

THE
TORAH PERSPECTIVE
ON
ANTISEMITISM

THE NOBLE NOBODY

AFTER TALKING ABOUT HOW IMPORTANT our actions are no matter how insignificant they seem, why am I calling this chapter, “The Noble Nobody?” I mean, didn’t we just learn that no one’s really a nobody? That everyone has their part to play, and every part is important?

The ideas in this section really get to the heart of the entire Living Aligned concept, and right here at the outset I want to ask you to open your mind because these are ideas that challenge some of our strongest-held assumptions.

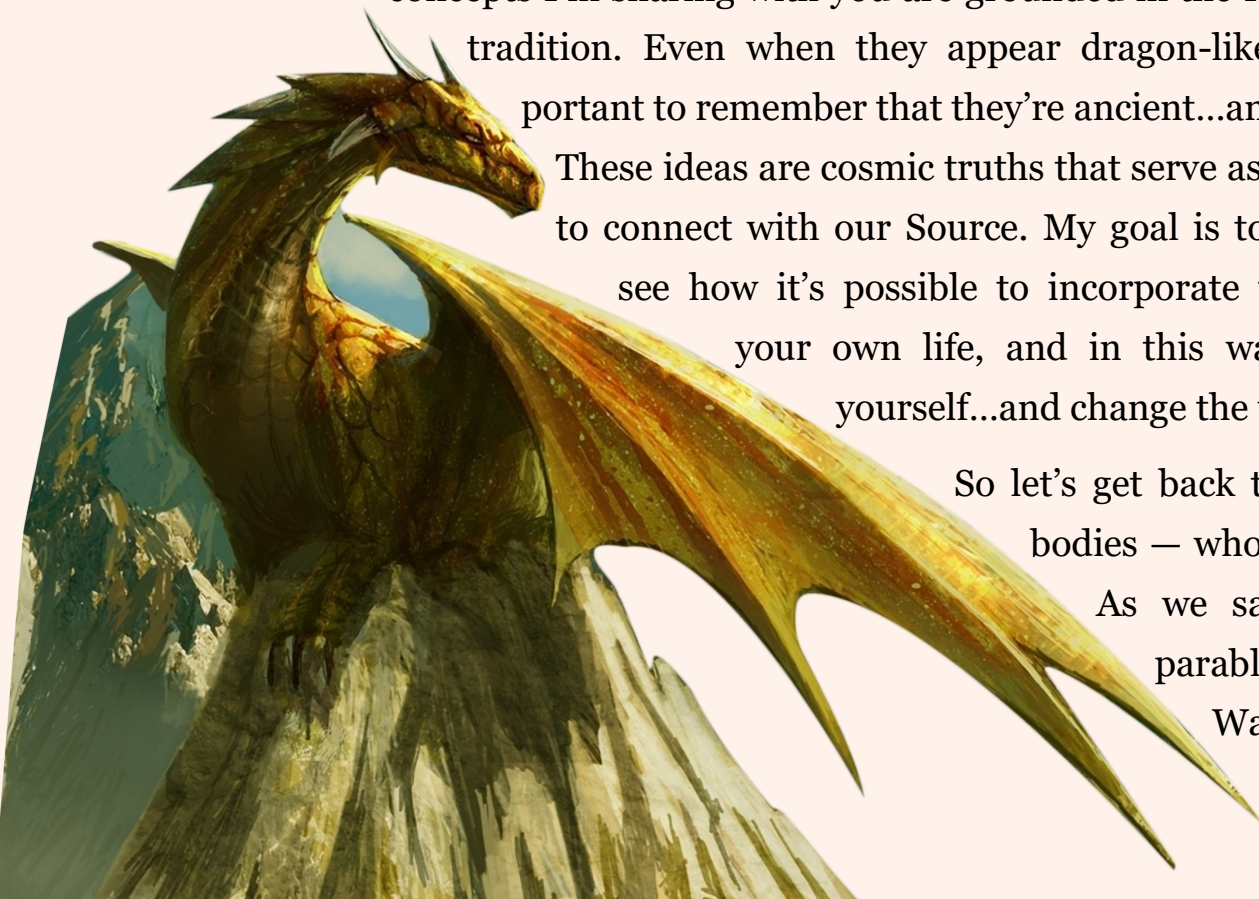
Earlier in the book, I spoke about concepts that are like dragons — they inhabit territory we tend to avoid, no-go zones because they’re “big and bad,” difficult to understand, or politically incorrect. The

concepts I’m sharing with you are grounded in the Kabbalistic tradition. Even when they appear dragon-like, it’s important to remember that they’re ancient...and they fly.

