

ב"ה



THOUGHTS  
TO LIVE BY

BY

HESCHEL GREENBERG

# 70 THOUGHTS TO LIVE BY

Published by the  
Jewish Discovery Center  
Institute for Jewish Studies  
© 2018 Rabbi Heschel Greenberg  
212 Exeter Road  
Williamsville, NY 14221  
716-632-0467  
716-245-9520  
[rabbigreenberg@yahoo.com](mailto:rabbigreenberg@yahoo.com)

# INTRODUCTION

The following are 70 maxims that are an attempt to capture the spirit of Judaism as it is illuminated by the teachings of Chassidic philosophy. Many of these thoughts were based on or inspired by the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Each one of these memes can easily be elaborated on to form an entire book. However, the purpose of these pithy messages is simply to ignite a spark within us.

I have undertaken this project, with G-d's help, in conjunction with my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, on the 13th of Shvat 5778, as a way of expressing my profound gratitude to the Almighty for the gift of life and all the abundant blessings, material and spiritual with which He has blessed me and my family.

My fervent hope and prayer is that these maxims will add a little bit more light to the world that will dispel the last remnants of darkness of exile and thereby contribute to the Final Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, without any further delay.

Heschel Greenberg

January 17 2018/Rosh Chodesh Shvat 5778

Buffalo, New York

70 THOUGHTS TO LIVE BY



**Joy is a statement: I am free!**



**Happiness is our soul's most natural state  
because our soul is a part of G-d and G-d identifies  
with joy.**



**True love is a composite of giving and receiving;  
with the emphasis on giving.**



**To love another you must love yourself; that is, the  
Divine Other in yourself.**



**A person who can find what to love in himself or  
herself can see the good in everyone**





**In Hebrew, the words gratitude and confession  
share the same root.**

**A person who is honest with himself or herself can  
appreciate and be grateful to others as well.**

**Denial of one's faults is driven by a distorted, ego-  
driven sense of self which prevents one from  
seeing the good in others.**



**Anxiety is often the soul's sense of frustration at not fulfilling its mission on earth. It fears returning to its source empty handed.**

**The cure for this soul driven anxiety must include giving the soul what it wants and needs.**



**Ambition is the soul's desire to return to its heavenly source. When ambition is married to spiritual growth we have heaven on earth.**



**Relationships are built on communication through speech.**

**Speech comes from the soul's essence that transcends all parameters and aspects of one's personality including emotion and intellect.**

**Speech is the medium that allows us to transcend ourselves so that we can connect to another.**



**Tzedakah is not simply an act of kindness. It is  
righting the wrongs built into creation.**

**However, when we give it with kindness we bring  
goodness into a just world.**



**Tikkun Olam, repairing the world is not just about fighting injustice.**

**The word *olam* is related to the word “concealed.”**

**Tikkun Olam is therefore about removing the smokescreen that does not let us see the Divine in creation.**



**Love is both selfish and selfless.**

**But true love is when the selfless outweighs the  
selfish**



**The mind is a terrible thing to waste, but is preferable to one whose brilliant mind is wasted on terrible things.**





**A pessimist sees the glass half empty.**

**An optimist sees the glass half full.**

**A Jew with faith anticipates the Messianic Redemption when the glass will be entirely full and the whole world will see it that way.**



**Faith is the foundation. Mitzvot are the structure.**

**Without the foundation the structure cannot endure; without the structure there is no point to the foundation.**



**The study of Torah is the ultimate experience of love; G-d allows us to enter into and share His most intimate space.**



**A Mitzvah is both a G-dly commandment and a means to connect to Him.**

**Prayer is also bonding.**

**A Mitzvah is G-d's lifeline to us while prayer is our effort to climb steep mountains on our own.**



**A Mitzvah is where G-d reaches out to touch us;  
prayer is when we reach out to touch Him.**



**Bigotry is ugly.**

**Worse, however, is when you do not help your own.**



**In the amoral world, privilege generates arrogance  
and condescension.**

**In the world of Torah morality, privilege humbles  
and generates a sense of responsibility for the  
less fortunate.**



