

(Notes taken during class, not reviewed nor edited by Harav Ginsburgh)

Nigun: Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li

## ***Introduction: Elul – the essence of marriage***

A good and sweet year for everyone—for the entire Jewish people.

In English-American culture, June is popularly thought of as the best month to get married. According to our Jewish tradition, based on the verse we just sang, “I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me” (אָני לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי), whose initials spell Elul (אֵלּוּל), Elul is considered the ideal month to get married. Additionally, Elul is the only full month between the 15th of Av and Yom Kipur, the two dates on which shiduchim (matches) were made. Another indication that Elul is the ideal time for marriage is that the mazal (the constellation) corresponding with Elul is *betulah* (the virgin).

Of course, whenever you get married it's good. Even if you don't get married in Elul, the essence and light of Elul, “I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me,” is drawn down into every marriage. In every marriage, the arousal of love to one's beloved, the spirit of Elul, is to be found.

### ***1. Praise and appraisal***

We will begin with a verse from Psalms ch. 78 that reads, “His young men were consumed by fire, and his virgins were not praised” (בְּחֹרֵי אֶבְלָה אֵשׁ וּבְתוּלָתָיו לֹא הִקְלִי). The literal meaning of this verse is not positive. It describes the destruction of the Temple in Shiloh. It says that the young men were consumed, not necessarily by physical fire, but by the fire of war, they perished in war (in Hebrew, the word “war” מלחמה suggests that war eats or consumes, as fire). And the maidens, the virgins who were engaged to those young men, were not *praised* (לֹא הִקְלִי); this is the key word. In the Tanach the normal meaning of להלל is to praise, but the sages use this word in the sense of “marriage” (הילולא) because the custom was to praise the bride and the groom under the *chupah*. That is something essential about a marriage, about any union of souls—it has to do with praise. Indeed, the commentaries on this verse (Rashi and the Radak) say the word “to praise” (הולל) here is the Biblical origin for הלל as marriage, the joy of marriage aroused by praise of the bride and the groom. The above verse thus reads that since the young men, the grooms, were consumed by war, the maidens did not merit to happily marry. Every maiden is meant to be happily married. Meaning that if this month is the month of the maiden (the *mazal* of *betulah*), it's not intended for single maidens, but for them to be married, הִקְלִי. This is why the month of Elul is the ideal month to marry. So we'd like to begin by wishing all the yet unmarried young men and maidens to be happily married.

The word “praise” in the sense of marriage in this verse immediately brings to mind the dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai about how to praise the bride during the wedding, and how essential praise is to marriage. Beit Shammai says you can't lie, so you have to pick out the good points in the bride and note them, but you can't exaggerate. So they say you should praise the bride as she is (בְּלֶה כְּמֹת שְׁהִיא). But, Beit Hillel disagrees and says that the great mitzvah of marriage, which we saw is essentially connected with praise, allows you to exaggerate and therefore, no matter what, you say that the bride is lovely and righteous (בְּלֶה נְאֻה וְחַסִּידָה).

The connection is obvious, since Hillel's name means exactly that: "praise." We rule according to Beit Hillel, which is thus a school of thought that teaches us how to praise. That's what his name means. It's a simple observation: “wedding” (הַלְוִיָּא) and “Hillel” (הִלֵּל) are etymologically similar and it is Hillel who says that you must praise (the good looks and character traits of) the bride, even if it's an exaggeration.

If Hillel means “praise,” what then does Shammai mean? Every time we look at a dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai, we try to understand the basic argument between these two schools of thought—and there are different ways of defining the issue that lies at the heart of their disputes (the Lubavticher Rebbe has a number of discourses on this topic). But now we'll say this very simple thing that differentiates between them. In the Tanya it states that something's name is its essence. The essence of Hillel is as we saw, to praise. Shammai literally means “someone who appraises.” So we have here a pun in English—praise and appraise. If you look up the etymological origin of "to praise," you'll find that it comes from the word prize, which also is related to price. Both prize and price come directly from the Hebrew, פָּרִיס, (which with another pronunciation means “Persians”). There are several words that we will talk about this evening. Regarding praise, the two most basic words in Hebrew for praise are לְהַלֵּל and לְשַׁבַּח.

So since Shammai is about appraising, he has to say the truth exactly, describe the bride exactly as she is. Like anyone who assesses the value of property and the like, they have to give an exact evaluation. That is *midat hadin*, the measure of fact or judgment, truth as it is. But Beit Hillel go above and beyond the letter of the law, and therefore they can, in certain cases, say that it is a mitzvah to exaggerate. According to Beit Hillel, it's an obligation to praise the bride as being lovely and righteous.

At present, we rule according to Beit Hillel, but after the world will be perfected, the actual and the desired will be the same and the way things actually are, that will itself be the very best and most desirable. It is then that Beit Hillel will agree with Shammai's opinion. But, in any case (both now and in the future), according to Beit Hillel, the praise has to optimal.

