



*ETHICAL WILL OF
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Ashdod, Israel
September, 2011
Elul 5771

To my children, grandchildren, son-in-law, and all the blessed relations and descendents to come that The Creator in The Creator's infinite kindness and mercy may bless upon me:

I leave these words to you, inspired by my presence among the people in the land of Israel. These are my people, and your people as well, in our land, the people and the land that now envelop me in both place and spirit, as I write these words. May these words be part of my legacy that I impart to you-- words of inspiration, ethics, and purpose that will serve you well in your journeys in this world, the world into which The Creator has chosen to bring you, through me, as your father.

I, myself, have opened up my mind and heart to the principles that I now communicate to you in this document that is separate from "The Last Will And Testament" document that deals with the physical possessions and money that I will leave to you and others, when it is my time to go to "the world to come".

In this more vital document, "The Ethical Will", I leave to you the more important principles and guidelines that have permitted me to make sense of this world; that have guided me well; and that, I am confident, will also guide you to make sense of this world, to be constructive participants in it, and to enjoy its many gifts.



My life has been one of mixed successes and failures, not unlike the life of every soul who has ever lived. I have not always been true to myself, and I have often strayed from the principles and ethics contained in this ethical will, even though I have been aware of them. Whatever good I have done, however, has largely derived from the knowledge of and inspiration from these ethics and principles that are, I remind you, the essence of our Jewish heritage.

It would be presumptuous of me to judge the overall merits of my life's actions. I will leave that to others and to The Creator. But, in the end, I do take pride in myself that I have the capacity to leave for you a document such as this. And I take pride in myself that I have descendents such as you, who will, I am confident, comprehend and act upon the true inspirations of its words.

My forefathers and mothers and I are blessed to have you as our descendents. Keep in mind that you are approximately the 200th generation of the people of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Jewish people. You will come to understand that essentially all that I leave to you in this ethical will derives from the principles of our Jewish religion-- the remarkable eternal contract that we Jews have made with God that states that we-- together with all other people of good will--take on willingly the obligation to help make THIS world a better place for ALL; and that, along the way, we also take on the obligation to partake of all the joys and gifts that The Creator has given us. Our joys and pleasures must follow ethical guidelines, however. Selfishness, arrogance, narcissism, and hedonism are not the traits that will permit us to fulfill our sacred contract with The Creator. These negative traits will not help us repair this world that is broken and in need of repair. They will not lead us to the "Crown Of Good Deeds" that should serve as our true immortality; they will not help us leave the world better for our descendents; and they will not give us a share in "The World To Come".

We cannot, as mortals, know the ways of The Creator. We are powerless to explain why The Creator has given us a broken world-- one in such disarray, too full of evil and ill will. Nor can we explain why The Creator permits horrible events and pain to be part of our lives. We are, for the most part, powerless to change the physical world. But, we can change the spiritual one by our commitment to ethical behavior and acts. The spiritual world is the one of mercy, ethics, tolerance, justice, decency, and respect. Also, when possible, love. (But, Judaism recognizes that love is neither a universal trait nor always possible.) Over this spirit world, we DO have control of how we think, speak, and act; as the Creator has given us free will in the realm of the spirit world. An important concept in Judaism is that the physical world and the spiritual world, while inextricably linked, are completely separate entities. The physical world is ethically and morally neutral, whereas the spiritual one is not so.

The Jewish people, with free will, then and now, have chosen to follow the "blueprints" of ethics, laws, guidelines, and teachings that God has given us, through divine inspiration, in the form of Torah and Talmud-- to help us make sense of this chaotic world, and to help guide us to the ultimate salvation of proper and righteous actions. I humbly submit to you that these aforementioned blueprints, Talmud and Torah, have always been, in my opinion, the best, the most logical, and the most comprehensive "system" to help us make sense of this world. You are blessed to have them as part of your heritage, and I urge you to use them. In this way, you should consider that the Jewish people are not necessarily "The Chosen People" (something that I have always thought a misnomer); but, rather, "The Choosing People"- - the people who choose daily to follow God's blueprints for righteous actions. Only through these righteous actions can we repair this broken world, to bring about the ultimate goal of universal peace, tolerance, justice, harmony, and prosperity for ALL.



