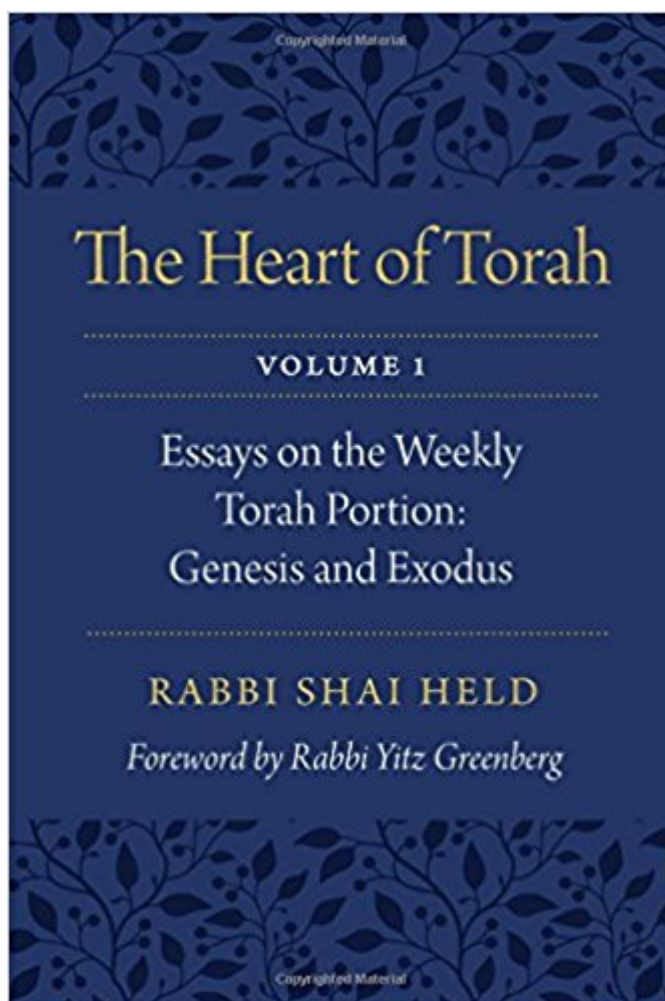


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# The Heart Of Torah, Volume 1: Essays On The Weekly Torah Portion, Genesis And Exodus



## Synopsis

In *The Heart of Torah*, Rabbi Shai Held's Torah essays two for each weekly portion open new horizons in Jewish biblical commentary. Held probes the portions in bold, original, and provocative ways. He mines Talmud and midrashim, great writers of world literature, and astute commentators of other religious backgrounds to ponder fundamental questions about God, human nature, and what it means to be a religious person in the modern world. Along the way, he illuminates the centrality of empathy in Jewish ethics, the predominance of divine love in Jewish theology, the primacy of gratitude and generosity, and God's summoning of each of us with all our limitations into the dignity of a covenantal relationship.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"*The Heart of Torah* is a stunning achievement: textually learned, theologically profound, ethically challenging, spiritually uplifting, and psychologically astute. If you want to know what it can mean to read the Torah today with your whole heart and your whole mind, read this book."---

--Rabbi Sharon Brous, founder and senior rabbi at Ikar, Los Angeles  
"Shai Held deftly brings the wisdom of Torah to bear upon the contemporary human condition. Christians who read this book can discover fresh dimensions within the biblical text, see more clearly where there is common ground between Jews and Christians, and better grasp what it means to understand and live in this world as God's world."---

--Walter Moberly, professor of theology and biblical interpretation at Durham University  
"Shai Held is one of the most important teachers of Torah in his

generation."--- --Rabbi David Wolpe, author of *David: The Divided Heart*

Rabbi Shai Held is president, dean, and chair of the Center for Jewish Thought at Mechon V'Chochvei Torah Hadar and directs its Center for Jewish Leadership and Ideas in New York City. He is the author of *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence* and a recipient of the Covenant Award for excellence in Jewish education. Rabbi Yitz Greenberg is one of the preeminent Jewish thinkers of our time.

As one enters middle age, it is rare to encounter a book that can profoundly change how one views the world. Rabbi Held teaches a Torah that will change your relationships with friends, spouses, kids, acquaintances and God. He opens up the Torah in a way that countless other books of the same genre (even great ones!!) have not. We are lucky to have this book in the world. It can change your life. Rabbi Held reminds us why the Torah matters and how Torah study can elicit grace and kindness and a road map for the world in which we want our kids and grandkids (and all other kids!) to live. Rabbi Held is also not afraid to remind that Torah makes real ethical and spiritual demands. But after learning from the Rabbi's words, I felt reinvigorated to make these commitments. May we all merit to learn from Rabbi Held and this important and beautiful book for many many years.

The next best thing to being in a class with the exceptional Shai Held is reading his teachings. From the time I met him -- when I was a jaded middle-aged rabbi and he was pretty much a kid -- Rabbi Held has inspired me in ways that echo with the insight, scholarship and prophetic vision of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Luxuriate in this wisdom and then talk about it with others.

A penetrating and inspiring collection of essays on the weekly Torah portion. The collection is well-written and edited and guides the reader -- above all -- to connect the biblical text to the quest for a just and meaningful life. Rabbi Held brings together his vast knowledge of biblical and rabbinic texts, along with the Western philosophical tradition, to produce concise essays that really do get to the heart of the matter.

Rabbi Held's essays on the weekly Torah portion succeed at presenting fresh, thought-provoking teachings on the stories and passages we've been studying and discussing since childhood and at making even the less familiar and more inaccessible parts of the Torah relevant and fascinating. His writing guides us in reading and re-reading the text with new eyes and new insights, always bringing

us back to his core themes and passions--love, justice, ethics, and living a life where our behavior and rituals reflect the image of God in which we were created.

Rabbi Shai Held skillfully melds close reading of text, traditional Jewish interpretation, and modern commentaries, both religious and academic, into moving essays that speak with deep empathy to the modern human condition. I wholeheartedly recommend these books not only to Jews and Christians interested in the Bible as scripture but also to anyone is interested in how an ancient text can speak powerfully to the modern day. *The Heart of Torah: Essays on the Weekly Torah Portion*

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