



**SOURCE SHEET: JEWISH SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR SELF-COMPASSION**

**1. Compassion:**

"The wish that all sentient beings may be free from suffering."

Dalai Lama

"Deep awareness of the suffering of oneself and other living beings, coupled with the wish and effort to alleviate it."

Dr. Paul Gilbert

**2. Self-Compassion**

"When we suffer, caring for ourselves as we would care for someone we truly love. Self-compassion includes self-kindness, a sense of common humanity, and mindfulness." Dr. Kristin Neff

**3. Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a mental process that includes

1. Awareness of the present moment
2. Nonjudgmental Acceptance of experience as it arises – willingness to allow thoughts and feelings to be what they are even if they are unpleasant
3. Defusion – seeing thoughts and feelings as experiences you have in a larger field of awareness; developing distance and distinction from self-attacking thought; understanding and having the experience that "you" are not your thoughts and feelings.

[Fusion with thoughts refers to "stuff your mind tells you that gets in the way when you get caught up in it or hooked by it."]

**4. Common Humanity**

**All humans are subject to suffering**



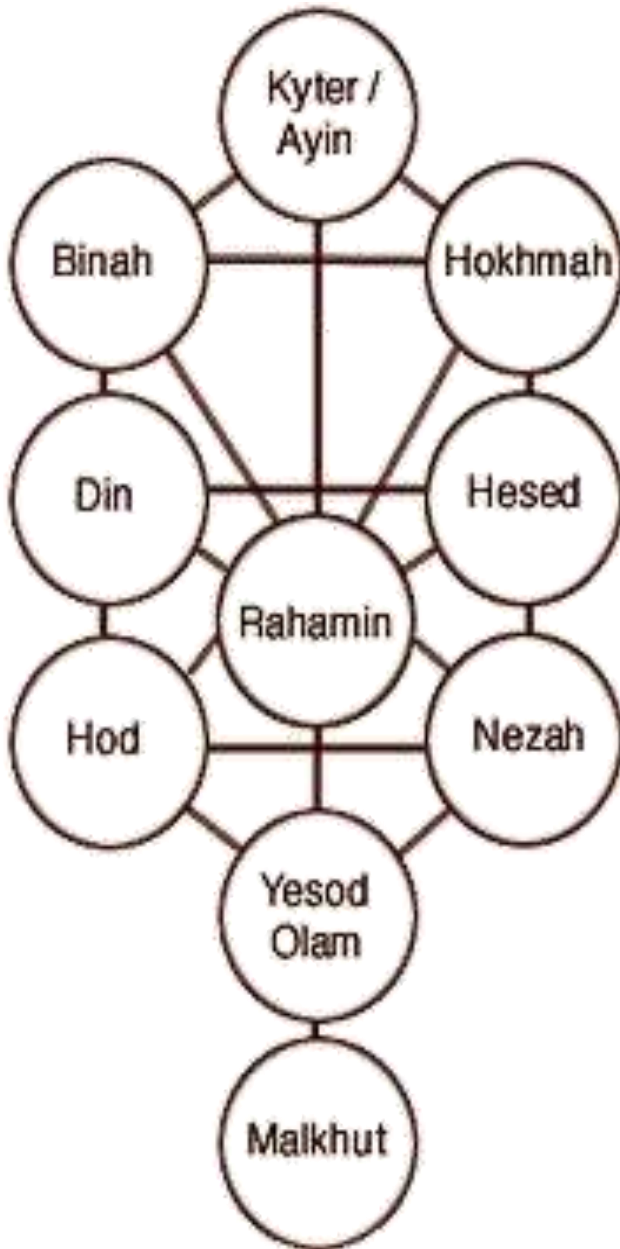
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5. Exodus 33,19 ורחמתי את אשר ארחם, ורחמתי את אשר ארחם, "**I will be gracious to whom I choose, and I will be merciful to whomever I shall be merciful to,**"

6. Exodus 34:6-7 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed: "**The LORD! the LORD!**"<sup>a</sup> **God compassionate** and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations."

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**5. The Etz Chayyim –Tree of Life – 10 Sfirot**



**Keter** Crown, Divine Will

**Hochmah** wisdom, insight

**Binah** understanding, discernment

**Hesed** love, lovingkindness

**Din** – judgment, **Gevurah** strength, responsibility

**Rachamin** – *compassion*.

**Tiferet** - the heart

**Netzach** – victory, energized engagement

**Hod** - glory, functions as humility

**Yesod** – Foundation, creativity, connection

**Malkhut** – Kingdom, Shechina – Divine Presence



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8. Tomer Devorah Chapter 1

[From [https://www.sefaria.org/Tomer\\_Devorah](https://www.sefaria.org/Tomer_Devorah)]

**Chapter 1 - That it is fitting for a person to resemble his Creator:** It is fitting for a person to resemble his Creator and then he will be [configured] in the secret of the Highest Form, [both] in image (*tzelem*) and likeness (*demut*). If he is alike in his body but not in his actions, he betrays the Form; and they will say about him, "A lovely form, but ugly deeds." For the essence of the Highest Image and Likeness is God's actions. And what will it benefit him to have the structure of his limbs like the Highest Form, but not resemble his Creator in his actions? Therefore it is fitting that he should [make his actions] resemble the actions of the Crown (*Keter*), which are the thirteen highest traits of compassion (*rachamim*). And they are hinted to in the secret of the verses ([Michah 7:18-20](#)), "Who is a power like You; He will again have mercy on us; You shall give truth." If so, it is fitting that these thirteen traits [also] be found in man. And now we will explain these thirteen actions that are fitting to be with Him.



