

Sparks

by Rabbi David Aaron
Founder and Dean, Isralight
Rosh Yeshiva, Orayta

Ready to HotSync Your Soul? *Secrets to a Super-Natural Life of Freedom and Synchronicity*

Years ago, I saw these sandals I really liked. At the time, I knew nothing about these shoes other than I just liked the way they looked. So I went into a store and I tried on a pair, but they didn't feel right. They had all these funny bumps inside of them.

I told the salesman, "There is something wrong with these shoes."

He said, "No there is something wrong with your feet. You must understand that these shoes are designed to support the shape of a natural foot."

"What's unnatural about my feet. They're in their natural place — at the end of my legs."

He laughed. "You don't understand. Your feet have taken the unnatural shape of the shoes you've been wearing. And the shoes you've been wearing are good for killing cockroaches in tight corners, but they are not meant to contain feet."

I felt insulted so I took my feet and walked out. But he had planted an idea in my mind and suddenly I was acutely aware of the cockroach killing potential of the shoes I was wearing. So I went back.

He did not gloat. He was compassionate. And he sold me a nice pair of these shoes. But he warned me: "Go slow with these shoes. Wear them only an hour or two a day at first. Until your feet get used to them. But I guarantee, once your feet return to their natural state, these shoes will be the best shoes you ever bought. You're gonna feel the difference."

I said "Right, right."

And I put on the shoes and I decided to walk home. An hour goes by, two hours, three and all of sudden, I feel like my feet are being ripped apart with pain shooting up my spine. And I can't believe it! I've been ripped off. It's these lousy expensive shoes with the dumb bumps."

So I go back and complain. And the salesman says to me "I bet you wore these more than two hours."

"So?"

"So, I'm telling you. Be patient and you'll see — these shoes are going to fit like a dream."

He was right. I have worn nothing else since then. And I found out that the most natural of things can initially feel very unnatural, but eventually you really know the difference.

Many of my students are astonished to learn that the commandments — *mitzvahs*— guide us towards a natural life and empower us to become our most natural selves. That the commandment-driven life is all about being in sync with the cosmic principles; attuning us to the will of G-d that governs all life.

What really are the *mitzvahs*?

mitzvahs, plural — *mitzvah*, singular — is often translated as commandment, but that doesn't do it justice. *Mitzvah* really comes from the Hebrew word that means "to connect" or "to unite."

Many people mistakenly think of commandments as demands. They are not.

A demand sounds threatening and self denying, while a command is an invitation to commune, to join, which is joyous and empowering.

A *mitzvah* is about connecting with G-d. It's through the *mitzvahs* that we transcend our ego, and synchronize our individual lives to the universal life, bonding our selves with G-d, the all-embracing Universal Self of all selves, the Soul of souls. G-d is the Great Self — the Ultimate "I" — the source of all will, intelligence and love. The Torah tells us that before the Israelites even knew what the *mitzvahs* were they accepted them unequivocally and unconditionally, telling G-d "we will do and we will hear." The Talmud says that G-d responded in admiration, "Who revealed this secret to My children, the secret that the ministering angels use for themselves, "Bless G-d, you angels of His, you mighty ones who perform His bidding, hearkening to the voice of His word." (Psalms 103:20)

In contrast, the Talmud, also tells us that a heretic criticized the Israelites for being so impetuous putting their mouth before their ears. It makes more sense to first hear what the commandments would be and then decide whether to accept them or not. What did the Israelites understand that this heretic obviously was missing?

This heretic understands G-d as a being separate from man, floating in heaven over there, and that the *mitzvahs* are His demands. He therefore sees the acceptance of *mitzvahs* as a sign of weakness and an act of self sacrifice. You are surrendering your will and your self interests to the will and self interest of this other being—G-d. But the Israelites knew better. They knew that G-d is the root, context, ground and essence of our soul. They understand that there couldn't be any conflict of self interests, because the soul is a spark of the Great Universal Self. If G-d were the sun each one of us would be a ray of His light. To do the *mitzvahs* is actually an act of Great Self expression. It's an act of strength. In sync with G-d, I am even more natural and empowered to express the real me. This is the secret the angels know— performing the will of G-d is a joyous opportunity for self expression. Through the *mitzvahs* we attune ourselves to the Ultimate Self; radiate His light and channel His presence.

That's what it's about.

Yet, I know so many people who think of *mitzvahs* as nothing more than good deeds. Like brownie points, you rack them up, you save them, you cash them in the next world.

This reminds me of when I was dating a woman and to get a sense of who she was, I asked her what she envisioned in her future home, once she was married and had a family. She said: "What comes to mind, as a symbol of our home? I see a *mitzvah* chart on the refrigerator door, and whenever the children do a good deed, they get a star on that chart. And when they collect about 10 or 15 stars, they get a prize."

I said "That's nice. But what else do you envision in your home?"

