

# Judaism 101

*A Text-Based Course*

Created by  
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On Behalf of Partners in Torah and Ner LeElef

Course Adapted and Edited by

**Ner LeElef**

Subjects included:

- Belief
- Prophecy
- Kindness
- Prayer
- Holiness
- The Commandments
- Shabbat

You can help improve this course and create new ones  
Comments, Questions and Suggestions

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## Judaism 101: A Text-Based Course

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## Ner LeElef Courses

*The goal of Ner LeElef Courses is to help you, the Jewish educator, in your crucial work of spreading the knowledge of Torah. Many Rabbis & teachers have told us that in addition to their own shiurim that they prepare, they would be glad to use others' materials if the quality and usability were high. We therefore offer these courses as our attempt to fill a need.*

*This Judaism 101 course was created by Rabbi Gidon Moskovitz on behalf of Partners in Torah and edited by Ner LeElef. Please Note:*

- Please use as much of the course (or as little!) as you like – there are no firm rules about what to teach or how.
- Note that this is a ‘work-in-progress’ – a first attempt at creating material that will be interesting to the students and user-friendly to the teacher. We would be delighted to have your corrections, comments and suggestions as to how to improve this Judaism 101 course. We are also most interested in knowing how relevant (or not) you found the material, and if you would like more. Please email all comments to Rabbi Doron Kornbluth at [dkornbluth@nerleelef.com](mailto:dkornbluth@nerleelef.com). If you would like to be on the email list to receive further courses, please email.
- Note also that these classes, and the course as a whole, are only beginnings. They are not at all exhaustive or complete. It is literally a ‘taste of Torah’ – to get students in the door for a set amount of time, to give them a basic framework with which to understand Jewish ideas and practices, and to give you the teacher a sense of what they are interested in and where to put your focus. If students are particularly interested in a subject, you can add in classes (based on sources in the appendices here or your own material). If students are less interested in a subject, you can skip it entirely.
- There is no charge for using this material. We do ask that each time you use it, you email us ([dkornbluth@nerleelef.com](mailto:dkornbluth@nerleelef.com)) to let us know how students responded and to share any suggestions you may have. This will enable us to gauge effectiveness and improve in the future.

Wishing you much hatzlacha in all your endeavors

Ner LeElef

## Text-Based Courses<sup>1</sup>

### What is a “text-based” course?

This Judaism 101 course is a *text-based* course. That is to say, both teachers and students are supposed to see the sources themselves. Two different documents were prepared explicitly for this purpose: a *Sources* document for the students which contains only the sources; and an *Educators’ Guide* for the educator, which contains the same sources in the same order (numbered identically on each document for ease of identification), along with explanations, background information, suggested questions and answers, etc.

Please note that if you wish to simply lecture without giving students the handouts (whether because of personal preference, time constraints, etc), you may of course do so and we are happy to help in whatever way we can.

### Why use a “text-based” course?

When possible, we strongly suggest giving students the handouts and having them read the sources for themselves. Most students today cannot pay attention to a long lecture - they will learn and enjoy more by being more involved. By reading and struggling with Jewish texts themselves, a whole new part of Judaism will be open to them. We consider their learning of Jewish texts as important as the actual ‘information’ they learn, if not more so!

### How should the course be taught?

Educators decide how best to use the material. For those educators who choose to follow the standard structure, the *Educators’ Guide* is quite self-explanatory. Each subject is broken-up into sections, and students will normally see 2-3 sources at a time.

Some students may ‘look ahead’ in the document. If you are concerned about this, you can specifically ask them not to, or perhaps edit the document and only give them certain sources at a time. In general, we do not feel that their ‘looking ahead’ is a major problem – it may actually help them get interested.

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<sup>1</sup>Please note also that Judaism 101 was originally created as a Chevruta Course – meaning for two study partners (ideally but not necessarily one more advanced in Torah learning and one beginner) to learn through the material together. In this format, there is no formal lecture at all. It is a classic chevruta session, albeit with guided text. If you are interested in using that format, we are delighted to help.

*How long should the course take?*

Judaism 101 is 7-part course. Each class (ie Prophecy, Chesed, etc) can last anywhere from 1-3 hours. Ideally, you will have 2-3 hours per class, which will enable you to use most of the sources and ideas presented, and have adequate time for students' questions and comments. The material does not need to be taught in one sitting. In other words, *any class can be 'broken-up' into two or more sessions (ie half of prophecy this week and half next week)*

If you are limited in time and (for example) want to finish in one hour, do not attempt to use all of the material: you will need to decide which sources to see and which questions to ask. There will also be limited time for discussion.

If you have 2-3 hours for each topic, you can also pick and choose what parts of the classes appeal most to you, or just 'do everything' and follow the instructions inside the text.

*Please Note:*

As mentioned, this is a work-in-progress. If you have comments, suggestions, corrections, etc as to how to best teach, structure, or improve the course, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please email [dkornbluth@nerleelef.com](mailto:dkornbluth@nerleelef.com)

Goals and Basic Concepts  
Of Judaism 101

*What are the goals of this Judaism 101 course?*

- (a) To introduce students to Jewish learning
- (b) To have students enjoy the process of asking and answering questions, and discussing Jewish ideas
- (c) To give students basic concepts as to what Judaism is all about, in order to be able to better appreciate further courses and Jewish learning

*What are the basic concepts that students should gain in this course?*

- Students should learn that the seven components of the course (Belief in G-d, Prophecy, Mitzvot, Shabbat, Chesed, Prayer, Holiness) are fundamental components of Jewish life and thought.
- *The list is not from Mount Sinai!* Please tell students what *you* would have included in a Judaism 101 course and perhaps discuss it with them.
- This course is a short introduction only. The goal is to get students thinking about the ideas and be exposed to various fundamental Torah concepts. Students will *not* gain fluency in any one of the particular subjects discussed. In any given subject, due to space and time limitations, some ideas were included and some were not, despite their importance. What we have provided is literally a ‘taste’ of Torah which will hopefully whet their appetites to learn more.
- That being said, in general, over the time you study together, students should gain a basic understanding of the structure of Judaism: (a) that G-d exists, Created and Sustains the world, and is Perfect; (b) that He communicated with us through prophecy and revelation; (c) gave the Mitzvot (which include but are not limited to Shabbat, Chesed, and Prayer); and (d) that all of us can – and are supposed to become ‘holy’, according to the Jewish view of holiness..
- Please note that this does not mean that students should be expected to ‘agree’ with the truth of these concepts after one course! Rather, we want them to know what Judaism is and to appreciate its depth and beauty.
- For particular goals and concepts, in each Educator’s Guide there is a boxed list of particular goals and themes of that subject.
- Educators should emphasize how wonderful it is that students are learning Torah and that learning Torah is indeed the key to Jewish survival and inspiration. It

- should be emphasized that Judaism is based on asking questions (ie the Talmud is full of questions).
- Students should finish the course realizing that this is a beginning not an end to Jewish learning, and the course will hopefully motivate them to learn even more.

## How to Generate Discussion

### *WHY BOTHER GENERATING DISCUSSION?*

People are rarely affected by lectures. Studies show that we remember less than 10% of what we hear, but over 80% of what we experience. Furthermore, people like being active – the whole experience is more enjoyable and interesting. The most powerful kind of learning there is (much more effective than passive listening) is when participants have grappled and involved their personalities.

### *ON THE OTHER HAND*

On the other hand, we are *teachers* – here to teach. There are certain ideas and concepts that we want to share, and there is a direction we would like students to go. So we can't have endless discussion without teaching anything!

The material we have prepared is designed to help the educator achieved a successful middle path – a guided discussion.

We have consciously given a little extra direction because we realize that you as the teacher can always open up discussion etc as you see fit – and we indicate many areas which are particularly suitable to your doing so. In the end, only the teacher can really find the right balance between teaching them 'our' ideas and letting them share 'their' ideas.

### *TYPES OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS*

- Good questions encourage participation (“*you seem to disagree Jerry, why?*”).
- Bad questions discourage participation (i.e. *yes* or *no* questions)

### *THE LOST ART OF LISTENING*

Studies show that most people are poor listeners. And yet, without listening skills, how can anyone learn? In order to emphasize listening, the teacher should be the model of an interested, respectful listener when students are speaking. Also, if students disagree on something, they should be encouraged to state the other's views before explaining why they disagree. Over time, this will encourage them to listen, and hopefully learn.

### *TRICKS OF THE TRADE*

- For large groups, allow participants one point each, and then move on.
- To re-ignite interest, use polling techniques: "*Can I see a show of hands? How many people ...*"

- If you notice disinterest, move on to a different section or subject.
- Thank them for their questions, individually, publicly and at the next break.

*THE GOAL*

The goal is not to “win” – the goal of these sessions is to get them to enjoy Jewish learning and to seriously consider the ideas being presented.



Judaism 101

Emunah (Belief)

Educators' Guide

## Judaism 101: Educator's Guide

### Please Note:

1. *Statements in italics* are ideas, questions, etc for you to tell the students.
2. Shaded boxes like these are background info & suggestions
3. Use as much – or as little – of this guide as you want.
4. Students have the same sources that appear in this Educator's Guide, but only the sources without any **background boxes** or *italics*. Please familiarize yourself with the student booklet as well.

### The Goals of this Class are to help students:

- a) respect Jewish wisdom and enjoy learning from Jewish texts
- b) be exposed to the first of the Ten Commandments and study the approaches of the Rambam, BeHag and Ramban.
- c) learn that belief in G-d is indeed fundamental to Judaism and that our greatest sages and leaders studied and explained the concepts at length.
- d) appreciate differences of opinion within Judaism
- e) begin asking questions as to *why* they should believe in G-d, and understand that in Judaism, belief is not a 'magical' thing (either 'you have it or you don't'), rather it is something to be studied, contemplated, argued, grown into, etc.
- f) realize that questions on the issue of belief are among the most important and legitimate questions a beginner can have. Students should be motivated to learn and read more on the subject.

### Outline

- Section 1: The Approach of Maimonides*
- Section 2: The Approach of the BeHag*
- Section 3: The Approach of Nachmanides*
- Section 4: The Philosophical Focus*

### Important Note to Educators

Teaching students *why* they should believe in G-d is a complicated matter. It is considered by some to be very 'frontal'. Many students will feel defensive from the beginning and reject what is being taught. Furthermore, if a teacher does not present the material well, it may well lessen the chances that the student ever takes a second look at this fundamental pillar Judaism.

On the other hand, the subject of Belief in G-d is so important and fundamental to Judaism that it should not be ignored in any course offering itself as 'Judaism 101'.

We have therefore taken a unique approach:

The main part of this class focuses on the mitzvah itself – ie is there a mitzvah to believe in G-d? In this way, students get talking and thinking about the existence of G-d, see that the subject is dealt with in our tradition in a very intelligent and thought-out manner, and will hopefully on their own ask the 'why.'

Note that throughout the sessions there are many opportunities for you the educator to discuss the 'why' if you so choose. We have offered some sources in the appendix to help you in this endeavor, but recommend that you add in your own sources and approach to make it complete.

*Many people were introduced to the Ten Commandments via Charlton Heston's famous movie of the same name. The truth be told, this is one of those times where the book is a 'heckuva' lot better than the movie.*

*The Torah itself paints the scene for us. After many decades of torturing and persecuting the Jewish People, a startling and miraculous turn-around had occurred. The greatest and most powerful nation of the day, Egypt, stood in ruins. The evil and once-mighty Pharaoh was brought to his knees after ten devastating plagues. Pharaoh himself, say the Sages, went running through the streets of the Jewish ghetto searching for Moses so as to beg him to leave the country.*

*And leave they did. The next morning, the Jewish Nation walked away from the land that enslaved them for so many years. They passed through the crumbled walls of Egypt and left as a free and proud people, over two million strong. They were now on their way to accept a new destiny. They were traveling toward the mountain where Jewish and world history would be changed forever.*

*Fifty days after the miraculous exit of the Jewish Nation from Egypt, the Jews witnessed an incredible, unique event that has no human parallel. They stood at Mt. Sinai and witnessed the Revelation. The entire Nation, men women and children, was transformed into prophets and prophetesses as they gathered to hear the 10 Commandments from G-d Himself.*

*The first of those Ten Commandments is recorded by the Torah as follows:*

[source 1]

<p>I am the LORD your G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other G-ds before Me. Exodus 20:2</p>	<p>אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים: לֹא-יְהִי לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים, עַל-פְּנֵי</p>
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*This, the first direct communication of G-d to an entire People, is clearly a significant idea. Our purpose in this session is to analyze this 'First Commandment'.*

### **Section 1: The Approach of Maimonides**

#### 613 Commandments

Much of the following material is based on the idea that there are 613 (Taryag) Commandments. Many students may find the concept of 613 commandments as being eye opening - it is a common misconception that we received only 10 commandments and not 613. The truth of the matter is that the 10 Commandments are more of a foundation for the entire framework of the 613 Mitzvot (see Rashi to Exodus 24:12). You may want to mention that most of those commandments were Temple related and do not occur today.

*Study the words of Maimonides, who describes the first commandment in his list of the 613 biblical Mitzvos:*

[source 2a]

<p><b>The First Commandment</b> is that commandment in which we were commanded to believe in the Lord. That is, we must believe that there is an Origin and Cause, who is the Catalyst for all of existence. And so the Exalted One said, "I am the Lord your G-d" (Exodus 20:2 &amp; Deut. 5:6).</p> <p>And at the end of Tractate Makos (23b) it is written: 613 Mitzvot were said to Moshe at Sinai. What is the verse [that hints] to this? "<b>Torah</b> was commanded to us through Moshe" (Deut. 33:4). That is to say [that the] numerical equivalent of TORA[h]<sup>2</sup> [was given to us through Moshe].</p>	<p><b>המצווה הראשונה</b> היא הציווי שנצטוונו להאמין באלהות, והוא: שנאמין שיש (שם) עילה וסיבה, שהיא הפועל לכל הנמצאים. וזה אמרו יתעלה: "אנכי ה' אלקיך" (שמות כ, ב ודברים ה, ו).</p> <p>ובסוף גמרא מכות אמרו: "תרי"ג מצוות אמרו לו למשה בסיני. מאי קרא? תורה ציווה לנו משה" (דברים לג, ד) כלומר: מנין תי'ר'ה'.</p>
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[source 2b]

<p>The Gemora then asks the following (rhetorical) question: "How much does the word 'TORA[h]' equal in gematria?"</p> <p>[To which it answers] "611" [So where are the other two?]</p> <p>And the explanation is that [the 2 commandments of] "I am the Lord your G-d" and "You shall have no other G-d" were heard directly from the 'Mouth' of G-d.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>Thus it is made clear that "I am the Lord..." is part of the count of 613 Mitzvot.</p>	<p>והקשו על זה ואמרו: "תורה בגימטריא הכי הוי?"</p> <p>שש מאות וחד סרי הוי!"</p> <p>ובאה התשובה: "אנכי ה' אלקיך' ולא יהיה לך' מפי הגבורה שמעום".</p> <p>הנה נתבאר לך, שאנכי ה' מכלל תרי"ג מצוות, והוא ציווי להאמין, כמו שביארנו</p>
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<sup>2</sup> Hebrew letters have numerical values that are expounded under the rubric known as 'Gematria'. The letter ת = 400, the letter ו = 6, the letter ר = 200, and the letter ה = 5. [400+6+200+5=611]

<sup>3</sup> The Torah tells us that at the time of the Revelation Hashem began to tell us the 10 commandments, but after He said the first two the people were unable to bear the awesomeness of that Revelation. They then asked Moshe to intercede and be a go-between of sorts. He ascended the mountain and stayed there for 40 days and nights. During that time he was taught the very foundations of all of Torah, including the 613 mitzvot and their precise definitions. After those forty days he descended with the two tablets containing the 10 Commandments as well as a wealth of information that he was taught by God.

And it is the commandment to believe, as I have explained.

Suggested Question: How would you summarize Maimonides' explanation?

Suggested Answer: Maimonides is clearly of the opinion that the "First Commandment" is a biblical Mitzva and is part of the count of 613.

The following is a fundamental point to be raised. Hopefully students will notice the problem on their own, but otherwise it is important that the educator explain it.

Suggested Question: What questions do you have about this approach?

Suggested Answer: How is it possible to have a commandment to believe in G-d? Who commanded it? If one believes in G-d and therefore cares to hear His Torah and Mitzvot, then there is no need for a specific Mitzva to believe – the person already believes! If one does not believe in G-d, then what good will a commandment to believe in Him do? Why should such a person listen more now that there is a Mitzva to do so? A 'Mitzva' implies a commander and this fellow does not believe in the existence of a Commander! Furthermore, why would a Nation who was in the midst of experiencing a Revelation from G-d Himself need to be commanded in His existence?

## **Section 2: The Approach of the BeHag**

There was one<sup>4</sup> early authority (Rishon) of note who in fact did not view the first Commandment as one of the 613 biblical Mitzvot. The BeHag leaves it out of his list of Mitzvot altogether!

Nachmanides<sup>5</sup> explains the opinion of the BeHag as follows:

[source 3]

It seems that the view of the Baal Halachos (BeHag) is that the count of 613 commandments are His decrees, may He be exalted, that He decreed upon us to do or to refrain from doing –

but belief in His exalted existence that He informed us with signs and wonders and revelation of His presence to our very eyes, this is the central point, the root from which [all] the commandments are 'born' – this was

והנראה מדעתו שלבעל ההלכות שאין מנין תרי"ג מצות אלא גזירותיו יתעלה שגזר עלינו לעשות או מנענו שלא נעשה אבל האמונה במציאותו יתע' שהודיע אותה אלינו באותות ובמופתים ובגילוי השכינה לעינינו הוא העיקר והשורש שממנו נולדו המצות לא ימנה בחשבון.

<sup>4</sup> It seems only one

<sup>5</sup> in his commentary to Maimonides's Sefer HaMitzvot

not listed [in the 613].

Students may be impressed by the fact – common in Torah learning – that one commentator will go out of his way to explain another’s view, even though he himself doesn’t ‘hold’ of it.

*Nachmanides then quotes the following Midrash (brought in the Mechilta):*

[source 4]

A parable: A king enters a country and his servants tell him, ‘Make decrees for them!’	משל למלך שנכנס למדינה אמרו לו עבדיו גזור עליהם גזירות
He responds, ‘If only they would accept my reign, I would make decrees upon them. Because if they don’t accept my reign, how can they fulfill my decrees?’	אמר להם לאו כשיקבלו מלכותי אגזור עליהם גזירות שאם מלכותי אינן מקבלים גזרותי היאך מקיימין
So said G-d to Israel: ‘I am the Lord your G-d...you shall have no other G-ds’	כך אמר המקום לישראל אנכי יי' אלהיך לא יהיה לך ... כשם שקבלתם מלכותי קבלו גזירותי לא יהיה לך.
‘Just like you accepted my reign, so too accept my commandments, “...you shall have no other G-ds”’	

*Nachmanides then adds,*

[source 6]

Accepting the kingship [of G-d] is one matter, and the commandments and decrees ...are another matter	קבלת המלכות עניין בפני עצמו והמצוות הנגזרות ... מענין אחר
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Suggested Question: How would you summarize<sup>6</sup> the view of the BeHag?

Suggested Answer: It seems clear from this Midrash that the First Commandment is not part of the “King’s edicts” but rather seems to be an introduction of sorts. Thus, this Midrash supports the BeHag’s assumption that the first commandment is not a Mitzva in the classic sense – and is not part of the 613 Mitzvot. Rather, according to the BeHag it stands alone as an **introduction and preamble** to the rest of God’s commandments.

Advanced Question: How would the BeHag address the Gemora<sup>7</sup> that Maimonides brings as support to his assertion that Belief in G-d is a mitzvah?<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that none of the sources here doubt the validity of the idea of God’s existence. The question here is a much more subtle one of whether or not the belief in that idea is a commandment per se – or just simply a reality. We will see that ultimately it is an issue of focus.

