

Facts, FAQs and Faith

BY RABBI NISSAN DOVID DUBOV



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Foreword

WITH IMMENSE GRATITUDE to *Hashem*, we present here Key Facts, FAQs and Faith. This edition celebrates the merit of having accomplished thirty-five years of activity as the Shluchim of the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* in Wimbledon, South London UK. Over these thirty-five years, our primary goal has been that of *Hafotzas Hayahadus* – spreading *Yiddishkeit* and *Hafotzas Hamayonos Chutzah* – disseminating the wellsprings of the teachings of *Chassidus* to prepare ourselves and our community for the coming of *Mashiach*.

Throughout this time, we have taught the very basics of Judaism, as presented in **Facts**, answered core questions, as presented in **FAQs** and discussed the inward-bound journey we must all take, as presented in **Faith**. Each one of these sections was printed separately at various stages; however, in celebration of these thirty five years of *Shlichus* and a special birthday, we are pleased to republish these three works in a single volume. Our hope is to share the timeless instruction, wisdom and advice of the *Torah* with the wider community.

We have been privileged to have gained many special friends and supporters throughout this time. Some have passed on from this physical world, and some are still with us, may they live and be healthy. We dedicate this volume in their merit, as detailed in the pages of dedication.

The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* has been our guiding light and inspiration. The true life of a *Tzaddik* is his faith, love and awe of G-d. This is wholly manifest today throughout the world in, and through, the *Rebbe's Shluchim*, and we humbly thank *Hashem* for the merit of being part of this great force.

We also salute our children who have been loving and supportive and very much part and parcel of the *Shlichus*. We bless them that they too serve as

the *Shamash* to light the flames of the Jewish *Menorah* all in good health and much *Chassidische Nachas*.

Our thanks to Rabbi Doniel Golomb of Dove Press for his caring and professional publishing service.

May *Hashem* bless us all with the coming of *Mashiach*, an era of peace, goodness and kindness, a complete indwelling of the Divine here on earth.

Rabbi Nissan Dovid and Sarah Dubov
11th Shvat 5783 – Shnas Hashishim

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Facts

The Jewish Belief

THERE ARE SEVERAL fundamental Jewish beliefs, central to our existence as a nation, and core to our faith. They include:

- Belief in G-d
- Proof that G-d Exists
- The Purpose of Creation
- The Soul
- Accountability
- Reward for *Mitzvot*
- The *Torah*
- The *Mitzvot*
- The Written and Oral Law
- The Ten Commandments
- Mount Sinai
- Love & Fear of G-d
- *Mashiach*
- The Seven Noachide Laws

Fundamental Jewish Beliefs

What do Jews believe in?

The *Rambam*, a great Jewish Rabbi and philosopher, summarised the Jewish faith in 13 principles. He starts each of those principles of faith with the words “*Ani Maamin — I believe*”. The following is a summary of those principles.

1. I believe in G-d. G-d is one. He was, is and will be.
2. I believe that G-d is everywhere. He does not have a body. He creates everything and can see everything.
3. I believe that G-d speaks to mankind. These men and women are called prophets. The greatest of all prophets was Moses. G-d gave the *Torah* to Moses.
4. I believe that the *Torah* is true. I also believe that G-d will reward those who keep the *Torah*.

5. I believe that I was created to serve G-d, as explained in the *Torah*.
6. I believe that one day, a Jewish King called *Mashiach* will come and gather all the Jews to live in *Eretz Yisrael*. In his days there will be peace in the whole world and the Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. I believe that in time to come G-d will resurrect the dead.

BELIEF IN G-D

What is G-d? G-d is a super being that creates everything. Nothing existed before creation except for G-d, and G-d created the world – something from nothing. G-d has no body or form, and He creates time and space. G-d was, is and will be for He stands higher than time. G-d creates and fills the entire universe. G-d knows everything.

To explain:

The world as we see it is made of elements that when combined make gases liquids and solids. The basic building block of all elements is the atom. Each atom is made of sub-atomic particles which are a combination of mass and energy. Science teaches us that mass and energy are related. The energy that brings mass into being — we call Divine creative energy. G-d is the source of that energy, and He pumps that energy every single second into making each and every atom. Therefore, the entire creation depends on Divine creative energy. In fact, if G-d were to withdraw that energy then the creation would disappear!

So, when we are looking at a piece of wood and a piece of plastic — the reason they look and feel different is because the molecular structure in both is different — however the energy source that creates their atomic particles, something from nothing, is the same.

In this sense we can understand how G-d is everywhere because He is the source of energy and the Creator of all existence. This is what the *Torah* means when it states that “there is nothing besides Him”, for all existence depends on His creativity.

This is also the meaning of the words “Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is one”. This is not only saying that there is one G-d (in contrast to those who believe in many gods), but in addition it means that G-d the Creator is one single united Being that creates all. He is Omnipresent (present at all times), Omnipotent (all powerful) and Omniscient (knows all).

Everything that happens in the world is with *Hashgachah Pratit* – Divine Providence. Even if the wind turns over a leaf, it is with Divine Providence for G-d is creating both the wind and the leaf.

PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF G-D

There are several proofs of the existence of G-d:

1. The stand at Sinai. This will be discussed soon.
2. The proof by Intelligent Design, which means that when we observe the immense brilliance and complexity of the creation, we must conclude that this did not come about by itself but it must have had a Master Intelligent Designer and Creator.

To illustrate with a story:

There was once a king who asked a Rabbi to prove to him that G-d existed.

The Rabbi asked the king to step out of the room, and the Rabbi sat at the king's desk and took the royal quill dipped it into the ink well and wrote a magnificent poem. When he had finished, the Rabbi called the king back into the room. The king read the poem and praised the Rabbi for his extraordinary writing skills.

The Rabbi said, "I didn't write the poem. I simply poured out the ink from the ink well onto the paper and the poem formed by itself!"

"Impossible" said the king, "if you poured the ink from the ink well it is hardly likely to have even formed one letter never mind a word, or sentence and certainly not a poem that rhymes".

"There is your proof" said the Rabbi, "a poem needs a poet and the world needs a Creator".

The fulfilment of *Torah* prophecies. When we take a look at the prophecies mentioned in the *Torah*, we see that they have come true during the course of history. This proves that the prophecy came from G-d who guides the course of history.

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

G-d created the world for a purpose. The *Torah* tells us that "G-d desired to have a dwelling place in our world". G-d created an amazing world, a beautiful garden and we make a dwelling for Him in this world by keeping the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

"I am created to serve my Master" – The life of a Jew is dedicated to *Avodat Hashem* – the service of G-d. We serve G-d by learning *Torah* and keeping the *Mitzvot*.

THE SOUL

King Solomon said, “The soul of man is the candle of G-d”. The purpose of a candle is to illuminate the darkness. Similarly, the reason our soul comes to the world is to light up the world with the light of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

The soul exists in Heaven before it comes down to the world, and it is sent down to this world for a certain time to fulfil a certain purpose. In general, this mission is the fulfilment of *Torah* and *Mitzvot* but in addition each soul has a specific purpose.

Before each soul is sent down to this world, it is given all the spiritual energy it requires to fulfil its specific mission. We need to utilise every precious moment of life to fulfil our mission.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We are always to be aware of three things; an eye watching, an ear listening and a hand writing. This means that everything we think, say and do is recorded by G-d and we are held accountable for it. When we die our soul stands before a Heavenly court and has to give an account for all we have done. We shall be asked if we conducted our business affairs properly, and if we had set time to study *Torah* and keep *Mitzvot*.

REWARD FOR MITZVOT — THE WORLD TO COME

A person is rewarded for every good deed and punished for every bad deed. The true reward for *Mitzvot* is not in this world, but in the World to Come.

The World to Come is the world to which our souls go after we die. It is there that the soul is truly rewarded. It is often called *Gan Eden*, the heavenly Garden of Eden. Nevertheless, the *Torah* promises that if we keep the *Mitzvot* in this world, *Hashem* will give us abundant blessings in this world in addition to the reward stored up in the World to Come.

Although we are promised reward for the *Mitzvot*, we should not keep the *Mitzvot* just to get a reward, rather we should serve G-d out of love.

Many people ask: “Why do we see good people suffer and bad people prosper?” One of the answers is that G-d may be punishing the good people for their small number of bad deeds in this world only to give them a huge reward for all their good deeds in the World to Come. The opposite is true of bad people.

In the end, justice is done.

THE TORAH

The word “*Torah*” means “teaching”. It is G-d’s teaching to man. In the Hebrew year 2448, G-d came down on Mount Sinai and gave this “teaching” to the entire Jewish people, through Moses, G-d’s faithful servant. All Jewish beliefs come from the *Torah*. In general terms, we refer to the Five Books of Moses as “The *Torah*”. The Five Books of Moses can also be referred to as the *Chumash*.

The *Torah* is our very life and existence. It is Divine wisdom and is a code how to live a good and moral life. Its ways are pleasant, and it leads to peace. Throughout history, Jews have studied and cherished the *Torah* and lived their lives according to its teachings.

THE MITZVOT

In the *Torah* there are 613 *Mitzvot*/commandments.

1. 248 are Positive Commandments [do’s].
2. 365 are Negative Commandments [don’t’s].

In addition to the word *Mitzvah* meaning a commandment, it also means a connection. This means that a Jew has 613 ways to connect with G-d. In every aspect of life a Jew connects with G-d through the *Mitzvot*. So for example we connect to G-d in our eating by keeping the laws of *Kashrut*.

THE WRITTEN LAW & THE ORAL LAW

When G-d came down on Mount Sinai to give the *Torah*, He gave it in two parts:

1. The Written Law — *Torah Shebichtav*

The Ten Commandments were written on two tablets of stone and later Moses wrote down the whole written law in a scroll which we call a *Sefer Torah* [as we have today in the ark in the Synagogue].

2. The Oral Law — *Torah Shebaal Peh*

G-d taught all 613 Commandments to Moses orally. For example, it says in the written *Torah* that it is a *Mitzvah* to have a *Mezuzah* on the door. However, it does not explain what a *Mezuzah* is. G-d gave the explanation to Moses, and it is part of the Oral Law.

We believe that both the Written and Oral Laws are true.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

As stated above, there are 613 commandments in the *Torah*. All of them are important. However, when G-d came down on Mount Sinai to give the *Torah*,

He actually spoke to the entire Jewish nation and gave them ten of these 613 commandments. The Ten Commandments are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. I am the L-rd your G-d.
(Believe in G-d). | 5. Honour your father and
mother. |
| 2. You should not have idols
or other gods. | 6. Do not murder. |
| 3. Do not mention the name
of G-d in vain. | 7. Do not commit adultery. |
| 4. Keep the <i>Shabbat</i> day and
make it holy. | 8. Do not steal [kidnap]. |
| | 9. Do not witness falsely. |
| | 10. Do not covet [be jealous of]
your friend's possessions. |

It is very interesting to note that in the Hebrew text, the total number of letters in the Ten Commandments is 620, to hint that all the commandments (613 plus seven Rabbinical commandments) are included in the Ten Commandments.

MOUNT SINAI

The fact that G-d came and spoke to the entire Jewish people at Mount Sinai is the greatest proof of the existence of G-d. Never in human experience has G-d spoken to approximately three million people [600,000 men, plus women and children] as He spoke to the Jews at Mount Sinai.

If you are ever asked the question: “How do you know that there is a G-d?”, the answer is: “my parents told me that all the Jews stood at Sinai and heard the Ten Commandments from G-d, and this fact my parents heard from their parents, and so on, going back all the generations right until the generation that stood at Sinai”.

Once a year at the Passover *Seder*, all Jews celebrate and recall the Exodus from Egypt and the stand at Sinai. Thus, it stands as an undisputed historical fact. Witnesses are the most legal and scientific proof of any fact and, as mentioned, the Revelation at Sinai was witnessed by the entire Jewish people.

LOVE AND FEAR OF G-D

The love of G-d motivates us to do all His 248 positive commandments [do's], for if we love G-d we are happy to keep His *Mitzvot*. Love of G-d is called *Ahavat Hashem*.

The fear of G-d keeps us from transgressing any of the 365 negative commandments [don'ts]. Fear of G-d is called *Yirat Hashem*, (and is often referred to as *Yirat Shamayim*, fear of Heaven).

G-d is our Father and our King. We must love Him as a Father, and fear Him as a King.

G-d's name is so holy, we do not read it as it is written. We read the name *Y-H-V-H* as *A-donai*. In conversation, we refer to G-d as "*Hashem*", meaning "The Name"; we only vocalise the Holy Names of G-d within prayer.

MASHIACH

The word *Mashiach* means 'anointed'. In the olden days before a king assumed office, he was anointed with oil. So too, there will come a time in the future when a Jew who is both learned and a descendent of King David will be anointed as a king and will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and gather all the Jews to Israel. This King is called *Mashiach*.

In the days of *Mashiach*, there will be no wars or famine, and everybody will have all they want. The Jews will be able to sit and study *Torah* in peace and the whole world will be full of the knowledge of G-d. The generation we are living in is the generation just before the coming of *Mashiach* and we eagerly await his coming every day.

THE SEVEN NOACHIDE LAWS

Not only does the *Torah* contain teachings for the Jew, but it also has teachings for the non-Jew. These are called the Seven Noachide Laws — seven universal laws given by G-d to Noah and subsequent generations.

The Seven Noachide Laws are:

1. Believe in G-d and do not serve idols.
2. Do not blaspheme.
3. Do not steal.
4. Do not kill.
5. Do not commit adultery.
6. Keep the laws of the land.
7. Do not eat a limb from a live animal or be cruel to animals.

The Rabbis explain that the seven laws are only general guidelines, but in truth non-Jews are required to pray, give charity, honour parents etc.

It is the responsibility of a Jew to influence the non-Jewish world to keep the Seven Noachide Laws.

Middot — Character Development

A MIDDAH (MIDDOT IN the plural) is a character trait. It is a behaviour, attitude or outlook that is important to embrace, and continually develop throughout our lives.

Here are some of the key *Middot* that every Jewish man or woman should aspire towards:

- *Yetzer Tov* — *Yetzer Hora*
- *Derech Eretz*
- *Kiddush Hashem* and *Chillul Hashem*
- *Rachmanim B'nai Rachmanim* — Merciful Sons of Merciful People
- *Gemilut Chassadim* — Acts of Kindness
- *Tzedakah* — Charity
- *Hachnassat Orchim* — Welcoming Guests
- *Bikkur Cholim* — Visiting the Sick
- *Halvayat Hamet* — Accompanying the Dead
- *Hachnassat Kallah* — Caring for a Bride's needs before her Wedding
- The Divine Example
- *Emunat Tzaddikim* — Belief in *Tzaddikim*
- *Ahavat Yisrael* — Love of a Fellow Jew
- *Halbanat Panim* — Insulting or Embarrassing a Fellow Man
- *Lashon Hora and Rechilut* — The Evil Tongue and Telling Tales
- *Nekamah and Netirah* — Revenge & Bearing a Grudge
- *Onaah and Ganayvat Daat* — Fraud
- *Netinat Michshol Lifnei I'Vair* — Putting a Stumbling Block before the Blind

- *Geneivah and Gezeilah* — Stealing & Robbery
- *Hashavat Aveidah* — Returning Lost Property
- *Bal Tashchit* — You Shall Not Destroy
- *Tza'ar L'Ba'alei Chayim* — Cruelty to Living Creatures
- *Kibud Av Va-Eim* — Honouring Parents
- *Mipnei Seivah Takum* — Stand before the Elderly
- *Kvod HaRav* — Honouring Teachers
- *Emet* — Truth
- *Shalom* — Peace
- *Anava* — Humility
- *Simchah* — Joy
- *Teshuvah* — Return/Repentance
- *Tzniut* — Modesty

The *Torah* puts great stress on character development — on becoming better people. This is called *Tikkun* [correcting] *Middot* [our character]. We must always strive to correct our faults and improve our character. The *Torah* also lays down a number of moral laws. The following is a shortlist of ways to better ourselves and a number of moral laws.

YETZER TOV — YETZER HORA

Inside us we all have a *Yetzer Tov* — a good inclination [voice] and a *Yetzer Hora* — a bad/evil inclination. The *Yetzer Tov* constantly advises us to do good and act in a proper manner. The *Yetzer Hora* constantly challenges the *Yetzer Tov* and tries to advise the person to sin. There is a constant battle between the two, but with G-d's help and our own will power, the *Yetzer Tov* can win.

DERECH ERETZ

We must conduct ourselves in a way that does not offend those around us. Judaism requires each of us to behave in a respectable fashion. This is called *Derech Eretz*. Included in *Derech Eretz* is respect for elders and teachers and respect for the laws of the land in which we live.

KIDDUSH HASHEM & CHILLUL HASHEM

- *Kiddush Hashem* — The sanctification of G-d's Name.
- *Chillul Hashem* — The desecration of G-d's Name.

Since the Jews were chosen by G-d to receive the *Torah* — G-d's teaching to mankind, the Jews must behave positively, in an upright manner, and set an example to all mankind. Non-Jews will judge us by our actions, [“see how

beautifully those whom G-d has chosen behave”.] When a Jew behaves correctly, he makes a *Kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification of G-d’s name.

The opposite is *Chillul Hashem*. When a Jew misbehaves, commits a crime, or offends against the laws of the land, not only does he disgrace himself, but also the entire Jewish people and the name of G-d Himself. There is no greater sin than *Chillul Hashem*.

RACHMANIM B’NAI RACHMANIM — MERCIFUL SONS OF MERCIFUL PEOPLE

The Jewish people are known to be very kind to each other and help each other as much as possible. According to the Rabbis, the Jewish people have inherited this trait of mercy [i.e. pity for those less fortunate than themselves] from the patriarch Abraham. One of G-d’s names is *Harachaman* [the Merciful One]. In many of our prayers we ask G-d to have mercy upon us. The Sages tell us that G-d says: “If you behave like brothers and sisters to one another, then I shall behave like a father to you”.

On *Yom Kippur*, we say in our prayers that in order to avert an evil decree, there are three things that we must do:

1. *Teshuvah* [repent]
2. *Tefillah* [pray]
3. *Tzedakah* [give charity]

In short, if we expect mercy, we must show mercy.

GEMILUT CHASSADIM — ACTS OF KINDNESS

The Hebrew word חסד *Chessed* means kindness.

Gemilut Chassadim are acts of kindness.

The Rabbis say that all Jews possess three qualities:

1. *Rachamanim* [as explained above].
2. *Byeshanim* — being ashamed of their wrong deeds.
3. *Gomlei Chassadim* — being engaged in doing acts of kindness.

TZEDAKAH — CHARITY

The word *Tzedakah* comes from the word *Tzedek* which means righteousness, or the right thing to do. Giving charity from our own money is the right thing to do.

Consider it as if G-d has given you money to give to the poor. The money does not really belong to you, and you are obliged to give it away.

A person must give charity according to his means. In general, one should always give away 10% of one’s income. Even a poor person must give charity.

It is customary to have a *Tzedakah Box* [*Pushka*] in every Jewish home, and the family is encouraged to give *Tzedakah* daily, especially before praying.

One should never refuse a request for *Tzedakah*. The *Tzedakah* should be given with a happy heart, a smiling face and an open hand.

G-d repays a person for every bit of *Tzedakah* he gives. The Rabbis tell us that if you want to become rich, you should give a lot of *Tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* should preferably be given anonymously, i.e. without anybody knowing [unless you want to show an example to others].

Tzedakah brings the coming of *Mashiach* closer.

HACHNASSAT ORCHIM

The Jewish home must always be hospitable. Guests must always be welcome at our table, particularly on *Shabbat* and festivals. The *Mitzvah* of *Hachnassat Orchim* is so great that even when Abraham was being visited by G-d, he ran out to meet his guests and invite them in for a meal. From this we learn that welcoming guests is greater than greeting the Divine Presence.

BIKKUR CHOLIM

We must visit friends who are sick, provide for them, cheer them up and pray for them. One must visit whether the person is rich, poor, young or old. G-d visited Abraham after his *Brit*, ritual circumcision.

A special prayer may be said by the reading of the *Torah* for a sick person. This prayer is called *Me Shebayrach*. It is customary to give *Tzedakah* in merit of the sick and wish them a *Refuah Sheleimah* — a complete recovery.

HALVAYAT HAMET — ACCOMPANYING THE DEAD

It is a great *Mitzvah* to attend a *Levaya* [funeral]. After the burial [*Kevurah*], the mourners [*Aveilim*] will sit *Shivah*, i.e. will mourn at home for seven days. [*Shivah* = 7]. During the *Shivah*, prayers are held at the house of the mourner and people come and comfort the mourners on their loss. This is called *Nichum Aveilim*, or as is commonly said: “I am going to be *Menachem Ovel*” to comfort the mourner.

It is customary to say the words, “*Hamakom Yenachem Etchem Btoch Shar Avelei Tzion Veyerusholayim* — May the A-mighty comfort you amongst the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem”.

The first meal eaten by a mourner after the *Levaya* is a boiled egg and bread prepared by a friend or a neighbour. The mourners sit on a low stool. It is customary that a memorial candle is lit in the house of mourning.

HACHNASSAT KALLAH — CARING FOR A BRIDE

It is the duty of every Jew to give money and moral support to help a young couple set up a Jewish home. It is a great *Mitzvah* to help pay for the wedding. This is called *Hachnassat Kallah*. A poor bride must not be disgraced through the lack of a dowry.

THE DIVINE EXAMPLE

From all the above, it is clear that we must follow G-d's example.

1. Just as G-d is merciful, so must we be merciful.
2. Just as G-d is generous, so must we be generous.
3. Just as G-d visits the sick, so must we visit the sick.
4. Just as G-d comforts the mourner, so must we comfort the mourner.
5. Just as G-d is kind, so must we be kind.

EMUNAT TZADDIKIM — BELIEF IN TZADDIKIM

G-d gave some men and women extraordinary powers. These righteous people are called *Tzaddikim*. It is a great *Mitzvah* to attach oneself to a *Tzaddik* and learn from his/her ways. One should always have faith in the words of a *Tzaddik*.

G-d commands us in the *Torah* "to cleave to Him".

The Rabbis ask: How is it possible to cleave to G-d?

They answer: One who attaches himself to a *Talmid Chacham* [a *Torah scholar*] is considered as if attached to G-d. It is a great *Mitzvah* to support *scholars* and provide for their needs. If possible, one should marry the daughter of a *scholar* and marry off one's daughter to a *scholar*.

AHAVAT YISRAEL — LOVE OF A FELLOW JEW

"And you shall love your fellow Jew as yourself..."

The Sage and commentator, *Rashi*, writes, "Rabbi *Akiva* said that this *Mitzvah* is a principal tenet of the *Torah*".

We must always have a feeling of love and respect for our fellow Jew, because in truth, we are brothers within the same family. This is a golden rule never to be forgotten, and, as Rabbi *Akiva* said, a great principle of the *Torah*.

One should never hate another person.

HALBANAT PANIM — INSULTING OR EMBARRASSING A FELLOW MAN

If a person embarrasses another in public, the latter's face turns pale with shame. The Rabbis regarded this as a terrible act to commit. The Rabbis advise: "Better fall into a fiery furnace than embarrass someone in public".

One who shames another in public, loses his share in the World to Come.

LASHON HORA & RECHILUT — THE EVIL TONGUE & TELLING TALES

One should not speak, write or even imply something evil against another, even if it is true. This is called *Lashon Hora*. Telling tales and gossiping is called *Rechilut*. King David in *Tehillim* [the *Book of Psalms*] advises:

"Who is the man who desires life... guard your tongue from speaking evil."

NEKAMAH & NETIRAH

Even if someone has wronged you, you should try to forgive them and certainly not take revenge. The *Torah* forbids not only revenge, but also bearing a grudge.

For example, A says to B: "Lend me your pencil". B replies: "No".

Next day, B says to A: "Lend me your pencil". A replies: "No, because you didn't lend me yours". That is *Nekamah*.

If A replies: "OK, I shall lend you my pencil, because I am not as mean as you are", that is *Netirah*, bearing a grudge.

A should lend the pencil to B, forgive and forget.

ONAAH & GANAYVAT DAAT

We must not sell anything for more than its value or give a false description of an article. We must not steal the knowledge or belief of another or take advantage of another's ignorance. Another type of "stealing" is being noisy and disturbing a person's sleep. This is called *Gezzel Sheena*.

NETINAT MICHSHOL LIFNEI I'VAIR — PUTTING A STUMBLING BLOCK BEFORE THE BLIND

The *Torah* warns us:

"Do not place a stumbling block before the blind".

This verse is interpreted both in its literal meaning and also in a general meaning, i.e. one should not mislead the innocent by deliberately giving bad advice.

GENEIVAH & GEZEILAH

It should be obvious that we must refrain from any action that involves us taking anything that is not ours — either stealthily or deceitfully as a thief [*Ganav*] or openly and brutally as a robber [*Gazlan*].

We must be careful not to use anything without the knowledge and permission of the owner. Respect for other people's property is a basic law of Judaism.

HASHAVAT AVEIDAH — RETURNING LOST PROPERTY

If a person finds any property whose owner could possibly be traced, he must not keep it. Otherwise, he is guilty of theft. Great effort must be made to find the owner, such as placing an advert in a paper or reporting lost property at a police station.

BAL TASHCHIT — YOU SHALL NOT DESTROY

We must not wilfully destroy anything just for the pleasure of destruction. Everything is put into this world for a special purpose. Everything has its use. We must not waste what can be put to good use. This does not mean, of course, that we accumulate everything and never throw anything away. It simply means that we must make full use of what we own. For example, one should not throw away good food or good clothes. One should also recycle goods.

TZA'AR L'BA'ALEI CHAYIM — CRUELTY TO LIVING CREATURES

We are forbidden to inflict needless pain on any creatures. This *Mitzvah* is far-reaching, extending to the daily care of any animals we own: we must even feed our animals before we sit down to eat our own meals.

KIBUD AV VA'EIM — HONOUR YOUR FATHER & MOTHER

In which ways should children honour their parents?

1. Not contradicting them.
2. Not speaking before them.
3. Not embarrassing them.
4. Not sitting in their place.
5. Bringing and fetching what their parents need.
6. Not calling, or referring to them by their first names.
7. Where applicable, feeding and clothing them.
8. Not waking them up when they are sleeping.

The *Torah* promises that one who honours his or her parents will merit to live a long life, as well as receiving a great reward in the World to Come.

MIPNEI SEIVAH TAKUM — STANDING BEFORE THE ELDERLY

This is a special *Mitzvah* and mark of respect which the young perform for the old. When an older person enters the room, the young must stand.

KVOD HARAV — HONOURING TEACHERS

Due honour must be given to Rabbis and teachers. Children should stand when they enter the room and always show *Derech Eretz* [see above].

EMET — TRUTH

Emet means truth. One must always tell the truth. *Emet* is made from three Hebrew letters א, מ and ת, which are the first, middle and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This teaches us that truth is from the beginning to the end: the whole truth. It is forbidden to lie [except when telling a “white lie” to preserve the peace].

SHALOM — PEACE

“Great is peace, for the *Torah* was given to bring peace to the world.”

One must always search for a peaceful solution to any difficult matter. The *Torah* ascribes the greatness of Aharon [Moses’ brother] to the fact that he always made peace between his fellow men.

ANAVA — HUMILITY

Never be haughty; always be humble. Know your advantages and your disadvantages. Always try to look at other people’s good points. Never be arrogant.

SIMCHAH — JOY

“Serve G-d with joy.” Imagine if a great king asked you to do him a small favour. Wouldn’t you run with joy to do it? So too, G-d has asked us to keep *Mitzvot* and we should be full of joy and happiness when keeping them. Joy is called *Simchah*.

TESHUVAH — RETURN/REPENTANCE

If a Jew does something wrong, G-d wants him to do *Teshuvah*; to repent. *Teshuvah* comprises of three stages:

1. Regret — to regret the misdeed.
2. *Vidui* — verbal expression... to say out loud [to oneself, not in front of others] what you have done wrong.
3. Resolve never to do it again.

One should do *Teshuvah* a whole year for one's misdeeds, but particularly one should do *Teshuvah* on *Yom Kippur*.

TZNIUT — MODESTY

A person should always be modest, both in dress and in character, whether in public or in private.

The *Torah* has a dress code for men and women. Parts of the body which are usually covered must be covered at all times. Men should cover their heads with a *Kipah*, or *Yarmulka* [this is an Aramaic word meaning *Yarei* = fear, *Malka* = King. A *Yarmulka* reminds you that you stand before the King of Kings at all times]. Married women should cover their hair with a scarf, hat or wig (*Shaitel*). A woman's skirt should cover her knees and shirt sleeves should cover the elbow.

A man may not wear women's clothing and vice versa. The *Torah* also teaches that boys and girls should not touch each other (*Shomer Negia*), nor act in an indecent manner.

CHAPTER 3

General Knowledge

1. The *Aleph-Bet*
2. Numerical Values
3. The Jewish Calendar
4. Dates
5. The Calendar
6. The Age of the World
7. The *Tenach*
8. The *Torah*
9. *Neviim* — The Prophets
10. *Ketuvim* — The Writings

THE HEBREW ALPHABET

The Hebrew Alphabet is called *Aleph-Bet*. It has twenty-two letters. Some sounds are ‘hardened’ with additional punctuation. There are five final letters.

THESE TWENTY-TWO MAIN LETTERS ARE:

BLOCK FORM	SCRIPT FORM	NUMERICAL VALUE	NAME [Sephard]	NAME [Ashkenaz]
א	א	1	<i>Aleph</i>	<i>Aleph</i>
ב	ב	2	<i>Bet</i>	<i>Bais</i>
בּ	בּ	2	<i>Vet</i>	<i>Vais</i>
ג	ג	3	<i>Gimmel</i>	<i>Gimmel</i>
ד	ד	4	<i>Dalet</i>	<i>Daled</i>
ה	ה	5	<i>Hay</i>	<i>Hay</i>
ו	ו	6	<i>Vav</i>	<i>Vov</i>
ז	ז	7	<i>Zayin</i>	<i>Zayin</i>
ח	ח	8	<i>Chet</i>	<i>Ches</i>
ט	ט	9	<i>Tet</i>	<i>Tes</i>
י	י	10	<i>Yud</i>	<i>Yud</i>

כ	כּ	20	<i>Kaf</i>	<i>Kof</i>
כ	כׁ	20	<i>Chaf</i>	<i>Chof</i>
ל	לׁ	30	<i>Lamed</i>	<i>Lamed</i>
מ	מׁ	40	<i>Mem</i>	<i>Mem</i>
נ	נׁ	50	<i>Nun</i>	<i>Nun</i>
ס	סׁ	60	<i>Samach</i>	<i>Samach</i>
ע	עׁ	70	<i>Ayin</i>	<i>Ayin</i>
פ	פׁ	80	<i>Peh</i>	<i>Pay</i>
פ	פׁ	80	<i>Feh</i>	<i>Fay</i>
צ	צׁ	90	<i>Tzadik</i>	<i>Tzadik</i>
ק	קׁ	100	<i>Kuf</i>	<i>Kuf</i>
ר	רׁ	200	<i>Resh</i>	<i>Reish</i>
שׁ	שׁ	300	<i>Shin</i>	<i>Shin</i>
שׂ	שׂ	300	<i>Sin</i>	<i>Sin</i>
תׁ	תׁ	400	<i>Taf</i>	<i>Tof</i>
תׂ	תׂ	400	<i>Taf</i>	<i>Sof</i>

THE FINAL LETTERS ARE:

ך	ךׁ	20	<i>Kaf</i>	<i>Kof</i>
ך	ךׁ	20	<i>Chaf</i>	<i>Chof</i>
ם	םׁ	40	<i>Mem</i>	<i>Mem</i>
ן	ןׁ	50	<i>Nun</i>	<i>Nun</i>
ף	ףׁ	80	<i>Feh</i>	<i>Fay</i>
ץ	ץׁ	90	<i>Tzadik</i>	<i>Tzadik</i>

Hebrew uses dots and lines to apply vowels to letters.

THE VOWELS ARE:

NAME	SHAPE	[SEPHARD]	AS IN	[ASHKENAZ]	AS IN
<i>Patach</i>	-	a	cat	u	rush
<i>Tzayray</i>	..	a	day	ay	day
<i>Segol</i>	˘	eh	pen	eh	pen
<i>Sheva</i>	˙	uh	done	uh	done
<i>Cholam</i>	ֿ	oh	off	oy	toy
<i>Chirik</i>	ֿ	ee	bee	ee	bee
<i>Shuruk</i>	ֿ	oo	look	oo	look
[OR KOOBUTZ]					
<i>M'lupam</i>	ֿ	ooh	do	ooh	do
[OR SHURUK]					

NUMERICAL VALUES

Hebrew does not contain any numerals. Instead, every letter of the *Aleph-Bet* has a numerical value. From *Aleph* to *Yud* the values of the letters increase by ones, from 1 to 10. From *Kaf* to *Koof*, the values of the letters increase by tens, from 10 to 100. From *Koof* to *Taf* the values of the letters increase by hundreds, from 100 to 400. To write the numbers using letters, simply add letters of the correct values. For example, the numbers 10-20 are written as follows:

11 = י"א	16 = * טז
12 = י"ב	17 = י"ז
13 = י"ג	18 = י"ח
14 = י"ד	19 = י"ט
15 = * טו	20 = כ

* The numbers 15 and 16 are not made up by adding a ה and a י, for this would spell the one of the Holy Names of G-d, which we must not write unnecessarily as it may not be erased. Even in English, we hyphenate the word 'G-d'. The numbers 21 to 30 are written as follows:

21 = כא	26 = כו
22 = כב	27 = כז
23 = כג	28 = כח
24 = כד	29 = כט
25 = כה	30 = ל

With numbers over 100, simply add units:

110 = קרע	248 = רמח
359 = שטן	365 = שסה

With numbers over 400, add hundreds:

571 = א"תקע"א, which is 400 + 100 + 70 + 1

With numbers over 1000, write a letter with a dash:

5751 = א'תשנ"א, which is 5000 + 400 + 300 + 50 + 1

It is also possible to convert words into numbers:

515 = ואתחנן, which is 6 + 1 + 400 + 8 + 50 + 50

The study of numerology, which the numerical equivalent of Hebrew letters, words and dates etc., is called *Gematria*.

THE JEWISH CALENDAR

The Jewish Calendar takes into account both the 365-day solar year and the 354-day lunar year. The calendar works on a 19-year cycle, of which seven are leap years. This equals out the discrepancy of eleven days between the solar and lunar years.

There is a leap year approximately every three years. The *Torah* does this so that the festival of *Pesach* is always in the Spring. The regular year has twelve months, while a leap year has thirteen.

THE NAMES OF THE MONTHS

ניסן	<i>Nissan</i>	חשוון	<i>Cheshvan</i>
אייר	<i>Iyar</i>	כסלו	<i>Kislev</i>
סיון	<i>Sivan</i>	טבת	<i>Tevet</i>
תמוז	<i>Tamuz</i>	שבט	<i>Shevat</i>
אב	<i>Av</i>	אדר	<i>Adar</i>
אלול	<i>Elul</i>	אדר שני	<i>Adar Sheni</i>
תשרי	<i>Tishrei</i>		(IN A LEAP YEAR)

Each month has either twenty-nine or thirty days. Although the New Year, *Rosh Hashanah*, is in the month of *Tishrei*, the months are counted from *Nissan*, since the Jews left Egypt in that month.

The Hebrew calendar stretches back to the six days of Creation. At the date of writing this book, the Hebrew year is 5783. The *Torah* was given to us in the Hebrew year 2448, exactly 3,335 years ago.

DATES

A Jewish date is also written using the numerical values of the letters, for example:

15th Shevat = ט"ו בשבט

19th Kislev = י"ט כסלו

11th Nissan = י"א ניסן

13th Tammuz = י"ג תמוז

The first day of the Hebrew month is called *Rosh Chodesh*, ראש חודש. This is abbreviated to ר"ח.

Abbreviations are used frequently within *Torah* and Jewish vernacular. Common examples include *Rosh Hashanah* — ר"ה and *Yom Tov* — יו"ט.

THE CALENDAR

We shall now go through each month listing the days of note in each month.

SEE CHAPTER ON FESTIVALS FOR MORE DETAIL.

NISSAN

- 14 Fast of the Firstborn. All firstborn males must fast. It is customary to attend a *Siyum* — a celebratory completion of a tractate of the *Talmud*. A firstborn who attends a *Siyum* in the Synagogue need not fast. Fathers who have young firstborn sons, and therefore cannot yet fast, are required to fast in their stead.
- 15 *Seder* night. First day *Pesach*.
- 16 Second *Seder*. Second day *Pesach*.
Start counting the Omer — the 49 days between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*.
- 17-20 *Chol HaMoed Pesach*. *Chol* = weekday; *Moed* = festival.
Chol HaMoed is the name for the intermediate days of the festival. They are partly weekday, partly festival.
- 21-22 Seventh day and *Acharon* [last] day of *Pesach*.

IYAR

- 14 *Pesach Sheni*
 The second *Pesach*. In Temple times, one who was unable to offer the Paschal Lamb on 14th *Nissan*, had a second chance on 14th *Iyar*.
 The Key esson is: “*It’s never too late!*”
- 18 *Lag B’Omer*
 The 33rd day of the *Omer* (ל’ = 30, ג’ = 3). In Roman times, there lived a great Sage, called Rabbi *Akiva*. He had 24,000 students. Unfortunately, a plague struck them during the *Omer* period, and many of them died. However, their deaths stopped on *Lag B’Omer*. It is therefore a day of rejoicing. Furthermore, it is the *Yahrzeit* of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, the author of the *Zohar* — a noted book on *Kabbalah*, the secrets of the *Torah*.

SIVAN

- 6-7 Festival of *Shavuot*. The Jews received the *Torah* in the year 2448.

TAMUZ

- 17 Fast of *Tamuz* [SEE CHAPTER ON FASTS]

AV

- 9 Fast of *Av*

ELUL

Month of preparation ahead of the High Holy Days.

TISHREI

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| 1-2 | <i>Rosh Hashanah</i> | 17-20 | <i>Chol HaMoed Sukkot</i> |
| 3 | Fast of <i>Gedaliah</i> | 21 | <i>Hoshanah Rabbah</i> |
| 10 | <i>Yom Kippur</i> | 22 | <i>Shemini Atzeret</i> |
| 15 | First Day of <i>Sukkot</i> | 23 | <i>Simchat Torah</i> |
| 16 | Second Day of <i>Sukkot</i> | | |

CHESHVAN

There are no days of note in *Cheshvan* — this month is often referred to as *Mar-Cheshvan*, the “bitter” *Cheshvan*.

KISLEV

- 25 *Chanukah*, for eight days.

TEVET

- 10 Fast of *Tevet*

SHEVAT

- 15 *Tu Bishvat*, the New Year for Trees. This day is celebrated by eating fruit, in particular the fruits with which *Eretz Yisrael* is blessed.

ADAR

- 13 Fast of *Esther*
 14 *Purim*
 15 *Shushan Purim*

In a Jewish Leap Year, an extra month, *Adar Sheni*, is added. That year, all the festivals and observances, which are normally held during *Adar* are deferred to *Adar Sheni*.

THE TENACH

The Bible, as we know it, is split up into three sections:

תורה	[<i>Torah</i>]	FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES
נביאים	[<i>Neviim</i>]	THE PROPHETS
כתובים	[<i>Ketuvim</i>]	THE WRITINGS

The first letter of each of the words spell תנ"ך [*Tenach*].

THE TORAH

The Five Books of Moses are:

בראשית	[<i>Bereishit</i>]	— GENESIS <i>The Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.</i>
שמות	[<i>Shemot</i>]	— EXODUS <i>Ten Plagues, Exodus from Egypt, Splitting of Reed Sea, Giving of Torah, Laws, Construction of Mishkan [Tabernacle].</i>
ויקרא	[<i>Vayikra</i>]	— LEVITICUS <i>Laws of the Temple, Sacrifices, Priests, Purity.</i>
במדבר	[<i>Bamidbar</i>]	— NUMBERS <i>Details of wanderings in desert, twelve spies, Korach's rebellion, Bilam's blessing.</i>
דברים	[<i>Devarim</i>]	— DEUTERONOMY <i>Moses' farewell address to the Jews, the Shema and the revision of the Torah Law.</i>

NEVIIM — THE PROPHETS

יהושע	JOSHUA	מיכה	MICAH
שופטים	JUDGES	נחום	NACHUM
שמואל א-ב	SAMUEL I & II	חבקוק	CHABAKUK
מלכים א-ב	KINGS I & II	צפניה	TZEFANIA
ישעיהו	ISAIAH	חגי	CHAGGAI
ירמיה	JEREMIAH	זכריה	ZACHARIAH
יחזקאל	EZEKIEL	מלאכי	MALACHI
הושע	HOSHEA		
יואל	JOEL		
עמוס	AMOS		
עובדיה	OVADIAH		
יונה	JONAH		

KETUVIM — THE WRITINGS

תהלים TEHILLIM – PSALMS – WRITTEN BY KING DAVID
 משלי PROVERBS – WRITTEN BY KING SOLOMON

The last chapter of Proverbs contains the Eishet Chayil.

איוב JOB
 שיר השירים SONG OF SONGS – WRITTEN BY KING SOLOMON
 רות RUTH

The Book of Ruth is read on Shavuot.

איכה EICHAH – LAMENTATIONS – WRITTEN BY JEREMIAH

A lament over the destruction of the Temple, read on 9th Av.

קהלת KOHELET – ECCLESIASTES – WRITTEN BY KING SOLOMON
 אסתר ESTHER – WRITTEN BY MORDECHAI & ESTHER

The Book of Esther is read on Purim.

דניאל DANIEL
 עזרא EZRA
 נחמיה NECHEMIAH
 דברי הימים איב CHRONICLES I & II

 CHAPTER 4

Torah

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. The <i>Mishnah</i> | 5. Jewish Law Today |
| 2. The <i>Talmud</i> | 6. The Golden Chain |
| 3. <i>Rambam</i> — <i>Maimonides</i> | 7. Law and Custom |
| 4. <i>Shulchan Aruch</i> | 8. Order of Learning |

THE JEWS ARE a *People of the Torah*. As explained in Chapter 1, G-d gave the *Torah* to the Jewish people in two parts: *Torah Shebichtav* (the *Written Law*) and *Torah Shebaal Peh* (the *Oral Law*, which explains of each of the 613 *Mitzvot* in the *Written Law*). Before Moses died, he passed this *Oral Law* on to Joshua. Joshua then passed it on to the leader of the generation after him and so on. The *Oral Law* was never written down; it was always memorised by each generation right up until Roman times.

THE MISHNAH

Under Roman rule, the Jews were persecuted. The leader of the Jews, a man called Rabbi *Yehudah Hanassi*, *Judah the Prince*, saw that if he did not write down *Torah Shebaal Peh*, the *Oral Law*, it would be forgotten. Subsequently, he wrote down the entire *Oral Law*, and called this book the *Mishnah*. The *Mishnah's* Laws are divided into six sections or *Sedarim* [orders]:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Zeraim</i> – Agricultural. | 5. <i>Kadshim</i> – The Temple and its sacrifices. |
| 2. <i>Moed</i> – The Festivals. | 6. <i>Taharot</i> – Laws of Purity. |
| 3. <i>Nashim</i> – Concerning women | |
| 4. <i>Nezikin</i> – Business & damage. | |

The *Mishnah* is popularly known as *Shas*, or *Shisha Sedarim*.

THE TALMUD

Rabbi *Yehudah* Hanassi wrote the *Mishnah* in a very concise manner. In the few hundred years after his death, a tremendous amount of discussion took place, all based on the *Mishnah*. The discussion was written down in a book called the *Talmud*.

In fact, two *Talmuds* were made. *Talmud Bavli*, the Babylonian *Talmud*, was edited in Babylon by two Rabbis, called Ravina and Rav Ashi. *Talmud Yerushalmi*, The Jerusalem *Talmud*, was written in *Eretz Yisrael* and edited by Rabbi Yochanan.

The *Talmud* is huge and it contains exploration of the *Mishnah*, discussion, analysis, argument and stories. Even today, all Rabbis still study the *Talmud*. Learning the *Talmud* at the pace of one page a day, takes seven years to finish. This is called *Daf Yomi* — “a page a day”.

Many great Rabbis, such as *Rashi* [Rabbi *Shlomo* Yitzchaki of France], wrote commentaries on the *Talmud*. *Rashi's* commentary on the *Chumash* is very famous and is based on the *Talmud*.

RAMBAM — MAIMONIDES

As you can imagine, learning through the entire *Talmud* is a major task. You have to learn it for many years with great diligence. About nine hundred years ago, a great Rabbi called *Rambam* [Rabbi *Moshe* Ben Maimon, Moses *Maimonides*] wrote a summary of all the laws brought down in the *Talmud*, which he called the book the *Mishneh Torah*. The *Rambam* left out much of the *Talmudic* discussion and only wrote the actual *Halachot*, laws. Many Jews today throughout the world study *Rambam* every day. If one studies three chapters a day, one finishes the *Mishneh Torah* in just less than a year.

SHULCHAN ARUCH

Based on the *Talmud* and its commentaries, and the *Rambam*, a Rabbi in the 16th century called Rabbi *Yosef Karo*, who lived in Tzfat, Israel, wrote what probably is the most famous of all Jewish Law books, called the *Shulchan Aruch*. The words *Shulchan Aruch* mean a ‘laid table’. The *Shulchan Aruch* is a summary of all Jewish Law that are applicable nowadays.

On a laid table, everything has its place. In the *Shulchan Aruch*, which is divided into four sections, each law is easy to find:

1. *Orach Chayim*: day-to-day laws, *Shabbat* and Festivals;
2. *Yoreh Deiah*: dietary laws;
3. *Even Hoezer*: laws concerning women;
4. *Choshen Mishpat*: laws concerning business matters.

JEWISH LAW TODAY

Until this very day, Jewish Law is decided by the *Shulchan Aruch*. When a Rabbi is asked a question, he will open a *Shulchan Aruch* to find the answer. If the law is not mentioned in the *Shulchan Aruch*, he will search in the *Talmud* for an answer. Students who learn Jewish Law today, sit in a *Talmudic* College, a *Yeshivah*, and study the *Talmud* and *Shulchan Aruch*.

THE GOLDEN CHAIN

Because of this hierarchy, the laws that we have today in *Shulchan Aruch* are based upon the laws in the *Rambam*, which in turn are based on the *Talmud*, itself based on the *Mishnah*, all of which is based on what Moses received from G-d on Mount Sinai. The origin of *all* Jewish Law is from G-d at Sinai.

LAW & CUSTOM

In addition to the numerous laws of the *Torah*, many customs have arisen that vary from community to community. The Hebrew word for law is *Halachah*, or *Din*, and the word for custom is *Minhag*. Oriental Jews, *Sephardim*, have different customs than European Jews, *Ashkenazim*, although both adhere to the same laws.

ORDER OF LEARNING

As soon as a child starts to speak, his father should teach him the verse:

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהילת יעקב

“The Torah which Moses commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob.”

This means that the *Torah* that Moses commanded us belongs to every Jew equally. Then the child should learn the *Shema*:

שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד

“Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One”

Every child should learn the *Aleph-Bet* and at the age of five, start to learn the *Chumash*. *Chumash* is usually learned with the explanation of *Rashi*. At a later age, a child will learn the *Mishnah*, and then the *Talmud* Babil, the Babylonian *Talmud*. Before one's *Bar Mitzvah* or *Bat Mitvah*, every child should know of the basic laws brought in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING

It says in the *Shema* that “*you shall teach them [the laws] to your children*”. Every father is obligated to teach his child *Torah*. A Jew without any *Torah* learning is like a fish without water. A child should never be embarrassed to ask a question.

THE JEWS — A PEOPLE OF THE TORAH

It is true to say that what makes the Jewish People a nation is the *Torah*. Without the *Torah*, we have no identity. G-d promises us great rewards if we listen to the words of the *Torah* and keep the *Mitzvot*.

 **CHAPTER 5**

Tefillah — Prayers

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. The Three Daily Prayers | 11. <i>Sefer Torah</i> |
| 2. The Texts of the Prayers | 12. Reading of the <i>Torah</i> |
| 3. <i>Kavanah</i> | 13. <i>Aliyah</i> |
| 4. Request | 14. <i>Maftir</i> — <i>Haftorah</i> |
| 5. Hebrew | 15. Number of people called up to the <i>Torah</i> |
| 6. <i>Shacharit</i> | 16. <i>Bar Mitzvah</i> |
| 7. <i>Minchah</i> and <i>Maariv</i> | 17. <i>Mussaph</i> — Additional Prayers for <i>Shabbat</i> |
| 8. <i>Minyan</i> | 18. <i>Yom Kippur</i> |
| 9. The Synagogue | |
| 10. <i>Mechitzah</i> | |

THE THREE DAILY PRAYERS

A Jew prays three times daily. The daily prayers are called *Shacharit*, the morning prayer, *Minchah*, the afternoon prayer and *Maariv* [or *Arvit*], the evening prayer.

Shacharit was instituted by Abraham, *Minchah* by Isaac and *Maariv* by Yaacov. Furthermore, *Shacharit* and *Minchah* correspond to the daily sacrifices in the Temple each morning and afternoon.

THE TEXT OF THE PRAYERS

The Shema

The *Shema* is perhaps the most famous of our prayers. The first paragraph of the *Shema* is selected from the book of Deuteronomy [6:4-9] and it speaks of:

1. The belief in one G-d, *Hashem Echad*;
2. Loving G-d with all one's heart, soul and might;

3. Teaching *Torah* to children.;
4. The importance of learning *Torah* at all times, even whilst travelling.;
5. The commandment to recite the *Shema* twice daily, upon arising and before going to sleep;
6. The commandment to put on *Tefillin*;
7. The commandment to put a *Mezuzah* on one's doors and gates.

The second paragraph is from Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and deals with reward and punishment, while the third paragraph, from Numbers 15:37-41, deals with the *Mitzvah* of *Tzitzit* and a daily mention of the Exodus from Egypt.

The *Shema Yisrael* should be read twice a day, in the morning and evening. Reading the *Shema* has become part of the daily prayers. The *Shema* is also read just before going to sleep. This is called *Kriyat Shema*, “reading the *Shema* in bed”.

It is customary to cover one's eyes with one's right hand when saying the first verse of the *Shema* in order to concentrate on the meaning of the verse.

The second verse of the *Shema* — *Baruch Shem* etc. is said in a whisper, with the exception of *Yom Kippur*, when it is purposefully said out loud.

The Shmonah Esrai

In days of old, every Jew spoke Hebrew and each individual composed their own prayers. When the Jews were exiled to Babylon after the destruction of the first Temple, not everybody was fluent in Hebrew.

A group of 120 Rabbis [including such people as *Mordechai*, of *Purim* fame] called the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah*, the Men of the Great Assembly, composed a set prayer, or *Tefillah*, which is called the *Shmonah Esrai* and has become the central part of each service. *Shmonah Esrai* means “eighteen”, because in this prayer there are eighteen blessings. [Subsequently another blessing was added to make the total of nineteen blessings]. Included in this prayer are requests for good health, income, success, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the coming Redemption and the arrival of *Mashiach*, peace etc. The *Shmonah Esrai* is also called the *Amidah* because *Amidah* means standing, and this prayer is said silently while standing with the feet together, facing Jerusalem.

On *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*, variations were made to the *Amidah* to reflect the sanctity of the day. In fact, the first three and the last three blessings are a feature of every *Amidah*. The middle part varies according to the occasion. The middle part of the weekday *Amidah* contains thirteen blessings, making nineteen in total. The *Amidah* of *Shabbat*, *Yom Tov* and *Mussaph* of *Rosh Chodesh* contain one central blessing dealing with the holiness of the day, making seven in

total. On *Rosh Hashanah* there are three central blessings in the *Mussaph* making nine in total.

Because certain people could not read Hebrew, the Rabbis instituted that at the *Shacharit* and *Minchah* prayers, the *Amidah* should be repeated by the *Chazzan* [the leader of the prayers, also known as the *Shliach Tzibur*] so that all could answer *Amen* to the blessings. The word '*Amen*' means 'it is true, and I believe in it'.

The daily prayers are set out clearly in a book called the *Siddur*. *Siddur* comes from the word *Seder*, meaning 'order', because all the prayers are laid out in their correct order. One should always pray out of a *Siddur*.

KAVANAH — CONCENTRATION

The most important part of prayer is concentration. One should understand and think about the meaning of the words being said. "Know before whom you stand — before the Almighty King of Kings." Just as one would address a king with great respect and intense concentration, so too should this attitude be adopted in prayer standing before G-d. Clothes must be clean and neat, and neither talking nor idle chatter are permitted whilst praying. It is better to say a little with concentration than a lot without. Do not gabble. Each word should be weighed — sincerity is important.

REQUEST

G-d knows what we need, so why pray? We pray so that we may understand that everything we have comes from G-d. If we need something, we must automatically turn to G-d and request it. The *Siddur* is a Jew's best friend.

HEBREW

A person should preferably pray in Hebrew. If this is not possible, pray in a language which you understand.

SHACHARIT

Upon awakening in the morning, the head is bowed to say:

"מוֹדֵה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ. מֶלֶךְ הוּא וְקַיָּם. שֶׁהַחַיִּים בֵּי נַשְׁמֹתַי בְּחַמְלָה. רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ:"

"*Modeh Ani Lefanecha Melech Chai Vekayam Shehechezarta Bee Nishmati B'chemla, Rabba Emunatecha*".

"*I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have mercifully restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is great*".

The hands are then washed using a cup of water, three times alternately [right, left, right, left, right, left]. This is called *Netilat Yadayim* (or *Negel Vasser* in Yiddish), meaning, washing the hands.

After washing and dressing, a number of *Berachot* [blessings] are made to thank G-d for our essential faculties of speech, sight, hearing etc.

The *Shacharit* prayers are structured as follows:

1. A study of the daily sacrifices;
2. *Baruch She'amar*;
3. *P'sukei D'zimra* — verses of praise [selected chapters of Psalms];
4. *Yishtabach* and *Barchu*;
5. Two blessings before the *Shema*;
6. *Shema* — when saying the first sentence, cover the eyes to concentrate. Kiss the *Tzitzit* at appropriate places;
7. Blessing after the *Shema*;
8. *Shmonah Esrai* — said silently, standing, facing Jerusalem. Knees and head are bowed at opening two and closing two blessings;
9. *Tachanun* — a prayer of supplication. It is customary to lean one's head on one's arm;
10. *Ashrei, Uvah L'tzion*;
11. *Shir Shel Yom* — the song of the day;
12. *Ain Kelokaynu*;
13. *Aleinu* — a beautiful summarizing prayer.

Nussach

It should be noted that there are slight variations in the text of the prayers as printed in different *Siddurim*. A text is called a *Nussach*. There are three main texts:

1. *Nussach Ashkenaz* — the custom of Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe.
2. *Nussach Sephard* — the custom of Spanish and Oriental Jews.
3. *Nussach Arizal* — a text used by *Chassidim* following the *Kabbalistic* text of Rabbi *Yitzchak Luria* (who was known as the *Arizal*).

MINCHAH & MAARIV

Minchah, the afternoon prayer, should be said before sunset. The structure of *Minchah* is:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. <i>Ashrei</i> [Psalm 145]; | 3. <i>Tachanun</i> ; |
| 2. <i>Amidah</i> ; | 4. <i>Aleinu</i> . |

Maariv, the evening prayer, should be said at night after the appearance of three medium stars. The structure of *Maariv* is:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>Barchu</i> ; | 4. Two blessings |
| 2. Two blessings | after the <i>Shema</i> ; |
| before the <i>Shema</i> ; | 5. <i>Amidah</i> ; |
| 3. The <i>Shema</i> ; | 6. <i>Aleinu</i> . |

In some places, where it is difficult to call together a *Minyan* [10 men] for both *Minchah* and *Maariv*, they can be recited one after another towards sunset.

MINYAN

If possible, a person should always pray with the congregation in a Synagogue. The minimum number of people required to form a congregation is ten men [over 13 years of age]. This is called a *Minyan*. Saying prayers with a *Minyan* is far more desirable than praying alone. Communal prayer is accepted immediately. If no *Minyan* is available, one must pray alone.

Certain parts of the service may only be said if a *Minyan* is present. These include: *Kaddish*, *Barchu*, the Repetition of the *Amidah*, *Kedushah* and the reading of the *Torah*.

THE SYNAGOGUE

A Synagogue is a house of prayer. Inside a Synagogue you will find the following:

Aron Hakodesh — Holy Ark.

The Ark is at the front of the Synagogue where the *Sifrei Torah* [Holy Scrolls] are kept. The curtain in front of the Ark is called the *Parochet*. The Ark reminds us of the holiest part of the Tabernacle the Jewish people built in the desert, and later, of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Bimah — Platform.

An elevated platform at the centre of the Synagogue from where the *Sefer Torah* is read to the congregation.

Amud — Lectern.

On the right side of the *Aron Hakodesh*, is a lectern on which the *Chazzan* [prayer leader] places his *Siddur* and from where he prays [In many Synagogues the *Chazzan* leads the prayers from the *Bimah*].

Ner Tamid — A continual light.

This is usually suspended from the ceiling in front of the Ark. This constant flame symbolises the *Menorah* in the Temple whose flame miraculously burned continually.

MECHITZAH

Men and women sit separately in a Synagogue. Some Synagogues have a ladies' gallery upstairs. If the Synagogue is on one level, a partition called a *Mechitzah* divides the men and the women.

The Synagogue is a miniature Temple. It should be treated with great respect. The congregation is obligated to keep the Synagogue clean and to make it beautiful. It is always preferable to pray in a Synagogue even if no *Minyan* is present.

SEFER TORAH

The *Sefer Torah*, Scroll of Law, is placed in the *Aron Hakodesh*. It is dressed with a mantle [a coat]; a *Choshen* [a breastplate]; a *Yad* [pointer] which the *Baal Koreh* [Torah Reader] uses to read; and a *Keter*, a crown placed on the *Atzei Chaim* [wooden poles around which the parchment is wound].

When the *Torah* is to be read, a man is honoured with opening the Ark — *Petichah*. The *Sefer Torah* is removed from the Ark and handed to the *Shlich Tzibur* who then carries it to the *Bimah* from where it is read. It is customary to stand when the Ark is open and to kiss the *Sefer Torah* during this procession. When the *Sefer Torah* is placed on the *Bimah* it is always flanked by two men, which affords the correct honour to the *Torah*.

READING OF THE TORAH

The *Torah* has 53 *Sidrot* [portions]. Every *Shabbat* we read the entire weekly *Sidra* in the Synagogue. Since there are only 52 weeks in the year, and also some festivals fall on *Shabbat*, there are certain *Shabbatot* on which we read two *Sidrot*.

From very early times, the Rabbis instituted that the first part of the weekly *Sidra* [i.e. up to *Sheni*] should be read on *Shabbat* afternoon during *Minchah*, and on Monday and Thursday mornings. In this way, there will never be three days without us hearing some words from the *Torah*.

ALIYAH

The weekly *Sidra* [portion] is split into seven sections. Although the *Sidra* is read by one man [usually the Rabbi or *Chazzan*], called the *Baal Koreh* [the Reader],

at each section a person is called up to the *Torah*. A call up to the *Torah* is called an *Aliyah*. One who has an *Aliyah* recites a special blessing before and after the reading of the *Torah*, known as the *Torah* blessings.

When called up for an *Aliyah*, one should first kiss the part where the *Torah* is to be read with one's *Tallit* (or the *Torah* sash) and then recite the blessing whilst holding the *Atzei Chaim*. The person having the *Aliyah* should then say the words quietly along with the *Baal Koreh*. When the reading is finished, one kisses the end of the reading with one's *Tallit*, closes the *Torah* and recites the after blessing whilst holding the *Atzei Chaim*.

A *Kohen* [priest] is always called up to the *Torah* first, followed by a *Levi* [Levite], and then any Jewish male over *Bar Mitzvah*, 13 years of age.

After the *Torah* is read, a person is honoured to lift the open *Sefer Torah* and show the text to the congregation. This is called *Hagbahah*. Another person is honoured to close and dress the *Torah*. This is called *Gelilah*.

MAFTIR — HAFTORAH

In a particular period of Jewish history, the land of Israel was ruled by an oppressive non-Jewish government. The government did not allow the Jews to read the *Torah*. Instead of reading the *Sidra* from the Five Books of Moses, the Jews read every week a similar reading [in content] from the Prophets.

After this harsh decree was abolished, the custom remained and nowadays on *Shabbat* after seven men have been called up to read the *Torah*, an additional person is called up to read first the *Maftir* [the last few verses of each *Sidra*], and then the portion from the Prophets which is called the *Haftorah*.

On special days such as *Rosh Chodesh*, *Yom Tov* etc., a special *Haftorah* is read connected with the theme of that day.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE CALLED UP TO THE TORAH

1. On *Shabbat*, seven men are called for an *Aliyah*, and an additional one for *Maftir/Haftorah*;
2. On *Yom Kippur*, six are called up;
3. On *Yom Tov*, five are called up;
4. On *Rosh Chodesh* [the first day of the new month], four are called up;
5. On regular Mondays and Thursday;
6. On *Shabbat* afternoon, three are called up.

BAR MITZVAH

On a boy's thirteenth Hebrew birthday, he becomes obliged to keep all the *Mitzvot*. He may become part of a *Minyan* and, amidst great celebration, is called up to the *Torah* on the occasion of the first *Torah* reading on or after his Hebrew birthday. Usually, the *Bar Mitzvah* boy reads the *Maftir/Haftorah* [and sometimes the entire *Sidra*] on the *Shabbat* following his thirteenth birthday.

MUSSAPH — ADDITIONAL PRAYERS FOR SHABBAT

On *Shabbat*, after *Shacharit*, the entire weekly *Sidra* is read, followed by *Maftir* and *Haftorah*. An additional prayer is added on *Shabbat* called *Mussaph*. *Mussaph* means "addition" corresponding to the additional sacrifice in the Temple on *Shabbat*. An additional prayer, *Mussaph*, is also added on *Rosh Chodesh* and *Yom Tov*.

YOM KIPPUR

On *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day in the Jewish year, two additional prayers are said. It is the only day of the year on which there are five prescribed communal prayers.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. <i>Maariv</i> (ON THE NIGHT OF
YOM KIPPUR EVE WHEN IT BEGINS) | 3. <i>Mussaph</i> |
| 2. <i>Shacharit</i> | 4. <i>Minchah</i> |
| | 5. <i>Neilah</i> |

The word *Neilah* means closing; the gates of judgment are closing and the inscription for a good year is sealed.

 CHAPTER 6

Shabbat

EVERY FRIDAY EVENING, as the sun sets, the holy day of *Shabbat* begins. By resting on *Shabbat* we declare our belief in G-d as the Creator of the Universe. *Shabbat* is the cornerstone of the Jewish religion. It is the one day in a week that we should divert our attention from weekday matters and concentrate on the spiritual purpose of life: to serve G-d through the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. *Shabbat* recharges our spiritual batteries for the week.

The Fourth of the Ten Commandments, says:

“Remember [Zachor] the Shabbat day to keep it holy... for G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh.”

EXODUS 20:8

“Observe [Shamor] the Shabbat day to keep it holy.”

DEUTERONOMY 5:12

This ‘observance’ refers to the prohibition of working on *Shabbat*. *Shabbat* has a calm and serene atmosphere all of its own.

We don’t work, drive, surf the internet, answer the phone, open mail or write on *Shabbat*.

Shabbat is a time for the whole family to attend the Synagogue, eat the *Shabbat* meal together and absorb the holiness of the day. Parents spend time, and learn, with their children. Rabbis have always gathered their congregations and taught the *Torah* on *Shabbat*.

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|--|--|
| 1. <i>Kavod</i> and <i>Oneg Shabbat</i> | 7. Rabbinic Prohibitions on <i>Shabbat</i> . |
| 2. <i>Kiddush</i> and <i>Havdallah</i> | 8. Attitude Towards Forbidden Activities |
| 3. <i>Shabbat</i> Candles | 9. The Spirit of the <i>Shabbat</i> day |
| 4. Meals | 10. Special <i>Shabbatot</i> |
| 5. The Order of <i>Shabbat</i> | |
| 6. Forbidden Activities on <i>Shabbat</i> — the 39 <i>Melachot</i> | |

KAVOD & ONEG SHABBAT

The Prophets tell us to honour *Shabbat* [*Kavod* means honour], and delight in *Shabbat* [*Oneg* means delight]. *Kavod Shabbat* is to wear special *Shabbat* clothing and *Oneg Shabbat* comes through having fine food and wine.

KIDDUSH & HAVDALLAH

A special blessing is made to sanctify the arrival of *Shabbat*. This is called *Kiddush* and is recited to fulfil the *Mitzvah* to remember [*Zachor*] the *Shabbat* day to make it holy. The *Kiddush* is made before the meal on Friday night. The blessing is made holding a cup [*becher*] of wine. *Kiddush* is also said before the daytime meal.

Another blessing is made to signal the end of *Shabbat*. This ceremony is called *Havdallah*, which means separation or division as it separates *Shabbat* from the weekdays. The *Havdallah* is recited after the appearance of three medium stars on Saturday night. It consists of four blessings:

1. *Borei Pri Hagafen* over the wine;
2. *Borei Minei Besamim* over fragrant spices called *Besamim*;
3. *Borei Meorei Haish* over the flame of a special plaited *Havdallah* candle;
4. *Hamavdil Bein Kodesh Lechol* — a blessing referring to the separation between *Shabbat* and the rest of the week.

SHABBAT CANDLES

To honour the *Shabbat*, women light *Shabbat* candles to usher in the *Shabbat*. The candles must be lit at least 18 minutes before sunset on Friday night. Married women light two candles, while girls (from around the age of three) light one. Some women light an additional candle for each child. The candles should be lit on the table where the Friday night meal is eaten. It is customary to give some money to *Tzedakah*, charity, before the candles are lit. Once the candles have been lit all the *Shabbat* laws apply.

MEALS

Three meals are eaten on *Shabbat*.

1. Friday night;
2. *Shabbat* day;
3. *Shabbat* afternoon — *Seudah Shlishit*, the third meal.

At each meal, the hands are washed [*Netilat Yadayim*], and *Hamotzee* [the blessing for bread] is said over two *Challot* called *Lechem Mishneh* [bread] *Mishneh* [double]. *Challah* is special plaited bread made for *Shabbat*. Two *Challot* are used to symbolise the double portion of *Manna* which fell on Friday when the Jews were in the wilderness. The *Challot* are covered with a *Challah* cloth to symbolise the covering of the *Manna* with dew.

It is customary for fish to be served at every meal. Foods which are delicacies should be served to honour the *Shabbat*. Grace after Meals [*Birkat Hamazon*] is recited after each meal. Special songs called *Zemirot* are sung during the *Shabbat* meals which create an atmosphere of holiness and joy at the *Shabbat* table. It is also customary for *Divrei Torah* [words of *Torah* – *Torah* thoughts] to be said by the table.

THE ORDER OF SHABBAT FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Preparation for *Shabbat* include bathing, cutting nails, dressing in special *Shabbat* clothing, cleaning the house, cooking all food in advance, setting the table with a white tablecloth and finest tableware, making beds, preparing candles and setting time switches for heating and lighting. We light *Shabbat* candles 18 minutes before sunset or at the time listed in one's local Jewish community's calendar.

FRIDAY NIGHT

Minchah, *Kabalat Shabbat* [acceptance of *Shabbat*], *Maariv*. Come home. Some families have a custom for parents to bless their children before *Kiddush*. Sing *Shalom Aleichem*, *Aishet Chayil* [see *Siddur*], make *Kiddush*, wash hands, *Hamotzee*, meal, Grace.

SHABBAT MORNING IN SYNAGOGUE

Shacharit, reading of *Sidra*, *Maftir/Haftorah*, *Mussaph*, come home, *Kiddush*, wash hands, *Hamotzee*, meal, *Zemirot*, Grace.

SHABBAT AFTERNOON

Minchah, Pirkei Avot [Ethics of the Fathers, which is read during the summer months — see *Siddur*], *Seudah Shlishit*, wash hands, *Hamotzee*, meal, Grace. [Some people just eat cake or fruit for the *Seudah Shlishit*].

MOTZEI SHABBAT [TERMINATION OF SHABBAT]

Maariv, Havdallah.

Melave Malka is a light meal eaten after the termination of *Shabbat* to accompany the *Shabbat* Queen.

FORBIDDEN ACTIVITIES ON SHABBAT — 39 MELACHOT

In order to preserve the *Shabbat*/Holy Day atmosphere, the *Torah* tells us that no work [*Melachah*] may be done on *Shabbat*. The Rabbis detailed the type of forbidden work into 39 categories which correspond to the 39 types of work done in the construction of the Tabernacle. These are called the 39 *Melachot*.

The following list shows that not only is business forbidden on *Shabbat*, but many activities in the home are also forbidden. All these prohibitions are intended to allow a person to concentrate on the spiritual side of *Shabbat*.

1. **CARRYING:** it is forbidden to carry any object in a public domain, i.e. in the street, e.g., one may not carry a *Tallit* or *Siddur* to the Synagogue on *Shabbat* rather, the *Tallit* and *Siddur* should be left in a safe place in the Synagogue;

It should be noted that some cities have an Eruv, an enclosure which surrounds the city turning the whole city into a private domain in which one may carry.

In a place where there is a *Kosher* Eruv under Rabbinic supervision one may carry in the street;

2. **BURNING:** one may not light a fire on *Shabbat*. For example, smoking, turning on a gas flame to cook, or turning on lights, are all forbidden. Driving is included in this prohibition. Each time one accelerates new fire is created in the engine. On *Shabbat* it is forbidden to drive;
3. **EXTINGUISHING:** for example, turning OFF the lights is prohibited. Many *Shabbat*-observant homes have a time switch, which turns their lights on and off automatically on *Shabbat*;
4. **FINISHING:** e.g. all forms of repair;
5. **WRITING:** e.g. letter writing. One may also not 'write digitally' by sending an e-mail or a text message;
6. **ERASING:** e.g. erasing writing;

7. **COOKING:** all *Shabbat* food must be cooked before *Shabbat*.

The food is kept hot by placing it on an electric hotplate. On a gas range an aluminium sheet called a *Blech* is used to cover the gas range to facilitate slow cooking. All flames on the stove must be lit *before* the beginning of *Shabbat*, and may not be adjusted on *Shabbat*;

- 8. **WASHING:** e.g. washing clothes;
- 9. **SEWING:** needlework, etc;
- 10. **TEARING:** includes undoing any form of sewing;
- 11. **KNOTTING:** tying a permanent knot. A bow is permitted.;
- 12. **UNTYING:** as above;
- 13. **SHAPING:** e.g. cutting up an object to shape;
- 14. **PLOUGHING:** includes any activity that improves the ground, such as raking the lawn;
- 15. **PLANTING:** this includes gardening and watering flowers;
- 16. **REAPING:** e.g. cutting any growing things;
- 17. **HARVESTING:** any harvesting operation such as binding bales, etc;
- 18. **THRESHING:** any action that separates food from its natural container;
- 19. **WINNOWING:** e.g. winnowing grain;
- 20. **SELECTING:** i.e. picking out the bad from the good.

This is one reason that we eat *Gefilte* Fish on *Shabbat*, so that we need not separate the bones from the fish;

- 21. **SIFTING:** sifting flour, straining liquids;
- 22. **GRINDING:** milling grain, grinding herbs for medicine;
- 23. **KNEADING:** any combination of powder with liquid to form a dough;
- 24. **COMBING:** e.g. wool or cotton;
- 25. **SPINNING;**
- 26. **DYEING;**
- 27. **CHAIN STITCHING E.G. KNITTING;**
- 28. **WARPING;**
- 29. **WEAVING:** including needlework and embroidery;
- 30. **UNRAVELLING;**
- 31. **BUILDING;**
- 32. **DEMOLISHING;**
- 33. **TRAPPING;**
- 34. **SHEARING:** i.e. removing hair from any creature;
- 35. **SLAUGHTERING;**
- 36. **SKINNING;**
- 37. **TANNING;**

38. SMOOTHING;

39. MARKING.

RABBINIC PROHIBITIONS ON SHABBAT

In addition to these 39 categories of forbidden work on *Shabbat*, which are Biblically prohibited, the Rabbis also added some prohibitions. To list them all falls beyond the scope of this book. However, here are two examples:

1. *Muktzeh*: In order to preserve the spirit of the *Shabbat* day, one may not move certain objects which have no direct use on *Shabbat*, e.g. bricks or money. Furthermore, one may not move any object which may be used to do some forbidden activity, e.g. a pen;
2. Speech: The Rabbis instructed that on *Shabbat* we should not discuss certain subjects which have no relevance to *Shabbat*, e.g. prices in shops. We should try to direct our speech to *Torah* discussion.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS FORBIDDEN ACTIVITIES

After reading the whole list of forbidden activities, one may think that *Shabbat* must be very boring. On the contrary, only because you are not allowed to do certain activities does this give you an opportunity to enjoy the spiritual side of *Shabbat*, which would not be enjoyed otherwise.

THE SPIRIT OF SHABBAT

Throughout the week we look forward to *Shabbat*. *Shabbat* is called a “queen”: just as we would prepare for a royal visit, so too do we prepare for *Shabbat*.

Choice foods are prepared, the finest clothes put on, and an atmosphere of rest and spiritual delight descends on the Jewish home.

SPECIAL SHABBATOT

There are certain *Shabbatot* which have special names because of the time in the year in which they fall. Sometimes, the names of these *Shabbatot* are the first words of that week's *Haftorah*:

1. *Shabbat HaGadol* is the *Shabbat* before *Pesach*;
2. *Shabbat Chazon* is the *Shabbat* before the Fast of *Tisha B'Av*;
3. *Shabbat Nachamu* is the *Shabbat* after the Fast of *Tisha B'Av*;
4. *Shabbat Shuvah* is the *Shabbat* before *Yom Kippur*;
5. *Shabbat Mevarchim* is the name of every *Shabbat* falling before *Rosh Chodesh*, the first day of the new month. On *Shabbat Mevarchim*, a prayer is recited in the Synagogue blessing the forthcoming month.

 CHAPTER 7

The Festivals

THERE ARE SPECIAL festival days, throughout the year, called *Moadim* or *Yom Tov*. Each of them has special observances, or *Mitzvot*, relating to that day. Most of these days are observed with the same laws that apply on *Shabbat*, except that we may carry and cook. (*Shabbat* restrictions *do* apply when a festival day falls on *Shabbat*). On the festivals of *Chanukah* and *Purim*, and on the Fast Days, one is permitted to perform weekday tasks, except on *Shabbat Chanukah*. On *Yom Kippur* (see X), we observe *all* the restrictions of *Shabbat* regardless of which day of the week it occurs.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. <i>Pesach</i> | 6. <i>Chanukah</i> |
| 2. <i>Shavuot</i> | 7. <i>Purim</i> |
| 3. <i>Rosh Hashanah</i> | 8. <i>Rosh Chodesh</i> |
| 4. <i>Yom Kippur</i> | 9. The Fast Days |
| 5. <i>Sukkot</i> | |

PESACH

The festival of *Pesach* [15th-22nd *Nissan*] celebrates the miraculous exodus of the Jews from Egypt. The word *Pesach* means “Passover” recalling the “passing over” of G-d over the Jewish houses during the tenth plague of the slaying of the firstborn. The festival is also called *Chag HaMatzot*, the festival of *Matzot*, and *Zeman Cheruteinoo*, the Festival of our Freedom.

During this festival no leavened bread — *Chametz* — may be eaten or found in the home of a Jew. *Chametz* includes cake, cereals, crackers, biscuits, yeast, pasta and whisky.

Preparations for the festival start early as the whole house is spring-cleaned and any *Chametz* removed. Finally, the kitchen is *Zeman* for *Pesach*.

Separate sets of pots, pans, crockery and cutlery are used on *Pesach*.

The highlight of *Pesach* is the *Seder* — the meal on the first two nights of *Pesach*. In Israel, there is only one *Seder* night. Shop well in advance for all *Pesach* needs, such as wine, *Matzah*, meat/poultry, fish, eggs, lettuce, horseradish etc. All items should have “*Kosher* for Passover” labels.

The *Shabbat* before *Pesach* is called *Shabbat Hagadol*, and it is customary on this *Shabbat* for the Rabbi to teach the congregation the laws of *Pesach*.

BEDIKAT CHAMETZ

בדיקת = searching חמץ = *Chametz*

On the eve of 14th *Nissan*, the head of every household searches the whole house for any remaining *Chametz*. The search is made with a candle and a feather [to brush crumbs], a wooden spoon [to collect crumbs], and a bag in which to put the *Chametz*. It is customary that before he starts the search, ten pieces of bread are “hidden” by another member of the family, and the head of the family has to find these pieces whilst thoroughly searching the whole house. A special blessing is made before the search: *Baruch Ata...Al Biur Chametz*.

BURNING & SELLING THE CHAMETZ

Any *Chametz* found during the search is collected in the bag, stored carefully and burned on the morning of 14th *Nissan*. Burning the *Chametz* is called *Serayfat Chametz*

After burning the *Chametz*, an announcement is made that all remaining *Chametz* which was not found during the search should be worthless like the dust on the ground. This is called *Bittul Chametz* — annulling the *Chametz*. It is also customary to sell any remaining *Chametz* [e.g. whisky etc.] to a non-Jew for the duration of *Pesach*, and then re-purchased after the festival. Since this is a complex transaction, the sale/purchase of *Chametz* must be done through a Rabbi or one’s local Synagogue. Any *Chametz* that has been sold should be locked away in a safe place, such as the garage, for the duration of the festival. This sale is called *Mechirat Chametz*. After *Pesach*, the Rabbi buys back all the *Chametz* from the non-Jew.

