



GO TO YOURSELF!

# THE BRIDGE

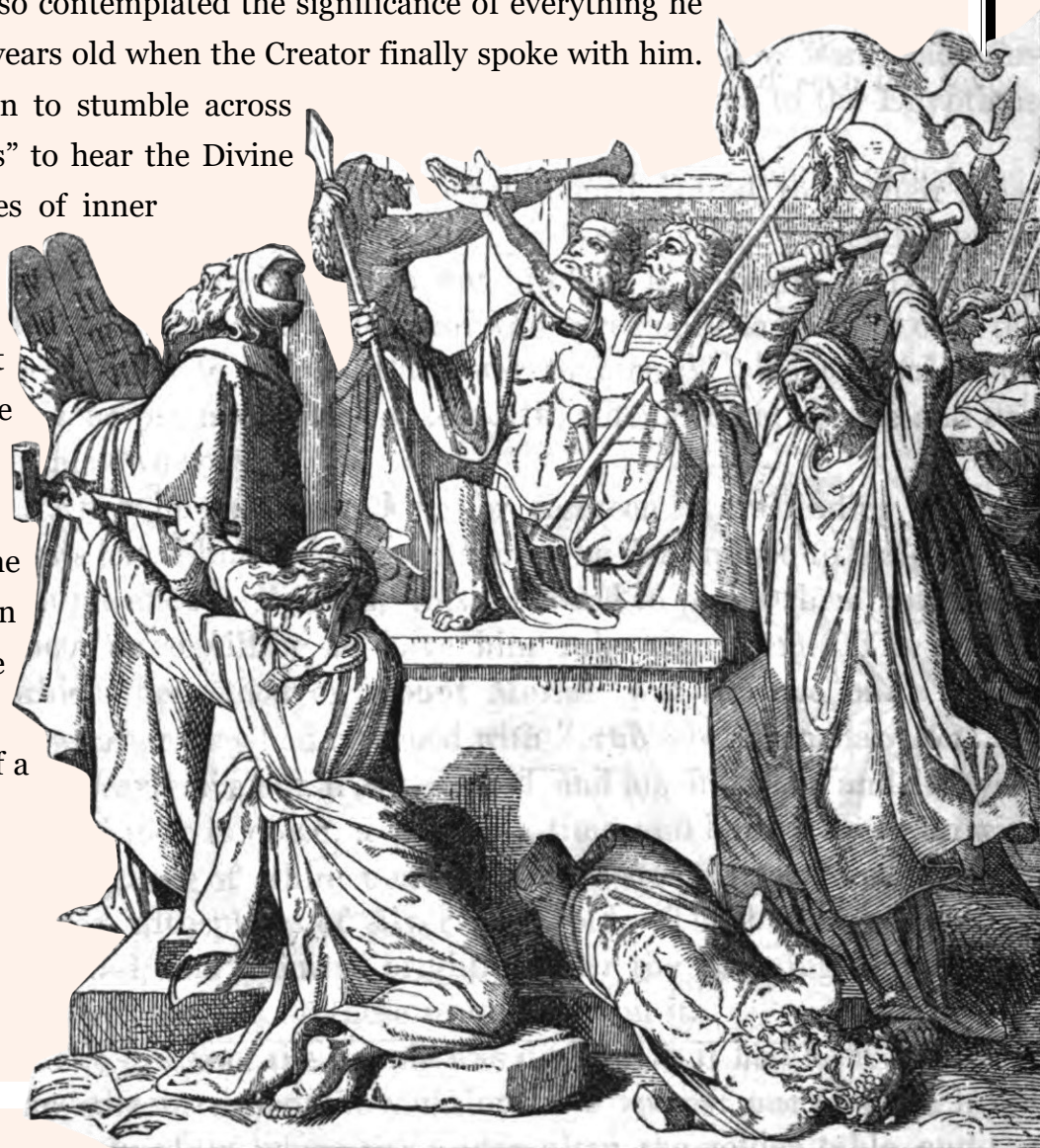
Ten generations after Noah, a soul descended into the world—“like a star rising in the east”—in Mesopotamia, the ancient cradle of civilization. This was Abraham. Despite being born into a home and a culture of idolatrous polytheism, Abraham’s shining soul was destined to expand on Noah’s work. He would widen Noah’s ark-pathway over the floodwaters into a bridge anyone could use to reach God. He would share a revolutionary concept with the world, in a radically new way.