These ideas are cosmic truths that serve as pathways to connect with our Source. My goal is to help you see how it’s possible to incorporate them into your own life, and in this way change yourself...and change the world.

So let’s get back to our nobodies — who are they?

As we saw in the parable of “The Wall,” com-



pared with the spiritual giants and warriors of earlier generations, we're all nobodies. Yet the wall comes down because of our seemingly small efforts. Can we really be nobodies, then? We are people who are, objectively, less gifted but who manage, through the force of our desire and goodness, to accomplish great things.

There's an idea beneath the surface of this model, and it's one of our elusive dragons. Why does God give some people greater gifts — spiritually, mentally, physically — than others? And when it comes to material gifts, why do we live in a world of such gross inequality? Why is there such an imbalance between the 1% and the other 99%?

Does a loving father make gross distinctions among his children? Does he give gifts to one that he doesn't give to the others? If he does, we'd probably agree that he's not being a loving and compassionate father.

Our hard questions surface because we do believe certain fundamental truths:

The Infinite One is goodness itself.

The Infinite One is compassionate and loving.

That which God does is for the absolute best.

If we didn't believe this — consciously or unconsciously — we wouldn't have any question about inequality. But we do believe in Divine justice, and that's why the very obvious imbalances that fill our world disturb us

All human beings are created in the Divine image; everyone is equally valuable in the eyes of God. This means we need to safeguard each other's right not to be beheaded for our religious beliefs, guarantee equal access to education, and ensure basic human freedoms and protections.

But that essential equality doesn't mean we're all the same.

We are, most certainly, not equal in the distribution of our gifts, whether they're innate (like intelligence), or inherited (like a supportive and loving family with adequate resources), or acquired (by living in a land of opportunity). We can say that we

ought to all have equal access to opportunities because of our essential human equality, but at the same time we still see that the Creator hasn't arranged for equal distribution of gifts.

There are fantastically intelligent and talented people in the world... and inept ones too. There are wonderfully beautiful people in the world...and plenty of unsightly ones. There are some amazingly athletic people here... and people whose handicaps make it difficult for them to function every single day. There are fabulously wealthy people in the world...and utterly destitute ones. Some of the "haves" were born to wealth, while others were gifted with *mazal* — good fortune.

But let's be honest...The "stars" are in the barest minority, and the other 99% run the range of "managing" all the way down to genuine suffering.

Is this just? Is this fair?

In many ways, the story of the unequal gift is reflected in the Torah's account of the conflict between Joseph and his brothers. Jacob recognized Joseph's great potential, and he gifted that son with something he didn't give the others — a special coat that represented that special relationship and Joseph's unique mission.

The sages taught that a parent should never show favoritism; didn't Jacob know that singling out one son would cause a rift among the brothers? How could he do it?

Joseph had a prophetic vision of kingship, to the dismay and disapproval of his brothers. Joseph was forced down into Egyptian slavery and eventually did come into his own, but the experience of opposition was a neces-



sary part of his refining process. To be truly worthy of those gifts, Joseph was sent lessons — hard ones — through the agency of his brothers' jealousy. In the end, Joseph acknowledged that it was his brothers' catalyzing his exile to Egypt and all of his trials there that forced him into bloom.

Let's imagine a scenario to help us understand a little more about how this really works in everyday life.

Picture yourself in a little village in Ukraine of two hundred years ago. No cellphones, no electricity, no vehicles...no money. Everyone lives on potatoes, and it's a meager and difficult life for everyone. There are maybe fifty families in the whole village living a life of bare subsistence.

