

Jewish Responsibility Towards the Nations
Today and in the Messianic Era

Lighting Up The Nations

Edited by

RIVKAH LAMBERT ADLER, Ph.D.

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***Lighting Up The Nations: Jewish Responsibility Towards
the Nations Today and in the Messianic Era***

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Dr. Rivkah Lambert Adler and some of the people mentioned in this book are available to speak at your synagogue, church, fundraiser or special event.

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1. Judaism 2. Torah. 3. Israel 4. Current Issues

I. Adler, Dr. Rivkah Lambert

*II. Lighting Up The Nations: Jewish Responsibility Towards the Nations Today
and in the Messianic Era*



Also From Rivkah Lambert Adler:

Ten From The Nations:
Torah Awakening Among Non-Jews.

100 Days of Thanking Hashem:
A Jewish Gratitude Journal.



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Advance Praise for *Lighting Up The Nations*

For thousands of years, the Jewish people have been forced into a defensive posture vis-a-vis the nations of the world. Tevye's rabbi's famous quote from *Fiddler on the Roof* summed it up: "May God bless and keep the Czar... far away from us!"

Now that the visions of the Prophets are miraculously manifesting before our eyes and the Jewish people are being ingathered from the exile, our fundamental posture is radically changing. Our fear of the nations is being transformed to blessing and the darkness of the exile is being transformed to light. In *Lighting Up The Nations*, Rivkah Lambert Adler taps into this transformative energy and makes it understandable to theologian and layperson alike.

- **Rabbi Ari Abramowitz**

The Land of Israel Fellowship (thelandofisrael.com)

It is *dvar pashut* (a simple and obvious thing) that it is a central pillar of the meaning of what *Am Yisrael* is - that we are here to share the wisdom of the Torah with all the Nations of the world, and that as we proceed, deeper and deeper, further and further to geula, that will become more and more manifest. Rebbetzin Rivkah's decades of deep devotion to Am Yisrael and geula is truly inspiring.

- **Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf**

Award-winning author of Jewish books

As the Jewish people are returning to the Land of Israel in an ancient promise coming true in our time, there is a shift happening from the particular Jewish story towards the universal Biblical

Advance Praise for *Lighting Up The Nations*

ideal - in which the Torah has a message for all humankind. Rivkah Lambert Adler is touching on that redemptive chord, which is vibrating, but is not yet being heard by most. This book will help you hear the song of global redemption.

- **Rabbi Yishai Fleisher,**

International Spokesperson for the Jewish Community of
Hebron and media personality (yishaifleisher.com)

Rachel is weeping for her children, but Redemption is coming! We can sense it. As a non-Jew, I am grateful for people like Dr. Rivkah Lambert Adler who are bringing awareness and building bridges between the Jewish people and those thirsty ones who wish to drink from Judah's well of knowledge regarding Torah. While this book was primarily written for a Jewish audience, mature, Torah-aware (non-Jewish) believers in Hashem will gain a deeper understanding of the Jewish heart and mind as they read *Lighting Up The Nations*. Understandably, it will take a great deal of patient willingness to build trust and understanding between Jews and the nations, but those brave Jewish souls who are willing to step out are prophetically fulfilling their role as a Light to the Nations. These are exciting times, and I want to personally thank those Jewish lights who recognize the souls within those of us who deeply desire the restoration of all of Israel.

- **Chasity Galyon,** MS Ed. and Seeker of Truth
from Knoxville, TN

The Torah tells us that we are here not only to elevate our souls, but to transform the physical world into a Divine garden where God's essence is fully revealed. At that time, the sages say, all of humanity will seek to learn Torah and all will serve God as one.

Throughout the centuries of exile, the Jewish people risked their lives to keep the Torah. It was impossible to imagine that

Advance Praise for Lighting Up The Nations

millions of non-Jews would someday start seeking the Torah's wisdom with a passionate hunger and thirst.

And yet, that day has arrived. Sincere, humble souls from among the nations are seeking a deeper truth and a new relationship with God that only the Torah can provide.

According to many of the greatest rabbis of our generation, including the Lubavitcher Rebbe, a fundamental part of the Jewish mission in these times of redemption is to teach the peoples of the world Torah-true wisdom, helping them to take their place in creating an inhabitable world which ultimately will be *filled with the knowledge of God like water covers the ocean bed* (Habakkuk 2:14).

Such a foundational change does not come easily to most of us. We, as Jews, need to more deeply understand and internalize our new role. *Lighting Up The Nations* is an important step in helping us do exactly that.

- **Shifra Chana Hendrie**,
Founder and CEO of The Gate of Unity
(gateofunity.com)

Any Jew who loves Judaism and loves humanity will naturally want to share Jewish wisdom with people outside the Jewish nation. How can we not, when that wisdom could revolutionize others' lives and at the same time increase respect for Torah? In *Lighting Up The Nations*, Dr. Rivkah Lambert Adler makes the case that if non-Jews are thirsting for truth, God wants us to be the wellspring they come to.

- **Gila Manolson**,
Author and international speaker
(gilamanolson.com)

In her fascinating and important book, Dr. Rivkah Lambert Adler outlines why our biblical mandate of Isaiah 60:3 to be a light unto the nations has unprecedented relevance and urgency in our generation. *Lighting Up The Nations* should be required

Advance Praise for Lighting Up The Nations

reading by all Jews to appreciate the spiritual opportunities we have to finally fulfill our historic destiny.