## ***2. Praise and success***

This is all leading to the next part of our discussion this evening. It all relates to something we began speaking about a few weeks ago (on the 11th of Av) to our School of Psychology, and this is also in honor of Professor Zeiger who is going back to Palo

Alto, next door to Stanford. There is a professor in Stanford, apparently she is Jewish, and her name is Carol Dweck (and we would like Eliezer to find her there). She has created a new approach in psychology (recently receiving much publicity) which has to do with how to praise people, especially children. Good praise vs. bad praise.

Since we are talking about praise, one fundamental teaching in Chassidut is that through praise, you can bring out a person's latent qualities. For instance, if I praise you as being very kind, even if a moment before you wanted to punch me in the face, it will soften you and bring out deep and hidden properties of loving-kindness in the soul. Why are we always praising God? All our prayers begin with praising God. Because, even with regard to God, praise manifests (reveals to us) those attributes with which we praise Him.

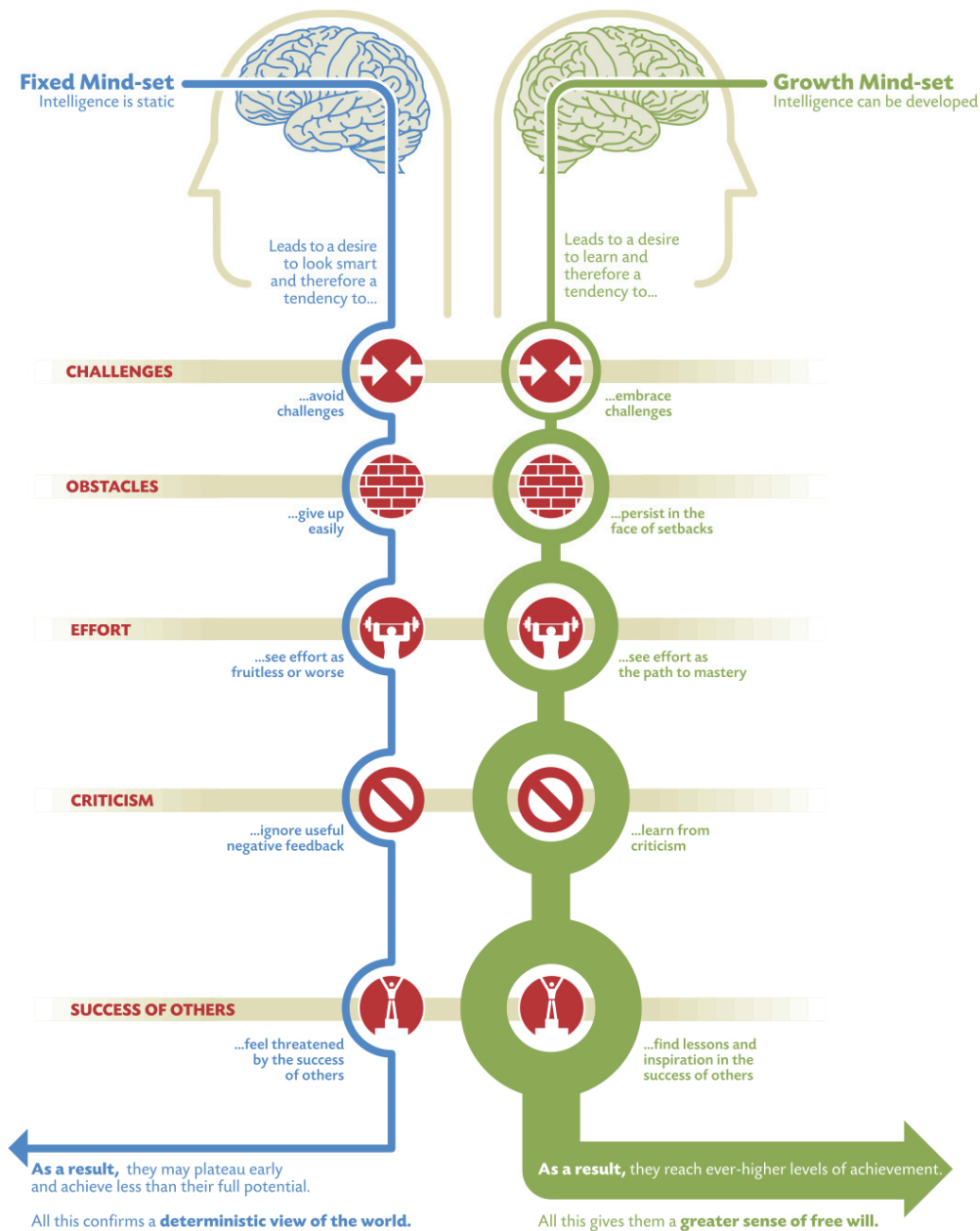
Dweck's theory is about success, how to succeed in life. A few years ago, in Los Angeles, we taught the Torah viewpoint on the then very popular fad called *The Secret*, which was also about how to succeed (most fads in the *goyishe* world are about how to be successful in life). Before we discuss what Dweck says, let's just mention that her theory is much better, more sophisticated than *The Secret*. In a nutshell, she holds that if you know how to praise them properly, your children are more likely to be successful in life. The people who wrote *The Secret* were not professors in University, but she is, and her "secret" is based on 30-40 years of research. She doesn't call it a secret, because it's supposed to be academic. She calls it "mindset."

