



# Mussar

Developing the Soul

Part 1

# 1

- What Is Mussar?
- Do We Need it?
- Jewish Presuppositions
- Mussar In the Bible
- History

# What Is Mussar?



## DEFINITION

# Mussar

“Instruction”

Proverbs 1:2

“Discipline”

Proverbs 1:7

## Related Terms:

- **Ethics**  
Moral principles and discipline
- **Soul Trait Rectification**  
Repairing the damage from Adam
- **Tikkun HaMiddot**  
Repairing Our Character Traits
- **Tikkun Olam**  
Repairing the World
- **Derech Eretz**  
Common decency

**What Are Some  
Modern Ethics?**

# Judaism Has A Few Unique Presuppositions...



**The Midrash teaches (Genesis Rabbah 11:6),  
“Everything that came into being during the first six  
days of creation requires improvement ...  
also humanity needs rectification.”**

Our world is a world of transformation. When we are improving and refining ourselves, we are in concert with the Divine plan – fulfilling our purpose for existing in this world ... Not only is the human being created for this purpose, but he is also given the ability and capacity to attain this supreme goal.

**Rabbi Zvi Miller Introduction to “Ohr Yisrael”.**

# Jewish Tradition Presupposes...

1

All people are  
created in the  
image of G\_D

2

We were  
created  
to connect  
with G\_D

3

Holiness is the  
means to  
connect with  
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4

Holiness takes  
obedience,  
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## How has the sin of Adam impacted these?

# Aftermath of Adam's Sin

1

All people are created in the image of G\_D



Our ideal state has been damaged.  
Body and soul now need repair

2

We were created to connect with G\_D



We lost the ability to connect with G\_D as we might have been able

Sins and bad traits disconnect us further

3

Holiness is necessary to connect with G\_D



Our evil inclination causes impurity, making holiness more difficult.

Evil has been integrated into our system

4

Holiness takes obedience, work, and dedication



Holiness will take more work than before to achieve.

# We Live In a Dualistic World of Opposites

**Truth**

**Deception**

**Good**

**Evil**

**Holy**

**Common**

**Purity**

**VS**

**Impurity**

**Spiritual**

**Physical**

**Love**

**Hate**

**G\_D**

**Idolatry**

# We Are In A State Of Impurity



If Adam had not sinned, he would have been able to attain this perfection without restraint. **His soul would have purified his body** step-by-step, until he reached the level required to permanently partake of everlasting bliss (that is the Olam Haba).

Ramchal Derech Hashem 1:3

# Evil is now somehow integrated into us



For it is from within, out of a person's heart, come; evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.

Mark 7:21-22



**If It Is So Important...**

**Why Isn't Mussar  
Clearly Commanded  
In The Bible?**

“

... do not harden  
your heart...

**Deuteronomy 15:7**

“

Place yourself far  
from a false  
word...

**Exodus 23:7**

“

**Be very careful that  
there should not be  
something wrong in  
your heart...**

**Deuteronomy 15:9**

“

**... You shall not  
covet... you shall  
not desire**

**Deuteronomy 5:8**

“

**You shall love your G\_D with  
all your heart and with all your soul  
and with all your might.**

**Deuteronomy 6:5**

“

**You shall not hate your brother in your heart... You shall not bear a grudge... you shall love your neighbor as yourself.**

**Leviticus 19:17-19**



“

**The good person out  
of the good treasury of his heart produces  
good, and the evil person out  
of his evil treasury produces evil, for his  
mouth speaks from what fills his heart.**

**Luke 6:45**

# Mussar Is Essential...

## The 10 Commandments:

... are more than simple commands and prohibitions. Some are action-oriented, some are thought-oriented.

## Hidden in Plain Sight:

You can go through the entire Bible many times and never come to an understanding of these concepts

## The Pathway to Holiness:

Mussar is the pathway to holiness, often dealt with in the oral tradition and Jewish learning

These disciplines are discussed and elaborated upon in the Jewish Oral tradition



# The Ten Commandments

**613 Mitzvot**



**248 Positive**



**365 Prohibitions**

**Mussar is foundational**

These disciplines are discussed and elaborated upon in the Jewish Oral tradition

# Mussar Focus

- Kindness
- Humility
- Charity
- Hospitality
- Honesty
- Equanimity
- Love of others
- Positive speech
- Returning lost property
- Kindness to animals
- Purity
- Respect for elders
- Peace
- Joy
- Holiness
- “Evil Eye”
- Derech Eretz
- **Much more...**

