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Sukkot, Shmini Atzeret, Bereishit

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Painting the Etrog: A Topsy-Turvy Tale of Etrog Painting

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After traipsing around town in search of the perfect *lulav* and *etrog* last year, I retired to my favourite local café for a coffee and a well-earned rest. I was feeling pretty pleased with myself for finding a nice long (and fat) *lulav* and a good-sized lemon-yellow *etrog*, and of course the *hadassim* (myrtle stems, three thereof) and *aravot* (a pair of willow stems) that for sure would last just a day or two before needing to be replaced. Coffee in hand,

I leafed through a pocket-sized book of Marc Chagall paintings and I happened upon his “Feast Day (Rabbi with Lemon)”.

To the trained eye, it is quite obvious that the lime-coloured “lemon” in the hand of the Hasidic rabbi is no more a lemon than a pineapple is an apple. But the “lemon” is not the most curious aspect of Chagall’s painting; the curiosity here is that Chagall has painted on top of the rabbi’s head, another rabbi – a backward-facing rabbi. This painting reminded me of another I have seen recently – “In Prayer at Sukkot” by Paula Gans. To the trained eye, there’s also something rather curious about Gans’s Hasidic rabbi: his *etrog* is upside-down¹, with the *pitom* facing down while the stalk faces up – the opposite of the traditional method. I

¹ While it is certainly true that the *etrog* is inverted by some while saying the blessing over it, this author feels that Gans’s

rabbi has gotten beyond the *bracha* stage, and the *etrog* should be shown with the *pitom* facing upwards.

wondered what these rabbis could mean, and whether they are connected to the upside-down *etrog*.

I have never really managed to get myself inside Chagall's head, to understand what he had in mind when he painted some of his great masterpieces. His psychedelic goats, floating people, animals within animals and music-playing goats, no doubt, can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. I would love to have travelled back in time to spend hours chatting with him to hear his interpretations of his paintings. Some of his rabbi paintings are straightforward portraits, though for sure, each one tells its own story. This painting, as well as many others of his, would need a full chapter in the yet-to-be-written 'Simple Guide to Understanding Chagall'.

A day or two after purchasing my *lulav*, *etrog*, and coffee, I read an essay: 'The Anatomy of an *Erog*' by Rabbi Dr Norman Lamm² z"l, formerly the Chancellor of Yeshiva University. Though I am not suggesting for one moment that this was what motivated Chagall to paint a rabbi on the head of the rabbi, or Gans to paint an inverted *etrog*, I did gain an understanding of the importance of Jewish history from looking at these paintings in light of Rabbi Lamm's explanation of the *etrog*.

Rabbi Lamm writes that there is an appendage at either end of the *etrog*. There is the *oketz*, the stalk, that attaches the *etrog* to the tree. This

represents the history of the Jewish people, its roots, its origins, the place we have come from. And at the other end is the *pitom*, the remnants of the flower. This represents growth, new life, the future of the Jewish people. When holding the *etrog*, together with a *lulav*, a Jew remembers whence they have come and where they are going. They remember they have come from an unbroken chain of antecedents, each of whom has made a contribution to their DNA and place in life; they recall Jewish history and culture of the last 3,700 years, and look to the future knowing that they themselves are a link in the chain to the next generation. The future of the Jewish people depends on it.

When I see Chagall's rabbi holding his *etrog*, I think of the future destiny of our people. When I see the rabbi on the rabbi's head looking back, I think of our whole history. We know where we have come from. We must be sure to know where we are headed.

When I see Gans's *etrog*, I get the feeling that she knew where she had come from, but she did not know where she was heading. In 1920, when she painted her rabbi and his *etrog*, she could not have known where she was heading. Perhaps it was just as well. Paula Gans, a portrait painter of some note, was born in 1883 near Prague. She moved to Hamburg in 1920 with her brother, Richard. In November 1941 they were informed they were to be deported to the Minsk ghetto. The day before

² The Anatomy of an *Erog* - Rabbi Dr Norman Lamm - Sukkot 1968

the deportation, Paula committed suicide. Richard was killed in Minsk some months later.

Ironically, Paula Gans's painting foretold her future without her realising. Chagall, though, thankfully fared much better – his destiny perhaps foreseen, likewise, in his painting. He left his birthplace Vitebsk in Belarus in 1923, only to find himself in Vichy France at the outbreak of WW2. Knowing the future looked bleak for a Jewish artist, whose works were labelled 'degenerate' by the Nazis, he managed to escape in 1941 just in time, together with his wife Bella, and spent the remainder of the war and the immediate post-war years in the US.