Abraham was an independent thinker from a young age. As soon as he was old enough to reason through his impressions of the world around him, he came to the conclusion that there could only be a single primal cause and active force within existence. And that’s with a father who sold idols for a living.

Abraham saw right through the false concepts of his own time and culture. As he got older, he became more and more attuned to an inner directive, while his dependence on the approval of people around him got ever weaker.

Abraham journeyed through life paying attention to the implications of phenomena and events. He didn’t only *see*; he also contemplated the significance of everything he saw. Abraham was seventy-five years old when the Creator finally spoke with him. But Abraham didn’t just happen to stumble across God; he *tuned in*. His “receivers” to hear the Divine voice were the result of decades of inner work.

What’s fascinating is that this dynamic is as true now as it ever was: if we want to experience contact with the Creator, we have to invest energy in refining our receivers. To allow the Divine into our lives, we align our own ways with the Creator’s way—we straighten out what’s bent, and expand the good. It’s the work of a lifetime.



Abraham was a truth-seeker, and he reached his most important truth—that there is only one God—through paying careful attention to the world around him. The Talmud describes his process by way of a parable:

*Rabbi Yitzchak said: Abraham’s discovery can be compared to a traveler who passed a castle that blazed with light.*

*He said, “Can it be that the castle has no ruler?”*

*The owner peeked out at him and said,*

*“I am the master of the castle.”*

*Because Abraham would say, “Can it be that this world has no ruler?”, the Holy One peeked out at him and declared,*

*“I am the Master of the world.”*

The world appeared to Abraham as a beautiful edifice, far too well designed to have just arisen by itself. And although it seemed empty and unclaimed, Abraham could see the inner Divinity illuminating the structure of the world from the inside, even though the actual owner was nowhere to be seen.

The world had already been subject to a flood, to social and physical breakdowns during early human history; Abraham was certain that an Infinite Intelligence was behind the illusion that these were just random events. And then the Creator revealed Himself to Abraham; the Infinite One *responded* to Abraham’s search for truth. The master of the castle peeked out and showed Himself.

Abraham was on his own in his quest. In fact, he had to overcome fierce opposition as he developed and shared the monotheistic idea. The verse says that “Abraham was *one*”—he was the only person in his time with the strength to break away from a false way of living.

And like Abraham, we all have to be willing to sometimes walk the path alone to stay in conscious contact with God.

Walking an individual path doesn’t mean being self-focused, however. It means staying aware that *you* have to do whatever spiritual work needs to be done. You can’t do anyone else’s, and no one else can do yours.

Just like Abraham.



# GO TO YOURSELF

If we look to the book of Genesis, we find that the first words God said to Adam after he ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil were, “Where are you?” Is it possible that the Infinite One was truly unaware of Adam’s location? No, it’s not.

And that’s because God’s question is so much deeper. The Chassidic masters teach that those words reverberate to all of us through all time; they are relevant to everyone, everywhere. The Creator calls out to us, “*Where are you?*” Where is *the real you* hiding?

When the Creator first spoke to Abraham, in Genesis 12:1, it was with a simple phrase directing him to leave his place of birth. “*Lech Lecha, Go **for** yourself*”—it’s for your own good, you’ll see blessing in it. But the mystics read this direction as—“*Go **to** yourself.*” Leave behind all of the false definitions and external selves you’ve built up over seventy-five years of living in this world. Go and discover who you really are.

This is the essential mission that every soul is sent out to accomplish, not just Abraham.

When we look back at the model of Abraham, we see that God told him to go to himself by getting away from, “...your **land**, your **birthplace**, and from your **father’s house.**” *To uncover your true self, you have to be willing to shed the **assumptions of your society**, your **natural inclinations**, and the habits you formed in your **family of origin.***

Until we consciously “go forth from them,” we’re tethered to so many beliefs—both conscious and beneath the surface—that can keep us spinning our wheels for a lifetime.

Most of the thoughts we truly believe are the products of our own minds (*our* thoughts, not

what we read online or saw on television) are really just projections of the ego, the external self that wants to Edge God Out. But how am I supposed to get beyond these projections, if the most internal I can get are my own thoughts?



