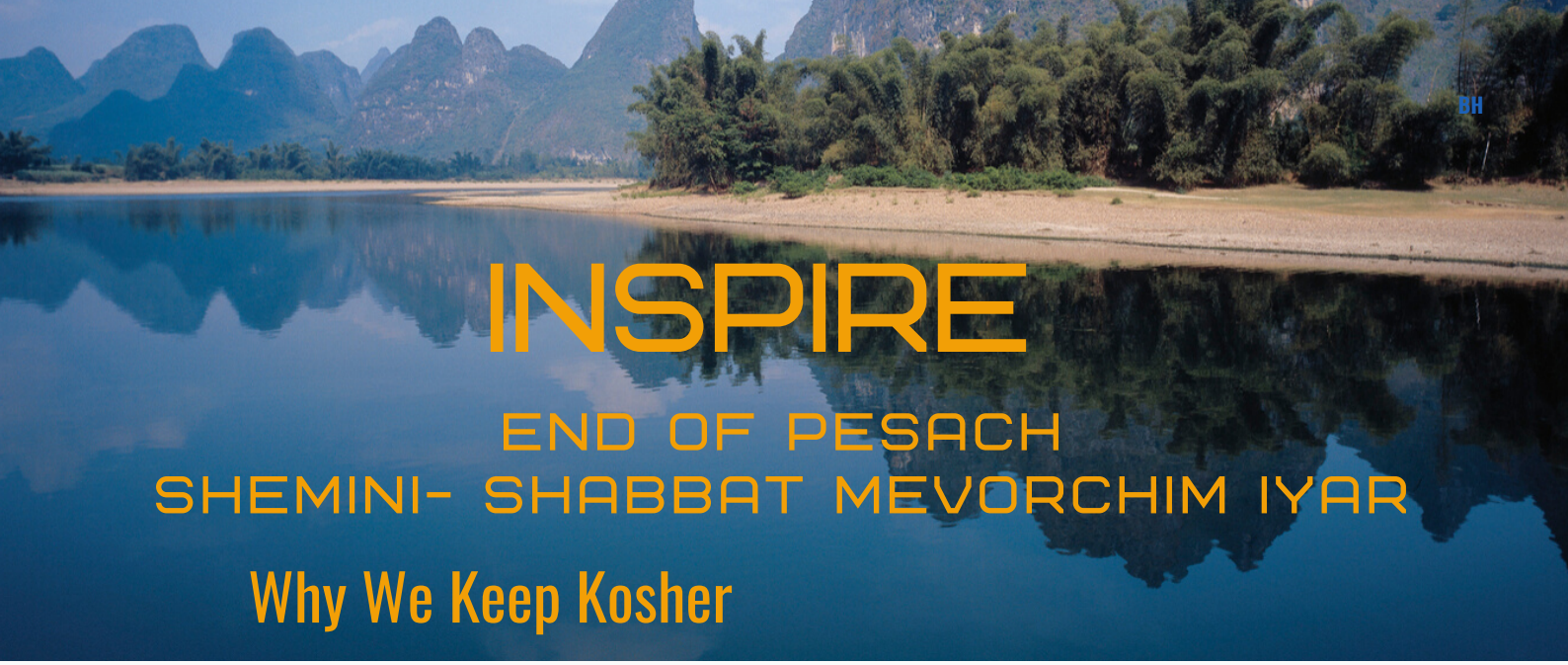

INSPIRE

END OF PESACH
SHEMINI- SHABBAT MEVORCHIM IYAR

Why We Keep Kosher

This week's parshah, Shemini, introduces the Torah's dietary laws. Animals must chew their cud and have split hooves to be kosher, fish need fins and scales, and a list of forbidden fowl is enumerated.To those of us in Jewish education, it is a continuing source of disappointment that so many Jews still believe the kosher laws to be outdated. After all, they reckon, in the desert our ancestors needed to protect themselves from trichinosis and all sorts of diabolical diseases so some kind of dietary system was needed. But today, they argue, in an age of refrigeration, government inspection and modern hygiene standards, the kosher laws are archaic, anachronistic and quite dispensable.How sad. The fact is that the kosher laws were never given to us for health reasons. If they happen to be healthy or provide good hygiene that is purely a fringe benefit. It may well be one of the perks but it has never been the reason.I often joke that if the kosher laws were for health, then all the rabbis should look like Schwarzenegger! And those who don't keep kosher should look sickly. In fact, anecdotal evidence seems to prove the very opposite; your average religious type looks rather scrawny (or overweight) and the non-kosher guys are the ones with the big biceps!So let it be stated categorically: kosher is not for our physical health but for our spiritual health. It is not for our bodies but for our souls. It is a Jewish diet to help Jews remain spiritually sensitive to their innate Jewishness.While the Torah actually records no official reason for these laws, the rabbis and philosophers have speculated on their purpose. They act as a bulwark against assimilation, we are taught. On a simple level, if we keep kosher, inexorably, we will shop with fellow Jews, socialise with fellow Jews and remain close to Jewish communal life. A rabbinic friend of mine once asked a very high-profile Jewish businessman why he was about to marry a non-Jewish woman. Couldn't he find a "nice Jewish girl"? His reply was very revealing. "I just don't mix in those circles anymore, Rabbi." There is no doubt that had he still kept Kosher his life choices may well have been very different.On a deeper, more spiritual level, keeping kosher keeps our Jewish souls sensitive to things Jewish. This is clearly a mystical concept and imperceptible to our physical senses, but according to our sages it is a fact. Just as too much red meat or fatty foods are bad for your cholesterol, non-kosher foods are bad for your neshamah. They clog your spiritual arteries and prevent those warm, healthy Jewish feelings from circulating through your kishkes and your consciousness.It's very important to have a mezuzah on your door. It identifies your home as Jewish. But what really defines your home as a "Jewish Home" - what your zayde meant when he said with pride "my children run a Jewish home" - is the kitchen. A kosher kitchen makes a Jewish home truly Jewish. It also extends a very warm and eloquent invitation to all fellow Jews. Here you are welcome. Here it is safe to come in and eat. Make yourself at home.Your favourite diet may build healthy bodies, but a kosher diet builds healthy souls.

