

Nourishment for the Neshama

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Who Is Gd? A Primer for Parents and Children

Chapter 1 Who is Gd? A Primer for Parents and Children The Soul of the Universe

Gd is the Creator of everything. He is the soul of the universe and everything in it.

Nothing can exist without the Creator's willing it to exist, not an object, not a thought, not an emotion. All there is in the world is the simple unity of the Creator. In order for a world to appear, the Creator conceals Himself. If the light of the Creator shown fully, we would not distinguish objects or even ourselves, for the essence of everything is from the Creator through light.

Every person, no matter what age, is the Creator's creation! He made every person. Everyone, including you, is unique and special! And Gd LOVES YOU!

Chapter 2 Who is Gd? A Primer for Parents and Children The One Who Loves Us the Most

When Gd created the world, He created one huge man named Adam and breathed a copy of Gd's character traits, a soul, into him. Gd was not hidden from Adam. Adam understood who Gd is. Gd loved Adam because He created Adam in order to love and give to Adam the greatest pleasure possible. The greatest pleasure possible is earning the right to feel part of Gd Who is perfect.

So that Adam could earn this pleasure, Gd made another creation. He made free will. Gd made free will because He wanted Adam to have awareness of Gd's love for him as well as an experience of himself, so that Adam could choose between what Gd said and what Adam's experience of himself said. Gd wanted Adam to choose so that Gd could give Adam the greatest possible eternal pleasure, the sense of earning the feeling of being part of Gd's perfection.

Gd wanted Adam to remember that there is Gd at every moment and to love Gd and remember to do what Gd says is right and wrong. Adam only wanted to do what is good, but Adam's experience of self led to a big mistake. Adam thought he knew how to use the world in a way that would please Gd even though Gd said He didn't want that. Adam's experience of self and his love for Gd led him away from the simple choice before him, which was to love Gd and choose to do only what Gd said was right to do. There was only one rule and Adam broke it.

Gd in his love for Adam's soul realized that Adam's soul had to correct itself from breaking Gd's moral standard of right and wrong. Adam's experience of self lured him to a different conception of right and wrong. The world changed from the Garden of Eden to a world of adversity.

Gd continues to put into every person's body a soul (which includes a copy of Gd's character traits,) but which also receives confusing messages due to our experience of self. These confusing messages are tests –will we choose to repair Adam's mistake and thereby help us regain the level of Adam before he made the mistake. Our soul knows who Gd is. Our body and our feelings may confuse us. But the chances of getting confused are greatly reduced if we remember that there is a Gd Who loves us and just wants to know if we know He is the Creator, the soul and simple unity of the entire world.

When we choose to remember, experientially we feel restored. That is another way to know that Gd is real. We are built to feel good when we do what is good in Gd's eyes. The feeling comes not from the experience of self. The feeling comes from a restoration of our soul, from the deepest wells of our vitality.

We may be upset with people or events. How do we do no harm to others (Gd does not want us to hurt each other or fight with each other) when our very emotions themselves are negative toward someone? How do we exchange our negative reactions for something that will truly restore our vitality? Consider that other people might be confused (as we all are) by our experience of self and that is why they too make mistakes. So we can forgive them! When we love them as we love ourselves, and we know how easily we can get confused by our body and our feelings, we can overlook or forgive! We feel vitality return to our souls because Gd loves us! Such an experience of revitalization brings the intrinsic reality of Gd's existence into our experience of self in a tangible way. Once within our consciousness, it is natural for us to develop a feeling of real love for Gd. And, when we love the Creator with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our might, we never wish to be out of rapport with Gd.

Let's take a closer look at how we develop a love for Gd that is so real within our experience of self that we can consistently choose well.

Maybe in our minds we love Gd, but do we have a feeling of love, an emotion of love? Have we brought into our experience of self the emotion of loving Gd? Consider that:

We can breathe because Gd built us to breathe and gave us air

We can talk because Gd made a meeting place of our bodies and our souls – speech.

