



AND FOR THE SLANDERERS...

A BAD APPLE?



ולמלשינים

SHEMONEH ESREI SERIES



A BAD APPLE?

Birchat Haminim	ברכת המינים - ולמלשינים
<p>For the slanderers let there be no hope, and may all wickedness vanish in an instant. May all Your enemies be cut down speedily. May You speedily uproot, crush, cast down, and humble the arrogant, speedily in our days. Blessed are You, HaShem, Who destroys enemies and humbles the arrogant.</p>	<p>וְלַמְלַשְׁיָנִים אֵל תְּהִי תִקְוָה, וְכָל הַרְשָׁעָה כָּרְגַע תֵּאבֵד, וְכָל אוֹיְבֶיךָ מִהֲרָה יִכְרֹתוּ, וְהַזְדִּים מִהֲרָה תַעְקֹר וְתִשְׁבֵּר וְתִמְגַּר וְתִכְנִיעַ בְּמִהֲרָה בְיָמֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', שׁוֹבֵר אוֹיְבִים וּמְכַנְיַע זְדִים.</p>

NATURE VS NURTURE

Your physical features can be identified as identical to that of your parents, like your eyes from your father, and the hair color from your mother. However, your personality and talents may have come not from your father or mother. The environment where you grew up may have a lasting effect or influence on that way you talk, behave and respond to the things around you.



One of the oldest arguments in the history of psychology is the Nature vs Nurture debate. Each of these sides have good points that it's really hard to decide whether a person's development is predisposed in his DNA, or a majority of it is influenced by this life experiences and his environment. **As of now, we know that both nature and nurture play important roles in human development, but we have not known yet whether we are developed majorly because of nature or due to nurture.**

Nature

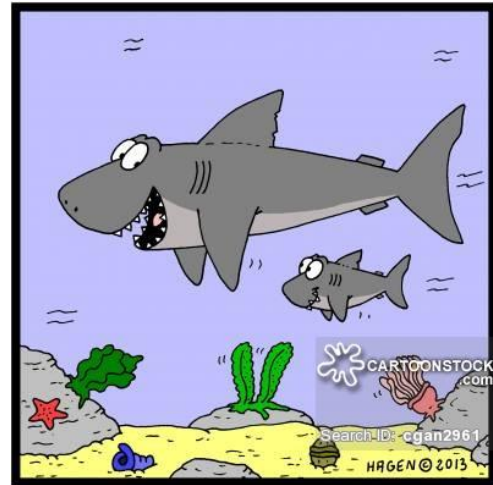
The coding of genes in each cell in us humans determine the different traits that we have, more dominantly on the physical attributes like eye color, hair color, ear size, height, and other traits. However, it is still not known whether the more abstract attributes like personality, intelligence, sexual orientation, likes and dislikes are gene-coded in our DNA, too.

One of the hottest issues against nature theory is that that the criminal acts, tendency to divorce and aggressive behavior causing abuse can be justified by the "behavioral genes" once the researchers have proven their existence.

On the other hand, the behavioral genes are somewhat proven to exist when we take a look at fraternal twins. **When fraternal twins are reared apart, they show the same similarities in behavior and response as if they have been reared together.**

Nurture

The nurture theory holds that genetic influence over abstract traits may exist; however, the environmental factors are the real origins of our behavior. This includes the use of conditioning in order to induce a new behavior to a child, or alter an unlikely behavior being shown by the child. According to John Watson, one of the strongest psychologists who propose environmental learning as a dominating side in the nature vs nurture debate, once said that he can be able to train a baby randomly chosen in a group of 12 infants, to become any type of specialist Watson wants. **He stated that he could train him to be such regardless of the child's potentialities, talents and race.**



Don't worry if you're not a natural born killer,
I'll teach you: That's what dads are for!

Although it is true that fraternal twins raised apart have remarkable similarities in most respects, still the intervention of the environment have caused several differences in the way they behave.

The nature vs nurture debate goes on and on, but still, it is a fact that we have traits that are predetermined by our genes, but we can still choose who we want to be as we travel through our lifetime. In the end, we are still left with the confusing question:

Are we born this way, or do we behave according to our life experiences?

- ❖ WHAT PLAYS A BIGGER ROLE IN PERSONALITY: NATURE OR NURTURE?
- ❖ HOW HAVE YOUR GENES INFLUENCED YOU?
- ❖ HOW HAS YOUR ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCED YOU?

HATE WHAT, NOT WHO

וְכָל הָרָשָׁעָה כְּרִגְעַ תֵּאָבֵד,

“And all the **wickedness** should **vanish** immediately”

Berachot 10a	ברכות י עמוד א
<p>There were some lawless men living in the neighborhood of R. Meir, and they used to bother him excessively. Once, R. Meir prayed that they should die. His wife, Beruriah, exclaimed, "What are you thinking??</p> <p>[Do you act this way] because it is written, 'Let sinners cease out of the earth'? But does the text write <i>hoteim</i> (sinner)? It is</p>	<p>הנהו בריוני דהוו בשבבותיה דר"מ והוו קא מצערין ליה טובא הוה קא בעי ר' מאיר רחמי עלויהו כי היכי דלימותו אמרה לי' ברוריא דביתהו מאי דעתך משום דכתיב (תהלים קד, לה) יתמו חטאים מי כתיב חוטאים חטאים כתיב ועוד שפיל לסיפיה דקרא ורשעים עוד אינם כיון דיתמו חטאים ורשעים עוד אינם אלא בעי רחמי עלויהו דלהדרו בתשובה ורשעים עוד אינם</p>

<p>written <i>hata'im</i> (sins). Glance also at the end of the verse, 'And let the wicked be no more' — i.e. when 'sins will cease,' then 'the wicked will be no more.' Rather you should pray that they repent and they be wicked no more." R. Meir offered prayer on their behalf and they repented.</p>	
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Maharal, B'eir HaGolah, Chapter Seven	מהר"ל באר הגולה, באר ז'
We are not praying for the wicked to vanish, rather that there should be no evil in the world, and the wicked ones should correct their ways.	לא מתפללים על מפתן של הרשעים, אלא שלא תהא רשעה בעולם, כי הרשעים יעשו תשובה.

