afraid, no I won't be afraid
Just as long as you stand, stand by me

Chorus:

*

So Darlin, darlin, stand by me
Whoa, stand by me
Oh, stand, stand by me

*

If the sky we look upon, should tumble and fall
And the mountains should crumble to the sea
I won't cry, I won't cry
No I won't, shed a tear
Just as long as you stand, stand by me

How is the model of friendship in 'Stand By Me' different than the one in 'Lean on Me'? What is the role of the friend in both?

זהו דרך האהבה הגמורה אשר מצד האהוב בלבד, כי האהבה שהיא בעבור התועלת אל האהוב תדמה אל האהבה שיאהב האדם הבהמות בעבור התועלת המגיע אליו מהן, והאהבה שהיא בעבור השמירה מן הנזק תדמה אל האהבה שיאהב האדם הכלבים, כי האדם יאהב הכלבים בעבור שמירתם אותו מהנזק. ואולם האהבה הגמורה היא אשר יאהב האדם את האהוב מצד האהוב בלבד ואין בלבו תכלית אחר רק לעשות רצון האהוב, כי לא יאהב את האהוב לסבה אחרת זולתו,

ספר העיקרים מאמר שלישי פרק לו

This is the way of absolute love, which comes purely from the person loved, for a love that is for some purpose for the lover is like the love that people have for animals for the function they get out of them, and the love on account of being protected from harm is like a man's love for dogs because of their guarding him from harm. But true love is when the person loves only because of that person who is loved in and of themselves, without any other purpose in their heart other than doing the will of the person loved, and for no other reason.

Sefer Ha-Ikkarim (R. Yosef Albo) 3:36

Is there always an ulterior motive to friendship? How can we develop relationships that are based upon the unique qualities of each individual? Do websites lend themselves to developing these kinds of relationships or are they better for developing need-based relationships?



III. Who Defines YourSpace?



Bob (Jocks U) wrote
at 3:08pm on 4 Sivan, 5767

Hey. Do u realize that rob is on ur friends list?
What's wrong with u man? He's a computer
nerd..do u want other ppl to think u are 2?

[Message](#)



Rob (MIT) wrote
At 3:09 pm on 4 Sivan, 5767

I was just thinking the same thing, in a
contrapositive kind of way. How can u have bob
on ur friends list? Do u think ur a football player
w a peanut sized brain? Who are u man? WHO
ARE U?

[Message](#)

“The best thing that anybody ever said to me is that you’re only as good as the people you associate with. Look at the five friends that you spend the most time with—that’s who you are.”

- **Rapper/actor Will Smith, Teen People, August 2004, p. 102.**

Is he right? How much do your friends define you? How much do you define yourself for the sake of friends’ approval? When you create your profile, are you putting out what best defines you, or what you think other people will approve of - or some mixture of the two?



מצות עשה של ואהבת לרעך כמוך אינה מחייבת רק להיות אוהב, אלא שמחייבת היא גם כן להיות אוהב מאחר שטבע האהבה כך הוא שכל אוהב שואף להיות אוהב, ממילא גם ההשתדלות להיות אוהב גם באהבה היא נכנסת

פחד יצחק, שבועות מאמר טו:ב

The positive commandment of 'Loving your neighbor as yourself' not only obligates one to love others, it also obligates one to be loved, since it is in the nature of Love that everyone who loves also yearns to be loved, and so also the striving to be loved becomes part of love.

***Pachad Yitzchak (R. Yitzchak Hutner, 1906-1980),
Shavuot, Maamar 15:2***

The Pachad Yitzchak says that it's in people's nature that if they love, they also want love in return- they want the other person to like them. Do you agree? How do you think this desire affects people?

הוא היה אומר כל שרוח הבריות נוחה הימנו רוח המקום נוחה הימנו

אבות ג:י

He used to say: any person who other people are happy with and accept, God also is happy and accepts that person.

Avot 3:10

Do you agree with this statement? Why is it important for other people to be happy with you? Who cares? Shouldn't you just be yourself? Why is this such a big deal?

Do you think you present yourself differently to different types of people? How? Should you change who you are in order to please other people? How do you balance being true to yourself while still being sensitive to how other people perceive you?



כי מה שראוי שימשך האדם אחריו הוא השלמות מצד עצמו וסוף השם והכבוד לבוא, ועל כן אמר השלם הזה שהאיש המושך את השם שיהיה מגמת פניו ותכליתו השם מצד עצמו הנה לא די שלא ימצא השם שמבקש למשוך אלא שהשם הטוב שהיה לו קודם לכן יאבד אותו וז"א נגד שמא אבד שמיה, שהיה לו לומר נגד שמא אבד שמא או נגד שמיה אבד שמיה, אבל שינה לרמוז אל הכונה הזאת והוא דקדוק נכון.

