



Special Souls

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

*To join the thousands of recipients and receive these insights free on a weekly email, obtain previous articles, feedback, comments, suggestions (on how to spread the insights of this publication further, make it more appealing or anything else), to support or dedicate this publication which has been in six continents and more than forty countries, or if you know anyone who is interested in receiving these insights weekly, please contact the author,
Rabbi Yehoshua Alt, at
yalt3285@gmail.com.
Thank you.*

Listen to the NEW, short Fascinating Insights podcast at <https://jewishpodcasts.fm/fascinating-insights>, where it can also be downloaded!

*AN EXCITING NEW BOOK:
The newly released book, *Extraordinary Insights: Inspiring Essays on Fascinating Torah Topics*, is now available for purchase by sending an email to yalt3285@gmail.com or at <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B09JJKFR5N>.*

This read is for all ages. It has something for everyone, for beginners and scholars, students and teachers. It makes a great gift for friends, relatives, business associates and learning partners.

What is the Torah view on mentally disabled children? The Chazon Ish and the Steipler would stand when a mentally disabled child came into their presence. Why? Because a child that is disabled is closer to perfection. That is why he is so limited—he doesn't need all his faculties for his mission in this world.

Although it was difficult for the Chazon Ish at the end of his life to arise from his bed, he nevertheless stood up with a big smile for a father who entered with his 13-year-old down-syndrome son. The Chazon Ish explained that he is standing for this down-syndrome boy who is one of the holiest souls in the generation. At the boy's bar mitzva, R' Leib Gurwitz turned toward the beleaguered parents: "You are fortunate that Hashem sent you such a lofty and precious soul. As its earthly guardians, you should consider yourselves fortunate to have this soul in your family."

In August 2003, the 14th child of Rebbetzin Machlis, Efrat, was born. Although she has down syndrome and is autistic, the Machlis family never looked at her as one who was lacking, but rather as one who was privileged. Her mother always spoke of her as such a high neshama.

R' Yitzchak Zilberstein was asked by a couple that gave birth to a disabled child what they need to correct in response to this "message from heaven"? His response: "Correct? This is a great zechus you have received. Why should you have to correct anything?" (Sefer Ohr Daniel 3:144)

In May 1996 R' Moshe Shapiro gave a speech to parents of children with developmental disabilities. In his speech, he related that every child is a *צלם אל-ה-ים*, image of Hashem, which doesn't become deficient in any way—whether he is the most disadvantaged, the most difficult, or the most limited child. These imperfections are an illness, and when Hashem brings the salvation, the cure for these illnesses will also be revealed.

"Just as an illness doesn't annul the *צלם אל-ה-ים*, so too these illnesses don't affect the *צלם אל-ה-ים*. The truth is that every child is helpless, the most helpless creature in the world, as no other creature is as helpless as a human child. Humans require parents—some for a short while, some for much longer, and some never stand on their own two feet. These children were created in a manner that requires more from those parents and for a longer period. These children will become healthy, either immediately or *עולם הבא* in. Regardless of their appearance, these children are a *צלם אל-ה-ים*, and it is certain that when we all rise for *תחיית המתים*, the resurrection of the dead (In a letter dated the 12th of Nissan תשל"ח 1978), R' Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 3, 138) writes that a child will merit *תחיית המתים*, even if its time with its mother was short-lived (see Sanhedrin 110b with Rashi s.v. *ע משעה שנוה ע* and Kesubos 111a). We must realise that they are clean and pure from any sin!), they will appear much more magnificent than we will.

On a deeper level, these children are exalted, exceedingly precious individuals. These souls can express themselves to a very limited degree. Hashem provided them with faculties that enable them to display only a fraction of their greatness. Why were they not given the full ability to express their inner self? Because their inner self is so elevated that it can't be expressed in this limited world.

Those who have such a child should take pride that Hashem gave them the opportunity to care for this elevated *צורת אדם*, human form, to raise such an illustrious soul in this world. Their extremely elevated soul and their body are incompatible, their inner and outer selves do not mesh. Their outer self cannot reveal their inner self and this inability expresses itself in their appearance. They are not inferior but rather superior."

For those who do not have such children, they can still apply these words to their life. Every time they see or come into contact with such children, they should realise the greatness of their presence!

We should also keep in mind the following story, which shows that some people are living solely so that others can benefit from them. A student of R' Yisrael Salanter had a sick daughter whom he loyally took care of. One day the girl passed away. Soon after, her father died. R' Yisrael Salanter remarked that at first it seemed that the daughter's life was dependent on her father, who was taking care of her. Now we see that the father was alive in the merit of his daughter.