BS”D

The Re-Tethered Soul

A Torah Commentary on ‘The Untethered Soul.’

My spiritual journey began at around 18 years old, mainly through a combination of mind altering substances and enough life struggles (building a healthy sense of self worth, relationships, university…) that I realised there must be a lot more to life than most people are experiencing.
After finishing a philosophy degree at Manchester University where I became enamoured with Eastern spiritual paths, martial arts and meditation, I set out to the Far East on my quest for enlightenment. For six years I lived and worked in Thailand, Laos, Korea, India, Nepal, China, Japan - doing silent meditation retreats, yoga courses, getting a black belt in Taekwondo and brown belt in Aikido, training in Shaolin, fasting, hiking in the Himalayas and volunteering in orphanages. I eventually arrived in Israel where I discovered the profound depth, beauty and truth of Torah Judaism.[1]
A major part of my journey was devouring spiritual and new age books - Way of the Peaceful Warrior by Dan Millman, Celestine Prophecy by James Redfield, Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda, The Alchemist by Paulo Coehlo, Siddhartha by Herman Hess, Jonathan Livingstone Seagull by Richard Bach, anything by Jiddhu Krishnatmurti and Osho and my favourite - The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle.
It was only several years later, whilst working as a Rabbi/Life Coach/Spiritual guide in Aish HaTorah Yeshivah opposite the Kotel in Jerusalem, that I was introduced to The Untethered Soul (TUS), written by Michael Singer (MS), a fellow Jew who also became enamoured with Eastern Philosophy. It soon became my ‘go to’ favourite book for dealing with the challenges of life and reaching a more awakened state of being. It is incredibly clearly written, true to life, simple, deep, understandable. It makes lofty ideas practical and his examples and analogies perfectly hit the mark. So whenever my students come to me to share their struggles with sense of self, anxiety, fear, doubt, loneliness and any other mental and emotional affliction that they share with the rest of humanity, I tell them that they *must* get and read The Untethered Soul as soon as possible. Yet, before they get it, I always warn them - “Just know that it isn't completely in line with Torah. There are some tweaks it needs and it’s only one half of the journey.” So, obviously, people started asking me - What does that mean? What is the first step and what more is there? What is not in line with Torah truth? What should we look out for? What should we ignore, is there anything to add? Hence the birth of this pamphlet -
The Re-Tethered Soul: A Torah Commentary on The Untethered Soul.

[1] For more see my book Mastering Life: A Unique Guidebook to Jewish Enlightenment.

BS"D

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE: RE-TETHERING!

The whole purpose of life according to the Torah is a deep, intimate, authentic, personal relationship with the Infinite, Conscious, Loving Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, Hashem.[2]
Our sages teach that the soul, which is a finite manifestation of the Infinite Consciousness, was formed in order to receive the Divine pleasure of Gd-Consciousness. However, as we all know, a free gift is not enjoyed and appreciated nearly as much as one that we choose, work for and earn. Someone who hikes to the top of a mountain is much more exhilarated by the view at the top than someone who got a bus up. Someone who works hard for their money doesn't feel the shame that someone who begs for their money does. In Kabbalistic writings this is called Nehamah D'Kisufah - The Bread of Shame.
So Hashem created the Universe and brought the soul down into a physical reality[3] in order to give it a chance to choose and work for the relationship. Faced with the difficulties of life - negative character traits, ego and material needs, societal-financial-relationship pressures, the fact that spirituality isn't revealed and readily experienced through the five senses - a person has to fight hard to choose and invest in a spiritual way of life in this physical world. However, it is through doing this that we enjoy a much more fulfilling experience of life not only in this world, whose pursuit of material and ego pleasures never leads to happiness, but also a much greater experience of being back in the completely spiritual world after the death of the body, where we can enjoy to the full extent a relationship with Hashem this time having chosen, worked for and earned it.

This teaches that the soul was untethered from Hashem[4] and tethered to this world and more challengingly tethered to our psyche (sense of self / thoughts and emotions). We have lost all sense that we are spiritual beings and have erroneously identified with our body, thoughts and emotions. People get their sense of say based on what they have, or what they look like, or what they've been through, rather than on who they really are. We are completely caught up in the movie of our minds and hearts, which unfortunately is rarely particularly enjoyable.
Our goal is to untether ourselves from this false identification and the suffering it brings (the whole teaching of TUS), *and also to re-tether ourselves to*

---

[2] Devarim 10:12 / first Chapter of Mesilat Yesharim
[3] Of course even 'physical' reality is a manifestation of Infinite Consciousness - like images in our head are 'made of' our consciousness.
[4] Obviously it can't be untethered from Hashem literally, seeing as we are taught that the soul is a piece of Hashem

Hashem. Although untethering from the psyche will itself lead to an awakened peaceful, joyful state of being, *it's not the whole picture*. We also have to proactively connect ourselves to Hashem.

The two main methods of doing this re-tethering (apart from character development and meditation which are essential basics for all humans), are tefillah and mitzvahs. Tefillah, often translated as Prayer really means to bind oneself[5] and Mitzvah, often translated as Commandment, comes from the word Tzavta, meaning connection. Through conscious tefillah and performance of mitzvot, along with character development and meditation/mindfulness, we weaken our connection to material and ego desires and strengthen our soul and therefore our connection and relationship with Hashem ie We ***re-tether*** to Hashem. This high level of spiritual awakening is called Deveikut - which literally means 'stuck together' or 'tethered.'[6] The purpose of life is not detachment. Detachment from the wrong things is the first step towards the purpose of life, which is attachment, Hashem.

ONLY ONE HALF OF THE WORK

The Untethered Soul (TUS) gives an incredible guide as to how to untether from our psyche and start living through our essential conscious self/soul. Michael Singer (MS) does a great job in demonstrating how we are not our thoughts, emotions, experiences, desires, memories etc. He says that we are in fact the pure consciousness that lies behind all of these things and experiences them. Judaism teaches that it actually goes deeper than that. Consciousness is not the 'I.' It is not synonymous with the Soul. The Soul is a Chelek Elokai Mimaal - literally an aspect of the Divine. Consciousness is a faculty of the Soul, the lens of the Soul, how it interacts with the world.
The issue is, as TUS points out, that we have fallen into the 'movie' of our psyche and have lost all sense of Self. Just like when we are gripped by a thrilling movie we lose all sense of our Self sitting in the cinema watching the movie,[7] so too we have become so caught up in our psyche that we have lost sense of our Self as a Soul (with pure consciousness). Just gaining and integrating this awareness is enough to help us live life from a much higher perspective, deal with events, thoughts and emotions in a healthier way, process our pain and experience sublime states of peace, vitality, love and joy.

