



## Discussion Guide for S1 E2 – Inside Looking Outside Looking In

Guests: Rabbi Dr. Shai Held, Suzannah Neufeld

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1. 4:33 - Rabbi Leon, summarizing Emanuele Berry's journey in learning to communicate again with her father:

*"What Berry discovers... is that she's been carrying this conversation around for years, upset that her father never tried to get to know her, but then she realizes that she hasn't made the requisite effort to get to know him and this conversation and the visit back in time to the basketball game he screwed up, is part of that effort."*

- a. How well do you feel that you communicate with your loved ones?
- b. Have you ever chatted with a parent, child, or sibling about **how** you communicate? Did those conversations have positive outcomes? If so, why did they? If they did not have positive outcomes, why not?

2. 4:57 - Bobby Berry, talking about the basketball game:

*"A lot of the opportunities for me to be seen [by scouts] went out the window... I feel that I have a lot of resentment about the opportunities, that I felt that it could have changed my life, from the way we are now, for me doing what I am, but over the years I've gotten better. And I feel what happened is happened. Um, and I've come to, come to accept it."*

- a. Are there major events, missed opportunities, or certain episodes in your life which have impacted the way you live today? If so, what are they, and how do you think about them now, in retrospect?

- b. When do you think it is helpful for a person to address difficult experiences in their life to try and achieve some resolution, and when do you think it is helpful for them to move on?

3. 8:56 - Rabbi Leon:

*“And yet Bobby didn't know everything about himself in advance. He admits that there was a redemption of sorts in watching the game with Emmanuel.”*

*Bobby: “You know, I actually felt a sense of relief after watching the game with you. I don't think I would have watched it, to tell you the truth. So getting through that with someone that you care, and for them to sit there and watching this be brutally honest, like you said, I'd played like \*\*\*\*, excuse my language...those things are important.”*

- a. What is it in Emanuele's presence and in her “brutal honesty” that allows Bobby to watch the game and confront his difficult memories?
- b. Drawing from your own experience, help unpack what is “redemptive”, to use Rabbi Leon's words, in sharing in another person's struggle or pain: for them, for you, and for the memory behind it?

4. 17:00 - Rabbi Shai:

*“This is a person who is truly out of control, cannot stop himself in this very crude moment. The Talmud reports that she passed gas. And essentially in, in that moment says to him just as this cannot come back, so too Elazar cannot return [i.e., do teshuva for his sins]. And that sets off utter panic in him... Finally, he realizes that the search for someone else to fix it, for someone else to fix him, is not going to work... He puts his head between his knees, he sobs and he dies. And a voice comes forth from heaven and says he has a share in the world to come.”*

- a. What were your initial reactions to hearing the Talmudic story of Elazar ben Durdaya and the prostitute? Were you surprised that Rabbi Shai brought this story in conjunction with the podcast about Bobby and Emanuele Berry?
- b. What do you think of Elazar ben Durdaya's final words: *“אֵין הַדָּבָר תְּלוּי אֶלָּא בִּי”* - “the matter is dependent only upon me”? How did the process that he went through (of asking for help with obtaining God's mercy from the hills and the mountains, the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon, and the stars and

constellations - and being turned down by all of them) help him arrive at this realization?

- c. In what ways is his takeaway relevant for us, today?

5. 33:16 Rabbi Shai:

*“The Kotzker Rebbe says the meaning of Judaism "Arbeit nach sich" - “working on myself”, but be honest about what material you have, what material you don't have. And the story of Elazar is a story to me that at least in part feels like it's honest. It doesn't say, oh, create yourself ex nihilo and make yourself a different self. It says, you know, go inside and work.”*

- a. List 2-4 components that you think are necessary for a person to do *teshuva*. As you look at this list, which of the items come from within a person, and which of them are external?
- b. If we are to take seriously Rabbi Shai's rendering of the Kotzker Rebbe's saying that we do not create ourselves *ex nihilo*, but rather hew away at our stone personalities, where are your edges that need sanding? Describe these character self-improvement projects that you are working on. What inspires you to pursue them, and what challenges do you experience while doing so? If you are not engaging in this kind of work, what obstacles might be preventing you from doing so?

6. 37:50 - Suzannah Neufeld:

*“Body image... is composed of a couple of different areas... I think perhaps the most important is how important your idea is of how and what your body looks like, how important that is in your idea of who you are as a person.*

- a. On a scale of 1-10, how accurately do you think you see your own body (10 being the most accurate, i.e., you see your body *exactly* how other people see it)? If you gave yourself a low grade on this scale, what do you think are the influences that cause this distortion?
- b. If you were to give an honest assessment of how important your own image of your body is to your sense of self on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most important), what number would you give?

- c. Are you happy about your answer to question (b)? If not, what factors – either external or internal – contribute to the gap between how important your body image is to you, and how important you would want it to be?

7. 47:54 - Rabbi Leon:

*“[The exercise of writing our own eulogy or epitaph] offers us the possibility of trying to describe ourselves objectively and to separate ourselves, or take a step back from the sense of judgment... and do a total and thorough accounting of who they are and an accounting of... what matters to them, in a way that does push them to view themselves in as objective or external of a way as possible.”*

- a. Take a few minutes and write two versions of your epitaph. Perhaps the difference between them is who wrote them (a family member, a spouse, a co-worker, a friend, you) – or perhaps they are touching upon two aspects of your lived life. Is the gap between them healthy, or would you want to narrow it?
- b. What character traits do you want to focus on cultivating to make sure that, as Rabbi Leon said, your “lived life match up to the values and norms that [you’re] committed to”?