EREV PESACH

Erev means eve. On 14th *Nissan*, all first-born males must fast [unless they attend a *Siyum*, a celebratory completion of a Tractate of the *Talmud*, usually made

by the Rabbi in the Synagogue]. All preparations for the *Seder* should be made, i.e. cooking food and preparing lettuce, horseradish, *Charoset* etc.

During Temple times, the Paschal lamb would have been sacrificed on *Erev Pesach*, roasted and eaten at the *Seder*.

Before sunset, women light *Yom Tov* candles to usher in the festival.

THE SEDER

The *Torah* commands us that on the night of the 15th of *Nissan* we must re-tell the story of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. We must also eat *Matzah* and *Maror* [bitter herbs] and drink four cups of wine. The evening must take on a particular order. The word *Seder* means “order”.

MATZAH — UNLEAVENED BREAD

The *Matzah* must be baked in less than 18 minutes from the time of contact of the flour with the water.

Special flour and water are used. The speed with which *Matzot* are baked is incredible. It is preferable to use hand-baked “*Shmura*” *Matzah* for the *Seder*. *Shmura* means “guarded”, i.e. the flour has been guarded so that it did not get wet before the baking process. This could have made the flour *Chametz*, because if flour is left in contact with water for 18 minutes, it leavens and becomes *Chametz*. If no hand-baked *Matzah* is available, square, machine *Matzah* may be used. Three *Matzot* are placed one on top of the other and covered with a special *Matzah* cloth.

The following items are placed on top of the *Matzah* cloth. (Some people place these items on a special *Seder Plate*):

Egg: To symbolise the *Yom Tov* sacrifice in the Temple.

Maror: Horseradish. Bitter herbs remind us of the bitter times in Egypt.

Chazeret: Lettuce, for use with the *Pesach* sandwich [see later].

Karpas: Parsley, potato or onion. A small piece of vegetable to be dipped in salt water.

Zeroah: Shank bone. Some use a roasted chicken neck, to symbolise the *Pesach* lamb which was eaten roasted.

Charoset: A mixture of apples, pears, nuts and wine.

THE ORDER OF THE SEDER

Kadesh: On return from the Synagogue, the table is already set with the finest cutlery and dishes. The *Seder* plate is arranged and *Kiddush* is made [see *Shabbat*]. Drink first cup of wine.

Urchatz: The hands are washed, three times on the right and three times on the left, *without* making a blessing.

Karpas: A small piece of vegetable is dipped into salt-water and eaten.

Yachatz: The middle *Matzah* is broken in two and the larger part is set aside for the *Afikoman* [dessert] to be eaten at the end of the meal.

Maggid: Children ask the “Four Questions” — *Mah Nishtana* — and the story of the Exodus is re-told from a book called the *Haggadah*.
Drink second cup of wine.

Rachtzah:

The hands are washed three times on the right, and three times on the left, this time with the blessing *Baruch Ata...Al Netilat Yadayim*.

Motzi Matzah:

The blessing is made over the *Matzah* and a piece is eaten. One should eat at least 1 oz. or 27 grams of *Matzah* within four minutes.

Maror: Eat bitter herbs.

Korech: Make a sandwich of *Matzah* and *Maror*.

Shulchan Orech:

Eat a festive meal. Hors d'oeuvres is the boiled egg dipped in salt water. No roast meat is eaten at this meal.

Tzafun: Eat *Afikoman* for dessert. Nothing else should be eaten after the *Afikoman*.

Beirach: Say Grace after Meals.

Drink third cup of wine.

Hallel: Sing praises to G-d.

Drink fourth cup of wine.

Nirtzah: Next year in Jerusalem.

THE MATZAH & WINE

Both the *Matzah* and wine should be under strict Rabbinical supervision. If one cannot drink four cups of wine, it should be diluted with grape juice. Each cup of wine must contain at least 86 ml.

THE SEDER ATMOSPHERE

On the *Seder* night, a person should imagine that he himself went out of Egypt. We should conduct ourselves like free people, reclining on pillows to the left side. The first *Seder* should finish by midnight but at the second *Seder*, one should talk about the Exodus of Egypt until the early hours of the morning. Involve the children with questions and answers, and discuss the *Haggadah*.

THE EIGHT DAYS OF PESACH

Special *Yom Tov* [festival] clothing are worn for the eight days of *Pesach*. Only *Matzah* and *Kosher* for Passover foods may be eaten. The first and last two days of *Pesach* are *Yom Tov*. They have all the restrictions of *Shabbat*, except:

1. One may cook on *Yom Tov*, using a *pre-existing* flame. However, striking a match, or turning on an electric cooker or oven, is forbidden.
2. One may carry those items necessary for *Yom Tov* in the street.

One observes *all* the *Shabbat* restrictions on festival days that fall on *Shabbat* itself.

The Intermediate Days of the festival are called *Chol HaMoed*. With the exception of *Shabbat*, they do not have the restrictions of a *Yom Tov*; however, only work activity needed for the festival is permitted. The seventh day of *Pesach* is a *Yom Tov* on which we celebrate the miracle of the Splitting of the Sea [*Yam Suf*]. It is called *Shvii shel Pesach*. The last day of *Pesach* is called *Acharon Shel Pesach*.

In Israel, *Pesach* lasts only seven days. If travelling to Israel for *Pesach*, consult a Rabbi as to whether one should keep *Yom Tov* for one day or two.

SHAVUOT

Forty-nine days after the Jews came out of Egypt, they stood before Mount Sinai and G-d gave them the *Torah*. The *Torah* was given on the 6th of Sivan, on which we have the festival of *Shavuot* to celebrate the giving of the *Torah*. The word *Shavuot* means ‘weeks’. In great anticipation of *Shavuot*, we count the forty-nine days (seven complete weeks) from *Pesach* to *Shavuot*. This counting is called *Sefirat Ha’Omer*. We start counting [with a special blessing each day] on the second day of *Pesach*. Just like we count down the days to a birthday, so too do we count down the days to *Shavuot*. With each day, our excitement grows.

THE OMER

The period between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* is called the *Omer* period. During this period the 24,000 students of Rabbi *Akiva* died, so we observe *some* rules of mourning. Thus, it is forbidden to have a haircut or get married during the *Omer*. This excludes *Lag B’Omer*, the thirty-third day of the *Omer* [18th *Iyar*] which is a day of rejoicing.

EREV SHAVUOT — THE EVE OF SHAVUOT

On the eve of *Shavuot*, we wash, have a haircut, and put on *Yom Tov* clothes. Food is cooked in preparation, especially milky dishes, such as cheesecake. On *Shavuot*, when the *Torah* was first given, the Jews could only eat milky dishes since their meat dishes had previously been used for non-*Kosher* meat. [This

was because the *Kosher* laws were given at Mount Sinai, so the crockery they had used prior to this was not *Kosher*. To commemorate this, we eat dairy foods on *Shavuot*. Furthermore, just as a mother feeds her baby milk, so too when the Jewish nation was born at Sinai, it was fed with *Torah*, likened to milk.

Candles are lit before sunset to usher in the *Yom Tov*. *Shabbat* restrictions apply on *Yom Tov*, with the exceptions mentioned above. If the second day of *Shavuot* occurs on *Shabbat*, all the restrictions of *Shabbat* apply.

LE'IL SHAVUOT — THE NIGHT OF SHAVUOT

Kiddush is made and after the *Yom Tov* meal, it is customary to stay up the entire night of *Shavuot* and engage in the study of *Torah*. In fact, one reads a special book called *Tikkun Le'il Shavuot*, which is a collection of excerpts from *Tenach*, *Mishnah* and *Zohar*, and an enumeration of all the 613 commandments.

ASERET HADIBROT — THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

In the morning in Synagogue, the *Torah* reading is the description of the Giving of the *Torah* on Sinai. When the Ten Commandments are read, it is customary to stand. In some places the Synagogue is decorated with flowers to recall the Sinai desert which miraculously blossomed at the time the *Torah* was given. Great effort must be made that the whole family, including small children and babies, should be in Synagogue for the reading of the Ten Commandments. The Book of Ruth is also read on *Shavuot*.

After Synagogue, a *Kiddush* with dairy foods such as cheesecake, yogurt, blintzes and sour cream is served. We then wait one hour, and then eat a meaty *Yom Tov* meal. In Israel, the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuot* is one day only and outside Israel it is two days. If travelling to Israel for *Shavuot*, consult a Rabbi as to whether one should keep *Yom Tov* for one day or two.

ROSH HASHANAH

Rosh Hashanah [1st & 2nd *Tishrei*] is the first day of the Jewish Year. Literally translated it means the head [*Rosh*] of the year [*Hashanah*] i.e. just as the head controls the body, so too one is judged by G-d on *Rosh Hashanah* and decisions are made in the Heavenly Court above for the whole year. For this reason, *Rosh Hashanah* is also called *Yom HaDin* — the Day of Judgment. On *Rosh Hashanah*, G-d looks at all human beings and decides what will happen to them in the coming year. His decision is based on our conduct in the previous year. G-d carefully weighs our good and bad deeds on Heavenly 'scales', and if the good deeds outweigh the bad, one is written down in the Book of Life.

Rosh Hashanah is also the day when we crown G-d as our King. It is like the coronation of a king when all his subjects vow to be loyal to the crown. The coronation is heralded with trumpets. The *Shofar* [ram's horn] that we blow on *Rosh Hashanah* is our trumpet, and it reminds us to be fully devoted to G-d, His *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

On *Rosh Hashanah*, we describe G-d as *Avinu Malkeinu*, 'our Father, our King': our Father – let Him act as a Father, have mercy on us and grant us a happy and sweet new year, and our King – we reaffirm our loyalty and dedication to follow His command.

THE MONTH OF ELUL

The month of *Elul* is a month of preparation for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Just as in any business, the director will assess the profits or losses of the business at the end of the year, at the end of the Jewish year, during the month of *Elul*, we must make an account of our actions and deeds during the year. If we have offended anybody, we must ask them for forgiveness.

In *Elul*, one's whole conduct should be more sober in view of the forthcoming High Holy Days. It is a good time to check one's *Tefillin* and *Mezuzot* to make sure they are *Kosher*.

In the week before *Rosh Hashanah*, we get up extra early and say *Selichot* — prayers asking for G-d's forgiveness.

On *Rosh Hashanah*, the King [G-d] is in the Palace; during *Elul*, the King is in the field, i.e. G-d is readily approachable and accepts all with a smiling face.

EREV ROSH HASHANAH AND ROSH HASHANAH NIGHT

As on *Erev Shabbat*, one should bathe, have a haircut and put on *Yom Tov* clothes. Some people wear white clothing, symbolising purity, on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

The table should be set as one does before *Shabbat*, and a *Machzor* [a special *Siddur* with the prayers for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*] is prepared.

In the Synagogue, a white *Parochet* [curtain] is hung in front of the Ark, in place of the usual *Parochet*, and it remains there throughout the month of *Tishrei*.

Before sunset, the women light the *Yom Tov* candles.

As *Rosh Hashanah* is a festival, one may cook and carry (PAGE 47), unless the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* occurs on *Shabbat*, when all the restrictions of *Shabbat* apply.

After *Maariv* it is customary to wish each other a "*Ketiva V'Chatima Tova*" — a good inscription for a sweet new year.

THE PRAYERS

The *Mussaph Amidah* of *Rosh Hashanah* is very special, in that we concentrate on three themes:

1. *Malchiot* — saying verses from the *Tenach* that proclaim the dominion of G-d as our King.
2. *Zichronot* — verses that ask G-d to remember us for the good.
3. *Shofrot* — verses that talk about the *Shofar*.

In one of the main prayers, we proclaim: “*And repentance, prayer and charity will remove any bad decree*”.

THE SHOFAR

The special *Mitzvah* of *Rosh Hashanah* is the sounding of the *Shofar*. The *Shofar* is a ram's horn.

It is blown to herald the coronation of G-d as our King, and to arouse us to examine our deeds and repent from any behaviour (both towards Heaven and towards our fellow man) is lacking.

The *Shofar* is blown with three distinct notes:

1. *Tekiah* — a long uninterrupted blast;
2. *Shevarim* — three short blasts;
3. *Teruah* — nine bleeps;

Altogether the *Shofar* is sounded one-hundred times on *Rosh Hashanah*. The *Shofar* is curved to remind us to bow ourselves before G-d. If the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* falls on *Shabbat*, the *Shofar* is not sounded until the second day.

THE MEALS

As on every *Yom Tov*, two festive meals are eaten, one at night and one during the day after attending the Synagogue.

On the first night of *Rosh Hashanah* it is customary to eat sweet foods so that G-d should grant us a sweet year, so:

1. Sweet wine is used for *Kiddush*;
2. The *Challah* is dipped into honey;
3. Sweet apple is dipped into honey and eaten at the start of the meal;
4. Sweet vegetables, e.g. *Tzimas* [carrots with honey and raisins], are eaten at the meal, as well as fatty meat, which indicates that we wish the year ahead to be ‘fat’ [i.e. prosperous] and sweet;
5. Pomegranate — our merits should be as numerous as its seeds.

On the second night of *Rosh Hashanah* a new fruit, i.e. one that we have not yet eaten this season, should be placed on the table.

THE SPIRIT OF ROSH HASHANAH

The atmosphere of *Rosh Hashanah* should be festive, yet serious and sincere, in view of the fact that we are being judged on this day. Imagine how you would feel on the day of a big court case you were involved in. Refrain from idle chatter and wasting time. Concentrate on prayer, learning and good deeds. Many people recite *Tehillim* (Psalms).

TASHLICH

It is customary on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah*, after *Minchah*, to go to a body of water, such as a river, stream, or the sea etc., preferably where there are fish, and to symbolically cast our sins into the water. This is called *Tashlich*. If the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* falls on *Shabbat*, *Tashlich* is deferred until the second day.

THE TEN DAYS OF REPENTANCE

The ten days between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are called the Ten Days of Repentance. During these days, we should make a special effort to make sure our conduct is as it should be. These are days in which our good conduct may tip the scales and secure us a good new year.

YOM KIPPUR

The 10th of *Tishrei* is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. It is the holiest day in the Jewish year. With *Teshuvah*—repentance—G-d will forgive our misdeeds and seal us in the Book of Life.

On *Yom Kippur*, we observe all the restrictions of *Shabbat*, regardless of which day of the week it occurs. In addition to this, one may *also* not:

1. Eat: the fast commences before sunset on the 9th of *Tishrei* and finishes at nightfall on the 10th;
2. Drink;
3. Wash: even when washing our hands in the morning (PAGE 32), we only wash to our knuckles;
4. Wear leather shoes: non-leather footwear, like sneakers or slippers etc. are permitted;
5. Cohabit.

Boys, from the age of *Bar Mitzvah*, and girls from the age of *Bat Mitzvah*, must fast all day. Children over the age of 11 should fast for *part* of the day. Those with medical conditions who need to eat, drink or take medicine, should consult a Rabbi before *Yom Kippur* to ascertain the correct conduct for their particular condition.

EREV YOM KIPPUR

On the day before *Yom Kippur*, it is a *Mitzvah* to eat a festive meal. One who eats and drinks on the 9th of *Tishrei* is considered as if he fasted for two days. One should give a lot of money to *Tzedakah*, charity, on this day.

Early in the morning, we do *Kaparot*, i.e. wave a chicken round our heads and say, “this chicken shall be my atonement”, i.e. this chicken shall be given to the poor, and the merit of this *Mitzvah* of *Tzedakah* shall stand in my good stead. Some perform the *Kaparot* service with fish or money.

Men immerse themselves in a *Mikvah* [ritual pool of pure rainwater] to purify themselves ahead of the *Yom Kippur* day. *Yom Tov* clothes are worn. Married men wear a *Kittel* [white coat] in Synagogue with a *Tallit*.

KOL NIDREI

The candles are lit and all go to Synagogue. On *Yom Kippur*, all *Shabbat* restrictions apply (PAGE 51). The service starts with *Kol Nidrei* [an annulment of vows]. The *Torah* Scrolls are removed from the *Aron Hakodesh* and the *Chazzan* chants *Kol Nidrei*, followed by *Maariv*.

PRAYERS

At the end of each *Amidah* a special prayer called *Al Chait* is said. *Al Chait* is a list of all common sins, and when we read down the list, we should repent for all our *Aveirot* [sins]. It is customary to tap the heart with the right fist, as if to say, “it is you, i.e. the *Yetzer Hora* [see chapter on *Middot*] who has caused me to sin”. This verbal expression of our sins is called *Vidui*. Doing *Teshuvah* is the special *Mitzvah* of *Yom Kippur*.

During *Mussaph*, we read of the special service of the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest in the Temple on *Yom Kippur*. When we read the section where the *Kohen Gadol* mentions G-d’s Name, we bow and prostrate ourselves.

On *Yom Kippur* [as well as on other the final day of some other festivals] a special memorial prayer called *Yizkor* is recited in which people remember their deceased relatives, and pledge to give *Tzedakah*, charity, in their merit. In most communities, it is the custom that children whose parents are still alive go out of the Synagogue whilst *Yizkor* is recited.

MINCHAH

At *Minchah*, the *Torah* is read followed by a special *Maftir* called *Maftir Yonah*. This is the story of Jonah and the whale. The story teaches us of the repentance of the people of *Nineveh*.

NEILAH

The concluding service of *Yom Kippur* is called *Neilah* which means “closing”, i.e. the Heavenly Gates of Prayer are closing and G-d’s books being sealed; this is our last chance to be inscribed for a good year. Many sincere tears are shed at *Neilah*.

The teachings of *Chassidut* suggest that, although the Heavenly Gates are indeed closing, we are locked on the *inside*, together with G-d, who shines His unbridled love towards us and blesses us all with a good, and sweet, year of life and blessing.

After *Neilah*, the *Shofar* is sounded once to signal the termination of *Yom Kippur*.

SUKKOT

The festival of *Sukkot* starts on 15th *Tishrei*, five days after *Yom Kippur*. On *Sukkot* we:

1. Sit in a *Sukkah* — a temporary dwelling with a roof of sticks and leaves.
2. Shake the *Arbah Minim*.

THE SUKKAH

When the Jews were in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d protected them from the blazing sun, the and heat of the desert, with Divine clouds of protection. Furthermore, the Jews built *Sukkot*, temporary structures with thatched roofs, which protected them from the sun. To symbolise this, we dwell in a *Sukkah* for seven days, from the 15th-22nd *Tishrei*. We must eat and drink [and some sleep] inside the *Sukkah*.

The *Sukkah* reminds us:

1. of G-d’s constant protection of the Jewish nation;
2. just as the *Sukkah* is a temporary dwelling, so too life is temporary, and this world is only a corridor to the Palace of the World to Come.

The *Sukkah* must have at least three walls. The roof, *Schach*, must be made from sticks, leaves, pine, laurel etc, i.e. things that grow from the ground. The *Schach* must be thick enough that the shade inside the *Sukkah* is greater than the sun, but not so thick as to be rainproof.

In short, during *Sukkot*, one should move out of the house and one’s main dwelling place should be in the *Sukkah*. Eat, drink, sleep, learn and pray in the *Sukkah*. A special blessing [*Layshave BaSukkah*] is made when sitting and eating in the *Sukkah*.

THE ARBAH MINIM

Every day of *Sukkot* [except on *Shabbat*] we shake the *Arbah Minim* — the four species, which are:

1. *Lulav* — the unfurled palm branch [tall and thin]
2. *Etrog* — the citron fruit
3. *Hadass* — the myrtle branch
4. *Aravot* — the willow branch

We take a *Lulav*, three *Hadassim* and two *Aravot*, bind them together and shake them, together with the *Etrog*, in all directions.

The *Arbah Minim* symbolise many things, for example:

1. *Lulav*: has taste [i.e. the date of the palm] but no smell — a Jew learned in *Torah* but lacking in *Mitzvot*.
2. *Etrog*: has taste and smell — a Jew learned in *Torah* and replete with many *Mitzvot*.
3. *Hadass*: has smell but no taste — a Jew replete with many *Mitzvot* but unlearned.
4. *Aravot*: has no taste and no smell — an unlearned Jew who is also lacking in *Mitzvot*.

The *Arbah Minim* represent the four types of Jews, as above. We bind them all together to show Jewish unity that all Israel must serve G-d. Also the shape of each of the *Arbah Minim* symbolise that our service of G-d must be with the whole body: the *Lulav* (spine), *Etrog* (heart), *Hadass* (eyes) and *Aravot* (lips).

YOM TOV

The first two days of *Sukkot* are *Yom Tov*, and *Shabbat* restrictions apply except for cooking [using a pre-existing flame] and carrying (PAGE 47). Festive meals are eaten by night and day and candles are lit at night [in the *Sukkah*]. *Kiddush* is made before every meal. One should be happy and rejoice on *Yom Tov*.

The Intermediate Days of the festival are called *Chol HaMoed*. With the exception of *Shabbat*, they do not have the restrictions of a *Yom Tov*; however, only work activity needed for the festival is permitted.

SIMCHAT BEIT HASHOEVA

During *Sukkot* in Temple times, great celebrations with singing and dancing took place, and these celebrations were called *Simchat* [the joy of] *Beit Hashoeva* [the water drawing]. Even today, each night of *Sukkot* we sing, dance and rejoice. The *Talmud* says that during *Sukkot*, there was so much rejoicing, people hardly slept a wink for seven days.

Every day of *Sukkot*, *Hallel* is recited and the *Torah* is read. After *Hallel*, it is customary to encircle the *Bimah* with the *Arbah Minim* in hand. This service is called *Hoshaanot*. [Some say *Hoshaanot* after *Mussaph*]

HOSHANAH RABBAH

The last day of *Chol HaMoed* is called *Hoshanah Rabbah*. On this day, we encircle the *Bimah* seven times with the *Arbah Minim*. At the end of the *Hoshaanot* service it is customary to take five willow branches and beat them on the ground five times. *Hoshanah Rabbah* is the last date of appeal to G-d to be granted a sweet new year.

SHEMINI ATZERET AND SIMCHAT TORAH

Shemini Atzeret is the eighth day of *Sukkot*. We still sit in the *Sukkah* but we don't shake the *Arbah Minim*. *Simchat Torah* is the day after *Shemini Atzeret*. [We no longer sit in the *Sukkah*]. *Simchat Torah* is the culmination of the whole month of *Tishrei* and its festivals and on *Simchat Torah* we finish the yearly cycle of reading the *Torah* and start again from the beginning.

The person chosen to be called up to the *Torah* for the last portion of the *Torah* is called the *Chattan Torah*. The person called up to read the beginning of the *Torah* is called the *Chattan Bereishit*. It is customary for the *Chattan Torah* and *Chattan Bereishit* to sponsor the *Kiddush* and festivities for the day.

Both on the night of *Shemini Atzeret* and the night and day of *Simchat Torah*, all the *Sifrei Torah* are removed from the *Aron Hakodesh* and we dance with them as we encircle the *Bimah*. Children carry flags and small *Sifrei Torah*. We kiss the *Torah* to show that we are truly happy that we are the Chosen People who have G-d's *Torah*. The joyous dancing around the *Bimah* is called *Hakafot*. During the reading of the *Torah* the custom is that everyone receives an *Aliyah*.

Both *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* are *Yom Tov* days are *Yom Tov*, and *Shabbat* restrictions apply except for cooking [using a pre-existing flame] and carrying (PAGE 47).

Kiddush is made by night and day together with festive meals.

In Israel, *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* are combined into one day. If travelling to Israel for *Sukkot* or *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah*, consult a Rabbi as to whether one should keep *Yom Tov* for one day or two.

Simchat Torah is one of the happiest days in the Jewish calendar and the *Mitzvah* of *Simchat Torah* is to dance and rejoice with the *Torah*. The teachings of *Chassidut* suggest that everything we achieve through prayer on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* is equally possible through joy on *Simchat Torah*.

CHANUKAH

On the 25th of *Kislev* we celebrate *Chanukah*. In the days of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the Greeks governed Israel and they forced the Jews to worship their idols.

A Jew called *Matityahu Maccabee* organised a revolt against the Greeks and, together with his sons and a small army, waged war against the Greeks and miraculously were victorious. When they entered the Holy Temple, they found that the Greeks had defiled all but one jar of pure olive oil, just enough to light the *Menorah* [candelabrum] for one day. Miraculously, this small jar of oil remained alight for eight days until more oil was procured.

All Israel marvelled at the victory in war and the miraculous burning of the oil for eight days, and the Rabbis instituted the eight days starting from the 25th of *Kislev* as a festival called *Chanukah*. *Chanukah* means “dedication” because the Temple was rededicated at that time. The festival is to be celebrated by lighting candles.

THE MENORAH

On the night of the 25th *Kislev*, we light our *Chanukah Menorah*. The first night of *Chanukah*, we light one candle, the second night two candles and so on, until the eighth night when we light eight. The candles are placed in the *Menorah* from right to left and lit from left to right. Many people use olive oil instead of candles since the miracle in the Temple was with olive oil. The *Menorah* is lit either by the window or by the door opposite the *Mezuzah*. Special blessings are made and songs sung when lighting the *Menorah* — see *Siddur*.

CHANUKAH CELEBRATIONS

It is customary on *Chanukah* to eat foods connected with the miracle of the oil, e.g. potato latkes, doughnuts [fried in oil].

Children play with a dreidel — a square spinning top with the letters ה, ג, נ, ש written on the four sides. These letters stand for *גם גדול ה' שם*, “a great miracle happened there”.

It is customary to give children pocket money, *Chanukah Gelt*, as a gift.

Among the many lessons we may learn from the miracles of *Chanukah* and the *Menorah*, perhaps the most poignant of all is that, despite the many years of persecution suffered by our nation, the Jewish flame will burn brightly forever.

PURIM

On the 14th *Adar*, we celebrate *Purim*. After the destruction of the First Temple, the Jews were exiled to Babylon where there arose a mighty ruler called King *Achashverosh*. He had a wicked advisor called *Haman* who plotted to kill all the Jews. The plot was foiled by *Esther*, the queen, and *Mordechai*. The entire *Purim* story is fascinating and is unravelled in *Megillat Esther* — the Scroll of Esther. This *Megillah* is read twice on *Purim* — by night and by day. During the reading of the *Megillah*, one bangs upon hearing *Haman's* name. [Some children swing graggers.]

OTHER MITZVOT OF PURIM

In addition to reading the *Megillah* by night and day, there are three other *Mitzvot* to be performed on *Purim*:

1. *Mishloach Manot* — “Sending of Gifts” — to send a gift of two items of food to a friend.
2. *Matanot L'Evyonim* — “Gifts to the poor” — to give charity to at least two poor people.
3. *Seudat Purim* — Festive meal — to eat on *Purim* day a festive meal. At this meal, it is a *Mitzvah* to drink enough wine so that one doesn't know the difference between “blessed be *Mordechai*” and “cursed be *Haman*”.

On *Purim* we eat *Hamantashen* — triangular pastries filled with poppy seeds. The reason given is that in the palace, all that *Esther*, the queen ate was seeds, since it was the only *Kosher* food available to her.

The rejoicing of *Purim* is great. Many children dress in costumes and masks. We greet each other with a “*Freilicher Purim* / a Happy *Purim* / *Purim Sameach!*”

ROSH CHODESH

The first day of each Hebrew month is called *Rosh Chodesh*. Special prayers are said, such as *Yaaleh Veyavo*, *Hallel* [a beautiful praise of G-d], *Barchi Nafshi* and *Mussaph* [see *Siddur*].

On *Rosh Chodesh*, women refrain from heavy housework and washing clothes.

The *Shabbat* before *Rosh Chodesh* is called *Shabbat Mevarchim* — the *Shabbat* that blesses the coming month. On *Shabbat Mevarchim*, the *Chazzan* holds a *Sefer Torah* and announces when *Rosh Chodesh* will be and blesses the coming month.

A Jewish month may consist of twenty-nine or thirty days and therefore *Rosh Chodesh* may be either one or two days [one day if the previous month

has twenty-nine days, and two days if the previous month has thirty days, the 30th day being the first day of *Rosh Chodesh*].

THE FAST DAYS

Excluding *Yom Kippur* there are five national Jewish Fast Days:

Tzom Gedaliah — 3rd *Tishrei*.

To commemorate the murder of *Gedaliah Ben Achikom*, a great Jewish leader of the post-Temple period. The fast is from dawn to nightfall.

Assarah b'Tevet — 10th *Tevet*

To commemorate the siege of Jerusalem in Temple times. Dawn to nightfall.

13th *Adar* — *Fast of Esther*.

To commemorate *Esther*, the queen's fast before she pleaded with *Achashverosh* to save her people. Dawn to nightfall.

Shiva Assar b'Tamuz — 17th *Tamuz*

To commemorate the breach of Jerusalem's wall by the enemy in Temple times. Dawn to nightfall. This marks the beginning of a three-week mourning period (until the 9th *Av*) for the destroyed Temples. During this period, it is customary to learn about the Temples, and not to take a haircut, listen to music or get married. From 1st—9th *Av*, not to eat meat or drink wine [except on *Shabbat*].

The three weeks are called the *Bein Hametzarim* [literally meaning “between the narrow straits” of the 17th *Tamuz* and the 9th *Av*] and the nine days between 1st-9th *Av* are popularly called, “The Nine Days”.

Tisha B'Av — 9th *Av*.

This is a 24-hour fast to commemorate the destruction of the two Temples on this day, and the destruction of *Betar* [a large, populated town in Israel in post-Temple era].

Other tragedies in Jewish history took place on the ninth of *Av*, such as the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. On *Tisha B'Av*, we read the Book of *Eichah*—Lamentations—say *Kinot* [verses of lament], we sit on the floor and do not wash or wear shoes.

When the Temple will be rebuilt in the days of *Mashiach*, these fast days will be turned to days of rejoicing. The *Talmud* teaches that anyone who mourns over Jerusalem will merit to see it rebuilt.

 CHAPTER 8

Kashrut

CENTRAL TO DAILY Jewish living is the special laws governing what we eat, how food is to be prepared for eating and what foods may be eaten together. These dietary requirements are called *Kashrut*, the Laws of *Kosher*. In this chapter, we shall briefly examine the following aspects of *Kashrut*:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Kosher</i> Animals | 13. Eggs |
| 2. Animal Products | 14. <i>A Hechsher</i> |
| 3. <i>Kosher</i> — <i>Treifa</i> | 15. Meat & Milk |
| 4. Birds | 16. The <i>Kosher</i> Kitchen |
| 5. Salting Meat | 17. <i>Tevilat Kelim</i> |
| 6. Liver | 18. <i>Parev</i> |
| 7. Fats | 19. Fish and Meat |
| 8. The <i>Kosher</i> Butcher | 20. Wine |
| 9. Fish | 21. Bread |
| 10. Milk | 22. The Reason behind <i>Kashrut</i> |
| 11. Cheese | 23. Beware |
| 12. Fruits & Vegetables | |

KOSHER ANIMALS

The *Torah* commands us only to eat animals that:

1. have split hoofs.
2. chew their cud.

This includes the cow, sheep, deer and some other animals, but *excludes* the pig, camel and rabbit. Furthermore, the animal must be slaughtered in a special way, called *Shechita*, which is described in the *Torah*. *Shechita* is the quickest, and least painful, method of slaughtering an animal. A qualified Jew called a *Shochet*, who knows all the laws of *Shechita*, must slaughter the animal.

ANIMAL PRODUCTS

Any meat, fat, oil etc. that comes from an animal which is not slaughtered by a *Shochet* is **NOT Kosher**. Confectionery, cakes, biscuits etc. which contain animal fats are **NOT Kosher**. Any food containing animal derivatives **MUST** be under Rabbinical supervision.

KOSHER — TREIFA

After slaughtering an animal, the *Shochet* checks the animal for any defects. If a defect is found, the animal is declared *Treifa* [lit. torn, i.e. it would not live long because of the defect] and it is not *Kosher*. Often defects, like lesions, are found on the lungs of an animal. If the lung is healthy, it is called *Glatt*—smooth—hence the term *Glatt Kosher*.

It is common usage to say that anything that is not *Kosher* is *Treifa*.

BIRDS

The *Torah* lists twenty-four species of forbidden birds. These include all birds of prey. Permitted birds include domestic fowl such as chicken, duck, goose and turkey.

SALTING MEAT

The *Torah* forbids the consumption of blood in any form. Therefore, in addition to the fact that animals and poultry must be slaughtered by a *Shochet*, the *Torah* commands us to remove all the blood from the dead animal. This is done through salting.

The meat is first washed and then soaked in water for half an hour. It is then placed on a slanting board and sprinkled all over with medium coarse salt, which causes the blood to be drawn out of the meat. It is important that the salt is sprinkled on all sides paying particular attention to any folds and cuts.

The meat is left on the slanting board for one hour allowing the blood to drain away. Finally, it is rinsed under running water to ensure all the blood is washed away. Only after soaking, salting and rinsing, is the meat fit for consumption.

From all the above, one may understand why one may not buy poultry or meat from a non-*Kosher* butcher or supermarket, because:

1. although it is a *Kosher* type of fowl/animal, it has not been slaughtered by a *Shochet*, and
2. it has not been soaked, salted and rinsed as required.

However, one may buy pre-packed meat and fowl, such as frozen chicken, provided it is sealed and has a *Kosher* symbol, called a *Hechsher*.

LIVER

Certain parts of the meat such as liver have much blood in them, and salting is not enough to remove all the blood. The liver must be roasted over an open flame to remove the blood.

FATS

Certain fats and veins must be removed from an animal before consumption. The process of removing the fats is called *Nikkur*.

THE KOSHER BUTCHER

From the above, it is clear that the *Kosher* butcher must do the following:

1. Only slaughter *Kosher* poultry or *Kosher* animals that have split hoofs and chew their cud;
2. A qualified *Shochet* must slaughter the animal;
3. Check the animal for defects;
4. Remove fats and veins;
5. Salt the meat or roast the liver.

The *Shochet* and the butcher must be G-d fearing Jews. Nowadays, one may only buy meat from a butcher who displays a certificate of *Kashrut* from a competent *Beth Din* [Jewish Court of Law].

FISH

Kosher fish must have fins and scales. A fish that does not have fins and scales is not *Kosher*. If there is any doubt, a Rabbi must be consulted. Seafood, like prawns, shellfish, crab, eels etc. are **NOT** *Kosher*.

MILK

Milk is only *Kosher* if it comes from a *Kosher* animal. Therefore, milk from cows and goats is *Kosher*, but milk from pigs or horses is not *Kosher*.

Nowadays, with government inspection at dairies, we can usually trust the farmers not to add any non-*Kosher* milk to the cows' milk. Nevertheless, many orthodox Jews will only drink supervised milk, i.e. a *Mashgiach* [supervisor] is present at the dairy to make sure that only *Kosher* milk is bottled with no non-*Kosher* milks added. Such milk is called *Chalav Yisrael*.

CHEESE

Cheese must be made with milk from a *Kosher* animal. Furthermore, many types of rennet [used in the preparation of cheese] are from a non-*Kosher* animal. Therefore, only cheese under Rabbinical supervision may be used.

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

In general, most fruits and vegetables are *Kosher*. However, fruits grown in the first three years of a tree are called *Orlah* and are forbidden. Fruits from Israel need to be tithed. This is called *Hafrashat Terumah Umaaser*. A special text is recited when tithing [see *Siddur*]. Every seven years in Israel there is a Sabbatical year called *Shmittah*, and special laws apply to Israeli fruits and vegetables during that year — ask a Rabbi for details.

Many fruits and vegetables are infested with insects. The *Torah* explicitly forbids us to eat any insects, and therefore a close inspection must be made to remove any insects from foods that are commonly infested, e.g. lettuce, dates etc. This inspection is called *Bedikat Tolaim*.

EGGS

Only eggs that come from *Kosher* birds and poultry are *Kosher*. Usually, *Kosher* eggs are round at one end and pointed at the other [whereas non-*Kosher* eggs are totally round]. Eggs must be checked for blood spots. If a blood spot is found, the egg must be thrown away.

A HECHSHER [KOSHER SYMBOL]

In general, it is always better to buy foods with a *Hechsher*, i.e. a stamp of Rabbinical supervision. This means that a group of Rabbis have checked the ingredients and have certified that all the ingredients are *Kosher*. Often the *Hechsher* will state *Kosher Lemehadrin*, which means *Kosher* even for the most scrupulous.

MEAT & MILK

The *Torah* commands us to keep milk and meat products separate. In practice, this means that we must take every precaution to ensure that we:

1. Do not eat meat and milk together.
2. Do not cook meat and milk together.
3. Do not derive any benefit from a mixture of milk and meat.

Therefore, after eating meat, one must wait six hours before eating any milk products.

Conversely, after eating hard cheese, one must wait six hours [some wait three hours] before eating meat. However, after eating milk, yogurt, soft cheese etc, one need only wait one hour [some wait half an hour] before eating meat.

THE KOSHER KITCHEN

In a *Kosher* kitchen, separate utensils are used for milk and meat. These must be kept totally separate: two separate sets of pots, pans, plates and cutlery. If possible, there should be two separate sinks.

If you only have one sink, use two washing up bowls: one for milk and one for meat, and separate drying racks.

Meat and milk utensils are often colour coded so as not to mix them up (e.g. red for meat and blue for milk). The oven is to be used either for milk or meat, or used only for *Parev* [see below] foods. Two separate tablecloths are used for milk and meat. If meat and milk utensils are accidentally mixed up, a Rabbi should be consulted.

TEVILAT KELIM

Utensils made of metal and glass [or glazed earthenware] must be immersed in a *Mikvah* before use. This is called *Tevilat* [immersion] *Kelim* [of vessels]. A special blessing is made before the immersion: *Baruch ata...Al Tevilat Kelim*. Many Synagogues and Jewish hardware shops have a small *Kelim Mikvah* specifically for this purpose.

PAREV

Parev means something that is neither specifically milky nor meaty. Vegetables are *Parev* and may be eaten with meat or milk. Every person should keep a mental check if they are milky [*Milchig*], meaty [*Fleishig*], or *Parev*. e.g. If you ate a steak for supper at 6pm, you may not have a cup of tea with milk at 8pm.

FISH & MILK

It is customary not to cook fish with milk, although they may be eaten one after the other. The same applies with meat and fish.

WINE

Wine must be under Rabbinical supervision and have a *Hechsher*.

BREAD

Many breads either contain animal fat or are baked on trays smeared with animal fat. Therefore, a bakery needs to be checked to make sure that the bread contains only *Kosher* ingredients. Many Jews will only eat bread baked by a Jew. This is called *Pas* [bread] *Yisrael*.

A Jew who bakes his own bread or *Challah* must separate a piece of dough — called the separation of *Challah* — before the bread is baked. In Temple times this piece was given to a *Kohen*, but today it is burned and disposed of respectfully. A special blessing is made when separating the *Challah*: *Baruch Ata...Asher Kidshanu B'Mitzvotav Vetzeevanu Lehafrish Challah*. The separation of *Challah* is one of the commandments specially performed by women.

THE REASON BEHIND KASHRUT

The *Torah* commands us to keep the Laws of *Kashrut* and gives no explanation why. We can therefore approach *Kashrut* in one of three ways:

1. G-d made man. Just as a mechanic knows a car, G-d knows man. He sees that for a Jew, eating non-*Kosher* food is not good for his physical or spiritual health. When we go to a doctor, we don't ask the doctor to explain to us the biochemistry of the pills he is prescribing. We trust that he knows better — so too with G-d.
2. We may suggest reasons for *Kashrut*, for example, we are what we eat, and therefore we only eat domesticated animals so that we have good character traits from the food. Eating wild animals would give us wild character traits. *Kosher* animals are cleaner.
3. These laws enable us to attain the ideal of holiness. They distinguish us from other nations.

BEWARE

Beware of what you eat. Just as a person should only eat healthy food, since non-healthy food is likely to cause health problems, so too with *Kashrut*.

Check all foods for *Kashrut* and keep a *Kosher* home. *Kashrut* lists are available from Rabbis.

One should only eat out at a *Kosher* restaurant that has a reliable Rabbinic supervision in place.

 CHAPTER 9

Sefer Torah, Tefillin, Mezuzah & Tzitzit

THE SEFER TORAH, pairs of Tefillin, the Mezuzah and Tzitzit (or a Tallit) are all “Tashmishei Kedushah”, holy items, with which one performs various Mitzvot, commandments, of the Torah.

Each has its own place and function within Jewish life and practice, and each of them have been cherished and revered throughout our history.

SEFER TORAH

A *Sefer Torah* [the scroll containing the Five Books of Moses] is written by a qualified scribe called a *Sofer*. He writes the *Torah* on scrolls of parchment using a feather and *Kosher* ink. The *Sefer Torah* is written in Hebrew with *Ketav Ashurit* [Assyrian writing], in paragraphs, but with no full stops or punctuation marks. The *Sofer* is extremely careful to copy every word from an existing *Sefer Torah* so that every *Sefer Torah* is the same. Even if a single letter is missing the entire scroll is invalid [*Passul*]. It takes between six months and a year to write a *Sefer Torah*.

THE PARCHMENT [KLAF]

Parchment is skin from a *Kosher* animal that has been processed and prepared for writing. The *Sofer* makes lines on the parchment with a blunt awl and writes the Hebrew underneath the line. He writes the text in columns, and fits four to five columns on one piece of parchment. Each piece is then sewn together with sinew [strong thread made from *Kosher* animal sinews]. The ink is made from special nuts, oils and gums, all *Kosher* in origin. The feather is specially shaped as a quill.

HONOUR

The *Sefer Torah* is the most holy object we have. Whenever the *Sefer Torah* is removed from the Ark, we kiss it and follow it to the *Bimah*. We must dress it and adorn it with the finest velvet and silver. We must always stand up if a *Sefer Torah* is removed from the Ark.

The *Sefer Torah* is the holiest treasure in our possession. Every single word in the *Torah* is Divine and is an exact copy of the very first *Sefer Torah* written by Moses.

HACHNASSAT SEFER TORAH

It is a big *Mitzvah* to write a *Sefer Torah*. Since most of us are not scribes, we can help write a *Sefer Torah* by paying a scribe to write one for us. Since a *Sefer Torah* is incomplete even if one letter is missing, therefore if one writes [or buys] one letter in a *Sefer Torah*, it is considered as if one wrote the entire scroll. When a scribe has finished writing a *Sefer Torah*, there is a ceremony called a *Hachnassat* [bringing in] *Sefer Torah*. In this ceremony, a few people are honoured to write the last few letters of the *Torah* [with the help of the scribe] and then the *Torah* is dressed with a velvet mantle and a crown and then placed under a *Chuppah* [canopy, as in a wedding] and led through the streets to the Synagogue amidst dancing and music. Great honour is given to the *Torah* and everybody kisses the *Torah* to show our love and appreciation for this most wonderful gift.

TEFILLIN

The *Torah* commands us to put on *Tefillin* every weekday. The *Tefillin* should preferably be put on in the morning in Synagogue, but it is permitted to put them on all day until sunset.

WHAT ARE TEFILLIN?

Tefillin are leather boxes with straps, which contain the four sections of the *Torah* that mention the *Mitzvah* of *Tefillin*. One of the sections is the *Shema Yisrael*. In the *Tefillin Shel Yad* [*Tefillin* put on the arm next to the heart] the four sections are written on one scroll; in the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* [*Tefillin* put on the head] the sections are written on four different scrolls placed in four different sections.

The obvious difference between the two is that the box of the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* has four distinctive sections, and it has the letter *Shin* drawn on either side of the box. [On the left side, the *Shin* has four heads, representing the four mothers, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah; on the right side, the *Shin* has three

heads representing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]. The *Tefillin* are made by a competent G-d-fearing *Sofer*.

WHY TEFILLIN?

We think with our brain. We feel with our heart. For a few moments each day we should direct our thoughts and feelings to G-d. This is achieved through *Tefillin*. The *Tefillin Shel Yad* directs our emotions [love, fear] to G-d, and the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* directs and concentrates our thoughts to G-d.

Furthermore, the *Tefillin* is strapped to the arm indicating that our actions should follow the Will of G-d.

WHERE ARE TEFILLIN PLACED?

The *Tefillin Shel Yad* is bound round the left arm [on the right arm if one is left-handed] on the biceps upper muscle — so that if the arm is put down, the *Tefillin* will face the heart. The straps are then wound round the arm seven times, and then round the hand. The *Tefillin Shel Rosh* is placed on the forehead, not lower than where the hair starts to grow.

WHO MUST WEAR TEFILLIN?

Every *Bar Mitzvah* boy must start putting on *Tefillin* two months before his *Bar Mitzvah*, in order to practice. Every male aged 13 upwards must put on *Tefillin* every weekday.

Tefillin are not put on *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*, since *Tefillin* are signs that direct our thoughts and feelings to G-d, and on *Shabbat* (and by extension *Yom Tov*), the day itself is the sign, and does not require an additional sign.

WHAT DO YOU SAY WITH TEFILLIN ON?

Before putting on *Tefillin* one says the blessing: *Baruch Ata...Lehoniach Tefillin*. Usually, *Tefillin* are worn for *Shacharit* and the entire *Shacharit* is recited with *Tefillin*. If this is not possible, one should at least put on the *Tefillin* for a few moments, say the *Shema Yisrael*, and say a short prayer.

HONOUR

The *Tefillin* must be kept in a special *Tefillin* bag and treated with great respect. They should not be kept in a dirty place, nor brought into the bathroom or toilet. It is customary to kiss the *Tefillin* when they are taken out of their protective boxes.

REWARD

The *Torah* promises that one who wears *Tefillin* every day will merit long life. The *Tefillin* should be regularly checked by a *Sofer* to make sure that they are *Kosher*.

MEZUZAH

The *Torah* commands us to affix a *Mezuzah* on every door of our home except the bathroom and toilet. A *Mezuzah* is a scroll of parchment with the first two paragraphs of the *Shema* written on it. The scroll is usually placed in a protective case to protect the *Mezuzah* from rain and damp.

The *Mezuzah* is fixed on the right doorpost as you enter, two-thirds of the way up the door with the top of the *Mezuzah* slanting towards the left. When affixing a *Mezuzah*, one says the blessing: *Baruch Ata...Likboa Mezuzah. Mezuzot* must be checked twice in seven years to ascertain their *Kashrut*.

PROTECTIVE POWER

On the reverse side of the *Mezuzah* scroll is written the name of G-d — *Shin, Daled, Yud*. These letters are an acronym for the words: *Shomer Daltot Yisrael*, the Guardian of the Doors of Israel. The *Mezuzah* protects the home physically and spiritually. It is customary to kiss the *Mezuzah* when going in and out of a room. The *Mezuzah* must be fixed in every room of the house except the bathroom and toilet. One should always kiss the *Mezuzah* of the bedroom before going to sleep at night.

TZITZIT

A Jew who wears a four-cornered garment is required by *Torah* to fix *Tzitzit*, threads, to the four corners. A large four-cornered garment is called a *Tallit Gadol*. A small garment is called a *Tallit Katan*. Eight threads with five knots are attached to each corner

THE MEANING OF TZITZIT

Tying a knot has always been a good way of remembering things. The knots and threads in your *Tzitzit* remind us of the 613 *Mitzvot*. The numerical value of the word *ציצית*, *Tzitzit*, is 600:

$$\text{צ} = 90, \text{י} = 10, \text{י} = 90, \text{ת} = 400.$$

Add on 5 knots and 8 threads, makes a total of 613. Looking at the *Tzitzit* reminds us of all the *Mitzvot*.

WHEN DO YOU WEAR TZITZIT?

Every morning, one prays with *Tallit* and *Tefillin*. Many people wear a *Tallit Katan* all day.

When donning a *Tallit Gadol* one says the blessing: *Baruch Ata... Lehitatef B'Tzitzit*.

When donning a *Tallit Katan* in the morning, one says the blessing: *Baruch Ata... Al Mitzvat Tzitzit*. One who wears a *Tallit Gadol* need not recite a separate blessing on the *Tallit Katan*.

The Passages of Life

THE RICH BEAUTY of a traditional Jewish life is replete with many life-cycle *Mitzvot*. Each milestone in our lives is an opportunity to connect with the Divine. The life-cycle *Mitzvot* are part of the unique relationship that our nation has with thee *Al-mighty*. We shall now look briefly at these key Jewish practices and how they shape our lives.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Mikvah</i> and <i>Taharat Hamishpachah</i> | 6. <i>Bar</i> and <i>Bat Mitzvah</i> |
| 2. <i>Brit Milah</i> :
Ritual Circumcision | 7. Marriage |
| 3. <i>Pidyon Haben</i> | 8. <i>Chanukat Habayit</i> :
Consecrating a
New Home |
| 4. <i>Chinuch</i> — Education | 9. Death |
| 5. <i>Opsher</i> :
The Age of Three | 10. The Resurrection
of the Dead |

MIKVAH AND TAHARAT HAMISHPACHAH

The family is the foundation of a Jewish home. Of particular importance is the *Shalom Bayit* — peace in the home. Husband and wife are to live together peacefully and happily, in accordance with the directives of the *Torah*.

The holiness of the family comes through observing a set of laws called the laws of *Taharat Hamishpachah* — family purity.

Included in these laws is *Mikvah* attendance. A *Mikvah* is a pool of water constructed according to Jewish Law. Married women attend a *Mikvah* on a regular basis. Every community must have a *Mikvah*.

CIRCUMCISION — BRIT MILAH

Eight days after a male child is born, [even if the eighth day is *Shabbat*], he is circumcised by a *Mohel* [a qualified Jewish surgeon]. At the *Brit* [circumcision], the child is given his Hebrew name.

The order of a *Brit* is as follows:

1. The baby is brought in by a married couple called *Kvatters*. The *Mohel* announces “*Baruch Haba*” — blessed is he who has entered.
2. Two chairs are arranged side by side. One chair is designated for *Eliyahu Hanavi* [Elijah the Prophet] and the other for the *Sandek* [the man who holds the baby at the time of the circumcision]. The baby is brought in and placed first on Elijah’s chair, and then on the knees of the *Sandek*.
3. The *Brit* is performed. The father makes a special blessing during the *Brit*.
4. The baby is then placed in the hands of a *Sandek* [who stands] and the Rabbi makes a blessing over wine and announces the Hebrew name of the child.
5. After the baby is taken out by the *Kvatter*, a festive meal is served with *Challah*, fish and meat. Special inserts are made at Grace after Meals.

A girl is given her Jewish name at the Reading of the *Torah* and a special celebratory *Kiddush* is made on the *Shabbat* after her birth.

PIDYON HABEN — REDEEMING [FIRST-BORN] SONS

Before G-d took the Jewish people out of Egypt, he struck the Egyptians with ten plagues. The tenth plague was the killing of every first-born child. During this plague, G-d “passed over” the Jewish homes — thus the name of the festival Passover.

From that time on, the firstborn child was to be consecrated to G-d. They were “His” children, since He saved them from the plague. The *Torah* states that on the 31st day after the birth of a *Bchor*—a firstborn male—the father must redeem the child from a *Kohen* (priest), who acts as a representative of G-d. It is as if the father is “buying back” his son from G-d.

In this service called *Pidyon Haben*, the father gives a *Kohen* 102 grams of silver (usually in silver coins) and redeems his son from the *Kohen*. A festive meal is served. A *Pidyon Haben* may not take place on *Shabbat* or a festival.

Kohanim and *Leviim* (Levites) are exempt from *Pidyon Haben*, (and this includes the firstborn son of a daughter of a *Kohen* or *Levi*, even if his father is an Israelite), as is a boy born by Caesarean section.

CHINUCH — EDUCATION

Every father is obliged to teach his children the *Torah* as soon as they can speak. The first verse a child should know is “*Torah Tziva*” and then *Shema Yisrael*, (SEE PAGE 32 AND CHAPTER 15).

Although children are not obliged to keep the *Mitzvot* until they are 13 (boys), and 12 (girls), they should be trained to keep them. This is called *Chinuch*, which means education.

“Educate a child young so that when he or she grows up they will keep to the path.”

PROVERBS 22:6

Children should be well rewarded for learning and keeping *Mitzvot*.

OPSHER — THE AGE OF THREE

Many parents do not cut a boy’s hair until he is three years old, and at three, they cut his hair leaving the *Peyot*, sidelocks. This is called an *Opsher*.

From the age of three, parents must educate a boy to cover his head with a *Yarmulka*, wash his hands in the morning and before meals and wear *Tzitzit*. From the age of three, girls should start to light *Shabbat* candles and be trained to be modest in dress. Both boys and girls should be trained to make *Berachot*, blessings, over their food before eating it.

BAR & BAT MITZVAH

A boy on his 13th birthday, and a girl on her 12th birthday, become of age, and are obliged to keep all the *Mitzvot*.

On the boy’s 13th Hebrew birthday, a festive meal is held, at which it is customary for the boy to say a *Dvar Torah* — a *Torah* thought. Friends and relatives gather to bless the boy, and to give him their best wishes that he should grow to be a fine Jew. It is customary to give the boy a present.

On the first occasion that the *Torah* is read after his 13th birthday, the boy receives an *Aliyah*. On the *Shabbat* after his 13th Hebrew birthday, it is customary for the boy to read *Maftir* and *Haftorah*.

Two months before his *Bar Mitzvah*, a boy should start to put on *Tefillin* every weekday, and on his birthday, he may officially be counted in a *Minyan* and have an *Aliyah*.

A girl will celebrate her *Bat Mitzvah* with a festive meal at which she delivers a *Dvar Torah*. It is customary to give the girl a gift.

MARRIAGE

When a Jewish man and women decide to marry, they will first become engaged. After the engagement, preparations will be made for the wedding. A Rabbi should be consulted as to the date of the wedding.

On the *Shabbat* before the wedding, the *Chattan* [groom] is called up to the Reading of the *Torah*. This is called the *Aufruf*.

The wedding should take place under a *Chuppah* – a bridal canopy. Under the *Chuppah*, the *Chattan* places a golden ring on the *Kallah's* [bride] right index finger and says: “*With this ring shall you be married to me according to the Law of Moses and Israel*”. The marriage is witnessed by two witnesses and the Rabbi will recite the blessings for marriage over a cup of wine.

The *Ketubah* [marriage contract] is read and the ceremony is concluded by the *Chattan* smashing a glass under his heel, after which the congregation shouts “*Mazaltov*” — “*Congratulations!*” The smashing of the glass is to remember the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. After the *Chuppah*, a wedding feast is held with a band and dancing.

At the end of the meal, Grace after Meals [*Birkat Hamazon*] is recited followed by *Sheva Berachot*, seven marital blessings, made over wine. These *Sheva Berachot* are repeated for seven consecutive days after the wedding at each festive meal made in honour of the newly weds. [A *Minyan* must be present to recite the *Sheva Berachot*].

CHANUKAT HABAYIT — CONSECRATING A NEW HOME

After moving into a new home, it is customary to ‘consecrate’ the new home with a housewarming party. If the *Mezuzot* have not yet been fixed, they are affixed at the *Chanukat Habayit*, and the house is dedicated as a home of *Torah*, *Mitzvot* and good deeds.

DEATH

It is a *Mitzvah* to visit the sick and dying. One should always pray for the sick even if the situation is bad. Once a person passes away, the *Chevra Kadisha* [lit. Holy Society] Burial Society or one’s local Rabbi should be contacted. The *Chevra Kadisha* will prepare the body for burial.

Before the body is interred, it is washed and clothed in *Tachrichim*, shrouds, (a man is also clothed with a *Tallit*) and then placed in a wooden coffin. It is a great *Mitzvah* to belong to the *Chevra Kadisha*.

It is a great *Mitzvah* to accompany a dead person to his or her final resting place. Accompanying the dead is called *Levaya*. Burial is called *Kevurah*.

The *Torah* tells us that if a person loses a father, mother, brother, sister, wife, son or daughter, they must observe the Laws of *Aveilut*, Mourning. Before the funeral, the mourner should make a small tear in their clothes to indicate their grief. This is called ‘tearing *Kriah*’.

At a *Levaya*, the family and friends usually assemble in a prayer hall where a eulogy [*Hesped*] is delivered. The coffin is then taken out and lowered into the grave. Those present then take turns to fill the grave with earth.

For seven days, the mourner then sits at home and people come to the home to comfort him or her on their great loss. This is called ‘sitting *Shiva*’. The mood at a *Shiva* house should be sombre, and one should take into mind the broken heart of the mourner.

It is customary that prayers [*Shacharit*, *Minchah* and *Maariv*] are held at the home of the mourner and remembrance prayers are recited [see *Siddur*]. Candles are lit and all mirrors in the house are covered. The *Kaddish* Prayer is recited by the mourner. *Kaddish* is a beautiful praise of G-d [it does not mention the dead] which is said by the mourner at certain parts of the daily service [with a *Minyan*] for 11 months after the death.

The mourner should not wear leather shoes; only slippers etc. like on *Yom Kippur*, and not shave or have a haircut. The first meal a mourner eats after the *Levaya* is bread and a boiled egg prepared by a neighbour.

The first three days of the *Shivah* are for ‘crying’, i.e. when the mourner is grief-stricken, and visitors should not open a conversation with the mourner unless the mourner speaks first. Some have the custom not to eat in the house of a mourner, and one should definitely refrain from laughter and joking.

One usually comforts the mourner with the following words:

“*May the Almighty comfort you together with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem*”.

Jews believe that after the soul departs from this world, it enters the World to Come, and the best way of helping the soul of a loved one or friend who has passed on is to do a *Mitzvah* in memory, and for the merit of that person.

It is customary to learn *Mishnah* (מישנה), which has the same letters as the word *Neshamah* (נשמה), meaning “soul”, in memory of the deceased. One should also give *Tzedakah*, charity, in their merit.

The period of mourning for a parent is 12 months [although *Kaddish* is only recited for 11 months]. The anniversary of the death is called the *Yahrzeit*. On a *Yahrzeit*, one recites *Kaddish* and lights a candle.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

It is a fundamental Jewish belief that, in the Messianic Era, the dead will again return to life in this world. The body will be reconstructed from the Luz bone [the coccyx], which is nourished from the food that we eat at the *Melave Malka* meal on *Motzei Shabbat* [Saturday night].

Burial is essential, and Jewish Law forbids cremation.

Berachot — Blessings

THE AL-MIGHTY CREATED the world. Everything in the world belongs to Him. He created mankind who benefits from the earth's plentiful resources. The Jew shows his gratitude to G-d by making *Berachot*, blessings, to thank G-d before deriving benefit from His gifts, or before performing a *Mitzvah*.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Birkat Hamazon</i> :
Grace after Meals | 5. <i>Birchot HaTorah</i> :
The Torah Blessings |
| 2. 100 Blessings a Day | 6. <i>Tefillah</i> :
Blessings of Praise |
| 3. <i>Netilat Yadayim</i> :
Washing the Hands | 7. Phenomena |
| 4. <i>Birchot Hashachar</i> :
The Morning Blessings | 8. Blessings over Food |
| | 9. Eating Bread |

BIRKAT HAMAZON — GRACE AFTER MEALS

The only *Berachah* mentioned in the *Chumash* is *Birkat Hamazon*, the *Bentching*, or Grace after Meals. This blessing is recited after eating bread. The *Berachah* contains a number of paragraphs which talk about how G-d sustains humanity, and the special nature of *Eretz Yisrael* [Land of Israel] and Jerusalem.

Although this is the only *Berachah* mentioned in the *Chumash*, however, the Rabbis said that if G-d wants us to thank Him after we have eaten, how much more so should we say a *Berachah* to thank Him and *before* we eat. They therefore instituted *Berachot* before eating food. Furthermore, they said we should make a *Berachah* before we do a *Mitzvah*.

100 BLESSINGS A DAY

King David instituted that every Jew should say one hundred blessings every single day. If you take a *Siddur* and count up all the blessings you say, from when you wake up until you go to sleep, there are about one hundred. [To start with, you have the nineteen blessings for the *Amidah*, which are recited three time: during *Shacharit*, *Minchah* and *Maariv*].

We shall now take a closer look at some of those blessings.

NETILAT YADAYIM — WASHING THE HANDS

Upon waking up in the morning, the first thing to do is to say *Modeh Ani*... [see *Siddur*]. This proclaims your thanks and great faith in G-d in returning and refreshing your soul. Following this, the hands are washed using a cup, three times alternatively, right, left, etc. The *Berachah: Baruch ... Al Netilat Yadayim*, is recited.

Note: the washing of the hands for a meal is different from the washing of hands upon awakening:

1. Upon awakening, wash: right, left, right, left, right, left.
2. Before eating bread, wash: right, right, right, left, left, left.

After washing one's hands before a meal of bread, it is customary not to speak until one has made the *Berachah* on the bread.

BIRCHOT HASHACHAR — THE MORNING BLESSINGS

A number of blessings are recited each morning to thank G-d; for our hearing, eyesight, straight posture, ability to walk, our clothing, and in general for being Jewish. [See *Siddur*.]

BIRCHOT HATORAH — THE TORAH BLESSINGS

A special blessing is made each morning over the portion of the *Torah* which we learn on that day. The *Torah* is a beautiful gift from G-d, and every day we thank G-d for this gift.

Note that the same blessing is said when one has an *Aliyah*.

TEFILLAH

Many blessings are said during the prayers, particularly in the *Amidah* [silent prayer] when 18 [actually 19, as one was added later] blessings are said which bless G-d for a variety of things including our livelihood, income, health, justice, peace etc.

BLESSINGS OVER FOOD

A blessing is said before eating any food or drink. Below is a list of foods with the *Berachot* we say over them.

1. Fruit of a tree — *Baruch Ata...Borei Pri Ha-eitz* Vegetables — *Baruch Ata...Borei Pri Ha-adamah* Meat, Milk, Cheese, Fish, Water, Juices — *Baruch Ata...Shehakol Nihyoh Bidvaro*
2. Cake — *Baruch Ata...Borei Minei Mezonot*
3. Bread — *Baruch Ata...Hamotzee Lechem Min Ha-aretz*
4. Wine — *Baruch Ata...Borei Pri Hagafen*

Note that a *Berachah* is said no matter how small the quantity of food.

EATING BREAD

If your meal contains bread, the procedure should be:

1. Wash hands three times [right three times, left three times] with a cup.
2. Say *Berachah* — *Al netilat Yadayim* — Don't speak.
3. Hold bread, say *Berachah* — *Hamotzee lechem min ha-aretz*. Dip bread in salt three times and eat.
4. After finishing eating, wash hands [fingertips] [Mayim Acharonim] and recite Grace after Meals.

Note that grace is only recited if 27 grams / 1 oz bread was eaten. If *Hamotzee* is said, it is not necessary to say any other blessings for food eaten during the meal. However, a blessing must be said over dessert [or wine drunk during the meal].

AFTER EATING CAKE OR SPECIAL FRUITS

After eating cake, or any cooked or baked food from the five species of grain [wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt] or after wine, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives or dates [all foods which the Land of Israel is blessed with], a special blessing called *Al Hamichyah* is said. In essence, it is a shortened form of Grace after Meals [Over grain one says *Al Hamichyah*, over wine *Al Hagefen*, and over fruit *Al Hapeirot*].

Note that one must eat at least 27 grams / 1 oz. to say this blessing.

AFTER EATING ANY OTHER FOOD

After eating any other food, a short blessing called *Borei Nefashot* is recited:
Baruch Ata... Borei Nefashot Rabot Vechesronan Al Kol Ma Shebarata Lehachayot Bahem Nefesh Kol Chai Baruch Chai Haolamim.

BLESSINGS OVER MITZVOT

Blessings are made when putting on a *Tallit*, *Tefillin*; fixing a *Mezuzah*; sitting in a *Sukkah*; *Baruch Ata...*Leishave *Basukkah*; shaking the *Arbah Minim*; *Baruch Ata...**Al Netillat Lulav* separating *Challah* from dough; blowing the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*; *Baruch Ata...*Lishmoa *Kol Shofar*, and on many more occasions.

SHEHECHIYANU

Upon wearing a new garment, eating a new fruit, and on lighting the candles and making *Kiddush* on *Yom Tov*, the *Berachah Shehechyanu* is recited; *Baruch Ata...*Shehecheyanu Vekeymanu Vehigianu LiZeman Haze.

PHENOMENA

Blessings are said over certain natural phenomena, e.g. thunder and lightning, shooting stars, rainbows, etc. A special blessing called *Asher Yatzar* is recited by a person each time he visits the lavatory. This blessing thanks G-d for the wondrous ways in which the body absorbs the food it needs and excretes the waste.

GRATITUDE

Saying blessings is part of the Jewish people's attitude. We make a blessing on hearing bad news as well as good news for we truly believe that everything G-d does is for the best [even if we can't fully understand why]. The words *Baruch Hashem* — Blessed be G-d, are constantly on our lips. This emphasises the total dependency of the Jewish people on our Father in Heaven.

A full list of *Berachot* may be found in a *Siddur*. It is praiseworthy always to use a *Siddur* when saying long *Berachot*.

Kohanim and Leviim

OUR PATRIARCH JACOB had twelve sons whose families grew into the twelve tribes of Israel. The Land of Israel was divided amongst these twelve tribes when Joshua conquered the land. After the death of King Solomon, the Land of Israel was divided into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Even before the destruction of the First Temple, ten of the twelve tribes were exiled from the land, and they are known as the ten lost tribes.

The remaining Jews in the kingdom of Judah became known as “Jews” indicating they come from the tribe or area of Judah. In truth, many Jews from the other tribes also lived in Judah but the separate identity of the tribes ceased.

1. The *Kohen* & the *Levi*
2. *Shevet Levi* — The *Levites*
3. The *Kohanim* [Priests]
4. Special Privileges
Nowadays
5. Special Responsibilities

THE KOHEN & THE LEVI

One tribe, however, the tribe of *Levi* continued to retain its separate identity. Within the tribe of *Levi* were the descendants of Aharon the High Priest, known as *Kohanim*.

Thus today, all Jews identify as being a *Kohen* [a descendant of Aharon], or *Levi* [from the tribe of *Levi*], or simply an Israelite, a Jew with no particular tribal identity.

SHEVET LEVI — THE TRIBE OF LEVI

Levi was the third son of Jacob. The Tribe of *Levi* always remained loyal to *Hashem*, both in Egypt and also by not worshipping the golden calf. They were rewarded with special privileges that would otherwise have belonged to the firstborn of Israel.

These special privileges involved carrying the *Mishkan* [the Tabernacle] and all its furniture when travelling in the desert and serving in the Temples in Jerusalem.

The Leviim were musicians and singers who accompanied the *Kohanim* as they offered the sacrifices in the Temple. In addition, the Leviim served as teachers of *Torah*, touring the country and instructing the people in the ways of the *Torah*. Because of their special duties, they were not given a portion in the land to cultivate as were the other tribes, rather they lived in cities dotted around the country. The *Torah* commands that they were to receive Maaser a tenth of the produce of the land, which was paid to them as a kind of wage for performing their work on behalf of the people.

Nowadays, the special privilege of the *Levi* is that he is called up second [after the *Kohen*] by the reading of the *Torah* and he also assists the *Kohanim* with the washing of their hands before they recite the Priestly Blessing.

THE KOHANIM [PRIESTS]

Hashem chose Aharon, *Moshe's* brother to be the High Priest — *Kohen Gadol*. All Aharon's descendants became *Kohanim* — priests. [It must be noted that all *Kohanim* belong to the tribe of *Levi* — they are just a select group within the tribe of *Levi*].

The *Kohanim* had special privileges in the Temple that included bringing the sacrifices, offering incense, lighting the *Menorah*. The first part of the book of Vayikra describes in detail the laws of the sacrifices performed by the *Kohanim* and for this reason it is called *Torat Kohanim* — the Laws of Priests.

Kohanim wore special garments in the Temple and had to be particular in the laws of purity — not allowing themselves to become Tameh — impure — by being in contact with something impure, for example, a dead body.

A man who has touched a dead body must be sprinkled with the waters of the Red Heifer before he enters the Temple.

THE KOHEN GADOL

Amongst the *Kohanim*, one *Kohen* was chosen to be the *Kohen Gadol*, the High Priest. He wore eight special garments and was considered to be the holiest

person in Israel. One of the garments was a breastplate with twelve stones with the name of one tribe inscribed on each stone. Within this breastplate were the Urim VeTumim — a piece of parchment on which was written the Divine Name of *Hashem*. The Urim VeTumim guided the *Kohen Gadol* in his decisions. On *Yom Kippur*, we read of the special service of the *Kohen Gadol* inside the Temple.

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES NOWADAYS

Birkat Kohanim

One of the great privileges given by *Hashem* to the *Kohanim* is to bless the Jewish people using the special priestly blessing as stated in the *Torah* [Numbers 6:24-28]. In Israel, during *Shacharit*, the *Kohanim* bless the people every single day. Outside Israel, the custom is only to perform this ceremony during *Mussaph* on festivals. The ceremony is called *Nesiat Kappayim* which means “Raising of the hands” because the *Kohanim* raise their hands to shoulder height [spreading their fingers in a certain position] when they give the blessing. The blessing is given whilst the *Kohanim* stand next to the Ark on the platform. The platform is called a *Duchan* and sometimes the ceremony is called *Duchaning*. Both the *Kohanim* and the people receiving the blessing cover their heads with a *Tallit* whilst the blessing is said, the *Kohanim* face the people with their backs to the Ark and the people face the *Kohanim*. In preparation for *Duchaning*, the *Kohen* has his hands washed by a *Levi* and he also removes his shoes. Before the *Kohanim* start to bless, they make a special *Berachah*, “Blessed are You... who has commanded us to bless His people in love”.

Aliyah

Another privilege belonging to the *Kohanim* is the honour of being called first to the *Torah*.

If a *Kohen* is present but there is no *Levi*, then the *Kohen* says the blessings a second time in place of the absent *Levi*.

If no *Kohen* is present, then either a *Levi* or *Yisrael* may be called up.

Precedence

A *Kohen* is always honoured first in a group. For example, if three or more males over age 13 ate a meal of bread, then it is customary for one to invite the others to say Grace. This is called *Zimun*. A *Kohen* must first be offered this privilege.

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As has already been explained, all *Kohanim* must be directly descended from the family of Aharon.

Just as there are special privileges associated with the Priesthood, so there are also special responsibilities which are necessary to enable the *Kohanim* to reach a higher spiritual level than the rest of Israel.

A *Kohen* is forbidden to marry a divorcee.

A *Kohen* is forbidden to enter a building if he knows that there is a dead body there. This does not apply to his own close family: i.e. parents, child, brother, wife or unmarried sister.

If a *Kohen* attends a funeral, he should enter a special room in the *cemetery*, separated from the main hall where the coffin lies before burial.

A *Kohen* is forbidden to come nearer than four cubits (six feet) to a grave.

Jewish History

THE WORLD WAS created 5783 years ago [at the time of this publication]. G-d created the world in six days and on the seventh day He rested. Adam was created on Friday, the sixth day of creation. There were ten generations from Adam to Noah, and ten from Noah to Abraham.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Creation | 7. The Kings of Israel and |
| 2. Abraham — Moses | Judah's Exile and the |
| 3. Moses | Second Temple |
| 4. Joshua — King David | 8. Exile — Present Day |
| 5. The First Temple | 9. Modern History |
| 6. The Division of the | 10. The Holocaust |
| Kingdom | 11. Israel |

CREATION

Day 1 — heavens and earth, light and dark.

Day 2 — sky and water.

Day 3 — land and seas, vegetation, trees.

Day 4 — sun, moon, stars.

Day 5 — living creatures.

Day 6 — man.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| • Adam | • Noah |
| • 10 generations | • 10 generations |

- Abraham
- Isaac
- Jacob
- 12 Tribes
- 11 sons *Levi*
- *Kehot*
- Amram
- *Moshe*

The history of the Jewish people began with Abraham. In his times, all the people in the world were idol worshippers. They used to bow down to the sun, moon and stars. It was Abraham who, even at an early age, proclaimed that there is only one G-d in the world and that He alone is the Creator, and all forms of worship and prayer must be to Him.

Abraham persuaded thousands of people to believe in one G-d. G-d spoke to Abraham and made a covenant with him, that his children would be the “chosen people” and they were destined to inherit the Land of Israel.

G-d tested Abraham ten times to see if Abraham believed fully in G-d. The tenth test is the most famous. G-d commanded Abraham to offer his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham listened to G-d’s command without delay and travelled to Mount Moriah and built an altar. Just before Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, an angel from heaven stopped him. Abraham offered a ram instead. This episode is called the Akeida which means “tied up” because Isaac was bound on the altar. We read this episode on *Rosh Hashanah*. The *Shofar* is a reminder of the ram’s horn in the story.

G-d gave Abraham a very special *Mitzvah*, the *Mitzvah* of circumcision — *Brit Milah*. Abraham circumcised himself when he was 99 years old. Abraham’s wife was called Sarah. She was well known for her piety. It was Sarah who was the first Jewess to light candles before *Shabbat*.

ABRAHAM — MOSES

Isaac, the son and heir of Abraham and Sarah, followed in the path of his parents and thus brought up his son Jacob [later named by G-d Israel] who in turn taught the family tradition to his twelve sons.

Later, Jacob and his family, 70 people in all, went to live in Egypt. It was G-d’s will that the Jewish people should in its infancy be prepared through suffering and bondage to become a spiritually and morally strong people.

MOSES

Moses was 80 years old when G-d commanded him to take the Jews out of Egypt. The Exodus was in the year 2448. 49 days after the Exodus, the Jews received the *Torah* on Mount Sinai and became the Jewish Nation. The Israelites

journeyed through the wilderness for 40 years, after which they entered the Land of Israel with Joshua.

JOSHUA — KING DAVID

Joshua divided the lands between the 12 tribes. After Joshua, a number of prophets and judges ruled over Israel, with such leaders as Deborah, Gideon, Samson and Eli until the prophet Samuel anointed King Saul as the first king of Israel.

After King Saul came King David, perhaps the most famous of all kings. King David slew Goliath in combat, beat the Plishtim [a nation at war with Israel] and returned the Holy Ark to Jerusalem. He also composed the book of *Tehillim* — Psalms.

THE FIRST TEMPLE

King David's son, King Solomon, built the first Temple in Jerusalem in the year 2935. The Temple was a beautiful building which housed the Holy Ark. Inside the Ark were the tablets of stone upon which the Ten Commandments were written.

The first Temple stood for 410 years.

- ◆ **Moses:** led Jews out of Egypt in 2448 and received the *Torah* on Mount Sinai.
- ◆ **Joshua:** entered the Land of Israel in 2488. Joshua died in 2516 at age 110.
- ◆ **Deborah:** 2650-2676
- ◆ **Gideon:** 2716
- ◆ **Samson:** 2830
- ◆ **Eli:** 2830
- ◆ **Saul:** Samuel anoints Saul in 2880.
- ◆ **David:** 2854-2924. Died on *Shavuot*. Lived 70 years.
- ◆ **Solomon:** commences building of Temple in 2928

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

After King Solomon's death, the Kingdom was split into two, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah. Initially, the King of Judah was Solomon's son Rechavam, and the Northern Kingdom was ruled by Jereboam. Thereafter, each kingdom had its own king until the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians on the 9th Av, 3338.

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

	King Solomon	
JUDAH		ISRAEL
Rechavam 2964-2981		Jereboam ben Nevat 2964-2985
Aviyah 2981-2983		Nadav 2985-2986
Asa 2983-3024		Baasha 2986-3009
Yehoshafat 3024-3047		Elah 3009-3010
Yehoram 3047-3055		Zimri 3010
Ahaziah 3055-3056		
Athaliah 3056-3061		Omri 3010-3021
Yoash 3061-3101		Ahab 3021-3041
Amaziah 3101-3129		Ahaziah 3041-3043
Uzziah 3129-3167		Yehoram 3043-3056
Yotham 3167-3183		Yehu 3056-3083

Achaz 3183-3199	Yehoachaz 3083-3098
Hezekiah 3199-3228	Yehoash 3098-3114
Menasheh 3228-3283	Jereboam II 3114-3153
Amon 3283-3285	Zechariah 3153-3154
Yoshiah 3285-3316	<i>Menachem</i> 3154-3164
Yehoahaz 3316	Pekahiah 3164-3166
Yehoakim 3316-3327	Pekah ben Remaliah 3166-3187
Yehoachin 3327	Hoshea ben Elah 3187-3205
Zedekiah 3327-3338	
Destruction of First Temple 3338	

EXILE AND THE SECOND TEMPLE

After the destruction of the first Temple, the Jews were exiled to Babylon for 70 years. Towards the end of this period, the great miracle of *Purim* occurred [14th *Adar* 3405] when the Jews in the vast Persian Empire were miraculously saved from the wicked *Haman*.

At the end of the 70 years exile, G-d took pity upon His people and returned them to the Land of Israel under the leadership of Ezra the Scribe. The second Temple was rebuilt, and the people re-settled on their land.

A wave of religious persecution by Antiochus, King of Syria, led to the brave Hasmonean revolt which defeated the Syrian armies and freed the Land of Israel from foreign domination. A great miracle occurred in the Temple — a small jar of oil enough only to last for one day, lasted for eight — the miracle of *Chanukah*. [25th Kislev 3622].

Finally, the land fell under Roman domination and on the 9th Av in the year 3828, the Roman army, under the leadership of Vespasian and his son Titus, destroyed the Temple. Nothing but the Kotel Maaravi — the Western Wall, remained.

EXILE — PRESENT DAY

After the destruction of the second Temple, the Jews were dispersed all around the world. Initially, Jewish communities sprang up in Babylon and then in Spain and North Africa but after great persecution, the Jews were expelled from one country to another with a gradual eastward movement: Spain — France — Germany — Poland — Russia. Jews would live wherever they were tolerated, although even in the dark hours of the exile some magnificent Jewish communities were built.