The first step is to be aware that there's a soul.

The second step is to know that I *am*—not that I *have*—a soul.

When a soul descends from a purely spiritual existence into the physical world, its outermost garment is the body. So our primary approach to the body is that you aren't a body; you *have* a body. There is a *you*—a true internal you—that possesses or wears this body as its most external and material garment. The body, just like the world in its relationship to God, conceals and reveals the soul that inhabits it.

The outermost soul-garment, the body, is the easiest to see—it's on the surface. So the body is a concealer. When a person is hyperfocused on the externalities of life, it really can hide the soul. On the other hand, when that outer garment acts as a real partner to the inner soul, it helps to reveal the soul—its existence, its goodness, its purpose.

A more subtle garment is one's external identity, what we call the ego. Just like the body, the ego can also hide the true self. But when the external self unites with one's essence, and expresses that soul at the core, the external self becomes our partner in helping us achieve our higher mission in life. Again, we're talking about uniting those two trees—that inner soul with the outer garments of our selves—so we can live in a whole and aligned way.

Even though we're carrying all of these different layers and acting through them, there's still only a single, true "I" that exists within. Just as there's only one God within all of the layers and garments of nature and Divine attributes, instilling all reality with vitality and wisdom.

The external ego is naturally self-seeking—it does a lot of Edging God Out. The soul, however, is one with its source.

The ego is judgmental and negative—it has trouble connecting. The soul, on the other hand, is merciful and compassionate and yearns for unity.

The ego is embodied within the layers of false identity that have to be sheared away from the core.

The soul controls the balance-point of alignment with the Divine at all times.

God well understands the power of the body-soul-ego divide; He created us, after all. He also knows we're capable of living in a whole and aligned way—and uniting those two trees. The Creator invited Abraham—invites all of us—to leave false identities behind us and take a journey to the true self.

# EDGE GOD OUT

## PIERCING THE VEIL

Abraham was taught over a long period of time that the state of nature is only meant to be a starting point; it's not the final destination. At nearly one hundred years of age, and after more than two decades of devotion to the way of mercy and unified God-consciousness, Abraham received another Divine communication.

The Creator was giving Abraham a new opportunity to further perfect himself and bond with Him. Just as God first provided Abraham with a family of origin and a primary nature and environment to strip away, God also formed him with a foreskin and only afterward commanded him to remove it.

Abraham spent a lifetime refining his nature and his receptivity to the Divine Will, and at a certain point the Creator made clear to him that, to really carry forward that first instruction to discover his true self, Abraham would have to alter his relationship with his body in an essential way.

***Circumcision provides us with a vision of an ideal...  
but we're supposed to be participants in reaching that ideal.***

If ego is Edge God Out, circumcision is the ultimate Let God In—let the Divine light of the soul into your body so it becomes a transformed garment. Circumcision, then, is a model of all of the places in our existence where God leaves gaps of imperfection and lack so that we can partner with our Creator to bring completion to reality. The word for circumcision is *brit*, which really means a pact or covenant. The relationship between God and Noah after the flood was also called a *brit*, but through Abraham's act, the *brit* was made personal and much more powerful.

The essential pact we make with God is to take the raw material of our lives—the circumstances of our birth, our natural inclinations, our assumptions—and pierce them to let God in. We don't rely on our default settings; we change them as needed, to get into increasing alignment with the Divine.

The foundation of the first mitzvah is this willingness to break away from the past, from the state of nature, to run after God.

This is Ground Zero of Judaism.

Since Abraham's time, Jews circumcise on the eighth day of a baby boy's life, when his parents do the work for him, in a way. This parallels God's taking the initiative to propel Abraham out of his land, his birthplace, and his father's house. "*Go to yourself...*"—it had the tone of command. Yes, it's "for yourself"—for your benefit—but there is a push inside that word, "Go!"

Abraham first *went*, and the journey brought him to the *brit*. As the children of Abraham, that first Divine push out of the state of nature is a gift. It's then up to us to continue our quest to discover our inner, truest selves.



The tradition teaches us that even though Abraham filled his life with *mitzvot* and devoted himself to the revelation of Divine lovingkindness in the world, he wasn't called "whole" until he circumcised himself.