*Advanced Answer:* One approach is that suggested by Nachmanides in his commentary to Maimonides's Sefer HaMitzvot. He explains that the second commandment, the one against "Serving other gods", is actually a group of commandments. The BeHag himself explains that within the 'Second Commandment' there are 2 separate Mitzvot, and this is what the Gemara was referring to.

### **Section 3: The Approach of Nachmanides**

Nachmanides's own<sup>9</sup> opinion<sup>10</sup>:

[source 7]

<p>"I am Hashem your G-d" This statement is a positive commandment.</p> <p>He says, 'I am Hashem' so as to instruct and command them [the Jews] that they should know and believe that there is a Lord, who is their G-d.</p> <p>That is to say, He exists, and always existed, and from Him all came to be through His Desire and Ability. He is their G-d Whom <b>they are obligated to serve</b></p> <p>...<sup>11</sup></p> <p>G-d says to the Jews, "I am Hashem your G-d. You shall have no [other G-ds]." [In other words, G-d says,] "It is I whose Kingship you accepted on yourselves in Egypt".</p> <p>They (the Jews) said back, "Yes it is true".</p>	<p>אנכי ה' אלהיך הדבור הזה מצות עשה, אמר אנכי ה', יורה ויצוה אותם שידעו ויאמינו כי יש ה', והוא אלהים להם, כלומר הווה, קדמון, מאתו היה הכל בחפץ ויכולת, והוא אלהים להם, <b>שחייבים לעבוד אותו</b> ... ...אמר המקום לישראל אנכי ה' אלהיך לא יהיה לך, אני הוא שקבלתם מלכותי עליכם במצרים אמרו לו הן, כשקבלתם מלכותי קבלו גזרותי, כלומר אחר שאתם מקבלים עליכם ומודים שאני ה' ואני אלהיכם מארץ מצרים קבלו כל מצותי</p>
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<sup>7</sup> Tractate Makos 23b

<sup>8</sup> It seems very clear that the first two commandments, which we heard directly from God, *are indeed included* in the list of 613! How did the BeHag understand the Gemara?

<sup>9</sup> Although Nachmanides attempts to explain the BeHag's opinion, he himself agrees with Maimonides

<sup>10</sup> In Nachmanides's commentary to the Torah he explains this Mitzva in detail, and his explanation there will help shed light on the depth behind the disagreement between himself and Maimonides on the one hand, and the BeHag on the other.

<sup>11</sup> The middle part of this section is interesting, though slightly off-topic for our subject here and therefore not included



[G-d then says,] “If you accept my Kingship you should accept my laws”. That is, after you have accepted and agree that I am Hashem and I am your G-d (as you saw) from Egypt, **now accept my Mitzvot!**

Exodus (20:2)

Suggested Question: How would you summarize Nachmanides’ opinion?

Suggested Answer: That the Mitzva of Emunah is not a simple declaration of God’s existence but a responsibility based on that existence. (The expression Nachmanides uses in his commentary to Maimonides’s Sefer HaMitzvot is “Kabolos Malchuso” [- accepting His Kingship] or in the often quoted expression of the Sages, “Kabolos Ol Malchus Shamayim” [- accepting the yoke of His Kingship].)

Suggested Question: On what do Nachmanides and the BeHag agree or disagree?

Suggested Answer: The Behag sees “I am the Lord your God” as a statement of God’s existence, while Nachmanides seems to see it as a statement of His relevance! According to Nachmanides the Mitzva is saying, “Now that you are clearly aware of My existence, and you see My control over creation, you must accept the consequences of that notion – i.e. My Mitzvot, like not serving other gods etc. etc.”

As for the Mechilta, Nachmanides sees that it is in fact saying this same idea. Effectively the Mechilta is saying that accepting Hashem as King must proceed His [other] Mitzvot, but that that acceptance is in fact itself also a Mitzva. It is the Mitzva to recognize that God is relevant – and as such it is the Mitzva that gives legitimacy to all the other Mitzvot of the Torah.

#### **Section 4: The Philosophical Focus**

What about Maimonides? Let us look him ‘inside’ once again<sup>12</sup>:

#### Important Note for Educators

This Rambam and its explanation as presented in the Q&A below is crucial to the entire class and subject.

<sup>12</sup> It seems from his commentary at the beginning of his famous work, the Mishna Torah, that he focuses on this Mitzvah of Belief in G-d in a slightly different way, as we will see. Keep in mind to compare this to the view of Nachmanides.

Students should understand clearly that the Torah very much wants them to ask, search, argue and learn about everything, starting with G-d Himself. When we explained above that this class did not directly address 'why you should believe in G-d', it was with this Rambam in mind – learning these sources will hopefully inspire students to want more on the subject, to try and learn and for themselves.

[source 8]

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of [all] wisdoms is to know that there is a First Cause. And He created all that exists. All that exists in the heavens and earth and all in between only exist due to the truth of His existence.</li> <li>2. If it were imaginable that He did not exist, then nothing else could exist.</li> <li>3. If it were imaginable that nothing else but Him existed, He would continue to be and would not be negated [in any way] through their negation. This is because all of existence needs Him, and He – Blessed be Him – does not need them, and not [even] one of them! Therefore, His Truth (or 'reality') is not like any of their truths.</li> <li>4. ... This is what the Torah means when it says, "There is none other than He" (Deuteronomy 4:35). That is, there is no true existence other than He and besides Him.</li> <li>5. This Being is the G-d of the world, Master of all the land. He is the controller of the sphere [of existence] with a power that is endless and limitless. The sphere turns constantly and it is impossible that it do so without a 'Controller' (lit. Turner). He, the Blessed One, is the Controller who does so without a physical hand or form.</li> </ol>	<p>[א] יסוד היסודות ועמוד החכמות, לידע שיש שם מצוי ראשון. והוא ממציא כל הנמצא; וכל הנמצאים מן שמיים וארץ ומה ביניהם, לא נמצאו אלא מאמיתת הימצאו.</p> <p>[ב] ואם יעלה על הדעת שהוא אינו מצוי, אין דבר אחר יכול להימצאות.</p> <p>[ג] ואם יעלה על הדעת שאין כל הנמצאים מלבדו מצויים, הוא לבדו יהיה מצוי ולא ייבטל הוא לביטולם: שכל הנמצאים צריכין לו; והוא ברוך הוא אינו צריך להם, ולא לאחד מהם. לפיכך אין אמיתתו כאמיתת אחד מהם.</p> <p>[ד].... והוא שהתורה אומרת "אין עוד, מלבדו" (דברים ד, לה), כלומר אין שם מצוי אמת מלבדו כמותו.</p> <p>[ה] המצוי הזה--הוא אלוה העולם, אדון כל הארץ. והוא המנהיג הגלגל בכוח שאין לו קץ ותכלית, בכוח שאין לו הפסק, שהגלגל סובב תמיד, ואי אפשר שיסוב בלא מסבב; והוא ברוך הוא המסבב אותו, בלא יד ולא גוף.</p> <p>[ו] וידיעת דבר זה מצות עשה, שנאמר "אנוכי ה' אלוהיך" (שמות כב, דברים ה, ו).</p> <p>הלכות יסודי התורה פרק א</p>
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<p>6. The knowledge of [all] this is a Positive Commandment, as it says, "I am the Lord, your G-d" (Exodus 20:2)...</p> <p>Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 1:1-6</p>	
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Suggested Question: How would you summarize Maimonides' approach?

Suggested Answer: It is clear from Maimonides that this first commandment is more than a simple statement, and is even more than the realization that God is relevant. It is a requirement to prove to ourselves in a deep, logical, and personal way, the existence of this Being, and to have a clarity - to whatever extent we as human beings can – about G-d's existence and relevance.

\* \* \*

### Conclusions

- \* Summarize the main ideas of the class
- \* Recall and praise students' contributions and participation
- \* Add in your own thoughts

Ideas to consider

- (a) Judaism certainly is based on belief in G-d. The question of this class is whether or not it is a mitzvah per se, and what form that mitzvah has.
- (b) Lack of belief does not mean a person is a bad Jew. It is something to be studied, contemplated, argued, etc. In Judaism, belief is not an ephemeral 'you have it or you don't' type of thing. We grow into it. It evolves. That is fine.
- (c) Figuring out an answer to 'why should I believe in G-d' is one of the most important and legitimate questions a beginner can have. They should realize that the question deserves their time and attention.
- (d) A person does not need to fully answer any one Jewish question – including this one – before embarking on other questions or experiences. In other words, someone who doesn't fully believe in G-d (now) can and should still learn Torah, experience Shabbat, etc

### **Additional Sources Related to Emunah for further study**

Note that the Mitzva of Emunah is one of the 6 constant Mitzvot.

The six Mitvot are brought in the beginning of the Sefer HaChinuch and are discussed in the Biur Halacha in the beginning of Shulchan Orach (OC 1). In short they are:

- 1) Belief in Hashem (as above)

- 2) Not to believe in any other power
- 3) To recognize/integrate His Oneness
- 4) To love Him
- 5) To fear Him
- 6) To not be swayed by our hearts and eyes

**What is “G-d”? How do we (or is it even possible to) define Him?**

- The continuation of Maimonides Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah Chapter 1 (1:7 and onwards):

**If G-d has no needs, then why does he want us to serve Him?**

- This is a very fundamental question. It is addressed by Derech Hashem chapter 2.

**Why Believe?**

- The Torah’s proof to its and G-d’s validity (note that we deal with this idea somewhat in the class on prophecy): Deuteronomy 4:32-34;

*Verse 32: Inquire now about the early years that preceded you, from the day that G-d created Adam on earth and from one end of the heavens to the other end of the heavens: Did anything ever happen comparable to this great event, or did anyone ever hear of such a thing?*

*Verse 33: Did any people [ever] hear G-d's voice speaking from within the fire as you heard and survive?*

*Verse 34: Or did any G-d ever miraculously come and take for himself a nation from within a nation through tests, with signs and with wonders, and through warfare, and with a strong hand and with an extended arm, and with great displays; entirely as Ad-noy, your G-d, did for you in Egypt as you watched?*

- Also ibid 5:20-23
- Read Permission to Believe by Lawrence Keleman (Targum/Feldheim)
- Articles appear in Jewish Matters (Targum / Feldheim)

**The history of how idol worship came about, and how Avraham Aveinu saw through it and recognized the existence of One G-d:**

- Maimonides Hilchos Avodas Kochavim Chapter 1

Judaism 101

Prophecy & Revelation

Educators' Guide

## Prophecy & Revelation: When G-d Talks to Us

### Please Note:

5. *Statements in italics* are ideas, questions, etc for you to tell the students.
6. Shaded boxes like these are background info & suggestions
7. Use as much – or as little – of this guide as you want.
8. Students have the same sources that appear in this Educator's Guide, but only the sources without any **background boxes** or *italics*. Please familiarize yourself with the student booklet as well.

### The Goals of this Class are to help students:

- g) respect Jewish wisdom and enjoy learning from Jewish texts
- h) learn that Prophecy (simply put, G-d communicating with people) is a fundamental part of our religion.
- i) understand that a Jewish prophet would need to prove him/herself and that prophets were extremely developed people
- j) appreciate that true prophecy no longer exists, however that G-d remains active in our lives
- k) question the relationship between Torah knowledge and prophecy and see which gets precedence
- l) learn about National revelation – the Giving of the Torah – and that is was the most unique prophetic event in history

### OUTLINE:

What is Prophecy?

    Moses and Other Prophets

    Seeing G-d

    The Purpose of the Vision

What it Takes to be a Prophet

    Establishing Credibility

Does G-d Still Talk To Us?

    Dreams

    The Sage or the Prophet?

    Revelation

*Jennifer was visiting New York City with a few friends. As the group walked down 42<sup>nd</sup> street in Midtown Manhattan a strange-looking man with wild eyes began talking loudly about the 'End of Days'. He was standing on top of a milk crate with a sign that said "Messiah" around his neck and a homemade harp in his hands and claiming that G-d had spoken to him in a dream. He threatened listeners with 'eternal damnation' if they didn't each fork over \$1 into his 'holy coffer'.*

*At first Jennifer thought the whole scene was amusing, but then she started thinking: 'Everyone knows this guy is crazy. But how is he different from Isaiah or Jeremiah or even Moses for that matter? They also claimed G-d spoke to them. How could a person ever really know?'*

### **Points to Ponder**

- *Does G-d communicate with people? Has He ever?*
- *Why should He? Why shouldn't He?*
- *What is prophecy all about?*
- *How does one tell the 'real thing' from a faker?*
- *What does a prophet see in his or her prophetic vision?*
- *Can one 'see' G-d outside of prophecy? What about within prophecy?*
- *Are dreams prophetic?*

## **I. What is Prophecy?**

*Is prophecy central to Judaism?*

*How would you define 'prophecy'?*

*Is all prophecy alike?*

### **Moses and Other Prophets**

[source 1]

<p>One of the principles of religion is to know that G-d prophesizes to mankind...</p> <p>Prophets come in levels, just like in wisdom there are sages wiser than others, so too in prophecy there are prophets wiser than others.</p> <p>And all of them only see the vision of prophecy in a dream – a vision of the night, or if sleep comes upon them in the day, as it says, 'I will be known to him in a vision, in a dream I will speak to him' (Numbers 12:6)</p> <p>Things that are made known to a prophet in a vision of prophecy – they are made known through parables, and immediately the explanation of the prophetic vision will be engraved on his heart, and he will know what it is...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Maimonides<sup>13</sup></p>	<p>מיסודי הדת, לידע שהאל מנבא את בני האדם...</p> <p>הנביאים, מעלות מעלות הן: כמו שיש בחכמה חכם גדול מחברו, כך בנבואה נביא גדול מנביא.</p> <p>וכלן אין רואין מראה הנבואה אלא בחלום בחזיון הלילה, או ביום אחר שתיפול עליהן תרדמה: כמו שנאמר "במראה אליו אתוודע, בחלום אדבר בו" (במדבר יב:ו)...</p> <p>הדברים שמודיעין לנביא במראה הנבואה--דרך משל מודיעין לו, ומיד ייחקק בליבו פתרון המשל במראה הנבואה, ויידע מה הוא...</p>
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*Compare this to the prophecy of Moses:*

[source 2]

<p>All the things we have said refer to the manner of prophecy for all the early and late prophets, except for Moses, our Master and Master of all the prophets.</p> <p>And what is the difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of the other prophets?</p> <p>All the other prophets: in a vision or dream Moses was awake and standing ...</p>	<p>כל הדברים שאמרנו, הן דרך הנבואה לכל הנביאים הראשונים והאחרונים--חוץ ממשה, רבנו ורבן של כל הנביאים.</p> <p>ומה הפרש יש בין נבואת משה לשאר כל הנביאים—</p> <p>שכל הנביאים, בחלום או במראה; ומשה רבנו--הוא ער ועומד ...</p>
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<sup>13</sup> Hilchot Yisodei HaTorah 7:1-3

<sup>14</sup> ibid #6



<p>All the other prophets: through an angel, therefore they saw what they saw through parables and riddles.</p> <p>Moses – not through an angel ... That is to say that there was no parable, rather he would see the matter clearly without riddle or parable</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Maimonides<sup>14</sup></p>	<p>כל הנביאים, על ידי מלאך; לפיכך רואין מה שהן רואין במשל וחידה.</p> <p>ומשה רבנו, לא על ידי מלאך... כלומר שאין שם משל, אלא רואה הדבר על בוריו בלא חידה בלא משל...</p>
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Seeing G-d

*Does one see G-d in the vision?  
Compare the following verses:*

[source 3]

<p>He [Moses] then said, "Please grant me a vision of Your Glory."</p> <p>And He said, "You cannot see My Presence, for no man can see My Presence and live."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exodus 33:18,20</p>	<p>יח וי'אמר: הראני נא, את-קבֹדְךָ. כ וי'אמר, לֹא תוכל לראֹת את-פָּנַי: כִּי לֹא- יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם, וְחִי.</p>
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[source 4]

<p>Let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day, [G-d] will descend on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exodus 19:11</p>	<p>יֵאָדָם וְהָיוּ נְכֹנִים, לַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי: כִּי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, יֵרַד יְהוָה לְעֵינֵי כָל-הָעָם--עַל-הַר סִינַי.</p>
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*How do you understand these verses?*

*Consider this explanation:*

[source 5]

<p>That is, they will see the vision of the honor of G-d as a consuming fire on the top of the mountain (Sinai), but not that they would actually see G-d</p>	<p>כי יראו מראה כבוד ה' כאש אכלת בראש ההר לא שיראו את ה' דכתיב "לא יראני האדם וחי"</p>
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<sup>15</sup> Ad loc

Himself. As it is written, “no man can see My Presence and live.”  
Nachmanides<sup>15</sup>

### The Purpose of Prophecy

Before looking at the next source, consider this question:

What is the goal of prophecy?

(In other words, why does G-d prophecy to humans?)

[source 6]

It is possible that a prophecy is for the prophet alone, to expand their heart or deepen their understanding, so they will know great things that they wouldn't have otherwise known.<sup>16</sup>

And it is possible that the prophecy is sent for one of the nations of the world, or the inhabitants of a city or Kingdom, to tell them what to do, or to stop them from the evil acts in their hands

Maimonides<sup>17</sup>

הנביא, אפשר שתהיה נבואתו לעצמו בלבד, להרחיב ליבו ולהוסיף דעתו, עד שיידע מה שלא היה יודע, מאותן הדברים הגדולים.

ואפשר שישולח לעם מעמי הארץ, או לאנשי עיר או ממלכה, לבונן אותם ולהודיעם מה יעשו, או למנוע אותם ממעשים הרעים שבידיהם...

This idea is noted as well by Rabbi Chaim Luzzato:

[source 7]

And regarding prophets, in their being sent as G-d's messengers:

That is not the core of prophecy, and it is not necessary at all that a prophet be sent to others

The core of prophecy is as we have explained the close attachment to G-d, His revealing Himself, and the passing of knowledge and understanding to him [the prophet]

וממה שיגיע לנביאים, הוא היותם משתלחים בשליחות ממנו יתברך. והיינו, כי לא זה הוא עצם הנבואה, ואינו מוכרח כלל בנביא שישתלח לאחרים, אבל עצם הנבואה כבר ביארנוהו שהוא התדבק בו יתברך, והיגלותו יתברך אליו. ויתלו לזה הידיעות וההשכלות שיתלו

<sup>16</sup> This idea that the prophecy may not be one that involves any message to be given over to others may sound novel. Many of us assume that prophecy always involves an important message to the masses, but Maimonides here notes otherwise.

<sup>17</sup> Hilchot Yisodei HaTorah 7:7

Suggested Questions: According to what we have seen, what is the central idea of prophecy?

Suggested Answer: Surprisingly, most often prophecy is more of a spiritual attainment than a conduit of communication to the masses.

## II. What it Takes to be a Prophet

Take a guess: How many prophets have there been, in all of human history?

[source 8]

<p>There were many (prophets)<sup>19</sup> as it was taught:</p> <p>“A great many prophets were established within the Jewish Nation – double the amount (of people) as left Egypt.</p> <p>...Those prophecies that were relevant for the future generations were recorded (in Scripture), otherwise they were not recorded for posterity.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Talmud<sup>20</sup></p>	<p>טובא הוו כדתניא הרבה נביאים עמדו להם לישראל כפלים כיוצאי מצרים ... נבואה שהוצרכה לדורות נכתבה ושלא הוצרכה לא נכתבה</p>
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According to the last part of this source, how do we explain the large number of prophets with the relatively small number in Tanakh?

Who can be a Prophet?

Can anyone be a prophet?

It may be important to mention to students that there have been many female and even some non-Jewish prophets.