- **Rabbi Tuly Weisz**, Founder of Israel365
(*Israel365.com and theisraelbible.com*)

I have known Rivkah Lambert Adler for many years, and she has always impressed me with her geulah consciousness, and especially her willingness to do her part to help make it happen. When it comes to redemption, there are many roles to play, and she seems to have found hers by sharing the wisdom of the Torah with those beyond the Jewish people who appreciate its centrality in human history and a perfected world, something that is certain to happen in future times. This recent work of hers is an important step in that direction.

- **Rabbi Pinchas Winston**, Author of more than 100 books on Torah philosophy (*thirtysix.org*)

Praise for
Ten From The Nations:
Torah Awakening
Among Non-Jews

Couldn't put this book down! I enjoyed reading how other non-Jews came to love the Torah and how similar some of their experiences were to mine. But, more than that, I cried when I read how my Jewish brethren are beginning to notice something big is starting to happen world-wide and many are open to it. This book is uplifting, encouraging, and validating. Rivkah has done a wonderful work and is very courageous to bridge a 2000 year divide. – **B. Smith**

[T]he stories from these brave witnesses are crucial to understanding that Divine restoration is underway and that the people of God should arise and prepare for the next steps. The discerning reader will be provoked to much prayer for wisdom and discernment as to how to respond to this evidence. I salute Dr. Adler for her courage! – **Cathy Helms**

This is a wonderful book of individual stories of people from many walks of life coming to similar conclusions independently of one another. It's well written and desperately needed today... Thank you Rivkah Lambert Adler for being so brave and willing to engage in dialogue with those that love the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob just as much as you do. I hope it will be used as an instrument for peace among all of Israel. I can also see that as fast as people are changing and returning to a love of Torah, Truth, a True understanding of the God of Israel, and the People of Israel this book will be a history book in no time at all. Their

Praise for *Ten From The Nations: Torah Awakening Among Non-Jews*

stories are just a drop in the bucket of countless others. It's so nice to have them written down giving legitimacy to so many people who thought they were the only ones. YOU'RE NOT!!! Must read folks!!! – **Jeremy Landauer**

Dr. Rivkah Lambert Adler has courageously dared to become the lightning rod around which an AMAZING conversation is taking place. Over the last 30 to 40 years a quiet revolution has begun within both Christendom and Judaism that is beginning to be felt very publicly and Adler's important work, *Ten From the Nations*, begins to chart the breadth, width and depth of this revolution.

Like an iceberg, with 90% of its mass hidden under the waters, a Torah Awakening has been happening across the globe. Christians are quietly waking, as if from deep slumber, to the continued relevance of the Torah, the five books of Moses and the contained Instructions in Righteousness. Both Jews and Christians are seeing this growing, even accelerating, shift and grappling with its significance... I encourage reading and wrestling with the contents of this book! - **Pete Rambo**

This Book was Wonderful, Timely and Challenging. I read all of it in about 4-5 hours, which was amazing because I cried through several pages. I could identify with the Journey of many coming from a Christian background. The struggles and blessings many have found in Keeping the Torah. Just to have our Jewish brethren take a closer look at us and wonder why or how this came to be thrills my soul... I appreciate the tremendous Chutzpah of Dr. Rivkah Lambert-Adler in compiling the individual contributions and opinions. The fact that these Two groups can find Holy Ground in the Torah is nothing less than Miraculous. The Jews have been at this for thousands of years and we have much to learn from them, having just rediscovered this treasure ourselves. - **Mary Stowell**

Acknowledgements

This is my opportunity to publicly thank:

The Master of the Universe, who keeps nudging me along this road.

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Gidon Ariel who originally inspired me to begin working with the Nations in 2014 and who envisioned a place for this book at Root Source Press.

Rochel Weiman who believed in the book so much, she volunteered to design the cover with her whole heart. Her design alludes to God's blessing to Abraham: *"And I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens."* (Genesis 26:4)

Devra Ariel for the gorgeous cover photo of the dawn breaking.

Omar Gill for the original, professional design of the taxonomy that was adapted for use in this book.

Eliyahu Berkowitz, Chasity Galyon, Dina Yehuda, Veronica Johnson, Piper Kelly, Gila Manolson and Reuven Prager for reading and correcting many errors that my eyes missed.

Shifra Chana Hendrie who has been doing this work for much longer than I have and who first brought me to meet Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh to discuss our shared commitment to teaching the universal wisdom of Torah to those non-Jews who want to learn from us.

Acknowledgements

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh who confirmed for me that this work with the Nations is my shlichut.

AnaRina Bat Tzion Kreisman whose vision for the future relationship between Jews and the Nations most closely matches my own.

Rabbi Pesach Wolicki for showing me the Rambam's teshuva and **Steven Rohde Gotlib** for helping me find it online.

Donna Jollay, Al McCarn, Bob O'Dell and Levi Schwiethale who advised me about some of the book's more sensitive content.

“I am the Lord; I called you with righteousness and I will strengthen your hand; and I formed you, and I made you for a people’s covenant, for a light to Nations.”

Yeshayahu 42:6

“And Nations shall go by your light and kings by the brilliance of your shine.”

