

## **Emotionally Intelligent Judaism**

**Rabbi Maury Grebenau**

The main thrust of much of Daniel Goleman's research is that emotional intelligence takes people much farther than IQ would alone. Goleman is a researcher and author of numerous books, including his most famous, *Emotional Intelligence*, which spent over a year on the NY Times best sellers list. Goleman argues that this is even truer when it comes to leadership; we must know ourselves well in order to be able to lead others. He advocates leading with a trait he calls "mindfulness". Being aware of what is occurring and appreciating how others are feeling about the situation is critical for discerning our next step. His research calls for slowing the fast pace of life enough to think deeply about the moment.

This week, Yaakov is instructed by Hashem to bring a sacrifice (Bereishis 35:1). This may not seem unusual or remarkable in the least, but a closer look reveals an important lesson which is echoed by Goleman's ideas. Hashem instructs Yaakov to prepare before bringing the sacrifice: '*VaShev Sham*' - "and sit there". The Seforno explains that these words of instruction are critical. Yaakov approaches the experience of connecting with Hashem and is told to take a moment to reflect before he continues. This moment of reflection is part and parcel of Yaakov's experience of the divine

Yaakov is told to experience the critical lesson of mindfulness. It is easy to have aspects of our life become rote behaviors or even tasks which need to be disposed of as quickly as possible. If, however, we approach them as opportunities for development and connection we will have a very different experience. Mindfulness is a way to mine our daily activities, religious and otherwise, for deep and meaningful connections.

Compare the difference between the experience of just bringing a sacrifice or rushing/talking through prayers with the experience of truly connecting with Hashem. The difference between rushing a child out to school and enjoying their company for a few moments as the day begins. The difference between feeling the burden of helping a struggling classmate and feeling uplifted by the experience of helping someone else succeed. In all of these situations the difference is mindfulness. Do we pause and allow ourselves to be mindful of the experience, or not? A few moments of preparation can make a world of difference in our experiences and what we get out of them.