---

[5] Another related word is tefillin which we bind on our arms

[6] In modern Hebrew the word for glue is devek and for stickers is madbekot

[7] to such an extent that when I was 12 I went to see The Dead Poet Society with my Mum and half way through the film she passed me a tissue - I was confused until I became aware that I was crying my eyes out without even realising it.

TUS, in the last chapter, equates this feeling and experience as living in a G!d-conscious state, connecting to the Divine conscious reality.
Judaism certainly believes that a re-identification with soul over ego will automatically connect someone to Hashem, seeing as the soul is an aspect of the Divine and is naturally connected to Hashem. In fact, Hashem can only be truly experienced through the soul; we can't experience Hashem directly through the 5 senses. However, this is just one half of the work. In fact, someone who just meditates and overcomes their ego and reaches blissful states of compassion and love, detached from anxiety and jealousy and doubt hasn't necessarily actually connected to Hashem at all. Buddhists, who definitely achieve the former goal as set out in TUS don't even believe in Hashem. They would have exactly the same experience as TUS describes and calls G!d, but they certainly wouldn't call it G!d. THere is no relationship in Buddhism, no prayer, no Divine guidelines. In fact, they don't even believe in the Soul at all (anatta) however they do believe in consciousness - (vijnana) - this itself demonstrates the distinction between soul and consciousness, a distinction TUS doesn't make. Therefore we see that connecting to Hashem takes more than just disconnecting from the psyche - that's just one half of the work.

THE CONCEPT OF G!D/HASHEM[8]

Like most spiritual, new age books, notably including The Power of Now, the concept of G!d in TUS is very vague; a higher Consciousness, a Loving Presence, the unmanifested, Being.[9] The Power of Now and TUS hardly even mention tefillah which is a major part of our everyday life. There is no talk of actively creating a relationship with G!d or what G!d wants for us and expects from us.
In fact, for TUS there is nothing that G!d wants from us and nothing that we can do to upset Him.[10]

---

[8] The following is written assuming the Torah is the Truth and is the Divine document which was dictated to Moshe by Hashem as the spiritual guidebook to life. For immensely compelling evidence that this is in fact the case go to www.areyouright.org
[9] These books also bring together teachings from several traditions which are infact teaching very different things - such as yoga which believes in Soul (Atman) and Buddhism which doesn't (Anatta)
[10] I refer to G!d as Him only, like our tradition teaches, because in the male-female physically intimate act of procreation, the man gives the seed and the woman develops it into a child. So too in the act of creation G!d gave the seed - the raw materials - and we are here to develop it into its perfection. We take the wheat and turn it into bread. We take our flawed nature and transform ourselves into great people. So in the relationship between human and G!d, G!d is the male aspect of seed-giver and humans are the female aspect of developing that into its wholeness.

TUS claims that the Divine Love is

> *"the love of a mother. …the level of love and compassion is so deep that the child can do no wrong."*

This analogy doesn't fit into our experience of reality. Certainly an unconditionally loving mother demands nothing from her child in order to deserve and receive her love, and there is nothing the child could ever do to lose the mother's love; however, a loving mother *does* have things She wants her children to do and achieve in their lives, and therefore she is disappointed ('*for'* them, not '*with'* them) when they don't live up to their potential. The child can do wrong, can damage himself, can strain the relationship with the mother. It's BECAUSE She loves them that She demands things from them (not to receive or deserve love but for their own sake to reach their potential) and She's disappointed for them when they go against that. This is the idea of the unconditionally loving Hashem.[11] Hashem knows what is best for you, gives the guidebook, and hopes and expects you'll live up to that potential.[12]

As we said, Judaism teaches that it's not enough to just disconnect from physical/ego identification in order to connect to Hashem; there are things that we need to do in order to consciously build the connection - to re-tether. These connection points are tefillah and mitzvot. Without them you can not connect to Hashem in an authentic, deep and meaningful way. If you don't speak to your Mother how can you ever have a real relationship with Her? So too with mitzvot. You can be a great, spiritual, kind person, but if you aren't keeping kosher and keeping Shabbat, consciously and joyfully, you can never reach your full spiritual potential. Mitzvot are food for the soul, without them the soul itself can never fully self-actualise. So even if we do manage to detach from the psyche, the soul we are now identifying with is not the fully self actualised reality it could be. Someone who doesn't do mitzvahs may achieve the immense, enlightening pleasure of detachment from psyche, but can never achieve the real goal, intimate attachment to Hashem.[13]

---

[11] It must be noted that EVERYTHING we say about Hashem is limited to Mitzideynu - our perspective. We can not understand anything about the essence of an Infinite Being beyond time and space. We can only relate to Hashem in the way that He has revealed Him to us.

[12] In Chapter 19 TUS claims that G!d is totally non-judgmental. Yet in Chapter 15, p147 it says that there are miserable people and happy people - *"Now, you guess who G!d wants to hang out with."* Obviously, if G!d is totally non-judgmental and unconditionally loving then what difference would your attitude make to whether G!d wants to hang out with you or not. ie MS himself would admit to G!d having preferences for us.

[13] It could also be the other way round, that someone is doing mitzvahs but is still very connected to the ego, so they too will not reach the ultimate goal. We need both.

BS"D

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THIS WORLD, PEOPLE AND EMOTIONS

One of the most famous Buddhist adages is "Attachment causes suffering," which gave rise to a spirituality of renunciation of the material world and emotional detachment from everything in it. A Buddhist monk won't get married, have money, eat nice food, sleep in a bed .. because craving these pleasures means that they are not at peace, or worse, they actually suffer some emotional pain.
Jewish wisdom teaches a very different approach to physicality.
Whereas in the East Philosophies they generally teach detachment from the material world (no money, no physical intimacy, no nice food) and the West is all about consumerism (as much money, intimacy and food as possible), Judaism teaches the balance. We engage in the physical world in moderation and on such a high level of consciousness that we aren't brought down and controlled by it, in fact we use it to be more spiritual. You can be rich, just don't get your sense of self through money, or be controlled by it; give at least 10% to charity and use it to do mitzvahs and kindness. We can eat nice food, just make sure it's kosher, say a blessing before and after. Physical intimacy with the right person, in the right way, at the right time, for the right reason is very holy. (I believe MS would agree with this, as he is married and a very successful businessman). It's actually a much higher level of personal mastery. It's easy to overcome your ego when there are no responsibilities, no negative people to interact with, no challenges from the external world.

