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## Are you ready to discover the power of the seven principles?

This is an 8-week study guide based upon the book *7 Principles for Living Bravely*.

**This study guide is designed for Jewish teens and adults.**

Each week/lesson elaborates on one of the chapters of the book through a distinctly Jewish framework. This study guide takes Jewish values, ideals, and teachings and opens deeper discussion on the themes presented in the book.

It is a great opportunity for deeper thought and conversation. In addition to texts presented in each chapter of *7 Principles for Living Bravely*, this Jewish study guide adds additional Jewish texts to the mix of learning. You will find Tanakh (Jewish Scripture), Talmud and Medieval Jewish philosophy, Israeli poetry, and even some contemporary Jewish people and personalities quoted who have added to the Jewish conversation through the millennia.

We hope these additional study opportunities will strengthen your courage, resilience, and hope.

Read the texts with a study partner or group and discuss. Reflect together on what these texts mean to you and what the author or main characters are trying to convey. Try to link these texts in the study guide with those in each chapter of the book. You may want to underline various ideas in your *7 Principles* book for further thought and discussion with these texts.

We wish you success in building a life of bravery, filled with a foundation of resilience, hope, and grace!

## Reading Schedule

### **Week 1**

*Introduction*

### **Week 2**

*A Time to Mourn*

### **Week 3**

*A Time for Truth*

### **Week 4**

*A Time for Rest*

### **Week 5**

*A Time for Love*

### **Week 6**

*A Time for Prayer*

### **Week 7**

*A Time for Joy*

### **Week 8**

*A Time for Hope*

***LET'S GET STARTED!***



## Week 1 – Introduction

Time is a construct that rules our lives. What time do we get up? What time do we go to sleep? We measure time with watches, clocks, and calendars. The passage of time is marked through nature with changes of seasons. Some of the first devices to measure time were sundials in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. David Rooney, a historian of technology, former curator of timekeeping at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, London, and author of *About Time: A History of Civilization in Twelve Clocks* (W. W. Norton, 2021) noted that while in modern times days and weeks are of the same length, in the ancient world time was a more complex system rooted in nature. With the advent of railroads, it was important to standardize time schedules. In the US and Canada, a standard time was adopted on November 18, 1883!

The courage to step outside of oneself and build a life of courage and bravery isn't connected to a specific time. *7 Principles for Living Bravely* urges each person to take some time to build resilience through a specific process. Time is a gift we give to ourselves and others. In this introduction we look at the concept of time.

*Kohelet Rabbah 3:1:1*

**“For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heavens”** (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

There was a time for Adam, the first human to enter the Garden of Eden, as it is stated: “God placed them in the Garden of Eden” (Genesis 2:15). And there was a time to depart from there, as it is stated: “God banished the human...” (Genesis 3:24). There was a time for Noah to enter the ark, as it is stated: “Come...to the ark” (Genesis 7:1). And there was a time to emerge from there, as it is stated: “Emerge from the ark” (Genesis 8:16). There was a time for the [mitzvah of] circumcision to be given to Abraham, as it is stated: “You shall observe My covenant” (Genesis 17:9). And there was a time for his descendants to be circumcised, [and for many] of them to be circumcised [at once. This occurred] in two places, once in Egypt and once in the wilderness, as it is stated: “All the people who departed were circumcised [and all the people born in the wilderness...were not circumcised]” (Joshua 5:5).

“And a time for every purpose under the heavens” – there was a time for the Torah to be given to Israel. Rav Beivai said: It was time for a certain thing that was located above the heavens to now be given under the heavens. What is that? It is the Torah, as it is stated: “God spoke all these matters, saying” (Exodus 20:1).

**At that time, Adonai said unto me: 'Hew two tablets of stone like the first and come up unto Me into the mount; and make an ark of wood. etc.**  
(Deuteronomy 10:1):

This is what the verse stated (Ecclesiastes 3:1), "A time and season is set for everything, for every experience under heaven." There was a time for the world to be created; there was a time for the generation of the flood to be destroyed in water. There was a time to go into the ark, and a time to exit from it. And there was a time for Avraham to be created, and so too with all the ancestors. There was a time that our ancestors were to go down to Egypt, and a time for them to exit from there. And there was a time that they were to be subjugated. And there was a time for the tablets to be broken, and there was a time when others would do that act [of the golden calf]. Hence, "Carve out two tablets of stone."

