

The Daily Portion

- Sivan Rahav Meir

WORDS OF COMFORT

Translated by [Janine Muller Sherr](#)

This week, we mark the fourth yahrzeit of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z"l, former chief rabbi of Britain.

Here is an inspiring passage from “To Be a Jew”, a booklet that I was privileged to compile of Rabbi Sacks’s teachings:

“Sometimes it is when we feel most alone that we discover we are not alone. We can encounter God in the midst of fear or a sense of failure.

Sometimes our deepest spiritual experiences come when we least expect them, when we are closest to despair. It is then that the masks we wear are stripped away. We are at our point of maximum vulnerability – and it is when we are most fully open to God that God is most fully open to us. “God is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (T'hilim 34:18).

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov used to say: “A person needs to cry to his Father in heaven with a powerful voice from the depths of his heart.

Then God will listen to his voice and turn to his cry.”

We find God not only in holy or familiar places but also in the midst of a journey, alone at night. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for You are with me” (T'hilim 23:4). The most profound of all spiritual experiences, the base of all others, is the knowledge that we are not alone.

There may be times in our lives – certainly there have been in mine – when the sun disappears and we enter the cloud of black despair. You can lose faith in humanity, or in yourself, or both. At such times, the knowledge that God has faith in us is transformative, redemptive.

The real religious mystery, according to Judaism, is not our faith in God. It is God’s faith in us.

We are here because a loving God brought the universe and life, and us, into existence – a God who knows our fears, hears our prayers, believes in us more than we believe in ourselves, who forgives us when we fail, lifts us when we fall and gives us the strength to overcome despair.”

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