As I hold my *etrog* each year, I remember our history, and I hold my *lulav* and *etrog* upright, hoping and praying that the future of the Jewish people and the future of Israel will be as bright as my lemon-yellow *etrog*.

Ameilut in the Age of AI

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A decade ago, I attended a conversation between Ray Kurzweil and Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz¹ where they discussed, among other things, the future of humanity and technology. Kurzweil, a futurist, has spent years discussing the "singularity," a predicted time when mankind will merge with machines — possibly out of necessity as artificial intelligence surpasses human intelligence — to expand our intelligence in the same way our minds evolved beyond cavemen. R. Steinsaltz, without commenting on the specifics, complimented Kurzweil's theory with the observation that Judaism, unlike other faith traditions, is more interested in progress and building a better future than longing for a glorious past.

Their perspectives resonated with me. We should not be afraid of technology, but we also should not let it get ahead of us. We need to progress in lockstep with technology and think about the ways it will change our lives, both in its current form and what it will likely become, and the ways we may need to change with it.²

¹ Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in dialogue with Ray Kurzweil, November, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q42F9-F17t8>.

² I want to thank my wife, Ruthie Hollander, along with friends R. Zach Beer, Matthew Weinstein, R. Binny Fiederer, and R. Steve Gotlib for their thoughts and feedback on this piece.

Reflecting on one such aspect of our lives, R. Josh Flug, writing for TraditionOnline.org,³ posed a question about artificial intelligence and *ameilut ba-Torah*, toiling in Torah. As AI becomes more commonplace, what will happen to *ameilut ba-Torah*, a concept sourced in the Sifra to the verse, “if you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments” (Leviticus 26:3), which claims the pre-condition for God’s blessings, “if you follow my laws,” means toiling (*ameilut*) in Torah. For centuries, this meant long nights in the *beit midrash*, breaking our teeth over difficult passages, and breaking a sweat over a text until we gained understanding and insight. However, if *ameilut ba-Torah* is expressed as effort in pursuit of knowledge and understanding, how will we “toil” (or even merely learn) in a world where AI tools offer information instantaneously? Few things are more meaningful to Judaism than toiling in Torah study, and it cannot be abandoned. Yet, while discussing Torah study and AI may seem trite in comparison to the more existential threats of artificial intelligence, discussions about the human centered parts of Torah study may jumpstart discussions about the areas of our lives where we should set boundaries between humans and technologies. Furthermore, AI proponent Moshe Koppel has written about how the Jewish practice of communal study could be an antidote

to the challenges of social isolation and loneliness that a fully online, and potentially laborless, world can produce.⁴

In his essay, R. Flug referenced an article by Rabbi Norman Lamm⁵ which stressed how Judaism values the process as much as the product, underscoring the preference for struggling to reach an answer independently over taking shortcuts. Others may lean into Torah *lishmah*, learning for its own sake rather than for any practical goal, as a justification for the continuity of classical study despite information being easily accessible. Jewish tradition sees Torah *lishmah* as paramount, crediting scholars who learn *lishmah* for a multitude of blessings bestowed upon our world, and even claiming that God learns daily (*Sanhedrin* 99b; *Avodah Zarah* 3b). Emphasizing the value of learning *lishmah* in a world of enhanced knowledge accessibility with AI tools is not dissimilar to the ways traditionalists discourage using translated *gemaras* instead of struggling with the original Aramaic. Learning Torah might also simply be a comforting experience. In a world that has undergone such tremendous change, connecting to our ancestors, and recalling the problems of similar times, might be a blessed escape or means of connection to what Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik called the

³ R. Josh Flug, “The Rabbi & AI,” *TRADITION Questions*, (February, 2025), <https://traditiononline.org/tradition-questions-rabbiai/>.

⁴ Moshe Koppel, “What Artificial Intelligence Has In Store for Judaism,” (March, 2024),

<https://ideas.tikvah.org/mosaic/essays/what-artificial-intelligence-has-in-store-for-judaism>.

⁵ R. Norman Lamm, “Knowing vs. Learning: Which Takes Precedence?,” <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/1123216>.

