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# JewishTimes

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BIBLE'S

# MIND/SOUL

MYSTERY

Parsha

**Rabbi  
Reuven  
Mann**

New  
Torah

**Rabbi Israel Chait**

Written by a student

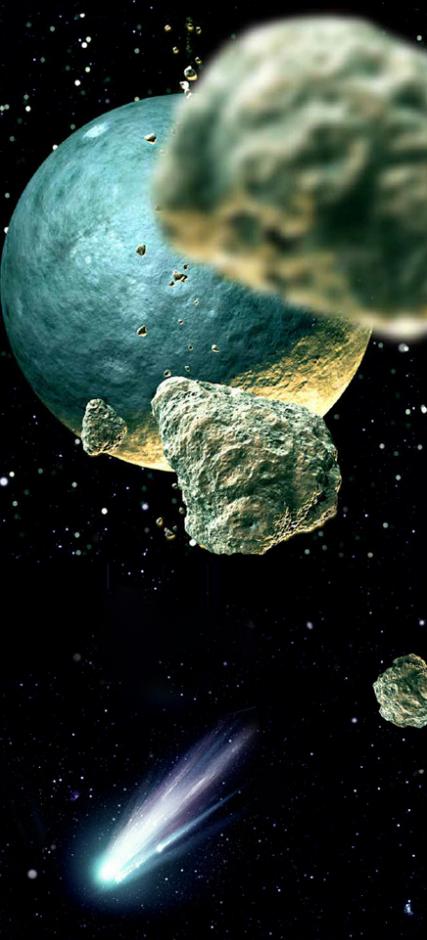
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### GOD'S ONENESS

Material existence contains plurality, but ideas contain no plurality. For example, the number 5: we cannot say there are 2 number fives.

That is simply a repetition of a single idea of 5. It then follows, there cannot be 2 Gods. Saying so, one merely repeats the reference to the 1 Creator.

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

### LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

## Bible's Mind/Soul Mystery

**READER:** In an article you identify the "yetzer harah" as the emotions. Doesn't Maimonides say that it is the imaginative faculty?

Alex Kahgan  
New York, NY

**RABBI:** Imagination can be used for both good (Torah thought, creativity) and evil (sinful fantasy). Thus, imagination is not evil per se. Even the yetzer hara (evil instincts) can be guided by our minds and souls to be used for God's will. They too are not inherently evil, they are only "evil from youth" (Gen. 6:5).

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

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8:21), i.e., they have a head-start over the mind that develops a decade later. Maimonides says the snake (Adam & Eve) had a rider: "The serpent had a rider, the rider was as big as a camel, and it was the rider that enticed Eve: this rider was Samael" (Guide, book II, chap. xxx). Maimonides teaches a primary lesson: instincts alone do not steer our actions, but they are guided by something. That something is fantasy.

*Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that God had made. It said to the woman, "Did God really say you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" The woman replied to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. It is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said you shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die." And the serpent said to the woman, "You are not going to die, but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings who know good and bad." When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate. (Gen. 3:1-6)*

The snake refers to Eve's instincts, explaining why it never spoke to Adam (Eve's internal psychological instincts cannot relate—"speak"—to Adam.) Our instincts can be led to either evil or good by what controls—"rides"—them: the rider is "human fantasy." While the snake initiate desires, Eve fantasized about the benefit of the fruit, and that fantasy is what coerced her will to follow her instincts and violate God's command. Thereby she corrupted her soul's value system. But had she focused more on God's will, she would not have fantasized about sin, but about God's will, and that would have led her instincts to desire God's path. The more we learn about what is true, the more we are inclined to follow truth, and our imagination will guide our instincts to what is true and proper. For God made the intellect more powerful than all other faculties, as it perceives what is real, and reality is most convincing. The rabbis discuss (Brachos 29a) that a person who is righteous from youth will not turn bad. He has become attached to Torah truths, and nothing can break that conviction and value. He will never sin (there are other opinions, [Ibid]).

Torah says, "Love your God with all your heart" (Deut. 6:5) and Rashi teaches that, "all" refers to both faculties: the yetzer hara and the yetzer hatov, the instincts and the intellect. Thus, the yetzer hara is not inherently evil.