However, even more important in terms of TUS, is relationship. According to Judaism, the purpose of life is relationship, attachment and emotional intimacy! Of course it is attachment to the right thing; not physical and ego things, but to meaningful relationships and spiritual realities.[14] Relationship to ourSelves, our fellow humans and to Hashem. Does this open us up to vulnerability and pain? Absolutely. Yet that is the possible price we are willing to pay for the depth of true intimate relationships. The truth is that **attachment doesn't cause suffering**. It can cause pain which is a feeling, an emotion. Suffering is your mind not dealing with the pain in a healthy way - 'Why me,' 'It's not fair..' ' If only …' Once we are conscious enough, and have enough emuna, we can feel pain without it leading to suffering. Infact, attachment creates immense depth and joy - for many people the happiest times are their wedding, the birth of a child, sharing quality time with friends and family -

[14] Buddhist philosophy is internally consistent - if there is no soul or G!d then indeed, everything is impermanent (annijja) and not worth getting attached to. Once you realise though that there is an Eternal Loving Divine Reality, then the whole purpose becomes to attach to it.

things that Buddhist monks never do. They may be the most peaceful people in the world, but they are certainly not the happiest people in the world.

TUS writes

> *“So to stay happy, just don’t close your heart. Even if your wife leaves you or your husband dies, you don’t close.”*

I might not have understood this correctly - but I don’t know what sort of human would just ‘choose to be happy’ when their beloved husband dies or their wife whom they have been lovingly devoted to for 30 years leaves them. What does that say about the love in the first place?
Relationships are made of attachment and emotional intimacy. There are times when the relevant and appropriate emotion is sadness and pain.
Of course we shouldn’t be totally broken, inconsolable and depressed by things that happen. We deal with things with equanimity and emuna. Equanimity, not letting the external world dictate how you feel and act, means that although we are not controlled by these things, we are open to experiencing them. Emunah, the knowledge that everything that happens is actually brought about by our Loving All-knowing Father and is for the best, means that although we don’t suffer long term from what happens, we can, and sometimes should, experience pain. Whilst we don’t let our pain control and break us, and we do retain our general happy outlook on life, we are meant to feel and experience sadness and pain and then use it to grow, become more conscious, empowered, refined and help others. That is part of the human condition. To love deeply and have compassion implies emotional attachment which means you can’t and in fact, should not, always choose to be happy. Happiness is a state of either mind (you are having refined, uplifting positive thoughts) or being (you have connected to your intrinsic, natural state of happiness in your soul). Feeling sad and broken on some appropriate occasions doesn’t undermine one's overall happiness. Judaism values the whole gamut of human emotions which bring vitality and depth to life. Walk into a Buddhist Temple any day of the year and it’s beautifully calm and peaceful. Tranquility pervades. Walk into a synagogue on Simchat Torah you’ll see people dancing with unbounded joy; on Tisha B’Av sitting on the floor crying. When someone dies we deeply mourn for seven days; when we get married we joyfully celebrate for seven days. We yearn for deep relationships

and it is this yearning itself that creates connection. Yes, connection can cause pain, but with emuna, pain isn’t necessarily such a terrible thing.[15]

The third difference is that both the Power of Now and TUS speak about accepting ‘what is’ from a place of detachment and calm, seeing as non-acceptance of the reality causes suffering. TUS says once you have this higher consciousness “*this world ceases to be a problem.*”
Judaism offers a higher path. We believe that ‘what is’ isn’t just a random natural simulation that you can learn to deal with from a higher perspective. We believe that not only is this world not ‘a problem’ but in fact that everything we see, hear, experience is put in our lives as a conscious, meaningful, message and opportunity from Hashem who loves us and knows what is best for us to reach our spiritual potential. This is called Emuna - knowing that everything that ‘is,’ is meaningful and for the best**.** Therefore we don’t just detach from it and accept it, we embrace everything, learn from it and use it to attach ourselves to Hashem. Then not only does the world cease to be a problem, it’s actually the arena that we are placed in in order to reach the highest levels of consciousness and perform our mission of bringing G!d-Consciousness into the ‘lower’ physical realm.

[15] In my notes to Chapter 5 I point out that in fact keeping your heart open is what lets you experience the pain and that letting go and choosing happiness in these intense emotional times is actually closing your heart. Only someone with a closed heart would not feel pain over the death of a loved one.

BS"D

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER NOTES ON TUS FROM A TORAH VIEWPOINT.

(Important note: This is by no means, Gd forbid, an attack on MS or TUS. As I said in the intro - I love the book. It's just pointing out the differences from a Torah view. Anything not commented on means it's totally in line - which is most of it).

Chapter One: The Voice Inside Your Head

p9: *"Stop feeling that one thing it says is you and the other thing it says is not you. If you are hearing it talk, it's obviously not you….There is absolutely nothing that the voice can say that is more you than anything else it says."*

It's true that neither voice IS you - but they aren't equally not you. One voice, the positive one, your yetzer tov, is more representative of you - it is the voice of your soul. The negative voice, the yetzer hara, is the voice of your body/ego. What the yetzer tov says is more representative of you than what the yetzer hara says.