**Chaim, the Hebrew word for life is in the plural tense. This informs us that life is only worthy of its name when it is with and for another - The Rebbe**





**Judge others favorably but approach your own  
faults before G-d with brutal honesty**



**Guilt is to the soul what pain is to the body.**

**If we wallow in it, it is negative.**

**If it spurs us to heal it is positive.**



**When searching for root causes of our flaws we  
must examine our mindset.**

**Perhaps we need a paradigm shift.**



**One of the significant contributions of Moshiach is  
his ability to change our mindsets with his  
knowledge and inspiration**



**In Galut-exile we evaluate things, events and people by their relative worth.**

**In the Messianic Age we will recognize and appreciate their intrinsic and essential value.**



**Positive thinking begets positive results.**

**However positive thinking because of our faith in  
G-d's presence in our lives begets Divine results.**



**The difference between positive and Divine is that one has limits and the other has not.**

**The former keeps us confined to the natural order, while the latter is liberating and transcendent.**



**While our generation may appear to be the “heels of the heels” of all of the past generations, we are the most unique generation of all of history.**

**Precisely because of our devotion to the Torah and Mitzvos, notwithstanding the darkness and degradation of society, we are rightfully the strongest and most robust generation of history.**

**We are the most worthy and receptive generation for the Geulah-Redemption! - The Rebbe**





**The word face in Hebrew, Panim, means inward.**

**We show our inner character on our face.**



**Division generates and multiplies negativity; while  
adding senseless love subtracts and eliminates  
our exile!**



**The more Divine and real an obstacle is, the greater  
the power we were given to overcome it!**



**When we suffer, we cannot tolerate harsh talk.**

**In times like these, we need the warm embrace of  
our heavenly Father.**



**Creative accounting is immoral, especially if it concerns our own self-assessment.**

**We are guilty of “cooking the books” by underestimating our true value just as when we overstate it.**



**A soul is a terrible thing to waste.**

**It is equally tragic when we forget we possess it.**



**Reaching the 100 mark from 99 can be more dramatic than reaching from 1 to 99!**



**A good leader commands.**

**Sometimes he commands us to do something.**

**Sometimes he commands us to be independent.**





**Waiting for an exciting event need not be a source  
of anxiety.**

**Waiting for a future event requires internalizing  
features of that event now!**

**Preparing for the ideal Messianic Age requires  
living that ideal life now!**



**Subtlety is an art form and should be used sparingly.**

**Tough love is a necessary tool to help those with a hard  
crust; but open love is the goal.**

**Some reach out to G-d scale and conquer mountains.**

**Some believe in themselves for salvation.**

**Torah teaches us to search for, discover and reveal our  
inner G-dly strength to surmount all obstacles.**



**Not all evil was created equally.**

**Some forms of evil must be destroyed.**

**Some forms actually contain a spark of goodness.**

**They are salvageable.**

**Moshiach will rid the world of the former and  
empower us to convert the latter.**



**While life is mostly about engagement; there are times when we must disengage.**

**Disengagement is positive when it is from a stifling atmosphere.**



**True Life is two dimensional.**

**If *chai* (18) is synonymous with life then the number 36 (*lamed vav*) represents life in its fullest, two dimensional sense.**

**Are you a *lamed vavnik*?**



**We fail when we embrace and institutionalize our  
G-d given limits.**

**Nothing is sweeter to G-d's "ears" than the music  
created by going beyond our "enough-ness"  
mindset.**



**There are two ways of viewing wealth.**

**We can either see it through a smokescreen or see  
its naked essence.**

**Seen through the smokescreen of human nature it  
will corrupt.**

**Removing the fog transforms wealth into a powerful  
vehicle to spiritual growth.**



**We demand equal representation and treatment of people.**

**We must hear both sides of a dispute before deciding who is right.**

**We too have two internal forces.**

**We must not allow our natural instincts (derived from our “Animal Soul”) to voice their opinion before we listen to our conscience; our G-dly soul.**





