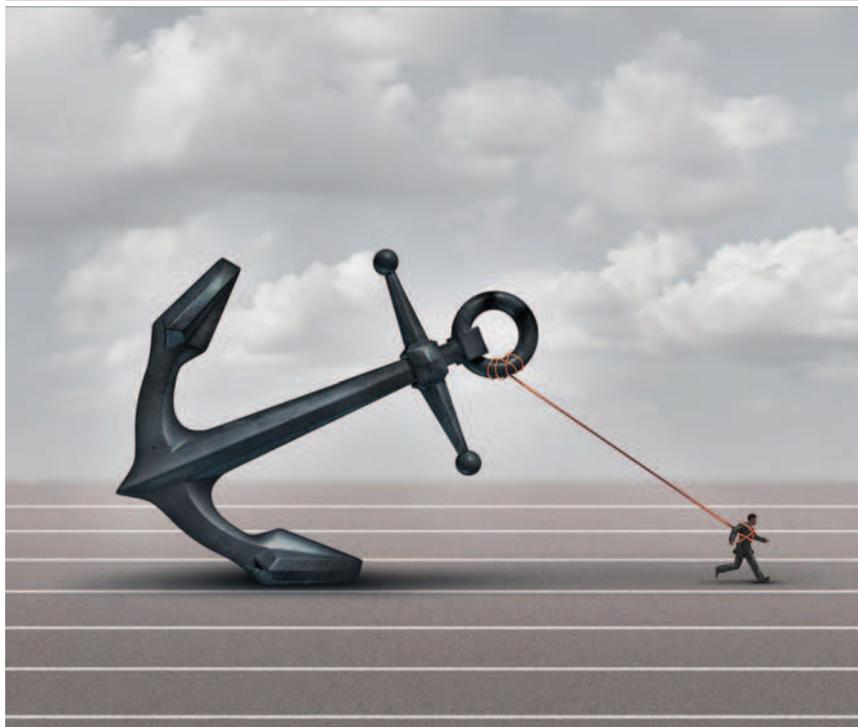




# CREATING A better world

Striving for Shalom by letting go of farribles

BY LEONARD CARR



**THE HIGH HOLY DAYS ARE THE TIME TO BRING** our world back into order through re-establishing Hashem's dominion over our lives. This means rededicating your entire world and returning your life to the authority of the singular guiding principle of Shalom. This restores coherence and integrity of our material, psychological, and spiritual lives. Bringing our lives back to Shalom means everything is held together in unity; a oneness that can only be achieved when everything is returned to the dominion of one Sovereign. It is our duty in this world to direct all of our efforts, both in personal growth and in our relationships, to actualising the ideal of Shalom and at all costs avoiding disuni-

ty and fragmentation that results from or gives rise to conflict. The biggest challenge that we face in making Hashem our true Monarch is liberating ourselves from the domination of our own subjective dramas that separate us from ourselves, others, and ultimately from Hashem.

We experience personally and witness many instances where relationships, marriages, and families are torn apart by people being so loyal and committed to their own egotism and self-righteous indignation, resentment, bitterness, greed, and disappointment that flow from that, that they will destroy what is most dear to

them rather than to face their own pain or negative character traits. Shalom means being at one with yourself and in harmony with your world. If you are torn between your true feelings, like love and a need for connection, and your ego that demands revenge and honour, you are at that point a fragmented individual, trapped in slavery to the conflict between a deeply held inner truth and an infantile self-centred need to show the world who is boss.

Being divided against yourself will inevitably put you in conflict with those around you and cause division in your world. Any unfinished business creates a schism between our present world and the part of you that is still stuck in the hurt or anger of the past. You become a hostage to a story that no longer serves you. In this circumstance, you become torn between investing energy in keeping the unprocessed experience alive and having the vision and drive to create a new future. You literally allow the past to hijack the future. What I have tried to describe above is the anatomy of a farrible.

What, you may ask, keeps a farrible alive? We all want to feel a sense of sovereignty, which means a feeling of autonomy and mastery over our lives. Implicit in this need is the belief that you have the power and competence to keep your world safe. Whenever you are hurt in some way, by, for example, being betrayed, exploited, let down, or insulted, you feel on a subtle level angry with yourself. It is humiliating to be duped into colluding with your own best interests being

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violated. This is even more so when your good-faith and well-intentioned actions and gestures of generosity are rendered irrelevant or even flatly denied by the other person, let alone appreciated.