This can be seen by your positive and negative character traits as well, which are rooted in the voices in your head.
People often tell me they hate themselves. When I ask why, they give me a list of negative character traits. I tell them that those traits don't define them, they should just work on improving them. However, I also tell people that they should get a healthy sense of self based on their positive character traits.
One may say - If my negative traits don't define me then my positive traits don't either. That's not quite true. While your good traits don't define you, they are certainly more of an expression of who you are - a manifestation of your soul which does define you. The negative ones belong to the Yetzer Hara which is in you and affects you, like a virus, which you are responsible for treating, but is not a part of who you essentially are.

p9: *Suppose you were looking at three objects - a flowerpot, a photograph and a book - and were then asked "Which of these objects is you?" You'd say "None of them! I'm the one who's looking at what you are putting in front of me."*

Once again, true that none of them IS you, but suppose the photograph was a photograph of you - you would definitely say it is more representative of you than the book and flowerpot. Our sages teach us that thoughts originate either from your soul or your body/ego. You should listen to the soul generated thoughts; they are helpful, uplifting, guide you to greatness, connection, doing the right thing, self-actualisation and Gd-Consciousess.

p10: *"They want to discover which of these voices, which of these aspects of their personality is who they really are. The answer is simple; none of them."*

Same as above. The positive ones are more representative of you than the negative ones. They are the 'voice of your soul.'

p12: *"You create the world within your mind because you can control your mind whereas you can't control the world …. If you can't get the world the way you like it, you internally verbalise it, judge it, complain about it, and then decide what to do about it. This makes you feel more empowered….In the thought world there's always something you can do to control the experience."*

This makes sense in theory, however really the whole problem, as TUS itself says, is that you in general CAN'T control your mind and it actually makes you feel dis-empowered. The goal is to learn to clear and control the mind.

Chapter Two: Your Inner Roommate

p21: *"How many times has that voice been wrong about what was going on or what will be going on?"*

True - and how many times has that voice been right? Often the voice in your head tells you to do the right thing even though it may be easier not to. It tells you to be there for others, to forgive people, to focus on being grateful. It cheers you up when you are feeling low. So, the truth is (once again) you have at least two inner roommates. One of them is good and positive (yetzer tov - the inclination towards perfection and connection) and should be listened to. That's the voice you need to amplify and follow. The other one is unhealthy and negative (yetzer hara - the inclinations towards lacking and brokenness) and doesn't serve you.
So you shouldn't completely reject the voice(s) in your head, rather you must learn to distinguish which one you can trust and which one isn't serving a purpose and can be let go of.

Chapter Three: Who Are You?

p27: *"Eventually you will get to a point within yourself where you realise that you, the experiencer, have a certain quality. And that quality is awareness, consciousness, an intuitive sense of existence."*

This is called Chavayah. See Getting to Know Your Soul and Getting to Know YourSelf by the author of Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh.

p28: *"Consciousness is the highest word you will ever utter. There is nothing higher or deeper than consciousness."*

TUS equates consciousness to the soul. We say consciousness isn't who you are, it's a faculty of the soul. It's what the soul uses to experience the inner and outer world. The highest word you'll utter is Hashem's name (in fact you won't utter it, it's so high you can't utter it and even if you could you aren't allowed). After that comes Neshama, then maybe consciousness.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LUCID SELF

p36: *"Consciousness is neither pure nor impure, it has no qualities."*

This is true according to Judaism, which separates consciousness from soul. Consciousness has no qualities, it's a lens. The soul however is certainly pure, as we say every morning - "Elokai neshamah she'natah bi tehorah hi."
If TUS is equating consciousness with soul, which it seems to be doing, then this statement isn't true - consciousness/soul is pure.

p37: *"As you pull back into the consciousness this world ceases to be a problem. It's just something you are watching."*

As I said in the intro - this world is more than 'not a problem' and it isn't just something you are watching. It is a Divine, meaningful, sometimes challenging communication from Hashem to help you reach your Divine potential. It's the training ground that is preparing us for the eternal life of the world to come. It isn't something we are just meant to detach from and observe, it's something we must engage in, learn from and uplift.

CHAPTER FIVE: INFINITE ENERGY

p44: Chi and Chakras
There is a lot to say about this. Judaism certainly believes in energy flow as the source of vitality in life, especially related to the levels of the soul specifically referred to as nefesh and ruach - life-force and spirit. The practice

of tai chi and qi gong, moving meditation exercises, are not connected to idol worship and are very healthy for the Jewish mind, body and soul.
Chakras on the other hand are a little more tricky.
People have tried to compare the Chakras (energy centres) to the Sephirot (Divine energies of Creation). Even the words Chakra and Sephirah are both related to the concept of a wheel. Whereas there are 7 Chakras running through the centre of the body, the Kabbalistic system of the Tree of Life has 10 Sephirot which correspond to parts of the body.
Keter - Crown Chakra
Chochma / Binah - Third Eye
Chesed / Gvurah - Throat (In our system corresponding to the right and left arm which when held horizontally are in line with the throat).
Tiferet - Heart
Netzach / Hod - Solar Plexus (In our system right and left leg)
Yesod - Sacrum
Malchut - Root
This is not surprising as the Torah teaches at the end of Parshat Chayei Sara that Avraham sent gifts of spiritual wisdom to the East. We therefore see many parallels - for example the main god in Hinduism is Brahman and his consort is Saraswati - a clear reference to Abraham and Sarah.
Even though the essence of 'Hindu' philosophy is in line with Torah, once it got mixed with local animist and spiritualist religions, the practice of Hinduism and the belief system - with idol filled temples, offering incense and food to stone calves, belief in several (thousand) gods with their own power - Hindu philosophy and practice certainly now falls under the category of avodah zara.
Therefore, even if there is a metaphysical reality to the Chakras, once they have symbols, mantras, sounds, religious practices and beliefs attached to them, they are certainly not something that it is spiritually conducive for a Jew to involve themselves in.[16] Even though these things may 'work' in arousing spiritual states, they aren't recommended for the Jewish soul. (Just like speaking to the dead and magic can be done but are forbidden to us).[17]
Baruch Hashem we have our own system of meditation, tefillah and mitzvot that works perfectly for our Souls.
We'll see in the next chapter that the energy center of the heart is a major theme in Jewish teaching.

---

[16] Especially Kundalini practices which arouse the power of the snake energy - clearly not something we should be messing with.
[17] The same goes for psychedelics, which may 'work' but are not a part of our pure, holy path. See my class on youtube - The Torah of Ayahuasca.

p46: *"Do not let anything that happens in life be important enough that you're willing to close your heart over it."*

We spoke about this in the intro. TUS's relationship to the world and life is one of complete detachment. There is no significance to life in the world aside from being something you need to overcome to find freedom. We believe that things are important here, especially relationships.
Indeed, 95% of the time, the situation that would normally cause you to close up isn't worth closing up over. You can learn to stay open. However, there are events that are worthy of feeling sad about and pain over. Yet, this doesn't mean you close your heart - in fact, the very opposite! An open heart doesn't always mean blissful experiences. There is something called keeping your heart open - **in order to** feel the emotion. To deny feeling a sense of loss and pain when someone you love dies or leaves, *that* is closing your heart. Detachment is a closing of the heart (which may make you feel open and blissful) whereas attachment is the opening of the heart (which sometimes feels painful). So we agree, always keep your heart open! 95% of the time because things aren't worth getting upset about, and the rest of the time because some things are worth getting upset about and we should be open to experiencing that. The greater the Tzaddik the more they cry on Tisha B'Av, the more they feel the pain of their fellow. That's being truly open and full of vitality.