The anatomy of the mind includes intelligence (yetzer hatov), fantasy or imagination, instinctual urges (yetzer hara), ego, guilt, and the soul, neshama. To live properly, we must continuously learn Torah to educate our soul on truths and morals, and this will in turn train our instincts to gain satisfaction from wisdom over lusts. Thereby our imagination will engage in higher matters to guide our actions. Our souls—values and the sense of self—then becomes more attached to Torah, and God.

**READER:** You write quoting Ibn Ezra "[But] when one joins the intelligence with one's ego (ruach) one may succeed over the nefesh: the base drives." Is this the strategy to defeat the yetzer harah? Can you explain how one defeats the yetzer harah?

**RABBI:** Ibn Ezra teaches that at first, the intellect is too weak to conquer the lusts. But ego is powerful, and one can harness his ego to restrain his lusts, for example, retraining lustful acts and speech to retain dignity or one's community or workplace position. Here, one sacrifices lustful gratification in place of honor. Once the lusts are restrained, and one has his energies under his control, this gives opportunity to the intellect to engage in wisdom, and one can direct his energies to this pursuit. With greater learning, one's sense of what is real and of value will overcome his lusts. ■

## Moses' Sin

**READER:** Shalom Rabbi. My question is about the last parasha called "Va-ethanan." We see that Moshe didn't reach the Promised Land, although he struggled to get Torah and transmit it to the Children of Israel, what caused Moshe Rabbeinu to not enter the Promised Land of Israel?

Odupa Abraham  
Mbale City, Uganda

**RABBI:** God instructed Moshe to speak to a rock that would miraculously bring out water for the thirsty Jews (Num. 20:8). Instead, Moshe veered from God's precise command and hit the rock. Although the rock delivered water, Moshe failed to sanctify God through using speech alone to cause the water to emerge from the rock. Moshe succumbed to an emotional response by not following exactly God's command.

God's very response to Moshe's act was this: "Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them" (Num. 20:12). Moshe erred in his leadership, and therefore leadership was removed from him.

God's punishments are measure-for-measure (midda knegged midda) to indicate to the sinner wherein his flaw lies, so he might identify that flaw, grasp his error, repent, and draw once again towards God. The prophet Micha formulates this very process of repentance: "Let us examine our ways, deliberate, and return to God our governor" (Lamentations 3:40). ■

## A Gentile Afterlife

**READER:** Dear Rabbi, in an answer to a reader's question "Am I better off as a gentile or a Jew?" you stated this:

*Torah study is also the greatest command, for in its pursuit, man elevates his highest element, his soul. He attains greater wisdom of God. And this too is open to a gentile; he is to study his laws, and if he takes on more than his minimal 7 laws, which he is allowed to do, he is to study those additional laws too. And he can convert to attain equal status to a Jew, and enjoy the same portion of the afterlife.* (CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



Do you mean that only the person who converts will enjoy the same portion of the afterlife? This is very important for me. Thank you for your answer.

Blessings.

Peter

*Titusville, NJ*

**RABBI:** Conversion enables a person to follow Torah out of obligation, and the rabbis say, "Greater is one who performs Torah due to obligation than one who is not obligated and performs" (Kiddushin 31a). Rabbi Israel Chait explained the greatness is due to the obligated party overcoming the "rebellious emotion to avoid commands." One who is not obligated can perform the identical act, but he is not battling any rebelliousness, as he has no obligation. But putting rebellion aside, a gentile and Jew who perform identical acts based on equal appreciation of its benefits, will equally receive the identical perfection, reward and afterlife. Gentiles and Jews are creatures of identical design, as we all descend from the same couple. Jews differ not in design, but in obligation.

Conversion is not necessary for a gentile to perform equal to a Jew. In the capacity of grasping the truths behind Torah, and in performance, gentile and Jew are equal on all counts. The only difference is when the gentile does not convert, and does not encounter the rebellious streak a Jew faces when obligated. ■

you saying that by studying the wonderful structure of the universe, in short, "creation," that creation proves the existence of God? If so, I would agree to this. I also agree that Torah is required for most people unless he is an Abraham.

