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Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life

By Unknown

Thank you for your compassion
in rendering my soul to me.
You are the source of all trust.
Blessed is our Eternal Go
who hallowed us
and commanded us
to wash our hands.
Blessed is our Eternal God
who opens the eyes of the blind.
Blessed is our Eternal God
who lift up the fallen.
Blessed is our Eternal God
who makes firm our every step
Blessed is our Eternal God who
has not created me a woman.
Blessed is our Eternal God who
has commanded us the tsitsit.
Blessed is our Eternal Lord who
was commanded us the tefilin.
It's so early.
I must hurry.
To go pray.
Your eyes are glistening.
Women cry even in their sleep.
Their eyes are sensitive.
I have such respect for you, Rivka.
Sarah, who are you staring at?
Yosef, your betrothed.
He's so handsome.
I already told you.
I don't want to get married.
I won't get married.
We all do.
Not me.
My wedding day was
the happiest day of my life.
Mine won't be for me.
Malka, take the keys.
You can lock up.
Thank you.
Yakov.
How are you, Malka?
You're different today.
You change from day to day.

Really?
Yaakov...
What's going on, Malka?
You seem so distant.
I can't seem to approach you.
My mother chose me a husband.
What? Who is he?
Yossef.
It was their decision.
I've refused so many proposals.
I've run out of reasons.
You know
I don't want to marry him.
Or anyone else.
My mother decided.
The Rabbi agreed.
When I joined the army
I lost all my yeshiva friends.
I don't know what they think of me
but I'll never change my mind.
In Lebanon, when I spent
sleepless nights in my tank,
I never stopped praying.
When I could, I went to the Wall.
I'm still a good Jew.
Did you speak to your father?
- Yes.
He can't do anything.
They're relentless.
What am I going to do?
I love you, but...
Malka...
You're my queen
and I'm your Yakov.
No one else can marry you.
I won't allow it.
Do you hear me?
Almighty God take pity on me.
Open my heart to your love
and allow me to sanctify your name
through the Torah.
Almighty God!
Put no obstacles in my path
to your holy Torah.

Give me the strength to concentrate
on your holy Torah.

Father!

I implore you!

I beg you,

for you alone can hear my prayers.

Blessed is the Lord

who hears my prayers.

Blessed is our Eternal God

whose word had created all.

Yossef...

On Shabbat, how do we make tea?

First the water, then the sugar.

Why?

If you pour water on the sugar,
you're cooking on Shabbat.

With a second vessel

you're not cooking.

A glass is a second vessel.

The kettle is the first vessel.

The glass is the second vessel.

No cooking occurs in the glass.

The glass doesn't count.

When you pour water

into the second vessel,

you heat it up.

Heating is cooking, Meir.

The tea leaves are already cooked.

But the water changes colour.

The leaves change the colour

of the water.

We are allowed

coloured beverages on Shabbat.

Why such rigor?

Students of the Torah must be

rigorous. Let's be rigorous.

Drink before it gets cold.

Rigor, constant rigor.

Why, Rivka?

Why are you doing this?

You know you're going

against my father's wishes.

Yakov and Malka have been

in love for years.

What about my father?
We've been in love
for a long time too.
I know, Rivka.
But we obey the Rabbi's orders.
Soon after we got married
we were sitting here.
It was pouring rain outside.
But a stubborn ray of sunlight
shone on our bed.
Do you remember what I said?
That you wanted to be with me
always.
It's true.
But I didn't know
if you meant
"all the time" or "forever".
What's wrong, Rivka?
I can see into your heart.
What do you see?
I see you suffering.
You suffer because
we have no children.
You suffer because...
you think we live in sin.
Your friends all have
three, four, five children.
People point at us.
Students at the Yeshiva
laugh at you.
You want a child.
You want a son.
It's been 10 years.
I will never leave you.
The people of Israel live!
Our Father is still alive.
Come to the Guithaym Yeshiva.
Jews, I love you.
I am your loving Yossef.
Tonight, the gates of Mercy
shall open.
Come greet it with love.
Come revive the Jewish soul!
Come rekindle the flame of Judaism!

Join us at 7:

to enjoy one another's company.

to pray,

to love one another.

Friends,

the gates of heaven are opening.

Let us gather and work together.

Together we will bring about
salvation!

Come, I have something for you.

My dear Jew, come here please.

I have a gift for you.

What are you scared of?

We're all Jews.

