



# Light Lines

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## Light Insight

### *Hands Up!*

*“And the Priest shall take the basket from your hands...” (Ki Savo 26:4)*

**H**ands are unique. Hands are different from the other limbs of the body. The other limbs of the body are fixed and static, whereas the hands may be lowered below the feet or raised higher than the head.

The same is true on an allegorical/ethical level. Man can lower his hands: i.e., he can stoop to the lowest

of the low. He can commit the greatest sins possible. He can murder. He can steal.

Everything can be done with the hands. Idiomatically we talk of ‘blood on his hands’ or ‘dirty hands.’

However, the hands can also be raised up. They can perform the holiest acts. When the Priest blesses the people he raises his hands. Hands give charity. They put on *tefillin*. We extend ‘the hand’ of friendship and assistance.

The handiwork of a person is symbolized by the acquisitions that his hands have brought him. For this reason, the first fruits of the farmer’s crops must be made holy as *Bikkurim*.

As commanded in this week’s Torah portion, the first of the harvest must be brought to the Holy Temple and given into the hands of the Priests as a show of appreciation and recognition of G-d’s providing the produce of the land for us.

The first fruits of every year, before the rest of the crops can be enjoyed, must be brought to Jerusalem.

Since the beginning of something always influences what follows, every beginning needs to be holy. For when the beginning is holy, everything that follows will also be holy.

When the hands are raised above the head, when their direction is heavenwards, then the head and the body will inevitably follow after them.

## LOVE of the LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

### *The Missing Ingredient*

*“Let my tongue cleave to my palate if I do not remember you, if I do not bring up the memory of Jerusalem at the peak of my joy.” (Psalms 137:6)*

not be complete as long as the Holy Temple has not yet been rebuilt in Jerusalem. At the height of the nuptial celebration, we take a moment to recall that even this boundless joy is yet incomplete.

**T**his is the source of our custom of breaking a glass at weddings. It is a gesture that reminds us that our joy can

Another dimension of meaning is added to the passage by the great eighteenth century scholar, Rabbi Yonatan Eybshutz of Prague, in his classic *Ya’arot Devash* (Lecture 14). He writes that even if a Jew should have achieved all of his heart’s desires outside the Land of Israel, it is incumbent upon him to remember that he is still missing the most important ingredient of success. As long as he is not in the Land of Israel, with the Holy Temple rebuilt, he cannot achieve ultimate fulfillment and happiness.

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## The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

**S**ometimes we feel we lack the tools to judge others favorably. We see no possible excuse for certain behavior. We can prove how talented we can be in inventing excuses for others by seeing how well we do it for ourselves.

Take, for example, the case of ...

### The Practicing Doctor and His Prescription Slip

**T**he telephone rang at our pharmacy. It was the doctor. He demanded to know why the pharmacist had dispensed medication other than the one he had prescribed. The pharmacist apologized, but the doctor continued with a lengthy speech as to how important it is to dispense what is prescribed, responsibility to the public, etc.

Afterwards, the pharmacist sifted through the pile of prescriptions to find the relevant prescription. To her surprise, she

discovered she had indeed dispensed what had been prescribed! It was the doctor who had erred — he had written the wrong prescription by mistake. She rang the doctor and explained the situation.

“Oh, well, anyone can make a mistake,” was his casual reply.

*For ourselves or someone we care about, it is surprising how easy it is to justify mistaken behavior — or at least to reserve judgment. Suddenly we become very creative and imaginative. We tap intellectual and emotional strengths we didn't know were there.*

*Next time we're struck by the seeming misbehavior of someone else, we should flex our talents giving others, too, the benefit of the doubt.*

## Response Line

Sarah Ross wrote:

Dear Rabbi,  
What is the Torah view on the possibility of life on other planets?

Dear Sarah,

Rabbi Chasdai Crescas (14th century) writes that nothing in the Torah precludes the existence of life on other

worlds. The verse “Your Kingdom is one which encompasses all worlds...” (Psalms 145:13) implies the existence of more than one world. According to the Talmud there are 18,000 (at least!). The existence of these other worlds and the fact that they rely on Divine Providence make it reasonable to assume that life does exist there!

The *Sefer Habrit* states that extraterrestrial creatures exist but that they have no free will. He adds that we shouldn't expect creatures from another world to

resemble earthly life, any more than sea creatures resemble land animals.

Now you might ask, what possible purpose could there be for the existence of ‘Martians’ who possess no free will? This problem prompted Rabbi Yosef Albo (author of *Sefer Ikkarim*) to view their existence as illogical.

However, a possible purpose for their existence can be found in the work *Tikunei Zohar*, which states that in the future each *tzaddik* (righteous person) will rule over a star and have an entire world to himself. This world with its entire population would serve to enhance the *tzaddik's* spiritual growth.

## Light Update

### “Ohr Somayach” Namesake Honored

**A**t the Ohr Somayach campus on Ohr Somayach Street in Jerusalem a special tribute was paid on August 26th/4 Elul to the memory of Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen, the famed rabbi of the Latvian com-

munity of Dvinsk and author of the classic scholarly work “Ohr Somayach” for whom our institution is named.

Rabbi Nota Schiller, founding dean of Ohr Somayach, delivered an address, to an overflow audience of students and guests, based on the insights of the great Torah scholar, who passed away 72 years ago.

Audio cassettes of the address are available upon request from the Ohr Somayach Audio Library - fax number: 972-2-581-2890 or email: audio@ohr.israel.net.