**Elul Week 4 -- Who is Rich?**

For [the past three weeks of Elul](https://cbbsb.org/hhd-2018/) we have focused on effecting positive change in our lives. **For our fourth and final week of Elul 2018**, we now turn to the complementary practice of **identifying what is good in our lives exactly as-is.**

**Our sages teach "Who is rich? Those content with what they have"**(*Pirkei Avot,*Ethics of the Fathers, Chapter 4).

Yet how often do we compare our reality to a dream of perfection, or even just something new and different? Striving for more just to have more or "better" can undermine our sense of peace and contentment in the reality of our lives. Especially as experienced in the context of our hyper-connected world, this phenomenon is being called the "Comparison Trap".

Before begin to free ourselves from this trap with this week's exercise, consider and important difference; between:

1. what we *cannot*change and what we *can*change in our lives; and
2. between what we *can* change and what we *should* change.

The Comparison Trap deals with the second point. (See Further Reading, below, for resources on the first.)

The aim this week is to develop wise enough eyes to see the riches we already have. What can you take pleasure in that you've perhaps been complacent about or blind to until now?

**Try this exercise:**instead of conjuring up a fantasy of your dream car, house, spouse, friend, child, or job, consider what is good about the *actual reality*. Make a list of every good thing that your *real* version possesses. See if you can find more empathy, more acceptance, and deeper appreciation for this thing or person though this exercise.

Then take a look at the Further Reading section below to delve deeper into these and related concepts in this last week before the High Holy Days.

***Wishing you purpose and meaning, a return to greater inner authenticity, and a healthy and sweet new year!***

**Further Reading:**

1. More on "Who is rich? He who is content with his lot." -- p.55, [*Rosh HaShannah Yom Kippur Survival Guide,* Shimon Apisdorf.](https://www.amazon.com/Rosh-Hashanah-Yom-Kippur-Survival/dp/188192727X) (*Cantor Mark recommended!*)
2. An article in *Psychology Today* magazine on comparing our reality to a fantasy, also known as[the "Comparison Trap"](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201711/the-comparison-trap)
3. On becoming aware of the difference between what we cannotchange and what we can change: summed up well in [the AA Serenity Prayer](http://www.aahistory.com/prayer.html):

*God, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,*

*the Courage to change the things I can,*

*and the Wisdom to know the difference.*

1. On choosing to embrace the beauty in the life we actual have rather than "what could have been," a memoir and guidebook by Auschwitz-survivor and psychologist Edith Eger: [*The Choice*](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/06/books/review/the-choice-edith-eva-eger-auschwitz-memoir.html)*.*
2. A book-length exploration of finding peace of heart, mind, and soul though connecting with what actually *is*, from a Buddhist point of view. Written by Sharon Salzberg, a pioneering "Jew-Bu" or Jewish Buddhist: [*Faith*](https://www.sharonsalzberg.com/faith/)*(don't be turned off by the title -- this is far from the concept of "blind faith" that many of us eschew).*
3. On the impact to quality-of-life in the difference between taking *pleasure* in your good fortune rather than *pride*. -- pp 79-80, *The Rosh HaShannah Yom Kippur Survival Guide,* Shimon Apisdorf.
4. A goal statement and reflection to consider at the start of the High Holy Days on the subject of the comfort in knowing we are always free to change. -- p. 16 of CBB's new Rosh Hashanah Machzor (prayerbook) ... come to services and take a look!