Yeshayahu 60:3

And the foreigners who join with the Lord to serve Him and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, everyone who observes the Sabbath from profaning it and who holds fast to My covenant. I will bring them to My holy mount, and I will cause them to rejoice in My house of prayer, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. So says the Lord God, Who gathers in the dispersed of Israel, I will yet gather others to him, together with his gathered ones.

Yeshayahu 56:6-8

“In the Time of the Messiah, when all Nations will, in a clear voice, call on G-d’s name, all will believe in G-d.”

- Rabbi Gedaliah Fleer *Rabbi Nachman’s Fire: An Introduction to Breslover Chassidus.*

The only way the Temple will ever be a house of prayer for all the Nations of the world, as we pray, is if they learn to see God through the eyes of Torah.

And no one can teach that to the world
except the Jewish people.

- Rabbi Pinchas Winston *Living Higher: On A More Miraculous Level of Reality.*

“To the Children of Israel, He gave the Land of Israel, and the mission to teach the rest of mankind about the Supreme authority of the One and Only King of the Universe.”

- Tzvi Fishman. *The Book of Hirsh: A novel.*



Publisher's Foreword

IDEAS WHOSE TIME HAS COME

As with her previous book *Ten From The Nations*, Dr. Rivkah Lambert Adler has provided us with a groundbreaking study of a phenomenon that barely existed centuries or even decades ago.

The present volume, *Lighting Up The Nations*, brings together Torah-observant Jews who work in the field of teaching Torah to non-Jews, each one presenting a defense of this activity from a traditional Torah and halachic perspective.

As a Torah-observant Jew myself, I certainly welcome these articles, and I am confident they will bring more Torah teachers from the position that teaching non-Jews Torah is forbidden or barely allowed to the realization that it should be encouraged and is even an obligation.

As the co-founder and director of Root Source (root-source.com), having taught Torah to Christians for over a decade and enabled tens of thousands of non-Jewish students to learn via over 1,000 Torah lessons recorded by a dozen Orthodox teachers (including Adler), I have come to certain conclusions and perspectives that I think are worthwhile considering, even if I do not footnote them with rabbinic sources.

1. The era that we are living in today, with the existence and centrality of the State of Israel, has paradigm-shifting ramifications not only for Torah-observant Jews, but for many Bible-believing Christians all over the world. While the image of *the wandering Jew*, *Synagoga* and *Ecclesia*,¹

¹ *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* are medieval, anti-Semitic statues of two women, representing Christianity and Judaism. *Ecclesia*, rep-

*replacement theology*², and other such Jew- and Judaism-cancelling concepts and ideologies may have been rampant (if not always front and center) for Christians throughout history, the new image of a strong Jew, “a free nation in our Homeland,” is now an irreversible reality and forces them to reconsider their relationship with the concept of Jews.

2. The Internet and social media have changed the rules of the game. There is no way to prevent anyone with a modicum of interest from accessing Torah in the widest sense of the word. To pretend that this is not reality, and continue to restrict teaching Torah by Orthodox teachers, only leaves the field open to non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews. While debating such people might gain a few likes, it is more effective to compete for thirsty students’ attention on the front end and respectfully offer more authentic Torah teachings.
3. The Christians that I have encountered span a spectrum of positions toward Jews, Judaism and Torah. Some still see Jews as no more than targets for the Gospel, some want to learn Jewish wisdom in order to apply it to their faith and understanding of Jesus, some want to abandon what they have concluded are outdated and even false or immoral Christian theologies, whether to convert fully to Judaism or find another spot on this complex journey.³ To envision all Christians as monolithic is anachronistic (if it ever was acceptable).

resenting the Christian church, is portrayed as proud and noble and Synagoga, representing Judaism, is portrayed as defeated. The Ecclesia and Synagoga motif is common in European cathedrals.

² Christian doctrine that asserts that Christianity replaced God’s covenant with the Jewish people.

³ See Adler’s taxonomy in the section “Torah Awakening Among Non-Jews”

Publisher's Foreword

4. It is important to distinguish between lay Christians, even Evangelical Christians, and Evangelists. Evangelists are professional missionaries. For our purposes, I am only dealing with missionaries to Jews, though the vast majority of missionaries do not deal with Jews and have never even met one. Professional missionaries usually answer to a boss or a funder and may have a “sales” quota. The great majority of “religious” Christians spend about as much time and effort trying to get Jews (or anyone) to consider accepting the Christian faith as most Jews, even Orthodox Jews, spend trying to get other Jews to upgrade their Jewish faith.
5. The most important goal that all people should set for themselves is relationship. Without a relationship, any effort to achieve something else will be much harder, if successful at all. But a relationship with someone else can and should be a worthy thing to strive for in and of itself. As Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook famously taught, the sage Hillel in Pirkei Avot taught “love others *and* draw them close to the Torah” *not in order to* draw them close. In other words, relationships have value and should not be undertaken exclusively for the purpose of drawing people close to Torah. To me, this means we should strive to reverse the millennia of animosity between Jews and Christians and just try to “play nice together.”

I have many other lessons learned, and most certainly will have more as the years go by. I encourage you, perhaps challenge you, to read this book and discover if any of your paradigms have shifted.

Gidon Ariel
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Editor's Introduction

DR. RIVKAH LAMBERT ADLER

Whose Torah Is It Anyway?

One of the first verses that a Jewish child learns is *Torah tzivah lanu Moshe morasha Kehillat Yaakov* - the Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov (Deuteronomy 33:4)

Before the Torah is read publicly in synagogue, one of the blessings recited thanks God “who has chosen us from among all the Nations and given us the Torah.”