Shlomo (King Solomon) said (Ecclesiastes 3:5), "A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones." "A time for throwing stones," these are the first tablets; "and a time for gathering stones," the time to carve out other tablets of stone, as it is stated, "Carve out (*pesal*) two tablets of stone." Rabbi Yehoshua said, "That he destroy the idols of (*pesilei*) their gods."

Another interpretation: "Carve out (*pesal*) for yourself," that the remnant (*pesolet*) be for yourself. Rabbi Levi and Rabbi Yochanan say, "From where did he carve them?" One [answered], "From under [God's] throne of glory." And the other said, "[God] created a quarry in the midst of his tent, and he quarried two tablets of stone from there. And he took the remnants from there and he became wealthy from there, since they were from sapphire."

This is what Shlomo stated (in Song of Songs 5:14), "His hands are rods of gold, studded with beryl [...] adorned with sapphires." His hands are rods of gold," these are the tablets. And how many [commandments] were on each tablet? Five commandments were on [each] tablet. And they were made with a type of rods between them, as it is stated, "His hands are rods of gold." "Adorned with sapphires," as they were made of sapphire.

Another explanation: "Carve out for yourself," in your merit, and it shall be yours. God said, Moshe, [I have given it to you] (you have given it to Me), and you are behaving generously [by] giving it to them, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 10:1), "Carve out (*pesal*) for yourself." By your life will I make you a king. And you shall (*pesol*) whoever you want, and you shall bring close whoever you want.

## **A Man In His Life** (Yehuda Amichai)

A man doesn't have time in his life  
to have time for everything.  
He doesn't have seasons enough to have  
a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes  
Was wrong about that.  
A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment,  
to laugh and cry with the same eyes,  
with the same hands to throw stones and to gather them,  
to make love in war and war in love.  
And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,  
to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest  
what history  
takes years and years to do.  
A man doesn't have time.  
When he loses he seeks when he finds  
he forgets, when he forgets he loves, when he loves  
he begins to forget.  
And his soul is seasoned, his soul  
is very professional.  
Only his body remains forever  
an amateur. It tries and it misses,  
gets muddled, doesn't learn a thing,  
drunk and blind in its pleasures  
and its pains.  
He will die as figs die in autumn,  
Shriveled and full of himself and sweet,  
the leaves growing dry on the ground,  
the bare branches pointing to the place  
where there's time for everything.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. *In the first Midrash, what are the distinct times mentioned?*
2. *In the second Midrash, what time are we talking about?*
3. *How is time in both midrashim related to God?*
4. *What is the nature of time in the first two midrashim? How does that relate to your life?*

5. *Does Amichai's poem agree or disagree with the midrashim about the nature of time? Why or why not?*
6. *What conclusions about time can you extrapolate from these texts?*

## **Week 2 – A Time to Mourn**

**God is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.**

*Psalm 34:18*

Judaism has a rich tradition and careful rituals to help with mourning and grief. In addition to the funeral, a family gathers immediately following for a meal of consolation which includes foods that are round (think bagel) representing the circle of life, and/or eggs, also the symbol of potential life. The custom reinforces the idea that even in our sorrow we focus on life, not death.

We observe several distinct periods of mourning for the first year. Immediately following the funeral, we return home or to a home for a period of seven days of mourning called *shiva* (from the word for the number seven). During this time, we curtail our activities, the community comes to us, often providing food and friendship. Daily services are held at the home so the mourners may recite the Kaddish prayer. There are other customs including covering of mirrors, males not shaving, and for some sitting on low chairs. It is also customary not to address the mourner, first allowing them to speak or not speak.

The second period is the first thirty days since the funeral called Sheloshim. This includes the first seven. Traditionally there is curtailed public activity. While the mourners may return to work and prayer services in synagogues, typically social engagements are curtailed. Often on the 30<sup>th</sup> day there is another gathering for prayer to recite the Kaddish.

