

Symposium  
*Back to Basics: The Foundational Texts of Courage, Resilience, and Perspective*  
Rabbi Karyn Kedar  
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Seven Weeks, Seven Principles

Week One: *decide*. With fortitude, determination, and focus, we can decide that the way we are living, thinking, behaving no longer serves us, and it is time to try another way. This is not a small matter. We try to shift from familiar and comfortable patterns. We find ourselves affirming our decisions and refining them over and over. As quickly as we decide to embark on a path, we often become confused. It is a continual cycle. So many voices prevail upon our good intentions. Which voice to listen to? And to what end?

Week Two: *discern*. Sort through the advice of friends and the echoes of your parents. Understand what helps and what doesn't and sort, choosing what to keep, what to discard. Question your well-guarded assumptions, and challenge the pervasive fear of doing the wrong thing. Discernment is clarity. It is fine-tuning. It is guidance. It is trusting intuition over fear, listening to the gentle fluttering of longing and to the whispers of the soul. It is self-reliance. It is the utter denial of negativity and the commitment to positive thinking. And yet, discernment is not dogmatic; there are a myriad of possibilities to self-actualize, to discover purpose, to have a meaningful life, to impact our world, making it safer and more compassionate.

Week Three: *choose*. To choose! To acknowledge! To affirm! Choice is empowerment when we choose to live differently, to be better. With every choice we defy inertia, with every choice, we expand our sense of possibility. With every choice we become emboldened. But it isn't easy, nor is it linear. We go back and forth between choice and discernment, reaffirming our decisions, reexamining everything. The spiritual path is a zigzag, a switchback up a mountain. It is exhausting, riddled with doubt and setbacks. There are so many ways to get us to where we need to go.

Week Four: *hope*. Anticipating, believing, affirming, thinking abundantly, even when our self-confidence is not strong. Hope takes practice. When the human spirit aspires, we stretch. When we reach beyond what enslaves us, we live with light and goodness. When hope becomes the answer to fear, so much is possible. Imagine the possibilities when we envision ourselves as strong, healthy, loving. Miracles abound.

Week Five: *imagine*. To have an expansive and abundant way of seeing the world. To see the invisible. To live with possibility and vision. To see ourselves as a miracle, a daily revelation of goodness. We are limited only by our imagination. And what *if* that were true? Where would your imagination lead you? What magnificence might you manifest?

Week Six: *courage*. Courage to live. Courage to love. Courage to risk. Courage to fail. And patience. It takes time to become the person we want to be, to grow and unfold, to fail and persevere. There is a vastness between what is possible and what is real; and expanse of uncertainty, ambiguity, and doubt. When we are afraid, we are paralyzed, suspended in midair between imagination and manifestation. It is the natural course of things to have our dreams lay fallow; only care and determination make the ground rich and ready to bear fruit. When we see our limitations as failure, we are afraid. Be brave and step into your life.

Week Seven: *pray*. Sometimes our power lies within our ability to let go of our delusions of control. By offering a prayer, we confess the boundaries of our power to know and to understand everything. Through prayer we find the strength to decide, to change. Within our prayers we sense the inner stirring of discernment, and we find the guidance to choose well. Within our prayers we find the light of hope and imagination to dream. Within our prayers we find the courage to sustain our path when doubt casts a shadow. Through prayer we find faith. When we pray, we partner with some invisible force that leads us toward our destiny, to the freedoms we so desire. Prayer is a conversation with the invisible. It expands the reality in which we live and bids us to imagine holiness, eternity, love, goodness, and beauty.

Rabbi Karyn D. Kedar  
*Omer: A Counting*

## Love

With a great abundant love have You loved us, Lord, our God;  
with a great compassion have You had compassion upon us.  
Our Father, our King - for the sake of our ancestors who trusted in You  
and You taught them the laws of life;  
so too grace us and teach us.  
Our Father, the merciful Father, the merciful One,  
have mercy upon us, and place within our hearts the ability to  
to understand and to comprehend,  
to listen and to study,  
to teach and to keep,  
to do and to preserve  
all of the words of Your Torah with love.

And enlighten our eyes in Your Torah, and make our heart cling to Your commandments. Unite our  
hearts with love and awe to Your name;  
and may we never be embarrassed or shamed.  
We have trust in Your great, awesome and holy Name. I  
Let us rejoice and be gladdened by Your salvation.  
Bring us in peace from the four corners of the Earth, and lead us upright to our Land.  
You are God who performs salvations.

You have chosen us from among all nations and languages,  
and have brought us close to Your great name forever in truth,  
to praise You and unify You with love.

Blessed are You, Lord, who chooses His people, Israel, with love.