We can walk because Gd made a brain and gave us coordination.

We can understand because Gd gave us intelligence.

So many gifts from Gd!

What does Gd want us to do?

Gd wants us to know that He is constantly giving to us, constantly giving us life, food, air, water and everything we need and to love Him.

As a parent, we comprehend that we grow to love those we give to. In this way, Gd arranged it so that we could develop a love for Gd within our experience of self. How? Although Gd does not need anything from us, He turns Himself into a receiver so that we can give to Gd. What we give to Gd is serving Him. **When we choose to keep the commandments and to bring out His character traits that are within us, we are saying, I love You, Gd.** Hand in hand with each time we make this choice is a sensation of vitality that comes to us. It is important to be open to this, not to allow obstacles to block it – often our experience of self, our ego, is so loud that we may not notice the experiential pleasure of doing what is good and right in Gd's eyes. When we give to Gd consistently, we develop an emotion of love within our experience of self. In the example above, we give forgiveness to another (Gd wants us to be overlooking and forgiving with one another). The result is a sense of peace

and vitality, a sense of understanding that although we have an experience of self, ultimately our greatest and truest sense of self is comprehending the reality that we have no separate existence from Gd and how to pursue an infinite path of the pleasure of connection and relationship.

Chapter 3: Who is Gd? A Primer for Parents and Children The Giver of Real Pleasure and Peace

Read one a week to "introduce" Gd to your family - it is not possible to hold children to standards of behavior outlined below, but just reading it to them will begin a lifelong process with tremendous potential for them in their journey to be more like Gd

There is more to our lives than meets the eye. We see things that we want, we have goals for ourselves to accomplish. But there is a framework. Not only are we in a physical world, but we are in a spiritual world. How does Gd treat us? Let us learn how merciful Gd is to us. In this way, we will comprehend how much we are receiving, we will have perspective on our physical reality, and we will have motivation to emulate Gd.

1. Gd tolerates us when we make mistakes: Gd creates everything and we are totally in His control. However, He allows us to make mistakes without immediate punishment. Let's say we know He does not want us to say something mean. Nevertheless, our experience of self leads us to say the mean thing. Does Gd destroy us right then and there for insulting Gd with our disobedience? No! He loves us. We continue to breathe, have a home, clothes, food, and a life. Our lives continue! Does this mean it is permitted? NO! It means that Gd tolerates us like a loving parent awaiting us to wake up to our mistake and repair it. Gd continues His kindnesses to us.

And we can copy this way of being from Gd when we deal with those who insult, annoy or bother us – whatever else we need to do in response, we can emulate Gd and let Gd know we love Him by modeling our behavior after His, and not withdraw our kindness from the person – yes we may need to work something out with the person or set a boundary, but to emulate Gd means we do not withdraw our kindness from the person. Even if it is a long drawn out process, every moment is a moment of telling Gd that we love Him and are bringing His tolerance the best we can into our experience of self in relation to the other person. The restorative vitality to our soul will soon make this easier and more obvious to choose, even though at first it appears counter-intuitive.

2. Gd tolerates our mistakes too: Because we have a soul and free will, every word we speak and every action we take creates either positive energy or negative energy in the world. This energy is called indeterminate forces, and essentially are spiritual beings. We take the spiritual energy coming to us and form it one way or the other, whether we realize and accept this spiritual reality or not. If in the example above we say something that violates the laws of speech, and we create a destructive being, Gd not only tolerates us, but He tolerates the destructive being we formed until we either repent or die. He did not form that destructive being and does not like to sustain it. However, its energy is coming from Him through us. If He denies the destructive being energy, it means that the energy for the destructive being comes from us alone, which in essence means that it can kill us, for our energy comes from Gd continually – where will we get energy from if Gd denies to energize the destructive beings that we form? Thus Gd sustains the destructive being until we, its creator, repents.

