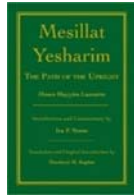


Mussar Texts

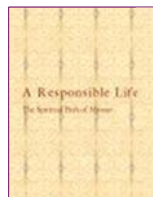
The primary text for study will be *Mesillat Yesharim* (The Path of the Upright) by Rabbi Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (Ramchal), translated by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan with a forward and commentary by Rabbi Ira F. Stone. *Mesillat Yesharim* is a classic of Jewish ethical literature. Written by one of the leading kabbalists of the late Middle Ages, it is also a window into the kabbalists' understanding of the connection between ethics and mystical vision.



Rabbi Ira Stone, consummate teacher and stirring speaker, is a major force in the resurgence of the mussar movement. In his introduction, he presents Luzzatto and *Mesillat Yesharim* in their historical context, and gives us new insights into Kaplan's emerging theology. Stone also explains the principles of reading that he uses in his commentary and teaching to make this medieval text so inspiring to readers today.

Working to perfect one's character through the observance of *middot* (character traits) is the core of mussar practice. The 13 *middot* outlined in Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Satanov's *Cheshbon ha-Nefesh* (Accounting of the Soul) is the heart of Mussar Pathways practice. Rabbi Stone's shiurim will illuminate the connections between fulfilling our responsibility to love our neighbor and the *middot* and *mitzvot*.

Students will be encouraged to read Rabbi Stone's *A Responsible Life: The Spiritual Path of Mussar* so that they can better grasp Rabbi Stone's contemporary theological framework of mussar. "Love your neighbor" is the central obligation of Jewish life. Mussar focuses on this precept as a means of self-improvement and spiritual growth. In this book, Rabbi Stone explains how participation in a mussar group can offer support and guidance for this powerful spiritual practice.



Madrichim

Beulah Trey was born into a South African Jewish family, raised in an orthodox Jewish community, married into a fourth generation reform family, is a follower of a conservative Rabbi and a member of a Reconstructionist synagogue. Finding mussar has given Beulah a practice that incorporates the diverse paths inside and outside Judaism that have nurtured her soul. Aware of the power of mussar to transform lives, she pioneers the applications of these practices to leadership, team and organizational transformation.

Mindy Shapiro is a Jewish communal professional with over 25 years of experience. She was the founding director of a program of Moving Traditions—*Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* Mindy has been studying mussar with Rabbi Stone since 2003. Mussar provides her with a framework for leading a more mindful life, something she would like to help others to do.

Miki Young combines a unique background of business acumen and spirituality. She has both a Masters in Marketing Communication and in Jewish Studies. As a mussar student, Miki is committed to both her own practice and to encouraging others in engaging. She has studied with Rabbi Stone for five years and speaks frequently on ethics, spirituality in the workplace, and social responsibility.

Phone **215-735-5148** to find out more about the Mussar Pathways program and to schedule a meeting to talk about your participation.

Tuition: \$250 a semester.

Mussar Pathways

Temple Beth Zion Beth Israel
300 S. 18th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
info@mussarleadership.org
www.mussarleadership.org



Mussar Pathways

Contemporary Practice for a
Responsible Life



- *Why is it so difficult to do what is good?*
- *What is the relationship between living a religious life and an ethical one?*
- *How can religion strengthen an ethical life?*
- *And most significantly, in a cultural milieu in which personal and spiritual satisfaction are seen as identical, how can we achieve a spirituality that takes us beyond ourselves?*

These are the questions that the Mussar Pathways program addresses. The path to the answers to these questions is not through some sort of "divine intoxication," but through profound concern for the other people among whom we live.

Mussar addresses these very critical issues within a contemporary Jewish context. Mussar brings the reality of Torah to everyday life. The Mussar Movement provides an accumulated body of knowledge and literature to answer the question: *If everyone knows what it means to be good, why is it so hard to be good?*

Mussar provides individuals with the skills to think beyond themselves and to make critical choices that will significantly benefit others in their lives. By doing so, mussar creates stronger, more positive relationships.

Through the practical applications of mussar, one can learn how to awaken to a spirituality that is compassionate, moral, and generous. Mussar is a medium for expanding personal responsibility to positively transform ourselves and our relationships with others.

Rabbi Ira F. Stone

The Mussar Pathways Program under the direction of Rabbi Stone brings mussar practice to light every day of every week through study, refection, and practice. He is a mussar scholar who has been studying mussar for over 30 years. He has taught mussar for the past seven years to community members and to rabbinic students. He lectures widely on the topic, and authored several books on the topic. Rabbi Stone has taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and has been a scholar in residence throughout the country. He is the Rabbi at Temple Beth Zion Beth Israel, a Conservative synagogue in the heart of center city.

