



The Power of Imagination

High School Lesson Plan on AI Chet

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Introduction

From על חטא we start saying ערב י"כ on מנחה.

על חטא is part of the תשובה process. We turn to ד' with so many mistakes from the previous year. How are we supposed to remember them all to ask for מחילה?

We therefore have a list of things that can be the causes of many עבירות. We go through this list and ask ד' that if we have done an עבירה that falls into this category, then please could we receive מחילה for it.

It is recommended that each person go through the list of על חטא's before י"ט and write down or have in mind things that apply to them. This way a person is prepared for י"כ and won't be rushed into saying them without understanding their meaning.

There is one על חטא that has always been harder to understand.

וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֵנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּהַרְהוֹר הַלֵּב
For the sin that we have sinned before You through inner thoughts

This על חטא is talking about the עבירות that a person simply 'thought' about.

There is a גמרא (in א"ט כ"א) that says the following:
הַרְהוֹרֵי עֲבִירָה קָשׁוּ מֵעֲבִירָה, וְסִימָנֶיךָ

Translated we see that this means that sometimes 'thoughts of doing an עבירה, can be worse than actually doing the עבירה itself."

How can it be that a 'thought' can be worse than actually doing something?

In today's lesson you will learn some life changing and mind blowing concepts and you will also see how incredible our תורה is.

Science

We've seen so many times how Science has proven so many things that we knew from תורה thousands of years ago. There are many many examples. One example of this is when researchers discovered that all fish that have scales also had fins. These researchers only managed to prove this recently, once they had the technology to properly discover the underwater world and all the goings on there. They had gone through every single fish in the ocean to prove this.

The אידן however, knew this all along from a משנה (in גיטא - י"ט לו - נידה ו:ט in) (סנהדרין) that explains that all fish that have scales also have fins, therefore you can be sure that any fish with scales is בשר.

Today we will see just another example of this.

Scientific study

A group of brain researchers were working on some of the wonders of the human brain. They carried out the following study:

They taught a group of people how to play a simple song on the piano. Day in and day out, they practiced this song, until they knew it practically inside out.

When the conductor of the study felt that they knew the song well enough, he divided the group into two and placed them into two separate rooms.

One group was told that they should play the song again and they had a brain scan done on them whilst they were playing.

The second group was not told to play the song, but rather to imagine as if they were playing the song. The second group also had a brain scan, whilst they were imagining that they were playing the song.

The results were incredibly astonishing. Both groups of brain scans showed the exact same results. The same movements that went on in the brain when the first group were actually playing, occurred in the second group, who were only *imagining* as if they were playing.

This study, as well as many others have come to prove that a person's brain cannot tell the difference between reality and imagination. Both are so vivid.

This is why a person has to be so careful about their thoughts.

Let's take this message though, a whole notch higher.

We're going to tie in the message we learnt about יר"כ, to the new school year that we have just begun. Here we go:

The Placebo Effect

Another example that demonstrates the power of a person's thoughts and mind, is what we know as the 'Placebo Effect'.

The first time the placebo effect was seen was in 1799. There was a doctor called John Hagar who was skeptical about a certain method that was used to treat joint pain using metal rods on the body that were thought to draw out pain because of their electromagnetic properties.

Dr Hagar tried to test their effectiveness, by making a pair of dummy wooden rods (placebos), which according to the method, should not work.

Miraculously, he found that patients felt just as much benefit with the wooden rods as they did with the metal ones. This showed him that even the act of just treating the patient, even if the treatment itself does not have healing properties, can be enough to really improve the patient outcomes.

Dr Hagar concluded that imagination can be powerful for healing.

Since then, the Placebo Effect has been used many times over. It's been used in a wide range of treatments and has been successful.

Discussion

We all have dreams for our future. Close your eyes for a moment and think of a few of yours.

Do you want to achieve these dreams?

Your brain has a filter system in it, known as the Reticular Activation System.

What is this?

This is a system in your brain that allows certain information to enter and blocks out other information.

Guess who programmed that filter?

None other than yourselves.

If you believe that you are unlovable, then guess what?