LOUGHTON SHUL
MORE THAN A

Shabbos Times

TUESDAY 7TH DAY
CANDLE LIGHTING 7:38PM
WEDNESDAY 8TH DAY
LIGHT FROM 8:51PM
THURSDAY YOM TOV ENDS
8:51PM

FRIDAY NIGHT
CANDLE LIGHTING 7:43
SHABBAT ENDS 8:57

JOIN THE ZOOM 6:30 FOR
FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICE
WITH GUY BARZILY

Reminder to count the omer

For Whom Yizkor Is Recited?

Yizkor may be said for all Jewish dead: parents, grandparents, mates, children, family and friends. It may be recited for suicides and for sinners. A question of propriety usually arises regarding yizkor for a deceased first mate after remarriage. The only reason it would not be said is the hurt it might cause the present mate. Being that the yizkor is recited silently, there can be no such fear and the prayer may be recited.

When Is Yizkor Recited?

Yizkor is recited after the morning Torah reading on Yom Kippur, on the last day of Passover and Shavuot, and on the seventh day of Succot, called Shemini Atzeret. It is recited on these days even if they fall on the Sabbath at which time memorials are, otherwise, inappropriate to the festive nature of the holiday. In most synagogues it is recited after the rabbi's sermon.

The Requirement of a Minyan

Yizkor should be recited at synagogue services. If one cannot possibly attend these services because of illness, or because there is no minyan available, one may recite yizkor privately at home, although it is distinctly and unquestionably preferable to recite it at a public synagogue service. In this respect, it is unlike the Kaddish which may not be recited privately, under any circumstances.

Candle Lighting for Yizkor

It is an ancient custom, on the four holidays when yizkor is recited, to kindle yahrzeit candles for the departed. It is best that the lights be flaming wicks, as the flame and candle symbolise the relation of body and soul. However, if this is not available, electric bulbs or gas light may be used. For yizkor memorial purposes, one light will serve adequately to recall all the departed.

Yizkor Prayer for a Male Deceased: Merciful God in Heaven, grant perfect repose to the soul of _____ who has passed to his eternal habitation; and in whose memory, the members of his family pledge charity. May he be under Thy divine wings among the holy and pure who shine bright as the sky; may his place of rest be in paradise. Merciful One, O keep his soul forever alive under Thy protective wings. The Lord being his heritage may he rest in peace; and let us say, Amen.

Yizkor Prayer for a Woman Deceased: Merciful God in Heaven, grant perfect repose to the soul of _____ who has passed to her eternal habitation; and in whose memory, the members of her family pledge charity. May she be under Thy divine wings among the holy and pure who shine bright as the sky; may her place of rest be in paradise. Merciful One, O keep her soul forever alive under Thy protective wings. The Lord being her heritage, may she rest in peace; and let us say, Amen.

WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK - CHAYIM ARUCHIM

Newman Millicent Father Ben Zion ben Mordecai 25 Nissan
Adams Douglas Father Pesach ben Yisrael HaLevi 26 Nissan
Lewis Gary Mother Rivka Ruchal bas Chaim Dovid 26 Nissan
Segal Norman Father Yaakov ben Hershel Ha Levi 27 Nissan
Kass Mark Mother Miriam Zelda bas Meir 28 Nissan
Posner Austin Father Areyah ben Avraham Mayer 29 Nissan
Berg Melinda Brother Yonatan ben Michael 30 Nissan
Williams Clive & Karen Son Yonatan ben Michael 30 Nissan
Williams Tara Husband Yonatan ben Michael 30 Nissan
Pushkin Norman Mother Faigel bas Nuchum 1 Iyar
Selwyn Maurice Brother 1 Iyar

A LITTLE HISTORY

the Torah specifies that the counting of the omer should be "complete": "[And] you shall count for yourselves, from the morrow of the rest day from the day you bring the Omer as a wave offering seven weeks; they shall be complete."The only way to have a "complete count" is if the counting begins during the preceding night, since the day begins with the night in Jewish law.

Sefirat HaOmer is actually somewhat of an anomaly. Unlike all other areas of the Torah, when it comes to Temple offerings, a "day" is considered the daytime and its following night. Since the Torah correlates Sefirat HaOmer with the Omer offering, it would have made sense to begin counting in the daytime. However, in order to have a "complete count," we start counting during the preceding night.And since the Torah intends for us to start counting the Omer at night, it stands to reason that we should continue to perform this mitzvah at night, so that we have a "complete count" for all 49 days of the Omer.On a deeper level, the concept of Sefirat HaOmer is a 49-day process of refining the darkness of the world; thus, it is appropriate for the counting to be done at night. At the same time, the counting correlates with the Omer offering, for which the day precedes the night. This symbolises the light and G-dliness that pervades the world through the mitzvah of Sefirat HaOmer.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

G- d can do anything. He could even, as the Talmud puts it, "fit an elephant through the eye of a needle."So, how would He do it? Would He make the elephant smaller? Or would He expand the eye of the needle? Neither. The elephant would remain big, the eye of the needle small. And He would fit the elephant through the eye of the needle.Illogical? True. But logic is just another of His creations. He who created logic is permitted to transcend it.

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Everywhere in the world, parents play peek-a-boo with their children. It is a major discovery of life, a cornerstone in human development: To realize that something is there even when you cannot see it, that the world is not defined by your subjective perception, that there is something that absolutely is—whether you know of it or not.All our life, all of the world, is G- d playing with us that same game. He peeks with a miracle and then hides behind nature. Eventually, we look behind nature to find Him there.

Parsha Summary

On the eighth day, following the seven days of their inauguration, Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as kohanim (priests); a fire issues forth from G- d to consume the offerings on the altar, and the divine presence comes to dwell in the Sanctuary.Aaron's two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu, offer a "strange fire before G- d, which He commanded them not" and die before G- d. Aaron is silent in face of his tragedy. Moses and Aaron subsequently disagree as to a point of law regarding the offerings, but Moses concedes to Aaron that Aaron is in the right.G- d commands the kosher laws, identifying the animal species permissible and forbidden for consumption. Land animals may be eaten only if they have split hooves and also chew their cud; fish must have fins and scales; a list of non-kosher birds is given, and a list of kosher insects (four types of locusts).Also in Shemini are some of the laws of ritual purity, including the purifying power of the mikvah (a pool of water meeting specified qualifications) and the wellspring. Thus the people of Israel are enjoined to "differentiate between the impure and the pure."

Haftorah Summary

II Samuel .This week's haftorah mentions how Uzzah was struck dead when he disrespectfully touched the Ark of the Covenant; reminiscent of Nadab and Abihu's death described in this week's Torah reading.The Holy Ark had been in storage in the house of Avinadav for many years, ever since the destruction of the Tabernacle in Shiloh. Recently crowned King David decided to move the Ark to the new capital, Jerusalem. He had the Ark placed on a cart and it was transported amidst singing and dancing. When the procession reached Goren Nachon, the oxen misstepped and Uzzah, Avinadav's son, took hold of the Ark to steady it—whereupon he was instantly killed.1 David was devastated, and he temporarily placed the Ark in the home of Oved-edom the Edomite, where it remained for three months."And it was told to King David saying: 'G- d has blessed the house of Oved-edom, and all that belongs to him, because of the Ark of G- d.' And David went and brought up the ark of G- d from the house of Oved-edom into the City of David with joy." The Ark was brought up to the city of David with great singing and dancing. David then blessed and distributed presents to all the assembled Israelites.