[source 9]

<p>Prophecy only occurs to one who is very wise, courageous in character traits, one whose [evil] inclination does</p>	<p>...ואין הנבואה חלה על חכם גדול בחכמה, גיבור במידותיו, ולא יהיה יצרו מתגבר עליו בדבר בעולם אלא הוא מתגבר בדעתו על</p>
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<sup>18</sup> 3:4:6

<sup>19</sup> in the first Temple Era

<sup>20</sup> Bavli Megillah 14a

not control them at all, rather they overcome it always; one who is extremely knowledgeable

Maimonides<sup>21</sup>

### **III. Establishing Credibility**

*How would you 'test' someone to see if he or she is a 'real' prophet? :*

Time allowing, this is a good opportunity to have a lively class discussion on how to test potential prophets. All students can participate since the question is a basic logical 'game' – how do we keep the fakers out and recognize the real ones. Students may come up with some interesting ideas!

[source 10]

[The Mishna noted that]

One who ignores the words of a prophet [is punished<sup>22</sup>].

[The Gemora asks] How should one know [that the prophet is true, that he] should be punished?

He gives a sign (and it comes true).

But in the story of Micha<sup>23</sup> he does not give a sign and yet [those who ignored him] were punished!

In the case of [a prophet] who is already tested and known<sup>24</sup>, the rules are different.  
Talmud<sup>25</sup>

המוותר על דברי נביא מנא ידע דאיענש

דיהב ליה אות

והא מיכה דלא יהיב ליה אות ואיענש

היכא דמוחזק שאני

*A prophet needs to prove himself by giving a sign - predicting the future correctly. But this too does not seem to be foolproof.*

*Maybe he or she just got lucky?*

[source 11]

<sup>21</sup> Hilchot Yisodei HaTorah 7:1

<sup>22</sup> through death from heaven

<sup>23</sup> (Kings I Ch. 20)

<sup>24</sup> In the words of Rashi, he is known to be "righteous and a true prophet".

<sup>25</sup> Bavli Sanhedrin 89b

<p>When a person comes who is fitting for the work of G-d, and does not add or subtract [from the Torah], rather serves G-d in the Torah's commandments, we don't say to him 'split the sea' or 'revive the dead', etc, and then we'd believe him...</p> <p>Rather we say to him, 'If you are a prophet, tell us things that will happen in the future.' And he says these things. And we wait to see if his predictions do occur.</p> <p>If they do not happen – even if only one small detail is missing – it is known that he is a false prophet. And if all his words do happen, we see him as trustworthy.</p> <p>And we check him many times. If all his words are reliable, he is considered a true prophet.</p> <p>Do astrologers and magicians not also tell the future?</p> <p>What is the difference between a prophet and them?</p> <p>In truth, astrologers and magicians and those like them, some of their words come true and some do not...</p> <p>But a prophet, ALL his words come true, as it is said "And nothing from the word of G-d shall fall to the ground" (2 Kings 10:10)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Maimonides<sup>26</sup></p>	<p>... כשיבוא אדם הראוי לנבואה במלאכות ה', ולא יבוא להוסיף ולא לגרוע, אלא לעבוד את ה' במצוות התורה--אין אומרין לו קרע לנו את הים או החיה מת וכיוצא באלו, ואחר כך נאמין בכך.</p> <p>אלא אומרין לו, אם נביא אתה, אמור לנו דברים העתידין להיות; והוא אומר, ואנו מחכים לו לראות היבואו דבריו:</p> <p>אם לא יבואו, ואפילו נפל דבר אחד קטן-- בידוע שהוא נביא שקר. ואם באו דבריו כולם, יהיה בעינינו נאמן.</p> <p>[ב] ובודקין אותו פעמים הרבה. אם נמצאו דבריו כולם נאמנים, הרי זה נביא אמת..</p> <p>והלוא המעוננים והקוסמים אומרין מה עתיד להיות, ומה הפרש בין הנביא ובינם</p> <p>--אלא שהמעוננים והקוסמים וכיוצא בהן, מקצת דבריהן מתקיימין ומקצתן אין מתקיימין.... אבל הנביא--כל דבריו קיימין, שנאמר "כי לא ייפול מדבר ה' ארצה" (מלכים ב י').</p>
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*Furthermore he writes*

[source 12]

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<sup>26</sup> Yisodei HaTorah 10:1-3

<p>When he is sent [to prophecy to the people], he is given a sign and a wonder<sup>27</sup> so that the people will know that G-d truly sent him.</p> <p>Not everyone who performs signs and wonders is believed to be a prophet. Rather, someone who was already deemed fitting to be a prophet due to their wisdom and deeds - raised above all his contemporaries, and went in the ways of prophecy and holiness and <i>perishus</i><sup>28</sup>, and afterwards performs a wonder and says that G-d sent him, it is a <i>mitzvah</i> to listen to them, as it is said, 'And to him you shall listen.' (Deuteronomy 18:15)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Maimonides <sup>29</sup></p>	<p>וכשמשלחין אותו, נותנין לו אות ומופת כדי שיידעו העם שהאל שילחו באמת.</p> <p>ולא כל העושה אות ומופת, מאמינין אותו שהוא נביא: אלא אדם שהיינו יודעין בו מתחילתו שהוא ראוי לנבואה בחכמתו ובמעשיו, שנתעלה בהן על כל בני גילו, והיה מהלך בדרכי הנבואה ובקדושתה ופרישותה, ואחר כך בא ועשה אות ומופת ואמר שהאל שילחו--מצוה לשמוע ממנו, שנאמר "אליו, תשמעון" (דברים יח:טו)</p>
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*How would you summarize the testing of Jewish prophets?*

*Note that a person needs to pass an incredibly rigorous test and standard of criteria before he would have been taken seriously as a prophet!*

#### **IV. Does G-d Still Talk To Us?**

*True prophecy ended long ago. What do you think? Is there any kind of prophecy today?*

[source 13]

<p>Rabbi Yehoshua son of Levi said:</p> <p>Each and every day, a voice comes out from Mount Sinai and declares and says:</p> <p>"Woe to them, the people, because of the insult to the Torah.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Mishna Pirkei Avos<sup>30</sup></p>	<p>אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת מהר חורב ומכרזת ואומרת: אוי להם לבריות מעלבונה של תורה</p>
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*Do you hear this announcement?*

*Does anyone actually hear it?*

<sup>27</sup> ie a miracle

<sup>28</sup> ie separation, mastery over the physical

<sup>29</sup> Yisodei HaTorah 7:1

<sup>30</sup> 6:2

What is the point of a daily heavenly announcement (not the level of true prophecy, it should be noted) if we do not hear it?

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains:

[source 14]

<p>...Regarding the announcement from Above, it is difficult to understand:</p> <p>If it is useful, why is it not heard?</p> <p>...The 'announcement' is [in actuality] the matter of thought, and so even every wicked person has murmurings of repentance, because of hearing the announcement in his thoughts</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Bechukosai 9</p>	<p>בענין הכרוז היוצא מלמעלה דקשה ממה נפשך אם הוא לתועלת למה לא נשמע...</p> <p>הכרוז הוא ענין המחשבה, ולכך אין לך רשע שאינו מהרהר בתשובה מצד שמעית הכרוז במחשבה</p>
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This idea (that G-d does somehow 'speak' to us, though we may not always recognize Him) is echoed in the following statement of the Sfas Emes:

This idea, especially as seen in the next source, is a powerful lesson for all of us.

The basic idea is the Sfas Emes's remark that Abraham was chosen – ie told to 'go' – before the Torah mentions his accomplishments and love of G-d, etc.

At a simple level, one could suggest that Lech Lecha happens *after* other tests, which for various reasons are not mentioned in the Written Torah.

The Zohar quoted here seems to suggest that the Torah presents things in this manner on purpose – that Abraham's praise was that he went, that he listened. Others heard the same message, but he acted.

The reason why this lesson is so crucial for students is that it can motivate them: many people *know* inside what they should do, what path they should take, what G-d wants of them. When we look into ourselves, we *know* it. The question is: will we act like true descendants of Avraham Avinu and *act* on our inner knowledge, or will we try to ignore it?

[source 15]

<p>Nachmanides was troubled by the fact that Abraham was told "lech lecha" [to</p>	<p>רמב"ן הקשה שנאמר לך לך בלי שנזכר מקודם חיבתו.</p>
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<p>go]” before his love was mentioned</p> <p>In the Zohar it seems that this itself is the praise – that Abraham heard “lech lecha” that G-d is constantly saying to all people ...and Abraham heard and accepted. This is why the phrase “lech lecha” is said [in the Torah] to him, because although he wasn’t the only one to hear it, his praise was that he was the only one ready to accept it.</p> <p>Sfas Emes Gen 12:1</p>	<p>ובזוה"ק נראה כי זה עצמו השבח ששמע זה המאמר לך לך שנאמר מהשי"ת לכל האנשים תמיד ... ואאע"ה שמע וקיבל. וממילא נקרא רק הדיבור אליו כי הלא לא נמצא מיוחד לשמוע. רק הוא אבל בודאי זה השבח בעצמו שהי' מוכן לקבל המאמר:</p>
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## V. Dreams

*Are dreams prophetic? Should we take them seriously?*

[source 16]

<p>Dreams are 1/60 of prophecy Talmud<sup>31</sup></p>	<p>חלום אחד מששים לנבואה</p>
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*How do you understand this idea?*

[source 17]

<p>Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: just as it's impossible to have wheat without chaff, it's impossible for dreams to be without inaccuracies.</p> <p>R' Berachiya said, even though part of dream can come true, all of it cannot come true</p> <p>Talmud<sup>32</sup></p>	<p>אמר ר' יוחנן משום ר' שמעון בן יוחי כשם שאי אפשר לבר בלא תבן כך אי אפשר לחלום בלא דברים בטלים</p> <p>אמר ר' ברכיה חלום אף על פי שמקצתו מתקיים כולו אינו מתקיים</p>
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*Now, of course, dreams today do not compare to true prophecy. True prophecy disappeared long ago, but in certain respects we continue to have something that is even more powerful than prophecy... Can anyone guess what it is?*

## VI: The Sage or the Prophet?

<sup>31</sup> Bavli Brochos 57b

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 55a



*Who is greater, a sage or a prophet?*

[source 18]

<p>Rabbi Avidimi from Haifa said:</p> <p>From the day that the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the Sages.</p> <p>But aren't the sages themselves prophets?!</p> <p>This is what he meant:</p> <p>Even though it [prophecy] was taken from the prophets, it was not taken from the sages.</p> <p>Amimar said:</p> <p>A sage is greater than a prophet Talmud<sup>33</sup></p>	<p>אמר רבי אבדימי דמן חיפה מיום שחרב בית המקדש ניטלה נבואה מן הנביאים וניתנה לחכמים אטו חכם לאו נביא הוא הכי קאמר אע"פ שניטלה מן הנביאים מן החכמים לא ניטלה אמר אמירא וחכם עדיף מנביא</p>
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*Considering what the Talmud had just concluded, how do you understand Amimar's statement?*

*Nachmanides<sup>34</sup> explains:*

[source 19]

<p>This is what [the Talmud] meant:</p> <p>Even though the prophets' prophecy – ie in visions – was taken, the prophecy of sages – the path of wisdom – was not taken away, rather they know the truth through the Divine Spirit inside them</p>	<p>הכי קאמר אע"פ שניטלה נבואת הנביאים שהיא המראה והחזון, נבואת החכמים שהיא בדרך החכמה לא ניטלה, אלא יודעים האמת ברוח הקדש שבקרבתם:</p>
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*Yet, consider the following statement of Rabbi Moses Chaim Lutzatto concerning life today:*

[source 20]

<p>There is no sign and no prophet, and true understanding – the Divine Spirit –</p>	<p>אמנם אין אות ואין נביא, וחסרה ההשכלה האמיתית שהיא רוח הקודש. כי אמנם מה</p>
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<sup>33</sup> Bavli Bava Basra 12a

<sup>34</sup> to the above Gemora

is also lacking. For what a person understands in his mind through his human endeavors compared to what one understands through the overflowing Spirit, can only be compared in value to the body vs. the soul

Derech Hashem<sup>35</sup>

Suggested Question: How does this compare with the Talmudic statement above that sages are just as good as (if not better than) prophets?

Suggested Answer: One can suggest that the closeness to G-d from the revelation of the prophetic vision can no longer be felt today, but the clarity of truth can indeed be arrived at (as the above quote from Nachmanides says).

## VII. Revelation

### Important Note to Educators

This last section of this 'Prophecy' class is unlike previous sections. Everything discussed so far had to do with the idea of prophecy, qualifications for individual prophets, how the concept relates to us today, etc.

This last section relates to National Prophecy – National Revelation at Mt. Sinai. Because it is unique, you may choose to skip the subject completely, to teach it in a different part of the course, to include it here, etc.

Aside from the fact that it is a fundamental idea to be discussed, we include it here because once students have become accustomed to the idea of 'individual prophecy', national prophecy seems less far-fetched. If you *do* decide to follow the order we have provided here, there are several things to keep in mind

- a) The subject of National Revelation is a major subject in and of itself and we are only scratching the tip of the surface here. If you have the time to devote to it, or feel the sources here are not enough to get the point across, please add on to them as you see fit.
- b) Keep in mind that while some students may not be able to fully comprehend the logic, *simply being exposed to the idea that there is indeed logic gives them 'permission' to take further steps in Jewish belief and practice.*
- c) There are two parts to the argument.

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<sup>35</sup> 2:8:4

The first part is that it is nearly impossible to conceive of a way that anyone could 'fake' or 'reconstruct' national revelation. No one would believe it. This is amply demonstrated by the sources below.

The second part is that considering how powerful a claim it is (compared to the almost ridiculous 'G-d spoke to me only' claims of most religions), *if indeed* there was a way of claiming national revelation – why has no other religion in history of humanity (and there have been many, many thousands of them) every made the claim?

In other words, seeing how strong the claim of national revelation is, there is enormous, incomparable motivation to claim it. Either you can fake it or you can't. If you can fake it, then someone else should have tried. If you can't, then our claim gains instant credibility.

d) Even more incredibly, as the verses below state, the Torah itself declares that no other nation would ever claim national revelation! And so it has been.

*Here is a great story to get us thinking:*

*A great Rebbe died, survived by his two sons. However, he left no instructions as to which son was to inherit the mantle of leadership in the community. The congregation itself was equally divided between the two. Some insisted that one son was more qualified while others were sure that the other son would be the better Rebbe. After weeks, the conflict finally came to a standstill, since the elders of the community could not decide who should be their new Rebbe.*

*Then, one day, one of the sons approached the Council of Elders and told them an amazing story. He insisted that his father, the Rebbe, had come to him in a dream the night before, and had told him to convey to the elders his command that this son become their new Rebbe.*

*Upon hearing this story, a hush fell over the Council. Would this new development settle at last the dispute that had occupied the minds and mouths of the whole community for so long? Was this what they had been waiting for?*

*As the suspense grew, a little old man who was sitting in the corner, amused at what he'd heard, softly decided the matter: "Young man, if your father, the Rebbe, had wanted you to be the new leader of our community, he should have come to us in our dreams, not to you in yours!"<sup>36</sup>*

*How would you describe the lesson of the above story?*

*Do you agree with the 'little old man'?*

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<sup>36</sup> - FROM Aish.com: The Prophecy of Moses – by Rabbi Mordechai Blumenfeld

Suggested Question: How does this story relate to the giving of the Torah?

Suggested Answer: The veracity of Judaism and Torah is not based on the claim of an individual or even a group of individuals. Rather, it is based on national revelation. In other words, no one had to be convinced that G-d spoke to someone else, rather He spoke to the entire nation and that experience has been passed on from parent to child ever since.

[source 21]

<p>32: Inquire now about the early years that preceded you, from the day that G-d created Adam on earth and from one end of the heavens to the other end of the heavens: Did anything ever happen comparable to this great event, or did anyone ever hear of such a thing?</p>	<p><b>לב</b> כִּי שָׁאַל-נָא לַיָּמִים רִאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר-הָיוּ לְפָנֶיךָ, לְמִן-הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם עַל-הָאָרֶץ, וְלִמְקַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְעַד-קִצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם: הִנְהִיָּה, כַּדְּבַר הַגְּדוֹל הַזֶּה, אוֹ, הַנִּשְׁמַע כִּמֹּהוּ. <b>לג</b> הַשְּׁמַע עִם קוֹל אֵל הַיָּם מִדְּבַר מִתּוֹךְ-הָאֵשׁ, כְּאֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַעְתָּ אֹתָהּ--וַיְחִי.</p>
<p>33: Did any nation [ever] hear G-d's voice speaking from within the fire as you heard, and survive?</p>	<p><b>לד</b> אוֹ הִנֵּסָה אֵל הַיָּם, לְבוֹא לְקַחַת לוֹ גּוֹי מִקְרֵב גּוֹי, בְּמִסֹּת בָּאֵת וּבְמוֹפְתִים וּבְמִלְחָמָה וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְחֲרוּעַ נְטוּיָה, וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדֹלִים: כִּכְלֹ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לָכֶם יְהוָה אֵל הַיָּכֶם, בְּמִצְרַיִם--לְעֵינֶיךָ.</p>
<p>34: Or did any god ever miraculously come and take for himself a nation from within a nation through tests, with signs and with wonders, and through warfare, and with a strong hand and with an extended arm, and with great displays; entirely as Ad-noy, your G-d, did for you in Egypt as you watched?</p>	<p><b>לה</b> הֲאֵתָה הִרְאֵתָ לְדַעַת, כִּי יְהוָה הוּא הָאֵל הַיָּם: אֵין עוֹד, מִלְבָּדוֹ. <b>לו</b> מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁמִיעַךְ אֶת-קוֹלוֹ, לְיִסְרָכָה; וְעַל-הָאָרֶץ, הִרְאָךְ אֶת-אֲשׁוֹ הַגְּדוֹלָה, וּדְבָרָיו שָׁמַעְתָּ, מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ</p>
<p>35: You have been shown that you might know that Ad-noy, He is the G-d; there is no [power] other than He.</p>	
<p>36: From the sky He made audible to you His voice to teach you, and on the earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words form within the fire.</p>	
<p>Deuteronomy<sup>37</sup></p>	

Suggested Question: What is the Torah telling us to do?

<sup>37</sup> Chapter 4:32-36

Suggested Answer: The Torah is telling us here to inquire as to whether such magnificent events – G-d speaking to an entire people, and the Miraculous exodus from Egypt – has ever happened elsewhere.

Have they? The answer is clearly ‘no’.

These incredible claims – the miraculous exodus and the Revelation to millions of people – seem like incredibly powerful proofs to the veracity of a religion and its claims. Why does no other religion make this claim?

As Lawrence Keleman puts it<sup>38</sup>:

*Imagine that the pope decided to announce today that G-d once spoke simultaneously to all Italians. Where in history could the pope place such an event and get away with it? ... All ancient and modern religions borrowed themes and narratives from neighboring theologies...Why doesn't a report of mass-prophecy appear in the annals of any other religion or cult?*

*Moreover, early Christianity and Islam would have benefited from incorporating such a myth into their respective theologies. Because Jews believed that millions of people – all of their ancestors – received the Torah directly from G-d, they were hesitant to accept just Jesus' or Muhammad's word that the Torah had been annulled. If G-d changed His mind, Jewry reasoned, why didn't He let them know?*

Note:

The next sources bring out the point that when the Torah was given, it was given forever.

*Christianity and Islam both claim that G-d sent a new law. How do we know that the original revelation is ‘for keeps’?*

[source 22]

1: Everything that I am commanding you--- be careful to fulfill it; do not add to it and do not subtract from it.	א את כל-הדבר, אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם-- אתו תשמרו, לעשות: לא-תִסֹף עליו, ולא תגרע ממנו. {פ}
2: If a prophet arises among you or a dreamer of a dream, and he gives you an omen or a miracle,	ב כִּי-יִקוּם בְּקִרְבְּךָ נָבִיא, או חֵלֶם חִלּוֹם; וְנָתַן אֵלֶיךָ אוֹת, או מוֹפֵת. ג וּבָא הָאוֹת וְהַמוֹפֵת, אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֵלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר: נִלְכָה אַחֲרַי אֶל הַיָּם אַחֲרַיִם, אֲשֶׁר לֹא- יִדְעֶתם--וְנַעֲבֹדֵם.

