

CHANGING G-D'S DECREE

THE MAHARAL:

1. IF GOD KNOWS WHAT I'M THINKING, THEN WHY DO I HAVE TO DAVEN?
2. IF GOD GIVES ME WHAT I DESERVE, THEN WHY DAVEN?

After Avraham sent away Hagar and his son Yishmael, and they ran out of water in the dessert, Hagar cried out to God to save Yishmael. An angel of God called out to Hagar and said, "Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the youth a he is, there."

Rashi- Bereishit 21:17	רש"י בראשית כא: יז
As he is there- In accordance with the deeds that he does at present he is judged, and not in accordance with what he is destined to do. For the ministering angels were impugning Ishmael, and saying, "Master of the world! He whose descendants are destined to put Your children to death by thirst, would You cause a well to rise up for him?" He answered them, "What is he now": righteous or wicked?" They said to Him, "righteous." He said to them, "In accordance with his deeds at present I judge him." This is the meaning of "as he is there, " in the state he is, there I judge him.	באשר הוא שם - לפי מעשים שהוא עושה עכשיו הוא נדון ולא לפי מה שהוא עתיד לעשות, לפי שהיו מלאכי השרת מקטרגים ואומרים רבונו של עולם, מי שעתיד זרעוץ להמית בניך בצמא אתה מעלה לו באר. והוא משיבם עכשיו מה הוא, צדיק או רשע, אמרו לו צדיק, אמר להם לפי מעשיו של עכשיו אני דנו וזהו באשר הוא שם. והיכן המית את ישראל בצמא, כשהגלם נבוכדנצר, שנאמר (ישעיה כא יג - יד) משא בערב וגו' לקראת צמא התיו מים וגו' כשהיו מוליכין אותם אצל ערביים היו ישראל אומרים לשוביהם בבקשה מכם, הוליכנו אצל בני דודנו ישמעאל וירחמו עלינו, שנאמר (שם שם) אורחות דודנים [אל תקרי דודנים אלא דודים] ואלו יוצאים לקראתם ומביאין להם בשר ודג מלוח ונודות נפוחים, כסבורים ישראל שמלאים מים, וכשמכניסו לתוך פיו ופותחו, הרוח נכנס בגופו ומת:

RABBI SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH

“The Hebrew infinitive L’hitpalel (to pray) from which the word Tefilla (prayer) is derived, originally meant to deliver an opinion about oneself, to judge oneself... thus it denotes to step out of active life in order to attempt to gain a true judgment about oneself, that is, about one’s ego, about one’s relationship with God and the world... It strives to infuse the mind and heart with the power of such judgment that will direct both renewed to a life of action- purified, sublimated,



WHY CHANGE IS SO DIFFICULT

1. We often try to change too much to quickly. Biting off more than we can chew may be the single biggest contributor to resistance to change. Instantaneously trying to go from no change to massive change can quickly send us into a state of shock. Shock often leads to paralysis, and paralysis is the opposite of movement (i.e. change).

The remedy: Make small changes instead. If your goal is to make a huge change, break it down into smaller changes and make those one at a time. Small success leads to more success, which leads to momentum. Momentum propels you toward large, lasting change.

2. We become discouraged after past failures. Because change is difficult, we sometimes fail. What we hoped was going to be a big change fizzles out after only a small initial change. What we hoped was going to be a lasting change turns into a quick, passing phase. Past failure tends to translate into present discouragement.

The remedy: As Stephen Covey says, *“between stimulus and response is choice.”* In this case, the stimulus is past failures, and the response is either discouragement or not. In between that stimulus and response lies your capacity for choice. Instead of reacting to past failures by becoming discouraged, proactively turn past failures into learning experiences. Go back and analyze your past approaches to change. Determine where in the process you broke down and come up with a plan to conquer that step this time. Almost no successful person in any field hits a grand slam the first time up to bat. Most of the time, “overnight success” involves countless ups and downs along the way. The vast majority of highly successful individuals will not only tell you that they failed along the way, but that their eventual success *hinged* on failing along the way. The lessons they learned from failing early on taught them how to succeed in the end. The difference between successful people and everyone else is not in how many times they fail, it’s in how they handle those failures. As the Japanese say, *“fall down seven times, stand up eight.”*

3. We fail to align our changes with our values and principles. Change becomes exceedingly difficult when we try to do it in ways that violate our own standards. If our values and principles say one thing and a proposed change says something different, we’ll have difficulty making that change stick. Why? Because that scenario produces what psychologists refer to as “cognitive dissonance.” It’s like trying to go right and left at the same time or convince yourself that something is simultaneously all-black and all-white. You can’t do that for very long without driving yourself nuts.

The remedy: If you find yourself in a dissonant state, spend some time doing 2 things: First, re-clarify what your values and principles are. Make them concrete and nail them down in your conscious awareness.

Second, re-frame your proposed changes to better align with your values and principles. This will allow for internal peace, which will ignite your ability to change.

ACCEPTING GOD’S DECREE

Bereishit 18:33	בראשית יח
And the Lord departed when He finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.	לג) וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה כְּאֲשֶׁר כִּלְהָ לְדַבֵּר אֶל אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לְמָקוֹמוֹ:

In Parshat Vayeira we encounter Avraham pleading with God to save the people of Sedom. Avraham says, “Perhaps there are 50 righteous men in the midst of the city; will You even destroy and not forgive the place for the sake of the 50 righteous men(Bereishit 18:24)? Avraham continues to bargain down to 10 righteous men and at the end of the chapter is says, “And the Lord departed when He finished speaking to Avraham, and Avraham returned to his place”. The significance of the verse “And Avraham returned to his place”, is to show that Avraham accepted God’ final decree.