

Questions and Answers

Prepared By Ner Le'Elef

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Publication date 08 October 2007

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
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PLEASE NOTE THAT:

1-The following questions have been answered using many sources, including the ideas of many contemporary outreach workers. While we have tried to bring sources for what we have said whenever possible, it was sometime difficult to say these ideas בשם אומרם for a number of reasons:

- i. We have often woven the ideas from a number of different sources together, making it very awkward to attribute an idea to a specific source.
- ii. We have put the ideas down in a form which, we hope, will maximize your ability to remember and utilize them. This required brevity and simplicity.

2 - We have followed the constraints of the ים של שלמה in presenting only authentic opinions within Yiddishkeit. (However, we have understood this to permit presenting minority opinions as well.) This has sometimes meant that a particular answer, although appearing to be the most effective and popular, was not brought. This is because we could not find any source for this approach. We stand firmly in the conviction that the best answer possible to any question is the mainstream approach brought down in the meforshim. Of course, one needs to know how to translate this into the idiom of a non-observant audience. And that is the purpose of this book.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO ANSWERING QUESTIONS

i-Language

- 1-Use only English
- 2-However, some words don't translate well
- 3-Don't quote too many sources

ii-Enter The Mind Of The Person

- 1-Find out what's really behind the question
- 2-Balance brevity with clarity
- 3-Politics
- 4-The Harm Principle
- 5-The context in which the question was asked

iii-Set A Positive Atmosphere

- 1-Stress what you stand for, not what you stand against
- 2-Try to find a point of contact and create consensus
- 3-Always give some kavod to their ideas
- 4-Get them to say what you want to say
- 5-When the argument gets out of hand

iv-Don't Defend Everything

- 1-Answers you yourself don't like
- 2-When you don't have a complete answer
- 3-You know the answer from second-hand sources
- 4-Criticism of the frum community
- 5-Questions about different hashkafos
- 6-The Rabbi said...
- 7-The Arab-Israeli Conflict

v-Different Categories Of Questions

- 1-Issues which prevent the person from going forwards
- 2-Issues relating to personal growth
- 3-Information
- 4-Contemporary Issues

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO ANSWERING QUESTIONS

i. *Language*

1-Use only English

No Hebrew, Yiddish, Aramaic or Yeshivish.

Some words to be avoided:

Mamash

Hakadosh Baruch Hu

To be *makpid* (punctilious is the literal translation, but you can use careful)

Try to say "To study Torah" instead of "to learn Torah"

What is the *Nafka Minah*

Pesach (the word is Passover)

Mishkan/Beis Hamikdash/Korbanos

2-However, some words don't translate well

Angels evoke visions from Renaissance paintings of child-like beings with halos and wings. (I use the awkward term "Spiritual scientific beings"! Other suggestions?)

Tzitzis, Tefilin, Rosh Hashana can all be used in the Hebrew, though make sure that people know what you are you talking about. For example say, "The Tefilin which we wear on our foreheads and our arms during morning prayers..." etc.

As illustrated in the following story, even the word G-d can be misunderstood:

Rabbi Yitzchak Ziskind, (then in South Africa, now in England) asked one girl in a group, "Do you believe in G-d?"

"No" she replied.

He asked a second girl who replied in the affirmative.

"What is G-d?" he asked.

"Truth, justice...", she began.

Turning to the first girl he asked "Do you believe in truth?"

"Yes".

"Justice?"

"Yes".

"Well then," he concluded, "you believe in her (the 2nd girl's) G-d".

This girl thought she didn't believe in G-d because she defined the term in a certain way and she didn't believe in that definition of G-d.

Either use the "Almighty", or use a Hebrew term, translating it the first few times and then continuing with only the Hebrew. That gets them out of a Christian and into a Jewish head space.

Other words that send the wrong messages are:

Sin - Use transgression, negativity, immoral act

Heaven - The World to Come

Hell - I tell them simply that there is no such thing, and then explain the Jewish **concept, similarly**, sacrifice.

Messiah - Mashiach or messianic era (where appropriate)

Work- The word work to translate melacha on Shabbos is very misleading. Creative work is better, but best of all is to define melacha and stick to the Hebrew.

Impure - Sometimes unavoidable, though how about 'loss of spiritual potential' or use the Hebrew.

There is also a whole dictionary of politically correct words today.

Many words that we may use will cause the person to hear something else entirely, a Christian idea which is evoked by the word. For example:

Spirituality means having as little to do with the physical world as possible. It is a world of monasteries, seclusion and celibacy.

The Messiah is not just an ordinary human being.

The sin of the first Man and Woman is unredeemable by our efforts alone.

Religion is in basic conflict with science and progress.

We are opposed to abortion under any circumstances.

In addition, the old canard that Christianity is the religion of love and Judaism of the unfeeling, strict law is commonly held to be true.

Note: Terms such as Angels, Sin, Heaven, Hell, Reincarnation, Resurrection of the Dead all arouse basically Christian ideas in the minds of most of the Jewishly-alienated.

3-Don't quote too many sources

Using unfamiliar names (Nachmanides, Sefer Halkarim) can be distracting (to the listener).

ii. *Enter The Mind Of The Person*

1-Find out what's really behind the question

Sometimes, in order to answer a person's question you need to understand the question behind the question. In such cases, if you can, rephrase the question. "You know that's a really good question. What I think you're really saying is----" For example, the question "Where was G-d during the holocaust?" usually means "How could G-d allow any suffering in the world?"

2-Balance brevity with clarity

Do not give an answer which is based on many presumptions of emunah and hashkafah (which the person may not have). This creates a difficulty. On the one hand, you want to keep it short; it is not good to give all the background when answering every question. On the other hand, the answer has to be comprehensible. For example, should you want to explain why we dip the challah in salt, you may say because the table is holy like an altar and the bread is like the sacrifice dipped in salt. Do you then need to explain the whole idea of a sacrifice which most secular people think of as primitive and barbaric? How deeply should you go into the idea of sanctifying the physical which is so different from ideas that they associate with religion? Or, would it have been better to have given a different explanation? The rule of thumb is: only give as much of the answer as you feel necessary. We'll leave it to you to figure out the rest.

3-Politics

American secular Jews are predominantly left. They are often appalled by what they perceive as the far right wing political views of many Orthodox Jews. These views only confirm for them that Orthodoxy is in fact another fundamentalist type of movement. They may perceive a pattern in terms of our views on women's rights, abortion and other issues which for them is no different from, say, Christian fundamentalism. They take extreme

offense at any derogatory remark about gentiles (goyim is not a good word - use non-Jew) or any comment that smacks of racism.

4-The Harm Principle

One of the central tenets of the secular paradigm is the harm principle: "if it doesn't harm anyone else it should be permitted". Consequently, two or more consenting adults should be allowed to do what they want. Many issues such as those relating to pre-marital relations and alternative lifestyles can only be answered by addressing this principle. (See the Ner LeElef book, *American Society*, Section One for other principles of the average non-observant person.)

5-The context in which the question was asked

I was once taking a couple who were Holocaust survivors on a tour of the Southern Wall Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem. We had not walked 10 meters when the husband blurted out, "Rabbi, where was G-d during the Holocaust?" Now, if this issue was so burning for this man that was asked completely out of context at the first opportunity, it was clear that I was not going to be able to provide him with an answer that would satisfy him. I knew that this man had plenty of contact with Orthodox Rabbis and had probably asked this question to many of them before. So I said, "The Holocaust was such an immense tragedy that it is almost unfathomable. What can we say that can explain the death of 6 million Jews? We cannot really say anything." "Rabbi, I am so glad you said that," he responded. "So many Rabbis turn the Holocaust into the 'hollow-cast'."

However, on another occasion I was visiting a city in the States and I volunteered to be a chavrusa at a 'Partners in Torah' night. I was given someone who was the child of Holocaust survivors and I was warned that he was a single-issue man. We sat down to learn Chumash, and sure enough, within five minutes, he used some pretext in the text to ask 'the question'. We still had an hour to go and my ½ minute answer which I had given in the above case clearly was not going to work. On the other hand, I clearly was not going to get through all his issues in one night. So I set a goal that we would deal with some aspects of this issue but still do a few more minutes of Chumash at the end. This would only work if there would be an offer not to finish off now but to continue communicating (to study together, if you are living in the same town), allowing one to transform a somewhat unanswerable question into a relationship.

A hulking, teenage student in a Jewish school, Orthodox for secular students, in Manchester, England, once stood up in the middle of class and said, "I don't really believe in G-d. My Father says that all of this Judaism stuff was only really made up in the last ten years or so." To which the teacher responded, "It doesn't matter whether you believe in G-d or not. He believes in you." A smile broke out on the boy's face and he sat down, seeming to be quite effected by those words. The teacher admitted that she probably could not have planned such an answer, even if she had thought of it for days and days. She was zocheh to Siyata Dishmaya, not to a Ner LeElef book of what could easily become pat answers.

iii. *Set A Positive Atmosphere*

1-Stress what you stand for, not what you stand against

Don't overplay the "Everything else is treif" card. In order to make your point, it is usually not necessary to bash something at all. For example, it is not necessary to explain what Jewish marriage is all about by comparing it or contrasting it with anything else. It is not necessary to talk about Torah-true Judaism by showing what is wrong with Conservative and Reform. We do not have to bash the secular school system when showing enthusiasm for Torah education.

2-Try to find a point of contact and create consensus

Find a point on which you both agree. Try to move the person forward together with you. Do not get into a fight with the person, even if you win the fight. It will be a case of winning the battle and losing the war. Put differently, answer in a way that your relationship with the person will be better after you have answered the question than it was before. Almost everyone comes closer to Yiddishkeit through their relationship with Torah Jews. These Torah Jews model Yiddishkeit for them, provide them with a warm and safe environment, and make Judaism not only feel true but feel meaningful and special to their lives. If you play hard ball with them and bash them (intellectually) into the ground, they may be forced to admit that you were right but they will be feel defeated and maybe even slightly humiliated. That is not a good formula for them to feel closer to you, and, through you, to Yiddishkeit.

Sometimes, the person may be angry about an issue or have very firm and emotionally invested feelings about a subject. He/she may simply not be emotionally available to hear a direct answer, i.e. there is no point of contact. This may require you to go away from the immediate topic and become more abstract before returning to the issue. This will allow the person to join you in areas where they are not so resistant and then move together with you towards the final answer.

For example, a woman may ask why women cannot be rabbis, read from the Torah, why they have to sit hidden behind a mechitza, etc. She may not be able, at this stage, to hear a direct answer. Perhaps, by starting out with an explanation of the female and the forces in this world, indeed the Female and Male Sides of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and working down from there, one will do better. This is because the woman will most likely never have thought of those areas before and will therefore not only have no resistance but will also be amazed at the depth, profundity and sensitivity of the Torah on this issue. This will make her more willing to hear the final answer to her question which will build on this.

3-Always give some kavod to their ideas

Say, "You know, that's an interesting perspective; I need to think about it more". "My immediate reaction is that that's a problem because..." or "I hear what you're saying, you're saying However..." It is rare that comments like "That's ridiculous" or "You're making a big mistake" are going to be effective.

4-Get them to say what you want to say

"Jamie, tell me, do you think that we in America are going forwards or backwards in our fight against murder, the inner city ghetto and the breakdown of the family?" is much better than, "Jamie, American society is rotten to the core and it gets worse all the time." Similarly, "Would you agree that..." is better than a blanket statement. It also allows someone to agree with you on many initial steps before possibly coming to a point where he does not agree. Often, a person will confuse his disagreement on a minor point with disagreement on the whole argument.

5-When the argument gets out of hand

If you see that you are getting into a long, unproductive argument about something, learn how to end it off without leaving any residue of tension. Try, "I see you know something about these matters, let's end off now before you expose more of my ignorance." Or, "You know, my husband/wife argues just like that. Which is why she wins all our arguments", "Hey, you're one excellent debater, how much do you charge an hour for lessons?", "You know, right now, it's this discussion vs. dessert. Let's break for ice-cream; we can always carry on later."

iv. ***Don't Defend Everything***

1-Answers you yourself don't like

Do not give answers which you yourself think are forced (דוחק). If you do not have a satisfactory answer simply say something like, "I know; I have problems with that myself. I am glad that I found someone who shares my difficulties." Or how about, "I don't have a good answer for you. But I am so impressed with the sophistication and depth of the Torah in every area that I've looked into that it is inconceivable to me that the Torah suddenly went blank on this issue."

Generally, people who are not yet committed cannot handle being told that something is a חק and that it has no explanation. The truth is that the מפרשים do give טעמים even for חקים. For example, the Sforno and Rav Tzadok HaCohen limit the חק aspect of Parah Adumah to a very small part of the procedure.

2-When you don't have a complete answer

Do not offer an explanation which is vague and where you are going to waffle. You may only confirm for the person that there really isn't a good answer for that question. If you have a partial answer which is good, preface it by saying, "I don't know; I haven't really gone into it. One idea that relates to this is ---- But the person who really knows about this is so and so". It then becomes very important that you make an effort to hook the person up with the one you mentioned. Don't just give them the name and telephone number; make the shidduch yourself. There are too many things that can otherwise go wrong. If that person does meet with "so and so", he may be the one to not only answer the question but also have a much broader influence. It may even be worthwhile to feign ignorance on some issue in order to facilitate their meeting with this person whom you imagine will be just the one he needs to meet.

3-You know the answer from second-hand sources

It is important to remember that many an explanation which seems absolutely flawless may not work at all on a specific individual. If you are going to answer a question on evolution with something from *Challenge* to someone who knows about evolution, there is a good chance that you will get into trouble if you are not familiar with the area. *Challenge* was written in the sixties and you have to know what is out of date, what is off mainstream today (scientifically speaking), etc. In general, if you do not know a field from first-hand sources; i.e. all that you know about a field is from books written by frum people who are answering challenges to Judaism raised by that area (second hand sources), don't try answering (especially if your guest appears to be knowledgeable in this area) even if you are utterly convinced that you have the best arguments in the world.

4-Criticism of the frum community

If a person should bring up something negative about the frum community which seems genuine and which you may even agree with, say: "I admit that that's a problem" or "You, know, I also have problems with that". Of course, such statements needn't be unqualified. You can say, "Yes, divorce rates are much too high amongst the Orthodox. My friends and I often talk about what we should be doing to improve the situation. Of course, the secular world dreams of having a divorce rate as good as ours. It's not more than 5%, but that's still way too high for us. But it should be pointed out that those figures still make us exemplary by the standards of the broader world."

The tone with which you criticize something is also important. Look at the following statement: "Yes, you're right about that problem. I think it is shocking. You know if you feel that way, you and I should get together. Together we could really do things." Whereas the

person may have started his criticism thinking "You Orthodox do such and such", you have now turned the tone away from the "you vs. us" perception to a "we have a problem together" issue.

This applies even if your guest makes a criticism which you think applies only to a specific group. You may be tempted to say, "Well, such problems are bound to be expressed amongst the Chassidim/Misnagdim etc; They don't really stress learning/love/singing etc." You will only further undermine their perception of the frum community as a whole by doing that. They don't care who is right or not. What sticks out for them is that frum people argue with each other, and that causes them to have doubts about the Torah. After all, these guys can't even agree amongst themselves what it is the Torah is supposed to be saying. Therefore, you must regard all frum people as though they belong to your community. In the end, you may feel forced to make exceptions to this, but at least start out with that commitment. (See the section below, *Frum Jews and Society*, for specific questions on this issue.)

5-Questions about different hashkafos

When dealing with people who don't know whether they are going to keep Shabbos or not, indeed who may not be sure whether they are going to marry within the faith, do not begin to deal with issues such as which hashkafa is better (or not). In fact, a less-than-experienced handling of this issue will only lead the person to become more alienated from Judaism, for if there are so many differences, how can the Torah be true? It is also disappointing for many that we Jews seem to be disagreeing (fighting) about these issues.

Relatively speaking, those issues are post-graduate level. If they do ask you what you think of Sephardim, Chabad, Satmar or Litvaks, either praise them or say you don't know enough about them. You can also simply contrast, in neutral terms, the differences between your approach and theirs.

6-The Rabbi said...

It is very problematic when your guest says, "I went to a shiur by Rabbi Ploni the other night and he said ..." and you are certain that what is being said is wrong according to all opinions. Your guest may have heard wrong or the rabbi may not know what he is talking about, but if you shoot the rabbi down in too strong a way, it is not just the rabbi that you are hurting. Your guest may become far more suspicious of anything any Orthodox person has to say as a result. Certainly, something should be said. Try, "I've never come across sources like that, although I'm not an expert in the field. What I do know is..." or "I'm having difficulty assimilating what you're quoting with the rest of my knowledge of Judaism. What I've always understood is...."

7-The Arab-Israeli Conflict

It is unlikely that anyone will get closer to Yiddishkeit because of a political discussion, particularly concerning Israeli politics, whereas many have been distanced by such discussions. Because of this, I take one of the following stands when asked my views:

(i) Orthodox parties in Israel represent as much of a cross-section of the political spectrum (on issues such as land for peace) as do their secular brethren. It would seem, therefore, that the Torah tradition lends itself to different interpretations on this issue.

(ii) Actually, what is much more important than knowing what I think is knowing whether Judaism has any unique methodology to offer in approaching issues like this. What sort of questions can we be asking, what sort of places in the tradition can we begin to search for clues.

(iii) It is easy for a little guy like me to have an opinion. Actually, I have been studying this issue now for ten years, and I still haven't gotten to the bottom of it. I have begun to develop a profound appreciation of just how complex these problems are.

However, if you feel you must answer, here is an approach:

The Arab-Israeli conflict is not the most serious conflict facing the Jewish people today. Far more serious is the conflict with אֲדוּם, the Western World. The Jews are presently in גְּלוּת אֲדוּם, which means that they are part of the same energy system as אֲדוּם. The more civilization energy that the West uses, the less energy there is available for the development of Jewish energy. יִשְׁמַעֵאל, Avraham's son and the father of the Arabs, on the other hand, received his own blessing from Avraham, and therefore the Arabs have their own independent civilization energy. There is therefore an intrinsic reason why the Jews and the Arabs cannot make peace together.

The opposite side to this approach is as follows:

This issue has no pre-messianic resolution. We therefore have to decide which mess we want to live with until then.

v. *Different Categories of Questions*

1-Issues which prevent the person from going forward

The issues listed here are some of the most pressing that are faced by someone approaching Judaism. Very often, people are obsessed by the question and they cannot move on until it is resolved. This is usually something which affects them personally or directly affects someone to whom they are very close.

Examples of such issues are:

- a-Women's issues for women
- b-Homosexuality for someone who is gay or has a gay friend
- c-Relationship to non-Jews, especially since most families today have someone who is intermarried
- d-Holocaust – for children of holocaust survivors
- e-Suffering – for someone who has witnessed or experienced great suffering
- f-Judaism's relationship to animals and vegetarianism

Of course, many of these questions may be asked by other people as well. But then it is going to be with much less baggage. For those for whom it is a core issue, it may not be possible to answer to the person's satisfaction at the beginning stages of their growth. Often, these questions resolve themselves without ever being formally answered. As people see the beauty and the wisdom of the Torah it becomes increasingly clear to them that this could not possibly have been man-made, no matter how great a genius Moshe Rabbeinu was. Their overall deep respect and love for Judaism allows them to come to accept their core hang-up issue as well. Nevertheless, by providing answers for them at an earlier stage it does allow them to, at the very minimum, move on and progress. They might say to themselves, "I don't buy this answer. But at least I see that Judaism has addressed this issue in a deep and profound way. At least it is not just a matter of prejudice and bias. I can at least respect these people for holding this position."

2-Issues relating to personal growth

To present Judaism's stand on these issues is to inspire and to motivate. Most people become frum not because someone proved to them that Judaism is true but because Judaism is relevant and meaningful to their lives. Of course people need to feel that Judaism is true, but this is a background fact and not a primary reason. People ultimately look to be filled up with spirituality, to see that Judaism will help them grow, develop and become better people.

- a-The whole interpersonal area - Yiddishkeit's insight into love and marriage, giving and taking.

- b-Inspiration and deep insights into self-growth; be it from Chasidus, Mussar, Machshava, Pirkei Avos, etc.
- c-Shabbos and Chagim; really any one of the Mitzvos when explained in a way which answers the question “What does this have to do with my life?”
- d-Fears and hang-ups - Issues of how Judaism may negatively impact their lives. How will it affect their career, their clothes, their individuality and their creativity? How will it affect their relationships with important others in their lives?

Most of this is straight Torah, which is really what works the best. For, when you talk about Yiddishkeit as it works from the inside, you are on your best ground. Where you are dealing with issues that are defined by the broader society, you are going to be at your weakest. To that degree, this book may be misleading, for we have given particular emphasis here to the Da Ma SheTashiv questions, those being the most suitable to be answered in this format. A novice may ask more questions from another one of the categories stated here, for the issues here are not always easy to formulate as a standard question. It would be better, then, to call this category, “Questions which people ought to have.”

Other questions included in this category:

- Judaism as a system of growth
- Love and marriage
- Relationships
- Having a relationship with G-d
- How do I start practicing Judaism?
- What is the purpose of existence?

3-Information

Knowing basic Judaism (davening, Shabbos, the Chagim) can, if presented attractively, be a powerful kiruv tool. However, there is an important additional element. The more a novice knows, the less uncomfortable and embarrassed he feels and the less traumatic and more enjoyable the experience. It is particularly humiliating for an adult to be "taken by the hand" and shown how to wash for Hamotzi.

Knowing the meaning behind mitzvos is even more powerful, as your guest might still be clueless even after he has heard Kiddush a few times. Be conscious of your role as the master educator!

Although this book does not address this area, it is no reflection on how vital it is for you to be familiar with Taamei HaMinhagim and the like.

4-Contemporary Issues

These are Da Ma SheTashiv type issues, such as what Judaism has to say about science, evolution and stem cell research. It may include business, legal and medical ethics, as well as any current or contemporary event. People are rarely hung up on these issues and they will not make or break their Yiddishkeit. If the issue is brought up, however, a good answer is expected.

Another similar category is proofs for the Torah. It is better to leave most of these to someone who is really an expert on these issues. Nevertheless, some of these issues may require the type of two-minute answers we have included in this book.

CHAPTER TWO: G-D

- i. Who Is G-d? What Is G-d's Name?**
- ii. How Do We Know He Exists?**
- iii. How Can We Gain An Awareness of G-d? How Can We Have A Relationship With Him?**
- iv. I Believe That G-d Made the World, But Not That He Continues To Be Involved**
- v. Does G-d Really Care Whether I Switch A Light On/Off On שבת Or Have Three Drops of Milk In My Chicken Soup?**
- vi. Why Does G-d Need Us Here? Why Create Us If He Doesn't Need Anything?**

CHAPTER TWO: G-D

i. Who is G-d? What is G-d's Name?

G-d has many different names. We cannot know G-d in His essence¹; we can only know His manifestation on earth. We interpret this manifestation as His traits (mercy, wrath, kindness) or as His actions. We give different names to each one of these so that we can tune in to the specific dimension of G-d's manifestation more perceptively.

Different languages have different vocabularies to discuss the areas which that culture is rich in. Eskimos have different names for different types of snow. The Turks have a separate name for eldest brother, indicating that an eldest sibling is in a completely separate category. Biblical Hebrew is rich in spiritual words because that is important to the Jews and allows us to think more richly and accurately in this area. No wonder, then, that we have many different names for G-d.

ii. How do we know He exists?

It is always possible to believe that G-d does not exist, but it is unlikely. If we investigate the world as good scientists, we will see that G-d is the best explanation for the facts that we see around us. There will always be other explanations as well, but the question is how closely they fit the facts. For example, we know that the Big Bang began from an infinitely dense point of matter. But who created this matter? We could cook up some explanation, we could say we do not know, or we could say G-d. The same goes for the anthropic principle, the fact that the four basic forces of nature are one, or how life first began, etc². In all cases G-d seems to be the most natural, likely answer (though not the only possible answer) to explaining the facts at hand. This scientific approach shortcuts the endless philosophical explanations that

¹Even the שם השם is not a description of His essence, just of the highest point which we can perceive. (נפש החיים)

² See Chapter Eleven on science.

theology and metaphysics have engaged in for thousands of years.

iii. How can we gain awareness of G-d? How can we have a relationship with Him?

It is one thing to know that G-d exists. It is another thing to know Him. The former is the G-d of the scientists, abstract and removed. The latter requires passion. Like all relationships, a relationship with G-d requires continuous work. Like all relationships, even when we feel close to G-d, if we let up on the investment we begin to feel a distance.

One of the first steps to knowing G-d is G-d awareness – seeing G-d in nature, noticing His Providence, seeing the hidden miracles. Now, if He is involved with nature, surely He is intimately involved with us. He sets up, in minute detail, every challenge we face, and responds to everything we do.

But, we need to go beyond observing into engagement. Engagement means that we talk to G-d, that we ask Him for things, that we study what He has to say in His Torah, that we respond to what we know He wants from us, and that we feel loved and wanted by Him. He is on our side and by our side.

Judaism is a fabulous tool for feeling that G-d is with us, close and caring, everywhere we go. We will begin to notice His Hand in everything we do and in everything which surrounds us - nature, the stock exchange, the eyes we see with and the clothes we wear.

The way Judaism does this is by giving us various entrées in the form of prayer, Torah study and mitzvos. Each one connects us to G-d in a different way, allowing for a full, rounded relationship. The Torah formula is a very nurturing, exact, wise way of getting close to G-d. After all, it is the formula He Himself gave to us.

iv. I believe that G-d made the world, but not that He continues to be involved.

This approach gives us the best of both worlds. It allows the comforting

explanation of where we came from with no resultant responsibilities. It is also a sad, lonely, intellectually abstract belief, the G-d of the philosophers.

It is hard to understand why G-d would do such a thing – why He would bother to create a world and then back out. Certainly, if He is capable of creating us He is capable of looking after us. Why would He want it any other way?

v. Does G-d really care whether I switch a light on/off on *נבט* or have three drops of milk in my chicken soup, etc.?

In Judaism, greatness lies in the details. And so it does in nature or technology. A computer missing one tiny microchip probably won't work at all. Try tuning into a radio station a bit off the mark: the result is an awful lot of noise. Try baking a cake at 450 when it was supposed to be baked at 400. Instead of a tasty dish, we get a burnt cinder.

Spirituality is the same. Harmonizing ourselves with spirituality requires that we tune in to the right station. It requires a focus on details. The devil is in the details, as they say, but so is the spirituality. This is how G-d made His world and He therefore cares very much about the details. It makes sense that if G-d made the physical world this way He also made the spiritual world this way.

Why did G-d create the world in this way? Because the real test for us is not whether we can do something heroic and get a medal. We are all capable of running to help the little, old lady who fell down in the street. The heroic moment brings the best out of most of us. But, can we sustain this sensitivity day in and day out? We are all capable of smiling some of the time. The great person always smiles when it is appropriate. We can all pray very well – maybe when we really need something. The great person prays like that three times a day. He is always patient when he needs to be and always connects with the pain and joy of others. Oh yes – greatness is in

the thousands of little everyday realities. And that's just what G-d is looking for.

vi. Why does G-d need us here? Why did G-d create us if He doesn't need anything?

Certainly, G-d did not create us because He needs us. Being that He is perfect, there is nothing that we can add to Him or give to Him – No, G-d created us for us – in order that He could share of His perfect goodness with us¹. We will explain this concept in greater detail under the section titled *The Messiah and the World to Come: What is the Purpose of Existence*.

¹דרך ד' ח"א פרק ב: א-הנה תכלית הבריאה היה להטיב מטובו ית"ש לזולתו

CHAPTER THREE: TORAH & JUDAISM

- i. I don't believe in absolute truth. I believe that everyone should work out for himself what he should do. Why can't I be a good person without Judaism?**
- ii. What are Prophecy and Revelation?**
- iii. How Do I Know That G-d Gave The Torah? Maybe Moses Made It Up? How do I know the Torah is true? Is the Bible the word of G-d?**
- iv. How do I know that the Torah was given for all time? Maybe it was meant to or could change / be replaced? Can the Torah be replaced by a New Testament or a Koran?**
- v. If the Torah is true how come so few people keep it?**
- vi. Should I not investigate all or at least some other religions before deciding that Judaism is true?**
- vii. Why should the decision of my ancestors affect me? I did not stand at Sinai and I did not choose to accept the Torah.**
- viii. How do I know that the Torah didn't get distorted over the ages?**
- ix. How could the Torah know about the challenges we have today? How can Judaism of the past answer questions of the future?**
- x. Conservative and Reform: Who is a Jew? Why isn't Orthodoxy pluralistic? Why does it not recognize three or more streams in Judaism?**
- xi. Why is Orthodoxy not pluralistic? Why should it not recognize three or more streams in Judaism?**

CHAPTER THREE: TORAH & JUDAISM

It is not often that people question the existence of G-d per se. What bothers people are the questions that follow. Oftentimes these questions resolve themselves without ever being formally answered. As people see the beauty and the wisdom of the Torah, it becomes increasingly clear to them that this could not have been man-made no matter how great a genius Moshe Rabbeinu was.

i. I don't believe in absolute truth. I believe that everyone should work out for himself what he should do. Why can't I be a good person without Judaism?

A person who's always going to start out from the beginning is unlikely to actually make it to the end and find out what absolute truth is. It's an enormously deep, sophisticated endeavor to undertake. The only one whom we know that was actually successful in this attempt was אברהם אבינו. If you want to be more generous and put the likes of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle on the list, you would still be able to count them on your hand. How many people are even capable of thinking at a deep enough level to stand a chance of achieving this? Let's presume that the one talking is such a person, a world-historic thinker. Let us presume that in the end he actually makes it and turns out to be a second Abraham, figuring the whole thing out for himself. Still, we are left with the problem that civilization and the world can never make progress if everyone is always starting from the beginning again. As long as people are not willing to build on the tradition of the generations, to tap into the cumulative wisdom of the history of the world, we will always be starting all over again.

In fact, that is part of the problem that we see in the world today. There have been more people killed after the second World War, when there was the United Nations, than in the war itself and perhaps

more than in any other period of history. Despite our horror of Nazism, we failed to resolve man's inherent capability for evil. The approach that everyone should do his best to discover the truth is predicated on the myth that overall, mankind wants to be good. 50 million post-war deaths testify to the falsehood of that idea.

There is a variation of this desire to do it yourself, and that's the belief of people in relative truth. I never met somebody who actually believed in relative truth, because the implications of relative truth are that there are no standards or values other than the ones I choose to adhere to myself. And in the end, nobody truly believes that; everyone believes that murder and theft and a whole host of other things are wrong.

It has become popular in recent times to point out that different cultures have different relative values. What may be right or wrong for one culture, may not be right or wrong for another. You get a culture with cannibals, and a culture sexually more open in its morals. There may be cultures that are more conservative or more liberal. Democracy may be right for America but may be considered inappropriate for Africa. But very few people really believe this. In fact I have never met anyone who felt that there was nothing wrong with stealing and the only reason we don't steal is because of practical Utilitarian reasons, i.e. we don't want other people steal from us, therefore we're all going to agree not steal just by convention. People do believe at bottom that it's WRONG to steal.

There was once an article in the Wall Street Journal about a student of philosophy who had written an essay for a professor pro the idea of relative values. The professor failed him. The student came and challenged the professor and he said "Why did you give me a fail?" and the professor said, "Because I don't believe

what you are saying is right". And the student said "What do you mean?" and the professor gave an argument against relative values, and the student said, "I don't accept that". And the professor gave another argument, and the student said, "Well I don't accept that." And the professor tried again, and the student rejected it, and the professor said, "Well I'm going to fail you anyway". And the student said, "You can't do that, it's not fair". At which the professor simply smiled, meaning that the student had admitted to the fact that there were standards, there were values. You can judge something by an objective standard. And the professor has no right to invent his own relative values and decide that he's going to fail a student, because he wants to anyway. We all agree that there is such a thing as objective reality.

ii. *What are Prophecy and Revelation?*

There are two ways in which we can reach truth. One is through Wisdom, when we rise from our perspective and reach up, way beyond ourselves, to understand truth. Nevuah, works the other way around. It comes from on top and comes down to us. נבואה has the advantage that it's much clearer. ---- חכמה is a human process subject to mistakes. But, חכמה has the advantage that it can go much further because you're starting from the bottom and you're going up on an open ended basis. In fact, Chochma allows you to go way beyond your own spiritual level. On the other hand, a person has to be ready for נבואה in order to have it, and this has to be reflected in one's overall spiritual level.