There are two types of mindset, and she's comes up with a distinction between fixed and growth mindsets. If you have a growth mindset, you'll succeed, but if you have a fixed mindset, your chances are not so good to be successful in the long term. At first, when we saw this idea, it sounded nice. She has a book that popularizes her ideas. Much applaud and praise of academics around the world are given to this book. But, the more you read, the more you feel that it's simplistic. At first it seems good, but it's not quite as good as it seems. Whenever we talk about a new fad, it should be seen as motivating us to obtain deeper insight into ideas in the Torah (and how to apply them to modern thought patterns—mindsets).

### ***3. The five criteria separating growth from fixed mindsets***

To begin, let's recall that there's a famous Chassidic saying that every few generations new names appear for the good and evil inclinations, whose generic, basic names are *yetzer hatov* and *yetzer harah*. The terminology that the Alter Rebbe (the author of Tanya) used in his generation was the animal soul and the Divine soul. Later it became "egocentricity" (יִשּׁוּרִית) and "self-nullification" (בְּטוּלָה). From time to time, their names change. What Dweck has done is that she's come up with new names for them. If you're a growth mindset type you're on the good side, and if you're a fixed mindset type, you're on the bad side.

So to illustrate this, let's look at a diagram she uses:



GRAPHIC BY NIGEL HOLMES

[One parenthetical observation: most often, professors and academics tend to put the good on the left and the bad on the right. That is because of their conscious or subconscious identification with the “left,” the side associated with liberalism, etc. They see the “left” as the good, and the “right,” the side associated with conservatism, etc. as the bad. But Dweck surprisingly does not follow this convention and she puts the good on the right and the bad on the left.]

Fixed mindset says that all talents are innate (beginning with native intelligence, IQ) what you were born with is what you have. You're not going to get smarter (in Chassidic jargon, no one is going to put a new head on you), it's just what you have at birth. That's a fixed mindset. Growth mindset means that a person thinks he can improve, even his native intelligence can grow. If he works hard, he can develop new cells in his brain, a process which of course is subconscious. It doesn't mean you can grow infinitely, you won't necessarily become an Einstein or Mozart, but you're not fixed. It implies that the world is not deterministic. A growth mindset believes strongly in free-will. And through free-will you can progress far beyond the initial characteristics you started with. But a fixed mindset says you're stuck with what you have from birth.

From the first two lines in this diagram, you can't yet tell for sure which side is good and which is bad. Certainly, nobody likes to be static, but still it's not totally clear, which is which. Villain number 1 says that a fixed mindset leads to a desire to look smart. He's only as smart as he is, never to become smarter or dumber, so he may as well appear smart, people should think he's smart. This is called "superficiality" (חיצוניות) in Chassidut. It is perhaps the worst adjective with which to describe someone in Chassidic circles. Your life revolves around an attempt to present a self-image of such and such. Now, growth mindset leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to continuously change for the better, not to create a fixed self-image. There are different schools of thought about why Jews are smarter than others (there have recently appeared new academic books on the subject). But, definitely a certain point is that Jews always want to learn more, they have a growth mindset.

What these two mindsets lead to is different approaches to challenges, obstacles, effort, ...

First on the list, if you're a fixed mindset (from now on we'll call you either 'a fixed mindset' or 'a growth mindset') you avoid challenges but if you're a growth mindset, you welcome challenges. Most of Dweck's research was with children in school. According to her, it is important to offer children challenges from the youngest possible age, even though it means that the child will most likely fail many times. But, that's not a loss, because failure is a spring board to eventual success. If you're afraid to fail you won't advance.

The next thing on the list is obstacles. If you're a fixed mindset, then you're afraid of obstacles and if you encounter one, you tend to avoid it or give up. But, if you're a growth mindset, then you persist in the face of setbacks. Dweck says that she was surprised to see that for some children, they don't even think of failure as what we tend to think it is. For them, failure is a natural part of the game, of the process. Therefore, failure is not failure. That was for her a big discovery, that many children don't understand what failure is—that is the greatest characteristic of a growth mindset. In Chassidut we call this type of outlook, "descent for the purpose of ascent" (יְרִידָה צֹרֵךְ (עֲלִיָּה). Rebbe Nachman goes further in describing this frame of mind and calls it, "the essence of descent is ascent" (יְרִידָה תְּבִלִּית עֲלִיָּה), which means that you don't even feel that you're going down, it's all a part of going up.