One day, Boris gets a message by the postal coach from Kiev. His uncle, a member of the government far away in the big city, has died and left him one hundred thousand rubles.

The whole village is overjoyed that one of their own has inherited a fortune, right? Of course not! Soon enough, Boris is the most despised man around for miles. And this baffles him. These are his relatives, his neighbors, his friends — they've been through good times and bad together. But now he's suddenly been set apart.

Wealth isn't really the final answer, because when you're given a gift and you don't know how to fit the gift into your relationship with others, it's a burden.

At first Boris says to himself, "This money is mine. He was my uncle, it's my mazal, and I even put in some effort by writing him letters every so often. And I don't owe any of the people in this village a thing." And he be-

comes more out of touch with everyone around him — he's afraid they all want his money, and they resent him for having what they don't.

Boris's old friend Misha goes over to visit one day. Misha is known throughout the village for his honesty and goodness, and he's been paying attention to the changes Boris is going through. And he's decided to try and help if he can.

Misha says, "Boris, we've always been friends, but now you're different. You don't mean to be, but you are. Why? Because God gave you something that none of us have. I don't know why He did it, and neither do you, but He must have had a reason. But you're really not any different from us, except that you were given something we weren't.

"We've been friends a long time, and I can see you're suffering. No one really likes you anymore, and you're afraid everyone's only out to get your money. Do you really want to live like that?"

Boris is struck by Misha's words. He's happy he's wealthy, but what he really wants is to live his old life, with his old friends in the village...just without

pov-



erty. But just because he's no longer poor, doesn't mean the village isn't. How can he really enjoy this blessing completely?

Boris says, "Misha, you've always been an honest and true friend, and I feel that you, at least, really want to help me. You're right; I'm not really happy even though I have the money, or maybe because I have the money. What do you think I can do?"

Misha answers, "Boris, maybe your gift wasn't sent from heaven only for you? Maybe it was also meant to help us, who weren't left a fortune? I'm not here because I want anything from you, but I think that if you don't change the way you're thinking about your wealth, you're never going to feel at home again in our village. You need to become a part of us again."

Misha is what we call a noble nobody

With intelligence, grace, and compassion, he nobly enlightens Boris so that Boris can see that his gifts are actually responsibilities. Misha might be a "have-not" when it comes to wealth — and this could also be the case with any of the many gifts one can possess — but when it comes to wisdom he has a noble role. Boris might resist at first, but eventually he'll be pressured by his circumstance to change his attitude. In a noble and dignified way, Misha helps Boris to understand his role.

Newly aware, Boris will be able to say, "This is from God; it's a gift. And

the fact *that* the rest of the village is looking over my shoulder all the

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time now, pressuring me for help, is also part of the gift — it comes along with it. I'm suddenly uncomfortable here, in the place my ancestors have lived for five hundred years, and why? Because I took the gift for myself, but I didn't accept that I'm in a new relationship with the world at the same time. The gift will force me to become a giver.

Anyone who's been singled out by a Divine gift has been chosen to carry out a mission.

Sharing a Divine gift demands a lot of wisdom.

One must give to people in a way that empowers them, that doesn't make them feel less than.

Giving needs to bring them to greater independence, and not further dependence.

The inheritance will make Boris into a partner with the Creator to fill the world's "empty pockets," both the literal ones and the spiritual ones, the pockets of darkness and concealment of the Divine Presence in the world in which suffering thrives .

This doesn't mean that Boris has to give all of his inheritance away. But he wasn't given the resource just for himself. He'll have to figure out exactly what his role is

The "noble nobodies" help the alleged privileged few to remember that we're all recipients, we're all takers. They approach the "chosen one" and say, "Don't you realize you're no different from us? If God hadn't placed you in that big house on the hill, you'd be down here in the trenches with us. You didn't create yourself, your advantages, or your circumstances."

And when the "gifted one" takes that message to heart, he turns to the Infinite One and says, "Your mercy is needed by all of Your creations — even me. I might have all of the money — or talent, education, or resources —

that I'll ever need, but I don't have anything unless You provide it for me. And if I need Your mercy, how much more does the rest of Your creation!"