And we can be like Gd and show the same tolerance to those who have wronged us and done us real harm, even though the harm may continue to exist. We await the wrongdoer's repentance when he corrects his mistake or we wait patiently for the harm to go away on its own.

How do we have the patience and love to do that? Imagine that two of your children are served a cookie each. One child grabs the cookie from the other child. The child wants to grab back his cookie and he has a right to that cookie! But the child knows that the parent does not want them to fight, that it disrupts the harmony in the home which is far worse than not having a cookie. But he still wants his cookie. So he goes to his parent and says "May I have another cookie, my brother took it from me and I know you don't want us to fight, so can I have another cookie?" Seeing that the child love the home and the rules of the home and loves peace so much, the parent is going to kiss the child and give the child two cookies!

3. Gd forgives us Himself and cleans our souls: When we see that we made a mistake, we confess it to Gd and He himself grants us forgiveness. Before Gd created the world, He created forgiveness, knowing that people are not perfect and that we would make mistakes and need to be forgiven and restored. Each year we are able to have our souls cleaned up in this way, thank Gd. But we don't want to blame others and create another destructive being in the process.

It is important for us, when we do our repenting and confessing, to be like Gd and forgive those who may have triggered our own wrongdoing because otherwise, if we don't take complete responsibility for it, we may make the same mistake again. Because Gd Himself is forgiving us, we want to heal our mistake at its root. We ask that Gd accept our confession and repentance and remove the destructive being that we created from the world, and we ask Hashem to help us not blame others for the sin, or beg for mercy because of the conduct of others, because we do not want to stand before Gd as victims of people. Rather, we take full and total responsibility for our mistakes and

see that we fell victim to the evil inclination that Gd uses to test us, that we regret slipping into its clutches, and we ask Hashem to help us rise above it, that we yearn to be lifted out of the quagmire of the evil inclination's clutches.

We need Gd's help in shifting out of the hands of the evil inclination because the evil inclination is a force created by Gd, an angel of Gd, that is both an external spiritual force as well as an internal personal obstacle to our connection to Gd.

4. Gd is in a family relationship with us: Gd feels our suffering and pain because we are Gd's children. Someone told me that their babysitter accidentally put water that was too hot into the tub and burned an 18 month old's skin over 10% of her body. The mother was in more pain than the child, (thank Gd the child is recovering) but the mother's emotional pain and suffering at seeing the child suffer was more painful than if the mother had experienced the burns herself, for there is the sense of helplessness and suffering for a loved one. This is how Gd feels when we suffer, when He sends us suffering.

We can be like Gd and show the same unity with each other, even the people who our experience of self would like to hate. We can be Gd-like when we share their joy in good fortune, see the good in each person, not speak badly of another, never be hoping for him to develop a bad reputation or suffer. Rather, we should be empathetic. We can take the negative energy and pain of our experience of self and say "for the sake of the unification and sanctification of Gd's name, from the bottom of my heart with this energy I ask Gd to forgive us, to have mercy on us, and to redeem us, for we are one and Gd is One."

5, Gd accepts us patiently even if we repeat our mistakes: Gd's approach to our bad habits is tender as He tries to shepherd us through gentle tests and then harsher tests, hoping we will reach up to Him and see a different way to conduct ourselves.

We can be like Gd when we overlook the personality flaws of others rather than judging and emotionally hating them. By loving Gd and not wanting to cause any harm to the world, we accept the suffering inflicted by other's mistakes as coming from Gd directly, Gd thereby using this person's weaknesses as His vehicle for delivery. The reality of our own suffering is, instead, a way to cleanse us of our own sins, or an opportunity to repair something within us. We only see in others flaws that we contain either in the past or present. Just as we tolerate our own faults, we have the opportunity to love someone else in the same way and tolerate it in them. Very often, if we do this, we repair the matter and it no longer remains a sore spot between the people. Instead of judging the other person, give a bracha – that the person be blessed with insight or aide in whatever the matter is. In this way, the bracha comes first to the one giving the bracha and then to the one blessed.

