

Daf 5:

1. **Less anxiety at bedtime.** There is an opinion that a Torah scholar, because he's constantly studying, does not need to read the evening Shema before going to bed. He says it during Maariv, and that is enough. But Abaya says even a *talmid chacham* needs to say one pasuk: "I give my soul to G-d as if in a safe deposit box for Him to watch. G-d is a G-d of truthfulness." Why does Abaya require this verse? There's a certain anxiety about going to sleep, and the antidote to that fear is knowing that you're letting go and G-d will catch you. G-d is the safest "bank," taking our souls while we sleep and storing them for us.
2. **What do we do about our evil instinct?** When the evil inclination is trying to convince you to do something you shouldn't, how should you respond? First, try to use your good inclination and get it upset at the evil inclination. Sometimes arrogance can be the thing that stops you from sinning, because you know how great you are and someone so great cannot sin. If fighting the evil inclination doesn't work, you should study Torah. If that doesn't work, you should read the Shema. If that doesn't work, you should mention the day of death. The Ishbitzer Rebbe explains: Let's say you have a desire to do something, but on a simple level you realize it's not 100% kosher. But you really want to do it. The first thing you should do is try to use your good inclination to defeat your evil inclination. Often, the evil inclination is in the moment while the good inclination can see the bigger picture. But that might not be enough to convince you to abandon the thing you desire. So try studying Torah. The Torah can tell you the permitted way to have something that might otherwise be forbidden. But sometimes there isn't a permitted way to get what you desire, and when that happens what you have to do is remind yourself that life is finite. When you remember that someday you will die, it becomes easier to deny your evil inclination. The point of this whole process is to help you figure out what is real for you and what is just a passing desire.
3. **Was the Torah really all given at Sinai?** Including neviim, ketuvim, mishna, and gemara? Did G-d really tell Moses about all the arguments that, for example, Hillel and Shammai were going to have? It's certainly possible that Moses was given every word. But it's also possible Moses was simply given the principles from which everything else could be extrapolated.
4. **G-d sometimes give people "affliction out of love."** The gemara says that if a person is experiencing hardships, he should examine his life. If he searches and cannot find any reason for the hardships, the reason might be *bittul* Torah. But sometimes it's not even that. A person might be doing everything right and still have hardships. These are called afflictions of Divine love. They are trials from G-d intended to teach lessons. G-d sends these trials to teach us and reprimand us because He loves us. So when something in your life seems terrible, remember that there's more to it. There is a Divine calculation you don't understand. The Talmud tries to limit this concept of affliction out of love by stating that if the hardship takes you away from Torah study, it's not an affliction of love.
5. **Three things come through hardship: Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and *olam haba*.** Why do these three things come only through hardship? Acquiring Torah, in addition to the years of study, requires a sincere attempt to improve your character. This is hugely difficult. It's easier to go through the entire Talmud than to change even one negative character trait. Eretz Yisrael is a very powerful place. It is earned only through hardship because it requires an extra level of *kedusha*. And to merit *olam haba* requires a tremendous amount of self-discipline. You need to learn to overcome the temptations of this world and sacrifice short-term gratification in favor of a long-term goal.
6. **Is there a law of *metzora* in Israel today?** The gemara says that one thing that can sometimes be an affliction of love is *tzaraas*. But this actually depends on where you live. In Israel, someone

with *tzaraas* must leave the walled cities, even today. Therefore, for someone living in Israel today *tzaraas* could not be considered an affliction of love, because it would make life much harder. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik explains that though the majority of the laws of *tzaraas* don't apply today, the law of a *metzarah* needing to leave a walled city in Israel would still apply.

7. **Someone who's in jail can't break himself out.** Rabbi Yochanan used to ask sick people, "do you want this illness?" If they said no, he healed them. But when he himself was sick, he needed someone else to help him. If he could perform all these miracles to heal other people, why couldn't he heal himself? Because a person can't free himself from his own prison. No one can do everything alone, and we might have a great ability to help others but still struggle for ourselves. Even a skilled doctor will need help from another doctor if he gets sick. A great rabbi still needs a rabbi.
8. **Rabbi Yochanan: stoic or saint?** A story is told about Rabbi Yochanan: he was once bathing in a river, and he was beautiful. Reish Lakish, who was a bandit at that time, saw him and thought he was a beautiful woman, so he jumped into the river and ended up talking to Rabbi Yochanan. Rabbi Yochanan told Reish Lakish he should use his strength for Torah, and Reish Lakish told Rabbi Yochanan his beauty should have been given to a woman. Rabbi Yochanan replied that he had a sister who was even more beautiful, and if Reish Lakish applied himself to Torah he could marry her. Reish Lakish listened and ended up becoming a great scholar. The two of them often debated in the gemara, until they got into a big fight. Reish Lakish got sick and Rabbi Yochanan refused to pray for him. Rabbi Yochanan had lost ten children, and he carried around a bone from the youngest. But he considered this to be afflictions from love, and he never lost his faith. Was he a saint or a stoic? So many terrible things happened to him, and he stoically accepted everything. But when his sister came to him to beg him to pray for her husband Reish Lakish, he refused. He said Reish Lakish was going to die and there was no point in interceding, which doesn't sound like the attitude of a saint. This is one of the most difficult stories in the Talmud, but perhaps forgiveness was something that the tzaddik Rabbi Yochanan struggled with. Every person, no matter how great, has tests and challenges that he must work to overcome.
9. **Prayer in time and space.** Abba Benyamin says, "There are two things that I would be conscientious about even to the point of difficulty: that prayer should be in front of my bed, and that my bed be placed between the north and the south." He did not mean that he literally prayed in front of his bed, but that he would pray soon after waking up. We learn that you should pray first thing in the morning, before you take care of yourself. Rashi says you don't even study Torah before praying, although Tosfot says you can. Prayer is about accepting *ol malchut shamayim*, the yoke of Heaven, and that should be the first thing you do every day. It's also about acknowledging the gifts that G-d gave you, and waking up in the morning is the most miraculous gift. As to where to pray, you need to find a comfortable place where you won't be distracted. The best place to pray is in front of a wall. Although for some it is appropriate to make time to study a straightforward halacha or inspiring *chassidut* before davening, it's important to start the day with *kabbalat ol* and tefillah.
10. **Praying for yourself by yourself, or for a friend with a friend.** If you and a friend are at an out-of-the-way synagogue and you finish praying first, you should not leave your friend behind to make his own way home. If you do, not only is your prayer not accepted, but you cause the Shechinah to depart. Why? In the times of the gemara, synagogues were out in fields and it wasn't safe for people to walk home alone. Leaving a friend behind meant putting that friend in danger. Prayer should not be selfish. It's not just for you. In fact, when you pray for a friend and you also need something yourself, your prayer will get answered first. If you wait for someone else to join your prayer, you increase the Shechinah. But if your prayer is self-absorbed, it won't be answered and it won't draw down the Shechinah.