There are two reasons why a person may receive prophecy:

1) השם wanted to communicate for the sake of כלל ישראל a message or

2) as an expression of השם's closeness to that person¹.

The Torah was not revealed to us through a process of חכמה. For G-d could never leave that which is meant to tell us what He wants from us in this world, to a process which is subject to error. Just look at the Western World, with its plethora of philosophies, the one contradicting the other. It is clear that human understanding on its own is not the way, certainly not the best most reliable way to understand what G-d's plan for the world is. There had to be a point where there was a נבואה process. There had to be a bringing down of the Torah down into this world in a precise and reliable fashion. After this truth, i.e. the Torah, is given through נבואה, then there is a place for us to understand it through חכמה.

This is why, for all the greatness of Nevuah, there was a certain point at which it stopped. For כלל ישראל wanted to be through the Oral Law process, חכמה, which allows us the advantages over נבואה described above. It eventually led to the גמרא and everything we have now. This focus on Chochma caused a dulling of the capacity for נבואה and a flourishing of the תושבע"פ as we have it today.

iii. *How Do I Know That G-d Gave The Torah? Maybe Moses Made It Up? How do I know the Torah is true? Is the Bible the Word of G-d ?*

If G-d has a plan for the world then he has to have a mechanism for revealing this and this mechanism has to lend itself to clear and convincing proof that this is His word. Having said that we need to understand that there is no absolute proof for any knowledge. Science doesn't even pretend to work this way. (Although the layman often thinks that it does). For any

¹For example, the רמב"ן says in the beginning of אברהם to נבואה that the פרשת וירא was simply השם responding to the closeness created by his ברית מילה.

particular set of phenomena there are usually several (sometimes hundreds of) competing scientific theories. A scientific theory is accepted as being true because it is the best, simplest, most aesthetic and inclusive explanation for a particular body of knowledge. In addition it should make testable predictions.

By scientific standards, Judaism can certainly be proven to be true. To mention just a few things:

(a) It works! It has worked across time, in different cultures (North African, European, etc.), under radically different circumstances (American affluence, the Holocaust). No other system even comes close in its combination of wisdom and profundity combined and yet so livable at the same time and therefore, says the Bechor Shor, it is inconceivable that this is the product of a human mind¹.

(b) The Torah makes very specific predictions which have come true².

(c) The complete consensus amongst the nation in the first 1000 years after Sinai mitigates against the Sinai experience being made up. It is impossible to create a fiction that will not have some skeptics

¹בכור שור ד ח: ומי גוי גדול אשר לו חוקים ומשפטים צדיקים ככל התורה הזאת: ומאחר שאי כל אדם יכול לתק כמותו, יש להבין שלא בא בסברת בשר ודם, כי אם מאת הקב"ה

Malbim also says that this is the meaning of the word ראה at the beginning of Parshas Reeh:

יא כו: ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה.

Malbim says that this shows that the blessing and the curse are not simply promises for the future. One can actually see that people who observe the Torah have a sense of accomplishment, fulfillment and spiritual growth. The blessing is there for all to see.

²The best example of this is the תוכחות, where very specific conditions were laid down for the Jews being able to remain in Israel and very specific consequences were predicted for failure to do this. Another case is that of שמיטה, and the year before and after.

(amongst a nation with a track record for skepticism) and that will not have differing versions of what happened.

(d) All the miracles in Egypt and during the desert were given under conditions where they could be examined closely, by everyone (including non-Jews) and without the element of surprise. The מן fell for 40 years, most of the plagues were with clear warning as to exactly what was going to happen.

(e) The overall consensus is that archaeology confirms the authenticity of the Bible account, wherever it could be checked.

(f) The Western and Moslem worlds accept the Sinai account as being authentic as well.

But all of these things are secondary to the primary claim. This is the fact that there was a national revelation to the whole nation. Moses did not emerge from a cave, Mohammed-like and proclaim he heard a prophecy. The ever weary Jews, the most skeptical nation on earth, would have had his head. Rather the entire nation stood at Sinai, spoke to G-d face to face, and were able to authenticate all the rest of Moses' prophecy.

The Kuzari tells us that one cannot fabricate a claim of national revelation. All religions would have loved to have made such a claim, but not one has made it. For a claim of national revelation can never be made unless it is true. All claims to new religions are made by individual people who made private claims to personal revelation.

What would happen if they did make a claim of national revelation? Let us take an example provided by Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb. Have you ever noticed that UFO claims are always about a spacecraft

landing in a deserted field. Imagine that your friend tells you one day that he has just seen a space-craft landing in Time Square, during morning rush hour. You phone a friend whose offices overlook Time Square and ask him whether he sees anything. Negative. You turn on the radio – no mention of such an event. You turn to all those around you and ask whether they heard of such a thing. No one. At which point you grab the person and walk them off to the nearest mental institution.

Now let us say that a person tells you that they did not see the event, but that all of our ancestors saw this event 250 years ago. Our first reaction is to go to our parents and say, “Mom, did your parents ever tell you about a spacecraft landing in Times Square?” I ask my friends and anyone I know to ask the same. No-one was ever told such a thing by their parents or by anyone of the previous generation. Only, apparently our claimant. Well this still isn’t going to get him out of the luny bin.

Judaism not only makes such a claim, but our Torah-keeping parents have all heard of this claim from their parents, and so on back for as 1000’s of years. As the Kuzari states, that claim, is watertight. You simply cannot make it up.

(The range of proofs can be found in the following Ner Le’Elef books: Proofs, The Chosen People, Science, and Evolution.)

iv. How do I know that the Torah was given for all time? Maybe it was meant to or could change or be replaced? Can the Torah be replaced by a New Testament or a Koran?

The proofs for truth of the Torah are so powerful that even Christianity and Islam admit that the Torah was given to the Jews at Sinai. What these religions claim is, though, that things changed later on, that at some stage G-d decided to choose a new people and to give a new Torah. This being the case, there is nothing to stop this from happening again

tomorrow. There is no reason not to believe in Mordechai Kaplan’s Reconstructionism, which states that Judaism has to be reinvented anew by each generation. The natural extension of this is that it does away with any absolute, eternal system of laws and spirituality. It is therefore no more compelling to be a Christian than it is to just to work out for one’s self what it means to be a good person.

Yet, to suggest that the Koran or the New Testament came to replace the Torah is to suggest that at some point the Torah became dated and needed to be replaced. This is an insult to G-d – it implies that He was not clever enough to introduce principles that would apply for all time.

When G-d gave the Torah, He knew that things were going to constantly change: science would progress, there would be times of war and times of peace; Jews would find themselves in Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia; some would be poor and some would be rich. So G-d gave us a Torah which was rich in the deep structure of ethics and spirituality – a code of principles which would translate into the endless variations which would unfold for mankind. These would be applied by the Torah experts of every generation and each generation has therefore produced a rich literature of contemporary responsa. One only has to glance at one of the contemporary halachic responsa to witness the full range of current issues – from Bioethics to the modern company to high-tech food-production.

The Torah can address any new issue without ever changing, because the deeper laws of ethics were always there to begin with. To accept a contemporary ethics is to accept a set of values which tomorrow will be outmoded and dated. G-d would have no purpose in a revelation that was relevant to one generation and not the next. Clearly, He intended His

revelation to be as meaningful and contemporary for us as it was for the generation that went out of Egypt. Indeed, if anything it is easier to see the wisdom of the Torah today. It seems amazing that its reservoirs of wisdom can easily accommodate all the modern progress in biogenetics, economics, medicine, and the microchip. It has anticipated many of the issues that arose and provided a deeper appreciation of why Jewish community and family has been so vibrant and stable to this very day.

It is for good reason, then, that the unchangeability of the Torah is one of the 13 Principles of Faith. But let us say, for argument's sake, that theoretically it were possible for the Torah to change¹. Since the Torah is eternal we would have to say, as Rabbi Yosef Albo does in his *Sefer HaIkarim*, that the Torah does not change intrinsically (מצד הנותן), rather its translation into this world changes (מצד המקבל). After all, the First Man was not allowed to eat meat, but Noach was. Good and well, but how then do we prevent spurious claims. Sinai set a standard of proof which would have to be superseded. The level of prophecy would have to be higher, and there would have to be more than one nation of 3/1/2 million or more people involved. If the miracle of the manna lasted for 40 years, we would have to have miracles that lasted even longer. Most important of all, just like we all heard G-d speak to Moses, face to face, we would have to all hear G-d speak to this new claimant². Well it is clear that nothing of the sort has ever happened. Nothing

¹In his *Sefer HaIkarim*, Rav Yosef Albo argues on the Rambam with respect to the unchangeability of the Torah, מצד המקבל, and the argument that follows is a simplified form of the one he presents. However, we stated the issue in this form because all the Rishonim favor the position of the Rambam and there is across the board consensus amongst the Achronim like the Rambam.

²ט"מ"ג הקדמה

nearly of the sort. The Torah remains, true for the ages, without anything but the most insipid challenges to its eternal relevance.

v. *If the Torah is true how come so few people keep it?*

As much as we do enjoy keeping the Torah, the Torah is something which requires effort and discipline. If the Torah was only offering ice cream and candy, certainly there would be a lot more takers. But, although Judaism seems intimidating when looked at from the outside, it does not ask us to give up This World in order to get to the Next World. Somebody who embarks on a Torah-spiritual journey, will find that, once they are spiritually full, they will not feel that they are lacking materially either. Whatever they have will be enough³. And the opposite is also true. Someone who tries to fill up on materialism is always going to find himself lacking. You cannot fill up a human being who is ultimately spiritual with \$100; it's never going to do it. So when he has the \$100 and it isn't enough he asks himself, why not? And sometimes he answers, "Well, maybe it wasn't enough. Maybe if I had \$200, then that would do it." And so he goes pitifully, looking for ever more of something that is the wrong solution to begin with.

So Judaism is certainly quite attractive when understood in this light. But until you get there, certainly there is an appearance of sacrifice, because you have to commit yourself to a very specific set of rules and laws.

But there is a bigger reason why most people do not keep Torah today. As Rabbi Refson puts it, most people never heard a sensible word of Torah being said in their lives. And the truth is that people

³זקן ושבע means that I don't need gifts, not that I learned to hate them. The רמב"ן explains that when אברהם died זקן ושבע, not that he had everything, but whatever he had, he was full. He didn't feel he lacked for anything.

who do expose themselves to hearing a decent amount of Torah, 80% accept it, and the other 20% never say it's junk. They say it's beautiful, it's for my children, not for me. I'm too old or set in my ways. I'm too frightened that I am going to lose my job, or worse, lose my personality or creativity, etc. So the issue is not why there aren't so many who accept the Torah. The issue is why have we messed up on not communicating the profundity and sensitivity of Torah to enough people.

vi. *Should I not investigate all or at least some other religions before deciding that Judaism is true?*

Judaism is not a cult, and does not require that you join Judaism by giving up your mind or even closing it to other options. On the contrary, we encourage questions, a critical mind and a close and vigorous investigation. Moreover, we are not frightened of being compared with anything else: Judaism can stand on its own two feet. However, if you are going to investigate other options, make sure that you investigate your own back yard first. There is a reason why we are still around and thriving after 3000 years of our enemies trying to get rid of us.

vii. *Why should the decision of my ancestors affect me? I did not stand at Sinai and I did not choose to accept the Torah.*

Whether we like it or not, we are born Jewish and into the Jewish nation, just like someone whose parents decide to move to America will automatically be born an American, against his choice. We do not, in fact choose most of our circumstances. We do not choose who our parents and siblings are, how tall we are going to be, and how much natural intelligence we will have. We do not choose our first language, or our original culture. But we do choose how we respond to all these givens. The question is only

how one is going to respond to the fact of one's Jewishness, not whether one is going to be Jewish or not. Certainly everyone has the right to decide what he/she is going to do about this.

viii. *How do I know that the Torah didn't get distorted over the ages?*

We have a written Torah, and an Oral Torah. As far as the written Torah is concerned, we know that when a סופר is writing a new ספר תורה, he has to read every word from an existing תורה scroll, or a printed copy, one word at a time. The entire Torah Scroll then has to be checked three times by independent, qualified checkers. Should any error creep in, as much as a letter, if that should be a letter that's joining another letter, even though we can see that this is a ו joining a ק, if there is any possibility of any confusion later on, we quickly stop reading that ספר תורה, in mid sentence. We bring out another ספר תורה. And these letters have to be so clear that a five year old has to be able to read them. ----- As a result of this we were able to take the Torah Scrolls from Yemen, a group of people who had been isolated for thousands of years with no contact with broader community, and we saw that they correlated exactly with our Torah Scrolls. We were able to confirm that what we have today is accurate. There is only one letter where there has ever been a dispute, and that is on the word Pitzua Dakah. The question is whether it is spelt with a ה or with an א, but there is absolutely no difference in the meaning of the word.

Anybody who deals with accuracy of texts knows what an achievement this is, how many versions of an original manuscript quickly develop. Errors easily slip into any work where these precautions aren't taken. And these errors eventually lead to much bigger differences. Even Jewish texts which have been studied continuously, develop many variations. In

the Torah there is no case of a different word.

So much for the Written Torah. The Oral Torah is a much trickier business because we don't have a text in front of us where we can check from a previous text.

It is true that certain disputes developed concerning Oral laws. These are all carefully recorded in the Talmud. However, there is not a single dispute about a fundamental principle or law in the Torah¹.

It was true then and it is true today. Take the case of the Esrog. We know only through Oral Torah what an אתרוג is. The Written Torah just says פרי עץ הדר, not whether it was an orange, or a myrtle. We know that it is referring to an אתרוג and we never had a מחלקת on that. In תפילין, there are at least ten הלכות which are completely oral, there isn't even a hint of them in the פסוק. Yet there was never a מחלקת on where the boxes had to be worn. There has never been a מחלקת about a fundamental הלכה מצוה דאורייתא. That is what we call למשה מסיני.

Now, the fact that there is a מחלקת is the subject of a certain lack of clarity², and lowering of standards of the Torah. It is a problem, and we are not proud of it. For the Jewish nation took enormous care

¹ The רמב"ם in his introduction to פירוש המשניות tells us that we never had a מחלקת on יסודות of the Oral Torah, or the fundamental מצוות דאורייתא.

²When did creep in? The רמב"ם says that מחלקת came in when it came to things which were subject to the interpretation through the מדות (Like a קל וחומר, a גזרה, a היקש, a שוה, a gives. Others give others.) The Torah which is interpreted through these מדות, have been subject to מחלקת. Because the moment you are using מדות, it is subject to human interpretation to some degree. Very often the גמרא will say, "I have received this from my Rebbe". And then the מחלקת stops. If there is a קבלה, then we will accept it.

to ensure that things remained accurate³.

³In every generation, there were many תלמידי מסורה who were broadly responsible for כוזרי ג' סה:

ובכל הדורות האלה לא פסקו – מלבד המפרסמים הללו, ומלבד קהל החכמים כלו, ומלבד הכהנים והלוים שהיתה תורתם אומנתם – השבעים סנהדרין, שמסרו את חכמתם מדור לדור, כי על פיהם היו ממנים כל ממנה ומעבירים כל מעבר – כמו שנאמר: אמר ר שמעון בן יוחאי: כך מקבל אני מפי שבעים זקנים ביום שהושיבו את ר' אלעזר בן עזריה בישיבה. מאחורי שבעים אלה ישבו מאות, ומאחורי המאות אלפים – כי לא יתכן לברר שבעים שלמים כי אם מתוך מאות שמדרגתם קרובה לשלמות, וכן הלאה, כן מדרגה אחר מדרגה. (דף קמה בהוצאת קפאח) שם סז:

וכן כל נזהרו חכמים שלא לקבל דברים שנאמרו רק מפי יחיד, עד שאחד מהם צוה, בשעת מיתתו, לבנו (עדינות ה'ז): בני חזר בארבעה דברים שהיית אומר.

i.e. the Father said to his son: Son, even though this is my position, you should not hold that way.

אמר לו (הבן להאב): ואתה למה לא חזרת בך? אמר לו: אני שמעתי מפי רבים והם שמעו מפי רבים – אני עמדתי בשמועתי והם עמדו בשמועתם. אבל אתה שמעת מפי יחיד (היינו רק ממני) – מוטב להניח דברי יחיד ולאחז את דברי רבים

Nevertheless, the מסורה was given through specific individuals:

אבות א:א: משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסרה ליהושע מהר"ל (דרך החיים דף יט):

ולא היה ראוי להכניס בקבלה אלעזר הכהן (אע"פ שגם הוא היה מקבל משה) ... כיון שלא היה מיוחד לזה כמו יהושע נחשב קבלתו שהוא במקרה ... (וגם) מסר משה התורה לכל ישראל, אבל היה להם הקבלה במקרה ולא נחשב זה קבלה כלל כי אפשר שיקבלו ואפשר שלא יקבלו וזה לא נחשב קבלה ... ובדבר שהוא כזה שהוא מסירת התורה שבו תלוי קיום העולם אין ראוי להיות דבר זה במקרה

ספורנו (שמות כד יב ד"ה להורותם): הנה הרמזים אשר [בתורה] ... לא יובנו אצל רב ישראל זולתו על ידי מורה צדק

We are required to believe that previous generations, including Moses himself, were faithful to their mandate:

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שכל התורה המצויה עתה בידינו היא הנתונה למשה רבינו עליו השלום (נוטק הסדורים)

אור החיים דברים א א:

אלה הדברים פירוש אלה הדברים לבד הם דברים אשר דבר משה דברי עצמו אבל כל הקודם בד' חומשים לא אמר אפילו אות אחת מעצמו אלא הדברים שיצאו מפי המצוה כצורתן בלא שום שנוי אפילו אות אחת יתרה או חסרה

רמב"ם הקדמה למשניות:

אלעזר then אהרון repeated the prophecy to אהרון & then the seventy elders then the whole nation. אהרון taught the last three groups in turn, אלעזר the last two:

וחוזרים הזקנים גם הם אחר כן להורות המצוה להמון פעם אחת; נמצא וכל הקהל שומעים המצוה ההיא ארבעה פעמים ... ואחר כן היו כל העם הולכים ללמד

An example is whether you should do *on a שמחה* *יום טוב* *on קרבן שלמים*. So firstly lets understand what everyone is in agreement about. Everyone agrees that there is such a thing as the Temple, where it should be, how it should be built, and what its purpose is. Everyone agrees that it is here where the Korbanos are brought. They agree on the different types of Korbanos, what the purpose and the detailed laws of each one is. In fact, they agree on thousands of details. They also agree that there should be such a thing as Semicha when bringing the Korban. Now on one little point, whether to do this *on שמחה* *on Yom Tov* or not, they have a dispute. That's it. The points of agreement are way over 99%. And that slight point of the dispute is a detail, never a principle or a fundamental².

Great care was taken to be as exact as possible with respect to every detail of the מסורה:

ענין הדייקנות הזאת הוא שלא יחול שום שינוי וחילוף במסירות התורה שבעל פה מדור לדור. וכן אמרו "חייב אדם לומר בלשון רבו" (עדות פ"א מ"ג, ועיין ביאור הגר"א שם למה דייק הלל לומר "מלא היו מים שאובים כו")...

¹The first מחלקת went on for four generations, and then הלל and שמאי had four מחלקות. After הלל and שמאי there were lots, because of the dropping of the Torah's standards.

²What about when you have a פסוק in the Torah and you have different interpretations. If it's not להלכה, the מכתב מאליהו explains that

Now what is truly amazing is that the Torah anticipated Machlokes and provided the mechanisms for resolving it. The most important of these are the principle to go after the majority. The majority decision of the Sanhedrin would not only determine the halacha, but, in some mystical way, G-d would ensure that the universe remain in harmony with that decision of the majority. But this is one of the deeper mysteries of the Torah, and goes way beyond what we need for our answer here.

ix. But how could the Torah know about the challenges we have today? How can Judaism of the past answer questions of the future?

The Torah stands or falls on the fact that it is G-d-given. Human beings cannot predict all the future scenarios which would take place in the world. Only G-d can bring down something which has in it that sort of wisdom. The reason it has that חכמה in it is because it preceded the world. If the world was created from the Torah, then every principle that is in the world is in the Torah. So when we have modern physics- the strong, the weak, the electromagnetic, and gravitational forces, the Torah itself has those four forces. It brought down those principles in a very contracted form.

Now the genius of the Torah was that it was able to take those principles and translate them into very specific mandates of action. Beware the person who loves the man but pushes on line to get onto the bus. Someone who just feels noble about the

they are never actually arguing to say one to the other that this is wrong. They are providing different perspectives of the פסוק and in אגדתא there is no מחלקת. It is just a question of עי פנים, and you understand from looking on top, the broader circle. If you take a hand, and you see one side and I see the other, there is a way that if you go deep enough, you can combine both sides.

world is yet capable of doing a whole lot of evil.

What the Sages had was a clear grasp of the principles which could then be translated into the specifics of any situation. And the great rabbis of each generation have been doing that ever since. Take the issue of electricity on שבת. Electricity was only discovered recently, but contemporary rabbis had no problem understanding what the Torah position on this would be. The Torah principles to inform us about electricity were already all there. Had we asked a rabbi from the time of the Talmud about something which resists a current, they would have been able to answer it on the spot, because they had such a mastery of the principles.

One only has to look at the responsa of Rav Moshe Feinstein or one of the other recent halachic literature to see a complete cross-section of modern problems, from the intricacies of corporate law, to the latest medical issues. When you see the breathtaking range of examples, you actually see just how sophisticated and contemporary Judaism is. In these areas, Judaism is way ahead of the Western world. In the Western World, medical and other ethics is always catching up. Science makes a discovery and defines the situation and only then do the ethicists begin to address the issue. But by that time the boundaries have already been stretched by the fait-accomplis of the discovery. The Torah, on the other hand, already contains this wisdom needed for this issue, and is ready to address it at any time. (See also *Chapter Four-25*)

x. *Conservative and Reform: Who is a Jew? Why isn't Orthodoxy pluralistic? Why does it not recognize three or more streams in Judaism?*

Background:

There are three vital background points to bear in mind, when dealing with issues having to do with Conservative and Reform:

i-The Conservative and Reform movement have spread the lie that Orthodoxy does not consider Conservative and Reform Jews as Jews. This has been so broadly spread that most Conservative and Reform Jews I have recently met, believe this to be the case. It is vital to explain, therefore, that the "who is a Jew" issue, is an issue concerning non-Jews who wish to convert, and has nothing to do with those who are born Jews.

ii-Having said that, there is a serious complication on the part of the Reform's position of Patrilineal Descent. This means that the Reform Movement recognizes someone as being Jewish provided that any one of the parents are Jewish, even if that one parent is the Father.

iii-Most Conservative and Reform Jews are not so committed because of any ideological reasons. They go to the Reform Temple, say, because this just happens to be where they are the most comfortable. In other words, Reform and Conservative persuasion is a function of level of commitment rather than ideology or belief. In fact, most of them do not have a clue what their movement's official ideology is. All they know is that they want to sit together with their husbands/wives in Shul, and this is where they can do this. Therefore, most of those who become Baalei Teshuva, do so without ever feeling the need to find out what is wrong with Conservative and Reform ideology. As they increase their passion for Torah Judaism, the issue of these "other movements" just falls away.

The answers below reflect the above considerations. This does not mean that these answers will be effective for all. There may come a time when you meet someone who is a real Conservative believer. But answering such a person is not the task we undertake today.

Who is a Jew?

"Who is a Jew" does not affect anyone who is already Jewish. According

to the Torah, even a Jew who is a devout Catholic is still a Jew. In fact, as Rabbi Mottie Berger points out, there is only one movement that disagrees with this and that is the Reform movement. For their position is that someone who believes in Jesus is no longer a Jew. “Who is a Jew” then, affects a potential convert to Judaism. Now this is not an Orthodox-Conservative-Reform issue. For thousands of years, long before there were these three “movements” there has been consensus as to how a conversion should take place, what tests of sincerity were being demanded and what level of commitment and observance. This really is not an area where we can afford to have different standards. We cannot have a situation where someone is regarded as Jewish by some and not by others. Therefore, however much we might respect the beliefs and opinions of the various movements, we have to be able to find consensus on this issue. Now the only conversion that is accepted by all movements is the Orthodox one. Therefore, we are urging our brethren: continue to have healthy and honest debates and discussions. Continue to present your view considerately but forcefully. But don’t do anything in this area which breaks the consensus. The consequences are just too great.

xi. Why is Orthodoxy not pluralistic? Why should it not recognize three or more streams in Judaism?

Judaism is enormously pluralistic. According to the Sages, there are seventy interpretations to each verse of the Torah. There are tens of different chassidic groupings, and there are non-chassidic misnagdim. There are Ashkenazim and Sephardim, each with their own customs and there are many different kinds of Sephardim each expressing their Judaism in slightly different ways. So certainly Judaism allows for a rich tapestry of

different customs and even different interpretations of many laws¹.

However, not all distinctions are valid. Torah Judaism does not like or use the labels Reform Jew, Conservative Jew and Orthodox Jew. These labels are of relatively recent origin and are not intrinsic to Judaism. Historically, Judaism did not recognize different types of Jews of this sort. (It is true that there were (and are)

¹Based on the principles we gave in the background, we have avoided a head on approach to the answer. However, should such an approach be necessary, we bring the following argument, based on that given by Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb:

Despite the pluralistic approach within Judaism, not everything can be called Judaism. Christianity may claim to be the successor to Judaism but it is not Judaism. Nor is Karaism, or the religion of the Essenes, the Bethoesim or the Kutim, despite the fact that all these people were Jewish and originally formulated their religion based on Judaism. If the Torah is to have any meaning as a code for all generations, there has to be a set of principles, of interpretations, a set of fundamentals and rules within which any authentic expression of Judaism must remain.

A group of Frenchmen cannot move to the island of St. Helena and proclaim their country America, claiming that they are the true Americans because they more accurately reflect American culture and more than the Americans themselves, even if this is true. Even a group of Americans cannot do this. The most they can do is declare themselves a new sovereign entity and claim that they are the true successors to the original Americans. The Jewish religion has had a recognized definition of who is a Jew and a recognized community for over three thousand years. Anyone is welcome to make up any post-Judaic religion or nation with whatever rules they please, just as anyone can make up new rules for chess. But they cannot call the religion Judaism any more than the new game will be called chess. If someone converts according to Reform criteria, it is not a Reform conversion to Judaism, it’s a conversion to Reform. There are no Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist Jews, there are only Jews (though some of them may be practicing different religions). So too there can be no Judaism called Reform Judaism though there can be a new religion called Reform.

Karaites, Essenes, etc. but these were groups who had chosen to separate themselves from Judaism and the Jewish people.)

Now, while it is true that Conservative and Reform have some ideological issues with Judaism, these are of no interest to the average Conservative and Reform Jew or Orthodox Jew for that matter. The only relevant distinction is between those who are passionate about their Judaism, who love the study of Torah and the practice of mitzvot (or who want to do so), and those who are less passionate, informed and involved. We are definitely on the side of passion and knowledge, for the Jewish nation will not survive otherwise. It takes passion and commitment to become a knowledgeable Jew, and it takes passion and commitment to keep up the mitzvot. The Torah requires all Jews, Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, to share this passion. We ask all Jews, Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, to continue to grow in their Judaism, to get close to that ancient wisdom of unfathomable depth, to make it relevant to their lives, and to go from strength to strength.

CHAPTER FOUR: ORAL LAW/Written LAW

- i. What Is the Oral Tradition (Torah SheBaal Peh)?**
- ii. How Do I Know That It Is True? I Can Accept The Written Torah But Not The Oral Torah.**
- iii. But often the Rabbis come and interpret a verse. Why is there any difference between my interpretations and theirs?**
- iv. What Is the הלכה?**
- v. Why Do I Have To Listen To the Rabbis (מצוות דרבנן)? What Special Authority Do They Have?**
- vi. What Makes Someone a Rabbi?**
- vii. I Know More About My Situation Than They Do; They Were Talking About a Situation That Existed Many Centuries Ago.**
- viii. Why Should I Listen to the Rabbis (Chazal): They Did Not Know Anything About My Situation As a Jew Living In the 21st Century. They Did Not Know About Cars and Movies and the Internet. In Their Day There Was No Electricity, No Megacities Nor Running Water, and the Average Person Lived Poorly and Simply. How Could They Begin to Understand What Our Lives and Challenges Are?**

CHAPTER FOUR: ORAL LAW/WRITTEN LAW

i. What is the Oral Tradition (Torah SheBaal Peh)?

Torah SheBaal Peh is oral because ultimately it has no repository other than the minds of the Jewish people. Even when it was written down in the form of the Talmud, it was written in such a way that it retains a component which can only be learned from a teacher. The Oral Law is the way in which we connect with the Torah. It is the bringing of the Torah into this world all the way down until it rests in and connects with our minds¹. Without the Oral Law, the Torah would always be something separate from ourselves, as is the Written Torah. This would render the Torah something abstract and removed. But this was not G-d's Will. G-d's whole reason for creating the Torah was so that we could keep it – so that we could become walking Sifrei Torah. The Oral Law is therefore not a luxury. It is G-d's way of ensuring the implementation of His plan².

ii. How do I know that it is true? I Can Accept The Written Torah But Not The Oral Torah.

It is quite obvious from looking at the Written Law that it was intended to be accompanied by an oral component. There is not a single mitzvah in the Torah that

can be understood in all its parameters without resort to the Oral Law.³

For example, the Torah states that the Tefilin should be as *Totafos* between the eyes. But there is absolutely no indication from the Torah as to what this word means. Are the Tefilin meant to be big, green round balls worn on our nose, or sharp red pointy ones worn on our foreheads. Maybe we should be wearing a smooth, flat, gold plate. Should there be anything written involved? What? And on what? And where should this be placed? The Written Torah does not give even a clue. Now if G-d has given us this Torah as a revelation of His Will, then he has played upon us a cruel joke. It is like the NY Subway announcements. We hear clearly the bit about, "And the next stop will be..." But just when we get to the crucial information, all we hear is static. It cannot be that G-d went to all the trouble to create this world for us, then gave us the Torah to tell us how to live here, and we open it up, it is incomprehensible. Clearly, there is another place, other than the Written Law where He tells us what Tefilin are and where we should wear them⁴. G-d tells us not to work on the

³באר הגולה באר רביעי (דף נ):

לא היה מצוה אחת קטנה או גדולה שנוכל לדעת פירוש המצוה אם לא היה חכמתם גדולה ... ולא שלא היינו יודעים שום מצוה על אמתתה, אך היינו הולכים מהפך אל הפך להבין דבר מצוה בהפך מה שכוונה התורה.

¹מהר"ל תפארת ישראל פ"ח:

... וע"י תושבע"פ שהיא בפה האדם והתורה היא עמו לגמרי ואינה על הקלף כתובה ... בפני עצמה רק היא עומדת באדם (ולכן לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה שנאמר ע"פ הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית – (גיטין ס); ודבר זה הוא הברית והחבור שמחבר שני דברים יחד נותן הברית והמקבל הברית, לא התורה שבכתב שהיא אינה עומדת באדם.

עיין דרשות בית הלוי (באמצע השו"תים) הדרוש הי"ז (האחרון) ליתר ביאור

²There are many other reasons for the Oral Law. See the Ner LeElef book, *the Oral Law*.

⁴The following 10 הלכות cannot be deduced from any scriptural source even indirectly:

- (a) The פרשיות must be written with black ink;
- (b) They must be written on parchment that comes from the outer side of the animal's inner skin;
- (c) The boxes and the stitching should be squared;
- (d) There must be a ש on both sides of the של דאש;
- (e) The פרשיות should be wrapped with animal skin;

Sabbath, but nowhere does the written law define work. Nor does it tell us how many categories of work there are¹. G-d tells us to slaughter an animal, but the Written Torah does not tell us how. Are we supposed to slaughter it from the neck or the throat. And with what kind of instrument? The Torah says that you should slaughter, “As I have commanded you²”, implying that we know from somewhere else how to do this. But nowhere else in the written Law is anything clarified on this issue. The information must then be in the Oral Law. There are many, many such examples³.

There is a group of people called the Karaites who insisted that there is no such thing as the Oral Law. But, since the text did not tell them clearly what they had to do, they simply ended up inventing their own oral law. They chose man’s interpretations over G-d’s. A poor choice indeed.

iii. But often the Rabbis come and interpret a verse. Why is there any difference between my interpretations and theirs?

The Hebrew language is a very precise language⁴. It has a very rich

- (f) They should also be wrapped with animal hair;
- (g) The בתים should be sewn shut with thread made from an animal’s sinew;
- (h) There should be an opening on the side of the בתים for the strap to pass through;
- (i) The רצועות should be painted black;
- (j) The רצועה of the יד של should be knotted so as to form a ד .