<sup>38</sup> “Permission to Receive” (Targum Press, pages 61 – 70)

<sup>39</sup> 13:1-5

<p>3: And the omen or the miracle happens--- the one he told you about--- saying, "Let us go after other gods, that you do not know, and let us serve them."</p> <p>4: Do not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of a dream, because Ad-noy, your G-d, is testing you to know whether you love Ad-noy, your G-d, wholeheartedly and with your entire beings.</p> <p>5: After Ad-noy, your G-d, are you to go, fear Him, keep His commandments, heed His voice, serve Him, and cleave to Him.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Deuteronomy<sup>39</sup></p>	<p>ד לֹא תִשְׁמַע, אֶל-דְּבַרֵי הַנְּבִיא הַהוּא, אוֹ אֶל-חֹלֵם הַחִלּוֹם, הַהוּא: כִּי מִנְסֵה יְהוָה אֶל הַיְכֶם, אֲתֶכֶם, לְדַעַת הַיִּשְׁכֶם אֶת-יְהוָה אֶל הַיְכֶם, בְּכָל-לִבְבְּכֶם וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁכֶם.</p> <p>ה אַחֲרַי יְהוָה אֶל הַיְכֶם תֵּלְכוּ, וְאַתּוֹ תִירְאוּ; וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּבְקֹלוֹ תִשְׁמָעוּ, וְאַתּוֹ תַעֲבֹדוּ וְבוֹ תִדְבְּקוּן.</p>
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*Maimonides<sup>40</sup> explains:*

[source 23]

<p>This matter is clear and explicit in the Torah, that it is a commandment to last forever, there will be no change, no subtraction, no addition<sup>41</sup>...</p> <p>We learn that all the words of the Torah, we are commanded to do them forever....a prophet is not allowed to change anything</p> <p>Therefore if someone stands up, Jewish or not, and performs a wonder, and says G-d sent him to add or subtract a mitzvah, or to explain a commandment in a way that we did not hear from Moses, or he says that the commandments that the Jewish people</p>	<p>א דבר ברור ומפורש בתורה, שהיא מצוה עומדת לעולם ולעולמי עולמים: אין לה לא שינוי, ולא גירעון ולא תוספת...הא למדת שכל דברי תורה, מצווין אנו לעשותן עד עולם;...אין נביא רשאי לחדש דבר....</p> <p>ב לפיכך אם יעמוד איש, בין מישראל בין מן האומות, ויעשה אות ומופת ויאמר שה' שלחו להוסיף מצוה, או לגרוע מצוה, או לפרש במצוה מן המצוות פירוש שלא שמענו ממשה, או שאמר שאותן המצוות שנצטוו בהן ישראל אינן לעולם ולדורי דורות אלא מצוות לפי זמן היו--הרי זה נביא שקר....</p>
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<sup>40</sup> quotes from the Bible itself are brought to support each statement. We are shortening here to increase readability

<sup>41</sup>

שנאמר "את כל הדבר, אשר אנוכי מצווה אתכם--אותו תשמרו, לעשות: לא תוסף עליו, ולא תגרע ממנו" (דברים יג:א) ונאמר "והנגלות לנו ולבנינו, עד עולם--לעשות, את כל דברי התורה הזאת" (דברים כט:כח)

<p>were commanded are not forever and for every generation, rather that they were for a limited period of time....</p> <p>[that person] is a false prophet Maimonides<sup>42</sup></p>	
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<p><u>Conclusions</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Summarize the main ideas of the class</li> <li>* Recall and praise students' contributions and participation</li> <li>* Add in your own thoughts</li> </ul> <p>Ideas to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Prophecy is a fundamental part of our religion</li> <li>* Prophets underwent severe testing to confirm that they were true prophets</li> <li>* Prophecy no longer exists but G-d still sends us messages, if we learn to listen</li> <li>* The Torah was given with National Revelation (National Prophecy)</li> </ul>

**Appendix**

**Is prophecy at will, or only when G-d chooses?**

<p>All prophets do not prophesize when they want. Rather they focus and sit, happy and of good heart, and meditate.</p> <p>Because prophecy cannot reside in sadness or laziness, only in happiness....</p> <p>They search after prophecy....that is to say they go in the paths of prophecy ...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Maimonides Yisodei Hatorah 7:4</p>	<p>ח [ד] כל הנביאים--אין מתנבאין בכל עת שירצו, אלא מכוונין דעתן ויושבין שמחים וטובי לב ומתבודדין: שאין הנבואה שורה לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות, אלא מתוך שמחה.</p> <p>והם מבקשים הנבואה...כלומר מהלכין בדרך הנבואה...</p>
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**May one look for 'signs'?**

<p>We do not 'practice signs' like ...those who say,</p>	<p>ד אין מנחשין ... כגון אלו שאומרין הואיל ונפלה פיתי מפי, או נפל מקלי מידי, איני הולך</p>
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<sup>42</sup> Hilchot Yisodei HaTorah Chapter 9 1-2

'since my bread fell from my mouth, or my staff from my hand, I won't go to such-and-such place today, because if I go I won't realize my goals;

Since a fox crossed my right, I won't leave the house today, because if I leave it, a scoundrel will attack me..'

...All things like these are forbidden...

Maimonides  
Hilchot Avodas Kochavim 11:4

## Difference between Ruach HaKodesh and Prophecy

א. הנה חוקק הבורא יתברך בטבעו של האדם, שיהיה מתלמד מבין ומשכיל בהשקיפו על הנמצאים ובחינותיהם, וממה שמתגלה לפניו יתבונן וידרוש את שאינו מתגלה, עד ששיגהו ויעמוד עליו, וזהו דרך ההשכלה הטבעית. אמנם עוד גזר, שימצא לו השכלה מעולה מזו מאוד, והיא ההשכלה הנשפעת, והיינו שיושפע לו שפע ממנו יתברך על ידי איזה אמצעים שהכין לזה, ובהגיע השפע הוא אל שכלו, יוקבע בו ידיעת עניין מה בבירור בבלתי ספק ובבלתי טעות, וידע הדבר בשלמות סבותיו ותולדותיו, כל דבר במדרגתו. ועניין זה נקרא רוח הקודש.

ב. והנה בדרך זה ישיג עניינים מה שבגדר ההשכלה הטבעית, אך ביותר ברור וכמו שכתבתי, וישיג גם כן עניינים מה שאין בגדר ההשכלה הטבעית שתשיגם, ומכלל זה העתידות והנסתרות.

ג. ואולם מדרגות על מדרגות נמצאו בדבר, בין בעניין כוח השפע הנשפע, בין בזמן השפע, בין בדרך הגיעו אל האדם, ובמהות הדברים המתגלים ונודעים לו על ידי זה. אמנם בכלם תהיה ההשפעה בדרך שירגיש בה המושפע בבירור. אכן עוד יקרה, שיושפע בלב האדם שפע שיעמידהו על תוכן עניין מהעניינים, אך לא ירגיש בו המושפע אלא כמי שנופלת מחשבה בלבבו, ויקרא זה לפעמים על דרך הרחבה "רוח הקודש" בדברי חז"ל, או השפעה נסתרת. אבל רוח הקודש באמת הוא שיהיה ניכר ונרגש בבירור לבעליו, וכמו שכתבתי.

ד. ואמנם למעלה מכל זה יש מעלה אחרת, והיא הנבואה. ועניינה, שיגיע האדם ויתקשר בבורא יתברך שמו ויתדבק בו דבקות ממש, באופן שירגיש ההתדבקות וישיג מה שהוא מתדבק בו, דהיינו כבודו יתברך, על הדרך שנבאר לפנינו. ויהיה הדבר ברור אצלו ומורגש ממנו בלי ספק כלל, כדרך שלא יסתפק בדבר גשמי שירגישהו בחושיו...

Derech Hashem 3:3:1-4



Judaism 101

The Mitzvot (Commandments)

Educators' Guide

## Judaism 101: The Mitzvot (Commandments)

Please Note:

9. *Statements in italics* are ideas, questions, etc for you to tell the students.

10. Shaded boxes like these are background info & suggestions

11. Use as much – or as little – of this guide as you want.

12. Students have the same sources that appear in this Educator's Guide, but only the sources without any **background boxes** or *italics*. Please familiarize yourself with the students' booklet as well.

### The Goals of this Class are to help students:

- m) respect Jewish wisdom and enjoy learning from Jewish texts
- n) learn that unlike most of the Western world, Judaism views every person and every action as important and full of potential
- o) appreciate that Hashem gave the Mitzvot for our benefit. We are not doing Him a favor by doing Mitzvot ... He did us one by giving us them
- p) understand that we cannot fully understand Hashem's 'Mind' and therefore can never *really* appreciate the true depth of the Mitzvot
- q) realize, however, that there *are* indeed aspects of the commandments that we *can* understand
- r) put the Mitzvot into perspective of what Olam Hazeh is really about (to change and improve)

### Outline

Do Our Actions Matter?  
Introduction to the Mitzvot  
Who are the Mitzvot for?  
Tamei HaMitzvot

*Would someone please read the following song:*

Some old song  
Just a drop of water  
In the endless sea  
All we do  
Crumbles to the ground  
Though we refuse to see

Dust in the wind

Now, don't hang on  
Nothing last forever  
But the earth and sky  
It slips away  
And all my money  
Won't another minute buy

Dust in the wind  
All we are dust in the wind  
Dust in the wind  
Dust in the wind

- 'Dust in the Wind', by Kansas

- *What does the song indicate?*
- *Do you agree?*
- *Does human life matter?*
- *Do our actions matter?*

Please read the following two sources:

[source 1]

<p>Every person should know:</p> <p>I, with my abilities and attributes, my face and the treasures of my soul, am unique in the world. Among all those that are alive today, there is no one like me. In generations past, there was no one like me. And until the end of time, there will never be anyone like me!</p> <p>If so, certainly G-d sent me to the world on a special mission that no one else can fill!</p> <p>Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe<sup>43</sup></p>	<p>וידע כל אדם</p> <p>אני עם כוחתי ותכונותי, פרצוף פני וסגולות נפשי, יחידי בעולם. בין כל החיים עכשיו אין אף אחד כמוני. בדורות שעברו לא היה כמוני. ועד סוף כל הדורות לא יהיה כמוני!</p> <p>ואם כך, בודאי הקב"ה שלחני לעולם בשליחות מיוחדת ששום אחר אינו יכול למלאותה!</p> <p>--הרב שלמה וולבה</p>
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[source 2]

<p>These are the things that a person does and enjoys their 'fruit' in this</p>	<p>...אלו דברים שאדם עושה אותם ואוכל פירותיהן בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לו לעולם</p>
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<sup>43</sup> Alei Shor Volume 2, p. 71

world, and the principal remains intact for them in the World to Come <sup>44</sup> .... Talmud <sup>45</sup>	
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*How does Judaism see life, as compared to the Kansas song above?  
Are our actions significant?*

## Introduction to the Commandments

*The Torah is full of Mitzvot. What are they all about?*

- Ask students to read sources 3&4 and have someone read them out loud.
- Ask what the difference is between the two examples

[source 3]

You must not kindle a fire in all your dwelling places on the day of Shabbos. Exodus 35:3	ג לא-תבערו אש, בכל משבתים, ביום, השבת
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[source 4]

And you shall write them [the scrolls] on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates Deuteronomy 6:9	ט וכתבתם על-מזוזות ביתך, ובשעריך.
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*Some Mitzvot<sup>46</sup> forbid certain activities and are known as 'negative commandments'.*

*Other Mitzvot<sup>47</sup> instruct us to do something and are known as 'positive commandments.'*

*Let us deal with a fundamental question:*

*Shabbat is a beautiful day, but why should G-d care if we light a fire?*

*Doesn't He have something else to worry about!?*

*Why does G-d care if we post a parchment on our doors?*

*Furthermore, some commandments have quite intricate laws. For example, let us see just some of the laws of Mezuzah:*

[source 5]

(1) How do we write the mezuzah?	(א) כיצד כותבין את המזוזה כותבין שתי
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<sup>44</sup> It may be useful to mention that Olam Haba is Eternal

<sup>45</sup> Shabbos 127a

<sup>46</sup> Known as 'Lavim'

<sup>47</sup> known as Mitzvot Asei

<p>Write two sections (Shema and veHiya Im Shamoah) on one page on one parchment and leave a space below and above about half a nail's worth, and at the beginning leave enough in order to roll it after it is folded...</p> <p>(2) One should write it on own page but if it was [already] written on two or three pages, it is Kosher</p> <p>(3) If it was written out of order – even if [the scribe] forgot to write one letter – it is invalid and cannot be fixed. All the more so if the sections were written out of order</p> <p>(4) If it was written on two skins, even though they were sewn together, it is invalid</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Code of Jewish Law<sup>48</sup></p>	<p>(ב) צריך לכתבה בדף אחד ואם כתבה בב' או בג' דפין כשרה:</p> <p>(ג) כתבה שלא על הסדר אפילו שכח מלכתוב אות אחת פסולה ואין לה תקנה ואין צריך לומר אם הקדים פרשה לפרשה:</p> <p>(ד) כתבה בשתי עורות אף על פי שתפרן פסולה:</p>
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*This is just one example of the many details that make up the 'Halacha' – or the laws of the various Mitzvot of the Torah.*

Time permitting, this is a good opportunity to hear students' ideas on why G-d gave the commandments. Not only can they learn from each others' ideas, but simply 'being heard' will often help them be more ready to 'hear' the sources.

*Why all the fuss? Why all the detail? Why all the commandments?*

## **Who are the Mitzvot for?**

*Do our actions somehow change or affect G-d? Who are the mitzvot for, anyway?*

*Please read the next source:*

[source 6]

	<p>אם-חטאת, מה-תפעל-בו; ורבו פשעיה, מה-תעשה-לו.</p> <p>אם-צדקת, מה-תתן-לו; או מה-מידך יקח</p>
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*How do you understand this source?*

*Is G-d somehow changed by our actions?*

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<sup>48</sup> Shulchan Orach, YD 288:1-4

It is important to clarify that Pure Monotheism means that G-d lacks nothing and

*Seeing as He lacks nothing, why does He want us to do the Mitzvot? Why does He care what we do?*

*Why all the commandments? Are they for Him or us? How?*

*Please look at sources 7, 8, and 9*

[source 7]

The Lord commanded us to perform all these statutes to [show that we] fear the Lord, our G-d; to benefit us for all time, to keep us alive like this day.

Deuteronomy 6:24

**כד** ויצונו יהוה, לעשות את-כל-החקים האלה, ליראה, את-יהוה אלהינו--לטוב לנו כל-הימים, לחיתנו כהיום הזה

[source 8]

What does it matter to G-d if an animal is slaughtered by cutting its neck through the spine or the throat?

[The answer is] "The commandments were given only in order to refine humanity

Midrash Rabbah<sup>49</sup>

וכי מה איכפת ליה להקב"ה למי ששוחט מן הצואר או מי ששוחט מן העורף הוי לא נתנו המצות אלא לצרף בהם את הבריות

[source 9]

And all these matters [the mitzvot] are to overcome the evil inclination and to correct our traits and most laws of the Torah are instruction from the Great Adviser to correct our character traits and straighten our ways

Maimonides<sup>50</sup>

וכל אלו הדברים כדי לכופ את יצרו ולתקן דעותיו ורוב דיני התורה אינן אלא עצות מרחוק מגדול העצה לתקן הדעות וליישר כל המעשים

*How do you understand these ideas?*

*What does the Torah mean 'for our benefit'?*

*Why did G-d give us the commandments?*

*Can anyone give an example of how the mitzvot help us or help improve us?*

<sup>49</sup> Genesis 44:1

<sup>50</sup> Mishne Torah end of Hilchos Temurah

At this point in the session – or elsewhere – students will sometimes challenge that if the mitzvot are indeed supposed to refine people, why are so many ‘practicing’ Jews unethical, etc.

This is a fair question that many people have, whether or not they openly ask it. It can therefore be important to deal with it openly.

Many approaches exist to answer this question: (a) human beings are not perfect and people may be good at some things and bad at others; (b) depending on their education, background, they may not know any better; (c) we need to judge Judaism not individual Jews, who certainly are not perfect; (d) the vast majority of ‘practicing Jews’ are extremely honest, ethical, generous etc [in fact far more than other people, studies show], so it is unfair to characterize them by a few bad apples...

## **Tamei HaMitzvot**<sup>51</sup>

*There is a wealth of literature explaining ‘reasons behind’ the commandments. Let us start with a basic question:*

*Can mortals understand G-d’s laws?*

[source 10]

A complete explanation of the mitzvot has not yet been revealed to any person in the world, even Moses...

Because the Holy Torah is emanated from Above, above all understanding. How could [this understanding] be given over to the grasp of man?

Nefesh HaChaim<sup>52</sup>

כי טעמי מצות עד תכליתם לא נתגלו עדיין לשום אדם בעולם אף למשרע"ה...! כי התורה"ק אצולה מלמעלה ראש מעל כל ההשגות. ואיך אפשר שיהא הדבר מסור להשגת האדם ...

*Should we even bother to search for reasons?*

*What do you think?*

*Consider the following source:*

[source 11]

Even though all the laws of the Torah are [Divine] decrees ... it is still fitting that a person contemplate them, and

אע"פ שכל חוקי התורה גזירות הם כמו שביארנו בסוף מעילה ראוי להתבונן בהן וכל מה שאתה יכול ליתן לו טעם תן לו טעם הרי

<sup>51</sup> You may want to mention that the idea of trying to understand – at least a little - of what underlies specific Mitzvot is known as ‘Ta’amei HaMitzvot’ – literally a ‘taste’ of the commandments.

<sup>52</sup> 1:22

give reasons as much as we can, and the early sages said that King Solomon understood most of the reasons of all the laws of the Torah

Maimonides<sup>53</sup>

*Suggested Question: Does human lack of understanding of a commandment somehow lessen its validity?*

*Suggested Answer: Certainly not. Consider: "As in Nature, the phenomenon remains a fact although we have not yet comprehended it as to its causes and connections, and its existence is not dependent on our investigation, but vice versa, thus also the components of the Torah remain the law even if we have not discovered the cause and connection of a single one." Rav Hirsch, footnote of Eighteenth Letter in "The Nineteen Letters"*

An Example: Mezuzah

*Each commandment will have many explanations ascribed to it. For example, let us look at the mitzvah of Mezuzah.*

It is important that everyone understands what a mezuzah is – ie that it goes on a doorpost, has parchments inside, etc.

