

It's Not as Tough as You Think: How to Smooth Out Life's Bumps by Abraham J. Twerski Quotes

On one of my trips to Israel I visited a friend, and asked him to pray at the Western Wall for my brother, who was ill with cancer. As I was leaving, he said, "May you have many worries." I was taken aback by this remark. "What kind of blessing is that?" I asked. My friend explained, "You see, it is impossible for there not to be any annoyances and irritations in life. Nothing ever goes completely smoothly. But if there is no single problem that is over whelming, then we are bothered by a number of things that upset us. If there is one problem that is extremely grave, it obscures every other annoyance, and we are focused totally on that one major problem. "Right now," my friend continued, "you are so concerned about your brother's illness, that nothing else bothers you. That is why having only one problem or one worry is not good, because it means that this one problem is terribly serious. If you have many worries, that means that nothing is so bad that it drives away all the rest, and that is about as good as life can be." ... God forbid you should have only one worry!¹

Our aspirations should be for things we can realistically achieve by our own efforts, blessed with Divine assistance. However, dreams and prayers for the absurd are futile. The Talmud states, "If you reach for things within reason, you may get them. If you seek things that are clearly beyond your abilities to achieve, you will end up with nothing (Rosh Hashanah 4b). So, do pray and dream, but stay within reality."²

The ethicist, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Chasman, says, "Denying your God-given talents is not humility. It is stupidity."³

Jewish law requires that unless an employee has specific permission from his employer he must devote his entire worktime to the task for which he was hired. If he is at work when it is time for the required daily prayers, he is not allowed to recite the full service. He may say only an abbreviated prayer. Prayer is very important in Judaism, but it does not take priority over one's commitment to his employer. Nevertheless, a worker may interrupt his work and take the necessary time to eat his lunch. He may do so even if the type of work he is doing could be done

¹ 15-16

² 44

³ 95-96

while eating, just like my reviewing medical records during lunch. Why not require the worker to do so? It would not interfere with his eating. The answer can only be that the Talmud considers any kind of work to be an interference with eating, even when it is technically possible to do both at the same time. Eating should be relaxing, and work is not relaxing.⁴

A recovering alcoholic with seven years of sobriety complained that he was still bothered by the fear that he might slip and drink. "Good!" I said. "Stay that way." People with phobias of situations that are not in any way dangerous should indeed seek psychological help. However, we should fear that we may do wrong. We are always subject to temptation and we are vulnerable to do things that can provide us with pleasure, even if they are wrong. Fear of doing wrong helps us keep up our guard. This is what Scripture means, "Fortunate is the person who always fears" (Proverbs 28:14). Fear of doing wrong is healthy.⁵

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⁴ 163-164

⁵ 221-222