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**Do Dogs Go to Heaven?**

**By**[**Yehuda Shurpin**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/15169/jewish/Shurpin-Yehuda.htm)

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**Art by**[**Sefira Lightstone**](https://www.chabad.org/3159160)

**QUESTION:** My dog recently died. He was my loyal companion for many years, even more loyal than some of my friends. I was wondering: what happens to animals after they die? Do dogs go to heaven?

**The Short Answer**

If you’re asking whether there is some sort of “dog heaven” in which there are cute puppies running around a special section of paradise, then, although I hate to be the one to disappoint you, the answer is no. However, if you mean “heaven” in the broader celestial sense, then yes.

**The Slightly Longer Answer: The Philosophical Debate**

The question of whether animals go to heaven has been debated throughout the centuries.

The Midrash states unequivocally that animals don’t have a portion in the world to come.1 But that has not stopped some of the greatest Jewish philosophers from debating whether the concept of reward and punishment, and by extension the afterlife, applies to animals.

For example, Rabbi Saadiah Gaon, in his famous philosophical work Sefer Emunot ve-De’ot (The Book of Beliefs and Opinions), writes that an animal is ultimately compensated for all the pain it went through in life and death.2 This idea is in line with the statement in the Talmud that “the Holy One, blessed be He, does not deprive any creature of any reward due to it”3 (although an animal’s reward is different than what a person would receive for doing a good deed out of free will).

The fact that Rabbi Saadiah Gaon held that this applies even to an animal going through a painful death suggests that the animal will continue to exist even after death.

On the other hand, Maimonides is of the opinion that the concept of reward and punishment applies to man alone.4

**The Kabbalistic Response**

The question of whether animals are rewarded and have immortal souls is important, as it not only gives man perspective and meaning in his interactions with the rest of G‑d’s creations, but explains, in part, man’s purpose in this world.

In a long and fascinating letter, the fourth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Shmuel, known as the Rebbe Maharash, explains that although some Kabbalists were of the opinion that animals don’t have immortal souls,5 according to the teachings of the Arizal animals do in fact have independent souls, and they do go to heaven.6 The [Arizal](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/111878/jewish/Rabbi-Isaac-Luria-The-Ari-Hakodosh.htm%22%20%5Co%20%22Rabbi%20Isaac%20Luria%20-%20The%20Ari%20Hakodosh) is generally considered the final arbiter for all Kabbalistic teachings.

The Arizal explains that every created entity possesses a “soul.” This includes everything from rocks and other inanimate objects to animals and, of course, people. This soul or “spark of G‑dliness” not only sustains the creation’s existence, but it imbues the creation with its purpose and significance in the world.

**Different Souls**

But if every creation has a spark of [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm), in what way does the soul of a person and that of an animal differ?

G‑d created the world, including the souls of animals, through speech. It is only regarding a person’s soul that the verse states, “He breathed into his nostrils the soul of life, and man became a living soul.”7 The Kabbalists explain that when one speaks, he uses a relatively superficial level of breath. But when one blows, he blows from deep within him. So too, man’s soul comes from the very essence of the divine.

**Interactive Souls**

When G‑d created the world, He invested in man the power to elevate the divine sparks or souls that are found throughout creation. It is for this reason that in general, the way an animal’s soul is elevated and returned after its death to its divine source is through its positive and spiritual interactions with man.

So, for instance, we can elevate the soul of a kosher animal by making a proper blessing when eating, and by using the energy gained for acts of goodness and righteousness.

(However, unlike a person’s afterlife, in which the souls “bask and delight in G‑d’s glory”8 in the Garden of Eden, the animal soul returns to its source (the supernal world of Tohu) in an elevated state.9)

In the end, while they are different from humans, animals too have souls that live on and can be elevated. This idea presents us with an enormous responsibility in our interactions with the animal kingdom. After all, the animal’s elevation in the afterlife can be dependent upon our positive interactions with it.

**Footnotes**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef1a3016125) See Kohelet Rabbah 3:22; Masechet Kallah, chs. 1–2.

[2.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef2a3016125) Emunot ve-De’ot 3:10. See also [Teshuvot HaGeonim](http://chabadlibrarybooks.com/pdfpager.aspx?req=21195&st=&pgnum=218" \t "_blank) (Harkavy ed.) 375.