MODERN HISTORY

In the late 19th century, most of the world's Jewish population lived in Eastern Europe. However, there was a great deal of anti-Semitism [Jew hatred] and many Jews sought a land of their own. The obvious choice was *Eretz Yisrael*, but in those days it was in Turkish hands. Nevertheless, many Jews emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* and a small Yishuv — settlement, was established.

During the First World War, the British took control of Palestine [then the name for Israel] and in 1917, the British Government issued a statement called the Balfour Declaration viewing with favour the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

THE HOLOCAUST

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of Jewish History was the Holocaust. This was the systematic murder of six million Jews by Hitler during the Second World War. Hitler and his men brutally murdered millions, either by shooting, hanging or gassing in a gas chamber. The horrors of the Holocaust are well known to all.

ISRAEL

It was only in 1948, after the tragedy of the Holocaust during World War Two, that a Jewish State was finally declared. Since its independence, Israel has fought four major wars against its Arab neighbours:

- 1948 — the War of Independence,
- 1956 — Sinai Campaign,
- 1967 — Six Day War, and
- 1973 — *Yom Kippur* War

In recent years thousands of Jews have returned to Israel. Jews the world over are now awaiting the coming of *Mashiach*, who will bring all Jews back to *Eretz Yisrael*.

 CHAPTER 14

Eretz Yisrael

THROUGHOUT THE PAGES of the *Chumash*, we find many times in that G-d promised *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his descendants. Thus, the world over, Israel is known as the Promised Land. The first reference is in the *Sidra of Lech Lecha*, when G-d first spoke to Abraham:

“The L-rd appeared to Abraham and said, I shall give this land to your descendants.”

[GENESIS 12:7]

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT ERETZ YISRAEL?

Many of the 613 *Mitzvot* are connected with *Eretz Yisrael*, e.g. Tithes, the *Shmittah* [Sabbatical year when the land lies fallow], worshipping and sacrifices in the Temple etc. *Eretz Yisrael* has a special *kedushah* — holiness — so much so, that one who lives there may only leave for a very good reason, e.g. to marry a wife or to learn *Torah*. Many great Jews kissed the land upon entering.

It is a *Mitzvah* to live in *Eretz Yisrael*. Those who live in the Diaspora should support the needy in *Eretz Yisrael*. Going to live in Israel is called going on *Aliyah*.

THE HOLY PLACES

Although the whole of *Eretz Yisrael* is a Holy Land, certain sites are of special significance:

The Western Wall

The only remaining wall standing from the Second Temple in Jerusalem is the Western Wall, often referred to as “the Kotel”. The *Midrash* tells us that the Divine Presence never departed from the Wall. Anyone who visits feels deeply touched and prays for the rebuilding of the Temple and for peace, prosperity and good health for the Jewish people and all mankind. It is called the “Gate of Heaven”. The Wall is also known as the Wailing Wall since many Jews go there to lament the destruction of the Temple and hope and to pray for *Mashiach*.

Kever Avot

The burial place of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and the first humans, Adam and Eve is called “*Kever Avot*”, the Grave of the Fathers. This holy place is in a cave in *Chevron*. This cave is called *Marat Hamachpaylah*, the “Cave of Doubles”, since four couples are buried there.

Kever Rachel

The Matriarch Rachel is buried on the way to *Chevron* in *Kever Rachel*. It is customary to pray at these sites and ask the Fathers and Mothers of the Jewish people to intercede in Heaven on our behalf.

Miron, Tiberias & Tzfat

Many great Jewish Sages are buried in *Eretz Yisrael*. To name a few; *Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai* in *Miron*, (thousands of Jews flock to his grave on *Lag B’Omer*), *Rambam* and *Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes* in *Tiberias*, the *Arizal* and *Rabbi Yosef Karo*, the author of the *Shulchan Aruch* in *Tzfat*. All the above cities are in the northeast of Israel near the Sea of *Tiberias*.

ISRAEL TODAY

At present, there are over eight million Jews living in Israel. The capital city is Jerusalem where the government sits in a building called the *Knesset*.

Industry and technology is highly developed and the agricultural settlements called a *kibbutz* or *moshav* produce high quality produce. The currency is the Israeli Shekel. Israel’s main airport is called Ben-Gurion airport near Tel-Aviv, a large city on the Mediterranean. The spoken language is *Ivrit* — Hebrew with *Sephardic* pronunciation.

MAP OF ISRAEL

 CHAPTER 15

The 12 Torah Passages

IMAGINE YOU WERE given the task of selecting from all Jewish holy books a number of passages that summarise the essence of Judaism. This is exactly what the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, Rabbi *Menachem Mendel Schneersohn*, a man of extraordinary wisdom and vision, in fact the greatest Jewish leader of our generation, did just that. The *Rebbe* selected 12 *Torah* Passages — 12 *Pesukim* – from the entire range of Jewish literature and suggested that every child learn these *Pesukim* by heart.

THE VERSES

Torah

“The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov.”

[DEUTERONOMY 33:4]

The *Torah* was given to us through *Moshe*, G-d’s most faithful servant. Every single Jewish boy or girl inherits the *Torah* for him or her self. Imagine how happy a person would be if he just received news that he had inherited 10 million dollars! So too should we be happy on realizing that we have the *Torah* which is worth far more than money.

The *Torah* does not just belong to the Rabbis or *scholars*, but to every Jew. Every Jew has his portion in the *Torah*. In fact, the soul of every Jew is like a letter in a *Sefer Torah* — The *Torah* is only complete when all letters are present. Every Jew must study *Torah* to the best of his ability.

Shema

“Hear O Israel, G-d is our L-rd, G-d is One.”

[DEUTERONOMY. 6:4]

The *Shema* teaches us that G-d is One and that He is everywhere.

The word *Echad*, אֶחָד, meaning “one” is made up of three letters. The ׀ represents the four corners of the earth, the ׀ represents the seven heavens and the earth [7 + 1 = 8]. Both the ׀ and ׀ have their source in the א — the One Creator.

This teaches us that not only do we believe there is only one G-d [unlike some religions who believe in many gods], but more than that. We believe that everything in the universe is created afresh every single second by G-d. Just as your heart pumps blood around the body, so too does G-d pump His creative energy into the universe every single second by bringing the whole world into existence. [If G-d were for one second to withdraw this energy, we would cease to exist].

Since G-d is a “hands-on” Creator, we therefore understand that everything that happens in the world is by *Hashgachah Pratit* — by Divine Providence. The *Baal Shem Tov*, the founder of the *Chassidic* movement, taught that even if the wind turns over a leaf in the street, it is by Divine Providence. G-d has a master plan for creation.

Bechol

“In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt.”

[PESACHIM 116B]

Some 3300 years ago, G-d delivered the Jewish people from Egypt, from slavery to freedom. As the *Haggadah* tells us: “If G-d had not taken us out of Egypt, then we would still be slaves there now”.

We thank G-d every day for our freedom, and we promise in our heart to use our liberty in the best possible way, chosen servants of the King of Kings.

There is a deeper explanation. The Hebrew word for Egypt — *Mitzrayim* — can also mean a “limitation”. Our *Yetzer Hora* often tells us that we can’t do a certain *Mitzvah*. Going out of Egypt in the spiritual sense, means breaking away from our own biggest enemy — our *Yetzer Hora*.

The most powerful weapon we have to combat the *Yetzer Hora* is the *Torah*. The *Talmud* says: “G-d says — I created the *Yetzer Hora* and I have created the *Torah* as an antidote”.

In every single generation, and in fact, every single day, we must all make the greatest effort to break out of our own personal Egypt, accept the *Torah* and draw closer to the Holy Land — to serving G-d properly.

Kol

“All Israel have share in the World to Come, as it is stated [Isaiah 60:21]: ‘And Your people are all Tzaddikim [righteous].’ They shall inherit the land forever. They are the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, in which I take pride.”

[SANHEDRIN 90A]

G-d takes special pride in each and every Jew. He created us, and He cares for us, and watches over us like a gardener who watches over a tender plant. And as we grow, learning His *Torah*, and doing the wonderful *Mitzvot* in it, G-d prepares for us a place in the World to Come.

The Rabbis tell us that the pleasures of the World to Come are unimaginable. Even if we were to add together all the greatest pleasures of this world, they would not equal one hour of the pleasure in the World to Come.

However, being here on earth is the purpose of creation and the World to Come is only a reward. We should not serve G-d in order to get the reward. The Rabbis tell us: “Better one hour of *Teshuvah* and good deeds in this world than all of the World to Come”.

Ki

“It is within your close reach to follow the Torah in speech, feeling and deed.”

[DEUTERONOMY 30:14]

One should never think that the *Torah* is too difficult to keep. G-d never asks a person to do something without giving him the ability to do it. G-d asks every Jew to keep the *Torah* and this posuk tells us that it is within our reach to fulfil the *Mitzvot*.

V'Hinei

“G-d stands over him, and the whole earth is full of His glory and He searches his mind and heart [to see] if he is serving Him as is fitting.”

[*Tanya* CH. 41]

We have previously spoken of G-d as a powerful Creator. However, this passage from the *Chabad* classic *Tanya* teaches us that G-d is a very personal G-d. He is not at all removed from us, too busy with universal affairs to care about us. On the contrary, G-d is concerned for every individual and searches our mind and heart to see if we are serving Him properly.

In every circumstance and at any given moment, a person should be aware that G-d is standing by him and watching his thoughts, speech and action. This thought should fill a person with feelings of *Yirat Shamayim* — fear of Heaven.

Bereishit

“In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth.”

[GENESIS 1:1]

The opening verse of the *Torah* tells us that G-d created the heavens and earth. Our Sages of blessed memory comment on the world Beraishit — “in the beginning” — that it is made of two words, Beit and Raishit literally meaning two firsts. They explain that in fact, the world was created for *Torah* and the people of Israel, both of whom are scripturally referred to as Raishit [first]. The purpose of creation is that the Jews fulfil the directives of the *Torah*.

Bearing this in mind, we must take everything in the world and use it for a *Mitzvah* purpose. Even when we do simple things such as eating, we should eat for a holy purpose i.e. to serve G-d with the energy produced by the food. In short, we should serve G-d in all our ways.

V'Shinantom

“And you shall teach the Torah to your children, and you should speak about them, when you are at home and when you travel, before you lie down to sleep and when you wake up.”

[DEUTERONOMY 6:7]

The *Torah* instructs us to teach the words of *Torah* to our children and students. Learning *Torah* is one of the greatest *Mitzvot* and what one learns, one should teach to others.

This Pasuk further instructs us that our daily conversation should be filled with words of *Torah*, both at home and away from home. We should refrain from idle chatter.

“When you lie down and get up” is the Biblical source for reading the *Shema* in the evening and morning.

Yogati

“If someone says: ‘I have worked hard but I have not been successful,’ don’t believe him. If someone says: ‘I have not worked hard and I have been successful,’ don’t believe him. If someone says: ‘I have worked hard and I have been successful,’ believe him!”

Talmud

G-d is good and wishes to give us good things. However, He wants us to earn what we have. In the Book of Job, it is written, “*Man was born to toil*”. We shall feel much more fulfilled if we know we have worked hard and deserve a reward. True success therefore comes only if a person has worked hard.

V’ahavta

“Rabbi Akiva says: ‘you should love your fellow as yourself’, is a basic principle of the Torah.”

[LEVITICUS 19:18, Midrash]

The 613 *Mitzvot* can be divided into two categories: *Mitzvot* between man and G-d, e.g. prayer, *Tefillin*, *Mezuzah*; and *Mitzvot* between man and man. One may not neglect either *Mitzvot* between man and G-d or between man and man. In fact, if one is lacking in the *Mitzvah* of *Ahavat Yisrael*

— Love your Fellow Jew — then there is something missing in one's love of G-d. As our Father in Heaven, G-d is happy with us when we love each other and live peacefully. Thinking about another and doing a favour for another is a basic principle of the *Torah*.

V'zeh

“The purpose of the creation of every Jew and of all the worlds is to make a dwelling place for G-d in this world.”

[*Tanya* CH. 33]

This quote from *Tanya* teaches us that the reason why G-d made each Jew and why He created the whole world is so that by following the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* we can make ourselves, and our homes and the world around us, a dwelling place for G-d where He will live, just as we live in our own homes.

Yismach

“The Jews should rejoice in their Maker..’ — every Jew should share in G-d’s joy, who rejoices and is happy in His dwelling in this world.”

[*Tanya* CH. 33]

Every Jew, no matter what sort of background or learning he has had until now, even until a minute ago, so long as he is a Jew, is a member of the Jewish people; and he should be happy and proud that *Hashem* has given him the special and greatest mission he could have — to make himself, make his home and make the world around him, a place where G-d is at home.

FAQs

Proof of G-d's Existence

THE CHALLENGE TO “*prove to me that G-d exists*” is as old as religion itself. Religion is defined as a belief in the existence of a superhuman controlling power, and when we give Judaism as our religion our belief in G-d is axiomatic. Yet so many Jews still question this very foundation.

It is still more difficult to articulate a convincing response. Furthermore, any answer is usually followed by a torrent of protest questioning such a belief, like the questions, “if there is a G-d, where was He during the Holocaust?” and, “why do bad things happen to good people?” In this chapter, we shall focus on the core issue. Before doing so, we shall state briefly the Jewish belief in G-d. Many Jews recite daily the Thirteen Principles of Faith, based on the commentary of *Maimonides* to *Mishnah* Sanhedrin 10:1. The first four principles are:

1. I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the Creator and Guide of all the created beings, and that He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is One and Alone; that there is no oneness in any way like Him; and that He alone is our G-d – was, is, and will be.
3. I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is incorporeal; that He is free from all anthropomorphic properties; and that He has no likeness at all.
4. I believe with complete faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the first and the last.

Prove the existence of G-d? In truth we must analyse the question before we attempt an answer. What is considered a proof? How does one prove that anything

exists? Take, for example, a blind man. Does colour exist for the blind man? He cannot see colour yet it still exists. That fact is established by others who can see. The blind man believes and trusts that his fellow men can see that colour does exist although it is beyond his personal experience.

For a further example, take electricity. When we turn on a light, can we see electricity? The answer is no, we see only its effect. Take gravity. When an object falls, we cannot see, hear, feel, taste or smell gravity – we see only its effect. All agree that gravity is an undisputed fact of nature – since we see its effect. Scientists today are still baffled as to exactly what is the “stuff” of gravity.

In short, the proof of existence of any matter does not necessarily mean that we have to sense it in any way. It exists because we see its effect or, as in the case of the blind man, we believe others who can see it. G-d, we believe, does not have a body or form of body. He is everywhere and creates time and space. By definition, we cannot transcribe any physical description to G-d. By definition, man cannot actually see G-d. In order, therefore, to prove the existence of G-d we must rely either on seeing His effect ourselves, or on others who have seen His effect (like the blind man).

To summarise, proving the existence of G-d may be done in two ways. First, by examining whether anyone has actually witnessed something Divine or, secondly, by extrapolating proof of existence from His effect. To express it slightly differently, by tradition or by metaphysical proof. We shall also examine proof of existence by studying Jewish history and the fulfilment of prophecy.

Before we examine all these avenues it must be mentioned that the great Jewish philosophers disagreed as to which is the strongest proof. Rabbi *Yehudah Halevi* in his book *Kuzari* (2:26) argues that “the highest faith is that derived through tradition alone, in which case metaphysical proof should only be used as a last resort to preclude disbelief”. *Maimonides* (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:51) disagrees. He argues that “our faith begins with the traditions that have been transmitted to us by our ancestors and in our sacred literature. This is alluded to in the verse, ‘Hear O Israel, G-d our L-rd, G-d is one.’ However, the highest level of faith comes from philosophical proof, and those who have the ability are required to prove the foundations of our faith”.

In this essay we shall examine all avenues. Our approach is that, through a combination of traditional, philosophical and historical proofs, any thinking Jew will be led to a firm faith in the existence of G-d.

THE TRADITIONAL PROOF

In a court of law, the strongest proof that something happened or existed is a witness statement. Seeing is believing. You cannot compare something seen to something heard.

Any historical fact is proven by those who witnessed and recorded the event. It follows that the more witnesses to that event, the more bona fide the fact.

One of the most celebrated holidays in the Jewish calendar is Passover. On *Seder* night Jews all over the world gather in family groups to recall the Exodus from Egypt. The evening is full of ritual and the *Haggadah* is our guide. One thing common to all is the eating of *Matzah* – the bread of affliction. The *Zohar* (an early *Kabbalistic* work) calls *Matzah* the bread of faith. It reminds us that the Jews ate *Matzah* upon leaving Egypt. Although customs may differ, the basic story of the Exodus remains the same. Jews from Bombay, Birmingham or Belarus all tell the same story.

Ask any Jew how many plagues there were in Egypt and his answer would be 10. If anyone suggested there were 11, he would immediately be contradicted, not just by the historical detail, as presented in the *Torah*, but primarily because of the yearly re-enactment of the Ten Plagues at the *Seder*. We have a custom of spilling some of the wine at the mention of each plague. We would have remembered if there were 11 plagues. No, there were 10.

In fact, had there been “Chinese whispers”, a distortion of the story over generations, we would have ended up with different versions of the story. All agree, however, that the Jews left Egypt and, forty-nine days later, stood before Mount Sinai and heard the Ten Commandments from G-d.

This is known, not just because a book (the *Torah*) tells us so, but simply by tradition – by the fact that generation after generation of Jews have transmitted this story, and that it is based on the actual experience of an entire nation. It therefore remains an undisputed historical fact. The Jews who left Egypt witnessed the Ten Plagues, the Exodus, and revelation at Sinai, and transmitted these events down the generations.

Throughout Jewish history there were never less than approximately a million Jews who transmitted this tradition, and the basic story remained the same even when the Jews were dispersed and scattered to the four corners of the earth. At Sinai, 600,000 men between the ages of 20 and 60, plus women and children (and men under the age of 20 and over the age of 60) – a total of approximately three million people – heard the Ten Commandments from G-d Himself. This event, recorded in the *Torah*, is, at the same time, a witnessed

event of history and therefore an undisputed historical fact. To discredit it is highly unscientific.

It must be stressed that the revelation at Sinai was unlike any other revelation claimed by any other religion. In Christianity, revelation is assigned to one man or to a small group of disciples, and the same is true in Islam (to Mohammed) and Buddhism (to an ancient Hindu sage, the Buddha – enlightened one – whose followers adopted his teachings and doctrines and called themselves Buddhists after him). Not so in Judaism – the revelation was to an entire nation.

In fact, a great Sage, Rabbi *Shlomo Ben Aderet (Rashba)*, explains that the stand at Sinai was necessary because if revelation had been only to one man – Moses – it would have been disputed. He explains: imagine Moses coming to Egypt and telling the Jews that the time for their redemption had arrived. At first, they doubt him, but once he begins to bring about the Ten Plagues they realise that there are supernatural powers at work. Moses outwits the Egyptian magicians and performs plagues they cannot reproduce. Even they admit that this is the “finger of G-d” at work. Moses, in the name of G-d, constantly gives a warning followed by a plague. After the Ten Plagues and the Exodus, and especially after the splitting of the sea, the *Torah* attests to the fact that the people “believed in G-d and in Moses His servant”.

However, there would be one problem. The Jews had been told by a creature of flesh and blood that G-d had sent him with a message. There was still room for the sceptic – particularly in a later generation – to doubt. Thus, says *Rashba*, the stand at Sinai was necessary. Witnessed by an entire nation, G-d revealed Himself on Mount Sinai and gave the Ten Commandments. Each Jew experienced the same level of communication that Moses received. Thereafter, the Jews were fully convinced that when Moses transmitted the word of G-d it was truly Divine in origin.

It must be mentioned that the Children of Israel at that time were not uneducated slaves who could easily be fooled. Among them were great sages, priests, architects and builders, professionals who built pyramids and other structures – wonders of the world – whose architecture still baffles modern builders. They were a knowledgeable generation – and certainly argumentative and stiff necked as was displayed on many occasions. If part of the nation had “dreamt up” a story it would certainly have been rejected by the others.

The Exodus and revelation at Sinai remain undisputed historical facts. As previously mentioned, witnesses are the greatest proof in a court of law – how much more so, the eyewitness account of an entire nation! That is certainly a

most scientific proof of the existence of G-d. Although we cannot see Him – like the blind man who can't see colour – our ancestors witnessed this revelation and transmitted the fact as both an oral and a written tradition. It may be for this reason that in the first commandment G-d says, “I am the L-rd your G-d who brought you forth from the land of Egypt”. The creation of the world is a much more complex and amazing phenomenon than the Exodus from Egypt, so why didn't G-d say, “I am the L-rd your G-d who created heaven and earth”? One possible answer is that scientists today still question the origin of the cosmos, and some ignore the G-d issue. When G-d communicated with the Jews, he made the communication very personal. “I am the G-d you have witnessed taking you out of Egypt, and who now is talking to you.” The people did not need any philosophical proofs. Their own eyes saw, and their own ears heard. They were witnesses to the stand at Sinai. That is the greatest proof!

The best known prayer in Judaism is the *Shema*. In a *Sefer Torah* or *Mezuzah* the letter Ayin (א) of the word *Shema* and the letter *Dalet* (ד) of the word *Echad* are written in large bold letters. Together they spell the Hebrew word Ed (עד) which means a witness. Whenever a Jew recites the *Shema* he bears witness to the existence of one G-d, an existence experienced by our forefathers and passed on to us through an unbroken line of tradition.

PHILOSOPHICAL PROOFS

In addition to the traditional proof, we may now go on to look at other philosophical proofs. Many proofs have been cited and we shall limit ourselves in this chapter to the better known and most frequently quoted ones.

1. CHOVOT HALEVOVOT

The classic work Chovot HaLevovot quotes a beautiful parable. Once a Rabbi entered a king's palace and was granted an audience with the king. The king asked him the question, “how do you know of the existence of the Creator?” The Rabbi respectfully asked the king to leave the room for a short while. On the table was a quill, an inkwell and some paper. While the king was out of the room, the Rabbi wrote a beautiful poem on the paper.

When the king returned, he noticed the poem and was amazed at its poetic style. The ink was still wet, and the king praised the Rabbi for writing such a beautiful poem. The Rabbi replied that he had not written the poem, rather, he had taken the inkwell, poured it onto the paper and the letters had formed themselves. The king ridiculed such a suggestion saying

that it was impossible for the ink to arrange itself into a single letter, let alone a word, let alone a sentence, and certainly not into a beautiful poem!

The Rabbi replied, “there is your answer. If the ink in an inkwell cannot form a poem without the hand of a poet, then certainly the world, which is infinitely more complex than the poem could not possibly form itself without the hand of a Master Creator!”

CHOVOT HALEVOT (1:6)

A similar fictional story – although more contemporary – is told about the Americans, Russians and Chinese who got together and decided to send a manned spaceship to Mars. After spending billions of dollars, roubles and yen, and decades of preparation, a spaceship finally blasts off heading for Mars.

A while later an astronaut takes a small step for man but a large step for mankind and steps out onto the Martian surface. The cameras beam his every move back to earth. Suddenly, after taking a few steps, the world is stunned by the sight of a can of Coca Cola lying on a nearby rock. The astronaut picks up the can, sees it's the real thing, for written on the can are the words “*Coke trademark – made in the USA*”. The Russians and Chinese are in uproar – the Americans had obviously deceived them and sent an earlier spaceship. The Americans deny this claim but are baffled by the appearance of the can of Coke. Finally, the press interviews a professor from Oxford University who explains the conundrum by suggesting that over billions and billions of years it is quite possible that, through evolution etc., a can of Coke was formed, even displaying the words “made in the USA”!

His comments are ridiculed. Even after billions of years the mathematical probability of these words forming by themselves is nil. How much more so the creation of this world which is amazingly complex? Even today, scientists agree that they have fathomed only the tip of the iceberg of the complexity of the universe. How could it possibly have formed by itself without a master architect and designer?

A similar story is told of a man who entered a fully automated car factory and, after seeing an entire car being produced by a machine from beginning to end, came to the conclusion that cars make themselves! How ridiculous to think that such a factory was not designed by a master mechanic and engineer!

2. RABBI ARYEH KAPLAN

The existence of a purposeful Creator is indicated by the fact that the inorganic universe contains every ingredient needed to make organic life possible.

The world exists as an arena for life, and the probability that this is entirely due to chance is infinitesimally small. The essence of the argument is that mathematically the more complex an ordered structure, the less the probability of its structure being due to chance. The chemistry of life is by far the most complex process in our experience, and yet we find that the inorganic matter of the universe can support this process.

Since there is only one type of matter in the universe, the chances of its having all the chemical and physical properties needed to support life are remotely small, unless we take into account a purposeful Creator.

(HANDBOOK OF JEWISH THOUGHT 1:1)

3. THE TALMUD

The Talmud states that man is a microcosm. Without even looking at the cosmos we see from the wonders of the human body that this is the work of a Master Creator, for, even over billions of years, nothing as complex as this could just have appeared.

Let us take an example from the human eye. A baby's eyes, which begin to form in the embryo at nineteen days, will have more than twelve million screen points per square centimetre; the retina, or light sensitive portion of the eye, will have more than fifty billion such points. The composite picture the eyes record is homogeneous because these light sensitive points blend into a whole. Take a hand lens and examine any picture in a daily newspaper. You will find it made up of hundreds of points, each light or dark, which together make up the picture as you look at it from a greater distance. This is exactly what the eye does, only in much finer detail.

Where do these billions of cells in the nervous system come from? From the fertilised ovum, which is still dividing after one month to form the tissues and organs that the child requires. It has been estimated that all two billion of the specific nerve cells which make any individual educable are located in the outer covering of the brain, its cortex, and that these two billion cells could be stored in a thimble. Development continues in certain parts

of the brain, even after birth. By the end of the first month of embryonic development, none of these parts of the brain, spinal cord, nerves or sense organs is completely formed, but the foundation for them all has been laid.

The development of the brain and the nervous system, and its role of the integration of all the systems remains one of the most profound mysteries of embryology.

The eyes alone display such intelligent planning as almost to stupefy anyone studying them. In the embryonic stage, the eyes are formed on the sides of the head and are ready for connection to the optic nerves growing out independently from the brain. The forces that ensure this integration have so far not been discovered but they must be formidable indeed since more than one million optic nerve fibres must mesh with each eye.

Think for a moment about what is considered to be a feat of human engineering – the drilling of tunnels from both sides of the Alps that must somehow meet precisely and merge into one continuous highway. Yet any one of the thousands of things the foetus must do as part of the routine of development is far more wondrous. (The Obvious Proof – C.I.S. p.59)

The same could be said of the wonder of the baby's first breath. After receiving oxygen for nine months through the umbilical cord, in a matter of moments the lungs miraculously open without any faults. Before the first breath the tubes were non-operative and yet a breath later all tubes are full systems go. This is truly phenomenal.

We have taken only two out of thousands of examples of the wonders of nature to demonstrate that these systems are so complicated it is almost impossible that they formed by themselves and were not designed by a Master Creator. No wonder the Kabbalists say that one may see the soul through the eyes, and King David writes in the Psalms that one must praise G-d for each breath.

This realisation is reinforced by the recent deciphering of the genome – the human DNA chain. The astounding amount of genetic information contained in these chains makes the mind boggle. Could these super complex chains just have made themselves?

CONCLUSION

We may conclude from the very existence of life and the complexity of the universe that it must have been designed and sustained by a Master Creator. It was our patriarch Abraham who, through such logical deduction, came to the monotheistic conclusion – the belief in one G-d; one unified force that creates

a most diverse universe. Abraham converted half of civilisation in his days to this belief and he transmitted that belief to his offspring. Seven generations later his children stood as a nation at Sinai where they received the *Torah* directly from G-d. The undisputed historical fact of the Exodus from Egypt and the stand at Sinai, coupled with the necessity for a master designer and architect of the cosmos, “prove” the existence of G-d.

THE HISTORICAL PROOF

There is one final proof that we must examine. This is neither tradition, nor philosophy; rather, proof of the existence of G-d as the G-d of history. The Jewish people are called the “Chosen People”. They were chosen by G-d to fulfil a specific purpose – adherence to *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, thereby creating an abode for G-d in this world. An in-depth review of Jewish history will inevitably lead to faith in G-d as the Master of the World.

Rabbi Meir Simcha Sokolovsky writes in his book, *Prophecy and Providence – The Fulfilment of Torah Prophecies in the Course of Jewish History*:

The Torah calls upon us to keep past events in mind and to study them. A study of the past will necessarily lead to the conviction that the direction of history was carefully programmed in advance and that the events of world and Jewish history have unfolded in accordance with a preconceived plan. Obviously, both the plan and its execution must be the work of the Creator who dominates history and directs its course.

(PROPHECY AND PROVIDENCE: FELDHEIM PUBLICATIONS)

At great length, he demonstrates in his book how,

1. The history of the Jewish nation up to the present time has corresponded in full, with all the prophecies of the *Torah*.
2. According to the laws of nature, Jewish history should have taken a different course from the one it actually followed. One is led to conclude that only a Creator, who alone controls the forces in the universe, could have determined beforehand what the future would hold.
3. The events of Jewish history are truly remarkable and extraordinary. Aside from having been predicted in advance, they serve as intrinsic proof of the unique and supernatural guidance which Jewry has always enjoyed as G-d's Chosen People.

To do justice to the subject matter, one must actually read the book. However, we shall give a brief review here, which will, hopefully, encourage the reader to study the subject in more depth.

Before we do so, by way of introduction, it is well worth citing the famous quote from **Mark Twain**, “Concerning the Jews”,

To conclude – If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way.

Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world’s list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are always way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvellous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him.

He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they all sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind.

All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality? (Harper’s Magazine, June 1899)

One of the Principles of Jewish faith is that G-d grants prophesy to man. When a prophet foretells the future, and everything he predicts takes place with amazing accuracy, we can be sure that this was the word of G-d. Nowhere else is this so remarkably demonstrated than in the Five Books of Moses. There are three passages in particular in which Moses tells the Children of Israel what will happen to them in the future.

In *Prophecy and Providence*, Rabbi Sokolovsky shows at great length how each prophecy was accurate and how it took place in the course of Jewish history. In this chapter we shall seek to précis his thesis.

Imagine if you were a reporter following the story of the Exodus of Jews from Egypt. You had been on site in Egypt witnessing the Ten Plagues and the splitting of the sea. You had travelled with the people throughout the forty years in the wilderness and you were now about to enter the Promised Land.

You were granted an audience with Moses – a press conference – in which Moses, before he dies, is going to share his last will and testament with the world. You are expecting that Moses will bless his people with good fortune, wishing them well on their entry and conquest of the land. You would expect him perhaps to admonish them, rather like a father who reminds his children to keep to the correct path. However, what happens at this press conference is somewhat different...

Moses proceeds to unravel a document in which – in the name of G-d – he prophesies exactly what will happen to this nation from the moment it enters into the land until the End of Days.

You are shocked – how could Moses possibly know in such detail of the following three thousand years of Jewish History, particularly when he unravels a tale so foreboding that one would consider his account a nightmarish tangle of falsehood that could not possibly occur in real life? How could a human being, standing on the plains of Moab, have such intimate insight into the future chronicles of this people? As a sceptic, you may have dismissed *Moses'* predictions as fantasy.

However, standing today with the advantage of hindsight you look back at that first press conference and see that Moses is true and his *Torah* is true. Everything that Moses said came to pass. How could that be?

There is only one answer and only one conclusion. Moses was a true prophet and he received and transmitted the word of G-d. Only the Master Creator could know of this tale and only He could weave the fabric of history to make it happen. An honest review of Jewish history points inexorably to the existence of G-d.

One final point before we start briefly examining those prophecies. At its inception as a nation the Jewish People experienced the guidance of Divine Providence. Divine intervention in human affairs was manifest and tangible. The whole nation clearly saw that there was a G-d in Israel. But, when the Jews began to stray from the ways of *Torah*, the Divine guidance of their fate changed into a different mode; it became hidden and covert – as the *Torah* tells us (Deuteronomy 31:17), “And My wrath will be aroused against them on that day and I shall abandon them and conceal My face from them.” When “that day” arrived the miraculous aspect of G-d’s overt intervention in our history

ceased, to be replaced by a covert intervention in man's destiny. This covert Providence leaves room for error and doubt, for it sometimes makes it appear as if, G-d forbid, He has abandoned His people.

Thus began the two oscillating modes of G-d's manifestation. Sometimes His presence would be manifest and at other times concealed. This is, in fact, one of the most striking points of the Jewish calendar and yearly cycle. On *Pesach*, *Shavuot* and *Sukkot* we celebrate the fact that G-d delivered us from Egypt, gave us the *Torah*, and granted us Divine protection with the clouds of Glory. On *Chanukah* we celebrate the victory over the Greeks and light the *Menorah* to symbolise the spiritual victory over the assimilative forces of Hellenism. On *Purim*, we celebrate the frustrating of *Haman's* "Final Solution".

On all these days G-d's presence is clear. And yet on *Tisha B'Av* we weep and mourn the destruction of the Temples. On the other national fast days we lament the events which led to that destruction and other catastrophes of Jewish history. In this generation we are all still numbed by the graveyard of Jewish history, the Holocaust. At these times, G-d's presence was covert. Yet the Jew celebrates and mourns simultaneously. He knows that his destiny stands far beyond the rules of nature and that the trials and tribulations of covert Providence are not merely due to chance, but rather to a meticulous realisation of G-d's premeditated and pre-calculated will. It is this very faith that allows the Jew to surf the waves of anti-Semitism and mock our enemies. The Jew knows that he is eternal – he knows his secret of immortality. G-d has promised him (Jeremiah 5:18), "Even in those devastating days, says G-d, I shall not make a full finish of you", and (Leviticus 26:44), "I shall not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly."

Let us now have a closer look at those prophecies. In two passages of the *Torah*, Moses gives us a *Tochachah* (an admonition) Leviticus Ch.26 and Deuteronomy Ch.28. *Nachmanides*, in his commentary on the Bible, explains that these two passages were both fulfilled consecutively. Leviticus Ch.26 by the destruction of the first Temple and Deuteronomy Ch.28 by the destruction of the second Temple and the following arduous exile. A third passage in Deuteronomy Ch.30 speaks of the eventual repentance and redemption of the Jewish People.

"And I shall scatter you among the nations." – the first exile to Babylon. "And I shall bring the land into desolation." – the ruination of the Land of Israel.

"And I shall bring your sanctuaries into desolation." – the destruction of the First Temple.

"And I shall not smell the savour of your sweet odours." – the cessation of sacrifice in the first Temple.

"Then will the land be paid her Sabbaths." – the duration of the first exile – 70 years – was commensurate with the number of Sabbatical years, which were not previously correctly observed.

"And you will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters." – a prophecy fulfilled, as described by Jeremiah in the book of Lamentations (2:20), at the destruction of the first Temple.

(LEVITICUS CH.26)

One can ask, how was it possible for Moses to know that, over eight hundred years after the Jews entered the Land of Israel under Joshua, the Babylonians would come and destroy the first Temple and exile the people for 70 years?

How did he know about the cessation of offerings and the eating of the flesh? Only cognitive dissonance will allow the sceptic to deny that this was prophecy from the true G-d; the living G-d who creates, sustains and directs the course of the world.

DEUTERONOMY CH.28

"And you shall be plucked off the land." – the second exile.

"Your sons and daughters shall be given unto another nation ... and you shall serve your enemy ... in famine and thirst." – before the exile.

"The Lord will bring upon you a nation from afar, from the end of the earth." – a reference to Rome.

"... who will swoop down like an eagle." – a reference to the Roman legions whose standard bearers carried the sign of an eagle.

"And it will lay siege to all your gates, until your high and fortified walls ... are toppled." – the land is conquered, there is siege, and the walls fall.

"The stranger that is in your midst shall mount up above you higher and higher." – a reference to Herod.

"You shall betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her." – a Roman decree.

"And G-d shall scatter you among all the peoples from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth." – the Jew is exiled to all four corners of the earth.

"And among these nations you shall have no repose, and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot ... and you shall fear night and day." – the

situation of Jews in exile. “Your life shall hang in doubt before you.” – no financial security.

“And as for them who are left of you, I shall send a faintness into their hearts ... and you shall have no power to stand before your enemies.” – the Jews are easily subdued.

“Each day’s curse will surpass that of the day before.” – events will happen so rapidly, the Jew will hardly be able to recover from one incident before another calamity befalls him.

“You will be beset by illnesses and plagues not even mentioned in the Torah.” – the many sufferings of exile.

“You shall serve gods ... wood and stone there.” – a reference to the fact that, throughout their long exile, the Jew will be subjected to the god of wood – the cross – burnt at the stake with forced conversions; and to the god of stone of Mecca and Medina.

“I shall draw out the sword after you ... and you shall perish among the nations and the land of your enemies will devour you.” (see Leviticus 26:33,38) – decrees of forced conversion and pogroms.

“And you shall be left few in number among the nations whither G-d shall lead you away.” – in fact it is quite amazing that, particularly during the Dark Ages, the Jew did not disappear totally.

“And you shall become an astonishment.” – the Jews will become a topic of discussion for all.

“...a proverb and a byword.” – the wandering Jew shall be the symbol of suffering and persecution.

“And they shall be upon you for a sign and for a wonder.” – the badges we were often forced to wear identified us as the Jew.

In graphic detail Moses prophesies the destruction of the second Temple and the following exile with amazing accuracy. He was talking about events that were to take place 1,500 years after he passed on. How could he possibly have known?

And yet the Jew still survives – and thrives.

“For I am G-d, I do not change, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6) – the eternity of the Jewish people.

“Only if the sun, moon and stars disappear, the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation.” (Jeremiah 31:35)

Amidst great persecution, suffering and exile, Torah study flourished. There were always Talmudic academies producing Torah scholars who carried the

baton of *Torah* learning and transmitted it to the next generation. This fulfils the prophecy, “For it, the *Torah* shall not be forgotten from the mouth of their seed.” (Isaiah 59:20-21) Throughout, the Jew kept *Shabbat*. “The *Shabbat* will be an everlasting covenant between G-d and Israel.” (Numbers 31:16) “*It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel.*” (Ibid.)

Isn't it fascinating that, when the other two main religions picked a day for their day of rest, one picked Sunday and the other Friday, but *Shabbat* remained the day of rest for the Jew? Was this not prophesied?

Most enlightening are the prophecies concerning the Land of Israel during the time when its people would be in exile: “And your enemies that dwell in the Land of Israel shall be desolate in it.” (Leviticus 26:32) The land belongs to us even when we are in exile. In our prayers we say, “because of our sins we were exiled from our land”. Isn't it fascinating that, before the destruction of the Temples, the land was populous and fertile, and, after the destruction, it became a desolate land, a land of swamps?

Mark Twain, on a visit to the land expressed his surprise – could it be said that this is the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey? The greatest number of people that inhabited the land from the time of the second exile until the turn of the twentieth century was 300,000 – in the times of the Turks – and even then, the population dwindled due to earthquakes.

Today, after the return of many Jews to the land, its population numbers in the millions. What was swamp has been reclaimed and is again green pasture. It was a land that was awaiting the return of its people.

Quite amazingly the only remaining wall of the second Temple, the Kotel Maaravi – the Western Wall – remained standing and was never destroyed. The rabbis stated that the Divine Presence never moved from the Wall.

And the story is not over yet. There is a passage in Deuteronomy Ch.30 that describes the full return and redemption of the Jewish nation.

It will be that when all these things come upon you – the blessing and the curse that I have presented before you – then you will take it to your heart among all the nations where the Lord your G-d has dispersed you; and you will return unto the Lord your G-d, and listen to his voice, according to everything that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and all your soul. Then, the Lord your G-d will bring back your captivity, and have mercy upon you, and He will gather you in from all the peoples to which the Lord your G-d has scattered you. If your dispersed will be at the ends of the heaven, from there, the Lord your G-d will

gather you in, and from there He will take you. The Lord your G-d will bring you to the land that your forefathers possessed, and you shall possess it; He will do good to you and make you more numerous than your forefathers. The Lord your G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, to love the Lord your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

The Lord your G-d will place all these curses upon your enemies and those who hate you, who pursued you. You shall return and listen to the voice of G-d, and perform all His commandments that I command you to-day. G-d will make you abundant in all your handiwork – in the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your animals, and the fruit of your land – for good, when the Lord will return to rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your forefathers, when you listen to the voice of the Lord your G-d, to observe His commandments, and His decrees, that are written in this Book of the Torah, when you shall return to the Lord your G-d, with all your heart and all your soul.

For this commandment that I command you today – it is not hidden from you and it is not distant. It is not in the heaven, to say, “who can ascend to the heaven for us and take it for us, so that we can listen to it and perform it?” Nor is it across the sea for you to say, “who can cross to the other side of the sea for us and take it for us, so that we can listen to it and perform it?” Rather, the matter is very near to you – in your mouth and your heart to perform it.

See – I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil, that which I command you today, to love the Lord your G-d, to walk in his ways, to observe His commandments, His decrees and His ordinances; then you will live and you will multiply, and the Lord your G-d will bless you in the land to which you come to possess it. But if your heart will stray and you will not listen, and you are led astray, and you prostrate yourself to strange gods and serve them, I tell you today that you will surely be lost; you will not lengthen your days upon the land that you cross the Jordan to come there, to possess it. I call heaven and earth today to bear witness against you; I have placed life and death before you, blessing and curse; AND YOU SHALL CHOOSE LIFE, so that you will live, you and your offspring – to love the Lord your G-d, to listen to His voice and to cleave to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days, to dwell upon the land that the Lord swore to your forefathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give them.

The *Talmud* is full of amazing predictions that will take place at the End of Days. These are now fully documented for the English reader. We refer you to the book *Mashiach* by Rabbi J. I. Schochet. See also Chapter 12 below.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have proved the existence of G-d:

1. through witnessing the revelation of G-d at Sinai,
2. by philosophical proof,
3. with a brief study of the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies.

The *Talmud* refers to Jews as “Believers, children of Believers”. It is almost as if belief in G-d is hereditary. In truth, however, innate belief stems from the very core of the Jewish soul. Job describes the soul as a “part of the Divine”. The simple faith of a Jew comes from that which he feels the very source of his soul – his very essence. That essence may often become oblique through the insensitivities and indulgences of the body. However, the quintessential point remains forever intact and, on those very special occasions when the soul shines forth, the Jew feels his true source, his very essence.

What is Life's Purpose?

WE ALL WISH to live a meaningful life. But why are we living? What are we doing in this world? To find the answer to this central question we must look in the very book of life itself – the *Torah*, which is called *Torat Chaim* (a living *Torah*).

The word “*Torah*” means “instruction” or “guidance”, for the *Torah* is our guide in life. The *Torah* makes us constantly aware of our duties in life; it gives us a true definition of our purpose, and it shows us the ways and means of attaining this goal.

THE CREATION OF MAN

The *Torah* begins with Genesis. When Adam was created the Creator immediately apprised him of his powers and told him that his purpose in life would be to, “Replenish the earth, and conquer it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth”. (Genesis 1:18)

Man was given the power to conquer the whole world and to rule over it, on land, sea and in the air, and he was enjoined to do so; this was his task.

How was this “world conquest” to be attained and what is the purpose and true meaning of it?

Our Sages teach that when G-d created Adam, his soul – his Divine image – permeated and irradiated his whole being, by virtue of which he became ruler over the entire creation. All the creatures gathered to serve him and to crown him as their creator. But Adam, pointing out their error, said to them, “Let us all come and worship G-d our Maker!”

The “world conquest”, given to man as his task and mission in life, was to elevate and refine the whole of nature, including the beasts and animals, to the service of true humanity: a humanity permeated and illuminated by the Divine Image – by the soul, which is veritably a part of G-d above – so that the whole of creation will realise that G-d is our Maker.

Needless to say, before a man sets out to conquer the world, he must first conquer himself and his own ego through the subjugation of the “earthly” and “beastly” in his own nature. This is attained through actions which accord with the directives of the *Torah* – the practical guide to everyday living – so that the material becomes permeated and illuminated with the light of the One G-d, our G-d.

G-d created one man and upon this single person on earth He imposed this duty and task. Herein lies the profound yet clear directive, namely, that one man – each and every person – is potentially capable of “conquering the world”. If a person does not fulfil his task and does not utilise his inestimable Divine powers, it is not merely a personal loss and failure but something that affects the destiny of the whole world.

ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

One of the main distinguishing features in the creation of man is that man was created as a single being, unlike other species which were created in large numbers.

This indicates emphatically that one single individual has the capacity to bring the whole of creation to fulfilment, as was the case with the first man, Adam. As mentioned above, no sooner was Adam created than he called upon and rallied all creatures in the world to recognise the sovereignty of the Creator with the cry, “Come, let us prostrate ourselves, let us bow down and kneel before G-d our Maker!” For it is only through “prostration” – self-abnegation – that a created being can attach itself to, and be united with, the Creator and thus attain fulfilment of the highest order.

The Rabbis teach us that Adam was the prototype and example for every individual to follow. “For this reason, was man created single, in order to teach you that ‘one person is equivalent to an entire world’”. This means that every Jew, indeed, every human being, regardless of time and place and personal status, has the fullest capacity (and also the duty) to rise and attain the highest degree of fulfilment, and accomplish the same for creation as a whole.

ROSH HASHANAH – THE BIRTHDAY OF MAN

This idea is underlined by the fact that the Jewish New Year – *Rosh Hashanah* – celebrates the birthday of man, which took place on the sixth day of creation. In the liturgy of *Rosh Hashanah*, we find that it is called the “day of the beginning of Your works” (text of prayer for *Rosh Hashanah*). Why is it the “beginning of Your works” when, in fact, *Rosh Hashanah* corresponds to the sixth day of the creation?

The answer is given by the Rabbis: Inasmuch as man is the ultimate purpose and *raison d'être* of all domains of the universe and since, with the creation of man, the whole of creation was completed and fulfilled, man, in effect, embodies the entire creation as if, before him, nothing was created.

Nevertheless, the question must be asked, how can this be true when there is a great world besides man, an impressive and noteworthy world, as it says in the Psalms, “How manifold are your works, O G-d”, and “How great are your works, O G-d”? Moreover, considering the whole of creation, we find that the “speaking genus” – man – is numerically much less than the order of animals, and still less than the order of plants, and least in comparison to inorganic matter (earth, minerals etc.).

The answer – and this, indeed, is one of the basic teachings of *Rosh Hashanah* in regard to the entire creation – is as follows:

The order in the scale of all created things where inorganic substances exceed plants, and plants outnumber animals, and man is least of all, is based on consideration of quantity. However, when quality is considered, the order is reversed: inorganic matter, which has no signs of life and locomotion, is at the bottom of the scale; above it is the world of plants, endowed with growth but lacking the vitality and movement of animals; higher still is the animal kingdom which, since animals do not possess human intellect, is inferior to man – the highest of all creatures. For, although an animal has an intellect of its own, the animal intellect is not an end in itself, but an instinct, whose function is to serve the natural needs of the animal.

However, the human intellect – provided the person conducts himself as a human being and not as an animal – is mainly an end in itself. Furthermore, the human intellect attains its goal and fulfilment, not when it serves as an instrument for the gratification of physical needs, as in the case of animals, but, on the contrary, when all such natural functions as eating, drinking and the like, become servants of the intellect, in order that the person should be able to rise ever higher in intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

Yet this is not quite the true fulfilment of the human being. True fulfilment is achieved when the intellect leads him to the realisation that there is something higher than intellect, so that the intellect surrenders itself completely to that ideal.

To put it more clearly, human fulfilment is attained when intellect recognises that man, and with him the entire creation, must strive for and achieve acknowledgement of, and attachment to, G-d, the Creator of the Universe and Master of everything in it.

This concept directly relates to, and must permeate, our daily life as evidenced also by the fact that the Psalm beginning with, "G-d reigns, He robed Himself in majesty", has been instituted as the "Daily Psalm" for the sixth day of every week of the year. This is what Adam, the first man, accomplished when he acknowledged the sovereignty of the Creator, elevating himself and all creation to a level of recognising G-d.

The general lesson to be inferred from all this is as follows: Reflecting upon himself, a person will see that most of his life and most of his efforts are taken up with things which, at first glance, are material and mundane, such as eating, drinking, sleeping and the What is Life's Purpose?

like. It is also evident that there is a greater number of "men of the world" than "men of the spirit". In general, one sees most people immersed largely in material pursuits. Hence, one may erroneously think that perhaps the material and physical aspects of life are the most important in the world.

Rosh Hashanah teaches us that the opposite is true. To be sure, it took five days and part of the sixth to create all sorts of creatures. Yet it was man, a very small part of creation in time and space, who was the essence and purpose of the entire creation. And in man, too, the essential thing is not the body, which is "dust from the earth", but the soul, the living spirit which G-d "breathed into his nostrils"; a soul which is "truly part of G-dliness Above". Only after man was created with the Divine spark within him did the entire creation become worthy and complete. Thus, man can justly be described as the "beginning" of creation in all its domains, and *Rosh Hashanah*, the birthday of man, as "the day of the beginning of Your works".

THE POWER OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Yet immediately after the creation the Biblical narrative continues with the temptation of the forbidden fruit, Adam's sin and subsequent exile from the Garden of Eden. The snake, synonymous with the evil inclination, persuades man to disregard the mission of his soul in return for momentary pleasure.

Adam plunges mankind into a constant struggle between his good and evil inclinations.

The Sages describe what happened in the following way: At the time of creation the *Shechinah* – Divine Presence – rested on earth. After the sin of Adam, the *Shechinah* removed itself from the earth to the first firmament (the Sages speak of the existence of seven firmaments i.e. spiritual levels), and after the sins of Cain and Abel, and the subsequent generation of *Enosh*, the *Shechinah* removed itself further to the second and third firmament etc., until the *Shechinah* was removed, through the sins of subsequent generations, to the seventh firmament. It was the righteous Abraham who, through his Divine service, returned the *Shechinah* by one level to the sixth firmament. His son Isaac and grandson Jacob, and thereafter subsequent generations of righteous people, returned the *Shechinah* further, until Moses, the seventh generation from Abraham, returned the Divine Presence to this earth, when he built the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the *Shechinah* rested there.

One of the great teachings of the *Baal Shem Tov*, the founder of the *Chassidic* movement, is that of an ongoing creative process. Divine creative energy is constantly pulsating through the creation, bringing it into being *ex nihilo* every single second. If G-d chose to stop creating the world, even for an instant, it would revert to null and void, as before the creation. When the Sages talk about “removal of the Divine Presence” they are not suggesting that G-d literally removed Himself from the world – otherwise the world would cease to exist. Rather they are suggesting that sin creates an insensitivity to that Divine Presence. G-dliness is no longer manifest and felt by the creation.

It is almost as though G-d is in exile from His world. This was the result of generations of sin, and it was only through the efforts of the righteous that the world was again sensitised to the Divine Presence and became a fitting abode for His presence.

A DWELLING FOR G-D

It was Abraham who first began the process of return, bringing the Divine Presence from the seventh to the sixth firmament. He accomplished this by establishing a guest-house in Beer Sheba and giving wayfarers food and drink. After they had eaten Abraham would ask them to say Grace. The *Torah* tells us, “And Abraham called there in the name of G-d”. The Sages comment, “do not read, ‘and he called’; but read, ‘and he made call,’” i.e. he encouraged others to call. *Maimonides* states that Abraham had such a powerful influence in

his time that he managed to convert a good part of known civilisation to belief in monotheism.

This task was continued by his sons, and the patriarchal traditions and belief in monotheism were continued and upheld even after the descent of Jacob to Egypt and subsequent servitude and bondage. Although steeped and assimilated into Egyptian culture, the Children of Israel, and in particular the tribe of *Levi*, maintained their identity and beliefs.

G-d had promised Abraham that his descendants would serve a strange nation only for a certain time, after which they would be redeemed. When the time of redemption arrived G-d sent Moses, a great-grandson of *Levi*, son of Jacob, to fulfil that task. Pharaoh, a self-proclaimed god, was systematically destroyed by the Ten Plagues. He and his magicians were forced to admit that the “finger of G-d” was at work. Finally, the Jewish people left Egypt, a redemption from bondage which became the prototype for all future redemptions.

They witnessed further miracles – the splitting of the sea and the defeat of the *Amalekites*. Forty-nine days after leaving Egypt they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai where they heard the Ten Commandments from G-d Himself. G-d gave His *Torah*-instruction to the entire nation. Shortly after Sinai He instructed Moses, “Make for Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them”.

Moses began the construction of the *Mishkan* – the Tabernacle; a portable structure that housed the Holy Ark, which contained the tablets of stone and the scroll of the Law. The Tabernacle was to be the prototype for all future Synagogues. When the Tabernacle was finally completed and erected, the Divine Presence rested upon it. The Sages tell us that the task was now complete, and the Divine Presence had now returned to the world.

The construction of the Tabernacle exemplifies the purpose of creation which, in the words of the *Midrash* is that, “G-d desired to have an abode in the lowest of all worlds”. The purpose of man is to take the creation and permeate it with G-dliness.

This idea was exemplified in the Tabernacle. When the Jews left Egypt, they took great wealth with them, which they subsequently donated for the materials necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle. Every aspect of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms was represented in the Tabernacle. The walls were made of wooden boards covered with gold. The offerings brought in the Tabernacle represented the elevation of the animalistic dimension within man and its dedication to a higher purpose. Every aspect of the Tabernacle transformed the material into the spiritual. Thus, the Tabernacle, which our Sages say was a microcosm, or symbol, of the universe, reflected our very task in the

world: that is, to take the material and transform and elevate it for a spiritual purpose. For example, eating in order to be healthy to learn *Torah* and keep *Mitzvot*, using animal hides for *Mezuzot* and *Tefillin*, and the like.

A DWELLING WITHIN EACH PERSON

Within the wording, “Make for Me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them”, lies a deeper meaning. Grammatically it should have stated, “so that I may dwell in it” yet it states, “so that I may dwell among them”. The Sages point out that the construction of the Tabernacle is a pointer for every person to make a dwelling place for the Divine Presence within themselves.

As mentioned previously, every person is infused with a Divine Soul. It is the task of the soul to make a *Mishkan* out of the body in which it resides by elevating all bodily functions to a Divine purpose.

In short, this means being able to connect every bodily function with G-d – and this is precisely the purpose of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. In the *Torah*, G-d instructs us how to connect every sphere of operation and function with G-d. For example, in terms of time, “six days you shall work and the seventh day you shall rest”. The function of *Shabbat* is to allow a person to withdraw from the mundane and focus on the spiritual for one day a week. This, in turn, creates a new perspective on the week to come. By simply dedicating one day a week to study and prayer, one elevates the entire week.

The laws of *Kashrut* connect a Jew in his eating habits, and the laws of *Taharat Hamishpachah* elevate intimacy. And so it is with all the *Mitzvot*.

The Sages tell us that a human being is made of 248 limbs and 365 sinews. These correspond to the 248 positive commandments and the 365 negative commandments of the *Torah*. The word *Mitzvah* in Aramaic means “a connection”. Thus, there are 613 ways of connecting with G-d. Man has the ability to connect his entire being with G-d. Upon achieving this task, he creates an abode for G-d in this world, hence fulfilling the purpose of creation.

The worlds of the spiritual and the material are not in conflict. The ultimate purpose is that they be fused and that the material is permeated with the spiritual. The core of all *Mitzvah* performance is to take the material creation and utilise it for a Divine purpose. This achieves a wonderful harmony both in the individual and in the world at large.

This theme is not relegated to the Synagogue or moments of religious practice. Rather it encompasses all times and places; wherever and whenever a person operates, he can utilise the task at hand for its correct, Divine, purpose.

THE REWARDS OF THE WORLD TO COME

The *Talmud* is replete with references to the World to Come. *Maimonides* describes it as a “world of souls”, a spiritual plane to which the soul returns after its sojourn in this world. The soul is to give an account of its lifetime and, subsequently, its merits and demerits are carefully weighed on the Divine scales. It is then rewarded for its good deeds and *Torah* learning. The reward takes the form of a revelation of G-d’s glory, “basking in the Divine light”. It may be necessary for the soul to be cleansed from its indulgences and iniquities and so it is sent to *Gehinom*, a spiritual purification depot, after which it ascends to Heaven. The *Talmud* uses the terms “Garden of Eden” or the “Heavenly Academy” to describe various levels and stages of this heavenly reward.

In this sense this world is a mere “corridor before the World to Come”, a temporary stepping-stone where one may earn a place and seat in the World to Come. In fact, the Sages state that, “better one hour of heavenly bliss in the World to Come than all the pleasures of this world” (*Avot* 4:17). One should not serve G-d merely to receive this reward yet G-d does not remain in debt and will reward a person for all his good deeds. To this aim there is an “eye watching, an ear listening and a hand writing” all of a person’s actions in this world. An exact account is kept.

Yet, however great the rewards of the World to Come, they are not the ultimate purpose of creation. As stated above, the ultimate purpose is that G-d desired to have a dwelling in the lowest of all worlds, in this material and physical world. It is in this vein that the Sages state that, “better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than all of the World to Come”. Although the revelations of the higher spiritual worlds are magnificent and a true reward for the soul’s efforts, however, the ultimate desire of G-d is the good deeds and *Mitzvot* of this world.

It is for this reason that there is no open mention of the World to Come in the scripture. The *Torah* is primarily concerned with life on this world. The soul exists before its descent and returns to the heavenly realm in the afterlife. It is a “descent for the purpose of ascent”, the ascent being the fulfilment of the ultimate purpose in creation, the creation of a dwelling for G-d in this world.

King Solomon describes the soul as “the candle of G-d”. For what purpose does G-d need a candle? Is there any place where it is dark before Him? The candle is needed for this world within which G-d has clothed His majesty. The soul illuminates the body and the world, enabling it to recognise the Creator, through fulfilment of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* in daily life.

Rabbi *Shneur Zalman of Liadi*, the founder of *Chabad*, used to say, “I do not want your Garden of Eden, I do not want your World to Come, I only want You, Yourself”. He meant that although the spiritual bliss of the World to Come is great, G-d, Himself, is experienced only by fulfilling the ultimate purpose – with one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world.

A SPECIFIC PURPOSE

In addition, every soul has a specific purpose besides the general purpose of making an abode for G-d in this world. The *Baal Shem Tov* said that a soul, in addition to keeping the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, may descend to this world and live for 70 or 80 years just to do a favour for another in the material or the spiritual realms. How does one know one’s own specific purpose? How does one know which favour is the purpose of one’s soul’s descent? The answer is that everything happens by Divine Providence and if a person is presented with a certain opportunity, this is certainly sent from Above and should be treated as if it is the purpose of one’s soul’s descent.

Our Sages stated, “everything is from the hands of heaven except the fear of Heaven”. This means that whatever happens to a person is from Heaven. The particular time and place in which a person lives, and his station in life, whether rich or poor etc., is decided from Above. A person’s only contribution is “the fear of Heaven” – his reaction in any given situation. We are all presented with unique opportunities and challenges, and it is our lot in life to utilise them for the Divine purpose.

THE SOUL’S DESCENT

Our Sages stated further, “each and every soul was in the presence of His Divine Majesty before coming down to this earth”, and that, “the souls are hewn from under the Seat of Glory”. These sayings emphasise the essential nature of the soul, its holiness and purity, and how it is completely divorced from anything material and physical; the soul itself, by its very nature, is not subject to any material desires or temptations, which arise only from the physical body and “animal soul”.

Nevertheless, it was the Creator’s Will that the soul – which is truly a “part” of the Divine, should descend into the coarse, physical world and be confined within, and united with, a physical body for scores of years in a state which is diametrically opposed to its spiritual nature. All this for the purpose of a Divine mission which the soul must perform to purify and spiritualise the physical

body and its related physical environment, making this world an abode for the Divine Presence. This can be done only through a life of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

When the soul fulfils this mission all the transient pain and suffering connected with the soul's descent and life on this earth is not only justified, but infinitely outweighed, by the great reward and everlasting bliss which the soul enjoys thereafter.

A WASTED OPPORTUNITY

From the above one can easily appreciate the extent of the tragedy of disregarding the soul's mission on earth. For, in doing so, one causes the soul to descend to this world virtually in vain, for one has not achieved its purpose. Even where there are brief moments of religious activity in the study of *Torah* and the practice of the *Mitzvot*, it is sad to contemplate how often such activity is tainted by the lack of real enthusiasm and inner joy, without recognition that these are the activities which justify existence.

Apart from missing the vital point through failure to take advantage of the opportunity to fulfil G-d's Will, thus forfeiting the eternal benefits to be derived therefrom, it is contrary to sound reason to choose that side of life which accentuates the enslavement and degradation of the soul while rejecting the good that is within it; namely, the great elevation that is to come from the soul's descent.

The proper thing to do is to make the most of the soul's sojourn on earth and a life which is permeated by the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* makes this possible.

It is also abundantly clear that since G-d, who is the essence of goodness, compels the soul to descend from its sublime heights to the lowest depths for the purpose of the study of the *Torah* and the fulfilment of the *Mitzvot*, it must mean that the value of *Torah* and *Mitzvot* is very great.

Furthermore, the descent of the soul for the purpose of being elevated shows that there is no other way to obtain this objective except through the soul's descent to live on this earth. If there were an easier way G-d would not compel the soul to descend to this nether world. For only here, in what the *Kabbalists* call the lowest world, can the soul attain its highest ascent, higher even than the angels, and, as our Sages say, "The righteous are superior to the (foremost) angels".

SERVE G-D WITH JOY

Reflecting on the greatness of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, specifically pertaining to this life; reflecting also that the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* are the only means to attain

the soul's perfection and the fulfilment of the Divine purpose; one will experience a sense of real joy at one's fate and destiny, despite the many difficulties and handicaps, from within and without, which are inevitable on this earth. Only in this way can one live up to the injunction, "Serve G-d with joy", which the *Baal Shem Tov* made one of the foundations of his teachings, which is expounded at length in *Chabad* teachings and pointed out by Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* of *Liadi* in his monumental work, *Tanya* (Ch.26,31).

Ultimately, following such a path in life will lead to true happiness. Happiness – in the Jewish sense – may be defined as follows: when a person is doing what G-d wants from him at any given moment then he may be truly happy. Therefore, if, at any given moment and situation, a person acts according to the directives of the *Torah* instruction, he is truly a happy and blessed person. This feeling transcends all worldly matters, for such a person understands that everything that happens in life is orchestrated by G-d.

CONCLUSION

It is obviously necessary to study *Torah* and be aware of how to fulfil its directives in one's daily life. *Torah* is Divine wisdom and there is no greater union with G-d than by the intellectual unity of study. Yet, "the deed is the main thing". The ultimate purpose of study is to lead to action – to *Mitzvah* performance – in fulfilling the purpose of creation, the making of an abode for the Divine in this world.

Every *Mitzvah* has a cosmic effect and reveals the presence of G-d. The full revelation of this effect will be apparent when *Mashiach* comes. In that era, man's entire pursuit will be to know G-d.

Jerusalem, the spiritual capital of the world is made up of two Hebrew words, *Yirah* and *Shalem*, meaning "perfect awe". The rebuilding of Jerusalem denotes the reconstruction in the world of that perfect state of awe and the full presence of G-d which was found in the Garden of Eden. Every individual *Mitzvah* is a step in fulfilling that goal.

We would do well to heed the advice of King Solomon, the wisest of all men, when he wrote at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes:

"Ultimately, all is known; fear G-d, and observe His commandments; for this is the whole purpose of man."

In the words of our Sages, "I was created for the sole purpose of serving my Maker".

 CHAPTER 3

The Chosen People: Chosen for What?

THE JEWS ARE referred to as “the Chosen People”. In the *Siddur*, it says, “*You have chosen us from among the nations*”. Many Jews rightly ask themselves what this means in practice: which task have we been chosen for?

The answer to this question lies in the *Torah* passage in which G-d addresses Moses immediately prior to His revelation at Sinai:

Moses ascended to G-d, and G-d called to him from the mountain, saying, “So shall you say to the House of Jacob, and relate to the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to Egypt, and that I have borne you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me. And now, if you hearken well to Me and observe My covenant, you shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you shall speak to the Children of Israel”.

(EXODUS 19:3-6)

These words encapsulate the reason G-d “chose” the Jews; namely, to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation”. The reference here to priests does not refer to the *Kohanim*, priests who are descendants of Aaron the High Priest, for clearly all Israel are not priests in that sense. Rather, the reference here is to the “priestly function”.

The priest’s function is to “bring” G-d to the people, and to elevate the people to be nearer to G-d. The purpose of the Jews is to bring G-d to the world and the world closer to G-d.

In our association with the outside world every one of us – man or woman – must fulfil priestly functions. The juxtaposition of a “kingdom of priests” and “a holy nation” indicates that through being holy and dedicated to *Torah* and *Mitzvot* in our private lives we can be successful ambassadors to the outside world. Our impact on the outside world is intrinsically related to our dedication to *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

This “priestly function” was termed by the prophet Isaiah as a “light to the nations”.

Wherever Jews find themselves, in the Diaspora or in the Land of Israel, even a single Jew in a remote corner of the earth, it behoves every Jew, and every Jewish community to remember that they are part of, and representatives of, the entire Jewish people, and hence mandated with this task. Even when Jews are in *Galut* (exile) it is only the Jewish body that is in exile. The Jewish soul is never exiled and is free from any external subjugation. Consequently, while in exile, Jews must not ignore their task, nor underestimate their capacities, however limited their material powers may be.

The extent of one’s duty is in direct proportion to one’s station in life. It is all the greater in the case of an individual who occupies a position of some prominence which gives him an opportunity to exercise influence over others, especially youth. Such people must fully appreciate the privilege and responsibility which Divine Providence has vested in them to spread the light of the *Torah* and to fight darkness wherever and in whatever form it may rear its head.

Let no one think, “who am I, and what am I, to have such tremendous powers?” For we have seen – to our sorrow – what even a small quantity of matter can do in the way of destruction through the release of atomic energy. If such power is concealed in a small quantity of matter for destructiveness – in denial of the design and purpose of creation – how much greater is the creative power entrusted to every individual to work in harmony with the Divine purpose. In this case, one is given special abilities and opportunities by Divine Providence to attain the goal for which we have been created; the realisation of a world in which, “Each creature shall recognise that You created him, and every breathing soul shall declare, ‘G-d, the G-d of Israel, is King, and His reign is supreme over all’” (*Rosh Hashanah* prayers).

NOT BY MIGHT OR POWER BUT WITH SPIRIT

The Jewish people have been given the directive, “Not by might nor by power, but by My spirit, says G-d”. To the Jewish people and Jewish community (even to the Jew as an individual), special Divine capacities have been given

to carry out their task in the fullest measure. For, where Jews are concerned, their physical powers are linked with, and subordinated to, their spiritual powers, which are infinite.

An historic example of this is found in the time of King Solomon when the Jewish people stood out among the nations of the world by virtue of having attained the highest degree of its perfection. Our Sages, referring to that state, describe it as being like “the moon in its fullness”, for, as is well known, the Jewish people are likened to the moon, and they “reckon” their times (calendar months) by the moon. One of the explanations of this is that just as the moon goes through periodic changes in its appearance, according to its position vis-à-vis the sun, whose light it reflects, so the Jewish people go through changes according to the measure of their reflecting the light of G-d, of Whom it is written, “For G-d Elokim is sun and shield”.

This perfection in the time of King Solomon (notwithstanding the fact that, even then, Jews constituted numerically and physically “the fewest of all the nations”) expressed itself in quite a distinctive form in the relations between the Jewish people and the other nations of the world. The reputation of King Solomon’s wisdom aroused a strong desire among kings and leaders to come and see his conduct and learn from his wisdom – the wisdom he had prayed for and received from G-d; permeated with G-dliness.

And when they came they also saw how, under his leadership, there lived a people, even in its material life, “with security, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree”, in a land where, “the eyes of G-d, your G-d, are constantly on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year”. And this is what brought peace between the Jews and the nations all around.

Thus, it was clearly demonstrated that when Jews live in accord with *Torah*, true peace is attained, and they serve as a guiding light for the nations – “the nations will go by your light” – the light of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

The task of the Jew and of the Jewish community is not limited to the time when they are in a state of a “full moon”, but also when in exile, “spread and dispersed among the nations”.

For even then they are one people, whose laws are different from those of all other nations, a fact that is known and acknowledged by all nations of the world.

Why is Life so Difficult?

JUDAISM TEACHES US that G-d is Master of the universe, whose omnipotent power is not limited in time and space. Moreover, G-d is the source of goodness, and He desires His human creatures to live a life based on justice, morality and, insofar as Jews are concerned, a life fully in accord with the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

Why is it, therefore, that such a life is often burdened with difficulties; sometimes, even seemingly insurmountable obstacles?

This question is not only raised by sceptics, but even by those who believe in Divine Providence. In fact, the deeper the belief in G-d's benevolence, the deeper the difficulty to reconcile this anomaly.

Consider the following:

Should a person strive towards a state of life in which he can enjoy the maximum pleasure with the minimum effort, or should he prefer a life of toil and maximum achievement, a life of much action and much accomplishment?

This is not an abstract question, for, in resolving it, the foundation is laid for the individual's concept of the pattern of his life, and how he will respond to what is happening both to and around him, even in matters not directly relating to him, and certainly in matters which directly affect his life.

Based on our faith and our *Torah*, we are committed to the principle that the Creator and Master of the World – including the “small world”, namely man – is the essence of goodness, and that it is the “nature of the Good to do good”.

At first glance, it would therefore appear reasonable to suppose that the highest perfection is to be found in a state where the maximum pleasure – true pleasure – is obtainable without difficulty and without travail; for in such a state the “nature of the Good to do good” would be perceived in the fullest measure.

Yet the *Torah*, which is called *Torah Or* (“A *Torah* of light”, showing things in their true essence) declares, “Man is born to toil”. Even before his downfall, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden with the assigned task “to till it and guard it”; only later did G-d tell him, “of all the trees of the garden you may eat”.

To be sure, G-d could have established a world order in which morality and ethics would reign supreme with little or no effort on the part of man. The explanation for His not doing so, which resolves this apparent contradiction, is given in the *Torah*.

G-d desires that man should enjoy the good in its perfection although human nature is such that a person

derives true pleasure only if he is a partner in its attainment, through his own exertion and travail; however, if he receives it entirely gratis, it is degrading to him as though he were receiving charity (bread of shame). Precisely because of this, the good in its perfection is enjoyed when a person earns it through hard work, and the harder the effort the sweeter the fruit of achievement.

Knowing that there is a Divine command to follow a certain path in life, a person is resolved to fulfil his Divine mission no matter what the difficulties may be. Indeed, he may regard the very obstacles which he encounters as a challenge to be faced unflinchingly and overcome. Far from being stymied by such obstacles, they may reinforce his determination and stimulate his effort to the maximum degree.

Coupled with this is the feeling of satisfaction, commensurate only with the amount of effort exerted in the struggle, which makes the fruits of victory so much more enjoyable.

YOU CAN DO IT

It is self-evident that the Creator, who knows the world and its creatures, would not give an order or command too difficult to carry out. If He has given specific commandments for each Jew, in his own unique circumstances, to fulfil, then it is equally certain that He has also given us the capacity to fulfil them.

Some Jews are born with greater natural capacities, others with less, therefore the challenges and trials that G-d presents to each are in keeping with their strength. As our Sages say, “G-d does not deal despotically or arbitrarily with His creatures” and He does not expect the impossible. If a person is faced with great trials, this is proof that he has the capacity and strength to overcome them. Nothing stands in the way of one’s will and, given the proper effort, it is possible to overcome all difficulties.

THE AMALEKITES

When the Israelites triumphantly marched out of Egypt on their way to Sinai, it seemed they were invincible, a nation surrounded by miracles; in one word, untouchable. And yet, brazenly, the *Amalekites* attacked them, an act we are commanded to remember.

Amalek, in the wider sense, represents all the obstacles and hindrances which a Jew encounters on his way to receive and observe the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* with enthusiasm and joy in everyday life. *Amalek* represents apathy, indifference and depression. The command never to forget *Amalek* reminds us that *Amalekites* exist in every generation and in every day and age, and that we must not allow ourselves to be deterred or discouraged by them, wherever they appear.

Every Jew has been given the power to overcome all such “*Amalekites*” and he is expected to use them to demonstrate to himself and others that nothing will deter him, nor dampen his fervour, to observe the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* in accordance with G-d’s Will. Once he recognises that any difficulty, he encounters is really a test of his faith in G-d, and resolves firmly to meet the challenge, he will see that no *Amalek* of any kind is a match for the Divine powers of the Jewish soul. Indeed, far from being insurmountable obstructions, they turn out to be aids and catalysts for ever greater achievements. They have been instrumental in mobilising those inner powers which would have otherwise remained dormant.

THEY ARE OUR LIFE

This leads to an even deeper insight.

The true and perfect way of fulfilling G-d’s Will, which is embodied in the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, is not when it is prompted by a desire to discharge an obligation towards G-d and our fellow man. Neither is it the gratifying feeling of having contributed something towards the world at large. For so long as the Jew’s compliance with the Will of G-d is externally motivated – however commendable such motivation is in itself – it is not yet quite complete. The perfect fulfilment of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* is achieved when such fulfilment is an integral part of one’s life to the extent of being completely identified with oneself: when the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* permeate a person’s very essence and being, and then become inseparable from him in his daily life.

This is the deeper meaning of the words which we declare daily in our prayer, “For they (the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*) are our life” – meaning that, just as a person and his life are one, making him a living person, so are the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* and the Jew, one and inseparable. Such real identification cannot be

experienced if it is achieved with little effort. It becomes an integral part of one's life only when it entails extraordinary effort in striving for it, even to the extent of staking one's life in obtaining and holding it. Only something which is regarded as indispensable and integral to one's life can evoke one's innermost powers, and even self-sacrifice.

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF GALUT

The above provides an insight also into the meaning of the *Galut* (the exile and dispersion among the nations of the world), which is at the root of most, if not all, the difficulties and obstacles confronting the Jew in his desire to live his G-d given way of life.

To be sure, we recognise the *Galut* as a punishment and rectification for failure to live up to our obligations in the past as, indeed, we acknowledge in our prayers, "For our sins we were banished from our land". But punishment, according to our *Torah*, which is also called *Torat Chesed* (a *Torah* of loving-kindness), must also essentially be *Chessed*.

G-d has ordained a certain group of people, the Jewish People, to carry out the difficult and challenging task of spreading, in every place, to the remotest corners of the world, the Unity of G-d – true monotheism – through living and spreading the light of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. This is a task which no other group was willing to undertake, or capable of carrying out.

The greatest reward is the fulfilment of this destiny, or, as our Sages put it, "The reward of a *Mitzvah* is the *Mitzvah* itself". Thus, the ultimate purpose of the *Galut* is linked with our destiny to help bring humanity to a state of universal recognition of G-d.

A CALL TO OUR GENERATION

Paving the way to the gradual achievement of this destiny has always been the indomitable work of determined individuals and groups conscious of their responsibility. They dedicated themselves to the vital need of strengthening and spreading the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* among all sections of our people.

In recent generations, more than ever before, the main emphasis has been on the need to bring the knowledge and practice of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* to all Jews, in the greatest number of locations – without waiting for them to seek it – in the hope that they will sooner or later realise the need of it themselves.

The most effective way to accomplish this is, of course, through organised *Torah*-true education of the young; both the young in years and the "young" in knowledge.

The pattern has been set by the founders of *Chassidut* and of *Chassidut Chabad*, who exemplified this approach with dedication and selflessness. Before revealing himself and his way of life, the *Baal Shem Tov* was a *Melamed* – a teacher of small Jewish children. Similarly, Rabbi *Shneur Zalman*, the *Alter Rebbe*, founder of *Chabad*, who was a disciple of the *Baal Shem Tov*'s disciple and successor, began his work by founding his well-known three *Chadarim* (higher education institutions). This road has also been followed by his successors, the heads of *Chabad*, each in his own generation.

They personified an indomitable spirit and a disdain for any difficulties and obstacles in their work, making it plain for all to see that these are nothing but a challenge to be expected and to be overcome. By facing up to, and overcoming, all obstacles, they verified the truth of the basic tenets of our faith, namely that G-d's Providence extends to each and every one individually, and that, "He who is determined to purify himself and others, receives aid from On High".

It is a fact of common experience that when there is a firm will and unshakable determination it soon becomes apparent that difficulties are often largely imaginary and, even when real, not insurmountable. The forces of good are cumulative and self-generating as our Sages indicated in their well-known dictum, "One *Mitzvah* brings another in its train". If evil can be contagious, good is certainly much more so, and many who stand at the side-lines are inspired and willing to join in constructive and positive action provided the lead is given and the way is shown.

The challenge of our time is to spread the knowledge of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, particularly through the education of our young, until each and every Jew attains the level of "Know the G-d of Your father and serve Him with a perfect heart", thus fulfilling the prophecy, "They all shall know Me, small and great, and the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d, as the waters cover the sea".

 CHAPTER 5

What is the Secret of Jewish Survival?

THE STORY OF *Purim*, as it is related in the Book of Esther, gives us a clear analysis of the “Jewish problem”: being dispersed over 127 provinces and lands, their own still in ruins, the Jews undoubtedly differed from one another in custom, dress and language, according to the place of their dispersal, very much in the same way that Jews in different lands differ nowadays. Yet, though there were Jews who would conceal their Jewishness, *Haman*, the enemy of the Jews, recognised the essential qualities and characteristics of the Jews which made all of them, with or without their consent, into one people, namely, “their laws are different from those of any other people”. (*Esther* 3:8)

Hence, in his wicked desire to annihilate the Jews, *Haman* seeks to destroy “all the Jews, young and old, children and women”. Although there were in those days, too, Jews who adhered to the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, and Jews whose religious ties with their people were weak, or who sought to assimilate, none could escape the classification of belonging to that “lone people”, and everyone was included in *Haman’s* cruel decree.