*Turk Hill*

**RABBI:** That is correct. ■

## Learning & Earning

**READER:** If man will find the greatest pleasure in wisdom, why did Hashem make it that one must work most of his life? My second question is can one still work 9-6 and fulfill "aseh torascha keva; make Torah study the bulk of one's day"?

*Alex Kahgan  
New York, NY*

**RABBI:** Maimonides (Shmitta & Jubilee 13:13) and Pirkei Avos (3:5, 4:9) speak of God's providence for a person who dedicates his day to Torah study. Most people have difficulty with their need for security, and won't abandon a 9-6 workday, as they live purely mathematically. But trust in God should override our calculations, as Maimonides says. Maimonides teaches that God will provide sufficient income for one who dedicates himself to Torah, for one who "breaks off the yoke of calculations that the masses seek" (*Ibid*).

Making Torah the bulk of one's day would seem to demand that a majority of daily hours are spent in Torah study. ■

## Nature Proving God

**READER:** When you write that God's plan is that man uses reason to discover God, are



**PARSHA**

# CONFessions OF THE **RIGHteous**

**RABBI REUVEN MANN**

This week's Parsha, Ki Tavo, contains the Mitzva of Vidduy Maaser (Confession of Tithes). At the conclusion of the third year of the Shmita cycle, the individual must dispose of the various tithes in the manner designated by the Torah. He must then (at Mincha services of the final day of Pesach of the fourth year) pronounce a declaration to the effect that he has fulfilled his responsibilities in this area appropriately.

He says,

*"I have removed the holy from my house and I have given to the Levite, the convert, the orphan and the widow according to all the obligation which You have commanded me. I have not violated nor have I forgotten. I have not eaten from it when I was bereaved, nor consumed it in a state of impurity nor used it for the purpose of a deceased. I have listened to the voice of Hashem my G-d. I have done all that He has commanded me. Look down from your holy abode, the heaven and bless Your nation Israel and the land that You have given us as You swore to our fathers, a land that flows milk and honey"* (Devarim 26:13-15).

At first glance, this recitation is problematic. We associate Confession with our sins. One is obligated to engage in Teshuva (repentance), and the first step in that process is Hakarat HaCheit (recognition/acknowledgment of sin). However, the notion of recounting our good actions is strange, for what would be its purpose? Are we showing off how wonderful we are? Are we asserting a claim for credit that is due us because of our faithful religious performance?

Indeed, the text indicates that we are not bashful about claiming our reward, as we call upon Hashem to look down from His "heavenly abode" and bless us. This constitutes a prayer that the righteous deeds we have done should find favor with Hashem and earn for us His Beneficence.

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



But, the Confession of Tithes can also be seen as an expression of humbleness. The Jew is listing his Mitzva achievements, but not because he desires to be boastful. He is not saying that his impeccable performance is due to his basic righteousness. To the contrary, the purpose is to recognize the crucial role that the system of Mitzvot has assumed in his religious life.

What if there had been no Divine commandments, would he still have been so generous with the Levite, the stranger and the other unfortunates? Many people believe that they are naturally good and do not need Mitzvot to impel them to moral and ethical behaviors.

But often, that is not the case, as the sincerely good intentions of many decent people, for reasons unknown, do not find their way to fulfillment. However, the obligation to implement the command of Hashem leaves no room to wiggle or hedge. One is thereby coerced to do the generous and charitable deed which otherwise one might have overlooked.

We must understand that man is not a "giver" by nature and finds it difficult to part with the money for which he has worked very hard. A major objective of the laws pertaining to tithes and charity is to overcome the stubborn resistance which a person had toward practicing generosity.

Thus, the intention of the confession is not to extol himself; but rather, the system of Mitzvot that Hashem has granted us. In effect, he is saying, 'I am a charitable person but only because I am bound to observe the Torah' (what choice do I have, my Father in Heaven has decreed it for me!) The

Vidduy (confession) is thus an expression of praise to Hashem for sanctifying us with His commandments. He is confessing that he is not a Tzadik (righteous person) by nature, but has developed into one by virtue of obedience to Hashem's instructions.

