

A Guide to  
**REMEMBER**  
*for* **LIFE**

*Holocaust Survivors' Stories  
of Faith and Hope*

BY Brad Hirschfield



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*Remember for Life* Guide

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## INTRODUCTION

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This study guide is composed of two kinds of questions, each designed to deepen your appreciation of the Torah text, the survivors whose stories lie within the book, and also of yourself as a reader of both. The questions in this guide will heighten both your awareness of yourself and the values that you hold most dear, and your awareness of the multiple layers of meaning embedded within the lines of each week's Torah reading.

While there really are no wrong answers to any of the questions, there are ways of answering them that will produce richer results for you as a reader. Start by reminding yourself that there really are no right answers, that questions such as these take time to answer, and that the “perfect answer” of today may give way to a totally different answer in the future, one which will be just as “perfect”. We have also tried to craft questions that invite the answers of readers both young and old, and also for readers whose range of experience in reading the Hebrew Bible (in any language) extends from neophyte to near professional.

Just as the stories which make up the book act as a new kind of commentary on the weekly Torah portion, the questions in this guide are designed to help you become a more active reader of the text, in effect creating a living commentary each time you read. Doing that requires drawing your attention to all three texts that should always be in play as you read through the pages of *Remember For Life*; the survivors' stories, the Torah portions on which their stories comment and reflect, and the text of your own life — the latter being the one from which none of us ever departs and from which all reading necessarily begins.

That is why two kinds of questions are offered for each highlighted value of the Torah portion covered in the book; we begin by inviting readers to connect their own experience, the story of their own lives, to the stories told by the survivors. Having made the connection between those two narratives, we invite readers once again to consider those questions which link your own experience to the narrative found in the Biblical text as well. In this way, each reader becomes both a carrier of previous Jewish stories about the struggle to create meaningful and ethical lives, and a creator of new stories that do the same. That is what it means to remember for life.

We hope that you find this process of ongoing questioning and answering gratifying, and know the blessing that your discovery of truths, both ancient and new, will bring you both wisdom and joy.

Brad Hirschfield  
*President, CLAL*

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for Readings

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# GENESIS

## בראשית

### BERE'SHIT

#### *Creativity*

---

- ◆ What hidden talent would you like to discover?
- ◆ Who could help you in that process?
- ◆ What is the relationship between God's creativity described in chapter one of Genesis and God's rest as described in chapter two?

# NOAH

## בראשית

### NOAH

#### *Survival*

---

- ◆ When have you felt lucky?
- ◆ To what do you attribute that good fortune?
- ◆ Why were Noah and his family saved?

# LEKH LEKHA

## בראשית

### LEKH LEKHA

#### *Journey*

---

- ◆ What journey are you on?
- ◆ What have you always wanted to do, but not yet tried?
- ◆ How do you think Abraham and Sarah felt as they set out on their journey?

## בראשית VA-YERA'

### *Hospitality*

---

- ◆ Through whose door would you like to walk?
- ◆ Whom are you waiting to welcome through yours?
- ◆ How is the hospitality offered by Lot both like and not like that offered by Abraham?

## בראשית HAYYEI SARAH

### *Laughter*

---

- ◆ What makes you laugh?
- ◆ With whom would you love to share that laughter?
- ◆ How is laughter, for which Isaac is named, related to love and comfort which he finds in bringing Rebecca into his life?

## בראשית TOLEDOT

### *Departures*

---

- ◆ What would you say to loved one who was departing for a journey which would end all contact between you?
- ◆ How many stories of departure are located within this parsha?

# בראשית

VA-YETSE'

## *Dreams*

---

- ◆ Are your dreams important to you? Why?
- ◆ What did Jacob discover in his dream and why was it important for him to know?

# בראשית

VA-YISHLAH

## *Identity*

---

- ◆ When have you felt most Jewish?
- ◆ What did Jacob discover about himself in his night of wrestling?

# בראשית

VA-YESHEV

## *Destiny*

---

- ◆ For what great thing might you be destined?
- ◆ Does Joseph necessarily believe that he is destined for greatness? From where might this belief come?

# בראשית

MIKKETS

*Wisdom*

---

- ◆ What does it mean to be wise?
- ◆ Is Joseph wise, smart or cunning in his dealings in Egypt? Are these all the same?

# בראשית

VA-YIGGASH

*Reunion*

---

- ◆ With whom would you most like to be reunited?
- ◆ What lies behind Joseph's loud sobbing at his reunion with his brothers?

# בראשית

VA-YEHI

*Legacy*

---

- ◆ What are your responsibilities as a human being and to whom are you responsible?
- ◆ Why does Jacob bless Joseph's sons instead of Joseph, as he blessed all of his other sons?

# E X O D U S

## שְׁמוֹת SHEMOT

### *Parenting*

---

- ◆ What makes a good parent?
- ◆ Who was Moses' real mother? Can there be more than one answer to that question and if so, how?