6. Gd loves the kindnesses we do and has mercy on us for our sins because of our kindnesses toward each other: When the destructive beings formed by our sins come before the Heavenly court, Gd Himself brings our acts of kindness to the courts and is merciful to us.

We can be like Gd in this regard – even if we are aware that another person is committing evil against us, and our experience of self with that person is one of negative emotions, if we can see some good redeeming quality, we should copy Gd and give the benefit of the doubt, nullify our anger against him and have a positive feeling and desire his kindness even though we may set a boundary to protect ourselves from the harm. It is okay to have a cold memory to help us deal in a self-preserving way with the person; however, there need be no negative charge in a person's heart toward another, for we see that the person does kindnesses to others and has merits.

7. Gd loves those who return to Him in a way that is greater than the way He loves those who never made a mistake: Of course there is no one who is born perfect. Every one of us learns by our mistakes. The good news is that when we learn from our mistakes, Gd loves us more than He loved us before we made the mistake! It is not like it is between people, where we forgive but have a memory that we don't forget, which stands as an obstacle. Literally, the sincere effort to overcome our bad habit and correct our mistakes becomes a such a strong merit- the effort itself transforms our return to Gd, heals the wrongdoing, and establishes a closeness to Gd above where we stood before we erred.

We can be like Gd in this way – when someone apologizes to us or wishes to renew a friendship, we, like Gd, can bring this person close to us, seeing that they desire our love and friendship, even more than a person who has never wronged us.

8. Gd suppresses our faults but not our good deeds: Everyone has good deeds and bad deeds. Gd does not allow our good deeds to be tainted at all by our bad deeds. The good we do rises up to Gd and is precious. However, before we are allowed to receive the benefit of the good deeds, the bad deeds must be rectified. Gd suppresses our bad deeds, with justice, until our guilt is erased. At that time, we are able to receive the reward for the good deeds that we do.

We can be like Gd in this way – when someone has done something wrong to us, we erase it from our memory and abandon the thought and instead remember the good the person does for us. We should be appeased in every way possible and never overlook a favor, turning a blind eye toward the past harm.

9. Gd casts our sins into the sea: Whoever does wrong, even though it was decreed by Gd that the wrong be permitted to have an impact on someone else, eventually is held responsible for the wrongdoing. Gd loves justice. But after a

person receives that justice from Gd, in the form of suffering which causes the person to confess and repent), the person is cleansed and the sin is cast into the sea.

We can be like Gd in this way – when we see someone who has received Divine justice through the form of suffering and affliction, we are not to hate him for his sin that he has atoned for, but rather see him as a brother, and befriend him and have mercy on him. If we see others being cruel to him, we should even come to his defense and not say he caused his own problems. Rather we can be Gd-like and have mercy on him.

10. Gd loves truth and the reality of both His judgment and His mercy is truth: There are some people who do not go beyond the letter of Hashem's law and they conduct themselves within truth of the law. There is a higher level of uprightness that others abide by. Gd is just with both. Those who are upright, Gd is merciful upon them in a way that is upright and just.

We can be truthful and upright like Gd in this way – we can treat every person with uprightness and truth by seeing the humanity of each person and not utilizing anyone for my personal gain, but rather to act with true love and concern for the person, as seen in Gd's eyes as good.

11. Gd bestows kindnesses those who conduct themselves beyond the requirements of the Law, like Avraham did: Gd does not deal with those who go beyond the letter of the law in accordance with justice, nor in accordance with uprightness. Instead, He treats with kindness those who conduct themselves like Avraham, who conducted himself beyond the basic requirements of Gd's will.

We can treat people who go out of their way to be good with extra kindnesses like Gd does and treat them as precious and beloved and count them amongst our friends.

12. Gd has mercy even on those who are unworthy because of the promise He made to our forefathers: Gd promised our forefathers that even if we are unworthy, He will guide us until we are perfected, He will maintain us with unearned gifts.