CHAPTER SIX: THE SECRETS OF THE SPIRITUAL HEART

I'm not sure I fully understand this chapter. It appears as though MS is saying that for a healthy person everything just passes through them with no real reaction. If someone walked in on his wife making love to the postman he's meant to let it just let it pass through his heart and remain open and loving? If he found out his daughter had been attacked, abused and killed, Gd forbid, he'd be okay with that? If he read about a terrorist attack that killed many people there'd be no energy disturbance? I can't believe that is the case - although that's what the chapter seems to be saying, so I may have misread it. Yes, in general we should not let things bother us and we should learn to release past wounds and energy blocks. Most of what we get upset about is not worth getting upset about. However, there are some serious things in life. There are painful things in life. Once again, I agree that we must learn to process them by feeling them intensely, releasing them and not letting them

dictate our lives. However, being so ethereal and detached that nothing causes any disturbance seems a little unhealthy and unrealistic.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TRANSCENDING THE TENDENCY TO CLOSE

I like this chapter a lot. It's a very high level. Having said that - people with deep wounding and trauma can not apply these ideas in the moment and need real healing before being able to implement these ideas.

CHAPTER EIGHT: LET GO NOW OR FALL

I like this chapter a lot. It's a very high level. Having said that - people with deep wounding and trauma can not apply these ideas in the moment and need real healing before being able to implement these ideas.

CHAPTER NINE: REMOVING YOUR INNER THORN

p85 *“To free yourself from your inner thorns, you simply stop playing with them. The more you touch them the more you irritate them. Because you’re always doing something to avoid feeling them, they are not given the chance to naturally work themselves out.”*

These sentences are a little unclear. Is the problem that we are ‘*playing with them …touching them … irritating them*,’ or is it that we are *‘always doing something to avoid them*?’ I would guess it’s a bit of both - sometimes we engage in our pain and sometimes we try to avoid it. Either way, these things won’t help. So how do we take the thorn out? How do we deal with loneliness, jealousy, fear? What does it mean to neither avoid it nor play with it?

p86 *“What you can do is notice that you noticed…your way out is to just notice who’s noticing….all you have to do is notice who it is that feels the loneliness.”*

For anyone who is actually experiencing the pain of having their thorn touched, zooming out and noticing who is noticing is incredibly challenging and could even be considered a form of avoiding the pain. If you can do it by all means go for it, yet for most people this is not practical. For most of us, Rashi teaches us how to deal with painful emotions. In Parshat Chukat he explains that

BS”D

“Anything difficult for a person to bear is called קָצוּר נֶפֶשׁ, like a person who is beset with trouble, and his mind is not composed/wide enough to accept it. There is no place in his heart for the distress to settle.”

What he is saying is that we need to give the pain a place in our heart, we need to feel the pain, to sit with it, to experience it in order to process it and let it go. We certainly should not fight it, play with it, judge it, identify with it, wallow in it, think about it, avoid it - all these things just perpetuate and build it. We should just breathe deeply and experience it. In saying we need a place for it in our heart, Rashi is also teaching us that it can’t take up our whole heart. There is a place for it but it doesn’t control or define me. We can label it - “I feel lonely, and that is okay.” Saying ‘I feel lonely (rather than I am lonely) is in itself helping us do the work of TUS, by helping us dis-identify from the pain, knowing it doesn’t define me and that there is a pure me in there experiencing it. The key is to not fall back into thinking about it - “why am I lonely, i hate being lonely, it’s my fault I’m lonely, it’s his fault I’m lonely, other people aren’t lonely, I’ll always be lonely.” That voice is just ‘playing with’ and aggravating the thorn. As soon as that voice comes we can acknowledge it and let it go as we re-focus on just experiencing the pain. At some point, when we are more calm and settled, we can tap deeper into the consciousness of the pure Self - there is the pain and there is the ‘me’ experiencing the pain. In this way the thorn works its way out.
When you are no longer afraid to experience the pain, it loses most of its power and you don’t have to spend your life avoiding it. Feeling pain is painful - that’s why we don’t like it. Yet the only way to get the thorn out is to go through the pain in a conscious way. Pulling out the thorn hurts temporarily but frees you from a lifetime of consistent nagging pain.
This is how we deal with our pain without playing with it or avoiding it.
TUS does go on to say something a little more in line with this later on the page …
“You can experience these very human states without getting lost in them or resisting them. You can …just watch how experiencing loneliness affects you. Does your posture change? Do you breathe slower or faster? Witness it and then it will go.”

Then, once we have been open to feeling the pain, we have the ultimate level - Emuna, as mentioned in the intro. Trusting that everything that happens, no matter how difficult, has meaning and is ultimately good for us if we handle it with the right attitude.

p87 *"You don't have to get rid of loneliness, you just cease to be involved with it."*

I like this idea. The ability to feel pain but not be bothered by it. It's a high level - to have a thorn but not let it affect you. It seems there are two levels - one where we haven't removed the thorn but it doesn't bother and control us seeing as we are more identified with our Soul and able to just observe the thorn, and a higher level in which we are so identified with our Soul that those thorns have been completely uprooted.

CHAPTER TEN: STEALING FREEDOM FOR YOUR SOUL

p95 *"The truth is, everything will be okay as soon as you are okay with everything."*

One of my favourite lines in the book. Once again, as I have stressed many times, I believe there are some things you shouldn't be okay with. But for the other 98% of things this is spot on.

Page 95 and p96 are the key to the whole game.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: PAIN THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

Great chapter! Still needs to address the opposite of closing around the pain which is completely drowning in it.

CHAPTER TWELVE: TAKING DOWN THE WALLS

"That's what the house is. It's all your past experiences, your thoughts and emotions: all the concepts, views, opinions, beliefs, hopes and dreams you have collected around yourself."

