

ב"ה



לעילוי נשמת מרדכי בן קרל

IN MEMORY OF MORDECHAI YOSEF BEN CARL
MORDECHAI YOSEF



משנה
בשמה *For*

MISHNA *For* NESHAMA

ברכות ג:א

מ

Mem

is the thirteenth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'forty'. The word mem stands for mayim, which means water. A human being cannot survive without water.

Torah, the most vital element in our spiritual lives, is referred to as water, as it states: "Water refers to Torah." Just as a human being cannot survive without water, a Jew cannot survive without Torah. By studying the mishnayot in this booklet, you will receive spiritual sustenance.

מי שמתו מטל לפניו פטור מקריאת שמע, ומן התפלה, ומן התפלין. נושאי המטה וחלופיהן וחלופי חלופיהן, את שלפני המטה, ואת שלאחר המטה: את שלמטה צרך בהן פטורין, ואת שאין למטה צרך בהן חיבין. אלו ואלו פטורין מן התפלה

Berachot 3:1

One whose deceased relative is not yet buried is exempt from reading the Shema and the Amida prayer, and from the mitzvah to wear tefillin, until the deceased has been buried. Concerning the pallbearers and their replacements and the replacements of their replacements, those located before the coffin who have not yet carried the deceased and those located after the coffin: Those who are needed to carry the coffin are exempt from reciting Shema; while those who are not needed to carry the coffin, are obligated to recite Shema. However, both are exempt from reciting the Amida prayer.

Insights

Caring for the dead is referred to as Chesed Shel Emmes – genuine kindness. When our forefather Yaacov was on his death bed, he instructed his son Yoseph to ensure that he would be transported from Egypt and buried in Israel. Yaacov said to Yoseph, "If you fulfill my request, you will have performed an act of kindness and truth."

It is called genuine kindness because when you do a favor for a living person, in the back of your mind, there is always the thought that perhaps the recipient of my favor will repay me later. However, when doing something for the deceased there is no expectation of ever receiving anything in return.

Why do we observe "kavod ha-met", respect for the dead?

When a person passes away, the neshama (the soul) still feels a connection to its body and stays near it until the burial. During this time period, the soul is aware of how its body is being treated and derives comfort knowing that its body is being given the ultimate respect.

Another reason is the very core of existence and why G-d created the universe.

G-d wanted a home in the physical world. According to the Chassidic masters, this is why the soul descended from heaven and partnered with its physical body. Only the combined effort of body and soul can reveal G-d's presence in this material world. Therefore, when the soul returns home to its Maker, we must offer the greatest level of respect to the soul's worldly partner.

It is worth mentioning that even after the burial, a part of the soul resides permanently at the gravesite. This explains why we visit our loved ones at the cemetery. We are not just visiting a slab of marble and lifeless remains, but rather, part of the eternal spirit of our beloved departed relative.

אבות ב,א

רַבִּי אומר: איזוהי דרך ישרה שיבר לו האדם? כל שהיא תפארת לעושה ותפארת לו מן האדם. והוי זהיר במצוה קלה כבחמורה, שאין אתה יודע מתן שכרן של מצוות. והוי מחשב הפסד מצוה כנגד שכרה, ושכר עברה כנגד הפסדה. והסתכל בשלשה דברים, ואי אתה בא לידי עברה; דע מה למעלה ממך: עין רואה, ואזן שומעת, וכל מעשיך בספר נכתבין.

Avot 2:1

Rebbi would say: Which is the proper course for man to choose for himself? Whatever is harmonious for the one who does it and harmonious for humanity. And be careful with a minor commandment as with a major one, for you do not know the rewards for fulfilling commandments. Consider the loss through fulfilling a commandment against its reward and the gain of a transgression against its loss. Contemplate three things and you will not come to sin: Know what is above you: an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all your deeds are inscribed in a book.



Reish

is the twentieth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'two hundred'. Reish means 'poverty'. It's interesting to note that, in the Talmudic era, a person who had less than 200 coins was considered below the poverty level and was entitled to receive tzedakah from the synagogue. The Sages teach us that in G-d's eyes, tzedakah and acts of kindness are equivalent to all the mitzvot of the Torah. Elsewhere they write, "Great is tzedakah, for since the world was created until this day the world exists upon tzedakah". It has always been the custom that every Jewish home should have a tzedakah pushka (a charity box).