Throughout every period of Jewish history, there has been a “*Haman*”, yet we have outlived them, thank G-d. Wherein lies the secret of our survival?

The answer will be evident from the following illustration. When a scientist seeks to ascertain the laws governing a certain phenomenon, or to discover the essential properties of a certain element in nature, he must undertake a series of experiments under the most varied conditions in order to discover those properties or laws which under all conditions are alike. No true scientific law can be deduced from a minimum number of experiments, or from experiments under similar or only slightly varied conditions, for the results

as to what is essential, what is secondary or what is unimportant would then not be conclusive.

The same principle should be applied to our people. It is one of the oldest in the world, beginning its national history with the Revelation at Mount Sinai some 3,300 years ago. In the course of these long centuries our people has lived under extremely varied conditions, in different times and different places all over the world. If we wish to discover the essential elements making up the cause and very basis of the existence of our people and its unique strength, we must conclude that it is not its peculiar physical or intrinsic mental characteristics, nor its tongue, manners and customs (in a wider sense), nor even its racial purity (for there were times in the early history of our people, as well as during the Middle Ages and even recent times, when whole ethnic groups and tribes have become proselytes and part of our people).

The only link which unites our dispersed and scattered people throughout its dispersion, regardless of time, is *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, the Jewish way of life which has remained basically the same throughout the ages and in every place. The conclusion is clear and beyond doubt: It is *Torah* and *Mitzvot* which has made our people indestructible in the face of massacres and pogroms aimed at our physical destruction, and in the face of ideological onslaughts of foreign cultures aimed at our spiritual destruction.

Purim teaches us the age-old lesson, which has been verified even most recently, to our sorrow, that no manner of assimilation, not even when it is extended over several generations, provides an escape from the *Haman* or Hitler of the generation; nor can any Jew sever his ties with his people by attempting such an escape.

On the contrary, our salvation and our existence depend precisely upon the fact that “their laws are different from those of any other people”.

Purim reminds us that the strength of our people, collectively, and of each Jew and Jewess individually, lies in our close adherence to our ancient spiritual heritage which contains the secret of harmonious life and, hence, of a healthy and happy one. All other things in our spiritual and temporal life must be free from any contradiction to the basis and essence of our existence, and they must be attuned accordingly to make for the utmost harmony, and to add to our physical and spiritual strength, which go hand-in-hand with Jewish life.

ASSIMILATION IS NOT THE ANSWER

In the human organism there are common functions in which all organs of the body participate in a joint effort; and there are specific functions pertaining

to individual organs. In the latter case, the individual organ must make a special effort to fulfil its particular function while the common functions are carried out much more easily.

What would happen if a particular organ surrendered its individuality and its function, applying its energy solely towards the common functions?

At first glance it would seem to benefit thereby in saving much effort and in the ability to increase its share in the fulfilment of the common functions of the body. Yet the results would be disastrous, both for the individual organ and for the organism as a whole, for the individual organ would lose its identity and essence which are predicated precisely on its ability to perform a particular function. Failure to exercise this function would, moreover, lead to its atrophy and also, eventually, complete uselessness in the fulfilment of the common functions. As for the collective organism, its deprivation of the particular function and the eventual loss of the organ, would be injurious to the whole body, and even fatal, if the organ in question were a vital one. This analogy can truly be applied to the individual in society, to a minority within a state, and to a nation within the community of nations. It is certainly true in our case, both on the national level as a people and in regard to every Jew individually.

The Jewish people, of whom it has been said long ago “for you are the fewest of all peoples” is a small minority among the nations of the world, and the individual Jew is a minority in his environment; even living in the midst of his own people, for there are places, sad to say, where the Jew living Jewishly, i.e. in accord with our holy *Torah* and the observance of its precepts in his daily life, is in the minority.

What is the specific function of our people and of the Jew as an individual?

It is, of course, easier to ascertain the individual function of any organ in the body than it is to ascertain the function of a people in the community of nations. However, in the case of the Jewish people, which is unique in its extremely varied experiences and long history, the answer is not difficult to find. By a process of simple elimination, we can easily ascertain what factors have been essential to its existence and survival, and thus determine the essential character and function of our people.

An objective, unprejudiced survey of the long history of our people will at once bring to light the fact that it was not material wealth, nor physical strength, that helped us to survive. Even during the most prosperous times under the united monarchy of King Solomon, the Jewish state and its people were materially insignificant in comparison with such contemporary world empires as Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia. That it was not statehood nor homeland is

clear from the fact that, for most of the time, by far, our people possessed no independent state and has lived in the diaspora. That it was not the language is likewise clear from the fact that, even in Biblical times, Aramaic began to supplant the Holy Tongue as the spoken language; parts of the Scripture and almost all of our Babylonian *Talmud*, the *Zohar*, etc., are written in that language. In the days of *Saadia* and *Maimonides*, Arabic was the spoken language of most Jews, while later it was *Yiddish* and other languages. Nor was it any common secular culture that preserved our people since that changed radically from one era to another.

The one and only common factor which has been present with Jews throughout the ages in all lands and under all circumstances is the *Torah* and its *Mitzvot*, which Jews have observed tenaciously in their daily life. To be sure, there arose occasionally dissident groups that attempted to break away from true Judaism, such as the idolatrous movements during the first Temple period, the Hellenists during the second, Alexandrian assimilationists, *Karaites*, etc., but they have disappeared. Such dissident groups uprooted themselves from their natural soil and, far from being constructive, became the worst enemies of the Jewish people and, thus, their persecutors.

Considered without prejudice, *Torah* and *Mitzvot* must be recognised as the essential purpose and essential function of our people, whether for the individual Jew, or in relation to the Jewish people's role within humanity as a whole.

Hence the logical conclusion that the policy of imitating the other nations, far from helping to preserve the Jewish people, rather endangers its very existence, and, instead of gaining their favour, will only intensify their antagonism. In like manner, those Jews who court the favour of non-religious groups by concession and compromise in matters of *Torah* and *Mitzvot* not only undermine their own existence and that of our people as a whole – for the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* are our very life – but they defeat even their immediate aim, for such a policy can evoke only derision and contempt; and justifiably so, for a minor concession today leads to a major one tomorrow, and an evasion of duty towards G-d leads to an evasion of duty towards man, and who is to say where this down sliding will stop?

Earnest introspection will show that the essential factor of our existence and survival is our adherence to the *Torah* and the practice of its precepts. Let no one delude himself by taking the easier way out, nor be bribed by any temporary advantages and illusory gains.

The secret of our existence is in our being “a people that dwells alone” (Numbers 23:9), every one of us, man or woman, believing in the One G-d,

leading a life according to the one *Torah*, which is eternal and unchangeable. Our “otherness”, independence of thought and conduct are not our weakness but our strength. Only in this way can we fulfil the function imposed on us by the Creator, to be to G-d a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation”, thereby being also a *Segulah* (G-d’s treasure) for all humanity.

THE FIFTH SON

The Festival of Passover is inaugurated by the central theme, “When your son will ask you”, and the *Haggadah* is based on the commandment of the *Torah*, “Then you shall tell your son”.

There are various ways of asking questions and formulating the answers depending upon whether the son belongs to the category of the “Wise”, the “Wicked”, the “Simple”, or “The One Who Knows Not How to Ask”.

While the “Four Sons” differ from one another in their reaction to the *Seder* Service they have one thing in common: they are all present at the *Seder* Service. Even the so-called “Wicked” son is there, taking an active, though rebellious, interest in what is going on in Jewish life around him. This, at least, justifies the hope that someday even the “Wicked” son will become wise, and all Jewish children attending the *Seder* will become conscientious *Torah* and *Mitzvot* observing Jews.

Unfortunately, there is, in our time of confusion and obscurity, another kind of Jewish child: the child who is conspicuous by his absence from the *Seder* Service; the one who has no interest whatsoever in *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, laws and customs; who is not even aware of the *Pesach Seder*, of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent Revelation at Sinai.

This presents a grave challenge which should command our attention long before Passover and the *Seder* night, for no Jewish child should be forgotten and given up. We must make every effort to save that “lost” child and bring the absentee to the *Seder* table. Determined to do so, and driven by a deep sense of compassion and responsibility, we need have no fear of failure.

To remedy an undesirable situation of any kind, it is necessary to attack the roots of the evil. The same is true in this case. The regrettable truth is that the blame for the “lost generation” lies squarely on the shoulders of the parents of a bygone immigrant generation.

It was the result of an erroneous *psychology* and a misguided policy on the part of some immigrants arriving in a new and strange environment. Finding themselves a small minority and encountering certain difficulties, which are largely unavoidable in all cases of resettlement, some parents had the mistaken

notion, which they injected also into their children, that the way to overcome these difficulties was to become quickly assimilated with the new environment by discarding the heritage of their forefathers and abandoning the Jewish way of life. Finding the ensuing process somewhat distasteful, as such a course is bound to be, and full of spiritual conflict, some parents resolved that their children be spared the conflict altogether. In order to justify their desertion and appease their injured conscience it was necessary for them to devise some rationale and they deluded themselves, and their children, by the claim that the observance of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* did not fit in their new surroundings. They looked for, and therefore “found”, faults with the true Jewish way of life while, in their non- Jewish environment, everything seemed to them only good and attractive.

By this attitude these parents hoped to assure their children’s existence and survival in a new environment. But what kind of existence is it if everything spiritual and holy is traded for material things? What kind of survival is it if it means the sacrifice of the soul for the amenities of the body?

Moreover, in their retreat from *Yiddishkeit*, they turned what they thought was an “escape to freedom” into an escape to servitude, pathetically trying to imitate the non-Jewish environment, failing to see that such imitation, based on caricature and an inferiority complex, can only call forth mockery and derision, and can only offend the sensibilities of those whose respect and acceptance they are so desperately trying to win.

The same false approach to the minority problem, whereby the misguided minority seeks to ensure its existence by self-dissolution, (which essentially means suicide, or, at any rate, weakening) has dominated not only individuals, but unfortunately has been made the creed of certain groups thrown together by a set of circumstances. This gave rise to certain dissident movements on the Jewish scene which, either openly or covertly, sought to undermine the Divine *Torah* which gives our people its unique and distinctive character among the nations of the world. In truth, these movements, while differing from each other, have one underlying ideology in common, that of, “We shall be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone”. (Ezekiel 20:32)

The dire consequence of this utterly false approach was that thousands upon thousands of Jews were removed from their fountain of life, from their fellow Jews and from their true faith. Deprived of spiritual life and content, there grew up children who no longer belong to the “Four Sons” of the *Haggadah*, not even to the category of the “Wicked” son.

Today, many Jews are the third or fourth generation of immigrants and are, halachically, in the category of a *Tinok Shenishbah* (a child abducted at an early age), meaning one who did not have the opportunity of a true Jewish education. Through assimilation and intermarriage, they are in great danger of losing their Jewish identity. What can be done?

THE WAY FORWARD

The event of the Exodus from Egypt and the Festival of Passover are timely reminders, among other things, that the hope for survival, deliverance and freedom lies not in attempting to imitate the environment but rather in unwavering loyalty to our traditions and true Jewish way of life.

Our ancestors in Egypt were a small minority and lived in the most difficult circumstances. Yet, as our Sages relate, they preserved their identity and, with pride and dignity, tenaciously clung to their way of life, traditions and distinct uniqueness; precisely in this way was their existence assured, as also their true deliverance from slavery, both physical and spiritual.

It is one of the vital tasks of our time to exert all possible effort to awaken in the young generation, and also in those who are advanced in years but still immature in deeper understanding, a fuller appreciation of the true Jewish values, a full and genuine *Torah*-true *Yiddishkeit*; not of that which goes under a false label of misrepresented, compromised, or watered-down “Judaism”, whatever the trademark. Together with this appreciation will come the realization that only true *Yiddishkeit* can guarantee the existence of the individual, of each and every Jew, at any time, in any place, and under any circumstance.

There is no room for hopelessness in Jewish life, and no Jew should ever be given up as a lost cause. Through the proper compassionate approach of loving a fellow Jew, even those of the lost generation can be brought back to the love of G-d (*Ahavat-HaShem*) and love of the *Torah* (*Ahavat-HaTorah*) and can not only be included in the community of the “Four Sons” but, in due course, be elevated to the rank of the “Wise” son.

Can One Be a Good Jew Without Being Religious?

MANY PEOPLE FEEL that life in accordance with *Torah* and *Mitzvot* is restrictive, limiting the individual in personal creativity, particularly in the area of thinking and choosing for oneself. It is hard to reconcile such commitment with the idea of personal freedom. Furthermore, is it necessary to have the shackles of religious observance to be a good Jew or, for that matter, a good person?

There are thousands of Jews who are good, moral and decent human beings, yet non-observant. They engage in acts of kindness both within the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. They lead active lives and many are role models in the worlds of science, art and commerce, yet they do not keep *Shabbat*, lay *Tefillin* etc. What is wrong with being a good but non-observant Jew?

THE GOOD LIFE

We all wish to live a good life. Most of us think that this means having the best of what life has to offer: a good and supportive family, good parents, a good spouse, good children and grandchildren. A good income and home. A good environment and community, good friends, and most important – having a good time. A sum total of all good things equals a good life. A person starting out in life is faced with the puzzling question of how to create this good life.

And what a great puzzle it is. Taking a look around us, we see that life is far from perfect and full of pitfalls. In today's modern fast-moving world, more and more children are born into broken homes, more couples are splitting up and more people are suffering from depression and lack of self-esteem. More people are discovering that material wealth does not ensure the road to happiness. More people are taking pills, drugs and tranquillisers. You have to be

very lucky indeed to hit the jackpot and have all the factors in place to create the good life. In the end most of us settle for mediocrity, acknowledging that you can't have everything in life, a somewhat sobering but pragmatic conclusion. What is, therefore, the secret of the good life?

G-D IS GOOD

G-d, the Creator of man, who is also Creator and Master of the whole world, surely has the best qualifications that might be expected of any authority to know what is good for man and for the world in which he lives. G-d has not withheld this knowledge from us. G-d is good, and it is the nature of good to be good. In His infinite kindness He has communicated to us that if a person conducts his life in a certain way he will have a healthy soul in a healthy body, and it will be good for him in this world and in the World to Come. It just makes plain common sense that in order to have a good life one should follow the directives of the Creator of man, even if there are aspects of those directives which superficially seem restrictive.

An analogy may be drawn from a car. Before one gets into a car, it is highly advisable to consult the manual in order to achieve the best performance levels from the car. Anyone who ignored the instructions could damage the car and, in some cases, the driver as well.

In truth there are many things in daily life which a person accepts and follows without question, even if he be a highly gifted intellectual with a searching bent of mind. For example, a person will board a plane without having first researched aerodynamics to verify that it is safe to fly in and that it will bring him to his destination at the scheduled time.

To take an example from the area of physical health: there are drugs which are known to be useful or harmful to one's health and a person would not go about trying to verify the utility or harmfulness of such a drug through personal experimentation. Even if a person had a very strong inclination to research and experiment, he would surely choose those areas which have not previously been researched.

This generally accepted attitude is quite understandable and logical. For, inasmuch as experts have amply researched these areas and have determined what is good and what is harmful for physical health or have established the methods leading to further technological advancement, it would be a waste of time to repeat those experiments from the beginning. Furthermore, there is no assurance that some error may not be made leading to the wrong conclusions being drawn, possibly with disastrous effects.

What has been said above concerning physical health is also true regarding spiritual health, and the means by which the soul can attain perfection and fulfilment. All the more so, since spiritual health is generally related to physical health, particularly insofar as a Jew is concerned.

It is quite certain that if a human being would live long enough, and would have the necessary capacities to make all sorts of experiments without distraction, interference, or error, he would undoubtedly arrive at the very same conclusions which we already find in the *Torah*; namely, the need to observe *Shabbat*, *Kashrut* etc. The reason for this is that the *Torah* is the truth and the ultimate good for a person.

But G-d, in His infinite goodness, wished to spare us all the trouble, as well as the possibility of error, and has already given us the results beforehand for the benefit both of those who have the inclination and capacity to search as well as for those who do not. G-d has definitely left areas where a person can carry on his own experiments in other areas which do not interfere with the rules laid down by Him.

Stated simply, the directives of the *Torah* are not a set of rules that have been given to impede or restrict the freedom of man. Rather, they are the pathway to a good life.

Let us take a few examples.

A person who works seven days a week leaves no time to recharge his spiritual batteries. Even limited leisure time is often devoted to keeping the body fit at gyms, health clubs or golf courses while the soul goes sadly neglected. To most people the severe restrictions of *Shabbat* appear to be limiting factors. In truth, those restrictions create an atmosphere and ambience that allows – in some cases, gently forces – a person into a totally different set of circumstances that enhance personal and familial spiritual growth.

A fictional story is told of a bird during the days of creation. This particular bird was created without wings and when it looked around at other birds soaring in the heavens it implored the Creator to allow it to fly. That night, whilst the bird was asleep, G-d affixed wings to its body. When the bird awoke and saw two new appendages to its body it said to G-d, “G-d, I asked you to make me fly, not to make me heavier”. G-d replied, “little bird, just flap them and you will see that you will fly”. The restrictions often seem like extra baggage but once we utilise them, they allow us to fly and soar into new heights.

The Rabbis tell us that “there is no free man except he who engages in the study of *Torah*”. This simply means that the *Torah* frees a person from personal restraints. Superficially this seems surprising, for the *Torah* places many

restrictions on a person. The answer is that in every generation and age there is a form of bondage; an “Egypt”. Some people are slaves to their jobs, others to the desires of their body. Some worship money, others power. *Torah* is the antidote that frees a person from his personal bondage. It manoeuvres a person into the enviable position of being able to maximise the goodness of this world, as well as the next. G-d is not an ogre or ruthless dictator who insists on His subjects keeping a meaningless routine. G-d is benevolent and good and wishes to bestow good upon His creation. The greatest act of Divine benevolence was to give us a living *Torah* – a pathway through life which leads us to the greatest good a human may achieve both for his body and soul.

In short, if a person wants to have good relationships with his parents, spouse or children he should follow the directives of the *Torah*. If he wants to have a healthy body, he should follow the laws of *Kashrut*. If he wants to create healthy children, he should keep the laws of *Taharat Hamishpachah* (the laws of family purity). If he wants to have a healthy mind and heart, he should lay *Tefillin* and study *Torah*. To create a healthy atmosphere at home he should create a home where *Torah* is studied and *Mitzvot* are kept. If he wants family dialogue, he should have a Friday night table upon which words of *Torah* are discussed. If he wishes to be protected, he should have a *Mezuzah* on his door. If he wishes for Divine benevolence, he must dispense charity to the needy. These are the pathways, not only to bliss in the World to Come, but also to a meaningful and fulfilling life in this world.

In describing how a Jew must accept the commandments, the Rabbis often use the expression “acceptance of the yoke of *Mitzvot*”, which may imply that the *Mitzvot* are somewhat of a burden. However, the true meaning of this expression is to be understood in the sense that human nature makes it necessary to act on imperatives. For human nature and the *Yetzer Hara* (evil inclination) are such that an individual might easily succumb to temptation. Temptation is sweet at the beginning but bitter at the end and human nature may lead an individual to disregard the bitter consequences because of the initial gratification. We see, for example, that children, and very often adults also, may be warned that over-indulgence in certain foods would be harmful to them and may even make them so ill that for a period of time they may not be able to eat anything at all, yet they nevertheless reject all restraint to gratify their immediate appetite. In a like manner G-d has given us the “yoke” of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, telling us that whether one understands them or not, or whatever the temptation may be, one must carry out G-d’s commandments unquestioningly.

THE DIVINE BRIDGE

There is a further point, and this is the most essential part of the concept of “yoke” of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. It is that although the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* have been given for the benefit of man, there is an infinitely greater quality with which G-d has endowed the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. This is the quality of uniting man with G-d – that is, the created with the Creator – with whom he would otherwise have nothing in common. For, by giving man a set of *Mitzvot* to carry out in his daily life, G-d has made it possible for man thereby to attach himself to his Creator and transcend the limitations of time and space.

The *Torah* and *Mitzvot* constitute the bridge which spans the abyss separating the Creator from the created, enabling the human being to rise and attach himself to G-dliness. This bridge has been designed by G-d, for only He can span that abyss. It is quite impossible for a limited being to create his own bridge to the Infinite, for whatever bridge he may build, however spiritual it may be, it will still be limited according to the parameters of the created mind. This explains why a person cannot create his own path to G-d independent of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. *Torah* is a revelation from Above, “And G-d came down on Mount Sinai”. It is He who reached out to us and provided the path to Him.

Of course, this relationship can only be attained if the person observes the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, not because of the reward contained therein, whether for the body or the soul, but purely because it is the will and command of G-d. It is for this reason that the text of the blessing which a Jew makes before fulfilling a *Mitzvah* does not mention the utility of the *Mitzvah*, rather the fact that G-d has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us.

The very word “*Mitzvah*” means both a commandment and a connection. The 613 commandments are 613 connections that the human being may form with G-d. The *Mitzvot* span the entire spectrum of human experience and give man the opportunity to sync with the Divine in both his spiritual and mundane affairs.

In fact, the essence of Judaism is belief in a Creator who brings the entire creation into existence from nothing every single second. His purpose is to create a physical world in which a person will create a fitting abode for the Divine. This is achieved by connecting every aspect of the creation with the Creator. In short, *Mitzvah* performance.

Even in man’s most mundane activities he must connect with G-d. Before eating he must recite a blessing, realising who is the Creator of the food. Whilst honouring parents he must realise that this is the fifth commandment and equal to honouring G-d.

The rabbis teach, “The reward for a *Mitzvah* is a *Mitzvah*”. Some commentaries explain this in the literal sense that the reward for a *Mitzvah* is the opportunity to perform another *Mitzvah*. However, in the light of the above, one may explain that the reward of a *Mitzvah* is the very connection that the person has with his Creator whilst he is doing the *Mitzvah*.

This connection is life itself. In a Jewish context life may be defined as something eternal, whereas death is something that is interrupted. The Rabbis teach that the righteous, even in death, are alive. The pleasures of this world are momentary. They may last for a minute, an hour, a week, or even a few years but, after a while, are gone. Life – true life – is eternal. When engaging in *Mitzvah* performance, a person is connecting with G-d, and therefore with eternity itself, and so is truly alive. That connection lasts forever and stands above time. The righteous are alive even after death because their entire focus in this world is their connection with G-d which continues even after death.

This leads us to the true definition of happiness. Ultimate happiness may not be gauged by any amount of self-gratification, even of a spiritual nature. True happiness may be defined as the knowledge that one is doing the will of G-d at any given moment. Such happiness is constant and permanent. A person may serve G-d with joy even when going through difficult moments. That attachment is, in fact, the true goodness that a person may experience, for it is an experience of G-d Himself. In fact, the greatest good that G-d could possibly give us is Himself.

To explain further: The world is a creation by G-d and, as such, can have no common denominator with its creator. This world consists of a variety of creatures which are generally classified into four “kingdoms”: minerals, vegetation, animals and mankind. Taking the highest individual of the highest group of the four, i.e. the most intelligent of all men, there can be nothing in common between him – a created and limited being – and G-d – the Infinite Creator.

However, G-d gave us the possibility of approach and communion with Him by showing us the way that a finite created being can reach beyond his inherent limitations and commune with the Infinite. Obviously, only the Creator Himself knows the ways and means that lead to Him, and only the Creator Himself knows the capacity of His creatures in using such ways and means. Herein lies one of the most essential aspects of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. Although, to many, the *Torah* may be a means to gain reward and avoid punishment or just a guide to good living, being G-d given it has infinite aspects, and one of the most important is that it provides the means whereby we may reach a plane above and beyond our status as created beings. Clearly, this plane is far

beyond the highest perfection which a man can obtain within his own created – and hence limited – sphere.

From this point of view, it no longer appears strange that the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* find expression in such simple, material aspects as in, for example, the Dietary laws. For our intellect is also created and therefore limited within the boundaries of creation beyond which it has no access. Consequently, it cannot know the ways and means that lead beyond those bounds.

The *Torah*, on the other hand, is the bond that unites the created with the Creator, as it is written, “And you that cleave to G-d, your G-d, are all living this day”. To the Creator all created things, the most corporeal as well as the most spiritual, are equally removed. The question, “what relationship can a material object have with G-d?”, has no more validity than if it referred to the most spiritual thing in its relationship to G-d.

The beauty of *Torah* and *Mitzvot* is that through simple everyday actions – well within the reach of normal individuals – every person can connect with the Divine and transform this world into an abode for G-d. The *Torah* is not in heaven, rather, “it is exceedingly near to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it”.

WHAT ABOUT A COMPROMISE?

This is also the answer to those who seek a compromised Judaism – selecting which *Mitzvot* they will or won't keep. Approaching *Torah* and *Mitzvot* on a selective basis is a contradiction in terms. If a person reserves the right to decide what to observe and what not to observe, then the whole *Torah* ceases to be for him a Divine instrument. Surely, it is far more honest ethically to be aware of the *Torah's* standards and to aim towards them, trying one's best, than to cut down Judaism's standards to suit convenience.

Now let us return to the original question – can a person be a good Jew without being observant?

The answer is that even if a person lives what he personally considers to be a good and moral life and engages in acts of kindness etc., although he is partially fulfilled through the *Mitzvot* he is doing (and living a good and moral life is truly desirable in the eyes of G-d), he is nonetheless denying himself the maximum and optimum goodness available and so missing out on a very precious opportunity.

THE TRUE MEANING OF GOOD

One last point. In truth, without the *Torah*, which illuminates and gives directives to our rather complicated and rushed lives, we could possibly err as to what good means.

Self-evident moral precepts, if left to human judgement without the binding force of Divine direction and sanction, can out of self-love be distorted so as to turn vice into virtue. Interpreting the moral precepts of “Thou shalt not kill ... Thou shalt not steal” from the viewpoint of selfish gain, many a nation, as well as many an individual, have “legalised” their abhorrent ends, not to mention justifying the means to those ends.

If in a previous generation there were people who doubted the need of Divine authority for common morality and ethics in the belief that human reason is sufficient, our present generation has unfortunately, in a most devastating and tragic way, refuted this mistaken notion. For it is precisely the nation which excelled in the exact sciences, humanities and even in philosophy and ethics, that turned out to be the most depraved nation of the world, making an ideal of robbery and murder. Anyone who knows how insignificant the minority of Germans was who opposed the Hitler regime realises that the German cult was not something which was practised by a few individuals, but it had embraced the vast majority of that nation, which considered itself the “super-race”.

From this blatant historic example, it is obvious that moral standards cannot be determined by individuals alone, for their human partiality will colour their values. Rather, humankind should rely on a more absolute standard of goodness and morality which is set out by G-d in the values of the *Torah*.

One of the basic messages of the Ten Commandments is contained in their opening words, “I am the L-rd your G-d” – the profound principle of monotheism which, in itself, was a tremendously revolutionary idea in those days of idolatry, dominated by the polytheistic culture of Egypt. This is detailed in the second commandment where all forms of idolatry are strictly prohibited. At the same time, the Ten Commandments conclude with such apparently simple and obvious injunctions as “Thou shalt not steal” etc.

The profundity of monotheism, with which the Ten Commandments begin, and the simplicity of the ethics and moral laws with which they conclude, point to two important lessons:

1. The true believer in G-d is not the one who holds abstract ideas, but the one whose knowledge of G-d leads him to the proper daily conduct even in ordinary and commonplace matters, in his dealings with his neighbours and respect for their property.

2. The ethical and moral laws, even those that are so obvious as “Thou shalt not murder” and “Thou shalt not steal”, will have actual validity and be observed only if they are based on the first and second commandments; that is to say, based on Divine authority, the authority of the One and only G-d.

The Ten Commandments emphasise, and experience has fully and repeatedly borne out, that even the simplest precepts of morality and ethics must rest on the foundation of “I am G-d” and “Thou shalt have no other gods” and only then can their compliance be assured. *Torah* and *Mitzvot* alone provide the true content of Jewish life and are at the same time the fountains of life for each and every Jew.

IN SUMMARY

1. A life of *Torah* and *Mitzvot* is the surest path to a good life. It is the very best thing for a human being and will bring him to the greatest fulfilment in this world.
2. The greatest good a person may experience is G-d Himself. This connection is achieved through *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

 CHAPTER 7

Are Science and Religion a Contradiction?

IN THE TRADITIONAL view of the Bible, the world is a mere five and a half thousand years old and was created in six days. Surely modern science proves that the world is billions of years old, and man evolved through a process of evolution, thus laying to rest the Biblical story of Genesis: can one honestly follow antiquated religious beliefs when science proves otherwise?

THE DEFINITION OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Science, broadly defined, means knowledge. Specifically, we refer to science as knowledge ascertained by observation and experiment, critically tested, systemised and brought under general principles. Being even more specific one must distinguish between empirical or experimental science dealing with, and confined to describing and classifying, observable phenomena, and speculative science dealing with unknown phenomena, sometimes phenomena that cannot be duplicated in the laboratory. The term “scientific speculation” is actually a terminological incongruity since no speculation can be called knowledge in the strict sense of the word. At best, scientific speculation can only describe theories inferred from certain known facts and applied in the realm of the unknown.

Religion means a belief in something. In terms of the Jewish religion this is belief in the Divine nature of the *Torah* – *Torah* min Hashamayim; that the *Torah* received by Moses and given to the Jewish people is Divine in source and is the word of G-d. Being so, *Torah* is Divine wisdom, and since G-d is true so is his *Torah*. *Torah* is often referred to as *Torat Emet* meaning the True *Torah*. *Torah* reveals the truth.

From these two definitions we see that science formulates and deals with theories and hypotheses while *Torah* deals with absolute truths. These are two different disciplines and “reconciliation” is entirely out of place. *Torah* is the realm of truth of the absolute. What *Torah* says is true not because it has been scientifically proven to be true, rather it is true because the truth was revealed by G-d. Science does not deal with absolutes, rather it deals with the realm of observable phenomena and produces principles based on its observations.

THE SCIENCE OF YESTERDAY & THE SCIENCE OF TOMORROW

In the 19th Century it was the prevailing view of scientists and modernists that human reason was infallible in “scientific” deductions and that sciences such as physics, chemistry, mathematics etc., were absolute truth, that is to say, not merely accepted truths but absolute. Speaking in Jewish terms this meant the establishment of a new idolatry, not of wood and stone, but the worship of the contemporary sciences and philosophies.

In fact, in the face of dogmatic and deterministic views of science prevailing at that time, a whole apologetic literature was created by well-meaning religious advocates and certain rabbis who saw no other way of preserving *Torah* heritage in their “enlightened” communities except through tenuous and spurious reinterpretations of certain passages in the *Torah* in order to accommodate them to the prevailing world outlook. No doubt they knew inwardly that they were suggesting interpretations in *Torah* which were at variance with *Torat Emet*, but at least they felt they had no alternative.

In the 20th Century, however, and especially in recent decades, science has finally come out of its medieval wrappings and the whole complexion of science has changed. The assumed immutability of the so-called scientific laws and the concept of absolutism in science in general have been abrogated and the contrary view is now held, known as the “Principle of Indeterminism”. Nothing any more is certain in science but only relative or probable, and scientific findings are now presented with considerable reservation and with limited and temporary validity, likely to be replaced at any time by a more advanced theory.

Most scientists have accepted this principle of uncertainty – enunciated by Werner Heisenberg in 1927 – as being intrinsic to the whole universe. The 19th Century dogmatic, mechanistic and deterministic attitude to science is gone. The modern scientist no longer expects to find truth in science. The current and universally accepted view is that science must reconcile itself to the idea that, whatever progress it makes, it will always deal with probabilities, not with certainties or absolutes.

Let us give two examples of the metamorphosis of scientific discovery. There is a verse in Ecclesiastes 1:4, “The earth stands forever”, that seems to suggest that the earth stands still, and the sun revolves around the earth. This presentation was entirely acceptable in the early common era, especially when, in the second century, Ptolemy perfected Aristotle’s construction of how the sun and the planets revolve around the earth in circular orbits with additional rotation around certain points on these orbits.

That view was adopted by all scientists and especially amongst religious clergy who viewed the earth as the centre of the universe. About 1,500 years later Nicholas Copernicus made a revolution in astronomy by describing the earth as going around the sun. Suddenly this new scientific discovery threw all religious belief into disarray. Even today in most schools, children are taught that the earth revolves around the sun and that this is a fact proven by science. To suggest otherwise is considered unscientific.

However, such an education is prejudiced since Albert Einstein’s Theory of Relativity eliminated the idea of absolute space and absolute movement. According to Einstein, science in principle cannot decide whether the earth stands still and the sun revolves around it, or vice versa. In *The Philosophy of Time* by Hans Reichenbach, a disciple of Einstein, he demonstrates that all the following concepts are clearly shown possible from a scientific point of view:

1. The earth stands still, and the sun revolves around it,
2. The sun stands still, and the earth revolves around it,
3. Both are revolving around a certain point. There is no way to prove which of the above is correct or preferable.

For practical purposes it is simpler to calculate astronomical events if we assume that the sun is standing still, and the earth is moving around it. Copernicus’ motive was to make calculation easier, but this is not good enough reason to ascribe “truth” to this concept. To dismiss the Biblical verse that suggests that the earth stands still is wholly unscientific.

The problem with the science v religion debate is as previously mentioned – that most people accepted scientific discovery as absolute, which precluded and excluded religious belief. Even today, some eighty years after the theory of relativity was published, although scientists accept the theory in their professional capacities, they ignore it in the context of philosophical debate, preferring to support old-fashioned ideas of absolutism. They continue to be governed by ideological preconceptions, blindly opposed to *Torah*, which have been absorbed into their consciousness since childhood, even when these preconceptions contradict professional knowledge.

Another good example of an ever-changing theory is that of light. The ancient Greeks developed a “corpuscular” theory of light, i.e. that light is a flux of tiny particles emanating from a source and moving linearly in all directions. The theory of geometrical optics was developed on the basis of this assumption. This theory successfully served mankind for centuries in designing and building lenses, prisms, flat and curved mirrors, vision aids, and later microscopes, telescopes, and other optical systems. Then it was discovered that light also follows a wavy motion and so it was reinterpreted as electromagnetic waves of a very short wavelength. Scientifically, the corpuscular theory developed into a wave theory. In the beginning of the 20th Century, Albert Einstein suggested that, in fact, light possesses a dual nature, i.e. the unification, in one entity, of two opposite concepts of a particle of matter and of a wavy motion. This new idea became the basis of the new fundamental theory of quantum mechanics.

It is most interesting to note that the *Kabbalah* uses light as a metaphor for the power of G-d. It speaks in terms of the *Or Ein Sof* – the Infinite light. One of the principles of faith is that G-d is omnipotent and may carry opposites. The fact that light possesses a dual nature and can carry an opposite makes it the perfect metaphor for Divine energy. In this third stage of the development of the light theory it becomes apparent that this unification of two concepts underlines the unity of G-d within creation. (See “The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* on Science and Technology” by Professor Herman Branover in *B’Or Ha’Torah*, Vol.9)

THE AGE OF THE UNIVERSE

A problem that bothers many is the seemingly irreconcilable contradiction of science claiming the world to be billions of years old and the *Torah* view that the world is 5,783 years old (at the date of this publication).

Furthermore, this contradiction has led some well-meaning religious scientists to reinterpret the passages of Genesis to the effect that the days of creation refer to periods or aeons, rather than ordinary days. They suggest that since the sun, moon and stars were only “hung in the sky” on the fourth day of creation, therefore the 24-hour day could not have come into effect until at least the fourth day. Furthermore, they claim, if one were to ascribe vast periods of time to each of the days of creation, all the theories of evolution and the Big Bang could fit in quite nicely with the *Torah*.

However, such interpretation tampers with the commandment of *Shabbat* – a *Mitzvah* which is considered by our Sages to be equivalent to keeping the entire *Torah*. For, if one takes the words “one day” out of context and plain meaning, one ipso facto abrogates the whole idea of *Shabbat* as the seventh day

stated in the same context. The whole idea of *Shabbat* observance is based on the clear and unequivocal statement in the *Torah*, “For in six days G-d made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested” – days, not periods.

As previously mentioned, such attempts at reinterpreting the *Torah* are, of course, the outmoded legacy of the 19th Century. Nowadays there is surely no justification whatsoever to perpetuate this “inferiority complex”. Certainly, there is no basis for maintaining views that have persisted in outdated elementary and high school textbooks on science.

It is very saddening to think that those who should be the champions of the *Torah* outlook and its advocates, especially among Jewish youth in general, and academic youth in particular, are timid or even ashamed to expostulate it.

The above is not meant to belittle science or the scientific method, rather there must be a differentiation between ephemeral science and theories drawn from scientific speculation. This is in contrast to *Torah*, which is eternal and immutable. When the *Torah* is modified or altered by compromise, to whatever extent, it ceases to be the truth. And the truth remains the same for all people and for all times. If one accepts the eternity of the *Torah*, and this can only be on the basis of *Torah* min Hashamayim, then it would be absurd to say that, while it is true that *Torah* was given by G-d, times have changed, as if the Creator and Governor of the universe could not have foreseen that there would be a 21st Century when certain groups of people, such as scientists or “modernists”, would be inclined to accept only a compromised *Torah*, not the *Torah* of truth.

Let us now inspect more closely the methods scientists have employed to discover the age of the universe. Science has two general methods of inference:

1. The method of interpolation (as distinguished from extrapolation), whereby, knowing the reaction under two extremes, we attempt to infer what the reaction might be at any point between the two.
2. The method of extrapolation, whereby inferences are made beyond a known range, on the basis of certain variables within the known range. For example, suppose we know the variables of a certain element within a temperature range of 0 to 100 and, on the basis of this, we estimate what the reaction might be at 101, 200 or 2,000.

Of the two methods, the second is clearly the more uncertain. Moreover, the uncertainty increases with the distance away from the known range and with the decrease of this range. Thus, if the known range is between 0 and 100, our inference at 101 has a greater probability than at 1,001.

Let us note at once that all speculation regarding the origin and age of the world comes within the second and weaker method. The weakness becomes more apparent if we bear in mind that a generalisation inferred from a known consequent to an unknown antecedent is more speculative than an inference from an antecedent to consequent as can be demonstrated very simply.

Four divided by two equals two. Here the antecedent is represented by the divided and divisor, and the consequent by the quotient. Knowing the antecedent in this case gives us one possible result – the quotient – number two.

However, if we only know the end result, namely the number two, and we ask ourselves how we can arrive at the number two, the answer permits several possibilities, arrived at by different methods: $1 + 1 = 2$, $4 - 2 = 2$, $1 \times 2 = 2$, $4 \div 2 = 2$. Note that if other numbers come into play the number of possibilities giving us the same result is infinite (since $5 - 3 = 2$, $6 - 4 = 2$ etc., ad infinitum.)

Add to this another difficulty which is prevalent in all methods of deduction: Conclusions based on certain known data, when extended to unknown areas, can only have validity on the assumption of “everything else being equal”, that is to say, on an identity of prevailing conditions and their action and counteraction upon each other. If we cannot be sure that the variations or changes would bear at least a close relationship to the existing variables in degree, if we cannot be sure that the changes would bear any resemblance in kind, if, furthermore, we cannot be sure that there were no other factors involved – such conclusions of inferences are absolutely valueless!

For further illustration, in a chemical reaction, whether fissional or fusional, the introduction of a new catalyst, however minute the quantity, into the process may change the whole tempo and form of the chemical process or start an entirely new process.

Now the whole structure of science is based on observances of reactions and processes in the behaviour of atoms in their present state as they now exist in nature. Scientists deal with conglomerations of billions of atoms as these are already bound together and as these relate to other existing conglomerations of atoms. Scientists know very little of the atoms in their pristine state – of how one single atom may react on another single atom in a state of separateness – much less of how parts of a single atom may react on other parts of the same or other atoms. One thing science considers certain is that the reaction of single atoms upon each other is totally different from the reaction of one conglomeration of atoms on another.

We may now summarise the weaknesses of so-called scientific theories regarding the origin and age of the universe:

1. These theories have been advanced on the basis of observable data during a relatively short period of time of only a number of decades; at any rate, not more than a couple of centuries.
2. On the basis of such a relatively small range of known (though, by no means, perfectly known) data, scientists venture to build theories by the weak method of extrapolation, and from the consequent to the antecedent, extending to, according to them, millions and billions of years!
3. In advancing such theories they blithely disregard factors universally admitted by all scientists, namely that in the initial period of the 'birth' of the universe, conditions of temperature, atmospheric pressure, radioactivity, and a host of other catalytic factors, were totally different from those existing in the present state of the universe.
4. The consensus of scientific opinion is that there must have been many radioactive elements in the initial stage that now no longer exist, or that exist only in minimal quantities; some of them elements the catalytic potency of which is known even in minimal doses.
5. The formation of the world, if we are to accept these theories, began with a process of binding single atoms together, or the components of the atom, and their conglomeration and consolidation, involving totally unknown processes and variables.

In short, all of the weak "scientific" theories, those which deal with the origin of the cosmos and with its dating, are, by the scientists' own admission, the weakest of the weak.

It is small wonder (and this, incidentally, is one of the obvious refutations of these theories) that the various "scientific" theories concerning the age of the universe not only contradict each other but, in some cases, are quite incompatible and mutually exclusive since the maximum date of one theory is less than the minimum date of another.

If anyone accepts such a theory uncritically it can only lead him into fallacious and inconsequential reasoning. Consider, for example, the so-called evolutionary theory of the origin of the world, which assumes that the universe evolved out of existing atomic and sub-atomic particles which, by an evolutionary process, combined to form the physical universe and our planet on which organic life somehow developed, also by an evolutionary process, until homosapiens emerged. It is hard to understand why one should really accept the creation of atomic and sub- atomic particles in a state – which is

admittedly unknowable, and inconceivable – yet be reluctant to accept the creation of planets, or organisms, or a human being, as we know these to exist.

The argument from the discovery of fossils is by no means conclusive evidence of the great antiquity of the earth, for the following reasons:

1. In the view of the unknown conditions which existed in “pre-historic” times, as already mentioned – conditions which could have caused reactions and changes of an entirely different nature and tempo from those known under the present day orderly processes of nature – one cannot exclude the possibility that dinosaurs existed over 5,000 years ago and became fossilised under terrific natural cataclysms in the course of a few years, rather than over millions of years, since we have no conceivable measurements or criteria of calculations under these known conditions.
2. Even assuming that the period of time which the *Torah* allows for the age of the world is definitely too short for fossilisation, one may readily accept the possibility that G-d created ready fossils, bones or skeletons (for reasons best known to Him), just as he could create ready living organisms, a complete man, and such ready products as oil, coal or diamonds, without any evolutionary process.

As for the question, if the latter reason is true, why did G-d have to create fossils in the first place? The answer is simple: We cannot know the reason why G-d chose this manner of creation in preference to another, and, whatever theory of creation is accepted, the question will still remain unanswered. The question, “why create a fossil?”, is no more valid than the question, “why create an atom?” Certainly, such a question cannot serve as a sound argument, much less as a logical basis, for the evolutionary theory.

What scientific basis is there for limiting the creative process to an evolutionary process only, starting with atomic and subatomic particles – a theory full of unexplained gaps and complications – while excluding the possibility of creation as given by the Biblical account? For, if the latter possibility be admitted, everything falls neatly into a pattern and all speculation regarding the origin and age of the world becomes unnecessary and irrelevant.

It is surely no argument to question this possibility by saying, why should the Creator create a finished universe, when it would have been sufficient for Him to create an adequate number of atoms or sub-atomic particles with the power of evolution to develop into the present cosmic order? The absurdity of this argument becomes even more obvious when it is made the basis of a

flimsy theory, as if it were based on solid and irrefutable arguments overriding all other possibilities.

EVOLUTION

First and foremost, let it be stated that the theory of evolution has no bearing on the *Torah* account of creation. Even if the theory was substantiated and the mutation of species were proven in lab tests this would still not contradict the possibility of the world having been created as stated in the *Torah* rather than through the evolutionary process.

How much more so since the whole theory is highly speculative and, although, during the years of research and investigation since the theory was first advanced, it has been possible to observe certain species of animal and plant life of a short life span over thousands of generations, yet it has never been possible to establish a transmutation from one species to another, much less to turn a plant into an animal. Such a theory can have no place in the arsenal of empirical science.

The theory of evolution is a typical example of how a highly speculative and scientifically unsound theory captured the imagination of the masses and has allowed them to dismiss the Biblical account despite the fact that the theory has not been substantiated scientifically and is devoid of any real scientific basis. It is almost as if the sceptics were searching for a reason to disbelieve. Their misguided axiom was that the Bible is wrong, and that they needed some replacement theory. Evolution was perfect. It provided a G-dless theory of creation and fuelled the atheistic bent. In truth, that is highly unscientific; pure science must be based on ephemeral data.

Human nature has also affected the debate. Although the various theories attempting to explain the origin and age of the world are weak, they are advanced because it is a matter of human nature to seek an explanation for everything in the environment, and any theory, however far-fetched, is better than none, at least until a more feasible explanation can be devised.

One may well ask why, in the absence of a sounder theory, the Biblical account isn't accepted by the scientists? The answer is again to be found in human nature. It is a natural human ambition to be inventive and original. To accept the Biblical account deprives one of the opportunities to show analytic and inductive ingenuity. Hence, disregarding the Biblical account, the scientists must devise reasons to justify doing so and take refuge in classifying it with ancient and primitive mythology and the like, since it cannot be argued against on scientific grounds.

CONVERGING NOT DIVERGING

As time proceeds, science will discover the truths of the *Torah*. Rather than being seen as diverging, science and religion are converging. There is a story of a group of scientists who were climbing the mountain of creation. As they reached the summit, they found a Rabbi sitting and learning. He looked up from his book and said to the weary scientists, "I told you so!"

This fact has been predicted by the ancient *Kabbalistic* text, the *Zohar*. On the verse in Genesis 7:11, "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life ... all the fountains of the great deep were opened, and the windows of the heaven were opened", the *Zohar* comments:

In the six-hundredth year of the sixth millennium, the gates of wisdom from above will be opened as well as the fountains of wisdom from below, and the world will be prepared to be elevated in the seventh millennium.

The *Zohar* predicts that in the Hebrew year 5600, which corresponds to the year 1840 CE, there will be major developments both in the wisdom from above and the wisdom from below. The wisdom from above refers to esoteric wisdom in which major revelations were made in the dissemination of *Chassidic* philosophy starting in that year. It is well known that the founder of the *Chassidic* movement, the *Baal Shem Tov*, once, through mysterious *Kabbalistic* means, entered the heavenly palace of the *Mashiach* and asked him, "When will the Master come?" *Mashiach* replied, "When the wellsprings of your teachings will be widely dispersed". The major developments in the teachings and dissemination of *Chassidism* that occurred after the year 1840 are a true fulfilment of that indication.

The wisdom from below refers to the major advances in science which also began around that time. The major industrial revolutions, which occurred in the mid-19th Century, paved the way for the major technological advances of recent years.

The connection between these two wisdoms is that they will converge. In the messianic era, it is prophesied (Isaiah 40:5) that, "...the glory of G-d will be revealed, and all flesh will see together that the mouth of the L-rd has spoken". As a preparation for the messianic revelation there will be an explosion in scientific discovery ultimately revealing the truth of the esoteric wisdom of the *Torah*.

Indeed, the discoveries in the natural sciences have thrown new light on the wonders of creation and the modern trend has consequently been towards

the recognition of the unity pervading nature. In fact, with every advance in science, the underlying unity in the physical world has become more clearly discernible; so much so, that science is now searching for the ideal formula which would comprise all the phenomena of the physical world in one comprehensive equation. With a little further insight, it can be seen that the unity in nature is the reflection of true monotheism in its Jewish concept. For, as Jews conceive of monotheism, it is not merely the belief that there is only one G-d, but that G-d's unity transcends the physical world as well, so that there is only one reality, namely G-d.

Indeed, the principle of unity is the essence of Judaism – since Abraham first proclaimed monotheism in a world of idolatry – which came to full fruition at the revelation at Mount Sinai. For true monotheism, as professed by us, is not only the truth that there is only one G-d and none with Him, but that there is “nothing besides” (*Ein Od*); that is, the denial of the existence of any reality but G-d's, the denial of pluralism and dualism, even of the separation between the material and the spiritual.

As noted previously, the more the physical sciences advance, the closer one approaches the principle of unity even in the world of matter. Formerly, it was the accepted opinion that the plurality and compositeness in the material world could be reduced to some hundred odd basic elements and entities, and physical forces and laws were regarded as being separate and independent, not to mention the dichotomy between matter and energy. However, in recent years, with the advancement in science, the basic elements themselves were reduced to several more elementary components of the atoms – electrons, protons, and neutrons – and even these were immediately qualified as not the ultimate “blocks” of matter, until the discovery was made that matter and energy are reducible and convertible into one another.

It is well known that the *Baal Shem Tov* taught, and Rabbi *Shneur Zalman of Liadi* explained and amplified, that every detail in human experience is an instruction in man's service to G-d. Thus, what has been said above about the advancement of science exemplifies also the progress of human advancement in the service of G-d. Man possesses two apparently contradictory elements, no less compatible than the incompatibility of matter and spirit, the counterpart of which in the physical world is matter and energy, namely the Divine soul and the animal soul, or, on a lower level, the *Yetzer Tov* (good inclination) and the *Yetzer Hora* (the evil inclination). But this incompatibility is evident only in the infantile stage of progress in Divine service, comparable to the plurality of elements and forces which were presumed to exist in physical

nature. Just as the appreciation of the underlying unity of nature grew with the advancement of science, so does perfection in the Divine service lead to the realisation of the essential unity in human nature, to the point where the *Yetzer Tov* and *Yetzer Hora* become one, through the transformation of the *Yetzer Hora* by and into the *Yetzer Tov*, for otherwise, of course, there can be no unity and harmony since all that is holy and positive and creative could never make peace and be subservient to the unholy, negative and destructive. And in this attained unity the Jew proclaims, “*Hear O Israel, G-d our L-rd, G-d is one*”. This is also what our Sages meant when they said that the words, “And you shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart” (the words immediately following the *Shema*) mean: to love G-d with both your inclinations, with the *Yetzer Hora* as with the *Yetzer Tov*.

CONCLUSION

The intent of the above is not to cast aspersions on science or to discredit the scientific method. Science cannot operate except by accepting certain working theories or hypotheses, even if they cannot be verified, though some theories die hard even when they are scientifically refuted or discredited. No technical progress would be possible unless certain physical laws are accepted, even though there is no guarantee that the law will repeat itself. However, science can only deal with theories, not with certainties. All scientific conclusions or generalisations can only be probable in a greater or lesser degree according to the precautions taken in the use of the available evidence, and the degree of probability necessarily decreases with the distance from the empirical facts or with the increase of the unknown variables etc. Bearing this in mind one will realise that there can be no real conflict between any scientific theory and the *Torah*. On the contrary, a careful analysis of the findings of modern science and their philosophical meaning shows a convergence and harmony of science with *Torah*.

Many Jews today have become alienated from *Torah* and the Jewish way of life because of the tremendous, almost hypnotic, effect of a seemingly omnipotent science. Thousands justify their secularism by the “fact” that they are “more enlightened” than past generations. Many in the religious camp choose either to ignore (or ban) the discussion of the development of science and technology, or to adjust *Torah* to modern thought. In truth, neither approach is credible.

The correct approach is that there is no reason for the *Torah* observant Jew to be frightened by the science and technology explosion, or to take an apologetic position. He should always bear in mind the saying of the *Zohar* (Vol.1

p.161b), “G-d looked into the *Torah* and created the world”. This means that the *Torah* is the blueprint of creation, and the finished product (the universe) cannot contradict the blueprint (*Torah*) by which it was designed.

By definition, *Torah* is Divine wisdom. The *Torah* is therefore the only ultimate source of true, complete and definitive knowledge about everything, including the objects and phenomena which science examines. *Torah* knowledge stems from a perspective “from Above”, whereas scientific knowledge, obtained by the rational processing of empirical information, stems “from below”.

Ultimately, these fountains will converge. We may look forward to the messianic era in which science, which in itself is neutral, will be elevated to serve for sacred purposes. Further scientific development and analysis will help us comprehend *Torah* concepts. Technology will bring the world to a situation where, as *Maimonides* describes the messianic era, “there will be neither famine nor war, neither envy nor competition, for good things will flow in abundance and all the delights will be as freely available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d”.

What is Wrong with Intermarriage?

WE LIVE TODAY in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. We mix freely with, and respect, people of all faiths. Many Jews today grow up fully assimilated and comfortable in a secular society and environment. Why is it such a tragedy if a Jewish man finds a non- Jewish woman (or vice versa) with whom he feels totally compatible and decides to marry her? He claims that she is a genuinely lovely person with a fine character – often much nicer than any Jewish woman he has met. She is at home with his Jewish background and culture, and both share the same values, hobbies and pursuits. A perfect match, yet not made in Heaven. Why not?

The decision to marry out is perhaps the most telling moment, when a person must consider what being Jewish means practically. Is being Jewish simply an accident of birth? Is there a difference between a Jew and a non-Jew? Can one retain full Jewish identity if married to a non-Jewish partner? What if one finds the perfect partner – loving, caring, considerate, good fun – but unfortunately non-Jewish? What means more in life – a happy marriage or one's religion? If one has found true love, does religion really matter?

WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?

No person just arrives on the scene. We are all the product of bygone generations: in the case of the Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob's family descended to servitude in Egypt and after 210 years was miraculously redeemed by G-d through Moses, His faithful servant. The Children of Israel were subsequently constituted as a nation at the stand at Sinai – the *Torah* being their 'wedding contract' with G-d. To date, Jewish history spans over 3,300

years. During this time Jews have had their golden eras and also have suffered severe persecutions, inquisitions, pogroms and, ultimately, the Holocaust. To be born a Jew today is not an accident of birth but the sum total of over 3,300 years of ancestral self-sacrifice of heroes who at times gave their very lives for their beliefs. Somewhere along our ancestral line, you can be sure that a grandfather or mother had to accept poverty, hardship, derision, exile and humiliation, but stubbornly stuck to their faith. Greeks, Romans, Crusaders, Nazis and Communists all tried to obliterate Jewish practice and faith but failed. The persecutors are all relics of the past, but Judaism is alive and vibrant. The indomitable Jewish spirit survived and clung to its traditions despite all odds.

And now, the very latest link of that glorious tradition wishes to sever the chain in one fell swoop! Imagine if one were able to resurrect all one's ancestors. They would differ in language, dress and cuisine but all would share the same Jewish tradition. What would one say to a great-great-grandfather who sat in prison for keeping *Shabbat*? What would one say to a great-great-grandmother who would walk for miles to buy *Kosher* provisions? How could one possibly introduce them to a non-Jewish fiancé?

A story was told by Mr. George Rohr, an American philanthropist, at a convention for the *Lubavitcher Rebbe's* emissaries in 1996. Mr Rohr related how he had the privilege to meet the *Rebbe* on one occasion just after *Rosh Hashanah*.

Mr. Rohr thought it appropriate to present the *Rebbe* with a "spiritual" gift. A short time before, he had set up a beginner's service at his *Shul* in Manhattan, and on *Rosh Hashanah* 120 Jews attended this new service. Mr. Rohr decided to announce this to the *Rebbe* and was sure the *Rebbe* would receive much nachas from this good news.

When his turn arrived, he confidently strode up to the *Rebbe* and said, "Thank G-d, this *Rosh Hashanah* we set up a beginners service in our *Shul* and had 120 Jews with no Jewish background participate!"

Until that point the *Rebbe* had a broad smile on his face, but when Mr. Rohr told him the news the *Rebbe's* face dropped, and Mr. Rohr searched his words for anything he may have said that had upset the *Rebbe*.

"What?!" said the *Rebbe*.

Mr. Rohr repeated, "... 120 Jews with no Jewish background"

"No Jewish background?" asked the *Rebbe*. "Go and tell those Jews that they are all children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob".

Now Mr. Rohr understood. The *Rebbe* objected to these Jews being described as having no Jewish background. Every Jew has a very illustrious background – they are all sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

One may ask, however, is this not a guilt trip? After all, why do I have to be liable to continue this chain, to pass on the traditions and to carry the baton just because my *Mazal* was that I was born Jewish? Who placed this awesome responsibility on my shoulders? Furthermore, there are plenty of others who will carry on the traditions. What difference does it make if I side-track a little and shunt myself into a dead-end?

Every merit comes with responsibility and every responsibility comes with liability. At Sinai, G-d proclaimed us the Chosen People. Chosen for what?

Just before G-d gave the Ten Commandments he spoke to Moses and said, (Exodus 19:5,6) “Now if you obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be my special treasure among the nations, even though all the world is Mine. You will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to Me”.

In these few words lies the task for which the Jews were chosen – to be a kingdom of priests. This means that every one of us must be holy in our private life, and in our association with the outside world every one of us, man or woman, must fulfil priestly functions. The priests’ function is to “bring” G-d to the people and to elevate the people to be nearer to G-d. Every Jew and Jewess fulfils their personal and “priestly” duties by living a life according to the *Torah*. The extent of one’s duties is in direct proportion to one’s station in life. It is all the greater in the case of an individual who occupies a position of prominence, which gives him an opportunity to exercise influence over others, especially over youth. Such people must fully appreciate the privilege and responsibility which Divine Providence vested in them to spread the light of *Torah*.

Jews are called *Bnai Yisrael*. The word *Yisrael* is an acronym for the phrase, “*Yesh Shishim Ribo Otiot LeTorah*” which means that there are 600,000 letters in the *Torah*. Every Jew is compared to a letter in a *Torah* scroll. Even if only one letter is missing the entire scroll is incomplete and invalid. Every Jew is an ambassador of his people in his echelon in society. That is his G-d-given responsibility and privilege. To shirk this responsibility is to deny oneself the ultimate privilege. To intermarry is an open violation of that responsibility.

CHILDREN

The *Torah* explicitly forbids intermarriage. The source is in Deuteronomy 7:3-4:

You shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughter to his son, and you shall not take his daughter for your son, for he will cause your

child to turn away from after Me and they will worship the gods of others then the L-rd's wrath will burn against you, and He will destroy you quickly.

The direct implication is that children from such a union will be torn away from Judaism. Incidentally, this is also the Scriptural source for the law of matrilineal descent. Since the verse states “for he (i.e. a non-Jewish father) will cause your child to turn away.”, this implies that a child born to a Jewish mother is Jewish whereas, if a Jewish man marries a non-Jewish woman, the child is not Jewish.

Thus, in the case of a Jewish man marrying a non-Jewish woman the child is not Jewish and an unbroken Jewish line has henceforth been broken. If a non-Jewish man marries a Jewish woman, the children are Jewish. However, the *Torah* explicitly forbids such a union for “he will turn your child away”.

The truth is that a Jewish woman who has already married out and borne children should be encouraged to give them a full Jewish education. There are today thousands of practising Jews who only have a Jewish mother. However, to a couple contemplating intermarriage, the facts speak for themselves. Except in a small number of cases in which the mother is very determined and gives the child a very positive, strong Jewish education, in most cases the child grows up with a mixed and confused identity: in simple terms, half-Jewish. Technically, there is no such thing – one is either Jewish or not. However, in terms of identity, the child feels only half-Jewish. Even if the mother is a proud Jew, the father, whether atheist, agnostic, Protestant, Catholic, Muslim etc., does not share the same beliefs and values. Even if he is sympathetic, or even agrees to the child being brought up Jewish, there are bound to be differences. Does one celebrate *Chanukah* or Xmas, both or neither? Whichever one chooses is confusing or even contradictory. Many intermarried couples today celebrate both – but what sort of message does this give the child? Is the child Jewish, thus rejecting the notions of Christianity, or is the child a Christian with Jewish roots? It causes great confusion for the child and in many cases the child sees both faiths only on a superficial level, distanced by his parents from true belief.

The child is also given the test of mixed allegiances. All passages of life create a problem. Should the child be circumcised, christened, both or neither? Should the child have a *Bar Mitzvah* or be confirmed, marry in a Synagogue or a church, be buried in a Jewish *cemetery* or be cremated?

And what chances are there that the child should want to marry a Jew? Even in the case of a determined Jewish mother who wishes to marry a non-Jewish partner and raise her child as a Jew, who says her child would want to marry a Jew and, most importantly, what sort of example has the mother set for the child?

Children learn from their parents. They cannot be taught ethics; they must see them being practised. There is no sense in parents demanding that their child marry a Jew when one of the parents has married out!

There is another point: people are social beings. From time immemorial they have gathered in communities. One thing the international Jewish community prides itself in is the idea of *Kol Yisrael Chaverim* – all Israel are one fraternity, one brotherhood, one nation. If you are travelling to Bangkok and need a place for *Shabbat*, you can be sure that if you turn up in *Shul* you will get an invitation. Wherever a Jew goes he will have an international support group that extends hospitality and financial help, if needed. By having a non-Jewish child, one has extricated the child from that community and bequeathed alienation to him. Everybody wants to belong – it is a basic human need. Inter-marriage causes great confusion to children regarding where they actually belong.

IT'S IN THE GENES

Marriage in general, even between two people of similar background, entails a certain risk as to eventual adjustment and compatibility. Even if the two have been acquainted for some time there is no sure guarantee as to what the relationship will be like when the acquaintance is turned into a marriage, where the two will be thrown together under one roof for 24 hours of every day, one after the next, week after week. But when the backgrounds are entirely different, and where these differences date back for scores of generations – and are consequently of a deep and lasting quality – the chances of adjustment and compatibility are so negligible as to be almost non-existent. Especially where the differences are of an antagonistic and hostile nature, as has been evidenced by the pogroms and persecutions of Jews in every land where Jews sojourned in the past 2,000 years. Moreover, modern science recognises the hereditary nature of character traits, particularly deeply rooted ones developed over generations.

Inter-marriage may result, sooner or later, in endless friction and unhappiness. That a casual, or even more serious, kind of relationship seemed in the past to indicate compatibility, is no proof that it would be so ever after in a marriage situation.

On the contrary, it is inevitable that two people of such divergent backgrounds, one descending from generations of oppressed and victimised people the other from the world of the oppressors and predacious, should be affected by hereditary forces.

NO CHANGE

Who says people don't change? Even if a couple are happy with each other, deeply in love, and have decided to marry despite their different religious backgrounds, who says that future events won't reverse their feelings? There are so many factors that can change a person's feelings.

King Solomon states, "I am sleeping but my heart is awake". A Jew may be sleeping spiritually but his inner Jewish heart is always awake and, at certain times, is aroused. Years into a marriage, where much of the relationship is routine, the soul and Jewish heart may be aroused to search for the deeper meaning to life. There may be a quest for spirituality and rediscovery of one's roots.

Consider the fact that these feelings will not be shared by your spouse. They will neither understand nor feel those same emotions and you will be alone. On the other hand, a Jewish partner means a shared history and a shared destiny.

BUT IT WORKS!

There is, of course, the argument that the percentage of intermarriages is considerable and many of them seem to last. However, the statistics show that the percentage of separations and divorces among intermarried couples is incomparably greater than among marriages within the faith. Secondly, many married people try to put on the appearance of a "happy" marriage, being ashamed to confess failure and to reveal the frictions and indignities suffered at home. In an intermarriage the sense of shame is even greater, knowing that many friends had warned against it, while the couple had maintained that their marriage would be different.

IT'S SIMPLY NOT RIGHT

To be honest – in the plain sense of the word – one would not wish to drag another party into an alliance which is problematic from the start. If there is true love between the two parties, and not in a selfish way, one would readily forgo the prospect of immediate and short-lived pleasure in order to spare the other a problematic result. Otherwise, the professed love is nothing but selfish and egotistic.

Should there be children from such a union, there is the added consideration that the children may have to witness friction – and worse – between their parents over matters that concern the passages of life.

It is necessary to emphasise the point that one's personal convenience, desire or gratification is no justification for involving oneself with that which is wrong, especially to involve another person – least of all a loved one – into

such a situation, even if the other person is agreeable, and sincerely so. No person has the right to harm another person.

A JEWISH MARRIAGE

A Jewish marriage is called a *Binyan Adei Ad* – an everlasting edifice. In order that the edifice of marriage should indeed be strong and lasting, everything connected with the wedding, as well as the establishment of the couple's home, should be in full compliance with the instructions of the *Torah*. The *Torah* is called *Torat Chaim* – the *Torah* of life – it is the source of everlasting life in the Hereafter as well as the true guide to life on earth.

The analogy of marriage to an “everlasting edifice” is not merely a figure of speech but contains also an important idea and moral. In the case of any structure, the first and most important step is to ensure the quality and durability of the foundation. Without such a foundation, all the efforts put into the walls, roof, decorations and so on, would be of no avail. This is even more true of the structure of marriage; if its foundations are unstable, what tragedy could result! This is why a Jewish marriage must, first of all, be based on the rock-solid foundation of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. Then the blessing of joy and happiness will follow the couple for the rest of their lives.

The *Torah* explicitly forbids intermarriage. Such a union has no foundation and will not be an everlasting edifice. In fact for a Jewish person to marry a non-Jew is one of the greatest calamities, and not only from the religious viewpoint. Nor is it entirely a personal matter affecting only the person involved, for it concerns the whole Jewish people, and there are few transgressions that affect the whole Jewish people as an intermarriage (G-d forbid) does. It is a transgression also against one's elementary honesty, for it is exceedingly unfair both to the other party and to the respective good friends, who wish to see their near and dear one lastingly happy.

SHOULD I MARRY A JEWESS JUST BECAUSE SHE IS JEWISH?

Many young people feel themselves pressured by their parents to marry a Jewish spouse and, even though the choice is wider in the non-Jewish world, they feel obligated to marry within the fold out of a sense of duty. They often ask the question, what is the difference between the Jew and the non-Jew – both dress the same, both share common values, both eat the same food? If a man finds himself with a choice between two women, one Jewish and one non-Jewish, should he marry the Jewish woman just because she is Jewish?

The answer is a resounding “Yes!” Yes, because therein lies the potential for a truly Jewish marriage. Although at present there seems to be no difference between the Jew and non-Jew, as people grow older, they change and mature. The vicissitudes, strains and challenges of life pull a person in all directions. If one is at least married to a Jew, there is common ground and potential to grow. That is certainly not the case in an inter-marriage.

However, as strongly as the answer is yes, it carries an equally strong piece of advice. The institution of marriage – any marriage – needs much hard work. It is imperative that two young Jewish people who wish to marry should examine the huge repository of knowledge that the *Torah* has to offer to guide them in their future lives together. Couples must learn about the laws of *Taharat Hamishpachah* – the laws of Family Purity – that enhance the marriage. They must learn of the great importance of *Shalom Bayit* – peace in the home – and how to run a *Kosher* home. They should learn about the importance of *Chinuch* – education – even from an early age. No marriage can be taken for granted. As stated above, the foundation for a good marriage must be the Divine directives of the *Torah*, but a man and wife must understand that they must work very hard to implement these directives in order to make the marriage successful.

IS CONVERSION AN OPTION?

Conversion is serious business. Ask yourself a serious question: Is the conversion being carried out from a true desire to become Jewish, independent of any impending partnership, or is it a token conversion, done to please some parent? A serious conversion can take years and involves serious changes in lifestyle and conduct.

To undergo a “cosmetic” or “plastic” conversion is, obviously, no solution to a seriously minded person, and even more abhorrent to an honest person. A true conversion has to be such as to transform a non-Jew into a Jew, with a new Jewish *Neshamah* (soul), like a new-born child of Jewish parents. Such a conversion is one that is carried out in strict accordance with *Halachah*; anything less is only a sham and a mockery.

The *Halachah* is very clear in its insistence that the would-be convert honestly and wholeheartedly accepts all the *Mitzvot*. Accepting all but one of the *Mitzvot* automatically invalidates the conversion, and the non-Jew remains a non-Jew exactly as before. Of course, it is possible to mislead a Rabbi or a Rabbinic Court by declaring one’s readiness to accept all the *Mitzvot*, but one cannot mislead the Creator who is the One who imbues the *Neshamah*.

There is the well-known argument that it is unfair to demand more of a would-be convert, in terms of adherence to the *Mitzvot*, than that which many born Jews observe in practice. This contention is inadmissible since it is a requirement and stipulation of Jewish Law to which the would-be convert must unequivocally commit himself.

A word of caution: within the Jewish community today one may convert in either an Orthodox or Progressive establishment. It should be clear from the start that an Orthodox conversion is accepted in all Jewish circles whereas the Orthodox do not accept a Progressive conversion. To convert in a Progressive establishment is hazardous in itself, for one's Jewish identity is not universally recognised.

It is analogous to a longer-but-shorter way. To get to a particular destination one can take a long route but it may in fact be the shortest route. One may take a short route which might turn out to be a very long route. An Orthodox conversion is the longer-shorter way. It may be arduous and take a longer time, but it is the shortest way to universal recognition. A Progressive conversion may be relatively easy but, in the final analysis, it is a very long route, for the end result is not recognised. It is a source of great shock to many children who find out that, since their parents underwent Progressive conversions, the Orthodox establishment does not consider them to be Jewish.

When a person marries, he must be a little long-sighted. One cannot think just of oneself. One must take into consideration the status of one's offspring. Just as all parents wish to do the best for their child so, too, must all parents ensure that their offspring will not have any problems of Jewish status. Accordingly, anyone serious about conversion should consult a competent rabbinic authority. The reader is referred to the book *Who is a Jew* by Rabbi J. E. Schochet, which discusses this issue at length.

ADVICE TO PARENTS

Parents often seek rabbinical advice on how to stop an intermarriage. In truth two pieces of advice are needed: one before the crisis, and one after.

When a child is born, we wish the parents "*Mazal Tov*". In many cases, straight after the *Mazal Tov*, the parents put their new-born child's name down to attend the best schools in the area. One often hears from parents that they want to give their children the best education possible. By this they mean that they wish to expose their children to the highest levels of academia available in the secular world coupled with a weak pre-*Bar Mitzvah* education in the basics of Judaism. They expect their child to be worldly, educated, modern and open

minded. They then pronounce that after such a broad education the child will be able to make his own choice about who he wishes to marry. When the child decides to intermarry the parents then run to the Rabbi for a quick fix. Some parents resign themselves to the situation while others seek a token conversion.

In truth, such an education does not give the child free choice at all. If their choice is between a modern well-equipped science laboratory and an old stuffy Synagogue classroom with a boring teacher – for sure they will choose the lab!

The story is told of a person who was asked if he knew what a *Tallit Katan* was. He replied affirmatively indicating on his own body the size of a pair of *Tzitzit* suitable for a seven-year-old – probably the type he once wore at Hebrew School. He was then asked what size suit he wore. When he appeared puzzled at the question it was explained to him that, since he now wears an adult size suit, why does he see himself in a child's size *Tzitzit*!

The point of this story is simple. The man's conception of Judaism is that of a child's because while in every other subject – Maths, English, History, etc. – he proceeded to higher education, in Judaism he stopped at *Bar Mitzvah*. No wonder he chooses to be assimilated since his choice appears to be between an adult modern world and an archaic irrelevant past.

If parents want to give their children a real choice, they have to give them a strong Jewish education and identity. It is only then that an informed choice can be made.

A father once came to a Rabbi with his daughter and asked the Rabbi to persuade her not to marry out. The Rabbi asked the daughter why she didn't want to marry a Jew. She replied that her father never took her to Synagogue, never ate *Kosher*, never kept *Shabbat* or the festivals – in short, lived exactly like their non-Jewish neighbours, so why now the hypocrisy in demanding that she marry a Jew! The Rabbi turned to the father and said that he agreed with her. The father was dumbstruck and then said that he had brought her to the Rabbi to convince her not to marry out, and not to agree with her. The Rabbi responded that, in order for her not to marry out, the father had to start living as a Jew. He suggested that the father should lay *Tefillin* daily and that his wife should start lighting the *Shabbat* candles. After a lot of persuasion, the daughter eventually married a Jew. To live as a Jew – that is the advice before the crisis, since prevention is the best cure. But what if one is already in a crisis?

Obviously, parents should intensify their own efforts as well as enlisting the aid of friends to do everything to prevent the tragedy. When it comes to a Jewish heart one never knows when and how its innate Jewish feelings will be aroused. However, parents should consider the following:

All the members of a Jewish family constitute one organism and, when one part of it needs special treatment, it can be given in one of two ways; either directly, if possible, or indirectly, through strengthening other parts of the body, particularly those that govern the functions of the entire organism. The head of the family is called the *Baal Habayit* and the wife is called the *Akeret Habayit*, corresponding to the heart of the family. Thus, strengthening the commitment to the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* on the part of the parents has a beneficial effect upon all the members of the family. Of course, it may sometimes entail certain difficulties by having to make some changes, perhaps even radical ones, in regard to habits and lifestyle. On the other hand, considering the far-reaching benefits, and especially the fact that parents surely would not consider anything too difficult if it could be beneficial to their children, of what significance can any difficulty be, especially as in most cases these are often exaggerated? In any case, a Jew is always required and expected to live according to G-d's Will; how much more so when a special Divine blessing is needed.

At the same time there is the assurance that, however one's everyday life and conduct was in the past, a Jew can always start a new life through *Teshuvah* – which literally means returning to one's essence.

 CHAPTER 9

What is the Role of the Woman in Judaism?

IN A JEWISH household, the wife, and mother, is called the *Akeret Habayit* in Hebrew. This means literally the ‘mainstay’ of the home. It is she who largely determines the character and atmosphere of the entire home.

G-d demands that a Jewish home – every Jewish home – should have a Jewish character, not only on *Shabbat* and the holidays, but also on the ordinary weekdays and in ‘weekday’ matters. It must be a Jewish home in every respect.

What makes a Jewish household special is that it is conducted in all its details according to the directives of the *Torah*. Hence the home becomes an abode for G-d’s Presence, a home for G-dliness, one of which G-d says, “Make Me a sanctuary, and I shall dwell among them”. (Exodus 25:5).

It is a home where G-d’s Presence is felt on every day of the week; and not only when engaged in prayer and learning *Torah* but also when engaged in very ordinary activities such as eating and drinking etc., in accordance with the directive, “know Him in all your ways”.

It is a home where mealtime is not a time for indulging merely in eating, but becomes a hallowed service to G-d, sanctified by the washing of the hands before the meal, reciting the blessings over the food, and Grace after the meal, with every item of food and beverage brought into the home being strictly *Kosher*. It is a home where the mutual relationship between husband and wife is sanctified by the meticulous observance of the laws and regulations of *Taharat Hamishpachah* (Laws of Family Purity, which include *Mikvah* attendance) and permeated with awareness of the active third “Partner” – G-d – in creating new life, in fulfilment of the Divine commandment, “Be fruitful and multiply”. This also ensures that children are born in purity and holiness, with

pure hearts and minds that will enable them to resist temptation and avoid the pitfalls of the environment when they grow up. Moreover, the strict observance of *Taharat Hamishpachah* is a basic factor in the preservation of peace and harmony (*Shalom Bayit*) in the home, which is vitally strengthened and fortified thereby – obviously, a basic factor in the preservation of the family as a unit.

It is a home where the parents know that their first obligation is to instill into their offspring, from their most tender age, the love, and fear, of G-d, permeating them with the joy of performing *Mitzvot*. Despite their desire to provide their children with all the good things in life, Jewish parents must know that the greatest, indeed the only real and eternal legacy they can bequeath to their children, is to make the *Torah*, *Mitzvot* and Jewish traditions their life-source and guide in daily life.

In all that has been said above, the Jewish wife and mother – the *Akeret Habayit* – has a primary role, second to none. It is largely – and in many respects exclusively – her great task and privilege to give her home its truly Jewish atmosphere.

She has been entrusted with, and is completely in charge of, the *Kashrut* of the foods and beverages that come into her kitchen and appear on the dining table. She has been given the privilege of ushering in the holy *Shabbat* by lighting the candles on Friday, in ample time before sunset. Thus, she actually and symbolically brightens up her home with peace and harmony and with the light of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. It is largely in her merits that G-d bestows the blessing of true happiness on her husband and children and the entire household.

In addition to such *Mitzvot* as candle-lighting, separating *Challah* from the dough, and others which the *Torah* entrusted primarily to Jewish daughters, there are matters which, in the natural order of things, lie in the woman's domain. The reason for this being so in the natural order is that it stems from the supra-natural order of holiness, which is the source and origin of the good in the physical world. This refers to the observance of *Taharat Hamishpachah*, which by its very nature lies in the hands of the Jewish woman. The husband is required to encourage and facilitate this mutual observance; certainly not hinder it in any way, G-d forbid. But the main responsibility – and privilege – is the wife's.

This is the great task and mission which G-d gave to Jewish women – to observe and disseminate the observance of *Taharat Hamishpachah* and of the other vital institutions of Jewish family life. For besides being the fundamental *Mitzvot* and the cornerstone of the sanctity of Jewish family life, as well as relating to the well-being of the children in body and soul, these pervade and extend through all Jewish generations to eternity.

It is to be remembered that the Creator has provided every Jewish woman with the capacity to carry them out in daily life in the fullest measure, for otherwise it would not be logical or fair of G-d to give obligations and duties which are impossible to fulfil.

It should be noted that the very Jewishness of a person is dependent on the mother. In Jewish law, if a person's mother is Jewish, then the person is Jewish. If only the father is Jewish, but the mother is a non-Jew, then the child is not Jewish. This very fact indicates the woman's primary role in preserving Jewish identity and values.