The Messiah will come.

We'll study the Torah.

We'll live in...

Safad? No, Jerusalem.

Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem we'll

study the kabbalah.

You taught me this before.

Is this from your group?

It's not that bad.

Remember the rest? -No

We'll live in a world
of peace and brotherhood.

everything perfect,
everything beautiful.

it's not that bad,
studying the Torah.

It's good to sing it low.

...studying the Torah.

It's been ten years.

What are you going to do?

You pushed the cloth
all the way in?

You waited seven days?

Yes.

You checked the cloth?

Was it absolutely clean?

No spots?

Black ones?

Or yellow ones?
My consultations last longer
than anyone else's.
Sometimes women are barren
because they have disregarded
the laws of purity.
Almighty God,
I heeded your commandment
and observed the days of separation.
I counted the seven days.
Today I am ready to heed
your commandment,
to purify my body.
I shall go down into the water
and in your mercy,
my body shall be washed
in the pure water,
and my soul cleansed
of all blemish and vanity.
For it is written:
"I have sprinkled you with water
and made you pure."
My God,
why have you forsaken me?
Far from my salvation
and the words from my mouth...
I call by day
and you do not answer,
At night I know no silence.
You dwell in the praise of Israel,
My fathers believe in you
and were delivered.
They called to you
and were saved...
Why weren't you at school?
I can't study. I'm troubled.
Meir, make up your mind.
I'm not sure I can.
Meir, don't you feel...
Don't you feel...
we're on the verge
of a new age?
That something is coming?
Are you getting ready for it?

Do you pray?
Yes. - You must pray.
Do you fast?
Do you meditate?
Yes.
Make up your mind.
Do your duty.
You know our laws.
You know that the only task
of a daughter of Israel
is to bring children into the world.
To give birth to Jews,
and enable her husband to study.
God created man to study the Torah.
The woman plays an indirect part
in fulfilling the Torah,
by keeping his home clean,
preparing his meals,
and especially,
by raising his children.
A woman's only joy
is raising his children.
Children are our strength.
With them...
we will vanquish.
Whom?
The others.
The godless.
The secular government,
Children are our future.
The future of our religion.
The others have no children.
Thanks to our children,
the future is ours.
Must I make this sacrifice?
- You are part of our struggle.
Our struggle is sacred.
My son,
I just ran into Rivka.
What is she doing?
Why does she no longer work?
This cannot go on, Meir.
I went to the ritual bath today.
Yes.

I am no longer unclean.
I'm exhausted, Rivka.
I had a hard day.
I want to sleep.
Do you think we don't
have the right to?
Yes.
If we don't try,
how can we have a child?
It's been 10 years, Rivka.
We'll never have a child.
We can still try.
Sterility is the cause.
There's no escaping it.
And our bond?
Isn't it a sacred commandment?
Please Rivka, that's enough.
What do you want from me? Tell me.
I haven't studied for 10 years.
I was a brilliant student
before our marriage.
I was the first to recognize
any passage from the Talmud.
And now, Rivka,
what can I do?
Tell me what I should do?
Let me prove to you
that God blesses our union,
that we were made
for each other, Meir.
I don't know.
Do you know what people say?
They say I'm getting married
next week.
To Yossef.
That's what they say.
To Yossef.
I'm marrying Yossef.
That's what they say.
You know what?
I'm a good girl, right?
True, I don't like
cooking and cleaning,
I'll study accounting, like you.

That way I'll be able
to support my family.
My husband can study.
Then...
I'll shave my head
and I'll spend my whole life
pregnant.
I'll give myself to Yakov
before the wedding,
Yossef will see that I'm not
a virgin and repudiate me.
You'll help me, won't you?
Tell me about it.
Tell me what it's like.
What does making love feel like?
Your wedding night with Meir.
Tell me.
You never told me about it.
On the night of the wedding
I found myself in this room.
He took off my dress,
then he took off his black coat.
We lay down on the bed,
he took off his black shoes.
He was wearing socks.
He took off his white shirt.
After he took off his shirt,
he hesitated...
before removing the tsitsit.
He didn't know the law
concerning them.
He finally removed them.
Then he took off his pants.
Then...
Around his hips, he wore that belt
which divides the spiritual
from the material world.
He undid it.
Then he turned off the light.
He honored me.
He entered me by the ways of love,
the ways of consent.
It was the first time.
It will be like that

for you too, Malka.

No, it won't.

