



PSALM 23

What are you pursuing in life
and what is pursuing you?
Responding to Pain & Grief

Rabbi Rachel Rubenstein

גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶךְ בְּגַיַּא צַלְמוֹת לֹא־אֵירָא רַע כִּי־אַתָּה עִמָּדִי שְׁבִטָךְ וְמִשְׁעַנְתְּךָ
הִנֵּמָה יִנְחַמְנִי:

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no harm, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי | שְׁלַחַן נֶגֶד צַרְרִי דִשְׁנֵת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֵאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רוּיָה:
You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my drink is abundant.

אֶךְ | טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־הַ לַאֲרָךְ יָמִים:
Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for many long years.

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד הַ רְעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר:

A psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd;
I lack nothing.

בְּנֵאוֹת דָּשָׂא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל־מֵי מְנַחוֹת יִנְהַלְנִי:

He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me to still waters.

נִפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:

He renews my life;
He guides me in right paths
as befits His name.



A Vision of A Happy Ending

אָרְךָ | טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֵּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־ה' לְאָרְךָ יָמִים:

Only goodness and loving-kindness shall pursue me
all the days of my life,
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Goodness & Lovingkindness

For it is written (Psalms 23:6), “May only goodness and lovingkindness pursue me,” and in the Zohar (II, 168b) we find: Isn’t goodness the same as lovingkindness? However, “goodness” is kept within, [whereas] “lovingkindness” flows outward.

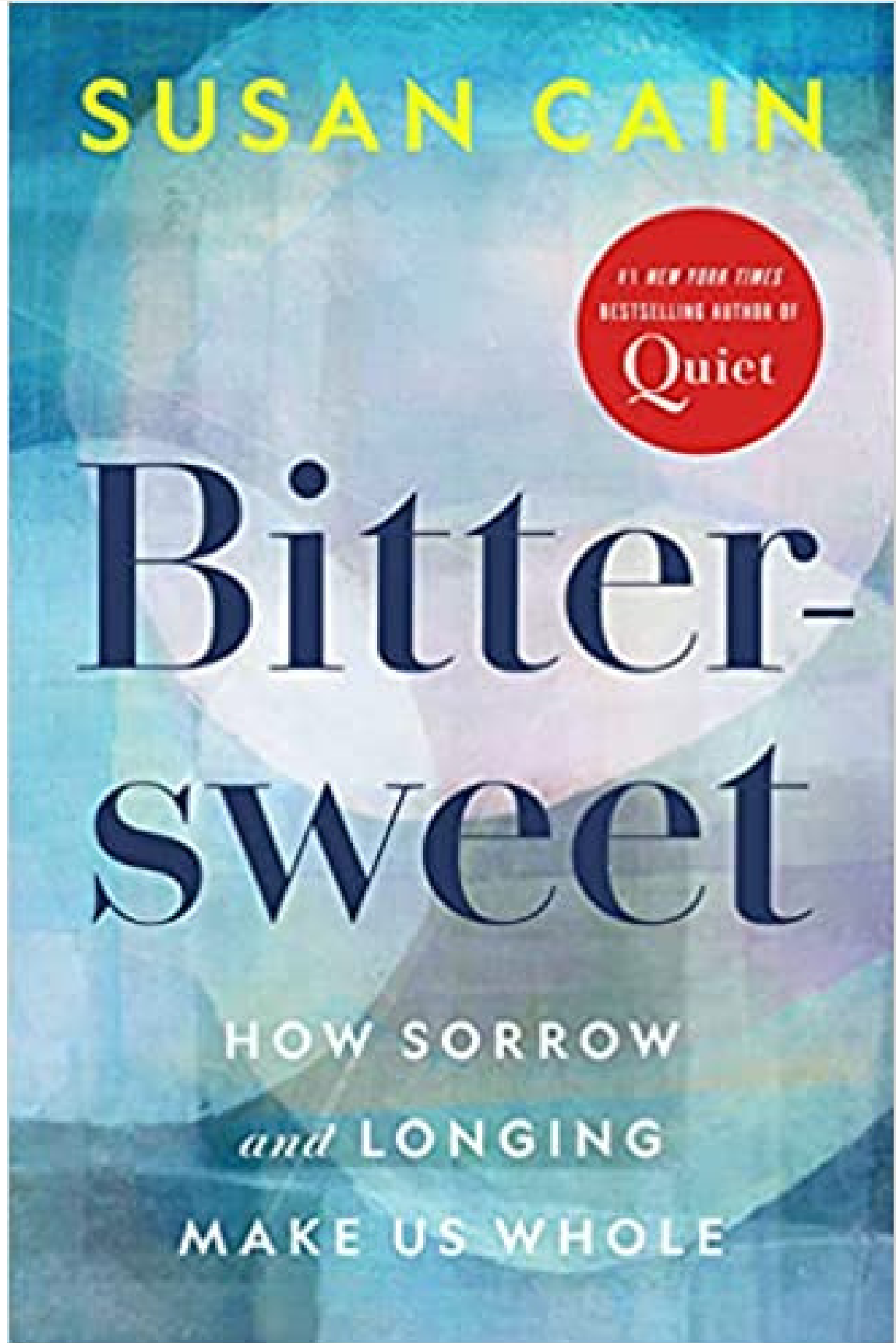
-Likutei Moharan 283:1:2

Goodness for my soul and lovingkindness with others, to teach them and to instruct them to serve God until it becomes for myself like a fixed rule, such that even if I wanted to rest from this goodness for one moment, it would chase after me.

