



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

Man Alive

N*eshama*. She had always liked her name. Neshama. A name which whispered the very breath of life. Neshama breathed in deeply the life-giving fluid in which she floated. Turning on her side, the life-support cable gently undulated in the dark liquid-world like a lethargic seasnake. It was at a time like this that one thought about the elemental things. Name. Life. The future. She was frightened. What lay ahead of her? As far back as she could remember, she had been in this safe secure waterworld. Now her life was drawing to an end. Death, non-being, the end of all she knew, of knowledge itself, awaited her at the tunnel's end. Like a puny raft circling on the edge of a giant whirlpool, she felt herself being drawn inexorably down into the vortex. Panic rose in her mouth. A primordial fear of the unknown gripped her. I don't want to die! I want to stay in this world and live forever! She had spent her days here in deep meditation on the secrets of the universe with her spiritual guide. But now she was alone. And she knew this was the end.

The time had come. It seemed that her ears filled with the most sublime music. A single chord of all the watervoices sounding one wordless chord undulating through every known scale. The sound grew and grew. She was terrified. Terrified of the pain. Terrified of not feeling the pain anymore. Down and down she went. Down to the world's end. Down to the place of death. It was here. This was the end. It was over. She had died.

It wasn't a particularly busy night in the delivery rooms at Hadassah Hospital. Another little soul had just come into the world. Screaming and crying as though she had been summoned reluctantly to this earthly sphere. The nurse cleaned the little baby, wrapped her in swaddling to keep her warm, and gave the baby into her mother's arms. The mother looked at her newborn daughter and thought to herself. "You are so beautiful, little Neshama."

Like the dark world before this existence, this world too is no more than a dark corridor compared with the great palace of light into which we will enter. This world is the place where we have the opportunity to prepare ourselves to enter that palace. To the extent that we prepare, so we

will be able to bask in that radiance.

I don't know about you, but I don't find it so easy to see this world as a corridor. It's so easy to get caught up looking at all the neon signs along the way. It's so easy to think that this world is the palace itself. And it's a pretty shabby palace for all its beauty. Is there anyone here who dies with even half his dreams fulfilled? With how many problems and heartaches and backaches is this world filled!

This week's parsha is called *Chayei Sara* — "The Lives of Sarah." It's a strange title. This is the Parsha in which Sarah passes away. So why is it called "The Lives of Sarah?"

The name is apt. Because only when we leave this passing world do we really start to live. Later in the book of Genesis, there is a Parsha called *Vayechi Yaakov* — "And Jacob lived." That's the Parsha in which Jacob passes away. As the Talmud says, "the righteous in their deaths are called alive."

There's an interesting fact about the Hebrew word for "life." It has no singular. *Chaim* is a plural noun. Maybe that's to remind our *neshama*, our soul, that there are two lives — and this one is only a prelude to the "main attraction."

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY*

Giving people the benefit of the doubt

Warning: If you don't judge favorably, your midnight complaints against your neighbors might just be...

Pipe Dreams

An elderly lady who lives above us kept complaining that we banged our baby's crib into the walls at night. I tried to tell her it might be pipes. She didn't believe me. A little bit later one late night, I heard a commotion from their bathroom. It seemed a pipe or something had burst. The noise stopped after that. I still wonder if she realized I was right.

LOVE of the LAND

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

A Land Like Yours

When Sancheriv followed up his destruction of the Kingdom of Israel and the exiling of the ten tribes which inhabited it with a siege of Jerusalem, Capital of the Kingdom of Judea, he sent messengers to persuade the besieged Jews to surrender. He promised to transfer them to "a land like your own land." (*Melachim II 18:32*).

The respect he showed for the Land of Israel by not daring to suggest that there was a land superior to it, say our Sages, gained for him the merit of being referred to elsewhere (*Ezra 4:10*) as "the great and noble Asnappar" (*Sanhedrin 94a*).

Response Line

Hungry for Torah

David Haneve wrote:

I'm 37 with no real Jewish education. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed with the idea of studying Torah, yet at this time of life I have a real hunger for it. I haven't started a family yet; I don't want them to inherit the spiritual void that I did. Any ideas?

Dear David,

A friend of mine from yeshiva, when his wife was expecting their first, broke the news to me by saying: "I've got eight years now to study *Bava Metzia!*" (*Bava Metzia* is traditionally the first tractate

boys begin when they start studying Talmud at age eight.) We all feel a bit lacking when it comes to our children's Torah education.

I support your desire to start studying. It is basically the only real cure for assimilation and intermarriage in the Jewish community at large, and in our own future generations in particular. There's no time like now to begin.

The best thing is if you can give a block of time — it doesn't have to be too long — but enough so that you can make a real foundation which you can build upon. A year of study would be great, but even a few weeks would make a big difference.

Where do you live? Exactly

how much Jewish education do you have? Where you are with respect to job or career? Any info you give can help me suggest where you should study and for how long. If you can't take out a block of time, I can also probably help you arrange a study partner or Torah classes where you are.

I don't think you have to worry about your children "inheriting a spiritual void." Regardless of your own level of actual knowledge, you can raise your children in a solid Jewish community and send them to a good Jewish school. Then, all they need to inherit from you is your "hunger" for spirituality! (By the way, who did you inherit your spiritual hunger from? Could it be that your parents deserve a little credit?)