The next major moment in the mourning cycle is the unveiling of the gravestone or marker. Depending on one's geographic location, this can take place any time between the 30<sup>th</sup> day and 11 months. It is another opportunity to gather at the grave site, offer remembrance, and recite the *El Maleh Rachamim* prayer and Kaddish.

The first anniversary of the death is the next significant time marker, known as the *Yarzeit* in Ashkenazi Jewish culture or *Meldado* or *Anyo* in Sephardic culture. The mourners light a memorial candle/light at home and go to synagogue to recite the Kaddish prayer during the worship services. It is customary to give *tzedakah*/charity in the memory of the deceased. Some also study passages from the Mishnah (whose letters can be rearranged to spell *neshamah*, the soul, meaning the soul of the deceased) Then annually after the first year, this is repeated.

***El Maleh Rachamim*** is a Jewish prayer recited at a funeral, unveiling of the marker, memorial service, four times a year at the *Yizkor* service, and at selected other times. The title of the prayer means: God full of compassion. This prayer is chanted in Hebrew including the full Hebrew/Jewish name of the deceased. There are special versions of this prayer for remembering the souls of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

This prayer asks God to take the soul of the departed and to enfold them in the safety of the Shekinah's wings (God's presence that can dwell on earth). In this prayer, the mourners pledge tzedakah, charity, in memory of the deceased as a sincere expression of our love and as redemption for their soul.

Here is the text of the prayer:

God, full of mercy, who dwells in the heights, grant perfect rest upon the Divine Presence's sheltering wings, among the holy, pure who shine as the brightness of the firmament, to the soul of (*Hebrew name of deceased*) son/daughter/house of (*Hebrew name of parents*) for charity was given to the memory of his/her/their soul. Therefore, Author of Mercy protect him/her/them forever, under the shelter of Your wings, and let their soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life. The Everlasting is their inheritance and may his/her/their repose be in peace and let us say: Amen.

#### **Questions to Consider:**

1. *What do you notice about the year-long process of formal mourning?*
2. *What customs have you ever observed or seen others observe in this regard? Describe them? How did they make you feel?*
3. *What role does the community play in this process? Why is this, or why is this not, important?*
4. *What is the image of the soul in the El Maleh prayer?*
5. *Why is it important for the soul to rise/return to God, do you think?*
6. *What is the image or images of God in this prayer?*
7. *Why do you think giving charity is "redemption for the soul?"*
8. *Judaism has a lot of rituals around mourning and grieving; which ones if any, have you observed?*
9. *Mourning and grief can be expressed not just for people or animals but for dreams or goals not achieved. Tell about a time you have been in mourning—either for a person, an animal, or a goal.*



## **Week 3 – A Time for Truth**

**These are the things that you shall do; Speak every person the truth to their neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates.**

*Zechariah 8:16*

Truth seems fleeting in our world. Opinions masquerade as truth and truth is often turned on its head. And yet a just society depends on a pillar of truth that undergirds all we do. This week we examine the ideas of truth and how we might adhere to truth and honesty and why it is one of our highest values.

*Psalm 119:142*

Your Torah is truth.

*Jeremiah 9:4*

They have taught their tongue to speak lies, they weary themselves to commit iniquity.

*Jeremiah 10:10*

“Adonai God is Truth”

*Babylonian Talmud, Pirkei Avot 1:18*

Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel used to say: on three things does the world stand: On justice, on truth and on peace, as it is said: “execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates” (Zechariah 8:16).

*Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 29a*

“When you add to the truth, you subtract from it.”

*Babylonian Talmud: Shabbat 55a*

“Truth is the seal of the Holy One, blessed be.”

In Rashi’s explanation [Rashi is the foremost medieval commentator on the Torah], this refers to the Hebrew word for truth, *emet*, (אמת) formed from the first letter of the alphabet, *alef*, the middle letter, *mem*, and the final letter, *tav*. The God of truth is found wherever there is truth and God’s absence is felt wherever there is falsehood.