The above stated does not mean that the Jewish woman's place is solely in the home and that she should not follow a career. Rather it is the realisation that the primary role of the Jewish woman is that of a homemaker – the home and family unit being the nucleus of the Jewish community. Modern psychologists are affirming more and more what the *Torah* has always taught us: that a secure and loving home built on solid moral and ethical values is the basic building block of society. To pursue a career at the expense of shunning one's obligation and privilege in this area is misguided.

When a Jewish woman creates a Jewish home and educates her children in *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, she is deserving of King Solomon's praise, "A woman of worth who can find... a G-d fearing woman, she is to be praised".

BACK TO ONE'S ROOTS

Every Jewish woman is a descendant of the Matriarchs, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah. It is incumbent on every Jewish woman to remember her roots. By reflecting upon the vital functions of roots in the world of plants one may deduce, by way of instructive analogy, a lesson for the contemporary Jewish woman.

The roots are the source of vitality of the plant from the moment of its birth when the seed takes root and thereafter, bringing it to fruition and constantly nourishing it throughout its life with the vital elements of water and minerals from the soil.

While the roots must also work for their own existence, growth, development and strength, their main function is to nourish the plant and ensure its full development, as well as its regenerative powers through the production of fruits and fruits of fruits. At the same time the roots provide a firm base and anchorage for the plant so that it will not be swept away by strong winds and other elements.

It is in the sense of these basic functions of physical roots that we can understand our spiritual roots. The primary roots of our Jewish people are our

Patriarchs, Abraham Isaac and Jacob, as our Sages declare, “Only three are called *Avot* (Patriarchs)”. On the maternal side our primary roots are our Matriarchs, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah. Each of these founders and builders of the House of Israel contributed a distinctive quality which, when blended, produced the unique character of our Jewish people.

Most typical – and original (in the sense of parentage) – is the Patriarch Abraham, of whom it is written, “One was Abraham”, for he was the only one in his generation who recognised the unity of G-d and, with complete self-sacrifice, proclaimed the Unity of G-d (pure monotheism) to a world steeped in polytheism and idolatry.

His progeny, the Jewish People, is still unique in carrying on his work – a small minority in a world which has many gods. It is from him that we inherited, and derive strength from, the quality of *Mesirat Nefesh* (self-sacrifice) as well as the supreme obligation to pass on our heritage to our children; for it was his greatest merit that, through his devotion and total dedication to G-d, “he bequeathed to his children and household after him to keep the way of G-d”.

By referring to our Patriarchs as “roots” our Sages indicate a further essential aspect of roots that goes beyond the role of parents. To be sure, parents give birth to children and transmit to them some of their own physical, mental and spiritual qualities. However, children are not directly dependent on their parents for survival; they can move away from their parents, and from their parental home, and will continue to thrive after their parents are gone. This is not so in the case of a plant and its roots. The roots are indispensable to the plant’s existence and their vitalising influence must flow continuously to keep the plant alive and thriving. In the same way, our Fathers and Mothers must always vitalise and animate our own lives.

Every Jew and Jewess should realise that he or she is an integral part of the great “root system” that began with our Patriarchs and Matriarchs and continued to thrive through the ages, nourishing and sustaining our people, whom G-d calls “a branch of My planting, the work of My hands, to take pride in them”.

Yet, sad to say, there are some Jews who, for one reason or another, are not aware of their roots, and some whose roots have become so atrophied as to be in danger of becoming withered (G-d forbid). It is therefore up to the healthy plants and roots to work all the harder to revive and strengthen the others, and to help them rediscover their identity and place within the root system of our unique people.

In this life-saving work, the role of the Jewish woman is of crucial importance since she is the *Akeret Habayit*, the foundation of the home, who largely

determines the character and atmosphere of the household, and the future of the children in particular.

In the same vein, there can be no greater fulfilment for a Jewish girl than to prepare herself for her vital role of building the House of Israel as a worthy descendant of the Matriarchs. As indicated above, it is a dual process: actively pursuing one's own growth and development and at the same time working for the preservation and growth of our people, through spreading and strengthening *Yiddishkeit* in the Jewish community at large, particularly in areas where Jewish mothers and daughters can contribute most such as *Kashrut*, *Taharat Hamishpachah*, candle-lighting etc.

Finally, to pursue the roots analogy to one more significant point: one does not look for flashing colour and external beauty in roots, nor are the latter concerned with what some people might say about their external looks. Roots do their work humbly and modestly, indeed, for the most part, hidden from view altogether. Such is also the work of true Jewish mothers and daughters.

In a world where fashion and vogue hold sway, and where expediency often takes precedence over eternal values and principles, our worthy mothers and daughters are not concerned with what some neighbour or passer-by might say about the way they conduct themselves and their homes in accord with the laws of our sacred *Torah*. If these appear "old-fashioned" to the onlooker with his "modern" ideas of "new morality", we Jews take pride in our "old-fashioned" – yet always new and eternal – roots; we strive to become ever more root-like and ever truer to the primary roots of our Jewish people, whom G-d designated as a "Kingdom of priests and a holy nation".

TRUE JEWISH WEALTH

We would do well to remember the *Chassidic* saying:

Neither property nor money is the true Jewish wealth. The everlasting Jewish wealth is: being Jews who keep Torah and Mitzvot and bringing into the world children and grandchildren who keep Torah and Mitzvot.

Belief After the Holocaust

EIGHTY YEARS ON, people still ask the same questions – Where was G-d during the Holocaust? How can you believe in G-d after the Holocaust? If G-d is just and righteous, how could He allow the Holocaust to happen? Why didn't G-d perform miracles during the Holocaust?

WHO IS ASKING THE QUESTION?

The questions themselves can only be asked by a believer for if the answer is that there is no G-d (G-d forbid), then there are no questions. Without a G-d, the world has no destiny and no purpose. Human beings may decide to act as they wish for there is no accountability. Super races may be formed and only the fittest will survive. In a G-dless world the Holocaust is not a theological question, rather a statement of how low man can stoop. The question becomes rhetorical – not “where was G-d during the Holocaust?”, but rather, “where was man during the Holocaust?”

The very fact that even those who claim they are non-believers incessantly ask where G-d was, is in fact the greatest proof that they too, deep in their hearts, believe there is a G-d, only they are aching for an answer to the question. To be more benevolent one may say that, in fact, they want to believe in G-d but the Holocaust poses a question of such dramatic proportions that they feel they cannot believe.

For the true believer there should be no questions. He quotes the verse (Deuteronomy 32:4,5), “The Rock! – perfect is His work, for all His paths are justice; a G-d of faith without iniquity, righteous and fair is He”. His faith is

not challenged by the fact that he does not understand, for which mortal being can truly comprehend the ways of the A-mighty?

However, the very fact that he is human and mortal, and terribly disturbed and upset, does make him question. Some incomplete response must therefore be supplied so that the believer may continue to serve uninterruptedly and undisturbed.

FAITH VERSUS TRAGEDY

The conflict between tragedy and faith is not new. Anybody knowledgeable in Jewish history will realise that our people have undergone the most terrible persecutions and genocide at the hands of many oppressors. The believing Jew of 1940 knew about the pogroms, crusades, destruction of the Temples, he read out aloud on the *Seder* night, "In each generation they rise over us to destroy us", and yet it did not shake his faith. Anti-Semitism was nothing new.

The same method by which the Jew of 1940 knew about the past and yet kept his faith could be employed after the Holocaust. The philosophical question of "Shall the Judge of the earth not do justice?" applies just as much to the seemingly meaningless suffering of an individual as to that of six million individuals. If it could be dealt with on an individual basis before the Holocaust, it could be dealt with in the same way afterwards. The difference is one of quantity, but the quality of the question remains the same.

In truth however, Hitler's Final Solution was something novel in that few people believed that in the 20th Century, when civilisation had reached its intellectual and ethical peak, such genocide was conceivable. Public consensus, supported by the media, reassured us that we could no longer return to the Middle Ages. However, the philosophers and poets of Berlin, with their fine manners and high society, turned into the world's greatest murderers. The Holocaust was not only perpetrated by monsters but connived at by an entire nation numbering close to one hundred million people.

The world was silent; not only silent but on the whole passive, indeed sometimes comfortable with what was taking place, and happy that it was not they, but rather others, who were carrying out the atrocities.

If anything, the Holocaust demonstrates that man may not rely upon his own intellect and feelings for righteousness and justice. Those with the highest diplomas and university degrees were often accomplices, if not perpetrators, of cold-blooded murder. Man must be accountable. The command, "Thou shalt not kill", must be premised on "I am the L-rd your G-d".

DID THE GREAT BELIEVERS QUESTION?

The question, “Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?” (Genesis 18:25), can be authentic and carry weight only when it bursts forth from the pained heart of a deep believer. The first to ask this question was our forefather Abraham, himself a man of great faith and the father of all believers, who when told to offer his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice, did not question. “And Abraham rose early in the morning”, – he rose to do G-d’s Will with alacrity.

The first to ask the question, “why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?” was none less than Moses. Moses – the very one who led us out of Egypt, split the sea, stood on Sinai, and heard the commands, “I am the L-rd your G-d” and “Thou shalt not have any other gods before Me”, – also questioned. (“other gods” may also be a reference to human intellect and comprehension when it is made the final arbiter of man’s ethical issues.)

The *Talmud* (*Menachot* 29b) relates that Moses was shown how the great Rabbi *Akiva* suffered a tortuous death at the hands of the Romans. When Moses saw them comb Rabbi *Akiva*’s flesh with iron rakes he exclaimed, “Is this *Torah* and is this the reward!?” The answer that came from Above was, “Silence, thus has arisen in the thought (of G-d)”.

The problem with *Moses*’ question was not that he verbalised a thought and was subsequently silenced. It was the content of *Moses*’ question that was silenced. This is rather disturbing for the reply to his question was superficially no reply. *Moses* requested a rationalisation and yet he received a command. But in no way do we find that the question weakens *Moses*’ faith. On the contrary, it is only faith that allowed the great to overcome their trials and tribulations.

Jeremiah, who asked, “Why are the wicked successful in their ways?”, continually exhorted the people to restore their faith in G-d. Job suffers horribly and is taunted by his friends. He questions but never loses faith.

It is no great surprise that all the great who questioned remained faithful. The question itself is based on a fundamental desire for justice. The premise of faith is that there is justice and that ultimately justice is carried out. This idea of justice stems from a superhuman source that stands above man’s limited grasp and intellect. Therefore, when justice is not seen to be done the question rocks not only the intellect but the very core of the questioner. However, after a brief moment of pain and protest, the questioner realises that he is trying to fathom the unfathomable, and comprehend the incomprehensible, to grasp that which is higher than intellect with intellect. He soon realises that such a reaction has no place and, while suffering, retires in the knowledge that although he cannot at this moment comprehend what is going on, ultimately

the Supreme Judge will execute justice. Through the question, and expression of pain, his faith is restored and strengthened.

THE JUDGE OF BILLIONS

Cursory reflection on the fact that G-d judges all men at all times reveals that the Judge of whom we talk is superhuman. Non-comprehension of His ways does not serve to disqualify Him but rather stems from our inability to understand His infinite wisdom.

Look for example at what happens in courts of law today. How many innocent people are imprisoned due to the shortcomings of the judicial system and its judges. How many guilty people walk freely in the street. The judges and their clerks frequently complain of being overworked and legislation places restrictions on their working hours. In contrast, the Judge of all the earth, works 24 hours a day, dealing with the five billion people on the face of the planet. Can man have the brazenness to question or even attempt to understand?

A PRIMITIVE MAN IN AN OPERATING THEATRE

Ultimately the human being realises his perception is finite. Imagine taking a primitive man and somehow transporting him into a modern operating theatre to witness open-heart surgery. First he sees men in masks walk into the room. They are all dressed in green and are wearing gloves. Next a man sleeping on a bed is rolled into the room and one of the men dressed in green puts a mask over his face. Another man removes the sheet and asks for a scalpel. The primitive man watches in horror as the surgeon makes the incision.

With no knowledge of modern medicine, the man comes to the terrible conclusion that what he is witnessing is murder in cold blood. Where he comes from that is not how men are killed. They die honourably in combat, not killed whilst asleep! It all seems wrong to him. His sense of justice is aroused, and he protests.

Try and explain to that man that the operation he is about to witness is, in truth, a life-saving operation, one that will give a new lease of life to the patient. Impossible – the man has not got the faintest idea of hygiene, let alone modern operating techniques. Whichever way you try to explain it to him, he will see it as murder. It would take weeks, months, or even years for him to comprehend.

On one level we are all primitive men in G-d's operating theatre. Our comprehension of the operation is limited, and we often accuse the Master Surgeon without comprehending that all operations are made for the good of the patient.

G-d is the ultimate of good. He is good and His nature is to do good. Even within pain and suffering there is some good, although that may be obscured from the sufferer. Our faith leads us to believe that the Surgeon knows what He is doing.

WAS THE HOLOCAUST A PUNISHMENT?

There are those who wish to suggest that the Holocaust was a punishment for the sins of that generation.

The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* rejects this view. He stated (*Sefer HaSichot* 5751 Vol.1 p.233):

The destruction of six million Jews in such a horrific manner that surpassed the cruelty of all previous generations, could not possibly be because of a punishment for sins. Even the Satan himself could not possibly find a sufficiently high number of sins that could ever warrant such genocide!

There is absolutely no rational explanation for the Holocaust except for the fact that it was a Divine decree... why it happened is above human comprehension – but it is definitely not because of punishment for sin.

On the contrary: All those who were murdered in the Holocaust are called “Kedoshim” – holy ones – since they were murdered in sanctification of G-d’s name. Since they were Jews, it is only G-d who will avenge their blood. As we say on Shabbat in the Av HaRachamim prayer, “the holy communities who gave their lives for the sanctification of the Divine Name ... and avenge the spilled blood of His servants, as it is written in the Torah of Moses ... for he will avenge the blood of his servants ... And in the Holy Writings it is said ... Let there be known among the nations, before our eyes, the retribution of the spilled blood of your servants”. G-d describes those who were sanctified as His servants, and He promises to avenge their blood.

So great is the spiritual level of the Kedoshim – even disregarding their standing in Mitzvah performance – that the Rabbis say about them, “no creation can stand in their place”. How much more so of those who died in the Holocaust, many of whom, as is well known, were among the finest of Europe’s Torah scholars and observant Jews.

It is inconceivable that the Holocaust be regarded as an example of punishment for sin, in particular when addressing this generation, which as mentioned before is “a firebrand plucked from the fire” of the Holocaust.

Simply put, one can only apply the words of Isaiah, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, and My ways are not your ways, says the L-rd”. (Isaiah 55:8)

THE SOUL DIMENSION

Judaism believes in the existence of a soul. This soul descends from the heavenly realms to inhabit the body for seventy or eighty years after which it returns to its Maker. The soul exists before it enters the body and exists after it leaves the body. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* of *Liadi* in *Tanya* describes the soul as a “part of G-d above”, a spark of G-dliness which inhabits the body in order to create an abode for the A-mighty in the world. *Chassidic* philosophy explains at great length the purpose of the descent of the soul and the purpose of creation.

Leaving aside any deep philosophy, even the simplest of beings understands that the body is corporeal and physical whereas the soul is ethereal and spiritual. He further understands that the sword, fire and water can have an effect on the body but no effect on the soul. Sticks and stones can hurt physical bones, but they can't touch the soul. It is then obvious that the gas chambers and crematoria affected only the bodies of those martyrs but not their souls.

Furthermore, it is logical to regard the soul as the main component of the compound body and soul. Just as all will agree that the head is more important than the foot, so too are thoughts and feelings more important than flesh.

Based on these two premises, which are logical and can be easily understood, it is clear that the Holocaust only achieved the severance of body and soul but did not destroy the soul. On the contrary, the soul lives on long after the body has been destroyed.

Imagine if someone looked into a room and saw somebody crying. Would it be logical to conclude that the person in the room had spent all his life crying? Conversely, if someone looked into a room and saw somebody laughing, would it be correct to assume that this person spends all his life laughing? Such conclusions would be ridiculous. We all know that a person's life constantly varies, containing moments of laughter and tears.

The same is true of those in the Holocaust. The precise number of years they lived in this world must be viewed in the context of the continuum of the soul. Although they physically lived so many years – some longer than others and, in the case of children and babies, some only a very short time – in terms of the time scale of the soul, which lives for thousands of years, it is but a brief moment! True, when we view the Holocaust we see an intense moment of destruction, but should we therefore conclude that this state is that of the soul!

We do not have any first-hand accounts of the situation of the souls of the Holocaust in the World to Come, however the *Torah* does tell us that the position of those who died sanctifying G-d's name is great indeed. This we may deduce from the following episode:

It is mentioned in the book *Maggid Meisharim* (*Parshat Tetzaveh*) that Rabbi *Yosef Karo*, the author of the Code of Jewish Law, was due to merit giving up his life for the sanctification of G-d's Name but for some reason this was commuted, and he did not merit to die thus. He lived on to become the leading *Halachic* authority of his generation and wrote the great Code of Jewish Law which we still follow today. And yet this amazing achievement is considered secondary to martyrdom in sanctification of G-d's Name. From this we see that martyrdom – and all those who perished in the Holocaust were martyrs, for they died because they were Jews – has merits of the highest order.

There is no question for the believing Jew that although the moment of *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d's Name) was horrific in terms of both physical pain and suffering this did not affect the soul and, on the contrary, was but a brief moment in the life of the soul, through which it attained eternal elevation. It is frequently explained and emphasised in the *Torah* that life on this earth is only a preparation for the future and everlasting life in the World to Come. The *Mishnah* (*Avot* 4:21) states, “This world is like a vestibule to the future world; prepare yourself in the vestibule so that you can enter the banquet hall”. If, during the time one is in the vestibule there has been a period of suffering whereby there will be an infinite gain in the “banquet hall”, this will surely be worthwhile. It is impossible to describe the joys of the life of the soul in the World to Come for, even in this world while the soul is connected to the body, its life is on an infinitely higher plane; how much more so when the soul is no longer distracted by the body. The suffering in the “vestibule”, which is no more than a corridor to the “banquet hall”, is after all a temporary one, and the gain is eternal.

Furthermore, one of the fundamentals of our faith is that of the resurrection of the dead. There is absolutely no doubt that all the *Kedoshim* of the Holocaust will rise at the resurrection. The many beautiful and bountiful years following the resurrection will certainly suffice to give them their full reward in this world for all they achieved and deserve.

SUBMISSION OR PRAYER

If the Holocaust was a Divine decree, why do we find the great Jewish leaders urging us to storm the gates of Heaven with prayer in order to avert any

evil decree? Surely we should just submit ourselves to the wisdom of G-d and not object?

We find the Previous *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, who himself lived through the Holocaust, proclaiming that all must plead and cry before the A-mighty King to annul the evil decree of destruction. But of what use was the crying if this was the Divine will?

Furthermore, the *Mishnah* in *Avot* (4:17) teaches, “One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the World to Come; and one hour of bliss in the World to Come is better than all the life of this world”. This means that if we could add the sum total of worldly pleasures it would not equal one hour in the World to Come. The spiritual bliss and rewards of the World to Come are incomprehensible and far surpass any worldly pleasure. And yet, since G-d created this world as the purpose of creation, in the words of *Tanya*, “to create an abode for G-d in this world”, it follows that one hour of fulfilling our purpose in this world – involved in repentance and good deeds – is better than all the spiritual rewards of the World to Come.

If this is the case what justifies taking so many Jews away from this world, removing their opportunity of living a life of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*? Which spiritual reward of the soul equals an hour of repentance and good deeds in this world?

Moreover, there is the law of *Pikuach Nefesh* (saving a life). This law states that everything must be done in order to save a life even for one extra moment. The holiest day of *Yom Kippur* may be desecrated to save a life. The law goes further to state that even the High Priest when performing the service in the Holy of Holies must leave to save a human life. Not only is this permitted, but it is also mandatory!

Since human life is so precious, both from a halachic and from a philosophical viewpoint, why did G-d act thus? Why the Holocaust which wiped out six million so mercilessly?

We mentioned before that even the greatest believers questioned. We could possibly restate their questions in the following way:

They believed firmly in an Infinite and Omnipotent G-d, and they understood that everything G-d does is for good, yet they felt that since G-d is not limited, and the Master Physician can treat the patient in several ways, why did the operation take place by such a drastic method? Could G-d not have found another way to treat the patient? Wasn't there a different way to avoid all the pain? True, we may need the operation – for a reason G-d understands best – but why did He choose such operating techniques?

The storming of the Gates of Heaven with prayer was to avert the means by which the result of the operation was to be achieved. The plea was: please achieve your desired result using a more palatable method. Why such a bitter medicine?

And yet, as mentioned above, after the initial burst of pain, they concluded and pronounced, “The L-rd is righteous in all His ways”.

MEMORIALS OR ACTIONS

We must never forget what happened. Remembering what *Amalek* did to us is a positive commandment. Our generation must always be reminded and fully aware of the events and consequences of the Holocaust. Particularly the great acts of *Kiddush Hashem*, not just of those who rose to fight but also of those who persevered in keeping the *Torah* in impossible circumstances.

But in addition to remembering, there is an equally, if not more, important response to the Holocaust. When Pharaoh in Egypt sought to destroy us, the *Torah* tells us, “But as much as they would afflict them, so they would increase and so they would spread out”. The true response to the Final Solution is to build a true Jewish life and home. Hitler sought to annihilate us; we must respond by building a more committed and numerous Jewish world. In fact, too much dwelling on any tragic event, and particularly the devastating events of the Holocaust, can drain one’s energy and induce pessimism. These may negatively affect the rebuilding of Judaism and Jewry, which requires elements of *Bitachon* (trust) and *Simchah* (joy).

A FASCINATING HISTORICAL NOTE

Three of the most tragic periods of the Jewish people were: after the destruction of the first Temple, after the destruction of the second Temple and in the Middle Ages following the Crusades. How fascinating that in each of these three periods we witness a phenomenal growth in the development of the Oral Tradition. After the destruction of the first Temple lived the Men of the Great Assembly who added many rabbinic injunctions and institutions. After the second Temple came the writing of the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*, and in the Middle Ages the period of the *Rishonim* who added detailed commentaries on the earlier texts. That same pattern has been repeated in the post-Holocaust era in which there has been explosive growth in *Torah* learning and publication of Judaica.

We must not give our enemies the final solution. We must increase our study of *Torah* and performance of *Mitzvot*, for ultimately the deed is the main thing.

 CHAPTER 11

How Does One Cope with Bereavement?

IT IS NATURAL to ask the question “why?” in a time of anguish. One general answer, which is self-evident albeit often hard to accept in a state of emotional distress, is that it is surely illogical to limit the Creator in His designs and actions to conform to the understanding of a created human being.

To cite a simple illustration: no one can expect an infant to understand the ideas and actions of a learned professor, although the latter was once an infant himself and the infant may have the potential even to surpass the professor in due course. How much more so, and incomparably, when it comes to the infinite intelligence of the Creator vis-à-vis the finite and limited intelligence of a created human being.

The difference between a created human being and his Creator is absolute. Our Sages declare that a human being must accept everything that happens, both occurrences that are obviously good and those that are incomprehensible, with the same positive attitude that “all that G-d does is for the good”, even though it is beyond human understanding.

This is not such a great revelation but, as the *Torah* says, it is difficult for a person to accept consolation in a time of grief.

Nevertheless, G-d has made it possible for human beings to grasp some aspects and insights into life and after-life. One of these revealed truths is that the *Neshamah* (soul) is a part of G-dliness and is immortal. When the time comes for it to return to Heaven it leaves the body and continues its eternal life in the spiritual World of Truth.

It is also a matter of common sense that whatever the direct cause of the separation of the soul from the body (whether a fatal accident, or illness, etc.,)

it could affect only some of the vital organs of the physical body but not, in any way, the spiritual soul.

A further point, which is also understandable, is that during the soul's lifetime on earth in partnership with the body, the soul is necessarily "handicapped", in certain respects, by the requirements of the body (such as eating and drinking) Even a *Tzaddik* (righteous person) whose entire life is consecrated to G-d cannot escape the restraints of life in a material and physical environment. Consequently, when the time comes for the soul to return "home", it is essentially a release for it as it makes its ascent to a higher world, no longer restrained by a physical body and physical environment. Henceforth, the soul is free to enjoy the spiritual bliss of being near to G-d in the fullest measure. That is surely a comforting thought.

It may be asked, if it is a release for the soul, why has the *Torah* prescribed periods of mourning? But there is really no contradiction. The *Torah* recognises the natural feelings of grief that are felt by the loss of a near and dear one, whose passing leaves a void in the family. The physical presence and contact of the beloved one will be sorely missed. So the *Torah* has prescribed set periods of mourning to give vent to these feelings and to make it easier to regain the proper equilibrium and adjustment.

However, to allow oneself to be carried away by these feelings beyond the limits set by the *Torah* – in addition to it being a disservice to oneself and to others, as well as to the *Neshamah* – would mean that one is more concerned with one's own feelings than with the feelings of the dear *Neshamah* that has risen to new spiritual heights of eternal happiness. Thus, paradoxically, the over-extended feelings of grief which are due to the great love for the departed one actually cause pain to the loved one, since the *Neshamah* continues to take an interest in the relatives left behind, sees what is going on (even better than before) and rejoices with them in their joys, etc.

Inasmuch as the soul is eternal and is now in a state where it is not constrained by the body's limitations, it is fully aware of what is happening in the family. When it sees that it is a cause of grief over and beyond the bounds of mourning set by the *Torah* it is obviously distressed by it, and this in no way contributes to the soul's peace and blissfulness.

Even during the soul's sojourn in this life, the real bond between people and members of a family is not a physical one but a spiritual one. What makes the real person is not his flesh and bones but his character and spiritual qualities. This bond remains and all those who loved the person dearly should try all the more to bring gratification and continuous spiritual elevation to the *Neshamah*

through greater adherence to the *Torah* in general, and particularly in the realm directly related to the soul's passing. To observe what is prescribed for the period of *Shiva* but not extend it, similarly, in regard to the period of *Shloshim* (thirty days) but not beyond, and then to serve G-d through the fulfilment of His *Mitzvot* as service should be – with joy and gladness of heart.

One thing the departed soul can no longer do is the actual fulfilment of the *Mitzvot*, which can be carried out only jointly by the soul and body together in this material world. But this, too, can partly be overcome when those left behind do a little more *Mitzvot* and good deeds in honour, and for the benefit, of the dear *Neshamah*.

Shiva is, of course, a period of sorrow and mourning for the soul of a near and dear one which has returned to the World of Truth. A Jewish soul is described in the *Torah* as “the lamp of G-d” since its purpose on this earth is to spread the light of G-dliness. Its departure from this earth is a cause for mourning as prescribed by the *Torah*. Yet, together with this, one must not forget that the soul is eternal. Nor must it be forgotten that even such a painful event comes from G-d so there can be no doubt that there is a good purpose in it.

But the essential purpose of *Shiva* is that “the living should reflect in his heart” (Ecclesiastes Ch.7:2). This means that those left behind should search their hearts and re-appraise themselves. They should attempt to improve themselves in areas of daily life which are real and eternal – i.e. *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. Indeed, since the soul that ascended to Heaven has left a gap of discontinued good deeds here on earth, the immediate relatives and friends should make compensation for it through additional and extra efforts on their part.

Doing or Understanding: Which Comes First?

THIS SECTION OF the book attempts to address the questions that explore the core of Judaism. Yet another question is even more fundamental: should one place one's understanding before one's doing? Should a Jew ever make his understanding of the commandments or of G-d's ways conditional on their observance?

When we received the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* at Sinai, the *Torah* states clearly that we accepted them on the basis of *Naaseh* – “we shall do” – first, and then, *V’Nishma*, – “we shall hear and understand”. In other words, on the basis of unconditional obedience and readiness to fulfil G-d's *Mitzvot*, regardless of our understanding them rationally. While we must learn and try to understand as much as possible, prior knowledge and understanding must never be a condition to living up to the guidelines which G-d has given us regarding our conduct and our actual way of life.

First it is necessary to start observing the *Mitzvot* and eventually we shall almost certainly come to a better appreciation of their significance and truth. To approach this matter from the opposite direction; that is, to understand first and only then to do, is wrong on two scores. First, the loss involved in not performing *Mitzvot* cannot be retrieved. Secondly, the very observance of the *Mitzvot*, which creates an immediate bond with G-d, develops additional powers, the sooner to understand and appreciate them.

Take, for instance, a person who is ill and for whom medicine has been prescribed by a specialist. Would it not be foolish to say that he should not take them until he knew how the medicine could restore him to good health? In the meantime, he would remain weak and ill and probably get even worse. It is senseless because the knowledge of how the medicine does its work is not

necessary in order to benefit from it. Moreover, while taking it he will get a clearer head and better understanding to learn how the prescription helps him.

To expand on this theme, the world is a well co-ordinated system created by G-d in which there is nothing superfluous or lacking. There is one reservation, however: for reasons best known to the Creator He has given man free will, whereby man can co-operate with this system, building and contributing to it, or do the reverse and cause destruction even of things already in existence.

From this premise, it follows that a man's term of life on this earth is just long enough for him to fulfil his purpose: neither a day too short nor a day too long. Hence, if a person should permit a single day, or week, let alone months, to pass by without his fulfilling his purpose, it is an irretrievable loss for him and for the universal system at large.

The physical world, as a whole, as can be seen clearly from man's physical body in particular, is not something independent and separate from the spiritual world and soul. In other words, we have not here two separate spheres of influence as the pagans used to think, rather we are now conscious of a unifying force which controls the universal system which we call monotheism. For this reason, it is possible to understand many things about the soul from parallels with the physical body.

The physical body requires a daily intake of certain elements in certain quantities obtained through breathing and consuming food. No amount of thinking, speaking and studying about these elements can substitute for the actual intake of air and food. All this knowledge will not add one iota of health to the body unless it is given its required physical sustenance; on the contrary, the denial of the actual intake of the required elements will weaken the mental forces of thought and concentration.

Thus, it is obvious that the proper approach to ensure the health of the body is not by way of study first and practice afterwards but the reverse, to eat and drink and breathe which, in turn, will strengthen the mental powers.

Similarly, the soul and the elements which it requires daily for its sustenance are known best to its Creator. A healthy soul is first and foremost attained by the performance of *Mitzvot*, and by understanding of them may come later.

The conclusion from all the above is clear enough. For a Jew, every day that passes without living according to the *Torah* involves an irretrievable loss for him and for all our people, because we all form a single unity and are mutually responsible for one another. It also influences the universal order, and any theories attempting to justify it cannot alter this at all.

BELIEVERS, SONS OF BELIEVERS

The *Torah* declares that Jews are “Believers, the sons of believers”, meaning that in addition to one’s own belief in G-d, one has the cumulative heritage of the faith of countless generations, beginning with our Father Abraham, the first believer, that the source of blessing is G-d, the Creator and Master of the universe. If a human being who introduces a certain system must give guidelines as to how the system works, how much more so is it to be expected that G-d would provide guidelines as to how a human being, and especially a Jew, must live. These guidelines were revealed at Sinai with the giving of the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, which were transmitted from generation to generation, not only in content but also in their exact terms. Thus, the *Torah* provides the guidelines as to how Jews must conduct their lives, especially their family lives.

Since the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* and the Jewish way of life comes from G-d and His infinite wisdom they are not subject to man’s approval and selection. Human reason is necessarily limited and imperfect. Its deficiencies are obvious since with time and study it improves, and gains knowledge and personal opinions may change.

In our long history we have had the greatest human minds possible who nevertheless realised their limitations when it came to the knowledge of G-d and His laws and precepts. We have had great thinkers and philosophers who not only fully accepted the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* but have been our guiding lights to this day, while dissident groups and individuals either disappeared completely or, worse still, continued as painful thorns in the flesh of our people and humanity at large. Anyone who is familiar with our history requires no illustrations or proofs of this.

Accepting our sacred tradition unconditionally and without questions does not mean that there is no room for any intellectual understanding. Within our limitations there is a great deal which we can understand and with which we can further enrich ourselves provided the approach is right. For G-d in His infinite grace has given us insight into various aspects of His commandments, an insight which grows deeper as we practise them in our daily life and make them our daily experience. In this way the Jew attains true peace of mind and a harmonious and happy life, not only spiritually but also physically, and fully realises how happy he is to be son or daughter of this great and holy nation, the Jewish people.

COPING WITH DOUBT

For a human being to question G-d's reasons for His *Mitzvot* contradicts common sense. If one accepts them as Divine commandments it would be presumptuous, indeed ridiculous, to equate human intellect with G-d's, which would mean limiting G-d's intellect to that of a human being. By way of a simple illustration, one would not expect an infant to understand the importance of nutrition as set forth by a professor who has dedicated his life to this subject, even though the difference between the infant and the professor is only relative in terms of age and education. There can be no such comparison between a created human being and the Creator, where the difference is absolute.

It should therefore be a matter of common sense to understand what the *Torah* explains clearly that whatever doubts and difficulties a Jew may have in matters of *Torah* and *Mitzvot* are only tests of his faith in G-d, and that a person is equipped with the capacity to overcome such tests and distractions. It would be illogical to assume that G-d would impose obligations which are beyond the human capacity to fulfil. Indeed, if one has more difficult tests, it only proves that he has greater capacities to overcome them.

Having feelings and thoughts which are not in accord with the *Torah* should not be surprising inasmuch as Rabbi *Shneur Zalman of Liadi* explains right at the beginning of the *Tanya* that every Jew also has an "animal soul" connected with the material body which is often the source of confusion and distraction, even to the point of blundering from the right path and robbing him of peace of mind. On the other hand, what makes it easier to deal with the situation is the fact that the Jew also possesses a Divine soul which is truly a part of G-dliness Above, and which is the essential and true aspect of the Jew. Hence it is not only possible to overcome these material distractions but, as our Sages declare, "One who is determined to purify himself receives aid from on High".

Above all, it is necessary to cultivate sincere and wholehearted confidence in G-d – as it is written, "Thou shalt be wholehearted with G-d thy G-d" – and thus eliminate all sorts of worries, anxieties and confusions. It develops a sense of security in that there is a L-rd and Master Who takes care not only of the world as a whole but also of each individual with loving care.

Of course, if a person has questions and even doubts, he must not feel any shame in asking for clarification, and certainly one should not keep any doubts within oneself, but one should seek answers. However, there is the one condition that, whatever the questions and doubts may be, this must not affect one's simple faith in G-d and in His *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, even if the answers have temporarily eluded one. This condition goes back to the day when the *Torah* was

received at Sinai on the principle of *Naaseh* before *Nishma*, the guiding principle for all posterity. However, after *Naaseh* follows *V'Nishma* for G-d, the Essence of Goodness, desires us to follow the path of Truth based on faith, but then to follow it up with knowledge and understanding, for then the totality of the person is involved in serving G-d to the fullest capacity.

NO HYPOCRISY

There can be no question of hypocrisy when a Jew learns *Torah* and conducts his life in accordance with the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* even if some of his other actions or feelings do not always harmonise with his *Torah* study and observance. The incongruity lies not in acting according to the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* but rather in acting contrary to the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

This is clearly demonstrated by the statement of *Maimonides* that if a Jew is compelled by an external force to do a *Mitzvah* he is not regarded as having done the *Mitzvah* under coercion but as having fulfilled the *Mitzvah* voluntarily. This is explained as follows. Inasmuch as every action has its roots in nature and natural disposition, the nature of a Jew is that he always desires to act in accordance with the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. However, sometimes there may be some circumstance which overshadows this desire or immobilises it, the *Rambam* calls this the *Yetzer Hara* (evil inclination), which always tries to find ways to prevent a Jew from behaving according to his real nature. Consequently, the physical force, or the threat thereof, used to compel the Jew to perform the *Mitzvah*, is not a force that induces him to change his real attitude, rather it removes the circumstance preventing him from exercising his true will. Once the external constraint is removed the true innate will is free to reassert itself.

HOW TO START

The *Torah* tells us that the conquest of the promised Holy Land was to take place by stages. The same applies, in a deeper sense, to the personal conquest of the self. In other words, when it comes to personal advancement in matters of *Yiddishkeit* the best method is sometimes in the way of a gradual conquest, step by step, and stage by stage, rather than by means of a drastic change.

Of course, there are certain situations and matters where a drastic change may be necessary but, by and large, steady progress is usually more effective than progress by fits and starts.

 CHAPTER 13

What is the Jewish Belief About 'The End of Days'?

THE TERM "END of Days" is taken from Numbers 24:4. This has always been taken as a reference to the messianic era and therefore we shall explore—albeit briefly—the Jewish belief in the coming of *Mashiach*.

WHAT DOES THE WORD MASHIACH MEAN?

Mashiach is the Hebrew word for Messiah. The word Messiah in English means a saviour or a "hoped-for deliverer". The word *Mashiach* in Hebrew actually means "anointed". In Biblical Hebrew the title *Mashiach* was bestowed on somebody who had attained a position of nobility and greatness. For example, the High Priest is referred to as the *Kohen HaMashiach*.

In *Talmudic* literature the title *Mashiach*, or *Melech HaMashiach*, (the King Messiah) is reserved for the Jewish leader who will redeem Israel in the End of Days.

WHAT IS THE BELIEF IN MASHIACH?

One of the principles of Jewish faith enumerated by *Maimonides* is that one day there will arise a dynamic Jewish leader, a direct descendant of the *Davidic* dynasty, who will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and gather Jews from all over the world and bring them back to the Land of Israel.

All the nations of the world will recognise *Mashiach* to be a world leader and will accept his dominion. In the messianic era there will be world peace, no more wars nor famine and, in general, a high standard of living.

All mankind will worship one G-d and live a more spiritual and moral way of life. The Jewish nation will be preoccupied with learning *Torah* and fathoming its secrets.

The coming of *Mashiach* will complete G-d's purpose in creation: for man to make an abode for G-d in the lower worlds; to reveal the inherent spirituality in the material world.

IS THIS NOT A UTOPIAN DREAM?

No! Judaism fervently believes that, with the correct leadership, humankind can and will change. The leadership quality of *Mashiach* means that through his dynamic personality and example, coupled with manifest humility, he will inspire all people to strive for good. He will transform a seemingly utopian dream into a reality. He will be recognised as a man of G-d with greater leadership qualities than even Moses.

Many, in modern society, are repulsed by the breakdown of ethical and moral standards. Life is cheap, crime is rampant, drug and alcohol abuse are on the increase, children have lost respect for their elders. At the same time technology has advanced in quantum leaps. There is no doubt that today, if channelled correctly, man has all the resources necessary to create a good standard of living for all mankind. He lacks only the social and political will. *Mashiach* will inspire all men to fulfil that aim.

WHY THE BELIEF IN A HUMAN MESSIAH?

Some people believe that the world will “evolve” by itself into a messianic era without a human figurehead. Judaism rejects this belief. Human history has been dominated by empire builders greedy for power.

Others believe in Armageddon – that the world will self-destruct, either by nuclear war or by terrorism. Judaism rejects this view as well.

Our prophets speak of the advent of a human leader, the magnitude of whom the world has not yet experienced. His unique example and leadership will inspire mankind to change direction.

WHERE IS MASHIACH MENTIONED IN THE SCRIPTURES?

The Scriptures are replete with messianic quotes. In Deuteronomy 30:1 Moses prophesies that, after the Jews have been scattered to the four corners of the earth, there will come a time when they will repent and return to Israel where they will fulfil all the commandments of the *Torah*. The gentile prophet *Bilam*

prophecies that this return will be led by *Mashiach* (see Numbers 24:17-20). Jacob refers to *Mashiach* by the name Shilo (Genesis 49:10).

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Joel and Hosea all refer to the messianic era. For full references the reader is referred to the book *Mashiach* by Rabbi Dr. I. Schochet. It is interesting to note that on the wall of the United Nations building in New York is inscribed the quote from Isaiah (Ch.11:6), "And the wolf shall lie with the lamb". Furthermore, it is clear from the prophets, when studied in their original Hebrew, that *Mashiach* is a Jewish concept and will entail return to *Torah* law, firmly ruling out any "other" messianic belief.

WHAT SORT OF LEADER WILL MASHIACH BE?

Mashiach will be a man who possesses extraordinary qualities. He will be proficient in both the written and oral *Torah* traditions. He will incessantly campaign for *Torah* observance among Jews and observance of the Seven Universal Noahide Laws by non-Jews. He will be scrupulously observant and encourage the highest standards from others. He will defend religious principles and repair breaches in their observance. Above all, *Mashiach* will be heralded as a true Jewish King, a person who leads the way in the service of G-d, totally humble yet enormously inspiring.

WHEN WILL MASHIACH COME?

Jews anticipate the arrival of *Mashiach* every day. Our prayers are full of requests to G-d to usher in the messianic era. Even at the gates of the gas chambers many Jews sang, "*Ani Maamin*" – I believe in the coming of *Mashiach*!

However, the *Talmud* states that there is a predestined time when *Mashiach* will come. If we are meritorious, he may come even before that predestined time. This "end of time" remains a mystery, yet the *Talmud* states that it will be before the Hebrew year 6000. (The Hebrew year at the date of this publication is 5783.)

This does not rule out the possibility of *Mashiach* coming today and now if we merit it. It should be noted that many *Torah* authorities are of the opinion that we are in the "epoch of the *Mashiach*" and the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* stated on numerous occasions that the messianic redemption is imminent.

COULD MASHIACH COME AT ANY TIME IN ANY GENERATION?

Yes. In every generation there is a person who potentially could be the *Mashiach*. When G-d decides the time has arrived, He will bestow upon that individual the necessary powers for him to precipitate that redemption.

Any potential *Mashiach* must be a direct descendant of King David as well as erudite in *Torah* learning. It should be noted that many people living today can trace their lineage back to King David. The Chief Rabbi of Prague in the 16th Century, Rabbi *Yehudah Loew* (the *Maharal*), had a family tree that traced him back to the *Davidic* dynasty. Consequently, any direct descendant of the *Maharal* is of *Davidic* descent.

Maimonides, a great Jewish philosopher and codifier of the 12th Century, rules that if we recognise a human being who possesses the superlative qualities ascribed to *Mashiach* we may presume that he is the potential *Mashiach*. If this individual actually succeeds in rebuilding the Temple and gathering in the exiles, then he is the *Mashiach*.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL HAPPEN WHEN MASHIACH COMES?

Maimonides states in his *Mishnah Torah* – a compendium of the entire halachic tradition – that *Mashiach* will first rebuild the Temple and then gather in the exiles. Jerusalem and the Temple will be the focus of Divine worship and “From Zion shall go forth *Torah*, and the word of the L-rd from Jerusalem”.

The Sanhedrin – a supreme Jewish law court of 71 Sages – will be established and will decide on all matters of law. At this time all Jews will return to full *Torah* observance and practice. It should be noted that in this present age of great assimilation and emancipation an unprecedented return of Jews to true *Torah* values has taken place. This “*Baal Teshuvah*” phenomenon is on the increase and paves the way for a full return in the messianic era.

WILL MIRACLES HAPPEN?

The *Talmud* discusses this question and again arrives at the conclusion that, if we are meritorious, the messianic redemption will be accompanied by miracles. However, the realisation of the messianic dream, even if it takes place naturally, will be the greatest miracle.

According to some traditions G-d Himself will rebuild the third Temple. According to others it will be rebuilt by *Mashiach*, while others suggest a combination of the two opinions. Some suggest that there will be two distinct periods in the messianic era: the first, a non- miraculous period, leading on to a second miraculous period.

Maimonides writes, “Neither the order of the occurrence of these events nor their precise detail is among the fundamental principles of the faith ... one should wait and believe in the general conception of the matter”.

WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT?

Initially, there will be no change in the world order other than its readiness to accept messianic rule. All the nations of the world will strive to create a new world order in which there will be no more wars or conflicts. Jealousy, hatred, greed and political strife (of the negative kind) will disappear, and humanity will strive only for good, kindness and peace.

In the messianic era there will be great advances in technology allowing a high standard of living. Food will be plentiful and cheap.

However, the focus of human aspiration will be the pursuit of the "knowledge of G-d". People will become less materialistic and more spiritual.

WHAT ARE THE BIRTH PANGS OF MASHIACH'S ARRIVAL?

The *Talmud* describes the period immediately prior to the advent of *Mashiach* as one of great travail and turmoil. There will be a world recession and governments will be controlled by despots. It is in this troubled setting that *Mashiach* will arrive.

There is a tradition that a great war will take place, called the war of Gog and Magog, and there is much speculation as to the precise timing of this war in relation to *Mashiach's* arrival.

There is a tradition that Elijah the prophet will come to the world and announce the imminent arrival of *Mashiach*. However, according to other opinions, *Mashiach* may arrive unannounced. Elijah would then arrive to assist in the peace process. Some suggest that if the *Mashiach* arrives in his predestined time then Elijah will announce his arrival, but if *Mashiach* comes suddenly then Elijah will appear after *Mashiach* has come.

As mentioned before, it is unclear as to exactly how these events will unfold. However, this uncertainty does not affect the general matter of *Mashiach's* arrival.

WHEN WILL THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD TAKE PLACE?

One of the principles of Jewish faith is belief in the resurrection of the dead. According to the *Zohar* – an early *Kabbalistic* text – the resurrection will take place forty years after the arrival of *Mashiach*. However, certain righteous individuals will arise with the coming of *Mashiach*. All the dead will be resurrected in the Land of Israel.

There is a small bone in the body called the Luz bone (some identify this bone as the coccyx) from which the body will be rebuilt at the time of resurrection. Our daily prayers are replete with requests for the resurrection and

there are many customs connected with it. (See the book *To Live and Live Again* – S.I.E. Publications)

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO BRING MASHIACH?

In general, mankind must strive to perform more acts of goodness and kindness. The Jew is mandated to learn and be aware of the messianic redemption, and to strengthen his faith in *Mashiach's* ultimate and imminent arrival.

Charity is a catalyst for redemption and every day in our prayers we sincerely plead many times for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the in-gathering of the exiles and the return to *Torah* observance under the leadership of *Mashiach*. The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* mounted a worldwide *Mashiach* campaign to heighten the awareness of *Mashiach's* imminent arrival. The *Rebbe* constantly urged every Jew to prepare himself, his family and his community for the arrival of *Mashiach*. This can best be achieved by “living with *Mashiach*”; that is, by learning about *Mashiach* and yearning for his coming.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, the Jew always was and remains the eternal optimist. Even in his darkest hour he hopes and prays for a brighter future – a world of peace and spirituality.

CHAPTER 14

The Ten Mitzvah Campaigns

IN THE LIGHT of all we have said it is clear that “the deed is the main thing”. Doing must come before understanding. To this aim we have included here a brief digest of the *Lubavitcher Rebbe’s* ten-point *Mitzvah* campaign. The campaign focuses on ten specific *Mitzvot* through the fulfilment of which the individual and the family will come to a greater appreciation of their Jewish heritage.

LOVE YOUR FELLOW JEW

Rabbi *Akiva* (one of the great Sages of the *Talmud*) explained that love of a fellow Jew is “one of the leading principles of the *Torah*”. A campaign for *Ahavat Yisrael* means that we make an effort that our thought, speech and actions be permeated with a real concern and sensitivity for the well-being of our fellow Jews. The *Baal Shem Tov* taught that one should have *Ahavat Yisrael* even for a Jew one has never seen in one’s life. The rationale behind this is explained in Ch.32 of *Tanya* (See the book *To Love a Fellow Jew* – S.I.E. Publications).

JEWISH EDUCATION

The campaign for *Torah* education seeks to involve any and every Jewish child in an educational programme that will teach him or her what it means to live as a Jew. Education is not only for children. Adults are encouraged to enrol in study groups and seminars commensurate with their background and knowledge.

TORAH STUDY

Torah is the medium of communication through which G-d enables man to know and serve Him. The campaign for *Torah* study encourages every individual

to set fixed times for *Torah* study every day so that our spiritual growth and development can be systematic and directed. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman of Liadi* explained that *Torah* study should be fixed not only in time but also in soul. It should be the vortex around which the entire spectrum of our day-to-day experience revolves.

TEFILLIN

The *Torah* describes *Tefillin* as a sign, a public statement of Jewish involvement. By donning *Tefillin* every day an individual gives expression to his basic feeling of Jewish identity and its importance to him. The *Tefillin* are placed on the arm, facing the heart, and on the head. This signifies the binding of one's emotional and intellectual powers to the service of G-d. The straps, stretching from the arm to the hand and from the head to the legs, signify the transmission of intellectual and emotional energy to the hands and feet, symbolising deed and action.

Our Sages explain that the verse, "And all the nations of the world shall see that the name of G-d is called upon you, and they shall fear you", applies to *Tefillin*. *Tefillin* are a medium to bring safety and security to Jews in the present era and hasten the coming of the ultimate security which will be experienced when *Mashiach* comes.

The *Rebbe* instituted this campaign on the eve of the Six Day War and specifically requested that soldiers in the Israeli Defence Forces should lay *Tefillin* and that this would protect them in battle.

MEZUZAH

"And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:9, 11:20)

A *Kosher Mezuzah* is a small parchment scroll, hand-written by an expert scribe, which contains two Biblical passages, one of them the *Shema Yisrael*. On the reverse side of the parchment are written the three Hebrew letters, *Shin* (ש), *Dalet* (ד), *Yud* (י). This is an acronym for the Hebrew words, שומר דלתות ישראל, meaning, "Guardian of the doors of Israel". A *Mezuzah* is affixed on the right side of every door of the home (except the bathroom) and it protects the inhabitants while in and out of the house.

A *Mezuzah* designates a house (or room) as Jewish; it reminds us of our connection to G-d and our heritage. By placing it on the doorpost we declare that

this is a house or room where the word of G-d and his *Torah* influences our behaviour, thus rendering it a holy dwelling.

Both *Tefillin* and *Mezuzot* need to be certified as *Kosher* by an authorised scribe. They also require regular checking. In many instances, when the *Rebbe* received a request for a blessing (particularly in health matters) he suggested that *Tefillin* and *Mezuzot* be checked.

CHARITY

We should give to others out of a sense of responsibility realising that what we have is also a gift from G-d, granted to us with a purpose, so that we shall help others. Our prosperity is a trust which we must steward and generously share with those in need. The *Tzedakah* campaign calls for an increase in giving as well as the conspicuous display of a *Tzedakah* box to serve as a reminder to give often every weekday. And our Sages told us, “*Tzedakah* is great, because it brings the redemption near”.

A HOME FILLED WITH JEWISH BOOKS

An environment teaches. What you have in your home helps determine what type of home you will have. By having sacred Jewish books conspicuously displayed at home you, your family and visitors will be prompted to use them. Moreover, their very presence reminds us of their contents and the importance of Jewish values. Of course, the more books the better. However, the minimum of a *Chumash* (the Five Books of Moses), a Book of Psalms and a *Siddur* (prayer book) is suggested.

CANDLE-LIGHTING

Shabbat is a day of light: a day with a different pattern and value orientation from our ordinary weekdays. Every *Shabbat* is a foretaste of the era of *Mashiach*. The lighting of the *Shabbat* candles 18 minutes before sunset ushers in and inspires this state of awareness. The responsibility for lighting the candles and inducing this change of perspective is the woman's. It is she who welcomes the *Shabbat* Queen into the home. Young girls from the age of three are also encouraged to light their own candle so that they too can have a share in creating this environment.

KOSHER FOOD

Eating *Kosher* food enables us to identify with our Jewishness on a very basic and fundamental level. As long as our Jewish involvement is limited to prayer,

study, or even specific ritual acts, it is spiritual, above our normal day to day reality. When you eat differently because you are Jewish your commitment is not only metaphysical, but part and parcel of your very being.

The observance of *Kashrut* consists of eating only *Kosher* foods both at home and away from home. It also entails not eating dairy and meat foods together and maintaining separate dishes, cutlery, and utensils for meat and dairy.

FAMILY PURITY

Taharat Hamishpachah – the attitudes and practices the *Torah* prescribes for married life – help to develop genuine communication and love between husband and wife and bring to the world healthy and loving children. Couples from all walks of life have adopted this *Mitzvah* as a means to enhance and enrich their married life.

A Rabbi should be consulted as to the details of these laws.

Faith

Adam

MAIMONIDES STATES IN his third Principle of Faith that G-d does not have a body and physical concepts do not apply to Him. There is nothing whatsoever that resembles Him at all. Yet, if we look at the opening verses of the *Torah*, we might be led to erroneously think that He does:

*G-d said, “Let us make man **with our image and likeness**... G-d created man **with His image... in the image of G-d**, He created him; male and female, He created them.”*

(GENESIS 1:26-27)

What, then, is the meaning behind the words, “Let us make man with our image?” Of which “image” does Scripture speak?

The classical commentaries explain that man alone is endowed—like his Creator—with reason, a sense of morality, and free will. It is in this vein that man is described as having been created in G-d’s image. The *Kabbalistic* interpretation of the “image” is different and profound. The image of G-d referred to here is not G-d Himself, Who is beyond comprehension, but rather to the creative process. The human being in soul and body reflects the spiritual infrastructure of the supernal realms and the chain order of creation.

In the words of Job: “From my flesh I perceive G-d” (Job 19:26). This means that understanding human *psychology* and *physiology* creates within us an awareness of our parallel spiritual source in the higher realms. To understand the different stages of creation, the *Kabbalists* refer to the human model and

extrapolate to the Divine. This process requires great caution, for as previously stated, no human qualities may be ascribed to the essence of G-d.

Adam HaRishon, the “first man”, was acutely aware of this process of creation. To use the computer analogy, his hard drive was programmed with this knowledge. His operating system spoke the Hebrew language, which is a holy tongue and the language of creation.

SPEECH

“And G-d said: Let there be light”

(GENESIS 1:3).

G-d has no physical mouth or vocal cords, so how can we understand the words, “And G-d said”? *Kabbalah* explains that the contraction of Infinite Light and power and its channelling into finite Vessels is comparable to the speech process (see Chapter 12, “*Tzimtzum*”). In the spoken word, thousands of thoughts are distilled into a few words. In the ten utterances of Genesis (referring to the ten times in Genesis where we read, “And G-d said”), G-d contracted massive energies into creative packets and configured them in the letters of the *Aleph Bet* (Hebrew alphabet).

Each letter of the *Aleph Bet* represents a Divine Power. Combinations of letters represent combinations of Divine Powers that result in the diversity of creation. One may draw an analogy from chemistry, which is the study of the formation of different materials through the combination of elements. The mixing of sodium hydroxide with hydrochloric acid results in salt and water. Sodium is a volatile metal and chlorine a poisonous gas, yet when combined, they create both salt, which lasts forever, and water, which sustains life. In the analogue, each letter of the *Aleph Bet* contains a certain configuration of Divine creative energy. When letters are combined, this represents a complex combination of Divine energies which results in the diversity of physical creation. There are 22 letters in the *Aleph Bet* with five final letters which the *Sefer Yetzirah* (the Book of Creation) compares to building blocks. Combinations of these bricks can build an enormous number of “houses” (see Chapter 12, “*Tzimtzum*”). Adam was aware of this knowledge, which from this point on will be referred to as the mystical tradition.

NAMING THE ANIMALS

G-d had formed every wild beast and every bird of heaven out of the ground. He brought them to man to see what he would name each one. Whatever the man called each living thing would remain its name

(GENESIS 2:19).

Why did G-d ask Adam to name the animals? Shouldn't their names be decided by consensus? The answer is that Adam perceived the spiritual components of the creative spirit that brought every animal into being and named each animal in conjunction with its spiritual configuration. Adam had the unique ability to look beyond the animal's physical form, and instead focus on the Divine energies flowing into it. The combination of Divine creative energy as represented in the letters of the *Aleph Bet* formed the name of the animal.

Therefore, all forms of creation are directly affected by their Hebrew names, as well as by the component letters of their names. This is why we always make sure to refer to a person's Hebrew name when praying for someone's recovery. Sometimes we may even add a name to a sick person, since the additional name carries additional life flow (which explains why we usually add the name *Chaim* for a man or *Chayah* for a woman, both of which mean life).

The *Shechinah*, or Divine Presence, was totally manifest in the Garden of Eden. To Adam, every facet of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms were superb manifestations of Divine creativity; and as the maestro of this cosmic orchestra, Adam directed the creation to prostrate itself to His majesty.

CREATION OF BODY AND SOUL

G-d formed man out of the dust of the ground, and He breathed into his nostrils a breath of life. Man thus became a living creature

(GENESIS 2:7).

Adam stood at the crossroads of Creation. His body was formed from the earth, "*min ha'adamah*", hence the name Adam, but his soul originated from the innermost aspect of G-dliness when G-d blew into his nostrils. The *Zohar* quotes, "It is of his inward and innermost vitality that a man emits through blowing with force". So, too, when G-d "blew" man's soul into his nostrils, G-d blew from deep within Him. Job describes man's soul as "a part of G-d above" (Job 31:2). This Divine spark is en-clothed within an earthly shell. It is interesting to note that in Hebrew, the word Adam is made of three letters: *Aleph*, *Dalet* *Mem*.

The letter *Aleph* always refers to G-d who is the *Aluf* – the commander-in-chief of the world. The combination of the letters *Dalet* and *Mem* form the word “dam” which is Hebrew for “blood”. The word “Adam” is a product of *Aleph*, the Divine, and dam, “blood”.

We learn from this that a person can either rise to great spiritual heights or plummet into the depths of the material. At times, he or she may oscillate between crass hedonism and spiritual ecstasy. The purpose of creation, as we shall explain (see Chapter 18, “The Purpose of Creation”), is not to escape into the spiritual or wallow in the material; rather, our aim should be to strike a balance between the two realms.

THE SIN OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT

G-d gave man a commandment, saying, “You may definitely eat from every tree of the Garden. But from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, do not eat, for on the day you eat from it, you will surely die”

(GENESIS 2:16).

It is beyond the scope of this work to explain in *Kabbalistic* terms why Adam ate the forbidden fruit, however we can make the following observation: Before eating the forbidden fruit, evil was external, en-clothed within the Tree of Knowledge and the snake. Upon eating the forbidden fruit, man internalised the struggle to determine between good and evil. Adam’s sin effectively caused a departure of the *Shechinah* from the world, and prompted the age-old war to refine the human condition and sensitise the world to its Creator. Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden, and it was decreed that his descendants would have to seek G-d through the travails of making a living.

Nonetheless, the mystical tradition programmed into Adam was transmitted to his children. It was in the days of *Enosh*, the son of Seth and the grandson of Adam, that idolatry began to surface and spread throughout the world. Though the philosophers of the time agreed that G-d was a Super-being, they erred when they assumed He must have delegated the various cosmic departments to the constellations, sun, moon, and stars. Eventually the generally ignorant populace became so engaged with stargazing and the worship of the constellations that they forgot about G-d.

The result of their idolatrous actions was that the *Shechinah*, which had already moved from our world one degree because of the sin of Adam, moved even further away. The *Midrash*, along with the *Talmud*, which talks of the

existence of seven heavens or firmaments, describes this process in the commentary on Song of Songs:

Through the sin of Adam, the Shechinah moved from the earth to the first firmament. Upon the sin of Cain and Abel, the Shechinah moved from the first to the second firmament. Through the sin of Enosh, the Shechinah moved from the second to the third, etc. Eventually, through the sins of each successive generation, the Shechinah was removed until the seventh firmament. It was Abraham who started the process of return, bringing the Shechinah from the seventh firmament back to the sixth, and thereafter Isaac from the sixth to the fifth, etc., until Moses in the seventh generation returned the Shechinah to this earth where the Shechinah rested in the Tabernacle.

It must be stressed that the concept of the “removal of the *Shechinah*” does not suggest that G-d actually removed Himself from the world, for the world is totally dependent on ongoing Divine creative energy for existence, as shall be explained in Chapter 17, “A Deeper Reality”. Rather, the removal of the *Shechinah* refers to the increasing insensitivity of the world to G-dliness. The pattern is clear: sin creates insensitivity. However, the righteous can re-sensitise the world to its true reality. In the *Kabbalistic* lexicon, this is generally referred to as *Tikkun Olam*, the “rectification of the world”. The purpose is to return the world to its perfect state as before the primordial sin.

Only a handful of righteous people were aware of the truth in the ten generations between Adam and Noah. Eventually the world was so filled with violence that G-d flooded the world to purify it, rather like the immersion of an impure vessel in a *Mikvah* (ritual bath used for spiritual purification). One righteous man, Noah, along with his three sons *Shem*, *Cham*, and *Yafet*, survived the flood. Noah transmitted the mystical tradition to his son *Shem*, who subsequently transmitted it to his great-grandson *Eber*.

Abraham

TEN GENERATIONS FOLLOWING after Noah, Abraham was born to his father *Terach* in Mesopotamia. *Terach* was an idolater who lived in a kingdom ruled by King Nimrod. At the age of three, Abraham intuitively discerned that worshipping statues made of wood and stone was senseless. His mind began to wonder and explore, and over the course of time, he ultimately became convinced of the notion of monotheism, one G-d, an omnipotent Super-being.

From the outset, Abraham struggled against the prevalent current—an attribute of strength inherited by his descendants. He was dubbed the *Ivri* (literally, “the other side”), for the whole world was on one side and he was on the other. Nimrod cast him into a fiery furnace for his “heretical” beliefs, yet he miraculously emerged unscathed, and began proclaiming his beliefs in public. Abraham was a great philosopher and astrologer. The *Talmud* teaches that, “Abraham held great astrology in his heart, and all the kings of the east and west arose early at his door” (*Talmud Bava Batra* 16b). He moved to *Haran* where, at the age of 75, G-d spoke to him in person for the first time and instructed him to leave his homeland and enter the Holy Land (Genesis 12:1).

When G-d revealed Himself to Abraham, one of the first things that He told him was that his fate, and that of his descendants, transcended the influence of the constellations. Therefore, Abraham should not be concerned with astrological predictions.

It was in the Holy Land that he met *Malki Tzedek*, King of *Shalem*, who was a priest to G-d, the Most High (Genesis 14:18). Our Sages identify *Malki Tzedek* as *Shem*, the son of Noah. There is evidence that the mystical tradition was taught

to Abraham by *Shem*. According to some authorities, Abraham authored *Sefer Yetzirah* (the Book of Formation), one of the fundamental works of *Kabbalah*.

The *Talmud* states that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all studied in the academies of *Shem* and *Eber*. The *Talmud* further proclaims that the Patriarchs observed the entire *Torah* before it was given. How was this possible? The *Kabbalists* explain that they kept the *Torah* in its spiritual form, for it was only subsequently through Moses that the *Torah* instruction became manifest in the physical observance of *Mitzvot*. The Patriarchs, however, were well aware of the spiritual flow affected by *Mitzvah* performance. The *Zohar* parallels the biblical episode of Jacob with the sticks, troughs, and striped sheep (Genesis 30:37-43) with the *Mitzvah* of putting on *Tefillin* (leather boxes and straps worn by Jewish men). Both elicited a similar Divine emanation, however after Sinai, it was the Divine will that this spiritual flow manifest itself through the *Mitzvah* of wearing *Tefillin*.

Abraham was also fully aware of the potential dangers of exploiting the mystical tradition for magical and idolatrous purposes, and the *Talmud* states that Abraham had a tract dealing with idolatry that consisted of 400 chapters. There is also a *Talmudic* teaching that Abraham taught the mysteries involving “the occult” to the children of his concubines. This is based on the verse, “to the sons of the concubines that Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and he sent them away...to the lands of the East” (Genesis 25:6). These gifts consisted of occult mysteries, which then became prevalent in eastern Asia. It is no wonder that in many of the eastern religions, we find parallels to *Kabbalistic* teachings.

One of the most simple and striking examples of the transmission of the occult is that every child is familiar with the phrase, “Abracadabra”. This magical expression is none other than an Aramaic extension of the Hebrew *abra*—I shall create, *k’adabra*—as I shall speak—the knowledge of creation using letters and names as documented in *Sefer Yetzirah*.

Abraham nomadically wandered the length and breadth of the land proclaiming his belief, and he was so successful that he converted thousands to monotheism. His method was one of kindness—he set up a motel and after providing the wayfarers with food and drink, they were introduced to the true belief and blessed G-d the Provider. Abraham converted the men and Sarah the women, and together they successfully brought many souls under the wings of the *Shechinah*, hence re-sensitising the world to G-dliness.

This holy work was continued by Isaac, Abraham’s second son, who was born miraculously after Abraham’s circumcision, implying that his future progeny who would be circumcised would also survive miraculously. Isaac displayed

amazing restraint and self-sacrifice at the *Akeidah* (the binding of Isaac). These attributes are forever engraved into the Jewish soul.

Jacob, Isaac's son, studied in the academy of *Shem* and *Eber* for fourteen years before setting out on his perilous journey back to Mesopotamia to his uncle *Laban*. On this journey, while sleeping on what was to become the Temple Mount, he had the dream of the ladder and the angels, which was filled with *Kabbalistic* mysteries (see Chapter 11, "The Ladder"). In exile he raises the twelve tribes and subsequently returns, only to be challenged further. Eventually, he descends to Egypt, where he establishes a house of study; he specifically instructs his son *Levi* in the tradition, and the tribe of *Levi* becomes the Israelite priests. It is here that the stage is set for *Levi's* great-grandson Moses to redeem the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

 CHAPTER 3

Moses

Moses received the Torah at Sinai.

(ETHICS OF THE FATHERS 1:1)

THE WORD *Torah* means “instruction” or “teaching”. *Torah* is G-d’s instruction to mankind. Incorporated in the *Torah* are 613 *Mitzvot* designed for Jews and seven *Mitzvot* designed for Gentiles. A *Mitzvah* means a commandment, but in a deeper sense, it also implies a connection. A Jew may connect with G-d in 613 ways which embrace the entire spectrum of human activity. The 613 commandments/connections act as a conduit in one’s daily life for reflecting the *Shechinah* on an ongoing basis, emulating the Divine example, and permeating the material with the spiritual.

This is the meaning of the “Chosen People”. G-d chose the Jewish people to be a “Kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (EXODUS 19:6). The word “priest” should not be interpreted literally, since not all Jews are descendants of the tribe of *Levi*, the priestly tribe. Rather it refers to a “priestly function”. The function of a priest is to bring people closer to G-d and to bring G-d closer to the people. On a national level, the Jewish people would serve as the priest among the nations, or as the prophet Isaiah put it, a “light unto the nations” (ISAIAH 51:4).

The Jewish people discharge this responsibility when they become a holy nation, conducting themselves with holiness according to G-d’s commands. The word “holy” means separate or distinct. The *Mitzvot* distinguish a Jew and separate him or her from the rest of the world in every sphere of activity. When a Jew keeps the *Mitzvot*, he or she becomes connected to the Divine, creating an abode for G-d in this world and fulfilling the purpose of creation.

When Moses received the *Torah* instruction at Sinai, he received it body and soul, with the body of the *Torah* being its codes of law, and the soul of the *Torah* representing its mystical dimension. Moses was the perfect receptacle for this wisdom for he was the humblest man who ever lived. He had totally extinguished his ego and was simply a conduit for the Divine will and wisdom. As the great-grandchildren of *Levi*, Moses, his brother Aaron, and his sister Miriam, were well aware of the mystical tradition and prophetic experience, but Moses was the greatest of the prophets. All others received their prophecy while asleep in the form of a riddle or vision, but Moses received his prophecy while awake and with clarity.

This is the meaning of the words, "Moses received the *Torah* at Sinai". In Hebrew the word for received is "*Kibbel*" which is also the root of the word *Kabbalah* (received). The mystical tradition, like all other parts of the *Torah* received at Sinai, is not a product of the human mind, but rather, it is a tradition received through revelation. G-d reached out to mankind and not the other way around, revealing to Moses with utmost clarity the Divine wisdom on its most esoteric and most practical levels. Though the finite mind cannot grasp the Infinite, the omnipotent G-d can create a bridge to Man, and this is the means to connect with the Creator. The *Torah* instructed the entire Jewish community how to live within the world, and yet stay above it. It directed the Jew not to wallow, like a hedonist in matters of the body, nor to escape ascetically to the spirit, but rather it permits him or her to embrace the body and elevate all of its functions for the Divine purpose. The Jew is to live within the world guided by the principles of the body of the *Torah*, which acts as a guide through the myriad of everyday mundane activities. Simultaneously, *Torah* elevates mankind and focuses it on a deeper reality, illuminating material darkness with Divine Light.

Although the law was given at Sinai, close examination of the Biblical text will reveal that there were several commandments given prior to Sinai. Jacob was commanded not to eat the sciatic nerve, and some of the laws of *Shabbat* were given at *Marah*. The Passover ritual was prescribed before the Exodus. So what happened at Sinai? What made it such a momentous event?

Firstly, it was at Sinai that G-d's communication to Moses was authenticated. Until that point, the Jewish people had witnessed great miracles wrought through G-d's servant Moses, but they had never heard anything directly from G-d. When the Jewish people heard the Ten Commandments directly from G-d, in the same way that Moses did, their belief in Moses and all his subsequent revelations was cemented. Secondly, it formally constituted the Jewish

people as a nation. It was the transformation from being a group of the descendants of Jacob, the “*Bnei Yisrael*”, into an entity bound eternally by the *Mitzvot*.

From a *Kabbalistic* perspective, however, the revelation at Sinai broke a barrier. The *Midrash* says that, prior to Sinai, it was decreed that the upper realms could not descend below, and the lower realms could not ascend above. At Sinai, the upper realms descended below, and the lower realms ascended above. We can understand this cryptic *Midrash* in the following way: Prior to Sinai, there was a divide between the body and the soul, the physical and the spiritual, and earth and heaven. It was not possible to endow material objects with innate spirituality. The *Mitzvot* performed by the Patriarchs prior to the giving of the *Torah* were primarily of a spiritual nature. The spiritual elite were endowed with powerful souls and minds, which were fully aware of the mystical dimension yet had not integrated that system into a down-to-earth practice for all mankind. Sinai changed everything.

G-d revealed to Moses his plan for the fusion of heaven and earth, the material and the spiritual. From that point on, the barrier between these two seemingly opposed realms was broken; they would no longer exist and function as two separate entities. In this way, the *Shechinah* found a dwelling place amongst humanity. It was immediately after the experience of Sinai that G-d instructed Moses to construct the Tabernacle, which would act as a house for the Divine. Made from gold, silver, cedarwood, and other precious materials that were donated by the Israelites, the Tabernacle represented a dwelling for the Divine in this world. Located in the innermost area of the Tabernacle, known as the Holy of Holies, was the Ark which contained the stone tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were engraved. It was from this place that G-d spoke directly to Moses.

However, why it is necessary to create a specific dwelling place for G-d when He fills all of creation? The answer lies in the wording of G-d’s instructions, which reveals a profound secret regarding the Tabernacle. G-d commands Moses, “*Make a sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell in them*”. The use of the plural “them” alludes to the structure’s purpose: to re-sensitise the people to G-d’s presence. The Tabernacle would be a focal point connecting the minds and hearts of the people to G-d. This, too, would be the purpose of the Temple in Jerusalem and, by extension, every Synagogue. It was Moses who now closed the circle. Adam through the primordial sin had caused the departure of the *Shechinah*, and it was Moses who had now brought the *Shechinah* back down to earth.

The Oral Tradition

IN DELIVERING THE *Torah* to the Jewish nation, Moses was instructed to package its contents in two distinct presentations: “The Written Law” (*Torah Shebichtav*) and “The Oral Tradition” (*Torah Shebaal Peh*).

The Written Law generally refers to the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, known as the *Torah*. Moses himself instituted that the *Torah* scroll of Written Law be read regularly in places of worship, and today we read from the *Torah* four times a week: *Shabbat* morning, *Shabbat* afternoon, and Monday and Thursday morning. However, the Written Law is somewhat cryptic and requires explanation. Together with the Written Law, G-d transmitted to Moses an entire Oral Tradition which explains every aspect of the Written Law.

For example, it says in Deuteronomy that one should affix a *Mezuzah* (parchment scroll attached to doorpost) on the door of a dwelling: “Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:9). What is unclear in the text is what exactly needs to be written, upon what it must be written, and where and how it is to be placed on the door. All this is elucidated in the Oral Tradition.

Included in the Oral Tradition is the *Kabbalah*, the very same tradition programmed into Adam, received by Abraham, and now incorporated into the *Torah* body. In fact, Moses received four levels of interpretation on every aspect of the *Torah*. These four levels are called *Pardes*, meaning an “orchard”. The Hebrew letters of the word *Pardes* form an acronym for the following four words:

1. *Pshat*—simple meaning
2. *Remez*—allusion—what is hinted at in the text

3. *Drush*—the homiletic interpretation
4. *Sod*—the mystical dimension.

This means that the written text is layered with various levels of interpretation. Every sentence, and in fact every word and letter, has meaning not only in its literal sense, but also in its esoteric interpretation. *Nachmanides*, a noted philosopher and *Kabbalist*, expresses this notion by saying that all the words of the *Torah* are in fact names of G-d. What he means to say is that far beyond the literal meaning of the verse is a mystical dimension which is super-imposed upon the literal sense.

In other words, one may say that when Moses taught the *Torah* to his students, he taught the literal meaning of the *Torah* to the masses, its allusion and homiletic meaning to a more elite group, and the deepest level of interpretation, the mystical dimension, to a select few who were capable of receiving it.

Moses transmitted this received tradition to Joshua, who in turn passed it on to the Elders and Prophets throughout the generations. There was always an inner circle that possessed knowledge of the mystical tradition. In Chapter 24, “*Torah Study*”, we shall delve deeper into these four levels of interpretation.

To better understand our topic, let us look through the annals of Jewish history. The *Torah* was given in the Hebrew year 2448 (1312 BCE). The Jews entered the land of Israel in 2488. For 14 years, the Tabernacle was housed in *Gilgal* and then for 369 years in Shiloh. The Ark was then moved to Nov and Gibeon, and finally to Jerusalem. Here, King Solomon built the first Temple where it stood for 410 years, until it was destroyed by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. Before the impending destruction, the Ark was hidden in catacombs beneath the Temple Mount where, according to Jewish tradition, it remains until today. The vision received and recorded by the prophet Ezekiel just before the destruction of the first Temple is of great significance in the *Kabbalistic* tradition. This vision is of a chariot supported by animals with the appearance of a man on top, and it is known as the “Discipline” or “Workings of the Chariot” (*Maaseh Merkavah*). In code and shorthand, Ezekiel is describing the higher supernal realms and providing the keys for entry into the *Pardes* and prophetic experience.

The people were exiled to Babylon for a seventy-year period, and returned to the Land of Israel, where, under the leadership of Ezra and *Nehemiah*, they built the second Temple. It was during this period that there was a great congress of rabbis called the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah* or “Men of the Great Assembly”. A total of 120 rabbis and prophets convened, arranged the Scriptures, and instituted the formal Hebrew text of our daily prayers. The members of this assembly

were well versed in the mystical tradition, and the structure, wording, and content of the prayers were all *Kabbalistically* correct. Every nuance of the liturgy they composed is laden with mystical significance and potent *Kabbalistic* power.

The second Temple stood for 420 years and was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. The Romans ravished the Land of Israel and systematically tried to destroy *Torah* teachers and their students. Until that point, there had been an unbroken chain of tradition, whereby the Written and Oral Laws had been transmitted in tandem. Due to Roman persecution, however, the Oral Tradition was in danger of being forgotten.

A great Rabbi known as Rabbi Judah the Prince, also known simply as Rebbi, made a monumental decision at that juncture. For the first time in history, he decided that it was necessary to commit the Oral Tradition to writing, and the *Mishnah* is the concise book that was born out of this venture.

The rabbis of the period of the *Mishnah* (during the first centuries of the Common-Era) were called Tannaim, and Rebbi collected their teachings and incorporated them into the *Mishnah*. The *Mishnah* was universally accepted in the Jewish world, and in the few hundred years after the passing of Rebbi, a tremendous amount of material on the *Mishnah* was collected, edited, and finally published in a work known as the *Talmud*. In fact, two *Talmuds* were produced—the Jerusalem *Talmud* and the Babylonian *Talmud*. So vast is this collection of knowledge that if one studies the Babylonian *Talmud* at the rate of one folio a day, it will take over seven years to finish!

There are a few references in the *Mishnah* to the mystical tradition. For example, the *Mishnah* states that the “Workings of Creation” (*Maaseh Bereishit*) may not be expounded in the presence of two students, and the “Workings of the Chariot” (*Maaseh Merkavah*) may not be expounded even in the presence of one, unless he is wise and careful with his knowledge. The term “Workings of the Chariot” refers to the meditative methods used to ascend to higher spiritual realms, while “Workings of Creation”, according to many authorities, refers to the mysteries of *Sefer Yetzirah*. Although the *Mishnah* constitutes the body of Jewish law, other Sages of the period also committed to writing the soul of the law.

Worthy of special mention is Rabbi *Akiva* (50-135 C.E.) who was a master of both the revealed and concealed aspects of the *Torah*. Rabbi *Akiva* was the primary custodian of the Workings of Creation tradition, and the prevalent view is that *Sefer Yetzirah* was redacted from Abraham through him. Rabbi *Nechunia ben Hakanah* and his disciple, the High Priest Rabbi *Yishmael ben Elisha*, wrote the *Sefer HaBahir* (Book of Illumination) and the *Pirkei Heichalot Rabati*

(The Greater Book of the Divine Chambers), which was one of the main texts for the study of Workings of the Chariot, containing meditative exercises, mystical disciplines, and directions for entering the prophetic state.

Although the *Talmud* focuses primarily on the body of the law, there are also numerous references to the mystical tradition within it. The *Talmud* relates that Rabbi *Chaninah* and Rabbi *Hoshia* would learn *Sefer Yetzirah* every Friday before *Shabbat*, and, using methods described in this early *Kabbalistic* work, would create for themselves a calf which they would then eat on *Shabbat*.