What we would consider diminishment—the physical cutting away of a part of the body—the Torah calls wholeness or perfection. Really, it means oneness. Circumcision made Abraham *one*. "Walk before Me, and be whole," the Divine voice told him. By doing this small

## THE HUMAN... BEING

act—which isn't small at all—you will become whole.

Why *do* we circumcise our sons at the tender age of eight days? Why not wait until the child is old enough to assume the responsibility to bring *himself* into the state of *brit*—this covenantal relationship with the Creator? It's because we understand that, although the state of nature may be beautiful, it's only a starting point. We were placed here to participate in the *achievement* of wholeness and perfection. The child is given the gift of a unified beginning, without having to struggle through the preliminary stripping-away Abraham had to do for himself. Even though that child is still going to need to "go to himself," just like Abraham, he's given the opportunity to begin from a place of holiness and move forward from there.

The unity of body and soul, this wholeness, is called *being*, not *doing*. We gift the child with *human being*—the opportunity to start from the point of integration and unity.

What the child does with this gift is up to him; it's up to all of us.

We're so busy *doing*; we're so busy performing our endless lists of tasks that we lose touch with ourselves. We can be in the middle of a business deal or a conversation with a client or a coworker, and our minds are somewhere else entirely. That's the human *doing*, not the human *being*. That's fractured; it's not whole.

We were created for greater things than that.

When that primary connection is made, when the light of the soul has a gateway through which it can permeate the body, that connection transforms the rest of the *mitzvot* we do.

The Kabbalistic tradition teaches us that every *mitzvah* is a specific packet of Divine light in a small, accessible form. Of these Divine directives there are 248 “dos” and 365 “don’ts”—paralleling the 248 “limbs” and 365 “sinews” of the soul-form called “Supernal Man.” *Mitzvot* nourish and sustain the spiritual self, allowing the full flow of Divine vitality to reach every part of us. And the spiritual self is reflected in the physical structure of our bodies.

The *brit* allows the light of every *mitzvah* we do to spread throughout our bodies, to vitalize each limb and organ that corresponds to that *mitzvah*. This is the gateway to wholeness. That integration has a ripple effect on the way our minds operate so that we can live consciously. We can become *human beings*—body, emotions, mind, and soul all working together as a single, organic whole, toward a single purpose, with everything that we do.

# SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

Abraham's journey of self-discovery didn't end with leaving his father's land and setting out for a new one. His life was an evolution, where the new insight and action of each stage brought him forward into the next.

Abraham began by focusing a lens of faith on the world outside—and he found God. His discovery made him receptive to the Divine communication to leave his comfortable point of origin and step out into the unknown to follow his higher destiny. This so refined him that his physicality came to reflect his transcendent spiritual nature—he circumcised himself.

Abraham then took his wife and household and began the next phase of his life—sharing his vision of Divine lovingkindness with a world badly in need of mercy and compassion. Everywhere he traveled, his tent became a haven for the hungry, the weary, the needy. The four sides of his tent were open to all passersby in a harsh desert climate—Abraham only wanted an opportunity to share God's bounty with his visitors.

Abraham's giving—he provided food, drink, and shelter to wayfarers in the deserts of Mesopotamia—changed him. It also changed his guests. His giving wasn't just the giving of an individual named Abraham. He was a living manifestation of the Divine attribute of lovingkindness, and people felt this. When they ate Abraham's food, drank his wine and water, and slept under the shelter of his tent, they felt the love of the Infinite One operating through him. He spread his message of monotheism throughout the ancient world by mirroring the Divine attribute of lovingkindness.

There is a joy to be discovered in the process of transformation, and that's the joy this universe was designed to deliver. Not that God's mercy and kindness should just shower down upon us (although we really do get a lot of freebies here), but that we should get to experience the higher joy that comes from changing this world from a tight, self-interested place into a fountain of Divine generosity.



The way we trigger the flow is by breaking through our own natural barriers and letting free those first streams of true lovingkindness that exist inside of us in potential.

Mercy isn't really kindness. Mercy is what you activate when you do kindness for the other *when you don't naturally want to*. It's when you give to the person *you think is undeserving*. Mercy is what happens when the channel of cruelty is forced to serve as the conduit of kindness.

