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Dear Friends,

I have read portions of the "Jewish Guide to Manifesting" by Rabbi Yaakov Cohen. The author presents the importance and power of thought as found in the wisdom of Torah sources. The physical world is but a manifestation of spiritual forces that emanate from Hashem, the ultimate source of everything. Hashem, the Creator and sustainer of all existence designated spiritual emanations that manifest His will in the world that we see and experience. Hence, proper thoughts can affect these spiritual forces and result in positive or G-d forbid negative effects in the world in general and in one's own personal life. The author discusses the various types of thoughts that one should utilize to manifest positive results according to various Torah sources.

I found the work interesting, informative and inspiring. I found the material to be representing true Torah concepts. I recommend this book for all those who desire to learn about the efficacy of positive thinking and who wish to enhance their spiritual and material lives and the world in general by putting these ideas into practice.

I commend the author for a fine presentation and pray that Hashem bless-him and his family with life and health and the wherewithal to continue to merit the community.

Sincerely,
With Torah blessings



Rabbi Zev Leff

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CHAPTER ONE

TENDING THE GARDEN OF THE MIND

THERE ARE MANY places in our holy writings that liken our minds and lives to a garden. The following are just a few places to give us a stage and setting.

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

To set the stage, we must first realize with absolute certainty our creative power.

And God created man in His image. In the image of God, He created him.

Bereishis 1:27

What does it mean that we were created in the image and likeness of God?

Since we know that God has no image, what could that image be? “Image” refers to a conceptual mold or structure that the Creator designed to make man.¹ Of the many aspects of this conceptual mold are the will and thoughts, and also a structure to bring those thoughts

1 See Rabbeinu Bachya, *Bereishis 1:27*, who explains that this refers to the ten *Sefiros* or ten Illuminations in which the Creator interacts with the Creation. See Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Inner Space*, chap. 3.

down to expression. “Likeness of God” primarily means that we were made to have understanding and gain wisdom.² Both image and likeness are in the area of thinking, including the ability to be creative.

Just as God’s expression begins from His will—a thought—and then proceeds to the manifestation of that thought,³ so too does man follow this same process. First, he thinks a thought, and then he proceeds to express it. For example, man first gets an idea to build a house, then has detailed plans drawn up, and then works to bring those plans to full manifestation. The imagery used in Kabbalah for the first impulse of creativity is that of a seed, which subsequently becomes implanted in the mind. The mind is the fertile soil, always seeking to bring out whatever is planted within it. As we are aware, a seed only knows how to produce more of its own kind: A wheat kernel cannot sprout corn, and a peach pit cannot grow avocados. Similarly, our mind can only produce experiences based on the seeds planted within it. The mind is also likened to an oven. An oven doesn’t care what you place inside it; it just bakes it. You can’t expect to put dirt in an oven and produce a cake.

We must be aware that our minds are very much like fertile soil with seeds being planted within that are in a state of constant creating! The fact that our minds are operating all the time gives us the ability to actualize our dynamic, creative nature. At any time, we can willfully direct those thoughts. Certain “will thoughts” are seeds that need

2 See Rashi, *Bereishis* 1:26, and *Seforno* ad loc. For another explanation, see also *Nefesh Hachaim* 1:3: “God empowered mankind to control and influence countless forces and worlds through his actions, words, and thoughts.”

3 The Kabbalistic meaning of the Tetragrammaton (*Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei*) is an expression going from will and thought to manifestation, or “thought-manifest” for short. The first letter, *yud*, is the first thought in seed form. It has no detailed plan or image of expression. The next letter, *hei*, is the detailed imagery or visualization in the mind. The next letter, *vav*, is the force that implements the mental plan, and the final letter, *hei*, is the actualization of the original letter *hei*—hence, the manifestation of thought.

to be planted, nurtured, and grown. A great place to exercise this awareness is the first law of the code of Jewish laws, namely, to wake up like a lion to serve the King of Kings—to awaken and utilize our creative process to proactively create our days and lives.