In our daily morning prayers, we bless God for commanding us to immerse ourselves in Torah study. We ask God to sweeten the words of Torah in our mouths and in the mouths of the entire Jewish people. We thank God for choosing us from all the Nations and giving us the Torah.

In this context, it would be easy to assume that Torah was intended to be the exclusive property of the Jewish people.

Therefore, it's not a surprise that I used to believe that the Torah belonged only to the Jewish people - that it was given to us by God as our inheritance. It's only later that I came to understand that, while it contains Divine guidance that only applies to the Jewish people, **the Torah also has universal wisdom that can benefit every human being on earth.**

Predictably, I resisted the perspective that the Torah was meant to be shared with non-Jews. I'm quite certain I'm not the only Jew who was initially uncomfortable with the idea of the Torah having any relevance to the rest of the world.

Editor's Introduction

Since the advent of Christianity, it has been neither safe nor smart for the Jewish people to attempt to share the universal wisdom of the Torah with the rest of the world. We have been too busy protecting ourselves from being kicked out of our homes or from being forcibly converted or even killed.

Today I understand that it has always been the responsibility of the Jewish people to guard and protect the Torah, and to learn its wisdom in great depth, *until such time* as the rest of the world was ready to hear the messages God embedded in the Torah for them.

In his classic work *The Nineteen Letters*, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch wrote that, "Israel was charged with the mission of being the guardian of Torah **until all mankind will want it and be able to maintain it.**"

I believe, with the non-Jewish awakening to Torah happening in our day, we are living in such a time.

If the idea that Jews have a God-given responsibility to share the universal wisdom of Torah with the rest of the world is new to you, there's a good chance that the perspectives shared in this book will make you uncomfortable, at least initially. Nevertheless, I urge you to read on, because the story ends with all of humanity accepting the dominion of the God of Israel.

Being A Light To The Nations

I also used to believe that being a Light to the Nations meant that the Jewish people was supposed to live together in Israel and to create a perfect society here. In my previous understanding, I thought we would be so admired by the rest of the world that they would naturally want to emulate us.

Today, I believe that being a Light to the Nations is a much more active role, requiring us to build relationships with the non-Jewish world and share the light of the Torah with them (if they are open to receive the light that God hid in the Torah.)

I often explain that I picture a bridge between the Jewish and the non-Jewish world. I like to imagine that I am standing at the foot of the bridge on the Jewish side. If someone is walking in the direction of the Jewish people, in the direction of Israel, in the direction of the Torah, I am there to welcome them. But I will not cross the bridge and yank them over to the Jewish side. The impetus has to come from them.

To a large extent, this book is a natural outgrowth of my first book. When I published *Ten From The Nations: Torah Awakening Among Non-Jews* (available on Amazon) in 2017, I had two goals. One was to assure current and former Christians who were feeling drawn to Torah that they were not alone, but rather part of a larger movement that God appears to be orchestrating. This was crucially important because many of them do not have the benefit of being in a like-minded community

My second goal was to introduce the Torah-aware non-Jew to the rest of the Jewish community, which I did by letting them tell the stories of their spiritual journeys.

Non-Jews Studying Torah?

In December 2018, I took a screenshot of a rather obtuse comment made by a Jewish woman on Facebook. She wrote, “*Not sure wtf (sic) christians have to do with the geula.*”

In part, it is in response to that uninformed and crassly-worded comment that *Lighting Up The Nations* was created. This book, although it will likely also be of interest to Torah-aware non-Jews, is primarily directed to the Jewish reader, in order to help us better understand what the proper relationship is between the Jewish people, the Torah and the rest of the Nations.

Indeed, the more I met Torah-aware non-Jews, the clearer it became to me that I was being guided to facilitate their learning of authentic Torah. In the introduction to *Ten From The Nations*, I wrote: “I believe that, by virtue of being a Light to the Nations, Jewish people who are able to teach should be teaching. Hashem sends us our students. The Jewish people’s relationship to the

Editor's Introduction

Torah is over 3,300 years old. The people awakening to Torah need rabbis and Jewish educators willing to teach them.”

For many, this is a controversial position, since it appears to be in direct conflict with a well-known teaching in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 59a) on this topic. “*Rabbi Yochanan said: “A non-Jew who engages in Torah study is liable to receive the death penalty, as it is stated: ‘Moshe commanded us the Torah, inheritance of the congregation of Ya’akov’—it is an inheritance for us, but not for them.*”

As with the rest of the Talmud, simply taking this statement at face value is misleading. While I elected not to include a halachic analysis of the issue here, on a personal level, I did seek out rabbinic guidance in order to better understand what I was and was not permitted to teach. This is when I came upon the work of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh.

In 2017, Rabbi Ginsburgh published “The Fourth Revolution: Torah Study for Gentiles”⁴. In this article, while acknowledging the *Sheva Mitzvot Bnei Noach* (Seven Noahide Laws in Appendix B) as “the most fundamental human obligations,” he argues that this level is necessary but not sufficient for the non-Jew who is seeking truth. Rabbi Ginsburgh claims that, “They must study Torah in a way that reveals its depth and its profound relevance to their own lives.”