Your Reticular Activation System in your brain is going to go through your day and point out every single piece of evidence that confirms that negative belief that you have.

If you think that people don't like you at school, then your Reticular Activation System (the filter) is literally going to be looking for evidence to prove this, all day long.

Your mind loves to read things that you agree with. This is called confirmation bias. Because reading things that you agree with, confirms your filter.

So why do we have this Reticular Activation System?

There's a really important reason why you have this. The reason is that if your brain would let in everything that it saw, with equal interest, then your head would literally explode.

Imagine reading through a newspaper and having to take equal interest in every single detail on every page, including the ads and numbers.

Therefore the Reticular Activation System protects your brain by filtering information and only letting in stuff that the filter agrees with.

This is the scientific reasoning why you have to take charge of reprogramming your system.

How do we start to reprogramme this filter?

We use something called visualization so that your brain starts to notice opportunity and evidence that things are working out.

Practice

Make a list of all your goals and dreams that you want to achieve and keep it in front of you. Then, for each of these goals, go through the following two step process:

I'm going to bring an example here, so that you understand the two step process more clearly.

Step one: If your goal is to improve your self worth; **then you need to visualize what your life looks like and how you are going to feel about yourself** when your self worth has improved. You need to envision in your minds, a clear and vivid picture of the end result.

Close your eyes and in your mind, imagine a specific picture of what it looks, sounds and smells like in your life when your self worth has improved.

- You will see yourself speaking up in school (hearing a round of applause)
- You'll see yourself making new friends (feeling a rush of confidence)
- You'll see yourself breaking away from unhealthy relationships (walking away with your head held high)
- You'll see yourself creating boundaries
- You'll see yourself exercising more (breathe in and smell the fresh air, feel the wind run through your hair, as you are going out on a walk)
- You'll see yourself taking care of yourself (doing the things that you enjoy and taking a break if you need it)

When you start to visualize the image of that then:

Consciously think of the positive emotions that you will feel.

- Happy
- Proud
- Stand tall
- Grateful for the change
- Raising your hand in class to ask questions
- Receiving a class award
- Having fun with your friends
- Being voted in as project leader
- Feeling really good about yourself

When you do this, this is what's going to happen in your brain. You are training your brain to create a totally different filter. As we said before, your brain doesn't know the difference between something that actually happened to you (like the test you failed) and the things that you **imagine** are happening to you.

Your brain will visualize you exercising more, making new friends, running projects

and how proud you are going to feel.

When you visualize in this way, it writes it into your brain's filter as a real memory.

The more you visualize things, the greater your confidence will be. You will see that simply visualizing, really develops the skill and helps you to improve on it- just as if you were actually doing it.

The more that you do this, the better the reprogramming of your brain and the more confident you will become.

Challenge

Give yourself a challenge for the next 30 days. Spend just 30 seconds after you wake up in the morning, to close your eyes and visualize what it will look like in your life when you have achieved your goals for this year.

How does it feel to be having such a great day at school?

How does it feel to be giving a speech with confidence in front of the whole school?

How does it feel to have real friends calling you up each day asking to get together?

How does it feel each day when you come home with full marks on your test?

How does it feel each day to come home and know that you are giving your family נחת?

How does it feel each day to know that the speech you gave at school, inspired so many?

It feels incredibly amazing.

Visualise what you want to achieve in that day.

Savour these feelings, because what you are doing is reprogramming your Reticular Activation System filter in your brain and training it to notice opportunities and helping you to see the evidence that you ARE confident, that you ARE capable and that you CAN do this, instead of all the nonsense that it was feeding it before.

Tried and true

What I am about to tell you, may seem shocking. You will probably think it's impossible, but if you follow all that you have learnt today, you will see how it can be applied and make a huge difference to so many different areas of your life. All of these incidents are 100% true.

Incident 1:

A number of years ago, there was a little boy named Moishy who lived in י"א, who unfortunately had a very ugly wart on his lip. Moishy's mother tried many different things to get rid of it, but nothing helped. After about a year and a half, she decided that enough was enough and she would make an appointment with the doctor, to get the wart removed.