The next characteristic on this chart is effort. It is the most important characteristic of these mindsets. If you're a fixed mindset you're embarrassed that you have to work hard, because if you were really smart, it should have come easily. So effort seems to say that you're not so smart after all. It's fruitless, or even worse. But, if you're a growth mindset then you see effort as the path to mastery. There is an explicit saying that the Lubavitcher Rebbe wanted children to memorize in this vein. One of the 12 *pesukim* the Rebbe encouraged children to memorize (and this may be the most important one) is the saying of the sages, "[If one says] 'I have made an effort but have not found [i.e., succeeded]' – do not believe him; 'I have not made an effort and have found' – do not believe him; 'I have made the effort and found' – believe him!" Only if you make an effort, will you succeed. If Dweck would have heard this saying, she would have reached the conclusion of 40 years of research in a moment (but apparently she had to make the effort!).

The next characteristic is criticism. If you have to be correct all the time, that's a fixed mindset. It forces you to ignore or reject criticism. But, if you're a growth mindset, you learn from criticism, as the Chassidic adage says, "Love criticism for it will raise you to your true heights."

The last criteria is how you react to other people's success. If you're a fixed mindset then you tend to become intimidated by the success of others. But, if you're a growth mindset then you are inspired by the success of others. Being inspired means that you want the same. It is a form of positive envy (קִנְיָאָה), the type that causes growth, like the sages' saying that, "the envy between scholars augments wisdom" (קִנְיָאת סוֹפְרִים תַּרְבֵּה (הַבְּמָה)).

A fixed mindset reaches his optimal level of performance at a relatively early stage in life and does not progress anymore. But, a growth mindset is always achieving and learning more. Life can begin when you're 70 years old. So now we see that basically what Dweck is saying is that the left side is the evil inclination. And all the good things she's placed on the right, the good inclination, are simple and obvious principles in Yiddishkeit.

#### ***4. The 5 criteria and their Kabbalistic counterparts***

Nonetheless there is some logic in the way she presents these 5 criteria: challenges, obstacles, effort, criticism, and how you see others' success. What's the Kabbalistic logic behind these 5 criteria and their order?

They correspond to the habitual *sefirot*: *netzach*, *hod*, *yesod*, and *malchut* (victory, acknowledgment, foundation, and kingdom) in the soul. Let's see how, one at a time.

Challenges and obstacles go together, just like *netzach* and *hod* (victory and acknowledgment are considered two halves of the same body). Not to fall-down when confronted by a challenge requires *netzach*, victory. Perseverance, and the strength required to continually overcome obstacles, exercises one's *hod*, acknowledgment.

Effort, which we said is the most important, corresponds to the rectification of the covenant (תִּקּוּן הַבְּרִית) which is foundation, or *yesod*. A *tzadik*, the epitome of foundation ("And a *tzadik* is the foundation of the world") is always exerting effort, which in

Hebrew is מאמץ. In the *mishnah* we quoted earlier, effort is called גיעה, but the word מאמץ is particularly related with foundation and the *tzadik* because it is an acronym for "faith in *tzadikim*" (אמונת צדיקים), referring not only to a *tzadik* outside of you, but the *tzadik* in yourself.

After effort, comes criticism, being able to accept positive, constructive criticism, that is the rectification of kingdom. The evil *malchut* (מלכות הרשעה), has no lowliness, that is why it can't receive criticism. Being lowly is the property of King David, but the evil kingdom has no place for criticism because it is full of hubris.

The final criteria, how you look at other people's success, is also a *malchut*, kingdom property. It's an offshoot, it's related to being able to seeing other people, that is how *malchut* sees the other. If you can't take criticism that's because of your ego.

Dweck most likely didn't know this Kabbalistic model, but it corresponds exactly to the behavioral powers among the *sefirot*. If we would want to characterize all of modern psychology, we would say that it is behavioristic in its thinking. It's very good that we now have these words, because all the concepts in the world have to relate to the *sefirot*. So we have new terminology gained from this clarification of this system. Challenge is *netzach*, victory, overcoming obstacles is *hod*, to exert effort and energy (energy is און, the procreative power in the soul) is in foundation, and the rectification of ego is related to *malchut*, allowing us to receive criticism and see other people positively.

This was the second chapter of our discussion this evening.

## 5. Praising the Jewish way

Now we'd like to talk about praise. Dweck says that if you praise a child who got an A on a test, "Wow. You're really smart," this will create in him a fixed-mindset. Her theory is that the way in which you praise is what creates a growth mindset. So she says, you should say: "You did really well, you must have worked hard. You must have put a lot of effort into studying." By praising the child in this way, you are introducing into his subconscious mind that working hard, that expending effort (as above), leads to success.