[3.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef3a3016125) Talmud, Bava Kamma 38b.

[4.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef4a3016125) Guide for the Perplexed 3:17. See also his commentary to the Mishnah, Bava Kamma 4:3.

[5.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef5a3016125) Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, known as the Ramak, writes that animals’ souls are not immortal, and their souls cease to exist when the animal dies (Ramak, Sefer ha-Pardes, Shaar ha-Heichalot, ch. 10).

[6.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef6a3016125) See [Igrot Kodesh Admor Maharash, p. 92.](http://chabadlibrarybooks.com/pdfpager.aspx?req=15760&st=&pgnum=96" \t "_blank)

[7.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef7a3016125) [Genesis 2:7](https://www.chabad.org/8166#v7).

[8.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef8a3016125) See Talmud, Berachot 17a.

[9.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3016125/jewish/Do-Dogs-Go-to-Heaven.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef9a3016125) See [Igrot Kodesh Admor Maharash, p. 92.](http://chabadlibrarybooks.com/pdfpager.aspx?req=15760&st=&pgnum=96" \t "_blank)

*Reprinted from the website of Chabad.Org*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Thinking about Bridges**

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**QUESTION:** What should a person think when looking at a bridge?

**ANSWER:** Now, it’s not a foolish question. The Chovos Halevovos tells us a very important point which we should make use of all the time. He says that one of the first functions of the *oved Hashem* is to see what *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* has done for him. *Tov l’hodos la’Hashem* – What’s good in this world? To thank Hashem. You must spend time thinking about what He did for you. And so, the Chovos Halevovos starts telling about all the things *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* is doing for us. Pages and pages.

Then when he gets through all these things he adds an important point. He says that we also have to thank *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* for the נימוסי האומות, for the things that the nations of the world instituted. When you see certain things that the gentile did and they are good for us you have to thank Hashem who gave them the idea to do it.

And so, we see traffic lights; it’s only a light after all but it adds so much convenience to our lives. I remember once upon a time when there were no traffic lights; no traffic lights. In busy places a policeman stood and he said, “Go, go.” But on other streets, nothing. When traffic lights were invented we appreciated it to no end. It was a wonderful thing.

But it wasn’t like these traffic lights. It was plain stop and go sign that turned around. Stop, go, stop, go. No lights. But now there are lights everywhere. *Boruch Hashem!* Lights are life savers! And you’re supposed to thank Hashem for the lights, yes! You never thanked Hashem for the traffic lights?! Get busy now. Think about that. Because an *oved Hashem* must thank *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* for the things that the goyim invented.

You should thank Him for the traffic laws too. How do you know that the person driving the car will stop and let you pass by when there is a red light? Maybe he’ll speed through. No, you have confidence that they are afraid of the police; that’s they’ll get a traffic summons for a violation. You rely on that. As you cross, there is a *rasha*, an antisemite, and he’s looking at you. He has a big *yetzer hara* but he’s afraid to do it, and so he sits still. So, you thank *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* who put this idea into the head of the goyim to create traffic lights and traffic laws. It’s a wonderful thing!

And so, when you see a bridge, so you think about how the bridge is a reason why you can go over it and go to good places. I once learned in a yeshiva in Manhattan. Way back, sixty-eight years ago, I went to a yeshiva in Manhattan. And I lived in Brooklyn, in Williamsburg, and we had to cross the bridge. The bridge was made to bring me to the yeshiva!  The Rambam says that. Forget about all the goyim that travel on the bridge; that’s just *agav urcha*. The bridge is made for you! For going to learn torah by crossing the bridge. So, the bridge is a gift from *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*. That’s how you should look at a bridge.

And all the things that the *umos ha’olam* invented are the same. You have to thank *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* that He gave us artificial lights. By the way, people don’t know that every week we thank Hashem for lights. Every day we thank Hashem for the natural light of the sun, but for artificial light we thank once a week, on motzei Shabbos. בורא מאורי האש.

