

THE MEANINGFUL LIFE CENTER

# BIRTHDAY GUIDE



YOUR **BLUEPRINT** FOR A **MEANINGFUL BIRTHDAY**

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# PERSONAL INTROSPECTION

Take some time to reflect on your achievements and goals.

Seclude yourself for a while on the day of your birthday and retrospectively review your conduct of the past year—see what needs improvement—and make good resolutions for the coming year.





# REVIEW YOUR YEAR

## How to use this chart:

Examine the fragmented pieces that make up your life. Are you spending time doing what you love? Are you living up to your own mission and personal expectations? Is there a common thread that connects them all?

Below are eleven themes. Take some time to reflect and take stock on the year that passed. Your response will be a good indication of where and how you should focus your energy in the coming year.

## RELATIONSHIPS:

Immediate family, extended family, friends, acquaintances & coworkers

## CHILDREN:

Positive parenting, spending quality time together, teaching values, teaching boundaries

## HOME:

Creating sacred space, guests, feeling of safety, being satisfied with your lot

## WORK:

Attitude, accomplishments, failures, making work meaningful

## CHARITY & MONEY:

Budgeting & saving, charitable giving, worrying about money, valuing money too much

## USE OF TIME:

Well-used time, wasted time, procrastination, down time

## PHYSICAL HEALTH:

Eating, exercise, sleep, medical issues

## INTIMACY:

Respect, trust, love, vulnerability

## TECHNOLOGY:

Too much technology, not enough technology, use of technology for the good, messages sent via technology

## COMMUNITY:

Made new friends, connectedness, helping within the community, level of, and response to, loneliness

## LEADERSHIP:

Found new leadership opportunities, careful use of power, providing new perspective, helping others to find their own leadership opportunities





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# INTENSIFY & INITIATE

Access your soul, which radiates on your birthday, by intensifying all your existing good activities, and initiating new ones.



Life rests on three pillars:

**MIND, HEART, ACTION.**

**On this day do something to strengthen each of your three pillars, and commit to doing this in the coming days of the year:**

1. Stimulate your mind by studying something meaningful
2. Connect emotionally with a loved one through a heart to heart conversation
3. Designate time for saying a heartfelt prayer or for mindful meditation
4. Increase acts of goodness and kindness
5. Give additional charity
6. Connect with your song
7. Feed your soul through spiritual reading

**My new commitment is:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# 5 WAYS

## TO INITIATE YOUR NEW COMMITMENT

### **Take first step.**

Cultivate your desire to take action and create excitement by spelling out exactly what you are going to do and get started, even if it's taking one small step.

### **Change your daily ritual.**

We tend to get stuck in our daily routines. Rather than being glued to your regular cycles and behaviors, incorporate a new ritual or try to be spontaneous.

### **Examine your hesitation.**

Unwilling to change? Take an honest stock of what is stopping you; then go to the root of inaction and address it.

### **Share and declare!**

Tell a friend your new commitment. By speaking your plan out loud to someone, the commitment is transformed from being an idea to being spoken into existence, giving it more power to become a reality.

### **Repeat.**

Use endurance and persistence to get the job done. Just as the inertia of routine prevented you from starting, use the momentum of action to keep the ball rolling.

# GIVING ADDITIONAL CHARITY

Your birthday is the day when your soul was sent to earth to give to others—to illuminate the world with your special light. What better way to energize this than by being extra charitable on your special day?

## 5 WAYS TO GIVE CHARITY

### Give Daily

Fill...Give...Repeat. Place a charity box in your home or office and put a coin in it every day. The very act of giving, even a small amount, trains us to be generous. Additionally, placing a charity box in a place redefines the entire space as a center for kindness and caring. When it is full, give it to an organization whose mission you support.

### Give With Joy

How you give is more important than how much you give! Don't begrudgingly toss a coin into someone's overturned hat. Give with a smile and genuine warmth. Make the recipient feel great, rather than shameful, about having to ask for help.

### Give More Than Money

The highest form of charity is to empower another. Financial giving is only one component of charity. You have way more to offer than the coins in your pocket, such as your time, experience, and advice. If you have an expertise in something or an employment opportunity or a loan, giving that can be far more valuable than a one-time donation. There is an expression that you can give a man a fish and that will be dinner for one night, or you can teach a person to fish and now he can feed his family for the rest of his life.