When Moishy heard what was going to happen, he was overcome with tremendous fear. He did not like procedures at all and was petrified of having his wart taken off.

His mother put a very nervous little boy to bed the night before the appointment.

The next day, mother and son trundled off to the doctor's office. When they arrived, the doctor asked to see where the wart was. To her shock, Moishy's mother was stunned to see that the wart had simply disappeared overnight. The nasty wart that had been there for a year and a half, had completely disappeared.

His mother was intrigued. What on earth had happened here?

After looking into it a little more, his mother realised that Moishy's fear had been so strong, that in his mind, he just wanted that wart gone. As far as he was concerned, if it was gone; he wouldn't have to go to the doctor. His tremendous desire to achieve this goal, had such an impact, that he managed to get rid of the wart, merely by the power of visualisation!

It works; it really works. Tell someone you know who has a wart, to give this method a go. Everyday, they should spend a few minutes, imagining as if the wart is gone. They should use their imagination to picture the wart shrinking each day or being shaved down and then disappearing.

There have been many other verified stories of people who have gotten rid of warts this way.

Incident 2:

When I heard this story, I was blown away at the power of the mind.

A few hours later, I unfortunately got hit with a round of hiccups. They were very annoying and loud and were bothering me a lot.

Then suddenly it hit me! My mind! My mind has a כח. I then decided to apply this and I told myself that the hiccups have gone; that they were finished. To my shock, the hiccups completely stopped. I was waiting to see if they would come back, but ב"ה they were gone.

Never forget the כח of your mind.

Time and Again:

There have been many cases of people who were gravely ill. Some had doctors telling them that they didn't have long to live and that there was no hope. Others, had doctors or family who gave them strength and חיזוק and told them to keep holding on.

The difference between these are incomparable. When a person knows in his mind that he can survive and that he will survive; he has a much higher chance of getting better. Once a person loses hope, however and in his mind he thinks that he's reached the end; then his chances are much lower.

Always remember the incredible power that your mind has over your circumstances and don't underestimate what positivity can do for you.

Incident 3: From Risk to Royalty Taking Today's Lesson to a New Level

Rav Aharon Margalit, the author of the biography "As Long As I Live", wrote something incredible, on the power of visualisation.

Rav Margalit once gave a talk to a group of bachurim in a summer camp. *In some places I will quote directly from the book- "The Impact of As Long As I Live".*

In his talk, he mentioned the following:

The Piaseczna Rebbe, Rav Klonimus Kalman Shapira, used to emphasise 'the power of imagination', a lot.

He once told his תלמידים, that if they want their תפלות to soar to שמים, then they need to picture as if they themselves, are davening in the ירושלים in בהמ"ק. This will help a person have כוונה that is rich with שמים and אהבת ד'.

The Rebbe used to teach his תלמידים, when they were learning חומש, to picture themselves, there in the story. When learning about יצחק to א"א taking יצחק to the עקידה IMAGINE as if you were there, walking alongside them. Picture yourself next to א"א and יצחק, accompanying them on their journey. Alongside them, trots another donkey, bearing ישמעאל and אליעזר. In front of your eyes, they stop and hitch the donkeys to a tree and you hear א"א tell ישמעאל and אליעזר "Stay here with the donkey and I will continue with יצחק." Of course, you don't stay behind, you continue to follow them and watch as they climb up הר המוריה. You see א"א with the fire and the knife in his hands and יצחק walking with the wood on his

shoulders. Stop and try to feel- not what they felt, but what YOU would feel, if you would be in such a situation.

This is also what the הגדה tells us on פסח "חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא" מצרים. A person must view himself, as if he left מצרים.

Now this takes on a whole new meaning.

It's not enough just to *know* that "If 'ד had not redeemed our fathers from מצרים, then we and our children would still be enslaved to פרעה today." To achieve our goal on ליל הסדר, we need to view ourselves as if we personally left מצרים.

We can now do this so much better, through the power of visualisation.

When Rav Aharon Margalit finished his talk, he told his audience that he wanted one volunteer to come forward and be part of a live demonstration to show the power of visualisation.

