

My Family's Ethical Values: A Personal Torah Commentary

This personal Torah commentary (my "Musar") is similar to an ethical will. The book describes ethical values and aspirational wisdom cherished by my ancestors and filtered by my experiences in life. The essays in the book outline my perceptions as an elder about how one can strive to live a vibrant and meaningful Jewish life in America when, for example, selecting friends and a spouse, choosing a career and managing financial resources, raising a family and celebrating festivals, praying meaningfully and enjoying Shabbat, going through the mourning cycle and becoming a mensch, gathering with family and taking vacations, and joining with well-motivated colleagues while struggling with bad actors or less than ideal practices. The essays are written with our grandchildren in particular, and our descendants in general, as the intended audience.

The book initially issued as a private publication. I am now sharing it publicly because a good number of folks concluded that the ideas expressed in the essays resonated with them, while others found the book to be a model for crafting something similar for their family and friends.

The book was written when my father was ill and after he died. You should know that I found the writing of these essays to be cathartic. By thinking about and writing this book, I was able to engage in an active dialogue with my father after his passing about his experiences in life and his ethical values and his wisdom. When you encounter the loss of a loved one, I pray you also will find a way to continue to communicate with that person.

If the framing of this book or the ideas contained in the essays help any one of you share your Jewish values with your descendants or continue your dialogue with a departed soul, the public release will be a complete success.

Phil Sunshine