There is another important dimension to the Mitzvah of Vidduy Maaser (confession of tithes). The hidden danger of Judaism is that by imposing many Halachik (legal) obligations and requirements, it can cause people to experience a sense of failure and frustration that they are not in compliance with Hashem's system. The sense of religious inadequacy can cause a person to shy away from greater involvement in the Torah way of life. Judaism maintains that it is essential for a person to feel good about himself and have a sense of confidence in his ability to be a good Jew.

The Vidduy asserts that, 'I have performed the Maaser tasks meticulously' and this produces the confidence that 'I am deserving of all of Hashem's blessings'. May we merit to achieve them.

Shabbat Shalom.

Dear Friends,

My newest book, *Eternally Yours: G-d's Greatest Gift To Mankind* on VaYikra was recently published, and is now available at: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09SHRXS3Q>

I hope that my essays will enhance your reading and study of the Book of VaYikra and would greatly appreciate a brief review on Amazon.com. ■

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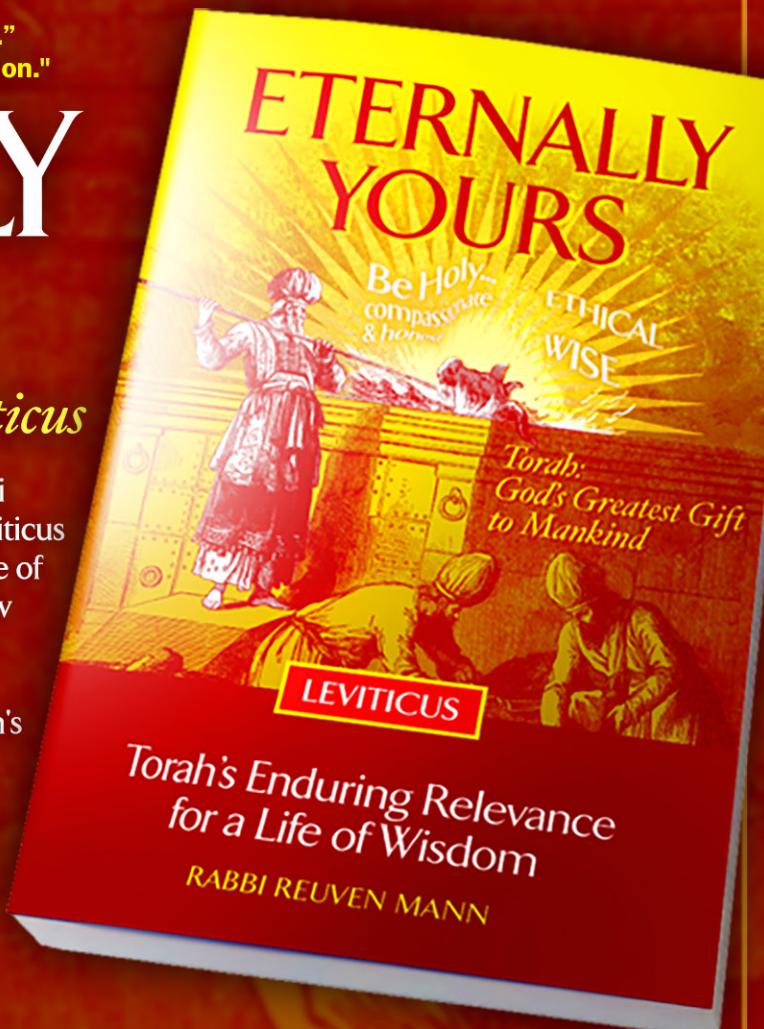
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## Jewish Guide to Practical Medical Decision-Making

**RABBI DR. JASON WEINER,**

BCC Senior Rabbi & Director, Spiritual Care Department

Due to rapid advances in the medical field, existing books on Jewish medical ethics are quickly becoming outdated. Jewish Guide to Practical Medical Decision-Making seeks to remedy that by presenting the most contemporary medical information and rabbinic rulings in an accessible, user-friendly manner. Rabbi Weiner addresses a broad range of medical circumstances such as surrogacy and egg donation, assisted suicide, and end-of-life decision making. Based on his extensive training and practical familiarity inside a major hospital, Rabbi Weiner provides clear and concise guidance to facilitate complex decision-making for the most common medical dilemmas that arise in contemporary society.