### Give to Those Closest to You

Sometimes we can be blind to those who need us the most—our closest friends, family, and colleagues. In our attempt at being generous, we can neglect to give to the people who need us the most—our best friends and family. It's easier at times to give to those we don't know or to organizations since we are judgmental about whether our close friends truly need help.

### Give Anonymously

The highest level of giving is when we do so anonymously, without ulterior motives while preserving the dignity of the recipient.



# PRAYER & MEDITATION

On the day when your soul renews its mission, prayer can help you emotionally connect to your divine calling.

## WHAT IS PRAYER

Prayer is a conversation, a dialogue between your heart and your soul. It is hard because it takes practice and work to develop the skills necessary to converse from the heart. This is why prayer is called “service of the heart.” As such, it is not an intellectual experience—it is an emotional experience.

*If study is exercise for the mind,  
prayer is exercise for the heart.*



## 5 SCIENTIFICALLY SUPPORTED BENEFITS of Routine Prayer and Meditation

1. Stabilizes your mood, making you more emotionally consistent
2. Increases your resilience to stress and attenuates anxiety
3. Improves self control-empowering you to absorb and dissipate negative energy without having it affect you
4. Makes you more forgiving
5. Offsets the negative health effects of stress





# 4 EASY STEPS

to get started with prayer.

Take full advantage of the day  
for connecting, receiving,  
achieving, and being grateful.



## STEP 1

Free up real time. Find a quiet space away from any distracting sights or sounds. Get everything else out of your mind and release yourself, by focusing inward. Listen to yourself breathe. Close your eyes. Sing a song to yourself. Create the mood—an oasis.



## STEP 2

Concentrate on your inner soul—the invisible force within that makes you tick. Allow yourself to feel and speak to your deepest essence. Then realize that your soul is part of a much larger essence. That larger essence is called G-d. If you were able to speak to your essence, what would you say?



## STEP 3

Open your emotions. As you recite the words, speak to G-d with the awareness that He is the essence which sustains and energizes your soul. Allow the words of the prayer to open up your deepest emotions before G-d.



## STEP 4

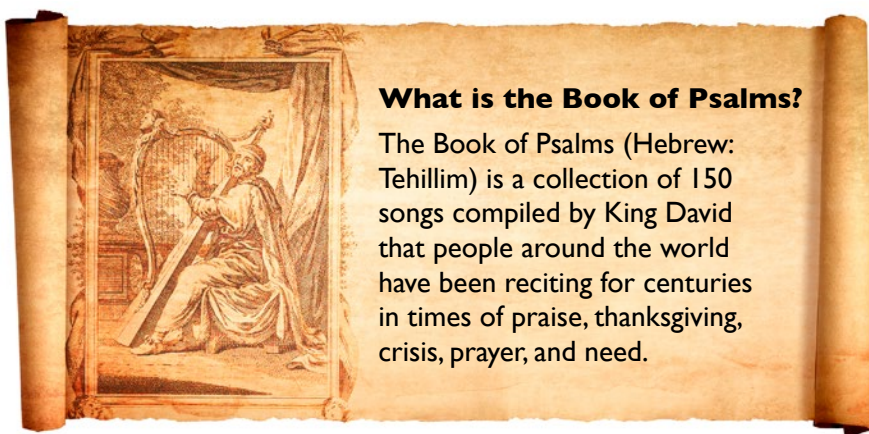
In your own words, ask Him for everything you need in life. Be completely open and vulnerable. Express your feelings about the most important matters in your life.

# CONNECT WITH YOUR SONG

Every soul has its own unique song.

One way to connect to your own special song is through the Psalm that corresponds to your age—the new Psalm that you begin reciting on your birthday, when your soul returns to the point when it first entered this world and began singing its own melody.

Every year on your birthday a new dimension of your song emerges. You access that energy by mindfully reading your new Psalm each day of the year.



## Find your Psalm:

Take your age, add one, and that is the number of your Psalm. Example: If you are turning 32, you begin reciting Psalm 33 on your birthday and every day henceforth until your next birthday when you begin Psalm 34.

**Each day**, preferably in the morning (after prayers), designate time to recite your Psalm, concentrating on the message that most relates to your state of mind on that day.

## NEXT STEPS



## On your birthday, read your new Psalm.

Familiarize yourself with its general theme, and the message of each verse. Look for parallels between your life and your Psalm.

**Allow your Psalm** to help you find your voice and sing your song.

**Begin a daily journal** to document how your Psalm speaks to and helps you deal with your experiences and challenges.



# THROW A PARTY!

Celebrate meaningfully by bringing family and friends together in honor of your birthday to share in deep conversation and manifest genuine joy.