"You always say it's so hard for you.

"The tears on your pillow
have long been dry.

"You sit at home doing nothing.

"You never come back to me.

"Why are you running from me?

"Why are you pushing me away?

"Take your time if you're scared.

"We'll meet again in another world.

"I'll find you in that other world."

Look how beautiful it is.

You'll make a beautiful bride.

A beautiful bride.

I'll try it on.

Rivka, hold this a second.

How are you feeling?

Better?

Meir worries me.

He's been distant lately.

He avoids my questions.

When I ask what's wrong,
he doesn't answer.

But I love him.

And at night?

He says we don't have the right.

I want to see you.

A man is obliged to satisfy his wife.

If he doesn't,
she has grounds for divorce.

I received a letter a few days ago.

It said that a woman
without a child
is no better than dead.

Who would send such a thing?

I don't know.

I asked Meir.

Sometimes I feel my problem
isn't sterility,
but shame.

It's in her eyes.

Mother is ashamed of me.

Even Meir is ashamed of me.

What did Meir say about the letter?
That is was copied from the Talmud.
The Talmud, the Talmud, Rivka.
Women don't study the Talmud.
Father said the Talmud contains
everything and its opposite.
No woman dares say it
but men don't want us to know.
That way they can do
what they like with us.
Look at the laws of menstruation.
They're forbidden to touch us.
We make everything impure.
We can't even hand them a cup.
Is all that in the Talmud?
What are you saying?
What's come over you?
I believe in this law,
and so do you.
Really? And do you also think
that woman is fickle
and her heart inconstant?
Why is the Torah forbidden to us?
I mean I would like to carry it.
I'd like to stand in the synagogue
and take it in my hands
like a man.
You're crazy!
Look at the others.
They live differently.
They watch television,
listen to the radio.
Look at them when they
drive by.
The women wear short sleeves.
They can laugh, they can drive.
Once a woman with bare arms
walked by.
The Hassidim threw stones at her.
You think we're living normal lives?
You say that,
but you'll never leave us.
"On the mounts of Judah
and in the streets of Jerusalem,

"will soon be heard
shouts of joy and elation,
"the voice of the bridegroom
and his bride.
"Enter in peace.
"Be the crown of your husband.
"Enter in joy and elation.
"You have shown faith
"and your people have been chosen.
"Enter, bride, enter.
"Blessed God who has created the
fruit of the vine."
The mother presents the cup
to the bride.
"If I forget you Jerusalem,
let my right hand be taken.
"Let my tongue stick to the
roof of my mouth if I forget you.
"If I hold not Jerusalem
as my greatest joy."
I like the way you sit and walk.
Your hair ripples like
waves in the sea.
Hello, how are you?
Anything new?
Rivka has arrived.
You can go in.
Rabbi Moshe Levi Steinberg
says on page 24 of his book
"The Laws of Women"
that artificial insemination
is strictly forbidden.
After insemination,
a wife is forbidden to her husband.
Do you do as you must with your
husband? Are your legs wide open?
You're a beautiful woman.
But you must excite him,
attract him.
Does he touch you? Lick you?
God forbid! Doctor!
I know that the Orthodox position is
man on top
and woman at the bottom

but we can try new things.
Did you do it while
ovulating?
Do you know what that means?
Undress.
There are some pleasant surprises.
We women are not always at fault.
Science and medicine
can sometimes help
and better than any amulet.
Surprising as it may seem,
it can be the man who is sterile.
That's the good news, Rivka.
But will it be any help?
All the tests show that
you can have children.
Maybe its time
we call in your husband.
Meir? He won't come.
What he should do is have
his sperm analyzed.
I know it's forbidden.
"Thou shall not spill
thy seed in vain"
Two,
three...
four,
five,
six,
seven,
eight,
nine,
ten,
eleven,
twelve.
Like the twelve tribes of Israel.
I noticed a spot on
my underpants.
but it's not my period.
What did you do?
I showed the rabbi's wife.
You showed your underpants
to the Rabbi's wife?
Yes.