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The 13 attributes cover a variety of values and behaviors, each of which has numerous ramifications and applications. These are summarized briefly here and will be elaborated as we move study the remaining *seifrot*.

1. Humility-responding to insults with compassion and forbearance
2. tolerating one who transgresses (including oneself).
3. Forgiveness – of those who may have transgressed against us.
4. Intimacy relating with love to all Israel as we have a common soul.
5. Letting go of anger and grudges.
6. Kindness to others even those who offend us or transgress.  
Minimally, finding at least one good point or attribute in everyone.
7. Forgiveness and compassion, drawing close, loving those who repent
8. We acknowledge evil when we see it, but do not dwell on it. Search for the good words and deeds we see in others and ourselves.
9. When seeing one burdened with evil or sinful behavior, do not hate
10. Truth - Respond to others with truth & uprightness/directness
11. We respond to others with loving kindness (*hesed*) -
12. We are gracious to all those with whom we share a common ancestry regardless of their behavior.
13. Even if we cannot associate a person with the goodness of our common ancestry we recall an earlier time of youth or even infancy before someone became burdened by their *yetzer hara*.

### 9. Nachman of Bratzlav: Advice, 128 Anger - *Ka'as*

Use love and compassion to sweeten anger. “You must break the force of your anger with love. If you feel yourself becoming angry, make sure you do nothing unkind because of your anger. You must make a special effort to be kind to the very person you are angry with. Sweeten your anger with kindness.”



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**9. Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov, Vol 1, page 156, note 83**

When distracting thought comes to a person during his time of prayer He should tremble and be afraid. He should humble himself (*hachnaah*) to the level of actual dust and dashes, (seeing how) the Soul of All Life is joined to a small worm; How he is nothing and how he is annulled.

Then the holy SPARK will be separated and connected above to the true life essence; by means of this great humility ... a division (*havdalah*) will be made between good and evil, And evil will fall into the great depth;

And after this comes the sweetening (*hamtakah*). In the light and life of Godliness, And a little taste of the world to come , And these judgments (distracting thoughts and sins) are repaired at their root.”



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**10. SELF-COMPASSION BREAK** [adapted from Kristen Neff, PHD]

When you notice that you're feeling stress or emotional discomfort, see if you can find the discomfort in your body. Where do you feel it the most? Make contact with the sensations as they arise in your body.

Now say to yourself, slowly:

**1. "This is a moment of suffering"**

That's mindfulness. Other options include: *This hurts. This is stressful.*

**2. "Suffering is a part of life." *Hachna'ah***

That's common humanity. Other options include.

- *I'm not alone,*
- *We all struggle in our lives.*
- *This is how it feels when a person struggles in this way*

***Havdalah*** - While allowing your experience to be whatever it is (sadness, anger depression) separating out the negativity, labelling it.

**3. "May I be kind to myself" *Hamதாக***

Now, put your hands over your heart, or wherever it feels soothing, feeling the warmth and gentle touch to your hands.

*Remembering that you are created b'tzelem in the Divine image whose essence is compassion.*

See if you can find words for what *you need* in times like this such as.

- *May I give myself the compassion that I need.*
- *May I learn to accept myself as I am*
- *May I learn to recognize and accept the Divine within me*
- *May I forgive myself.*

If you're having difficulty finding the right words, imagine that a dear friend or loved one is having the same problem as you. What would you say to this person? If your friend would leave with just a few words in mind, what would you like those words to be? What message would you like to deliver, heart to heart?

**Now** see if you can offer the same message to yourself.



Center for Spiritual Intelligence®  
Rabbi Yaacov J. Kravitz, Ed.D.,  
Melrose Park, PA [ykravitz@spiritualintelligence.com](mailto:ykravitz@spiritualintelligence.com) 215-635-3011

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### Resources for Compassion and Self-compassion

<http://self-compassion.org/> is the web site for Kristen Neff, PhD, a leading compassion researcher.

<http://www.mindfulnesscompassion.org/> is the web site for Chris Germer, PhD.

You will find the instructions for the Affectionate Breathing Meditation here along with several other beautiful meditations:

<http://www.mindfulnesscompassion.org/meditations/AffectionateBreathing.pdf>

*Mindful Compassion*. Paul Gilbert (2014) New Harbinger Press

### Resources for meditation and compassion practices in Judaism

Buxbaum, Yitzhak. *Jewish Spiritual Practices*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1990.

Kaplan, Aryeh. *Jewish Meditation: A Practical Guide*. Schocken, 1985.

Schachter, Zalman. *Gate to the Heart: A Manual of Contemplative Jewish Practice*. 2013.

Cordova, Moshe *Tomer Devorah: The Palm Tree of Devorah* [this book is accessible in both Hebrew and English at [https://www.sefaria.org/Tomer Devorah](https://www.sefaria.org/Tomer_Devorah)