

Ethical Will of Israel (son of Ephraim) Friedman
As translated by Lea and Moshe Helner

Sunday (reckoned as the first day of the week on the Jewish calendar) three days before the month of Menachem Av---in the year 5697.

Every man is obligated to remember that he is not immortal/ all men must die...and when one always thinks that one will one day die, then , one is less apt to be deeply involved in the desires/material ambition/ physical excesses of this life, especially in our elderly time/ the later years of our lives... we think more and more often of our own death and dying, And because of this I find it necessary to speak/ communicate with my children—with those I love with all my heart.

I feel that man is a wonderful creation—and that Jews are even a higher one. We have had in our forefathers the best of people—and that is why we are a chosen people—and we were enormously privileged to receive the Law/Tora/Scripture/teachings. A teaching and an instruction on how to conduct our lives, we received this from God alone. No matter how small is our understanding, we still can sense/understand how refined and lofty/elevated the Torah is—which teaches us how we all might reach the highest happiness.

We are now living in such a time when men's understanding/thoughts are "free", unrestrained by any kind of lawful teachings..which leads men into a lowly state of life. And so, I find it necessary to declare to you —always remain Jews—be near to God and by His Torah as much as it is possible for you. (Implied in the Yiddish language-according to this text/context is the idea; no matter how difficult and unreachable seems to be the possibility for you to realize God and God's teachings/Torah—try to reach for it!) And when, Heavens forbid, you might feel that you have failed in some way in some manner—don't fall from faith in yourselves—and wrongly think that since you have fallen/failed/transgressed a law that you are condemned and therefore you will continue the transgression. Don't ever fall into such an erroneous way of thinking!

Our Sages taught us that when a man transgresses, man can repair his transgression by carrying out the duties and obligations commanded him—and in this way man can draw closer to God, and in this way also, you can turn toward repair and repentance. Teach this concept to your children so that they will lead good and upright lives after you. And in such a way/manner your own ancestors and forbears conducted themselves. It is written in our Torah that God Says, "I love Abraham because he teaches his children how to follow after him."

The commandment to Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother is a very great one and will bring great happiness in this world and in the world to come. This commandment to honor father and mother continues through to old age and after their death. But it does not mean that you set a nice stone on their gravesite —of father and mother---nor, Heavens forbid, to bring flowers to the grave---this is foolish. The honoring of the dead parents is in the children carrying on their lives according to the precepts as enjoined us in Scripture/Torah—according to the Jewish way/Jewishly.

When the time comes for saying El Ma'leh Rachamim (God, who is filled with mercy)—(an indirect reference to the burial service. L.H.) bring and give charity in their names, each according to his ability.

Don't desecrate the Sabbath by driving a car to Synagogue in order to say Kaddish. (The special prayer said together with the congregation of men in the synagogue). Don't run to say Kaddish and by doing so neglect putting on T'fillin (phylacteries). The commandment concerning the putting on of T'fillin is higher than the saying of Kaddish, according to our Torah.

If you will conduct your lives in an orderly and in a Jewish way, I say to you, that you then shall always be near God and to your parents. And with God's help, in your need, He will be with you, as is written: "God is near to all who cry out to Him."

I, of course, would not like my body to remain here in America, for all kinds of Jewish reasons, but I can't arrange otherwise since who can know the outcome of the future. (This is written in 1937—prophetically realizing the bitter devastation that was set to take place in Europe—World War II and the Holocaust.) In any case, do not bury me next to those who were "free thinkers" (non-believers)—this would be contrary to the precepts of Torah. The purification of my body should be made according to Jewish custom and only by Jews.

Each of my children should have a copy of my will –to read it and to become familiar with it. This will earn merit for me and for all of you.

Your loving father
Israel (son of Ephraim) Friedman