*“I am a powerful creative entity! I will utilize
the creative nature God has given me to
create my day!”*

*And from the ground God caused to grow every tree that
was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the Tree of
Life in the middle of the garden and the Tree of Knowledge
of Good and Evil.*

Bereishis 2:9

Let’s examine the commentary of the Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin:

- “The Garden of Eden sprouts from it all trees **pleasing to the sight**”—this represents the external, outer expression of a person’s deeds.
- “**Good for food**”—this represents the inner aspect of a person, i.e., his thoughts and feelings. From the comparison between food and thought, it seems that thoughts are a higher form of energy intake.
- “**The Tree of Life**”—this represents the heart of a person (i.e., the will), as it is placed in the middle part of the body.
- “**And the Tree of Knowledge**”—this represents the mind that distinguishes between good and evil.⁴

4 Rabbi Tzadok Hakohen, *Kometz Haminchah* 2:26.

And God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and guard it.

Bereishis 2:16

There are several commentators who do not view the Garden of Eden as a literal garden but rather as a spiritual concept.⁵ The verse says that God placed Adam there to “work and guard.” What does this mean? Were there thieves roaming around that one needs to guard from? From here, we can infer that the verse is referring to a garden that has spiritual needs. Just like land needs to be worked, plowed, and seeded, so too, this garden of the soul needs planting and guarding. To “work” represents the good deeds, and to “guard” symbolizes refraining from negative actions. The *Zohar* specifically associates the verse with positive and negative commandments. A person’s actions are therefore likened to tending a garden. Hence, your life is your garden.

When you besiege a city for many days to wage war upon it...you must not destroy its trees. You may eat of them, but you may not cut them down. For the trees of the field are a person...

Devarim 20:19

From this verse, we derive the prohibition against the needless destroying of items. This verse specifically refers to fruit trees—that we may partake of them but not cut them down. What is interesting is the reason given for the prohibition, which is that the Torah compares a person to a tree. The most common understanding is that the life of humankind is dependent on the food of the trees of the field. We are not to cut them down because they can benefit someone. The Talmud

5 Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, *Ohr Hachaim*, Bereishis 2:15; Zohar 27a.

brings the deeper meaning as to why man is compared to a tree.⁶ Fruit trees are likened to scholars and people of good influence, whom we may not cut down. Non-fruit-bearing trees are likened to people of bad influence, whom we are encouraged to stay away from. This idea is expressed by many other sources.⁷ Just as trees start from seeds and have roots, branches, and fruit, so too, all these elements are contained within man. The fruits only produce seeds of their own kind.

*For thus says God to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem,
“Break up the untilled ground and do not sow among thorns.”*

Yirmiyahu 4:3

The prophet Yirmiyahu is not literally instructing the men to start farming. The wording is being used in a metaphorical sense, telling them about the need for them to correct their deeds. Just as the farmers dig up the soil in the summer to kill the roots of the thorn weeds, ensuring that they won't rise at the time of planting, so too, we must make an effort to better our deeds before we plant our seeds of holiness. The idea of uprooting the thorns in our hearts represents ridding ourselves of the bad character traits and negative images that grow on the “mounds” of the heart. We need to do this before we plant the seeds of charity and good deeds that will draw us close to God.

We see from this metaphor how the heart and soul are likened to a field. “Do not plant your seeds [i.e., your thoughts] in a place of negativity.” Your thoughts—which are the roots of your character traits and deeds—are seeds. They will grow.

6 *Taanis* 7a.

7 *Zohar* 1:187a, 3:202a, 3:215a, 3:219a; *Tikkunei Zohar* 141b. Here is the source for the Kabbalistic custom to celebrate the new year for trees each year on the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat. It is celebrated with special rituals likened to the Passover Seder.