Dweck claims that all her decades of research in schools demonstrated that this works. She adds that it's true with children but whether or not it will work with graduate students, is not so clear. She thinks that in the end it works for everybody, but there are opinions that disagree.

Once more, Dweck says: Don't praise children for being smart, but for having worked hard. She divides things into two, either a or b. But now, let's think about a Jewish child. How do we teach a Jewish child? Is there a third possibility besides the two she presents, besides praising their native ability or praising their hard work?

Obviously, what's lacking in her thinking is the Almighty. She is completely secular. Let's say we agree with her that you should tell a child that they worked hard, not that they are smart, but where does the Almighty fit into the picture? He's not in her picture at all. But as Jews, we know that the Almighty must be part of the picture. We should be able to impress upon the child that if you were successful on a test, *HaShem* helped you. Maybe one should say, "You got a good grade, you must have prayed really hard..." (I didn't see this option in any of the articles). What we want to say here is that there are

many nuances regarding praise, exactly what about the child's effort should be praised. The lack of sensitivity to these nuances is why I would say that the whole theory is too simplistic. The more you think about it, the more you see that there are a multitude of nuances (and each one makes a difference, also how you say the same words and where in your heart it is coming from).

There is a 15 minute video recording in which Dweck summarizes her theory. The latest thing is that she tries to apply the theory to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Her conclusion is that growth mindset people are willing to compromise for the sake of peace whereas fixed mindset people are conservative and not willing to compromise. Now we see a 'politically-correct' fixation in Dweck's application of her theory, to explain how wrong the Jewish people are in holding steadfast to the land of Israel.

## ***6. Praise in World, Souls, and Divinity***

Notwithstanding her opinions, it is certainly true that a truly believing Jew, and even a non-Jew, should have a growth perspective on life. Because there is God, you have even more infinite capacity to grow, and there are even miracles in life that do indeed change (and re-channel) innate nature.

So again, in general, you can either tell a child they are smart, everything is deterministic, this is how they were born, or you can praise them for the effort they expended, or you can praise them for the Divine input that their effort has drawn down into the world. These three veins of praise correspond to the three dimensions the Ba'al Shem Tov calls: Worlds, Souls, and Divinity.

Praise at the level of Worlds focuses on the child's native intelligence. We tell him, you succeeded because of how you were born, because of what your natural and native talents are.

The difference between souls and angels is that souls are always moving, they are dynamic. The definition of a soul is one who is able to overcome obstacles, that is a soul. An angel is static, it can only use its natural gifts, it can't transcend its native attributes. As soon as you can transcend, you are a mover, you are a soul. So if we praise their effort for having led them above and beyond, we are praising them at the level of Souls.

The third level of praise is when we praise the child for the Divine input, which includes miracles, and all the levels of miracles, whether they come from the surrounding light of the Creator, or from His imminent light. This corresponds to praise in the dimension of Divinity.

## ***7. Incommensurable levels of effort***

Additional Kabbalistic terminology will enable us to better understand what it means to transcend nature through effort. We will use the Kabbalistic terminology of עיגולים וישר, curvature and straightness. Anything that is fixed is termed עיגולים or curved in Kabbalah. The Arizal says that all of creation has five levels to it. The *nefesh*, the lowest level of creation is called עיגולים, "circles," or curvature. While the ray of Divine light that God projects into the void is called ישר, or straightness. Straightness, ישר,



constitutes the *ru'ach*, the spirit of all five levels of creation and unlike curvature, it is dynamic.

Following the initial *tzimtzum* (contraction of God's infinite light), the Arizal explains that revealed reality consists of only the first two levels, curvature and straightness, only the *nefesh* and *ru'ach* of what existed in God's infinite light before the contraction. What happened to the 3 higher levels, the *neshamah*, *chayah*, and *yechidah* of reality? To find them, we have to go into the deeper Chassidic writings that describe the state of things before the contraction, which are present now too (albeit, they are concealed). The 3 higher levels are known as *Kadmon*, *Echad*, and *Yachid*.

A week ago in our weekly class, we explained (based upon a Chassidic discourse of the Rebbe) that *avodah* in general, that a person has to exert his maximal effort, that is the toil of the *tzadikim*. What might be higher than that? In effort itself there are different levels, with quantum leaps between them. This is something Dweck doesn't address. She doesn't differentiate between essentially different levels of effort. The truth is that the effort that a *tzadik* puts into his daily routine of *davening* (praying) and learning and doing *mitzvot*, compared to the effort that a *ba'al teshuvah* (one who returns to HaShem) puts into doing *teshuvah* is simply incomparable. If simply the inertia of your native gifts is what is getting you through life, that is *nefesh*, if you are investing new energy, as does the *tzadik*, that is *ru'ach*. This is as far as Dweck goes, and obviously this is all external and it also suffers from the fact that she doesn't recognize the Almighty. But, there are higher levels of effort, like the effort involved in *teshuvah*. She does not comprehend these levels of effort at all.

