

# A Letter to Readers and Friends: **Adopting Positive Judaism in Your Life**

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Dear readers and friends,

Thank you for reading this book. The people that I have described within come from real life stories that I've witnessed. I protected the identities of all these people by changing their names, ages, and even genders at times. Sometimes the episodes are composite stories that have blended together in my mind over the years. I respect and admire everyone who has shared their truths and intimacies with me, and I would never risk revealing their identities. Of my own life and my family, everything is real. I want you to know why I chose to share so openly.

There is a tale about a Jewish scholar who lived two thousand years ago. Reb Mordechai loved to teach, and he was beloved by his students. Each day he would explain the teachings of the ancient sages, one by one. He brought to life the biblical stories, by making each lesson relevant to the real lives of his students. This way, the rabbi knew he was preparing them to live in the real world.

One Friday, Reb Mordechai's most inquisitive student did not return to class after lunch. He had snuck into the rabbi's home and climbed under the rabbi's bed.

That Shabbat eve, the rabbi and his wife shared in the most spirited lovemaking. Minutes after, they felt something move beneath their bed. To their great surprise, the rabbi's student appeared.

"What are you doing here?" cried the rabbi.

The student replied, "Reb Mordechai, you always teach that you will prepare us to live in the real world. I am here to learn."

As you've read, I shared my own life experiences to model how I approach

the journey of life as a son, a husband, a father, a rabbi, and a citizen of the world. I find strength in the story of Reb Mordechai and his student, and I take to heart that my role as a rabbi is to prepare people to live in the real world.

But for me, it goes one step further. The difference between Reb Mordechai and myself is that I want to do more than just prepare you for life. My hope is to train you to thrive and flourish in your own life by adopting Jewish virtues and practices that have been shown by modern science to raise the level of happiness, well-being, positivity, and life satisfaction.

Now it's up to you to choose to adopt these and other virtues and practices in order to live your best life, achieve authentic happiness, find true love, take responsibility for your actions, find your calling, live every day with purpose, and lastly, have the most positive impact on yourself, your family, and the world around you.

Let us call to mind a beautiful prayer from the Torah. "You shall take to heart the words with which I charge you on this day. You shall teach them to your children. You should recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise up."<sup>196</sup>

My hope for you, your children, and the world, is that the words you teach and the words you recite, are words of positivity, happiness, and well-being.

Shalom, friend. Here is to well-being in your life and in the lives of the ones you love.

Rabbi Darren Levine