# **The History Of The Late Mussar Movement**



# **Rabbi Israel Salanter**

**Considered the Father of the  
late Mussar movement.**

**However, he gave credit to the Vilna Gaon.**



**1809-1883**

**Lithuania**

# Regarded the Rabbis as “Physicians” of the soul.

## Controversy

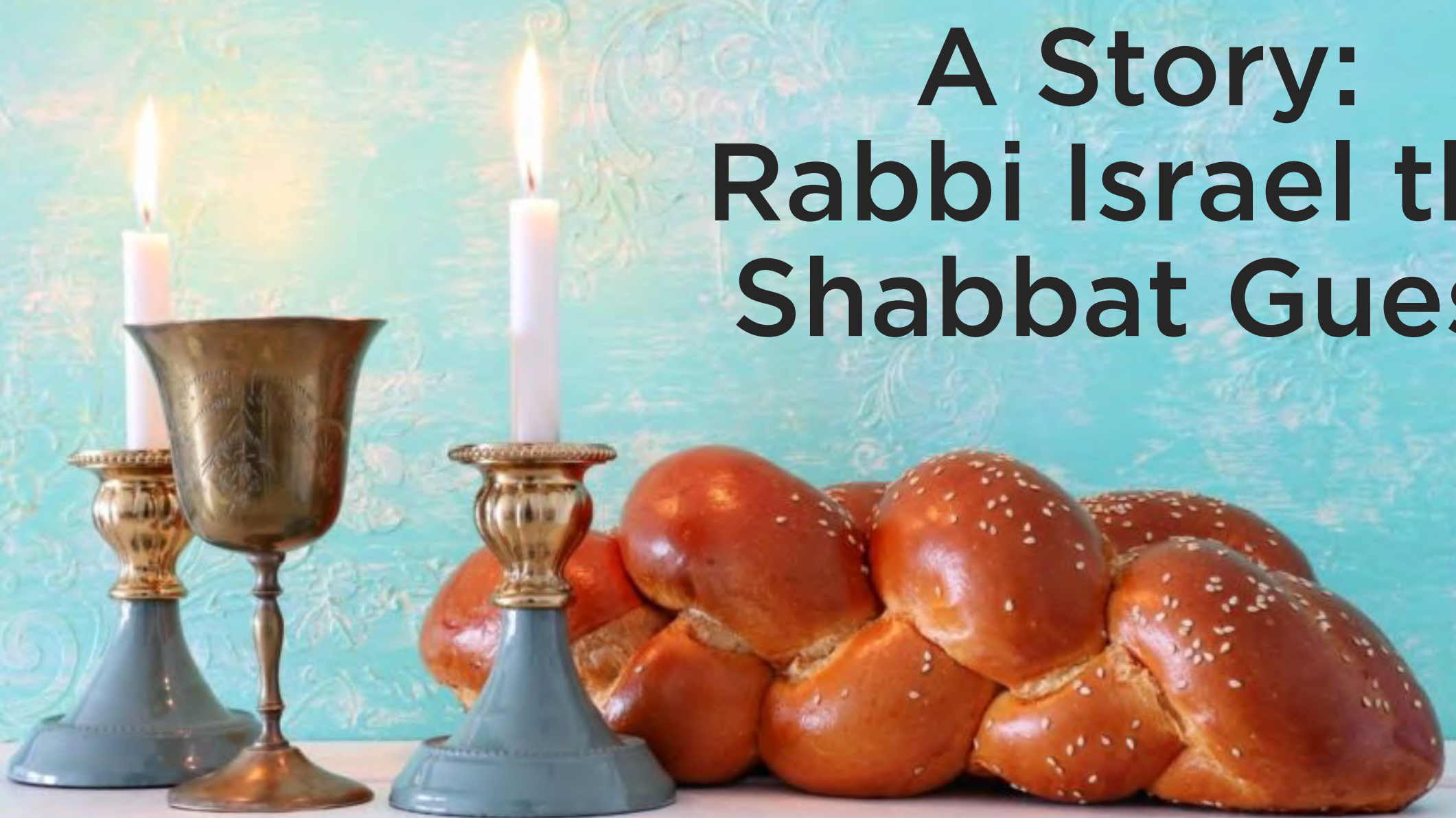
- He shunned honor and rejected positions of power
- Rabi Salanter was opposed by some of the Kabbalists and Orthodoxy of his day as his movement was seen as divergent to some extent