And what did she say?
She said...
that it didn't mean anything.
It was just a plain old spot.
She was right.
Are you unclean?
She told me to make a wish.
to put a cloth up my vagina
and to wait for 3 stars
to appear.
If there's blood, I'm unclean.
And?
There was blood.
Did you tell Yossef?
No.
My Jewish brethren,

tonight at 8:

we will be gathering at the
Pazner Yeshiva
with the Ghitaym
to keep the flame alive.
The second millenium is ending.
It is our duty to work together
to bring all the Jews and the lost
sheep back into the fold.
We must build and organize
the Jewish force.
Brethren, tonight at 8:00,
we must organize and
close our ranks
under the Star of David.
God Almighty,
at the dawn of the year 2000
we will bring about deliverance.
May the names and the memory
of our enemies disappear.
They will pay for what they did
to our forefathers.
The Messiah is at hand.
With God's help they will pay. An
eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
It is time to unite.
The light is approaching.

You have the marriage contract?
Father, Ecclesiastes says:
"Live joyfully with the wife you love,
"all the days of your life"

It also says:

"Let your fountain be blessed."
Rejoice with the wife
of your youth."
If, after 10 years of marriage,
a man has no child,
he must take another wife,
to increase and multiply.
Sarah was barren
and our Father Abraham
did not abandon her.
Isaac did not repudiate Rebecca
in spite of her barrenness.
Neither did Jacob.
- Meir, that's enough.
We've already talked about this.
A woman's life
is in him who makes use of her.
A barren woman is no woman.
A man who dies without progeny
rips a page from the Torah.
Meir, your marriage contract.
Next week,
Meir is supposed to meet a woman.
Who is she?
Haya, Uncle Shmuel's daughter.
Does Rivka know?
Yes.
I took care of everything.
She'll go away.
I'm leaving our house.
I'll rent a room.
All by myself.
At least you'll be happy, Malka.
Rabbi,
please think it over again.
I can't do it.
Why not?
Rivka is all I have left.

We're not angels.
We're human beings, flesh and blood.
Flesh and blood.
I can't.
I can't bathe Haya.
She's replacing
a woman who is loved.
And the commandment about
peace in the home?
Joy in the family?
Rivka is my daughter.
She's my whole life.
Do as our religion commands.
May God bless and protect you,
Elisheva.
My son Meir will have a son
by Haya.
One.
two...
...twelve.
Like the twelve tribes of Israel.
Speak to me.
Say something.
Rivka, I love you.
Say something.
Speak to me, Rivka.
Then I spoke with the doctor.
She told me everything.
She said she found me
stronger than my sister.
Rivka undressed in front of her.
More than I do in front of you.
She lay down.
The doctor asked her
if it was her first test.
Rivka said yes.
The doctor told her not to worry.
She told her to spread her legs.
She told her not to tense up.
She put her finger in her vagina.
All the way up, like we do
to make sure our periods are over.
That's how she examined her.
Do you hear me?

Rivka, It's me.
What's the matter?
I'm here, Rivka.
Happy Purim!
I love you, Rivka.
Do you need money?
I haven't given you any money
for a while.
Give me a kiss.
Why won't you speak?
You haven't spoken for weeks.
You won't answer me.
Speak to me, Rivka.
Excuse me, I'm looking for Yakov.
This is no place for tourists.
I live here. I'm not a tourist.
People always talk about crows
but there are storks too.
I'd like to see him.
It's urgent.
Please, it's really urgent.
Relax honey,
there are plenty of nice guys.
Please.
Yakov!
There's a lady in a hurry for you.
It's OK. I know her.
Come with me.
You didn't go to study?
See my dress?
Get inside.
Do you know where I've been?
I said get inside.
You want me to tell you?
What did you do to my sister?
I love her more than
anything in the world.
Do you see my hair?
I said get inside!
Stop it!
Get on the bed!
Now.
Slut!
Rivka.

Come with me.
There's another world out there.
It's so big.
Our world isn't all there is, Rivka.
I heard people singing a song outside.
"Put your hand in mine,
"I'm yours and you are mine."
Put your hand in mine...
I can't go on like this.
I'm suffocating.
I'm suffocating.
We're fine here.
It's so calm.
So calm.
No, Rivka.
We're not fine.
Not at all.
May it please you,
Eternal God
God of our fathers,
for the psalms I have sung
Before you
to soothe
the pain of my child-bearing
and to give me strength.
That we not weaken,
neither I nor the child I bear,
before the day of my delivery.
When my time comes,
on the delivery bed,
in your mercy safegaurd me
from all pain and sorrow.
Ease my delivery.
Let the child come
painlessly and in calm.
Rivka!
Rivka wake up!
Can you hear me? Wake up!
What's wrong?
Wake up!
Wake up! Answer me!

KADOSH: