



***Authentic Kabbalah - Sephardic Studies
Benei Noah Studies - Anti-Missionary/Anti-Cult Materials***

Perspectives Insights into Mortality

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As we approach the New Year, the Day of Judgment for our souls, it is important for us to remember the one element about life that we often seek to forget.

Whether we like it or not, we are all fragile, mortal beings. Any type of bad occurrence can befall any one of us at any time, without any warning.

I know, this is a rather depressing thought. Thank G-d most of us will not have to deal with any type of serious tragedy over the coming year. Yet, tragedy will strike, some one, some where, at some unexpected time. It is the nature of things.

So, ask yourself this, how do you beat the odds? How do you avoid personal tragedy? True, one can avoid dangerous places and practices. One can safeguard one's health to the maximum degree. These practices and those similar to them might very well make the odds in your favor that tragedy would pass over your door in this coming year.

Yet, are life and its ups and downs really a simple matter of luck and the odds being in your favor? Live the best you can, be healthy, wealthy and strong, just to be struck down by a drunk driver, or some other mishap or accident? We hope not, we pray not, yet we can never really be sure.

I have known good people who have died over this last year, who started their year and the day of their deaths with full confidence and faith in G-d that they would live to complete it. But, they never did. Where is the logic in this? Where is the justice?

If you are looking to understand the rhyme and reason of life and G-d's rule over creation, you better give up your search right now, for look in vain for answers you are. G-d's wisdom is unfathomable. Why He allows innocent, sweet, good people to die is beyond the wisdom of anyone I know.

Granted, we can all talk about reincarnation, past life accounts, punishments of sin and every other reason we can muster to justify the loss of one who could never deserve such a fate as accidental or violent death. We can comfort ourselves with all our words and beliefs. Yet, we all know how little those words and beliefs really comfort us when the loss is personal. When we lose a loved one, we cry out and ask why. Yet, even if G-d Himself were to answer us from Heaven, the answer alone would not comfort us for our loss.

There is an old saying, "there but for the grace of G-d go I." We must all remember this. Life is not a certainty. There are no guarantees. Today you can go off to work or drop the kids off at school, get entangled in a car accident, and never come home. As depressing as it might sound, every minute can indeed be our last.

Now, we cannot go through life with apprehension and fear, waiting for our personal moment of death. A life like this is no life at all. No, G-d gave us life in this world to enjoy it, and so we should. Of course, we know that not all joyous things are good for us. We all know there are many enjoyable things that are very bad for us. Sometimes we stay away from them, sometimes we don't.

All in all, we must live each day of our lives as if it were our last because you never know it might just be.

If indeed today was your last day on earth before your judgment before the Heavenly Throne, what would you do?

Would you tell your loved ones how much you really love them and appreciate them? Would you fall on your knees in sincere prayer and ask G-d to forgive your sins? Would you take a significant sum of money to donate to charity, to help all those in life whom until now you ignored? Seriously, ask yourself, what would you do?

Maybe you are not worried about all this and maybe you should be. True, not everyone is going to meet with tragedy this coming year; at least I hope not, I pray not.

What it all boils down to is this: life is short, life is fragile, at best! G-d grants us a very finite time here on earth and instills within each of us our own personal missions in life. Our obligation, our purpose in life is to figure out what it is that G-d wants from us and to do it!

Finding out what G-d wants from us is both an easy and an almost impossible task rolled up into one. We know G-d wants us to observe the mitzvot of the Torah, so we do. Benei Torah observe the 613 mitzvot and Benei Noah observe their seven. Yet, even very righteous Benei Torah and Benei Noah suffer personal tragedies. There must be something more that G-d wants from us, and indeed, there is.

More than anything else G-d wants us to observe those commandments which make us to be better human beings. How many times have we been commanded to safeguard our speech, to refine our personalities, to act with sincere kindness and support to all others? How many of these commandments do we truly fulfill on a daily basis?

Life is not a gamble. The luck of the draw does not decide our fate. Life and death are not haphazard occurrences. Everything in life and death comes about by the Hand of the Almighty Creator. And yet, G-d is not some heartless beast who seeks to punish and hurt us because we

succumb to human frailties. On the contrary, we are surrounded by the grace of G-d and His non-stop miracles at every moment of life.

Life itself is a miracle. Health is a miracle. Wealth is a miracle. All good things are miracles, be they great or small.

All things are in G-d's Hands. Therefore, our Sages advise to contemplate our mortality and recognize what are the truly important things in our lives.

Doing the truly important things everyday, this is what shines G-d's Countenance upon us. The important things, those are the ones that require of us effort and sacrifice. The important things are those that sometimes require of us an uncomfortable investment of our time, our monies and most important, our hearts. Yet, is this not how G-d commanded us to love Him, as it says, you shall love HaShem your G-d with ALL your heart, with ALL your soul (time) and with ALL your might (money)."

As we approach Rosh HaShana, I too must contemplate these things. I too must do the important things.

Many years ago, I recognized my life's calling was to be a Rabbi. Through the study of the Torah according to the Sephardim and the Kabbalah, I became aware of such beauty and such wisdom that I knew I just had to share them with others. I quickly realized just how many people out there, just like me, craved this learning and the inner peace it brings. Thus for the last 20 years, I have been sharing and teaching, endeavoring to make the sublime lessons of the Torah and Kabbalah relevant, practical and easy for all to see and understand. This is my gift to you and to the world.

Let me get very personal here and share with you all a personal passion of mine. The greatest Biblical vision that I hold in my heart is the words spoken by Isaiah the prophet. He spoke about a coming day when all the nations of the world would beat their swords into plowshares and the spears into pruning hooks, that nation would no longer raise the sword against another and war would be no more. This is the day, more than any other, I would love to see finally come. I long for the day when all of us can see the Face of G-d, know His truth and finally live by it, in peace. To bring this day close, I have devoted my life and my teachings.

We have enough pain in this world without our having to add to it by our own evil and stupidity. I say these words as war rages in the Middle East with every sign pointing to it getting worse and not better. More terrible wars threaten us for one reason alone, we do not express the necessary resolve to solve a problem before it grows into a monster. Israel could have easily solved the Arab problem back in 1967 by simply transferring the Jordanian population of Judea and Samaria back to Jordan. They missed this and many other opportunities. Now there is a monster on the loose and it has all our heads into a noose, as we just sit there watching . . .but this is not the time to discuss politics.

I am not a prophet; I cannot foresee the future. I cannot tell you for sure whether we will have war or peace in this coming New Year. However, I can tell you one thing. I want to tell you what I am doing and I want to encourage you to do the same.

I am recognizing my own mortality. I am living my life for the sake of the Higher Good. I am making whatever efforts I can to awaken sleeping souls. I want for each and every one of you to

have a blessed New Year. I pray not just that you would have money and health, but that more importantly you would have love and fulfillment of your life's purpose as ordained for you by G-d.

It is time to stop clowning around and acting as children. We all have responsibilities to fulfill, some of them will be painful, but to paraphrase Hillel, if I do not fulfill my responsibilities, who else can do it for me?

Our responsibilities are to the members of our families, our community, our Torah and most important to our G-d. Remember, it is G-d who is pulling all the strings and at any moment, He can cut those strings.

The things that we do in life either strengthen or weaken the strings through which we are attached to G-d. Keep focused on the important things.

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