In addition the following laws are part of the Oral Tradition:

- (a) There should be 4 פרשיות on each one of the תפילין. (Supported by the דרשה that טט (סנהדרין ד:). בכתפי שתיים פת באפריקי שתיים)
- (b) The ראש של should be placed on the hairline. (A גזירת שוה לו. in קידושין לו.)
- (c) The יד של should be placed on the left arm. (A דרשה on the extra ה of ידכה, meaning the weaker arm - מנחות לו.)
- (d) The animal to be used must be a בהמה טהורה.
(Learned from the verse: למען תהיה תורת ה' (שבת קח). (שמות יג) בפוך - מן המותר בפוך
(Taken from מבוא שערים/Gateway to the Talmud - Meir Zvi Bergman.)

¹The Torah does mention two categories of work, carrying and lighting a fire. But clearly these were never meant to comprise an exhaustive list. Indeed, each of these is brought for a special reason.

²דברים יב:כא: כי ירחק ממך המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך לשום שמו שם וּבַחַתּ מִבְּקֶרֶךְ וּמִצְאֲנָךְ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' לך כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָךְ וְאָכַלְתָּ בְשַׁעֲרֶיךָ בְּכָל אֹתוֹת נִפְשֶׁךְ.

³a) Death Penalty - does not specify details;

b) not described; עינוי - יום כפור; Marriage - only 4 words - כי יקח איש אישה (דברים כד: א)

⁴ The complexity and wisdom of the Hebrew language is such that it could not have been invented by human beings. The internal logic and interconnectedness of the letters and the words are vastly superior to any other language on earth. The fact that we were given and still have the תורה in לשון הקודש is further proof of the Divine origins of the תורה.

The Hebrew language is the vehicle through which all השפעות ה'קב"ה are filtered. Therefore it is called לשון הקודש.

Other languages are languages by convention, i.e. by the common decision of a group of people to agree to use certain sounds (words) to represent certain things. Hebrew, however, is intrinsic, i.e. the words actually reflect the reality of a particular object at a certain level. Since the world was created by G-d using Hebrew words (עשרה מאמרות של מעשה בראשית) (עשרה מאמרות של מעשה בראשית) (עשרה מאמרות של מעשה בראשית) (עשרה מאמרות של מעשה בראשית), were we to trace any object back up its spiritual trajectory, we would, at some stage get to the word. The word then, is the reality of the object at a higher level. This is how אדם הראשון knew what the names of the animals were. He did not name them, rather, וכל אשר יקרא לו האדם נפש, And whatever Man understood to be each animals name, that was indeed its name. (בראשית ב:יט) The שם of something is its thereness, its שם-ness. The word, therefore, actually sustains the physical reality it produced. Man, who is an עולם קטן is made up of all 22 letters (שם)

The kabbalistic work which deals with how words are the building blocks of the world

spiritual vocabulary to be able to precisely describe issues of good and evil, purity, holiness and their opposites. In addition, words are related to other words in very precise ways, and they have a very clear, precise grammar. Now when the Sages come to understand a verse, they do so as scientists using clear tools of interpretation. They look at the exact words that are used, they identify apparent redundancies and they see whether any one of the 13 Hermeneutic Principles are applicable. They identify any apparent ambiguities and line up all the different possible ways in which a verse may be interpreted. They then interpret the verse at all four levels of interpretation, checking that the levels are consistent and checking that this interpretation is consistent with everything else that is said in the Torah¹.

is ספר היצירה which, according to the חז"ל (מאמר ד ט' נה), was written by אברהם אבינו. The letters are considered the bricks, the words the rows of bricks which comprise the buildings.

Letters and words are precise in all their dimensions: They can therefore be analyzed by their shape, their numerical value, their sound, and their relationship to other letters and words. Because they represent complete realities, they translate not only into the physical reality of matter, but also of time (each month reflects a letter), and of the Jewish nation itself (each tribe) (ע"פ ספר (היצירה)).

¹Rabbi S. R. Hirsch said that the way other religions, including Reform, choose to interpret the Torah is not scientific. Analyzing the Torah very specifically, you have to come up with a specific interpretation. Rarely is this interpretation how one would have translated the verse at first glance. In several places רש"י says that the verse is כמשמעו. Rabbi Biberfeld says that this implies that in all the other places, כמשמעו is not פשוט, פשוט is not פשוט, פירוש רש"י, he has a very specific קושיא, and what רש"י is telling you is the intended meaning of the verse based on the grammar of the verse, the redundancies, the order of the words, and why a particular word was chosen.

Rav Hirsch says, by looking at the general categories of letters that the words

Interpreting the Torah is then not an open-ended exercise in creativity. It is a result of laborious analysis, with the intended meaning of the verse emerging, per force, from the information that unfolds.

iv. *What is the הלכה?*

The word הלכה comes from the word הולך, which means to walk, to go. הלכה is a guide to our path in life. It provides a framework in which we can function which ensures that we set a certain spiritual and ethical standard whether we are up and down. Perhaps we are feeling depressed today – we do not want to get out of bed. But halacha tells us that we have to daven by a certain time – it breaks our fall and ensures we can rest on a clear standard until we again feel inspired to do more.

But the path of halacha is about much more than merely breaking a fall. On the one hand, there is more to Judaism than the Halacha². Most of the

belong to we can understand both the general class of meanings to which the words belong and the specific meaning of this particular word. The ספר היצירה and the זהר tell us that they are divided by their sounds. ד', י', נ', ט', where the top of your tongue meets your teeth. ב', ו', מ', פ', said by closing your lips. Or gutturals, א', ע', ה'.

If you were to analyze a word you would have to:

1) look at all other places the word was used,

2) associate and analyze it in context of its letters.

This is a very scientific exercise, not open to everyone's interpretation. The נקודות are Oral Law.

²Not every aspect of one's daily living is enshrined in Halacha. There is a huge area of our lives designated רשות, which is not specifically mandated. Although there are considerably more halachic imperatives in our lives than most of us realize, the period between minyanim has large areas which are open to our own creative decision making and only generally covered by the injunction, קדושים תהיו. But even that מצוה is understood by Rashi, the Ramban and others to be a negative injunction, as the Ramban says that

interpersonal laws provide us with only a basic framework (although comprehensive by secular standards) which is meant to provide a springboard from which we ought to express our own creativity and unique potential. Within the formal wisdom of Judaism itself, there are many areas of knowledge other than the Halacha.

Yet Judaism can never contradict Halacha. G-d made Judaism for us, and therefore we have to see halacha as a gift to us. Most of our day is spent in a dimension called **רשות**, an area not clearly halachikally mandated where it us up to us to harmonize ourselves with the essential logic of the halacha, and bring all areas of our life into the spiritual zone. Without halacha, this attempt would amount to nothing more than a bunch of subjective interpretations of what we would like the Torah to say. Halacha is a bed-rock of certainty in fulfilling G-d's will.

For centuries, spiritual giants, the wisest of people, have been pooling their wisdom and understanding of Judaism, and giving this to us as a gift of the ages. Halacha represents the final distilling of this wisdom¹, the starting point wherewith we, even as spiritual midgets, can start out standing on the shoulders of giants.

One could argue that when one acts Toradik in one's area of רשות, one is also bringing the Torah finally into the world, just as when a posek paskens halacha. In this sense, פ' תושבע"פ is a part of our רשות just as it is a part of our הלכה.

One of the areas that give us our Toradik perspective is Agadata. Another, according to Rav Hirsch, is the symbolism in the Torah. The Mishkan, for example, was a symbol of man. The details of the Mishkan give us a clear reading of how we are to construct ourselves. Rav Shimshon Rephael Hirsch held that such symbolism has to emerge from the halachos within each sugya. Symbolic interpretations must not only be consistent with the halachos, the symbolism must emerge from these halachos. (Contrast with the Moreh Nevuchim who claimed that we could not understand the details of the Mitzvah in the context of their "Taam".)

Another source of a Toradik perspective is the stress and emphasis we give to certain midos, issues and aspects of our lives over others. In addition, many of these great underlying principles, although impacted by halacha, are not entirely halachically proscribed. The יג עיקרים of the Rambam was not even articulated in that form before his time (though some of them can be defined as Mitzvos). In fact, Rav Yosef Albo (ספר העקרims) held that there were only three such principles. The Torah does not explicitly discuss ימות המשיח nor תחיית המתים. The בה"ג holds that there is not a מצוה פרטית to believe in HaShem. It is a יסוד of the whole Torah. (השגות על ספר המצוות, מצווה א: Ramban). The Ramban, and most poskim, hold that there is no chiyuv to daven daily to HaShem. It is a chesed HaShem granted us. (רמב"ן השגות שם:); According to some, the Rambam does not hold that there is a מצוה to do תשובה; only

to do וידוי. The type of chesed we are supposed to do is, with the exception of a few Derabanans such as Bikur Cholim and Hachnasas Kala, left completely open to us. According to Rav Chaim Vital, there is no מצוה to work on your midos (though all the מצוות demand some application of מדות development) (מובא בעלי שור); family and chinuch issues are also loosely proscribed and it is questionable whether a woman is חייב to get married. (בר"ן הוי רק הכשר מצוה לבעלה של). (פרו ורבו, והמקנה חולק). All this means is that we have to have a way of applying the Torah that is not restricted to purely halachic categories, though which have to be consistent with them.

¹באר הגולה: ההלכה היא שכל פשוט ... כי ההלכה היא הדרך הישר והוא ההולך עם הש"י לגמרי לכן נקרא דבר הזה ההלכה

v. **Why do I have to listen to the Rabbis (מצוות דרבנן)? What special authority do they have?**

The authority of the Sages derives from the Torah itself:

דברים יז יא:
לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל
על פי התורה אשר יורוך¹
ויקרא יח ל:
ושמרתם את משמרתני – ובאה בו הקבלה: ועשו
משמרת למשמרת

It is as if G-d Himself commanded us to keep each מצוה דרבנן². In fact, the Torah was given in such a way that it lacked a certain completion. G-d Himself should have commanded us to do the things, which were Rabbinically ordained³.

¹וכן אנחנו מצווים לשמוע אל השופט הממנה בכל דור ודור כמו שאמר הכתוב (דברים יז טי): ובאת אל הכהנים הלויים ואל השופט אשר יהיה בימים ההם, ודרשת והגידו לך את דבר המשפט, ועשית על פי הדבר אשר יגידו לך מן המקום ההוא אשר יבחר ד'

²רמב"ם פ"א מהל' ממרים הל' ב:
... על פי התורה אשר יורוך ועל המשפט אשר יאמרו לך תעשה זו מצוות עשה - (עיין במס' שבת כג: והיכן צונו שמביא שם עוד פסוק ועיין בריטב"א חדשה שם) אלו הגזירות והתקנות והמנהגות שיוודו בהם לרבים כדי לחזק הדת ולתקן העולם.

(והנה הרמב"ן בהשגותיו על ספר המצוות שרש א חולק על הרמב"ם וסובר דהפסוק של לא תסור הולך רק על תורה שבע"פ אבל על דבריהם לא קאי כלל ע"ש ומרבה להקשות עליו ועיין במשך חכמה פרשת שפטים ד"ה לא תסור שמתוך כל קושיות הרמב"ן ועיין בקובץ שעורים, קונטרס דברי סופרים ס"א ס"ק יג – טו שמביא שמוכרח לומר שלשיטתו כל דרבנן הוא גילוי רצונו ית"ש ע"ש. והקרית ספר תירץ את קושיות הרמב"ן על הרמב"ם. ושיטת הכוזרי בזה (מאמר ג לט) לא ברור שכתב בזמן הבית מברכים על מצוות דרבנן אשר קדשנו ואלא בזמן הגלות לא היו מחייבים אותנו ברכה, אך היה נאמר עליהם כי תקנה הם או מנהג. עיין בקול יודה שמפרש את הכוזרי או כהרמב"ם או כהרמב"ן. או באופן שלישי יהיינו דאין אנו חייבים מן התורה לשמוע אליהם אלא בזמן הבית, כלשון הכתוב וקמת ועלית אל המקום וגו'.

בדרישות הר"ן מביא מחלוקת אמוראים שכ"ע מסכימים שגזירות וסייגים דרבנן שיש להם סמך ועיקר מן התורה הם נכללים בהלאו דלא תסור אבל במצוות דרבנן שאין להם עיקר בתורה וכמו נר חנוכה יש מחלוקת אם נכללים או לא (הדרוש השביעי הקטע המחיל התירוץ בזה שלא נחלקו וכו')

³רמח"ל מאמר העיקרים:
כל התקנות האלו ... הנה דעתו ית"ש מסכמת שישמרו שמירה מעולה ככל מצוות התורה עצמה ... וכבר היה ראוי שיצוה עליהם הוא ית"ש בתורה עצמה, אלא

And in fact, many of the things which the Sages have commanded us to do are clearly implicit if not directly hinted at in the verses of the Torah itself. מצוות דרבנן are therefore an integral part of our conception of Judaism⁴. (However, השם did not want these commandments to have status: status⁵) The Sages were given

שהיה הרצון לפניו שיבא הדבר מצדנו ... ואין הבדל בין [מצוות מן התורה ומצוות מדרבנן] אלא במה שהם ז"ל הבדילו, דהיינו הספיקות בדיני התורה ידינו לחומרא ובדברי סופרים ידינו לקולא ... אמנם בענין חיוב המצוות ... אין הפרש בין אלה לאלה כלל.

⁴פאר הדור על החזון איש:
גזירות שגזרו חז"ל, משמרת למשמרת, הכל "נכנס בגופי התורה ובינתה"
משך חכמה שפטים יז יא (ד"ה לא תסור):
התורה רצתה אשר מלבד ענינים הנצחים ומקיימים לעד, יתחדש ענינים, סיגים, ואזהרות, וחומרות אשר יהיו זמניים, היינו שיהיה ביד החכמים להוסיף ע"פ גדרים הנמסר להם. מהר"ל, באר הגולה, באר א (דף טו): וגם באלו מצוות (שגזרו חכמים) אין ספק שהם מתחברים אל התורה עצמה ... וכן עשתה הטבע הצפונים לאצבעות היד והרגלים שלא יהיו נקופים התנועת האדם, ושערות הראש שמירה לראש ... וכמו ששמירת העין ושאר אברים נכנסין בגדר הבריאה, כך ג"כ גזירות שגזרו חכמים לשמירת המצוות נכנסים בגדר התורה. לכן חייב לברך עליהם אשר קדשנו וכו' כמו על מצוות התורה וכן בכל דבר שבעולם יש שמירה ותיקון ג"כ, שהש"י סדר אותו בחכמתו שיהיה נשמר מן ההיזק ... ואיך לא תהיה שמירה למצוות שבתורה.
במדבר רבה יד: יב דברי תורה ודברי חכמים מרועה אחד נתנו (ויש שפירשו שדברי חכמים קאי על תושבע"פ דרך כלל).

The Ritva understands that the Chachamim saw a hint in the Torah of all that they decreed. This was an indication to them that HaSh-m wanted these decrees all along:

ריטב"א ראש השנה טז. ד"ה תניא ר"ע (בסוף): שכל מה שיש אסמכתא מן הפסוק העיר הקב"ה שראוי לעשות כן אלא שלא קבעו חובה ומסרו לחכמים ... לקבעי ... אם ירצו כמ"ש ועשית על פי הדבר אשר יגידו לך ולפיכך תמצא החכמים נותנין בכל מקום ראייה או זכר או אסמכתא לדבריהם מן התורה כלומר שאינם מחדשים דבר מלבם וכל תורה שבע"פ רמוזה בתורה שהיא תמימה וח"ו שהיא חסרה כלום.

The same is true of תקנות after the time of: חז"ל:
שם:

"תקנת חכמי דור ודור מחייבת כתקנת חכמים בזמן התלמוד" שמה שגזרו הראשונים ז"ל גזרו על שורש הדבר המביא להרחבת המצווה ומשמרתה ומסורה לחכמים הבאים לשפוט ביתר הפרטים כפי הוראת העין וכמשא-ומתן של זין התורה ומה שראיה לחכם שראוי להבינו בכלל גזירתם זהו באמת בקשת הגזורים ומבוקש גזירתם"

⁵The exception to this may be a שבת on שבת. At the beginning of his ערוך הלכות שבת, the רב who says in the name of the ריטב"א brings the השולחן דאורייתא that the שביות are in fact רמב"ן

Now the Sages knew when they undertook to make any Rabbinic Decree that these would be binding for all time. They certainly understood that times change: Some of us would live in times of wealth and some in times of poverty; some during times of peace and some during times of war; some would live in the Middle East, some in North Africa and some in the USA – representing enormous diversity of cultures. Some would live in the 2nd Century and some in the 21st. They were enormously careful, therefore, not to decree anything which would somehow date, which might be enormously relevant at certain times under certain circumstances but not at other times or under different conditions. Sometimes they debated a decree for hundreds of years. Thousands of Sages may have been involved.

Look, as an example, at the Siddur. There were at least seven prophets amongst thousands of the greatest minds who all came together to pour over every word, every nuance, of this great work. They did so with an understanding that sometimes we may feel up and sometimes down; that sometimes we may be looking for comfort and sometimes for inspiration. Ask a passionately observant Jew today what he finds in this fabulous work and he will tell you that he finds all of himself therein.

vi. What makes someone a Rabbi?

The formal qualification to be a rabbi is to pass a test in certain difficult areas of Jewish law, and to receive a Semicha from the testing rabbi. Now, although there is a minimum standard, which is quite high, there are certainly semichas and semichas, some being more prestigious than others. However, in addition to the formal knowledge required, no one would be eligible for receiving the title “rabbi” unless he showed that he was passionate about his Judaism, and a real example to others.

It is interesting that many great rabbis never got a semicha, and, at this level, it does not seem to matter very much. We need to know whether or not someone received semicha where we are not sure how else to evaluate the person’s knowledge, observance and practice of Judaism. We don’t want people walking around faking it. But someone whose overall knowledge and observance is so significantly above this minimum standard would be seen as a Torah leader in our eyes and be worthy of the name “Rabbi”.

vii. *I know more about my situation than they do; They were talking about a situation that existed many centuries ago.*

People in the Western world have a particular problem with authority figures in general, and this exacerbates their problems in this area. But, the truth is, that all legal codes work basically the same way. Almost every western legal system can trace its origins to Roman law. In England, the Roman and later legal principles were embodied in what is today known as English Common Law. Superimposed upon these are state or county laws, municipal ordinances and even neighborhood regulations. This comprises a vast web of precedent, principles and codes of conduct covering vast areas of our life. In fact, the most regulated country in the world is the USA. We are told whether to park on the right or the left side of the road and on which day,

how to sort our garbage, and whether we can have a fence around our backyard or not. Yet we know, that this does not contradict our idea of America as a country of freedom and opportunity.

The Rabbis of the Talmud had a genius and insight that makes Einstein look like a kindergarten kid. [There have been many physicists, doctors and other professionals, some of them leaders in their field, who have studied the Talmud. All have reported that they have never come across anything so intellectually challenging and sophisticated, containing so much insight into the human condition.]

But even they would not have dared to direct a small part of our lives had the Torah itself not ordered them to do so. (See above)

These great men, thousands of them over many centuries, knew that times and circumstances change. They themselves saw dramatic changes in their own environments. Their genius was to make up a code that provided ethical principles together with a few timeless decrees. There are in fact no more than seven Rabbinic decrees, asking us to do something new. All the other enactments of the Sages related to consolidating what the Torah had already told us to do, remembering a Torah Mitzvah which we could temporarily not fulfill, or ensure appropriate commercial, zoning, pollution and neighborhood laws¹. But even this

¹The following are the enactments of the Sages:

(i) A handful of Rabbinic מצוות (officially seven: lighting candles Friday night, reading the מגילה, lighting candles on חנוכה, washing hands before eating bread, etc.)

(ii) Laws that were Torah laws and will, when the conditions are right again, be Torah laws, which we keep now in order not to forget how to do them;

(iii) Enactments protecting the rights and freedoms of the citizen; relationships between neighbors; business enactments; etc.

(iv) Many laws that act as a fence around the Torah law, so that, even if one should come to accidentally transgress one of these, one still

leaves large parts of our lives unregulated and open to our own, spiritual creativity in harmonizing these aspects of our lives with the deep principles of the Torah.

The rest is up to each community to develop its own customs and each generation to resolve its own unique problems.

(See the next question. See also *Chapter Two–15-But how could the Torah know about the challenges we have today? How can Judaism of the past answer questions of the future?*)

viii. Why should I listen to the Rabbis (Chazal): They did not know anything about my situation as a Jew living in the 21st Century. They did not know about cars and movies and the internet. In their day there was no electricity, no megacities nor running water, and the average person lived poorly and simply. How could they begin to understand what our lives and challenges are?

First read the answer to the previous question, which is the background to this one.

The mandate of the Sages comes from the Torah itself. It is the Torah which tells us to listen to the Sages and to the legislation which they might make, thereby giving G-d's legitimacy to any of the decrees of the Sages. The Sages were enormously brilliant and insightful people who were masters not only of all of the Torah wisdom but of 70 languages and much other secular wisdom besides. There were many, many prophets amongst them. They were critically aware of the fact that they were making legislation for times and circumstances in the future when things might be different.

will not have transgressed the Torah law. This is similar to having a cut glass bowl. Even though it is firmly on the table, when at the edge of the table it may be bumped off. So we make sure that it is in the middle of the table.

They were profoundly careful not to make any legislation which might become dated or which might not apply to any set of circumstances. They therefore looked very deeply at universals in human psychology and makeup, and drew on deep principles that would be applicable for all time. In this, they were operating at a level called Ruach Hakodesh, a phenomenally high spiritual level, which allows access to a much higher plane of understanding.

Despite operating at such a high level, still the sages were very wary of making any decree. Many hundreds and often thousands of Sages would discuss each and every point, before a decree would be made. Sometimes, such discussion would continue for decades, sometimes over many generations.

To understand what the Sages were up to, imagine an extremely valuable, crystal-glass bowl lying at the edge of a table. Although it is firmly on the table, yet it can still be knocked off very easily. What the Sages did was to take the bowl and put it in the middle of the table. Now, even if the table gets knocked, the bowl still will not fall off. Our commandments are so precious that the sages ensured that even if we should bump something over (transgress), we will still have the commandments intact, safely guarded in the middle of the table by the edicts and decrees of the Rabbis.

(See also Chapter Two-15-But how could the Torah know about the challenges we have today? How can Judaism of the past answer questions of the future?)

CHAPTER FIVE: MITZVOS, PRAYER & RELIGION

- i. How Does Law Relate to Morality? Much of Judaism Seems Outdated - e.g., שבת and כשרות Laws**
- ii. Does G-d Need My Prayer? Doesn't He Know What We Need Without Our Asking?**
- iii. Why Do I Have to Pray In Hebrew?**
- iv. Why Can't I Just Say My Own Prayers?**
- v. Is There Any Room in Judaism for Spontaneous Prayer and Communication With G-d?**
- vi. Why Are There Fixed Times for Prayers?**
- vii. I Do Not Find Going to Synagogue a Spiritual Experience.**

CHAPTER FIVE: MITZVOS, PRAYER & RELIGION

*i. How does Law relate to Morality? Much of Judaism seems outdated - e.g., **שבת** and **כשרות** Laws.*

שבת: It would seem to be just the opposite. As civilization goes forward, Judaism seems to be becoming more, not less, relevant to our lives. In an era when the weekday is becoming more pressurized, when our leisure time is taken up primarily by TV, the Internet and other inanimate non-spiritual undertakings, **שבת** is increasingly the key to sanity.

(You will then probably have to go into the concept of **מלאכה** to explain why seemingly petty things that take no effort at all, like switching on and off lights are forbidden.)

כשרות: The reason for keeping kosher is not related to health, (though we imagine that if G-d told us to eat some things and not others this would also be good for our health). Keeping kosher is a part of the group of commandments called **חוקים**, which have to do with our sensitivity to the physical environment, starting with our own bodies¹. The prohibition for not eating meat and milk is considered by some commentators, for example, as an act of sensitivity or mercy, the opposite of cruelty². This seems surprising because neither the meat nor the milk is alive when we eat it.

However, the understanding of this is as follows. The Hebrew word for cruelty, to be **אכזר**, comes from the words **אך זר** - to be only a stranger, to be totally estranged from something. Estrangement from something leads to the type of insensitivity that ultimately allows for cruelty, just as the Nazis had to first

dehumanize their victims to facilitate their destruction. The Torah prevents our alienation from the world by giving us a whole lot of commandments (**שעטנו**, (כלאים, אותו ואת בנו, שילוח הקן וגוי) that heighten our awareness and appreciation of the plant and animal world around us, and that urge us to preserve the natural order of things. This in turn heightens our compassion for these things.

Now, meat is the part of the animal used for its own self-sustenance and therefore represents the more self-centered aspects of the animal whereas milk is used for nurturing, reflecting the giving, outer directed part of the animal³. By not mixing the two we show our alertness and sensitivity to all these differences in nature, ultimately impacting on our own personalities. Surely in the 20th – 21st centuries, with its unprecedented onslaught of the environment, this idea is more needed than ever.

(See also *Chapter Two-15-But how could the Torah know about the challenges we have today? How can Judaism of the past answer questions of the future?*)

ii. Does G-d need my prayer? Doesn't he know what we need without asking?

Sure He does. But He needs us to ask for it, for our sakes not His. This ensures that we have a relationship with Him, that we realize that everything comes from Him, and that we grow by turning to Him⁴.

³ Based on R. SR Hirsch on **שמות כג יט** (משפטים): לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו

⁴ Rav Yosef Albo in the **ספר העקרים**, asks, amongst others, the following question: If prayer is a request for the fulfillment of needs then we need to question the whole undertaking. For, either we deserve the situation we are in or we do not. If we deserve the situation we are in, then who are we to

¹This is the definition of R. SR Hirsch in the Horeb.

²Ibn Ezra

iii. *Why do I have to pray in Hebrew?*

The truth is that you can pray in any language you understand¹, but there is a tremendous advantage to praying in Hebrew.

Firstly, if you can pray in Hebrew, you can walk into any synagogue around

The ספר העקרים answers by saying that we truly do deserve any situation which we are in. This is not because of reward and punishment, which is in the World to Come. But because, if we are not worthy receptacles of ברכה's ה'שם, then we are actually preventing ourselves from receiving the good He wishes to bestow upon us. But by praying we change ourselves so that we now deserve a different situation. A similar approach is taken by the מהר"ל, who suggests that the difference is that we now, by preparing ourselves for שלימות, have a relationship, a connection with G-d. This allows us to receive from him.

Sometimes G-d puts us into a situation of need for the very purpose of getting us to daven. ר' tells us sometimes a person has an anxiety-provoking premonition that something bad is going to happen to him, and this motivates him to daven to השם. In the end, that same thing which would have been bad, turns into something positive. Prayer, says Rav Dessler, is the פתחו של מחט which allows us to be דארי לטיעתא דשמיא

¹ ותפלה בכל לשון (סוטה לג ע"א): שמונה עשרה וברכת – בכל לשון שאתה מברך (סוטה לג: ברכת המזון ע"א)

שמע – בכל לשון שאתה שומע (ברכות יג ע"א): שמע However, this does not mean that prayer in all languages is equally good. A person is allowed to pray in a language other than Hebrew, if he will then understand every word, presuming that he does not understand Hebrew. But, we are allowed to daven in Hebrew, even if we don't understand every word. Hebrew, is a very holy language, the language the world was created with, the language that the prophets spoke in, and has effects far beyond what we can understand.

the world and feel at home. This gives a tremendous unity to the Jewish people.

Secondly, Hebrew has a certain potency which other languages do not have. It is like the difference between a sword on the one hand and a bow and arrow on the other. A sword is sharp; it is dangerous even if not wielded. Should someone accidentally fall on it, it will still cause great damage. A bow and arrow on the other hand only has potency if careful aim is taken, the bow is taut, and the arrow is shot. The Hebrew language is like a sharp sword - even without perfect intention and depth of feeling on our part, the very use of the language achieves a certain effect². (This is because the Hebrew language is the reality of the world at a higher level). Other languages can be used, but they need to be used much more accurately - with greater intention and feeling.

To understand this issue more deeply see note³.

²משך חכמה - בראשית פרק מח כב ד"ה בחרבי (דף 46) (תפילה קבועה פועלת אפילו בלי כוונה משא"כ תפילה נדבה):

צלותי הוא סדר תפלה הקבוע כמוש"א השבח והתפלה וההודאה מעכבין (תוספתא מנחות) ובעתי הוא בקשה אשר אמרו אם רצה אדם לחדש בתפלתו מעין כל ברכה שואל אדם צרכיו ... כי סדר תפלה שזו עבודה קבועה אין הכוונה מעכב ואם כוון לבבו באבות סגי ובכוונה מועטת סגי לא כן בחידוש שמבקש האדם צרכיו ומחדש בעי כוונה יתירה ... והנה חרב הוא בעצמו רק כח המורה ... ולכך אמר ברכות דף ה כל הקורא ק"ש על מטתו כאלו אווז חרבו על שתי פיות כו' כי על מטתו איננה בכוונה מדובה

³Man is the only creation with a Godly soul, and the unique expression of the human soul is speech. Speech is the ability to take an abstract idea, to convert it into a physical sound, to make a physical impact on someone else's ear, who in turn turns it back into an abstract idea. Therefore speech is the point at which we convey our inner spirituality into the physical world around us. Every word we say carries power because it emanates from the soul, which is a part of God. Without the power of speech, nothing differentiates me from the animals. When I pray with this gift of speech, I pray with my full status as a human being: a human being with human lacks, and then I become a receptor for God's blessing.

iv. *Why can't I just say my own prayers?*

There is a very high level of speech, i.e. the use of the Hebrew language. The complexity and wisdom of the Hebrew language is such that it could not have been invented by human beings. The internal logic and interconnectedness of the letters and the words are vastly superior to any other language on earth. The fact that we were given and still have the תורה לשון הקודש is further proof of the Divine origins of the תורה.

The Hebrew language is the vehicle through which all השפעות s'heqeb"ה are filtered. Therefore it is called לשון הקודש.

Other languages are languages by convention, i.e. by the common decision of a group of people to agree to use certain sounds (words) to represent certain things. Hebrew however, is intrinsic, i.e. the words actually reflect the reality of a particular object at a certain level. Since the world was created by G-d using Hebrew words, were we to trace any object back up its spiritual trajectory (השתלשלות), we would, at some stage (עולם הבריאה), get to the word. The word then, is the reality of the object at a higher level. This is how אדם הראשון knew what the names of the animals were. He did not name them, rather,

בראשית ב יט

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא לוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ.

And whatever Man understood to be each animal's name, that was indeed its name.

(The שם of something is its thereness - שם ness - Rav SR Hirsch).

The word, therefore, actually sustains the physical reality it produced. Man, who is an עולם קטן is made up of all 22 letters (שם)

The kabbalistic, work which deals with how words are the building blocks of the world is ספר היצירה which, according to the כבודי מאמר (אברהם אבינו was written by ד' ט' נה) The letters are considered the bricks, the words the rows of bricks which comprise the buildings.

The Men of the Great Assembly understood that on a spiritual level, God is constantly transmitting His life force to man. The Almighty gave them the wisdom to compose an order of worship necessary to transmit this life force at all times by using The Hebrew language. It is as if the "Infinite Essence is bound to this person's breath and life force," as if God's spirit is modulated and constricted within man's words. God breathes His life force into us every morning, we return it to Him through prayer. This forms a cycle of daily renewal and continuous blessing .

It is beautiful if you feel inspired to say your own prayers. But, most of us are only inspired occasionally, and we need something more structured to help us through all those other times.

The sages were conscious of the fact that they were enacting prayers for all times; they knew that people are different, feel differently at different times, have their ups and downs. That is why, one hundred and twenty of them, at least seven prophets amongst them, spent many decades, weighing each word, each sentence and each paragraph. They so structured the prayers that someone looking for compassion and hope will be able to find it in the prayers; someone feeling joyous, will be able to pray from that angle; someone depressed or in pain or under stress - all will find what they are looking for in what is actually the deepest of all the Oral works which we have received from the sages¹.

Dena Heller, in a Moreshet essay, put it this way:

I'm not very adept at prayer because, being a writer, I'm overly cautious of my language. So, not wanting to bore whomever or whatever is on the receiving end...and yet wondering at the same time whether ornamentation and witticism would be inappropriate... I'm a little inhibited...