Despite the greatness of these writings, the most famous of all *Kabbalistic* texts composed in that era is the *Zohar*.

The Zohar

IT WAS IN the *Tannaic* period that the *Zohar*, the most famous *Kabbalistic* text of all times, was committed to writing by Rabbi *Shimon Bar Yochai* (also known as the *Rashbi*). *Rashbi* lived in tumultuous times when the Roman government was executing all the great *Torah* teachers, including his master, Rabbi *Akiva*. *Rashbi* himself had to flee Roman persecution and hid in a cave with his son, Rabbi *Elazar*, for thirteen years. During this time, he received Divine Inspiration (*Ruach HaKodesh*), merited the revelation of Elijah the Prophet, and composed the sacred *Zohar*.

Based on the Five Books of Moses and written in Hebrew Aramaic, the text of the *Zohar* explores and expounds in a most cryptic way the mystical tradition. Its pre-eminent place in Jewish mysticism does not derive solely from its antiquity or its authorship. Other *Kabbalistic* works such as *Sefer Yetzirah* and *Sefer HaBahir* are of earlier origin. The *Zohar*'s importance must rather be attributed to its comprehensiveness. It became the source for practically all the later authoritative *Kabbalistic* teachings of Rabbi *Yitzchak Luria* (the *Arizal*) and others.

The manuscript of the *Zohar* was concealed for many centuries, and the study of *Kabbalah* was restricted to a select few qualified individuals. It became revealed only in the thirteenth century and was published by one of the leading *Kabbalists* living in Spain, Rabbi Moses de Leon. Some believed that the *Nachmanides*, himself a renowned *Kabbalist*, had sent the *Zohar* from Israel by ship to his son in Catalonia, but the ship had been diverted and the texts ended up in the hands of Rabbi Moses de Leon. Others explained that these manuscripts had been hidden in a vault for a thousand years and had been discovered by an Arabian king who sent them to Toledo to be deciphered. Still others maintained that Spanish conquistadors had discovered the *Zohar* among

many other manuscripts in an academy in Heidelberg. Whichever theory is true, the text was accepted as authentic by all pre-eminent Jewish *scholars*.

The mystics ascribe special potency to the study of *Zohar*, maintaining that it nullifies evil decrees, eases the travails of exile, hastens the redemption, and draws forth Divine blessings. In some mystical circles, great merit is attributed to the mere recitation of the sacred texts of the *Zohar*, even if one does not understand them. However, ideally, one should try to understand and comprehend the texts. Although the text has been translated into Hebrew and English, it remains to this day a closed text lacking in many introductions, explanations, and elucidations of later masters.

IN SUMMARY

At this stage of history, the major texts of *Sefer Yetzirah*, the *Sefer HaBahir*, the *Pirkei Heichalot Rabati*, and the *Zohar* contained the basic teachings that had been passed down through the prophets and Sages from Moses. Although committing the mystical tradition to writing had saved it from extinction, it was still a closed book to most people. The outline had been written, but the keys to the tradition were contained within a small circle and were not committed to paper. This remained the case until the next great explosion of *Kabbalah*, which took place in the town of *Safed*, located in northern Israel, in the sixteenth century.

The Arizal

IN THE BEGINNING of the sixteenth century, in the aftermath of the Spanish Inquisition, a number of Jews settled in the Holy Land, in the city of *Safed*. Over the course of eighty years, this mystical city witnessed a renaissance of Jewish life and activity that was to change and shape the Jewish world.

The Chief Rabbi of the city was none other than the famous Rabbi Joseph Karo. After writing his monumental work called the *Bet Yosef*, in which he traces the source and origin of contemporary Jewish Law, he summarised all the practical legalities in his book the Code of Jewish Law (*Shulchan Aruch*).

The city's mystics were no less famous. Rabbi Moses Cordovero, known as the *Ramak*, wrote a monumental *Kabbalistic* work called *Pardes Rimonim*. However, the most famous *Kabbalist* of the day was Rabbi *Yitzchak Luria*, universally known as the *Arizal*, an acronym for The G-dly Rabbi Isaac of Blessed Memory.

Though the *Arizal* only lived for 38 years, he possessed a phenomenal soul, and all secrets of the creation were open to him. It was only in the last two years of his life that he met his foremost disciple, Rabbi *Chaim Vital*. While the *Arizal* himself never wrote any books, all his words were faithfully recorded by Rabbi *Chaim Vital*, and were published in what we call *Kitvei Ari*, a series of books containing the "writings of the *Arizal*".

The *Zohar*, which is a poetic text, is difficult to decipher without extensive knowledge and guidance. The *Kitvei Ari* provides a foundation of knowledge that is necessary in order to fully understand the structure of the *Zohar*.

The main work of the *Kitvei Ari* is the *Etz Chaim* (Tree of Life). This work expounds the theoretical foundation of *Kabbalah*. Next, the *Pri Etz Chaim* (Fruit of the Tree of Life) and *Shaar HaKavanot* (Gate of Meditations) demonstrate

how we should apply the various teachings in the *Etz Chaim* to our daily rituals, such as meditations to be said when putting on *Tzitzit* or *Tefillin* or meditations in prayer. These works also deal with the *Kabbalistic* intentions one should have in mind when performing *Mitzvot* that relate to the Jewish holidays, such as eating *Matzah* on *Pesach* or blowing the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*.

Then comes the work known as the *Shemonah Shearim* (Eight Gates). The first gate, *Shaar HaHakdamot* (Gate of Introductions), covers the same theoretical ground as the *Etz Chaim*; the second is *Shaar Maamarei Rashbi* (Gate of *Zoharic* Teachings); the third is *Shaar Maamarei Chazal* (Gate of *Talmudic* Teachings); the fourth is *Shaar HaPesukim*, (Gate of Biblical Verses); the fifth is *Shaar HaMitzvot*, (Gate of the Commandments); the sixth is *Shaar HaKavanot*, (Gate of Meditations); the seventh is *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*, (Gate of Divine Inspiration); and the eighth is *Shaar HaGilgulim*, (Gate of Reincarnations). In many ways, the *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*, which describes how to use the *Arizal's* system as a meditative discipline, is the key to the entire *Kitvei Ari*, because all the previous gates deal with theory while the *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh* teaches us how to implement his system.

It was the *Arizal* who formulated the *Kabbalah* into a comprehensive system. Today we refer to this system as the *Tzitzit Kabbalah*. Of great significance is that Rabbi *Vital* writes in the name of the *Arizal* that, "It is a *Mitzvah* to reveal this wisdom". This statement signified that the time had come for the *Kabbalah* to be taught widely. The *Tzitzit* school of *Kabbalah*, which follows the teachings of the *Arizal*, and its disciples, revolutionised the Jewish world and popularised the study of *Kabbalah*.

The Baal Shem Tov

THE CITY OF *Safed* was devastated by an earthquake, signifying an end to the brief renaissance of Jewish life. The literary works, however, that had been published during that short time period continued to proliferate throughout the world. Universally accepted was the Code of Jewish Law (*Shulchan Aruch*) by Rabbi *Yosef Karo*, and it was further enhanced when Rabbi Moses Isserles (the Chief Rabbi of Cracow, Poland) annotated it with the *Ashkenazic* or European Jewish customs.

It is interesting to note that Rabbi *Karo* was a noted *Kabbalist* and held the *Arizal* in great regard. In the Jewish cemetery in *Safed*, Rabbi *Karo* and the *Arizal* are buried within close proximity of each other, indicating the total synthesis between the revealed part of the *Torah* as embodied in the Code of Jewish Law, and the mystical tradition as expounded by the *Arizal*. The *Kabbalist* is guided by the Code of Jewish Law, and the legalist is inspired and spiritualised by the *Kabbalah*.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the bulk of Jewry became concentrated in Europe. The shifting population took along with it the *Kabbalah*, and many of the generations most distinguished scholars and heads of *Talmudic* academies were well versed in the text's doctrines. (It should be noted that the study of *Kabbalah* was extremely prevalent in *Sefardic* countries, and *Sefardic* Jewry produced many *Kabbalists*. In fact, *Kabbalah* plays an important role in many *Sefardic* traditions.) However, despite the *Arizal's* wishes that the *Kabbalah* should be disseminated further, due to the complex nature of the text, coupled with the population's general ignorance, the *Kabbalah* stayed within small, elite circles.

The *Kabbalah* also gained opponents during this time because some quasi-*Kabbalists* began to profess powers of the occult. These mavericks were distanced, and in some cases ostracised, by the community. Perhaps the most infamous case was that of *Shabbetai Zvi* (1626–76), who claimed he possessed *Kabbalistic* powers and was the messiah. His ultimate conversion to Islam resulted in a débâcle which only further convinced the establishment that *Kabbalah* was to be limited to true *scholars* who had first mastered *Talmudic* study.

Due to a series of devastating pogroms (such as the *Chmielnicki* massacres of 1648 in the Ukraine), vast displacement, and spiritual decline, a gaping schism developed in the Jewish community during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Jews were divided into essentially two classes: *scholars* and the ignorant, known by the pejorative term *Amei Haaretz* (literally, “people of the land”). Although this uneducated class was sincere and devout, it was for the most part illiterate; their focus was not on the esoteric or *scholarly*, but rather on their daily struggle to survive as farmers or tradesmen. In medical terms, it would be correct to say that during that period, the Jewish people were in a state of spiritual faint—the Jewish soul was submerged under the burden of mere survival. The wandering Jew became a byword, and the hardships of Exile (*Galut*) were a daily reality. In order to revive a person who has fainted, it is necessary to give them a pungent smelling salt that will deeply arouse his or her soul. The following parable will explain this concept in clearer terms:

There was once a king who had an only son. This son was the apple of the king’s eye and was raised in the finest tradition. One day the son became deathly ill, and all the physicians of the land were summoned to cure him, but they failed. Finally, one doctor suggested a strange remedy. He said that the prince might be cured if one would take a certain precious gem, crush it, and mix it with water, and then apply the drops to the prince’s lips. “Where can such a gem be found?” enquired the king. “The crown jewel of your majesty’s crown is such a gem. Are you prepared to have it removed and crushed in order to save your child?” replied the doctor. “Of course, this is my child!” exclaimed the king, and the medicine was administered successfully.

In the analogue, the child represents the Jewish people in a state of spiritual faint, while the crown jewel represents the deepest teachings of the *Torah* which can touch the soul like no other. To save the Jewish people, permission was given from Above to remove the crown jewel from its place, crush it, and “package” it in small drops so that the weak and faint child could be revived. This potent medicine is *Chassidut*.

It was against this background, in 1698, that the Almighty sent into the world the holy soul of Rabbi Israel Ben *Eliezer*, also known as the *Baal Shem Tov* or the Besht. Born in a small Polish village called Okup, the *Baal Shem Tov* was orphaned at the age of five, and just before his father *Eliezer* died, he instructed the little Israel, “Have no fear of any being, only G-d, and love your fellow Jew with all your heart”. This last will and testament became the foundation of the *Baal Shem Tov*’s life philosophy—a constant awareness of the immanent Creator, and *Ahavat Yisrael*, love of a fellow Jew.

The young orphan was fostered by a group called the Nistarim, “clandestine *Kabbalists*” who worked incognito to improve the lot of their brethren. As a result of the “bad press” *Kabbalah* had received, this group studied *Kabbalah* privately and lived amongst the people as workers or tradesmen. At the age of 36, the *Baal Shem Tov* became the recognised leader of the Nistarim, and his fame started to spread.

He settled in the town of Mezibuz, but he frequently travelled around Jewish communities arousing souls with the elixir of *Chassidut*. Being a profound scholar in the revealed parts of the *Torah*, he gathered around him a circle of other brilliant *Torah* scholars to whom he taught the deepest parts of the *Torah*. He set their souls on fire, and they served G-d with boundless joy and fervour. While enlightening the scholars, the *Baal Shem Tov* also lifted the spirit of common folk while entertaining them at his table and building their self-esteem.

He was widely acclaimed as a miracle worker, and thousands flocked to him for advice and blessings. Today volumes about the *Baal Shem Tov* abound, with miraculous stories of how this great man saved a town from a heavenly decree or blessed a childless couple, among many other spectacular events. He would arrive unrecognised in a town and go to the town square, gather the common folk around him, and preach in simple but eloquent terms about how much G-d loved them. He spoke of *Ahavat Yisrael*, the importance of loving a fellow Jew regardless of his or her background, religious observance or knowledge, and taught that each Jew is a precious child of G-d. He spoke about the importance of a single deed, both on a cosmic and microcosmic level, when that deed is done with heart and sincerity. He encouraged everyone to say *Baruch Hashem* (Thank G-d).

The *Baal Shem Tov* succeeded in creating a movement that filled rituals and observance with soul, joy, and sincerity. Although he himself never wrote any books, his teachings were preserved by his students, in particular by Rabbi *Dovber*, the *Maggid* of *Mezritch*, who succeeded the *Baal Shem Tov* as leader of the *Chassidic* movement.

Of greatest significance, however, was an event that occurred one *Rosh Hashanah*. Using a *Kabbalistic* meditative technique, the *Baal Shem Tov* entered the heavenly realms and met with the soul of *Mashiach*. The *Baal Shem Tov* asked, “When will you arrive?” *Mashiach* replied, “When your teachings will be widely disseminated”. This indicated to the *Baal Shem Tov* that the time had come for the mystical tradition to fill the world; the inner dimension of the *Torah* had to be disseminated in order to usher in the era of *Mashiach*.

One could therefore summarise by saying that at this point in history, G-d gave His consent that the “Inner Dimension of the *Torah*” (*Pnimitiyut HaTorah*) be widely disseminated. G-d gave His Divine permission for the following two reasons: firstly, due to the darkness of exile, an extra strong antidote was needed in order to revive the faint Jewish masses, and secondly, the wide dissemination of *Chassidut* is a prelude and preparation for the era of *Mashiach* when the whole world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d.

The *Baal Shem Tov* and the *Maggid* started the process of dissemination, but it took on an entirely new momentum with the teachings of Rabbi *Shneur Zalman of Liadi*, the founder of the *Chabad* movement.

Chabad

RABBI *Shneur Zalman of Liadi* (1745–1812), affectionately known as the *Alter Rebbe* by his *Chassidim*, succeeded Rabbi *Dovber*, the *Maggid of Mezritch*, as the leader of the *Chassidic* movement. As a child prodigy, the *Alter Rebbe* astounded everyone with his phenomenal memory and deep grasp of all aspects of *Torah* study. As a young man in 1764, he became one of the foremost students of the *Maggid of Mezritch*, and absorbed the teachings of the *Baal Shem Tov*. In 1770, the *Maggid* instructed him to write a Code of Jewish Law which would incorporate Rabbi *Karo's* Code of Law, while also providing concise explanations of the law. The work was universally accepted as a masterpiece, and the *Alter Rebbe's* genius in *Torah* scholarship was undisputed.

After the demise of the *Maggid* in 1773, the vast majority of Russian *Chassidim* chose the *Alter Rebbe* as their leader. Thousands turned to him for guidance and blessings, and the *Alter Rebbe* started to write essays that addressed their spiritual questions and dilemmas. These essays became the basis of the book *Tanya*.

Tanya is considered to be the Written Law, the *Torah Shebichtav*, of *Chassidut*. The first section of the work, *Likutei Amarim* (Collection of Sayings), deals with the human condition and the struggle to improve one's character, thereby fulfilling the purpose of creation. The second section, called *Shaar HaYichud Ve'haEmuna* (Gate of Unity and Faith), focuses on creation *ex nihilo*, and the third section, *Igeret HaTeshuvah* (Letters on Repentance), examines the dynamic of *Teshuvah* (repentance). The fourth section, *Igeret HaKodesh* (Holy Letters), is a collection of letters the *Alter Rebbe* sent to his followers; many of them solicited funds for the *Chassidic* community in Israel, which was impoverished

at that time. The fifth section, *Kuntres Acharon* (End Pamphlet), presents an in-depth explanation of many intricate *Kabbalistic* texts.

The *Alter Rebbe* revolutionised *Chassidut* by blazing a new path called *Chabad*. An acronym for *Chochmah* (wisdom), *Binah* (understanding), and *Daat* (knowledge), *Chabad* is a rational approach that intellectualises mystical concepts using parallels and parables drawn from the human psyche and experience. The esoteric teachings of the *Baal Shem Tov* and *Maggid* were delivered in fiery cryptic capsules, whereas the *Torah* of the *Alter Rebbe* was cool, calculated, and easily digested by the average mind.

The *Alter Rebbe* emphasised *Avodat HaTefillah*, the Service of Prayer, as a meditative process, and encouraged his followers to learn *Chassidut* and then meditate before prayer. Unlike the previous *Kabbalists* whose meditations were focused on Divine names, the *Alter Rebbe* encouraged meditating on such concepts as *Sovev Kol Almin Memale Kol Almin* (for an explanation of these concepts, see Chapter 12, “*Tzimtzum*”), the purpose of creation, and soul descent. Among the *Alter Rebbe’s* many accomplishments was his success in creating a movement that was totally committed to Jewish Law, his ability to intellectualise and clarify the most profound esoteric concepts, his dedication to serving G-d with joy, and his emphasis on loving one’s fellow Jew.

His teachings took on a new force after his famous arrest and release from a Soviet prison in St. Petersburg on the 19th of *Kislev*, 1798. Superficially, he had been arrested on charges of treason for sending money to Israel (which was then under Turkish control) in support of the *Chassidic* community. The Turks were enemies of the Russians, and the Russians believed that the *Alter Rebbe* was sending money in support of the enemy. While the *Alter Rebbe* sat in jail, the *Baal Shem Tov* and the *Maggid* came from the World of Truth to visit him. The *Alter Rebbe* asked them why he was imprisoned and what is being demanded of him. They replied that there was a heavenly accusation levelled against him for revealing *Chassidut*. He asked them whether he should cease teaching *Chassidut* upon his release, and they replied that not only should he not stop, but he should also actually increase his teachings. (A detailed analysis of this story may be found in *Likutei Sichot*, Kehot Publications, Vol. 30, p.170.)

Upon his release, there was a definite change in the *Alter Rebbe’s* style of teaching. His discourses, or *Sichot*, were far more in-depth with additional explanations. In addition, the deepest *Kabbalistic* ideas were being presented in such a way that the ordinary mind and soul could appreciate them. In *Kabbalistic* terms, it was a revelation of the Infinite Light distilled into human intellect.

The *Alter Rebbe* wrote extensively, including his famous works known as *Torah Or* (Light of *Torah*) and *Likutei Torah* (*Torah Anthology*), which are discourses explaining the weekly *Torah* portion in its inner dimension. He also initiated a chain of seven leaders of the *Chabad* movement, who each developed and expanded the *Alter Rebbe's* teachings. His son, Rabbi *Dovber* (1773-1827), took every one of his father's discourses and expanded on them with far more detailed explanations. Rabbi *Dovber* also took up residence in a small town called *Lubavitch*, a name which means "city of love" in Russian. Soon the name of this town became associated with *Chabad* teachings and the love of one's fellow Jew.

The third *Rebbe*, Rabbi *Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch* (1789-1866), also known as the *Tzemach Tzedek*, took the teachings of *Chassidut* and showed how they are totally incorporated into, and are at one with, the revealed parts of the *Torah*.

The fourth *Rebbe*, Rabbi *Shmuel of Lubavitch* (1834-1882), created a system called *Hemsheichim*, in which he would develop a discourse explaining a certain theme, and he would continue to develop that theme in further public addresses.

His son, Rabbi *Sholom Dovber Schneersohn*, the fifth *Rebbe of Chabad* (1860-1920), developed this system even further, and produced the most sophisticated, systematic, and profound *Chassidic* tracts that explain the most esoteric concepts in *Kabbalah*.

Rabbi *Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn*, the sixth *Lubavitcher Rebbe* and son of Rabbi *Sholom Dovber Schneersohn* (1880-1950), followed in the footsteps of his father and started to translate *Chassidut* into other languages. Living in Communist Russia under great oppression, he inspired and motivated his followers to withstand the great obstacles that blocked the path of Jewish observance and spiritual survival.

However, it was *Rebbe's* son-in-law, the seventh *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, Rabbi *Menachem Mendel Schneersohn* 1902-1994 who took all the previous generations' teachings and applied them perfectly to modern life. The *Rebbe's* talks (*Sichot*) and discourses (*Sichot*), which appear in 200 published volumes, are treasure houses of *Chassidic* and *Kabbalistic* thought. The *Rebbe* would *Farbreng* (conduct *Chassidic* "gatherings") at his headquarters in 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, where would talk for hours about a host of subjects spanning the entire spectrum of Jewish life, philosophy, and thought. He also inspired his followers to reach out to fellow Jews through *Mitzvah* campaigns, which are launched around the world. Much of the material in this book has been culled from the *Rebbe's* vast teachings. Most of all, the *Rebbe* encouraged each and every Jew to prepare for the coming of *Mashiach*, when we shall hear profound new *Torah* teachings. *Chassidut* is a mere taste of what is yet to come.

 ✎ CHAPTER 9

Mashiach

WHAT DOES THE future hold? There is a *Talmudic* statement that the world will exist for 6,000 years before it enters a new state. At the time of this edition of the book's publication the current Hebrew year is 5783—which leaves 217 years before the seventh millennium.

The *Kabbalah* explains that each millennium is a Divine day, and as we approach the seventh millennium, we are approaching the Divine Sabbath: a millennium that will mirror the *Shabbat* day.

To explain what this means in the simplest terms, the difference between weekday and *Shabbat* is the cessation of daily work and mundane pursuits, and creating space for spiritual development.

In historical terms, the 6,000-year-history of mankind represents human creativity, while the seventh millennium represents a step out of the creation and into the Creator. This era is classically called the days of *Mashiach*.

The word “*Mashiach*” actually means “anointed”, and was a term reserved for any anointed king in the *Torah*. In the context of the era of *Mashiach*, the term specifically refers to a dynamic human leader, a true Jewish king who will appear and rebuild the third Temple in Jerusalem and in-gather the exiles. Mankind will be fully aware of G-d, and *Mashiach* will reinvigorate the world with spirituality, ushering in an epoch of global harmony:

And the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d, just as water covers the seabed.

(ISAIAH 11:9)

“Out of Zion shall go forth Torah and the word of the L-rd from Jerusalem.”

(ISAIAH 2:3)

“The wolf shall lie with the lamb”

(ISAIAH 10:40)

Although the *Mashiach* has to arrive by the year 6,000, it can happen any time before then if we merit his coming. In fact, we eagerly anticipate the coming of *Mashiach*, and our prayers are replete with requests for his speedy arrival.

WHAT WILL LIFE BE LIKE IN THOSE DAYS?

Maimonides, one of the greatest of Jewish scholars, summarises by saying that although there will be a very high standard of living for all, and delicacies will abound, our main pursuit will be to “know G-d”.

In *Kabbalistic* terms, this means that mankind will become aware of the mystical tradition, and even small children will be able to enter the prophetic state. *Torah* on all its levels will be fully revealed and *Mitzvot* fully practiced, and the world will return to its state in the Garden of Eden, materially abundant and spiritually focused.

The revelation of *Kabbalah* and the teachings of *Chassidut* in the years leading up to the seventh millennium are a foretaste of the Messianic Revelation. Based on the belief that the dissemination of mystical teaching ushers in the era of *Mashiach*, the leaders of *Chabad* have promoted the study of *Chassidut* in the widest possible circles and in the greatest number of locations.

As the world nears the era of *Mashiach*, knowledge in all areas of life is rapidly expanding. There is a prophetic passage in the *Zohar*, which states:

“In the six-hundredth year of the sixth millennium there will be opened the gates of wisdom above and the wells of wisdom below – and the sign is in the verse (Genesis 7:11), ‘In the six-hundredth year of the life of Noah... all the wellsprings of the great deep burst forth and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.’”

(ZOHAR VOL.1:117A)

The six-hundredth year of the sixth millennium corresponds to 1840 of the Common Era. A cursory inspection of history reveals that all the major revolutions in industry, communication, and technology began in the twentieth

century. At present, technology is advancing at such a rapid pace that we have achieved instant universal communication and unprecedented scientific breakthrough.

Our Sages say that *Mashiach* will teach *Torah* simultaneously to all Israel. A hundred years ago, that was not possible. Today, however, we have the means to do so. In fact, the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* greatly encouraged the use of technology to teach *Torah*. *Chabad* was a pioneer in creating *Torah* in cyberspace.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

The *Zohar* indicates that the expansion of knowledge will come from both heaven and earth. “The wellsprings of the great deep bursting forth”, which is a reference to scientific advance, will be complemented by, “the floodgates of heaven being opened”, which is a reference to the wide dissemination of *Kabbalah* and *Chassidut*. Ultimately in the Messianic era, these two will converge. Science will reveal the profound secrets of creation as already described in the mystical tradition, and the whole world will proclaim that *Ein Od Milvado* – “there is nothing else besides G-d” (Deuteronomy 4:35).

G-d

WHAT CAN WE say about G-d Himself? In *Maimonides'* magnum opus, the *Mishneh Torah* (Restatement of the *Torah*), with the following words, “The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of all wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Existence, who brings into being all existence. All the beings of the heavens, the earth, and what is between, came into being only from the truth of His Existence.”

Chassidut calls this primary existence *Atzmut*, from the word *Etzem*, meaning “the essence”. The essence of G-d is totally independent of any other existence. All existence depends on G-d, but He does not need or depend on any other existence. He may therefore be defined as the true existence. In simpler terms, a being only exists because G-d wills it to exist and constantly allows Divine creative energy to flow into that being. If G-d were, for even an instant, to cease generating that creative energy, the being would cease to exist. That creation is therefore totally dependent on G-d for its existence, whereas G-d's existence is *Atzmut* and is not derived from any other existence that preceded Him. He has no beginning and no end. He was, is, and will always be.

It is impossible to describe the essence of G-d, who is not corporeal, and therefore physical concepts and emotional temperaments do not apply to Him. There is nothing whatsoever that resembles Him. It is a principle of our faith that G-d is One, a belief that not only means a singular being, but also that G-d creates everything and is everywhere.

One may not talk of *Atzmut* in terms of revelation, for G-d's essence is neither revealed nor concealed. In the words of *Tikkunei Zohar*, an early *Kabbalistic* work, “You are exalted above all the exalted ones, hidden from all the hidden

ones; no thought can grasp You at all” (*Tikkunei Zohar*, Introduction 2). Because the concept of *Atzmut* is incomprehensible, no descriptive terms may be applied. We do, however, refer to G-d as the Creator. This does not limit G-d to His creation and sustenance of all the worlds, though the creation does reflect His essence. Only G-d has the power and ability to create something out of absolute nothingness, without this creation having any other cause preceding it. As we shall later explain in detail, the very essence of G-d is specifically manifested in this physical world. Furthermore, the true infinite nature of G-d is also manifested in the physical world by creating diversity without limit.

Kabbalah closely examines the creative process, in which a physical creation was created from *Atzmut*. It maps out all the stages of this creative process, calling it the *Seder Hishtalshlut* – the chain order of creation. The word “chain” indicates that there are numerous links, each with purpose, importance, and a connection to the other. The Hebrew word for “world” is *Olam*, which etymologically is related to the word *Helem* (concealment).

In the *Seder Hishtalshlut*, there are higher worlds and lower worlds. In the higher, ethereal worlds, G-d’s presence is more manifest and less concealed, and the beings in those worlds bask constantly in the Light of the *Or Ein Sof* (the Infinite Light). In the lower worlds, which are dominated by the physical, G-dliness is concealed to a greater degree. The physical world in which we live is called the *Olam HaTachton*, meaning the “lowest of all worlds”, for it is in this world that G-d’s presence is most concealed.

It is important to understand that everything visible in our cosmos is all in the lowest of all worlds, i.e. the physical creation. When we talk of higher worlds, we are not referring to planets in outer space, but rather to higher metaphysical planes. A description of these worlds will be provided in Chapter 14, “The Four Worlds”.

The Ladder

ONE OF THE most striking Biblical dreams is that of Jacob and the ladder. Jacob has been exiled from his family and land, and he is about to enter the world of his corrupt uncle *Laban*. Just before he leaves Israel, Jacob rests on the future Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which was also the site where his father, Isaac, was bound. Jacob falls asleep and dreams of a ladder with angels ascending and descending it (Genesis 28:12). Classically, this scene is interpreted as the departure and elevation of the angels that accompanied Jacob in Israel and the descent of the angels that would accompany him in his future journeys.

Kabbalistically, this “ladder”, or *sulam*, represents the ladder of worlds, the *Seder Hishtalshlut*, and signifies the connection between G-d and the ethereal to our physical world. The conceptual ladder suggests that one may both ascend and descend. The purpose of ascent is to gain a higher perspective, a view from above. The purpose of descent is to fulfil the purpose in creation. In reality, both are essential. Only when one ascends the ladder of creation does one perceive true reality, allowing a sharper and more focused perspective upon re-entry into earthly spheres.

This ascent and descent is traditionally called prayer. On the most basic level, prayer is turning to G-d to request one’s needs. On a *Kabbalistic* level, the purpose of prayer is to attach the soul to its source, and to refine and elevate the crass nature of one’s baser drives and passions. These two goals go hand-in-hand. Through elevation and attachment – ascent – one may refine one’s character through a deeper understanding of the purpose of creation. Hence the *Kabbalists* write that the knowledge of this chain of creation is a great *Mitzvah*, in that it brings us to “know G-d” (Numbers 4: 39), love Him, and stand in awe

of Him. In truth, no mortal being has any notion of G-d Himself; the phrase “to know G-d” refers to a cognizance of, and sensitivity to, the Divine Presence, the *Shechinah*. As a result of this deeper awareness, one can infuse the Divine Presence into all aspects of human experience. This is why we pray each day.

Man stands at the crossroads of creation. His body is made from earth while his soul was literally breathed into him by G-d. Man embodies heaven and earth and in his daily schedule oscillates between the two. At times he is spiritually uplifted and detached from the mundane. At other times he is totally immersed in the materialistic quagmire. How does he strike a healthy balance between the two states of being? The mystical answer to this question provides a totally different and fresh perspective.

Kabbalah explains that this fusion occurs in the reactor of prayer. Upon ascending the ladder, and touring the “higher worlds” while rising level after level, the view from above is stunning. The material world below is so very insignificant, when compared to the huge Divine Light accessible in the higher realms. At the height of meditation, the soul experiences a spiritual ecstasy that is so powerful that it wishes to expire and leave the earthly container.

And then, at the height of the flight, the soul dissolves in awe, standing before the Almighty Himself. All notions of ego and self are dispelled, and the pervading feeling is one of *Atzmut* alone. At that level, one senses G-d’s true purpose in creation, that the G-dly soul descend through the worlds and become en-clothed in the earthly body, and become immersed in daily routine.

In Judaism, action is imperative. The mystic is not the ascetic with his or her head in the clouds; rather he or she understands that a deep knowledge of the higher realms results in a much richer involvement in this world. It is specifically in the “lowest of all realms” that one can make a dwelling place for the Divine. G-d desires to have an abode in this world. This is achieved by the soul’s descent and its transformation of physical darkness into spiritual light, bitterness into sweetness.

We may now understand why *Kabbalah* anatomically maps out the pathways of Heaven. Through studying this chain order, and by our meditating upon it, not only does one become totally *sensitized* to the *Shechinah*, but at the same time, one develops an awareness of one’s *own* purpose and the purpose of *all* of creation.

Tzimtzum

IN THE TEACHINGS of *Kabbalah*, which examines the origins of creation, G-d is referred to as the *Ein Sof*, the Being that has “no end”. In the act of creation, G-d made something very finite out of the infinite. How did this come about?

Some *Kabbalistic* texts speak of a gradual contraction of Divine Power as it streamed into this finite world, eventually reaching a point of complete concealment in this world; according to the *Arizal*, however, there was a quantum leap from infinite to finite, and this leap was called *Tzimtzum* (contraction).

To visualise how this happens, Rabbi *Chaim Vital* in the *Etz Chaim* presents the following structure. The power and ability of the *Ein Sof* is called the *Or Ein Sof* (the Infinite Light). Because physical light is perceived as being ethereal and intangible, while at the same providing life and warmth, it is often used in *Kabbalah* as a metaphor for Divine Power.

In the initial stage of revelation, the prevalent manifestation was that of the Infinite Light. The potential for finitude did exist within the *Or Ein Sof*, however it was initially indistinguishable from the powerful manifestation of the Infinite Light. In order for creation to take place, it was necessary somehow to conceal this Infinite Light, thus creating a vacuum for the Finite Light to be revealed. One may draw an analogy to a ray of light from the sun. Within the sun itself, the ray has no independent identity because it is totally nullified within the sun. Only when it exits the sun may it be recognised and perceived as having an independent identity.

To explain further, a parallel may be drawn from the world of teaching. Imagine that Albert Einstein is invited to an elementary school to teach mathematics. If Albert wants to communicate effectively with the young children

in his classroom, he needs to put aside all the theories and complexities of advanced mathematics, and to focus on basic addition. In time, the child he is teaching may progress to study mathematics in high school, college, and then university. Maybe the student will one day become a professor of mathematics himself and may even surpass Einstein in brilliance. However, in the first stages, the end was concealed. The same principle can be applied to *Tzimtzum* – G-d purposefully concealed the infinite in order to create a space in which finitude could be realised.

FIRST STAGE OF CREATION: TZIMTZUM HARISHON

The *Arizal* calls the concealment of the *Or Ein Sof* – *Tzimtzum* HaRishon. This “first” *Tzimtzum* was the most radical in the sense that it was the quantum leap that allowed finitude to surface. It must be noted that the concealment of the *Or Ein Sof* did not affect *Atzmut* itself, for *Atzmut* is the essence of G-d which transcends everything, including changes. G-d remains the same after creation as before creation. He is totally detached from any change that takes place within the creation. Any changes that did occur took place within a manifestation of revealed power – the *Or Ein Sof*. This is what Malachi the prophet meant when he said, “I, G-d, have not changed”.

Chassidut explains that what was left after *Tzimtzum* were the “letters of the residue” (*Reshimu*). The *Zohar* states that “He engraved letters in the supernal purity” (i.e. in the *Or Ein Sof*). This means that when it arose in G-d’s will to create the world, G-d measured out within Himself in potential what would exist in actuality. In the *Zohar*, this act of measuring out is referred to as “engraving letters”. These letters signify the structuring and formation of the Divine will prior to *Tzimtzum*. They are the potential for finitude that existed within the *Or Ein Sof*.

Explained differently, in order for finitude to take on parameters and definition, there had to be some form of definitive language. Letters are the building blocks of words which can build sentences, ultimately resulting in a language and the ability to communicate. The *Kabbalah* calls these letters “Vessels” (*Kelim*), and the meaning within the words “Lights” (*Orot*). Every sentence is composed of letters which are the Vessels for the meaning of the sentence, and the message conveyed which is called the Light (Or). The revelation of Vessels came about through *Tzimtzum*, although they existed in an abstract form before *Tzimtzum*. As previously stated, within the *Or Ein Sof* was also the power of finitude. Prior to *Tzimtzum*, these “Letters” were filled with *Or Ein Sof* and they represented only the potential for limitation. The function of the *Tzimtzum*

was to remove the *Or Ein Sof* that flooded the letters so that limitation and finitude could be actualised.

In order for there to be diversity within creation, it was necessary to reveal different qualities or attributes within the Divine. These “attributes” are called *Sefirot*, and they are the building blocks of creation. Every *Sefirah* (attribute) is composed of Lights and Vessels. It must be emphasised that the existence of the *Sefirot* in no way implies plurality within Divinity. The *Sefirot* are not separate entities within the *Or Ein Sof*.

To quote from *Sefer Yetzirah*:

“The ten Sefirot are bli mah (without substance); their end is wedged in their beginning, and their beginning in their end, like a flame bound up in a coal. For G-d is One, and there is no second to Him”.

This same metaphor is employed in the *Zohar*:

“The Holy One blessed be He, emits ten crowns, supernal holy crowns with which He crowns Himself. He is they and they are He, just as the flame is bound up in the coal, and there is no division there”.

Chassidut compares the *Sefirot* as they were in the pre-*Tzimtzum* state to the potential of a spark from a flint stone. Even if a stone has been immersed in water, there remains the potential ability to strike the stone and make fire. In no way could we say that the spark has a separate identity within the stone. However, as the *Sefirot* emerge in the post-*Tzimtzum* stage, they are indeed like a flame bound up in a coal. The flame has a separate identity, yet its whole existence is completely bound up in the coal.

To visualise what happened after the initial *Tzimtzum*, Rabbi *Chaim Vital* presents the following graphic: Imagine a circle, and the circle is full of the *Or Ein Sof*. No finite existence may be created within this circle for the Light of the Infinite totally occludes it. After the *Tzimtzum* conceals the *Or Ein Sof*, however, there is a void within the circle, whose space allows for the creation of something finite.

SECOND STAGE OF CREATION: THE KAV

The next stage of creation was the introduction into this circle of a beam of pre-*Tzimtzum* light called the *Kav*. Contained within this Light were all the ingredients for the creation of the various worlds.

The difference between a circle and a beam of light is that the circle has no beginning and no end. Around its circumference one can move ad infinitum. The circle represents the Infinite Light of *Sovev Kol Almin* (the Light that surrounds all worlds), which is peripheral to all worlds. *Chassidut* calls it an *Or Makkif* (a Transcendent Light). It must be emphasised here that the word *Makkif*, meaning peripheral, does not suggest that the *Or Ein Sof* does not exist within the circle; rather, after the *Tzimtzum*, it fills the circle, but only in a concealed manner.

The *Kav*, on the other hand, is a line which has a beginning and an end. The *Kav* represents the chain of worlds in the post-*Tzimtzum* state in which there are higher worlds and lower worlds, rather like the various rungs of a ladder. In the higher worlds, the Light is very intense and G-d's presence is absolutely manifest.

As the *Kav* progresses, however, the measure of Light is reduced, and G-d's presence becomes more concealed within the Vessels. At the centre of the circle is this world. This is the lowest point of the line at which the Light is totally concealed within physical creation.

The Four Worlds

HEBREW	ENGLISH
<i>Atzilut</i>	Emanation
<i>Beriah</i>	Creation
<i>Yetzirah</i>	Formation
<i>Assiyah</i>	Action

Breaking it Down

To help understand this difficult concept, let us imagine a beam entering a circle and then creating concentric circles, rather like the layers of an onion. In our case, the circles are worlds.

There are four levels of worlds, called *Atzilut* (emanation), *Beriah* (creation), *Yetzirah* (formation), and *Assiyah* (action). As the *Kav* enters the circle, or in our analogy, the outermost layer of the onion, this first stage is the world of *Atzilut*. The *Kav* progresses to form the worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Assiyah*, each world being another layer of the onion, a further concentric circle progressing towards the centre of the circle.

The entire Light of the *Kav* is the Light of *Memale Kol Almin* (the Light that fills all worlds). This Light is an *Or Pnimi* (inner Light), as opposed to *Sovev Kol Almin* which is an *Or Makkif*.

Kabbalah explains the various names of G-d. One may not pronounce the four letters of the *Tetragrammaton*, Y-H-V-H, as they are written, due to the name's great sanctity. We shall therefore employ the word *Havaye* to denote that name.

The name *Havaye* is composed of three words: *Hayah* – He was, *Hoveh* – He is, *Yihyeh* – He will be. This name describes the *Sovev Kol Almin*. (In Chapter 14, “The Four Worlds”, we shall discuss the name *Havaye* in a different context, as it relates to the four worlds.) The name of G-d that describes *Memale Kol Almin* is *Elokim*. The numerical value of *Elokim* is the same as the Hebrew word for “nature” (*HaTeva*), implying G-d's Presence within creation. *Kabbalah* talks of the unification (*Yichud*) between *Havaye* and *Elokim*. The *Torah* tells us, “Know this day that *Havaye* is *Elokim*” (Deuteronomy 4:39). *Chassidut* calls it a unity of *Sovev Kol Almin* and *Memale Kol Almin*, seeing G-d as both transcendent and imminent.

In our teaching metaphor, the purpose of Einstein removing quantum theory from his mind was to reveal elementary mathematics to the student. The process was for the purpose of revelation, so that the student would eventually progress to higher levels. The same is true of *Tzimtzum*. The purpose of *Tzimtzum* was not mere concealment, but also revelation – a descent for the purpose of ascent. Through *Tzimtzum*, a finite world was created. This world, with its limitations, cannot contain the Infinite Light in its revealed state, but it *can* in its concealed state. The *Torah* and *Mitzvot* can be likened to clothing or garments that are covering the *Or Ein Sof*. Within this world, the pre-*Tzimtzum Or Ein Sof* is en-clothed within *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, fulfilling the purpose of creation – to create a dwelling for G-d in this lowest realm.

When a person performs a *Mitzvah*, this causes a unification of *Sovev Kol Almin* and *Memale Kol Almin*. For this reason, before performing a *Mitzvah*, many people recite the words, “*Leshem Yichud Kudsha Brich Hu Ushchintei...*” meaning, “For the sake of the union of the Holy One, blessed be He, with His *Shechinah*, to unite the name *Yud-Kay* with *Vav-Kay* In a perfect union in the name of all Israel”. *Kudsha Brich Hu* – the Holy One (*Yud-Kay*) represents the level of *Sovev Kol Almin* and *Shechinah* (*Vov-Kay*) represents the level of *Memale Kol Almin*. Hence each *Mitzvah* unites the transcendent levels of G-dliness with the imminent levels, thus creating a true dwelling of G-d in this lowest realm.

In terms of human history, the revelation of this Light will take place in stages. At present, the Divine Presence, is concealed, but as history progresses into the Messianic Era there will be a greater revelation of the pre-*Tzimtzum* Light, and even more at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead. Our *Mitzvot* in exile will precipitate the revelations of the Messianic Era and the Resurrection.

Although exile is a result of sin, the real purpose of exile is to reveal self-sacrifice (*Mesirat Nefesh*) for *Mitzvah* observance. This acts as an arousal from below and elicits a response from Above in the form of reward in the Messianic Era.

MODES OF CREATION

KAV (*beam*) **OF CREATION**

MEMALE KOL ALMIN

(the Light that fills all worlds)

OR PNIMI

(an inner Light)

ELOKIM

(imminent name of G-d)

CIRCLE OF CREATION

SOVEV KOL ALMIN

(the Light that surrounds all worlds)

OR MAKKIF

(a transcendent Light)

HAVAYE

(transcendent name of G-d)

Sefirot

AS WE DISCUSSED in the previous chapter, *Tzimtzum* is the concealment of the *Or Ein Sof* which allows a *Seder Hishtalshlut*, a series of intermediary stages or worlds that makes the creation of the finite world possible. Each of these worlds has a spiritual infrastructure, the most basic component being the *Sefirot*. The *Sefirot* are ten modes or attributes through which G-d manifests Himself. Everything that happens in the spiritual worlds takes place through the medium of the *Sefirot*. The *Sefirot* do not, however, take the place of G-d, and the *Kabbalists* warn that one should not pray to them. In the words of *Tikkunei Zohar*:

Elijah opened his discourse and said: “Master of the worlds, You are One but not in the numerical sense. You are exalted above all the exalted ones, hidden from all the hidden ones; no thought can grasp You at all. You are He who has brought forth ten ‘garments,’ and we call them ten Sefirot, and revealed worlds; and through them You conceal yourself from man. You are He who binds them together and unites them; and inasmuch as You are within them, whoever separates one from another of these ten Sefirot, it is considered as if he had effected a separation in You.”

The word *Sefirah* is related to the verb “*Lesaper*”, which means to “express” or “communicate”. This implies that the function of a *Sefirah* is to express a certain attribute. It is also related to the word “sapphire” (*Sapir*). A sapphire is a gemstone that is brilliant and illuminating, implying that the function of a *Sefirah* is to give light. Combining these two concepts, one may say that the *Sefirot* have two basic functions: they serve as lights or luminaries whose aim is to reveal

and express, and as Vessels that limit and define the Light so that specific qualities are manifested. The *Sefirot* may be compared to the two hands of a king. Sometimes the king operates with his right hand and sometimes with his left. Ultimately, it is the king himself who is acting through the medium of his hands.

In fact, every *Sefirah* is divisible into the two aspects of Lights and Vessels. The Lights of the *Sefirot* are simple and formless. They reflect G-d's infinite power as revealed within the *Sefirot*. The Vessels have specific characteristics, and thereby reveal G-d's power of limitation and finitude. It is through the *Sefirot* that the *Ein Sof* – which, by definition, is infinite – creates and conducts the finite worlds.

To understand the dynamics of the *Sefirot*, let's look at humans, for man was created in the image of G-d. In many places in the *Torah*, Scripture speaks of G-d in anthropomorphic terms, and refers to, "the eyes of G-d", the "hand of G-d", etc. Yet we know that G-d has neither a body nor form of body. So why does the *Torah* describe G-d in human terms? The answer is that the *Torah* speaks in the language of man. G-d borrows terms from His creatures to express His relationship with the world. G-d has no eyes, yet He creates the eye and is aware of everything that happens in the world. G-d has no hand, yet He creates the hand, and His providence guides the world's destiny. When the *Torah* tells us that G-d made man in His image, it means that man is a microcosm of the *Sefirot*, with the entire spiritual infrastructure reflected in him. The *Sefirot* make it possible to speak about G-d's immanence in creation; in other words, we can describe what He does without referring directly to what He is.

Those Divine attributes are reflected within human beings, both in their spiritual and physical makeup. Hence, the *Kabbalists* chose to depict the *Sefirot* as corresponding to various limbs and functions of the human body.

Furthermore, when trying to grasp the dynamic of the *Sefirot* in the higher realms, one may make reference to the human conceptual model, and then reflect these concepts above. In this manner, we can use physical terminology to help us appreciate the higher spiritual realms. One must be cautious in doing so, and must realize that this human model is only a reflection of the *Sefirot*. All analogies have their human dimension which may not be applicable in the higher realms.

To use an analogy to explain: A camera picks up a scene. The scene is sent by signals through a cable to a monitor where it is played. Obviously if you cut open the cable, you will not see miniature images of the scene. The signal in the cable carries the scene, but not in the way we picture it; it is carried in a different form. In the same way, the *Sefirot* appear in very different forms in

the physical world than they do in the spiritual process of creation. Yet in the same way that the electronic signals determine exactly what is on the screen, so, too, does the Divine light determine exactly how the physical appears on earth.

The *Sefirot* are also reflected in our spiritual make-up, with each of our faculties derived from the supernal *Sefirot*. When we utilise the ten soul powers (*Chassidut* explains that the infrastructure of the human psyche consists of ten faculties called soul powers that are a reflection of the ten *Sefirot*) within us in our Divine service here in this world, we are able to affect their source, the *Sefirot*, in the higher worlds.

THE TEN SEFIROT

The ten *Sefirot* are generally divided into two categories: Intellect (*sechel*) and Emotions (*Middot*). The category of Intellect includes the three intellectual powers of *Chochmah*, *Binah*, and *Daat* – which are an acronym for the word *ChaBaD*. The emotive powers are represented by the seven channels of *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferet*, *Netzach*, *Hod*, *Yesod*, and *Malchut*. They are also referred to as the Three Mothers and the Seven Doubles. The first three are viewed as “mothers” because they are the source and root of the other seven, just as a mother is the source of her offspring. The seven Emotions are called doubles because they manifest themselves in a twofold manner, as shall be explained.

INTELLECT

1. The first of the *Sefirot* is called *Chochmah*, which is the soul faculty that conceives any matter, and hence is made of the words *Koach mah*, meaning the potential of what is. It produces the original idea and is often referred to as the first flash of intellect. It already contains within it all the details of the idea but, as yet, they are concentrated and obscured. It is everything in potential. This potential has been likened to a dot, in which everything is contained, but nothing is actualised or given definition. In the *Tetragrammaton*, this is represented in the first letter, *Yud*, which resembles a dot.
2. The second *Sefirah* is *Binah*, which means, “to understand or derive one matter out of another matter”. *Binah* takes the original idea and expands and develops it both in breadth and depth. It crystallises and clarifies the details of the idea that were obscured in *Chochmah*. That which was in concentrate form is now revealed and understood. In the name of G-d, *Binah* is the letter *Hey*. Its shape, which is more elongated and comprised of strokes, implies the expansion of the dot in breadth and

length. *Chochmah* and *Binah* can be compared to two good friends who are inseparable. The *Zohar* describes them as “a dot in the palace”, with the dot *Chochmah* being realised in the palace of *Binah*. The *Koach* mah of *Chochmah* (potential of “what is”) is realised in *Binah*.

3. An idea once conceived may remain abstract. The meaning of *Daat* denotes attachment and union as in the verse, “and Adam knew (yada – from the word *Daat*) Eve” (Genesis 4:1). The faculty of *Daat* brings the abstract concept into actuality. An idea must be felt and implemented, and *Daat* has the power to unite the intellect and the emotions. One can only put an idea into practice if one is extremely attached to it; this does not only require an intellectual grasp of the idea, but a deep emotional understanding as well.

It is clear how *Daat* is the connector between *Chochmah* and *Binah* and the rest of the body (*Sefirot*). In the human body, the three cognitive faculties of *ChaBaD* correspond to the right cerebral hemisphere, left cerebral hemisphere, and cerebellum, from which stems the spinal cord connecting the brain to the rest of the body.

EMOTIONS

The next three *Sefirot* are the Emotions. In the body, *Chessed* corresponds to the right arm, *Gevurah* to the left arm, and *Tiferet* to the heart. The *Kabbalists* draw parallels between the personalities of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the three supernal *Sefirot* of *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*.

4. *Chessed* (loving-kindness) is the attribute which diffuses benevolence to all without limit. Creation itself is an act of *Chessed*, as it is stated, “The world was built with *Chessed*” (Psalms 89:3). The attribute of *Chessed* is also called “greatness” (*Gedulah*), for G-d grants life to an unlimited number of worlds and creatures. As we learn from Abraham, it is the nature of the benevolent to do good. Abraham embodies *Chessed*, and it is in him that we see the paradigm of endless loving-kindness. His tent was open on all sides, and he extended the warmest hospitality to all.
5. Whereas *Chessed* is boundless, *Gevurah* is the attribute of restraint. It has the power and ability to limit and contract. In the act of creation, *Gevurah* conceals from the created beings the activating force within them. This enables them to exist as tangible entities, instead of being utterly nullified within their source. The patriarch Isaac demonstrated *Gevurah* when he restrained his emotions at the *Akeidah* (the binding of Isaac).

Gevurah can also mean “law” and “judgment” (Din). Judgment demands that *Chessed* be distributed justly to those who deserve it, and not in a boundless, gratuitous fashion. Without *Gevurah*, *Chessed* would lack the boundaries that are necessary in order for creation to exist. In terms of humanity, if *Chessed* was dominant, the earth would be full of sinners since the attribute of loving-kindness would forgive all iniquity. Conversely, if *Gevurah* was dominant, no human being could withstand the scrutiny of judgment.

6. Both *Chessed* and *Gevurah* operate successfully through a mediating faculty, the *Sefirah* of *Tiferet*. The attribute of *Tiferet* beautifully synthesises *Chessed* and *Gevurah*. To understand this concept, imagine a garment dyed with many colours and blended in such a way that it gives rise to beauty and decoration. Within human beings, *Tiferet* is equated with the attribute of “compassion” (*Rachamim*). *Tiferet* is also equated with “truth” (*Emet*) in the sense that both *Chessed* and *Gevurah* agree to its flow.

In the body, *Tiferet* is the heart, whose central position in the torso mediates between right and left and creates harmony. The attribute of *Tiferet* is seen in Jacob, the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. Whereas Abraham represented unlimited kindness and gave birth to Ishmael, and Isaac represented severe restraint and gave birth to Esau, Jacob represented a harmonious blend, and gave birth to 12 righteous children, the twelve tribes of Israel.

The next three *Sefirot* are *Netzach*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. These three are extensions of *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*. *Netzach* is an extension of *Chessed*, *Hod* of *Gevurah*, and *Yesod* of *Tiferet*. In their parallels within the human body, *Netzach* and *Hod* correspond to the two thighs and *Yesod* to the reproductive organ, the *Brit Kodesh*. The *Brit Kodesh* emphasises the special holiness that must be attached to intimacy as well as the abstention from prohibited sexual activity. The Biblical figure *Yosef*, Joseph, is often referred to as *Yosef HaTzaddik*, “Joseph the Righteous One”, because he controlled his sexual desire for the wife of *Potifar*.

Just as the thighs support the body and transport the body to its destination, so, too, *Netzach* and *Hod* channel the upper *Sefirot*. The *Kabbalists* parallel *Netzach* with the personality of Moses, *Hod* with Aaron, and *Yesod* with Joseph.

7. The word *Netzach* derives from the word “*Menatzeach*”, meaning to “conquer” or “overcome”. *Netzach* therefore denotes the idea of dominance. By giving in an unlimited way, one is overwhelming the other, and in this respect, the attribute of *Netzach* is an extension of *Chessed*.
8. *Hod* is just the opposite. Being an extension of *Gevurah*, it denotes

restraint to the point of submission. *Hod* stems from the word “hodaah” meaning to “thank”, “admit”, or “submit”. Total dominance over another is a *Netzach* relationship, while total submission is a *Hod* relationship.

9. *Yesod* balances the two attributes of *Netzach* and *Hod* by communication, and it is therefore the foundation of the world. The effect of *Netzach*, *Hod*, and *Yesod* (known in its abbreviated form as *NeHiY*) on *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet* (known in its abbreviated form as *ChaGaT*), is analogous to a father teaching a son. Once the emotions of *ChaGaT* are aroused, the function of *NeHiY* is to receive the flow from *ChaGaT* and make sure that its intensity and content is appropriate for the recipient.

In the analogy, *NeHiY* has a triple function. If the father will impart the knowledge in its totality as it appears in his own mind, the son will be unable to absorb it. Rather, the father must convey the subject matter in such a way that little by little, the child will be able to understand the subject matter.

In this respect, *Netzach* and *Hod* are referred to in *Kabbalistic* terminology as “the kidneys that advise” and are “the two testicles” that prepare the sperm. This means that they modify a subtle concept in the father’s mind so that it is comprehensible to the child on his level. *Netzach* and *Hod* are also referred to as “grinders” and “millstones”. Just as a millstone grinds the wheat germ into flour, so, too, a father must break up concepts and determine which should be presented and which should be withheld. *Netzach* and *Hod* serve to contract a concept in all its dimensions. Finally, *Netzach* also allows for the father to prevail over himself by not withholding any beneficial influence or learning from his son.

Carrying this analogy further will also explain the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*. Even if the father will privately rehearse what he is going to teach his son, it cannot be compared to the actual moment of teaching. At that moment, the father binds his intellect to the child and communicates with love. He truly desires that his son understand the subject matter. The more the father delights in teaching his son, the more the son benefits and learns. The son is able to absorb more, and the father responds by teaching him at a higher level. The bond that unites the father and son is the attribute of *Yesod*, which acts as a funnel through which all the previous *Sefirot* are channelled.

We may now understand why the triads of *ChaGaT* and *NeHiY* are called doubles. *ChaGaT* are the emotions as they exist within a person, without taking into consideration the recipient. *NeHiY* are the powers that focus the emotions of *ChaGaT* so that they may be received by others. Hence, *ChaGaT* and *NeHiY* ride in tandem and are called doubles, since each is dependent upon the other.

In summary, *Chessed* denotes unlimited giving, *Gevurah* parallels unlimited restraint, while *Tiferet* is a harmonious blend of the two. *Netzach* and *Hod* adapt the influence for transmission, and *Yesod* transmits with deep attachment. The six *Sefirot* of *ChaGaT* and *NeHiY* are often grouped together. *Kabbalistically*, they are called “little faces,” *Zeir Anpin*. In the *Tetragrammaton*, *Yud* represents *Chochmah*, *Hey* is *Binah*, and *Vov* is *Zeir Anpin*.

10. The tenth *Sefirah* is called *Malchut*. It is the ultimate realisation of the first *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*. *Chochmah* is *Koach mah* – the potential of what is, and *Malchut* is called *Mah*—that which is. In the *Tetragrammaton*, *Malchut* is the final *Hey*, and in the human body, *Malchut* is the mouth. *Kabbalah* parallels *Malchut* to the personage of King David.

Essentially, *Malchut* is the recipient of influence from the higher *Sefirot*. In this respect, *Malchut* has a feminine quality. Just as a woman receives from a man and gives birth to a child, so, too, *Malchut* receives from *Zeir Anpin* and creates a new entity. In a kingdom, a king “receives” his people’s acceptance, and in return he provides all his people’s needs. As the last *Sefirah*, *Malchut* does not exert any influence of its own except that which the other *Sefirot* pour into it. It is often compared to the moon which, though has no light of its own, reflects the sun’s light as a new entity. In *Kabbalistic* terms, the fusion of *Zeir Anpin* and *Malchut* is called *Yichud Zun – Zeir Anpin* and *Nukvah* (which is Aramaic for *Nekeivah* – female [*Malchut*]) combined. As in a physical union that can result in procreation, all supernal diffusions are effected by the *Yichud Zun*.

The purpose of creation is to reveal G-d’s sovereignty through the creation of “subjects” who are separate entities. These subjects are distant and distinct from the level of the king, and subsequently accept upon themselves the yoke of his kingship. The purpose of *Tzimtzum* is to obscure and hide the life force of the world, thereby making it appear as an independent entity. It is through the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* that time and space came into being. In the dimension of space, we can call G-d a king “above without end and below without limit”, and likewise in all four directions. In the dimension of time, G-d reigns, has reigned, and will reign.

Because *Malchut* is the *Sefirah* in which the *Or Ein Sof* becomes manifest within creation, it is called the *Shechinah*. *Malchut* is also identified with the “mouth of G-d” or “G-d’s speech”, for it reveals G-dliness to the worlds.

Although we have enumerated the ten *Sefirot* above as including the *Sefirah* of *Daat*, some *Kabbalistic* texts count the *Sefirah* of *Keter* instead of *Daat*. The word *Keter* means “crown” and stands above all the other *Sefirot*, like the crown stands on a head. A king’s crown distinguishes him from his people so that they can subjugate themselves to him. The subjects of a sovereign are called “subjects of the crown” due to their loyalty, and nullification to the crown and its authority. *Keter* is the *Sefirah* that stands above all the *Sefirot*, and it is equated with Divine will (*Ratzon*) and Pleasure (*Taanug*). The highest, most transcendent level is Faith (*Emunah*).

In the human model, intellect and emotions are soul powers that dwell within the body. Intellect is in the mind and Emotions are in the heart. A person’s willpower and pleasure, however, transcend any particular organ. In a sense, it is peripheral and is described as *Keter*.

SEFIROT OF MAN

As mentioned above, the *Sefirot* are the infrastructure of all the worlds and are reflected with the microcosm of human beings. They are the infrastructure of one’s soul, both animal and G-dly soul (see Chapter 22, “The *Benoni*”). Both souls are a combination of Intellect and Emotions. In the *Nefesh HaBehamit* (animalistic soul), the predominant powers are the Emotions and are often classically referred to as the Evil Inclination (*Yetzer HaRah*). In the *Nefesh Elokit* (G-dly soul), the intellect is dominant and is referred to as the Good Inclination (*Yetzer HaTov*).

The *Sefirot* all have their internal and external dimensions which affect a person, and in turn affect other people. *Chessed* is internally translated into love, and externally into kindness. Within the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, one may love the forbidden and be kind to the undeserving. The main thrust of *Chassidut* is *Tikkun HaMiddot*, “correcting the negative character traits” of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*.

We shall now study in more detail the *Sefirot* as they appear in the *Nefesh Elokit*. When we utilise the ten soul powers within us in our Divine service here below, we can affect their source, the *Sefirot* of the higher worlds.

Chessed: The internal aspect of *Chessed* is love of G-d and a great desire to cleave to Him. The external attribute of *Chessed* manifests itself in a person who desires to practice *Chessed* to emulate G-d and cleave to His attributes.

Gevurah: The internal aspect of *Gevurah* is fear of G-d. This is expressed externally by reproving and chastising the wicked with the punishments of the *Torah*, prevailing over the Evil Inclination, and sanc-

tifying oneself in that which is permitted. By building a fence and hedge around the *Torah*, safeguards are put in place to prevent transgressions.

Tiferet: This is the power to seek glorification of G-d and follow His *Torah* with compassion in all ways possible. This is expressed in Hiddur *Mitzvah* (the “beautification” and “punctiliousness” in the performance of *Mitzvot*), such as owning beautiful *Tefillin* and *Mezuzot*, even when they are more expensive. It is also expressed by praising G-d in every way possible – in thought, speech, and action.

Netzach: The power to prevail over anything that would withhold humans from performing the service of G-d and from cleaving to Him. This includes external battles over the forces of evil to fill the earth with the glory of G-d, as in the wars fought by King David.

Hod: Through self-abnegation and acknowledging the transcendence of that which defies our mortal understanding, we seek to prostrate ourselves and offer self-effacing praise G-d. Even though we see a material world, we acknowledge that in truth it is G-d who animates and creates everything. Our limited vision is due to our earthbound perspective. We express gratitude to G-d for all the favours that He has bestowed upon us and offer thanks to G-d for all His praiseworthy deeds, attributes, and workings in the creation of the upper and lower worlds. In this context, *Hod* has the meaning of being sincere in one’s expressions of gratitude.

Yesod: Cleaving to truth with intense desire and pleasure to the extent that one’s soul is bound up with G-d, the very source of life and truth.

Malchut: To accept the yoke of G-d’s sovereignty and to serve G-d like a true servant would serve his master, motivated by awe and fear.

All the above Emotions of the *Nefesh Elokit* are activated by the Intellect of the *Nefesh Elokit*. *Chochmah* is the source of the selflessness (*Bittul*) that comprehends G-d and His greatness. *Binah* is the great joy (*Simchah*) that comes as a result of this comprehension in the length, breadth, and depth of understanding. The deep comprehension of *Binah* along with the unification (*Yichud*) of *Daat* gives birth to the emotions of love and fear of G-d. *Daat* represents the bond and link with which the soul is bound up in this understanding.

In summary, we can now see how the *Sefirot* are a microcosm of a person’s soul and how they reflect and affect the supernal *Sefirot*. We can also understand that *Tikkun HaMiddot* is primarily affected through *Chabad* – a thorough intellectual attachment to G-d and His purpose in creation.

EXTERNAL ASPECT**INTERNAL ASPECT**

SEFIRAH
(Macrocosm)

WITHIN CREATION
(Microcosm)

WITHIN MAN

INTELLECT

Chochmah
Binah
Daat

Wisdom
Understanding
Knowledge

Selflessness
Joy
Unification

EMOTIONS

Chessed
Gevurah
Tiferet
Netzach
Hod
Yesod
Malchut

Kindness
Strength
Beauty
Victory
Splendour
Foundation
Kingship

Love
Fear
Mercy
Prevail
Sincerity
Bonding
Service

The Four Worlds

IMAGINE A COUPLE who wish to build an ideal house for their family. They were struck with inspiration and visualised in their minds a palatial home with gardens and a pool. Without wasting a moment, the couple sat down and discussed in detail the layout and size of each room. Now that they have developed the idea in their mind, it would be all too easy to forget about it the next day. To transform their idea into a reality, they must become emotionally excited by the idea. They need to call an architect and builder and start the process of putting their ideas down onto paper. Once the plans have been drawn up, our couple must then go into practical mode: they need to buy a plot of land, apply for building permission, finance the project, and of course, supervise the actual building of the house. It will take months before the house is completed and the couple is able to move into their dream home.

With this analogy, we shall now look closely at the different stages of the chain order of creation:

We could delineate four stages in this process:

1. The initial flash of inspiration (concept)
2. The broadening of the concept (developing the concept in detail)
3. Emotional involvement and the drawing of actual plans
4. Practicalities (building)

ATZILUT

Kabbalah explains that these four stages were also used in the creation of the world. The first stage was the overall concept in which the *Sefirot* are manifested. This level is called the world of *Atzilut*. The word *Atzilut* derives from the

Hebrew word *Aitzel*, which means “next to” or “emanated from”. This world is the next stage after the *Tzimtzum* of the *Or Ein Sof*. Once finite creation had been enabled through *Tzimtzum*, it was then possible to delineate different features or attributes of G-d. The *Torah* uses different Hebrew names for G-d. They are in fact names that describe the different *Sefirot*. For example, the name E-I describes G-dliness as manifest in the *Sefirah* of *Chessed*. Elokim describes G-dliness as manifest in the *Sefirah* of *Gevurah*, and so on.

The world of *Atzilut* is still within the realm of the Infinite, and each of the *Sefirot* in the world of *Atzilut* is infinite. The novelty of the world of *Atzilut* is the delineation between the attributes. Each one becomes uniquely identifiable. Previously, although the possibility for their creation existed, the attributes were totally obscured by the *Or Ein Sof*. In the world of *Atzilut*, all that can be felt is the Divine. There is not yet any independent existence.

Each of the four stages of creation corresponds to one of the four letters in the *Tetragrammaton*, G-d’s four-lettered name of *Havaye*. The world of *Atzilut* corresponds to the letter *Yud*. This letter is shaped in the form of a dot and is the smallest letter from which all other letters are conceived. It is the quintessential point from which all further existence may develop. As explained in Chapter 13, “*Sefirot*”, the letter *Yud* also corresponds to the *Sefirah* of *Chochmah*. Although all ten *Sefirot* are present in every world, one *Sefirah* (or a group of *Sefirot*) is predominant at each stage. The dominant *Sefirah* in the world of *Atzilut* is *Chochmah*. The world of *Atzilut* is the revealed potential of further creation.

BERIAH

In the next stage, the initial concept is worked out, and plans for the creation are further developed. Within the mind, the building has taken on some form of independent existence. Something has been created, albeit only in theory. This world is called the world of *Beriah* (creation). The word “creation” always implies creating something (yesh) from nothing (ayin). In *Beriah*, the initial concept of *Atzilut* has been broadened, both in length and depth. The letter *Hey* corresponds to the *Sefirah* of *Binah*, which is the predominant *Sefirah* in *Beriah*. *Binah* takes the initial concept of *Chochmah* and develops it fully.

The world of *Beriah* takes the initial manifestation of the *Sefirot* in *Atzilut* and creates out of them some form of existence which starts to take on an independent form. While there is total “nullification” (*Bittul*) in the world of *Atzilut*, nothing exists independently. The Divine is also felt in *Beriah*, however, unlike in *Atzilut*, there is something outside of G-d that is feeling Him while still being totally nullified. It is for this reason that the world of *Beriah* is called

the world of the Divine Throne – *Kisei HaKavod*. In essence, a throne is a chair upon which a person lowers his or her posture. So, too, the Divine lowers itself onto the Divine Throne in order to come into contact with the worlds. This lowering of posture takes place in the world of *Beriah*.

It is also in the world of *Beriah* that we find the creation of souls and the highest angels. Angels (*Malachim*) are not white-winged creatures that fly across the sky. Rather, they can be understood as conduits for Divine energy flow. They act as agents through whom energies flow to this world. The angels in the world of *Beriah* are called Seraphim, from the Hebrew word *Seraiphah* (a fire). These angels are so infused with feeling that they “burn up”. This is not to be taken literally; the angels are so close to G-d that they cannot endure the intensity, and they are in a constant state of spiritual ecstasy. The world of *Beriah* is also the location of the upper Garden of Eden, which is an abode for souls who have merited entering this most sublime realm as a reward for their efforts in this world.

YETZIRAH

The next stage is the world of *Yetzirah* (formation). It is in this world that finite plans are drawn up for actual creation. The predominant *Sefirot* in this world are the six emotional *Sefirot* from *Chessed* to *Yesod*. They correspond to the letter *Vav* in the name *Havaye* (the numerical value of *Vav* is six). It is in this world that emotional attachment to the project forms and it takes on a momentum of its own. The project is no longer merely a concept; concrete steps are being taken to actualise the idea.

Here exists the lower Garden of Eden, the abode for souls who merit basking in its Divine Light. This is the realm of the angels called *Chayot HaKodesh* (literally, “holy beings”). The angels in this world are extremely emotional and vocal in their praise of G-d. They take on names corresponding to the *Sefirot*. For example, the angel Michael corresponds to the *Sefirah* of *Chessed*, Gabriel to *Gevurah*, and Raphael to *Tiferet*, etc. When we recite *Kedushah* in the repetition of the *Amidah*, we say “*Kadosh*” (holy) three times. This is a reference to the angels of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Assiyah*, all of whom pay homage to G-d in their different ways.

Ezekiel’s prophecy was experienced when he entered the world of *Yetzirah* through meditative techniques. Since he wished to communicate this experience to his people, he had to use human language to describe metaphysical phenomena. In the world of *Yetzirah*, he describes the angels there as creatures. Below him were the *Ophanim*, the angels of the world of *Assiyah*. The

throne of the world of *Beriah* was above him. Sitting on the throne was the form of a man describing the Sefirotic array in the world of *Atzilut*. Ezekiel's detailed description stands in stark contrast to that of Isaiah. The *Kabbalah* explains that Ezekiel experienced the world of *Yetzirah*, and Isaiah the world of *Beriah*. Since G-dliness was more manifest in the world of *Beriah*, his description is not as detailed.

ASSIYAH

Finally, the fourth world is *Assiyah* (the world of action), where the creation is actualised. The Divine creative flow from the world of *Yetzirah* flows down through the angels into the creation of the four kingdoms: Mineral, Vegetable, Animal, and Human. The predominant *Sefirah* in the world of *Assiyah* is *Malchut*. The attribute of *Malchut* corresponds to the letter *Hey* and suggests sovereignty – the idea of a distant king ruling over willing subjects. *Assiyah* is the world in which creation takes on a form of total independence, yet it is also here that the subjects accept G-d as their King.

The world of *Assiyah* is somewhat contrary. The Master Creator, who is a supreme Artist, has created a most beautiful and diverse creation. It is a creation of G-d alone, yet G-d is hidden so that His creations are not aware of their Creator. Somehow it is possible in this world to totally deny the presence of G-d, as He is completely concealed. It is this total concealment that allows this world to be a realm of free choice, where a person can choose to serve or ignore, as well as a realm of challenge, where the hand of G-d is sometimes overt and at other times covert. This world is the ultimate purpose of creation, and it is here that G-d wishes His creatures to create an abode for Him. This is achieved through adherence to *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. Within the *Torah*, G-d has communicated the truth of creation and provided a path through which people can navigate the twists and turns of everyday life. One can achieve this inner peace by attaching oneself to G-d through His *Mitzvot*.

In the higher worlds, what is manifest is the Divine Light. In reality, they are only manifestations of the Divine creative ability: mere rays from the sun. However, it is in this world, where one cannot perceive the Light, which is manifest in the higher realms, that one can truly appreciate the essence of G-d (*Atzmut*). In this world, we perceive ourselves as separate and distinct from the flow of G-dliness, and it is this feeling of being apart that allows us to behold the essence of G-d to a greater degree. Ironically, there is a vantage point to the observer in this world. In the higher worlds, one is blinded somewhat by the rays of the "Divine Light" (*Gilyim*). The higher we ascend, either in

the lower or upper Garden of Eden, the more sublime the revelation and the more we are blinded as a result. Yet, from Earth, we have a much greater capacity to appreciate the sun. The total eclipse of this Divine Light means that the observer can actually encounter *Atzmut* Himself. Though G-d seems unreachable and incomprehensible, one can nonetheless observe creation and realise that this can only be the work of G-d Himself.

We shall develop this concept in Chapter 18, “The Purpose of Creation”.

LETTER	WORLD	SEFIRAH	BUILDER
<i>Yud</i>	<i>Atzilut</i> (emanation)	<i>Chochmah</i> (wisdom)	Initial Inspiration
<i>Hey</i>	<i>Beriah</i> (creation)	<i>Binah</i> (understanding)	Broadening of Concept
<i>Vav</i>	<i>Yetzirah</i> (formation) <i>Yesod</i> (foundation)	<i>Chessed</i> (kindness)	Emotional through Involvement in Plans
<i>Hey</i>	<i>Assiyah</i> (action)	<i>Malchut</i> (kingship)	Building of Project

 ✨ CHAPTER 15

Angels and Mazalot

IN THE PREVIOUS chapter, we discussed the flow of Divine creative energy through the four worlds of *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Assiyah*. We have also discovered that *Beriah* is where souls and angels become manifest. The upper Garden of Eden is in *Beriah* and the lower Garden of Eden is in the world of *Yetzirah*. In this chapter, we shall focus specifically on the flow of Divine creative energy into the physical world of *Assiyah*.

As previously explained, the supernal *Sefirot* are manifest in the world of *Atzilut*. Below this is *Beriah*, the world of the Throne of Glory (*Kisei HaKavod*). *Beriah* allows the *Sefirot* to interact with the lower worlds. Between *Beriah* and *Assiyah* is *Yetzirah*, the world of the angels. It must be noted that although there are also angels in the worlds of *Beriah* and *Assiyah*, the *Kabbalists* associate the angels primarily with the world of *Yetzirah* due to their emotional intensity.

The *Kabbalists* associate the three worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Assiyah* with the three human faculties of thought, speech, and action. Just as these three faculties act as garments to the soul, the worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Assiyah* likewise act as garments to the *Sefirot* of *Atzilut*. *Yetzirah* is known as the world of speech. The *Talmud* states that “every word emanating from G-d creates an angel” (*Talmud* Chagigah 14a).

When we speak of “G-d’s word”, we are referring to His interaction with the lower worlds. We have also described an angel as a conduit or channel for Divine energy flow. In truth, there are many different types of angels. Some are created daily, and others are permanent with fixed names, such as Michael and Gabriel. There are different *Midrashic* opinions regarding which day of creation the angels were created; according to some, they were created on the second day while others believe they were created on the fifth day. Since all opinions

are held as valid, we must say that different groups of angels with diverse functions were created on different days.

As the flow of Divine energy descends further into the world of *Assiyah*, we see it being refracted through the stars and constellations. G-d's Providence works through the angels, but these angels in turn work through the stars and planets. In a sense, we could speak of the angels as souls to the stars. Some sources speak of the stars as having intelligence, but the commentaries note that this applies to the angels who are associated with them. The *Zohar* teaches that every star in the universe has a name, and the *Midrash* indicates that the names of the stars correspond to the names of the different angels. We see that the Divine influence and flow comes through the angels, the stars, and finally to earth. The *Midrash* and *Zohar* state, "There is no blade of grass that does not have a 'constellation' – *Mazal* – over it, telling it to grow". This means that every blade of grass – which serves as an example of all the minutiae in creation – has its spiritual source in the *Mazalot*, in the constellations, which in turn receive their flow from the angels.

We may now understand why people started to worship the stars in the days of *Enosh*. Although the founders of star worship knew about G-d, they mistakenly believed that G-d is far beyond the vanities of this world and therefore felt it would be better to serve the underling stars that are in closer contact to creation. In time, the underlings became the principal, and the notion of monotheism was lost until the days of Abraham.

It should be noted that the stars' influence extends only from the visible members of our solar system. The distant planets such as Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto, which are invisible to the unaided eye, are not considered to have any significant astrological influence.

In order of their distance from Earth, the planets are:

Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon. Saturn is furthest from the earth and the moon is the closest. In Genesis, it states that the stars and the planets were created on the fourth day of creation. Counting from Sunday, this means that they were created on Wednesday. In Biblical reckoning, night always precedes the day; therefore, the planets were placed in position on the eve of the fourth day, i.e. on Tuesday night. They were placed one at a time, an hour apart, in order of their distance from the earth. Thus, in the first hour 6 p.m., Saturn was placed in position. In the second hour, 7 p.m., Jupiter was placed in position; Mars at 8 p.m., Sun, 9 p.m., Venus, 10 p.m., Mercury, 11 p.m., and finally Moon at 12 A.m. Each planet dominated the hour in which it was positioned. After the first seven hours, their dominance began a new cycle,

with the planets in the same order. This seven-hour cycle continues through the week, and it is the same every week. One immediately notices that the first hour of each evening is dominated by a different planet. Sunday-Mercury, Monday-Jupiter, Tuesday-Venus, Wednesday-Saturn, Thursday-Sun, Friday-Moon, and Saturday-Mars. The name of each day is associated with the planet that dominates its first hour in the morning. Sunday is dominated by the Sun, Monday (Lunar day) by the Moon, Tuesday (Mardi – Martian day) by Mars, Wednesday (Mercredi – Mercurian day) by Mercury, Thursday (Jeudi – Jovian day) by Jupiter, Friday (Vendredi – Venusian day) by Venus, and Saturday by Saturn. In Hebrew, Saturn is called *Shabbatai* after the word *Shabbat*.

ASTROLOGY

One of the most important factors in astrology is the time and date of a person's birth. The *Talmud* states that there is a “*Mazal* of the hour”. The time, day, and date when a person is born has an important influence on his or her destiny. It is the prevalent custom that on a happy occasion, such as a birth, one wishes the family “*Mazal tov*”, indicating the wish that the planetary influence on the child should be a good one. Yet we are not slaves to the planets, as the *Torah* states, “You shall be perfect with the L-rd your G-d” (Deuteronomy 18:13). This means that the more we perfect our relationship with the spiritual dimension, the more G-d is going to aid us in changing the natural course of events.

It must be made clear that despite the seeming influence of the stars upon human life, the concept of *Mazalot* (constellations) is essentially physical. It is a channel through which spiritual forces flow down to the world. A person can establish direct contact with G-d through prayer, and can bypass the influence of the stars.