*We don't pray for bad things to befall bad people,
 Rather, we pray that those people stop being bad!*

FREE WILL AND PRAYING FOR OTHERS

*How can we pray for people to change even just their actions?
 Doesn't everyone have free will to act however they so choose?*

Iggrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 4, 40:13
The Maharsha (Berachos 10a) asks how R' Meir could pray for those men to repent, for we say that "All is in the hands of Heaven, but for the fear of Heaven"? The prayer was that they should no longer be challenged to act wickedly, and that they should encounter people who will help them mend their ways.



❖ WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES MIGHT YOU PROVIDE SOMEBODY TO IMPROVE THEIR WAYS?

❖ ARE THERE TEMPTATIONS THAT YOU PERSONALLY HAVE THAT YOU WANT TO PRAY TO BE REMOVED?

A LITTLE HISTORY

WHY ADD A BLESSING TO THE AMIDAH?

Mishneh Torah - Hilchos Tefilah 2:1	משנה תורה - הלכות תפילה ב:א
<p>In the days of Rabban Gamliel, the numbers of heretics among the Jews increased. They would oppress the Jews and entice them to turn away from God.</p> <p>Since he saw this as the greatest need of the people, he and his court established one blessing that contains a request to God to destroy the heretics. He inserted it into the Shemoneh Esreh so that it would be arranged in the mouths of all. Consequently, there are nineteen blessings in the Shemoneh Esreh.</p>	<p>בימי ר"ג רבו האפיקורוסין בישראל והיו מצירים לישראל ומסיתין אותן לשוב מאחרי השם וכיון שראה שזו גדולה מכל צרכי בני אדם עמד הוא ובית דינו והתקין ברכה אחת שתהיה בה שאלה מלפני השם לאבד האפיקורוסין וקבע אותה בתפלה כדי שתהיה ערוכה בפי הכל נמצאו כל הברכות שבתפלה תשע עשרה ברכות.</p>

NO SMALL JOB

Who would you choose to write such a blessing?

Ethics of Our Fathers 4:19	אבות ד:ט
<p>Samuel the Small would say: When your enemy falls, do not rejoice; when he stumbles, let your heart not be gladdened. Lest God see, and it will displeasing in His eyes, and "He will turn His wrath from him [to you]" (Proverbs 24:17-18).</p>	<p>שמואל הקטן אומר: בנפול אויבך אל תשמח, ובכשלו אל יגל לבך, פן יראה ה' ורע בעיניו והשיב מעליו אפו. (משלי כד)</p>

Rav Zev Leff on the Shemoneh Esrei

Although he did no more than quote a verse in Proverbs, Shmuel Hakatan's statement is recorded in Pirkei Avos because he lived it. His entire being and conduct proclaimed the verse. Only one with such pure feelings toward his enemies could compose a prayer calling for their destruction.

❖ DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HAVE SUCH PURE INTENTION
TOWARDS SOMEONE YOU DON'T LIKE?

CATCHING THE MOUSE

Rabbi Chaim Brisker pointed out that there are two types of zealots - one praiseworthy and one not. They can be compared to a housewife and a cat. The housewife and the cat both want to rid the house of mice. There is only one difference: **The cat is excited to catch the mouse and wants to find more mice in the future, the housewife hopes there will never be another mouse to eliminate.**



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- ❖ DO YOU THINK SOMEONE COULD ENJOY POINTING OUT FLAWS IN ANOTHER PERSON?
 - ❖ HAVE YOU EVER FELT THAT SOMEBODY ADMONISHING YOU WASN'T GENUINE?
 - ❖ WHAT WOULD HELP YOU LISTEN TO SOMEBODY'S CRITICISM?
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GETTING OUT QUICKLY



Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, in his sefer, Sifsei Chaim on the Shemoneh Esrei, points out that the word *Meheira* (speedily) is found more times in this blessing than any other blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei. He explains that this blessing in particular requires great speed because the negative influence of a peer or a neighbor. We pray that those around us correct their ways, not only for their sake, but for our own benefit as well.

**“Associate yourself with people of good quality, for it is better to be alone than in bad company.”
Booker T. Washington**

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- ❖ WHAT NEGATIVE INFLUENCES IN YOUR LIFE DO YOU NEED TO REMOVE IMMEDIATELY?
 - ❖ IF NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ARE SO POWERFUL, CAN POSITIVE INFLUENCES HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT?
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NO SUCH THING AS A BAD APPLE

In the Talmud (Kereisos 6b) we learn about the Ketores (incense) offered daily in the Temple service. One of the spices was called *Chelbanah* had a bad smell. Even so, we offered it in the Ketoret daily. This teaches us that no matter how bad someone might “smell”, even people who sin are still part of B’nei Yisrael!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- ❖ We pray to remove the sins from a person, not to remove the sinner
- ❖ Only Shemuel HaKattan could write the blessing against other people because he cared so much for every individual
- ❖ No matter how a person acts, every Jew is a part of the Jewish people just like the foul smelling incense in the *Ketoret*