



BEGINNING *within*

BEGINNING WITHIN MASTER COURSE

1. OUR FUNDAMENTAL NEED

We all have a fundamental need. Without addressing this need, it begins to affect every area of our life. What we say, how we think and the way we interact. By addressing this need, we change the one core thing that impacts everything.

Our Fundamental Need

Let's begin with the main point of Module 1. What I'm going to be teaching you in this module is that there is one fundamental need that we all must meet. It is so fundamental that we all desperately work to have it fulfilled. This fundamental need is our sense of worthiness that I am worthy, deserving, lovable and indispensable. It's the need to know that who I am is different than what I do. Whatever I do or don't do cannot affect my inherent self-worth for who I am. This need can only be met in one of two ways. We can either confirm our worthiness from without, from people, things and circumstances outside of us. Or from within, we can confirm our worthiness through knowing that as a person put here by G-d with intention and for a unique purpose. I am therefore indispensable and worthy, otherwise I wouldn't be here. Choosing whether to depend on circumstances and things to confirm my self-worth versus knowing I am worthy from within ultimately determines whether I live a life of insecurity or a life of security. Ultimately this affects practically every single thing we think, speak and do. I'll begin to explain.

Have you ever been a nervous wreck before going on a date, not being sure how your date will like you?

Has your significant other ever said something to you that led to you erupting emotionally and ruining the next 24 hours?

Has anyone ever pointed out a stain on your clothing at the end of a long evening, leaving you humiliated that you were walking around that way all night?

Have you ever gotten angry at someone you love only to regret it and apologize?

Do you get frustrated when your friend or spouse lost their keys for the tenth time?

Have there been moments when you wondered whether you married the right person?

Do you find yourself repeatedly frustrated with your child or loved one thinking, "What is wrong with them?"

Have you ever felt guilty that you praised someone you don't approve of?

Do you have a pleasure you indulge in when you get frustrated?

Have you ever noticed yourself exaggerating about something to make yourself look just a little better?

Have you ever lied about something simply to prevent an unnecessary confrontation?

Practically everyone can relate to every one of these situations. Why do we behave in all of the above ways? Why do we get frustrated so easily? Why do we respond with irrational anger? Why do we compliment people when we don't really mean it? Why do we minimize our failures and exaggerate our successes? Why do we get so defensive?

We can analyze every individual scenario and discover the reason why. There's always a reason or justification. What we usually don't discover is the reason behind the reason. This is the one reason that drives all of these things. It's to satisfy our core, inherent need, to know that we are acceptable, worthy and valuable. Some people call this self-esteem. It's walking through a day knowing that I'm good enough even if you don't think so. I'm good enough even after I have made a mistake. I'm good enough even though I have faults, weaknesses and failures. I have inherent value simply because G-d made me. The more we imbue this awareness in our psyche, the less the people and circumstances around us affect us.

Greg Baer, author of Real Love, shares these two examples which really clarify how our worthiness, or lack of worthiness, drives the way we respond to events and people around us. Imagine you only had two dollars left to your name. That's all you had. Someone comes and steals your last two dollars from you. You might feel furious. For heaven's sake, it's your last two dollars. Now imagine that you had twenty million dollars and someone steals two dollars from you. Would you feel furious? No. What's two dollars when you have twenty million? Nothing. What we see is that the taking of the two dollars is not what makes us angry. If it did, we would be angry even when we have twenty million. What makes us angry is our own emptiness of money. When we have no money, all that we had was just taken from us. When

we barely have a sense of worthiness, the insult takes away the little bit we have and in our fear, we become emotional. This is because of what's going on with us, not with what you said, had we been full of worthiness, the comment would not have hurt us at all.

Here's a second example. Imagine you're sitting next to your future spouse and you put your arm around their shoulder. How would they feel about such an embrace? Typically, they'd feel wonderful. There's nothing like a loving embrace from someone you love. Now, what would happen if they just returned from the beach with a bad sunburn and without knowing, you give them the same embrace. They'll jump back and scream. Why are they screaming? Not because your embrace hurts but because they are in pain. When someone is in pain the smallest thing sets them off. They screamed because of their own sunburn, their own issue. Likewise, when someone throws an insult at me, if I'm sunburn, meaning, I'm hypersensitive because I lack worthiness, I will feel hurt. The hurt is coming from my sunburn, not their insult. If I have a strong sense of worthiness and I'm not hypersensitive, I will hear the insult without being hurt by it. If it were the events themselves or the insulting words themselves that caused anger, we'd all respond to the same events and insults in the exact same way. There isn't a single event where all people will respond equally. This course will take you through the journey of understanding this thoroughly and doing something about it.

There was a Jewish US serviceman who participated in the liberation of one of the concentration camps during the last days of the Second World War. He recounted how before his platoon entered the camp they were briefed by their commanding officer.

"What you are about to see is like nothing that you have ever seen before," he said.

