



"Would it be that My people listen to me, if Israel would go in My ways,
I would subdue their enemies in a instant, and turn My hand against their foes."

King David, Psalm 81

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IN THIS ISSUE:

PRAYING FOR OTHERS	1, 2
ADAM'S LONGEVITY	1, 3
WHO IS HAPPY?	1
IS THE BRAIN, THE SOUL?	2
DOES GOD CREATE EVIL?	3

SUGGESTED READINGS:

SEE THESE AND OTHER ARTICLES AT OUR SITE

Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Praying for Others

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Dear Mesora, I once heard (unsure of the original source) that if one prays for another person suffering the same ailment or having the same desire (example: wanting children) as oneself, then the person will be granted by Hashem the very thing they asked for the another person. 1. Have you ever heard of such a notion (its source)? 2. If not, what do you think about this? I have some problems with it as it doesn't make sense to me that Hashem should decide to give you something you want should you daven for another with the same bakasha.

I would appreciate your insight into this, as I was asked to do this (and

(continued on page 2)

Adam's Longevity

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Since youth we have read stories from Genesis, sometimes with much amazement. Of the personalities mentioned in Genesis what is striking is their longevity. Adam lived to the age of 930, and others lived until 1000 years. Currently, most of us do not exceed 100 years of age, so 1000 years seems unreal. These ages were real, however there are discussions among our Rabbis as to who lived that long aside from those named.

The Ramban's argument against the Maimonides, recorded by the Ramban in Genesis 5:4. The Ramban's reason for Adam's longevity is due to his being the "Handiwork of the Holy One". He was created in "absolute perfection as regards beauty, strength and might." The Ramban explains that because of man's sin and environmental changes after the flood and the dispersion, did man's lifespan decrease. The Ramban holds that all of mankind shared this longevity, and all mankind suffered a shorter lifespan.

The Ramban criticizes The Maimonides' opinion:

"Now what the Rabbi has written in the Moreh Nevuchim does not seem right to me, namely that the longevity was only in those individuals mentioned, while the rest of the people in those generations lived lives of ordinary natural length. He further said this exception was due to the mode of living and food of such people or by way of miracle. But these words are without substance. Why should this miracle happen to them since they were neither prophets nor righteous, nor worthy that a miracle be done for them, especially for generation after generation. And how could a proper mode of living and proper food prolong their years to the extent that they are so many times greater than that of the entire generation? It is possible that there were others who observed such a mode of living, in which case all or most of them should

(continued on page 3)



ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"If God wants us to be happy, and gave the Torah, what is God's idea of happiness?"
Have your children email us with their answers: questions@mesora.org

Who is Happy?

RIVKA OLENICK

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch states in Horeb: "It is not how little or how much you have that makes you small or great but how little or how great you are with what you have." This concept is very difficult to put into practice, especially when we desire to possess what our neighbors have. We often measure our own happiness in life by looking at what we don't have. Does it really matter if our neighbor has a bigger house or better car or more things to fill their house or anything else for that matter? Bigger and better just means more responsibility and worry - and it is all temporary "false" happiness, not long lasting "real" happiness. The minute we see our neighbor with something that we think we must have, then what we already possess seems empty. It's what we desire and don't have that appears so much more attractive. Everything you don't have you want and whatever you do have seems unattractive. So the cycle continues and the fantasies fuel the cycle. The more time and energy a person spends in acquiring possessions the more unhappy a person becomes, because there is no real value in pursuing "possessions." The only thing we acquire from endless "possessions" is endless responsibility. And the responsibility does become endless and futile and takes a person away from their real purpose in life, the purpose that truly makes a person happy.

We've all heard people say they feel unhappy because they want but don't have what others have - and yet what they do have, they take for granted. "If I only had more money, I know I'd really be happy!" Everything that one already has that made one happy originally, was given by God - so why unhappiness now? Hasn't God provided you with everything you need, and each time you obtained a new thing you were happy? Now you are unhappy and so you blame God! The Ramban says: "The numerous evils to which individual persons are exposed are due to the defects existing in the persons themselves. We complain and seek relief from our own faults; we suffer from the evils which we by our own free will, inflict on ourselves, and then ascribe them to God, who is far from being connected to them!" (Guide for the Perplexed, Chapter XII pg. 267).

God set up the world so that we all can be happy by doing the good, the good is the real happiness not the pleasures that we imagine is real happiness. How does a person continue on the way to a happier life? By involving oneself in Torah study, learning about and doing good deeds, and directing one's life towards the middle path. Happiness in doing good begins when a person spends as much time as possible thinking and learning. Acquiring ideas and wisdom that can be passed on to one's family and friends. This real "acquisition" and investment in life is what gives a person strength and contentment to continue in the right direction. A person will feel satisfied that they are spending their time acquiring "thought." After a while you will see that redirecting your life this way gives you more peace of mind and less worry. You will want to continue in this derech, this way. You'll want to share your thoughts and ideas with your family and neighbor/friends and you may influence them to be introspective about their own life. This is all positive and part of the purpose of the commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself" All the good that your new direction brings, you will want for your neighbor too. This is what creates peace between people and pulls us away from the evils of envy and jealousy, which began in the first place because you wanted and thought you needed to have what your neighbor has. "Who is happy? One who is happy with their lot." Psalms 119:99