

## Chapter 7 – Learning Guide

### I-In-Class Discussion Questions

1-1-The statement from Genesis with which the chapter begins reads as follows. “And Joseph said to his brothers, fear not, for am I instead of God? You thought evil against me, God thought it for good; in order to do as at this day, to preserve numerous people alive. Now therefore fear not: I will support you and your little ones. So he comforted his brothers and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis: Chapter 50, Verses 19-21) How does the author of the chapter interpret these *verses*? How are they connected to Zeke and Natan Sharnansky’s stories? How else can this statement be interpreted?

2-In the story of Joseph, why doesn’t he take revenge on his brothers?

3-Why do you think Joseph is called *Yosef Hatzadik*, Joseph the righteous one?

4-How did Zeke react to the fact that he had juvenile diabetes?

5-Zeke says, “I feel as though God had given me not only a disease, but rather a window of opportunity to make a change in this world for the better.” What does getting a disease have to do with changing the world for the better?

6-In what ways do you think Psalm 39 helped Natan Sharansky cope with his ordeal? If you were in a similar situation what one book of the bible would you like to have with you?

7-Throughout his years in the Gulag, Natan Sharansky’s one fixed point was the love he felt for his wife Avital. Do you think having one fixed point is always helpful? Can you imagine a situation why having such a fixed point might be detrimental?

8-“In searching for meaning, we’re not looking for just any old link in the chain, but we’re looking for the golden link. When you finally find it, you know it’s right because it is intellectually defensible and emotionally satisfying.” What does the author mean by the “golden link?”

9-The very last sentence of this chapter states, “They did this not to live a detached and emotionless life, but to live a deeper, richer, and more purposeful life, a life of integrity and connectedness.” Integrity and connectedness are sometimes seen as opposite characteristics. Sometimes, more integrity means less connectedness, and more connectedness means less integrity. Give an example of each of these situations.

### II-Essay Questions

1-Write a short essay about what might have happened to Zeke had he not found meaning in his disease.

2-Write a short essay describing the main thesis or theme of this chapter. What does it mean to say “stuff happens.”

3-In this chapter, Joseph is described as an “improvisor.” What does it mean to improvise? Give some concrete examples of improvisation.

4-Natan Sharansky states that he felt like he was having dialogues with some of the great characters of the past. He includes Socrates, Don Quixote, Ulysses, Gargantua, and Hamlet. Who would you include on your list and provide a sentence or two explaining each choice.

### **III-Connections**

Consider the following news story:

**N E W Y O R K**, July 26— An overweight Bronx man wants four famous fast food chains to pay for serving him the finger-licking food that helped make him fat.

Caesar Barber, 56, a maintenance worker who weighs about 270 pounds and stands 5-foot-10, claims McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's and KFC jeopardized his health with their greasy, salty fare. He filed a class action lawsuit on Wednesday in the New York State Supreme Court in the Bronx on behalf of an unspecified number of other obese and ill New Yorkers who also feast on fast food.

Barber's lawsuit is the first broad-based action taken against the fast food industry for allegedly contributing to obesity. He claims the fast food restaurants, where Barber says he used to eat four or five times a week even after suffering a heart attack, did not properly disclose the ingredients of their food and the risks of eating too much.

"They never explained to me what I was eating," Barber said on ABC's Good Morning America.

His lawyer, Samuel Hirsch, said the multibillion-dollar fast food industry has an obligation to warn consumers of the dangers of eating from their menus. "It's a question of informing the consumers," he said. "[The companies] profited enormously."

The fast food chains were negligent in selling food high in fat, salt, sugar, and cholesterol content, the lawsuit claims, despite studies showing a link between consuming such foods and obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, elevated cholesterol intake, related cancers, and other health problems.

As a result of the fast food companies' actions, Barber suffered injuries — he has had two

heart attacks and is diabetic — and is entitled to unspecified damages at a jury trial, the complaint reads.

A food industry spokesman says he is surprised Hirsch can make his legal argument with a straight face. (Excerpt from “Whopper of a Lawsuit Fast-Food Chains Blamed for Obesity, Illnesses” By Geraldine Sealey at <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/fatsuit020725.html>)

Question: Is Caesar Barber trying to shift the blame for his own careless behavior onto the fast food industry? Does the fast food industry share any responsibility for what has happened to Barber?

#### **IV-Personal Journal**

1-Just like Zeke, stuff has happened to me. For example...

2-What is your “one fixed point?”

3-Integrity and connectedness are important values in my life because...

#### **V-Group Project**

Directions: The group project is to write a “chain essay.” What this means is that each member of the group is responsible to write one paragraph as follows. The first person in the group should think of a hypothetical situation similar to Zeke’s (note it doesn’t have to be about getting a disease) and write a one paragraph description of it. The second person should read the first paragraph and continue the essay by writing a second paragraph. He or she might discuss how the person in the hypothetical situation reacted to the news. The third person should read the first two paragraphs and continue the essay by writing a third paragraph. He or she might write about what happened next. This process should continue until everyone in the group has had a chance to write one paragraph.

#### **VI-Vignette**

##### **A Test Case For a Young Business Person**

Gabe Levine graduated business school at the top of his class. Although Gabe did exceptionally well in school, most of his friends think of him more as a doer than thinker. He was extremely active on the school newspaper and was president of his university's entrepreneurial club. Upon graduation, Gabe started his own company, a dot.com called BETTER GRADES. Gabe's driving insight came to him one night during his senior year as he was feverishly trying to finish up a term paper. Gabe knew he needed some additional research before he was ready to write, but he simply didn't have the time. "If only I had a research assistant..." he imagined. A groggy Gabe reluctantly finished the paper and almost immediately forgot about it. He didn't forget about his idea, though.

He was able to raise funds to start his business by persistent convincing and pestering among members of his extended family. He was helped by exuberant economic expectations of the period, especially for anything that had to do with the fast growing internet. Gabe's plan was to act as a kind of middleman, matching desperate students with less desperate students, particularly graduates students with exceptional abilities, extra time, and a need for some additional cash.

Phase 1 of his business plan required him to identify, contact, and hire potential research assistants or on-line consultants, as he called them. His criteria were plain and simple. Every on-line consultant had to be currently enrolled in a nationally recognized graduate school, maintaining a grade point average of 3.33 or above. In addition, each candidate had to furnish a job recommendation from a current professor.

With approximately 100 on-line consultants in place, Phase II began. Gabe advertised in the top 50 University Newspapers and through the internet. His advertisements were also plain and simple, promoting the fact that he had hired an experienced group of researchers from some of the top name schools in the country. He identified the names and affiliations of all his on-line consultants.

Gabe charged \$60 per hour for his on-line consultant's time, paying the consultants \$40 per hour and pocketing the difference. "While this is a seasonal upscale business," he would say, "you do the math. One hundred consultants times 10 hours per week, time \$20 per hour...Not bad."

Initially, business was brisk and things were running relatively smoothly. In time though, customer complaints began to grow and business deteriorated. It turns out, while many students needed research assistance, many more students needed more fundamental help writing their papers.

Gabe talked to many of his customers and on-line consultants in an attempt to figure out a strategy to re-focus his company. He decided to expand and re-invigorate the product. Rather than merely selling research assistance, he now advised his on-line consultants to provide "model papers" for the students to use in writing their papers. It worked. Soon business was better than ever, even though a number of his original on-line consultants quit. The biggest difficulty Gabe faced now was simply hiring enough consultants and tending the problems which

naturally arise with any business growth. Or, was it?