## שְׁמוֹת VA-'ERA'

### *Liberators*

---

- ◆ Who could you help to liberate?
- ◆ For what purpose does God promise to liberate the Jewish people?

## שְׁמוֹת BO'

### *Redemption*

---

- ◆ For what purpose are you certain it's worth surviving anything?
- ◆ To what end are we supposed to remember our redemption?



## שמות BE-SHALLAH

### *Triumph*

---

- ◆ When have you felt truly successful?
- ◆ Were the Children of Israel fully successful in their battle with Amalek? Is full success ever really possible? Desirable?

## שמות YITRO

### *Community*

---

- ◆ Of what communities are you a member?
- ◆ Where was Moses when the Ten Commandments were given and what can be learned from that?

## שמות MISHPATIM

### *Justice*

---

- ◆ What does it mean to be just?
- ◆ What defines a just community according to this *parsha*?

## שְׁמוֹת TERUMAH

### *Sacred Space*

- ◆ What spaces in your life are sacred to you?
- ◆ Are the gifts which the people are commanded to give for the establishment of the tabernacle really gifts, given that God demands them? What about the notion that they are to be a result of the giver's heart's desire? How do those concepts fit together?

## שְׁמוֹת TETSAVVEH

### *Service*

---

- ◆ What person, cause or idea would you most like to serve?
- ◆ What is the difference between service and worship?

## שְׁמוֹת KI TISSA'

### *Hope*

---

- ◆ Who gives you hope?
- ◆ For what do you hope?
- ◆ How does hope strengthen you?
- ◆ What does Moses hope to discover about God and why?

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## שמות VA-YAKHEL

### *Refuge*

- ◆ Where do you find refuge when you need it most?
- ◆ Why are we commanded both to work during the week and to rest on the Sabbath? Are both sacred acts?

## שמות PEKUDEI

### *Success*

---

- ◆ How do you measure success?
- ◆ How did Moses know that they had successfully completed the Tabernacle? What new limitations came with that success?

# LEVITICUS

ויקרא  
VA-YIKRA'

*Sacrifice*

- ◆ When have you sacrificed something in your own life? Was it worth it?
- ◆ Why are sacrifices so important to the ancient Israelites? What did they accomplish?

ויקרא  
TSAV

*Giving*

---

- ◆ What is the best gift you have ever given? Received?
- ◆ Why can people of different financial means give different sacrifices to achieve the same desired outcome? Is that really fair?

ויקרא  
SHEMINI

*Eating*

---

- ◆ What is your favorite thing to eat, and why?
- ◆ Why are there so many rules about what we can and cannot eat, and how are they related to the rules of the Tabernacle among which they are found?

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ויקרא  
'TAZRIA'  
*Sexuality*

---

- ◆ Are sex, romance and love inherently interconnected? Should they be?
- ◆ What messages are conveyed by a system which imagines that our bodies can be both ritually pure and impure?

ויקרא  
'METSORA'  
*Healing*

---

- ◆ How are health and healing related? Is it possible to have one without the other?
- ◆ Are the rules and rituals in this *parsha* about physical health, or something else, and if so, what?

ויקרא  
'AHAREI MOT'  
*Atonement*

---

- ◆ For what do you wish to atone?
- ◆ What does it mean to be “too close to the Lord” as is stated in the opening lines of chapter 16?

## ויקרא KEDOSHIM

### *Love*

---

- ◆ Who do you love? How do you show it?
- ◆ What does it mean to love another human being “as yourself”?

## ויקרא 'EMOR

### *Sacred Time*

---

- ◆ What times are sacred for you? How do you honor them?
- ◆ Why is having sacred times so important in this story?

## ויקרא BE-HAR

### *Liberation*

---

- ◆ When have you felt liberated?
- ◆ What does it mean to be a servant of God, as described in these chapters? Does that contradict what it means to be liberated?

ויקרא  
BE-HUKKOTAI  
*Obligation*

---

- ◆ To whom or what are you most obligated?
- ◆ Why is it that there are so many more verses describing the bad things that will happen to the people if they fail to follow God's laws, than there are to describe the good things that happen if they do?

# N U M B E R S

## במדבר BE-MIDBAR

### *Home*

---

- ◆ Where do you feel most at home? Why?
- ◆ Was the camp in the desert a real home for those who lived there, or something else?

## במדבר NASO'

### *Blessing*

---

- ◆ In what ways do you feel blessed?
- ◆ Why must a Nazarite bring a sin offering after engaging in what seems to be an act of religious devotion?

## במדבר BE-HA'ALOTEKHA

### *Starting Over*

---

- ◆ What part of your life would you like to start over? What would you change?
- ◆ How do you understand the importance of *Pesah Shenit*, which is unique to the celebration of this holiday?



## במדבר SHELAH LEKHA

### *Self-Confidence*

---

- ◆ What is the relationship between genuine self-confidence and genuine openness?
- ◆ In what or whom did the spies really lack confidence?