¹עלי שור ח"א

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¹King, Larry, and Katsof, Rabbi Irwin Powerful Prayers, Renaissance Books, Los Angeles, 1998; pg. 50

Having a set prayer service saves us from such worries. It can be compared to going to visit the royal family at Buckingham Palace. Before one meets the Queen, he must be taught what type of speech and manners are expected of him, and only then can he approach her. It is no different with the King of Kings: one can only pray in his own words once he is familiar with the proper way of addressing prayers. We only achieve the “proper etiquette” of prayer by using the format of the Men of the Great Assembly, and only then are we encouraged to add our personal prayers in any form and any language we like.¹

Set prayer is not restrictive. Quite the contrary, it actually compliments spontaneity. When I use a *siddur*, a prayer book, I know that I am covering all the bases. Someone who was wiser and more discerning than myself made sure of that. Everything I could possibly want to pray for was included, such as health, unity, justice, wealth, understanding, wisdom, and peace. Then within the structure of the עשרה שמונה there are special insertions for personal prayers such as healing, business, forgiveness, and general requests. The structure adds many levels of meaning that we wouldn't have if our prayers were unstructured. When we are focused, we can see the beauty and relevance of these time-tested prayers, and hopefully we will be able to convert obligatory, directed prayer into spontaneous prayer.

v. *Is there any room in Judaism for spontaneous prayer and communication with G-d?*

There certainly is. Besides the times when we pray, we can pray to G-d any time we like, using any words, in any language. Every time we feel joy or sadness, every time we feel gratitude or a

¹Amsel, Nachum, *The Jewish Encyclopedia of Moral and Ethical Issues*, Jason Aronson, Inc., NY 1996; pg. 133

need, we have an opportunity to reconnect to G-d.

vi. *Why are there fixed times for prayers?*

We talked above (Why can't I say my own prayers) about the fact that, left to our own devices, we would very rarely turn to G-d. But the Sages did not just fix prayers at certain intervals. They tuned into the different cycles of the day, each with its own spiritual energy and potential².

The morning has the longest prayer, it is a preparation for the whole day. But it must be said by a certain time – this ensures we get up, put our headspace right with the morning prayers and get out into the world to fulfill our potential. The afternoon prayer is the toughest, coming in the middle of things. However, it is also the shortest. For, having given ourselves a long daven in the morning, we only need a short booster to get us back on track. The night is a time of withdrawal and meditation – therefore Maariv can be said the whole night³.

²בראשית רבה ט"ח ט: אמר רב שמואל בר נחמן: [התקינו שלש תפילות] כנגד שלש פעמים שהיום משתנה. בערבית צריך אדם לומר: יהי רצון מלפניך ד' אלוקי שתוציאני מאפילה לאורה. בשחרית צריך לומר: מודה אני לפניך ד' אלוקי שהוצאתני מאפילה לאורה. במנחה צריך אדם לומר: יהי רצון מלפניך ד' אלוקי שכשם שזכיתני לראות חמה בזריחתה כך תזכני לראות בשקיעתה. (מובא ג"כ בירושלמי ריש פ"ד דברכות בשינויים)

³In ברכות כו: the Sages are in dispute as to whether the three prayer times are derived from the time of Korbanos or were implemented by the Avos/

ברכות כו: אמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא תפלות אבות תקנום, ר' יהושע בן לוי אמר תפלות כנגד תמידים תקנום (שנאמר ונשלמה פרים שפתינו – הושע יד: ג). תניא כוותיה דרבי יוסי ברבי חנינא: אברהם תקן תפלת שחרית שנאמר וישכם אברהם בבוקר אל המקום אשר עמד שם את פני ד' ואין עמידה אלא תפלה שנאמר ויעמוד פנחס ויתפלל ותעצור המגפה, יצחק תקן תפלת המנחה שנאמר ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה לפנות ערב ואין שיחה אלא תפלה שנאמר תפלה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ד' ישפוך שיחו,

The wording of the prayers reflect these differences. For example, in the morning we say, just after the Shma, the words *אמת ויציב*, that these words are true and *firm*. However, in the evening, the words are *אמת ואמונה*, true and *faithful*. We change the words from firm to faithful. Firm is the word for the clarity of the day, faithful is the word for the darkness of night. Saying these prayers connects us to cycles which, in our harried and busy days, we might otherwise miss.

vii. I do not find going to Synagogue a spiritual experience.

Many people tend to think that expressing their Jewishness means going to *Shul* to pray. Actually *עבודת הלב* is a difficult process for us all, and is often not the best place to start a relationship with Torah and *מצוות*. This is especially so because ignorance of how to *daven* can make someone feel intensely uncomfortable, and often one lands out in a *shul* which is cold and unfriendly. If need be, such a person can be reassured that *davening* is only a small part of Jewish spirituality and that they should focus on other things for the time being. It may be that the services are too long for the person, in which case they shouldn't feel that they have to sit through the whole thing. Ideally they should be sent to an adults' 'beginners minyan' or 'explorers minyan' as they called in England. Many are bothered by the talking in *Shul*. Though talking in *shul* is wrong, it can be pointed out that it does reflect a certain feeling at home by the people who are there. It is wonderful that *shul* inspires such warmth and familiarity!

Yet, despite these problems, much can be added to a person's richness of experience by explaining to him/her not only what the prayer services are all about (and making sure they know where the place is) but by giving them an appreciation of the symbolism of the synagogue and the prayer service.

יעקב תקן תפלת ערבית שנאמר ויפגע במקום וילן שם כי בא השמש ואין פגיעה אלא תפלה שנאמר ואל תשא בעדס רנה ,
תניא כוותיה דריב"ל מפני מה אמרו תפלת השחר עד חצות שהרי תמיד של שחר קרב והולך עד חצות נפש החיים שער ב:
ועבודת התפלה כנגד תמידים תקנוה שהיו ג"כ בשעת הקבוע להם עיקר המזון ...
שם: --

ותפלות נגד תמידין תקנום שהיו עולות כליל לאישים כולה לגבוה סלקא ולא היה בהם חלק הדיוט כלל...
The מהר"ל brings a third reason behind the three daily prayers, i.e. that they complete all the dimensions of man.

וביאר המהר"ל (נתיב העבודה פ"ג) ששלשת התפלות הם כנגד גופו, נפשו וממונו: שחרית כנגד גופו שאז צריך להתגבר על שינתו מנחה כנגד ממונו – שאז הוא באמצע העסקים שלו מעריב כנגד נפשו – שאז מבקשת הנפש מנוחה ובה למדינו שצריך לשעבד את כל אלו להקב"ה שנאמר ואהבת את ד' אלוקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך

Shacharis – "I thank G-d for having brought me from darkness to light." – The essence of Shacharis, the morning prayer, is a realization of Hashem as the Creator. We wake up, are newly amazed at the magnificence of creation, and turn to the Creator to thank Him. Recognizing this leads us to acknowledge that we are His creations, and that we owe everything to Him. This establishes within us the notion that our day is meant to be spent in service of Him.

משנה ברורה א:א:
מודה אני לפניך ה' או"א שהוצאתי מאפלה לאורה.
Mincha – "I thank Hashem that as I was worthy to see the sun in the east, I was worthy to see it in the west." During the day, we become very involved in mundane matters, and our appreciation of life is stifled by more urgent matters. We remind ourselves of the purpose of it all, by taking time out of our day in order to refocus our lives. And again, we remind ourselves to appreciate life itself.

משנה ברורה א:א:
מודה אני לפניך ה' או"א שכשם שזכיתי לראות כשהחמה במרחק כך זכיתי לראותה במערב.
Ma'ariv – "May it be Your will, that as I was in darkness and You showed me light, may You again take me from darkness to light." At night, before we go to sleep, we are suddenly cognizant of our vulnerability. We are about to go to sleep and again surrender our souls to Hashem, and so we thank Him for the gift of life today, and request that He renew the gift tomorrow.

משנה ברורה א:א:
יה"ד מלפניך ה' או"א כשם שהייתי באפלה והוצאתני לאורה, כן תוציאני מאפלה לאורה.

A synagogue is like the Temple. It has an Aaron with a Ner Tamid. It has a Bimah, and a Paroches¹. In fact a synagogue derives its holiness from the same verses which tell us that the Temple is holy².

The Synagogue is a place where we come to make a public demonstration of our belief in השם and His Hashgacha³.

Prayer should not be a casual act that is done in a different place every day. That's all right for eating or a shmooze between pals. But when we daven, we have a specific place of worship, the shul. We are tremendously privileged to have a

meeting scheduled with God, and we honor Him by showing up on time, at the right place. We should go to God, and not have Him come to us.⁴

¹Because the Shul derives its Kedusha from the same verses that teach us to build a Beis Hamikdash, the structure of the Shul is based on the structure of the *Beis HaMikdash*. In fact a shul is called a מקדש מעט . In an era where our own prayer is all we have, where we have lost our Kohanim, prophets and kings, the *Beis Knesses* is the direct continuation of the *Beis HaMikdash*. In both there is an Aaron HaKodesh with a Paroches as the focal point, in both there is a Ner Tamid (of the Menorah), a Bimah. This is not just a symbolic parallel. In an era where our own prayer is all we have, where we have lost our Kohanim, prophets and kings, the *Beis Knesses* is the direct continuation of the *Beis HaMikdash*. The Zohar in בשלה learns that the obligation to build a *Beis Knesses* comes from the obligation to build the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Both are supposed to be built on the high ground of the city (Har HaBayis in the case of the *Beis HaMikdash*.) (תוספתא מגילה ג.) (יד). Each *Beis Knesses*, in fact, faces the *Beis HaMikdash*. (ברכות ל)

The Tur (ט' צ) writes that a *Beis Knesses* should have two gates at its entrance, similar to the *Beis Hamikdash*.

²משנה ברורה קנא ס"ק א: כי הם נקראים מקדש מעט כמו דכתיב ואהי למקדש מעט וגו' וכתב נמהרש"א ברכות ח ע"א ד"ה המצויינים בהלכה של בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות מקבילים את השכינה במקום המשכן ובמשנה ברורה שם ובמקדש כתיב ואת מקדשי תיראו שיהא מוראו של השוכן בה עליו וגו'

³רמב"ן סוף פרשת בא (שמות יג טז):
... וכוונת רוממות הקול בתפלות וכוונת בתי הכנסיות וזכות תפלת הרבים, זהו שיהיה לבני אדם מקום ... יתקבצו ויודו לאל שבדאם והמציאם ויפרסמו זה ...

⁴Kaplan, Rabbi Aryeh, [A Call to the Infinite](#), Moznaim Publishing Co., NY 1986 quoting the Maharal of Prague; pg. 93.

CHAPTER SIX: WOMEN'S ISSUES

- i. Introduction to Women's Issues**
 - a Don't Filter the Information Through Your Prejudiced Value System. Understand Judaism On Its Own Terms.**
 - b In Judaism All That Counts is Getting Close to the Almighty. Men and Women Are Entirely Equal in This.**
 - c Men and Women Are Different in Significant Ways: Therefore it Makes Sense That They Have Different Roles. Each Role is Unique and Essential. Neither Role Can Be Weighted as Being More Important Than the Other.**
 - d All Great Things in Judaism Are Done in a Hidden Way. Public Roles in Judaism Are Not Considered a Spiritual Advantage.**
 - e Torah Women Are Happy and Fulfilled With Their Role.**
- ii. What is the Torah View of a Woman?**
- iii. Do Men and Women Have Separate Roles¹?**
- iv. Why Are Women Not Allowed To Lead the Prayers? Why Can They Not Be Called To the Torah? Why Can They Not Be A Part Of A מנין?**
- v. Why Can A Woman Not Become A Rabbi? Why Can She Not Learn גמרא? Why Can She Not Be A Witness?**
- vi. Why Are Women Not Obligated In Many Of The Commandments?**
- vii. Why Does A Man Say the Blessing שלא עשני אישה, whereas a woman says שעשני כרצונו?**
- viii. What is the Purpose of Women's Modest Dress?**
- ix. Why Do Women Have To Cover Their Hair?**
- x. Why Is A Woman Considered Impure During Her Menstrual Cycle?**

CHAPTER SIX: WOMEN'S ISSUES

i. Introduction to Women's Issues

It is not always possible to give totally satisfying answers to women who have serious questions about the role of the Jewish women. The truth be told that the real answer needs to be acquired experientially rather than intellectually, i.e. by contact with our great Torah women. Until that happens, one has to at least show that you recognize their questions are legitimate, that Judaism has thought deeply about this issues, and that it affirms the unique and special role which women have to play in the world. Hopefully the person will walk away satisfied; minimally the person will not "get stuck" on these issues.

Around the table, it is usually better that the wife rather than the husband answers these questions, even if the husband has more knowledge on the subject. And ideally it should be women to women who are the lecturers on these issues. Everything a man says to a secular woman on the subject is suspect. "Were you ever a woman that you know what it's like?" they're thinking.

It is usually ineffective to attempt to jump into specific answers to questions about women as rabbis, forming a minyan, etc., without providing some of the general background¹ about the whole idea of the male and the female in Judaism. Two minute answers, so effective with other issues, just won't score their mark on this one.

We repeat here what we wrote in the introduction:

¹If one simply jumps in with the local answer, this will be filtered through their existing secular framework and the answer will not make sense. In addition, some of these ideas are so different to current Western messages about women that it may take many years to fully integrate these ideas.

Sometimes the person, presumably female, may be angry about this issue, or have very firm and emotionally invested feelings about a particular aspect thereof. He/she may simply not be emotionally available to hear a direct answer, i.e. there is no point of contact. This may require you to go away from the immediate topic, and become more abstract, before returning to the issue. This will allow the person to join you in areas where they are not so resistant, and then move together with you towards the final answer.

For example, a woman may ask why women cannot be rabbis, read from the Torah, why they have to sit hidden behind the mechitza, etc. She may not be able, at this stage, to hear a direct answer. Perhaps, by starting out without an explanation of the Female and the Male Forces in this world, indeed the Female and Male Sides of HaKadosh Baruch Hu and working down from there, one will do better. This is because the woman will most likely never have thought of those areas before and will therefore not only have no resistance, but also be amazed at the depth, profundity and sensitivity of the Torah on this issue. This will make her more willing to hear the final answer to her question which will build on this.

The basic outline of the general response to women's issues is as follows:

Most of the questions have to do with inequality of some sort and are rooted in two misconceptions:

- 1 - Women to be equal to men must be the same and must have the same role.
- 2 - The more visible a role, the more important it is.

Based on the above, and coupled with great ignorance and many misconceptions, many secular women are

convinced that Torah women are getting a raw deal.

The basic guidelines to answering questions on women's issues are as follows:

- a- **Don't filter the information through your prejudiced value system. Understand Judaism on its own terms.**
- b- **In Judaism all that counts is getting close to the Almighty. Men and women are entirely equal in this.**
- c- **Men and women are different in significant ways: therefore it makes sense that they have different roles. Each role is unique and essential. Neither role can be weighted as being more important than the other.**
- d- **All great things in Judaism are done in a hidden way. Public roles in Judaism are not considered a spiritual advantage.**
- e- **Torah women are happy and fulfilled with their role.**

In slightly greater detail, arguments b-e are as follows:

b-What Counts Is Getting Close To The Almighty

Now, what counts in Yiddishkeit is getting closer to the Almighty - nothing else matters. Accordingly, there is nothing which we think important in the Western world, job, security, etc., which has intrinsic value. For all we know a dish washer may have more opportunities for getting close to the Almighty than an executive.

Two things are certain:

- i - G-d wants the maximum closeness possible between Himself and any human being. Anything else is absurd.

ii - Judaism is clear about that women get as much reward for their way of serving G-d as men do for theirs, i.e. each has equal opportunity to get close to G-d through their respective roles¹.

c-Men and Women Are Different In Significant Ways: Therefore It Makes Sense That They Have Different Roles

Each role is unique and essential. Neither role can be weighted as being more important than the other. Men and women have obvious physical differences; in addition there are many hormonal, neural and other differences. We have clear evidence that women find directions and conceptualize differently than men². Below, under the questions "*What is the Torah view of a woman?*" and "*Do men and women have separate roles?*" we have shown what Judaism claims are these differences and their implications in practice.

¹ילקוט שמעוני שופטים ילקוט ד ד: ודבורה אשה נביאה. מה טיבה של דבורה שנתנבאה על ישראל ופשטה אותם והלא פינחס בן אלעזר עומד? מעיד אני עלי את השמים ואת הארץ בין גוי בין ישראל בין איש בין אשה בין עבד בין שפחה הכל לפי מעשיו של אדם רוח הקדש שורה עליו.

אגרות משה אורח חיים ח"ד סי' מט - צריך לדעת כי אין זה בשביל שנשים פחותות במדרגת הקדושה מאנשים זלענין הקדושה שוות לאנשים לענין שייכות החיוב במצות שרק מצד הקדושה דאיכא בישראל הוא ציוי המצות וגם לנשים נאמרו כל הקראי דקדושה בין תחלת תנאי קבלת התורה והייתם לי סגולה ואתם תהיו לגוי קדוש שנאמר לבית יעקב אלו הנשים ותגיד לבני ישראל אלו האנשים, ובין ואנשי קדש תהיון לי שבמשפטים והייתם קדשים דשמיני וקדשים תהיו והייתם קדשים שבפ' קדשים וכי עם קדוש אתה לה' שבפ' בראשית כח: ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע ... רש"י - ... מגיד שיציאת צדיק מן המקום עושה רושם שבזמן שהצדיק בעיר הוא הודה הוא זיוה הוא הדרה יצא משם פנה הודה פנה זיוה פנה הדרה וכו' (רות א) ותצא מן המקום האמור בנעמי ורות.

²Actually, studies have revealed a very comprehensive list of differences between men and women and continue to do so. In fact if men and women were not different there would be no concept of marriage. Marriage is the structure in which each sex gives to the other what he/she is lacking. That requires that each has what the other does not have.

It is interesting that all the secular studies are confirming what Judaism has been saying about the female nature all along¹. What is quite amazing is that for 3000 years, Judaism has been saying things which are just now being discovered in the secular world.

A society which does not take into account differences between people is a cruel society; a cripple should not get drafted to the infantry; a genius (who studies hard) deserves a place in college ahead of someone who has an IQ of 70 (who studies equally as hard); a heart patient deserves more health care aid than a healthy person. It is therefore to the credit of Judaism that it has taken note of the differences between men and women and structured society to accommodate these differences.

Women have a primary responsibility for bringing up the next generation. There is no society in the history of man which did not regard the family as the core unit on which the entire social edifice rests. It is the women who will mold the next generation in their values and psychological makeup. Anyone who thinks that this is a consolation prize needs his/her head examined². Sarah

¹Until the early eighties, in the first stages of the women's liberation movement, the stress was on the essential sameness of men and women. Women, in order to be liberated, were trying to be men. However, from the eighties onwards, there was a real change. These women began to see women as being unique. A flood of studies confirmed this. (Until then, such studies were either suppressed or simply not undertaken.) The stress was then in ensuring women equality without sacrificing their uniqueness and in seeing how female values could then be fairly represented in places like the work place.

²The greatest, most creative challenge which any male or female faces is bringing up children. In the main, women have proven to have a superior parental genius - but parenting roles are just a question of degree. We expect husbands and wives to prioritize the home. As for house-cleaning - by all means ladies -

determined what the whole future of the Jewish nation would be by deciding that **ישמעאל** must develop his potential outside of the Jewish nation. **רבקה** did the same with **עשו**. Both Sarah and Rivka had very different ideas to their husbands as to what Yishmael's and Eisav's future roles in world history would be. In both cases, it was the female who won out, and who determined certain basic historical patterns for all time. (See **Question 33** for greater detail.) The ramifications of a woman's role may not be so obvious today, but cumulatively it is just as great.

d-All Great Things In Judaism Are Done In A Hidden Way

Public roles in Judaism are not considered a spiritual advantage. The idea that worth is defined by public recognition is an anti-Jewish idea. In the western world, the people with the most public exposure, the movie stars the rock stars and the sportsmen, are the most highly rewarded, both financially and in terms of the number of fans they have. Yet we all know that they are the least likely to be leading morally mature lives. A billionaire with a temper, five divorces to his name, who is egotistical and insensitive commands more respect in the western world than Joe simple who controls his temper is happily married, other- relating and sensitive. In Judaism we stress that the better known one's good deeds are, the less its value. The world's greatest Halachic authority, Rav Elyashiv, lives without titles in a simple home in a back ally. This leads on to the idea of **צניעות**, an idea which we have explored further below (Question 52).

e-Torah Women Are Happy And Fulfilled With Their Role

stand there with the rolling pin until he does it all.

It is important to stress that Torah women are happy with their roles. The person questioning should be invited to go see this for herself¹.

ii. *What is the Torah view of a woman?*

Judaism gives us a comprehensive picture of the female mystique, a picture that, in the last 20 years, has been confirmed by all the scientific studies in this area². We are told of a wide range of feminine qualities all of which have to be understood together to provide us with a complete picture of what a woman is³.

As a starting point, let us look at the first two generations of *Avos* and

Imahos. Sarah and Avraham have a machlokes concerning whether Yishmael should be a part of the Jewish nation, or whether he should be sent out of the Jewish nation to form a new nation. This dispute seems to be repeated in the next generation concerning Eisav. Yitzchak seemed to feel that Eisav should be a part of Klal Yisroel. Rivka felt that he should be excluded. In both cases it was the woman who won out. This tells us that it is a female power to set the boundaries of something, to define the environment, to provide the basic framework in which we operate. Without this, the male force would simply dissipate⁴. This applies to the home, it applies to a baby in the womb and it applies, as we have seen, to the very

¹Sometimes she will say something like: "Oh that's because they have been conditioned to that role." That's tantamount to saying that unless Torah women agree with her views, they've been duped.

²Until 1982, it was politically incorrect to distinguish between a man and a woman. However, after the publication of Harvard professor Carol Galligan's study in that year, the cat was let out of the bag and all the studies from then on showed just how different male and female were. Incredibly, Chazal had clearly talked about these difference over 2000 years ago.

³See for example *אשת חיל* where a woman is described as being dynamic, creative and proactive in a wide range of endeavors. Failure to look at all a woman's qualities together can lead to serious misunderstandings. For example, the Maharal sometimes describes women as being superior to men, sometimes being equal and sometimes being inferior. Clearly, the Maharal is referring to different aspects of a woman. One would have to know all that the Maharal has to say about women in order to emerge with a coherent picture of his understanding on this issue. Similarly, the much talked about female qualities of *בינה יתירה*, *נשים דעתן קלות*, *בינה יתירה*, *צניעות*, etc. all have to be understood in their dynamic relationship with each other, and not in isolation. We have attempted, in a few lines, to give some approach to this in the body of the text.

⁴The Male, Right Side is the beginning of G-d's creative force.

The Female, Left Side takes that force and translates it into a form whereby the recipient could receive it.

היא כח מציאות התחתונים... (המקבלים) ההשפעות שהקב"ה משפיע (רמח"ל ספר הכללים כה)

As long as G-d's creative force remains on the Male Side, it is too spiritual, too ethereal and non-tangible to have any lasting existence in the world as we know it. Left in this state, it would not have ongoing existence, and ultimately would simply be reabsorbed back into HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The Male Side is incomprehensible until it is taken in by the Female Side, which expands, nurtures and elucidates it:

כי בעודם בזכר הם בדקות גדול ומוסר אותם אל הנקבה כדי להביא ההויה אל בישול מציאותה וגייליה בפועל (שומר אמונים הקדמון ויכוח ראשון אות כז)

Without the Female Force, the Male Force would just dissipate and be wasted. The Female Force provides the environment, the context and the framework which allows the Male Force to grow and develop. This is no different to the physical relationship between husband and wife. The male seed cannot reach fruition on its own. It needs to be absorbed by the woman, combined with her egg cell, and then nurtured in her womb. She provides the total environment for the developing embryo; its warmth, its food, its oxygen – the very walls in which it survives.

definition of the Jewish people¹. This is also why a woman defines whether the baby is going to be Jewish or not².

¹Other ways of saying this is that the female completes, informs, elucidates, nurtures, develops. She is therefore the מתקנת, making connections and rectifications. (First the male is מביא, then she is מתקנת -Maharal). Two other dimensions of this is to say that she is the חומר, the כלי and the מקבל, while the male is the צורה and the משפיע; she is the גוף while the male = נשמה. (Note, the word נשמה itself is a female word, as are all the other words of the different levels of the soul: נפש, רוח, נשמה, חיה, יחידה. This is because the relationship of male to female is relative to the thing being discussed. The soul is female in the sense that it receives its השפעה from the *Ribono shel Olam*. However, it is male with respect to the body, which it in turn is משפיע.)

היא כח מציאות התחתונים... (המקבלים) ההשפעות שהקב"ה משפיע (רמח"ל ספר הכללים כה) כי בעודם בזכר הם בדקות גדול ומוסר אותם אל הנקבה כדי להביא ההויה אל בישול מציאותה וגילוייה בפועל (שומר אמונים הקדמון ויכוה ראשון אות כז)

כי האשה נקראת חומה כדאמרין בפרק הבא על יבמתו (יבמות סב ע"ב) ויליף מדכתיב נקבה תשוב גבר, כי האשה על ידה השלמת האדם... וכל אשר שלם דבר זה הוא חזק שלו שהוא מגין עליו (מהר"ל חידושי אגדות נדה מה ע"ב ד"ה מלמד שקלעה).

Therefore, both the creation of the world and the giving of the Torah were through the left or female side. Both ultimately required that some much higher spiritual reality be brought down into the reality of this world.

Prophecy also occurs through the left side. Prophecy is the receiving of higher wisdom down into this world. This is in contrast to תושבע"פ which is on the male side. (The difference between *Nevuah* and *Torah she Baal Peh* is that *Nevuah* works from the top down whereas *limud haTorah* works from the bottom up. Although ultimately Torah also requires a dimension of being מושפע, the basic process is as we have described.)

For the same reason the name שכינה is feminine. The שכינה is the expression of HaSh-m's holiness in this world, the final manifestation of קדושה.

²Once the basic parameters of the child have been determined and a framework has been established, the male determines which *Shevet* the person belongs to and whether, if from *Shevet Levi*, he will be a *Cohen* or not.

Another way of looking at this is to see the female force as the final expression of something in this world, that which provides the framework, environment and nurturance within which something can express itself. This is the *Midah* of מלכות³. It is also the ה in the name of HaSh-m⁴ ק-ה.

³ There are ten *Sefiros*. The last of these ten is מלכות. Therefore, when spirituality is initiated from HaSh-m and it comes down and down through many layers (השתלשלות), it finally comes down into this world through this *midah* of *malchus*.

⁴This name of HaSh-m is the name in the Pasuk, כי בקה ד' צור עולמים – For with this name (K-ah), HaShem sustains (is the rock of) the (two) worlds. Another Pasuk says אלה – and, since תולדות השמים והארץ ביום הבראם ה of הבראם is written large, Chazal learn בה ארץ and שמים using the ה. Therefore perforce He created the world with the other letter of That Name, i.e. with a י. In his אבות on דרך החיים, the Maharal explains why this world was created with a ה. The ה is comprised of two letters, a ט and a י. The י is the spirituality that exists in this world, the "world-to-comeness" in this world. The י represents spirituality because firstly it is really just a point with no physical dimensions. But it is not one, it is ten. Ten is a unit of one which comes after reality fragments into its multiple parts of two, three, etc. It then recombines them into a unit of one, i.e. ten. The ט of the ה represents the fragmentation of our world into multiple realities – each person, each object has its own dimensions in space and time, its own separate identity. The ט represents this 'atomized' reality because it comprises two ו's (vavs). Each vav is a line going in two directions, representing four directions in total. These represent the four directions in which reality can scatter away from the unity. (Four always represents this – four rivers come out of the one river of *Gan Eden*, there are four exiles, four animals with only one sign of purity, etc.) But the י of the ה is in the epicenter of the four ends of the ט. It can operate on the ט in such a way that it pulls all these four points of the ט into a single point, the oneness of the unit of ten.

This is the female force of the ה. The ability to address a world which seems fragmented and separate into a composite whole, the ability to

Because the נקבה receives from the זכר, they are in a relationship of משפיע to מושפע¹. However, it is clear from the above, that נקבה is not just a passive recipient. נקבה completes the process of השתלשלות whereby there can be a final expression of reality down here². The male is pure potential (מהר"ל=מביא); the female is actualization (מהר"ל=מתקנת), providing the framework in which the initial male spark can be more than a quickly lost flash of energy³. Neither has any reality by themselves, and therefore neither can be said to be primary or secondary.

The woman is the לב, while the male is the מח. תשוקה, the passion to be committed to something, is therefore a

female concept⁴. This helps women have greater faithfulness – אמונה than men, something which has been historically clearly evident⁵. This contributes to a greater, natural sense of מנוחה & שאנן, of inner contentment and peace⁶.

This is not to say that women are passive. On the contrary, she actively engages reality to find its essence, define it, nurture it, set boundaries and develop situations⁷.

This also helps her to have superior empathy, becoming more personally identified with the other person with greater connecting, conversational abilities⁸. In general, women are better at

⁴As with all these *Midos*, we are not implying that men lack these qualities altogether, or that they cannot develop them to a high degree. Rather, women are, in general, naturally stronger in these areas.

⁵Men, on the other hand, have a greater natural sense of אמת.

⁶Maharal, דרוש על התורה, claims that women are naturally endowed with more of these two attributes.

⁷Sometimes this takes great עוז – courage and daring for which women are praised in the *Eishes Chayil*. It also takes intelligence פיה החכמה בחכמה, a special type of women's intelligence, נשים בנתה ביתה

⁸קידושין מט:

י קבים שיחה ירדו לעולם ט נטלו נשים

This fits in very well with women's focus on connecting, relating and communicating. In contrast to men's approach to use speech primarily as a tool for expressing an opinion, for women, the process of talking has value in and of itself. When a woman relates that she has a problem, for example, she is expressing the need to share that experience. Men, however, very often hear women as asking for advice as opposed to looking for empathy and are surprised that the advice is not welcome when it seemed to be solicited. Women respond to other people's pain with empathy – a way of connecting and letting them know that they know what they are going through. Many men misinterpret a woman's empathy with an attempt to detract from the uniqueness of the

¹ In the language of the מהר"ל, חומר to צורה, מהר"ל

²עד גמר מציאותם

³כי האשה נקראת חומה כדאמרינן בפרק הבא על יבמתו (יבמות סב ע"ב) ויליף מדכתיב נקבה תטוב גבר, כי האשה על ידה השלמת האדם ... וכל אשר שלם דבר זה הוא חוזק שלו שהוא מגין עליו (מהר"ל חידושי אגדות נדה מה ע"ב ד"ה מלמד שקלעה).

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relationships than are men¹. This is an extension of them being the מתקנת (making connections), of her בינה יתירה (greater intuition facilitates a deeper understanding of and therefore connection with others) and of their being an עזר כנגדו (the desire to help and be of service to others). Other aspects of this side of her include a greater ability to be receptive and therefore responsive involving greater רחמנות and a desire to resolve conflict by consensus (and to prefer consensual rather than hierarchical structures.) She is less competitive and aggressive², less

experience. (You Just Don't Understand, Deborah Tannen, chap 2)

¹ Gray: A man's sense of self is defined through his ability to achieve results while a woman's sense of self is defined through her feelings and the quality of her relationships. In general women have better interpersonal skills. It has been discovered, for example, that women smile and laugh more, gaze more directly at others, and sit or stand closer to people than men do. (Psychologist Judith Hall of North-eastern University in Boston). Women interrupt less, are more likely to be complimentary, and laugh at other people's jokes more (Linda Carli, Professor of Psychology at Wellesley College). Women also read non-verbal cues – facial expressions, body movements, changes in tone of voice – more accurately than men do (Hall). This ties in also with women's greater verbal fluency, her greater insight into people, and her greater capacity to feel their pain (רחמנות, see above).

Girls begin talking before boys, have larger vocabularies at an earlier age, and produce more varied and sophisticated sentences. Verbal superiority may continue into adulthood. Studies show that women excel at certain verbal-fluency tests, such as listing multiple words that begin with the same letter. Some researchers have also found that women are more adept at learning foreign languages than men are. (Readers' Digest from Susan Seligson in Redbook Aug. '93)

²Instead she is by nature a consensus builder

externally achievement oriented³. (This also draws from her *tznius*.)