### About The Author:

With a degree in bioethics and health policy, and a pending doctorate in clinical bioethics, Rabbi Jason Weiner serves as the senior rabbi and director of the Spiritual Care Department, at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. Rabbi Weiner is a board certified chaplain, currently serves as the president of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California and has been honored with Rabbinic Leadership Awards from the Orthodox Union and Chai Lifeline. He is a member of the Cedars-Sinai End of Life Committee, the Organ Donor Council, and the Bioethics Committee, for which he serves on the internal advisory board. Rabbi Weiner is also the rabbi of Knesset Israel Synagogue of Beverlywood, and frequently serves as a scholar-in-residence at conferences and synagogues throughout the U.S.




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# New Divrei Torah Rabb Israel Chait

Written by a student

## **Idolatry and Egotism**

We say that Avoda Zara leads to self-aggrandizement. How does this fit into Rambam's three stages of idolatrous devolution? Enosh is Stage I, false prophets is Stage II, and the liars' era is Stage III.

In the Enosh era, there was no mistake about who is God, only about His will. In Stage II they lied and stated that God told them to serve a specific physical form in specific ways. In stage III, that of the "liars," they claimed that the star itself spoke to them and demanded such and such a service.

Once again in Stage I, God was not changed; the mistake was about the proper way to serve Him. In Stage II, they imputed to God a false command. They now were worshiping a different god. He is no more a God of truth. There is no such god in existence, only in the imagination of man.

In Stage III, God is completely removed from the picture; there are only the physical forms who are worshiped in accordance with the human will. God retreated into oblivion. In all three cases, man tries to impress his control over God's will, thereby aggrandizing the self, as the prophet says, "Can man make a God for himself? And they are not gods" (Jer. 16:20). ■

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



## Sinners without Punishment

Talmud Rosh Hashanah 17a says, "One who forgoes his character has his sins overlooked." This refers to a person who doesn't set boundaries for his friend's behavior; his friend overstepped certain boundaries of friendship and disturbed him, but he remained silent and accepted it. He recognized that his personal boundaries (likes/dislikes) are not real; only God's boundaries are real. [So he didn't act to defend himself.]

With "overlooking his sins," the Talmud means he is not taken to task. This perfected person breaks down the human desire to "take for himself" (follow his desires), precisely what we recite during Neila, "That we forgo the oppressiveness of our hands."

Since this person is traveling on a path towards perfection, he is not deterred by receiving punishments for his sins, which could derail his new, proper path and ruin his progress. He is traveling a path to approach God, so his course is not interrupted. This is done so he might break down the human desire for a life of physicality, which stems from the need for others not to violate his boundaries. ■

From the Pirkei Avos book series

## Society and Perfection

There is a mistake in this society which is based on the false notion that ostentatiousness is a good. People are convinced that through fame one achieves a great good. Judaism holds that a person is worse off when famous. We have a prayer which is so beautiful that we attach it to the Shmoneh Essray:

*My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceit. To those who curse me, let my soul remain silent and my soul be like dust to all, open my heart to Your Torah, then I will pursue Your commandments. As for those who design evil against me, quickly nullify their counsel and disrupt their design.*

This is a recognition that man's evil takes place through his verbalization. Speech expresses and satisfies man's instincts: ego, aggression, sexual desires, etc. Speech is the medium through which man satisfies all his instincts. This is why Lashon Hara is the worst thing.

### To those who curse me, let my soul remain silent.

This means that if an entire society curses you, you should be quiet. This is the proper level. One should be unconcerned with what society says. A perfected person needs only to walk in the proper path and that is sufficient for him. He needs nothing more [he does not need society].