Speaking to the Jew, he adds that, “Teaching Torah means sharing with the Nations of the world some of the infinite wisdom and beauty that it contains,” and reassures the Jew that, doing so is not a contradiction to our mission of being the Chosen People. “On the contrary, the nation that has the Torah in its possession is the one who can share its light and goodness with all peoples, ‘to illuminate the Nations’ (Isaiah 49:6). Teaching the Torah to non-Jews augments the Jewish people’s status as ‘a nation of priests and a holy nation.’ (Exodus 19:6).”

⁴ The full text of the article appears below, in its own chapter.

Rabbi Pinchas Winston elaborates on how this responsibility fell to the Jewish people in the first place.

“Meanwhile, there are a lot of agnostics and atheists out there. Or there are believers, but in the wrong version of God. There are so many spiritual approaches today, but how many of them miss the mark, either partially or completely?

“Who can blame them? The one nation [the Jewish people – Ed.] whose mission it is to fix all that isn’t interested or has little or no credibility. Their main resource, Torah, is not respected among masses of their *own* people, so how could it be among masses of *other* peoples? Consequently, and dangerously, the secret to life remains, for so many, a ‘secret.’

“It might have all been different had *Eisav* (Esau) not sold his birthright to *Ya’akov* (Jacob). Until that time, Eisav had been the destined leader of the nation, responsible for carrying out the intended mission of the descendants of *Avraham* (Abraham) and *Yitzchak* (Isaac). He was the first born, and the right of the first-born belonged to him. Ya’akov would have always been a teacher, but it would have been Eisav’s job to take his message, the message of Torah, to the rest of the world.

“But he did sell his birthright to Ya’akov, and with it, the blessings necessary to live up to his future mission. And though Eisav has tried from time-to-time to take it back from Ya’akov, he has not been able to. He can’t, and Ya’akov can’t give it back to him even if he wants to. He and his descendants are here to teach the world truth, period.”

There is an eye-opening halachic response from the Rambam about this issue. The Rambam *poskened* (gave a ruling in Jewish law) that it is permissible to teach Torah to Christians and not to Muslims. Why? Because even though Christianity is *avoda zara* (idolatry), Christians have the same Bible and the same reverence for it that we do. If we teach them our perspective, *it might bring them closer*. For Muslims, although they are monotheists, there are vast differences in our perspectives and our texts. If we teach

them something that they don't agree with, it might cause them to hate us more.⁵

In 2012, Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody penned an Ask The Rabbi column for *The Jerusalem Post* titled "May a Jew teach Torah to a gentile?"⁶ In his column, Brody cited the halachic opinions of multiple rabbis through the centuries.

Of special relevance is the opinion of Rabbi Yehiel Weinberg who passed away in 1966. About his position, Brody wrote, "Particularly notable was Rabbi Yehiel Weinberg, who himself taught at a pre-World War II German university. He contended that the proscription only banned gentile study intended to form competing religious ideals and rituals. **It remained perfectly permissible, however, to teach even an exclusively non-Jewish audience if the goal was simply to spread Jewish wisdom.**"

A Warning For Readers

As with *Ten From The Nations*, this volume highlights a controversial topic – the responsibility the Jewish people have to be a Light to the Nations. The primary audience for this work is the Jewish people. If you are a Jew and this is the first time you're hearing these ideas, they may cause you discomfort. I get it. I completely understand the proprietary sense Jews have about the Torah.

It takes time to integrate a different paradigm.

I know in advance that this book will also attract a certain percentage of readers who are not Jewish but who occupy the liminal space between Judaism and other faith traditions. Those readers in particular should be aware that this volume contains

⁵ The full text of the teshuva is here: <https://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=1730&st=&pgnum=299>

⁶ <https://www.jpost.com/magazine/judaism/ask-the-rabbi-may-a-jew-teach-torah-to-a-gentile>

some sensitive material and proposed Messianic era scenarios that may not sit comfortably with them.

Editing Decisions

With multiple contributors, there are various spellings of transliterated Hebrew words. I did not change them. So, for example, you may see variations like halacha and halakhah, both references to the system of Jewish law.

This work contains a lot of Hebrew words and concepts. When contributors didn't include an explanation of Hebrew words they used in their text, I italicized the word and added a translation in parentheses the first time the word appears.

In order to make the meaning of the Hebrew words as accessible as possible, there is also a glossary at the end of the book. If the Hebrew word only appears one time in the text, it may not also appear in the glossary. Sometimes the glossary has a bit of an expanded definition. A good basic glossary of Jewish terms is available online at jewfaq.org/glossary.htm.

Regarding biblical quotes that are included in the book's essays, in all cases, the translations and verses appear as the contributor submitted them. If you want to look them up in your Bible, it's important to note that there are some differences in the numbering of chapter and verse between Jewish and Christian Bibles.

Final Thoughts

When *Ten From The Nations* was first published in 2017, reader responses fell into two main categories. The vast majority of readers applauded the book's publication, recognizing that it was the first book of its kind to tell the story of Torah-aware non-Jews. Many Jews were fascinated, learning for the first time about non-Jews who did things like study the weekly Torah portion and bake *challah* (braided Shabbat bread).

I also received exceedingly harsh criticism from a small but vocal group of Jews. I was recklessly accused of, among other things,

Editor's Introduction

cooperating with Christian missionaries to the detriment of the Jewish people and of selling my soul to rake in Christian money. I recognize that the publication of this book might subject me to more criticism.