A combination of her *tznius* and *bina yeseira* allows her not only to be more insightful, and connecting, consensual and empathetic, but, as a result more holistic and communal⁴. Whereas men tend to break things down into details in order to understand the principles behind them, women tend to engage micro realities, combining them and building them up into wholes. This requires the ability to simultaneously engage many different, seemingly unrelated fragments of reality, a function of her דעת נשים (דעתן קלות)

The female *koach*, includes the ability to recognize and reveal hidden קדושה. This draws from her *midah* of צניעות, which is the ability to focus on the essence rather than the superficiality of any person or situation⁵. This means that she is more easily in touch with spirituality when surrounded by mundane, physical realities. She sees through superficiality, focusing on the essence. Her *midah* of *tznius* allows her to be more inner defined.

³Therefore, hierarchical structures are more suited to men than to women.

⁴Generally, men and women are more external and internal aspects of a whole. Men act at more of a macro level, breaking that macro into its specialized parts; women operate at a micro level, building smaller units into greater, more holistic conceptions. As a result of this, men relate more to אמת, given and concrete realities; women have deeper אמונה, allowing for greater faithfulness to all relationships, including G-d and their husbands. In the חטא הזהב and on numerous other occasions it was the men who got into trouble and the women who remained faithful to G-d. Since the Western world stresses quantity (macro) over quality, that world has great difficulty appreciating the levels of profundity and depth involved in a woman's role.

⁵In her own being it is the ability to also project her spiritual essence rather than her more superficial, physical aspects.

iii. *Do Men and Women have separate roles?*¹

They most certainly do. The worst thing we could do is to try and make women be men and men be women. The women's liberation movement has realized this for nearly two decades already, demanding not that women be allowed to act like men, but rather that they be given full opportunity to act like women! Since 1982, all psychological studies have been confirming what Judaism has been saying all along – that women have a unique contribution to make to the world.

Women are not better than men, although they are superior in some areas on the whole, nor are they worse than men, although men do better than women in some areas on the whole². Judaism encourages women to express their strengths, to understand their superior nurturing abilities, insight into people, holistic approach to life - and to use these to make the world a better place. Women

¹The strong form of this question is: Why do women have to be miserable, staying at home, doing housework and watching the kids, while men have all the fun studying Gemorrah, playing all the public roles and being out in the world fulfilling their potential? Although the question may be asked in this form, this is really a composite of several questions, questions we have answered individually below. One question presumes that the family is less important or fulfilling than the work place. A second question asks why women cannot learn Gemorrah and a third question asks about women in public roles. In such a case, one should point out that multiple questions are being asked and then answer one question at a time, or possible answer only one question.

²See the question above, *Are Men and Women different*, for a description of female strengths. The crux of the issue is that women have the same *Kedusha* as men in this world (*Igros Moshe*) and they get the same *schar* in *Olam Haba* for the *avoda* they do as men get for their *avoda*.

are known to have superior social skills, to be more cooperative than competitive, to do better on verbal tasks and a host of other attributes.

iv. *Why Are Women Not Allowed To Lead the Prayers? Why Can They Not Be Called To the Torah? Why Can They Not Be A Part Of A מנין?*

General Introduction: Why some people get commanded and others do not:

If we see that someone is commanded by G-d to do something it means two things: Firstly, it means that the person has a need for the *Tikun* of that commandment, i.e. he/she is lacking something which doing this commandment comes to rectify. Secondly, the person must be in basic harmony with the spirituality of the commandment for the *Tikun* to be effective³.

If someone is not commanded in a particular commandment, it means one of two things. Either the person is not in harmony with that particular thing; or the person does not need that particular thing.

Minyan:

Women by their nature are communal, connecting people. In *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, the author describes how women when they have a problem seek out other people, not necessarily to find a solution, but rather to share the problem. Men on the other hand tend to withdraw to their cave. They will only share the problem with someone else if they are looking for a solution, not just for the sake of sharing.

Women tend to seek out relationships more than men. In religious neighborhoods there is usually a *Neshei*, a voluntary women's group, one of whose goals is just to be together. Yet men hardly

³The Ramchal explains in the *Daas Tevunos* that when we were commanded to do something through the Torah, we were given the power to actualize the spirituality of that commandment as well.

ever do the same – they need a reason to associate.

Women are more natural consensus builders than men. Men are more naturally competitive. In a man's world, things tend to be more hierarchical and authoritarian than in a woman's world.

For this reason, men tend to need lessons in community building. They are required to go to the synagogue to make a *minyan* and participate in the services. Men need this role for their spiritual completion; women do not. Therefore, a woman who would demand to make up a *minyan* would be stealing that opportunity from a man, which would be an act of selfishness in the guise of spirituality.

There is no question that one's natural instinct is to be in the limelight, but, that has nothing to do with what is really spiritually meaningful.

v. ***Why Can A Woman Not Become A Rabbi? Why Can She Not Learn גמרא? Why Can She Not Be A Witness?***

Please note our general introduction to women's issues as a background to these answers.

a-Being a Rabbi and learning גמרא:

Women are expected, in fact even required, to study Torah and they are spiritually rewarded for doing so¹. The areas of Torah learning which a woman is expected to grasp is so large that it is hard to imagine any woman doing so in a lifetime.

Women as a group are not, however, encouraged to learn Gemorrah. Despite this, Jewish history is full of examples of outstanding *חכמות*, of women communal leaders and of women who learn and have learned גמרא. If the

¹ב"ח (טור יו"ד רמז ד"ה כתב) כתב הרמב"ם אשה שלמדה תורה יש לה שכר וכו' בפ"ק דקידושין (ל"א) א"ר חנינא גדול מצווה ועושה יותר ממי שאינו מצווה ועושה אלא מאד גם מי שאינו מצווה ועושה גדול הוא

requirements of modesty are met, the limitations on female leadership is technically only in the area of *paskening shealos*. However, although a Devorah, the Judge, may reluctantly feel forced to play such a role, she would do it with a sense of the enormous sacrifice of her female potential that this would entail.

A woman learning גמרא, for example, would be training herself to deal with problems in a linear rather than holistic fashion: this would reduce her insight into her children and other people, undermine her intuitive grasp of many situations and compromise her effectiveness to respond to the drama of day to day living both by anticipating events and by spontaneously adapting to new realities without compromising deeper principles. A Torah woman would not ordinarily be willing to give all that up. So it is clear that a woman's not learning certain parts of the תורה is not because she has less of a relationship with the תורה as a whole. On the contrary, the מהר"ל seems to indicate just the opposite².

It is possible that for some reason the Almighty would create a particular woman with certain male aspects³. Such a woman may feel that her עבודת השם requires her to compromise her phenomenal feminine powers and learn גמרא, which she may then do⁴. However,

²דרוש על התורה: כי האיש ... איננו בעל שאנו והשקט מצד התגברותו והתפעלו, בכך אינם מוכנים גם כן כל כך אל השאנו והמנוחה הוא העולם הבא שהוא המנוחה בעצמו. אבל הנשים ראויים ומוכנים לה מצד עצמם שאינם בני פעולה והתעוררות מצד עצם בריאתן, לפיכך גדולה ההבטחה שהבטיחון הקב"ה יותר מן האנשים... ובמעט הסיוע שמסייעים לתורה שכרם גדול מאד כאשר כבר הם מוכנים אל השאנו, וכל המוכן לדבר מה בנקל ישיגו מצד תכונתו. אבל האנשים צריכים מצד זה שיהיו עמלים וטורחים בתורה מבלי מנוח לילה ויום, וזהו גורפו ותגיד לבני ישראל דברים הקשין כגידין הוא העמל הגדול הזה. אמנם לנשים בלשון רכה כי אינם צריכים כל כך, ואעפ"כ הם ראויים לשכר יותר גדול עד שלזה גם כן הקדימן הכתוב לאנשים כאמור.

³Only at the very highest spiritual levels is there a concept of pure נוקבא and pure זכרה
⁴פרישה טור, יורה דעה, רמז טו

As for being a rabbi, if we get away from the titles for a minute¹, a woman is expected and encouraged to play an active communal role. She can certainly tell people what the halacha on any issue is². Jewish history is in fact replete with examples of Torah women who became fully conversant in wide areas of the Torah³. She may not pasken shealos,

מפני שרוב נשים אין דעתם מכוונת כ"י (לשון הטור): אבל אם למדה לעצמה אנו רואות שיצאו מהרוב ולכך כתב לעיל שיש לה שכר ור"ל אם למדה התורה על מכוונה שאינה מוציאה לדברי הבאי אבל האב אינה רשאי ללמדה דדילמא מוציא דבריה לדברי הבאי כי הוא אינו יודע מה שבלבה וק"ל

This was the case of ר' מאיר, ברוריה and others:

עירובין סב: ...ברוריה דביתהו דרבי מאיר... דתניא תלת מאה שמעתתא ביומא (She learned 300 sugyas a day)

¹A woman cannot have the title Rabbi, though she may be given other titles such as מחנכת or Rebbetzin to show her wisdom.

²ספר החינוך מצוה קנב: ונוהגת איסור ביאת מקדש בשכרות בזמן הבית בזכרים ונקיבות, ומניעת ההוריה בכל מקום ובכל זמן בזכרים, וכן באשה חכמה ראויה להורות

פתחי תשובה (חו"מ ס"ז ט"ק ד): ... אשה חכמה יכולה להורות ... (ע"ש)

In addition, a woman ought to consult with a woman who has a superior knowledge or understanding of the background information necessary for a פסק:

שערי תשובה (או"ח ט' תסב ט"ק יז): ... הגאון מוה' העשיל ז"ל ... כשאירע שאלה של נפחה (במצות) לפניו ... היה סומך על ראות עיניהם (של נשי ביתו) והבחנתם בעסק הוראה זאת כדת הנשים שהם רגילות במעשה אופה והם ידעו יותר להבחין וגו'

³For example, ברוריה, wife of ר' מאיר, is quoted several times in the תלמוד. She began the day by learning 300 הלכות. However, in the end she was led astray with tragic consequences. (רש"י יח) Namnah, Daughter of R Shmuel Ben

which means she cannot decide which way the halacha should be in circumstances which were not clearly talked about by previous Halachic authorities or which are in dispute by different authorities. However, most rabbis are not qualified to do this either. Only a tiny minority are ever considered poskim.

b-Witnesses:

It is wrong to think that women cannot be witnesses⁴. The principle of עד אחד נאמן באיסורים (One witness is believed where the issue is deciding whether something is אסור or not) is in

Ali, the head of the ישיבה in Baghdad, was so well versed in תלמוד that she would give שיעורים through the window of her house (so that she could not be seen) to the ישיבה students. The 13th century authority of Germany and France would quote halachic rulings in the name of his mother-in-law. The wife of R. Avraham Meir of Worms (14th C) delivered learned discourses before the congregation every שבת. The grandmother of T. Solomon of Luria (16th C) (ים של שלמה) would deliver תורה lectures to students while concealed behind a curtain. Beilah, mother of the דרישה (R Yehoshua Falk - 16-17th C), is quoted by her son on certain halachic issues. מגן אברהם argues with one of her opinions, but נודע ביהודה says that the law is like her, was she not a woman "whose heart was uplifted by wisdom."

⁴It has become popular to claim that, because women are more wholistic than men, grasping whole gestalts rather than details, that therefore they are not suitable to be witnesses. Women's grasp of a situation requires an element of judgment (such as women's superior ability to judge human character), unsuitable for the detached, "just say what you saw" approach to the עדים. However, this implies that women cannot be trusted to give accurate evidence, that they too readily play the role of judge rather than witness. But clearly this is not so - the ראשונים state that a woman's ineligibility is a גזירת המלך, comparable to the פסול of a מלך (including משיה), and relatives. Women are therefore kosher to give evidence in איסורים, such as whether something is kosher or not.

creative faculties, morals and values requires instant responses and constant alertness.

In order to allow for this role, women were created with a superior ability to create structure and frameworks⁴. This ability reflects itself also within time-modalities. Most men need outside structure to their days, things that begin and end at a certain time, frameworks and schedules within which there are certain expectations. Women are more capable of creating these structures for themselves. Men are therefore given time-based *Mitzvos* which are designed to bring out their potential in this way, whereas women actualize this potential on their own.

However, although not obligated, a woman is entitled to perform any commandment to which she feels a special relationship. However, she must do this because of genuine spiritual yearnings to become closer to G-d and not because of a desire to show that she is liberated, equal to men, or to make a statement. Therefore, those women who have done certain *Mitzvos* (like *רש"י* granddaughters who put on *תפילין*) have made a point of doing so in private without letting anyone know.

vii. Why Does A Man Say The Blessing *שלא עשני אישה*, whereas a woman says *שעשני כרצוני*?

Men thank G-d for the privilege of having more *mitzvos* than women⁵. Men

vi. Why Are Women Not Obligated In Many Of The Commandments?

A woman is exempt from time based *מצוות* because her entire approach to serving G-d is one of constant readiness to respond to changing realities. For example, although one can easily provide for children's physical needs according to certain schedules, facilitating personalities,

¹וכן באבן האזר סי"ז ס"ג: אשה שהלך בעלה למדינת הים והעידו עליו שמת אפי' עד אחד אפילו ... אשה

²שבועות ל. מנהי מילי (מאיפה אנחנו יודעים דברים פסולות לעדות) (דברים יט:יז) ועמדו שני האנשים (אשר להם הריב לפני ד' לפני הכהנים והשופטים אשר יהיו בימים ההם) בעדים הכתוב מדבר ופירש רש"י שהפסוק הקודם דבר בעדות "כי יקום עד חמש באיש לענות בו סרה" (וגם פסוק טו דבר בעדים: לא יקום עד אחד) לכן מן הסמיכות מבינים שג"כ פסוק זה מדבר בעדים. אבל בגמ' שם הסבר אחר: נאמר כאן שני ונאמר להלן (דברים י"ט) שני מה להלן בעדים אף כאן בעדים והאריך הת"ת להסביר שהגמ' אמרה את לימודה רק מבוסס על למוד רש"י ובסוף דבריו: ואעפ"י דבהכרח גם בבע"ד איירי כדכתיב אשר להם הריב אך משינוי הלשונות ש"מ תרתי דקאי גם על בע"ד גם על עדים ודריש אשא להם הריב כמו ואשר להם הריב, כומר יעמדו העדים וגם אלה אשר להם הריב, ודו"ק

³It is clear that בית דין does not tell the event that the event happened with certainty. For even משה רבינו as one witness would not be sufficient; whereas two unknown (observant) Jews are acceptable. Moreover, the תורה explicitly allows for the possibility that the witnesses may be lying (עדים שקרים או עדים זוממים). Witnesses allow בית דין to pasken as if the event happened, not that it actually happened with certainty. G-d introduced a concept of בית דין which in and of itself is an enormous חידוש (for He could just have as easily taken care of all justice Himself) and He introduced the rules by which this "earthly justice" would take place in such a way that it would be a component of His total judicial system. But just as we cannot grasp the totality of His judicial system, neither do we fully comprehend any of its components, including the earthly judicial system.

⁴See the first two questions in this section on women's issues where we showed how women provide the framework, boundaries and context in which men operate. It was the *Imahos*, Sarah and Rivka who decided who would be defined as a part of *Klal Yisroel* and who not, just as it is every mother who provides the total environment, the womb, as well as the identity (Jewish or not) of each child.

⁵Men express, in the negative, their potential, in harmony with the previous two blessings. All three refer to the extra commandments which a Jew, and in the last instance a male Jew, is privileged to do over a gentile (who has only

are thanking G-d for a particular privilege, not a general one¹. It is important to note that this Blessing is being said as a part of *Birkas HaShachar*. These blessings are thanking G-d for our physical reality, for the fact that we can see, that we have clothes, that we can walk, that we have shoe-laces. The blessing, *Shelo Asani Isha*, must be seen in that context. It was never meant to be a total description of what a man and what a woman is. Time is a part of the physical creation, and a blessing thanking G-d for time-based *mitzvos* has its rightful place in *birkas hashachar*, the blessings about the physical reality.

The Sages never gave women a bracha in lieu of the men's². They were not

given any consolation prize. *Sheasani Kirtzono* was created by women themselves. This is an unprecedented act of creativity – there is no other known case of a new *brocho*, not decreed by Chazal, being spontaneously generated.

In the end, everyone is required to understand their potential and to want to fulfill it - that is all G-d ever asks of us. It is absurd to suggest that Judaism compares potentials and grades people - everyone achieves maximum spirituality by fulfilling their potential.

viii. *What is the purpose of Women's modest dress*³?

seven), a slave (who has no time based ones and also lacks some others) and a woman, (who has no time based מצוות). (You will then probably have to deal with why a woman does not have time based מצוות - there are sources which say that she doesn't need them - she inherently has the spirituality which they would provide. Nevertheless, the male, despite his lack, rejoices in the privilege of doing more which coming up from behind entails.)

The fact that the formulation is negative is for a side reason:

וכתב מהר"י מיניץ הא דתקנו לומר שלש ברכות אלו בדרך שלילה. ולא תקנו ברוך שעשני יהודי ברוך שעשני בן חורין. ברוך שעשני איש. הוא משום שאחז"ל נמנו וגמרו שטוב לאדם שלא נברא משנברא. ור"ל כי יותר טוב לאדם היינו לנפש המשכלת שלו (אשר בעבורה נקרא אדם ובה הוא נבדל משאר בעלי חי) להשאר במציאותה הרוחני כבראשונה משנברא בגוף. משום שזה שלקחה הקב"ה ממקור הקדושה והכניסה בגוף האדם. הוא כדי שתוסיף שלימות על שלימותה בעולם הזה עולם המעשה. כשתבחר בטוב ותלך בדרכי הקב"ה לשמור מצותיו חוקותיו ותודותיו. אבל כיון שנוטה האדם אחר כל התאוות ועושה רע א"כ טוב היה לו שהיה נשאר הנפש במציאתו הרוחני. ולכן לא יצדק לברך ברכות אלו בדרך חיוב. כי ודאי נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא לא איש ולא אשה לא יהודי ולא גוי לא בן חורין ולא עבד. האמנם מאחר שכך גזרה חכמתו לברוא את האדם. עלינו לשבח ולברך לשמו הגדול שלא עשני גוי, עבד, אשה

blessings (i.e. the מנחות מג ברייתא in תוספתא ירושלמי ברכות and the פרק ו in תוספתא פרק ט הלכה א). Indeed, the טור, who appears to be the earliest source to mention this ברכה, says that it is a מנהג for women to say this ברכה, apparently something which they began themselves, whoever initiated it (although by the time of the ערוך it already had the status of הלכה - והנשים מברכות - הלכה). It is not mentioned in the רוקח, nor is it in the נוסח אר"י. נוסח אר"י says to leave it out and the (מו: אות ד) פרי חדש (מו כף החיים יוסף) יחווה דעת both pasken (for בנות ספרד) that this ברכה should not be said with ומלכות women are חייב to say it, for בנות אשכנז with or without. (Note: שם ומלכות and for בנות ספרד with or without.)

³This question often is backed up by saying, "If men cannot control their gazes, this is their problem."

Secular women very often view צניעות as a part of what they see as a package of inequality and discrimination by the Torah against women. Their concept of צניעות extends only so far as women's dress, covering of hair and not singing. Therefore, when dealing with צניעות it is important to take account for the following:

a- צניעות applies to men as well as to women. (However, women have a special relationship with צניעות.);

b-Dress is only one of many expressions of צניעות;

c- צניעות has no real translation and is perhaps best left untranslated. "Modesty" is not a good translation;

¹With the three ברכות that we do say (שלא עשני גוי, עבד, אשה), we are thanking השם specifically for the advantage of being able to do more מצוות, not for any other advantage. (תוספתא and all the מפרשים thereafter)

²The ברכה of כדצונו is not mentioned in any of the Talmudic sources dealing with these

Tznius is the quality of being able to cover over the superficiality of a situation in order to reveal the true inner essence and holiness of that situation. Since spirituality is hidden in this world¹, someone who does not have the quality of *Tznius*, will not be able to access spirituality².

An example of this was the receiving of the Torah at Sinai. When the First Tablets were given, there were convulsions of nature. These proved to be a slight distraction to the Jewish people, a distraction that ultimately led to the Golden Calf and the breaking of the Tablets. When the Second Tablets were given, all of nature was quiet. The Jews were able to focus on the inner essence of the event and they successfully received the tablets.

Another example of *Tznius* is the actions of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur is the holiest day; and the Temple was the holiest place on earth. On that day, in that place, the culminating service involved the High Priest doing the service on which the atonement of the entire world depended. Just at that time, he disappeared from view

behind the curtain of the Holy of Holies. At that holiest of times, he disappeared from sight so that we could focus on the deep, inner essence of his actions, and not be at all distracted by actually seeing him do the action.

So *Tznius* is much broader than dress³. It is a fundamental way of accessing spirituality, a way of becoming internally self-aware. And it applies to men as it does to women. In fact the prophet Micha states that it was one of the big three principles of Judaism, together with kindness and justice⁴.

Because *Tznius* also applies to men, Torah-observant males generally do not walk around in shorts and sandals and T-shirts⁵. And they, like women, ought to

³ ולדוגמה בנוגע לצניעות בלשון כתב הגמ' פסחים ג. דאמר ריב"ל לעולם אל יוציא אדם דבר מגונה מפיו שהרי עקם הכתוב ח' אותיות ולא הוציא דבר מגונה מפיו שנאמר (בראשית ז) מן הבהמה הטהורה ומן הבהמה אשר איננה טהרה, רב פפא אמר ט' שנאמר (דברים כג) כי יהיה בך איש אשר לא יהיה טהור מקרה לילה, רבינא אמר עשרה וי"ו דטהור רב אחא בר יעקב אמר שש עשרה שנאמר (שמואל א כ) כי אמר מקרה הוא בלתי טהור הוא כי לא טהור תניא דבי רבי ישמעאל לעולם יספר אדם בלשון נקיה שהרי בזב קראו מרכב ובאשה קראו מושב ואומר (איוב טו) ותבחר לשון ערומים ואומר (איוב לג) ודעת שפתי ברור מללו, מאי ואומר וכ"ת ה"מ בדאורייתא אבל בדרבנן לא ת"ש ואומר ותבחר לשון ערומים וכי תימא ה"מ בדרבנן אבל במילי דעלמא לא ואומר ודעת שפתי ברור מללו.

⁴ מכות כד. - בא מיכה והעמידן על שלש דכתיב (מיכה ו) הגיד לך אדם מה טוב ומה ה' דורש ממך כי אם עשות משפט ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת עם ה' אלקך (ע"ש ואח"כ בא חבקוק והעמידן על אחת)

⁵ פלא יועץ אכילה ושתייה - וידוע מעשה הרב רבי ישראל נאג'ר זמן האר"י ז"ל, שהיה משורר על שלחנו בקול נעים, והיו מתקבצים מלאכי השרת כבמזמורי חתן וכלה, והיו זרועותיו מגלות מפני החם, וקל מן שמיא נפל: ברחו לכם מאצל האיש הזה שממעט בכבוד שמים, שאינו יושב בכבוד על השלחן אשר לפני ה', ותכף פרחו כלם. והרב האר"י היה רואה מביתו את המראה הגדולה זה, וגלה סודו להרב ישראל נאג'ר, וחרד חרדה גדולה, וקשט עצמו וישב בכבוד, וחזר לשורר כבראשונה, וחזרו מלאכי השרת להתקבץ כבתחלה.

In fact the long coat which you see many observant Jews wearing is as an act of extra modesty. They wear shirt and pants to cover the body and then a long coat to cover the shape of the body, a sensitivity that probably goes back to our forefathers.

d-*Tznius* is a positive attribute, not a restrictive one;

e-Deal with the broader issues of *Tznius* before dealing with specifically women's issues.

¹ *Tznius* is related to the word העלם (hidden) i.e. the world which hides קדושה

מהר"ל נתיב הצניעות פ"א: כי הצניעות היא קדושה. פלא יועץ: צניעות - בזה האדם נבדל מן הבהמה ²תנחומא, במדבר (ג): וידבר ה' אל משה במדבר סיני. עד שלא הוקם המשכן דבר עמו בסנה שנא' (שמות ג) ויקרא אליו אלקים מתוך הסנה. אח"כ דבר עמו במדן שנא' (שם ד) ויאמר ה' אל משה במדן אח"כ דבר עמו במצרים שנאמר (שם יב) ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן בארץ מצרים. ואחר כך דבר עמו בסיני שנאמר וידבר ה' אל משה במדבר סיני. כיון שהוקם המשכן אמר יפה הוא הצניעות שנאמר (מיכה ו) והצנע לכת עם אלקיך. התחיל לדבר עמו באהל מועד וכן דוד אמר (תהלים מה) כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה ממשבצות זהב לבושה. בת מלך זה משה ... שהיה מלכה של תורה... ממשבצות זהב לבושה זה אהרן שנאמר (שמות כח) ועשית משבצות זהב... אמר הקב"ה כך הוא כבודי שיהא מדבר מבפנים שנאמר (במדבר ז) ובבא משה אל אוהל מועד וישמע את הקול מדבר אליו

shun publicity and high profile situations¹. It is true that women have an extra capacity for *Tznius*², a fact which allows her to be more easily spiritual, to find the spirituality in other people and to access to sparks of spirituality even in the physical world.

In צניעות, the keeping brings the understanding. For example, tribal female Africans walking around with large parts of their body exposed would not understand what is wrong with that. And most secular people cannot tell you what is wrong with a woman wearing short sleeves. Once one gets used to something one gets desensitized. But who wants to be desensitized - such a lot is lost. A person who does not dress, speak and act with *Tznius* is simply denying him/herself the opportunity of peeking behind the veil of this world into the mysteries, which lie behind it.

ix. *Why Do Women Have To Cover Their Hair?*

Hair is the only part of a woman's body, which seems to have no other function other than to add to her beauty. Women cover their hair because it is a part of their inner beauty³, which only their husbands,

¹Judaism discourages both men and women from participating in positions where public honor or prestige is a prerequisite for the job...The more peoples' roles encourage them to view themselves as important because of how others react to them, the more these roles can detract from the people's awe and obedience to G-d (Lisa Aiken, pg. 135)

²בראשית רבה יח: ב ויבן כתיב התבונן מאין לבראתה...ממקום שהוא צנוע באדם אפילו בשעה שאדם עומד ערום אותו המקום מכוסה ועל כל אבר ואבר שהיה בורא בה היה אומר תהא אשה צנועה אשה צנועה, התבונן

³The hair of חוה, like the rest of her body, was not covered. Yet we see that, from the very outset, her hair was an intrinsic part of her attractiveness to אדם. Thus השם beautified her by doing her hair in an appealing manner before presenting her to אדם

who can get to know that inner beauty intimately, can perceive correctly. Jewish women through the ages have therefore come to perceive covering their hair as the essence of being an inner defined person⁴.

This, despite the fact that he did not relate to her external beauty, and therefore she did not need to wear clothes. This implies that a woman's hair, emerging as it does from the top of her entire being, is something that radiates more than a physical beauty.

⁴ברכות כד. אמר רב ששת: שער באשה ערוה, שנאמר (שיר השירים ד') שערך כעדר העזים אשה סוטה:

במדבר ה:יח והעמיד הכהן את האשה לפני ה' ופרע את ראש האשה ונתן על כפיה מנחת הזכרון...

"The Cohen stands the woman (who has committed adultery) before G-d (at the entrance to the tabernacle), he reveals the head of the woman (uncovers her hair), and puts the offering of remembrance into her hands..." (Numbers 5:18)

רש"י שם: "סותר את קליעת שיערה כדי לבזותה, מכאן לבנות ישראל שגלוי הראש גנאי להן (ספרי)"

"He reveals the locks of her hair in order to embarrass her, from here [we learn] that a revealed head is an embarrassment for the daughters of Israel." (Rashi ad loc.)

במדבר רבה פרשה ט: כך שלא יאמר הכהן אני פורע ראש האשה ורוחו גסה עליו לכך נאמר לפני ה' ופרע ופרע למה שדרך בנות ישראל להיות ראשיהן מכוסות ולכך היה פורע ראשה ואומר לה את פרשת מדרג בנות ישראל שדרך להיות מכוסות ראשיהן והלכת בדרכי העובדי כוכבים שהן מהלכות ראשיהן פרועות הרי לך מה שרצית, ונתן על כפיה את מנחת הזכרון

(סנהדרין קט:)" ואון - שישב באנינות, פלת - שנעשו לו פלאות, בן ראובן - בן שראה והבין. אמר רב: און בן פלת אשתו הצילתו... אמרה ליה: ידענא דכולה כנישתא קדישתא נינהו, דכתיב (במדבר ט"ז) כי כל העדה כלם קדשים. אמרה ליה: תוב, דאנא מצילנא לך. אשקיתיה חמרא, וארויתיה, ואגניתיה גואי, אותבה על בבא, וסתרתה למזיה, כל דאתא חזיה, הדר. אדהכי והכי אבלעו להו..."

און's wife knew that since the nation was holy, the men of Israel, even those about to go and rebel against Moshe Rabeinu, would not draw near the house if a woman was present with her hair uncovered.

זה לומדים מקמחית יומא זו. אמרו עליו על רבי ישמעאל בן קמחית: פעם אחת סיפר דברים עם ערבי אחד בשוק, ונתזה צינורא מפיו על בגדיו, ונכנס ישבב אחיו ושמש תחתיו, וראתה אמן שני כהנים גדולים ביום אחד. ושוב אמרו עליו על רבי ישמעאל בן קמחית: פעם אחת יצא וסיפר עם הגמון אחד בשוק, ונתזה צינורא מפיו על בגדיו, ונכנס יוסף (עם) אחיו ושמש תחתיו, וראתה אמן שני כהנים גדולים ביום אחד. תנו רבנן: שבעה בניו היו לה לקמחית וכולן שמשו בכהונה גדולה. אמרו לה חכמים: מה עשית

Strictly speaking, women need not cover their hair from other women, only from other men. But many women feel that their own internal sense of *Tznius* is violated when they keep their head uncovered even where it is halachically permissible.

“The head; being the part of the body encasing the mind, represents our exalted status as human beings. By emphasizing the head, we are emphasizing this statement of humanity that we emanate (i.e. graduates wear distinctive four cornered tasseled caps, Indian chiefs wear special headdresses, the High Priest in the Temple wore a distinctive hat called the *mitznefet*). A married woman covers her hair as a sign of the added dignity now accorded to her.” (Gila Manolson, *Inside/Outside*)

The covering of a woman's hair is akin to including her aura within her inner essence (סוד המקיף) similar to a man's covering his head with his *טלית* while praying¹.

From here you see that the *צניעות* of covering one's hair does not have only to do with men seeing it. *קמחית* claimed that her own internal sense of *צניעות* was never violated, whether anyone saw this or not.

¹ There is a concept in Judaism called *סוד המקיף*. Each person has five levels of souls. The first three, *נפש*, *רוח*, *נשמה* are contained within the body of the person. The next two, the *חיה* and the *יחידה* are attached to the body, but are not contained within it. According to one Kabbalistic view, the *חיה* surrounds the body, while the *יחידה* the highest of the souls, is attached to the body on top. (דמח"ל). This is known as the *סוד המקיף*, an aura of *קדושה* which surrounds the body. (Rabbi Mattisyahu Glazerson). It is in order to express this idea, that a man covers his head with a *טלית גדול* when he davens in the morning. A woman, who has an even greater sensitivity to *צניעות* expresses this idea by covering her head all of the time. Below we will deal with why this applies specifically to a married woman. However, amongst Ashkenazim, the *טלית* is also only worn after marriage (with the exception of the *Yekkes*); and even amongst

Why Only a Married Woman?

A woman who gets married covers her hair to reflect “a deep and irreversible change ... in undergoing the transition from being single to being married, ... from sexual naivete to direct knowledge of intimacy... When a woman who is no longer sexually naive displays something sensual about herself, it is now likely to “radiate more energy,” because of her own experiential awareness of what it can evoke... When a woman covers her hair upon marrying she makes the statement: “My eyes have been opened - and at the same time, I intend to keep my sexuality where it belongs: in the intimacy of marriage.” (*Outside/Inside* pg. 46-47) In fact, the ridding of this naivete even outside of marriage was considered reason enough to cover one's hair. Thus Tamar covered her hair after Amnon had assaulted her. (שמואל ב יג יט). To counter the fact that her privacy had been tampered with, and in order to maintain her natural sense of *בושה* and *צניעות*, she covered her hair when in public. This was a refinement that went beyond that which is normally expected of single girls. (*Modesty-An Adornment for Life*, pg. 245))

In the time of *חז"ל*, even non-Jews had this sensitivity of covering their hair when married. (מסי סנהדרין נח:). The state that we find ourselves in now, of married women not feeling the need for a particular modesty once married is completely unnatural. (*Modesty-An Adornment for Life*, pg. 227)

the Sephardim where the *מנהג* is to wear a *טלית גדול* from the time of *מצוה*, the *מנהג* is only to wear it over the head after marriage.