### ...and my soul be like dust to all

This is an unbelievable prayer. This means that a person should want one thing: to be alone in the world of reality and not care about anyone. Others should not affect a person whatsoever. Chazal say that King David was persecuted not only by evil people, but even by Torah giants of his generation, but he did not care. This prayer shows the ultimate level of the person living in the world of reality and not society.

### ...and my soul be like dust to all

If a person truly desires this, that it does not disturb him [that society thinks nothing of him, for he thinks nothing of society] and he does not care about what people say about him, [this discard for society's approval], this is a prerequisite for greater attachment to Torah, as the next statement says:

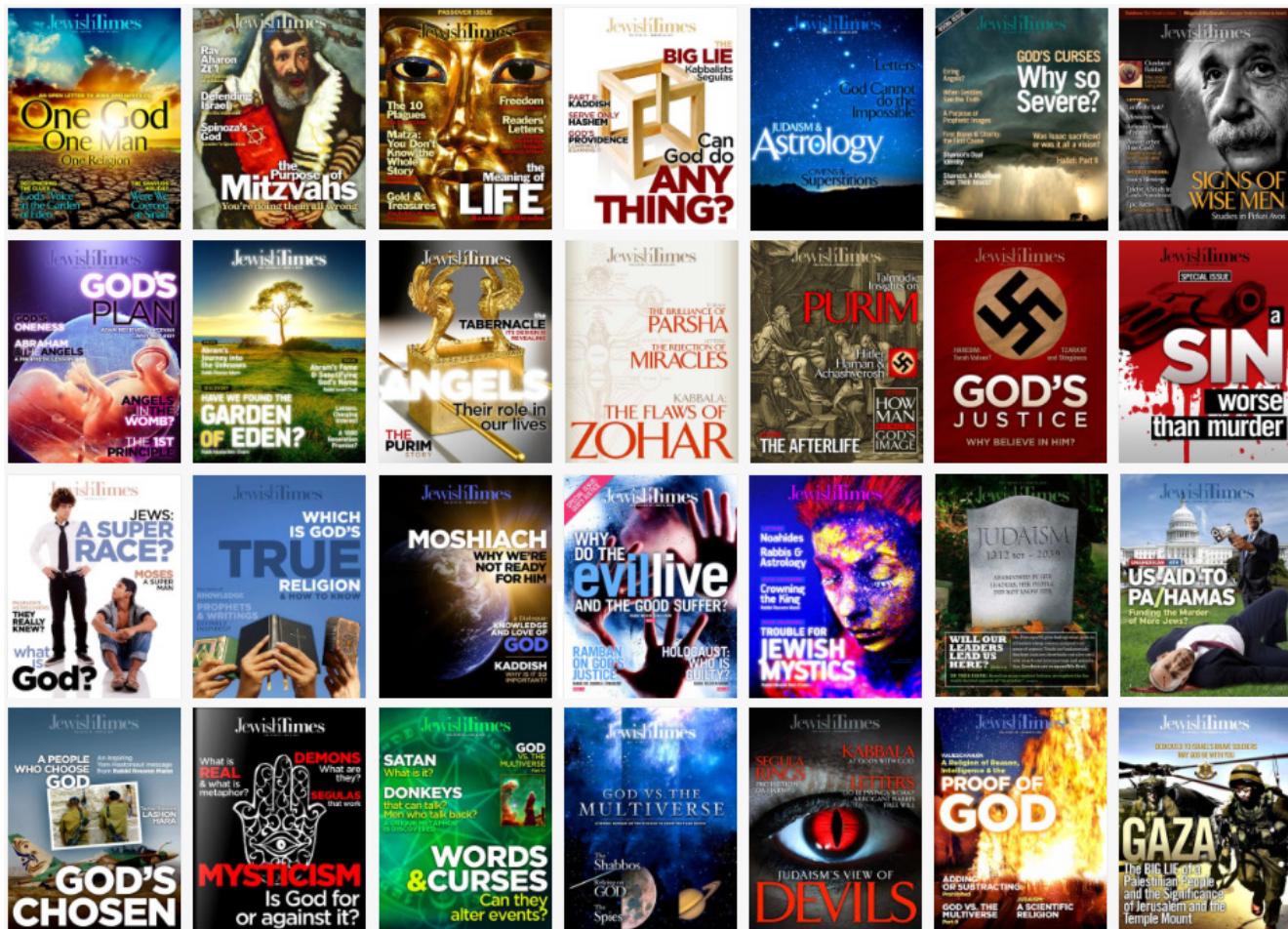
### ...open my heart to Your Torah, then I will pursue Your commandments.