One Bochur named Zevy volunteered and stepped forward. Rav Margalit saw that Zevy had a mischievous look in his eyes and had only volunteered because he was in it for some fun.

Rav Margalit began.

"Tell me Zevy, have you ever considered the possibility of completing ש"ס by the time that you get married?"

Zevy seemed surprised and answered with a confident 'no'.

"Has anyone in your family- a brother or brother in law or close cousin- completed ש"ס before his wedding?"

There were some snickers from the audience. No, none of Zevy's relatives had completed ש"ס.

"Now listen Zevy. Let's block out the audience and focus on a very attractive offer that I have for you. I am the owner of a secret amulet that has been handed down in our family for generations. The family legacy is that whoever has this amulet, is guaranteed to merit sons and sons in law, who are giants in תורה and outstanding יראי שמים. No one who has had this amulet in his possession before his wedding, was let down. Since you volunteered and offered to be my partner, I'm willing to give it to you. Are you interested?"

"Of course" Zevy responded.

"Ok, but I'm sure that you understand that I won't just give it to you, without some sort of payment."

"I understand," Zevy said slowly, "But, I don't have anything to give you in exchange. I have no money or anything valuable."

"I don't want money from you. I want something that I know for sure you can give me." Rav Margalit replied.

"What is it?" Zevy wondered. The 15 pairs of eyes watching him, seemed equally perplexed.

"The payment I want, is an hour and fifteen minutes every day, for the next four years. When I say 'every day', I mean every single day, no exceptions, not even on **יום כיפור** and **ערב פסח**."

When Zevy tried to protest that he had **ישיבה** everyday, so he couldn't just do what he wanted, Rav Margalit assured him that this would be something that he could do even when in **ישיבה**.

"So, do we have a deal?" Rav Margalit asked.

"You didn't tell me what I have to do; how do I know what I am committing to?"

Rav Margalit remained firm and told Zevy that first he needs to commit and only afterwards, he will get the full details.

"Remember Zevy," Rav Margalit reminded him, "that we are talking here about an outright promise of sons and sons in law who are tremendous **תלמידי חכמים** and great **יראי שמים**. This is an opportunity not to be missed."

Zevy hesitated for a few minutes, thinking over the offer and finally declared that he was in.

This was followed by a round of applause from the crowd.

Rav Margalit didn't hesitate and asked Zevy if he wanted to hear what he was now obligated to do?

Zevy nodded and Rav Margalit continued. "During my hour and fifteen minutes, you are to find a **חברותא** and learn **גמרא** with **רש"י** and **תוספות**. This is my hour and fifteen minutes and you have no permission to do anything else during that time. I'm talking about an hour and fifteen minutes of focused and consistent learning.

If you stick to this **סדר** and never slack off; you'll finish **ש"ס** in four to four and a half years."

Zevy took a deep breath. "Ok, I agree; where's the amulet?"

Rav Margalit looked at the expectant boy with his outstretched hand and knew that the job ahead of him, would not be easy.

"You're a smart boy and I'm sure that you've calculated that we're talking about more than 2000 hours. Since, you've proven that you're a clever boy, who can recognise a great opportunity when he sees it, I will explain to you the nature of the amulet that I promised you.

I'm sure you will agree that a Bachur who has a reputation for having completed ע"ס - learning with a חברותא on a steady basis and never missing a day, is considered a real catch. When he enters shidduchim, he will be getting top suggestions. Such a בחור will not marry the daughter of a simple man; he'll be lead with great honour to the home of someone of great distinction in the תורה world. His children will be the sons and sons in law of Hagaon Harav Zev Shlita.

Of course you can still back out of the entire deal, but that would be a bad choice. It would mean giving up Hagaon Harav Zev shlita and staying Zevy.