The foundational idea presented in this book - that the Jewish people have a biblical mandate to share the universal wisdom of Torah with the rest of the world - is likely to further agitate those who vigilantly guard the border between the Jewish people and the Nations.

To my critics and supporters alike, I boldly assert my belief that the Jewish people understanding and acting upon this biblical mandate is part of the process of redemption.

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Vital Jewish Values for the Nations

RABBI ELAN ADLER

During my years in the active rabbinate, in Stamford, Connecticut and Baltimore, Maryland, I felt it a great privilege to speak at interfaith occasions. Sometimes I was a guest speaker at a dinner or similar function, most often being invited to offer the benediction or invocation at a Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast or *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) commemoration at Social Security or the US Department of Health and Human Services. As a president of the Baltimore Board of Rabbis, there were many invitations to address interfaith groups of all ages, including political events on a local and national level.

As an Orthodox rabbi, one of my greatest joys at these events was the honor of representing a rich tradition of teachers and messages, of scholarship and wisdom, of intimacy with God. And I knew in my heart that when standing in front of an audience that represented the widest face of God, I was doing holy work. I was there to remind people that, although we have different faiths and beliefs, we share a commonality of goals and dreams for ourselves, our families, our communities and the world.

I represented God and the Torah. I was there to be a Light unto the Nations. There was no interest on my part to be a 7 watt night light; it was either a 2000 watt beam or I would feel that I failed in my mission, namely, to share the idea that while God and the Torah may not obligate everyone equally, they unequivocally speak to everyone.

This is our responsibility as Jews. It hit me years ago that this duty to share the universal messages of the Torah is hinted at in

words no less holy and sacred than those of the Rosh Hashanah *Amida* (the central prayer in Jewish liturgy, also known as the *Shemonah Esrei*). “*Instill Your awe on all you have created... let all Your handiwork revere You...speedily reign over all your creations...*” And in the *Aleinu* prayer: “*May all the inhabitants of the world recognize You and bow down to You...may they accept the yoke of Your kingship...on that day Hashem will be king over all the earth, He will be one and His name will be One.*”

How will the Nations arrive at this level of allegiance and obedience to the Master of the Universe? Who is going to teach them, inspire them and motivate them to learn and comprehend the universal messages in the Torah that are meant for all of God’s creations? They won’t arrive at *Hashem Echad U’shemo Echad* (God is One and His Name is One) blindly. **We are the Lights for the Nations.** As I see it, the following are some of the most important universal Torah values intended to guide all of humanity.

SHABBAT

As God told the Jewish people, He has a treasure which He would like to share with them, and it is called Shabbat. At the most, Shabbat is a day spent in *oneg*, the pleasure of a day of rest, and *kavod*, giving honor to God the Creator. It is a day of *zachor*, to remember throughout the week that Shabbat is coming and a reminder to prepare for this holy day, and of *shamor*, being careful to not violate the restrictions that are in place to help guarantee a *Shabbat Kodesh* (a holy Sabbath). At the very least, for the Nations, it is a day to take off from work if possible, and reflect, redirect energies, rejuvenate and get in touch with the soul and spiritual part of life. Clearly, the Nations are not required to follow the laws, and there is debate as to whether gentiles may keep all the laws of Shabbat. There can be little debate, however, about the physical, emotional and spiritual benefits of taking a Shabbat, even if not making a Shabbat.

CONSCIOUS EATING

In the Torah portion of *Shemini* (Leviticus 9:1–11:47), God teaches the Jewish people that besides being careful about what comes out of our mouths, we need also be cautious about what goes into our mouths. For a first time reader of the many verses that instruct about visible signs that put various domesticated animals and fowl and fish into the kosher category, there is a question that begs itself: for what possible reason did God create a huge variety of food in the world, only to restrict the Jew to a sliver of it? And why are those the outward signs of a kosher species and not other signs?

We find ourselves at the very last verse of *Shemini* to get a sense of what God had in mind: *L'havdil bein ha-tamei u'vein ha-tahor* (to distinguish between the impure and the pure.) There is more to it (a LOT more to it!), but the core of *kashrut* (Jewish dietary laws) is to differentiate and to discern, to learn how to make spiritual and God-connected choices and to recognize differences.

There are gentiles who are careful to avoid pork and shellfish, eating what they call biblically clean, though not necessarily kosher. Discernment in food choices easily leads to having greater clarity in other life choices and is a beneficial proficiency to which to aspire.

TZEDAKAH (charity) and CHESED (deeds of loving kindness)

Many years ago, synagogues had an idea that revolutionized the Bar and Bat Mitzvah: the Mitzvah Project. It was felt that the event itself, the synagogue performance and the subsequent celebration, focuses so heavily on the child. What if we suggested that as part of their milestone event, a mitzvah project was done, to help each student climb out of themselves and see a bigger world and its many challenges and needs?

Many raised money or collected things or brought awareness of an urgent need to their guests. The idea was a huge success, and it continues to this day. Tzedakah/chesed is a major pillar

of both Judaism and Islam, and for good reason. While the words tzedakah and chesed have a wide variety of applications, and the Torah has many examples of urging charitable and compassionate giving, at their core is the idea of repairing the world, sharing with others who have less, opening our eyes and hearts to need and challenge and shortage. Teaching the Nations the commandment as well as the privilege of tzedakah and chesed can affect a spiritual rehabilitation of our world.