## 8. The three axes of praise

Now let's turn to the 2 basic words for praise: *הָלַל* and *שָׁבַח*. There are many other idioms for "praise." If you open a siddur you'll see many of them. If we wanted to add a third word to the two basic words, we would choose *לְפָאֵר*, which comes from *תְּפָאֵרֶת*, which means "beauty."

*לְפָאֵר* means to beautify you, to say how beautiful you are.

*הָלַל* has to do with light, it illuminates you. Halel, like Hillel has to do with light, praising you for having light, I am bringing out light from some unconscious part of you, as there is a prayer called *הָלַל*.

What about *לְשַׁבַּח*. It has another meaning in Hebrew, *משביח שאון ימים*, which means to quiet turbulence. What's the connection?

Halel actually has 3 meanings in Hebrew, according to the Radak. One is to praise, another is to light (he doesn't say it's the same thing, just 2 different meanings of the same root). The third is *הוללות* which is very negative. It's usually translated as debauchery. The way the Radak explains it is as "crazy joy" (*שִׂמְחָה שְׂגוּעוֹנִית*), or "crazy fun." How can crazy fun, which is one of the negative attributes of the animal soul as discussed in the first chapter of Tanya, go together with praise? The idea is that *הוללות* is related to self-praise (*התפארות*)—two of the negative traits that stem from the element of air. They are *התפארות* and *הוללות*, self praise and having crazy fun.

What we get out of this is that Hillel has to do with the tikun, the rectification of debauchery, הוללות. Obviously if a person has a tendency to this, he should suppress it. So now, we can correspond the three meanings of הלל to submission, separation, and sweetening. The submission is related to debauchery, which should be submitted. The separation is related to praise, because if you are praising something you are also discounting its opposite. So you are separating it into to. The meaning of הלל as light corresponds to sweetening, as the verse states, "for light is sweet."

What is the word for "challenge" in Hebrew? אֶתְגֵּר. It's a modern word. It sounds a little like the phrase, "[you shall love] the convert" (וְאַהֲבִיתֶם אֶת הַגֵּר). To love challenges is like loving a convert, converting challenges into opportunity. In the Torah the phrase אֶת הַגֵּר appears twice, once in the commandment to love the convert, and the other time when Sarai took Hagar (וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲבִרָם אֶת הַגֵּר). Hagar, who was Pharaoh's daughter who preferred being a maidservant in Abraham and Sarah's household than being a princess in Egypt, presented a formidable challenge – especially her children – to the Jewish people. To convert is the greatest positive challenge for the Jewish people. The revelation of Mashiach depends on this. Converts came to both Hillel and Shamai. When a convert came to Shamai, what did he say? Go to Hillel, because apparently the convert too needs to be praised in some way in order to be incorporated in the Jewish people, and as we saw, Shamai could only praise reality for what it was.

We have Hillel, who is the epitome of learning how to praise in the sense of הלל, and then we have שבח, and we have פאר. These three synonyms for praise correspond to praise on the right, left and middle axes of the Tree of Life, the model of the *sefirot*. Halel corresponds to the right, *chesed*; שבח to the left, *gevurah*; and פאר with the middle axis, *tiferet*. Let's explain each part of this correspondence.

When we say, "May Your Name be praised forever our King" (וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח שְׁמֶךָ לְעַד מְלִכְנוּ), we are relating שבח to the construction of kingdom, the *malchut*. As we said, the origin of שבח is in *gevurah* (the left axis), but from it comes the energy used to build, to construct, *malchut*.

*Halel* which is related to light, like a candle on the top of your head, represents unconscious light. להלל is to reveal that light, that candle above your head, an idiom taken from the verse, בְּהִלּוֹ נָרוֹ עָלַי רֵאשִׁי. So *halel* actually comes from *keter*, the crown and manifests, is revealed, in *chesed*, loving-kindness. להלל is to praise your deep unconscious potential, praising it so that it becomes revealed and manifest.

Finally, לפאר someone is to praise his character traits in the sense of the comely balance between them. *Tiferet* in general is the related with the ability to create balance, a trait associated with the middle axis of the *sefirot*.

## 9. Praiseworthiness

Let's say something more about praise that Dweck didn't touch upon. When we bless a child, the traditional Chassidic blessing is that he should be a *chassid*, a *yerei shamayim*, and a *lamdan*—a *chassid*, a God-fearing Jew, and a scholar. The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe would bless children with these same 3 blessings, but he didn't necessarily

mention them in this order. The order depended on the child's soul root. For some children, being a *chassid* came first, for others it was fear of Heaven, and still for others learning Torah.

Our own Rebbe fixed the order as we said, because it's logical in the order of *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferet*. What this teaches us is that the most praiseworthy thing about a child, the most important thing to praise is behavior, how good you were. Let's say the child gave candy to his sister. The most important thing to praise his goodness, to praise him for having done a good deed.