I have no idea what type of Zevy you are today," Rav Margalit went on, "But I can describe to you what your life will be like as Hagaon Harav Zev Shlita. On Friday nights, as you walk to shul discussing the פרשה with your adorable little boys, their sweet faces framed with neatly curled payos. Mothers will be standing on their porches, straining to get a glimpse of your face and davening that their children should grow up to be like you, Hagaon Harav Zev. Your family's Yichus will begin with you, Zevy. All you need to do is block out the background noise, connect with the agreement we've made here and go on to the next stage. Starting tomorrow morning, you will begin towards your goal; completing ע"ס before your wedding."

Zevy's head hung low as he shook his head slowly. His face was a picture of rejection.

Rav Margalit knew that he needed to take one more step. He placed his arm around Zevy's shoulder and began speaking with great warmth and empathy.

"It's true that Chazal told us that 'כל ההתחלות קשות' - All beginnings are difficult,' but let's not forget the rest 'מכאן ולהבא יערב לכם' - From here on, it will be pleasant for you."

"Tell me Zevy. Where do you think your סיום הש"ס will be held?" Rav Margalit asked. "I guess in the הישיבה הראש" house," Zevy replied spontaneously, as if he was already there.

"And who will be there?"

"My parents... You..." Zevy said with a mischievous smile.

"Of course I'll come. If you remember to invite me. What about your siblings?" Rav Margalit asked, trying to prod his imagination along.

"I don't know," Zevy mumbled, an indecipherable look in his eyes. A moment later, he was back to himself, yet, he agreed. "Yes, I guess my family will come. Yes of course. I'll invite them after all."

"And I'm sure your mother will bake your favourite cakes in honour of the event- which two cakes are your absolute favourites?"

"Crispy apple pastries and soft cheese cake with a crumb topping" he replied, blushing slightly.

The picture of the future event slowly took shape, as Zevy and Rav Margalit continued planning the details.

Soon it was time to describe to Zevy the exalted moment of the סיום itself. Rav Margalit described how he would stand at the centre of the head table, flanked by his father to his right and the Rosh Yeshiva to his left. A hush would fall over the room and he would say, "הדרך עלך תלמוד בבלי." Zevy closed his eyes and many of the בחורים in the audience did the same.

"Now the Rosh Yeshiva will shake your hand," Rav Margalit said, looking sharply at Zevy as he opened his eyes, "What do his eyes look like?"

"They're soft and shining with joy."

"And your father's?"

"They're full of tears."

It was an unforgettable demonstration of the power of visualisation. Everyone saw clearly how the description was working its magic on Zevy. As the סיום changed from an abstract idea into a concrete event, complete with all the details, he truly "entered" the situation and found that it appealed to him mightily.

"What will your mother be holding?"

For the first time, Zevy was dumbfounded. He didn't know what to answer.

"Close your eyes," Rav Margalit guided him. "Picture your mother standing next to the door and watching your siyum. What's she holding?"

"A packet of tissues," Zevy replied, his eyes tightly shut. A tiny tear fell from his left eye.

"She's crying," said Zevy, as if he actually saw her standing right there, behind the door, sobbing with happiness.

Rav Margalit told Zevy that after he did such a good job of picturing what he wants to achieve; he simply won't be able to forgo it. "You will stick to your goal. You will learn and complete ש"ס!"

The exercise and speech came to an end and the בחורים left on a high.

Fast forward a number of years and Rav Margalit got a call from Zevy. Zevy told Rav Margalit that he wanted to invite him to his חתונה, which would be taking place that afternoon together with his סיום הש"ס that would take place at the חתונה סעודה. Rav Margalit was shocked and wondered to himself, why he was so last minute? Zevy quickly explained. He told Rav Margalit that he had spend hours writing him a personal invitation, in which he had told Rav Margalit just how much he owed him, how deep his הכרת הטוב was and how he had turned his entire life around as a result.

However, just a few minutes earlier, his mother had told him that the invitation that he had sent out to Rav Margalit, had been returned marked 'undeliverable'. Zevy was devastated. He had spent so long putting together that invitation. He then told Rav Margalit that he was actually conducting a תענית דיבור from שבת מוצאי שבת after his אופרוף, until his חתונה, but he felt like he had to break it, to call him.

When Rav Margalit entered the hall that evening, Zevy leaped out of his seat and ran to greet him with open arms.