**1809-1883**

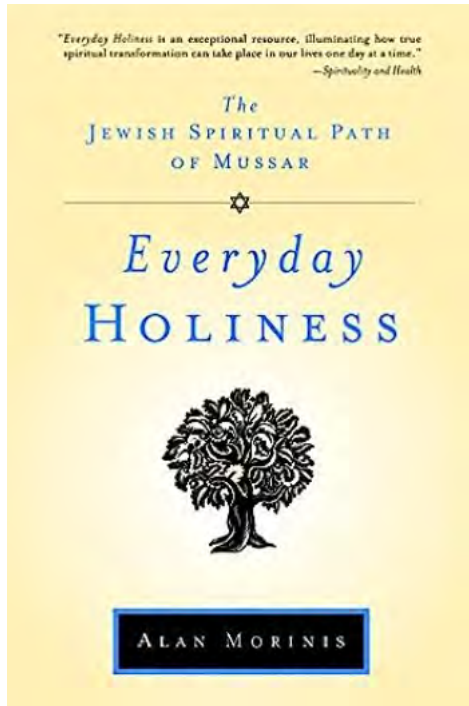
**Lithuania**

# A Story: Rabbi Israel the Shabbat Guest



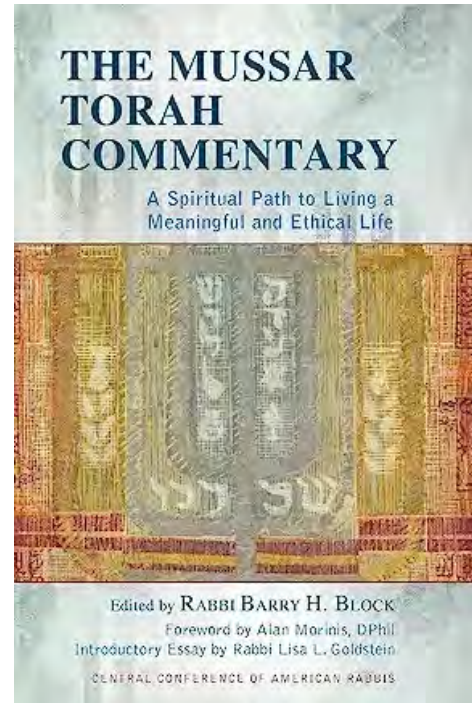


# Further Study



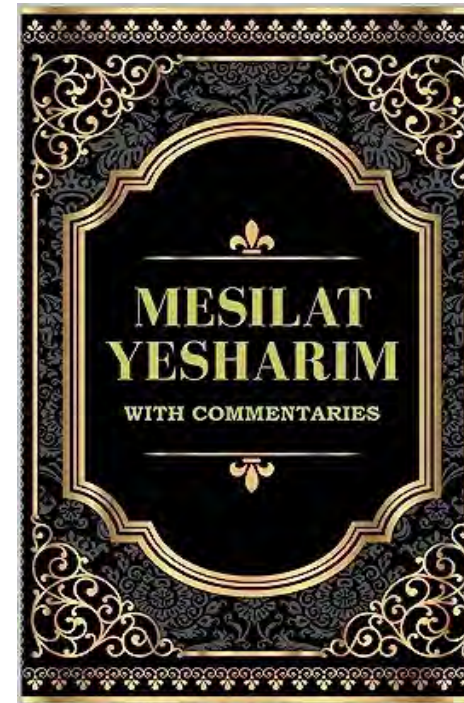
Everyday Holiness

Alan Morinis



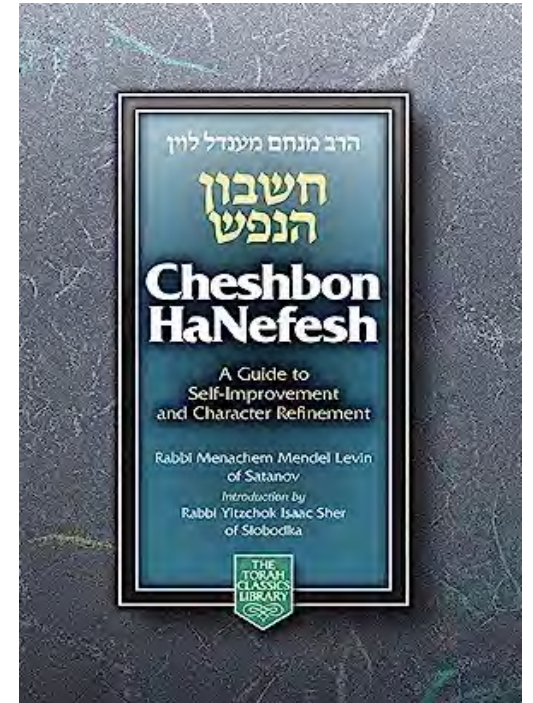
Torah Mussar  
Commentary

R. Barry Block



Messilat Yesharim  
"The Way of the Just"

Ramchal



Cheshbon HaNefesh

R. Menachem Mendel

“

**Every one of us is assigned to master something in our lives. You have already been given your assignment and you have already encountered it, though you may not be aware that what faces you is a curriculum, nor that this is the central task of your life...**

**Alan Morinis Everyday Holiness**