Not all our thoughts, emotions, opinions, hopes and beliefs are bad and blocking out the light. In fact, in Judaism, quite the opposite is true. The values and beliefs we are raising our children with are teaching about and connecting them to the light! 'There is a Loving Divine Consciousness who cares about you,' 'You are intrinsically worthy,' 'There is a Creator of the world which means life has real meaning and purpose' 'love your neighbour as yourself' and so on and so on. Our practices are constant reminders and mindfulness tools to help us remember and integrate those teachings - Mezuzas, brachas,

tefillah, kashrut and Shabbat, a whole day a week to bask in the light! Obviously there is the anxiety and self doubt ie negative psyche stuff etc that people are definitely dealing with and yes these things can cut people off from experiencing the light. However, a conscious, growing Jew never finds themselves completely locked away in darkness. Our path is constantly letting in and connecting us to the light, in fact that is the purpose of the religion.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: FAR, FAR BEYOND

p119: *Boundaries create the appearance of finiteness in infinite space. There is just the infinite universe. In truth, everything is infinite.*

I don't want to be nit-picky but feel the need to mention that space/the universe isn't infinite. It had a start point 13.8 billion years ago and it's expanding. Infinite can't start or expand. It has an edge. It is limited.

It's important at this point to understand the difference between Mitzido and Mitzideinu. Mitzido means from His perspective, which we can say almost nothing about. We can't grasp beyond time and space (at least whilst the soul is in the body), seeing as we are within it. From G-d's viewpoint, we don't exist independently at all. We are a figment of His imagination.

Much of this chapter is trying to apply Mitzido to Mitzideinu, which is impossible and impractical. From our finite reality, Mitzideinu, there are practical boundaries. Things are a mile away and it takes a certain amount of time to reach there. I am not you. There is your consciousness and my consciousness. Everything in this universe, including your consciousness, is finite. Lofty ideas like these are often not functional or practical and actually miss the whole point of creation and our role in it. On our level of consciousness, reality and being, the finite is very real. It's not the highest, ultimate reality, but it's the one we have and have to function in. It's through mastering the finite that we can truly choose to connect to the one infinite reality - Hashem. We are finite consciousness, distinct but not separate aspects of the Infinite Consciousness. We were placed in a finite world in order to bring Consciousness of the Infinite into the finite reality. That's huge.

p120 *Since the analytical mind cannot handle the infinite, you created an alternative reality of finite thoughts …*

This sounds profound, but really we couldn't exist in this realm without finite thoughts. MS is using his finite mind to write this book, appear on podcasts, make money, buy gifts for his wife. He is functioning in the finite world.
We need to come to terms with our finite-ness and work within it, just from a higher level of consciousness. We can use our finite mind and world to create goodness and healing and beauty. MS may have broken out of the limited cage of his psyche so is living on a much higher level of consciousness, but he still needs to eat and go to the toilet and even that higher level of consciousness is still finite. It's still a cage.

p120 - p122 *Your model*

We have built a model of reality for ourselves that we have to break down. Yet, breaking down your old model is not enough, because whatever happens you have created another, albeit higher conscious model. TUS is describing a different reality, but even that reality is a model. There is an objectively true model of reality, created by the modeller Himself.
Hashem has given us the model which is made up of 613 pieces and if we aren't living within that model it doesn't matter what model we create for ourselves, it's not the ultimate truth.
Once again, TUS only goes half way. Yes break down your old model, but then tap into the real model of reality.

p122 - means you love your cage.

People don't love their cages, most people are suffering in their cages, they just don't know how to or are afraid to break out.

p125 Would you like to go beyond? Would you like to feel no edges?

Love the analogy of the cage and pushing through the painful edges to be free. It's so true and well written. We just need to remember that once the dog is free of the cage, he's now still a dog, just in a much bigger, better cage, a bigger, better model. Don't think that MS is now not in a cage. He has his beliefs and experiences and limitations.
We, in this finite reality are in a cage, even when untethered. Unless we buy into THE model that THE CREATOR gave us, we're always in a self projected

cage. A cage is not necessarily a bad thing. Hashem gave us our cage and taught us how to function within it at the highest level.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: LETTING GO OF FALSE SOLIDITY

p130: Because you have this model of who you are it is easier to know how to act, how to make decisions, and how to relate to the outside world.

Absolutely! We have to make decisions and act and relate to the outside world. We have to develop a model of who we are. The goal is to develop the model that most accurately represents and manifests our soul and the model given to us by the Creator. .

p130: You try to hold a consistent set of thoughts and concepts in your mind such as "I am a woman." Yes, even that is a thought or a concept held in your mind. You, who are holding onto that are neither male or female….You think 'I am a woman, I am of a certain age and I believe in one philosophy versus another' (To end of paragraph).

Firstly, your soul is either a male or female half of a whole soul.
Secondly, in this world, you are a woman of a certain age with certain beliefs. Your gender and age are objective realities. They are aspects of who you are whilst you exist in a body, in olam hazeh - this reality. Your roles, gender, age etc do not define your essential being, yet whilst operating in this world you have to have a self concept, you can't function without it. You can't relate to others without it. My son is a nine year old boy. It's not a false sense of self. Yes there is a higher essential spiritual conscious self, but we are in this world for now. Yes, you can change your beliefs, but some beliefs are objectively true. You should believe in them, act and make decisions based on them, and if you don't you made a mistake.
MS also has his model and self concept. In this reality he is a 76 year old Jewish man with certain beliefs that he's written a whole book about. (By the way, if the Torah is true it turns out that many of his beliefs that he holds onto and defines his life and actions and decisions by, aren't actually true seeing as he isn't following the Torah. In fact many things he believes and does, those that go against that Torah, if the Torah is true[18] are disconnecting him from his soul).
The goal is, as I said before, to develop the self concept that most accurately represents our soul in this finite world. The purpose is to get your physical-

[18] www.areyouright.org

ego-this worldly self living as much in line with your essential self as possible.[19] You can’t get rid of the psyche permanently in this world - you can shape and refine it to be functioning in line with higher consciousness.
The problem is that most people's self concept is developed through upbringing, pain, comparison and society (p131). So the key is to develop your solid self in this world based on the truth as the Torah teaches it.

p132: You have no concepts, no hopes, no dreams, no beliefs, no security …

I’m not sure I understand this. MS has just written a whole book full of concepts and beliefs and he certainly has hopes and dreams … to help people, spread light, write books. There is no life without these things. It may be healthy not to be attached to achieving hopes and dreams, but we should have good, healthy positive ones. It is always good to question your beliefs and concepts, but you have to have something to base your life on, especially if there are objective truths. The goal is to live in line with the objective reality. We must be careful of spiritual sounding lofty ideas with no practical relevance.

p133: You must be willing to see that this need to protect is where the entire personality comes from.