Insights

Ethics of the Fathers is the only section of the Mishna devoted exclusively to the ethical and moral statements of the Sages. It contains timeless wisdom and advice.

Our Mishnah shares the wisdom of Rebbi, Rabbi Yehudah the Prince. His contemporaries called him 'our Holy Teacher', and he attained the ultimate level of wisdom and greatness. He was responsible for committing the Oral Tradition to a text known as the Mishna thereby preserving Jewish law for all time.

There are approximately 7.9 billion people who populate the planet Earth. The world has existed for over 5780 years. Who knows how many humans have lived since the time of Adam and Chava. Our time here is transient even if we live till 120. We may begin to question our very existence. Do we really make a difference? Or posed slightly different, would the world be any different if we were never born?

This is a very sobering thought.

The Baal Shem Tov (1698 – 1760), the founder of the Chassidic movement who stressed the importance of serving G-d with joy and happiness, offers a unique insight into the phrase 'Know what is above you'. He writes that everything we say and do has an impact in heaven. If we act in a benevolent and kindly fashion to our fellow human beings, G-d's attribute of compassion will be revealed through the supernal worlds.

The phrase reads, know that what occurs above in the celestial worlds is from you.

The next time we are feeling down, remember that we do count; our actions do make a difference. And what we do down here on earth impacts all the way up to the upper spiritual worlds.



סנהדרין א,א



Dalet

is the fourth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'four'. The Talmud tells us that the dalet represents the poor person. In the Holy Temple, there was a room called 'the Silent Chamber'. One would enter this room alone. In the room was a big box. One had a choice: either to put money into the box or to take some out. It was all done discreetly. The rich man couldn't see to whom he was giving charity. The poor person didn't know from whom he was taking it. Giving charity must be done with dignity.

דִּינֵי מִמוֹנוֹת בְּשִׁלְשָׁה. גְּזֵלוֹת וַחֲבָלוֹת בְּשִׁלְשָׁה. נֶזֶק וַחֲצִי נֶזֶק, תְּשֻׁלוּמֵי כֶּפֶל, וְתְשֻׁלוּמֵי אֶרְבָּעָה וַחֲמִשָּׁה בְּשִׁלְשָׁה. הָאוֹנֵס וְהַמִּפְתָּה וְהַמוֹצִיא שֵׁם רַע בְּשִׁלְשָׁה; דְּבָרֵי רַבִּי מֵאִיר; וַחֲכָמִים אוֹמְרִים: מוֹצִיא שֵׁם רַע בְּעֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁלֹשָׁה, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁיֵּשׁ בּוֹ דִּינֵי נִפְשׁוֹ.

Sanhedrin 1:1

Cases concerning monetary law are adjudicated by three judges. Cases concerning theft and personal injury are adjudicated by three judges. Cases concerning damage are adjudicated by three judges as well. Likewise, cases concerning payment for half the damage, payment of double the principal by a thief caught stealing, and cases concerning payment of four or five times the principal are all adjudicated by three judges. Cases concerning one who rapes or one who seduces a virgin girl, and cases concerning a defamer who falsely asserts that his wife was not a virgin when she married him, are adjudicated by three judges; this is the statement of Rabbi Meir. And the Sages say: Cases concerning a defamer are adjudicated by a court of twenty-three judges, which is the type of court authorized to judge capital law cases, because this may become a case of capital law.

Insights

The first Judicial System was established by Moshe Rabbeinu and functioned throughout the forty years that the Jews wandered in the desert. Moshe also appointed court officers to enforce the court's decisions.

When the Jews entered the Land of Israel, a three-tiered system was established. Every village appointed three judges to rule on monetary matters, including those which might involve the imposition of fines as listed in our Mishnah. They also dealt with divorce and conversion. Larger towns and cities had courts of twenty-three judges, known as the small Sanhedrin. This court judged cases dealing with corporal punishment and was authorized to sentence someone to death. The highest court in the land, the Sanhedrin, was comprised of seventy-one judges and was located in Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin had the authority to crown a king, authorize the Israeli army to go to war, and judge crimes an entire tribe or city committed.

A judge needed to possess the following seven attributes: wisdom,

humility, awe of heaven, a loathing for money, a love for truth, love of the people, and a good reputation.