Some learn that it is the *תפילין של ראש* which comprises or contributes to the *סוד המקיף*. Therefore, Rav Shimon Schwab claimed that a woman is not obligated to wear *תפילין* because she, by covering her hair, is ‘wearing her Tefilin’ all day. (In Rabbi Pesach Eliyahu's *Modesty an Adornment for Life*, pg. 243)

Lisa Aiken, pg. 133: "Some people wonder what a married woman accomplishes by covering her hair if she is more attractive wearing a wig than when exposing her real hair. There is no reason why a woman should not look attractive; they are prohibited from looking attracting...It can still make her more aware of G-d's presence."

Wigs raise the issue of "the letter versus the spirit of the law". The permissibility of wearing a wig indicates that a woman primarily covers her hair for herself. The headcovering serves as a reminder to the woman of her special status as a married woman. (Gila Manelson, *Inside/Outside*)

Outside/Inside pg. 48-49: "Cross-culturally, when we want recognition of our higher status, we draw attention to our head. A graduating university student wears a distinctive, tasseled, four-cornered cap. Dignitaries from almost all religions wear impressive-looking headgear. The priests of the Jewish Temple wore turban-like head apparel. Among members of a Native American tribe, the chief wears the largest headdress. All intuitively recognize that the head, where the mind lies, represents the seat of our humanness, and that by emphasizing it, you create an ever stronger statement of your stature as a human being."

"In this view, a woman covers her head upon marrying as a sign of the greater dignity now attributed her. (From this perspective even a bald woman would cover her head.) ... Many women, in fact, regard their head covering as a queen does her crown."

x. ***Why Is A Woman Considered Impure During Her Menstrual Cycle?***

טומאה reflects a loss of potential. The greater the loss, the greater the טומאה. A dead human body has greater טומאה than that of an animal. A woman's menstruation is a signal of the loss of potential fertilization of that month's egg

cell, which could have led to another human life. When a woman goes to the מקוה at the end of this period, she is renewing her creative energies for the coming month.

Pure טהרה is the highest stage of דעת¹, i.e. the ability to connect with something or someone in a totally integrated way. Similarly, pure טומאה represents the furthest from קדושה conceivable². Therefore, a dead corpse, even of an animal or an insect, is a source of טומאה. Touching such a corpse transmits that טומאה to a person (but not to a live animal who will touch it). This is because it is we humans who have a finely tuned sensitivity to spiritual realities. טומאה always reflects a loss of potential. Our contact with such loss effects our own spiritual realities to some degree.³

"An analysis of the various species of *tumah* reveals that what they have in common is the awareness of death. The most potent source of impurity is, indeed, a corpse or a part thereof. The other kinds of *tumah* imply, indirectly, the suggestion of death, even if only the loss of potential life. ... The *Metzora* ... includes the withering and dying of the limbs of the leper. ... the Rabbis taught that a leper is considered as if he were dead. ... [So too] semen ... is the loss of potential life. ... A *nidah* ... loses an unfertilized ovum, ... a whisper of death." (Norman Lam – *A Hedge of Roses*, pg. 84)

¹רב צדוק שם – טהרות הוא המדרגה היותר גדולה בדעת

²שם

³The approach of Rav S. R. Hirsch is to define *Tumah* as a loss of control in moral matters due to our physical *taavos* taking over (or for some other reason.) The word *טומא*, he says, is related to the *דמע* and *טמע* which means a mixture of things – something prohibited with something permitted. (See the *Hirsch Chumash*, ויקרא א, pg. 302, ד"ה ונטמאתם במ)

All forms of טומאה have purification, even טומאת מת¹.

¹Even though this results from the זוהמא of the טהרה, from the אדם הראשון of חטא, it has its טהרה through the אדומה פרה. Of course the real טומאה from this, death itself, can only be purified after the tikun of the אדם of חטא and חוה. We might have expected that contact with a dead body would also have no טהרה. Indeed the fact that we do have טהרה from the Tumas Meis is what even Shlomo hamelech could not understand about this מצוה (רב צדוק הכהן – מחשבות חרוץ)

Interestingly it is only we Jews, with our unique potential for spirituality, who are, exclusively amongst humans, susceptible to טומאה.

שמות כב ל: וְאִנְשֵׁי קִדְשׁ תִּהְיוּ לִי וּבֶשֶׂר בְּשַׁדָּה טְרֵפָה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ לְכַלֵּב תִּשְׁלִיכוּן אֹתוֹ וְיִקְרָא יֵאֵד: ... טמא הוא לכם

In the המקדש, a non-Jew was allowed to come to as far as the חיל, the same place as a טומאת מת and further than the other kinds of טומאה. Furthermore, a non-Jew cannot become Tameh in a halachic sense. This includes נדה – only a Jewess could become טומאת נדה.

Yet, since the very טומאה of a Jew comes from his connection with holiness, he can therefore always find a mechanism of Tahara.

כוזרי ג מט: הטומאה והקדושה הם שני דברים העומדים תמיד זה מול זה: לא ימצא האחד מהם כי אם בהמצא חברו.

במדבר יט ב: זאת חוקת התורה – עיין רש"י שם.

This is a great chesed from השם, that we need never be in a state of halachic טומאה for long. Therefore, the parshios which deal with טומאה are ultimately a sweet thing:

שיר השירים ה יא: ראשו כתם פז, קוצותיו תלתלים שחורות

ויקרא רבה פרשה יט א-ג: ראשו – זו תורה ... כתם פז – אלו דברי תורה ... קוצותיו תלתלים שחורות כעורב - ... [אלא] פרשיותיה של תורה [שאע"פ שנראות כאילו הם כעורות ושחורות לאומן ברבים, כגון הלכות זיבה ונגעים, נדה וילדת, אמר הקב"ה הרי הן עריבות עלי, שנאמר וערבה לד' מנחת יהודה וירושלים (מלאכי ג ד)]

Since the greater the loss of potential, the greater the טומאה

רב צדוק הכהן: טומאתן דבני ישראל [הוא] טומאה קלה לפי שעה שיש לה טהרה במקוה ישראל לד' כמ"ש (יומא פה): מי מטהרן אביהן שבשמים כאשר דבוקים בו שהוא שרשם הרי זה כמו השקה למעיין דמועיל לטהר מים טמאים. ... ולכך שכינת הש"י בתוך בנ"י גם בתוך טומאתם ... זהו טומאתם (ולא טומאה סתם) דייקא אצלם מצידם נקרא טומאה (רסיסי לילה סי' יט דף 21)

A non-Jew, on the other hand, although he does not have halachic טומאה, has a kind of intrinsic טומאה which, because of his weaker

A woman's menstruation is a signal of the loss of potential fertilization of that month's egg cell or ovum, which could have led to another human life². This loss, is a kind of distancing, reflected in the *Tumas Nidah*³.

A woman during her menstrual flow, is focused on re-preparing her body for a new cycle, a kind of healing process. Since her bodily energies are more focused on this, she is less available for the kind of wholistic spiritual, intellectual and emotional unity which ought to accompany relations with her husband. Hence relations during this time would become more of a base, physical act. This is the very opposite of the marital union, whose whole essence is purity. Hence the Torah prohibited it, as it did other forms of illicit unions⁴.

הקדוש ברוך הוא, spiritual connection with, cannot be so easily purified:

רב צדוק (שם): טומאת עמלק היא אב טומאה שאין לה טהרה במקוה כמ"ש תמחה. ושאר אומות הוא מה שא"א להשיבם למעין כלל כי אין להם שום דביקות והשקה למעין רק בבנ"י נאמר ישקני מנשיקות פיהו...

² During the month, the lining of the uterus thickens to accommodate the egg cell, should it become fertilized. There is an increase in blood supply in preparation of this happening. When it does not do so, this excess blood is released, and the egg cell discharged, and the potential for it to grow into a fetus is lost forever.

³ויקרא טו:יט

תהיה בנדתה

אונקלוס: תהי בריחוקה

טמטום = blockage; hence טמטום as in טמטום or clarity, related to צמצום = a contraction, a loss of clarity. (ולא darshen from the verse חז"ל). i.e. instead of reading Nitmeisem they read Nitamtem)

טהרה = purity; related to צוהר (like טוהר with the ט/צ interchanged) = clarity, brightness.

Therefore the Greeks טמאו את כל השמנים, i.e. they blocked the paths of wisdom, they prevented spiritual access to clarity. (See also טמטום - טמטום)

⁴ע"פ אהל רחל פ"ג

While a woman is still a נדה until after she goes to the מקוה, the שבעה נקיים is a part of the process of purification and not just in anticipation of it. Counting is done in Judaism to show that something is dear to us¹. For example, we count with joy towards מתן תורה with ספירת העומר.

When a woman goes to the mikvah at the end of this period, she is dipping, so to speak, in the primordial waters at the beginning of creation, thereby renewing her creative energies for the coming month². Although the way a mikvah purifies is ultimately a mystery³, we understand that, as primordial waters, it has to be מים חיים, waters connected to an ongoing, fresh source of water⁴. Such

¹רש"י ריש במדבר: מתוך חיבתן (של כלל ישראל) לפניו מונה אותם כל שעה

²See Rav Aryeh Kaplan, Waters of Eden, pg. 40-46

³רמב"ם פ"א מהל' מקואות הל' א: כל הטמאים בין אדם בין כלים בין שנטמאו בטומאה חמורה של תורה בין שנטמאו בטומאה של דבריהן אין להן טהרה אלא בטבילה במים הנקוין בקרקע.

רמב"ם סוף הל' מקואות: דבר ברור וגלוי שהטומאות והטהרות גזירת הכתוב הן, ואינו מדברים שדעתו של אדם מכרעתו והרי הן מכלל החוקים וכן הטבילה מן הטומאות מכלל החוקים הוא שאין הטומאה טיט או צואה שתעבור במים אלא גזירת הכתוב היא והדבר תלוי בכונת הלב. ולפיכך אמרו חכמים טבל ולא הוחק כאילו לא טבל, ואעפ"כ רמז יש בדבר כשם שהמכין לבו לטהר כיון שטבל טהור ואע"פ שלא נתחדש בגופו דבר המכין לבו לטהר נפשו מטומאות הנפשות שהן מחשבות האון ודעות הרעות. כיון שהסכים בלבו לפרוש מאותן העצות והביא נפשו במי הדעת טהור. הרי הוא אומר וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טומאותיכם ומכל גלולים אטוה אתכם. השם ברחמיו הרבים מכל חטא עון ואשמה יטהרנו אמן. It represents the primordial waters of creation – hence re-creation.

ספר החינוך: שיראה האדם את עצמו אחר הטבילה כאילו נברא באותה שעה, כמו שהיה העולם מים טהורים בו אדם וכמו שכתוב ורוח אלוקים מרחפת על פני המים, ויתן אל לבו בדמיון כי כמו שנתחדש בגופו, יחדש ג"כ פעולותיו לטוב, ויכשיר מעשיו וידקדק בדרכי ד' ברוך הוא (מצוה קעג בהוצאת שעוול) ר' יהודה פתיה: קודם שברא הקב"ה את השמים ואת הארץ, היה כל העולם כולו מלא מים הנקראים תהום, עד אפס מקום לברא שם שמים וארץ וכל כך היו המים רבים וגבוהים, עד שהיו מגעים קרוב לכסא הכבוד הנקרא רוח אלוקים (בספר מנחת יהודה, ראשית הספר)

⁴ספר החינוך (שם): ועל כן אמרו חכמים שלא תכשר במים שבכלי, רק במים חיים או מכונסים שהן על קרקע ואלא בכלי מכל מקום, כדי לתת אל לבו

water is called מים חיים because water is the source of all life. (In fact most of our body is comprised of water, about 60%.⁵). That is why מקוה always comes as a transition from a lower to a higher state, such as that of a non-Jew to becoming a Jew or just before Shabbos and the Chagim⁶.

במחשבה כאילו העולם כולו מים והוא נתחדש בעלותו מהם. ר דוד צבי הופמן: מים שיש בהם זרימה מתמדת, בלתי פוסקת, הנובעת מן המקור הטבעי שנברא על-יד ד' בורא עולם, מים שיש להם קשר עם הנצח. (פירושו על ויקרא יא עמוד רי בהוצאת מוסד הרב קוק)

⁵In fact, מקוה ישראל himself is called הקב"ה (The peshat is that HaShem is the hope of Yisroel.) Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman: Just as death is אבי – אבי אבות הטהרה ד' is so too, אבות הטומאה פירושו על ויקרא יא). הטהרה במהותה המוחלטת (עמוד רי בהוצאת מוסד הרב קוק)

⁶Similarly, it is a custom for some to go to the mikveh after doing תשובה from being a מומר – the raising of the hands before elevating the meal and turning it into a קרבן (the table = the מזבח; the salt in memory of the tahara – is to remind us of the –מקוה – תרומה before eating the Cohen before eating

יום כפור גדול כהן went on כהן גדול. Every Jew before going into the עדרת ישראל (תוס' יום טוב על יומא ג: ג)

CHAPTER SEVEN:
MARRIAGE/INTERMARRIAGE/CONVERSION

- i. Introduction**
- ii. Why Should I Marry A Jew?**
 - a I'm Not Really That Religious, So it Really Doesn't Matter.**
 - b I've Found the Perfect Partner. Why Do You Want to Disturb My Personal Happiness?**
 - c What About Giving My Children the Best of Both Worlds and Letting Them Choose?**
 - d You Don't Seem to Understand, I'm in Love With Mary/John!**
 - e What If My Partner Agrees to Convert?**
 - f I Would Consider Myself a Racist to Only Date Jews.**
 - g Even If I Intermarry, I Still Intend Bringing My Children Up Jewish.**
- iii. Why can't a Mamzer marry any other Jew? Why can't a Cohen marry a Giores?**

CHAPTER SEVEN: MARRIAGE/INTERMARRIAGE/CONVERSION

i. Introduction

The Jews are disappearing, fast. The greatest civilization the world has ever known is being endangered because most Jews in the world today do not regard marrying a fellow Jew as important. The world is quickly losing one of its greatest sources of morality, creativity and energy.

It is probable that your grandparents and if not, your great grandparents and many of their parents' and their parents' parents gave up a great deal so that you could be Jewish. You are throwing away a gift that they gave all to make sure that you could have. In fact, you will be throwing away 3,700 years of the greatest spiritual and ethical tradition which the world has ever known.

ii. Why should I marry a Jew?

a-I'm not really that religious, so it really doesn't matter.

One doesn't know how important something is to him until it is taken away. A Jew might not realize how important being Jewish means to him until someone makes an anti-Semitic remark or until someone tries to raise his child to believe in Jesus.

Besides, who says being Jewish is simply a matter of religion. Throughout history, many Jews who were not religious at all were willing to give their lives for the Jewish nation, for Jewish principles or so their children could remain Jewish.

You may be entering college or in the middle or otherwise single away from home. These are years when religion is least important in people's lives. This is also the time when you will probably meet the person you will marry. Like most people, when you begin to raise a family and educate children, religious values will take on much more significance.

In intermarriages, the issue of Jewish identity emerges sooner or later,

even where the couple thought they had it figured out in advance.

b-I've found the perfect partner. Why do you want to disturb my personal happiness?

Today, many couples live together without getting married. What pushes most to eventually marry is having children. Most people see the family structure of being married as the best option for their future kids.

Sooner or later the question of how you are going to raise your children is going to arise. Will they be Christian, Jewish, a combination of both or nothing?

If you are like most Jews, the thought of raising your children as Christians probably bothers you. We see our children as extensions of ourselves. There has been a deeply rooted survival mechanism that has been ingrained in every Jew that tells us not to convert to another religion. If becoming a Christian in any way bothers you, you won't want to raise your children to be Christians.

So you probably will want your children to be raised as Jews. Will your partner understand this and agree to this? Many Jews are walking around with a misconception that non-Jews today are flexible when it comes to religion. A recent Gallop Poll showed that 90% of Americans identified with some religion (93% of those that did, identified as being Christians, 2% as being Jewish).

More importantly, how will the children feel about being Jewish when only one of the parents is Jewish? ("Mom, you expect me to go to Hebrew School and have a Bar Mitzvah when you can't even convince Dad to be Jewish?")

c-What about giving my children the best of both worlds and letting them choose?

Is this really fair to your children? Aren't you really asking them to choose between Mommy and Daddy or between two sets of grandparents? If you think back to your childhood you'll see clearly that your parents let you choose what color dress you'd wear today not whether or not you should go to school. The message the child picks up when he is allowed to choose is that it is really not that important. When given the choice between Christianity or Judaism, the child is most likely to choose neither.

You may be feeling at this time in your life that religion is not that important. So you will be satisfied in raising the child with nothing. Chances are that after you have children you or your partner will change your mind. What will you do now? What if you want to circumcise your son and your partner refuses? What will you do if your daughter wants to join the Sunday School at church to be with her friends?

Even should you as parents agree to bring up the child with both religions - that is terribly confusing for and therefore unfair to the child. Children need a sense of identity. Only a super-genius and spiritual giant like Abraham could figure the whole thing out himself. Besides, Judaism and Christianity are very different religions. One cannot be both a Jew and Christian. Moreover, a great deal of Judaism is dependent on the family experience, on experiencing the warmth of Shabbat together, on having a Passover Seder, on discussing what your moral and spiritual traditions are - this can't be done when one of the parents is doing this as an outsider - unless you reduce Judaism to a meaningless set of different customs. But that's a lie - that's not what being Jewish means. Your kids will know whether you are presenting them authentic Judaism or not.

And beyond the family there is the community-experience which has shown often the relationship itself.

that bringing up a kid in two faiths doesn't mean that he will belong to two communities - it usually means that he will belong to none. He will have no community to share his joy and his sadness, to celebrate his successes and commiserate with his disappointments.

d-You don't seem to understand I'm in love with Mary/John!

If you really love this person you will want what is best for him or her. Chances are they are not aware of how differences in religions can cause problems later on in the marriage. Do you love your partner enough to consider that marriage may be the wrong thing?

What is really going on in your mind is that you don't want to give up this feeling of closeness that has developed. Think for a moment. If something happened and the relationship ended, would you be capable of having an intimate relationship with someone else? If the answer is "No," perhaps you should develop yourself into a more loving\loveable person. Realize that the joy you feel now is the joy of intimacy, and it is not necessarily limited to this particular partner.

You need to first decide what your life goals are and then find someone who matches, rather than find a partner and then try to rearrange two lives to suit each other's needs.

e-What if my partner agrees to convert?

And what if she doesn't? Out of every one hundred marriages between Jews and non-Jews, less than ten involve conversion. Asking someone to give up their religion and adopt another one is a lot to ask.

One should not enter into a relationship with someone thinking one can change the partner. Chances are something is gong to be compromised,

f-I would consider myself a racist to only date Jews.

I hope that you reserve the right to determine who will be the mother or father of your children. You don't have to marry anyone you don't want to.

We can generally assume that we will marry someone who we first date. Therefore, if one wants to be selective as to who one marries, one must first be selective of whom one dates.

It is important to be aware of the many difficulties that arise from entering into serious relationships with people that you do not wish to marry. You or your partner are going to get hurt. Since the process of dating often unwittingly advances from casual friends to serious partners, you ought to be selective as to whom you date.

There are many reasons why people intermarry - they may have dated many Jews before and found them all shallow and insensitive, finally they meet a non-Jew who is deep and caring. They usually believe that they have to marry the person they love - this is a one time opportunity. They usually think that the problems of higher divorce rate and other marital problems with intermarried couples won't happen to them.

g-Even if I intermarry, I still intend on bringing my children up Jewish.

To a male:

If you don't marry a Jew your children will not be Jewish. Patrilineal descent is only recognized by Reform, which has only about 2 million out of 18 million Jews world wide. The chances are pretty good that your kid will meet someone not Reform, and be shocked to find out that his/ her fiancée does not consider him/her Jewish. You can't imagine the trauma that people like that go through - who could be so selfish as to maybe cause their kids that sort of pain.

To a female:

Even if you bring up your kids Jewish they are unlikely to remain so. Statistics show that less than 10% of the children of intermarried couples identify themselves as Jews. The grandchildren of such couples are almost never Jewish. Don't fool yourself that you are going to be different - you're playing around with other people's lives.

To a male or female:

Even if your spouse says that he doesn't mind you bringing up the kids Jewish, that has a good chance of changing when you actually have children. Children arouse one's identity - you'll suddenly feel more Jewish at the very time that he is beginning to feel more Christian. You will want to circumcise the child, he will regard it as barbaric; your spouse will want to take the kid to church on Christmas (never mind whether he ever goes now), you'll feel very uptight about that. Often these conflicts spill over into the broader family network, requiring you to choose between your spouse and parents or siblings. The older you get, the more important these relationships become. That's one reason why intermarriages have over a 50% divorce rate, as opposed to only 20% for all Jewish, marriage - you're getting involved in a marriage that is probably going to fail. Your children are going to forever suffer because of that.

iii. Why can't a mamzer marry any other Jew? Why can't a Cohen marry a Gioret?

Such situations can be the toughest and most challenging of them all. Thus, a dual approach can be the most helpful and comforting: on the one hand, be genuine - say that you too find it very difficult to understand; this is one of those situations where you must bang your head in the wall and say "I give up"! Cry with them, explain how you, too, as a Rabbi/Mechanech etc. have these hard

questions about Halacha. On the other hand, attempt to say that this is a good example of how the human being should be a bit humble, namely with all the information at our fingertips we still don't know all the answers to everything. By following these Halachot the human being makes a statement that he accepts to follow even though he may not understand. After all, was there yet a good, acceptable, and logical answer as to why every fulfilling life must end? But somehow, we still go on living.

Many times, R' Amital shlit"a has said (while asking a hard question on a sugya) that "it's better to stay with a hard question than to give a lousy answer". This doesn't negate the human mind, but rather this shows that we do not know it all.¹

¹Rabbi Y.C Grunstein

CHAPTER EIGHT: SUFFERING AND THE HOLOCAUST

- i. I cannot believe in a G-d who allows a Holocaust and Suffering.**
- ii. How can one explain bad families and environments?**
- iii. Why do good and innocent people suffer? Why do some wicked people seem to have it all?**
- iv. How come G-d lets one person kill another?**
- v. What are Jewish responses to suffering? What should our response be to someone else's pain? What should our response be to our own pain?**
- vi. Are we allowed to question G-d's actions?**

CHAPTER EIGHT: SUFFERING AND THE HOLOCAUST

i. I cannot believe in a G-d who allows a Holocaust and Suffering

Introduction

There are really one of two answers to the issue of suffering: Either you don't believe in G-d and this world is therefore totally meaningless, a scenario that few people really believe; or you do believe in G-d, in which case there is a World to Come, the only thing that helps make sense of suffering. (Certainly, the third alternative, not to believe in G-d and to believe in man instead, does not exist, for it was man who actually perpetrated the deed.) Since these are equal alternatives, you cannot use the argument for suffering to decide which of the two you believe in. Your attitude toward suffering must be a consequence of your belief and not that which formulates your belief. Anyone who says, "I can't believe in G-d because He allowed the Holocaust," is really willing to say that the moment he receives an adequate explanation for this, he will immediately become fully observant. But this is almost never true. The Holocaust is not what destroyed his faith: rather he is saying this because he doesn't believe. The fact is that most observant Jews who actually went through the Holocaust increased their faith afterwards.

Answer

When attempting any explanation for the Holocaust, one has to approach with fear and trembling. How could any explanation account for six million Jews killed. Indeed, for nearly half a century after the event, great sages refused to address this issue. A comprehensive answer is impossible in this format. It may be impossible in any format. When Moses was on Mt. Sinai, he reached the greatest heights attainable by a human. At that time, he sought to resolve the puzzle of why there is suffering. But even he could

not fathom the ultimate meaning of this all¹.

So, a full understanding of the issue is impossible. But let us look at a few issues and see whether we can increase our understanding a little.

It matters very much to us how many people were killed and how much they suffered. There is no end we need to go to to save a single Jewish life. There is no value that we can put on anyone's suffering. At a level of feelings we ought to be doubly as distressed by the pain of two than we are by the pain of one. But at a level of theology, of explaining why G-d allows suffering in this world, we may just as well begin by explaining why someone's finger is hurting². There is a

¹ברכות ז.
וא"ר יוחנן משום ר' יוסי שלשה דברים בקש משה לפני קב"ה ונתן לו ... בקש להודיעו דרכיו... ונתן לו שונא' הודיעני נא את דרכיך אמר לפניו רבש"ע מפני מה יש צדיק וטוב לו ויש צדיק ורע לו יש רשע וטוב לו ... ופליגא דר' מאיר דא"ר מאיר שתיים נתנו לו ואחת לא נתנו לו

²Philosophically no difference between stubbed toe and great suffering

ערכין פרק ג טז :
עד היכן תכלית יסורין אמר רבי אלעזר כל שארגו לו בגד ללבוש ואין מתקבל עליו ... אפילו נתכוונו למזוג בחמין ומזגו לו בצונן... הושיט ידו לכיס ליטול שלש ועלו בידו שתיים

"One human tragedy is not as heartbreaking as a tragedy multiplied a million fold. A man who murders one person is not as guilty as a mass murderer ... but justice and injustice, guilt and innocence, are matters of degree only for man ... an absolute G-d cannot be a tiny bit unjust ...Once the questioning of G-d over the Holocaust is motivated by the vastness of the catastrophe, the questioning itself becomes ethically questionable. It is of course more human to query G-d about the suffering of the many rather than the few, but it is not more humane... To suggest that one could put up with less evil and less injustice, but not with so much, is cruelly unethical. Indeed, the Holocaust was only possible because man was willing to tolerate less than a Holocaust. ...The question is not why the Holocaust, but why a world in which any amount of suffering is extant. (Eliezer Berkowitz, The Hiding G-d of History.)

difference as to why national tragedies happen as contrasted with a private person's pain. But the starting point for both is why G-d allows suffering in the world.

Now there are many explanations as to why someone might be in pain. G-d may be urging the person to address a certain issue or to turn to Him; He may be purifying the person or the person may be suffering the natural consequences of his actions. But the deeper question is, "Why did G-d create the world in such a way that suffering is an intrinsic component thereof?" Could not G-d have found a different way of achieving these things? Why do people have to suffer?

Let us be absolutely clear: Judaism does not regard suffering as having intrinsic value. Ultimately, suffering is regarded as a part of the evil of this world, something which is destined to disappear. But it does seem to be built into this world to some degree. G-d created darkness before he created light. And from that time onwards we seem to only to be able to see true spiritual light by pushing it against the darkness. Even our senses seem to work this way; and to do good we also have to push against our inclinations to cheat just a little on our taxes or tell that little white lie, or to sometimes have illicit thoughts. Pain is a part of our learning process and it is an essential early warning that something is wrong, physically or emotionally.

Now we can never ask why the world was created a certain way rather than another. Not being G-d, we can never understand all the reasons why the fact that the world was created the way it was was the best possible of all options. All we can do is to notice that this is the choice that G-d made and try to understand the wisdom of the way the world functions as

is. And what we do notice, is that all great things are achieved with difficulty¹.

It is clear that we choose very little of the struggles we face in this world. But it is also clear that we do choose our responses to them², including our response

¹מס' ברכות ה'.
שלש מתנות... נתן הקב"ה לישראל וכולן לא נתנן אלא על ידי יסורין אלו הן תורה וארץ ישראל והעולם הבא מהר"ל נתיב היסורין פרק ב':
...אלו שלוש מדריגות של קדושה לישראל... כי היסורים זיכרון הנפש ולכך כאשר ישראל קנו מעלה נבדלת מן הגוף צריכים קודם מרוק וזכור הנפש עד שראוי לקבל המעלה הקדושה ודבר זה דומה ליסורין של אהבה... ולכך אמר ג' מתנות טובות כנגד ג' מדריגות של קדושה
בראשית רבה צד:ה
ויזבח זבחים לאלקי אביו יצחק (ויגש)... אין הקב"ה מייחד שמו על ברייה כשהוא חי אלא על בעלי יסורין, לפיכך אין כתיב כאן ויזבח זבחים לאלקי יעקב אלא לאלקי אביו יצחק... שהיה בעל יסורין
ילקוט איוב תתקח:כג
איוב אלולי לא קרא תגר כשבאו עליו יסורין כשם שאומר עכשיו אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב כך היו אומרים אלקי איוב
לפום צערא אגרוא (פרקי אבות ה:כז)
מס' שבת יג:
ת"ר מי כתב מגילת תענית אמרו חנניה בן חזקיה וסיעתו שהיו מחבבין את הצרות
מהרש"א:
... כמ"ש כשם שמברכים על הטובה כך מברכים על הרעה (דאיתא בערכין דף יז כל מי שעברו עליו מי יום בלא יסורים קבל עולמו) ולזה נקרא ספר מגילת תענית דהיום טוב הנזכרים בו עיקרן לא נתייטדו אלא ע"ש התענית שהיה להם בעת צרה

²I have come to understand that there is a universal principle at work for each of us – whether we grow up in a mill town or Beverly Hills. Sometime in childhood you are 'dealt a card' and often the person who deals the card is your parent. The card usually represent a childhood trauma of some sort-your parents are poor, your parents are rich, your parents get divorced, your parents stay together when they should have divorced, your parents neglect you, your parents overpower you with attention, your parents died, your parents are perfect, your home life is perfect but then war breaks out in your country and on and on it goes.

It is guaranteed that something happened in your childhood which has imprinted you for life, and chances are it is linked to your main fear in life-fear of abandonment, fear of intimacy, fear of being controlled ... you fill it in.

The point of all this is-we are stuck with the card dealt to us in childhood, and everything in life depends on how we play it.

to imminent death. And, we are told, by exercising our choice in this way we imitate our Creator, we choose to create good just like He does. This understanding changes our whole attitude to things. Comfort, ease, security and status are no longer the goal – the soul has a different agenda altogether. It will measure pleasure or pain, comfort or discomfort only against the yardstick of means for refining our character, purifying and elevating ourselves¹. And when it comes to purifying and being strengthened, comfort

usually comes a poor second to being hammered in the fire².

Suffering represents the ultimate **הסתר פנים**, the hiding of the Face of G-d. This is why we all naturally have the question of where He is when we see pain and tragedy. But it is just this **הסתר פנים** which G-d uses to give us our challenges and to allow us to choose our responses. In our period, the pre-Messianic era, we are told that this **הסתר פנים** will be at its greatest. For it is then that the final and deepest contradictions between purity and impurity, spirituality and vacuum, are being resolved. At this time, the final kicks

The credit or the blame for how the game turns out is all ours. (Kirk Douglas, *Climbing the Mountain – My Search for Meaning* (Simon & Schuster 1997) pg. 64)

¹Rabbi Tauber: If, for instance, everything goes well, a pregnant woman lives through nine months of morning sickness, discomfort and mood swings which finally culminate in excruciating labor pains. Despite all the discomfort, in the end she looks at the newborn and says that it was all worth it. What if, however she was pregnant for a few months and then, G-d forbid, miscarried? How devastating! Or what if the child is born crippled or retarded? Or what if it is a healthy child who grows up into a real problem child? What will the mother think, then? That all the pain and effort was for nothing.

It does not have to be so, however. Our mission is to perform **השם** - to do whatever G-d demands of us at that moment. If you perform the responsibility of that moment, then - mission accomplished! Consider the pregnant woman who miscarried. If she can say to herself: "G-d, You commanded me to have children. It is my business to try and fulfill that commandment. However, I have no guarantee about the end result. I know that as long as I am taking all the necessary steps to fulfill this mission, then I am a success - mission accomplished" and mean it, she will never be devastated. In fact, every second she is pregnant it is as if she is giving birth to a child. Her feeling of accomplishment is not dependent on the final outcome, which really is in G-d's hands anyhow.(p. 46-47)

² Although this is based on a quote in *Why Me Why This Why Now*, Robin Norwood, pg. 34, the idea is a very Jewish one. For example, Maharal states:

מהר"ל נצח ישראל פ"ז:
אין ד"ת מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה: דבר זה ענין מופלא כי התורה והגוף שהן שני הפכים וא"כ איך מתקיים התורה שהיא שכלית בגוף הגשמי שהגשמי הפך הנבדל ולפיכך אין קיום התורה באדם הגשמי שהם כמו שני דברים שאין מתדמים ומתייחסים ביחד, שאין להם עמידה ביחד ולפיכך אין התורה מתקיימת רק במי שממית עצמו על התורה ואדם כזה גופו אינו נחשב כלל וכאילו אינו גופני כלל שהרי הוא ממית ומסלק עצמו על התורה ובוזה התורה מתקיים שהרי אינו בעל גוף ...