Time permitting, you may want to ask students what *they* think the mitzvah of

*Please read sources 12-13*

[source 12]

A person should be diligent with regard to the Mitzvah of Mezuzah .... (for) every time one enters or leaves he is reminded of G-d's unity and love, and will awaken from his sleep and his wasting of time, and will know that the only thing that lasts forever is knowledge of Him, and immediately [the person] will return to his senses and walk in just paths

Maimonides<sup>54</sup>

חייב אדם להזהר במזוזה ... כל זמן שיכנס ויצא יפגע ביחוד השם שמו של הקדוש ב"ה ויזכור אהבתו ויעור משנתו ושגיותיו בהבלי הזמן וידע שאין דבר העומד לעולם ולעולמי עולמים אלא ידיעת צור העולם ומיד הוא חוזר לדעתו והולך בדרכי מישרים

[source 13]

Onkelos son of Klonimus [and brilliant

אונקלוס בר קלונימוס איגייר

<sup>53</sup> Yad end of Hilchos Temurah

<sup>54</sup> Hilchos Mezuzah 6:13

<sup>55</sup> Avodah Zara 11



<p>nephew of the Roman Emperor Titus], converted to Judaism.</p> <p>[Hearing this] Titus sent a brigade of soldiers from Rome after him [to bring him back]. But when Onkelos engaged the soldiers in discussion of the Torah, they converted to Judaism.</p> <p>Titus then sent another brigade, instructing them not to speak to Onkelos. [Eventually] they too converted to Judaism.</p> <p>Finally Titus sent a third brigade and instructed them not even to listen to Onkelos. When they were leading him away, Onkelos placed his hand on the mezuzah and inquisitively inquired, "What is that?"</p> <p>"You tell us," the soldiers said.</p> <p>He replied, "Normally, a human king sits inside and his servants stand outside and guard him. But, with the Holy One Blessed be He, His servants are inside and He guards them from outside."</p> <p>[Eventually] They too converted.</p> <p>Titus sent no more soldiers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Talmud<sup>55</sup></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">שדר קיסר גונדא דרומאי אבתריה משכינהו בקראי איגור</p> <p>הדר שדר גונדא דרומאי [אחרינא] אבתריה אמר להו לא תימרו ליה ולא מידי... איגור [כולהו]</p> <p>הדר שדר גונדא אחרינא אבתריה אמר להו לא תשתעו מידי בהדיה כי נקטי ליה ואזלי חזא מזוזתא [דמנחא אפתחא] אותיב ידיה עלה ואמר להו מאי האי</p> <p>אמרו ליה אימא לן את אמר להו מנהגו של עולם מלך בשר ודם יושב מבפנים ועבדיו משמרים אותו מבחוץ ואילו הקב"ה עבדיו מבפנים והוא משמרן מבחוץ ...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">איגור</p> <p style="text-align: right;">תו לא שדר בתריה</p>
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***Suggested Questions:*** How would you summarize these explanations of the mitzvah of Mezuzah? Do they agree? Are they mutually exclusive?

***Suggested Answer:*** Simply speaking, the quote from Maimonides is the rationalist / educational approach<sup>56</sup> while the Talmudic account seems to indicate

<sup>56</sup> Notice that the more rational explanation of Maimonides helps us understand the broader aspect of the commandment, but does not necessarily explain all the details. Why can't I choose the words that appeal most to me? Why can't I write it in any way I see fit (in crayon, out of order, on frosted glass...)?

that the Mezuzah itself has some mystical qualities. [See if students can see how Maimonides would understand the Gemara.]

Many Jewish mystical sources do indeed see the mezuzah as some kind of special protection, and that to this day many Jews 'check their mezuzahs' if G-d forbid something happens in the house.

Remember that we looked at Mezuzah only as an example: The important points here are that (a) there are many different explanations of Mitzvot, including the more rational and the more mystical approaches; and (b) these explanations are not mutually exclusive – ie they can all be true.

Time permitting, you may ask students to see the last two sources:

[source 14]

<p>It is known that every person has 248 spiritual limbs and 365 spiritual sinews, and on them are 'clothed' the physical 248 limbs and 365 physical sinews, as it is said (Job 10:11) 'Skin and flesh you have clothed me and bones and sinews you have covered me' – the verse mentions skin, flesh, bones and sinews and refers only to 'covering' and 'clothing'.</p>	<p>ידוע הוא דכל אדם יש לו רמ"ח איברים ושס"ה גידים רוחניים, ועליהם מלבשים הרמ"ח איברים ושס"ה גידים גשמיים, כמו שנאמר (איוב י' י"א), "עור ובשר תלבישני ובעצמות וגידים תשכני", הרי שהזכיר הכתוב עור ובשר וגידים ועצמות ולא קראו, רק בשם לבוש וסך כן כמו שנאמר, "תלבישני" "תשכני",</p>
<p>Who is being clothed, if not for the soul inside, that is the core of the person, and on each and every limb of the soul is clothed from above a corresponding 'bodily' limb, like clothing on a body.</p>	<p>ואת מי הלביש, אם ל'א לנפש אשר בקרבו, שהיא היא עצם האדם, ועל כל איבר ואיבר של הנפש מלבש מלמעלה איבר הגוף המכנה כנגד איבר ההוא, כמו הבגד על הגוף.</p>
<p>And corresponding to this G-d gave us 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments, and they are also divided up according to limbs, for there are commandments relating to the hand and to the feet and to other limbs....</p>	<p>וכנגד זה נתן לנו הקדוש ברוך הוא רמ"ח מצוות עשה ושס"ה ל'א תעשה, והם מחלקים גם כן על האיברים, דיש מצוה שתלויה ביד ויש מצוה שתלויה ברגל וכן שאר כל איברים ...</p>
<p>And when a person in this world fulfills a commandment with a certain limb, in the future light will rest on that limb...</p>	<p>וכשאדם מקיים בעולם הזה איזה מצוה באיזה איבר, שורה לעתיד לבוא אור ה' על אותו איבר, ... נמצא דכשהאדם מקיים הרמ"ח עשיו, אז הוא האדם השלם המקדש לה' בכל איבריו... וכשהאדם זהיר מלעבר על הלאוין שבתורה, הוא ממשיך אור הקדשה על גידי נפשו</p>

<sup>57</sup> In the introduction to his Shmiras HaLoshon

<p>It turns out that when a person fulfills the 248 positive commandments, they are a complete person holy to G-d in all their limbs...And if a person is careful from transgressing the negative commandments in the Torah, they extend the holy light onto the 'sinews' of their soul Chofetz Chaim<sup>57</sup></p>	
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[source 15]

<p>'Reward' in the world to come is [a result] of the actions of people themselves. After the soul separates from the body, it rises to delight and be satiated in the flashes of light and powers and holy worlds that were added and expanded by its good deeds ...</p> <p>The truth is that the World to Come is the creation of a person himself, that he expands and prepares his own portion in the World to Come Nefesh HaChaim<sup>58</sup></p>	<p>זזהו ענין שכר העה"ב שהוא מעשי ידי האדם עצמו. שאחר פרידת נפשו מהגוף. הוא העולה להתעדר ולהשביע נפשו בצחצחות האורות והכחות והעולמות הקדושים שנתוספו ונתרבו ממעשיו הטובים. .... אבל האמת שהעה"ב הוא הוא מעשה ידי האדם עצמו שהרחיב והוסיף והתקין חלק לעצמו במעשיו....</p>
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*How do you understand these sources?*

*Based on the above, how do we understand all these laws and details?*

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Conclusions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Summarize the main ideas of the class</li> <li>* Recall and praise students' contributions and participation</li> <li>* Add in your own thoughts</li> </ul> <p>Ideas to consider</p> <p>(a) While we cannot fully understand Divine laws, there are parts we <i>can</i> understand</p> <p>(b) There are many different explanations of the commandments, including but not limited to the rational and the mystical.</p> <p>(c) The Commandments refine and change us</p>
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<sup>58</sup> Sha'ar 1 Chapter 12

(d) They also have a spiritual reality. G-d created both the physical and the spiritual world, and each has its own laws. Spirituality is to the soul what food is to the body: the soul has needs much like the body and the human must provide both with their nourishment to truly flourish.

Judaism 101

Shabbat: The Day of Rest

Educators' Guide

## Judaism 101: Shabbat

### Please Note:

13. *Statements in italics* are ideas, questions, etc for you to tell the students.
14. Shaded boxes like these are background info & suggestions
15. Use as much – or as little – of this guide as you want.
16. Students have the same sources that appear in this Educator's Guide, but only the sources without any **background boxes** or *italics*. Please familiarize yourself with the students' booklet.

### The Goals of this Class are to help students:

- s) respect Jewish wisdom and enjoy learning from Jewish texts
- t) learn that celebrating Shabbat is a fundamental part of our religion.
- u) appreciate that Shabbat is not a list of things we can't do, but a day of happiness, joy, togetherness, great food, rest, learning meaning, connection, etc
- v) understand various ideas about what G-d's rest was and what our rest is
- w) be exposed to Rav Hirsh's explanation that the forbidden melachos of Shabbat refer to creative activities rather than manual labor or 'work'.
- x) Appreciate that Shabbat offers a unique opportunity for spirituality

### Outline

- A Special Day
- The Day of Rest
- Thou Shalt Not
- The Philosophical Approach

*Leaving the gloomy theatre, the littered coffee cups, the jumbled scarred-up scripts, the haggard actors, the shouting stagehands, the bedeviled director, the knuckle-gnawing producer, the clattering typewriter, and the dense tobacco smoke and backstage dust, I have come home. We have sat down to a splendid dinner, at a table graced with flowers and the old Sabbath symbols: the burning candles, the twisted loaves, the stuffed fish, and my grandfather's silver goblet brimming with wine. I have blessed my children with the ancient blessing; we have sung the pleasantly syncopated Sabbath table hymns. The talk has little to do with tottering ruins. My wife and I have caught up with our week's conversation. The children, knowing that the Sabbath is the occasion for asking questions, have asked them; the Bible, the encyclopedia,*

*the atlas have piled up on the table. We talk of Judaism, and there are the usual impossible children's queries about G-d, which my wife and I field clumsily but as well as we can.*

*Saturday has passed in much the same manner. The children are at home in the synagogue, and like it. They like even more the assured presence of their parents. On the Sabbath we are always there, and they know it. It is their day. It is my day, too. The telephone is silent. I can think, read, study, walk, or do nothing. It is an oasis...*

- From Herman Wouk's This Is My G-d

**Points to Ponder:**

- Why do Jews celebrate Shabbat?
- Is Shabbat relevant today?
- Why all the rules?

**A Special Day**

*Shabbat is a very special day. So special, in fact that those who have experienced it note that it gives off a palpable feeling:*

[source 1]

<p><i>The [Roman] Caesar once asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya why it is that the food [the Jews eat] on Shabbat has such an enticing aroma?</i></p> <p><i>Rabbi Yehoshua said [back] to him, "There is one spice that we have, and its name is 'Shabbat', that we place in [the food] and it causes an enticing aroma".</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Talmud<sup>59</sup></i></p>	<p>א"ל קיסר לרבי יהושע בן חנניא מפני מה תבשיל של שבת ריחו נודף</p> <p>אמר לו תבלין אחד יש לנו ושבת שמו שאנו מטילין לתוכו וריחו נודף</p>
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*Many people believe that Shabbat is simply a short holiday in order to 'rest up' for the week. Is this true? In the evening Shemoneh Esrei Prayer Shabbat is referred to as the goal of the creation of the heavens and earth.*

*Which is the goal and which is the means?*

[source 2]

<p>Shabbat is one sixtieth of the World to Come</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Talmud<sup>60</sup></p>	<p>שבת אחד מששים לעולם הבא</p>
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<sup>59</sup> Trac Shabbos 119a

### Explanation of 'One Sixtieth' in classic Torah thought

One-sixtieth is the point at which the slightest perception of the phenomenon in question is still perceivable (an example is *nosein ta'am*, something that gives taste, within the laws of Kashrut). If the concentration were any less, than the phenomenon would be (effectively) not perceivable. Thus, Shabbat is the slightest perception of the experience of the World to Come which is otherwise unperceivable to physical beings such as ourselves.

*Shabbat is – somehow - comparable to the immense spiritual experience of the World to Come! How is Shabbat so special? Why is it so significant?*

### **The Day of Rest**

*Let's see how the Torah describes Shabbat (in the 4<sup>th</sup> of the Ten Commandments):*

#### The Ten Commandments

Time permitting, it may be useful to put Shabbat in context of Judaism and the Ten Commandments. While everyone has heard of the Ten Commandments, few can name them.

Many students – feeling that they personally are ethical people and that the Ten Commandments are completely ethical - are completely unaware that the observance of Shabbat is 'core Judaism' and is indeed one of the Ten Commandments:

#### The Ten Commandments\*

- 1) I am the Lord Your G-d who took you out from Egypt.
- 2) You shall not recognize the gods of others in My presence.
- 3) You shall not take the name of the Lord your G-d in vain.
- 4) Remember the Sabbath day to make it holy.
- 5) Honor your father and your mother.
- 6) You shall not murder.

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<sup>60</sup> Brochos (57b)



7) You shall not commit adultery

8) You shall not steal.

9) You shall not commit perjury.

10) You shall not covet.

\* This list is included in the appendix of the students' source book

[source 3]

<p><b>7</b> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.</p> <p><b>8</b> Six days shall you labor, and do all your work</p> <p><b>9</b> But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your G-d, in it you shall not do any manner of work, neither you nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your man-servant, nor your maid-servant, nor your cattle, nor the convert that is within your gates;</p> <p><b>10</b> for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and <b>rested</b> on the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and sanctified it.</p> <p>Exodus Chapter 20: 8-11</p>	<p>ז זְכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, לְקַדְּשׁוֹ</p> <p>ח שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד, וַעֲשִׂיתָ כָּל-מְלֹאכֶתְךָ .</p> <p>ט וַיּוֹם, הַשְּׁבִיעִי--שַׁבָּת, לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:  לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל-מְלֹאכָה אֹתָהּ וּבִנְךָ וּבִתְךָ, עַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וּבְהֵמָתְךָ, וְגֵרְךָ, אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ.</p> <p>י כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת-יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ, אֶת-הַיָּם וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּם, וַיִּנַּח, בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי; עַל-כֵּן, בֵּרַךְ יְהוָה אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת--וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ.</p>
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According to these verses, what is one of the central ideas of Shabbat?

Suggested Question: Why do **we** rest on Shabbat?

Suggested Answer: Because G-d rested

Do you have any questions about this idea?

*(Hint: think about the word “וינח” (rest) in verse 10 – how does it seem to be problematic?)*

[source 4]

<p>If the Creator had a body and form, He would have a limit and boundary, for it is impossible to have a body without a limit. And all that has a limit and boundary, its power is limited...</p> <p>G-d has no body or form...</p> <p>If so, what is this that is mentioned in the Torah: ‘under His feet’ (Ex. 24:10), ‘written with the finger of G-d’ (Ex. 31:18), ‘the hand of G-d’ (Ex. 9:3), ‘the eyes of G-d’ (Deut. 11:12), ‘the ears of G-d’ (Num. 11:11), etc?</p> <p>Everything is according to the understanding of human beings, who only know bodies, and the Torah spoke the language of people....everything is a metaphor...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Maimonides<sup>61</sup></p>	<p>ואילו היה היוצר גוף וגווייה--היה לו קץ ותכלית, שאי אפשר להיות גוף שאין לו קץ. וכל שיש לו קץ ותכלית, יש לכוחו קץ וסוף... אין הקדוש ברוך הוא גוף וגווייה...</p> <p>אם כן מה הוא זה שנאמר בתורה "ותחת רגליו" (שמות כד,י), "כתובים באצבע אלוהים" (שמות לא,ח), "יד ה'" (שמות ט,ג) "עיני ה'" (דברים יא,יב), "אוזני ה'" (במדבר יא,א), וכיוצא בדברים הללו--הכול לפי דעתן של בני אדם הוא, שאין מכירין אלא הגופות; ודיברה תורה כלשון בני אדם. . . והכול משל.</p>
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*Suggested Question: What is the problem that now appears in the verses from Exodus above?*

*Suggested Answer: The problem is as follows:  
How can G-d ‘rest’? G-d is – by definition – above all physicality and all physical needs! Why did the Torah say that He ‘rested’?*

*How would you answer this question?*

This is a good opportunity to let students share their thoughts and ideas, which will increase their interest and the interest of other students. Students will often come up with some of the main explanations that the commentators give. We give one here from Rashi, and more become apparent later on in the session.

[source 5]

<p>“<i>And He rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> Day</i>” – <u>so to speak</u>.</p>	<p>(יא) וינח ביום השביעי - <u>כביכול</u> הכתיב בעצמו מנוחה ללמד הימנו ק"ו לאדם שמלאכתו בעמל וביגיעה שיהא נוח בשבת</p>
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<sup>61</sup> Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah Chapter 1

[G-d] writes about Himself the notion of 'rest' so as to learn from it 'all the more so' to man whose work is done through toil and effort - That [we] should surely rest on Shabbat!

Rashi ad loc

## ***Thou Shalt Not....***

*Spirituality and rest are great, but what is with all the laws on Shabbat?*

*Why all the "Thou Shall Not's"?*

*Let us begin to address the issue<sup>62</sup>.*

*Some Shabbat laws are easier to understand than others, at least at first glance. For instance, building a house on Shabbat seems clearly against the spirit of the day. But what about the 'small stuff'?*

[source 6]

### **And He rested on the Seventh Day:**

There are 39 forbidden melachos, including some that have no exertion at all in doing them: like carrying a vessel from private to public area or vice-versa, or many other examples...

A person will say, 'what exertion is there in this?' ...

Therefore the verse said, 'Six Days ... and He rested'

... go and understand the reason – ...

It says [in Isaish 40] '[G-d] does not get tired or exerted....'

[meaning that] ... exertion is not the

### **וינח ביום השביעי.**

...מ' מלאכות [ח"א] שיש בהם מלאכה שאין בה שום טורח כלל בעשייתה כמו שתאמר המוציא כלי מרשות היחיד לרשות הרבים או להפך וכדומה לזה רבים ...

ויאמר אדם מה טורח יש בדבר זה...

לזה אמר הכתוב **כי ששת ימים וגו' וינח וגו'** פירוש ודוק והשכיל בטעם ותדע כי אין הדבר לצד הטורח לבד... והרי מי שנאמר בו

(ישעי' מ') לא ייעף ולא ייגע ...

ולזה כל ששם מלאכה עליה...

<sup>62</sup> For more on the subject though, please see the study session entitled "Mitzvot, Actions that Build", which is part of the Judaism 101 series

only factor [at all] rather anything that has the name 'melacha' on it...

The Ohr HaChaim to Exodus 20:11

Suggested Question: What point is the Ohr HaChaim making?

Suggested Answer: He is showing that since G-d was not physically tired, His rest was not a physical rest. Our rest also is not a physical rest (though some of that is nice too!)

As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh notes...

[source 7]

The idea of Melacha in no way necessarily entails the idea of strenuous physical labor. It occurs nearly 200 times in the scriptures and in no single instance does the word itself indicate strenuous work, just as the slave work in Egypt is never called 'Melacha'. But everywhere the essential idea of the word Melacha seems to be ... not the greater or lesser amount of bodily fatigue but the intelligent carrying out of an intention. So that if we knew nothing of the oral traditional explanation, simply from the actual meaning of the word, and from the hundred-fold evidence of the way it is used in the Bible we should say that

ל' א-תַעֲשֶׂה כָל-מְלָאכָה means, "Thou shalt not perform any constructive work". Thou shalt not carry out thy intention on any thing, make no thing the bearer of thy purpose, thy ideas; in general, thou shalt not produce, not construct!

The Pentateuch – Samson Raphael Hirsch<sup>63</sup>

Suggested Question: How would you summarize Rabbi Hirsch's approach?

Suggested Answer: Rav Hirsch is explaining the logic that distinguishes between some acts being forbidden and some acts not being forbidden. What is forbidden is creative acts not physically difficult acts per se.

Suggested Question: How does this fit in with G-d's resting on the seventh day?

Suggested Answer: G-d stopped creating on the Seventh Day. So do we.

Nachmanides notes a very positive thing that comes about from desisting in the engagement of these creative activities...