With tear filled eyes, Rav Margalit watched as Zevy turned to the final page in the entire ש"ס. Never before had the רב been so moved, hearing the words "הדרן עלך מסכת" "נידה והש"ס בולו."

The חתן finished reciting the הדרן and the יהי רצון and his father said קדיש. Zevy quieted the guests and took a מסכת ברכות from the table. When he completed the first משנה, he closed the ספר and kissed it and the hall rocked with exuberant cries of "מזל טוב!"

If an outsider would've walked into the hall an hour later, he would've been shocked by the intensity of the outpouring of joy. Everyone was dancing and it was impossible not to join in.

Finally, after about an hour, Rav Margalit was ready to leave and he went to find Zevy, to say goodbye.

Zevy grasped his hand tightly and told him that he would walk the רב out.

Zevy insisted on telling Rav Margalit what he had written in the letter. He pulled out the returned invitation from the pocket of his Bekeshe and placed it into his hands.

He told Rav Margalit that when he had asked him that day on stage, if he had any brothers who had learnt ש"ס, the audience had snickered. The reason why they had laughed is because Zevy's three older brothers had gone off the דרך and abandoned תורה and מצוות completely. One of his brothers had married a non Jewish woman, another had completely cut off contact and the third was there at the חתונה, smoking on the side, with three piercings.

Zevy told the רב that when he had come to camp that year, he was at a point, where it seemed safe to assume that he would be following in his brother's footsteps. No one, not even his parents, had believed that he would be anything different. By age 16, Zevy himself realised that it wasn't even worth his while to try.

When he had walked on stage that day, he had done so for the fun of it, never dreaming where it could possibly lead. The בחורים in the audience had been laughing and Zevy had been so furious that he had been the victim of the trick. However, just before he was about to stomp off the stage in disgust, the magic of the moment, when he had really believed that he could do it, made him stop. The dream had felt so sweet and he couldn't give it up so easily. Zevy told Rav Margalit that when he had put his hand on his shoulder, he had sensed that the trust was so strong, that he decided to ignore the fact that he really felt it was beyond him.

There was no question that had it not had been for the vivid picture that Rav Margalit had painted, Zevy admitted that he would never had made it to the finish line. For the first time in his life, the רב had made him want to take control of his life. There was nothing that he longed for more, than the vivid imagery that they had created together.

Starting that night, as the בחורים were preparing for bed, Zevy went around looking for a חברותא. A lot of the boys had a good chuckle and teased him- none of them agreed to learn with him. Except for one בחור who saw how serious he was and agreed 'temporarily', until he'd find someone else. This temporary חברותא, lasted almost a year and they finished סדר מועד together. When the בחור left ישיבה ב"ה, Zevy found a new חברותא and merited many good חברותות over time.

It was not easy for him, but he withdrew strength from the vivid imagery. Nothing was able to stop him. He dreamed about the moment at night and fought for it by day.

Zevy told Rav Margalit that right now, he thinks he's seeing the results of his work, but really he's only seeing part of the picture. He's not seeing the beautiful outcomes that will come afterwards בע"ה; the generations of בני תורה that will stem from him.

Zevy begged Rav Margalit to come back in, so that he could introduce the רב to his mother, who wanted to thank him for what he did for her son and for the way he