Rabbi Tauber: Having faith does not mean one is numb to pain. It is like giving birth to a child. The woman about to give birth is experiencing very real labor pains, yet she knows that after the baby is born she will feel that it was all worth it. That faith in the ultimate outcome gives her the strength to withstand the present pain. The truth is that every person who goes through pain is delivering a "baby" - that "baby" is yourself. It is the accomplishment that you have remained true to the Higher reality - that G-d is behind everything, all for your ultimate good - in the face of extreme hardship...(pg. 87)

דברים יד א: א"ע (מובא ג"כ ברמב"ן):
אחר שתדעו שאתם בנין לה' והוא אוהב אתכם יותר מן האב לבנו לא תתגודדו על כל מה שיעשה כי כל מה שיעשה לטוב הוא ואם לא תבינוהו כאשר לא יבינו הבנים הקטנים מעשה אביהם רק יסמכו עליו כי עם קדוש אתה ואינך כשאר כל הגוים ע"כ לא תעשו כמעשיהם

Somebody who has really internalized the purpose of **הכרת הטוב** will actually have **השם**, just like a patient will thank his doctor for a painful procedure.

“What happened, however? Under circumstances where people had the most opportunity to become the most angry at G-d Jews snuck away and said:

”יתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבא”

In the end evil will not have its day, and the very evil will be used by G-d to contribute to a time when suffering, Holocausts and tragedy will be banished forever.

But to go further we must stop here and get together again to study further.

ii. *How can one explain bad families and environments?*

Let's get one thing straight at the outset. This world is not a fair place and was never meant to be a fair place. Each of us gets exactly what we need in order to do what we need to do. Since we each have a unique role to play in this world, we each have an exact environment. We are not all born equal. (This is not the same as saying we ought to be given equal opportunities.) Some of us are more intelligent than others; some more physically agile, some more naturally together, calm or energetic than others. We are not all born equal because we do not all have the same spiritual task in life. But Judaism is a great believer of equality – in the world to come. The same effort exerted by say a mentally

¹בדעת תבונות:

שבזמן תוקף עקבות משיחא, לא יקשה עלינו אם הצדיקים נשפלים השפלה גדולה, ואם בני האדם צועקים ולא נענים... כי כל זה נולד לפי שאין הצדיקים יכולים אפילו בזכותם לתקן הקלקולים (של הבריאה בכללה) (ס' קע הוצאת הרב פרידלנדר דף קצג) ובכללים ראשונים: ובאחרית הגלות הקב"ה משתמש הרוב מאת, (מהנהגת המזל) כי הכוונה אז לתת תקון כללי לכל העולם, ועל כן צריך שיתנהג בהנהגת היחוד, שמון ההעלם הגדול יולד הגילוי הגדול, ויהיה שלמות ניתן לעולם. (מובא בהארה 474 שם) והוסיף הרב פרידלנדר דברים אלה פותחים פתח להבין את הגזירות הקשות שירדו על דורנו

or physically challenged person as someone talented may achieve very different results in this world. But it will achieve the same level of spirituality in the World to Come. And that is where it really counts.

iii. *Why do good and innocent people suffer? Why do some wicked people seem to have it all?*

This is a very good question. It would be a knockout question if This World were all there was. But it is not. G-d does not reward people in This World for the good they do. Only in the land of Israel, and only for the Jewish people as a whole, is there a linkage between spiritual behavior and G-d's direct response to us. In addition, G-d did build the world in such a way that, when evil reaches a certain point, it self-destructs. But for individuals, we get not reward and punishment in this world, but tools for change. G-d reacts to our actions, words and thoughts and presents us with new challenges, internal or external, that are perfect for our next stage of growth. It may be that someone perfectly righteous spends his whole life in dire poverty. And this is just what he needs. And it may be that someone perfectly evil is rolling in the dough. And this gives him the opportunities he needs to maximize his potential. In the end we all get what we need and we will all be held accountable for fulfilling our potential. We cannot know anyone else's potential and why he was given what he was given. We are competing only with ourselves.

iv. *How come G-d lets one person kill another?*

It is difficult for us to understand how G-d reconciles the detailed care He gives to arranging the perfect environment for each and everyone of us, with the freedom of choice we all have. It means that when I choose to do something which may affect any number of other people, G-

d has to rearrange all the environments of all those affected. Now there are many ways in which G-d can ensure that we get the challenges that we need, and, He, in His infinite wisdom, weaves a thread of Providence which integrates with the choices which we all make.

Now the situation becomes much more complicated when we deal with murder. G-d will not allow someone to die before his time, but that means interfering with someone else's (the murderer's) choice. The issue is brought to the fore in the story of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's brothers decide to kill him and in the end throw him in a pit full of snakes and scorpions. Ohr HaChaim explains that they wanted to see whether in fact Joseph deserved the death penalty. Had they killed him themselves, then this would not have proven that he deserved to die, for G-d might not have interfered with their freedom of choice. Whereas, by abandoning Joseph in the dangerous pit, they were truly putting him in G-d's hands, for He would save Joseph if he did not deserve to die. And indeed that is what happened.

Sometimes, when a murder takes place, it was time for the victim to die anyhow. Sometimes, the potential victim needs to be saved, even if this requires miraculous intervention. And sometimes, in a mystery of Providence, G-d reorganizes the universe so that the untimely death of this person does not deprive him of any of his potential. The very act of dying in this way, is often the purification the person needs to fill in the gap of his missed years of life.

v. *What are Jewish responses to suffering? What should our response be to someone else's pain? What should our response be to our own pain?*

Judaism makes a very big distinction between our responses to our pain, and our responses to the pain of another. When we are the sufferers, we

need to look into ourselves, and find the strength to use the suffering to grow and be purified. We need to understand that G-d loves us, and that therefore He must be giving us this pain for our own good.

But when it comes to someone else's pain, we are urged to feel their pain, to be a source of strength and comfort. In fact, it is a defining characteristic of being a Jew that we are able to identify with the pain of others. This is what made Moses so great. It may be that a person will draw strength from hearing about some of the ideas why people suffer, or it may be that that is the last thing you should be telling them. Your job is to be there for them, and to ease their lot in any way possible.

vi. *Are we allowed to question G-d's actions?*

Yes we may. One of the great figures of suffering in the Bible is Job (Iyov). Throughout the book of Job, his three friends try to comfort him and to justify G-d's actions in letting him suffer. Yet Job rejects their solace and pushes away their explanations. Amazingly, in the end G-d praises Job and criticizes his friends¹. The Malbim explains that this is because Job never stopped believing in G-d. What he was not willing to do was to accept explanations of his suffering which did not ring true to him. His friends, on the other hand, were full of philosophical and theological sophistry, but at bottom, they really had serious doubts, problems with faith.

We may not always understand what our parents do to us and for us, but in normal families this does not contradict the faith we have in them. Similarly, we can

¹פרק מב
(א) ויען איוב את ד' ויאמר (ב) ידעתי כי כל תוכל ולא יבצר ממך מזמה (ז) ויהי אחר דבר ד' את הדברים האלה אל איוב ויאמר ד' אל אליפו התימני חרה אפי בך ובשני רעין כי לא דברת אלי נכונה כעבדי איוב מלביים:
חרה אפי בך: כי לא דברתם אלי נכונה כעבדי איוב שבפיהם התוכחו בעד ד', אבל לבם לא היה מסכים אל פיהם ...

be secure in our faith and yet, no because of that faith, turn to G-d and say, "G-d, I simply do not understand why you are doing this to me."

CHAPTER NINE: FRUM JEWS AND SOCIETY

- i. Why Do Frum People Do Bad Things?**
- ii. How Come the Rabbis Don't Say Anything?**
- iii. Explain the Tensions and Major Disagreements Among the Different Sects and Factions in the Orthodox Community.**
- iv. Why Do Frum Jews Have Such Large Families? This is Especially Problematic For Those Families Who Are Dirt Poor.**
- v. Why Don't Charedi Men Go to the Army?**
- vi. Why Do Many Frum Men Sit and Learn Instead of Taking Care of Their Families?**
- vii. Why Do Chasidim Wear Long Black Coats and Black Hats?**

CHAPTER NINE: FRUM JEWS AND SOCIETY

i. Why do Frum people do bad things?

Judaism is a system designed to help a person reach moral and spiritual perfection. As such it has been remarkably successful: Observant families are generally harmonious and close, kindness and charity proliferate, drugs, prostitution and alcoholism are miniscule. The overall standards of observant communities on the whole, range of desirable social characteristics, and are the envy of the broader world. Nevertheless, people have freedom of choice, and otherwise observant people may choose to act inappropriately. The truth is that all people, observant or otherwise, do some things wrong at some times. The Talmud assures us that even the greatest spiritual giants transgress the "dust of speaking badly about one's neighbor" at some time or another. We are on this earth just because we are imperfect; we are here to grow and improve.

This is not to justify the wrongs of anyone, and certainly not the wrongs done by religious people. I am merely pointing out that Orthodox people, like the rest of us, sometimes really mess up. Now Judaism definitely regards such behavior from an observant person as being much more morally repugnant. It goes so far as to call such behavior a *Chilul HaSh-m*, a desecration of G-d's name, for why would someone want to keep G-d's Torah if those who claim to do so behave in a scurrilous fashion. In fact, a Jew who lies or cheats is no different to a Jew who eats pork or doesn't pray - he is at best a partially committed observant Jew. And in one sense he is worse. For a Jew who eats pork only sins against G-d. Whereas a Jew who lies or steals, sins against man and G-d.

ii. How come the Rabbis don't say anything?

This is simply not true. As an observant Jew I can tell you that the Rabbis quite clearly and forcefully give to us on every little foot we might dare to put wrong. What they do not do is hang their dirty linen in public. They are not wont to speak to the press about anything, let alone about the problems of the Orthodox community. But any reporter or anyone else who would make the slightest effort would find out the truth for himself.

iii. Explain the tensions and major disagreements among the different sects and factions in the Orthodox community

In the army there are different segments, each with their own specialty. There are Engineers, the Golani troops, the Paratroopers, etc., each with a different purpose and role. Naturally, each squadron will boast that it is finest in order to bolster spirit and morale. The Air Force pilots feel they are the best. The Paratroopers are certain they are the most valuable. The tankers surely believe that they are the elite. This is natural.

However, every unit is under the subordination of the Chief of Staff whose orders must be followed by *every member* of the armed forces, without question, and with complete compliance.

Furthermore, every soldier knows that they never fight *against* each other. Rather they are in battle with a common enemy and a common goal.

In the past, the Jewish nation was divided into 12 tribes, with individual characteristics and strengths. Still, they were all part of one nation, united under one leader and one G-d. Today, we no longer are divided into these divisions but we still have different ways of serving **השם**.

The *Chassidim* have their unique ways of serving **השם**. The *Religious Zionists* have their ideology. But all submit to the High Power of the Commander in Chief, **הקדוש ברוך הוא**. Every soldier in the

iv. Why do Frum Jews have such large families? This is especially problematic for those families who are dirt poor.

Let's answer the second question first. Look around any Frum neighborhood: The kids look well-dressed and fed; they look happy and well-looked after. If frum people decide to forgo a fancier car and put that money into their kids, and if the kids are thriving, then that is something to admire, not to criticize.

As for the big families themselves: After the Holocaust, the world Jewish population dropped from 18 million to 12.5 million. As many as five to six million of those were in communist countries where for another 40 years, the last traces of their Judaism was being wiped out. Throughout Europe, former glorious communities were devastated, most never to be rebuilt. In Western countries, Jews were and are being lost through intermarriage at a dizzying rate. Those that remain are not replacing themselves: the overall Jewish birthrate in the States is 1.4%. In fact, almost 60 years after the Holocaust, we were able to increase our numbers to only 13.5 million. And that is about as good as it is going to get.

There is one segment of the Jewish community, the Orthodox, who really care about this tragic loss and who have a deep sense of mission about the future of the Jewish people. They are not even making

up for the tragic losses of the last century, let alone contributing to a population explosion. In the light of our recent history, this question, then, simply has no place.

v. Why don't Charedi men go to the army?

To a non-Israeli:

Torah Jews believe that studying the Torah is something deeply mystical and of great importance in upholding the world¹. But that is for a longer deeper

¹The source for torah learning aiding in security can be seen in סנהדרין מט: 'Behold, Dovid engages in matters of justice and righteousness for all his nation and Yoav the son of Tzruya is involved with the army. What is the reason that Dovid engages in matters of justice and righteousness for all his nation? Because Yoav looks after the army. And what is the reason that Yoav looks after the army? Because Dovid engages in matters of justice and righteousness for all his nation.'

It is hence derived that both physical and spiritual efforts are necessary. This point is also emphasized in the War of Midian in which 36,000 men were recruited. One third of these men were sent to the back, one third fought in the front lines and one third were sent to learn.

Further, consider that in the conquering of Eretz Canaan under the military leadership of Yehoshua, Yisachar and Levi did not participate in the physical fighting. Those exempted from duty is given at twenty %.

The war, it should be noted, was a milchemet mitzvah or war of mitzvah, war of the highest order, and yet it was still acceptable to opt out of physical fighting.

Torah study was considered integral to an army and so no complaints were hurdled at those who stayed back to study torah. Moshe, however, did levy complaints against those tribes settling on the east side of the Jordan when it was thought that they would not assist in conquering the west side. Moshe told these tribes that not assisting would be sinning to G-d. (במדבר לב:כ-כג) While some may use this source to demonstrate that the charedim are obligated to participate in the physical army (Yechezkel Cohen; Halachically Drafting Deferred Yeshiva Students; Torah VeAvodah Kibbutz Dati Publishers; Jerusalem; 5753.), this argument is erroneous. After all, the eastern tribes were not going to be furthering the war cause through

discussion¹. However, even on more superficial grounds, this issue can readily be understood.

Firstly, let me stress that Charedim do go to the army: There have always been Charedim in the Israeli army – Charedim have died in battles and there are whole Charedi units. What many Charedim do, however, is get a deferment from the army while they are studying in Yeshiva. This is a deferment and not an exemption. (In practice, the army chooses not to call many of these men up later. This is because the army is trying to cut down on its manpower to save costs, so that it can concentrate on its elite forces and high technology equipment.)

Every country with a draft has a deferral for purposes of study. This was

A further source which may appear at first blush to negate the religious stand against participating in the physical army is that '...in a war of mitzvah, all must be involved - even the groom from his room and the bride from her chuppah'. (Mishneh Sota; Perek 8; mishneh 7.) To understand this source, one needs to consider that a war of mitzvah involves the obligation to help the people of Israel from the hand of their enemy. This necessitates that every state have a standing army even without specific threat. By application, if a war is being fought and yeshiva students are needed, then they should fight. Even if there is no war but military experts nevertheless declare that a certain number of men are needed and these can only be found amongst the yeshiva students, then the halacha would likely require these men to be trained because they are bound by 'war of mitzvah' as defined above. Today, where there is no active war, the service of the yeshiva students would only be required if a military expert indicated the unique need for the service of this group. To date, this has not occurred. Hence, the service of the yeshiva students is dispensable.

¹ The idea that the Torah holds up the world needs an extensive introduction. It is worth pursuing this explanation, but only if one has the time. I have chosen a simpler explanation for the three minute version.

the case in South Africa when it had the draft for many years. It was the case in the USA, when there was the draft during the Vietnamese War. This is because every country recognizes that its base of scholars is a vital lifeline to the country's present and future. Every democratically elected Israeli government has chosen to include Yeshiva students as a part of this concept²

² The religious deferral is derived in law from the inclusion in S. 36 of "or other reasons". The deferrals, interestingly, precede the establishment of the State and hence precede the legal structure, or laws, of the State. On March 9, 1948, two months prior to the establishment of the State, a directive came from the Rosh Hamateh Ha-Artzi, Yehuda Gellili, to exempt yeshiva students from security service. This order is attributed to the direction of David Ben-Gurion, Minister of Security. This practice of deferrals was then accorded additional weight by David Ben-Gurion who proclaimed in a 1949 letter to Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levine, head of Agudat Yisrael and also its representative in government, that he agreed to postpone conscription of yeshiva students for whom 'toratam umnatam' (their studying of torah is their craft/profession). A 1953 assembly of the Knesset again shows David Ben-Gurion supporting this position. It may be noted that while the deferral of yeshiva students was not explicitly enumerated in the law, the law has been interpreted traditionally to include them.

In subsequent years, the conditions surrounding the deferral of yeshiva students were broadened. Occasionally, attempts were made to thwart the legal deferral but these were obstructed, leaving intact the legal authority for deferral from army service. Examples of this development include 1954 attempts by Minister of Security, Pinchas Levine, to draft all yeshiva students who had studied for four years after the legal draft age. Moshe Sharet, then head of state, subsequently instructed him not to do so. In 1968, Minister of Security, Moshe Dayan, indicated in an article in the newspaper 'HaAretz' that he advised not to draft against their will those individuals who believed fully in their study of torah. A final example can be seen in Minister of Security Shimon Peres's 1975 attempt to limit new deferrals every year to 800. This measure was in force only until 1977 when Minister of Security Ezer Weizman cancelled it.

and every election is an opportunity for the Israeli public to elect a government that will choose to change this law.

Now, what is also true is that many Charedim are reluctant to go to the army because, although it meets some religious needs, it is hostile to others. In particular, it is insensitive to keeping the sexes separate and there is a great deal of licentiousness. The army has been slow to respond to the needs of the Charedim, partially because of its historic vision of being a melting pot for immigrants into Israeli society, a vision fashioned on a purely secular model.

Orthodox Jews have a passionate, alternative vision, one that necessitates an army, but includes a core of the finest Torah scholars allowing us all access to the finest Jewish wisdom of the ages. This vision is rooted in the historic reality that without Judaism to give content to the State, we will lose our moorings in some post-Zionist dead-end. Indeed, this unfortunate prophecy is taking place before our very eyes. The loss of Jewish values in Israeli society, together with a

S. 36 of Israel's Security Service Law (1986 edition) indicates that the Minister of Security is authorized to order dismissals from regular service or reserve service of Israel's National Defence Army for 'reasons connected to needs of education, secure settling, state security, or for reasons of family or other reasons...' That same year, as a result of the increase in deferrals, MK Geula Cohen requested an investigation into the matter of the deferrals. Interestingly, Minister of Security Yitzchak Rabin was noted to have said at the time that the 'deferral from service is anchored in law and in custom from the time of the establishment of the Israeli Defence Forces (Tzahal) and that there is nothing new which would justify changing that which existed from the beginning (of the State)'.

In 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the arrangements for Yeshiva deferment were illegal and instructed the legislature to enact more appropriate laws. Subsequently, a series of temporary enactments valid for up to two years, were promulgated.

rapid rise in the crime rate, juvenile and spouse violence, drugs and empty materialism.

To an Israeli¹:

This is one of the most difficult, painful issues which we all have to face together and resolve. I appreciate how strongly you feel about this issue, and it is therefore of vital importance that we search for a solution together. It is true that the issue is getting much smaller, as the army gives more and more exemptions to everyone. (Of the 22% of those eligible for the draft who got exemptions, only 8% were Haredi.) It is my hope that we, the secular and the religious communities, continue to get closer. Hopefully, the trust and respect we build up for each other will allow us to address this issue in time as well.

vi. Why do many frum men sit and learn instead of taking care of their families?

Every culture and civilization had its scholars. In the Western World there are hundreds of thousands of academics in thousands of universities who are paid to study, research and teach in all sorts of areas. These do not just include practical areas but also areas such as history, philosophy and anthropology.

Jews are the inheritors of the most fabulous tradition of thousands of years of wisdom. We are proud of our Torah scholars who make this wisdom accessible to all of us. Those who sit and learn do so with the active consent of their families. All involved feel privileged, and they choose to give up whatever material benefits they might have otherwise gained.

Indeed, the Torah observant world feels so grateful to these people that they support these people, and the Yeshivas in which they learn to the tune of billions of

¹My experience has been that most Israelis are just too passionate about this issue to begin a serious discussion about this.

dollars every year. So does the Israeli government, the greatest financial supporter of Torah of them all.

vii. Why do Chasidim wear long black coats and black hats?

There is a mistaken idea that long coats date back to the 16th or 17th centuries in Europe. This is not the case. The Talmud (Bava Basra) talks of a long coat as being the garment of a wise man. Such a man would wear a shirt and pants that show the shape of the body, and then would wear a long coat over that, covering the shape of the body, an extra dimension of modesty. Indeed heads of yeshivas today generally wear such a coat, as do many, though not all Chasidim. Presumably, the Talmud is talking about a custom, which went way back, perhaps to Abraham.

And why black? Truthfully, any modest color will do, a brown, dark blue, grey, etc. Black has emerged as a current trend, but it is not intrinsic to the idea.

As for a hat, the main idea is to wear one when praying. We dress up to meet our maker. However, many have extended the idea that, as G-d's people, we should always be dressed up (besides the convenience of the head being the best place to keep one's hat).

There is another idea, that of the Shtreimel on Shabbos. This is the one idea that is of recent, 16th-17th C origin. The kings of those times wore shtreimels, and every Jew feels like a king on Shabbos. Chasidim began the beautiful custom of dressing up like a king and indeed they have continued this beautiful custom. The kings of Europe may be almost gone, but the Jewish kings and queens in every Shabbos home remain on for eternity.

CHAPTER TEN: MAN, SELF DEVELOPMENT, COMMITMENT

Body and Soul

- i. What makes human beings so special? Aren't animals also able to love and care, display intelligent behavior and even learn how to speak?**
- ii. Does Man really have freedom of choice as Judaism says? People surely don't choose who their parents are, what their genes are going to be, which town they are going to be born in, how clever and handsome they will be and what opportunities they are going to get in life?**
- iii. Does not the idea of freedom of choice contradict G-d's divine foreknowledge?**
- iv. What is the Jewish idea of the Sacred and the Secular, the Pure and the Impure?**
- v. What is the Jewish concept of the Sinner and the Saint?**

Goodness, Commitment and Growth

- i. Does Judaism really lead to greater happiness? Frum people don't seem happier to me?**
- ii. How does Judaism provide a system for changing and/or modifying one's nature and character?**
- iii. How does Judaism build one's self-esteem? We see how crippling it is to have low self-esteem and how important it is in this day and age to learn how to be assertive and to project one's personality; surely Judaism's emphasis of humility and modesty undermines this?**
- iv. If I am happy with my life as it is, why change it?**
- v. Hypocrisy; I'm worse off if I know and don't do than if I simply stay ignorant.**
- vi. I am willing to do things which make sense to me, but not if I don't see the logic.**
- vii. Judaism takes you out of the world.**
- viii. Judaism is too restrictive; It will destroy my individuality; It will destroy my creativity; Why does G-d want so many restrictions?**

CHAPTER TEN: MAN, SELF DEVELOPMENT, COMMITMENT

BODY AND SOUL

i. What makes human beings so special? Aren't animals also able to love and care, display intelligent behavior and even learn how to speak?

Animals are capable of some emotional and intellectual maturation. They are able to have relationships, feel pain and learn simple aspects of language. They can problem solve up to a degree and adapt to new environments. But animals are totally divorced from the moral and spiritual realm. They have no spiritual aspirations, they never suffer from existential crises and they never show any sense of any higher purpose in life. Those animals that show certain types of moral behavior, like loyalty in dogs, or modesty in cats are genetically programmed to be so. So is any apparent evil we see in animals pre-programmed. Only man has the moral autonomy to be truly good or evil. Only human beings ever seem to show any sense of a higher purpose in life and therefore only human beings can invest themselves and the world around them with meaning. Animals do indeed possess some basic life-force which is actually considered, in Judaism, the lowest level of the soul the נפש. But they lack the higher levels of the soul, those that allow us to say of man that he was created in the image of G-d. Man aspires to imitate his Creator and therein lies his own unique creativity, as far from animals as life is from a rock.

Perhaps the most powerful expression of the differences between man and animal is the fact that animals do not recognize their grandparents¹. This is because animals do not build on the

achievement of the generations. Animals are always starting over from scratch – basic insects and then a narrow range of learned behaviors. Unlike humans, there is no such thing as animal civilization, no such thing as progression from one generation to the next. For you can only build with spirituality. And that is a gift that was given only to man.

ii. Does Man really have freedom of choice as Judaism says? People surely don't choose who their parents are, what their genes are going to be, which town they are going to be born in, how clever and handsome they will be and what opportunities they are going to get in life?

It is true that we all are given most of what we are, either by nature (genes) or by nurture (the environment). However, we all have a small area of our lives in which choices can be made. Firstly we can, indeed are forced to, choose our reaction to our given situation. Building on this, we all are given the moral and spiritual imperative to take who we are, our character, and our personality, our creativity and sensitivity - and to grow forward. This part of ourselves (however small it may be) defines our essential self. It is this, which makes us truly human.

Different people have different choices to make. For one, smiling may be effortless, not something he has to consciously choose to do. For another it may be a huge effort, something which requires commitment and work. But the first person will have his

¹Different animals recognize one or both of their parents for various parts of their lives, usually only for as long as they need them.

challenges. And in the end, we all get the same amount of choice¹. What we make of those choices, we make of our life.

iii. Does not the idea of freedom of choice contradict G-d's divine foreknowledge?

G-d is above time. Therefore, if He understands anything about the present, (which He certainly does), then He automatically must know about the past and the future as well. It is all one to Him, all appearing to Him in an instant that is above time. But this knowledge of G-d exists in a plane in which freedom of choice cannot exist. The moment reality translates itself into a time-based existence, the plane on which we exist, G-d's foreknowledge falls away and our freedom of choice begins to express itself. Since we live within time, the plan of G-d's foreknowledge is unimaginable to us - we simply are not equipped with the frame of reference to understand anything but our earthly past-present-future domain. So we might say that in the dimension that G-d's foreknowledge exists, there is no choice, but in the dimension where choice exists, there is not foreknowledge.

iv. What is the Jewish idea of the Sacred and the Secular, the Pure and the Impure?

Judaism does not believe in achieving holiness by separation from the physical world. We are commanded to go through the physical world; to use and harness it and thereby elevate it with the spiritual elevation of ourselves. The Secular then becomes that which was not yet elevated by us. Everything actually starts out with a neutral potential, neither sacred nor profane - simply secular. The greater the potential for something to become sacred, the greater the potential for it to become profane.

¹See קונטרס החסד, מכתב מאליהו, חלק א'

The pure is something whose life potential has been actualized, the impure, something which has lost its life potential. The paradigm of something impure is a dead body, a holy corpse which no longer houses the soul which allowed it to continuously grow and to actualize more and more of its potential. A woman in her menstrual cycle is simply reflecting a loss of that same potential on a lesser scale. So is a Metzora whose malicious speech is a socially destructive act.

(For a related insight on the pure and impure, see the section on Women's Issues, Why a woman is impure during her menstrual cycle?)

v. What is the Jewish concept of the Sinner and the Saint?

Sin & Saintliness do not exist in Judaism. These are Christian concepts. Judaism has a whole range of words to describe spiritual negativity עבירה, חטא, טומאה, among others. For us negative and positive spirituality exist on a gradient and cannot be contained by one word. The commonly used word however is עבירה which literally means to pass over - i.e. to pass over the opportunity to do G-d's will. This is also called a חטא, a lack, which means that we have failed to actualize our spiritual potential either by failing to do something or by doing something positively bad.

So too there are no saints in Judaism², although there are righteous men and women. These צדיקים are your common man who through working on their characters became holy. No titles are ever given out or awards made. In fact the surest disqualification for the name Tzadik is someone who is trying to consciously acquire the name.

A צדיק, like you and me continues to struggle with himself, to work on

²To be declared a Saint the Catholic Church demands that the person have done two or more miracles. But there is no such requirement to be a Tzadik.

If what is meant is somebody going "whee" at the fun fare, people walking around without seemingly a care in the world - then frum Jews indeed don't make the grade. Jews are serious about life, because they care about it very deeply. But they are definitely happy where it really counts - they have a deep inner contentment in their belief that they are doing the right thing, growing spiritually and acting ethically. The real test comes in old age. Frum Jews seem to get more content the older they get. Yet old age depression is a massive problem in the secular world - people can no longer lead the lives that were so dependent on their being vigorous and in the prime of their health. These people often long to be young - they are backward looking. Frum people rarely are. Part of the problem comes from the Western idea of pleasure; a lot of it has to do with escaping. In fact some forms of Western pleasure are deliberately designed to be as different to normal living as possible. A discotheque for example has very loud music, is dark with flashing lights, has dancing - very different to normal types of body movements - all completely different to any normal environment. Movies, videos, theme parks, theatre, Disneyworld and TV are all designed to transport one into a different reality to one's own². People talk

(See further below, *Chapter Nine – 63 How does Judaism provide a system for changing and/or modifying one's nature and character?*)

GOODNESS, COMMITMENT AND GROWTH

*i. Does Judaism really lead to greater happiness? Frum people don't seem happier to me?*¹

¹Secular people tend to scrutinize frum people to see whether they really are happy or not. Should they see a haggard-looking woman trying to get off the bus with two children and a carriage, they will use this as proof that frum people don't really look happy. But they do not do this with secular people. You will not find a secular person looking intensely at his co-travelers on a N.Y. subway to see whether they are happy. But let him or her come to Har Nof and they will immediately put everyone under the microscope.

The truth of the matter is that you cannot tell whether someone is happy or not by just looking at him or her. People are not happy because they crack a lot of jokes or seem to laugh in public a lot. Suicides often include people who appeared outwardly so happy. Happiness is a function of an inward contentment with one's lot, serenity, a feeling of being fulfilled and having meaning in life and on feeling adjusted. The few studies that have been done have shown that on these variables, frum people do better than non-frum people.

²Even reality TV, which is meant to be more real-life, is in fact meant to give us pleasure by becoming peeping-Toms into other people's lives.

about "getting away", perhaps from life itself.

The epitome of Jewish leisure, on the other hand, is the Shabbat. The Shabbat is held in the same house, around the same table, as the weekday. It is intended not simply to give us a break, but to inform our weekday, provide it with spirituality and meaning¹. Jewish pleasure comes from engaging one's normal environment in a creative and meaningful way. Jews don't get away for pleasure (though they might for relaxation) they go up for (spiritual) pleasure.

Happiness is a consequence not a goal². You can't be happy by trying to make yourself happy or declaring that you have a right to be happy³. You can only be

¹This is not to say that taking a vacation, and experiencing a different environment and pace for a while is not a healthy thing. But this is not meant to be a break from life - just a break from work, from being rushed, from not being able to think and appreciate oneself, one's family and the nature around us.

²Like happiness, self-actualizing is an effect, the effect of meaning fulfillment. ...If he sets out to actualize himself rather than fulfill a meaning (out there in the world), self-actualization immediately loses its justification. (Victor Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, p.38)

³The right to pursue pleasure is one of the supreme values upheld in the American Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are... endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that amongst these are... pursuit of happiness." Secular humanism leads to a desire by people to be happy here and now. Doing the right thing in this world in order to be rewarded in the world to come is replaced by doing what makes you happy in this world. For those who are intelligent and disciplined, this may mean delaying gratification until they have a job, or until they get married or until they have put their kids through college or even until they retire. This is the "Waiting for Godot" syndrome, where people are always waiting for that thing to happen in their lives when they are then really

happy because you are feeling good about yourself as a consequence of doing the right thing⁴. Anyone who looks for something from outside of himself to make him happy finds that it was a quick-lived experience. We dream for wealth – and find that the moment we have it, it does nothing for us⁵. We long to be famous, but

going to start living. For others, the happiness has to be more instant.

Pleasure may mean having fun or enjoying leisure, and indeed Hollywood, theme parks, most of TV, the music and sports industries, as well as most popular literature are devoted to this idea. This idea of pleasure being something instantaneously gratifying is reinforced by a consumer orientation, the labeling of any pain as negative, sexual liberation, a victim rights oriented society, a fast food industry, and a whole host of other factors. Presidential hopefuls now talk in sound bytes and parents feel that their moral responsibility to their children is to condone whatever makes them happy. The idea of real pleasure, a higher spiritual happiness is rarely given equal consideration.

⁴True happiness comes from within. It is a state of being as a result of working on ourselves, of feeling that we have done the right thing, that our lives have meaning and that we are spiritually fulfilled. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that a person only gains true meaning in life when he reaches beyond himself. It is ultimately self-transcendence, rather than simply self-actualization which leads to true self-fulfillment. As Victor Frankl puts it, man must reach beyond himself, "because of the self-transcendent quality of human existence... being human always means being directed and pointing to something or someone other than itself" (*The Will to Meaning*, p. 25). However, in stating that one must not look outside of one's self, we meant in the sense of looking for something in the physical world.

