



STRIVING FOR INTERNAL PEACE WITH OUR STRUGGLES

On Yom Kippur, when we stare our wrongdoings in the face, guilt and shame can overwhelm and push us into an emotional pit where we feel like there is no way out.

We must recognize, however, the Jewish approach to reflecting on wrongdoings is not to despair. We try to hold onto hope and persevere, recognizing the only way forward is to keep moving. In life we dip or sway and even move backward at times, but as long as we are moving somewhere, we are on a path toward growth.

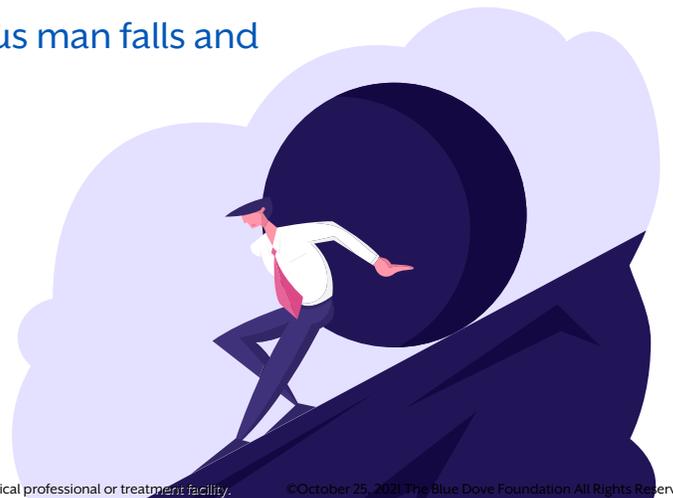


"As long as the candle is still burning, it is still possible to accomplish and to mend." – Rabbi Yisrael Salanter

Despair eliminates the prospect of mobility, so we must eliminate despair. But how?

When we try to move on after making a wrong turn, the journey out of our mental pit is likely to be bumpy. There's no automatic or direct path to growth, but the bumps actually make that growth more authentic and powerful. Judaism believes challenges are essential to growth. And it is our triumph over our downfall and our difficulties that make us great. This Jewish idea is famously expressed through the phrase, **"seven times the righteous man falls and gets up (Proverbs 24:16)."**

Someone is truly righteous and impressive when they face challenges but continue to grow nevertheless. That is what makes them righteous.



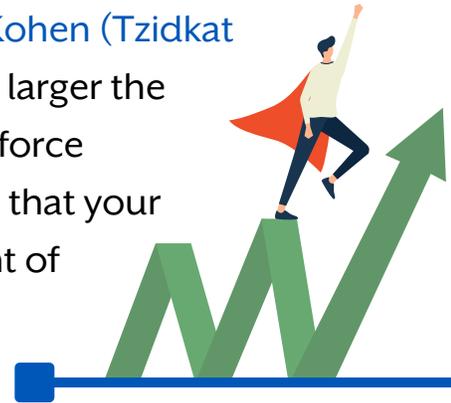


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When we have fallen, when we are low, these reminders can help us pick ourselves up:

1. Remember Your Potential

The greatest people make mistakes. Indeed, [Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen \(Tzidkat HaTzadik 40:4\)](#) has said the larger the inclination to do evil, the larger the potential for greatness. He says there is an equal and opposite force between evil and righteousness within each person. Recognize that your self-same person is capable of living uprightly, and to the extent of your ill will — as bad or low as you think you are — you have power to exercise goodness.



2. Struggling is Part of Being Human

To make mistakes is a quintessential part of the human experience, and on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we embrace that with the blowing of the shofar. The shofar-blowing service consists of a number of blasts separated into stanzas. Each stanza comprises a single blast, the tekia, followed by a broken blast of either a teruah (nine small blasts) or shevarim (three blasts) and another tekia. As explained by Rabbi Yehuda Amital, former rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Gush, this is a representation of the human experience. To him, the simple blasts of the tekiot at the beginning and end of each stanza represent the simple sounds of the beginning and end of our lives, but the broken sound in the center represents the experience throughout our lives. [“During his lifetime, nothing is simple, and his tortured soul cannot emit a simple sound.”](#) In that vein, the final passage of the central prayer of Rosh Hashanah praises G-d:

For you hear the sound of the shofar and you give ear to the teruah, and none is comparable to you. Blessed are you, Hashem, Who hears the Teruah of His people Israel with mercy.