“Mesorah community, where generations meet.”^{6,7}

However, as AI technologies advance, these answers may become less satisfying, especially if Kurzweil’s theory of the singularity comes to pass and technologies such as Elon Musk’s Neuralink connect our minds to the Internet, making learning new information instantaneous. R. Lamm asks a similar question about inserting chips into our brains to gain access to Torah knowledge. R. Flug addressed this subject in another article,⁸ sharing Rabbi Hayyim Volozhiner’s well-known anecdote about the Vilna Gaon’s visitation by angels offering the revelation of secrets of Torah. The Gaon was reported to rebuff the supernatural acquisition of knowledge, saying “If there are truths to be uncovered, he didn’t want those given to him automatically. He only wanted to learn

them through toil.”

The Vilna Gaon’s rejection of instantaneous knowledge implies that we should reject technological advancements promising similar short-cut rewards, and I do indeed think that some form of limitation or rejection of AI is necessary. Thinkers such as David Zvi Kalman⁹ and Sinead Bovell have persuasively suggested that we put real thought into how we should safely engage with these technologies¹⁰ which have already been shown to be harmful to our social wellbeing, mental health,¹¹ and our cognitive capabilities,¹² much like we do with television and social media. However, I’d like to suggest another direction for this issue of *ameilut ba-Torah* that avoids outright rejecting this technological innovation and the tremendous benefits it can bring, assuming we put the work into figuring out how to use it

⁶ The Rav’s famous description (from 1974) of how he experienced the Mesorah as he gave shiur as an old man, <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/753994/>.

⁷ There were times in my own life when reading a *rashi* or a *gemara* felt uplifting because I was plugging into a chain of thinkers that I was also a part of.

⁸ R. Josh Flug, “Artificial Intelligence and Halacha, Yoreh Deah: Talmud Torah in the Age of Brain Interfaces,” (2025), <https://download.yutorah.org/2024/1053/1119217/artificial-intelligence-and-halacha.pdf>.

⁹ David Zvi Kalman, “AI Ethics is Another Casualty of the Gaza War,” *Jello Menorah*, <https://www.jellomenorah.com/p/ai-ethics-is-a-casualty-of-the-gaza>.

¹⁰ Sinead Bovell, https://www.sineadbovell.com/?fbclid=IwY2xjawLZeTFleHRuA2F1bQixMABicmlkETF2all0SkZhVnM4N1hoQ1pFAR4KXhc p8zsPbXOrHsvxmslr2UXhnpTYbmSrlSsWbq7FlmSkFbYp0BpzXDYbPQ_aem_LWO80ceU_f_8cHfCfHjOg.

¹¹ Maggie Harrison Dupré, “People Are Being Involuntarily Committed, Jailed After Spiraling Into ‘ChatGPT Psychosis,’” (June, 2025), https://futurism.com/commitment-jail-chatgpt-psychosis?fbclid=IwY2xjawLNmFZleHRuA2F1bQixMQBicmlkETEzRXBZNkFaVWl2amxpNFhrAR7z6GvwhQ2IR7usCnLKCBQ4r2ykWLmh7ml4pGTUyc6Ajq6XEQlxCUqlQD2iIA_aem_Yp_gcdbg2_NT7RJq1-KKQOw.

¹² Kyle Chayaka, “A.I. Is Homogenizing Our Thoughts,” *New Yorker* (June, 2025), <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/ai-is-homogenizing-our-thoughts>.

safely.¹³ Furthermore, operating under the mistaken assumption that our technology's current capabilities are the final phase of innovation, or that our lives will remain as they are, leaves us unprepared for what further innovation may lie ahead. That's why I'd like to consider what *ameilut ba-Torah* might look like in a singularity world. We can still center our lives around *ameilut ba-Torah* and learning even as we redefine our goals.

Time will tell if we actually see this world of instantaneous information. If we do, I hope these approaches will be useful ways of crafting/finding meaning in that new reality. But regardless of what the future holds, it is still our duty to create Torah that is meaningful, relevant, human, and worth "toiling" for today. Hopefully, these approaches serve the current moment too.