## במדבר KORAH

### *Resistance*

---

- ◆ Under what circumstances would you commit civil disobedience? How far would you go in your resistance?
- ◆ What evidence points to the justness of Korah's cause? How about its inappropriateness?

## במדבר HUKKAT

### *Continuity*

---

- ◆ How do you stay connected to the people, places and ideas which you love – especially if they are far away?
- ◆ What do you think Aaron and his son Eleazar said to each other as the priesthood was passing from one generation to the next?

## במדבר BALAK

### *Faith*

---

- ◆ Was Pinhas' behavior an expression of deep faith? Fierce fanaticism? Something else altogether?
- ◆ In what or whom do you most deeply believe? Why?

## במדבר PINHAS

### *Restitution*

---

- ◆ How does God's blessing to Pinhas attempt to provide for him the very spiritual traits which he is most lacking? How does it create a context in which to maximize his strengths and protect against his shortcomings?

## במדבר MATTOT

### *Speaking*

---

- ◆ What would you most like to say to God?
- ◆ Why are there such strict rules about vows and oaths in the Hebrew Bible?

- ◆ Who has protected you over the course of your life? From what did they offer their protection?
- ◆ From what did the Israelites imagine they would need protection in the land of Israel?

# DEUTERONOMY

## דברים DEVARIM

### *Courage*

---

- ◆ When have you been moved to act courageously, or have seen others do so?
- ◆ Was courage required by the new generation, led by Joshua, to take possession of a land already promised by God?

## דברים VA'-ETHANNAN

### *Teaching*

---

- ◆ Who has been your most important teacher? What did they teach you?
- ◆ What does Moses most want to teach the community in these last days of his life with them?

## דברים 'EKEV

### *Devotion*

---

- ◆ To what or to whom are you most devoted? Is it possible for that devotion to go too far?
- ◆ Is there a tension in this *parsha* between devotion to God and devotion to humanity? Does God go too far?

## דברים RE'EH

### *Celebration*

---

- ◆ Describe the greatest celebration in which you participated. What made it great?
- ◆ What is it that the Jewish people are to celebrate as they take up residence in the Promised Land?

## דברים SHOFTIM

### *Righteousness*

---

- ◆ Who is the most righteous person you know or admire? How can you emulate their actions?
- ◆ This *parsha* commands us to “pursue justice,” does that mean that it is never fully attained? What would our world look like if it was?

## דברים KI TETSE'

### *Memory*

---

- ◆ What must you always remember? How does it help you to do so?
- ◆ Why must Amalek always be remembered? How does that commandment fit with the one to “blot out their memory”?

## דברים KI TAVO'

### *Homecoming*

---

- ◆ What does it mean to come home? Must it involve physically returning to a place in which you once lived?
- ◆ How do the rituals described in these chapters help the Jewish people feel at home in a land that their ancestors had left hundreds of years earlier?

## דברים NITZAVIM

### *Choosing Life*

---

- ◆ What's the toughest choice you've ever had to make? And the best choice that you've ever made?
- ◆ What does it mean to "choose life"?

## דברים VA-YELEKH

### *Education*

---

- ◆ What would you most like to learn?
- ◆ Was Moses a good educator? What were his most lasting lessons to his people?

## דברים HA'AZINU

### *God*

---

- ◆ What does it mean to believe or disbelieve in God? In what do you most deeply believe?
- ◆ How is God understood in the poem which is the majority of this *parsha*?

## דברים VE-ZO'T HA-BERAKHAH

### *Leadership*

---

- ◆ What does it mean to be a great leader? Is that the same as exercising great leadership?
- ◆ What made Moses the greatest prophet? Does that mean he was the greatest leader too?

## Brad Hirschfield

Rabbi Brad Hirschfield is the President of CLAL–The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. He is the author of *You Don't Have To Be Wrong For Me To Be Right: Finding Faith Without Fanaticism* (Harmony, Jan. 2008) and co-host of the weekly radio show, *Hirschfield and Kula: Intelligent Talk Radio*. He was a speaker at the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music and Colloquium in Morocco and at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona, where he was featured in *Freaks Like Me*, a highly praised film that explores our fear of the "other." Listed as one of the "Top 50 Rabbis in America," in *Newsweek* magazine, Rabbi Hirschfield conceived and is featured in a landmark TV series, *Building Bridges: Abrahamic Perspectives on the World Today*, now in season II, airing on Bridges TV (American Muslim Network TV). A popular media analyst and acclaimed commentator on the role of religion in America, he is a regular on Court TV, and was a guest on ABC-TV's "Nightline UpClose" (the only rabbi ever featured), PBS-TV's "Frontline" and "Religion & Ethics Newsweekly," NPR radio, and is frequently quoted by the press.

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CLAL

CLAL-The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership

440 Park Avenue South - 4th Floor

New York, NY 10016-8012

212-779-3300

Fax: 212-779-1009

[www.clal.org](http://www.clal.org)