For many people, yes. Not everyone though. Some people are driven by the desire to manifest their ultimate potential, become great people and make the world a better place. Or even higher, to just do what is right in G!d’s eyes.

p134: Your mind does not stop struggling until you’ve processed the event….

It’s healthy to process events.
Don’t allow events to leave impressions inside of you.
Same point again - you hear of the mass rape and genocide of innocent women and children and it shouldn’t bother you? A car passes through your consciousness without leaving an impression, mass rape and genocide should also just pass through? Don’t make a block. It’s all the same. Where’s the humanity in this world view? (Yes yes, don’t be a victim to it and define your life by it - but feel it and do something about it).

[19] In Kabbalistic terms get your Ruach living in line with your Neshamah - hameivin yavin.

CHAPTER 15: THE PATH OF UNCONDITIONAL HAPPINESS

p141: Just make one basic, underlying decision: Do you want to be happy, or do you not want to be happy?

Happiness is not the highest goal. Some higher choices are - Do I want to be good, or do I not want to be good? Do I want to live in line with the truth, or do I not want to live in line with the truth? Do I want to be Gd-Conscious, or do I not want to be Gd-Conscious? Do I want to always do the right thing, or do I not always want to do the right thing? Happiness is not the ultimate goal - it’s just the result, a by-product, of achieving these goals.

p142 Do you want to be happy from this point forward for the rest of your life, regardless of what happens?

Once again, this is so, so true for the vast majority of things so I still love this chapter - but no, absolutely not, I don’t want to be happy regardless of what happens. I don’t want to be happy when horrific things happen. I want to be sad. I want to grieve and mourn. I want to be a happy person in general with a good, empowered attitude who processes pain quickly and also cries over the pain and suffering of my people, mourns the loss of a loved one, feels other people’s pain. We are intimately connected, not completely detached. You get the point (again).

p143 You are floating in empty space in a universe that goes on forever. If you have to be here, at least enjoy the experience. You’re going to die anyway. Things are going to happen anyway. Why shouldn’t you be happy? You gain nothing by being bothered by life’s events.

This makes life in this world totally insignificant, something to detach from and observe. We believe that life on this planet is immensely important and significant. Not only in and of itself, but as a preparation for the eternal reality of the world to come. (By the way, the universe doesn’t go on forever).
Yes, the vast majority of things you are bothered by aren’t worth being bothered by. However you do gain a lot by being bothered by the things that are worth being bothered by. Yes, you are going die anyway - so you should make sure you are tapping into your mission in this world whilst you are here.

p144: No matter what happens you can choose to enjoy the experience.

I'm sure by now you don't need me to comment. Choose your own horrific, physically and emotionally torturous and painful scenario for MS and his family and see if he'll just choose to enjoy it. (don't actually do that, but you get the point).

p146 - 147 If you want to be close to G!d learn to be joyful.

Yes, we shouldn't complain about bent trees, mosquitoes and people with nicer cars. Of all the paths I've studied, Judaism is the one most focused on joy as a key on the spiritual path as it says, amongst many other sources, (Tehillim 100:2) Serve Hashem with joy. Yehudi comes from the root word meaning gratitude. The first thing we say in the morning is Modeh Ani - I am grateful.
However, Hashem doesn't abandon the truly downtrodden. David HaMelech says (Tehillim 34:19) Hashem is near to the broken hearted and He saves those of crushed spirit.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE SPIRITUAL PATH OF NONRESISTANCE

p149 Neither pushing life away, nor pulling it towards you. …just letting life be life.

Yes, we should accept whatever comes our way and be present with it.
Yes, we should not resist that which can't be resisted, or fight against 'what is' and we should accept reality as it is.
However, we should then consciously choose how to interact with these things. We should push things away or pull them towards us depending on whether or not they serve our higher purpose of personal development, closeness to Hashem and positively impacting people.
That which should and can be resisted and changed, can and should be!
In fact that's the purpose of life - to engage in tikkun - fixing ourselves and the world, being intimately involved in the flow of life, directing it to its higher purpose. We are not meant to be bystanders, we are meant to be vibrant participants and guides. We make a stand against things that shouldn't be - injustice and corruption etc.
I believe Michael would agree with this - he isn't just watching life pass by - he has a business and is empowering people through books and podcasts, so

maybe he is just saying to accept what is first, and then consciously decide how to engage with it.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: CONTEMPLATING DEATH

Great chapter. Many Jewish sources (such as Pirkei Avot, Chovot HaLevavot) suggest contemplating the day of death, not as a morbid thing, but as a way to encourage us to make the most of life and focus on what is important.

p157/158. Let's say you are a jealous type….think about when you're no longer here. Is it really all that romantic that your loved one should live alone with no-one to care for them.

Of course we should learn not to be jealous - but this example is illogical. I *am* here. They *do* have someone to care for them. So it's not okay that they are flirting with someone at a party. Thinking about me being dead isn't going to help take away my jealousy (will actually probably make it worse).

Jewish belief is that death of the body is the entrance way into eternal spiritual life. The pathway to get there is 'life' in this world. So what we do here is very important as it is creating our after-earthly life experience of spiritual reality. So although we don't live for the Next World, we are present in this world and connect to Hashem here, the ultimate purpose is actually what happens after we leave this world and enter the next. (Mesilat Yesharim Chapter One). So we believe in not only contemplating death as the end of life, but also death of the body as the beginning of eternal life.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE SECRET OF THE MIDDLE WAY

Although Taoism has many beautiful ideas and universal truths, it is at best agnostic, if not atheist. There is no talk of a personal Gd, who is intimately involved in our lives and wants a relationship with us. The Tao is at best the flow of nature that Hashem uses to sustain existence. The duality and harmonious coming together of opposites is how time-space reality works - Bereishis begins with the interplay between light and dark, night and day. Inhale and exhale, wax and wane, male and female - this is the make-up of physical and spiritual reality. The coming together of these two opposites is known as Shalom - peace and wholeness.

p170 If you have no preference, if the only thing you want is to remain centred, then life unfolds whilst you simply feel for the centre.