Physicality

The value of physical exertion in pursuit of *mitzvot* is well-known. Running to *shul* is praiseworthy, for example (*Berakhot* 6b). However, the kind of physicality I'm referring to is not simply a show of dedication, but rather its own dimension of learning. Rabbi Yosef ben Moshe records a position of his teacher Rabbi Israel Isserlein, author of *Terumat Ha-Deshen*, who disdained inventions that made learning physically easier:

Those rich, spoiled students that had made a revolving stand which allowed for them to turn the table to get whichever book they wanted [without having to get up]— such behavior is inappropriate. Instead, one who gets up to get a book and exerts himself will remember that he had to look for the book [and what it said]. (*Leket Yosher*, vol. 2, 39)

R. Isserlein seems to imply that learning is a physical, bodily process as well as a mental one. Physical exertion helps ideas crystalize within our bodies, building a kind of muscle memory. This aligns with modern concepts such as embodiment cognition, a thesis that suggests that "the human mind is largely determined by the structures of the human body (morphology, sensory and motor systems) and its interactions with the physical environment."¹⁴ Our bodies may also influence our memory and recall capabilities.¹⁵

In one study at Florida State University, researchers had participants recall autobiographical memories, with some mimicking the bodily positions they maintained during the events in question. What they found was a strong correlation between accurate recall of

¹³ "Artificial Intelligence: The Newest Revolution in Torah Study?" Rabbi Dovid Bashevkin in conversation with Professor Moshe Koppel, *Jewish Action*, <https://jewishaction.com/cover-story/artificial-intelligence-the-newest-revolution-in-torah-study/>.

¹⁴ *American Psychological Association*, 2018, <https://dictionary.apa.org/embodied-cognition>.

¹⁵ Brandon Keim, "Upward Physical Movement Brings Back Happy Memories," (2010), <https://www.wired.com/2010/04/motion-recall/>.

autobiographical events and congruent body posture. “Our main hypothesis predicted better access to autobiographical memories in the congruent body position than in the incongruent condition for both age groups,” they wrote. “This hypothesis was supported.”¹⁶ Personally, I’ve found a massive difference between the tactile experience of learning with a book and learning on a computer in my own life. The muscle memory developed through learning from a book helps me remember where I was on the page the day before, what I was interested in, and what tangents and related ideas I meant to explore.

The Gemara similarly supports the idea of physical activity influencing cognition. Beruriah scolds one student for whispering rather than verbalizing what he was learning, warning him that he’d forget his studies (*Eirubin* 53b). Granted, such sources emphasize physicality’s improvement of fact recall — something that might not be necessary in the future — but R. Isserlein’s suggestion positions physicality as a tool for recalling personal experiences and autobiographical information, not mere facts. And experience isn’t information the Internet can offer; it’s information we recall from our lives.

Physical expression is a halakhic requirement too. *Shulhan Arukh* claims that reciting *Birkhot ha-Torah* is only necessary when reading or writing Torah, not thinking (OH 47:2-4). Elaborating on

this, *Mishnah Berurah* suggests that thought is not equivalent to speech, and someone learning from a book “should be careful to verbalize at least a bit of Torah out loud after reciting the blessing.” Furthermore, *Tanya* maintains that *mitzvot* are the medium through which we transform our animalistic qualities into holy ones, including the verbalizing of Torah study:

The more forcefully one speaks words of Torah or prayer, the more of the animal soul’s energy he introduces and clothes in these words... he converts more of the energy of the *kelipa[h]* (evil outer shell of the self) to holiness. This is the meaning of the verse, “All my bones shall declare...”[;] words of Torah and prayer must be said “with all of one’s bones” so as much of the body’s energy be utilized in performing *mitzvot* as possible. That’s why our Sages said: “If the Torah abides in all 248 limbs, it is preserved in your memory; otherwise, it’s not preserved.” (*Tanya*, ch. 37)

Knowledge acquisition, while a priority, is not the only priority. Our engagement with Torah is an act of holiness and a path towards new forms of connection and spiritual transformation. Simply

¹⁶ Katinka Dijkstra, Michael P. Kaschak, Rolf A. Zwaan, “Body posture facilitates retrieval of autobiographical memories,” *Cognition* 102, no.1 (January 2007): 139-149.

uploading information into our brains or searching for answers isn't sufficient. The *ameilut* of the future might perhaps be the overcoming of a learned resistance to physical exertion and actions that may feel repetitive or unnecessary, given our technological capabilities. It might be the act of walking to book shelves, sitting with others,¹⁷ reading aloud — learning with our feet — to create a different kind of wisdom.