-Ibn Ezra

And as the verse states (Tehillim 23:6): “May only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life”, meaning that even though I flee from them, they [emphatic] pursue me against my will.

Nefesh HaChayim, Gate IV 16:11

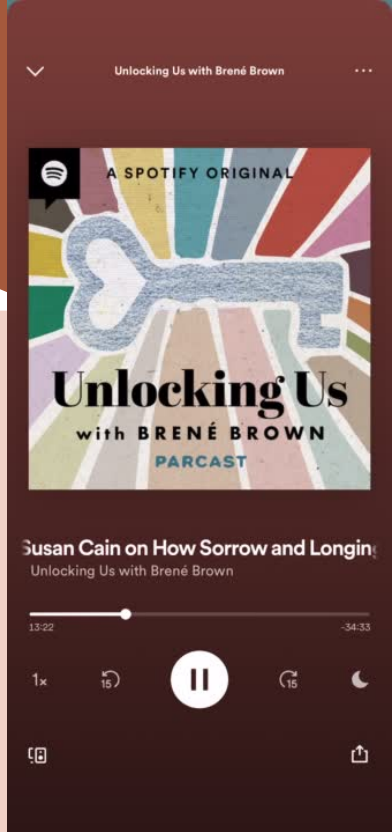




Susan Cain x Brene Brown

SC: When I first went on this quest to explore bittersweetness, and maybe it's worth kind of defining what it is, it's the recognition that light and dark and joy and sorrow are always going to co-exist, and that's what life is, and it's an awareness of passing time, and an awareness of the impermanence of life, but it's also a kind of piercing joy at how incredibly gorgeous and beautiful life is, and then it's this... To answer your question, what I've come to believe through this quest that I went on to understand the nature of bittersweetness is, we are creatures who are born to transform pain into beauty. That is something we have the ability to do.


BB: Say that again. You have got to say that again.

SC: Okay. We are creatures who are born to transform pain into beauty, because one thing is certain, we are all going to experience pain at some point, probably we all have already, like some kind of profound pain. And there's two things we can do with that. One thing is to not really acknowledge it, and then we end up consciously or unconsciously taking it out on other people through abuse or passive aggression or whatever it is for us, and then the other thing that we can do is accept that pain is part of life too, and what can we do to transform it into something else, into some kind of healing state. Maybe for other people who've experienced the same kind of pain that we have, maybe into some kind of creative expression, but somehow to turn it into beauty.





What is pursuing us in life?



Only goodness and loving-kindness shall pursue me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for many long years.

I will set My face against you: you shall be routed by your enemies, and your foes shall dominate you. You shall flee though none pursues.



(Vayikra 26:17)

Susan Cain x Brene Brown


SC: So I went back there, this was just a few years ago. And I started asking the students what their lives are really all about. And I swear, it took literally less than two minutes and they all start talking about this phenomenon called “effortless perfection,” effortless perfection, which is a common phrase among college students. I know you know this, and it refers to the need to present as beautiful or handsome or whatever, thin, fit, socially adept, great grades, the whole works, you’ve got it all. And not only do you have it all, but it all came effortlessly. So no one should ever see you sweating to actually achieve all these things. And this word rose to prominence at a time when we were starting to see this rash of students who were dying by suicide two days after they had posted an Instagram photo of them surrounded, smiling by all their friends, and you start realizing well, okay, that’s really the situation right now. I feel it’s a continuation of that tradition we were just talking about from the 19th century and into the Depression, “Do not be a loser at any cost,” and that’s what’s behind a need to be effortlessly perfect.

BB: How do you think effortless perfectionism and this idea of being a loser, what happens if you’re on this moving escalator of effortless perfection and you encounter, as we all do, pain?

SC: We don’t know what to do with it. We don’t know what to do with it. We have our own pain and we think that there’s something wrong with us.



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Pursue Peace

Hillel says, "Be of the disciples of Aharon, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving the creatures and bringing them closer to Torah." He means to say that he loves truth and peace in his heart and pursues it with the actions of his hands. As there are people that love it in their hearts that don't trouble themselves to bring peace to the world and don't walk in the paths of peace. But those that do actions and bring peace between a man and his friend and love to do this work - as it is stated (Psalms 34:15), "seek peace and pursue it" - those are from the students of Aharon, who would act like this.

-Rabbeinu Yonah on Pirkei Avot 1:12:2



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