Our lives in this world are likened to a garden or field. Our good thoughts, words, and deeds are likened to removing stones, cutting out weeds, plowing, planting, watering, and pruning our personal garden, which we can call our “holy garden.”⁸ What is this holy garden about? It intimates that we are participating in a cosmic event that is likened to a garden or field—a cosmic garden that we, as creations, are involved in building—which is a means that enables the holy Infinite to express His Infiniteness.

How we tend to our “holy garden” will determine our destiny and our unique expression, our part in Creation, and our portion in the fulfillment of our destiny. How much and in what way the Infinite expresses itself depends on how well we tend to this garden. Our Creator is the “Master Gardener,” but we must do our part. The beginning of our work in the “garden” starts in the mind. We need to understand that when we accept and integrate thoughts and beliefs, it is like we are planting the seeds; the dynamic and fertile ground of our consciousness will grow whatever thought or belief we put into it. So, let us choose our seeds wisely.

CHOOSING YOUR SEEDS

The question is, which seeds should be implanted in our minds? We need to determine if they are good seeds or if they will not allow us to express our unique potential in life. If we can adopt and integrate the higher style of thinking that we will explain in later chapters, it will surely bring forth a higher experience—an experience of greater joy, trust, security, and fulfillment. We need to develop the ability to become aware of our thoughts.

Let us examine a key source that exposes the power of our thoughts.

8 Arizal, *Otzros Chaim, Shaar Nikudim*, chap. 6.

Angels from Thoughts

Our Sages share with us a life-changing principle: “The way in which a person wants to go, they lead him.”⁹

The question is, who are the “they” that our Sages are talking about?

If this principle means that God leads a person in the way he wants to go, the Hebrew should have been written in the singular form: “In the way in which a person wants to go, He [i.e., God] leads him.” But the Hebrew is in the plural form. So, the question remains, who are the “they” to whom the Sages are referring?

The answer is that **with every thought, word, and action a person thinks, says, or does, an angel is created.**¹⁰

However, whether the angel created is good or bad depends on the particular thought, word, or deed. This idea is simple yet astounding: Every thought creates an angel!

Additionally, the angel that is created as a result of a person’s thought, word, or action enables the materialization of that thought, word, or action. In other words, we ourselves produce the force that will allow our thoughts to be manifested in the physical world. Our thoughts create angels, which in turn cause those thoughts to become reality.

This idea has significant implications, and it raises many questions. What exactly is an angel created by our thoughts? Does it literally mean every thought creates an angel? Is each angel the same? What about the angels we created in the past? Can anything be done about negative angels? If we change our thinking, can we change our angels? What would the result be?

Let’s begin to answer these questions by understanding an important point: Not all thoughts are created equal. Some people generate

9 *Makkos* 10b.

10 Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Edeles (1555–1631), known as the *Maharsha*. For a whole translation, see Appendix.

thoughts from the most powerful beliefs and convictions, while others have endless thoughts that sputter things out without any direction. Someone once explained it to me through an analogy of television newscasts. While there is a man announcing or analyzing a main news point, at the same time, there is something like a ticker tape with small news blurbs constantly moving on the bottom of the screen. Generally, the words racing by on the bottom don't have as much impact as the man talking.

The same thing occurs with our thoughts: There are heavier ones and weaker ones. Every thought is involved in creating angels, but some are more powerful. Indeed, we are taught that we are not responsible for the thoughts that just pop into our head—only for what we choose to do with those thoughts.

What Do We Mean Here by the Word “Angel”?

How do we understand the word “angel” according to the Torah? The *Rambam* defines an angel as an incorporeal, spiritual being with no shape or form that is capable of imparting information or prophetic messages to people.¹¹ The word “angel” may conjure up for some people images of a half-naked winged baby flying through the air, or a female-like figure in a flowing white gossamer gown, crowned with a glowing halo. Yet, there are many people who wouldn't even venture a guess as to what an angel looks like. How does this idea of an angel blend with what we are discussing here?

The answer is that angels are energies.