One of the seven Noahide laws given to mankind is the importance of establishing a society with rules and regulations that safeguard the rights and freedom of every human being.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that the Ten Commandments include some of the loftiest obligations, such as belief in G-d and the prohibition of idol worship. Yet, at the same time, it includes laws that mankind would introduce to create a functioning society, such as do not murder and do not steal. The need to incorporate such laws in the Ten Commandments is to impress us that the ultimate reason we should not steal or murder is because it is the will of G-d.

ברכות וא

כִּי־צֵד מְבָרְכִין עַל הַפְּרוֹת? עַל פְּרוֹת הָאֵילָן אוֹמֵר "בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ", חוּץ מִן הַיֵּין; שְׁעַל הַיֵּין אוֹמֵר "בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן". וְעַל פְּרוֹת הָאָרֶץ אוֹמֵר "בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה", חוּץ מִן הַפֶּת; שְׁעַל הַפֶּת הוּא אוֹמֵר "הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ". וְעַל הַיִּרְקוֹת אוֹמֵר "בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה". רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: "בוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי דְשָׂאִים."

Berachot 6:1

What blessing does one make on fruits? On fruits that grow on trees one says: "Who creates the fruit of the tree", except wine. Although wine is produced from a fruit of the tree, due to its significance, its blessing differs from other fruits of the tree. Over wine one recites: "Who creates the fruit of the vine." On fruits that grow from the earth, one says: "Who creates the fruit of the ground", except for bread; on bread one recites: "Who brings forth bread from the earth." Bread, too, is significant and its blessing differs from other fruits of the ground. Over herbs and vegetables, one says: "Who creates the fruit of the ground." Rabbi Yehuda says: "Who creates various kinds of herbs."

Insights

Why do we make a blessing before eating?

King David writes in Psalms, "The earth is G-d's." Our Sages infer that before benefitting from G-d's world, we must ask permission by reciting a blessing; otherwise, it would be tantamount to stealing.

Chassidic teachings explain that all food contains a Gdly spark of holiness. When we say a blessing before eating and eat with the intention to serve Gd, we actually elevate the physical substance of the food into holiness and reunite it with its Divine source.

Every blessing begins with "Blessed are you G-d". How can we, a mere mortal and a finite being, bless G-d, the Creator of the universe who lacks nothing?

Our Sages offer more sublime and profound explanations. Each time we make a blessing, we do not bless G-d; we acknowledge that G-d is the source of all our successes and prosperity.

Another explanation: The translation of the Hebrew word for blessing, 'Bracha', can be a 'wellspring'. Each time we make a blessing we request G-d that His spiritual energy flow upon us.

Expressing our gratitude to G-d is not only when we partake of food. A great Rabbi once explained that one of the responses to death and mourning is silence; when we lose a loved one, we need to offer G-d a silent prayer of thanks. We need to recognize how our loved ones enriched our lives by being such an integral part of it, and we realize how our lives would have been lacking without their presence.

As you mark the yahrtzeit of your loved one, take a moment to reflect on the blessings you received by their presence in your life.

Kaf

כ

is the eleventh letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'twenty'. The kaf represents a 'crown'. In Ethics of our Fathers it states, "There are three types of crowns: The crown of the Torah, the crown of Priesthood, and the crown of Kingship. However, the crown of possessing a good name stands higher than the previous three". To become a great Torah scholar you need to be blessed with superior intellect and have the opportunity to devote your life to studying Torah. A Cohen is an inherited right. Likewise, you are born into a royal family. However, the crown of a good name is accessible to all.



יומא ח,א

יום הכפורים אסור באכילה ובשתיה וברחיצה
ובסיכה ובנגילת הסנדל ובתשמיש המטה. והמלך
והכלה ירחצו את פניהם, והחיה תנעל את הסנדל;
דברי רבי אליעזר, וחכמים - אוסרין.

Yoma 8:1

On Yom Kippur it is prohibited to eat and drink, bathe, smear oil on one's body, wear shoes, and have marital intercourse. However, the king, in deference to his eminence, and a new bride within thirty days of her marriage, who wishes to look especially attractive for her husband, may wash their faces. A woman after childbirth, who is suffering, may wear shoes. This is the statement of Rabbi Eliezer. The Sages prohibit these activities for a king, a new bride, and a woman after childbirth.