We can be like Gd and treat people who we consider to be wicked with mercy seeing them as the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. If we hate the children, it is implied that we hate their forefathers and we do not want to create such destructive beings. Instead we can have mercy and overlook as much as possible and ask for mercy for them because they are living so far away from Gd's laws. It is our duty to whitewash their wrongdoings in our minds and help guide them as much as is in our power to do so.

13. Gd loves us even though we are unworthy and without merits, even when the merits of our Patriarchs are exhausted, because He recalls for our sake the initial love He had for us, remembering every mitzvah we ever did and any good qualities we ever brought out. Gd also recalls all the favors and good qualities with which He conducts the world, and finds a way to be merciful toward us.

We can be like Gd and improve our conduct toward other people. Even if we cannot find any good in a person, we can think back that at the moment of this person's birth, his mother was so happy and joyous and in this way every person is worthy of our respect simply because they are created by Gd.

It is important for people to be more like Gd in these manners. When we act mercifully, we open up the channel of mercy to come to the world, to shine here in this world. For this reason, it is important for us to bring this mercy into the world, for if we do not, how will the mercy come into the world? Every moment is an opportunity to subjugate our body and our emotions to the intrinsic reality of Gd's commandments and merciful characteristics. People are fully capable to bring love, light and mercy to the world.

Here are some more tangible good reasons to do so.

Look at your hands and feet. Look in the mirror at your face, your eyes, your nose, your ears, mouth, teeth and hair. Your body can be seen in a mirror! Your body can be seen and felt by other people! It is an amazing miracle! The body is the vessel for the soul. We really are Gd's hands and feet in this world of action.

But a body is not all that a person is. No matter how developed our bodies, we are never able to be perfect in anything. We are designed, each one of us, with one or more flaws. When we are able to use our choices the way Gd wants – to do what is right in Gd's eyes, we are able to correct some of our flaws and bring out the part of us that Gd breathed into us, our soul. That is what we are here to do, and when we expend effort to correct our flaws in a way that is pleasing to Gd, Gd brings us success and gives us reward for all eternity.

The greatest pleasure a person can have is the experience of connection to Gd in this world. Such a pleasure is greater than any experience of self that a person can have in this world.

Why? Because it has infinite possibilities and an infinite depth. Experiences of self in this world have only a depth of emotion and physicality which do not really interact with intrinsic reality, the soul, which has no separate existence from Gd.

Imagine if you have a way to get the greatest pleasure that there is and never find it because of confusion about the body and the emotions!

Here is an example of how the body, the experience of self, and the soul can interact towards being like Gd:

You have a toy and your friend takes it from you, it is natural to want to take it back. But Gd does not want us to fight! It is best to ask Gd to give you another one so you don't get into a fight. And if it is the only one, then it is okay to still ask Gd for help. Maybe ask a grownup to help with a fair rule on sharing. What if nothing works and you still don't have your toy back? The experience of self is one of lacking something.

But we know something special – that we have no separate existence from Gd and that only what Gd wills happens here, that this is a test to see if we will remember that. So we think - which is better, to have the toy and an experience of the self "winning" or to tell Gd that because we love Gd, even though we are right and he was wrong to have taken the toy that we don't want to fight so we will give in? Perhaps Gd gave the boy success in taking the toy just so we can feel so strong and give in because we desire to be Gd-like in kindness!

Why should I give in you say? Why shouldn't he give in? He should! But we are talking about you and your soul and Gd, only that which is in your control. We can't control what another does. But don't worry. Gd is King over him too and He sees. Gd doesn't want us to fight with each other. That is more important than any toy. Just because we lack a toy doesn't mean we lack love from Gd or that Gd does not see!

Our value (real self-esteem is soul-identification with Gd, knowing that our soul has no separate existence from Gd) comes from staying connected to what Gd says is right. Gd doesn't want us to fight, steal, or hurt each other. We can still love people even if they are wrong and don't always do the right thing. We can give in and be patient, like Gd.