What’s that? Did you ever think about that? We’re thanking Hashem for artificial lights. Some people think its just a ceremony, a *frumkeit*. No! We’re *makir tov* for electricity and all other forms of artificial light. After all, in the olden days when it was night time, what could you do? You could sit down and learn *ba’al peh* if you remembered but if you didn’t have such a good memory you couldn’t learn. And now *boruch Hashem, Hakodosh Boruch Hu* gave lights.

And He also told a certain German named Gutenberg, “Get busy Mr. Gutenberg and invent the art of printing.” And so, Gutenberg, in the 1400’s, invented printing. And as soon as Gutenberg invented printing, the Jews seized hold of it – they began printing the shas immediately. Among the first ones who utilized the invention of printing were the Jewish people. Such a wonderful thing! And so, we thank *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* for that.

In the olden days a sefer cost as much as a farm. To write a sefer could cost as much as a farm! The *ba’alei tosfos* didn’t have the whole shas. Who could afford a whole shas?! And boruch Hashem people have a shas in every home today. We have to thank *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* that he told a goy in the 1400’s to go ahead and invent printing.

So, all the things that the goyim did were instigated by Hashem. Traffic light and traffic laws and light bulbs and printing and bridges, it’s all a part of the *chasdei Hashem*. And it’s up to us that besides for all the things we thank Him for, we have to thank Him for these things as well.

*Reprinted from a recent email of Toras Avigdor based on a Thursday night lecture (Tape #E-8) delivered on May 1995).*

**“So that a Flame Arises**

**Of Its Own Accord”**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah portion, Behaalotcha, begins with G-d's command to Aaron to light the menora in the sanctuary. The Torah does not say "When you light the candles" but rather "When you raise the light." The commentator Rashi explains this unusual choice of words to mean that the one lighting the lamp should hold the flame to the wick until a flame arises of its own accord.

Like our ancestor Aaron, we are also lamplighters. In our everyday lives, in many different spheres, we find ourselves in a position to affect, to inspire and to help those around us. When presented with such opportunities, it is not sufficient to help someone up just to have him fall down again, requiring further help. Like Aaron in this week's portion, we are enjoined not just to light a lamp, but even more so to give it enough strength and enough power to remain lit by itself.

Later in the portion, G-d tells Moses, "I will cause some of the spirit that you possess to emanate, and I will grant it to them." (Num. 11:17)

**Was Moses’ Prophecy Diminished?**

One might wonder if Moses' prophesy was diminished by G-d apportioning some of Moses' divine inspiration to others. This is similar to when one lights a flame from another flame; the original flame does not lose anything. So too with us - when we seek to help and inspire others, without making calculations based on power (a zero-sum game), we actually increase the amount of light rather than depleting it.

Maimonides, in his classic legal work Mishnei Torah, enumerates different levels of charity. The very highest are those where one helps another to stand on his own two feet, the highest level being to do so anonymously. This is in keeping with the idea that the best way we can help another is not just to help him get up but to keep him standing.

**Our Responsibility to Kindle**

**the Potential in Others**

The soul is compared to a light. In this area too, we must strive to kindle the lamp "so that a flame arises of its own accord." In dealing with another person, the objective should be to establish the person as an individual in his own right, independent of us. We should encourage others to hone their talents and abilities so that their lamps independently glow and, in turn, kindle the potential in others.

In the days before electric street lights, many locales had gas lamps. The people whose job it was to go out each evening lighting the street lamps were known as "lamplighters." Some of the lamps were in places that were difficult to approach, others had been neglected and were covered over. A conscientious lamp lighter had to make sure to light every lamp in his area.

Similarly, when helping out others, we need to find those who may be difficult to approach or hidden from view in order to assist them in any way possible.