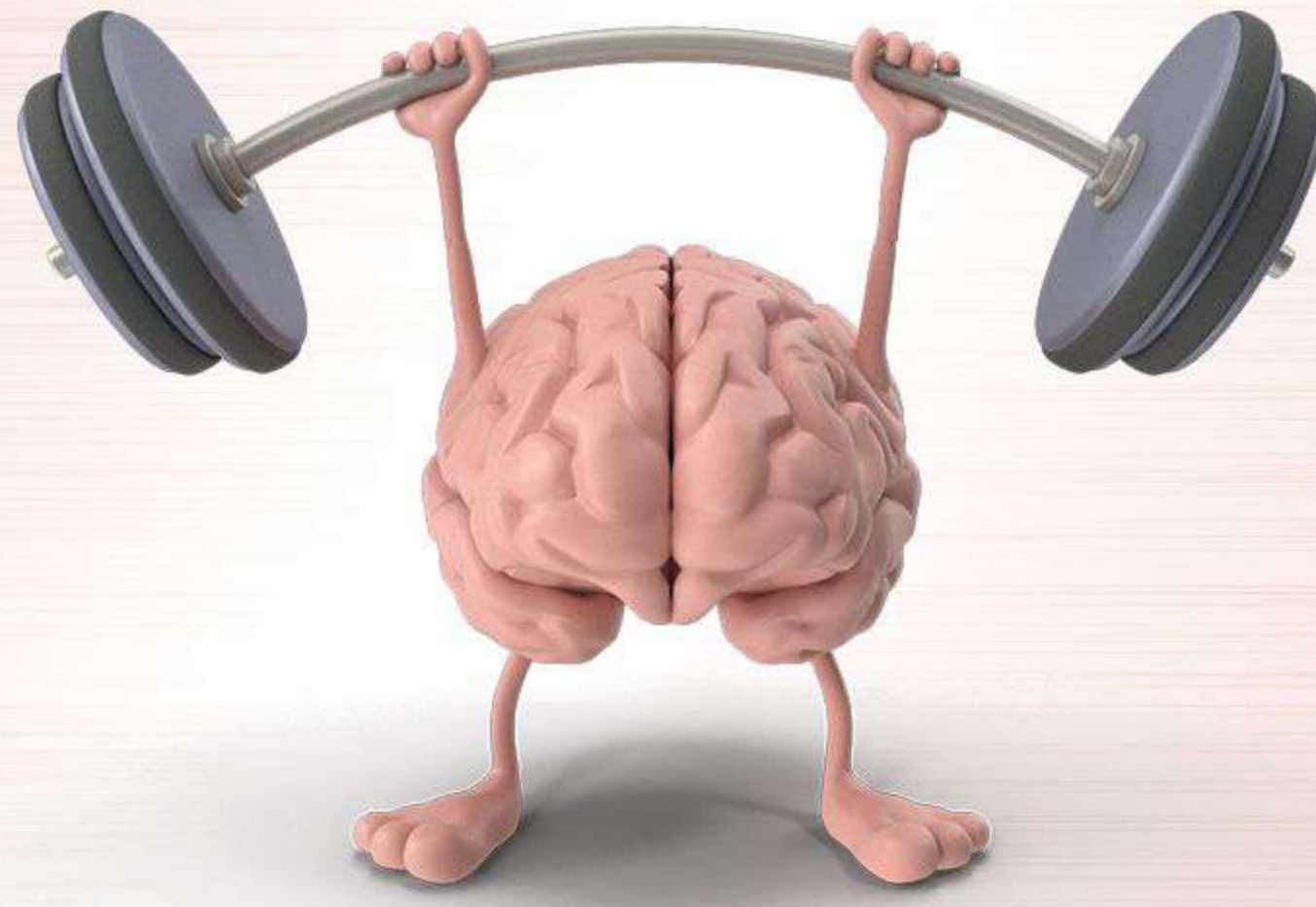
changed their entire family.

As they went over to the מחיצה, the dam burst, Zevy's mother was crying uncontrollably, unable to speak clearly. With effort, she managed to say, "You saved me," and a moment later, "You saved us all... You have no idea..."

Her tears caused Zevy to begin crying again and at that point, Rav Margalit broke down too.

An entire family saved all as the result of the power of visualisation.

This יר"כ, as you say the words וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֵנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּהַרְהוֹר הַלֵּב, understand and appreciate who you are and what you're worth and never underestimate the incredible power inside your brain.



ועל חטא שחטאנו לפניך בהרהור הלב

Close your eyes and start listing the dreams and goals you would love to achieve. Then use this sheet to help you with your 30 second challenge.

Eight horizontal, rounded rectangular bars for writing, arranged vertically.

ועל חטא שחטאנו לפניך בהרהור הלב

This יו"כ, understand & appreciate who you are & what you're worth & never underestimate the incredible power inside your brain.