*Babylonian Talmud, Makkot 24b*

The Psalmist says, “And speaks the truth in one’s heart” (Psalm 15:2), This refers to the Talmudic story of Rav Safra, who was reciting Shema (praying) when a person approached him to purchase an item. He intended to accept the man’s offer, but he was unable to respond because it is prohibited to interrupt the recitation of Shema. The buyer misinterpreted Rav Safra’s silence and concluded that Rav Safra demanded a higher price, so he raised his offer. Rav Safra insisted on selling him the item for the sum that he was offered initially.

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. *Why do you think truth is one of the pillars of the world?*
2. *What do you think the meaning is of having one of God's names be truth?*
3. *What does it mean that the word truth in Hebrew begins with the first letter of the aleph-bet, and concludes with the last letter of the aleph-bet, and has the middle letter of the aleph-bet in between?*
4. *In the story Rav Safra is so deep in prayer he cannot respond to the buyer who offers a higher price. Why do you think he offers the initial price? Why is this considered ethical?*
5. *In this day and time when it is harder to discern the truth, what sources do you use to help you find and seek the truth?*

## **Week 4 – A Time for Rest**

**This is what Adonai says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”**

*Jeremiah 6:16*

Rest is a pillar of Judaism. Shabbat is the cornerstone of the week and the crown of the week. In a society that pushes work 24/7 and that values busy-ness and pushes productivity, rest is devalued. This week we will look to the idea of incorporating rest and how Judaism weaves rest into a religious obligation.

*Exodus 20:8*

(8) Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is a sabbath of Adonai your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. (11) For in six days Adonai made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore, Adonai blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

*Leviticus 23:3*

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to Adonai in all your dwelling places.

*Arbaah Turim 1:262:1*

And one should prepare her table and make beds and arrange all the matters of the home in order that it will all be found arranged and orderly when everyone comes home from synagogue. Rabbi Yose Bar Yehuda said: two ministering angels escort a person on Erev Shabbat from the synagogue to her home, one good and one evil. When she comes home, she will find a lit candle, the table set, and a made bed. The Good angel says, “May it be God’s will that it will be like this next Shabbat.” and the Evil angel must answer, “amen” because the angel has no choice (but to say amen). And he should make an effort to wear nice things for Shabbat as it is said in Torah: “its honor.” And we explain this to mean that one should not be dressed for Shabbat like one is dressed on the weekday. And if he does not have other clothes, he should allow his clothes at least to hang low in an honorable way. And she should wear nice clothes and have happy Shabbat sex like one would accept a king, or a bride and groom as it is said in the Talmud in Shabbat: “Rabbi Hanina would wrap himself in a nice garment and would face evening on Friday and say, ‘come and let’s go out to meet accept the Shabbat queen.’ Rabbi Yanai would say, ‘come bride, come bride.’” And one should eat a lot of meat and drink wine and sweets as much as she can. And anyone who can increase their honor of Shabbat in body, clothes, or eating, or drinking, she should be praised.

[The Tur is an important Halakhic code composed by Jacob ben Asher, 13th c. Spain]

*Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Sabbath"*

To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow men and the forces of nature—is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for man's progress than the Sabbath?

### **The Room Behind My Eyes**

Judy Katz, *Salamander*, Issue 46, Spring/Summer 2018

I'm drinking coffee with Melissa  
telling her about an idea for a poem called  
The Encyclopedia of Small but Significant Gestures,

in which I explore the gesture of pressing my fingertips  
against my eyelids when I'm trying to recall someone's name  
or remember the word for *elevator*. This small

gesture helps me concentrate. I go into the room  
behind my eyes where all the lost things are  
and look around for the missing word.

And this gesture

leads to a further back room, where my mother and grandmother  
and great grandmother stand at the dining room table  
scooping the air above the lit Sabbath candles

as if they could bring the light into their bodies,  
then cover their eyes with their hands  
to say the blessing.

And this image

breaks into a hundred images, a mirrored corridor  
of all the women before me, back and back  
to the first woman

lighting the first candles,  
going into the privacy behind her eyes  
to look for the first lost thing.