Yud

is the tenth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'ten'. The meaning of yud is a Yid, a Jew. One of the great mysteries of civilization is the secret of our survival. The ancient nations have been reduced to chapters in a history book while we continue to flourish and grow. Why?

We see life as a never-ending relay race that started at Mount Sinai. And each generation is tasked with receiving and transmitting the Torah and tradition. As we reflect on the life of our departed, let us recommit to continue passing the baton to the next generation faithfully.

Insights

Our Mishnah lists the Torah laws for the year's holiest day, Yom Kippur. Even the least observant Jews will make their way to the synagogue on Yom Kippur. Perhaps, by understanding the deeper meaning of the Day of Atonement, we will better understand the significance of observing a yahrtzeit.

One of the unique practices of Yom Kippur is that during the synagogue service we wear a kittel, an all-white garment.

There are two explanations for this custom. The first is that the kittel is a shroud as the deceased wear when buried. The kittel is meant to remind us of the day of our death. What a sobering thought - on Yom Kippur to contemplate death. Another reason given is that the kittel is a garment of purity. It expresses confidence and happiness.

What are we meant to do on Yom Kippur - thinking of death, or celebrating life?

A verse at the beginning of Bereishit describing creation states, "Behold it is very good." The Sages ask: What is very good? Their response is challenging to comprehend. They answer: Death. There is nothing better than death itself.

Why?

Without death, no one would truly live. We would be alive, but we would not live. Only when we recognize that our life is limited can we choose to live it fully. Another important result of death is realizing what is significant in life, what truly matters. The kittel doesn't have any pockets, nor do shrouds.

You can't take anything with you. Not money, not the experiences. Not even all your self-discovery. You can only take what you give. Yom Kippur reminds us of our mortality not to depress us, but so that we can make decisions that matter.

As we mark the yahrtzeit, it would be wise to remember the inner meaning of the kittel and the eternal message it shares.

שבת כא,א

בּוֹטֵל אָדָם אֶת בְּנוֹ וְהֶאָבֵן בְּיָדוֹ, וְכִלְכְּלָהּ וְהֶאָבֵן
בְּתוֹכָהּ. וּמִטְלָטְלִין תְּרוּמָה טְמֵאָה עִם הַטְּהוֹרָה וְעִם
הַחֲלִין. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: אֶף מֵעֲלִין אֶת הַמְדָּמָע
בְּאַחַד וּמֵאָה.

Shabbat 21:1

On Shabbos, one may take his son into the house, even though there is a stone, which is muktzeh (cannot be moved), in the child's hand. And it is permissible to take a basket with a stone inside on Shabbat. And one may move ritually impure teruma (food designated for the Cohen), which may not be eaten and is muktzeh (cannot be moved), with ritually pure teruma, as well as with non-sacred produce. Rabbi Yehuda says: One may even lift a measure of teruma that was nullified from a mixture of one hundred measures of non-sacred produce and one measure of teruma.

Insights

There are thirty-nine categories of work prohibited on Shabbat by Torah Law. Many have the misconception that Jewish law prohibits labor on the Shabbat and, therefore, they don't understand why we cannot turn on a light that takes no effort. Or driving a car to the synagogue, which takes less effort than walking.

The mistake lies in the inaccurate translation of one word in the Torah. When the Torah discusses the prohibition of not working on Shabbat, it does not use the word 'avodah' which is translated as work or labor. Instead, it uses the word 'melacha' which means a creative activity that demonstrates man's mastery over nature. By refraining from such actions, we acknowledge that G-d is the ultimate Creator and Master.

The Sages also enacted edicts whose purpose are to preserve the spirit of Shabbat as a day of rest and holiness. One such law is called muktzeh - certain objects must be set aside and not moved on Shabbat.

Some reasons for this law are: Since it is forbidden to work on Shabbat, one might utilize the free time to rearrange the items in their home and carry them from one place to another, in contrast to the spirit of Shabbat as a day of rest.

The Sages restricted the handling of items whose primary function is for an activity forbidden on Shabbat. Writing on the Shabbat is one of the thirty-nine Torah prohibitions. If we were permitted to hold a pen, inadvertently we may come to write with it. To safeguard this law, the Sages decreed that handling a pen is prohibited.



Nun

is the fourteenth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'fifty'. Nun means 'fish' in Aramaic, the language of the Talmud. When we stand by the sea and look down, all we see is water. Yet, we know beneath the surface there are thousands of different species of fish, coral, and vegetation. The fact that we can't see it does not negate its existence. Similarly, there is a spiritual world where the soul of the departed resides. Our inability to see it does not mean that it doesn't exist.