[source 8]

The reason [behind the command to] וטעם לקדשו - שיהא זכרוננו בו להיות קדוש

<sup>63</sup> Judaica Press Gateshead 1982, translated from the original German by Isaac Levy. Pages 270-271

<p>sanctify Shabbat] is that we remember it so that it is holy in our eyes, as it says, "if you proclaim the Shabbat 'a delight' ..."64</p> <p>...we should see our rest to be based on the holiness of the day.</p> <p>[We are] to turn away from the [physical] pursuits that take up our minds and the silliness with [which we waste] our time.</p> <p>[Rather] we are to afford our spirits delight in the Ways of G-d, and to go to the sages and prophets to hear the Word of G-d.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Nachmanides<sup>65</sup></p>	<p>שתהא השביתה בעינינו בעבור שהוא יום קדוש,</p> <p>להפנות בו מעסקי המחשבות והבלי הזמנים, ולתת בו עוגג לנפשינו בדרכי ה', וללכת אל החכמים ואל הנביאים לשמוע דברי ה'...</p>
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*Suggested Question: What is Nachmanides saying? How would you put it in modern terminology?*

*Suggested Answer: The basic idea is that by stopping for 24 hours, we allow ourselves to focus on more meaningful, spiritual, and fulfilling activities. These include quality time with children and family, reading, prayer, contemplation, discussion, learning, reflection, etc.*

*If Shabbat is so spiritual, where do physical pleasures fit in?*

[source 9]

<p>Are we not commanded to take delight on Shabbat with tasty foods, nice clothes, a bed that is made, and lit candles, as it is written, 'And you shall call Shabbat a delight'?</p> <p>What is [this] delight?</p> <p>It is delighting in G-d – that is to say regarding G-d – that this delight should come from spirituality alone and not from physical pleasures.</p> <p>Such is the power of the holiness of</p>	<p>אך הלא נצטוונו לענג את השבת במאכלים ערבים, בבגדים נאים, במטה מוצעת ובנרות דולקים, וכן כתוב "וקראת לשבת עונג..." מאי עונג?</p> <p>...דהאי עונג על ה' – פ' אודות ה' – שהעונג יבוא מן הרוחניות לבד ולא מן התענוגים הגשמיים כה גדולה היא קדושת השבת עד שגם אלה מוכנסים על ידה לתחום הרוחניות</p>
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<sup>64</sup> Isaiah 58:13

<sup>65</sup> Nachmanides to Exodus 20:8

<sup>66</sup> Michtav Eliyahu vol. 2, page 14

Shabbat that these too [the physical pleasures] are through it considered to be in the realm of spirituality!

Rav Dessler<sup>66</sup>

*How do you explain this?*

There is an intentional overlap here with the class on holiness. The basic idea that students need to learn is that physicality is not frowned on in Judaism. We have no convents, monks, celibacy, etc. Rather, Judaism believes in uplifting the physical world. In this way, the physical pleasures of life become spiritual. This applies to the physical pleasures of Shabbat, marital relations, etc.

### ***The Philosophical Approach***

This section is based on the idea that the Days of Creation were essentially G-d hiding Himself from us, and that Shabbat (on a simple level, when G-d did not create anything new) is thus a day when He is more visible and accessible.

Time permitting, it may be useful to let students prepare the next sources (source 10 from the Ramchal and source 11 from Rav Dessler) and try to figure them out themselves.

*For a deeper understanding of Shabbat rest – and the role of Shabbat itself – let's ask an even more basic question:*

*Why did G-d create the world in the first place?*

[source 10]

1. The goal of Creation was for G-d to give of His goodness to others.... Seeing as He alone is true Good...

Therefore His wisdom decreed that the way of giving of [His] goodness would be the giving of opportunity for His Creations to get close to Him, as much as they can, so that the perfect completion that they could not achieve on their own...they will achieve as much as possible through their closeness to Him

א. הנה התכלית בבריאה היה להטיב מטובו יתברך לזולתו...

ובהיותו הוא לבדו יתברך הטוב האמיתי...על כן גזרה חכמתו שמציאות הטובה האמיתית הזאת יהיה במה שיינתן מקום לברואים לשיתדבקו בו יתברך, באותו השיעור שאפשר להם שיתדבקו.

ואז נמצא שמה שמצד עצמם אי אפשר שיתוארו בשלמות כשלמותו יתברך, הנה מצד התדבקם בו, יגיע להם באותו השיעור שאפשר לתאר בשלמות ההוא.....

ב...להיות הטוב שלם, ראוי שיהיה הנהנה בו בעל הטוב ההוא. פירוש: מי שיקנה הטוב

<sup>67</sup>Derech G-d Part I, Chapter 2 #1-2

<p>2...In order for this good to be complete, the one who enjoys it should 'own' it.</p> <p>To explain: Whoever acquires this good for themselves ... this is somewhat similar – as much as possible – to G-d's completeness, for His completeness is intrinsic to Him, not accidental, and although it is impossible for our completeness to be [like G-d's], it can be somewhat similar to His, at a minimum we need to <i>acquire</i> it for ourselves ... and so be fitting to get close to G-d and to enjoy His goodness</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Rabbi Chaim Lutzato<sup>67</sup></p>	
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*This is a difficult but fundamental text: Can anyone summarize it?*

<p>Here is an explanation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) In order to connect to G-d, we need to be G-d-like.</li> <li>2) And just like G-d's perfection is intrinsic to Him (not something outside of His existence), so too our acquisition of perfection must be such that we internalize it and make it part of ourselves.</li> <li>3) This can only be done by having worked on that perfection and chosen of our own free will to do those acts that G-d decrees as being 'spiritual'.</li> <li>4) In other words, if we had simply received spirituality on a silver platter without working for it, we would be complete 'takers' – unlike G-d, and unable to connect to Him. G-d therefore hid Himself in order to give us free will enough to <i>earn</i> our spirituality.</li> </ol>
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*Now contemplate the following statement:*

[source 11]

<p>What is the definition of 'Work' that G-d does? ... the creation of [His] hiddenness in order to allow free choice</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Rav Eliyahu Dessler<sup>68</sup></p>	<p>מהו גדר מלאכה עצל הקב"ה? ...בריאת ההסתר כדי לאפשר הבחירה</p>
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<sup>68</sup> Michtav Eliyahu vol. 2, page 14

Suggested Question: According to this, what ‘work’ did G-d do?

Suggested Answer: On a physical level, G-d created a physical world and everything in it. At a deeper level, in order to enable us free choice and a chance to really get close to Him, what He was doing was making Himself hidden in the world (ie before Creation, all that existed was...G-d. Now, since Creation, it is possible to look at the world and not see Him)

Suggested Question: How does this fit in with the goal of Creation as described before?

Suggested Answer: The point of Creation was to create an environment somewhat removed from G-d so as to be able to real choice. The world became that arena in which we could use our uniquely human ability to choose between good and evil, so as to receive the ultimate good – becoming more G-d-like and thus connecting to Him, the only true source of spirituality!

Suggested Question: If the six days of Creation correspond to G-d’s hiding Himself (in order to enable us to have free choice) what is the seventh day? Why did G-d stop creating?

Suggested Answer: After six days of creating, the world was ready to serve its purpose as an environment of free choice. He had moved his (obvious) presence enough away from us. The system was in place. He then said “enough” – stopped creating and thus stopped the movement away from His own Presence. In other words, G-d did not ‘rest’ as we know it, rather He **desisted** from making the world any more complicated and removed from His Presence.

Suggested Question: According to this deeper approach, what is Shabbat all about?

Suggested Answer: If G-d is somewhat hidden the other six days of the week, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, we can experience His presence in a unique and deep way. Shabbat is a day of unique spirituality! We can feel His presence more. We can access spirituality more easily and directly. There is less hidden-ness and distractions.

### **More Points for Discussion:**

*Based on all of the above, how would you describe the special character of Shabbat?*

*How does that special character lend toward Shabbat being described as ‘a taste (or 1/60) of the World to Come’?*

\* \* \*

### Conclusions

- \* Summarize the main ideas of the class
- \* Recall and praise students’ contributions and participation



\* Add in your own thoughts

Ideas to consider:

\* Shabbat is one of the Ten Commandments and a fundamental part of our religion

\* G-d doesn't get tired and therefore doesn't need to rest. His rest therefore

\* On one level, G-d was resting to teach us to rest

\* Also, His rest was a cessation from creative/constructive activities, and our cessation from these normal activities allows us to focus on meaning, spirituality, etc

\* At a deeper level, Creation was the process of G-d hiding Himself. Shabbat is a day where it is easier to connect to Him

#### Suggested Exercise for End of Class:

If Shabbat seems like a daunting undertaking, remember that in Judaism it's not

How to start? Have your friends over for Friday night dinner. Light the candles, make Kiddush, sing some songs, and share words of Torah. (You can discuss the "Portion of the Week," or pick a topic like "Free Will" or "The Afterlife.")

But make one rule: No outside entertainment. No radio, no television, no telephone, no internet. Try it for a few hours, and increase the amount of time as you feel more comfortable. The key is to relinquish control of the universe and get in touch with the Almighty.

Finally, here's an exercise that can really get you in the mood. At sundown this Friday, take a minute and do the following: Clench your fists tight for 60 seconds. Then let go.

That, my friends, is Shabbat.

- from an article entitled Shabbat - Heaven on Earth by Rabbi Noah Weinberg

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## **Appendix**

**More on Shabbat and creation:**

Where does the Torah teach us what is considered 'creative' activities? The Talmud (Shabbos 49b) tells us the following...

<p>That which we have learned, namely that the forbidden categories of creative work are forty minus one (i.e. 39), what does that correspond to? Said Rabbi Chanina to them (i.e. the questioners) they correspond to the activities in the construction of the Tabernacle</p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Shabbos 49b</p>	<p>הא דתנן אבות מלאכות ארבעים חסר אחת כנגד מי אמר להו ר' חנינא בר חמא כנגד עבודות המשכן</p>
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The creative activities that are forbidden on Shabbat are the same that were employed in the construction of the Tabernacle in the desert. The Tabernacle was the central place of worship for the Jews over the 40 years they spent in the desert. It housed, among other things, the Holy Ark with the Stone tablets containing the 10 Commandments. But what is very significant about this statement in the Talmud is the fact that the Tabernacle is intimately linked with the world as a whole. In classic Jewish literature, the Tabernacle is seen as a miniature universe of sorts. For example:

<p>(9) 'The structure of the Tabernacle and the structure of its vessels' – It is known that the tabernacle and its vessels are physical forms through which to contemplate the more lofty concepts which they represent. Among the awesome concepts contained within them (i.e. the Tabernacle and its vessels) is that they are split into three general categories; namely Inside the curtain (i.e. the 'holy of holies'), outside the curtain – which is the 'Ohel Mo'ed' (the 'holy'), and finally the courtyard. These represent the 3 basic levels of existence (i.e. the physical/spiritual universe); namely the world of the</p>	<p>(ט) את תבנית המשכן ואת תבנית כל כליו - ידוע כי המשכן וכליו הכל ציורים גופניים להתבונן מהם ציורים עליונים שהם דוגמא להם, ומכלל העינים הנפלאים הנכללים בו הוא מה שתמצא המשכן על ג' חלקים, לפנים מהפרכת חוץ לפרכת שהוא אהל מועד חצר המשכן כנגד המציאות שנחלק לג' חלקים עולם המלאכים עולם הגלגלים עולם השפלים.</p>
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angels, the world of the planets, and the lower world (i.e. our world)... - Rabbeinu Bachya Exodus 25:9	
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*Since the Tabernacle reflect the broader universe, the activities used in the construction of the Tabernacle mirror on some level the activities used by G-d (so to speak) in the construction of that broader universe. Desisting from such activities is then extremely apropos.*

Rav Hamnuna said; Anyone who prays on the eve of Shabbat and pronounces [Kiddush that contains the words,] "And the [creation] was complete...", the Torah considers this individual as being a partner in Creation! - Tractate Shabbos 119b	דאמר רב המנונא כל המתפלל בע"ש ואומר ויכולו מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו נעשה שותף להקב"ה במעשה בראשית
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#### **More on the connection between Shabbat and The World to Come:**

- *Tractate Shabbos 118b*
- *Maharal Chidushei Aggadot to Shabbos (p 45)*

#### **More on Shabbat and rest**

For on [Shabbat] everything necessary to bring the goal to realization was already complete, and in completion there is rest	שבו כבר נשלם כל הצריך להביא המכון אל תכלית, ובשלמות תהיה המנוחה
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Seforno Exodus 20:11

Judaism 101

Chesed

Educators' Guide

## Judaism 101: Chesed (LovingKindness)

### Please Note:

17. *Statements in italics* are ideas, Suggested Questions, etc. for you to tell the students.

18. Shaded boxes like these are background info & suggestions

19. Use as much – or as little – of this guide as you want.

20. Students have the same sources that appear in this Educator's Guide, but only the sources without any background boxes or *italics*. Please familiarize yourself with the Source Booklet as well.

### The Goals of this Class are to help students:

- y) respect Jewish wisdom and enjoy learning from Jewish texts
- z) learn that Chesed (simply put, caring *about* and *for* others) is a fundamental part of our religion.
- aa) appreciate the greatness of Avraham Avinu, the pillar of Chesed
- bb) delve into the question of 'Torah vs. Chesed' and see that Torah itself *is* a Chesed
- cc) realize that by performing acts of chesed, we are not only helping others, but also helping ourselves become more G-d-like.

*There was a poor man who lived in the community of the sage, Mar Ukva. Mar Ukva would slip 4 zuz (a currency of the time) under this man's door every week. The man decided that he was going to discover who his anonymous benefactor was and waited in hiding to see who would come to his door. That day, Mar Ukva happened to be walking with his wife, and when they slipped the money under the door, they noticed the poor man trying to come toward them and meet them in person. In order to avoid embarrassing him, they ran away!*

*The poor man gave chase and so they turned down an alley looking for a place to hide. All they saw was a large oven, which was currently not in use. They both jumped in. The oven was still warm, though, and the heat was burning the bottom of Mar Ukva's feet. His wife was not in any pain, and told him to place his feet on hers. She saw that he was disturbed, for it seemed that G-d felt her merit was very great, for she did not suffer from the heat: 'Why,' he asked himself, 'am I not also worthy of not having to be pained by the heat of the oven floor? Have I sinned in some way?'*

*His wife, seeing his downtrodden face, said that he should not be disheartened. She explained that she had the special merit of not only giving charity to the poor, but actually feeding them food when they came to her door. Her giving immediately filled their needs and so she merited extra protection! - The Talmud<sup>69</sup>*

*Today we are going to explore the concept of Chesed, lovingkindness. It is a central, fundamental part of Judaism.*

Outline

- Abraham and His Guests
- Abraham and Us
- The Depth of Chesed:
- Torah or Chesed?
- The Commandment(s) of Kindness

Abraham and His Guests

*The first Patriarch Abraham is the example par excellence of one who went out of his way to help others. Please read the first source:*

[source 1]

<p>(1) G-d appeared to him [Abraham] in the groves of Mamrei and he was sitting at the door of the tent in the heat of the day.</p>	<p>(א) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְדֹד בְּאֵלֵי נֵי מַמְרֵי וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פְּתַח הָאֵהָל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם: (ב) וַיֵּשֶׁא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלוֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרֶץ לְקִרְאתָם מִפְּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֲרָצָה:</p>
<p>(2) He lifted his eyes and saw, and behold three men were standing near him. He saw [them], and ran from the door of the tent to greet them, and he bowed down to the earth.</p>	<p>(ג) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם נָא מִצָּאתַי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֵל נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ: (ד) יִקַּח נָא מַעֲט מִיַּם וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֲנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ:</p>
<p>(3) He said, "My Master, if I have found favor in Your eyes, please do not bypass your servant."</p>	<p>(ה) וְאָקְחָה פֶתַח לְחֵם וְסַעַדוּ לְבַבְכֶם אַחֲרַי תַעֲבֹרוּ כִּי עַל כֵּן עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֵן תַעֲשֶׂה כְּאִשְׁרַי דְּבַרְתָּ:</p>
<p>(4) "Let a bit of water be brought and wash your feet. Rest yourselves under the tree.</p>	<p>(ו) וַיֹּמְהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֵהָלָה אֵל שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מְהֵרָה שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים קִמַּח סִלְתָּ לְוִישִׁי וְעָשִׂי עִגּוֹת: (ז) וְאֵל הַבְּקָר רֶץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן בְּקָר רֶךְ וְטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֵל הַנֶּעַר וַיֹּמְהַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת:</p>
<p>(5) I will get bread and you will sustain your hearts. Afterwards you will continue on your way, because it is for</p>	<p>(ח) וַיִּקַּח חֲמָאָה וְחֵלֶב וּבֵן הַבְּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לַפְּנִיָּהִם וְהוּא עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאמְרוּ:</p>

<sup>69</sup> Tractate Ksubos (67b)

<p>this reason that you have passed by your servant." They said, "Fine, do as you have said."</p> <p>(6) Abraham hurried to Sarah's tent and said, "Hurry! [take] three measures of the finest flour; knead it and make cake-rolls."</p> <p>(7) Abraham ran to the cattle, and took a tender, choice calf. He gave it to the lad, and hurried to prepare it.</p> <p>(8) He took butter, milk, and the calf he had prepared, and set it before them. He stood over them under the tree, and they ate.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Genesis 18:1-8</p>	
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Now that we have seen the basic story, let us ask two questions:

Why did G-d appear to Abraham?

And, why do you think he went running after these three 'men'?

[source 2]

<p><b>"And G-d appeared to him" –</b></p> <p>To visit the sick.</p> <p>Rabbi Hamma son of Chaninah said:</p> <p>It was the third day after his circumcision, and G-d was 'checking' on his welfare</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Rashi<sup>70</sup></p>	<p>וירא אליו - לבקר את החולה (ב"מ פו)</p> <p>אמר רבי חמא בר חנינא</p> <p>יום שלישי למילתו היה ובא הקב"ה ושאל בשלמו:</p>
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[source 3]

<p><b>"In the heat of the day" –</b></p> <p>G-d (had) made it extremely hot<sup>71</sup> in order to prevent [Abraham] being disturbed by visitors</p>	<p>כחום היום - (ב"מ פו) הוציא הקב"ה חמה מנרתיקה שלא להטריחו באורחים ולפי שראהו מצטער שלא היו אורחים באים הביא המלאכים עליו בדמות אנשים:</p>
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<sup>70</sup> ad loc / Talmud Baba Metziah 86

<sup>71</sup> literally, took the sun out of its container

When [G-d] saw that Abraham was troubled that he didn't have guests, He sent angels [to Abraham] in the guise of people

ibid

Suggested Question: Why did he go running after the three strangers?

Suggested Answer: The desire to help others was very deeply ingrained into him. Abraham was troubled to the point where he was anguished by his inability to perform Chesed, so G-d sent him three angels in the guise of humans so that Abraham could do what he so strongly desired – to give!

### Optional Suggested Question

Time permitting, there is a fascinating additional question that can be asked at this point of the class. It deals with the concept of chesed, but touches more on the goal of life itself.

This question often generates lively discussion:

Why did Abraham 'leave' his communication with G-d Himself in order to help three human beings? In other words, why leave something 'more' important – communicating directly with the Creator and Sustainer of Everything - to do something 'less' important, namely giving food and water to some mere mortals, strangers passing in the desert.

One approach is to understand that the act of talking with G-d is overshadowed by the act of being like G-d! Another approach is that we can 'meet G-d' in various ways: directly through prayer, and 'indirectly' through helping others are two ways.

### Abraham and Us

*Abraham lived a long time ago.*

*How do his actions affect our lives?*

*What do you think?*

*Consider the next sources:*

[source 4]

For I have given him special attention <sup>72</sup>	יט כי ידעתיו, למען אשר יצוה את-בניו ואת-
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<sup>72</sup> literally, I have known him. In the Hebrew, though, the sense is more intimate: ie I have become intertwined with him because...



because he commands his children, and his household after him, and they will preserve the way of G-d, doing charity and justice, so that G-d will bring upon Abraham all that which He has spoken of him.  <a href="#">Genesis (18:19)</a>	ביתו אחריו, ושמרו דרך יהוה, לעשות צדקה ומשפט—למען, הביא יהוה על-אברהם, את אשר-דבר, עליו.
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[source 5]

There are three distinctive signs of this [the Jewish] Nation.  They are merciful, bashful, and doers of Chesed!  <a href="#">Yevamos 79a</a> <sup>73</sup>	שלשה סימנים יש באומה זו  הרחמנים והביישנים וגומלי חסדים
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Suggested Questions for Discussion: How does Abraham's kindness affect us? Is he a role model or something more?