Referring to their food supplies the soldiers had been given to provide to the hungry inhabitants of the cities that they had captured, including Hershey chocolate bars for the children, the officer warned them about giving any of that food to the camp survivors. "You must know," he said, "that these people have not eaten anything but scraps and morsels for years. As much as you may want to load them up with food, as much as you may wish to give the chocolate bars to the children here, you must not. Their systems would not be able to stand it. They could

actually painfully die as a result. Our cooks and food people know what to give them and how to ensure that they are slowly nourished back to health. Leave it to them.”

As they entered the camp they were looked upon by the prisoners as if they had been sent by heaven. Then a child of skin and bones, barely alive, came up to this soldier and begged him for food. His heart began to break.

A starving, dying Jewish child and he couldn't pull out what was in his pack to give him what he was asking for.

He turned to the child and in his broken American Yiddish told him “I don't have any food I can give you. But I know what I can give you. I can give you a hug.”

In describing what happened next he writes. “I lifted this emaciated child and put my arms around this child, and he put his thin bony arms around me. Tears began flowing down my cheeks. And then an incredible thing happened. Dozens of these children, barely alive began flocking towards me, asking if they too could have a hug from this strong and proud Jewish liberator. Before long there was a long line in front of me. They were standing there, not for a chocolate bar not for a piece of bread, but just for a hug. After all the hatred and cruelty they'd encountered, just a little love and tenderness from a feeling and caring human being is all they wanted. And then even adults came over. They wanted a hug and support from someone who could show them some humanity. We silently hugged and cried together.”

The reason why I am sharing this story is because it demonstrates the fundamental need of every human being. The extent to which this need is fulfilled has an enormous impact on the way we live our lives. We all need to know that we are worthy, that we have value that we are lovable and acceptable exactly as who we are. Every human being needs to know that they have an indispensable purpose in this world.

Before moving to the Bucks County Pennsylvania community in 1999 to serve as a Rabbi I received unsolicited advice from many people. I can only remember one piece of advice which will always stay with me. It was from Dr. Richard Sugarman, a Philosophy Professor at the

University of Vermont. He said, “Make sure people know that they matter.” At the time I did not realize the significance of his advice. However, I have come to realize since then that this is the core of any healthy functioning human being.

A Choice of Two Paths

There are two paths we can take to feeling that we truly matter. The most common way, used by the large majority of society, is by seeking the applause and approval of others. If other people embrace me, like me and praise me, it gives me a sense of worth. It is proof that I matter. This is what I call beginning without, meaning that I affirm my value from people and things outside of me. The second way to come to knowing that we truly matter is through developing a deep understanding and belief that within me lies a unique purpose which I was put on this earth for and that every moment that I breathe, God is reminding me of this purpose and that I matter. Whether you do or don't applaud me and whether I have or have not yet begun fulfilling my purpose, my inherent value hasn't diminished. This is what I call Beginning Within.

It is of utmost importance for every single one of us, that we fully understand in the most nuanced way possible, the difference between these two approaches to accepting ourselves, knowing that we matter and that our existence is indispensable. The reason why it's so important to understand the difference between these two approaches is because they define the way we approach almost everything in life and they ultimately determine our quality of our life. As we understand this more we will see how these two approaches define how we think, what we say and how we behave in every situation we're in.

Insecurity and Security

One fundamental difference between getting our self-worth from without versus getting our self-worth from within is the level of our confidence and security. When we are constantly seeking acceptance and our self-worth from others, we ensure that we remain insecure and self-conscious. Being that we are depending on others who are out of our control, we have no

way of securing our self-worth and so we constantly feel insecure. We also become very self-conscious as we measure everything people say and do to us as to whether it fulfills our inherent need of self-worth or takes it away. This leads us to constantly needing other people to give us attention, approval of our importance and tell us how good we are. Why? Because we don't feel our own self-worth or accept ourselves and therefore need constant approval from the world around us telling us that we're good. The moment we stop hearing this from the world around us, we once again become desperate and seek out attention and approval. Our constant dependence on others to feel secure demonstrates how weak we are on our own. Seeking our self-worth from without actually makes us very weak people. We don't hold the reigns on our life, others do.

A secure person is the exact opposite. We aren't self-conscious. Why? Because we don't depend on what others think to know we are worthy. We don't need others to tell us how good we are. We don't need others to applaud us nor do we rely on others compliments to know our inherent value. Our own self-worth and acceptance comes from within. It comes from us knowing that G-d has created us and constantly gives us life because G-d put us here for a purpose. When someone insults us or when someone compliments us it does not have an overwhelming impact on our emotional state because our inherent need to know that we are acceptable and worthy doesn't come from without. We will surely pay attention to compliments and insults to see what we can learn from them about ourselves for the future. However, we don't personalize them. This is the most powerful way of living because we are not dependent on things and people which are all out of our control. We're only dependent on the one thing which is within our control, and that is ourselves. This makes us strong and powerful people who are independent. This is because we hold the reigns of our own life.