*Reprinted from the Behaalotcha 5762/2002 edition of L’Chaim. Adapted from Likutei Sichot volume 2.*

**Thoughts that Count**

**for Our Parsha**

*This is the workmanship of the menora--beaten work of gold* (Num. 8:4)

"Beaten work of gold," explains Rashi, means that the menora was to be made of a single piece of gold, beaten or pounded with a hammer and other tools, until it assumed the proper shape. Likewise, a person who desires to transform himself into a "menora," to kindle his G-dly spark and be illuminated with the light of Torah, should also do the same to himself -striking away at his negative qualities and working on his character until he, too, assumes the proper form. (Likutei Torah)

*From the base, until the flowers, beaten work* (Num. 8:4)

The base of the menora symbolizes the simplest of Jews; the flowers, those on the highest spiritual plane. The Torah demands that the menora be made out of one piece of gold, just as the Jewish people is one entity. Every Jew is incomplete by himself, without the rest of the Jewish nation, just as in the human body, the foot needs the head to function no less than the head requires the foot for mobility.

(Likutei Torah)

*We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for naught* (Num. 11:5)

G-d created the world in a way which makes it necessary to exert tremendous energy to attain sanctity; being holy demands hard work. But whatever interferes with our pursuit of holiness, come to us easily. As slaves, the Children of Israel had grown accustomed to receiving the bounty of Egypt. After their liberation, they protested that from now on they would have to work hard to obtain G-d's blessings.

(Likrat Shabbat)

*But the man Moses was very humble, more so than any man on the face of the earth* (Num. 12:3)

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi explained that Moses felt humble especially in comparison to our generation, the last generation before Moshiach. For, despite the extreme darkness that would reign immediately preceding the Final Redemption, Moses foresaw and was humbled by the self-sacrifice our generation would show to keep the Jewish faith alive even in the most difficult of circumstances. (Sichat Purim, 5747)

*Reprinted from the Behaalotcha 5762/2002 edition of L’Chaim.*

**Fired from the Columbia University’s Newspaper for Being an Orthodox Jew**

**By** [**Kylie Ora Lobell**](https://aish.com/authors/323055461)



*After graduating from Columbia this spring, Eliana is now coming forward with her story.*

For two years, Eliana Goldin wrote for Columbia University’s student newspaper, the Columbia Daily Spectator. She rose through the ranks to become a senior staff writer for the university news section and had close relationships with everyone on the team.

Right before October 7th, she happened to take a break from writing. When it occurred, she started advocating for Israel, which took up her time.

In February of 2024, she was finally ready to get back into writing and was hired for the Spec as a columnist to discuss the common ground between Israelis and Palestinians. After her first column came out, the trouble began, as [Eliana posted on her X account](https://x.com/Eliana_Goldin/status/1924881776314323449) this past May 20.

“People dug up my old social media posts to find something they could use to bully me, and they found a poll I had asked my Instagram followers months before October 7th,” she wrote. “The poll said, ‘Would you k\*ll someone from Amalek?’ Immediately, tons of Columbia students posted on their social media platforms that I had called for the death of Palestinians because of that poll. SJP posted it on their Instagram, and it received 18,000 likes and had a ton of scary death threats asking about my identity.”

Just a few days later, the head of the opinion section called Eliana and fired her.

“In the time when I needed support the most, the Columbia Daily Spectator — people I had once been friends with — left me to fend for myself,” she wrote. “And the thing is, Amalek has nothing to do with Palestinians. I explained that the question of Amalek is akin to the Binding of Isaac — a Jewish thought experiment on whether you would go against your own personal morality to follow G-d’s morality — but they didn’t care.”

She kept trying to explain that she was in no way comparing Palestinians to [Amalek](https://aish.com/amalek-and-irrational-hate/), the biblical nation that was a hereditary arch-enemy of the Israelites. No one would listen.

“Judaism was whatever they wanted it to be,” she wrote. “Just as it is Islamophobic to define Islam based off of extremists who take the religion out of pocket and use it for their own racist aims, so too is it antisemitic to do the very same thing with Judaism. But that’s what Spec did. They defined my Judaism based on extremists.”

And then, the editors turned the heat up even more, publishing an op-ed saying a Columbia student was calling for the deaths of Palestinians. They linked it to her Instagram poll. She got mean looks on campus, and a peer DMed her, calling her vile and disgusting.

I went out of my way to engage in dialogue with people who disagreed with me. And yet when it came down to it, all people saw was what they wanted to see.