We cannot know what or who God actually is. Perhaps we can ponder or surmise what God is like, or what is God-like. But, certainly, God is not us, and we are not God. I submit that God is like a cheerleader on the sidelines, pumping us up with lots of inspirations. But, we call and make our own "plays". God does not execute our plays; we do so ourselves. Remember, how to "do the right thing" is neither intuitively obvious, nor is it "in our genes". Judaism acknowledges that good and evil co-exist in man's inherent nature. Thus, we need Talmud and Torah to guide us to proper actions.

For Jews, simply to be or to believe is not enough. Action is what really counts. We can come closer to God, and be God-like (i.e. have some of God within us) when we do good deeds, and take proper care of "business" in THIS world. It is what we do in THIS world that determines what share we will have in the "next" world, the "world to come" (or the "after life" as some would term it). Thought and belief do not determine our share in the world to come; only our actions do. Nevertheless, we should not minimize the roles of proper thoughts and beliefs, as these can help propel us to proper actions.

We can see, hear, smell, and "feel" God's essence in the wonders of the physical world, and in the physical outcomes of good deeds. And also in the eyes and words of gratitude from those we, or others, have helped. We can "feel" God in the spiritual world of love, tolerance, emotion, inspiration, remembrances of ancestors and descendents, etc. Each person shares with every other person a common existence as a unique creation of God. But, none of us is God.

So, do I, myself, ever actually "see" or "hear" God? Yes, many times, every day; but only indirectly-- usually in "the mirror" of good deeds that are divinely inspired. An example that remains particularly vivid in my mind is this one:





One day, some years ago, I witnessed outside a school at dismissal time several kids in wheelchairs. All of the kids had broken bodies, as they were victims of the worst congenital anomalies that made them helpless prisoners within their own bodies that could not respond to any self-generated commands. I saw one of the special-education aids, a young woman, kneel down in front of one of the kids to touch him, look him him square in the eyes, smile at him, gently and unhurriedly prepare his clothes and wheelchair for his transfer to the bus. Then she just stood by the kid for some minutes. She gave no sense that there was any other place she would rather have been. No fanfare. Nothing glamorous or sophisticated on her part. She probably did this many times every work day. Just one human being helping another, because it was the right thing-- the "human" thing-- to do; to help a person {one for whom, perhaps, even God had made a "mistake"} make it through one more day. Now, this aid was not God, herself, but a pretty good representative/extension of God here in this world. This aid likely could have chosen to do something else more savory, more exciting, more remunerative for a career. But no, she decided to be God-like-- in this simple way, a very right way. At the moment I saw her in action, she was as close to God as it gets. Good enough for me.



I leave to you now these specific principles and ethics:

RUSH to do even the smallest good deed, mitzvah, obligation.

Be good citizens in whichever land you choose to live. Participate in "the social contract".

Do not turn your backs to the needs of others. Do not have a "blind eye" to the sufferings of others. Defend the weak and the disadvantaged. Always pursue mercy and social justice.

Visit the sick and the elderly-- one of the highest mitzvahs.

Listen with patience to those who need to unburden themselves of trouble.

Do not impoverish yourselves, but do give generously to those in need and to good causes.

Avoid gossip, greed, gluttony, jealousy, avarice, self destructive behaviors, and criminal behavior; for these are abhorrent in the eyes of The Creator who gave you life.

Avoid hypocrisy, an especially malignant outcome of the combination of selfishness and stupidity.

Show a bit of flair, but be overall modest of dress and habitat.

Be proud, but not egotistical.

Be confident, but not arrogant.

Be optimistic, but also realistic.

Be joyful, but not contrivedly so.

Be adventurous, but also practical.

Enjoy with grace the many gifts that The Creator has presented to you; including those of the earth, the senses, and the talents and companionship of others.

Do not be a recluse. Engage yourself in the community at large.

Be respectful of others, with the use of good manners, speech, etiquette, and dress.

Find a spouse who excites you, one who you can and will love forever and a day, and one who, in turn, can and will hold you in his or her arms forever and a day.

Speak out against injustice, prejudice, intolerance, and improper utilization of resources.

Be civilized to your enemies or opponents, as, over time, many will eventually become your friends and allies.

Be a leader when appropriate. Be a follower when appropriate.

Seek the help and counsel of wise people, including those who can teach you Torah and Talmud.

Give your children both strong "roots" and strong "wings".

Be kind to the stranger, as we too were once strangers.

Feed your animals first. Take care of them, as they are a gift to us from The Creator, to help keep us company.

Pay promptly the wages that you owe to those who work for you.

Do not take advantage of those who are vulnerable.

Do not sell to people things or services they do not need, as this is a form of stealing.



Do not deprive any person of dignity, or of the ability to make a living; as these are also the equivalent of stealing.

When it is your role to punish another, be mindful of the impact that punishment might have on that person's loved ones and society as a whole.

Be mindful of speech. Proper words can do infinite good. Improper ones can destroy unmercifully. It is often best to say nothing at all, and just listen. Again, avoid gossip completely, as it is one of the worst offenses.

It is permissible to rebuke a person's bad actions, but almost always not the person himself or herself. Avoid ad hominem remarks.

Take proper care of your body and health. You are the caretaker of your body, as it is a sacred entity that belongs not to you but to The Creator who gave you life.

Seek proper and timely medical attention from medical experts, ones who practice medicine according to science, not superstition. Avoid quacks and innumerate people who cannot comprehend or refuse to acknowledge valid scientific principles.

Take care of the environment. The earth is fragile. Do not burden our descendents with a ruined planet. Be a "good ancestor".

Give compliments generously and sincerely to others. Allow others the pleasure to compliment you.

Do not deceive. Be truthful, but remember that truth in any situation is not absolute; but, rather, contextual and multi-layered. Brutal honesty can, at times, be both hurtful or stupid.

Moderation in all things-- "the golden mean"-- is a most wise guideline. Avoid all extremes, except those of extreme humility and extreme slowness to anger.

Profanity, even a little bit, is shameful, and best avoided. Vulgarity also so.





Remember your departed forefathers, of blessed memory. Honor them by your own lives, well lived.

You MUST forgive those who have wronged you, if they ask you for such forgiveness, and have committed to make restitution to you. On the other hand, you cannot forgive someone who has wronged someone else, as only the one wronged can do so. Judaism frowns upon vicarious forgiveness.

If you have wronged someone, either by intention, indirectly, or unwittingly; apologize directly to that person, ask forgiveness as soon as possible, and commit to make, to the extent possible, full restitution to that person.

Do not be too hard on yourself. After you have corrected a wrongful action, stand ready to forgive yourself. But, to avoid hypocrisy, just as you may forgive yourself, you must also stand ready to forgive others for their transgressions.

You will serve yourself well to study Jewish Torah and Talmud, for the study of such will lead to countless more good deeds, insights, and true wisdom. As your father, I tell you with all confidence and love that no other system is so comprehensive and logical in its delineations to deal rationally with this chaotic world, and to give us a "blueprint" for success, joy, and proper entrance to "The World To Come". Give your children every possible opportunity to study this grand system of insights about life, the physical world, and the spirit world.

Support Israel in its missions to be "a light upon the nations", and to be a defender of the Jewish people and of those in need.

Remember our forefathers who sleep "the eternal sleep", including those six-plus million Jews who perished at the hands of others during the Holocaust, a time when much of mankind turned brutally evil. Remember those-- both Jews and non-Jews-- who fought against this evil, many of whom made the ultimate sacrifice so that the world would not turn completely dark.



Once again, RUSH to do even the smallest good deed!! For then surely you will have exalted places in both this world and "the world to come".

Remember also, when my gift of days in this world is done, please accede to my requests to be buried according to Jewish tradition, and to sleep the eternal sleep among my fellow Jews in a Jewish cemetery. Do not mourn excessively for me. You will bring honor to me in this world and the world to come by your acknowledgement of and your action upon the inspirations of this ethical will.

Now go forth proudly, enjoy life, and do good deeds.

I, your father, your ancestors, and The Creator eternally hold you with joy and love.

Manes Elias Gottlieb Goodman

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Menachem Eliyahu Ben Yaakov Ha-kohen

January, 2012

Tevet, 5772