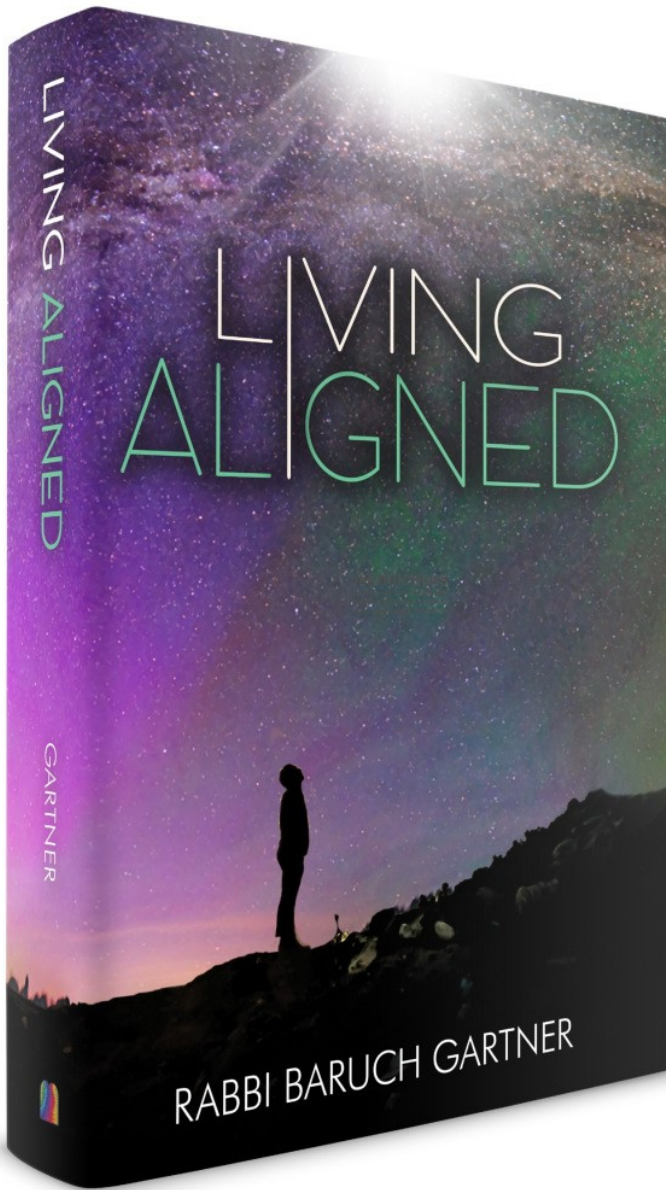
Breaking out of our "stuckness" requires massive action, like getting the car whose back wheels are in a snowbank out and moving. You, your friends, your neighbors, are going to have to get behind that heavy vehicle and push; otherwise you're just spinning your wheels. Massive action is what gets the stuck mass moving.

That unmoving mass is us. Charity—the *stretching* kind of giving—is the massive action that can get us out of our stuck places. And there are many stuck places for all of us.

According to the Kabbalistic tradition, there is a custom to give charity before we undertake an endeavor or set out to fulfill certain *mitzvot*. Before we try to open a new door, we go back to the beginning of all beginnings. When the Torah speaks of giving charity generously, it says, "You shall surely open your hand to your brother" (Deuteronomy 15:8). In the original Hebrew, though, the words can be read, "You will open an opening..." Charity is what first opens the door to all new beginnings, and Abraham's opening of his tent to give so generously to everyone is the beginning of *our* process of spiritual evolution.

To get your foot in the door of a new opening in your spiritual life, you first need to get it open a crack. Charity gets the door open a bit, and once it's open, charity helps it open even more. But for that act of giving to serve as a transformative door-opener, it's going to take energy. The giving of self, the boundary-stretching kind of giving, is what does it. And giving money is not the only way to do an act of charity. It can be money, or time, energy, or skill. Give what's needed. Give what you've got.

This is the beginning of all beginnings. It is the opening of all doorways.



GO TO YOURSELF, TAKE  
THE NEXT STEP AND  
START READING "LIVING  
ALIGNED"

Available on **amazon**

Click the link below to order now:

<https://www.amazon.com/Living-Aligned-successful-navigation-different/dp/1946351342>