**Mourning the destruction of the Temple is about grieving the loss of G-dly innocence and sanity in our world.**

**Prayers for the Temple are about the restoration of G-d's palpable presence in our physical existence.**

**The rebuilt Temple will thus restore innocence and sanity to a terribly flawed world!**



**An anniversary of an event is when the event  
comes to life again.**

**An anniversary of a tragedy is when we focus on  
what we lost and endeavor to restore it with even  
greater vigor.**



**“A journey begins with but one step,” is a popular adage.**

**Our path to total and immediate Redemption needs one small, even imperceptible, redirection**



**Who is the real realist? The pessimist or the  
optimist?**

**Both, when combined!**

**We believe that the future will be good, but we  
must act as if it wouldn't happen without our  
efforts.**



**When you see a person whose past leaves much to be desired and who needs guidance, rather than tell them simply what they did wrong, show them how they could use the same energies for good.**

**Instead of focusing on their negative choices, emphasize how the very same circumstances that led to their degradation can be a catalyst for growth.**



**Flatterers praise you to your face but ridicule you  
behind your back.**

**Moses taught us to do the opposite:**

**While Moses berated the people for their  
worshipping of the Golden Calf to their face, he  
attempted to invoke G-d's love for His people.**



**In exile, we are confused about life's experiences  
and we often don't know our place; our mission in  
life.**



**Exile is also characterized by a lack of awareness of G-d's role in our lives. We don't see the Divine in everything; we tend to forget G-d's many miracles.**





**Often after reciting our prayers and meditating about G-d, we can go on to engage in behavior that is unG-dly.**

**It is not a sign of insincerity or hypocrisy; it is a sign that we have an exile, forgetfulness mentality.**



**Judaism loves paradoxes because they highlight  
our ability to unite opposites.**

**Expect to find light precisely where it is most dark!**



**Singularity is a virtue in terms of a goal; but the way to reach our goals is best served by authentic diversity.**



**Egos are strange.**

**They can diminish us by ostensibly getting us to do  
more.**



**Some ideologies glorify the soul.**

**Some cultures worship the body.**

**Judaism believes in their synergetic nature.**



**We have been conditioned to see the good even in  
adversity.**

**Judaism wants us to use that recognition as a  
means to finally eliminate all adversity.**



**Prayer for a benefit is laudable.**

**Prayer for self-expression is both soothing and  
exhilarating**

**Prayer to converse with G-d is the most ideal form  
of prayer and breaks through all barriers!**



**Chutzpah is a negative trait when it is for selfish reasons.**

**Chutzpah is kosher and even holy when it is for others.**





**When G-d says no to our requests for salvation, it  
is not always no.**

**When G-d says no to one person it is not  
necessarily no to others.**

**G-d wants us to protest His will that we languish in  
exile and bring us Moshiach!**



**The worst part of alienation is that we become  
alienated from the realization that we are  
alienated.**



**Much of life is spent on running away from pain and negativity.**

**That is a formidable challenge.**

**An even greater challenge is when we confront adversity precisely when we are ready to embrace unadulterated positivity.**

**Today, on the cusp of the Messianic Age, we were entrusted with this greater challenge**



**Judaism is obsessed with G-d's unity.**

**Yet there are 13 Principles of Faith.**

**In truth, all of these 13 emerge from one principle.**

**IT is no wonder that the numerical value of the  
word *echad*—one is 13!**



**Torah is unique because it is G-d's only direct communication with every Jew.**

**Nature, although G-d's creation, can only pick up an echo of His original voice.**



**A human being is both a social creature and a lover  
of privacy.**

**Our challenge is to know how to balance these two  
opposite traits of creating wall of separation and  
doors to get through the barrier**



**Barriers and obstacles were made to be  
transcended.**



**There is a perennial conflict between mind and heart.**

**The solution to this challenge is by developing a deeper understanding of the mind-heart construct.**

**This is the Mitzvah of Tefillin.**





**Conventional wisdom teaches us that despite being on the ground you can still climb high.**

**Chassidic wisdom believes that *because* you are so low you can climb high!**