The *Torah* states (Deuteronomy 18:10), “There shall not be found among you one who calculates times”. The *Talmud*, in the name of Rabbi *Akiva*, specifically applies this prohibition to one who calculates auspicious times, meaning that one should not make astrology a dominant influence in one's daily life, and astrological predictions are forbidden. Therefore, one should not use horoscopes to determine one's future actions, though it is permitted to conduct character analyses through astrology.

The *Talmud* clearly states that “*Ein Mazal LeYisroel*” or “there is no *Mazal* for the Jewish people”. This simply means that the Jewish people as a whole were lifted above the *Mazalot* by virtue of their receiving the *Torah*.

Kelipot and Sitra Achra

G-D IS GOOD, and it is the nature of G-d to be good. So why did G-d create evil? Why do we live in a world which is rife with injustice and where the wicked have the upper hand? Jewish philosophy answers these timeless questions by stating that because G-d is good and it is His nature to do goodness, He created the world in order to bestow goodness upon His creations. The greatest possible good that G-d can bestow upon His creations is the goodness that is Himself. In order to earn that reward – so that it should not be what the *Zohar* calls “bread of shame”, or unearned reward – G-d granted us the power of free choice where we have to strive to choose good over evil. A person’s mission in life is to avoid the pitfalls and temptations of this world by adhering to *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

The effort to struggle against one’s Evil Inclination is rewarded in the World to Come (*Olam HaBah*), where the soul is divested of all physicality and basks in the Light of the *Shechinah*. The creation of evil is therefore a necessity to allow for the possibility of free choice, which is a stepping-stone to the ultimate reward.

However, as previously mentioned, *Chassidut* maintains that although the soul will be handsomely rewarded by basking in the light of the *Shechinah* in the World to Come, nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of creation is to create a dwelling place for G-d in this world. G-d made a physical creation which conceals its Divine source, and He placed a soul within a body specifically to refine and elevate the body and its portion in the world. Although the soul will be rewarded for its efforts in the World to Come, the ultimate purpose of creation is in this world. The greatest achievement of the soul is to take a corporeal and crass body whose inherent nature is animalistic, and to use it to transform darkness into light and bitterness into sweetness. The soul itself

is pristine and holy, and it does not require rectification. As we learned from Jacob's ladder (See Chapter 11, "The Ladder"), the soul's descent into this world is for the purpose of ascent. It achieves something here that it cannot possibly achieve in the World to Come, and that is, that despite being in the lowest of all worlds, one can overcome animal drives and passions to achieve the Almighty's purpose in creation.

The soul, therefore, strives to fulfil the will of G-d and to create a *Dirah BeTachtonim*, an abode for the Divine here in this world. As the soul descends into the bleakness and confusion of this world, it realises that its descent is for the purpose of ascent. King Solomon in Song of Songs describes this state as "black, but beautiful" (Song of Songs 1:5). Her descent into the body is dark, yet beautiful in terms of fulfilling the purpose of creation. From this perspective, it follows that the presence of evil creates the challenge of making a *Dirah BeTachtonim*.

WHAT IS A KELIPAH?

Kabbalah uses the term *Kelipah* to describe evil. Literally, *Kelipah* means a "peel" or "shell", as in the peel of a fruit.

An orange will not retain its juice if it does not have such a protective jacket. However, when one eats the orange, one discards the peel. The peel is only there to preserve the fruit. The same is true of the existence of evil. *Chassidut* uses the terminology "inner will" (*Pnimitiyut HaRatzon*), and "external will" (*Chitzoniyut HaRatzon*). When one goes out to work, one is occupied with one's job in order to make a living. However, one is engaged only with one's external will. One's inner desire is to make money in order to do what one really wants. The existence of *Kelipah* stems from the external will of G-d, whereas *Kedushah* (holiness) stems from the inner will of G-d.

Kabbalah divides everything in this world into either *Sitra D'Kedushah* (the side of holiness) or *Sitra Achra* (the side of impurity) – literally meaning "the other side", or the side of *Kelipah*. There is nothing that is in between – every thought, speech, action, or creation has its source in either *Kedushah* or *Kelipah*.

The holy side is the indwelling and extension of the holiness of G-d that rests only on something that abnegates itself completely to Him, as in the case of angels above, or potentially as in the case of every Jew below who has the capacity to surrender himself or herself completely to G-d. This is what is meant when the Sages proclaim that when an individual sits and learns *Torah*, the *Shechinah* rests on him. However, that which does not surrender to G-d and is oblivious to His presence, but is a separate entity, does not receive its vitality

from the inner will of holiness. Rather, vitality is given from “behind its back” (*Zohar* as quoted in *Tanya*), descending degree by degree through myriads of levels and innumerable contractions until the Light is so diminished that it can be compressed and enclosed in a state of exile within that separate thing. Although the very existence of that entity is totally dependent on G-d, He creates it unwillingly in order to fulfil the purpose in creation.

Kabbalah further delineates two distinct types of *Kelipah*: *Kelipat Nogah* – literally *Kelipah* that can be illuminated, and *Shalosh Kelipot Hatmayot* – three totally impure *Kelipot*. *Kelipat Nogah* can be uplifted and refined, while the only form of reformation or redemption for the three impure *Kelipot* is their destruction.

In the chariot of the prophet Ezekiel, the three unclean *Kelipot* are called “whirlwind”, “great cloud”, and a “blazing fire”, while *Kelipat Nogah* is described as the “translucence [*nogah*] around it” (Ezekiel 1). From the three impure *Kelipot* flow and derive the souls of all living creatures that are not *Kosher* as well as the existence of all forbidden food in the vegetable kingdom, such as *Orlah* (the first three year’s fruit of a tree). The existence and vitality of all actions, utterances, and thoughts pertaining to the 365 negative commandments and their offshoots also flows from these *Kelipot*. On the other hand, from the *Kelipat Nogah* flows the *Nefesh HaBehamit* of the Jew, the souls of the *Kosher* creatures, the existence of the entire inanimate and vegetable world that are permitted for consumption, and the existence and vitality of every act, utterance, and thought that contain no forbidden aspect, whether performed for the sake of Heaven or not.

A Jew is composed of two distinct souls (see Chapter 22, “The *Benoni*”): the *Nefesh Elokit* is juxtaposed with the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. The soul powers of the *Nefesh Elokit* strive for *Kedushah* while the soul powers of the *Nefesh HaBehamit* long for *Kelipah*. These two souls vie for control of a person’s thoughts, speech, and actions, which are often referred to as “garments” of the soul. A person is constantly faced with a choice to either flood the soul with garments of *Kedushah* or garments of *Kelipah*. If a person allows the *Nefesh HaBehamit* to take control of the mind, then the soul garments may be contaminated by the impurities of the animal drive. These impurities are vain and ruin the spirit. It is within the arena of the mind and the heart that the battle between *Kedushah* and *Kelipah* plays itself out. The aim in battle is to destroy the three impure *Kelipot* and to elevate the *Kelipat Nogah* so that the *Nefesh HaBehamit* and its soul powers are channelled toward striving for *Kedushah*. This can be compared to placing a yoke on an ox: Such *Avodah* (service) is often referred to as *Kabbalat Ol* (literally, accepting the yoke).

HOW WAS KELIPAH CREATED?

Until this point, we have discussed the function of *Kelipah* and its role in the fulfilment of the purpose of creation. We shall now examine how *Kelipah* was formed in the process of creation. How did evil descend from the good G-d?

In our chapter on *Tzimtzum*, we explained that after the first *Tzimtzum*, the *Kav* was beamed into the void to create the worlds, and we described the formation of the four worlds of *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Assiyah*. In actuality, however, the emanation of *Atzilut* was preceded by another stage called the World of Chaos (*Tohu*), and it was in this world that *Kelipah* was created.

The following presentation is based on the teachings of the *Arizal* and is called *Shevirat HaKelim* – “the shattering of the Vessels”. The *Midrash* states that prior to the creation of this world, G-d created other worlds and destroyed them. Obviously G-d had a reason to create them and a good reason for destroying them. The *Arizal* explains that these worlds were not of a physical but spiritual nature. The first world created was the World of Chaos, as can be seen in Genesis 1:2, “In the beginning of G-d’s creating the heavens and earth, the earth was *Tohu Vavohu* – chaotic and empty”.

After the *Tzimtzum* and emergence of the *Sefirot*, the *Sefirot* were originally arrayed in the World of Chaos as they existed individually, with no inter-relationship; *Chessed* was pure *Chessed* without any relation to *Gevurah*, and so on. The Lights which entered and flooded the “feeble Vessels” (*Kelim Muatim*) of the World of Chaos were “highly concentrated and intense Lights” (*Orot Merubim*). The result was a Shattering of the Vessels. It may be compared to running a million volts of electricity through a 60-Watt light bulb. The World of Chaos possessed a great advantage, for it was brilliant and was filled with intense Lights. Its great disadvantage, though, was that each *Sefirah* was egotistic and wanted all the Light for itself, unable to share or co-exist with another. The root of independence and ego therefore stems from the World of Chaos.

Such a world could not exist, so it was destroyed, and a far better World of Correction (*Tikkun*) was constructed in its place. In the World of Correction, each *Sefirah* is interrelated and interpolated. *Chessed* contains within it *Gevurah*, and *Gevurah* contains *Chessed*, etc. This inter-relationship coupled with Broad Vessels and less intense “little Lights” (*Orot Muatim*) created a world that could exist.

In *Kabbalah*, there is much talk of the *Sefirot* being arrayed in either “Circles” (*Igulim*) or “Straight” (*Yosher*). The terms “Circles” and “Straight” are synonymous with Chaos and Correction. In Chaos, the *Sefirot* were arrayed in Circles, like one concentric circle within another, each circle being independent of the

other. In “Straight”, however, the *Sefirot* are interdependent yet inclusive of each other. The state of Correction can be compared to a human body which is made up of many organs that work together to support body functions.

When the Vessels of Chaos shattered, 288 sparks “fell” from their level and became embedded in the lower levels of creation. As they fell downwards, they disintegrated further into smaller particles. As they continued to fall, they shattered into even smaller pieces and were coarse due to their egotistic origin. The more refined sparks were assimilated into *Atzilut*. The others fell into *Beriah* or *Yetzirah* constituting the “evil” (or independent) parts of those levels. The coarsest sparks fell into *Assiyah* and ultimately created *Kelipot*.

It should be noted that the Shattering of the Vessels was not an accidental flaw in the Divine plan. On the contrary, this process allowed for the creation of evil, which gave human beings the opportunity to exercise free will and to rise to the challenge of creating a *Dirah BeTachtonim*. Furthermore, hidden sublimely within *Kelipah* are the original Lights of the World of Chaos. When a person elevates *Kelipat Nogah* or destroys *Kelipot* through *Teshuvah* (repentance), he or she releases those Lights. In every material item, there are sparks of holiness that are released when that item is used for the sake of Heaven. It could be that certain sparks wait hundreds or even thousands of years for someone to release them. The task of releasing the lights is called *Birur Nitzoztot*, or the “Refining of the Sparks”.

An example of this refinement is in the eating of food. Body and soul are sustained through food. Every *Kosher* food item contains sparks of holiness that are released when the food is consumed for the sake of Heaven, such as eating to be healthy in order to learn *Torah* and keep *Mitzvot*. The soul, which stems from the World of Correction, is nourished by this spark, whose root is in the World of Chaos. Human beings are reliant upon food because their souls are nourished by the light of the sparks of holiness hidden in the food that originated from the World of Chaos. It should be noted that if the food is not consumed for the sake of Heaven, it remains in a state of *Kelipat Nogah* until the body utilises the energy derived from the food for *Torah* learning or other G-dly pursuits. Non-*Kosher* food, however, remains *Kelipah* until either the person who consumed the food does *Teshuvah*, thereby retroactively elevating it, or G-d Himself causes the sparks to be elevated.

The ultimate refinement of the world will take place in the days of *Mashiach* and thereafter in the time of Resurrection when G-d “will remove the spirit of impurity from the world” (Zachariah 13:2). In that era, all *Kelipot* will be removed, and everyone will have repented. Since G-d is infinite, however, serving

G-d in an effort to become increasingly close to Him will still be an eternal task. That period is often referred to as *Shabbat*, the day of rest. According to Jewish law, one may eat only that which is prepared before *Shabbat*, and one is forbidden to eat food that was prepared on the day of rest.

The time of *Mashiach* and beyond is comparable to *Shabbat*, and therefore at present, we are living in the “weekday”. Now is the time that we should be preparing for the ultimate *Shabbat*, when the work of today – our building of a dwelling place for the Divine in this world – will be enjoyed.

A Deeper Reality

EMERITUS CHIEF RABBI Lord Jonathan Sacks ב"ת was a philosophy graduate of Cambridge University. He told the following story. After graduating, he spent some time studying in a *Yeshivah* in Kfar *Chabad* in Israel. He was once studying *Chassidut* with a student who was born and bred in the Kfar. In the middle of their studies, the student turned to the Chief Rabbi and said, “Do you know what the difference is between you and me? You think about G-d all day, while I think about myself all day!”

The Chief Rabbi was somewhat taken aback by this statement. He asked his study partner, “But surely you who have been raised in this isolated *Chassidic* village, and spoon-fed with faith and stories of the righteous, you should be thinking about G-d all day, and I who was educated in the bastions of secular philosophy should be thinking about myself all day!” The student replied, “You failed to understand my point. You who attended university and received a degree in philosophy know that you exist; your only question is whether G-d exists, so you think about G-d all day. I, who was raised in Kfar *Chabad*, know there is a G-d, but my whole question is where I fit into the picture, and how I fulfil the will of G-d. Therefore, I think about myself all day!”

This story encapsulates what *Kabbalah* describes as *Daat Elyon* (supernal knowledge) and *Daat Tachton* (terrestrial knowledge); or, more simply put, the view from Above and the view from below. From G-d’s perspective, He exists, and we are an infinitesimally small manifestation of His Divine creative energy. That is *Daat Elyon*. His knowledge of us is knowledge of Himself. From our perspective, we are sure of our existence as human beings and the existence of the world. That is *Daat Tachton*.

Let us for a moment take the view of *Daat Elyon*. We have described how infinite energy is condensed through the gradation of the chain order to create the material world. That energy has passed through various transformations and filters, and has contracted and condensed until encapsulated, so that it can create and vivify the physical world. Albert Einstein taught us that $E=MC^2$. Even if one does not understand quantum mechanics, this equation means that there is a relationship between energy and mass, and mass is a form of energy. Take an object such as a glass. What is a glass made of? The answer is silicon. And what is silicon? Silicon is a conglomeration of molecules. And what are molecules made from? Molecules are made of atoms. What are atoms? Atoms are protons, neutrons, and electrons. Going deeper and deeper into sub-atomic particles, one finds that the smallest particles with the smallest mass are forms of energy and that there is a relationship between their mass and energy.

Kabbalah calls this energy Divine creative energy. This means that every physical object has a form of energy that creates it. Looking at our world from this perspective, although we would see diversity and multiplicity within creation, with creations ranging from the tiniest grain of sand to the largest whale, in reality, however, this seeming array is really a manifestation of a unified creative force which we call G-d. The only reason we don't perceive this energy in its pristine form is because it is dressed in numerous layers of garments, creating what appears to be a multifarious world, rich in its chemical and physical tapestry. Truthfully, if we were to break down any gas, liquid, or solid to its sub-atomic makeup, we would perceive the bare Divine creative energy that vivifies creation.

Kabbalah helps us to realise and recognise the spirituality of matter; that in every physical thing, even in the inanimate, there is a "soul" which has created it, a force that continuously prevents it from reverting back to its former state of non-existence or nothingness. It is this "spark" of G-dliness that is the true essence and reality of all things, and this spark is released and revealed when physical matter is used for a holy purpose or deed in accordance with the will of the Creator. This is the meaning of the *Shema Yisrael* prayer. When we say, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One", it is not only a statement affirming monotheism. It also means that the entire world around us, in all its diversity, is the ongoing creation of a unified being we call G-d. G-d is well aware of what is happening in the creation, for every second, He is re-creating something from nothing. His knowledge of the world is knowledge of Himself.

Building on the concept of G-d's Oneness, it is found in the Code of Jewish Law that when we say the *Shema Yisrael* prayer, we should have in mind that the

word “*Echad*”, one, is made up of three Hebrew letters: *Aleph*, *Chet*, and *Dalet*. *Aleph* corresponds to the number one and represents the one G-d. *Dalet* corresponds to the number four which represents the four directions, and *Chet* corresponds to the number eight, which represents the seven heavens and the Earth. When uttering the word “*Echad*”, one should have in mind that *Dalet* (the four directions) and *Chet* (the seven heavens and the Earth) are all made by *Echad* – the one G-d.

This explains the speech metaphor used in creation. G-d’s statement, “*Let there be light*” represents a condensation and contraction. *Kabbalah* explains that Divine creative energy, originally emanating from the ten utterances found in Genesis, is configured in the shapes of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet as it flows down the chain order of creation. Each letter of the *Aleph Bet* represents a certain configuration of energy which, when combined, can create the physical form. This explains the speech metaphor used in creation, “*And G-d said, Let there be light*”. G-d created through the ten utterances which were enumerated in the first chapter of Genesis. “*When G-d said, Let there be light*” is not anthropomorphic: it can be interpreted literally. This statement represents a condensation and contraction of infinite energy into the combination of the letters *Aleph*, *Vav*, and *Reish*, which constitute the word “*Or*” (light). The letters *Aleph*, *Vav*, and *Reish* contain all the creative Divine energy necessary to create physical light. This knowledge of creation through letters was known to Adam, who named all the creatures by perceiving their spiritual source and ascribing to them a name which described the flow of creative energy into them.

The *Sefer Yetzirah* refers to this means of creation through combining letters when it states that one brick can build one house, two bricks can build two houses, three bricks can build six houses, four bricks 24 houses, etc. The mathematical formula is simple. If you have two bricks, for example *Aleph* and *Bet*, you can build two houses; this means that you can either write them in the order *Aleph, Bet* or *Bet, Aleph*. If you have three bricks, there are six possible combinations for creating 6 houses (3 x 2 x 1). Four letters can create 24 houses (4 x 3 x 2 x 1). The number of houses that can be built by twenty-two letters is enormous. Furthermore, if we take into consideration the final letters and the possibility of interchangeability of letters called “*At Bash*” (exchanging an *Aleph* for a *Taf* and a *Bet* for a *Shin*), you can build many houses.

The *Sefer Yetzirah* speaks of 231 gates through which the world was created. This figure is arrived at by simply drawing a circle and writing the *Aleph Bet* around the circumference of the circle. If one now joined the *Aleph* and *Gimmel* with a line, and then with the *Dalet*, and so on with all the letters, you would

have a total of 462 (22 x 21) lines. The 462 lines connecting the 22 letters are called the “231 gates” (half of 462=231, each two lines creating a gate). This simply means that the gateway of creation is a result of the combination of letters which represent Divine powers.

According to early *Kabbalists*, the 231 gates are hinted at in the name “Israel”. In Hebrew, Israel is spelled *Yisrael*. These letters can also spell out *YeSh RLA*, which literally means “there are 231”, for the numerical value of the three letters *Reish*, *Lamed*, and *Aleph* equals two hundred and thirty-one. The *Midrash* states that at the beginning of creation, “*Israel rose in thought*” (Genesis Rabbah 1:4), which implies that when G-d created the world, He thought about Israel before the *Torah*. The name Israel thus alludes to the fact that creation took place through these 231 gates. Some *Kabbalists* identify these 231 gates with the letters of the residue (*Reshimu*) left after the *Tzimtzum* (see Chapter 12, “*Tzimtzum*”). The residue represents the power to create finitude. Finite beings were created with “letters”, and these letters were combined and formulated into the words and ten utterances with which G-d created the world through the 231 gates.

The *Sefer Yetzirah* begins by stating that the world was created through 32 pathways of wisdom. The number 32 corresponds to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet plus the ten *Sefirot*. In *Kabbalah*, the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* within the world of *Atzilut* is called the “mouth of G-d”. It is through this ‘mouth’ that the ten utterances of creation found in the Book of Genesis were said. The combinations of letters, each of which represent a flow from the *Sefirot*, diffuse down the chain. At each stage, their power is reduced and condensed until they create physicality in this world.

The *Baal Shem Tov*, the founder of the *Chassidic* movement, explains that the words which G-d used to create the world were not just uttered once, but are being repeated constantly. In other words, the ten utterances of Genesis are not a mere historical occurrence, but are rather an ongoing dynamic, and represent the constant flow of Divine creative energy which vivifies all creation. If G-d were for one moment to withdraw that energy from the creation, then the world would cease to exist. If G-d were to withdraw the energy configured in those letters, or figuratively speaking, if He was to stop uttering the words, “Let there be light”, the Light would cease to exist.

The following short story will illustrate this point. With the advent of the *Chassidic* movement, there arose a group of people who called themselves the *Mitnagdim* (the “opponents” of this movement). A *Chassid* and a *Mitnagid* were once having a discussion. The *Chassid* presented a hypothetical scenario, and then asked the *Mitnagid* how G-d would destroy the table at which they were

sitting. The *Mitnagid* replied that He would bring a fireball from heaven which would incinerate the table. The *Chassid* inquired about the ashes which would remain. The *Mitnagid* said that G-d would send a tornado which would scatter the ashes over the seven seas. “What about the ashes that are floating in the water?” Again, the *Mitnagid* had an answer: “G-d would send all the fish of the sea to eat the ashes”. The *Chassid* exclaimed, “Yes, but in the belly of the fish you still have the ash!” At his wit’s end, the *Mitnagid* turned to the *Chassid* and asked him how he thought the table would be destroyed. The *Chassid* replied, “If G-d wanted to destroy the table, He would simply stop creating it!” We learn from this story that, from the *Chassid*’s perspective, the table is the mere result of Divine creative energy that is constantly being pumped into the table to create it. If G-d wants to destroy the table, He does not require a medium to do so. He can simply withdraw the flow of creative energy.

Chassidut provides the example of a ball being thrown in the air. The natural force of gravity will cause any object to fall to the ground. The only reason why the ball will fly upwards is because there is a kinetic force that is stronger than the opposite force of gravity. However, when that dissipates, the ball decelerates and eventually falls back down to the ground. Similarly, the only force that creates physicality is the Divine creative energy, and if that energy was withdrawn, the earth would revert to a state of nothingness.

In terms of *Daat Elyon*, the world is therefore only a manifestation of an ongoing flow of Divine creative energy, and G-d may withdraw that energy at any time. Our entire physical existence is dependent on G-d. G-d however is totally independent of creation.

Furthermore, the entire energy that G-d expends in the creation of the cosmos is only an infinitesimally small fraction of His infinite power. Building on the previous chapters, we may now start a meditative process to help us fully understand the greatness of the Creator.

Firstly, we behold the splendid physical creation and observe how G-d has robed His glory in this world. We then contemplate that everything in this world is influenced and affected by the stars, and in turn by the angels, in the world of *Yetzirah*. We contemplate the service of the angels, in which they stand completely nullified before the Divine. We then ascend into the world of *Beriah*, the world of the Throne, and finally we stand in total awe in the world of *Atzilut*.

We may then *further* meditate that even the highest level of *Atzilut* is the Light of *Memale Kol Almin*, which is only a fraction of the Light of the *Or Ein Sof*. Such meditation puts us “face-to-face” with *Atzmut Ein Sof* (essence of the infinite Light).

The Men of the Great Assembly structured our daily prayers so that they corresponded to this meditation. Firstly, we recite the morning blessings and thank G-d for our daily functions. We then recite the sacrifices (*Korbanot*) which express the necessity for us to draw near our own *Nefesh HaBehamit*—the animalistic soul within us—as a *Korban* to be consumed with a fiery love of G-d. We subsequently recite the *Pesukei D’Zimrah*, the verses of praise describing G-d’s majesty in the world. Next, we ascend into the world of *Yetzirah* depicting the service of the angels, with further ascent into the world of *Beriah* when we recite the *Shema*, and meditate on the Oneness of G-d. We then stand in awe for the *Amidah*, the Standing Prayer, in the world of *Atzilut*. We may meditate further that the world of *Atzilut* is in the post-*Tzimtzum* state, though prior to the *Tzimtzum* was the *Or Ein Sof*. At this stage, we stand like children making our request, asking G-d that He should grant us physical sustenance so that we may be able to fulfil our role in creation; to infuse the material with Divine purpose and create an abode for G-d in this world.

THE LADDER OF PRAYER

MORNING PRAYER

Amidah

Shema Yisrael

Service of the Angels

Pesukei D’Zimrah

(verses of praise)

Korbanot (liturgy)

(pertaining to sacrifices)

LEVEL OF CREATION

Atzilut

(WORLD OF EMANATION)

Beriah

(WORLD OF CREATION)

Yetzirah

(WORLD OF FORMATION)

Assiyah

(WORLD OF ACTION)

Nefesh HaBehamit (THE ANIMALISTIC SOUL)

COMPLETING AND ACTUALISING OUR PRAYER

At this height, we then begin our descent, or re-entry, into this realm. We first recite *Tachanun*, a penitential prayer. Because we have been so close to the Divine, we are truly filled with a sense of remorse over our transgressions and immersion in vanities, and consequently try at this stage to change our ways by doing *Teshuvah*, as is expressed in the supplications of the *Tachanun* prayer. Our prayers continue, culminating in *Aleinu*, where we express our desire and prayer that this world should once again be dominated by the kingdom of G-d. The true mystic is not concerned about achieving spiritual “highs”, but rather is occupied with learning from his or her spiritual experience and applying the lessons to his or her daily interactions in this world.

We can now see the great value in being cognizant of the chain order of creation, and its profound manifestation in meditation. When a person contemplates that he or she is standing at the foot of the ladder of creation, and stares up the ladder, he or she truly becomes totally nullified before the *Or Ein Sof*. At the same time, one also becomes truly elated at the thought that one is part of the purpose of creation, a speck of dust in the cosmos that is of vital importance in the greater scheme of things. Such meditation imbues a person with true humility and gives him or her a focus to fulfil his or her purpose on this earth (see Chapter 11, “The Ladder”).

When a person contemplates the principle of ongoing creation, he or she intimately feels the imminent presence of G-d. The world is no longer a place that was here yesterday and will be here tomorrow; rather, it is a fresh daily creation. G-d creates the world afresh for a purpose, and He has communicated that purpose. He is the Omnipotent Being upon whom we are all totally dependent and who directs the affairs of mankind.

This leads us to the principle of Divine Providence (*Hashgachah Pratit*). The *Baal Shem Tov* differed from previous Jewish philosophers by stating that Divine Providence extends even to the inanimate world. He taught that even if a leaf turns over in the street, it is because of Divine Providence. This is consonant with the *Baal Shem Tov*'s first principle that every second of the day, G-d is creating nature and the world from nothing. Following this principle, nothing happens by chance. One of the ways in which we can serve G-d is to recognise this Divine Providence within our daily affairs. We are not victims of circumstance; rather one is lead from Above, for as we recite in our daily morning blessings, “G-d prepares the footsteps of man”. Our true purpose in occupying a place is to transform that place into an abode for G-d.

One of the implications of this philosophy is that even when events do not go according to plan, it is all the will of G-d, and despite our frustration, we must strive to see how this is so. The *Talmud* teaches that getting angry can be compared to idolatry. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* in *Tanya* explains that when a person gets angry, it means that they are frustrated and upset at a turn of events. Failure to understand that this turn of events is orchestrated from Above is tantamount to idolatry. A true believer understands that, in the words of the *Talmud*, “Everything that happens is from the hands of heaven, except the fear of heaven”. Everything that happens is ordained from Above, except for our reaction to a given set of circumstances. That reaction remains in the realm of free choice.

 ✎ CHAPTER 18

The Purpose of Creation

I have only been created to serve my Master.

(ETHICS OF THE FATHERS)

THERE WAS ONCE a newspaper advertisement filled with the words, “left right, left right” repeated over and over. At the foot of the page, in bold letters was the question, “But where are you going?” As we sail through life and navigate its choppy seas, we must have our bearings and sense of direction. As long as we know where we are going and what we are doing on this world, we may keep the ship on course.

In *Kabbalistic* works, various expositions deal with the purpose of creation. The *Zohar* states that the reason G-d created the world is, “So that we may know Him” (*Zohar, Parshat Bo* 42b). Rabbi *Chaim Vital* in *Etz Chaim* writes that, “G-d wished to reveal the complete array and perfection of His powers and deeds”. In this chapter, we shall focus on the exposition of Rabbi *Shneur Zalman*, the founder of *Chabad*, who writes in *Tanya* (Chapter 36) while quoting from a *Midrash* that, “G-d desired to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds (*Dirah BeTachtonim*)”. It is for this reason that G-d specifically designated that the purpose of creation should take place in the lowest realm of the chain order of worlds.

Subsequent works of *Chassidic* philosophy analyse every word of this *Midrashic* statement through the following questions:

1. What is meant by “desire?” Does G-d have desires? Is He lacking in something that needs to be fulfilled?
2. What exactly is meant by the word “*Dirah*?” In Modern Hebrew, the

meaning of *Dirah* is “apartment”. Why would G-d want an “apartment” in this world?

3. “*BeTachtonim*”. The implication is that it is our mission as human beings to create that apartment. How exactly do we achieve this?

To accomplish the task of creating a dwelling place, one would need to take the material world and elevate and connect it to G-d. This is the basis of *Mitzvah* performance. The word *Mitzvah*, in addition to meaning a commandment, also means a connection. The 613 *Mitzvot* of the *Torah* are ways in which we can connect every aspect of our earthly lives to G-d. In the same way that we want to feel comfortable in our “dirah”, our home, we should make sure that G-d feels at home in this physical world. How can we achieve this? We make G-d feel at home in our kitchen by observing the Jewish dietary laws. He feels at home in the workplace when we are ethical in our business dealings. He feels at home in the weekly cycle when we keep *Shabbat*. *Dirah BeTachtonim* means taking the physical world, known as *Gashmiut*, and permeating it with spirituality (*Ruchniut*), thereby revealing its G-dly essence.

A person’s home consists of more than just four walls; it is bare without furniture and fittings. An experienced interior designer will guide you as to how to make your home an aesthetically pleasing environment in which to live. An abode for G-d must not only be a receptacle for the Divine created by *Mitzvah* performance, but it must also be filled with Divine Light and Presence. Therefore, when you perform a *Mitzvah*, you must be filled with love and awe of G-d. When a person does a *Mitzvah* beautifully with love and joy, the dwelling becomes illuminated with G-dliness (*Elokut*). The *Mitzvah* therefore is comprised of two parts—the deed and the intent (*Kavannah*). The deed relates to the physical creation, as the *Mitzvah* is being done within the material world, and the intent relates to the spiritual dimension.

In this respect, the reasons for creation as mentioned in the *Zohar* (“so that we may know Him”) and the *Etz Chaim* (“G-d wished to reveal the complete array and perfection of His powers and deeds”) actually complement the ultimate purpose of *Dirah BeTachtonim*. Although the ultimate purpose of creation was to create a dwelling for G-d within the physical world, that dwelling must be illuminated with G-dliness, and that illumination comes through “knowing Him” and “a revelation of His true powers”.

G-d as an omnipotent Being could surely have created the physical world with no intermediary stages and no chain order of creation. *Kabbalah*, however, reveals that He did make the world in a certain order, first revealing the *Or Ein Sof* and then the higher realms, and finally, after various stages of concealment,

creating this world. The purpose of creating this *Seder Hishtalshlut* is so that we may look up that chain of order, and meditate upon the vastness and expanse of the greatness of G-d, thus inspiring us with a great love and awesome feeling. The net result is that our *Mitzvah* performance here in this world is permeated with “knowing Him” with love (*Ahavah*) and awe (*Yirah*), thus illuminating the dwelling.

We may now also focus on the word “desire” used in the *Midrash*. There was no logical need for creation. It is for this purpose that the *Midrash* introduces the idea of “desire”. The word “desire” does not introduce any corporeality Above; rather it conveys that G-d did not have any specific need for creation – He simply desired it. When we fulfil G-d’s desire, our intention is to fulfil G-d’s will simply because that is what He wants. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* used to say, “Of a desire, one may ask no questions”. He meant that one cannot ask why one desires something for it is beyond logic. So, too with creation—G-d was not lacking anything when He created the world. G-d “desired” to have a *Dirah BeTachtonim* and gave us the privilege of fulfilling that task. This does not mean that we are fulfilling a meaningless task, for G-d is the epitome of goodness and it is the nature of a benevolent Being to bestow benevolence. The greatest gift G-d could possibly give us is Himself. He therefore “desired” to create a world in which He could bestow upon us that goodness. It is specifically through the creation of the physical world and the making of a *Dirah BeTachtonim* that we can be exposed to a revelation of G-d’s true powers.

The task of making a *Dirah BeTachtonim*, however, is formidable and not without considerable challenges. We live in a society in which the human body is worshipped above all else, and we require instant gratification in order to be happy. From the perspective of the *Tanya*, the world is full of *Kelipot* and *Sitra Achra* (see Chapter 16, “*Kelipot* and *Sitra Achra*”).

What instrument have we been given in order to fulfil the task of creating a *Dirah BeTachtonim* in this physical world? King Solomon states, “The candle of G-d is the soul of man” (Proverbs 20:27). The meaning of the verse is that G-d sends the soul down to this world to act as a candle that will illuminate the spiritual darkness. Before the soul came down to this world, it was, as the Sages describe, “Hewn under the Divine Throne of Glory”. From a *Kabbalistic* perspective, this means that the soul inhabited the higher worlds. G-d sends the soul down to this world for the short period of a human lifetime in order to fulfil the purpose of *Dirah BeTachtonim*. After the soul’s brief sojourn in this world, it returns to its heavenly abode where it is richly rewarded for its work. Our Sages state that all the pleasures of this world do not equal a moment of

pleasure in the World to Come. The Sages call this reward, “basking in the ray of the *Shechinah*”. The pleasure of experiencing G-dliness far exceeds the joy we experience in this world.

For example, the soul may be rewarded by entering the lower Garden of Eden, which is in the world of *Yetzirah*, or, if it merits, it may enter the higher Garden of Eden in the world of *Beriah*. In each world, there is a myriad of levels, and each soul is rewarded with a certain measure of Divine revelation commensurate with its efforts in this world.

Through descent into this world, the soul may merit to ascend to a higher level in the Garden of Eden. The soul can achieve this by en-clothing itself in a corporeal body in a world full of *Kelipot*. During that sojourn, the soul longs for its source, rather like a child that has been separated from his or her parent and longs for reunion. Those feelings of longing create a deep bond between a parent and child that are experienced once the soul returns to its heavenly abode, and it is those feelings that elevate the soul to a higher level in the Garden of Eden. From this perspective, the soul descent is for the purpose of the ascent of the soul in the World to Come, this world being just a stepping-stone to the next.

However, *Chassidut* explains that the true ascent of the soul is not its elevation in the Garden of Eden, but rather, it is the ascent that is achieved when the soul inside a physical body helps fulfil the purpose of creation. The soul itself does not require rectification, for the soul is a spark of G-dliness. It is sent down into this world in order to fulfil the purpose of creation by refining the body and the physical world. When the soul is removed from the immediate revelations of the Garden of Eden and is exposed to a spiritual desert, it connects with its deepest quintessential levels in order to fulfil its purpose. This may be compared to a person who, in the face of a horrific ordeal, survives by drawing on inner strengths that he or she didn't even know existed.

The only power that can transform the material, physical world is *Atzmut*, the very “essence” of G-d. Only the power of *Atzmut* can create something from nothing, and it is only the power of *Atzmut* that can permeate that something with total recognition and cognizance of the nothingness from which it was created.

The *Zohar* states that Israel, *Torah*, and G-d are One. This means that the *Nefesh Elokit*, being a part of G-d, has within it the power of *Atzmut* which can reveal G-dliness even within a physical world whose values are antithetical to spirituality. Only when a *Mitzvah* is fulfilled in this world is there a true

connection with *Atzmut*. It is only on this earth, which is not a receptacle for revealed G-dliness, that can one reveal the true essence of G-d.

Rabbi *Shneur Zalman*, the founder of *Chabad*, used to say: “I do not want your Garden of Eden, I do not wish for your World to Come—I just want You!” He meant to say that all revelations of the Garden of Eden and the higher worlds do not come close to the ultimate connection that one experiences when fulfilling a *Mitzvah* in this world which is a revelation of “You!” Most commentaries explain that the reward for a *Mitzvah* is the opportunity to fulfill another yet *Mitzvah*. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* has a different perspective: he explained that the reward for the *Mitzvah* is the *Mitzvah* itself, which is a connection to G-d, to *Atzmut*.

We can now appreciate and understand the words of the Sages in the Ethics of the Fathers. The *Mishnah* states: “Better one hour of heavenly bliss in the World to Come than all the pleasures of this world” (Ethics of the Fathers 4:17). In this sense, our world is a mere temporary stepping-stone for the World to Come. It is well worth giving up on the fleeting pleasures of this world when we have ahead of us brilliant revelations of the higher worlds.

However, it is important to stress that the purpose of creation is not the rewards that can be derived from the World to Come. We are not living for the sake of the afterlife. It is in this vein that the *Mishnah* states: “Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than all of the World to Come”. Although the revelations of the higher spiritual worlds are magnificent and are a true reward for the soul’s efforts, the ultimate desire of G-d is *Teshuvah* and positive deeds in this world.

When a soul fulfils its mission down here in this world, by making a *Dirah BeTachtonim*, it causes an elevation in all the higher worlds. *Chassidut* draws an analogy from a lever. In order to lift a heavy load, one must use a lever and lift from the bottom. Although the lever is placed at the very bottom of the load, it causes even the highest parts of the load to be elevated. So, too, when the “lower realms” (*Tachtonim*) create the “dwelling” (*Dirah*), they reveal *Atzmut* in the dwelling, and this causes an elevation in all the higher realms.

We may now understand how angels and souls residing in higher worlds are profoundly affected by our actions in this world. The commotion of *Mitzvot* performed in a world full of *Kelipot* and *Sitra Achra* reverberate into those higher realms, causing great joy. It is for this reason that *Kaddish*, recited in memory of a departed soul, causes elevation for the soul. The departed soul can no longer perform physical *Mitzvot* in this world, but when the name of G-d is

glorified and magnified by a living relative in this world, the soul is tremendously elevated in the World to Come.

There is a story in the *Midrash* of a King who entered a land together with various ministers, pageantry, and servants. Many observers were taken aback by the dazzling presence of the ministers and soldiers. However, one smart person in the audience said, "I just want the King". In this world, we should not allow ourselves to become distracted by the lure of honour or reward, even when it is of a spiritual nature. Our sole focus should be, "I just want the King".

It is a most exhilarating feeling to walk through this world and see all it has to offer, yet to know in one's heart that one is in G-d's world. Permeated with such self-assurance, one can ignore and reject momentary distractions, and look to G-d's instruction manual, the *Torah*, as our guide.

The greatest purpose of the study of *Kabbalah* and *Chassidut* is that it catapults the mind, heart, intellect, and emotions to stand face-to-face with G-d. One is totally cognizant that G-d is standing above, filling the entire world, and that He is checking your heart to see if you are serving Him properly. The greatest possible experience for a human being is that connection. It is eternal and truly life-giving.

 CHAPTER 19

The Soul and the Afterlife

THE SOUL IS described by Job as “a part of G-d” (*Tanya*, Chapter 2), and exists both before its descent into the body and after the ascent from the body. The G-dly soul in itself is not in need of rectification; rather it descends into this world in order to refine the base and animalistic nature of this material world.

Before its descent into the world, the *Nefesh Elokit* is taken on a heavenly tour around the various departments in the heavenly Garden of Eden, and it is also shown Purgatory (*Gehinom*). It is made clear to the soul that it is embarking on a perilous journey full of distractions and enticement. The soul is made to take an oath that it will remain righteous, and even if persuaded by those around her that it is perfect, it should always deem itself in need of improvement. The soul is provided with all the spiritual sustenance that it will require on its journey, and it is satiated with enough spiritual energy to elevate the *Nefesh HaBehamit* and its portion in the world.

When a person is born, the *Nefesh Elokit* is aligned with the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, and they both operate and express themselves within the thinking mind. The two souls live locked together for their lifespan, both trying to gain control of the thinking mind. When a person dies, the *Nefesh HaBehamit* disintegrates in the grave with the body while the *Nefesh Elokit* returns to its Maker. The soul ascends before the Heavenly court and is judged accordingly. Every *Mitzvah* that a person has performed creates a defending angel, and every misdeed creates an accusing angel. These angels come and bear witness on a person, and every thought, speech, and action of the deceased during his or her lifetime is reviewed and considered. The *Talmud* lists the questions that a soul will be asked upon arrival at the Heavenly court; they include: “Were your business

dealings faithful?”, “Did you allocate a fixed time for *Torah* study?”, and “Did you engage in procreation?”

If the soul requires cleansing of any misdeeds, it is sent to *Gehinom*, which is a heavenly purification depot. The works of *Mussar* describe *Gehinom* as a horrific place where excruciating punishments are meted out to the sinner. The severity of the punishment depends on the severity of the sin. It must be understood that *Gehinom* is not a physical place, nor is it a place for eternity. *Gehinom* is a temporary—albeit terrible—place for the soul to be cleansed. In fact, the vast majority of souls do not stay in *Gehinom* for more than twelve months.

Because most people’s sins are not so extreme as to warrant a twelve-month sentence (reserved only for the wicked), we only recite *Kaddish* for a departed soul (which brings elevation to the soul and relief from *Gehinom*) for eleven months, and thereafter only on the anniversary (*Yahrzeit*) of death. On *Shabbat*, all souls experience an elevation. Souls in *Gehinom* on this day are given relief, while those in the world of *Yetzirah* are elevated to the world of *Beriah* through the “*Amud*”, the pillar that connects the two worlds of *Yetzirah* and *Beriah*. After the purification of *Gehinom*, the soul enters the World to Come—the Garden of Eden—where it receives the rewards it earned through work in this world.

The *Talmud* speaks of “Heavenly academies” (*Mesivta D’Rkia*), where souls sit and learn *Torah*. The *Talmud* states: “Happy is the man who enters the World to Come with the *Talmud* in his hand”. What one learned in this world is studied afresh on a much higher level in the next. As is explained in the chapter on *Torah* learning (see Chapter 24, “*Torah Study*”), there are numerous levels of *Torah* learning called *Pardes*, and they correspond to the four worlds. The *Torah* one has learned in this world on the level of *Pshat*, “simple interpretation”, one will merit to learn on the level of *Remez* (allusion), *Drush* (homiletics), and *Sod* (secrets).

On occasion, souls will be allowed to hear new interpretations of *Torah* from higher souls. According to the previous *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, on the *Yahrzeit* of a *Tzaddik* (righteous person), all other righteous souls come and hear *Torah* from the *Tzaddik*.

It must be made clear that the revelations that the righteous soul experiences in the World to Come are commensurate with the efforts the soul exerted in this world.

An analogy may be drawn from a marketplace. When the market is open, one may engage in buying and selling and all other business dealings. However, once the market has closed, one leaves with the profit one has made, and no more. This world is like a marketplace where one can make long-term investments

through the performance of *Mitzvot*, but once the soul departs from this world, it is only rewarded for the good deeds done on earth, and no more.

The souls that have achieved their place in the Garden of Eden will stay in their heavenly abode until the time of the Resurrection of the Dead, which will take place at some point in the Messianic Era. At that time, all souls will descend once again into this world to be en-clothed in their resurrected bodies.

It is possible for a soul to be reincarnated, and this will be discussed in the next chapter. (For an in-depth overview of the classical sources discussing the resurrection, see my book, *To Live and Live Again*, S.I.E. Publishing, 1995.)

It is interesting to note that there is a difference of opinion among the Sages about what exactly the *Talmud* means when it refers to the World to Come. According to *Maimonides*, it refers to the World of Souls which the soul enters after death to receive its earned reward, while *Nachmanides* and the *Kabbalists* say that the *Talmudic* reference to the World to Come applies to the time of Resurrection. All opinions agree, however, that the World of Souls and the Resurrection are two distinct existences. The real question is: which world represents the greatest reward?

According to *Maimonides*, the greatest reward is that of the World of Souls, and he maintains that even after the Resurrection, people will still die, and then the souls will travel to the World to Come. The *Kabbalists* disagree and maintain that the ultimate reward occurs during the time of Resurrection. This perspective requires explanation, though, because surely the soul experiences more pleasure once it is free of a body and physical existence?

Chassidut explains the views of *Nachmanides* and the *Kabbalists* in the following way: What the soul experiences in the heavenly abode is a revelation of G-dliness as it is manifest in the higher realms. However, such revelation is limited to the spiritual levels of those worlds. It is specifically here in this world, in which the world itself is not receptive to the manifestations of the higher worlds, that it is receptive to the revelation of *Atzmut*. Only *Atzmut* can transcend all material and spiritual limitations, and can be revealed even within the physical world. Such will be the experience during the time of the Resurrection; souls who have inhabited the Garden of Eden for thousands of years, even those who have had amazing elevations in those worlds, will descend at the time of Resurrection, for it is specifically here that they will experience the greatest level—that of a true *Dirah BeTachtonim*.

Therefore, the creation of a *Dirah BeTachtonim* is a developmental process. Historically, there have been various stages in the revelation of G-dliness within this world. During the time of the Tabernacle and Temple, G-dliness was

revealed while during the times of Destruction (*Churban*), G-dliness was concealed. As time progresses, we move towards the Messianic Era in which there will be a full revelation of G-dliness within the world, and the ultimate purpose of creation will be revealed in that time. After the arrival of the Messiah, the Resurrection will occur whereby all the souls in the heavenly realms, including those of the righteous, will return to their bodily state.

Reincarnation

ONE OF LIFE'S greatest challenges is to understand why there is so much suffering in this world. Often when faced with crisis, trauma, or bereavement, we intuitively search for meaning and purpose, and the cold realisation that we may never find the answers we are searching for leaves us numb. One way in which *Kabbalah* restores our faith is in its presentation of reincarnation and soul migration. Although no overt reference is made in Scripture to the subject, the greatest *Kabbalists*—notably the *Arizal* as quoted in the work *Shaar HaGilgulim* (Gate of Reincarnation)—clearly expound its principles.

The soul is eternal, a spark of the Divine, or as the prophet Job calls it “a part of G-d above”. The soul exists before it enters the body and it lives after the body is laid to rest. Though the soul's place of origin is in the higher worlds, there is something that the soul can achieve in a body that it cannot achieve in the heavenly realms. It has already been explained that the purpose of creation is to make an abode for the Divine in this world. Although higher worlds are glorious in terms of revelation and offer the best reward for a soul after it has achieved its earthly mission, the heavenly realms are not the purpose of creation. It was G-d's desire to create a world where His presence would be acutely concealed and where darkness and evil would prevail. He charged His children with the task of creating a home in this world, and the soul fulfils that mission by its adherence to *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

Kabbalah explains that the soul is comprised of 613 components, which parallel the 248 limbs and 365 blood vessels of the body. These 613 components attain eternal elevation when all 613 *Mitzvot* are fulfilled by a soul in its earthly descent. Usually, a soul does not manage to fulfil all the commandments

in one descent, therefore the *Arizal* writes that every soul must be repeatedly reincarnated until it has fulfilled all 613 *Mitzvot* in thought, speech, and action. In the previous chapter, the notion of purification through *Gehinom* was introduced. Here the soul is cleansed so it can be elevated to the Garden of Eden. How can we reconcile this concept with the idea of reincarnation and a return to our world?

The *Kabbalists* explain that when a soul returns to this world, the part of the soul that was elevated by its *Torah* learning and *Mitzvah* performance is not reincarnated; only the other parts of the soul that were not affected by the first incarnation return to this world. The possibility of a soul being divided, and part of a soul being reincarnated is discussed at length in *Kabbalistic* thought. The original idea stems from the fact that the soul of Adam was composed of all future souls, and the soul of Jacob was comprised of 70 parts which were then further subdivided into the 600,000 souls of Israel. These 600,000 were then subdivided further into another six hundred thousand. Through various reincarnations, all parts of the soul are elevated and once the entire soul has been elevated the soul is no longer in need of reincarnation. This explains why certain people engage in a specific *Mitzvah* in which they excel. It could be that the person's soul descended again for the sake of that specific *Mitzvah*.

The *Midrash* states that the soul has five names: *Nefesh* (soul of vitality), *Ruach* (spirit), *Neshamah* (breath of life), *Chayah* (living one), and *Yechidah* (singular one). *Kabbalah* explains that these five names of the soul correspond to the level of soul in each of the worlds. *Nefesh* corresponds to the soul in the realm of *Assiyah*; *Ruach* in *Yetzirah*; *Neshamah* in *Beriah*; and *Chayah* in *Atzilut*; while *Yechidah* represents the quintessential point of the soul (*Etzem HaNeshamah*) which is rooted in the *Or Ein Sof*. *Chassidut* teaches that the *Nefesh* resides in the blood, *Ruach* in the heart, and *Neshamah* in the brain. *Chayah* and *Yechidah* transcend the body, not en-clothing themselves in any particular limb. The *Kabbalists* explain that through successive incarnations, all levels of the soul are elevated.

FIVE LEVELS OF SOULS AND WORLDS

SOUL		WORLD	
<i>Yechidah</i>	(singular one)	<i>Ein Sof</i>	(the Infinite)
<i>Chayah</i>	(living one)	<i>Atzilut</i>	(World of Emanation)
<i>Neshamah</i>	(breath of life)	<i>Beriah</i>	(World of Creation)
<i>Ruach</i>	(spirit)	<i>Yetzirah</i>	(World of Formation)
<i>Nefesh</i>	(soul of vitality)	<i>Assiyah</i>	(World of Action)

Souls may also be reincarnated to complete a certain task, repay a debt, or rectify a sin. In fact, the concept of reincarnation as rectification for sin is well documented by the *Kabbalists*.

Most fascinating is the study of soul migration, which is how a soul from a previous generation is reincarnated in a later generation into a specific set of circumstances which are tailored to engineer a rectification of a previous sin. Of the hundreds of examples, we shall quote one here which is documented in the book *Shaarei Teshuvah* (Gates of Repentance), written by Rabbi *Dovber of Lubavitch*, a foremost *Kabbalist* and *Chassidic Rebbe*. When we look at the period of the Spanish Inquisition in 1492, we are perplexed as to why that generation was faced with the impossible task of deciding between apostasy and burning at the stake. Why was it that at this particular junction of Jewish history, Jews had to endure such horrible torture and exile? Rabbi *Dovber* writes the following:

In the times of the first Temple, they served G-d and did not cast from themselves the yolk of heaven, except in certain idolatrous practices for which they had tremendous desire, so much so that there were only left 7,000 people that had not succumbed to Baal worship in the days of Ahab. All the Kings who served these idols were great men, and they were tainted with this heinous sin of idolatry.

All these generations, who were most elevated souls, did not receive their rectification and elevation until the times of the philosophers in the time of Rashi and the Rambam until the time of the Arizal, which was from the year 4856 (1096) in the days of Rashi until the expulsion of Jews from Portugal in the year 5252 (1492), and until the time of the Arizal in 5333 (1573). The Arizal explicitly stated that in his time, the period of destruction that had swept the Jewish world for the last nearly 500 years had ended.

All those who had sacrificed their lives in sanctification of G-d's name in their thousands, and tens of thousands in each generation, all of them were souls of the first Temple. Their sin was that they had previously served idols and had nourished the Kelipot and therefore their rectification was to give up their lives in sanctification of G-d's name with simple faith which transcended any logic or philosophy.

Imagine a soul that entered the heavenly realms in the days of the first Temple, which had been tainted by the grave sin of idolatry. The soul would greatly anticipate and appreciate an opportunity to descend once again to rectify its

mistake. Any momentary pain involved is worthwhile to gain eternal elevation. Hence the soul descended to a body in a later generation for rectification. Although the body of the Spanish Jew could not comprehend why he or she was being hauled through this torture, what was happening was essentially a kindness, for it was the key to eternal elevation. In fact, the *Kabbalists* point out that the Hebrew word for “reincarnation”—*Gilgul*—has the same numerical value (gematria) as the word *Chessed*, “kindness”.

Such explanations, however, have their limitations. Could one explain the Holocaust with reincarnation? The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* was of the opinion that although the concept of reincarnation may be a component in explaining the events of the Holocaust, one could not possibly conceive of such a hideous crime that would warrant atrocities of such grand proportions. It would be arrogant to even suggest a reason for such merciless extermination and brutality. Rather, one must take the humble position that such tragedy is beyond us. In the words of the prophet, Isaiah, “My ways are not your ways, and My thoughts are not your thoughts, says G-d” (Isaiah 55:8).

Though reincarnation cannot explain all forms of suffering, it may help us understand certain tragedies, such as people dying sudden deaths due to accidents, illness, or war. It could be that their souls needed to return to this world for a certain amount of time to fulfil their specific purpose, and when that purpose had been achieved, the soul could return to its eternal abode. This explanation may also comfort couples who are devastated by infertility. It could be that such a couple has already fulfilled the *Mitzvah* of procreation in a previous incarnation, and is therefore not required to procreate in order to fulfil the *Mitzvah*. Reincarnation notwithstanding, Jews should do all they can within the parameters of Jewish law to fulfil the *Mitzvah* of procreation.

“The hidden matters are for G-d, and the revealed aspects for us and our children”

DEUTERONOMY 29:28.

One should walk simply before G-d, and it is beyond the vision of mere mortals to figure out whose reincarnation one may be. However, in times of hardship, when we feel like we are out of control, we can take solace in the knowledge that everything has been meticulously planned and executed in the Divine kaleidoscope.

A FINAL COMFORTING WORD:

There is a verse in the book of Samuel:

“For die we must, like water flows on the ground and that cannot be gathered up again; and G-d favours not a soul, but He devises means that he that is banished be not cast away from Him.”

(SAMUEL 2:14)

Citing the closing phrase of this verse as an assurance that no one banished from G-d by his sins will remain banished, Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* writes that every Jew will eventually return to G-d, either in this incarnation or another.

Jewish Meditation

THE *Talmud* TELLS the story of a thief who prayed to G-d for success. Is this thief a believer or not? If he is, what is he doing thieving? If he isn't, then why bother praying to G-d?

The answer is that he does believe, but his belief is peripheral, and he has not internalised his faith to the extent that it has had an effect on his entire way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Belief must be intellectualised, internalised, and integrated into one's actions, and that is the purpose of Jewish meditation. Sadly, many Jews today have never heard of Jewish meditation, and typically, when asking a group of Jews how many of them meditate on a regular basis, only a few will respond affirmatively. Meditation is commonly associated with eastern religion, but rarely is it associated with a regular Synagogue service.

The truth is that meditation is an essential ingredient of our religion and represents the foundation of all observance. There are 613 *Mitzvot* in the *Torah*. Six of them are obligatory every single second of the day, and upon deeper reflection, it is clear that they are the bedrock of observance.

They are:

1. To believe in G-d.
2. To unify His name.
3. To love G-d.
4. To fear Him.
5. Not to serve idols.
6. Not to turn astray after one's heart and eyes.

The first step is to believe in and know G-d, as the verse states, "Know this day and take unto your heart that the L-rd is G-d; in the heavens above and upon

the earth below there is nothing else” (Deuteronomy 4:39). We proclaim G-d’s unity by reciting “Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One” twice a day, morning and evening. Such profound statements of belief cannot simply be recited by rote; they must be accompanied by deep contemplation. A person must enter a course of study in which he or she will be introduced to such concepts as the nature of G-d, the chain order of creation, and the purpose of this creation, followed by a deep meditation on what has been learned. The point of the meditation is to arouse the emotions of love and fear of G-d, which allows one to grasp the profundity of such statements as those cited above.

The *Zohar* calls love and fear the two wings with which the bird soars above. A person is motivated to keep all the positive commandments out of a sense of love and commitment, and is deterred from transgressing the negative commandments out of a sense of fear. There are, of course, many levels of love and fear, as explained at length in *Chassidic* teachings. The scriptural text uses the Hebrew word *Yirah*, usually translated as the “fear” of G-d. However, fear denotes fear of punishment, which is the most basic level of fear. In truth, the more appropriate translation is “awe”, for that denotes deep awareness of the Omnipotent Being. Initially, a person may be deterred from sin by a fear of punishment, however ultimately the deterrent should be a deep sense of awe and desire not to contradict the Divine will.

The *Maggid of Mezritch* once asked, “How is it possible for G-d to command an emotion?” The *Torah* states that we are to “Love the L-rd your G-d”, and to “Love your fellow Jew as yourself”. Love is an extremely powerful and subjective emotion. How can G-d demand that all His creatures love Him and each other? Is it possible to summon up an emotion on demand? The *Maggid* answers that the command is not to instantly become emotional; rather the command is to meditate. Deep meditation and intimate knowledge of G-d brings one to love Him, and contemplation on the G-dly essence in every individual (as explained in Chapter 26, “Loving One’s Fellow Jew”) causes one to love every Jew. By extension, a person’s love and fear of G-d is reflected in interpersonal relationships, as the *Baal Shem Tov* stated, “the portal to G-d is the love of a fellow Jew”.

When applying this idea to the daily prayers, we see that if prayer is to be effective during the course of the day, it must involve meditation. Although classically, prayer represents a request to G-d, on a deeper level, prayer constitutes two soul movements: the moment when one meditates on deeply attaching the soul to G-d, while simultaneously communicating with one’s *Nefesh*

HaBehamit in an effort to refine one's character (see Chapters 22, "The *Benoni*" and 27, "Refining One's Character").

When the Sages constructed the order of prayer, they did so with this in mind, and each stage of the prayers is a rung in the ladder of meditation. We begin with *Modeh Ani*, which is a simple expression of faith. We then express our deep thanks to G-d for our faculties and well-being in the morning blessings. We proceed to the section describing the daily sacrifices, which in Hebrew is called *Korbanot*. The word "*Korban*" actually means to "draw near". On a spiritual level, this means that we all need to sacrifice our animalistic nature on the altar of the heart. Through fiery and passionate love of G-d, we can burn excessive materialistic indulgence and draw near to true service.

Next, we read the *Pesukei D'Zimrah* (Verses of Praise), where we become truly overwhelmed by G-d's benevolence and omnipotence. We then speak of the service of the angels and how they stand in awe in their daily lauding of G-d. Following this, we proclaim G-d's absolute unity in the *Shema*, acknowledging that G-d is all and all is G-d. Only then do we stand for the *Amidah* and make requests of G-d.

This daily service cannot be rushed or done without preparation: the order of prayer and words are precise and meaningful. It is important to have a solid comprehension of its meaning, both literally and conceptually. But beyond the actual meaning, the daily service requires personalisation. We should reflect on what the prayers mean to us as individuals, how they can help us change for the better, and how they can impact on our daily life. Meditation gives us the tools not only to understand the words of the prayers, but to infuse and incorporate these words and their meaning into our mundane daily activities. It is for this reason that *Chabad Chassidim* place such emphasis on the study of *Chassidic* teachings before prayer.

Meditation requires practice and study. For the beginner, a good place to start would be to decide that before praying, one should sit quietly for a few moments and "know before whom you stand". One should study a particular discourse in *Chassidut* that explains in detail the dynamics of G-d's unity, or the love and fear of Him, and one should reflect regularly on that discourse.

It is essential to realise that meditation requires deep concentration, and not just a cursory reflection. The more detailed one's meditation is, the stronger its effect.

The Benoni

TO WHAT LEVEL may one personally aspire? This question does not relate to academic, business, or professional achievements, but to personal development and refinement of character. The *Talmud* states that each person is obligated to wonder “when will my actions reach those of my forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?” (TANNA DVAI ELIYAHU RABBAH, CHAPTER 25) But is it imperative—or even possible—for every individual to become the proverbial *Tzaddik*?

In *Tanya*, the classical work of *Chassidut*, Rabbi *Shneur Zalman of Liadi* develops a phenomenal response to this age-old question, and he revolutionised the Jewish world with the concept of the *Benoni*.

Traditionally, three terms are used to describe a person’s status:

1. *Tzaddik* – the righteous person
2. *Benoni* – the intermediate
3. *Rasha* – the wicked person

According to the classical *Talmudic* definition of the word, a *Tzaddik* is a person who has more spiritual credits than debits, a *Rasha* has more debits than credits, while a *Benoni* has a balanced scale. On *Rosh Hashanah*, we are placed on the Divine weighing scales, and hope and pray to be inscribed in the book of the righteous.

Such a simplistic approach, however, is problematic. The *Talmud* (BERACHOT, END OF CHAPTER 9) states: “The righteous are ‘judged’ (i.e. motivated and ruled) by the *Yetzer Tov* and the wicked are judged by the *Yetzer Hara*, and *Benonim* are judged by both. Rabbah (a great *Talmudic Sage*) declared: ‘I for example am a

Benoni.' Said Abbaye (a contemporary of Rabbah), 'Master, you make it impossible for any creature to live.'"

Now, if a *Benoni* is defined as a person whose spiritual debits and credits are equal, how could Rabbah, who was a supreme Sage whose mouth never ceased studying *Torah*, declare himself a *Benoni*?

The matter calls for clarification, and the *Tanya* provides a superb insight into the human condition. In addition to providing advice, the *Tanya* develops the concept of the *Benoni*, and deals with many of his spiritual maladies.

As we have already discovered, according to Rabbi *Shneur Zalman*, a Jew is composed of two separate and distinct souls, each of which has a separate infrastructure of soul powers.

The first is called the *Nefesh HaBehamit* (the animalistic soul), which animates the body. In essence, it is a soul of the flesh, and its powers of faith, pleasure, will, intellect, and emotion seek to fulfil bodily desires – without it, we would have no desire to sustain our bodies or to even have children.

The second soul is called the *Nefesh Elokit* (the G-dly soul) which is truly a spark of the Divine, or as termed by Job, a "part of the One Above". The *Nefesh Elokit* also possesses soul powers of faith, pleasure, will, intellect, and emotion; however, unlike the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, all these soul powers are focused upon G-d and yearn for the spiritual.

The various soul powers express themselves through thought, speech and actions, which collectively are termed "garments of the soul". The thinking mind is somewhat of a no-man's land between the two forces of the soul powers of the *Nefesh Elokit* and the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, and each vies for control.

According to Rabbi *Shneur Zalman*, if the *Nefesh Elokit* is in total possession of the thinking mind, and manages to subdue and completely eradicate the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, that person is considered a *Tzaddik*. Likewise, if the *Nefesh HaBehamit* has taken possession, and the *Nefesh Elokit* is subverted, the person is a *Rasha*.

The *Benoni* is a person whose *Nefesh Elokit* controls the thinking mind, but whose *Nefesh HaBehamit* has in no way been refined or sublimated. On the contrary, the *Nefesh HaBehamit* is constantly attacking and seeking entry into the thought process, only to be held at bay by the *Nefesh Elokit*. The net result is a human being who is actually controlled by the *Nefesh Elokit*, and who obeys the *Mitzvot* in thought, speech and deed, but is constantly engaged in battle with the darker side of his or her character.

The *Benoni* may remain in this condition for an entire lifetime, but he or she need not be depressed about the inability to refine the *Nefesh HaBehamit*.

Not everyone is capable of reaching the level of refinement of a *Tzaddik*. Still, every person can, and should, aspire to become a *Benoni*.

Truthfully, most people are on the level of the imperfect *Rasha*: When we are occupied with spiritual activities, such as prayer and *Torah* study, the *Nefesh Elokit* takes control of the mind, but in other situations, the *Nefesh HaBehamit* is in control.

The entire *Tanya* is dedicated to explaining how it is possible for each and every person to strive to the level of *Benoni*; at this level, G-d's commandments are adhered to on an operational level, despite the subconscious presence of rebellious and egotistical forces. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* calls his book, the *Tanya*, a *Sefer Shel Benonim* (A Book for the *Benoni*) based on his belief that every person has the potential to become a *Benoni*. He describes in depth how everyone has the capability, through their *Nefesh Elokit*, to gain control of the mind, even though the soul powers of the *Nefesh HaBehamit* are lurking in the background, waiting for a crack in the individual's defences.

Such a presentation gives hope to the average person struggling with desires and lusts. For example, a person with a very strong sexual drive may find it extremely difficult to eradicate from his or her mind all lewd thoughts. Such an individual may become depressed about his or her inability to subdue those inclinations. According to Rabbi *Shneur Zalman*, however, the *Benoni* is not expected to be able to extinguish his or her *Nefesh HaBehamit*. The *Benoni* certainly has the power to contain his or her *Nefesh HaBehamit* and prevent it from taking over the faculties of the soul. Whenever a lewd thought enters the mind, the *Benoni* rejoices at the opportunity to be able to fulfil the commandment of "Do not turn astray after your heart and after your eyes". The *Benoni* realises he is not a *Tzaddik* and still has a very animalistic nature. He or she is not at all surprised that this drive has not disappeared, and goes to great lengths to ensure that such thoughts never gain a foothold in the mind.

The *Tanya* provides lengthy prescriptions for how to deal with the daily challenges of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* demands that we serve G-d with joy while deeply contemplating an imminent and compassionate G-d, who is actively helping us overcome our darker side. When we speak of creating a dwelling place for G-d in the lowest realms as being the purpose of creation, it is not only a reference to the physical world at large, but more specifically to the lowest realms in every human being. We are composites of a *Nefesh Elokit* and a *Nefesh HaBehamit*, and may oscillate from ecstatic spirituality to crass hedonism.

The *Benoni* fulfils the purpose of creation by placing a “yoke” on the *Nefesh HaBehamit* and goading it in the service of G-d. The concept of *Dirah BeTachtonim* is primarily fulfilled within a human being, and then by extension to the world. *Chassidut* enjoins us to engage in an intellectual dialogue with the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, explaining why it is advantageous to listen to the *Nefesh Elokit*.

The *Zohar* provides a beautiful parable about the son of a king who had been educated with the highest moral and ethical values. One day, the king decided to test his son to see if his education could withstand a challenge. He ordered a harlot to seduce his son, and he promised her a handsome reward if she succeeded. The harlot obeyed the king’s instructions and failed. The prince passed the test, and the king was delighted. Not only was he happy with his son, but he was also pleased with the harlot since she had failed.

So, too, the King G-d employs the Evil Inclination to seduce us. When the Evil Inclination fails, G-d is delighted both with us and with it. The opposite is true when the Evil Inclination succeeds. The task of the *Nefesh Elokit* is to communicate with the *Nefesh HaBehamit* and convey the belief that if both souls listen to G-d, they will benefit since there is no fleeting pleasure that is worth sacrificing eternity.

We can derive comfort from the knowledge that although we face enormous challenges currently, our generation will witness the epoch of *Mashiach*. To stay on course, a Jew has to demonstrate humility and selflessness. Through deep contemplation within prayer, a person should internalise the fact that everything has been created by G-d, and there is nothing else but the Divine will. He or she should view the vanities of the world with contempt and realise their shallow lure. Such self-sacrifice elicits a powerful response from Above. He or she is granted Heavenly assistance. In the words of Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, “when a Jew is connected Above, he does not fall below”.

No person is exempt from Divine service because of the claim that the Evil Inclination is too strong to resist. We all have free choice. G-d does not demand the impossible from His creations, nor does He send us challenges that are without purpose. If G-d has asked us to perform the *Mitzvot*, even though we possess a *Nefesh HaBehamit*, we must have the capability of doing so. We must constantly ask for Divine assistance to be able to accomplish this task.

 CHAPTER 23

Joy

ALTHOUGH TODAY, THANKS to improved material and social conditions, we have greater opportunities than ever to fulfil *Mitzvot*, we nonetheless face the enormous challenges of withstanding the numerous distractions which accompany the benefits of our generation. There seems to be no refuge available from the onslaught of images or suggestions that threaten to lead us astray.

Having said that, if a person is motivated enough, he or she can achieve the greatest heights by learning *Torah* and serving G-d with joy. Service out of rote, or even worse, out of force will not succeed. Being observant today can be compared to walking up an elevator that is going down. If you stand still, you will automatically go down. If you walk at a normal pace, you will stay in the same spot. In order to go up, you have to run. The energy and drive for such a run is generated by *Simchah*.

Depression is not counted among the 365 negative commandments, but it leads to the lowest spiritual depths. *Simchah*, on the other hand, is a bulldozer that can break through the strongest of barriers. The phrase, “Serve G-d with joy”, (Psalms 100:2) is not just an adage, but the living agenda of a *Chassid*. Imagine two wrestlers fighting in a ring – one may be physically stronger than the other, but it is the one with alacrity and enthusiasm that will win.

Similarly, in one’s service of G-d, *Avodat Hashem*, the *Nefesh HaBehamit* is in constant combat with the *Nefesh Elokit*, and a person can only overcome his or her darker nature with the help of Heavenly aid and a happy and positive outlook.

In the *Tanya*, Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* makes a fine distinction between sadness and depression. If a person is saddened by his or her spiritual state and thereby yearns for a higher plateau, such sadness is positive for it acts as a springboard

to renewed vigour in climbing the spiritual ladder. However, if sadness gives way to depression (and it must be stressed that we are not referring to clinical depression which requires medical attention), which translates into inertia and apathy, it is a result of the scheming Evil Inclination. The *Yetzer Hara* throws such thoughts into the mind with the aim of paralyzing a person so that he or she lacks the strength or inclination to improve the situation.

This distinction facilitates an easy test which can discern the source of one's feelings. In a moment of misery, one should ask oneself, Will these feelings result in something positive, and are they spurring me on to renew my efforts (in which case they stem from the *Yetzer Tov*), or are such thoughts just dragging me into inertia and apathy (in which case they stem from the *Yetzer Hara*)? If a person realises that the source of his or her sorrow derives from the *Yetzer Hara*, he or she should mentally shout at the Evil Inclination, calling it names and castigating it for trying to pull a person away from serving G-d. Simultaneously, a person should beseech G-d and ask for Divine assistance to overcome the challenge.

Maimonides describes serving G-d with joy as an *Avodah Gedolah*—an “immense effort”. The state of *Simchah* should not be confused with frivolity or self-indulgence; happiness may be defined as the knowledge that one is always fulfilling the will of G-d. The *Arizal* maintains that his greatest spiritual experiences were achieved through *Simchah Shel Mitzvah*—joy in the performance of a commandment.

A story presented in the memoirs of the previous *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, Rabbi *Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn*, reinforces this idea. He records that there once lived in the small town of *Lubavitch* in Russia a Jew called Reb *Yisrael der freilicher* (Israel the happy one). This man would always be found jumping for joy, and would oft refrain, “If Reb *Yisrael Gornisht* (Rabbi Israel the Nothing) can give G-d joy by doing a *Mitzvah*, should I not jump and dance with joy?”

His point was simple. Compared to G-d, we are nothing, yet G-d has communicated to us that He experiences pleasure when we observe His commandments. The thought of a fallible human being bringing joy to Almighty G-d is truly wondrous and is the cause for celebration. Such a thought was enough to cause Reb *Yisroel* to dance with joy!

Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* in the *Tanya* offers an inspirational analogy: Imagine for a moment a person who is destitute and wretched. Now visualise a mighty king who approaches the poor wretch, pulls him out of the gutter, and welcomes him into the innermost chamber of his palace. In seclusion, the king embraces this wretch, hugs and kisses him, and tells him how much he loves

him. The man is overwhelmed! Not only has somebody taken an interest in him, but it is none other than the king himself. He feels totally overwhelmed by the king's benevolence and sincerity. So it is with G-d, who elevated the Jewish people from the depravity of Egypt and consecrated them with His commandments. He chose us from all the nations and bestowed upon us His eternal gift.

Think positive and it will be positive! By meditating on the omnipresence and omnipotence of G-d, you become aware that you are occupying His world, and He is the boss. G-d placed us in this world to fulfil a particular mission. All trials and tribulations are only there to be overcome. In the same way that an athlete needs to look after his body and energy levels through constant exercise and healthy nutrition, we need to work on our minds and hearts so that we maintain a positive attitude coupled with a joyful heart. Learning *Torah* daily, as well as engaging in sincere prayer, are requirements that will help us run the course.

Rabbi *Shmuel of Lubavitch*, the fourth *Rebbe of Chabad*, and often called the *Rebbe Maharash*, used to say "*Lechatchila Aribet*". Many people, when confronted with an obstacle, try to ignore, or avoid a problem instead of tackling it head-on; "*Lechatchila Aribet*" means that one should "in the first instance go right over it". If it stands in the way of serving G-d it is merely an illusionary obstacle and one should go straight over it.

This was brilliantly illustrated one *Rosh Hashanah* in Crown Heights, New York, when Rabbi *Menachem Mendel Schneersohn*, the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, was on his way to recite *Tashlich* (the symbolic casting away of sins on the first day of the new year, done by the edge of a body of moving water). He was walking from his headquarters on 770 Eastern Parkway to the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, and it was raining heavily. The staff at the Gardens had locked the gates since they thought that no one would come to visit on such a rainy day. They certainly did not expect a *Rebbe* and hundreds of *Chassidim* to arrive for *Tashlich*.

When the *Rebbe* arrived at the Gardens, he saw that the gates were shut and locked. What was he going to do? They had just walked half an hour to say *Tashlich* and now the gates were shut! Without hesitation, the *Rebbe* scaled the fence and proceeded swiftly on his way. All the *Chassidim* followed. It was a great lesson in *Lechatchila Aribet*!

THE HEBREW WORD FOR TRUST IN G-D IS BITACHON.

In November 1996, a *Chassid* by the name of Mr. Benzion Rader was in a private audience with the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*. The *Rebbe* asked Mr. Rader if he knew what the word *Emunah* meant.

Mr. Rader replied, “*Emunah* means faith, belief, and trust”.

The *Rebbe* pressed Mr. Rader further, “Do you know what *Bitachon* is?”, and Mr. Rader replied in the negative.

The *Rebbe* said: “If one is confronted with a problem and one has *Emunah*, then one has faith, belief, and trust that G-d will help you overcome the problems, but if you have *Bitachon* you do not see that there is a problem because G-d does not send any problems—only challenges!”

Anxiety and fear are borne out of a lack of trust. Regardless of the situation, one should believe that “I desire only the King and ultimately He is in charge of my destiny”. Everything that we have or don’t have on this earth is determined by G-d. Love G-d with all your strength, and love Him regardless of how He decides to deal with you, for everything is orchestrated from Above. To bewail one’s geographic location, standing in life, and financial troubles is futile. Rather, one should make the best of what one has, and realise that, at this moment, the Divine will is that one must serve G-d properly in one’s present situation. Acceptance of Divine will in no way suggests that one should not pray to G-d to improve one’s situation, for G-d’s salvation can come in the blink of an eye.

The ideal balance is to do everything you can in your present situation while praying for improvement and change. Strong faith and trust that G-d will help guide and direct one’s affairs in the best possible manner are essential. One should always bear in mind the words of the *Talmudic* personality, Nachum Ish Gamzu, “*Gam Zu Letovah*”, which means “this, too, is for the best”.

 CHAPTER 24

Torah Study

“Torah is our life and length of days.”

(SIDUR)

WHAT EXACTLY IS *Torah*? In Chapter 3, (“Moses”) we explained that the word *Torah* comes from the root *Horaah*, which means “instruction”. *Torah* is G-d’s instruction or teaching to mankind.

This definition is vitally important. It means that unlike other sciences or intellectual systems that remain separate from performance, *Torah* knowledge must be translated into action.

The *Talmud* presents an interesting discussion about whether learning or action is more important. The final word is that learning is more important “for it leads to action” (TALMUD KIDDUSHIN 30A).

An ignorant person cannot be pious. In order to keep the *Mitzvot* in all their detail, one must first learn their principles. In fact, it is incumbent upon every Jew to learn about the 613 commandments and their practical applications.

The Code of Jewish Law mandates that a person who has little time for study should primarily study those areas of *Torah* that can be applied to our daily lives.

The *Torah* is our instruction manual for how to lead an ethical and moral life on Earth. The *Torah* is not a manual filled with abstract information written by human beings, but rather is a gift from G-d that allows us to lead meaningful and holy lives. Since the *Torah* emanates from the Eternal Being, it contains eternal truths.

BLUEPRINT FOR CREATION

From a *Kabbalistic* perspective, *Torah* may be defined as “G-d’s wisdom” (SEE TANYA CHAPTER 4). Just as G-d existed before the world was created, so, too, did His wisdom. In fact, the *Zohar* comments that, “G-d looked into the *Torah* and created the world, and when man studies the *Torah*, he maintains the world”. This means that *Torah* is the blueprint for creation—the architect’s plans. G-d looked into His wisdom and created the world. What does this mean?

In Chapter 12, “*Tzimtzum*”, and Chapter 18, “The Purpose of Creation”, we explained that to create a finite world, G-d had to conceal the *Or Ein Sof* to create the conceptual space for finitude to exist. After this quantum leap of *Tzimtzum*, He then projected a beam called the *Kav* into the void from which stemmed all the worlds. The pre-*Tzimtzum* Light is called the *Or HaSovev Kol Almin*, the Transcendent Light, and the Light of the *Kav* is called *Memale Kol Almin*, the Immanent Light, in the sense that it fills all worlds. We also explained that the true purpose of *Tzimtzum* was not to conceal, but to reveal, for the Infinite Light precluded finite existence. Because G-d wished to dwell in a physical and limited world, it was necessary to contain and conceal this Light. This process permitted finite worlds to exist so that ultimately the *Or Ein Sof* would be revealed within them. Our mission is simple: reveal the infinite Light contained within our finite world. The keys to accomplishing our mission are found in G-d’s wisdom—the *Torah*.