TEN COMMANDMENTS

Jewish tradition is rich with rabbinic commentary about who was actually standing at Mount Sinai for the giving of the Ten Commandments. Some say it was all souls present, past and future. Others say it included the souls of all who would eventually convert to Judaism and the souls of those among the Nations who wished to be under God's command, even though their nation refused the Torah when it was offered.

You do not have to be Jewish to acknowledge that what happened on Mount Sinai was one of the most important moments in the history of civilization. God gave His commands, not in the Land of Israel, but in the desert, which is ownerless, and therefore belongs equally to everyone.

And His words weren't intended for just one people. They were meant for the whole world, because they represent the key to universal survival. Emblazoned on stone was the concept that some things are right and some are wrong, decided by Divine Will and not by a committee or society.

From the mountaintop of Sinai, God taught the world that there are absolutes and rules to abide by. He made us aware, through two tablets side-by-side, to be equally conscious of how we relate to Him as well as our fellow men and women. The entire world was challenged to channel our deeds, as well as our thoughts and intentions, heavenward. **And the Jewish nation was called upon to invest in teaching the Nations these basic tenets.**

PRAYER

In our *siddurim* (prayerbooks), there are many prayers for various reasons. Some are long prayers, such as the *Musaf* (additional service) Amida for Rosh Hashanah, and some are very short, such as *Moshe's* (Moses') prayer for healing for his sister Miriam: *El Na, Refa Na La* (please God, heal her!) There are many instances of prayer in the Torah, all efforts to reach and beseech God to consider our dire situation and respond with favor, or hearts pouring out in thankfulness for His grace and salvations.

The Torah teaches us that there are various ways to link heaven and earth, and one of the most primary is through prayer – the idea that what we say and do *here* is heard *there*. It's quite a distance to traverse.

A teaching from *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) says that one miracle done repeatedly in the *Beit HaMikdash* (Holy Temple) was that the column of smoke that rose from sacrifices remained unaffected by winds. If sacrifice was prayer, one could vividly see and feel that connection, that channel. Lacking that vision today, we still have absolute confidence that our words can leap from our lips and find their place in the hearing of the Almighty. God and His Torah have given us, and from us to the Nations, a most powerful way to bathe our world in hope.

DERECH ERETZ

It has often been said that there should be a fifth section of the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) following the well-known four major sections, and it should be called *Derech Eretz* (acts of decency and courtesy). I would suggest it might even be better positioned as the first section, in honor of the teaching that *derech erez kadma laTorah*, that being careful to be kind, sensitive, compassionate and refined has to be the foundation of a life of commitment to Torah and *mitzvot* (Divine commandments).

There is a teaching that for the three days prior to the receiving of the Torah, the Israelite nation was told to practice *derech erez*

with each other. Equally weighty is noting that Pirkei Avot is placed in the order of *Nezikin* (damages) in the *Mishna* (central part of the Oral Torah), in order to make the point that when we, as Jews, fail to keep the Torah with *derech erez*, we can damage not only our individual reputation, but also that of the entire Jewish people, and even God Himself.

Rambam (important Torah scholar who lived 1138-1204 CE) teaches that when we do the right thing with the right attitude and kindness and sensitivity, it is a *kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of God's Name), making Him look very good in the world, and when we do the opposite, it is a *chillul Hashem* (desecration of God's Name), embarrassing and insulting to Hashem and His great Torah. **As Jewish people, our obligation to teach and model derech erez is no less to the Nations, who see us as the preservers and the teachers of God's Holy Word.** Upgrading everyone's *derech erez* is a magnet to bring *Mashiach*.

FAITH

We are the people who taught the world *Amein* (Amen), an acronym for the words *El Melech Ne'eman* (God is a faithful King). In saying *Amein*, we confirm our belief that whatever the blessing made entailed, we know it was God who made it happen, and will continue to make it happen again and again in the future.

We are a people of *emunah* (faith) and even more, *bitachon* (tested faith). *Eemunah* is standing at the top of a staircase, waiting to jump into a parent's arms, believing that they will not let you down and will catch you. *Bitachon* is trusting them repeatedly because they have shown themselves to be trustworthy and consistently dependable.

Over and over, the Jewish people have put their collective trust in Hashem, Creator and Sustainer, knowing with surety that He loves us, cares for us, does only the best for us, and wishes to have

the same relationship with all the Nations of the world. Faith is hardly sectarian; it is an equal opportunity lifter and supporter for all mankind. There is no better people to teach this faith to others than the People of the Book and the People of emunah and bitachon.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

In Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith, number 11 is summarized in a familiar passage as recorded in *Yigdal* (Jewish prayer based on the 13 Principles of Faith). "God repays the person of chesed for his deeds, while He punishes the evildoers in accord with their transgression."

At the very height of the Jewish experience at Mount Sinai prior to receiving the Torah, the Jewish nation asserted enthusiastically, *Naaseh Venishma* (We will do and then we will hear.)

If only that doing and following and observing would have been the hallmark of our nation. Alas, our history has been one of joyous following of the Torah, as well as joyous abandoning of the Torah. Not angels, we are human, susceptible to temptations and seductions of all kinds, drawing us from the service of God that we promised.