## THE MEANINGFUL BIRTHDAY PARTY PLANNER

- ☐ Pick a location where you can create sacred space.
- ☐ Choose a time and date as close to your birthday as possible.
- ☐ Look up your Hebrew birthday.
- ☐ Write your guest list.
- ☐ Email/send out your invitations.
- ☐ Make a menu—just snacks are fine!
- ☐ Optional: Invite someone who inspires you to share a story or lesson at your party.

## PLAN THE MEANINGFUL DIMENSION OF YOUR PARTY

- ☐ Brainstorm meaningful conversation topics.
- ☐ Prepare some insightful stories to tell, from your own life or someone else's.
- ☐ Learn a lesson about living a conscious life with the intention of sharing it with your guests.
- ☐ Ask your guests to bring a favorite spiritual saying or lesson.
- ☐ Prepare a prayer or blessing for each of your guests—on your birthday you have extra prayer-power!
- ☐ Have a charity box at the party, and give all your guests coins place a coin into the charity box.

## THROW YOUR SPIRITUAL BIRTHDAY PARTY!

- ☐ An hour before guests arrive, set a beautiful table.
- ☐ Spend the moments before your guests arrive in quiet contemplation in order to set your intention for your gathering.
- ☐ Welcome your guests with warmth and joy!
- ☐ Enjoy your birthday gathering by singing, dancing, and having meaningful conversations with your guests!
- ☐ Announce to your friends and family your commitment to a new good deed! (Encourage them to do so as well!)
- ☐ If you choose to have a candled birthday cake at the party, light the candles, instead of blowing them out.

# DO YOU MATTER?

**W**ould the world be any different if you weren't born? Do you wake up in the morning feeling like you have an important role to play in the grand scheme of things?

Most of us grow up in a world where life is dispensable, where our individual contributions go unrecognized, where there is no real sense that life—ours or anyone's—is significant or meaningful.

At the root of this restlessness and discontent is the deep-seated conviction that “I Don't Matter.” It is a belief that if I were to show up someplace or not, or make some kind of contribution or not, it would not fundamentally affect the world or the people that live in it. Think about that for a minute. If you don't feel like you make a difference in the world, how excited can you be about the things you do and the choices you make? When you wake up in the morning and you feel like what you do that day doesn't matter anyway, how committed or passionate can you be?

But here is a message that will change your life forever:

**Birth is G-d's way of saying “you matter.”**

This means you are absolutely necessary. You are indispensable to G-d's vision of the world, chosen to fulfill a mission in this world that you and only you can accomplish. Like musical notes in the grand Divine composition, each of us has our unique music to play.

We must each challenge and ask ourselves: Do I really matter?

I have posed this question to audiences across the country. The knee-jerk response is usually: Of course I matter—I feel that I am important. My family, friends and work colleagues value me. But let me rephrase the question: **Would it make a difference if you were never born?** Remember, before you were born, it would not have been a catastrophe if you did not appear; no one would miss you because no one was expecting you. Of course, we can justify our existence once we are born. But does our existence have any merit beyond our justifications?



**You are an indispensable musical note in life's symphony.  
Irreplaceable. Period. The world would be different if you  
were not here or if you do not fulfill your calling.**

The only absolute reason why you truly matter is because you were chosen by G-d to come to this world. The words "Birth is G-d saying you matter" are not my own. They are taken from the Torah, which states the single most important truth you will ever hear: Yes, you matter, not because you think you are important, or because others tell you that you are, or because of your buying power, monetary value, looks, performance or productivity level. You are important because G-d put you here.

You are an indispensable musical note in life's symphony. Irreplaceable. Period. The world would be different if you were not here or if you do not fulfill your calling. You have been allotted a certain section of this globe, with certain talents; people you will meet; experiences you will have; places you will go; objects you will obtain—all are allocated to you in order for you to transform them, to leave them differently from how you found them. And this changes lives forever. Eternally. When you know that you and your contribution are crucial, it infuses all that you do with a compelling sense of urgency.

I believe that this simple, clear message is preventive medicine for much of the tragedy and suffering that plague our world today—the shootings, the hatred, the suicides, the wars. We need to reach to every person, to every child, every parent, every educator, every leader, with the message: You matter. Your life and what you do with it matters. You are indispensable to G-d and to this world.





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