HUMOUR???

An employee of the Maid of the Mist in Niagara Falls was trying to recruit a few more tourists to join their tour when he approached one fellow who was admiring the falls."Where are you from?" the employee asked."Israel," responded the man."I bet you don't have anything like this in Israel," said the employee."No, but my cousin Itzik is a plumber in Netanya. He could fix this."

Why do we say Yizkor on the last day of Passover? What's the connection?On Passover, we remember the Exodus. After Yizkor, in most shuls, there is also a mass Exodus!

How did Passover get its name?Since the Seder table is usually made larger, people can't reach for the items on the table and invariably ask others: "Could you please Pass Over the matza, etc."!

How is a good sermon like a piece of matza?They both should take less than 18 minutes!

Riddle of the week

It is sweeter than honey.It is hotter than the sun.The King needs it,But a beggar has it.Whoever eats it, dies.What is it?

Answer to last weeks Riddle BY Rebbetzen Rochel

King David

STORY TIME

In a small corner of the vast expanse of Russia there lived a Jewish innkeeper. In appearance, there was nothing special about him. He dressed like a peasant and spoke like a peasant. But this simple, earthy man was admired and respected by villagers all over his district. It was known to one and all that he was in reality a holy man, a miracle worker. Whomever he blessed, was sure that the blessing would be fulfilled.So, after a time, the reputation of the innkeeper wonder-worker spread, until word of him reached the Rebbe of Apta, who then lived in Medzibuzh. The Rebbe became curious to meet this man and learn his secret. If the man was, indeed, as simple as they all said, then whence his mystical power?The Apter Rebbe harnessed his horses and went to the tavern. When he arrived, he looked the tavern-keeper up and down, but could perceive no nuance of greatness in him. He studied his movements, but saw nothing remarkable in anything the innkeeper did. Finally, the Rebbe approached the man and questioned him, "Tell me, please, from where are your special powers? Why does Heaven grant all of Your blessings?"The man smiled, and replied straightforwardly, "My powers come from my faith in G-d which is as strong as a mighty oak."Since my youth, I have always trusted in G-d, and no matter what ever happened to me I was always certain that it would be ultimately for the best, since it came from G-d. I never despaired and I always gave tzedaka (charity) generously, particularly when times were tough."As for guests, I have always kept an open house and treated passersby with the greatest hospitality."The innkeeper paused and then continued. "One night, when I had a house full of guests, there came a knock at my door. It was a messenger from the poretz [landowner] saying that I was to appear before him at once or else he would have me thrown into prison."Now, I had a problem, for I had a lot of hungry people to feed. If I left at once, they would probably go to bed hungry.I stayed and took care of my guests, putting my trust in G-d that no harm would come to me."Only hours later, after my guests were comfortably in their rooms did I venture out to meet my landlord. When I arrived, he was brimming with goodwill; apparently he had had a change of heart. Not only didn't he throw me into jail, but he greeted me like an old friend. Everything worked out all right."Whenever I put my trust in G-d, I have nothing to worry about. Two years ago I lost all my money. I had no trouble maintaining my faith, but it was a different thing for my family. They were desperate and begged me to go and find a partner. They could see no other solution."This was against my own ideas. Why should I suddenly begin to rely on flesh and blood when all my life I had trusted only in G-d, and He had never let me down? In the end, I couldn't hold out against them, and so, I set out to find a business partner."I walked through the green countryside, bursting with G-d's goodness and bounty, red apples here, luscious grapes to the other side, contented cows grazing lazily, and I stopped in my tracks. My heart was almost bursting with my love of G-d, and my trust in Him had never been greater. Could not the One Who created all of the beautiful greenery and sustained it eternally also care for me and my little family? Why was I seeking out some human being to lift me up from all my troubles. I raised my eyes to the heavens and prayed, 'G-d, You are the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, please grant my prayer. I have lost all my money, and I cannot operate my inn. My family tells me to get myself a partner, a mere mortal of flesh and blood. Why can't You become my partner? We'll split everything down the middle. Your half, I'll distribute to the poor, and my half, I'll use to support my family."No sooner had I finished, when I felt something in my pocket. I reached for it, and to my astonishment it was a silver coin of such value that I had never owned one like it. And I knew that G-d had accepted my proposition; we were partners, and this was the first profit."With this coin I replenished my stock and resumed my trade. When the first profits came in, I put one half aside for my 'partner' in a box which I keep behind the counter. I am scrupulously careful with these funds, even more so than with my own money. This is my whole story."The Apter Rebbe, who had been listening with rapt attention, rose, thanked the tavern-keeper, and left. When he returned to his own shul in Medzibuzh he told the entire tale to his chasidim, and concluded "When one enters a partnership with G-d, and is completely honest in his business dealings, G-d enables him to perform wonders."

By Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz—father of seven, husband of Dina, —has been rendered immobile by ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Unable to speak or type, he uses his eyes via machine to write heartfelt thoughts

Before the Splitting of the Sea, the Jewish people dwelled in a place called Pi Hachirot, which opened up to the shore of the Sea of Reeds. The sea was raging while Pharoah pursued them with his entire Egyptian army. As the Egyptians were quickly approaching, Moses said to the people, "Have no fear, stand firm and witness the deliverance that G d will perform for you today, for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see again. G d will do battle for you, and you shall remain silent."

The Midrash says that there were four factions, four opinions on how to deal with their situation. One group said, "We should drown ourselves in the sea," anything but slavery. The second group said, "We should return to Egypt," at least we will live. The third said, "We should make war against them," perhaps we will win. And the fourth group said, we shouldn't do any of the first three options, but "we should cry out to G d," and He will surely help.

G d's words to Moses were a refutation to all four factions. To those who said, "We should drown ourselves in the sea," Moses said, "Stand firm and witness the deliverance that G d will perform for you today." To those who said, "We should return to Egypt," he said, "For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see again." To those who said, "We should make war against them," he said, "G d will do battle for you." And to those who said, "We should cry out to G d," he said, "You shall remain silent."

What should they do? G d said, "Speak to the children of Israel, and they should journey forth." Continue on the path that leads to Mount Sinai, where you will receive the Torah, because that is the whole reason for the Exodus from Egypt.

It is hard to understand how the answer to all these four opposing opinions could be in a single statement. They are so different that some are diametric opposites.

"We should drown ourselves in the sea" is the diametric opposite of "return to Egypt." And both are, in a way, giving up, the opposite of "make war against them." All three are taking matters into their own hands, as opposed to "cry out to G d," which is putting it in G d's hands. So how can they all be swept away with one short statement?

The order of Moses's answer is also difficult to understand. It would make sense to first respond to "return to Egypt," because that was the lowest of the four and the opposite of what they were doing, the Exodus from Egypt. Then the other three, each a step higher, drowning, war and prayer. Yet, he responded to "drown in the sea" first. Why?

Another question: What was wrong with their recommendations, that they had to be refuted? True, drowning in the sea is against our belief. One must not take his or her own life, and returning to Egypt is giving up and one must never give up hope in G d. However, to go to war with them is a noble gesture, standing up to our oppressors and protecting our families. What is wrong with that? And what could be better than putting our total faith in G d by turning to Him in prayer? Isn't that what we are meant to do in a crisis?

Finally, what are we meant to learn from this event?

Even though the Exodus happened seven days earlier, the Jewish people were not completely free until the Splitting of the Sea, as they were still being pursued by the Egyptians. It was only after they crossed the sea and the Egyptians drown, that the Exodus was complete.

This is one of the reasons that we mention the Splitting of the Sea in our prayers. We have an obligation to mention the Exodus every day, and according to some, one must also mention the Splitting of the Sea, the final stage of the Exodus. Otherwise, it isn't considered as if he mentioned the Exodus at all, since, until the splitting of the sea, we weren't completely free.

We say in the Haggadah, "In every generation, a person is obligated to see himself, as if he came out of Egypt." This means that "in every generation, and every day," we have to negate the first four opinions and act in the way of "journeying forth." In other words, there are two stages in the Exodus: first there is leaving Egypt, and secondly, the Splitting of the Sea.

Leaving Egypt is the first stage. We negate the confines and the servitude to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, i.e. the evil inclination and the animal soul, and we serve G d through accepting His yoke. Without this there is no freedom, because if he is not able to keep even one mitzvah, because of the hold the evil inclination and animal soul have on him, he is not truly free.