“As a Jewish leader on campus, I spent my entire tenure trying to make more room for alternative viewpoints within the Zionist community,” she wrote. “I went out of my way to engage in dialogue with people who disagreed with me, even when it was uncomfortable. And yet when it came down to it, all people saw was what they wanted to see: that Orthodox Jews are racist to their very core because of their religious beliefs, and that Zionists have no room for Palestinians in their narrative. Antisemites see what they want to see.”

**Coming Forward with the Truth**

Eliana waited until May 20 of this year, after she graduated, to go public with her story on X. She told Aish she’s not sure where she will go from here, as it’s been a difficult time.

“It’s taken this huge mental and emotional toll on me,” she said. “As soon as you speak out against antisemitism, there is always this huge backlash that occurs. It’s hard to roll with that. It takes a lot just to begin fighting.”

So far, no one from Columbia has contacted her about the incident. Her post went live the same week that the Trump Administration claimed that [Columbia violated Jewish students’ rights](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/trump-administration-claims-columbia-violated-title-vi-threatening-sch-rcna211028) and is now in violation of the standards set by Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which is Columbia's accreditor.

“Maybe [Columbia is] worried about a lawsuit and that’s why they haven’t reached out, but it’s really sad that that hasn’t happened,” Eliana said.

**Additionally, her former colleagues haven’t been in touch either.**

“No one on the newspaper staff has reached out to apologize, which makes me think they are not capable of making requisite changes that are needed to make in order to combat the antisemitism in their staff and that’s systemically embedded into the newspaper. That makes me think a lawsuit might be the only option.”

**Should Jewish Students Stay at These Universities?**

Though Eliana had negative experiences at Columbia, including at the newspaper, she also had positive ones: for the first time in her life, the practicing Jew and day school graduate went outside of her bubble and felt even more secure in her identity.

“Being in an environment where not everyone is like you is how you really clarify your beliefs and values and practice,” she said. “It’s been really enriching to be an Orthodox Jew at Columbia.”

Eliana believes that Jewish students should still go to secular universities if they want to. After all, universities hold tremendous power in society and if we don’t have a stake, we could be left out entirely.

“Separate but equal is not equal,” she said. “If we retreat and lose our position in Ivy League universities, I imagine it’ll be incredibly difficult to regain. Jews used to not be allowed into many Jewish universities and then there were Jewish activists who fought to allow them to be able to attend. We can’t back down now.”

*Reprinted from the current website of aish.com*

**Duchening (the**

**Priestly Blessings)**



Duchening all over the world, except in Eretz Yisrael, Ashkenazim are blessed by the Kohanim only a few times a year: on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and on the Yom Tov (but not Chol HaMoed) days of Pesach, Shavuos, and Succos. Sephardim outside Eretz Yisrael do it every day.

In Eretz Yisrael, most Ashkenazim and Sephardim receive all the wonderful blessings of Bircas Kohanim every single day. On Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, and Yom Tov the Kohanim bless the people twice, once during Shacharis and again at Mussaf, and on Yom Kippur they do so during Ne'ilah as well.

**No Peeking!**

Don’t try to sneak a peek at the Kohanim during Bircas Kohanim. No one looks at the Kohanim when they are blessing the Jews. Why? Because in the Beis HaMikdash, when the Kohanim gave a berachah to the people, the Shechinah (Hashem’s Presence) rested on the Kohanim’s hands and people were not allowed to see that. Today, we still want to remember the Beis HaMikdash, so we don’t look.

**Under the Tallis**

What is happening under the Kohen’s tallis? Facing the aron kodesh, the Kohen raises his hands to shoulder height. Palms down, he splits his fingers to make five spaces. After hearing the word “Kohanim,” he begins to make the berachah over the mitzvah of Bircas Kohanim. Halfway through that berachah, all the Kohanim turn around, face the congregation, and complete the blessing. The congregation answers “Amen.” Now the Kohanim are ready to bless the people.

*Reprinted from the Parsha Nassa 5785 edition of At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table.*

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Drawing shows two elderly Jewish men in the Polish city of Cracow. They are dressed in long robes or coats, have long hair and beards, wear round hats and lean against canes. Bayard Taylor (1825-1878) may have traveled through Poland in 1856 and 1857 after the death of his first wife or when he served in the Russian legation in 1862 and 1863.

*Reprinted from the collection of the Library of Congress.)*