### Questions to Consider:

1. *Discuss how you observe Shabbat.*
2. *Describe how your Shabbat practice enriches your spirituality or hinders it.*
3. *The Arbah Turim describes ways to prepare and observe Shabbat. Compare and contrast with how you observe Shabbat.*
4. *What surprises you most about this passage?*
5. *What are ways you can honor Shabbat in “body, clothes, eating and drinking?”*
6. *The Arbah Turim passage doesn’t say it, but these things are typically associated with oneg (joy, delight) as a principal observance of Shabbat rest. What are ways you “delight on the Sabbath”? How can delight become part of your Sabbath rest?*
7. *How does Rabbi Heschel’s ideals of Shabbat speak to our current situation? Why or why not?*
8. *Judy Katz mentions in her poem Shabbat traditions of her family. Share some Shabbat traditions you have inherited or would like to create.*

## **Week 5 – A Time for Love**

**Hatred stirs up strife, but love conquers all transgression.**

*Proverbs 10:12*

Love is an intense feeling of affection, but it is also loyalty, fidelity, and commitment. To love another person, one must care and be willing to be vulnerable and open with one's thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Love can be expressed physically, verbally, and through acts of kindness and tenderness. Showing love to another person or even to an animal involves a sense of compassion towards them, a sense of kinship and personal ties.

Judaism believes that marriage is sacred and that the partners within a marriage have sacred obligations toward one another. The marriage ceremony is called *kiddushin* from the Hebrew word for holiness, and the state of marriage is a holy union of two souls. This same idea is the relationship that Judaism believes we have with God. The rabbis often framed the covenant of Israel as a marriage contract between God and the Jewish people that took place at Mt. Sinai.

Explore these ideas of love and see if you can find different ways to love and different kinds of love.

*Lev. 19:18*

Love your neighbor as yourself.

*Rashi on Lev. 19:18*

“This is a fundamental principle in the Torah” —Rabbi Akiva

*Babylonian Talmud, Pirkei Avot 5:19*

Any love that depends on a specific cause, when that cause is gone, the love is gone; but if it does not depend on a specific cause, it will never cease.

*Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 86a:12*

Abaye said: As it was taught in a *baraita* that it is stated: “And you shall love Adonai your God” (Deuteronomy 6:5), which means that you shall make the name of Heaven beloved. How should one do so? One should do so in that they should read Torah, and learn Mishna, and serve Torah scholars, and they should be pleasant with people in their business transactions. What do people say about such a person? Fortunate is their parents who taught Torah, fortunate is their teacher who taught them Torah, woe to the people who have not studied Torah...

*Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 69:1-2*

(1) When a man marries a woman, he is obligated to her in ten things, and he merits [is owed] from her in four things, even if it is not written.

(2) These are the ten: her food, her clothing, her regular sexual relations, the core of her Ketubah, her healing, to redeem her if she is captured, her burial, that she be sustained from his possessions and live in his house after his death the whole time she is a widow, that her children be sustained after his death until they are engaged, that her sons from him inherit her ketubah more than their portion of inheritance that is with their siblings.

"The real opposite of love is not hate, but indifference."

*Elie Wiesel*

"Everyone has a right to love and be loved, and nobody on this Earth has the right to tell anyone that their love for another human being is morally wrong."

*Barbra Streisand*

"Love is a covenant. Our entire Jewish tradition is about covenantal love – God created the world, so that God would enter a relationship of love with the Jewish people, God redeemed us from Egypt because God loved our ancestors, God brought us to the Mountain of Sinai and revealed the Torah, another covenantal contract of love. When the Torah commands us to love, we are commanded to be more than just kind. It involves two parties, a relationship, a covenant of how people in relationship should act towards one another. And it is intentional. It requires that both parties must consciously choose to act with *chesed*, with love towards those we encounter regularly. *Olam Chesed Yibaneh*. We must build this world from love."

*Rabbi Amanda Greene*

### **Questions to Consider:**

1. *Why do you think love is the greatest principle of the Torah?*
2. *Rabbi Greene writes that love is a covenant. What does this mean?*
3. *The Shulchan Aruch is a legal code dating from 1563 and written by Joseph Karo. What are the obligations of the married partners in this passage? Why is this related to love? How should partners show these commitments today?*
4. *How is God's love expressed in your life?*
5. *Are there different kinds of love? Name them and explain the differences.*
6. *Can love ever be wrong? Why or why not?*

## **Week 6 – A Time for Prayer**

**The time to study a little Torah, or to pray, or to meditate, can't be “when everything else is done” — because everything else is never done.**

*Rabbi Rachel Barenblat*

Prayer is central to Judaism. Each person is supposed to pray a formalized set of prayers three times a day. Within the framework of the formalized prayer are opportunities for individual, private prayer. Because Judaism emphasizes a fixed prayer formula, it is often difficult for individuals to understand how to pray from the heart. Yet when words fail us, Judaism provides words that help us express our intentions, anguish, and joy. There are times for private prayer and times for communal prayer.

### **Mishneh Torah, Prayer and the Priestly Blessing 8:1**

Congregational prayer is always heard [by the Almighty]. Even if there are sinners among them, the Holy One, blessed be, does not reject the prayer of a multitude. Hence, a person should associate himself with the congregation, and never recite his prayers in private when he is able to pray with the congregation.

*Rabbi Nachman of Breslav (1772-1810), Sichot HaRan, 229*

Prayer originally began with each person pouring out their heart before God in their own words and language. This is explained by Rambam (Maimonides) in his Laws of Prayer (1:4), where he states that personal prayer was the main form of prayer prior to the institution of the set prayers... it is extremely beneficial to make a regular practice of offering your own prayers and requests from the depths of your heart in the language you understand best, asking God to help you serve God truly. This is the essence of prayer, and this is the way all the righteous people attained their high levels.

### *The Perpetual Prayer of the Soul*

Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, *Olat Re'iyah, vol. I, p. 11*

We can only pray the way prayer is supposed to be when we recognize that in fact *the soul is always praying*. Without stop, the soul soars and yearns for its Beloved. It is at the time of outward prayer, that the perpetual prayer of the soul reveals itself in the realm of action. This is prayer's pleasure and joy, its glory and beauty. It is like a rose, opening its elegant petals towards the dew, facing the rays of the sun as they shine over it with the sun's light.

*Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg (Podcast, Open My Heart with Rabbi Jonathan Slater, 10/2020)*

“So when I pray or think about praying, I think about, and I try to, connect to something that is greater than myself. Something greater than my small mind sort of running around after itself; or my fears; or my worries; my despair. Notice all of these are “my”: my, my, my! So, beyond my naming, even and beyond my owning, and beyond MY



wanting, beyond me, my myself. And I recognize that that greater something, that larger something is already here, right here, right now, in this present moment. So, I pray that this smallness expands into the bigness. And the prayer that I've been thinking about in these days, which is all about expansion, is a prayer we say in the mornings, in the prayer book, in the Jewish liturgy: it's called Sim Shalom. And I like to think of that as: "Expand into Shalom. Expand into peace, into wholeness, into pure goodness and blessing." *Sim Shalom tova uv'rakhah* – expand, expand into a world, right here, filled with graciousness and loving kindness – *ba'olam chen vachessed* compassion, love, tenderness. The ability to just be in a loving, expanded way with the pain: my pain, your pain, our pain. Not just for me, but for us, all of us; all the people, all the identities, all the ME's, all the US's, all the WE's."

*Rabbi Dr. Rachel Adler, Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*  
"To pray without being fully present is highly problematic for rabbinic Judaism. A recurring talmudic controversy rages about the extent to which commandments in general and prayer in particular require *kavvanah*, the intentionality and attention with which a fully aware and situated self, orients itself toward God and performs a holy act. *Kavvanah* is both internally and externally manifested. It is both a proper frame of mind and a proper demeanor."

#### **Questions to Consider:**

1. *Describe the tension between individual prayer and communal prayer. Which do you prefer and why?*
2. *What is the role of the soul in connection to prayer?*
3. *In Judaism there is also a dialectic between fixed (keva) prayer and inspirational (kavannah) prayer. Give examples of both. How does one affect the other?*
4. *Traditionally, in Judaism, prayer can affect change in God and change in the person. Do you believe that? Why or why not.*
5. *Prayers have many forms: gratitude, praise, and petition in Jewish teaching. Name a prayer that belongs in each category.*
6. *If you had to write a prayer, what would it say?*

## **Week 7 – A Time for Joy**

**There is no mitzvah to be joyous, but joy can bring on the greatest mitzvot.**

*Rabbi Aharon Karlin*<sup>1</sup>

In a world that is difficult, violent, and filled with anxiety, finding joy can be difficult. Joy is an expression of our happiness and contentment. It can be intense feelings of overwhelming delight and pleasure. It can transform one's attitude and can be rooted in love and have deep reservoirs of meaning. Explore these texts and see how they might help you find joy.