Weekly Mussar Pathways Sessions

Mussar sessions will be held at Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel on Tuesdays from 7:00 to 9:00 PM beginning on September 28, 2010. These weekly sessions will have two components: the Rabbi's Shiur, and the Va'ad.

- For the first hour, everyone will participate in the **Rabbi's Shiur**. During this time, Rabbi Stone will explicate a classic of mussar literature—Ramchal's *Mesillat Yesharim* (The Path of the Upright)—in light of our obligation to love our neighbor.
- During the second hour, everyone will join in one of three small groups—**va'adot**. The focus of the **va'ad** will be on reflecting and sharing how to acquire a particular *middah* (a character trait such as such as humility, order, or patience) on a more consistent basis. The goal is both to understand when our actions fall short of our intentions and how to be more attentive in the future.

Mussar Practice

Participants will be supported in their development of the four components of mussar practice.

- **Cheshbon/Journaling** — Students are expected to journal daily about their encounters with another through the lens of the *middah* they are working to perfect that week and create intentions for the day to come.

- **Chevruta** — Once a week, students will meet with their *chevruta* (study partner) to prepare for the upcoming shiur by studying together the relevant chapter of *Mesillat Yesharim*.
- **Torah Study** — Every day, students are to study systematically some Torah on their own.
- **Mitzvot** — At the heart of the mussar experience is the fact that to be human is to be commanded. The observance of these religious obligations is a part of that reality. This year, as a *Kahal* (community) we will explore elements of the observance of three mitzvot – the twice daily reciting of the *sh'ma*, honoring Shabbat and keeping it holy, and saying the appropriate *brachot* before eating.

Mussar Pathways

There are three levels of mussar small group sessions.

Chadashim — for first and second year students who want to become familiar with the principles and practices of mussar and who desire to develop a daily mussar discipline.

Vatikim — for returning students who have developed a daily mussar practice and who are committed to using mussar as a means of repairing the world.

Mazkeh Ha-Rabbim — for those mussar students who are at a point in their practice that they know they want to bring what they have learned about mussar to a wider community. Rabbi *Yisroel Salanter* (1809-1883) coined the term *Mazkeh Ha-Rabbim* (“to bring merit to the multitude”) to encourage his students not only to learn mussar, but also to take it more broadly into their worlds. Students at this level will strive to do this through teaching in the Mussar Pathways program, or through translating mussar ideas into other contexts in which they participate. People who experience mussar as a primary way that they approach their lives, who have experience leading groups, and who believe their mussar practice is at a point where being a *madrach* or using mussar in other contexts is of interest to them are encouraged to speak with their *madrach*.

The Middot (The Character Traits)

Seder (order) - *All of your actions and possessions should be orderly—each and every one in a set place and at a set time. Let your thoughts always be free to deal with that which lies ahead of you.*

Menuchah Hanefesh (equanimity) - *Rise above events that are inconsequential—both bad and good—for they are not worth disturbing your composure.*

Savlanut (patience) - *When something bad happens to you and you did not have the power to avoid it, do not aggravate the situation even more through wasted grief.*

Nikiut (cleanliness) - *Let not stain or ugliness be found in your possessions or in your home, and surely not on your body or clothes.*

Haritzut (decisiveness) - *All of your acts should be preceded by deliberation; when you have reached a decision, act without hesitating.*

Zerizut (diligence) - *Always find something to do—for yourself or for a friend, and don't allow a moment of your life to be wasted.*

Anavah (humility) - *Always seek to learn wisdom from everyone, to recognize your failings and correct them. In doing so you will learn to stop thinking about your virtues and you will take your mind off your friend's faults.*

Shtika (silence) - *Before you open your mouth, be silent and reflect: "What benefit will my speech bring me or others?"*

Tzedek (righteousness) - *What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.*

Emet (truth) - *Do not allow anything to pass your lips that you are not certain is completely true.*

Kimutz (frugality) - *Be careful with your money. Do not spend even a penny needlessly.*

Nichutah (calmness) - *The words of the wise are stated gently. In being good, do not be called evil.*

Prishut (separation) - *Strengthen yourself so that you can stop lewd thoughts. Draw close to your spouse only when your mind is free, occupied only with thoughts of fulfilling your conjugal duties and procreating.*