

The Joy of Judaism: A practical guide to spiritual living using Judaism's timeless teachings by Sam Glaser Quotes

Rabbi Hillel stated in Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers 2:5), "In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man." Hineni is an invitation for all of us to take initiative toward greatness. Why do we think small? According to author Marianne Williamson, we are marooned in a societal "conspiracy for mediocrity." We make excuses for staying in jobs we hate, we're habitually late, we procrastinate, break diets and promises. These excuses keep us cemented in place. Why do others accept our excuses? Because they, too, don't want to be held accountable. Listen to President Truman: "The buck stops here!" The next time the opportunity presents itself, be the one to stand up and take responsibility, or as Mahatma Gandhi says, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world."¹

Humans are hard-wired for connection and tears are the ultimate connector. As Rabbi Stephen Baars explains, tears are both glue and solvent. They bond us together and wash away barriers. Think about the impact of videos of sobbing, malnourished kids in Africa. We cannot "stand idly by" while someone is crying.²

Chassidic master Rabbi Tzadok HaCohen (1823-1900) argues that humankind ranks above the angels because we are the only creatures in existence sanctifying God through struggle. Angels have it easy! Mastering the Science of Struggle is an essential skill in the pursuit of the Joy of Judaism, a prerequisite to forging a meaningful relationship with a living God.³

Most Jewish day schools present only 90% of the breadth of Torah. What's the missing 10%? It's the "why" of Judaism: why we do mitzvot, why we serve God, why we are different from the other nations of the world, why we merit redemption. How shocking that Charedi youth can't explain why one says Sh'ma or Sim Shalom. Without emphasis placed on communicating this first 10%, observance can become rote and meaningless. Asking fundamental questions should not be seen as heretical; ignoring the "why" of Judaism imperils the Jewish future.⁴

¹ 8 (Kindle Ed)

² 16

³ 20-21

⁴ 23

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan offers an unconventional description of hell in his book, "If You Were God." According to our sages, we are constantly measured on how we maximize our potential. We are not judged against our peers. Instead, at the end of one hundred and twenty years (the ideal human life span based on that of Moshe Rabbeinu, Moses our teacher), we are faced with the discrepancy between our potential self and actual self. The degree of difference between them is a source of tremendous humiliation, the "fires of hell." Were we the best that we could be? By nailing free will decisions, we have a better chance of finishing the game in alignment with our greatest potential.⁵

Remaining present with the inevitability of death keeps us humble. We can never fully complete the task. There is always more to learn and experience. How can we leave this world a better place? Ideally, we prioritize estate planning before the need arises. Hopefully this plan benefits multiple charities with which we were involved. In spite of efforts to the contrary, we can't take it with us when we go. Billionaire Edward Reichman was a giant in tzedakah and left two wills for his family, one to be opened upon his death and the other to be opened at shloshim. The first stipulated all the standard details and added that he wished to be buried in his favorite socks. The Chevra Kadisha refused to do so and regardless of the amount of pressure applied, no rabbi would step forward to override them. Alas, even with all his power and influence, Mr. Reichman was buried in a simple shroud, barefoot, just like all Jews, according to tradition. Thirty days later, the second will was opened. It said, "My dear children, by now you must have buried me without my socks. I wanted you to truly understand that a man can have all the money in the world, but in the end, he can't even take along a pair of socks."⁶

Buy the book: <https://www.amazon.com.au/Joy-Judaism-practical-spiritual-teachings/dp/1732950601>

⁵ 46
⁶ 230