To feel as dust is the basis [for greater attachment to Torah]. That desire to be satisfied and happy, even though others view him as dust, will drive him more towards living a Torah life, learning for learning sake alone. And the Torah says so:

*He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk modestly with your God (Micah 6:8). ■*

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Shani Feder A”H was a dear friend who endured health issues for some time...but she always smiled and always cared deeply for others. Shani shared these precious thoughts.  
Moshe Ben-Chaim



# Some Thoughts on *Happiness*

By Shani Feder

I am awed by watching the miraculous order of G-d's nature unfolding in my backyard. You can see throughout nature, a mother's job is to give her child wings, teach them to fly and watch them soar. Each year I watch the swans hatch ugly ducklings, teach them to hunt for food and when strong enough, teach them how to fly. Then they turn into beautiful swans and fly off to start their own lives (so it seems). Fortunately children may leave the nest, but don't always leave the neighborhood, and I have really had the zichus to

**watch you all soar.**

I just have a few words of motherly advice as you soar (It's not torah me sinai that your father and rabbiem have taught you well and I in turn have learned much from you), but just some thoughts on happiness:

## *Enjoy and cherish every day*

Don't worry so much about tomorrow or what might or might not happen. Do the best you can, but if you focus your worry on tomorrow it makes you lose today and tomorrow. If something bad is going to happen it will happen, you won't be able to deny it. At least you have today, and so many wonderful things happen in today. If something bad or unexpected happens you will deal with it.

## *You are stronger than you think*

and maybe some good will even come from it. Only G-d knows what lies ahead, what's just around the corner.

## *We cannot write the script*

We don't even always know what is good or bad. Sometimes it's a matter of a person's perspective on life and what's truly important to them. One can only strive for the Best Torah Life.

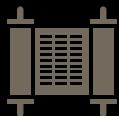
## *Always thank G-d*

for all the good that you have (and for the bad that you don't have). Nothing is a given. Appreciate it all but try not to judge people. You never really know what their true circumstances are. But do try to treat them as you would like them to treat you (G-d created all of us).

Okay, enough preaching. I could keep going but as you realize that's not the point of this message. (I can take lessons from you all on these topics). As I hope you realize, the point of this all is to simply say that I thank G-d every day because I am truly blessed with happiness (to be cliché — Yiddeshe Nachas). Bumps in the road are just that and make me appreciate what I have more. I am sorry for how they affect you and your father. My wings may be clipped for a short time but G-d willing all will be well. (Even better, I hope and pray. No pain no gain as they say.)

So shut off this computer and go teach my grandchildren to fly. With G-d's help I will be there very soon to help.

Love,  
The Tough Old Bird



## RIVKAH NACHMIAS

A'H SEPT. 2, 2022

### MOTHER OF RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

*Rivkah Nachmias' great sacrifice 45 years ago has caused the spread Torah through Mesora.org and the Jewishtimes.*

*Tens of thousands across the globe are enjoying Torah for 25 years due to her dedication.*

*We all owe a great debt to this amazing woman who acted as did Channa, by giving her children to others who would ensure they all benefit from a Torah life.*

# Eulogy for my Mother: The Person Responsible for your Torah

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Thank you to Rabbi and Rebbetzin Chait, Howie, Lewis, Heshy and Tova, Avi Haar, and Ben for you recent and regular calls...for your love and support.