When the one who has already been gifted also acknowledges his dependence on the Source, it's possible to draw down a much greater flow of Divine mercy and abundance for everyone.

The "noble nobody" wakes the privileged into a new state of awareness, and this new awareness is like a key that unlocks the door behind which lies boundless compassion and mercy

Of all abundance, there is nothing like the abundance that belongs to God. And of all Divine attributes, there is nothing like compassion. Those people who act to unlock this most essential and most high Divine quality serve the noblest purpose. Their actions have ramifications that affect all of us, in ways we can barely imagine...

And now we can welcome in the biggest dragon of them all...the very complex and persistent problem of anti-Semitism. Based on the fundamental ideas we've learned in Living Aligned, concepts that are rooted in Kabbalah and the Chassidic tradition, we have a new set of tools to help us examine the question

Why are the Jewish people called "chosen?"

Is that fair? Did the Infinite One set the Jewish people up for being hated by the rest of mankind?

The name of the mountain upon which the Torah was revealed was Mount Sinai. Sinah in Hebrew means hatred, and the tradition teaches that the singling out of the Jewish people for this gift — this responsibility and mission — is the root of anti-Semitism, of Jew-hatred.

Today, the world is reminding the Jewish people of the responsibilities of privilege. Sometimes it's with love — I've had many profound discussions with non-Jews who look admiringly toward the Jewish people for inspiration.

And sometimes the reminders have assumed a harsher form.

Until the Jewish people focus on acting as channels of Divine compassion with the rest of the world, the reminders will keep on coming. Because the chosen — of whatever form they take — need to wake up and arouse the mercy of the Infinite One...for the sake of everyone else. They have a mission to carry out that will not be denied.

THE HIGHEST MERCY

WE'VE SEEN THAT THE “NOBLE nobody” has the mission of awakening the “chosen and blessed” into a new state of awareness, and that this higher consciousness has a powerful effect on everyone, everywhere. We're not only talking about the micro-environment of Boris and Misha, their village, and the “newly gifted” waking up to his destiny as a conduit of Divine mercy and abundance for others. We're talking about the way in which sharing a more encompassing, broader, endless, and unfettered understanding of God's love and compassion allows just that kind of unlimited mercy to reach us.

This isn't about Jews and non-Jews, because in our relationship with the Creator we're all on the same page — all of us are “noble nobodies” trying to unlock the treasury of Divine mercy of the ultimate Blessed One — the Creator Himself.

If you have awareness of the greatness of Divine compassion, you share it with those who don't. You uplift other people's consciousness as yours evolves, and change the world, mind by mind. This is the key to unlocking Divine mercy so the world can reach its potential.

Reaching out to touch minds and unlock hearts is our way of opening the Divine heart so that the highest level of mercy can really flow. That force is so powerful, it transforms everyone and everything it touches.

What do I mean by “the highest level of mercy?” Is there more than one degree of mercy?

Yes, there is!

The ancient text of Jewish mysticism, the Zohar, teaches us, “There is

simple mercy, and then there is the higher mercy of the Hidden Ancient One.” There are different degrees of Divine kindness, and sometimes “simple mercy” is just not going to be enough. If we want to really change the world and usher in a new age of peace, reconciliation, and abundance, we need to get that highest level of Divine compassion to flow. As the prophet Isaiah said so powerfully, “And I will redeem you in great mercy” (Isaiah 54:7).

What’s more, simple mercy can also involve pain and suffering, because sometimes you have to be strict to be kind. In that realm, there are times when rebuke is necessary to bring the recipient to a better place. But, at this late date, we’re finding ourselves less and less capable of handling harsh rebuke both as individuals and as a society. What we need is to tap into and unlock the highest, unlimited mercy of the Hidden Ancient One — the ultimate level. It is the primordial impulse of Creation — to share and give and act with love and compassion.

God always wants to share His infinite loving-kindness with us, but our limitations block the flow. The only person who can tap into this higher degree is one who really knows just how boundless is the Creator’s kindness. That person helps it to descend so it can shower upon all of us, deserving and undeserving alike.