ש

Shin

is the twenty-first letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'three hundred'. On the tefillin worn on the head are two shins - one with three vertical lines protruding from the base and one with four. They symbolize our three forefathers and our four mothers. When one loses a parent, mourning is for twelve months. For all other blood relatives, mourning is for thirty days. When we lose a parent, we have lost the golden link in the chain that takes us all the way back to Abraham, Yitzchak, Yaacov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rochel, and Leah. Hence, the mourning is more intense.

שקלים וא

נְשִׁלָּשָׁה נְשִׁלָּשָׁה עֲשָׂר שׁוּפְרוֹת, נָל נָה עֲשָׂר
 נְשִׁלָּחוֹת, נְשִׁלָּשׁ עֲשָׂרָה הַשְּׁתַּחֲוִיּוֹת הָיוּ בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ.
 נָל בֵּית רֶבֶן גַּמְלִיאֵל וְנָל בֵּית רַבִּי חַנִּינָא סֵגֶן
 הַכֹּהֲנִים, הָיוּ מְשַׁתַּחֲוִין אַרְבַּע עֲשָׂרָה. וְהֵיכָן הִתְהַ
 יְתָרָה? כְּנֶגֶד דִּיר הָעֵצִים, שָׁכַן מַסֶּרֶת בִּידָם
 מֵאַבוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁשָּׁם הָאָרוֹן נִגְזַר.

Shekalim 6,1

In the Temple there were thirteen chests, thirteen tables and thirteen prostrations. Members of the household of Rabban Gamaliel and of Rabbi Chanina, the chief of the priests, would prostrate fourteen times. And where was the additional prostration? In front of the wood storage yard, for they had a tradition from their ancestors that the Ark was hidden there.

Insights

King Solomon built the First Temple in 827 BCE, and it lasted for 410 years until the Greek Assyrian Empire destroyed it. The Jewish people were sent to exile in Babylonia for 70 years. It was during this period that the miracle of Purim happened. The Jewish people then returned to the Land of Israel, and under the guidance of the Prophets Ezra and Nechemya the Second Temple was built. It was completed in the year 349 BCE and lasted for 420 years. During this period the miracle of Chanukah occurred. It was destroyed by the Roman Empire in the year 69 CE. The third and final Temple will be built by Moshiach speedily in our days.

Three times a year - Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot - all males would make a pilgrimage to the Temple. There were ten constant miracles in the Temple. One of them was that even though the altar was outside and exposed to the heavens, the rain never extinguished its fire. Similarly, even though the altar was open to the elements, the winds never disturbed the smoke from rising straight upward

like a pillar.

The Temples were the center of Jewish life. Our prayers focus on beseeching G-d that He should bring the Jewish people home and rebuild the Temple.

There is a fascinating discussion concerning the actual construction of the Third Temple: Either Moshiach and the Jewish people will build it, or as others say, it will descend from heaven. The Lubavitcher Rebbe suggests that the two opinions are not necessarily contradictory. One of the suggestions he offers is that the Temple will initially be built by Moshiach together with the Jewish people. And then, a spiritual covering will descend from heaven and enclose the Temple, thereby ensuring that the structure will be eternal.

ברכות ג:א

מִי שְׁמִתּוֹ מָטֵל לְפָנָיו פָּטוּר מִקְרִיאַת שְׁמַע, וּמִן הַתְּפִלָּה, וּמִן הַתְּפִלִּין. נוֹשְׂאֵי הַמָּטָה וְחַלּוּפֵיהֶן וְחַלּוּפֵי חַלּוּפֵיהֶן, אֶת שְׁלֹפְנֵי הַמָּטָה, וְאֶת שְׁלֹאֲחֵי הַמָּטָה: אֶת שְׁלֹמֹה צֶרֶךְ בָּהֶן פְּטוּרִין, וְאֶת שְׂאִין לַמָּטָה צֶרֶךְ בָּהֶן חִיבִין. אֵלּוּ וְאֵלּוּ פְּטוּרִין מִן הַתְּפִלָּה

Berachot 3:1

One whose deceased relative is not yet buried is exempt from reading the Shema and the Amida prayer, and from the mitzvah to wear tefillin, until the deceased has been buried. Concerning the pallbearers and their replacements and the replacements of their replacements, those located before the coffin who have not yet carried the deceased and those located after the coffin: Those who are needed to carry the coffin are exempt from reciting Shema; while those who are not needed to carry the coffin, are obligated to recite Shema. However, both are exempt from reciting the Amida prayer.