But that was it. That was what she thought of as a wonderful day in her home. She felt my disappointment, I guess, because she said, "Well, how about you?"

So I said, "When I think of my home, I think of ... I don't know ... I think of ... light. I want my home to be full of light."

And she said, "that could run a high electrical bill."

That's when we both realized that this was not a match.

Of course, it is nice to have a *mitzvah* chart for children. I would use it too. It's a metaphor that's important for children to gauge their growth. But there are adults who still have a childish sense that *mitzvahs* are brownie points. It's as if they thought that G-d has a big cosmic refrigerator and on His refrigerator He has your chart. That implies, of course, that G-d must have a cosmic oven also. And right in that oven is your transgression chart. So beware of G-d's kitchen.

Mitzvahs are surely more than collecting brownie points. They are actions which bring health and healing to the world restoring us to our natural godly essence; plugging us into to the source of life.

SPIRITUAL HYGIENE

The Talmud says that returning to the ways of commandments brings healing and health to the world. In contrast, transgression is associated with sickness.

Why? Because it causes stress and disease in the world.

We all know there is physical hygiene. You brush your teeth everyday. And if you don't, you lose your teeth.

So why do some people think that there physical hygiene — things you must do as part of your daily routine — but not spiritual hygiene? Why do people think that the physical body has very real principles and rules that maintain a healthy harmony between it and its environment, but that the spirit doesn't?

The Hebrew word for healing *refuah* is rooted in the word *refueh* meaning "loose" or "lax." What's hinted here is that sickness comes through tension, strain and stress, and health comes through harmony, wholeness and integration.

The Hebrew word for sickness is *machala*, and the mystics teach that one gets well by turning *machala* into *maholos* which means a dance.

The *mitzvahs* gives our life a rhythmic dance-like flow.

The Talmud says that in the after life, those who kept the *mitzvahs* will dance in a circle around G-d, and G-d will lead them in an eternal dance.

You can't know how to souldance without the dancing lessons that the *mitzvahs* provide. *mitzvahs* are like the footprints that dance studios paint on the floor in order to teach people to dance.

Imagine you walk into Life's Dance Studio and you see footprints on the floor. You say, "Gee, who brought in all this mud? Look at all the footprints on your floor."

But you are told, "No, no, we painted that intentionally."

You take a closer look and see that each footprint has 1, 2, 3, 4 ... 1, 2, 3, 4. It looks rigid and silly.

But the dance instructor says "Follow the steps, follow the steps."

When you start you might feel kind of unnatural and stiff, but the more you do it — the more you coordinate your life to the universal life — the more gracefully you move, and you catch on to the dance, to the harmony. Then you realize that there is so much more between the steps.

It is written that when a person does one mitzvah, it already leads them into the next mitzvah, because we don't view *mitzvahs* as separate brownie points, but as the movement of life. A life of *mitzvahs* is the Dance of Life.

THE DANCE OF FREEDOM

Now there are a lot of dances — there is disco dancing and square dancing. There are tangos and waltzes and rhumbas. So just what kind of dance are we talking about?

Free dance. Through *mitzvahs* we dance our way to freedom — the freedom to be the real you and me. Interestingly enough, the first of the Ten Commandments states: "I, G-d, am your G-d, who took you out of Egypt." You probably know that the Israelites endured many years of cruel oppression under the tyranny of the King of Egypt, before being freed from slavery by a series of miracles. They crossed the Red Sea and received the commandments at Mt. Sinai.

Now this stupendous event happened only 50 days after they left Egypt, so there is no possible way they could have forgotten what just happened. How then are we to understand this strange statement?

Imagine that six weeks ago you almost drowned and a stranger by the name of Jack came out of nowhere and saved your life. You owe him everything. You intend to name all your future children Jack, Jacqueline, Jacket, Jacquzzi ... And then the phone rings and the voice you will never ever forget, says to you, "Hi Dave, this is Jack, you know, the Jack who saved your life ..." Does he really need to say that? As far as you are concerned is there even another Jack in the world?

So too, the very first of the *mitzvahs* seems just as bizarre, and yet it is the root of all the commandments. To boot, it doesn't even seem to be a commandment. Isn't it just a statement?

The answer is: We are commanded to know that G-d is "I" — the Great "I" — the source of our freedom. And we are commanded to continue to liberate ourselves from other oppressions by bonding with G-d as the Great "I." When you live the *mitzvahs* you hot sync your will into the Will of all wills; you hot sync your soul into the Soul of all souls.

Living the *mitzvahs* is the secret to a super-natural life filled with joyous celebration of freedom and synchronicity.

Rabbi David Aaron

Author of Endless Light, Seeing G-d, The Secret Life of G-d, Inviting G-d In, Love is My Religion, Soul Powered Prayer, Living A Joyous Life, and The G-d-Powered Life