

## Turning Points

with life coach Randy Nathan

Dear Coach Randy,

I am part of a group of high school students who agree to abstain from drinking, smoking, drugs, and sex. Some of my friends in this group have started drinking at parties. This violates our pact, and I do not feel they should be a part of this program anymore. How can I get my friends to honor the agreement without losing them?

Feeling Torn

Dear Feeling Torn,

First, I truly admire your integrity and desire to honor this pact. You clearly understand the value of this program and have integrated it into your life. You should be very proud of yourself. It's unfortunate that your friends have made the decision to violate the agreement.

How realistic is it for you to control your friends' choices at this time? The only thing you can control is your own behavior. So where does that leave you? What if your friends no longer want to be a part of this group? How will that affect your friendship with them?

Dear Helpless,

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation. I'm sure you have worked hard these past few years. What a wonderful opportunity you are facing in life. As a graduating senior, the opportunities are endless. Endings as well as beginnings are often challenging. Not only is a major part of your life ending, another chapter is beginning. It's no wonder you're feeling "helpless." Any direction you choose will have an impact on your future.

When you reflect on your college experience, what do you conclude was the purpose of going to school? When you were an entering freshman, where did you think you would be upon graduation? Where are you now and how does that compare to where you thought you would be? What has changed?

It may sound funny, but you may want to think about where you see yourself three years from now and what steps you will need to take to get you there. Keep in mind all the factors that affect who you are (friends, family, personal development, social relationships, finances, etc.). Once you have identified your goal, create an



What is the foundation of the friendship? How likely is it for you to remain friends if they decide to drop out of the program?

You have demonstrated moral character by realizing the hypocrisy in this situation. How reasonable is it for you to accept their decision while maintaining your value system? Be true to yourself and the best solution for you will become clear.

Dear Coach Randy,

I'm a college senior and expect to graduate this May. Most of my friends are busy getting job interviews and negotiating salaries. Frankly I don't even know what I want to be when I "grow up." What should I do?

Helpless

action plan that lists three to five steps you need to take within the first six months. The more specific you can be the more attainable the steps become. Regardless of which path you choose, it will be the right one for you.

**Randy Nathan, MSW, is a certified empowerment coach who works exclusively with high school and college-age students. Through the coaching process, he empowers and motivates young people to face the major challenges, transitions, and opportunities in their lives. For further information, visit [www.yppoach.com](http://www.yppoach.com).**

Have a question for Coach Randy? High school and college-age people may contact him by writing to [Real-Life@njewishnews.com](mailto:Real-Life@njewishnews.com).

## Ethical Work

by Rabbi Dr. Asher Meir  
from [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com)

The term "work ethic" conjures up the image of legions of devoted and diligent workers. But a closer analysis reveals that this phrase actually has two distinct meanings.

On the one hand, we use it to describe someone who has good work habits: When at work, he or she works hard and conscientiously. But we also use it to describe an ethic toward life as a whole, a worldview in which the individual finds meaning in life through work and professional achievement. Jewish tradition promotes the first kind of work ethic but not the second.

Diligence at work is consistently praised in our tradition. In the book of *Genesis*, we find Jacob's devoted service to Laban. Jacob tells his wives, "I served your father with all my might." (*Genesis* 31:6) He also tells Laban, "Thus I was: In the daytime the dryness consumed me, and the frost at night; my sleep fled from my eyes." (*Genesis* 32:40) Afterward we learn of Joseph's diligent service first to his master, then to the jail-keeper, and ultimately to Pharaoh.

In the book of *Proverbs* we learn: "One who works his land will be sated with bread, but one who runs after empty things lacks understanding" and "The slothful person desires but has nothing; but the soul of the diligent will be sated."

Judaism, however, definitely does not view work as the center of life or as its primary source of meaning. Rather, the rule is "Make Torah primary and work secondary." Work, like any other area of human endeavor, gives us the opportunity to express our Torah values in our everyday life, but our ability to do this is mainly dependent on our devotion to cultivating these values in the first place. This requires diligent study and

solemn commitment.

Our Code of Jewish Law states that a person should work for a living, but he should "work to live," and not "live to work." After morning Torah study, a person "should go to work, for all Torah which is not accompanied by work is destined to be nullified and in danger of causing transgression, because excessive poverty may cause him to deviate from the will of his Maker. But even so, a person should not make his work

primary, but secondary, and his Torah the center; in this way both will succeed. And he should deal faithfully." (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 156.)

Today, when the work ethic has become an overriding compulsion, this seems like a distant dream. Yet a look at Jewish history reveals that a way of life that esteems work but puts Torah study at the center was a living reality for Jews around the world, even where economic conditions were grim. For example, a prominent 16th-century commentator, Rabbi Yehoshua Katz, remarks that in his time an ordinary householder is unable to devote a solid nine hours to study, but "only three or four hours" per day. ("Drisha Yoreh Deah" 246.)

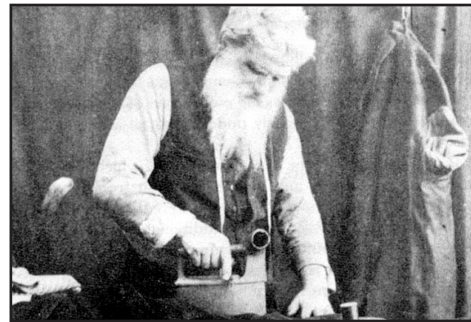
Economic life, including both production (work) and consumption, are an important part of our existence. The Torah acknowledges this importance and encourages us to work dili-

gently and to enjoy life in appropriate moderation. But the material dimension is not the center of our existence; indeed, it only acquires meaning as an opportunity for us to live out the values of God's service. Judaism definitely demands that we be ethical at work but doesn't really square with adherence to a "work ethic."

**Rabbi Dr. Asher Meir is research director at the Business Ethics Center of Jerusalem. Reprinted from the [Aish.com](http://www.aish.com) Web site.**



*"Make Torah primary and work secondary."*



## Kids' Web site of the week

### 'Jewpardy'

Babaganewz.com offers several Jewish-oriented versions of the popular TV show, geared toward young people. The games test knowledge in holidays, customs, and Israel. A special section marking the 350th anniversary of Jews in America include questions about colonial times and the 20th century. A sample question: "These two baseball players honored their Jewish beliefs by going to synagogue on Yom Kippur instead of playing in important games." Answer choices: "A. Who are Hank Greenberg and Sandy Koufax?" "B. Who are Abbot and Costello?" "C. Who are Sammy Sosa and Mark McGuire?" (Correct answer: A)

Visit [www.babaganewz.com/games/jewpardy/](http://www.babaganewz.com/games/jewpardy/) to play.



## Torah haiku

by Ron Kaplan

### Teruma

God, the architect,  
Wants his Tabernacle done  
just so. *Tres* fussy.

## Your turn

Real Life welcomes guest columnists. If you'd like to share your experiences, your outlook, or a moment in your life, e-mail [reallife@njewishnews.com](mailto:reallife@njewishnews.com) for column guidelines. Real Life is edited by Ron Kaplan.