Identity

Sefer Ha-Hinnukh's description of the goal of Torah study is to acquire information,¹⁸ but thinkers like Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Shagar identify connection and reflection as vital aspects of Torah study.

R. Soloveitchik observes that the Talmud's strange claim that the prohibitions against greeting others and learning Torah while in mourning are sourced from the same verse (*Mo'eid Katan* 15a, citing Ezekiel 24:17). The connection between these laws is perplexing, but R. Tzvi Sinensky points to R. Soloveitchik's interpretation of a *gemara* in *Niddah* that offers clarity.¹⁹ The Rav frames the essence of learning Torah in a way that reveals the connection between these prohibitions. The Gemara maintains that angels teach children Torah in the womb only for them to forget it once

they're born. "When a Jew studies Torah," the Rav taught, "he is confronted with something which is not foreign... but rather intimate and already familiar, because he has already studied it... like the amnesia victim who tries to reconstruct from fragments the beautiful world he once experienced. In other words, by learning Torah man returns to his own self."²⁰ According to R. Soloveitchik, learning Torah is an experience of reflection and connection, something totally inappropriate for the mourner but extremely meaningful for a learner. Utilizing this interpretation of the experience of Torah study, R. Sinensky explains:

In light of Rav Soloveitchik's striking thesis, we may better understand the nature of the mourner's exclusion from *Talmud Torah*. *Talmud Torah* is a form of self-expression in that it constitutes a search for personal identity. By learning, we find not only the wisdom of Torah but also, in a sense, our deeper selves. Such a search for personal identity is contrary to the experience of the mourner. An *ave[il]* experiences a sense of alienation not only from

¹⁷ A proponent of artificial intelligence in Jewish education, [Moshe Koppel has written](#) about the ways the Jewish world is poised to meet the challenges of AI and society, particularly the Jewish practice of communal study as an antidote to the loneliness a totally on-line life can produce.

¹⁸ *Sefer Ha-Hinnukh*, 419:2.

¹⁹ R. Tzvi Sinensky, "The Purpose of Talmud Torah" (April, 2019), <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/shavuot/purpose-talmud-torah>.

²⁰ R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah," *TRADITION* 17, no.2 (Spring 1978): 69.

those around him (as exemplified by the prohibition of *she'eilat shalom*) but also from himself. For this reason, the personal search of Torah study runs counter to the experience of the mourner, who is torn asunder by the terrifying news of personal loss.

Similarly, the Rav writes elsewhere that “‘Oral Torah’ means a Torah that blends with the individual’s personal uniqueness and becomes an inseparable part of man. When the person then transmits it to someone else, his personal essence is transmitted along with it.”²¹

Rav Shagar, an advocate for Torah study that’s both an intellectual exercise and a meaning-making one, writes about the purpose of *talmud Torah* as being a means of forming a connection between one’s self and God:

Studying Torah is not merely an intellect project... it is a relationship between God and the Jewish people. Our essential awareness is that of the Torah as a book of love. *Brit* means that the main function of studying Torah is a spiritual connection, an intimacy that a Jew experiences toward God when studying Torah. (*BeTorato Yehegeh*, 25)

To learn Torah entails deep, personal reflection in pursuit of connection with the divine, but that isn’t always easy. That kind of reflection can be challenging, troubling, even strenuous if done genuinely, but it’s what we should strive for. Perhaps achieving that level of connection could become the *ameilut ba-Torah* of the future. Our task would no longer be to collect information but to find points of connection within Torah that speak to us on deeply personal levels — that speak to our souls. Have you ever read something that resonated so deeply that it felt like it was written for you? I’ve had those moments — times when I was struggling with something in my life and I’d sit down to learn and magically find something that spoke to what I was going through. It wasn’t always an answer, but it was enough to feel seen by God. Kurzweil describes the evolution of the singularity as a progression towards “greater complexity, greater elegance, greater knowledge, greater intelligence, greater beauty, greater creativity, and greater levels of subtle attributes such as love.”²² This can be the Torah of the age of AI, a Torah that speaks to our changing realities and evolving personalities. In a world that can feel devoid of meaning, filled with knowledge but plagued with existential uncertainty, to toil in Torah can be to strive for this deep connection to Torah and to find ourselves within it. A Torah that sees you. And when given the opportunity to share that Torah with someone else, you gain the added experience of being seen by them.

²¹ R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, [And From There You Shall Seek](#) (Ktav Publishing, 2021), 142.