פרקי משה על אבות פרק א

What it's worthy for man to pursue is wholeness that comes from within- in the end the name and honor will come. A person who is pulled after making a name for himself, and his whole purpose becomes getting a good name for its own sake, not only will he not make the name for himself that he wants to, but also the good name that he had before will be lost, and this is the meaning of 'one who seeks a name will lose his name'. It should have said- one who seeks a name will lose a name, or one who seeks his name will lose his name, but it changed the language (to- 'one who seeks a name will lose *his name*) to hint to this intention (that he will lose his previous good name).

Pirkei Moshe on Avot, 1

Pirkei Moshe suggests that trying to be popular and not being true to oneself can backfire. Do you agree? How do you strike a balance? Should you be at all concerned with other people liking you? What about the Mishna we saw? Are there positive values to being concerned with what others think of you?



קנה לך חבר. הקנין הזה הוא ככוסף התועלת הגדול הנמשך מהחבר, ואמר שתשעבד מדותיך למדות חבריך. וזה כי ידוע שטבעי בני אדם ומזגיהם מתחלפים עד שימצא אחד שונא מה שאוהב חברו בעניני השינה והאכילה, ולזה ירחק להמצא שני חברים יחד מסכימים על תכונה אחת, וכמו שרמזו שהע"ה (קהלת ד) טובים השנים מן האחד אשר יש להם שכר טוב בעמלם, ולא היה ראוי לומר אלא בחברתם, אבל אמר כן על העמל המגיע לכל אחד בחברת חברו, ואמר כי החברה הזאת כשימשך ממנה שכר טוב בעמלם והיא הצלחת הנפש, היא טובה כי יצא הפסדה בשכרה,

פירוש היעב"ץ על אבות - פרק א משנה ו

'Acquire for yourself a friend'- this acquiring is the yearning for the great benefit that comes from a friend, and it says that you should subject your character to the character of your friend. And this is because it is known that people's nature and temperaments are all different, so that you can find one who hates what the other loves in matters of sleeping or eating, and so it's hard to find two friends who agree on any issue, as Shlomo, of blessed memory, hinted (Kohelet 4) 'Two are better than one when they have a good reward for their work'. It would have been more appropriate to say 'for their friendship' but he said it the way he did to point to the work involved in being someone's friend, and he said that when this friendship results in a good reward for their work, the success of a person's soul, it is good, because the loss is made up for by the gain.

Yaavetz on Avot (R. Yaakov Emden, 1697-1776) 1:6

Yaavetz takes the opposite extreme from the Pirkei Moshe. He suggests that acquiring a friend means giving up on your own character traits and adopting theirs. What could be the benefit of doing this? What would be times when you'd want to do this?

רבי אומר איזוהי דרך ישרה שיבור לו האדם כל שהיא תפארת לעושה ותפארת לו מן האדם

אבות ב:א

Rebbe says: What is the straight path that a person should choose? Anything which brings glory to the one who does it, and glory for him from others.

Avot 2:1

How can you strike the balance of Rebbe? How do you see yourself striking it in your own life? How would you apply this to your online personality?



IV. An Open (Face)Book?

The screenshot shows a Facebook 'My Notes' page. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Profile, edit, Friends, Networks, and Inbox. Below this is a search bar and a list of navigation options: Photos, Notes, Groups, Events, and Posted Items. The main content area is titled 'My Notes' and contains a note titled 'Worst Night' by 'Rabbi D (JHS)'. The note text reads: 'Man, that was totally awful. i had the worst fight with my parents last night, and i am in so much trouble now, i just don't know what to do with myself. they almost threw me out of the house..instead i just walked out...oh man oh man..i don't know what to do about all this'. Below the note is a reply from 'Hamish (JHS)' which says: 'I just read your post, and I want you to know that, as your teacher and rabbi, I'm here for you if you want help. I'm sorry you're going thru such a hard time. Let me know if there's any way I can help'. The page also includes a 'Notes Settings' section and a 'Subscribe to these Notes' section.

Was this a violation of Hamish's privacy? Or should Hamish not be sharing this kind of info in a public forum? What kind of balance should people strike between privacy and sharing?



וקנה לך חבר כיצד מלמד שיקנה אדם חבר לעצמו שיאכל עמו וישתה עמו ויקרא עמו וישנה עמו ויישן עמו ויגלה לו כל סתריו סתרי תורה וסתרי דרך ארץ

אבות דרבי נתן נוסחא א פרק ח

'And acquire for yourself a friend' - How? This teaches that someone should acquire a friend for himself to eat with and drink with and read and learn with and live with and he should reveal all his secrets to him, secrets of Torah and secrets about life.