### **Don't Hesitate**

Mary Oliver

If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy,  
don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty  
of lives and whole towns destroyed or about  
to be. We are not wise, and not very often  
kind. And much can never be redeemed.  
Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this  
is its way of fighting back, that sometimes  
something happens better than all the riches  
or power in the world. It could be anything,  
but very likely you notice it in the instant  
when love begins. Anyway, that's often the  
case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid  
of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.

### *Avot d'Rabbi Natan 34:9*

There are ten words for Happiness. And they are: *sasson* (joy), *simcha* (happiness), *gila* (rejoicing), *rina* (songfulness), *ditza* (amusement), *tzahala* (exuberance), *aliza* (felicity), *hedva* (delight), *tiferet* (splendor), *alitza* (cheer).

### *Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, Likutei Moharan, Part II 24:1*

(1) It is a great mitzvah to always be happy, and to make every effort to determinedly keep depression and gloom at bay.

(2) All the illnesses that afflict people are due only to flawed joy. For there are ten types of song, which are synonymous with joy.

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<sup>1</sup> **Aharon ben Jacob Perlov of Karlin**, (1736-1772) known among the Ḥasidim as Rabbi Aharon the Great, or simply as the "Preacher" or "Censor," was one of the early rabbis of the sect who helped the rapid spread of Ḥasidism in Eastern Europe, and was distinguished for the fiery eloquence of his exhortations

(2:3) One should therefore always be happy, and only at the designated time have a broken heart.

*Siach Sarfei Kodesh 1-736*

Reb Noson answered, “Borrow the happiness!”

*Estelle Frankel, Sacred Therapy*

The Hebrew word for oneness—*echad*—comes from the same root as the word for joy—*chedva*. We experience joy when we feel a sense of oneness and connectedness. This is the central aim of all Jewish spiritual healing—to restore a sense of unity, joy, and connectedness in a world in which brokenness seems inevitable.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. *What is joy to you? When do you experience joy?*
2. *Do any of the texts resonate (or not) with your experience of joy?*
3. *In the list of 10 types of joy, what do you think are the differences?*
4. *We often hear “Fake it till you make it.” How does Reb Noson’s advice relate? Why would you need to “Borrow” happiness?*
5. *How do alignment and connectedness create joy? When have you felt this? Describe.*
6. *They say, “Laughter is the best medicine.” How can laughing and humor help you build joy?*

## **Week 8 – A Time for Hope**

Judaism is a religion based upon hope. We infuse an optimistic look toward the future even in the darkest of times. We are commanded to “Therefore, choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). We are taught by the book of Psalms: “Hope in Adonai; be strong and of good courage! and hope in Adonai! (27:14). Each year for thousands of years, even after the destruction of the second Temple (70 CE) continuing to today, we end our seder meals at Passover with the phrase “Next year in Jerusalem!” This is an age-old hope of return to our ancient homeland made manifest in 1948 with the creation of the modern State of Israel! Even the national anthem of the modern state of Israel is “*HaTikvah*”—The Hope.

The following texts explore these ideas in a deeper way.

To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope in a world serially threatened by despair. Every ritual, every mitzvah, every syllable of the Jewish story, every element of Jewish law, is a protest against escapism, resignation, or the blind acceptance of fate. Judaism is a sustained struggle, the greatest ever known, against the world that is, in the name of the world that could be, should be, but is not yet. There is no more challenging vocation. Throughout history, when human beings have sought hope, they have found it in the Jewish story. Judaism is the religion, and Israel the home, of hope.

*Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks*

### *Berakhot 32b:10*

On a similar note, Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: A person who prayed and saw that they were not answered, should pray again, as it is stated: “Hope in Adonai, strengthen yourself, let your heart take courage, and hope in Adonai” (Psalms 27:14). One should turn to God with hope, and if necessary, turn to God again with hope.

### *Makkot 24b:2-4*

The Gemara relates another incident involving those Sages. On another occasion they were ascending to Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple. When they arrived at Mount Scopus and saw the site of the Temple, they rent their garments in mourning, in keeping with halakhic practice. When they arrived at the Temple Mount, they saw a fox that emerged from the site of the Holy of Holies. They began weeping, and Rabbi Akiva was laughing. They said to him: For what reason are you laughing? Rabbi Akiva said to them: For what reason are you weeping? They said to him: This is the place concerning which it is written: “And the non-priest who approaches shall die” (Numbers 1:51), and now foxes walk in it; and shall we not weep? Rabbi Akiva said to them: That is why I am laughing, as it is written, when God revealed the future to the prophet Isaiah: “And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to attest: Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah” (Isaiah 8:2). Now what is the connection between Uriah and Zechariah? He clarifies the difficulty: Uriah prophesied during the First Temple period, and

Zechariah prophesied during the Second Temple period, as he was among those who returned to Zion from Babylonia. Rather, the verse established that fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah is dependent on fulfillment of the prophecy of Uriah. In the prophecy of Uriah it is written: "Therefore, for your sake Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become rubble, and the Temple Mount as the high places of a forest" (Micah 3:12), where foxes are found. There is a rabbinic tradition that this was prophesied by Uriah. In the prophecy of Zechariah it is written: "There shall yet be elderly men and elderly women sitting in the streets of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 8:4). Until the prophecy of Uriah about the destruction of the city was fulfilled, I was afraid that the prophecy of Zechariah would not be fulfilled, as the two prophecies are linked. Now that the prophecy of Uriah was fulfilled, it is evident that the prophecy of Zechariah remains valid. The Gemara adds: The Sages said to him, employing this formulation: Akiva, you have comforted us; Akiva, you have comforted us.

*Thoughts on the word hope:*

The Hebrew word for hope (*tikvah*) comes from the root word that means to bind together, collect, or to wait for (*kavah*). The Hebrew word for hope provides a powerful lesson that is reflected in the biblical story where the word *tikvah*/hope first appears.

In the book of Joshua, chapter two, two Israelite spies<sup>1</sup> were sent by Joshua to inspect the Promised Land and scout the city of Jericho before the Israelite army conquers it. There they meet a Canaanite woman, Rahab,<sup>2</sup> who is a prostitute. She helps them and protects them when they are sought out by the King of Jericho who has heard there were Israelite spies. She hides them on the roof of her home and even misdirects the King's soldiers when they come looking for the spies.

Rahab tells the Israelite spies that the coast is now clear and that the citizens of Jericho have been fearful of the Israelites since they had heard of the great victory that God wrought for the Israelites over the Egyptians and over the Ammorite Kings of Og and Sihon (*Joshua 2:10*). Rahab asks the two spies to return the favor by helping her and her family by protecting them when the Israelites come to conquer the city.

The men said to her, "We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. (*Joshua 2:17-18*)

Rahab said, "According to your words, so be it." So, she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window. (*Joshua 2:21*)

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<sup>1</sup> This is reminiscent of the spies that Moses sent out in the book of Numbers

<sup>2</sup> Rahab's name means wide or spacious place and can also mean words for the Abyss

The Hebrew word *tikvah* is used in its literal sense here as a cord or thread, but it is also Rahab's hope that she and her family will be spared. We long to grasp hold of hope—like the cord that will save Rahab and her family, a cord that is a sign of a better time ahead. Hope is a cord or rope used to escape a difficult situation.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. *What instills hope in you?*
2. *What do you have hope for?*
3. *Have you experienced a collective or personal sense of hope in action? Explain how this happens and when.*
4. *Where and when do you struggle to feel hope?*
5. *What has happened when your hope and trust in your vision or dream is different than what other people, or the facts, told you to believe?*
6. *Who are the people that inspire hope in you?*
7. *What do you hope for?*
8. *What helps you build/rebuild hope?*