Insights

Caring for the dead is referred to as Chesed Shel Emmes – genuine kindness. When our forefather Yaacov was on his death bed, he instructed his son Yoseph to ensure that he would be transported from Egypt and buried in Israel. Yaacov said to Yoseph, “If you fulfill my request, you will have performed an act of kindness and truth.”

It is called genuine kindness because when you do a favor for a living person, in the back of your mind, there is always the thought that perhaps the recipient of my favor will repay me later. However, when doing something for the deceased there is no expectation of ever receiving anything in return.

Why do we observe “kavod ha-met”, respect for the dead?

When a person passes away, the neshama (the soul) still feels a connection to its body and stays near it until the burial. During this time period, the soul is aware of how its body is being treated and derives comfort knowing that its body is being given the ultimate respect.

Another reason is the very core of existence and why G-d created the universe.

G-d wanted a home in the physical world. According to the Chassidic masters, this is why the soul descended from heaven and partnered with its physical body. Only the combined effort of body and soul can reveal G-d's presence in this material world. Therefore, when the soul returns home to its Maker, we must offer the greatest level of respect to the soul's worldly partner.

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מ

Mem

is the thirteenth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'forty'. The word mem stands for mayim, which means water. A human being cannot survive without water.

Torah, the most vital element in our spiritual lives, is referred to as water, as it states: “Water refers to Torah.” Just as a human being cannot survive without water, a Jew cannot survive without Torah. By studying the mishnayot in this booklet, you will receive spiritual sustenance.



ברכות ט,א

הַרוּאָה מְקוֹם שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ בוֹ נִסִּים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, אוֹמֵר
 "בְּרוּךְ שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה". מְקוֹם
 שֶׁנַּעֲקָרָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה, אוֹמֵר "בְּרוּךְ שֶׁעָקַר
 "עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה מֵאַרְצֵנוּ."

Berachot 9,1

One who sees a place where miracles occurred on Israel's behalf recites: "Blessed... Who performed miracles for our forefathers in this place." When in a place where idolatry was eradicated, one recites: "Blessed... Who eradicated idolatry from our land."

ה

Hay

is the fifth letter of the aleph-bet and has a numerical value of 'five'. The soul has five levels: nefesh, ruach, neshama, and yechidah Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Chabad Rebbe and the founder of Colel Chabad, writes that the soul is 'truly a part of G-d above'. Therefore, there is no such thing as a distant Jew as our souls are always bound and one with G-d.

Insights

What is the secret of Jewish survival? Throughout our history we have lived through pogroms, the crusades, the inquisition, and the holocaust, and somehow, we have survived. And not only have we survived, but we have also flourished.

There is only one explanation we can offer, and that is Divine intervention. Our existence is truly miraculous.

In truth, our very beginning was miraculous. The first Jew to be born was Yitzchak, the son of Abraham and Sarah. Both were of an age where they could no longer bear children. G-d performed a miracle and they were blessed with the first Jewish child. From that moment on, our survival has been nothing short of miraculous.

A great Rabbi who lived in the middle-ages wrote: Every time I wake up in the morning and see myself in the mirror, I am witnessing a miracle far greater than the splitting of the sea. I see a Jew who has lived through the destruction of Two Temples. I

see a Jew who has been dispersed to the four corners of the globe and has been exiled for over 1500 years. I see a Jew who has lived through the crusades, the inquisition, and the pogroms.

We can add that when we look in the mirror, we see a Jew who lived through the holocaust and lost 6 million family members. And yet, we are still here. Is this then not the greatest miracle of all? People often say that if we saw miracles like the Jews who left Egypt, we would believe.

If you saw freedom for 8 million Jews from the Former Soviet Union, then know you saw the freedom of 3 million Jews from Egypt.

If you saw our soldiers at the Western Wall on June 7, 1967, then know you have seen a shepherd boy slaying the mighty giant Goliath.

And if you saw the whispering embers rebuild the Jewish world, then know you saw the dry bones of Ezekiel come back to life.