We're overall meant to be in the middle path - ha derech haemtzait - as Rambam and the Vilna Gaon call it and must always return to the centre point. However, often we are called upon to act strongly in one of the extremes. An overall attitude of Tiferet is very healthy, but often acting through Chesed or Gevurah is the necessary power in the moment. Sometimes Netzach (perseverance) , sometimes Hod (surrender). We must be a baki in Ratzo V'Shov - running and returning. Sometimes we have mochin d'katnus - focused awareness, sometimes mochin d'gadlus - expanded consciousness. The moon waxes and wanes, the sea ebbs and tides, they don't stay balanced in the middle. We need to know when and how to use the forces in their own right and when and how to actually go to an extreme if needed. We aren't here to just be flat line peaceful and balanced. We have Purim and Tisha B'Av. Weddings and Funerals. Sheva brachas and shivah.
I do have preferences. I want my kids to be happy and healthy. I want war and abuse to stop, and peace and love to prevail. I want to passionately do something to help achieve these things.
A full life is often lived further afield from the centre - if not at the extremes. One of the greatest things about being a Jew, seeing as we have emunah (loyalty), hishtavut (equinimity) and Gd-Consciousness, we can remain centered, even at the extremes! We live with a general attitude of menuchat hanefesh - inner peace - yet we aren't afraid to show fiery passion and boundless joy, or express immense pain and yearning.
The Torah says that all of Sarah's days were equal in goodness (Culam Shavin L'Tovah). It can't mean that they were equally good. She had the pain of giving her husband to her maidservant and the joy of giving birth to Yitchak. Tov means closeness to Hashem (kirvat Elokim li tov). Sarah felt equally close to Hashem in her pain and her joy.
That is the ultimate balance within extremes.

CHAPTER NINETEEN: THE LOVING EYES OF GD

p173 How can anyone really know anything about Gd?

Through Gd giving us a Divine Guidebook and Prophets to explain it.
That seems like a pretty good way. Not about Gd's essence, but about how Gd wants us to relate to Him.

p175 There was no sense of ‘I’ anymore….like a single drop of water merging in the ocean.

We believe there will always be a sense of I, even when I leave my body, distinct but not separate from the Universal ‘I’ and the other ‘I’s. The purpose of life and the ultimate pleasure in this World and The World to Come is an intimate palpable relationship with Hashem. For a relationship, there must be two.
Even the greatest sages of other religions who spoke of losing all sense of ‘I’ (Buddha and Ramana Maharishi - although through diametrically opposite philosophies) must have been aware of others distinct from themselves. People asked them questions and they answered. How can one person answer another if there is only one? It's impossible to function in the world if you are merged into the oneness with no sense of separate self. If they had truly merged they would not be able to communicate or function in any meaningful way.

Even these quotes he uses to prove his point - ‘I and my Father are one,’ and ‘I speak not of myself, but the father that dwelleth in me,’ actually demonstrate duality (I and my Father. Myself and the Father). There is self and Father in both these cases.

p176 The individual ray is really no different from the sun.

Sounds profound, but clearly isn’t true. There is only one sun, there are many rays. The ray is dependant on the sun, the sun isn't dependant on the ray etc . A finite ray of consciousness is very different from the Infinite Consciousness which created it. There are many souls, just One Hashem. The Soul has no existence without Hashem, Hashem's existence is intrinsic and independent etc.

p177 What if it’s really true that G-d is not judging? What if G-d is loving? We all know that true love doesn’t judge.
p179: That’s how a mother talks about her child. The level of love and compassion is so deep that the child can do no wrong.

Judging and loving do not contradict each other. In fact, true love does judge. It doesn’t judge the person themselves, but certainly their actions and choices. A mother who loves her child wants certain things for him, therefore he certainly can do wrong harmful things to himself and others. When the child

doesn’t live up to those things that are good for him, she doesn’t stop loving him for a second, but she does judge his choices. If one kid is lazy, racist and cruel and another is kind, compassionate and loving, there is clearly a difference. Once again, love is love. She loves them both. However one of them she is more proud of and happy for. Unconditional love doesn’t mean no judgement. Hashem judges BECAUSE He is loving. He doesn’t judge us, he judges our actions and intentions. He wants the best for us. When we don’t achieve that there are consequences. I live up to what Hashem wants from me not from fear of punishment (Hashem has no interest in punishing us), but because I want to develop myself and my relationship with Hashem.

p178: Instead of being encouraged to feel completely protected, loved, honoured and respected by the Divine Force, you’ve been taught that you are being judged.

Baruch Hashem we’ve been taught to feel completely protected, loved, honoured, respected and judged by the Divine Force. It means He cares about me. It’s good for me to know that it’s not okay to do whatever I like. That way I can reach the potential Hashem gave me. Hashem believes in us - we can be great. We shouldn’t let ourselves or Hashem down. That’s real love.

p180 People say that Gd cries when He looks at this earth. The saint sees that Gd goes into ecstasy when He looks upon this earth, under all conditions and at all times.

I’m not sure who this saint is. Not one tradition that believes in Gd teaches such a thing. Gd is equally in ecstasy when He sees His beloved creation killing and abusing each other as when He sees them loving and caring about each other? Why would He be? To bring back his parent analogy - a loving parent isn’t equally ecstatic when their kid aces the test and comes home to help his siblings with their homework as when the kid is arrested for sexual abuse and drug dealing. Gd isn’t equally pleased when we succeed and when we fail. Otherwise there is no point to existence, there’d be no good or bad, no achievement. To the extent that, mitzideinu, we can attribute human qualities to Gd, He does indeed cry when He sees awful things happening in His world. Hashem has a plan for the world. Hashem has a plan for us. He wants us to succeed in creating the most beautiful, close, enlivening and enlightening relationship with Him and spreading that to everyone around us.

BS”D

B’Ezrat Hashem, we can merit to take all the incredible life changing lessons from this amazing book, leave behind that which isn’t fully in line with the truth of the spiritual reality and tap into a real, authentic, palpable relationship - RE-TETHERED to Hashem.