Suggested Explanation: Abraham carefully taught the character trait of giving to his descendents. And the Talmud notes that the education stuck around, and very much became part of the Jewish ethos. The Torah is full of commandments to help others, but the idea goes beyond specific actions – it is one of the distinctive signs of the Jewish people!

Do you see any indications of this today?

Most religious communities have lists of the Gemachim available. The whole concept of a 'Gemach' (that private people contribute their own time and money to lend things to others) is foreign to many non-observant Jews and largely non-existent in the non-Jewish world.

It is something to be proud of.

If you can bring such a book or list to show, it makes a wonderful impression. Otherwise, the web site [www.chesed.info](http://www.chesed.info) has some listed. Or you can just mention examples.

### The Depth of Chesed:

<sup>73</sup> In a similar vein, consider this statement

... one who shows no pity for fellow creatures is assuredly not the seed of Abraham, our father.  <a href="#">Beitzah 32b</a>	וכל מי שאינו מרחם על הבריות בידוע שאינו מזרעו של אברהם אבינו
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*Is Chesed just 'being nice'? Is there more to it?*

*Please see the following two sources*

[source 6]

The world from its inception was only created through Chesed,  as it says, "For I said, 'a world of Chesed shall be built...'" (Psalms 89). Avos D'Reb Nosson 4:5	העולם מתחלה לא נברא אלא בחסד  שנאמר (תהלים פט) כי אמרתי עולם חסד יבנה
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[source 7]

The point of creation was for Him to give of His Goodness to others... Derech Hashem Part I Chapter 2 #1	א. הנה התכלית בבריאה היה להטיב מטובו יתברך לזולתו...
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*Suggested Question:* *Is Chesed a major part of G-d's plan or a side-point?*

*Suggested Answer:* *We've seen that Chesed is not a side-point. G-d didn't need the world. He was lacking nothing. He created it as a chesed to us. The whole world was created with and for chesed.*

*Suggested Question:* *How does Chesed fit into the Jewish role in the world?*

*Suggested Answer:* *The Jewish People is supposed to be a 'Light unto the Nations', 'Nation of Priests' - a spiritual example and leader for the entire world. Chesed is part of that message. We are meant to inspire ourselves and the world to do Chesed.*

### Optional Discussion

The Derech Hashem just quoted (1:2:1-1:3:2) is fundamental to Jewish thought. It centers on why G-d created the world and what the goal of life is. Note that this source and idea also appear on the session discussing Shabbat.

Time permitting, and if students are interested, you may want to discuss it in a little more depth. To paraphrase the Derech Hashem:

G-d's purpose in Creation was to bestow of His good to others. Since G-d is all good, giving a 'partial good' would not be sufficient – He wanted to give the ultimate good that we could accept. What is the ultimate good? G-d Himself! He

is the source and 'embodiment' (forgive the term) of all good. There is no good outside of Him. The greatest good that He could give therefore is Himself.

In other words, the greatest good He could give us was attaching ourselves to the Ultimate Good of the universe – namely Him. As we live spiritual lives and perfect ourselves, we draw closer to Him and become more like Him.

### Torah or Chesed?

*Please see the next source*

[source 8]

Simon the Just was one of the last remaining members of the Men of the Great Assembly. He used to say, "On three pillars the world stands; Torah, Divine Service (ie prayer), and acts of Chesed!"

Avos 1:2

א,ב שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלושה דברים העולם עומד--על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות החסדים

*Which of these three has priority?*

*If you had to choose one, which would you choose?*

Students will often be very interested in this question (which to choose) and may have fascinating answers and insights. Time permitting, it is a good opportunity to encourage class discussion

*Contrast and compare the next three sources:*

[source 9]

You have been told what is good and what the Lord requires of you:

to act justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Michah 6:8

גיד לך אדם מה-טוב ומה-יה'וה דורש ממך כי אם-עשות משפט ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת עם-אל'היך:

[source 10]

We must be careful about the commandment of charity, above all other positive commandments, that charity is the symbol of the righteous descendants of Abraham our Father, as it is said, 'For I have given him

א חייבין אנו להיזהר במצות צדקה, יתר מכל מצוות עשה--שהצדקה סימן לצדיקי זרע אברהם אבינו, שנאמר "כי ידעתיו, למען אשר יצווה . . ." (בראשית יח,י)

special attention' ...	Maimonides <sup>74</sup>
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[source 11]

<p>These are things that have no established measure:</p> <p>Peah, Bikkurim, Reayon, the giving of Chesed, and the study of Torah.</p> <p>And these are the things that a person enjoys the interest in this world, and the principal remains in the World to Come:</p> <p>Honoring one's parents; the bestowing of Kindness; Creating peace between a person and his fellow; and <i>the study of Torah is equal to them all</i></p> <p>The Mishna in Pe'ah 1:1</p>	<p>א, אלו דברים שאין להם שיעור--הפיאה, והביכורים, והריאיון, וגמילות חסדים, ותלמוד תורה. ואלו דברים שאדם אוכל מפירותיהן בעולם הזה, והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא-- כיבוד אב ואם, וגמילות חסדים, והבאת שלום בין אדם לחברו; ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם</p>
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*How do you reconcile these sources?*

*If one must choose between them, which should one choose?*

*The next two sources will help us:*

[source 12]

<p><i>Rav Avahu ... sent [someone] to check on his son, Rabbi Chanina, [who was supposed to be learning Torah] in Tiberius.</i></p> <p><i>He was told that [his son] was [extremely busy] performing acts of Chesed. [He was spending all his time digging graves.]</i></p> <p><i>Rav Avahu responded: "Is there a lack of graves [needed to be dug] in Caesaria<sup>75</sup> that I sent you to Tiberius?!"</i></p>	<p>ר' אבהו ... שלח לר' חנינה בריה מזכי בטיבריה שלחון ואמרן ליה גמל הוא חסד שלח כתב לליה המבלי אין קברין בקיסרין שלחתיך לטיבריא וכבר נמנו בעליית בית ארים סלוד התלמוד קודם למעשה</p> <p>רבנן דקיסרין אמרין הדא דאת אמר בשיש שם מי שיעשה אבל אין שם מי שיעשה המעשה קודם לתלמוד</p>
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<sup>74</sup> Matnos Anyim 10:1

<sup>75</sup> where he and his son came from

<sup>76</sup> Chagiga 1:7

<p><i>The Sages in the upper level of the house of Arim decided that learning must be one's focus!"</i></p> <p><i>The other Sages around him comforted him by noting that the idea that learning comes first assumes that someone else will take care of the needed Mitzvah.</i></p> <p><i>But if there is no one else [as was the case in Tiberius] then the deed comes before study [As such, Rabbi Chanina was in the right].</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Talmud Yerushalmi<sup>76</sup></p>	
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[source 13]

<p><i>If one has before him the choice of doing a Mitzva<sup>77</sup> or learning Torah:</i></p> <p><i>if the Mitzva can be performed by others then the person should continue learning;</i></p> <p><i>Otherwise they should do the Mitzva and then return to learning.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Maimonides<sup>78</sup></p>	<p>[ד] היה לפניו עשיית מצוה ותלמוד תורה—</p> <p>אם אפשר למצוה להיעשות על ידי אחרים, לא יפסיק תלמודו;</p> <p>ואם לאו, יעשה המצוה ויחזור לתורתו.</p>
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Suggested Questions: How would you summarize this principle? How do you understand it?

Suggested Answer: There are many ways and levels of understanding. Let us consider a few basic ideas as food for thought:

Some explain that Torah is the root of Chesed and of the rest of our Jewish lives. Therefore it gets priority.

Also, are food and clothing the only kinds of chesed? What about emotional support? What about helping a person find meaning and spirituality?

<sup>77</sup> [Although this Halacha is said with regard to the general categories of Mitzvot, it is clear from the incident above that it applies equally to acts of Chesed.]

<sup>78</sup> Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:4

*In the long term, how can Jews offer meaning and spirituality to their brethren and to world if they don't 'have it' themselves?*

*In other words, it can be said that ALL kinds of chesed are important, and that the ultimate chesed that we can offer ourselves and the world is direction, meaning, understanding, and connection to G-d. This is the essence of Torah, and why it overrides other 'more immediate' kinds of chesed – as long as they are being taken care of by someone else.*

*An extension of this idea is that the learning of Torah itself is as an act of chesed – by enhancing the world's kedushah.*

*Can you think of any other ways of understanding this concept?*

### The Commandment(s) of Kindness

*The Torah commands us to be kind to one another, but does so from two different angles. Sources 14-15 focus on one idea, while sources 16-17 focus on another:*

[source 14]

<p>You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. Leviticus 19:18</p>	<p>יח ל'א-תק'ם וְלֹא-תִטֹּר אֶת-בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ, וְאַהֲבֵת לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ: אֲנִי, יְהוָה</p>
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[source 15]

<p>We were commanded to love each other as we love ourselves,  and that my mercy and love for my brethren should be like my mercy and love of myself ...and anything he wants and anything I want for myself, I should want for him ...  .... And this is what is said, 'And you shall love your neighbor as yourself Maimonides<sup>79</sup></p>	<p>היא שצונו לאהוב קצתנו את קצתנו כמו שנהאב עצמנו  ושתהיה חמלתי ואהבתי לאחי כחמלתי ואהבתי לעצמי ... וכל מה שיהיה ברשותו או ירצה אותו וכל מה שארצה לעצמי ארצה לו כמוהו  ...והוא אמרו ית' ואהבת לרעך כמוך</p>
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<sup>79</sup> Positive Commandment # 206

[source 16]

<p>The LORD will establish you as a holy people unto Himself, as He has sworn unto you; if you will keep the commandments of the LORD your God, <u>and walk in His ways</u>.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 28:9</p>	<p>ט יְקִימְךָ יְהוָה לְעַם קְדוֹשׁ, כְּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע- לְךָ: כִּי תִשְׁמֹר, אֶת-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדַרְכָיו</p>
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[source 17]

<p>We were commanded to imitate G-d as much as we can, as it is said '<u>and walk in His ways</u>.' Included in this is:</p> <p>Just as G-d is Gracious, so you should be gracious Just as G-d is Righteous, so you should be righteous Just as G-d is Giving, so you should be giving</p> <p>Also included is that we should be similar to Him in the good acts and character traits that He is described with...</p> <p>Maimonides<sup>80</sup></p>	<p>מצוה ח - היא שצונו להדמות בו ית' לפי יכלתנו והוא אמרו והלכת בדרכיו וכבר כפל צווי זה ואמר ללכת בכל דרכיו</p> <p>ובא בפירוש זה מה הקדוש ברוך הוא נקרא רחום אף אתה היה רחום מה הקב"ה נקרא חנון אף אתה היה חנון</p> <p>מה הקב"ה נקרא צדיק אף אתה היה צדיק</p> <p>מה הקב"ה נקרא חסיד אף אתה היה חסיד</p> <p>... ובא בפירוש גם כן שעלינו להדמות בפעולות הטובות והמדות החשובות שיתואר בהם האל ית'</p>
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**Suggested Question:** Are they different? If so, why do you think the Torah gave two separate commandments that seem to demand the same actions?

This question rests on the knowledge that the Torah does not 'waste' words or repeat itself without a very good reason. If students are not aware, or not sufficiently aware of this, it is important to mention it

**Suggested Answer:** One understanding would be that depending on one's motivation, he can fulfill one of two commandments, or both. If he is only moved to act out of care for the needs of his fellow man then he has fulfilled the notion of "love your fellow man as yourself". However, if his motivation includes the desire to be G-dlike, and emulate His goodness, then he has additionally fulfilled the notion of "following in His ways".

Alternatively, *ואהבת* is an attitude while *והלכת בדרכיו* requires action. Perhaps also *ואהבת* is a negative and *והלכת* is a positive.

<sup>80</sup> Positive Commandment # 8

\* \* \*

### Conclusions

- \* Summarize the main ideas of the class
- \* Recall and praise students' contributions and participation
- \* Add in your own thoughts

#### Ideas to consider:

- \* Chesed is a fundamental part of our religion, and Avraham Avinu was the pillar of Chesed
- \* Often in life the challenge is not whether or not to do a mitzvah but *which* mitzvah to do – ie 'Learning Torah vs Doing a Chesed'
- \* Teaching Torah and Learning Torah are themselves acts of Chesed
- \* By doing chesed, we help others and help ourselves be more G-d-like.



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## Appendix

### ***The difference between Charity and Chesed***

- Succah 49b

וא"ר אלעזר גדולה גמילות חסדים יותר מן הצדקה שנאמר (הושע י) זרעו לכם לצדקה וקצרו לפי חסד אם אדם זורע ספק אוכל ספק אינו אוכל אדם קוצר ודאי אוכל וא"ר אלעזר אין צדקה משתלמת אלא לפי חסד שבה שנאמר זרעו לכם לצדקה וקצרו לפי חסד ת"ר בשלשה דברים גדולה גמילות חסדים יותר מן הצדקה צדקה בממונו גמילות חסדים בין בגופו בין בממונו צדקה לעניים גמילות חסדים בין לעניים בין לעשירים צדקה לחיים גמילות חסדים בין לחיים בין למתים

### ***More on Chesed as a foundation***

- Koheles Rabbah 7 – Kofer in Chesed is a Kofer Bi-ikar

- Sota 14a – Torah begins and ends with it

דרש ר' שמלאי תורה תחלתה גמילות חסדים וסופה גמילות חסדים תחילתה גמילות חסדים דכתיב ויעש ה' אלהים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם וסופה גמילות חסדים דכתיב ויקבר אותו בגיא

### ***The Reward for those who do acts of Chesed***

- Koheles rabbah 9

- Peah 1:1

א,א אלו דברים שאין להם שיעור--הפיאה, והביכורים, והריאיון, וגמילות חסדים, ותלמוד תורה. ואלו דברים שאדם אוכל מפירותיהן בעולם הזה, והקרן קיימת לו לעולם הבא--כיבוד אב ואם, וגמילות חסדים, והבאת שלום בין אדם לחברו; ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם.

- Yerushalmi Tanis 4 person will get to sit in the shade of G-d

(ישעיהו נא) ואשים דברי בפיך זו תורה ובצל ידי כסיתך זו גמילות חסדים ללמדך שכל מי שהוא עוסק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים זכה לישב בצילו של הקב"ה. הדא היא דכתיב (תהילים לו) מה יקר חסדך אלהים ובני אדם בצל כנפיך יחסיון.

# Judaism 101

## Prayer

### Educators' Guide

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## Judaism 101: Tefillah (Prayer)

### Please Note:

21. *Statements in italics* are ideas, questions, etc for you to tell the students.
22. Shaded boxes like these are background info & suggestions
23. Use as much – or as little – of this guide as you want.
24. Students have the same sources that appear in this Educator’s Guide, but only the sources without any background boxes or *italics*. Please familiarize yourself with the Source Booklet as well.

### The Goals of this Class are to help students:

- dd) respect Jewish wisdom and enjoy learning from Jewish texts
- ee) learn that prayer is supposed to be – and can be - a deeply moving human experience, not a rote recitation of words barely understood.
- ff) learn that prayer is fundamental to Jewish life
- gg) appreciate *why* we pray
- hh) understand that we *can* improve how we pray

### Outline

- Why Pray?
- Islands of Spirituality
- Opening the Channels

*Will someone please read this true story out loud?*

*Dateline: 1997. Psalms were being recited in synagogues around the world. Women had accepted the call to light Shabbat candles for the first time. Just before Shabbat, the hostage's mother, Esther Wachsman, made a dramatic and emotional appearance on Israeli television, pleading with the public to pray for her son Nachshon who had been kidnapped by Hamas. Earlier that day, the terrorists had released a video of Nachshon begging the government to relent to their demands.*

*The entire country spent Shabbat in tense apprehension, not knowing the fate of the hostage. When Shabbat was over we received the horrible news that Nachshon had been deliberately murdered during a rescue attempt by the IDF. The Wachsman family sat shiva, and thousands of Jews from all backgrounds flocked to their home in the Ramot section of Jerusalem.*

*The broken father barely answered the reporter's questions, until one correspondent had the audacity to ask, "Well, what happened to all our prayers?"*

*The room fell silent as all eyes fell on Yehudah Wachsman, who quietly replied: "All of my life I have been asking G-d for things, from health to spouse to job, and He always answered me positively. But it is a father's prerogative to say 'no' every so often. This time He said 'no' to our prayers."<sup>81</sup>*



### **Points to Ponder**

- *Why Pray?*
- *If G-d knows everything, why do we need to ask him for our needs?*
- *Does He listen, or is He 'too busy'?*
- *Isn't prayer for weak people who need a crutch?*

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<sup>81</sup>Reprinted with permission from Aish.com article entitled "Lively Introduction to Prayer", By Rabbi Avi Geller

## I. Why Pray?

The first idea dealt with is the simple question of 'Why Pray?'

It is fundamental that students struggle with this issue, appreciate the question

—

In this class we are trying to begin a paradigm shift – to help students understand that prayer is not necessarily what they thought it was, and that it is meant to be deep and meaningful.

Consider the following two sources:

[source 1]

[G-d] knows all and nothing is hidden from him Maimonides <sup>82</sup>	הוא יודע הכול ואין דבר נעלם ממנו
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[source 2]

The goal of Creation was to bestow good ... to others.... Rabbi Chaim Luttzato <sup>83</sup>	א. הגה התכלית בבריאה היה להטיב מטובו ... לזולתו....
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Suggested Questions: According to these ideas, where does prayer<sup>84</sup> fit in? Why should we pray?

*In other words, if He knows what we need and He wants to give us what is good for us, why do we pray? If He did not give something to us, it is obviously not good for us – so why ask for it?!*

*Interestingly, many Jewish prayers involve praising G-d.*

If time allows, you may want to show in a siddur more examples of praising G-d.

<sup>82</sup> Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 2:12

<sup>83</sup> in Derech HaShem I 2:1

<sup>84</sup> Notice that the word 'prayer' can refer to many different things – praising G-d, thanking G-d, asking for things, introspection, etc.

Consider a typical prayer:

[source 3]

<p>Every day will I bless Thee; and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever.</p>	<p>בְּכָל-יוֹם אֲבָרְכֶךָ; וְאֶהְלֵל שִׁמְךָ, לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.</p>
<p>Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable<sup>85</sup></p>	<p>גָּדוֹל יְהוָה וְיִמְהָלָל מֵאֵד; וְלִגְדֹלְתוֹ, אֵין חֵקֵר</p>
<p>Psalms 145: 2-3</p>	

Does G-d really need our praises? What is, then, the function of prayer?

Prayer is a huge subject. In this session, we will explore a few central ideas about prayer to 'get the ball rolling.' See if you can find answers – or beginnings of answers – to these questions along the way.

## II. Islands of Spirituality

How do you feel about prayer?

Be honest: is it a boring obligation to fulfill or a delightful privilege to enjoy?

This is a good opportunity to let students honestly share how they feel about prayer.

[source 4]

<p>... the time of prayer is <i>the most ideal time</i>, and other times are simply paths leading toward it</p>	<p>... שעת התפלה ... כגרעין הזמן ופריו ושאר השעות תהיינה לו כדרכים המוליכות אל שעה זו שלבואה הוא מצפה כי על ידה הוא מדמה אל העצמים הרוחניים ומתרחק מן הבהמיים ...</p>
<p>To its arrival, one looks forward, because with it [the pray-er] becomes like spiritual beings and distances himself from lower beings...</p>	<p>והנה ערך כל אלה לנפש הוא כערך המזון לגוף שכן תפלת האדם טובה לנפשו כשם שהמזון תועלת לגופו</p>
<p>And also the blessing of every prayer</p>	

<sup>85</sup> The verses above were taken from the 145<sup>th</sup> Psalm, repeated three times a day in regular daily prayer:

<sup>86</sup> 3:5

<p>rests on a person until the next time of prayer, just like the power of a meal that one ate satiates one until the next meal, however the further away the time of prayer</p> <p>But at the time of prayer, a person purifies his soul from everything that happened in between, and prepares himself for the future</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Kuzari<sup>86</sup></p>	<p>וכן ברכת כל תפלה שורה על האדם עד שעת תפלה שאחריה כשם שכח הסעדה שסעד מתקים בו עד שיסעד סעדת לילה אולם ככל אשר תתרחק שעת התפלה תלך הנפש הלוך וקדור מטרדות העולם הבאות עליה ...</p> <p>אך בשעת התפלה מטהר האדם את נפשו מכל מה שעבר עליה בינתיים ומכין אותה לקראת העתיד</p>
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#### Important note to educators

In this and other matters it is important for beginners to know that every individual, no matter how 'religious' he or she is, has ups and downs - times when prayer is easier and times when prayer is harder.

