

Everyday holiness

Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar is a beautiful book that reminds us we need to stay in a holy place not only during the High Holidays, but every day of the year.

Written by Alan Morinis, the book covers the subjects of humility, pa-



Life Coach Corner

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tience, gratitude, compassion, order, equanimity, honour, simplicity, enthusiasm, silence, generosity, truth, moderation, loving-kindness, responsibility, trust and faith. It is a guidebook for how to live more spiritually, and it is a guide to live a more meaningful and well-directed life.

Recommended by the father of dear friends of ours, *Everyday Holiness* is full of riches such as this: "Life is a curriculum. Each of us is assigned to master something in our lives. You have already been given your assignment and you have already encountered it, though you may not be aware that what faces you is a curriculum, nor that this is the central task of your life. My purpose is to help you wake up to your personal curriculum and to guide your steps towards mastering it."

So what is your personal curriculum? He talks about how your curriculum shows up in issues that repeatedly challenge you.

"I'm talking about the behaviours that dunk you in the same soup, time and time again. The sooner you become familiar with your curriculum and get on with mastering it, the faster you'll get free of these habitual patterns. Then you will suffer less. Then you will cause less suffering for others. Then you will make the contribution to the world that is your unique and highest potential."

The author suggests we learn about *mussar*, which is also the simple Hebrew word for "ethics." It is a way of life and a

way of living and through studying it, we learn how to "realize our highest spiritual potential, including an everyday experience that is infused with happiness, trust and love."

Imagine waking up every day and feeling elevated, pure and whole? What does it take to achieve that? So many of the answers are contained in this book that states: "When all is said and done, holiness and wholeness and any other elevated idea of the spiritual goal comes down to a simple Yiddish notion: you are supposed to be a mensch, which means "a decent human being."

Morinis talks about how the word mensch really captures the integrity, honour and respect that a person can hope for in his life. *Mussar*, this path of spiritual self-development, is extraordinary because its goal is not self-help or to gratify all of your desires, but its purpose is to "become the master of your desires so you can fulfil the potential of your higher nature."

It becomes clear that you can't achieve holiness without beginning by being a mensch. Then in order to become holy, what you are really doing is uncovering the holy purity that is already innate within you. Then through introspection and self-examination, you can identify the traits that are hindrances in your life, and are getting in the way.

Some of the ways we can uncover the holy purity is through meditation, silence and retreat, and keeping a *mussar* diary. The author writes about "bearing the burden of the other," which translates into acts of generosity, loving-kindness and compassion, and care undertaken for the benefit of another.

Says Morinis: "In endeavouring to help others, we will surely encounter our own spiritual curriculum, which provides us with an ideal opportunity to grapple with our own soul traits and to grow spiritually."

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