²² Ray Kurzweil, [The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology](#) (Penguin Books, 2019), 389.

However, this would present two more challenges. The first would be the toiling it might take to leave our homes and have new experiences for Torah to speak to us in a world where many of our needs are otherwise met. The second would be overcoming an even greater challenge: honesty. Reflecting on comedy and the differences between comedy produced by a human being versus comedy produced by an artificial intelligence, comedian Mike Birbiglia said that there's something special about the confessional element of comedy that is unique to conscious experience. Choosing to share something with others or admit something to yourself is one of the most powerful drivers for creating meaningful and substantive things.²³ To create a Torah that sees us for what we as individuals are and feel entails struggling with ourselves to be honest about who we are and what we're feeling, which can be a toiling of its own.

Novelty

Finally, *ameilut ba-Torah* could mean to strive for novelty (*hiddush*) rather than information. *Hiddush* is essential to Jewish tradition. The Rav stressed, "There is no change or reform within the Halakhah, but there is unlimited innovation (*hiddush*)... The Holy One, Blessed Be He, gave the Torah to Israel and commanded us to innovate and create."²⁴ Rav Kook claimed that producing a novel idea was a more impactful revelation of God's

divine wisdom in the world because it revealed parts of the Torah unique to the individual:

And the wisdom of the Torah is the Divine revelation of His will that takes place when we serve God and study His Torah. Thus, everyone who studies Torah actualizes the potential of its wisdom through their own soul, and certainly the light that is renewed through the connection of the Torah to one soul is not the same as the light born from its connection to another soul. Therefore, one truly magnifies the Torah through their learning... All the more so when one innovates in Torah, which is certainly the magnification of Torah with a twofold light. (*Orot Ha-Torah* 2:1)

Novelty is a religious imperative, and it isn't something that can be downloaded or taught. It is something personal, reflective, and unique to each of us. This stands in opposition to the popular misconception that artificial intelligence will be more creative than humans, which assumes a fictitious, objective standard for creativity or novelty. Beauty is subjective, and even if AI produces countless ideas in the time it takes a human to produce one, there is no objective

²³ Q&A: "Mike Answers Voicemails About AI and Weird Audience Energy," *Working it Out Podcast*, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2ab3Op8miVqG4XbwlsIGx3?si=Gj9b0yYEQSmN2avwMftggQ>.

²⁴ R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *And From There You Shall Seek*, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, (Ktav Publishing, 2021) Publishing, 108-110.

metric making the AI's ideas better than one human's *hiddush*. One article eloquently articulated the issue with AI and creativity, explaining that what's killing creativity in the age of AI is not the machine but the culture we've built around it, the valuing of productivity over creativity. "At the end of the day, the problem isn't AI. It's us," the author writes. "It's the way we've devalued art. The way we've made everything about engagement metrics and monetization. It's our 'hustle culture', and the quest to get rich fast with minimal effort, that is ruining creativity."²⁵ However, true creativity is difficult. To strive for *hiddush* and contribute personal, novel insights to our tradition isn't easy — it takes toiling — but it's what ensures our tradition's continuity. The Midrash says that Moshe had one final request from God: to appoint a leader capable of caring for the uniqueness of every Jew, each of whom was born with individuality (*Bemidbar Rabbah* 21:2):

'Master of the universe, the dispositions of each and every one are revealed and known before You, and the dispositions of Your children are not similar to one another. When I depart, I implore You, appoint a leader over them who will bear each and every one in accordance with his dispositions,' as it is stated: "May the Lord, [God of the

spirits]...appoint." It does not say "spirit," but rather "spirits."²⁶

When I was in college, I had a conversation with a friend about the ways Torah has managed to stay relevant regardless of time, place, or culture. At one point she asked me how I knew that was true, and I told her I had faith that it was because it's been true for 3000 years. Allowing a misconception about creativity and technological innovation to obfuscate this fact and rob us of this meaningful form of *ameilut* is unfair to Torah — and humanity.

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²⁵ Esther Uwanah Edet, "AI Is Killing Creativity, But Not for the Reason You Think," *Medium* (February, 2025), <https://medium.com/the-written-mosaic/ai-is-killing-creativity-but-not-for-the-reason-you-think-c376fe1cbf0e>.

²⁶ Translation from Sefaria, *Midrash Rabbah* (2022).