There is nothing worse than realizing that in some way you either allowed or failed to protect yourself against another person disrespecting your entitlements or sensibilities, or disregarding your worth or sense of dignity. There is no worse undermining of your sense of personal honour than the feeling of self-betrayal. It is demeaning to be fooled, duped, and rendered powerless by not being given the necessary information about, for example, the other person's true nature or actual intentions. You are rendered unequipped to make informed choices and retain personal autonomy and mastery over your circumstances. You develop a degree of doubt about your ability to accurately read signals, assess situations, or exercise sound judgements in relationships. You lose confidence in the value of or your ability to assert your own deeply held values and principles. Your trust in the guidance of your emotions and intuition is compromised. It becomes that much more difficult after such experiences to know when to open yourself to new possibilities or to the vulnerability that paves the way to a shared meaningful encounter and self-surrender necessary to experience deep intimacy.

When things go awry and moments or interactions become ruined by misdirected speech or action, there are inevitably feelings of embarrassment, shame, and inadequacy. Nobody wants to own these feelings and so power struggles ensue over who is going to be the one to carry them. This leads to the need for endless cycles of recrimination and blame.

Whenever you find yourself in these types of circumstances, you feel robbed of a layer of innocence, trust in your own perception and judgment, and, consequently, in your ability to keep your world safe. You acquire, in place of that lost innocence, a level of weariness about others and cynicism about life. This often extends to a loss of trust of the category of individual who violated your trust,

whether it was a friend, business associate, family member, leader, or employee.

You may try to reaffirm your sense of power and control by holding onto revenge fantasies and resentment because deep down you believe that that will in some magical way punish the other person. You may wish to protest against your feelings of insult and disappointment at your expectations being thwarted or violated. Or, maybe, you simply hold onto bad feelings to protect yourself by keeping an ongoing inner reminder not to trust or open yourself to further discomfort. By reminding yourself of potential future danger, you stay artificially emboldened with outrage that affords you the illusion of power and control to set the boundaries you ordinarily would not feel confident to do from a place of maturity and self-assurance. You may even be feeling guilty for the pain caused to you by others and so you ramp up the intensity of your negative feelings towards them in order to convince yourself that you have a real and valid claim. You might have been accused by someone “gaslighting” you that you are to blame for his abuse of you and you are the bad and crazy one. Or, he may simply deny the validity of your experience and take no ownership of the role that he played in your injury. In such instances you may find yourself entrapped in the drama of obsessively trying to make sense out of what happened, questioning how you could have allowed yourself to be misled, what you missed, how you were seduced or tricked into letting your guard down. Another motive for holding on to past bitterness is to give yourself an alibi to not fulfil your responsibilities to the relationship in the future.

How, you may ask, could you even entertain the thought of forgiveness? In order to forgive others you need to understand and have compassion for the human condition. Briefly sketched, we have limited access to the immediate present, memory of the past is no more than a sketchy re-

construction of disparate shards of memory pulled together from different parts of the brain and altered by imagination and emotions, contaminated by new thoughts or information over time. The future is beyond our grasp. It is our existential condition that we make all decisions in life, no matter how important, with the determinate information available to us at the time. We make mistakes in perception, thinking, and judgment, and we are more clumsy and fallible in these areas than we prefer to acknowledge. We inadvertently hurt our loved ones and ourselves more often in error than out of hateful intentions, even though our actions may be read that way. Oftentimes our behavior is simply a misdirected attempt to feel okay about ourselves, to prove our strength or control over our world. We all long to be recognised, close, welcomed, accepted, embraced, cherished, and, all too often, our efforts to get these needs met provokes the opposite of what we crave. The harder we work at the same counterproductive strategies the worse our dilemma gets. This is because we keep doing the things that served us in childhood or earlier circumstances that do not apply in the current situation.

Only Hashem has access to the “big picture” of the all-encompassing reality called life. The rest of us have only very limited access to small shards of partial realities. We cannot read hearts and minds to even begin to grasp the inner struggles and challenges that every other person we meet faces and about which we have no concept. No two people share the identical reality. Our focus needs to be not on what has happened to us, but on the end goal which is creating a better world for ourselves and those around us to inhabit. This means reaching deep into ourselves and finding the mercy, compassion, and generosity of spirit to let go of the past, and trying, yet again, to create the life that we were created to build. ■