The second most important thing is to praise the child's fear of Heaven, for instance when a child makes a *brachah*, he says a blessing over something he is about to eat, that indicates God-consciousness, fear of Heaven, understanding that everything in this world was given to me by the Almighty.

Earlier today, a family came with their three year old son to celebrate his *Opshernish*. After I gave the child a bar of chocolate, I blessed him with this traditional blessing. Just before doing so I asked the child why am I blessing you to be a *chassid*, a *yerei shamayim*, and a *lamdan*? Why in this particular order? Because first you have to share the chocolate with your other siblings (that stems from being a *chassid*). Then you have to be a *yerei shamayim*, God fearing, which means that you say a *brachah* over the chocolate. Then you need to be a *lamdan* by using the pleasure from the chocolate to learn Torah. This is the order.

According to our order, the most praiseworthy trait is good deeds. That is the first thing you should praise. By doing so, you are praising their goodness. But, notice that Dweck's theory of praise revolves around praise for intelligence (she doesn't want you to praise the native intelligence as such, because that would be self-defeating, it would foster a fixed-mindset; rather she has you praise the effort that went into the intelligence the child demonstrated). But in the Torah, in Chassidut, intelligence is only the third most important trait. Actually, what we learn from this is that if in your conceptual scheme intelligence is just the third and last in terms of praiseworthiness, then praising it will not necessarily cause a fixed mindset, contrary to what Dweck claims, on the condition that what is most praiseworthy are good deeds. If your conceptual scheme is like Dweck's, where the success in life is based only on intelligence, then you have to make sure not to over-praise the intelligence, but if its third in line, it's already not such a big deal.

Now, we can tie these three blessings (which correspond to *chesed*, *gevurah*, and *tiferet*) to the three synonyms for praise discussed earlier. We said that הלל is *chesed*, שבח is *gevurah*, and פאר is *tiferet*, implying that *halel* is to praise goodness (revealing the inner essence of the soul, crown), that *shevach* is to praise fear-of-heaven (as reflected in action, *malchut*), and that *pe'air* is to praise scholarship (which, when based upon conscious effort, serves to balance the character traits of the soul; in Kabbalah, scholarship derives from *tiferet*).

There is a verse that explicitly ties actions with שבח: "From generation to generation Your actions will be praised, and Your might will be recounted" (דֹר לְדֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיךָ (וּגְבוּרַתְךָ יִגִּידוּ)). There is a beautiful commentary by the Malbim on this verse, he explains

that every generation should ultimately cancel and supersede all the scientific knowledge of the previous generations. Why? Because every generation has the capacity to understand more about nature than all previous generations. There is an idiom of the sages, *מִשְׁבַּח נִכְסָיו*, which means to make your property increase in value, which is also related to “appraisal.” You’re appraising it day by day, but its value is always increasing. That’s *דָּוָר לְדָוָר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֵׂיךָ*, meaning that every generation should understand nature much better than the previous generations.

So apart from this comment by the Malbim, from this verse’s literal meaning we find that *לִשְׁבַח* has to do with action, *מַעֲשֵׂה*. The synonym *לְהַלֵּל* is relatively common, but *לִשְׁבַח* is very rare in the Tanach. There are actually two verses that use both synonyms: *הִלְלוּ אֶת שְׁבָחֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם אֶת ה' הִלְלִי אֱלֹהֵיךָ צִיּוֹן*, and, *ה' כָּל גּוֹיִם שְׁבַחְוּהוּ כָּל הָאֲמִיּוֹת*. These are the only two verses where the two synonyms are juxtaposed.

The ultimate origin of the sefirot chagat (chesed, gevurah, and tiferet) is the chagat of Atik. More exactly, the source of *לְהַלֵּל* is the chesed of Atik enclosed in the “skull” of Arich, the source of *לִשְׁבַח* is gevurah of Atik enclosed in the concealed mind (mocha stima’ah) of Arich, and the source of *לִפְאֹר* is the tiferet of Atik enclosed in the keruma de'avira (the membrane between the skull and concealed brain) of Arich. The gevurah of Atik in the concealed brain of Arich is the power to quiet turbulence, to subdue severe judgments, and so we can now understand the relation of the two meanings of *לִשְׁבַח*.

## 10. When is intelligence praiseworthy?

So now we have 3 types of praise. Let’s conclude with something Dweck doesn’t talk about at all. The prophet Jeremiah says, “So says God, the wise man should not praise his wisdom, the mighty should not praise his might, the wealthy shall not praise his wealth. For only in this shall he who is praised be praised, in contemplating and knowing Me...” ( *כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֵל יִתְהַלֵּל חֶכְם בְּחַכְמָתוֹ וְאֵל יִתְהַלֵּל הַגִּבּוֹר בְּגִבּוֹרָתוֹ אֵל יִתְהַלֵּל עֲשִׂיר בְּעֲשָׂרָו. )* ( *כִּי אִם בְּזֹאת יִתְהַלֵּל הַמִּתְהַלֵּל הַשֶּׁבַל וְיָדַע אוֹתִי* ). If you use your intelligence to know Me, says the Almighty, then intelligence is praiseworthy. At first glance the beginning of this quote supports Dweck’s theory. No native property is worthy of praise (wisdom, or might, or wealth). But, the follow-up she lacks entirely.