It is stated in the *Zohar*: “*Torah* and the Holy One, blessed be He, are truly One”. This means that because *Torah* is the wisdom and will of G-d, it is one with His glory and essence. Just as G-d is unfathomable, so is His wisdom. Yet G-d compressed and lowered His wisdom, clothing it in commandments pertaining to this physical and material world, so that it might be accessible to human intelligence, enabling mankind to connect with their Creator. *Torah* journeyed in a descent through the worlds of *Atzilut*, *Beriah*, and *Yetzirah* until it reached the world of *Assiyah*. This supernal knowledge is en-clothed within the 24 books of the *Torah*, Prophets (*Neviim*), and Writings (*Ketuvim*).

The *Talmud* outlines this concept in the following way: The first word of the Ten Commandments is “*Anochi*”, which means “I [am the Lord your G-d]”. The Hebrew letters of the word “*Anochi*” are *Aleph*, *Nun*, *Chaf*, and *Yud*. They are an acronym that stands for the words *Ana Nafshi Ketavit Yehavit* (I put myself in writing). G-d “compressed” Himself into the words of the *Torah*.

We read about physical objects and people in the *Torah* because this is how the *Torah* was interpreted when it descended into the world of *Assiyah*. As we ascend to the higher worlds, *Torah* may be comprehended on a higher level.

THE TORAH PARALLELS THE FOUR WORLDS

The *Kabbalists* state that the *Torah* has four global layers, each of which correspond to the four worlds:

1. *Pshat*: Simple interpretation
corresponds to the world of *Assiyah*.
2. *Remez*: Allusionary interpretation
corresponds to the world of *Yetzirah*.
3. *Drush*: Homiletical interpretation
corresponds to the world of *Beriah*.
4. *Sod*: Secret/mystical interpretation
corresponds to the world of *Atzilut*.

One could say that as the *Torah* descended from Above into the world of *Atzilut*, it may be comprehended on the level of *Sod*. As it descended further into *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*, the *Torah* may be comprehended on the levels of *Remez* and *Drush*, and finally when the *Torah* descends into the world of *Assiyah*, it is comprehended on its most simple level—*Pshat*, in its literal meaning as we understand it in this world.

We can now understand the reference to “Heavenly academies” (see Chapter 19, “The Soul and The Afterlife”) and how souls may learn *Torah* in higher worlds. When a soul ascends to Heaven—to the lower Garden of Eden in the world of *Yetzirah*, or the higher Garden of Eden in the world of *Beriah*—it relearns the same *Torah* it learned previously, but on the level that is comprehended in those worlds. That is a great reward for the soul. The *Talmud* states, “Happy is the man who arrives (in the World to Come) with the *Torah* in his hand”. This means that in the merit of studying *Torah* in this world, a person will merit to study the *Torah* in the higher worlds.

CONNECTING TO G-D THROUGH TORAH

From this perspective, *Torah* study takes on a totally different and fresh meaning. When, for example, a person learns a particular Law in the *Mishnah* or *Talmud* through strenuous mental exertion, what is happening is that his mind is becoming totally united with the Law, which is the will and wisdom of G-d, albeit concealed. Despite being vastly disproportionate, the human intellect and G-d’s intellect merge at this moment.

Let’s now return to the passage in *Zohar* that states that *Yisrael* (the Jew), *Torah*, and G-d are One. Considering the above explanation, this means that a Jew connects to G-d through *Torah*. When a Jew studies *Torah*, his or her mind grasps the subject and becomes one with it. We may now understand

why *Torah* learning has such a preeminent place in Judaism. It is the deepest bond a person one may have with G-d.

In truth, the *Nefesh Elokit* of a Jew is part of the Divine and is a spark of G-d. Why, then, does it need to connect to G-d through *Torah*? This may be understood by explaining a contradiction between two sayings of the Sages. The *Midrash* states that “The thought of Israel preceded any other”. This means that when G-d created the world, Israel preceded *Torah* in His thought.

On the other hand, the above-quoted *Zohar* states: “Israel connects with G-d through the *Torah*”, which seems to suggest that the *Torah* precedes Israel. *Chassidut* resolves the seeming contradiction by stating that in their source, Israel stands higher than the *Torah*. However, as souls descend below, and become en-clothed in a corporeal body, they need to connect to G-d through *Torah*.

In his or her source, a Jew stands higher than the *Torah*, and therefore is eternal. No number of sins can rid a Jew of his title and status, because the connection of a Jew’s essence with G-d is not dependent upon his observance of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*. On the other hand, once the soul descends into a body, the open connection of a Jew with G-d is through the *Torah*. It is the Jew’s connection with G-d that ultimately brings a Jew to do *Teshuvah* and keep the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

We can apply this idea to the command to love one’s fellow Jew. When a person loves his or her fellow Jew, the essence of the love is directed to the soul as it stands in its source, united with all other souls, above the *Torah*. That essential love therefore transcends *Torah* observance and even extends to those who are distant from the *Torah*. On this level, there is no differentiation between a *Tzaddik* and a *Rasha*. However, since the soul as it descends below connects with G-d through *Torah*, therefore the greatest display of love would be to strengthen another Jew’s connection to G-d through *Torah* observance.

It is now clear why *Torah* study is a great *Mitzvah* even if there is no practical application. When one studies *Torah* on this level, it may be termed *Torah Lishmah*—study of *Torah* for no other motive than that of being bound to G-d. And yet, since the purpose of creation is *Dirah BeTachtonim* – the ultimate refinement and elevation of the physical world – priority is given to those areas of the *Torah* that focus on the practical application of the *Mitzvot* in this world. In fact, Jewish law states that if one is engaged in *Torah* study, and there arises the opportunity to fulfil a *Mitzvah*, one should not hesitate to interrupt one’s studies if there is no one else who can perform it in your place.

In summary, *Torah* is Divine wisdom, and a Jew can connect with G-d on the most profound level through *Torah* study. A person should strive to fill his

or her mind and thoughts with *Torah*, so that he or she is always united with the Divine. The *Torah* states that:

“One should speak words of Torah when sitting at home, on a journey, when one lies down, and upon awakening”

(DEUTERONOMY 6:7).

Each person is mandated to set aside time for *Torah* study, and there is a severe punishment proscribed for those who wantonly waste precious study time.

We may now understand why it is in the *Shema*, “Love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, soul, and might” is immediately followed by the command to learn *Torah*. If you wish to quench your spiritual thirst by reaching out to G-d, the key is to immerse yourself in *Torah* study, for *Torah* and G-d are One. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, “Let the thirsty one go to water” (Isaiah 55:1), for *Torah* is compared to water – spiritually thirst-quenching and life supporting.

From a *Kabbalistic* perspective, *Torah* is the mechanism through which we draw the *Or Ein Sof* into the world in its post-*Tzimtzum* state. In *Kabbalistic* terminology, it embodies the unity (*Yichud*) of the *Sovev Kol Almin* and *Memale Kol Almin*. It therefore follows that you need to be in the right state of mind when you study.

We should not study *Torah* as a means to broaden our intellect, nor should we pore over its pages in the hope that we shall be honoured and admired as a result. Rather, *Torah* must be studied with immense selflessness and a humble awareness that one is studying G-d’s *Torah* and wisdom. It is for this reason that we recite a blessing before study in which we thank G-d for choosing us out of all the nations and giving us His *Torah*. The Sages state that when we say words of *Torah*, the Almighty repeats the words after us. One should imagine that the *Torah* is given anew every day as a gift from G-d.

MYSTICAL TRADITION AT SINAI

The *Torah* was given in its entirety to Moses at Sinai. However, at different stages in history, different levels of interpretation were revealed. This may be compared to a principle and its details. The principles were revealed at Sinai, and the details were revealed at different stages later by great *scholars* who received ongoing revelation through a “holy spirit” of revelations (*Ruach HaKodesh*). This evolutionary process is evident in the historical development and revelation of the *Kabbalah*. *Kabbalah* was received at Sinai, but the mystical tradition was only taught within a small circle. It was committed to writing primarily by

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in the *Zohar*, and then elaborated on by the *Arizal* in whose time it was pronounced that it was a *Mitzvah* to disseminate the *Kabbalah*. However, it was only after the era of the *Baal Shem Tov* that the teaching of the mystical tradition took on a new dimension. Why?

Nistar (the inner dimension of the *Torah*) differs from *Nigleh* (the revealed aspects of the *Torah*). For instance, when we learn *Torah* in its *Pshat* level, we openly talk of physical matters that relate to this world, and the aspect of G-dliness within it is concealed. The tractates of the *Talmud*, for example, discuss civil damages, and we become involved in the details of an ox that gored a cow and its resultant damages and charges. Although this is distilled G-dly wisdom, what is most apparent to us is the physical details of this material world.

However, when learning on the level of *Sod*, which is on a *Kabbalistic* level, there is an open discussion of G-dliness, and one is totally cognizant of the Giver of the *Torah*. Stated in *Chassidic* terminology, this world is one in which the material is obvious (*BiPshitut*) and G-dliness is novel (*BeHitchadshut*). In the higher realms, however, G-dliness is obvious and the material is considered novel.

As we progressed historically into the darkness of Exile, it became increasingly necessary to reveal the Divine source of the *Torah*. Therefore, it was in the days of the *Baal Shem Tov*, and Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* in particular, that an even deeper level of *Torah* was revealed. We previously explained that the four levels of *Torah* interpretation correspond to the four worlds of Creation. The leaders of *Chabad* revealed an even deeper level of *Torah*, that of *Yechidah*, which is the quintessential level of the soul corresponding to a revelation of the will of the *Ein Sof* itself. This level of *Torah* interpretation is called *Chassidut*. Although we have used *Kabbalah* as a generic term for all mystical teachings including *Chassidut*, in truth, *Chassidut* is quite distinct from *Kabbalah*. *Kabbalah* refers to the level of *Torah* interpretation called *Sod* whereas *Chassidut* is the level of *Yechidah* of the *Ein Sof*.

This level is not an additional fifth layer of interpretation of the *Torah*; rather it is the essence of all the other four, just as the level of *Yechidah* is the essence of the soul which stands above yet permeates the other levels. This fifth level may be compared to oil. Oil floats above all other liquids, yet when is combined with a solid, it diffuses throughout. In the same vein, *Chassidut* is a revelation of the *Ein Sof*, yet it diffuses and illuminates all other levels.

To give a brief illustration of these five levels of *Torah* interpretation, let us take for example the *Modeh Ani* prayer which is said upon rising in the morning:

“I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is abundant”.

The *Pshat* of this prayer is that we are simply thanking G-d for restoring our souls. The *Remez* understanding is that this “restoration” of the soul refers to the time of the Resurrection of the Dead. The *Drush* explanation is that since G-d returns to a person the soul which was entrusted to Him (while sleeping during the night), we should not withhold an article entrusted to us from another. Finally, the *Sod* interpretation states that this “restoration” of the soul stems from the mystical union of the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* as it unites with the *Sefirah* directly above it – *Yesod*.

Chassidut – the *Yechidah* level of interpretation – explains how this declaration brings out the perfection, or *Yechidah*, of the soul. *Modeh Ani* is said before the ritual washing of the hands in the morning, (which removes residual impurity from the night), since no impurity can defile the *Modeh Ani* of a Jew. His or her *Yechidah* is quintessential and always remains pristine and invigorating.

When studying *Torah* today, one must taste from the Tree of Life—*Chassidut*—to illuminate all other aspects of *Torah* study and to fill the mind with the knowledge of G-d. To have a healthy body and soul, it is necessary today to study both the body, which is comparable to *Nigleh*, and the soul, which is comparable to *Nistar* of the *Torah*.

Mashiach promised the *Baal Shem Tov* that he would come when the teachings of *Chassidut* are widely dispersed. *Chassidut* translated the loftiest supernal concepts into a language that the average intellect could comprehend. That is exactly a foretaste of the coming of *Mashiach* when, in the words of *Maimonides*, mankind will know G-d according to the extent of his ability.

FIVE LEVELS OF TORAH INTERPRETATION, THE WORLDS, AND THE SOULS

INTERPRETATION	WORLDS	SOUL
<i>Chassidut</i>	<i>Ein Sof</i>	<i>Yechidah</i>
	(The Infinite)	(Singular One)
<i>Sod</i>	<i>Atzilut</i>	<i>Chayah</i>
(Mysteries)	(World of Emanation)	(Living One)
<i>Remez</i>	<i>Beriah</i>	<i>Neshamah</i>
(Allusion)	(World of Creation)	(Breath of Life)
<i>Drush</i>	<i>Yetzirah</i>	<i>Ruach</i>
(Homiletics)	(World of Formation)	(Spirit)
<i>Pshat</i>	<i>Assiyah</i>	<i>Nefesh</i>
(Simple)	(World of Action)	(Soul of Vitality)

Mitzvot

“The essential thing is the deed.”

(ETHICS OF THE FATHERS)

THROUGHOUT JEWISH LITERATURE and prayer, the *Torah* is often frequently referred to as *Torat Chaim*—a “living *Torah*”. It is *Torah* that defines the life and essence of the Jewish people. There are 613 *Mitzvot* in the *Torah*, and in this chapter, we shall take a closer look at how these commandments benefit mankind, refine creation, and act as a medium between us and G-d.

THE BENEFIT OF MITZVOT TO MANKIND

Mitzvah observance is the path to a good life in this world. G-d, the Creator of the entire universe, is surely in the best position to know what is best for mankind and the world. G-d has not withheld this knowledge from us, for G-d is good, and it is the intrinsic nature of good to be good. In His infinite kindness, G-d has communicated to us that if a person conducts his or her life in a certain way, he or she will have a healthy soul operating in a healthy body, and the benefits will be felt in this world and in the World to Come. It makes perfect sense that if you want to have a good life, you should follow G-d’s directives, even if there are some aspects of G-d’s commandments which appear to be irrational or restrictive.

In truth, there are many aspects of our daily life which we accept and follow without hesitation, even if we consider ourselves to be questioning human beings. For example, a person will board a plane without first researching the

aerodynamics to verify that it is safe to fly in. Similarly, if a person has a headache, he or she will not study biochemistry before taking an aspirin.

The same principle can be applied to our spiritual health. It is quite certain that if a human being were to live long enough, and would have the necessary capacities to conduct all sorts of experiments and research without distraction, then he or she would arrive at the very same conclusions which we already find in the *Torah*, namely the need to observe Jewish dietary laws, *Shabbat*, etc. The reason for this is that the *Torah* represents the truth and the ultimate good for a person.

Stated simply, the *Mitzvot* are not a set of rules that have been given to impede or restrict the freedom of mankind. Rather, they are the pathway to an enriching life. To illustrate this point, let us look at the mandatory day of rest – *Shabbat*. A person who works seven days a week leaves no time to recharge his or her spiritual batteries. Even limited leisure time is often devoted to keeping the body fit at gyms and at golf courses while the soul goes sadly neglected. Although to many people, the laws of *Shabbat* appear to be restrictive, in truth however, these restrictions create an atmosphere in which a person can enhance his or her personal, familial, and spiritual growth.

According to the Sages, “there is no free man except one who engages in the study of *Torah*”. On the surface, this seems surprising, for the *Torah* places many restrictions on a person, so how can you possibly be freer by observing the *Mitzvot*? The answer is that everyone has his or her own form of bondage, an “Egypt”. Some people are slaves to their jobs, others to the desires of their body. Some worship money, others worship power. *Torah* is the antidote that liberates a person from personal bondage. It manoeuvres a person into the enviable position of being able to maximise the goodness of this world, as well as the next.

G-d is not a ruthless dictator who insists on subjecting His people to laws that have no meaning or purpose. G-d is benevolent and wishes to bestow good upon the creation. The greatest act of Divine benevolence was to give us a living *Torah*, a pathway through life which leads us to the greatest good a human may achieve both for one’s body and soul. By emulating G-d’s ways, human beings elevate their status, resulting not only in rewards in the World to Come, but to a meaningful and fulfilling life in this world.

MITZVOT—REFINING THE CREATION

In addition to the benefits that human beings derive from *Mitzvot* in this world, the *Midrash* states that the *Mitzvot* were given to refine the creation. Both the

person who is doing the *Mitzvah* and the object which is being used to perform the *Mitzvah* is refined. Let us examine how the *Mitzvah* affects the person who is performing it.

The first condition of the *Mitzvot* is mankind's absolute submission to the laws of G-d, which is called in Hebrew, "*Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim*" (submitting to the rule of the Kingdom of Heaven). This was expressed prior to the receiving of the *Torah* at Sinai when the Jews said "*Na'aseh VeNishma*"—we shall do it and we shall hear it, placing acceptance before understanding. The *Mitzvot* are a disciplinary code that places a yoke on the powerful animalistic side of mankind, channelling its considerable energies toward the service of G-d.

This, then, is the meaning of the expression *Avodat Hashem*. The root of the word "*Avodah*" is similar to the word "*Ibud*", which, in the context of leather skins, means "tanning". In the tanning process, a very coarse skin is taken and transformed by working it into a supple piece of leather or parchment. What was coarse has become refined. *Avodat Hashem* means taking a coarse *Nefesh HaBehamit* and refining it and channelling its energies to serving G-d.

On a deeper level, as we have explained in Chapter 16, "*Kelipot and Sitra Achra*", the *Nefesh HaBehamit* stems from *Kelipat Nogah*. *Nogah* means light, and therefore, as the name suggests, *Kelipat Nogah* is a *Kelipah* that can be fostered, illuminated, and elevated. When a person does a *Mitzvah* which requires physical exertion, the entire *Nefesh HaBehamit* is utilised in the service of G-d and thereby elevated. A great example of this is the *Mitzvah* of *Tzedakah* (charity). When a person works hard all day to make a living, and then gives a part of what they have earned to *Tzedakah*, what they are giving away in reality is the energy that they have invested into making that money. In this respect, *Tzedakah* is an excellent representation of all *Mitzvot*.

Furthermore, it is not only your hand (that physically gave *Tzedakah*) that is elevated from *Kelipat Nogah* to *Kedushah*, but also the food and drink that gave you the strength to perform the *Mitzvah*. The *Kabbalah* states that the community of Israel comprising of 600,000 souls is the general source of vitality for the entire world, which was created for the sake of these souls.

To each of those souls (which are further sub-divided into 600,000 sub-souls) is designated one six-hundred-thousandth part of the entire world to refine and elevate. This elevation occurs when one eats, drinks, and utilises one's dwelling for the service of G-d. In this respect, the part of the world which is apportioned to this soul becomes a true *Dirah BeTachtonim*.

We can see this ripple effect in the simple act of eating bread on *Shabbat*. On Friday night, one rests both hands on the two *Challot* (bread used on *Shabbat*

and holidays) and recites the blessing *Hamotzi* (which thanks G-d for “bringing forth sustenance from the Earth”). Imagine the following: the *Challah* is the product of a huge chain of production. The farmer planted the grain, irrigated, and weeded the field. He then harvested the field, and the grain is taken by truck to a granary where it is ground and shipped to the baker. The baker now combines the wheat flour with the various other ingredients and bakes the *Challah* in an oven powered by gas or electricity.

There are many people involved at each stage of this chain of production—the farmer, the field workers, the truck driver who delivered the ingredients to the bakery, the baker, etc. When a Jew raises the two *Challot* and proclaims G-d as the Provider of the bread, he has elevated this entire chain.

Our Sages tell us that although man was the last of G-d’s creations, created only on the sixth day, nevertheless he was first in G-d’s master plan of creation, since it is man who takes the entire creation and as a maestro orchestrates the creation in its service of G-d. Although preceded by the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, it is mankind standing at the apex of the pyramid of Creation that has the capacity to elevate and transform all of creation for a higher purpose.

MITZVOT—A CONNECTION WITH G-D

Although the *Torah* and *Mitzvot* have been given for the benefit of mankind and for the purpose of refining Creation, there is an infinitely greater quality to the *Mitzvot*. The *Mitzvot* enable mankind to transcend the limitations of time and space and attach himself to his Creator.

The *Torah* and *Mitzvot* constitute the bridge which spans the abyss separating the Creator from the created, enabling the human being to rise and attach him or herself to G-dliness. This bridge has been designed by G-d, for only He can span that abyss. It is quite impossible for a limited being to create his or her own bridge to the Infinite, for whatever bridge he or she may build, however spiritual it may be, it will still be limited according to the parameters of the created mind. This explains why a person cannot create his or her own path to G-d independent of *Torah* and *Mitzvot*.

Torah and *Mitzvot* are vehicles that enable each individual to connect with the Divine and transform this physical world into an abode for G-d. As previously mentioned, the word *Mitzvah*, as well as meaning a commandment, means a connection. G-d created mankind to be within the material world, and to connect, permeate, and elevate it with G-dliness through the performance of *Mitzvot*.

In Chapter 24, “*Torah Study*”, we defined the *Torah* as Divine wisdom and the *Mitzvot* as the Divine will. The essence of G-d and His will and wisdom are one. Therefore, when we study *Torah* and keep the *Mitzvot*, we are in absolute communion with G-d. Although this Divine will is clothed within the material, the union with G-d is not affected by materiality. This may be compared to a King who is clothed in many layers of garments. When one embraces the King, although externally the contact is only with the outermost garment, nevertheless it is the King himself who is underneath the garment. Similarly, although the *Mitzvot* are performed in the material world, this is only an outer garment of the Divine will which is en-clothed within it

Furthermore, when we perform a *Mitzvah*, we become a vehicle to the Divine will and evoke Divine benevolence upon ourselves and the world. The *Tikkunei Zohar* states that the 248 positive commandments parallel the 248 organs of the body. The *Mitzvot* represent G-d’s will, and each individual commandment which is parallel to a particular organ of the body is an expression of a particular aspect of this will. Each *Mitzvah* evokes a particular response commensurate with that commandment. When we give charity, G-d stretches forth His hand to bestow kindness upon the world. When we act compassionately toward the less fortunate, He acts compassionately toward us and the world around us.

A similar Divine reaction is evoked when we abstain from prohibited acts. For example, when we suppress the urge to gossip, the forces of evil are subdued. Even the smallest subjugation of the *Sitra Achra* causes a great diffusion of Divine Light in all the worlds.

The Divine Light we draw upon ourselves through the fulfilment of *Mitzvot* is called the *Shechinah*. When we study *Torah*, our souls and the two inner garments of speech and thought are absorbed within the Divine Light, causing the *Shechinah* to rest upon our Divine souls (see Chapter 15, “*Angels and Mazalot*”). However, for the *Shechinah* to rest upon our body and *Nefesh HaBehamit*, we need to use our bodies to fulfil the practical *Mitzvot*. In this way, the actual power of the body engaged in the act is absorbed into the Divine Light and will, and it unites with G-d in perfect unity. As previously mentioned, this explains why *Mitzvah* performance takes priority over learning *Torah* if the commandment cannot be done by anyone else.

A FINAL WORD

A person may be naturally diligent and find it easy to sit and learn *Torah* for great lengths of time. An observer may be astounded at the level of devotion

this *scholar* demonstrates to his studies. However, in truth, his diligence in *Torah* studies may not be indicative of his devotion to G-d. That very same *scholar*, for example, may find it challenging to be hospitable to guests. True demonstration of *Avodat Hashem* is when a person serves G-d with enthusiasm and fervour even in areas in which he or she is not naturally inclined. If the *scholar* demonstrates the same devotion and joy when serving a guest, as he does when immersed in *Torah* study, this would prove that he performs the *Mitzvot* simply because it is the will of G-d.

This point may be illustrated in the signs of a *Kosher* animal. An animal is only deemed *Kosher* if it has split hooves and chews the cud. In the spiritual dimension, this means that a person's service of G-d is only "*Kosher*" if it has split hooves, meaning that a person needs to dedicate as much energy to those *Mitzvot* that are challenging than to those which come naturally. Furthermore, this cannot only be demonstrated on occasion, but rather it must be in a way of chewing the cud, which implies constantly performing the *Mitzvot* because it is the will of G-d. Such service demonstrates true self-abnegation.

In the *Tanya*, Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* states that in the days of old, students would typically review their studies 100 times. Consequently, a student who reviewed their studies 100 times has fulfilled his obligation but has not necessarily showed true devotion. The student who reviewed his studies 101 times is a true servant of G-d.

In *Chassidic* terminology, such service is called nullification to the *Baal HaRatzon*—surrender to the author of the will, rather than to the particulars of the will. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* once summarised this point by stating that if G-d had asked the Jews to chop wood all day, then we would have become a nation of woodchoppers. Even if chopping wood would provide no material or spiritual benefit, we would nonetheless chop wood because it is not important what we have been asked to do, but the fact that G-d asked us to do it.

Love Your Fellow Jew

“Love your neighbour as yourself.” (LEVITICUS 19:18)
 Rabbi Akiva says, *“This is a great principle of the Torah.”*

RASHI

BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES STRUGGLE to understand the phrase, “Love your neighbour as yourself”. Human beings are egocentric by nature and are preoccupied with their own existence. The commitment to help another person, to give of one’s time and energy, demands an enormous amount of self-sacrifice. It is not easy to tear oneself away from personal interests. Even in more refined pursuits, a person is self-absorbed. The study of *Torah* is never-ending; the obligation to raise one’s own spiritual level is unlimited.

Nevertheless, true involvement with your fellow Jew demands much more than the mere sharing of time or knowledge; you are in essence investing in a person on an emotional level. His joy is your joy, his anguish is your anguish, and the travails of his soul are your travails. How, therefore, is it possible to put one’s own interests to the side to the extent that a separate entity assumes equal importance—to love another person as yourself?

The *Torah* also commands us to “love” every other person “as yourself”. How is it possible for G-d to command an emotion? If we were asked to show respect, or even kindness, this commandment would be easier to follow. How, though, can a person force himself or herself to feel an emotion at will? There are some people we like and some people we don’t like.

Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* offers a truly brilliant answer in Chapter 32 of his classic work *Tanya*. As we have mentioned in previous chapters, he first explains

that every Jew is composed of two distinct souls. The first is called the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, and the second the *Nefesh Elokit*. These two souls vie for possession of the thinking mind, and the soul that is in control of the mind will determine if the person is a *Tzaddik* or a *Rasha*.

The *Nefesh Elokit* is a G-dly soul, a part of G-dliness. It therefore follows that, in source, all G-dly souls are one on account of their common root in the one G-d. In this sense, they are true brothers, and only their bodies are distinct from one other. Since the *Nefesh Elokit* is the essence of the Jew, it follows that the command to love a fellow Jew is the directive to focus on the essence of another Jew and to see it as one with one's own essence. To love your fellow as yourself may then be translated in its literal sense. The true path to loving a fellow Jew is to learn to go beyond the physical, to look past the outer concealments, and focus on a person's true essence. Bodies are separate, but souls are one. From this perspective, all differences fall away, and Jew is united with Jew.

Loving a fellow Jew from this perspective is an exercise in deflating one's ego. It is only possible to reach such a level if the soul is primary, and the body secondary. If the body is of paramount importance, it is impossible to attain the level of loving another person as yourself, since your love is based on externals. This type of love is called, in the Ethics of the Fathers (Chapter 5:16), a "dependent love". If you love another person because of what you hope to gain as a result, or because of his or her physical appearance, it is considered a dependent love. The very fact that one's fellow Jew possesses a *Nefesh Elokit* is enough of a reason to love him or her. In source, both souls are united, and as they descend into this world, they are given separate missions within separate bodies.

Collectively, the sum total of all G-dly souls represents the *Shechinah* in this world. It therefore follows that when there is strife and baseless hatred among Jews, they are not focusing on their essence, and therefore the *Shechinah* is said to be in exile. When there is true love among Jews, the *Shechinah* is revealed. We may now understand why the *Talmud* states that the second Temple was destroyed because of baseless hatred, and that the *Mashiach* will only come when we display unconditional love.

The *Arizal* writes that all the souls of Israel may be viewed as one large body. There are souls that are the "head" of the body and souls that are the "feet" of the body. Although each soul performs its individual purpose, just as each limb of the body has its specific task, in the final analysis, they are all part of the same body. It also follows that since all souls constitute one body, the performance of a *Mitzvah* by any one limb will be healthy for the entire body.

The Jerusalem *Talmud* explains the *Mitzvah* to love a fellow Jew with a parable: If a man used a knife to cut a piece of meat, and cut his hand in the process, can you imagine that one hand would hit the other to reprimand it? In the same vein, even if we observe Jews neglecting the *Mitzvot*, it is not our duty to reprimand them, but rather to reach out to them in love. Each Jew must view the other as part of the same body. Cultivating a day-to-day awareness that all Jews are limbs of the same body is the true fulfilment of the *Mitzvah*.

The *Baal Shem Tov* stated that it is incumbent upon a person to love a Jew even if one has never met him or her. This principle applies both in a geographical and spiritual sense. Even if a Jew is far removed from the *Torah* and *Mitzvot*, he or she must be treated with love and kindness; only with such an approach will a person desire to become observant.

Today's generation is that of the *Tinok Shenishbah*. This is a *Talmudic* term used to describe a "child who was abducted" from his parents and heritage from an early age. The vast majority of Jews today have not been raised in a *Torah*-observant environment. Therefore, it is incorrect for an observant Jew to berate their fellow Jews for their non-observance. The correct approach should be—in the words of *Tanya*—to "draw them with ropes of love" (Chapter 32)—back to their heritage.

One must follow the dictum of *Hillel*:

"Be one of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving creatures and drawing them near to the Torah".

(ETHICS OF THE FATHERS CHAPTER 1:12)

This directive is twofold. We have explained in Chapter 24, "*Torah* Study" that a Jew openly connects with G-d through *Torah*. The greatest act, therefore, of *Ahavat Yisrael* (love of a fellow Jew) is when one brings another Jew close to *Torah*. At the same time, *Hillel* warns that the creatures should be drawn near to the *Torah*, and not the opposite. *Torah* values should never be diluted to facilitate the non-observant.

The *Baal Shem Tov* said that love of a fellow Jew is the first portal that leads into the court of G-d. This is based on the teaching from *Zohar* that "G-d, *Torah*, and Israel are one". It therefore follows that the love for G-d, the love for *Torah*, and the love of a fellow Jew are one. Since the essence of G-d, *Torah*, and Israel is one, and therefore indivisible, when one grasps a part of the essence, one has the whole essence. For this reason, the love for a fellow Jew is an excellent barometer for one's love of G-d. If a person is lacking in *Ahavat Yisrael*, then he

is lacking in *Ahavat Hashem* (love of G-d), for one who loves the father should surely love the children.

The *Baal Shem Tov* also teaches that a soul may descend to this world and live for a lifetime for the sole purpose of doing a favour for a fellow Jew in the material world, and how much more so in the spiritual world. If this is the case, how can we ignore our responsibilities to our fellow Jew in the spiritual realm?

The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* once spoke about this teaching and asked an interesting question: How does one know which favour it is that is the soul's mission?

He replied that one doesn't know, and therefore one should treat every favour as if that is the reason one's soul came down to this world.

Refining One's Character

EVERY JEW IS a complex tale of two souls. As previously explained, a person is composed of a *Nefesh Elokit* and a *Nefesh HaBehamit*. The two souls are constantly engaged in battle oscillating between heaven and earth, soul and body, and the spiritual and material. The purpose of creation is to make an abode for G-d within this “two-souled” character, brokering a peace between the two parties, so that harmoniously they may fulfil together the purpose for which they have been created.

This idea is expressed by our Sages when they stated that the *Torah* has been given in order to make peace in the world. *Torah* is elsewhere defined as “power” and “salvation” in the sense that *Torah* gives a person the ability to overcome his or her baser nature, and the *Talmud* states that if one meets one's own Evil Inclination, then “drag him to the house of study”, for (G-d says), “I have created an Evil Inclination, and I have created the *Torah* as the antidote”.

If not for the fact that G-d helps us overcome the Evil Inclination, we would never have the ability to do so. Armed with *Torah*, a person can wage war against his or her darker nature, first subduing and then transforming and channeling its power. The *Nefesh HaBehamit* can be compared to an ox; it is coarse and animalistic. Yet it has powers to be extremely constructive if channelled in the correct way. *Torah* is the yoke that harnesses those powers and channels them into Divine service.

The *Talmud* speaks of the Good Inclination and the Evil Inclination. *Chassidut* teaches that the Good Inclination is the intellectual faculty of the *Nefesh Elokit* while the Evil Inclination is the Emotions of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. All negative character traits stem from the Emotions of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. The intellect of the *Nefesh HaBehamit* acts as an enabler for the emotions – the mind

finds a way to fulfil the desire. Take, for example, the emotion of *Chessed*. In the *Nefesh Elokit*, the *Sefirah* of *Chessed* represents the soul's love for G-d. In the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, this love is directed towards the material, and can degenerate into lust, making it ultimately very destructive.

We have already explained in Chapter 22, "The *Benoni*", that not everyone has the ability of the *Tzaddikim* to totally transform and sublimate the Emotions of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. The *Benoni* will always struggle with his or her *Nefesh HaBehamit*, and it is for that purpose that he or she has been created. Considering the power of the Evil Inclination, how are we to bridle the emotions of the *Nefesh HaBehamit*?

DIAGNOSIS

The first stage must be that of interpretation. Whenever an impulse enters one's mind or heart, one must first determine the origin of this impulse. For example, if a person has a passion for a forbidden relationship, then obviously the desire is not coming from the *Nefesh Elokit*, but from the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. But what if a person craves for a pursuit which can be seen as good, such as *Torah* study? How do we know if we are studying for the right reasons? If a person is not sure as to the motives for their desires, there is a simple test one can take that will give us the answer. Simply ask yourself: What is the result of the action? If the action results in something positive in terms of *Avodat Hashem*, then it stems from the *Nefesh Elokit*. If the result is negative, it stems from the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. In the case of *Torah* study, if a person is studying to learn how to fulfil G-d's will, then it is holy. If, however, a person studies to use the knowledge to humiliate another or to feed one's own ego, then it is not holy. This delineation is very useful in that it at least allows a person to understand from where the impulse is coming. Even though it does not necessarily help overcome the impulse, at least a person cannot fool himself or herself as to its source. The first stage is diagnosis. If a person does not feel well and goes to the doctor, the first relief is to find the cause of the malady. Once the cause has been identified, one can then apply the correct medicine.

TURN AWAY FROM EVIL

If it has been decided that the source is impure, one must then re-evaluate his or her intentions and act accordingly. The following treatment is based on the verse in Psalms Chapter 34: "Turn away from evil, do good, seek peace, and pursue it".

After the diagnosis, one must “turn away from evil”. This means that one should not only turn away in the face of evil, but one should also avoid a situation in which evil could arise. A person should never request a *Nisayon* – a test or a trial that would evaluate their level of *Avodat Hashem*. The *Talmud* tells us that King David asked for a test, and he failed. Nevertheless, if a trial or tribulation comes your way by Divine Providence (*Hashgachah Pratit*), you are meant to overcome it. Everything is a result of Divine Providence, and the very fact that you have been presented with such a test means that you have the energy and ability to overcome it. G-d would never give us a challenge that we didn’t have the capacity to surmount.

When calamity strikes, a person should realise that ultimately what is happening is for the good, even if, on the surface, it appears to be bad. This notion applies not only to tragedies that suddenly befall us without any explanation, but also to temptations and tests that we are confronted with daily. Such an approach—that every temptation and calamity is for the best—represents a massive act of faith. We have to draw on huge reserves of trust (*Bitachon*) that G-d knows what He is doing, and it is all for the good. The great *Tzaddikim* would demonstrate such faith even when faced with the greatest tragedies.

When one is tested on a daily basis, the test must be received in the manner in which it is given. The attitude should be that this is a G-d-given opportunity to exercise self-control, subduing and controlling one’s bad emotions. The *Zohar* states that whenever a bad impulse is subdued, “the glory of G-d diffuses throughout all the worlds”. This means that a person should not underestimate the immense value of subduing – even in thought – his or her Evil Inclination just once.

We live in a very permissive and promiscuous society, and in general there is a terrible lack of modesty (*Tzniut*). A *Torah*-observant Jew can hardly walk in the street without being confronted by immodest behaviour. What should one do in such a world? The first thing is to realise that this is a test. It is a wonderful opportunity to fulfil the *Mitzvah* of “not straying after one’s eyes” (Numbers 15:39). One should not feel bad that one has such an impulse for base thoughts or desires – after all, one has been created with a *Nefesh HaBehamit* – but one should instead channel that impulse into the permitted and rejoice at the chance to turn away from evil. If a person gives up on the fight and feels dejected and helpless, he or she should realise that such impulses come directly from the *Nefesh HaBehamit* and ultimately lead to sin.

If a person feels overpowered by his or her Evil Inclination, and is ready to give up the fight, he or she has to make the effort to withstand such negativity

and should summon up the energy to shout out at the *Nefesh HaBehamit*, demanding that the animal impulse release its grip. The truth is that negative thoughts creep into an empty mind. The mind should always be occupied with *Torah* thoughts, which will combat negativity. When a person is walking down the street, and he or she sees something that is distracting and immodest, the best method to fight the Evil Inclination in this regard is to divert his or her thoughts to *Torah*. This is why pious Jews review portions of *Torah* by heart when they walk in the street or find themselves in the store or subway. By focusing on *Torah* in such a way, we are creating a *Dirah BeTachtonim* in the highest form. The joy that one gives G-d because of such *Avodat Hashem* is immense.

If we still feel that the Evil Inclination looms large, we should mentally prostrate ourselves before G-d and ask for Divine mercy. We should contemplate on how low the *Nefesh Elokit* has fallen, sunken in the pits of iniquity. Before it came down to this world, the soul was basking in the light of the *Or Ein Sof*. Now it is wallowing in a body which is controlled by some fleeting bodily pleasure. The *Talmud* advises that if one feels overcome by the Evil Inclination, one should read the *Shema*, and if that does not help, one should realise that upon death, one will have to give a full account of one's deeds.

There is the possibility that disturbing thoughts can come to a person when they are praying or learning. If this happens, one should immediately divert his or her mind to *Torah* study. The principle applies in speech as well. Unfortunately, in today's society, avoiding gossip (*Lashon Hara* or *Rechilus*) is a major challenge. When one is tempted to become involved in a prohibited discussion, one should again realise that this is only the trappings of the Evil Inclination and will be the downfall of the person.

TIKKUN HAMIDDOT

Every negative character trait has a moment of contemplation attached to it that allows a person to reflect on its futility. For example, anger is a very destructive emotion, and many people suffer from bad tempers. In this area too, one must realise that if one is frustrated or angered by circumstances or people in our lives, this challenge provides a golden opportunity for *Avodat Hashem*.

Imagine the following scenario: A person is driving to an important meeting and suddenly he is stuck in an unexpected traffic jam which will make him very late. It can be extremely exasperating sitting in traffic, wasting one's precious time. Such a scenario would infuriate some people to such a degree that they would remain angry for the rest of the day. The correct approach in such a situation is to contemplate the following: Everything in this world, including

heavy traffic, is a result of Divine Providence. If you are going to miss your meeting, so be it—such circumstances are beyond a person’s control. Anger is tantamount to idolatry and a lack of faith in Divine Providence. G-d wants us to stay calm in the face of our problems, and we certainly should not take out our frustrations on other people. Challenging situations present an opportunity to demonstrate self-control and accept the fact that we are not in control of the world. While some people view challenges as an opportunity for growth, others are lazy and apathetic. The works of *Chassidut* are filled with advice on to how to cope with the vast array of spiritual maladies. The general principle is that the mind must rule the heart. Using meditative and contemplative techniques, a person can learn to bridle and subsequently channel his or her negative character traits and use them in a positive direction.

From a *Kabbalistic* point of view, this refinement of character, called *Tikkun HaMiddot*, is very much part and parcel of the Divine purpose in creation. Even small improvements are vastly appreciated by G-d. Each “refinement” or “correction” contributes to the general World Refinement (*Tikkun Olam*) which will be precipitated when *Mashiach* will come.

Some people are under the false impression that G-d does not concern Himself with minor details, such as whether a person resists temptation or not. This is not true. G-d—through His *Torah*—has communicated to us what is and is not important to Him. He emphatically states that we should serve Him with all our heart, soul, and might. G-d examines the heart of each individual to see how he or she serves Him, taking into account the person’s spiritual, physical, and emotional state of being. In fact, G-d leaves all the supernal realms and designates His sovereignty on Israel in general, and on each Jew to oversee each individual’s service. Every movement, sincere feeling, thought, and action is counted and appreciated.

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE POSITIVE

After “turning away from evil”, one is responsible for “doing good”. This means that a person should become so involved with the positive, that he or she doesn’t have time for anything negative. The mind is filled with the desire to perform the *Mitzvot* and to show *Chessed* to one’s fellow Jew. The righteous are involved day and night with the welfare of their brethren, not resting for a moment until the needs of the less fortunate have been met. Using one’s energy in such a positive way leaves little room for any negativity.

SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT

The final stage is “seek peace and pursue it”. This means that a person's *Nefesh Elokit* must sit down and communicate with the *Nefesh HaBehamit*. The *Nefesh Elokit*'s task is to convince the *Nefesh HaBehamit* that it should channel its energies into serving G-d rather than focusing its attention on vanity and emptiness. In the *Chassidic* community, this conversation took place publicly in the form of a *Chassidic* “gathering” called a *Farbrengen*. In a *Farbrengen*, a spiritual mentor (*Mashpia*) would lead the conversation and discuss self-improvement and self-refinement. He would never point a finger at anyone other than himself and would often discuss his own shortcomings and how to correct them.

In life, one must know three things: how it should be, how it is, and how it could be. How it should be is stated in the Code of Jewish Law. How it is, can be seen in the mirror. A *Farbrengen* is all about how it could be, and about moving from the state of “how it is” to “how it should be”. *Farbrengens* should be held regularly since it is human nature to need constant encouragement.

“Seek peace and pursue it” means that the ultimate aim is to make peace between the *Nefesh HaBehamit* and the *Nefesh Elokit*. Although initially a person should wage a constant war against the Evil Inclination, ultimately, instead of fighting, these two souls need to join forces in the fulfilment of creation. It means that the *Nefesh Elokit* understands the great advantage of being in the physical world where it can attach to *Atzmut* (see Chapter 19, “The Soul and the Afterlife”), and the *Nefesh HaBehamit* feels proud to be a vehicle for the Divine.

On the holiday of *Simchat Torah*, we “rejoice with the *Torah*” by dancing with it and renewing the yearly cycle of reading the *Torah*. The previous *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, Rabbi Yoseph *Yitzchak Schneersohn*, once said that in truth the *Torah* scroll would like to jump out of the ark and dance itself, but it has a basic problem: it has no feet. The *Torah* asks the Jews to be its feet. *Torah* is Divine wisdom, and Divine wisdom wants to “dance” in the world, but it lacks a vehicle. G-d gave the *Torah* to the Jewish people and asked them to become the vehicle to that Divine Will.

Teshuvah – Returning to One’s Roots

THE PROPHETS TELL us that prior to the coming of *Mashiach*, there will be sounded a great *Shofar*. Traditionally the *Shofar* awakens us to *Teshuvah*, and there is no doubt that the notes of this great *Shofar* are already reverberating throughout the Jewish community. We are living in the generation of the *Baal Teshuvah* (literally, master of *Teshuvah*). Yeshivot and seminaries across the world are filled with young people who are returning to their roots and are learning *Torah* and keeping *Mitzvot*. This is a prelude to the final redemption with *Mashiach*. The “returnee” (*Chozar BeTeshuvah*) undergoes a transformation in terms of belief, dress, and observance. In this chapter, we shall explore what *Kabbalah* has to say about *Teshuvah*, and will take a look at its cosmic effect.

The word *Teshuvah* is usually translated as repentance. In fact, there is a well-known prayer recited on the High Holy Days which states that *Teshuvah*, *Tefillah*, and *Tzedakah* – translated as “Repentance”, “Prayer” and “Charity” – can avert the evil decree. This translation is not entirely accurate. *Teshuvah* is better translated as “return” and signifies a return to the original state. Classically, *Teshuvah* is comprised of three ingredients: regret of misdeed, decision to change, and verbal expression of one’s sins. Technically, whenever one sins, one is mandated to do *Teshuvah*. The Ten Days of *Teshuvah* between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are specifically designated for *Teshuvah*, when the gates of prayer and repentance are open wider than at any other time in the cyclical Jewish year.

Kabbalistically, *Teshuvah* takes on more of a cosmic dynamic. The word “*Teshuvah*” in Hebrew may be read as, “tashuv hey”, literally, “returning the letter *Hey*”. The last letter *Hey* of the *Tetragrammaton* refers to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*,

which is synonymous with *Shechinah*, which is how G-d manifests Himself as a Sovereign within the creation.

The Hebrew word for Jerusalem, the holy capital, is Yerushalayim. This word is in fact a composite of two words: *Yirah Shalem*, meaning “a perfect state of awe”. When the Jewish nation is totally cognisant of that reality, the *Shechinah* rests in Jerusalem. This was the state in Temple times. However, when the Jewish people sinned as a result of insensitivity to G-dliness, the *Shechinah* was removed, and Jerusalem was subsequently destroyed. The name of G-d was “fractured” and the final *Hey*, representing the *Shechinah*, went into exile. *Teshuvah* is therefore the process whereby the name of G-d is once again complete, the *Hey* is restored, and the *Shechinah* rests in Jerusalem within the rebuilt Temple. The physical state of Jerusalem correlates completely with the spiritual state of Yerushalayim (perfect awe). In this sense, *Teshuvah* therefore represents re-sensitising oneself to the Divine Presence, and returning the world to its original state in the Garden of Eden where the presence of the *Shechinah* was manifest.

Each individual must do *Teshuvah*. The *Talmud* states that one should spend all one’s days doing *Teshuvah*. The *Zohar* goes even further and states that *Mashiach* will come so that *Tzaddikim* will do *Teshuvah*. This statement begs the question: Why would a *Tzaddik*, who has successfully conquered his Evil Inclination, need to do *Teshuvah*?

There is a difference between a *Tzaddik* and a *Baal Teshuvah*. A *Tzaddik* has never erred; he constantly fulfils the will of G-d. The *Baal Teshuvah*, however, has strayed, and feels bitterly disappointed about his distance from G-d. His spiritual yearning is far more powerful than that of the *Tzaddik*. Though his descent into sin was, on the surface, due to his Evil Inclination, in truth the inner intent was a descent for the purpose of ascent. When a person does *Teshuvah* out of true love for G-d, his sins are transformed into merits. The descent of sin becomes the springboard which catapults the *Baal Teshuvah* from darkness to the heights of spirituality.

The *Tzaddik* lacks the strength of the *Baal Teshuvah*, and consequently, the *Baal Teshuvah* is on a higher level than a *Tzaddik*. When *Mashiach* comes, even the *Tzaddik* will see that even though he never intentionally sinned, his service was somewhat lacking in fervour, and he, too, will feel the same spiritual yearning experienced by the *Baal Teshuvah*. In that era, even the *Tzaddik* will do *Teshuvah*.

The revelation of *Mashiach* is dependent on our actions in the time of Exile. *Maimonides* rules that *Teshuvah* is a prerequisite to redemption. In his words, “the *Torah* has promised that at the end of their exile they will do *Teshuvah* and

will be immediately redeemed”. In our generation, this means that amidst the chaos, we must re-sensitize ourselves and the world around us to the *Shechinah*. This is what the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* called, “Living with *Mashiach*”. Even though we may live in the modern world, with all its comforts and conveniences, we should feel broken-hearted that G-dliness is not openly revealed. Our mundane activities should be infused with the desire to know G-d in all His ways. In fact, on a certain level, transforming the mundane into holiness is the highest level of *Teshuvah*. It is the clearest indication that G-dliness has not been relegated to obvious moments of religious involvement, but rather the connection with the Divine spans all echelons and areas of life, even the most mundane.

It needs to be reiterated that *Teshuvah* today must be accompanied by tremendous joy. The Evil Inclination’s greatest weapon is depression, for once the state of helplessness and hopelessness grips a person’s soul, it is very difficult to find the tremendous energy required for introspection and self-improvement. Even if one has committed a terrible sin, a prolonged or excessive degree of sadness is not healthy for the souls of most people in our generation. *Teshuvah* must be done with great *Simchah*—enthusiastically and with joy and feeling. The greatest gift that G-d can give a person is the opportunity to be elevated from the mire of sin to the pristine and eternal connection.

 ✨ CHAPTER 29

Rebbe

THE CONCEPT OF having faith in the righteous (*Emunat Tzaddikim*), is deeply ingrained in the Jewish psyche. Jews who find themselves in trouble or are in need of a blessing for any aspect of their lives, will often approach a *Tzaddik* and ask for his guidance and blessing. You may be wondering, though, why it is necessary to turn to a *Tzaddik* when we can direct our requests to G-d. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* in the *Tanya* clarifies the matter with the following explanation:

The *Nefesh Elokit* of a Jew is a “part of G-d Above”, a spark of the Divine essence. However, although all souls are rooted in the essence of G-d and are interdependent, as these souls descend into bodies, they contain many levels and gradations. We could view the national pool of souls in the form of a human being. Some souls are the head of the body, and some souls are the feet of the body.

To quote from *Tanya* Chapter 2 (commenting on the origin and purpose of holy souls):

The supernal root of every Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah in the community of Israel on high, in descending degree by degree, through the evolution of the worlds Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Assiyah from His blessed wisdom—as it is written, “You have made them all with wisdom”, the Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah of the ignorant and unworthy come into being: yet they remain bound and united, with a wonderful and quintessential unity, with their original essence and entity, namely, the extension of the Supernal Wisdom. For the nurture and life of the Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah of the ignorant are drawn from the Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah of the Tzaddikim

and Sages, the heads of Israel in their generation. This explains the comment of our Sages on the verse, "And to cleave unto Him"; "He who cleaves unto a Torah scholar is deemed by the Torah as if he had become attached to the very Shechinah". For through their attachment to the scholars, the Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah of the ignorant are bound up and united with their original essence and their root in the Supernal Wisdom.

Stated simply, a *Rebbe* or *Tzaddik* is not merely an individual who is more learned and pious than those who seek his guidance, but one whose soul is a head to the body of Israel. Those who strive to achieve a "connection" (*Hitkashrut*) with the *Tzaddik* are people who see in him a source of spiritual nurturing and consider themselves as limbs to his head. The *Tzaddik*, in turn, is connected to them in the same way that a head is connected to the body. When Jews approach their *Rebbe* to request a blessing, they feel that they and their *Rebbe* are of the same body, striving towards the same ultimate goal despite their obvious differences in spiritual stature. The *Tzaddik* or *Rebbe* is not an intermediary that divides, but rather an intermediary that unites.

IN EVERY GENERATION

The *Talmud* states that in every generation there are 36 great *Tzaddikim*. Amongst the 36 *Tzaddikim*, there exists the *Tzaddik HaDor*, the supreme *Tzaddik* or leader (*Nassi*) of that generation. King David states in Psalms, "The *Tzaddik* is the foundation of the world" (Proverbs 10:25), which means that the entire world rests on the merit of the *Tzaddik HaDor*. An example of a *Tzaddik HaDor* is Moses, whom our Sages describe as a "*Rayah Mehemna*" (the name of a section in the *Zohar*).

There are two interpretations of this term:

1. A leader who is devoted to the needs of his flock, and
2. one who sustains and nurtures the faith of the Jewish people.

The first interpretation describes Moses as a compassionate and dynamic leader, who will go to extraordinary lengths to protect and lead his flock, and will make sure not to overlook any lost sheep. The second interpretation signals that the job of the leader is to inspire his people, feeding them with faith and constantly connecting them with G-d. The *Talmud* describes Jews as "*Maaminim Bnei Maaminim*" (believers and the descendants of believers) for they have inherited faith from their ancestors. However, we are not always conscious of our faith; it is the job of Moses to help each Jew become aware of and internalise his or her faith.

The *Zohar* adds that this task applies not only to Moses who led the people out of Egypt, but also to “the extension of Moses in all generations”, who are the heads of the Jewish people.

THE SOURCE OF OUR FAITH

In order to understand how Moses nurtured faith, we must first analyse the source of a Jew’s inherent faith. *Chassidut* explains that since the soul has numerous levels, the higher levels of the soul perceive G-dliness.

We have explained previously that the soul level of *Nefesh* is in the world of *Assiyah*, *Ruach* in *Yetzirah*, *Neshamah* in the world of *Beriah*, *Chayah* in *Atzilut*, and *Yechidah* is rooted in the *Ein Sof* itself. The levels of *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* are felt within the body—the *Nefesh* in the blood, *Ruach* in the heart, and *Neshamah* in the brain—while the levels of *Chayah* and *Yechidah* are peripheral soul powers that are not en-clothed within the body. Because the lower levels of the soul are in contact with the higher levels, the soul within the body draws its faith from the higher levels that perceive G-dliness.

The *Talmud* describes this phenomenon with the quote, “his *Mazal* perceives”. In this context, *Mazal* means the “source of influence”, referring to the soul as it exists in the higher realms. Since the higher levels of the soul see and experience G-dliness, this in turn affects the soul which is en-clothed within the body.

A second explanation offered by *Chassidut* maintains that faith is rooted in the very essence of the soul, a level above that of “his *Mazal* perceives”. The essence of the soul connects with G-dliness through an essential bond; a connection that is not dependent on any external factors. This connection is even above the quality of perception that transcends thought. The implication is that even if a Jew is unaware of his or her Jewish identity, that person will still have a connection to his or her Creator, albeit a bond that is buried deep within a person’s subconscious.

There is a difference between these two causes of faith: in the first case, where the soul derives faith from the higher levels’ perception of G-dliness, the faith is not internalised and remains a Transcendent Light. This is because the soul as it exists in the spiritual realm is too elevated to be en-clothed within the body, and as a result, the faith cannot be internalised and has only a peripheral effect. In contrast, the faith that stems from an essential connection with G-d is revealed even within the body, for the essence is not constrained by the concealment of the body.

The function of the “faithful shepherd” is to raise our faith above the influence of the higher levels of the soul (whose effect is only peripheral), and

make our faith reflect the essence of the soul (whose effect is internal). This nurturing is achieved by imparting the knowledge of G-d to the Jewish people while simultaneously demanding that Jews demonstrate self-sacrifice for the sake of the *Torah* and the *Mitzvot*.

We may now clearly define the role of a *Rebbe*. Primarily the *Rebbe* is a teacher, a *Rav*, who will impart his vast knowledge in a most inspiring way. He will draw upon peripheral faith and internalise it within the intellect, which in turn will ignite our hearts and motivate action. In addition, the *Rebbe* takes on the role of a king, who demands self-sacrifice from his subjects and reveals in them the essential connection they have with G-d. The *Rebbe* peers deeply into the soul of his student and touches his essence. He brings that essence to the surface, which permeates every level of the student's thought, speech, and action.

A famous *Chassid* once described the role of a *Rebbe* as a “*Yechidah* conductor”. It is the *Rebbe's* job to reveal the essence of each Jew and allow his *Yechidah* to rise to the surface and be integrated within his day-to-day activities. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* in the *Tanya* writes that every Jew has a spark of Moses within his soul. Moses has a “collective soul” that encompasses all the souls of the generation. The *Yechidah* level of each Jew (i.e. the spark of Moses within each Jew) connects with the national *Yechidah* as contained within the *Rebbe*. It is the *Rebbe* who has the ability to touch every soul on the *Yechidah* level.

When a *Chassid* goes to his *Rebbe*, he is not only going to learn *Torah* and be inspired in the ways of *Avodat Hashem*. Ultimately, he wishes to attach himself to the *Yechidah* level of the *Rebbe*, and he aspires to internalise that level on a day-to-day basis. After an encounter with the *Rebbe*, a person should feel as if he or she has met a true servant of G-d, one who epitomises G-d's will and desire in this world. The *Rebbe* reflects what the Almighty wants from a human being in this world. Encountering a *Rebbe* should inspire one to live a life in which one's faith has been internalised and expresses itself in *Torah* learning and the performance of *Mitzvot*.

A group of students once asked the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* about the role of a *Rebbe*. The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* explained that a *Rebbe* is like a switch that connects the power station with the light bulb. The connection is already there—the *Rebbe's* role is to activate that connection. In order to be able to do this, the *Rebbe* himself must be on the level of *Yechidah*. In fact, the *Tzaddik HaDor* represents the *Yechidah* of that generation, and holds the keys to realise the *Yechidah* of that generation. He can speak to the souls of the world's Jews—no matter where they are, either spiritually or geographically—and can arouse their latent soul powers.

The *Baal Shem Tov* described the *Tzaddik* of each generation as a *Baal Teshuvah*. In a literal sense, this means that the *Tzaddik* is the “*Baal*” (owner) of *Teshuvah* since he holds the keys which can open up people’s hearts to do *Teshuvah*.

The *Talmud* is replete with miraculous stories about *Tzaddikim*. These stories are testimony to G-d’s Hand in nature, and they demonstrate that He is Master of everything. G-d entrusted supernatural powers to *Tzaddikim*. G-d enables those who are completely righteous and subservient to Him to override the laws of nature, and this opens an aperture in the veil that hides the presence of G-d in this mundane world. When a *Tzaddik* or *Rebbe* performs a miracle, such as blessing an infertile couple to have children, or healing the sick, we gain a glimpse of the Divine. We are catapulted beyond the parameters of the restricted universe and its natural order, and we are transported into the transcendent and infinite G-dly world order.

There is a fascinating *Midrash* which states that it originally arose in G-d’s thoughts to create the world with the attribute of *Gevurah* (severity). He saw, however, that the world could not endure with *Gevurah* alone, and combined with it the attribute of *Chessed* (kindness). The *Tanya* reveals the mystical meaning of this *Midrash*. The attribute of *Gevurah* obscures and camouflages the *Or Ein Sof* in this world, so that G-d appears to be “remote”. This element of Divine distance is tempered by *Chessed*, namely the revelation and manifestation of G-dliness through the *Tzaddikim* and the signs and miracles recorded in the *Torah*. The *Tzaddikim* lift the veil of concealment and allow us a glimpse of the Divine.

Our Generation

WE STAND AT the threshold of the Final Redemption. “*This generation is the last generation of ‘Exile’ (Galut) and the first generation of ‘Redemption’ (Geulah)*”. This phenomenal statement was made on numerous occasions by the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*, Rabbi *Menachem Mendel Schneersohn*. He was not alone in perceiving this era as that which the *Talmud* describes as “the epoch of the Messiah”. Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, an eminent seminary principal of pre-war Europe who was tragically murdered by the Nazis, also proclaimed in his book *Ikvitah Dimshichah* (The Footsteps of the Messiah) that the travails of World War Two signified the birth pangs of the Messiah.

The *Talmud* in tractate *Sotah* predicts tumultuous times immediately before the redemption. *Maimonides* points out that although the Prophets have made numerous predictions about the advent of *Mashiach*, the exact circumstances of his arrival are unclear. Nevertheless, the *Talmud* in tractate *Sanhedrin* states that the world will exist for 6000 years, after which a new order will be ushered in. If we see each millennium as a day, it is now Friday afternoon, and it is time to welcome the holy Sabbath, which represents the seventh millennium.

Quite amazingly, after 1900 years of exile, the Jewish people have returned en masse to their homeland. From the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. until the beginning of the twentieth century, Israel’s population didn’t exceed three hundred thousand. Throughout that entire period, the land of Israel was filled with swamps and empty deserts, resulting in malaria infestation, which stands in stark contrast to Temple times, when the land was populated in the millions and was flowing with milk and honey. Today, the land has been transformed. Deserts have been made into luscious pastures and the population has again

swelled into the millions. It is strikingly clear that this was a land awaiting the return of its people. No other nation had successfully managed to inhabit the land in significant numbers, and no other nation managed to cultivate its soil.

Against the odds, during the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973, Israel miraculously scored victory over formidable enemies who threatened its very existence from all sides. Today, the threats of terrorism within Israel, and anti-Semitism in the Diaspora, still present a real danger to our people. Notwithstanding all of this, when one sits back and contemplates the long Exile and subsequent return, one realises that Jewish history transcends all rules of natural history, and that we are still in the midst of a process that will culminate in the coming of *Mashiach*. With telescopic vision, the *Rebbe* declared that while even the “beginning of Redemption” (*Atchaltah Di-geulah*) is clearly a matter of the future, the Divine “redemptive process” has already made its mark upon empirical reality.

The world is slowly but surely moving in this direction. The inscription on the United Nations building in New York is the famous quote from:

“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift sword against nation, and neither shall they know war anymore”.

ISAIAH 2:4

Today, unilateral atomic weapon limitation agreements attest to the fulfilment of this prophecy. World organisations are working hard to ensure that no human being on the face of this planet will die from unnecessary disease or starvation, which is once again testimony to a subtle global shift in the right direction. In a similar vein, technology has advanced to such a degree that it is possible to reach out to the world community in an instant. *Mashiach* will have no problem sitting in Jerusalem and teaching *Torah* to the entire world, “out of Zion shall go forth *Torah* and the word of G-d from Jerusalem”. (Isaiah 2:3). Everything will culminate in the coming of *Mashiach*, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the full in-gathering of the exiles.

The final move in this lurch forward to re-spiritualise the world. In this area, the world is in the throes of a revolution. Never has *Kabbalah*, *Chassidut*, and mysticism been so popular and in such high demand. People are thirsty for the knowledge of G-d. The response of *Mashiach* to the *Baal Shem Tov* that he will come when the wellsprings of the *Baal Shem Tov*'s teachings will be widely disseminated has taken on new dimensions. Today, wherever you are in the world you can immediately connect to *Torah* teachings, through both audio

and visual media. The greatest challenge is not to be diverted or distracted by external stimuli but rather to immerse oneself in the refreshing and invigorating waters of *Pnimitiyut HaTorah* – the inner dimension of the *Torah*. Let us all dance together to greet the *Mashiach*, may he come soon in our days, *Amen*.

Appendix

Eyewitness Accounts of Higher Realms

IN THIS BOOK, we have often referred to the existence of higher realms or worlds. Has any live human being ever experienced those realms and delivered eyewitness accounts of their experiences? Has anyone ever communicated with a departed soul? We shall present in brief some source material attesting to those experiences. The following are examples taken from the *Talmud*:

ACCOUNTS FROM THE TALMUD

- The *Talmud* Tractate *Shabbat* 88b attests to the fact that Moses ascended to heaven and debated with the angels about whether the *Torah* should be given to mankind.
- After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Romans crushed the Jewish community and martyred ten of its greatest Sages. When the ten martyrs were confronted with the news of their death, they asked for three days to find out whether it had been the decree of Heaven. Rabbi Yishmael the High Priest then ascended to Heaven by uttering a Divine Name and asked their question. He was told that their death had indeed been decreed by Heaven. This account was incorporated into the liturgy for *Yom Kippur* in the poem entitled *Eilah Ezkarah*. See also *Talmud* tractate *Berachot* 51a.
- The *Talmud* Tractate *Ketubot* 77b explains that one of the greatest Sages of the *Mishnah*, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, visited the Garden of Eden.

THE ARIZAL

More recently, there are records of the soul ascents of the holy *Arizal*. As the *Arizal* slept one *Shabbat* afternoon, his student Rabbi *Avraham Halevi* noticed him whispering. Rabbi *Avraham* bent down to hear what the *Arizal* was saying, and the *Arizal* woke up. Rabbi *Avraham* explained that he wished to hear what his holy teacher was saying.

The *Arizal* said, “Whenever I sleep, my soul ascends heavenward through certain paths known to me. The angels bring my soul before the angel *Matatron*, the Minister of the Interior, who asks me which seminary I wish to attend. At the seminary, they transmit to me the secrets of the *Torah* that have never been revealed, and that were not known even in the days of the *Tannaim* (the Sages of the *Mishnah*).

After Rabbi *Avraham* begged the *Arizal* to reveal just one secret to him, the *Arizal* laughed and replied, “I testify by Heaven and Earth, if I were to live eighty consecutive years, without exaggeration, to relate what I learned this time on the subject of *Bilam’s* donkey, I would not be able to conclude. So how can I reveal just one of the secrets to you: they are all inseparable?”

This account is recorded in the book *Shivchei Ari*, Chapter 2.

CHABAD REBBEIM

Even more contemporary are stories of the *Chabad* Rabbis who had visions of departed souls. Rabbi *Shneur Zalman* of *Liadi*, the founder of *Chabad* and affectionately known as the *Alter Rebbe*, related that when he was imprisoned in St. Petersburg on false charges of treason, he was visited by his departed masters, the *Maggid* of *Mezritch* and the *Baal Shem Tov*. They told him that the real reason for his imprisonment was his wide dissemination of *Chassidut* which had caused a heavenly charge against him. He asked them whether he should stop, and they told him that on the contrary he should continue, and he was eventually vindicated and released on the 19th of *Kislev*, which became celebrated by *Chassidim* as the new year of *Chassidut*.

Chassidic leaders were also able to enter the Garden of Eden and hear departed souls teaching *Torah*. Rabbi *Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn* relates in *Sefer HaSichot* (5697, p.190):

My father [Rabbi *Sholom Dovber Schneersohn*—the fifth *Lubavitcher Rebbe*] visited the “resting place” (*Ohel*) of his father [Rabbi *Shmuel Schneersohn*—the

fourth *Lubavitcher Rebbe*] on Thursday, the 16th of *Elul* 5652 (1892), the last day of the seven festive days following the wedding of my aunt.

On the following day, he visited the *Ohel* once again, remaining there for many hours, and upon his return, his eyes were swollen. These two visits during the *Sheva Berachot* [literally, “seven blessings”; celebrations held during the week after a wedding] were quite unusual. On *Shabbat*, my father delivered a *Chassidic* discourse and prayed for many hours; in general, his entire conduct on that *Shabbat* was considered out of the ordinary. A few weeks later, my father revealed the reason for his strange behaviour: His custom was that after exerting himself in preparing a *Chassidic* discourse for recital in public, he would deliver it only after obtaining permission from Above. He knew he had been granted permission if the subject of the discourse had become “one” with him. The discourse of that *Shabbat*, however, had not become one with him even after much exertion, so he decided to visit “the master of the subject”, the one who had originally expounded the idea, which in this case was his father, Rabbi *Shmuel*. This required two visits to his father’s resting place, which resulted in his finally succeeding to become one with the subject. In return for his tremendous exertion, his father rewarded him.

That *Shabbat* was the 18th of *Elul*, the birthday of the *Baal Shem Tov*. His father told him, “Come let us go hear a *Torah* discourse from the *Baal Shem Tov*”. He took my father along. Later on, my father described the place where they went and commented that “*Gan Eden* is a place of order, unlike *Sheol* which is described as a place of “imbalance” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). My father related that on that *Shabbat* he heard seven teachings from the *Baal Shem Tov*.

These seven teachings that Rabbi *Sholom Dovber* heard from the *Baal Shem Tov* are recorded in the book *Keter Shem Tov*.

IN SUMMARY

It is clear from the accounts presented above that *Tzaddikim* and *Chassidic* leaders were able to communicate with past souls and enter heavenly realms. Most fascinating was that despite their being giants of the spirit, their feet remained firmly on the ground, and they paid great attention to all the spiritual and material needs of their people. This indicates true connection to *Atzmut* which transcends both the material and spiritual realms.

Glossary

- Adam HaRishon*(lit. “the first man”) Biblical Adam
- Adam Kadmon*(lit. “primordial man”) The will
of the *Or Ein Sof* to create
- Ahavat Hashem*love of G-d
- Ahavat Yisrael*love of a fellow Jew
- Aleph Bet*the Hebrew alphabet
- Amidah*.....the silent prayer said while standing
- Assiyah*the world of “action”, lowest of the
four worlds of Creation
- Atzilut*.....the world of “emanation”, highest of
the four worlds of Creation
- Atzmut*.....the essence of G-d
- Avodat Hashem*.....service of G-d
- Baal Teshuvah*.....(lit. “a returnee”) One who has become
observant of the commandments
- Benoni*the intermediate person; between
the *Tzaddik* and the *Rasha*
- Beriah*.....the world of “creation”, second-highest
of the four worlds of Creation
- Binah*.....*Sefirah* of understanding
- Bitachon*trust in G-d
- Bnei Yisrael*.....(lit. “the children of Israel”) The Jewish people
- Chabad*acronym for *Chochmah*, *Binah*, *Daat* also the
name of the worldwide Chassidic movement
- Chagat*acronym for *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*

<i>Challah</i>	bread used on <i>Shabbat</i> and festivals
<i>Chassid</i>	(pl. <i>Chassidim</i>) follower(s) of the <i>Chassidic</i> movement
<i>Chassidism</i>	movement of Judaism that focuses on the study of <i>Kabbalah</i> ; founded by the <i>Baal Shem Tov</i>
<i>Chassidut</i>	<i>Chassidic</i> philosophy
<i>Chayah</i>	Hebrew for “living one”; second highest of five general souls
<i>Chayot Hakodesh</i>	(lit. “holy beings”) A group of angels
<i>Chessed</i>	<i>Sefirah</i> of kindness
<i>Chochmah</i>	<i>Sefirah</i> of wisdom
<i>Daat Elyon</i>	supernal knowledge
<i>Daat</i>	<i>Sefirah</i> of Knowledge
<i>Daat Tachton</i>	terrestrial knowledge
<i>Dirah BeTachtonim</i>	quoted from the <i>Midrash</i> that G-d desired to have a “dwelling place in the lower worlds”; the purpose of Creation
<i>Drush</i>	“homiletic” interpretation of the <i>Torah</i> ; second-highest level of <i>Parades</i>
<i>Ein Sof</i>	(lit. “Without end”) the Infinite G-d as en-clothed in Creation
<i>Elokut</i>	G-dliness
<i>Emet</i>	truth
<i>Emunah</i>	faith
<i>Farbrengen</i>	<i>Chassidic</i> gathering
<i>Galut</i>	the diaspora, exile
<i>Gehinom</i>	purgatory
<i>Gevurah</i>	<i>Sefirah</i> of strength
<i>Gilgul</i>	reincarnation
<i>Hashgachah Pratit</i>	Divine Providence
<i>Hatzlachah</i>	success
<i>Havaye</i>	the <i>Tetragrammaton</i> ; four-letter name of G-d
<i>Hiddur Mitzvah</i>	beautification of the <i>Mitzvah</i> ; i.e. doing a commandment in a beautiful way
<i>Hod</i>	<i>Sefirah</i> of splendour
<i>Kabbalah</i>	(lit. “received”) mystical tradition of the <i>Torah</i>
<i>Kaddish</i>	prayer recited in the memory of a departed soul
<i>Kav</i>	circular “beam” of pre- <i>Tzimtzum</i> Light
<i>Kedushah</i>	holiness

- Kelipah*(pl. *Kelipot*; lit. “peel” for “shell”) words used by *Kabbalah* to describe coverings of impurity
- Kelipat Nogah*(lit. “illuminating shell”) *Kelipah* that can be utilised for good
- Keli*vessel
- Keter**Sefirah* of crown
- Light*English for “*Or*”. Metaphor for Divine energy
- Malchut**Sefirah* of kingship
- Mashiach*(lit. “anointed one”) the Messiah
- Mazal*.....(pl. *Mazalot*) constellation or planetary influence
- Memale Kol Almin*.....light that fills all worlds; also referred to as the *Kav*
- Mezuzah*.....parchment scroll attached to doorpost
- Midrash*anthology of Rabbinic scriptural commentary
- Mikvah*ritual bath used for spiritual purification
- Mishnah*.....Oral Law of the *Torah* compiled by *Tannaim* under the leadership of Rabbi *Yehudah* HaNassi
- Mitnaged*(pl. *Mitnagdim*) opponents of the Chassidic movement
- Mitzvah*(pl. *Mitzvot*) Divine commandment(s) derived from the *Torah*
- Modeh Ani*.....first words of the following prayer said immediately upon awakening:
“*I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have restored my soul within me; Your faithfulness is abundant*”.
- Mussar*(lit. “discipline”) a movement of Judaism that encourages people to study ethics and morals and to improve character
- Nefesh Elokit*G-dly Soul of a person
- Nefesh HaBehamit*animalistic Soul of a person
- Nefesh*Hebrew for “soul of vitality”; lowest of five general souls
- Nehiy*acronym for *Netzach*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*
- Neshamah*.....Hebrew for “breath of life”; third highest of five general souls
- Netzach**Sefirah* of victory
- Nigleh*revealed dimension of *Torah*
- Nistarim*.....clandestine *Kabbalistics* during the days of *Baal Shem Tov*

- Nistar* inner dimension of *Torah*
Olam (lit. “concealment”) world
Olam Haba the World to Come
Ophanim group of angels
Or Ein Sof Hebrew for “Light of the Infinite”; metaphor
for Divine energy used in creation
Or Makkif a peripheral Light
Or Pnimi an inner Light
Pardes (lit. “orchard”) acronym for four levels of *Torah* study
Pshat “simple” interpretation of the *Torah*;
most basic level of *Pardes*
Rasha wicked person
Rebbe leader of *Chassidim*
Remez “allusionary” interpretation of the *Torah*;
third-highest level of *Pardes*
Rosh Hashanah the Jewish New Year
Ruach HaKodesh (lit. “holy spirit”) Divine inspiration
Ruach Hebrew for “spirit”; fourth-highest of five general souls
Seder Hishtalshlut chain-ordered process used in Creation
Sefer Torah *Torah* Scroll
Sefirah (pl. *Sefirot*) A channel of Divine energy
or attribute used in Creation
Seraphim group of angels
Shabbat Sabbath
Shechinah Divine Presence
Shema (or *Shema Yisrael*) beginning word(s) of the prayer
“Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One”.
Shevirat HaKelim shattering or breakage of the Vessels
Shiva seven-day mourning period
Shliach emissary
Shofar ram’s horn blown on primarily on *Rosh Hashanah*
Siddur prayer book
Simchah joy
Sitra Achra (lit. “the other side”) the side of impurity
Sod “secret/mystical” interpretation of
the *Torah*; highest level of *Pardes*
Sovev Kol Almin light that transcends all worlds
Tachanun prayer of supplication recited after *Amidah*

<i>Taharat Hamishpachah</i>	laws of family purity
<i>Talmud</i>	repository of Jewish Oral Law; an explanation of the <i>Mishnah</i>
<i>Tannaim</i>	Rabbis who authored the <i>Mishnah</i> during the first centuries of the Common-Era
<i>Tefillah</i>	prayer
<i>Tefillin</i>	leather boxes and straps worn by Jewish men
<i>Teshuvah</i>	repentance
<i>Tiferet</i>	<i>Sefirah</i> of beauty
<i>Tikkun HaMiddot</i>	correction of negative character traits
<i>Tikkun Olam</i>	correction of the world
<i>Tinok Shenishbah</i>	(lit. “Child abducted at early age”) term used for estranged Jews
<i>Torah</i>	(lit. “instruction”) the Five Books of Moses in particular, and all Scriptural text in general
<i>Tzaddik HaDor</i>	<i>Tzaddik</i> , or leader, of the generation
<i>Tzaddik</i>	righteous person
<i>Tzedakah</i>	charity
<i>Tzimtzum</i>	Divine “contraction” used in Creation
<i>Tzitzit</i>	fringes on garment worn by Jewish men
<i>Yahrzeit</i>	anniversary of death
<i>Yechidah</i>	Hebrew for “singular one”; highest of five general souls
<i>Yeshivah</i>	<i>Torah</i> academy
<i>Yesod</i>	<i>Sefirah</i> or foundation
<i>Yetzirah</i>	World of “Formation”, third highest of the four worlds of Creation
<i>Yiddishkeit</i>	<i>Torah</i> Judaism

Dedications

לזכות הרה"ה ר' ברוך שלום הכהן שי' כהן
וזוגתו דבורה תחי'
לאורך ימים ושנים טובות
מתוך בריאות נכונה ורוב נחת
חסידותי מכל המשפחה

לזכות

הרה"ח ר' ניסן דוד שי' דובאוו

וזוגתו שרה תחי'

בשבה והודי' להקב"ה בהגיע לשנת

הששים לאורך ימים ושנים טובות

ויה"ר שנזכה לראות מכל יו"ה רוב נחת

הסידותי בבריאות נכונה בג"ור גם יחד

והצלחה רבה בהשליחות, ומשיה **!NOW**

לזכות ר' יעקב קאפל בן מרים שי'
וזוגתו לאה בת שרה תחי'
לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות
עם רוב נהת מכל בני משפחתם
בבריאות הנכונה ופרנסה בהרחבה

לזכות הבהור הבר מצוה
ארי' יוסף יצחק שי'
ש"ק פ' בא ה'תשפ"ג
שיגדל להיות חסיד ירא שמים ולמדן
לאורך ימים ושנים טובות
יעקב אליעזר ומישל רחל ברוך שיהי'

לעילוי נשמת

ר' ראובן בן ברוך ז"ל

DEDICATED IN FOND MEMORY

OF OUR DEAR FRIEND

RAYMOND LYONS

העמיד דור ישרים יבורך

בנים ובני בנים עוסקים בתורה

ובמצוות עטרת זקנים בני בנים

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

לעילוי נשמת
ריצי הכהן כדורי ז"ל

DEDICATED TO THE CHERISHED
MEMORY OF OUR DEAR FRIEND

RITCHIE KHEDOURI

MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE AND
REAP THE JUST REWARD FOR ALL
HIS GOOD DEEDS IN THIS WORLD

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

לזכות ההתן הרה"ת ר' איתן שי' וקסמן
והכלה חי' מושקא תחי' כהן
ביום התונתם בשעה טובה ומוצלחת
אדר"ח אדר ל' שבט ה'תשפ"ג
ויה"ר שיבנו בית נאמן בישראל ויזכו להעמיד
דור ישרים יבורך בנים ובני בנים עוסקים
בתורה ובמצוות לאורך ימים ושנים טובות

לזכות הבהור הבר מצוה
הת' זאב גבריאל הכהן שי' כהן
שי"ק פ' תרומה ב' אדר ה'תשפ"ג
יה"ר שיגדל להיות חסיד ירא שמים
ולמדן לאורך ימים ושנים טובות