Avot DeRabbi Natan 1:8

והשלישי, לענין העצה שיקחנו להיות לו מעיר לעזור בכל עניניו ולקחת ממנו עצה טובה, ולהיות לו בן סודו, אחר היותו עמו בברית ולא יגלנו לאחרים לבל יפרו מחשבתו, ואף לא לנראים אליו כאוהבים.

רבנו יונה על אבות א:ו

The third [thing a person needs a friend for] is to take him to help him and inform him regarding all of his issues, and to take advice from, and to be a confidante, since he is in a covenant with him. He won't reveal his secrets to anyone else so that they can mess up his plans, and not even to people who appear as his friends...

Rabeinu Yonah, Avot 1:6

ואמנם חבר הבטחון, הרי הוא שיהיה לאדם חבר שתבטח נפשו בו, לא ישמר ממנו לא במעשה ולא בדיבור, ויגלה לו כל עניניו, הנאה מהם והמגונה, מבלי חשש ממנו שישגהו בכל זה חסרון, לא אצלו ולא אצל זולתו. כי אם יגיע לנפש בטחון באיש עד לזה השעור - תמצא רוב נחת בשיחתו ובחברותו

פירוש המשנה לרמב"ם אבות פרק א

A friend for security is when a person has a friend that he can trust his soul with, he won't hold back anything in action or speech, and will reveal to him all of his issues, the nice ones and not-so-nice ones, without worrying that he will judge him as deficient because of any of these things. If a person attains a 'security friend' to this extent, he will find great tranquility in talking to him and in his friendship.

Rambam's Peirush on the Mishna, Avot 1

What goes into choosing your confidante? Who do you share very private information with? Who won't you share it with? Are there things you should keep private from anyone? Are there things that should be shared, even if they are personal?



שבח גדול לשב שיתודה ברבים ויודיע פשעיו להם ומגלה עבירות שבינו לבין חבירו לאחרים ואומר להם אמנם חטאתי לפלוני ועשיתי לו כך וכך והריני היום שב ומתנחם, וכל המתגאה ואינו מודיע אלא מכסה פשעיו אין תשובתו גמורה שנאמר מכסה פשעיו לא יצליח, במה דברים אמורים בעבירות שבין אדם לחבירו אבל בעבירות שבין אדם למקום אינו צריך לפרסם עצמו ד ועזות פנים היא לו אם גילם

רמב"ם תשובה ב:ה

It's very praiseworthy for someone repenting to admit their sins in public and reveal his interpersonal sins to others and to tell them, I sinned against so and so and did this and that, and from this day I repent and regret what I did. Anyone who is too proud and won't admit, but rather conceals his sins, his repentance is not complete, as it says 'One who covers his sins will not succeed'. This is said regarding sins between man and his fellow, but sins between man and God he doesn't have to publicize and it's considered brazen to do this.

Rambam, Laws of Repentance 2:5

How do you draw the line between things that should be shared, and things that are inappropriate to share? Why do people share private information? Just to brag? To get attention? To get help? How can you tell the difference?

Similarly, this is the way I, as a human being created in the divine Image, must conduct myself. To a certain extent I communicate. I reveal myself to my friend and my friend reveals himself to me. But there is a limit beyond which no one may pass, and that is my very self-hood. My self is sacred and dignified, in the sense of being the source and guarantor of my dignity, and therefore it is private. So, tzeniut means respect for the inviolability of the personal privacy of the individual, whether oneself or another, which is another way of saying that tzeniut is a respect for the integrity of one's ego, of one's very self.

Man, in the understanding of Judaism is fundamentally inscrutable; as much as you know about him, you never know everything about him. Man, according to Torah, possesses not only natura, not only his natural self that can be weighed and measured, but also personae. The word originally meant a mask, because it symbolizes that aspect of man that is secret, concealed from public view, altogether private... Not only is man a mystery, but he should be a mystery. You are obliged to enhance and cherish and develop a sense of self which you will be able to respect. The respect will come when you are happy with that self even though no one else knows about it, no one else confirms it, no one else validates it, indeed, no one else comes within distance of it... In a healthy human being, revelation and communication are balanced in that vital core that remains free and undetermined--the center of personality that has clearly defined boundaries of selfhood.

**Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm
Tzeniut, A Universal Concept**



At what point can sharing information violate a person's dignity? Is there a difference if the person is doing it to himself, or if someone else is revealing the information? To what extent can a person choose to waive his or her own sense of dignity?

What information is important to your own sense of self? What kinds of things do you feel are your business alone? What kinds of things are you content knowing for yourself, without feeling a need to share with others? What things do you feel a need to share with others – and why?



Acknowledgments

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