If prayer is presented to them as 'constant pure ecstasy', when students don't feel that – and most of them won't, most of the time – they may simply conclude that prayer is not for them.

We want them to realize that prayer – and all of Judaism – connects to the them, is as organic as they are, and that no matter who they are and what their background is, prayer can add tremendously to their lives.

And, of course, as the Kuzari mentioned, we want students to see that prayer can be a peak experience, something to be looked forward to, not a boring obligation.

*How should prayer affect our day?*

[source 5]

<p>The more who gets involved in worldly matters, the more one is distanced from the Divine Light...</p> <p>Behold [G-d] prepared a solution for this, that a person presents himself and draws close and stands before Him, and from Him requests all his needs, and upon Him throws his burdens, and this should be the central and principal point of all his efforts, so that when he continues later in ...other means of human effort, he will not become confused and sunk in physicality and materialism, because he has already placed everything on Him</p> <p>It is a great kindness from Him to give man a place to get close to Him, even those his natural place is quite far from the light, and sunken in darkness.  Rabbi Chaim Lutzatto<sup>87</sup></p>	<p>... כי הנה כפי מה שירבה להסתבך בעניני העולם, כך מתרחק מן האור העליון ומתחשך יותר. והנה הכין הבורא ית' תיקון לזה, והוא מה שיקדים האדם ויתקרב ויעמוד לפניו ית', וממנו ישאל כל צרכיו ועליו ישליך יהבו, ויהיה זה ראשית כללי ועיקרי לכל השתדלותו, עד שכאשר ימשך אחר כך בשאר דרכי ההשתדלות שהם דרכי ההשתדלות האנושי, לא יקרא שיתבך וישתקע בגופניות וחומריות, כיון שכבר הקדים ותלה הכל בו ית'.</p> <p>ג. והנה היה מחסדו ית' לתת לאדם מקום שיתקרב לו ית', אע"פ שכפי מצבו הטבעי נמצא רחוק מן האור ...</p>
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*Suggested Question: How do these sources begin to answer our questions?*

*Suggested Answer: People need regular input from prayer to help keep us from becoming overly distanced from spirituality and G-dliness.*

### III Opening the Channels

*Can you think of other benefits prayer has for us as individuals and the world?*

Here and throughout this class (and the entire course!) students should be

*Please see the next sources:*

[source 6]

<p>No shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for the LORD G-d had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground</p>	<p>וְכֹל שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יְהִי בְּאֶרֶץ וְכָל עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְדֵי יְיָ אֶל הָאֲדָמָה עַל הָאֶרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין לְעִבֹד אֶת הָאֲדָמָה:</p>
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<sup>87</sup> Derech Hashem IV:5:2-3



[source 7]

<p>Why did it not rain? Because there was no man to work the land, and no one to recognize the goodness of rains</p> <p>When man came and recognized that they were necessary for the world, he prayed for them, and the rains came, and the trees and grasses sprouted</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Rashi Gen 2:5</p>	<p>...ומה טעם לא המטיר לפי שאדם אין לעבוד את האדמה ואין מכיר בטובתן של גשמים</p> <p>וכשבא אדם וידע שהם צורך לעולם התפלל עליהם וירדו וצמחו האילנות והדשאים:</p>
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Suggested Question: How do you understand these passages?

Suggested Explanation: It would appear that there is some input necessary from man to 'allow' G-d to give what He desires to give. What does that mean?

Why is the existence of man – and his prayer – necessary for G-d to give of his goodness? Does anyone have any ideas?

This idea is explained further in the following sources:

[source 8]

<p>The matter of prayer is, that the Highest wisdom arranged that in order for created beings to receive from G-d, they need to awaken to Him and approach Him, and beseech Him</p> <p>And according to their awakening to Him, so too will [His goodness] flow to them.</p> <p>And G-d wants that his creatures enjoy His goodness at all times, and so prepared for them this worship every day, that through it will flow His abundance, success and blessing, according to what they need in their situation in this world</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Derech Hashem<sup>88</sup></p>	<p>א. ענין התפילה הוא, כי הנה מן הסדרים שסידרה החכמה העליונה הוא, שלחיות הנבראים מקבלים שפע ממנו ית', צריך שיתעוררו הם אליו ויתקרבו לו ויבקשו פניו, וכפי התעוררותם לו כן ימשך אליהם שפע, ואם לא יתעוררו לא ימשך להם. והנה האדון ב"ה חפץ ורוצה שתרבה טובת ברואיו בכל זמניהם, והכין להם עבודה זו דבר יום ביומו, שעל ידה ימשך להם שפע ההצלחה והברכה כפי מה שהם צריכים לפי מצבם זה בזה העולם:</p>
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<sup>88</sup> IV Ch. 5 #1

*Why would G-d have designed the world in such a way that our input is necessary?*

*One could suggest that the answer lies in the following idea:*

[source 9]

<p>The Master of all, Who created them, wants what is best for them, and guided them in His precious commandments that they should gain merit, and He also informed them and opened for them an opening whereby they could attain everything they wanted for the good - that they ask from Him, Who can fill every need.</p> <p>Aside from informing them of this opening, He commanded them that they should use it, and should always request of Him their needs and wants, and aside from getting our hearts' desires, we also benefit [from prayer] in that we awaken our spirits and focus our thoughts that He is the Master of good, Who bestows good upon us, for His eyes are open on all our ways, and at all times He hears our calls...for there is no obstacle to Him in anything He wants...</p> <p>And in every time and moment He hears our calls to Him, for he Guardian of Israel neither slumbers not sleeps, and we believe in His Kingship and powers without any reservation, for there is no obstacle to anything He wants...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sefer HaChinuch<sup>89</sup></p>	<p>ואדון הכל שבראם חפץ בטובתם והדריכם והצליחם במצוותיו היקרות שיזכו בהן, והודיעם גם כן ופתח להם פתח באשר ישיגו כל משאלותיהם לטוב, והוא שיבקשו ממנו ברוך הוא אשר בידו ההסתפקות והיכולת כל חסרונן, כי הוא יענה את השמים לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת:</p> <p>ומלבד ההודעה להם בזאת המדה ציום שישתמשו בה ויבקשו ממנו תמיד כל צרכיהם וכל חפצת לבם, ומלבד השגת חפצי לבנו יש לנו זכות בדבר בהתעורר רוחנו וקבענו כל מחשבתנו כי הוא האדון הטוב והמטיב לנו, וכי עיניו פקוחות על כל דרכינו</p> <p>ובכל עת ובכל רגע ישמע זעקתנו אליו לא ינום ולא יישן שומר ישראל, והאמיננו במלכותו ויכלתו מבלי שום צד פקפוק, וכי אין לפניו מונע ומעכב בכל אשר יחפוץ</p>
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*How do our prayers affect our connection to G-d?*

*How do they affect other people and the world?*

*Do we have a better understanding of why prayer is necessary?*

<sup>89</sup> Commandment #433

## The Lesson of the Snake

Time permitting, have students read the first 3 chapters of the book of Genesis and ask them to focus on the punishments that Adam, Eve and the Snake got.

*Think back to Adam, Eve, the Snake, and the Garden of Eden.*

*Consider the snake's punishment:*

[source 10]

And the LORD G-d said unto the serpent: 'Because you have done this, cursed are you from among all cattle, and from among all beasts of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust<sup>90</sup> shall you eat all the days of your life.

Genesis 3:14

יְד וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הַנָּחָשׁ, כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת, אָרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה, וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה; עַל-גִּחְוֹנְךָ תֵּלֵךְ, וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ

*Suggested Question:* *What do you think is strange about the snake's punishment?*

*Suggested Answer:* *For the snake, food just became more plentiful, and much easier to get suddenly, he could eat just about anything from the ground, without much effort to get it! What kind of a punishment is that?! Why did G-d give such a strange punishment?*

*How do you understand this passage?*

*One way of understanding it is with the following comparison. Please read:*

[source 11]

Once there were two fathers. The first was angry with his son, gave him a \$1,000,000 check and told him: "Here, this is all you need. Now leave me alone and don't bother me!" The other father loves his son very much and wants to be close to him. He put the child on a regular allowance in order that the child constantly return to him, and thus enable a lasting bond to form.

*Suggested Question:* *According to this, what was the snake's punishment?*

*Suggested Answer:* *G-d gave the snake an easy source of sustenance because He wished to banish the snake from His presence!*

*Suggested Question:* *With this in mind, what is one of the goals of prayer?*

*Suggested Answer:* *At the deepest level, the goal of prayer is not to 'get stuff', but to get closer to G-d. G-d wants our prayers because He wants us to come*

<sup>90</sup> I.e, from the dust – any little animals or insects that are commonly and easily found there

close to Him and benefit from true meaning and spirituality. Judaism is a relationship as much as a religion. According to this, it is easier to understand why we praise G-d: He surely does not need our praises – they are to help us realize Who G-d is, so to speak, and better appreciate Who we are praying to. Sometimes, G-d specifically does not give us everything we want in order that we should pray and thus create a relationship with Him.

Looking back at our initial questions (ie Why Pray?...etc), what answers or partial answers have we seen in this session?

What other approaches resonate with you?

\* \* \*

### Conclusions

- \* Summarize the main ideas of the class
- \* Recall and praise students' contributions and participation
- \* Add in your own thoughts

Ideas to consider

- \* we asked the basic question of why pray?
- \* we saw that prayer helps connect our mundane days to spirituality.
- \* we saw that G-d designed the world so that it needs out input/prayers!
- \* we saw the Sefer HaChinuch that we are meant to pray so as to deepen our understanding and appreciation of G-d, and the punishment of the snake shows that one of the main goals of prayer is to create a relationship with G-d

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Appendix

### **More on G-d Wanting Only What is Best:**

With the development of greater understanding of G-d's kindness with the Creation, the person wants only what G-d wants for him and he rejoices with everything that G-d does to him; be it death or life, poverty or riches, good health or illness. He will have no desire for anything other than that which G-d has chosen for him and he thus subjugates himself totally to

וכאשר תחזק הכרתו יותר מזה, בחמלת הבורא על ברואיו, ירצה במה שיהיה מגזירת האלוהים לו בלבו ובלשונו ובנראהו ובנסתרו, וישמח בכל אשר עשה לו האלוהים ממוות וחיים וריש ועושר ובריאות וחולי, לא יכסוף לזולת מה שבחר לו האלוהים, ולא ירצה אלא מה שרצה לו ונמסר אל האלוהים

Hashem.	
	Chovas HaLevavos (4:7)

### **G-d Desires the Prayers of Man**

<p>(א) וַיִּסְעוּ כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּדְבַּר סִין לְמִסְעֵיהֶם עַל פִּי יְדֹד וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּרִפְיִים וְאִין מִיָּם לִשְׁתֵּי תֵּהָעָם:</p> <p>(ב) וַיִּרְבּ הָעָם עִם מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ תָנוּ לָנוּ מִיָּם וְנִשְׁתֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה מֶה תִּרְיָבוּן עִמָּדֵי מֶה תִּנְסֹוּן אֶת יְדֹד:</p> <p>(ג) וַיִּצְמָא שָׁם הָעָם לַמַּיִם וַיִּלֶן הָעָם עַל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה הָעֲלִיתֶנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לְהָמִית אֶתִּי וְאֶת בְּנֵי וְאֶת מִקְנֵי בְצָמָא:</p> <p>Ohr HaChaim Exodus 17:3</p> <p>ונראה כי ה' ניסה אותם, להדריכם לשאת עיניהם ולהתפלל לפני ה', כי זה "עיקר גדול באמונה ובהשלמת הנפש" ותמצא שנתחכם ה' על הדבר, ולא נתן להם מן יום לחודש, אלא דבר יום ביומו, ואשר על כן מנע מהם</p>
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### **G-d Answering Our Prayers**

<p>Rosh Hashana 18a</p> <p>היה רבי מאיר אומר שנים שעלו למטה וחוליין שוה וכן שנים שעלו לגרדום לידון ודין שוה זה ירד וזה לא ירד זה ניצל וזה לא ניצל מפני מה זה ירד וזה לא ירד זה ניצל וזה לא ניצל זה התפלל ונענה וזה התפלל ולא נענה מפני מה זה נענה וזה לא נענה זה התפלל תפלה שלימה נענה וזה לא התפלל תפלה שלימה לא נענה ר' אלעזר אמר כאן קודם גזר דין כאן לאחר גזר דין רבי יצחק אמר יפה צעקה לאדם בין קודם גזר דין בין לאחר גזר דין</p>
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### **Whose Words to Use?**

<p>It is a commandment to pray every day as it says, "And you shall serve the Lord your G-d", and our tradition teaches that this 'service' is prayer, as it says, 'to serve Him with all your heart' and the sages said, 'which is the service of the heart? – it is prayer.'</p> <p>The number of prayers is not Torah</p>	<p>(א) מצות עשה להתפלל בכל יום שנאמר ועבדתם את ה' אלהיכם מפי השמועה למדו שעבודה זו היא תפלה שנאמר ולעבדו בכל לבבכם אמרו חכמים אי זו היא עבודה שבלב זו תפלה</p> <p>(ב) ואין מנין התפלות מן התורה ואין משנה התפלה הזאת מן התורה ואין לתפלה זמן קבוע מן התורה:</p>
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<sup>91</sup> Hilchot Tefillah 1:1

<p>law and the wording of the prayers is not Torah law and prayer does not have prescribed times from the Torah Maimonides<sup>91</sup></p>	
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*Considering this, why not form our own prayers? Why do we use the words of other people?*

*How does the following text begin to deal with the question?*

<p>Rabbi Yochanan said...  One hundred and twenty sages, including several prophets, established the 'Eighteen Blessings' in order Megillah 17b</p>	<p>אמר רבי יוחנן... מאה ועשרים זקנים ובהם כמה נביאים תיקנו שמונה עשרה ברכות על הסדר</p>
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Suggested Question *How do you understand this text? Does it help to answer the question?*

Suggested Answer: *The Gemora here notes that the authors of the prayers we now say were not your run of the mill 'think tank'. It was a large group of sages who had in their midst the last of the prophets. Who better to design the prayers that are most powerful and most meaningful?*

Suggested Question *Is there any room in Judaism for individual prayer?*

Suggested Answer: *Definitely yes! It is wonderful to pray at various moments during the day, aside from 'official prayer times'. Furthermore, consider the following source from the Code of Jewish Law:*

<p>If a person wants to add [personal prayers] during the middle blessings, in the spirit of the blessing, they can add...  And in the 'Shomeah Tefillah' blessing, a person can request all their needs... Orech Chaim 119:1</p>	<p>אם רצה להוסיף בכל ברכה מהאמצעית, מעין הברכה, מוסיף. ...ובשומע תפלה יכול לשאול כל צרכיו...</p>
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*Note also the following important point:*

<p>One may pray in any language which he desires  Orech Chaim 101:4</p>	<p>יכול להתפלל בכל לשון שירצה...</p>
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## Divine Prayer

One of the most esoteric passages in the Talmud actually relates very strongly to prayer, but not prayer as we know it...

<p>Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Yossi:</p> <p>How do we know that G-d prays?</p> <p>As it says, "And I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them rejoice in the house of My prayer."</p> <p>[the verse] does not say, 'their prayer', rather 'My prayer'.</p> <p>From here we learn that G-d prays.</p> <p>What does he pray?</p> <p>Rav Zutra said in the name of Rav Tuvia in the name of Rav: it should be My will that My mercy overcomes my anger, and my mercy spreads over my judgment, and that I treat my children with mercy, and act with them beyond the letter of the law Talmud Bavli Tractate Brochos 7a</p>	<p>אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי יוסי מנין שהקדוש ברוך הוא מתפלל שנאמר והביאותים אל הר קדשי ושמחתים בבית תפילתי תפלתם לא נאמר אלא תפילתי מכאן שהקדוש ברוך הוא מתפלל</p> <p>מאי מצלי אמר רב זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב יהי רצון מלפני שיכבשו רחמי את כעסי ויגולו רחמי על מדותי ואתנהג עם בני במדת רחמים ואכנס להם לפני משורת הדין</p>
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## **Praying with Concentration**

<p>Maimonides Hilchot Tefillah 4:15-16</p> <p>טו כוונת הלב כיצד: כל תפילה שאינה בכוונה, אינה תפילה... טז כיצד היא הכוונה--שיפנה ליבו מכל המחשבות, ויראה עצמו כאילו הוא עומד לפני השכינה; לפיכך צריך לישב מעט קודם התפילה, כדי לכוון את ליבו, ואחר כך יתפלל, בנחת ובתחנונים. ולא יעשה תפילתו כמי שהיה נושא משאוי, משליכו והולך לו; לפיכך צריך לישב מעט אחר התפילה, ואחר כך ייפטר...</p>
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<p>'To Love the Lord your G-d and to serve him with all your heart' (Deut 11)</p> <p>Which is the service of the heart? We</p>	<p>לאהבה את ה' אלהיכם ולעבדו בכל לבבכם(דברים יא)</p> <p>איזו היא עבודה שהיא בלב הוי אומר זו תפלה</p>
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would say this is Prayer	Ta'anis 2a
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<p>(1) there is a positive commandment to pray every day, as it says, 'To Love the Lord your G-d and to serve him with all your heart' (Deut 11) and we learned through tradition that this service is prayer</p> <p>Which is the service of the heart? We would say this is Prayer</p> <p>Maimonides (Hilchot Tefilla 1;1-2)</p>	<p>(א) מצות עשה להתפלל בכל יום שנאמר ועבדתם את ה' אלהיכם מפי השמועה למדו שעבודה זו היא תפלה שנאמר ולעבדו בכל לבבכם אמרו חכמים אי זו היא עבודה שבלב זו תפלה ואין מנין התפלות מן התורה ואין משנה התפלה הזאת מן התורה ואין לתפלה זמן קבוע מן התורה:</p> <p>(ב) ... חיוב מצוה זו כך הוא שיהא אדם מתחנן ומתפלל בכל יום ומגיד שבחו של הקדוש ברוך הוא ואחר כך שואל צרכיו שהוא צריך להם בבקשה ובתחנה ואחר כך נותן שבח והודיה לה' על הטובה שהשפיע לו כל אחד לפי כחו:</p>
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Judaism 101  
Recommended Reading

Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Judaism (Alpha) by: Benjamin Blech  
An excellent intro to Jewish philosophy. It deals with all the major issues such as belief, free will, mitzvot, intellect and faith, etc.

Gateway to Judaism (Artscroll) by: Mordechai Becher  
The What, How, and Why of Jewish Life

Jewish Matters (Targum/Feldheim) by: Doron Kornbluth  
In this lightweight, pocket-size book, twenty-three Jewish leaders, thinkers, and educators offer their insights and knowledge on topics as varied as relationships, prayer, mysticism and happiness.

Permission to Believe (Targum/Feldheim) by: Lawrence Kelemen  
Four rational approaches to G-d's existence.

The Everything Torah Book: (Adams) by Yaakov Menken  
An introduction to the Torah and Jewish thought and practice.

Recommended Surfing

[www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com)

[www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org)

[www.ohr.edu](http://www.ohr.edu)

[www.simpletoremember.com](http://www.simpletoremember.com)

[www.torah.org](http://www.torah.org)