We therefore find statements in the Torah such as this one, the thrust of which is replicated many times in our Tanach: "*Behold it will be that when you listen to my commands...to love and to serve Hashem with all your heart and soul, that I will give rain in its season and plentiful crops and you shall eat and be satisfied. Be careful that your heart does not get tempted, causing you to worship other gods, and I will halt the rains and cancel your crops.*" (Deuteronomy 11)

When we do good, it is acknowledged and rewarded in kind; when we do bad, that too is acknowledged and repaid in kind. While there are many in the Nations who feel that God's Grace, not our good deeds, bring the Kingdom of God to rest on earth, we teach and model the intrinsic value of doing good. Doing good helps us not only to avoid punishment, it also shapes and

polishes our character and soul. Teaching this pillar of Judaism to the Nations helps polish the rough diamonds among us.

GRATITUDE

Our Jewish day begins with gratitude, when we arise and say *Modeh/Modah Ani* – “I thank you, Hashem, for compassionately restoring my soul to me, great is your faithfulness.” This brief prayer inaugurates a day filled with blessing and praise, thanks and recognition for all that Hashem does for us, for others and for the world.

When we make a *bracha* (blessing), we call God the God of the entire world, *Melech ha'olam* (King of the world), understanding that, just as He created the world, he remains intimately involved with all its aspects and all its people.

Teaching and modeling gratitude to the Nations has a benefit beyond the spiritual; our health care professionals remind us of the importance of being thankful to each other and even to ourselves. In their estimation, being thankful and expressing it, is one of the most critical ingredients, perhaps even the main ingredient, to happiness and contentment. Our keen and detailed observations of God's goodness and kindness, even when we experience hardship and challenge, give us a helpful prism through which we can love God and our fellow men and women as well as ourselves. All Nations can benefit tremendously from the Jewish priority of gratitude.

MASHIACH/REDEMPTION

In the same way that a person starts dying from the moment he or she is born, the Jewish people have waited for the Mashiach and his redemption from the formation of Adam and Eve. From those first seconds of human life, we have anticipated the arrival of a worldwide Messiah, one who will bring us to a spiritually-drenched new epoch of existence, free of trial and pain and sickness and evil. Anxiously anticipating Mashiach has been a pursuit across the millennia, and it has helped the Jewish people cope with innumerable atrocities and challenges, personal and

national, by knowing that Hashem's saving is coming, even though there might be a bleak outlook in the present.

It is a promise from God, veiled in the Five Books of Moses but clear in the rest of Tanach, that a Redeemer will come to Zion, and that Hashem will bring the Mashiach at the End of Days, to redeem and vindicate those who unstintingly awaited his arrival every day. Teaching the Nations about Mashiach and redemption is a priceless and indispensable gift to a fractured world that needs hope and optimism. *Od Lo Avda Tikvateinu* (Our hope is not yet lost). Who but a nation that, for 2,000 years, has not lost hope to return to our Homeland can so fervently spread this Messianic ideal to the Nations?

Rabbi Elan Adler was born in Israel to Hungarian Holocaust survivors. After receiving his rabbinic ordination from Yeshiva University, he served Orthodox congregations on the east coast of the US over a 25-year period. During that time, he was active in interfaith initiatives, and developed multi-faith relationships. In Israel since 2010, he teaches in a girls' high school and in several local programs of Jewish and biblical content and also does counseling for individuals and couples.

The foundational idea presented in this book is that the Jewish people have a Biblical mandate to share the Oneness of God, and the universal wisdom of Torah, with the rest of the world. The Jewish people's understanding of, and acting upon, this Biblical mandate is part of the process of redemption.

Our fear of the nations is being transformed to blessing and the darkness of the exile is being transformed to light. In *Lighting up the Nations*, Rivkah Lambert Adler taps into this transformative energy and makes it understandable to theologian and layperson alike.
- Rabbi Ari Abramowitz, *The Land of Israel Fellowship*

It is a central pillar of the meaning of what Am Yisrael is - that we are here to share the wisdom of the Torah with all the Nations of the world, and that, as we proceed further to geula, that will become more manifest.
- Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf, *Award-winning author of Jewish books*

This book will help you hear the song of global redemption.
- Rabbi Yishai Fleisher, *International Spokesperson for the Jewish Community of Hebron and media personality*

We, as Jews, need to more deeply understand and internalize our new role: to teach the peoples of the world Torah-true wisdom. *Lighting Up The Nations* is an important step in helping us do exactly that.
- Shifra Chana Hendrie, *Founder and CEO of The Gate of Unity*

In *Lighting Up the Nations*, Dr. Rivkah Lambert Adler makes the case that if **non-Jews are thirsting for truth**, God wants us to be the wellspring they come to.
- Gila Manolson, *Author and international speaker*

In her fascinating and important book, Dr. Rivkah Lambert Adler outlines why our biblical mandate to be a light unto the nations has unprecedented relevance and urgency in our generation. *Lighting up the Nations* should be required reading by all Jews to appreciate the spiritual opportunities we have to finally fulfill our historic destiny.
- Rabbi Tuly Welsz, *Founder of Israel365*

When it comes to redemption, there are many roles to play, and Rivkah Lambert Adler seems to have found hers by sharing the wisdom of the Torah with those beyond the Jewish people who appreciate its centrality in human history and a perfected world, something that is certain to happen in future times. This recent work of hers is an important step in that direction.
- Rabbi Pinchas Winston, *Author of 100+ books on Torah philosophy*

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Lighting Up The Nations:
*Jewish Responsibility Towards the Nations
Today and in the Messianic Era*

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