The difference between the secure and insecure person shows when a situation arises where someone has to take responsibility. A secure person rises like a lion to fulfill their purpose in that situation. An insecure person will not always rise up. It will depend on whether it will add or take away from the approval of the people around him. This scenario perfectly demonstrates

how an insecure person is very weak because even in a situation where they can make a difference they will choose to safeguard their sense of self-worth over doing what they should be doing. A secure person makes their decision based on only one thing, what is the correct thing for me to do. A secure person responds to the objective reality of what's going on. The insecure person responds to their subjective reality of how people will perceive them.

If you've ever been disappointed by a leader or politician who hasn't risen to the occasion, you now understand why they haven't. They are insecure and won't step into a role that is not popular. This is why one of the attributes of a real leader is one who will step into responsibilities if they are the correct thing to do, irrelevant of whether it's popular or not. This is also the reason why we get so inspired by such rare leaders. We see in them what we yearn to have within ourselves, independent self-acceptance and self-worth. The truth is that we are all leaders. We are the leaders of our lives and of our families and friends. The more secure we make ourselves, the stronger our relationships become and the healthier our children become.

Arrogance and Humility

So living a life Beginning Within is the necessary ingredient to becoming a secure person. This is also the difference between arrogance and humility. Most people know arrogance when they see it but we often have a very hard time defining exactly what it is. All you need to do is replace the word insecurity with arrogance. You see, arrogance is the attitude and behavior of an insecure person. Arrogance is always a sign of tremendous weakness. It's the attitude and behavior of someone who is constantly trying to prove to themselves and others that they are valuable and worthy.

Imagine this scenario: A top lawyer in the city is sitting at his desk in his prized corner office being that he is a senior partner in the firm. He has finally, as they say, "made it." You need to speak to him because of a legal issue that you're dealing with. You have an appointment with him at 9 AM. You show up to his office and his secretary tells you to go right in as he's waiting for you. When you go into his office he is sitting with his feet up on the desk reading a newspaper. He doesn't look up at you but continues reading even though he knows you're

there. His secretary notified him and you knocked before you walked in. After waiting for two minutes, he puts down the newspaper, he looks at you, and he says “How can I help you?” This is a subtle occurrence that probably happens in different variations thousands of times a day. Here’s a person who has worked all his life to demonstrate his worthiness and value to the world. He’s sitting in the office that demonstrates what a successful and powerful person he is. A simple unassuming person walks into his office and he still feels the need to act out his superiority to this person. The new client is not contesting his worthiness. In fact, by reaching out to him for his help the new client demonstrates how much he values the lawyer. Yet the lawyer still needs to behave in a way that demonstrates his importance. Where does this all come from? Insecurity. And insecurity leads to a behavior called arrogance. In fact the moment we see someone behaving this way we begin to sense how insecure they are. And the moment we see someone acting with arrogance we can be sure that it is because they are insecure. This is the reason why they need to assert their value upon everyone. In some way the lawyer is demonstrating that he needs his new client to approve of him in order for him to be worthy. That is the unspoken story of what’s going on. Imagine, after all his years in law school and all his years of practice he still is the same insecure person. This is truly a human tragedy. One thing this lawyer has not learned is that if he wants to feel his worthiness he has to stop getting it from other people and things, like the office he has or the car he drives. Only if he acknowledges his inherent worthiness from within will this insecure behavior change.

Humility is a very misunderstood word. This is the reason why most people associate humility with weakness. Here’s the surprising fact: humility breeds unbelievable strength. You see, humility is the behavior of a secure person. It’s the lawyer who is welcoming and down to earth. He has no need to assert himself because his self-worth comes from within. It is this strength of humility that we are preparing to discover. We first need to be clear about these fundamental concepts of without and within, security and insecurity and arrogance and humility.

Now, there is a form of humility which I am going to refer to as false humility. This is when someone acts as if they are humble. This means that they act one way which is not consistent with the way they feel and think. You give someone a compliment and tell them how good they are about some talent they have. And they make a motion with their hand and they say I'm not that good while really feeling high from your compliment and thinking to themselves that they're really good. Their act of humility is simply that, an act. That is false humility.

You may be thinking, so how do we know when someone's humility is real or false. The answer to that question is that we may not know, it simply depends on our ability to read other people. But it's also not that important to know. What's most important to know is whether I am truly humble or I am putting on an act of false humility while I am really arrogant. Now, this is really important to know because it tells me to what extent I am living from without and to what extent I am living from within.

So let's go recap the main points in module 1.

1. We all have an inherent human need: To know that we are worthy.
2. There are only two ways for us to find worthiness: From without or from within
3. Finding worthiness from without creates insecurity and arrogance
4. Finding worthiness from within creates security and humility
5. Attempting to get worthiness from without makes us weak and dependent
6. Attempting to get worthiness from within makes us powerful and independent

Let's conclude by doing a simple exercise right now. You can fill out these two questions in the form entitled Where Am I At.

Question 1: From 1 – 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, which number would reflect how much of your life is lived from within. Don't overthink, simply choose a number.

Question 2: Write down one way your life would be different if you lived more from within.