My brother Nissim shared this: *"Mom is an Aishes Chayal...and then some. All six of us were always blessed with the same attention. None were ever short changed. I'd remember, 'Never give one without giving the other.' Mom was indeed well learned...we were all gifted with a Sefer Tehillim highlighting beautiful commentaries. At great sacrifice mom afforded us the opportunity to make well educated choices...lifestyle, observance, hashkafa. Mom possessed kindness to a fault and had a deep abiding love, unconditionally."*

#### MOM'S KINDNESS

Mom carried a large pile of "Keep Smiling" cards. She handed them to complete strangers. Mom sang for the elderly in senior centers, to bring joy to others. She approached all people with a calm smile and befriended everybody. My brother Avraham shared that when new immigrants moved into my mother's building, she approached them and befriended them and handed them money in her first conversation. This immigrant just found out that mom had passed and told my brother how he will never forget her kindness.

#### HUMILITY

Mom never returned animosity, as Duties of the Heart says. A nurse who was recently tough on mom, mom quickly turned into a friend...she knew how to appeal to people's goodness. Mom was astonished by people's insensitivities. She would say "The more I know, the more I don't know." Her favorite saying: "You can be black or brown or yellow white...but we all bleed red." She identified with all people like Abraham. She accepted reality, never fought it, and always said, "It is what it is."

#### GENEROSITY

Mom quietly put away pennies, and over decades, gave her 6 sons bonds worth many thousands each...years later she left that same amount in savings to us all. This means mom toiled, sacrificing her own needs, so her sons can have. But she never told a soul until recently.

#### TORAH

Mom derived great delight from the Torah that I shared with her. She was amazed at Torah's depth and brilliance. I am so gratified that she reached this level that most people do not. She was extremely grateful to Rabbi and Rebbetzin Chait and Rabbi and Rebbetzin Mann for guiding me these many decades. She had great respect for her grandfather who helped establish the Kehila Kedosha of Janina. And I must also recognize Rabbi Rodney Feinerman for taking me under his wing once convincing me to join the YBT dorm. He spent tremendous amount of time in my early years teaching me how to learn. You all greatly contributed to her love of God and Torah.

#### HEALTH AND DEPRESSION

Since the 1980s mom struggled with both heart problems and depression, and yet she persevered.

#### SACRIFICE

But the most significant praise of mom was her Ultimate Sacrifice. We grew up in a non-Jewish environment with many bad influences. She insured we attended yeshiva for five years but that came to an end. Those negative influences were risking her children's Jewish future. I remember her being weak and the challenge was too much for her as a single mother of six sons. She Trusted chochamim who told her that to ensure Torah for her children, she must give us up so we can live in religious homes. She gave away her children. Imagine her pain. Mom followed Yocheved sending away Moshe, and Chana sending away Shmuel for the sake of Torah. For Her great sacrifice, mom achieved her goal with great success...she gave me olam hazeh and olam haba. I cannot repay this debt. Mom also gave all of you Torah. Be thankful to this brave woman, whose love of Torah and her children outweighed selfish motives to keep her children close and at home.

"Talmud Torah kineggged kulam" also means mom achieved the greatest level for herself as well. May her soul be bound up with the Source of life, and her memory inspire your greater Torah study and observance.

— Moshe Ben-Chaim

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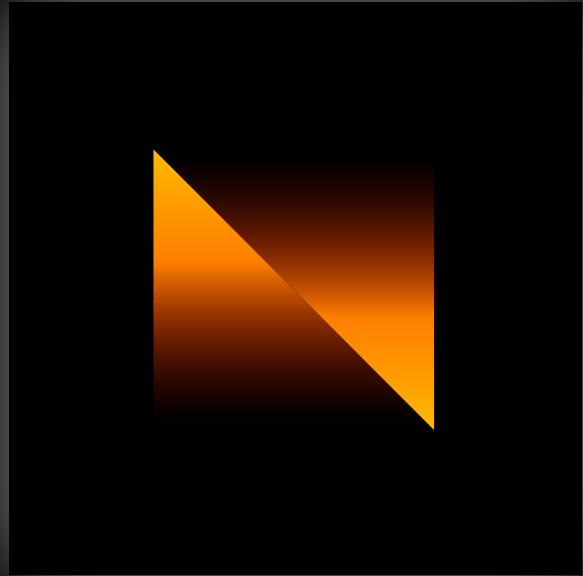
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