The follow-up is that “What is praiseworthy?”—what you use your native intelligence for (as Rashi explains). It is not enough to just be smart, to use your intelligence, it has to be directed. Again, referring to an example of a child who did well on a test, you can say that they worked hard, that God helped him, etc. But there is something more. It is entirely possible that success on this particular test isn’t valuable in the first place. Maybe the topic of the test was a waste of time. Maybe it would have been better worth your while to have studied something else. It’s not enough to use your intelligence, you have to use it in the right way and for the right things.

Praise has to direct a child to what is worthwhile in the first place. If a child has received a really good grade in arithmetic, is that in and of itself praiseworthy? Would a yeshivah consider giving this child a prize, for instance a ticket to the Rebbe for that? No. But, if the child put a lot of effort into learning Mishnayos, that’s valuable. Speaking

generally, you have to use your mind in a valuable and positive direction, and not in directions that are (spiritually) useless. That is what Rashi says here. You were given a mind to know God. If you use it in another way, it is not praiseworthy at all. It's not only ego that's the problem, but that you are using your mind for the wrong thing.

## 11. Praise is not everything

Let's look a little more closely at the verse, "From generation to generation Your actions will be praised, and Your might will be recounted" (דֹר לְדֹר יִשְׁבַּח מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּגְבוּרֹתֶיךָ) (גִּידוּ). The initial letters of the first three words are דְּלִי, which in reverse spell יִלְד, which can be read as either "child" (יִלְד) or as "will give birth" (יִלְד). The initial letters of the final three words, backwards are יוֹם, which means "day." If there is a book in the Tanach that is related with Hillel, it is Tehilim (תְּהִלִּים), since it means "praises." Tehilim is one of the three Emet books: Iyov, Mishlei, and Tehilim (אִיּוֹב מִשְׁלֵי תְּהִלִּים), or in English Job, Proverbs, and Psalms. They are considered a distinct unit in the Tanach because their cantillation system is different from the other 21 books. Now, just as Tehillim is related to Hillel, Iyov and Mishlei are related with Shamai. How so? Because the first two letters of each (אִיּוֹב מִשְׁלֵי) together spell Shamai (שָׁמַאי). Tehillim is a book of praises, while Job is a book of controversial praises.

Now, these two words, "will give birth" and "day" appear together in the beginning of chapter 27 in Proverbs. There we find the verse that reads, "Do not praise yourself for [what you will do] tomorrow, because you do not know what the day will bear" (אַל יִסַּח לְפִי מִלְּמָחָר כִּי לֹא תֵדַע מַה יִּלְד יוֹם). So our original verse of praise in Psalms is alluding to this verse of praise in Proverbs. But the following verse is even stronger. These first two verses in chapter 27 of Proverbs are fundamental to understanding the proper context of praise. The next verse states that you should never praise yourself, only another person may do so (יִהְיֶה לְךָ זֵר וְלֹא פִיךָ נִכְרִי וְאֵל שְׁפָתֶיךָ).

In regard to praise, it says in *Pirkei Avot*, "Do not be like servants serving their master in order to receive praise (a pun on the word פָּרַס, as stated above), but be like servants serving the Master not in order to receive praise." So even though praise is important, you should never work for it, don't do things for it. And even more than that don't praise yourself. Furthermore, don't believe that you will necessarily do more tomorrow than you did today, even though you should have a growth mindset, and indeed prepare for a tomorrow that will be better than today.

Extending this one step more: when you learn not to praise yourself, you should only let a foreigner praise you. This suggests that all the Jewish people are like one person, and we shouldn't ever praise ourselves. So in a certain sense, why were non-Jews created? Because we're not supposed to praise ourselves. We need non-Jews to praise us, because we are like a single person that shouldn't praise himself.

## 12. Conclusion

Getting back to right and left in politics, obviously we should rule like Beit Hillel now. We should try to find positive, praiseworthy things about all Jews.

Why did Dweck say that if you have a growth mindset you will be willing to compromise? Because, she explains, that you believe that everything and everybody can change for the better. You believe that even your enemies can change. But, what she is doing is making הלל, meaning praise, into הוללות. She is going a little crazy with her growth mindset theory.

Nonetheless, we should be weary of adopting a fixed mindset, we have to be able to appreciate good points in everyone, everyone has to be praised in the proper way. Beit Hillel teaches us how to praise. May Hashem bless us that we are able to praise everyone in the proper way and that Hashem praise us in the right way and bring the Mashiach now.