The problem he faces after entering this stage is that since he is only serving G d through acceptance, Pharoah and the Egyptians, the evil inclination and the animal soul continue to chase after him and cover up the light of the G dly soul that is in him.

However, when he enters the second stage, he starts to serve G d in a way that "turns the sea into dry land," he uncovers and reveals the G dliness that is hidden in the world. He sees G d in everything, then he is truly free—the evil inclination and the animal soul can't bother him anymore. When he works on himself and reveals his true purpose, and follows the path that G d wants him to take. In other words, the path that allows him to "journey forth," then he is truly free.

The problem with the four opinions is that they keep you from "journeying forth." The groups are in the order of worst to least encumbering.

The worst of all is "we should drown ourselves in the sea." This is the attitude of one who cuts himself off from the world. He isn't interested in taking care of anybody but himself. He throws himself into the sea, the sea of Torah, the sea of prayer and the sea of repentance. When you ask him, "What about the world? What about another Jewish person?" He says, "Let someone else do it! Why should I mix into G d's affairs?!" It is cold in the exile, so he puts on his coat and he is warm. He could warm up others, but he says, "I can't warm up the whole world." It is beneath his dignity to do a small amount. If he can't warm up the whole world, he will do nothing. So he puts on his coat and he is warm.

The problem with this way of thinking is that it goes nowhere.

The next faction said, "We should return to Egypt" and be their slaves. This is the person who is stuck. He feels the burden of the Torah, the burden of Judaism, but it is a burden. He keeps the Torah, but he has no enjoyment in it. He serves G d through accepting His yoke. It is honorable to serve G d this way, but accepting His yoke is only the beginning of serving G d, ultimately, one has to understand and find pleasure in his service. But what should he do? It is difficult to be a Jew, he feels. Nebach.

The problem with this way of thinking is that he is stuck in the jail of his mind, in perpetual servitude, and because of that, he can't move forward.

The third faction said, "We should make war against them." This is the person who sees the Torah and its holiness as fighting the forces of evil. He is leading the charge.

The problem with this way of thinking is that G d wanted us to go to receive the Torah at Mount Sinai, and this is a distraction from the task at hand. Plus, how does he know that it is coming from the right place? Perhaps it is just his nature to like to fight. Did he ask Moses if it's what G d wants?

The fourth faction said, "We should cry out to G d." This is the person who is at a very high level. He puts his total trust in G d. The problem with this is that he does nothing, but G d wants us to put in our effort and use our abilities to serve Him.

We Jews live in a dichotomy. On one hand, we have to trust in G d that He will take care of us, and at the same time, He wants us to use our abilities to the fullest. On one hand, we are meant to believe that everything that happens is from G d, and therefore, totally good, even if we don't see it that way. And at the same time, we are meant to ask for revealed good, and trust that He will grant us what we are asking for.

Why do we have this dichotomy? Because G d is able to have polar opposites within Him, and we are one with Him. We, therefore, have this ability, this dichotomy, as well.

I see this in my own life. It is so hard for me to cope with ALS, and it is so difficult and heartbreaking for my wife and children to live this life. On one hand, we know that this is G d's will, and we know that He has a good reason for giving me ALS. We do our best to be happy, and we try to use our challenge to do good, lift others up, and teach the ways of G d. On the other hand, we pray every day for this test to come to an end, that we see revealed good, total health and function, and we expect it to happen. I know it's crazy, but that is who we are, Jews, and that is truth at the highest level, when you are who you are.

What is the path that we are meant to follow? The way of G d is to "journey forth," to head towards the destination that will accomplish what G d wants. To make this world into a home for G d.

The common denominator of the four opinions is that they were all opinions based on human intellect which is at best flawed. And since they share this common link, they were refuted in the same short statement.

How do you figure out which path G d wants you to take?

It is the path that you know is correct, but it is also the one that you want to follow the least. The mitzvah you find the most difficult is the one that you need to do the most. Because the evil inclination puts up a fight, when it comes to what is most important for you to do.

May we journey forth on the path that G d wants us to, even though it is a struggle. This struggle will uncover the G dliness within us, and the G dliness that is in the world. Just as following G d's path split the sea for us and completed the redemption from the Egyptians, so too, by following the path that G d wants us to, and not what is easy, we will once again split the sea, reveal the G dliness that is hidden in the world, and Moshiach will come. The time has come.