Jacob blessed his sons, “May God grant you mercy...” We can understand this to mean, “May the Infinite One share with you the power to awaken the highest degree of mercy.” May He give the quality of mercy into your hands so that you can work with it as required. Because God really wants to share the attribute of mercy with us so we can become partners with Him in the work of compassionate transformation.

But how easy is it for us to really know and grasp the infinite nature of Divine generosity? Anything infinite is, by definition, impossible for us to really grasp in our minds. So how can we get to this ultimate level and unlock its power?

The answer is that we use our access to that lower degree of mercy to help us reach the higher degree of mercy. We aim for the highest and most expansive awareness of Divine compassion we can get to, and then stretch one bit higher. We do it by knowing that what we've known until now of God's mercy is nothing compared to its real extent, because the Infinite One's kindness is absolutely infinite.

The mercy of the Ancient Hidden One has no limits, no judgments, no side effect of pain or suffering, and no end. And that's exactly what the world needs so badly right now. Because we're done, we've had enough, we're exhausted and desperate for healing and change right now.

We can reflect on this dynamic by way of a parable:

A loving father is in a desperate situation; his child suffers from a severe heart condition, and his medical insurance doesn't come close to covering the costs of surgery and therapy.

In his city, there are two philanthropists — one of them is a millionaire, while the other is a billionaire. The father knows the millionaire personally, but he also knows that his friend's resources are limited. The billionaire, on the other hand, has vast resources at his disposal, but it's not easy to get to him.



You need an “in.” The desperate father sizes up the situation and acts with wisdom. Instead of appealing to the millionaire for the full sum (which his friend can’t supply in any case), he appeals to his friend’s mercy and asks him for a favor. “I’m really in need right now, and I know you want to help me but you can’t really give me what I need. I ask instead that you go to the billionaire here in our city to ask him for help on my behalf. He can give me everything I need without any trouble, but I have no access to him. You, though...you can get to him!”

Even my broadest grasp of Divine compassion and kindness is limited, because I’m limited. In terms of my mind and heart, the furthest I can go is to that millionaire — the merciful man of limited means. But my access to that person (who is also really wealthy, but, even better, is well-connected) will get my need across to the one who can really help me.

However much I know of Divine mercy, it doesn’t come close to what is really there — how powerful and pervasive it is, how transformative it can be. But when I’m aware of that gap, I open up the gateway to that highest degree of mercy. I tap into the vast — really infinite — resource of the Divine mercy that will change the world. I can appeal to God’s simple mercy (because I can reach that far) and appeal to it to do me the kindness of reaching up toward the limitless mercy of the Infinite One on behalf of all of us.

As we learned earlier, Moses was given the gift of a vision of the Holy One “wrapped in a prayer shawl” while calling out the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy. The purpose of the vision was to teach Moses the pathway of reaching up to access the redemptive power of the highest degree of mercy. This upward-reaching is called “God’s Prayer.”

The Holy One said through the prophet Isaiah: “And I will bring them up to My holy mountain, and cause them to rejoice in the House of My Prayer...

For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all of the peoples of the world” (ibid. 56:7).

This verse teaches us that the Holy One, Himself, also prays!

When we activate God’s prayer, we’re able to unlock the infinite mercy of the Hidden Ancient One that will transform the world. It will correct all damage, uplift all people, and bring us into a state of harmony and spiritual unity.

Dear reader, I’d like to crystalize these ideas by sharing with you a prayer authored by one of the great spiritual masters. And maybe a request, too...

If these ideas resonate with you, consider incorporating them within your own personal prayers, for every positive thought, word, and action has the power to tip the balance and illuminate the world. May we be blessed to see the earth filled with consciousness, compassion, and peace.



*Merciful One, please send Divine
consciousness down to Your world, so
that anger and cruelty will cease to be.*

*Please pray for us and awaken Your
great mercy, for at this point in time
there is no one but You who can fully do
this.*

*Your great mercy is powerful enough and
limitless enough to help every single one
of us align with You fully. In Your highest
mercy, please bring us up to Your holy
mountain, so that we can all rejoice in the
House of Your Prayer...*

*For Your house shall be called, “a house of
prayer for all of the peoples of the world.”*

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