Let's look a little closer at this concept. We can all agree that different thoughts bring about different feelings. Maybe, the thought of your child or grandchild warms your heart with happiness, thinking about filling out your tax return brings about feelings of anxiety and dread,

11 *Rambam, Yesodei HaTorah 2:3.*

and anticipating your upcoming vacation in the Bahamas lifts your mood. Let's call these feelings "feeling tones." Specific thoughts elevate and inspire you, making you feel charged, while other thoughts make you feel depressed and bring you down.

Simply put, thoughts create a vibrational force—an energy that pulls you to carry out that thought and propel you to your destiny. This is the principle of resonance, and it can be illustrated by using tuning forks. We can take what we call an "A" tuning fork, and when we strike it, an "A" sound is produced. When we bring another motionless "A" tuning fork close to the vibrating one, what happens? The "A" vibration passes onto the other tuning fork, which then starts to emit its sound.¹²

Now, when we touch it with an "E" note, what happens? It stops. Although there are a lot of conclusions that one can draw from this phenomenon, the point I want to draw out here is that an "A" only knows how to connect with the same sound—another "A."

In the same way, our thoughts produce vibrations. And the thoughts we think, which produce those vibrations, only know how to find harmony with experiences in the same tone. Or like we said above, a wheat kernel only knows how to produce wheat; a corn kernel only knows how to bring forth corn. Wheat can't make corn, and corn cannot become wheat.

What does that tell us? The importance of becoming aware of our thoughts and being careful of the thoughts we think, because good thoughts produce positive angels—which we can also call a positive force or energy—while "bad" thoughts bring about a negative, destructive angel, which we can term a negative force.

12 This is also brought in the *Malbim's* explanation of the Tabernacle that the Israelites built in the wilderness; see *Parashas Terumah*. If there are two instruments in a room, one in one corner and one in the other, and one of them is big and one of them is small, and I strike the chord on the bigger one, the same chord on the smaller instrument will resonate.

WEAKER VS. STRONGER ANGELS

We have explained that not all angels are equal; some are stronger, and some are weaker. The determining factors that make angels more or less powerful are based on two things: quantity and quality. It is estimated that a person thinks anywhere between 6,200 to 60,000 thoughts a day.¹³ If we take the number 60,000, imagine if half of those thoughts are thought in one direction (for example, “I want such and such”), and the other half are focused on something else entirely. This would result in massive confusion. It’s like an airplane with one engine facing one direction while the other engine faces a different direction. That aircraft isn’t going to get anywhere—except maybe around in circles. This also answers the complaint that I so often hear, “Rabbi, why is my life going nowhere?”

There is the frequency with which thoughts recur in our psyche, and there is also the degree to which we believe in them. The extent to which our thoughts resonate with us determines the power of the angel created. The determining factor is the **conviction of the idea**.¹⁴ This also illustrates the concept of “to the degree of the awakening from below will be the bestowal from above.”¹⁵

13 For example, see research by Dr. J. Poppenk in *Nature Communications*, <https://www.exploringtheproblemspace.com/new-blog/2017/1/1/counting-thoughts-part-i>. Over twenty-four hours, one thought per second would yield 86,400 thoughts. If “thoughts” are restricted to sixteen waking hours, the number would be 57,600. But we’re almost certainly thinking while we’re dreaming (approximately two hours every night), so that would be 64,800 seconds, resulting in an average of one thought every 0.9257 seconds.

14 Imagine, for example, what the recitation of the *Shema* can do.

15 See *Leshem Shevo V’Achlamah, Sefer Hade’ah*, for why Moshe had to go to the Children of Israel before going to Pharaoh. Why did he say, “If the Children of Israel will not listen to me, how could Pharaoh?” Why should one relate to the other? The rule is that in order for there to be a bestowal from above, there must be a corresponding awakening from below. Thus, Moshe said, “If the Children of Israel don’t believe in me to create this awakening from below that we need, how will Pharaoh listen to me to send them out?” Meaning, the