⁵יש לו מנה רוצה מאתניים:

Like nature, the human being abhors a vacuum. We are driven to fill ourselves up. But since we have an infinite, spiritual soul, any attempt to full ourselves up with materialism is doomed to failure. Some people misinterpret this by thinking that the reason they are still feeling empty is because it wasn't enough. They become millionaires and it still does not

the famous seem no happier than those without all of that. Hollywood stars, in fact, seem to have miserable lives. This is because the human being is ultimately a spiritual being¹. Trying to satisfy the soul with material things just isn't going to hack it².

So Jews live meaningful, fulfilling lives and it is this which makes them happy. But Jews are not happy with any meaning – we are a nation that insists on ultimate meaning – a faith in G-d and a Torah life which fulfills His will³. Faith allows one to feel not only that life is meaningful, but that one was given everything that one needs to fulfill it. A Jew who trusts in his G-d does not feel that he is lacking anything.

איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו

Who is happy – he who is happy with his lot.

ii. *How does Judaism provide a system for changing and/or modifying one's nature and character?*

Judaism has 3,500 years of wisdom on character development and it shows. Most of us who work on ourselves focus on our strongest assets - the pianist, the athlete, the doctor keep on working away at their piano-playing, running and medicine, especially in this era of super-specialization. If our worst trait is really getting in the way then we will work on

do it for them. The reason, they figure, must be because a million is not enough. Another million and that will do the trick. But such notions of instantaneous gratification will simply not work when it comes to real happiness.

¹Judaism believes that true happiness is not in this world. Rather it is in the World to Come. But, the amazing thing is that the "this worldly" process of attaining the World to Come makes us happier in this world as well

²מהר"ל, באר הגולה באר רביעי (עמ, עה): דע כי השמחה הוא מצב הנפש, כי השמחה הוא כאשר האדם הוא בשלימותו ואין שלימות רק אל הנפש ולא אל הגוף החמרי

³אורחות צדיקים – הבטחון הוא מקור השמחה

that too. If we just lost another friend because our quick temper got the better of us for the umpteenth time then we will have no choice but to try and do something about this. But most of our potential, in most of us, simply remains underdeveloped.

Judaism is a system of developing all of oneself, of actualizing all of one's potential. The annual cycle gets us to focus on freedom and self-control come Passover; our relationship with spirituality and the Torah on Shavuot; self-awareness and judgment on Rosh Hashanah; relationship with the material, faith on Sukkot, etc. The Commandments of the Torah direct us toward a golden mean or path: there are commandments which develop our internal self-discipline on the one hand, and those which direct our focus on giving outward on the other hand; we are directed to be sensitive to our environment, to our physical needs, to our intellectual development, to our communal responsibility - all with the right balance.

On our own, we are but midgets in the complex maze of our own fabulous selves; with the Torah we can climb a tower and finally view the totality of ourselves.

iii. *How does Judaism build one's self-esteem? We see how crippling it is to have low self-esteem and how important it is in this day and age to learn how to be assertive and to project one's personality; surely Judaism's emphasis of humility and modesty undermines this?*

Judaism is not for losers. It is demanding and challenging. It therefore makes a poor crutch. Yet, this is not to say that it does not build self-esteem. On the contrary, somebody who is filled up with the spirituality, sense of meaning and wholeness of the Torah, will have real self-esteem which can only ultimately come from the knowledge that he is fulfilling his mission in life. And he will feel little need to validate himself from the outside.

Neither humility nor modesty have anything to do with having a positive self-image and the confidence to be able to do what life-situations demand of us. In fact the rabbis would not advise someone with a poor self-image to work on their humility. Humility is the smallness that a person feels when he compares himself to his ultimate potential or when he compares himself to Ultimate Reality. Humility demands that one not belittle who one is and what one has done; even more so it requires one to really understand what one can be.

Nor is modesty a contradiction to self-esteem. Modesty is the de-focusing from the superficiality of a situation so that the inner essence of the situation can be revealed. In the case of clothing, it is the hiding of the distractions of the purely physical aspects of oneself in order to reveal the true honor and value of oneself. This applies to men as well as to women. However, in women, immodest dress impacts more on the situation because men, more than women, are capable of pure, sensual, attraction. Modesty is not only a dress issue it applies to the way one speaks, to all one's senses, to the way one filters any information. In fact *מיכה* the prophet described modesty as one of the big three keys to unlocking all of spirituality. Since spirituality is always hidden below the surface of things, someone who lacks the focus of modesty will never have an authentic relationship with spirituality. So modesty is really a *גילוי כבוד*, a revelation of the true honor and glory of the person. Far from being a reflection of a lack of positive self-image, it reflects just the opposite, the confident conviction that we are more, much more, than sometimes meets the eye.

(See further under Women's Issues, Women's Clothing)

iv. If I am happy with my life as it is, why change it?

It is true, people do not change if they are completely happy with the way they are. However, in order to make sure that you have assessed the situation properly, ask yourself the following questions:

- (i) Based on my present life-style, am I as likely to be as satisfied with my life in ten and fifty years as I am now? Are people of that age who live or lived like me as happy as I would like (them) to be? How do I expect to be different? Bear in mind that now is probably the easiest time in your life to make changes.
- (ii) Do I just want to be happy, or do I want to be as spiritually fulfilled as I possibly can be?
- (iii) Am I fulfilling all of my potential; not just my best quality, but all my traits? Do I even understand myself well enough to be able to say what my ten best and ten worst traits are?
- (iv) Is my lifestyle going to give my children the best chance (possible) to live the most moral and fulfilling lives possible?
- (v) Are all my current values really true?

Nobody is asking you to change your life if you don't want to. Ultimately that is your choice and only you can make it. What I am asking is that you study - that you know something about the most magnificent body of wisdom ever to exist on earth - and it happens to belong to you. Once you know a little about your heritage, you will be in a position to decide for yourself what you want to do, and I fully respect your integrity to make an honest and independent decision.

Pop quiz:

Who was the Mother of J-sus?

And who was the Mother of Moses?

Most Jews know the answer to the first but not the second question. That just shows how far we are away from our own Heritage.

Therefore, to decide now, before you have learned, whether you want to observe Judaism would be to decide by default. That I can't respect. I can only respect an informed decision. So I am encouraging you to check things out, to give at least as much time to your Judaism, which has inspired millions of brightest and the best Jewish minds through the ages, as you would to any one semester course at college, many of which are probably going to make absolutely no difference to your life.

v. ***Hypocrisy; I'm worse off if I know and don't do than if I simply stay ignorant.***

The secular person figures that anyone who is observant but who is not a צדיק, must be a hypocrite. After all, you say that you believe in it, why don't you do it. Many of their hassles with the frum community arise from this. But worse than that, they often prevent themselves from getting involved by saying, "I relate to parts of Judaism, but to do it all is too much for me. Is it not hypocritical to observe some מצוות and not others?" Here's one answer:

Monday: You have just been to a great lecture on keeping Kosher. You come home, throw out the cheeseburger and stock up with kosher goods, although you have no idea what you are going to do about that important business appointment in a *treife* restaurant on Wednesday. You agonize over the decision but you end up having that *treife* meal. You simply didn't have the strength to cancel or maybe you were too embarrassed to suggest a kosher alternative. To give in to one's weakness like this is a problem to be overcome, but

it is not hypocrisy. Judaism regards any מצוות that a person keeps as being of value - it is not an all or nothing process. A person can do a little, then fall short, that is only human. What is important is that he be committed to the process of growth. He should say, "Although I can't see myself doing everything now, there is no area of Judaism which I reject from doing one day in the future, even if it is difficult now for me to imagine doing these things." What for one person may be a piece of cake (e.g. smiling cheerfully in the morning), for another may be extremely difficult. Therefore, what really counts is not where you are, but where you want to be, and how much energy you are willing to put in getting there.

vi. ***I am willing to do things which make sense to me, but not if I don't see the logic.***

If we were to wait until we understood every part of a system before expressing faith in that system, we might as well not come out of the womb? We fly in things 30,000 miles above the sky, not because we understand every part of an airplane, but because overall we see that it works. So too we do the מצוות because overall Judaism makes sense, enough sense to allow us to believe that this mitzvah too will make sense to me when I finally understand it. So - one stops doing if one loses faith in the overall system but not when one lacks insight into a detail.

vii. ***Judaism takes you out of the world***

The list of observant Jews who have reached the top in their respective professions would read in the thousands, covering medicine, law, physics, the arts, and many more. There is even an observant U.S. Senator and at least two observant U.S. ambassadors. In Israel, observant Jews have had amongst their ranks Menachem Begin, Agnon (the only Israeli recipient of a Nobel Prize for

literature), two Supreme Court Judges, the first State Comptroller (Dr. Nebensal), a recent President (Moshe Katzav) and many more. In the area of science alone we can talk about people such as Herman Branover, the world's leading scientist in magnetohydrodynamics; Alvin Radkowsky, formerly Chief Scientist, U.S Atomic Energy Commission and father of a number of key inventions relating to nuclear reactors; Leo Levi, Rector of Jerusalem College of Technology; Cyril Domb, a fellow of the Royal Society in London and many more. Historically, this has always been the case. Maimonides was considered, together with Averos, as the foremost philosopher of his time; his textbooks on Galen were standard in medical schools throughout the Old World; there have been a number of observant prime ministers like Shmuel HaNagid of Grenada and finance ministers like the Abarbanel to Isadore and Ferdinand Isabella. Most of them have been great sages, some, the leading sages of their generation.

What Judaism does is to change our perspective of the world. Priorities do change, and yesterdays burning ambition may be today's yawn. But these are choices you may or you may not want to make, and you will feel no pressure to do differently. Your life will remain in your hands. May you merit to make the right decisions.

viii. Judaism is too restrictive; It will destroy my individuality; It will destroy my creativity; Why does G-d want so many restrictions?

Though there is certainly a Jewish way of approaching every situation, most of the day of an observant Jew is not explicitly defined by Jewish law. The entire area of the laws between man and man is only defined in very broad outline. The infinite variety of unique human situations require a continuous outpouring of personal creativity.

At the same time, everything worthwhile in life requires discipline and restrictions. The great pianist has to follow the restrictions of counterpoint and harmony. There are scales and rules of pedaling. The great gymnast or ballerina require both tremendous discipline and constant practice to free their bodies to glide through the air as they do.

A novice at the keyboard trying to express himself will just make noise. It will take years of hard practice, day in and day out, before he becomes a master. But having mastered the discipline to express himself creatively, he will be able to use his discipline to soar to greater and greater heights.

The most creative and individualistic personalities in Judaism are usually the greatest. Like the Olympic swimmer who trained for a decade to glide so beautifully through the water, they seem to effortlessly combine their own personalities with the highest spiritual ideas. They have harmonized themselves with the Torah which in turn is very finely tuned to the physical world in such a way that they can respond to each situation with maximum creativity.

But there is more. Not only does Judaism not want you to give up your personality, it insists that you don't. You owe your creativity to not only yourself but to the world - the world cannot be complete without it.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE JEWISH NATION

- i. Are Not All Men Equal? Does Not the Chosen People Idea Contradict This? Why If the Torah Is Supposed to Be a Moral Code, Was It Only Given to the Jews? Don't We Want All People to Be Good?**
- ii. What Does it Mean to Be Chosen? Chosen for What?**
- iii. How Can We Know That the Jews Are Really the Chosen People?**
- iv. What is G-d's Attitude Toward Other Religions, Races and Nationalities?**
- v. How Do We Explain Discriminatory Laws Like Interest, Loshon Horo and Returning a Lost Object?**
- vi. What is Anti-Semitism and Can it Be Removed? If the Jews Are the 'Chosen People' Why Have They Been Oppressed So Much Throughout the Generations?**

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE JEWISH NATION

i. Are not all men equal? Does not the Chosen People idea contradict this? Why if the Torah is supposed to be a moral code, was it only given to the Jews? Don't we want all people to be good?

*"How odd of G-d to choose the Jews.
It's not so odd, the Jews chose G-d."*

Judaism would prefer that there be no distinctions. In the ideal, had the first Man and Woman not transgressed, there would not have been any Jew or non-Jew - just man¹. After the sin, the situation was still open for anyone to choose a life of core spirituality and to become the Jewish people². Despite the passing of tens of generations, only Abraham and his descendents chose to dedicate themselves to this task. G-d did not simply accept their role as future recipients of the Torah. Again and again, He tested Abraham³.

¹All of mankind would then have become a part of Klal Yisroel.

²Even at time of ההפלגה each of 70 nations was given a distinct spiritual task.

מהר"ל אור חדש ח"א: יש לכל אומה ואומה מהות בפני עצמה...עד"ו מורה הכתב כי כל כתב הוא ציור הדבר... ר' צדוק, רסיסי לילה ט' לז: כל אומה יש לה כח מיוחד עיין דרך ה': חלק שני - פרק 4 - ט' ב וס' ג 3 (1rst paragraphs)

See Handbook of Jewish Thought: 4:12, 4:13, 4:16

Until the מבול, period of roots (= 70 nations). After then, period of branches. Commitment by "roots" to role of central spirituality would lead to branches playing that role as well because they would inherit intrinsic degree of innate spirituality. Because א"א = אב המון גוים therefore even during the period of the branches, possible to join central spirituality (although this became increasingly difficult).

³Abraham was given 10 tests (ר' יונה אבות ה:ד lists them); "Never in history had unaided individual made such a complete break with his environment, overcoming all obstacles for a yet unknown faith." (A Kaplan - 4.15)

דרך חיים (מהר"ל) אבות ה ג הקב"ה היה מנסה את אברהם בעשר נסיונות שיהיה אברהם מנוסה בכל מיני

Again and again, He tested Yitzchak and then Yaakov and his children and their children⁴. The nation had to pass the horrific and miserable experience of Egypt, but still they stood fast, ready to commit themselves to G-d's Torah. Therefore it was only because the Jews consistently and doggedly chose G-d, that G-d ultimately chose the Jews⁵.

Even at this late stage, other nations could also have accepted the Torah. The Torah was in fact offered to everyone. But when even now only the Jews responded, the nations of the world could no longer, as a nation, accept the Torah. Still, any individual non-Jew is welcome to convert and become a part of the Torah-keeping nation. Non-Jews have, in fact, more spiritual opportunities than Jews. Non-Jews can remain as they are and by keeping the Seven Noachide Laws, get the World to Come. These laws are very basic laws of minimum civilized standards like killing, stealing and not being cruel to animals. Or, if they so desire, they can commit to a higher standard of spirituality by converting. Jews have no such choice. Their only choice is how they will respond to the incontrovertible fact of their Jewishness.

ii. What does it mean to be chosen? Chosen for what?

נסיונות שהם מחולקים [וכמו עשר המכות ועשרה מאמרות של מעשה בראשית]

⁴Only after 3 generations and after all Yaakov's children followed in his way is the term Israel first used; (The other names for the Jewish people, שארית ישראל & only after his children in turn.)

⁵ברכות ו. אמר להם הקב"ה לישראל אתם עשיתוני חטיבה אחת בעולם ואני אעשה אתכם חטיבה אחת בעולם (עיי"ש)

G-d chose us for special duties not privileges¹, because we showed a willingness to accept those duties, which the rest of the world rejected. These responsibilities involve not only a more demanding level of spiritual and moral standards, but also include caring for the broader spiritual fulfillment of the world and all its people². The Jews did not accept

the Torah only for themselves, but on behalf of the whole world. Nor have we ever tried to get anyone else to take over our responsibilities.

The Jews have not had a privileged history in the normal sense of the word. On the contrary, being Jewish means being judged by a stricter standard than non-Jews³ and suffering the long history of anti-Semitism that we have. Even the gift of the land of Israel was conditional on the highest commitment to G-d and His Torah. And the land that was given was small enough. That we have survived in defiance of any sociological explanation, is testimony to the fact that G-d wants us to continue serving the role that we have⁴.

iii. How can we know that the Jews are really the Chosen people?

¹דברים ד:כג-כד
דברים ח:יט
והיה אם שכח תשכח את ד' אלקיך והלכת אחרי אלהים אחרים ועבדתם והשתחית להם העידתי בכם היום כי אבד תאבדון: (עיינין שם בהמשך)
אבד תאבדון: משני עולמות (ספורנו)
דברים יט:טו-טז
רק באבתיך חשק ד' לאהבה אותם ויבחר בורעם אחריהם בכם מכל העמים כיום הזה. (ומיד) (טז)
ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם וגו'
שמות יט:ה-ו
(ה)ועתה אם שמוע תשמעו בקלי ושמרתם את בריתי והייתם לי סגלה מכל העמים כי לי כל הארץ: (ו)ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש אלה הדברים אשר תדבר אל בני ישראל:
פחד יצחק (פסח מאמר מו, מז, מח, ראש השנה ד) - קודם מתן תורה הנהיג ד' בחסד ויתור ואילו אחרי מתן תורה הנהיג בחסד משפט

אני הנה בריתי אתך והיית לאב המון גוים: בל תחשוב שעל ידי המילה יתרחקו בני אדם ממך...

R. S. R. Hirsch, the Nineteen Letters:
"The Bible terms Israel a chosen treasure." This designation, however, does not imply, as some have falsely interpreted it, that Israel has a monopoly on G-d's love and favor. On the contrary, it proclaims that G-d has the sole and exclusive claim to Israel's devotion and service." (Fifteenth Letter)

ממלכת כהנים
Implies the Jews are chosen to the nations - i.e. the rest of the world

²ישעיה נז:
כי ביתי בית תפלה יקרא לכל העמים
רמב"ם הל' עכו"ם א:ג
(אברהם) והתחיל לעמוד ולקרא בקול גדול לכל העולם ולהודיעם שיש שם א-ל אלוה אחד לכל העולם ולו ראוי לעבוד והיה מהלך וקורא ומקבץ העם מעיר לעיר וממלכה לממלכה
רמב"ם פ"א מהל' מלכים הל' ד:
...אם עשה [כל הדברים האלה]...הרי זה משיב בודאי ויתקן את העולם כולו לעבוד את ד' ביחד שנאמר כי אז אהפוך אל העמים שפה ברורה לקרוא כולם בשם ד' ולעבדו שכם אחד.

ספורנו (שמות יט:ו)
... תהיו ממלכת כהנים להבין ולהורות לכל המין האנושי לקרוא כולם בשם ד' ולעבדו שכם אחד ...

ישעיה מב:ו: ...ואתנן לברית עם לאור גוים
רד"ק: לברית עם - לקיום כל עם ועם כי בעבורך מתקיים כל העולם... והאור הוא התורה...וישראל- יהיו קיום האומות על שני פנים הא' שיהיה שלום בעבורם בכל הגוים...השנית כי בסבת ישראל- יהיו הגוים שומרים שבע מצות...

ישעיה מט:ו: ...ונתתיך לאור גוים...

העמק דבר (שמות יב:נא): ... ישראל נוצרו להיות לאור גוים להעמידם על ידיעת אלקי עולם וגו' (עיינין שם שהאר"י קצת)

R.S.R. Hirsch: Israel's most cherished ideal is that of the universal brotherhood of mankind. Almost every prayer we utter contains reference to the hastening of this end. (The 19 Letters, 15th letter.)

ספר החינוך מצוה תל"א לאהוב גרים: משרשי המצוה כי הש"י בחר לישראל להיות לו לעם קדוש ורצה לזכותם ולכן הדריכם וציום על דרכי החנינה והחמלה והזכרים להתעטר בכל מדה חמודה ויקרה למצוא חן בעיני כל רואיהם ויאמרו עם ד' אלה.

Rav S. R. Hirsch: davens for שמוע right after circumcision. which was to separate אברהם from the rest of the world, immediately spurs him onto a greater sensitivity to that world.

³עמוס ג:ב
רק אתכם ידעתי מכל משפחות האדמה על כן אפקד עליכם את כל עונותיכם

⁴ See the next answer

וכן במלבי"ם עה"פ (בראשית יז: ד)

There are several, objective ways by which we can know that our claim to be the Chosen People is, in fact, true. The very fact that we survived as a nation and a religion¹, a tiny group of people spread throughout the nations of the world is totally mysterious and entirely unprecedented². Paul Johnson stated it

¹T.R. Glover: No ancient people have had a stranger history than the Jews. ... The history of no ancient people should be so valuable, if we could only recover it and understand it. ... Stranger still, the ancient religion of the Jews survives, when all the religions of every ancient race of the pre-Christian world have disappeared ... Again it is strange that the living religions of the world all build on religious ideas derived from the Jews. The great matter is not "What happened?" but "Why did it happen?" Why does Judaism live? (The Ancient World, Penguin, pp. 184-191)

²Alswang: "The Chinese in China have always been the majority. The Kurdish people as well (within their own national geographic boundaries) were the majority until Turkish occupation in the sixteenth century. In contrast, for over eighteen hundred years, until the creation of the modern Jewish state in 1948, Jews were always a minority. The Chinese had no substantive interaction with Western or Middle Eastern culture up to the nineteenth century. The Kurds too had minimal interaction with the West, and, to this day are, in general, a pastoral people living in tents. In comparison, the Jews have not only witnessed every Western and Near Eastern physical and cultural revolution over the past three thousand years, but have, more times than not, been an integral feature of non-Jewish society."

Mark Twain:

"The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed; and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they 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

beautifully when he observed: "Above all, that the Jews should still survive when all those other ancient peoples were transmuted or vanished into the oubliettes of history, was wholly predictable. How could it be otherwise? Providence decreed it and the Jews obeyed." (A History of the Jews, pg. 587)

Anti-Semitism is another phenomenon in the world which seems perplexing and without explanation. No other hatred is as intense, spread over so many countries (even ones where Jews do not live), over so many centuries and with such persistent dedication³. Lloyd George stated in 1923: "Of all the extreme fanaticism which plays havoc in man's nature, there is not one as irrational as anti-Semitism. ... If the Jews are rich [these fanatics] are victims of theft. If they are poor, they are victims of ridicule. If they take sides in a war, it is because they wish to take advantage from the spilling of non-Jewish blood. If they espouse peace, it is because they are scared by their natures or traitors. If the Jew dwells in a foreign land he is persecuted and expelled. If he wishes to return to his own land, he is prevented from doing so." Nations dedicated enormous energies and resources to their Jew hatred, sometimes to the point of their own destruction. Ultimately, anti-Semitism can only be explained as result of the recognition which the nations of the world have that the Jews are the Chosen People⁴.

mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?" (from the article *Concerning the Jews*, Harpers (1899), see *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain*, Doubleday (1963) pg. 249).

³*The Discovery Booklet* states that Anti-Semitism unique in its:

- i - Universality
- ii - Intensity
- iii- Longevity
- iv - Apparent Irrationality

⁴How did the Christians historically explain the miraculous survival of the Jew. Only two

All the prophecies about the Jews, which have proven to be so accurate further bolsters our claim. Finally, there is the fact that this is the people to whom G-d gave the Torah¹. None of the monotheistic religions denies this claim. The Kuzari claims that a claim of a national revelation cannot be made unless it is true, which is why no other nation ever attempted to make a similar claim². The miracles which occurred around this time were public, easily observable and testable and took

possibilities - or G-d's chosen people - which they couldn't accept, or the work of the devil, which they proposed. A perverse recognition of Jewish uniqueness." (Eliezer Berkowitz - The Hiding G-d of History)
 Nazi's hatred and fear of Jews: Totally unjustified in terms of material and political power. "It was a metaphysical fear of the true mystery of G-d's presence in history as revealed in the continued survival of Israel. The hiding G-d of history was a repudiation of everything Nazi Germany stood for." (Berkowitz, ibid.)

¹The Jewish nation is intrinsically bound to the תורה. Proof that the תורה is Divine is also proof for the Chosenness of the Jewish people.

דברים ד:לב
 כי שאל נא לימים ראשנים אשר היו לפניך, למן היום אשר ברא אלקים אדם על הארץ, ולמקצה השמים ועד קצה השמים, הנהיה כדבר הגדול הזה או הנשמע כמוהו (ע"ש המשך הפסוקים)

All other religions: One man claiming prophecies; a few people seeing miracles; usually from less educated parts of population; miracles often at a distance; done suddenly over short periods of time; recorded much later; etc.

התוכלו להראות לי כמו "מחולת המחנים" (=שמחת מחנה ישראל בהר סיני) (שיר השירים ז:א) כלומר האומה תטעון כנגד (אלא שמפתים אותם לדתים אחרים) ואומרת להם: הראוני כמו מעמד הר סיני ... אז אשוב לעצתכם (אגרת תימן)

Other religions would have loved to have made such a claim, especially Islam and Christianity, who were claiming to replace the national revelation at Sinai. But as the Kuzari explains such a claim cannot be invented. The Kuzari explains why it is impossible to lie about such a claim.

place over an enormously long period of time.

Many other proofs that verify that G-d gave the Torah to the Jews exist besides³. The last one we will discuss here is the Jewish contribution to civilization, a phenomenon so remarkable that all great historians have felt a need to comment on it⁴. More than anything else, the Jews have

³See the section called *Proofs of the Torah*

⁴John Adams: ... the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation.... (2nd President of USA, Discovery booklet pg. 50)

T. R. Glover: ... It is strange that the living religions of the world all build on religious ideas derived from the Jews. (The Ancient World, Penguin, pg. 184-191 in Discovery Booklet pg. 51)

In the Aish HaTorah seminar, *World Perfect*, 6 values for an ideal world are suggested:

1) Value of Life, basic human rights and dignity

2) World peace, harmony and mutual respect

3) Justice and Equality

All people, regardless of race, sex, or social status, have the right to be treated equally and fairly in the eyes of the law.

4) Education

Everyone has the right to be functionally literate as a basic tool for personal advancement and the ability to attain knowledge.

5) Family

A strong, stable family structure is necessary for the moral foundation for society.

6) Social Responsibility

Individually and nationally, we are responsible for each other. This includes responsibility for: disease, poverty, famine, crime, and drugs, as well as environmental problems and animal rights.

There seems to be a universal agreement of people from every race and continent that these six values are fundamental to building a perfect world.

The two civilizations, other than Judaism, which appear to have the greatest impact on the world are Greece and Rome. There is hardly a philosophical thought which didn't originate with the Greeks.

contributed Monotheism¹, a fact that changed everything about the world, including the ability to do science as we know it today. The Jews contributed the Torah, the idea of universal education, the concept of the basic rights of man. They also gave the basic notions of equality of opportunity, democracy, and our basic notions of justice. In Paul Johnson's beautiful prose:

“Certainly the world without the Jews would have been a radically different place. Humanity might eventually have stumbled upon all the Jewish insights. But we cannot be sure. All the great conceptual discoveries of the intellect

Rome powerfully shaped Western law, government, administration and engineering. *World Perfect* shows that, despite this, Greece and Rome were far, far from the six universal values of today. It then goes on to show how Judaism is, in fact, the source of these values.

¹“Israel's great achievement, so apparent that mention of it is almost trite, was Monotheism. It was an achievement that transformed subsequent history....One may raise the question whether any other single contribution from whatever source since human culture emerged from the Stone Age has had the far reaching effect upon history that Israel in this regard has exerted both through the mediums of Christianity and Islam and directly through the world of Jewish thinkers themselves” (H. and H. A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Throkeld Jacobsen, William Irwin, *The Intellectual Adventure of Modern Man*.)

Carlyle B Heynes: This one book (the Bible) ... has attracted to it, and had concentrated on it, vastly more thought and has called forth more works, explanatory, illustrative, apologetic, upon its text, its meaning, its geography, its theology, its chronology, its evidences, its inspiration, its origin, than all the rest of the literature of the world put together. An immense bulk of the world's literature owes its origin to this book. (in *The Bible, Is it a True Book*)

seem obvious and inescapable once they have been revealed; but it requires a special genius to formulate them for the first time. The Jews had this gift. To them we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience and so for personal redemption; of the collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice...Above all, the Jews taught us...Monotheism¹."

This contribution, which is so disproportionate to our size, was made under the most difficult of circumstances, when we were under siege, spread out, being hounded and expelled. Other nations would have been pleased to have survived; while the Jews did more for the world than any nation on earth.

iv. What is G-d's attitude toward other religions, races and nationalities?

Judaism is unique in recognizing the legitimacy of other religions. A non-Jew is entitled to practice any religion which is Noachide-consistent, thereby earning himself the title of being a righteous Gentile and deserving a place in the World to Come². Judaism is also not

¹Paul Johnson, A History of the Jews (See entire epilogue)

²רמב"ם: הל' מלכים (שופטים) ח:יא: כל המקבל שבע מצות ונהר לעשותן הרי זה מחסידי אומות העולם. ויש לו חלק לעולם הבא וגו'. ומה שכתב אח"כ והוא שיקבל אותן ויעשה אותן מפני שצוה בהן הקב"ה בתורה והודיענו על ידי משה רבינו שבני נח מקודם נצטוו בהן וגו' מדעת עצמו אמר כן ולא מחז"ל וצ"ע.

1 - Islam

All opinions Monotheistic (did ישמעאל) in his later years (רמב"ם הל' מאכלות אסורות פי"א הל' ז)

2 - Christianity

3 - Protestant Religions

Protestant religions have less of a problem with the Trinity. Probably all opinions would regard them as Monotheistic in this regard. Primary problem with Protestantism has to do with limitations on freedom of choice (Calvinism believes in pre-determinism); stressing faith over deeds (many fundamentalists believe that salvation is only through faith). However, Mormonism believes that G-d can express Himself on earth as a man and that a man can later become Divine.

4 - Catholicism

idolatrous (in uncensored versions) (in ט:ד רמב"ם)

אדומים (כנענים) עובדי עכו"ם הם, ויום ראשון הוא יום אידם לפיכך אסור לתת ולשאת עמהם בארץ ישראל יום חמישי ויום ששי שבכל שבת ושבת ואין צריך לומר יום ראשון עצמו שהוא אסור בכל מקום וכן נוהגין עמהם בכל אידיהם.

ובהל' מאכלות אסורות פי"א: אבל הנוצרים עובדי ע"ז הם וסתם יינם אסור בהנייה (והצנזור כתב במקומו "אבל אותם העובדים עכו"ם סתם יינם אסור בהנייה)

Other hold that Catholics (i.e. the Christians who lived at that time in those places) are not idolatrous:

are considered non-idolatrous. אומות הגדורות בדרכי דתות ונימוסים - מאירי

and several other places) (In בבא קמא לז:)

תוס. ע"ז דף ב ע"ב ד"ה אסור: דעכו"ם שבינינו קים לן בגויה דלא פלחו לעבודת כוכבים

The paskens like those who say that are not commanded on:

א"ח קנו א: ויש מקילין בעשיית שותפות עם העכו"ם בזמן הזה משום שאין העכו"ם בזה"ל נשבעים בע"א ואע"ג דמזכירין הע"א מ"מ כוננתם לעושה שמים וארץ אלא שמשותפים שם שמים ודבר אחר ולא מצינו שיש בזה משום לפני עור לא תתן מכשול דהרי אינם מזהרים על השתוף (ר"ן ספ"ק דע"א ורבי' ירוחם נ"ז ח"ה ותוספות ריש פ"ק דבכורות) ולתת ולשאת עמהם בלא שותפות לכ"ע שרי בלא יום חגיהם) הגמ"י פ"ק מה' ע"א) ועבי"ד הל' ע"א סקמ"ז וכן פסק הש"ך חו"ם סק"ז

ע"ן חו"ם ס' קמח הסעיף האחרון המחבר והרמ"א והש"ך שם²

Nevertheless, there are degrees of Monotheistic purity. The fact that Christianity retains ideas such as a virgin birth and a trinity means that, although it is a great improvement on beliefs which preceded it, it is still only half-way between paganism and true Monotheism. (Rav Nachman Bulman)

Concerning the Islamic and Christian claims about the status of their founders:

racist. If it were it would not allow Jewishness to be determined by the mother alone¹, when half the child's genetic endowment would be coming from a non-Jewish source. (The Nazis killed people whose blood was only one quarter Jewish.) Similarly, anyone from any race is entitled to convert to Judaism².

So too, Judaism recognized that each nation has a unique role to play in the world³. In practice, these nations have not, in the main fulfilled their unique potential. So G-d implemented a backup plan, using the Jews to ensure that the precious sparks of holiness of the nations of the world do not get lost. The first part of this plan is to use converts, who bring the sparks of that nation into the Jewish People⁴. The second part of this plan is through Galus. By spreading us out amongst so many nations, G-d is ensuring that we redeem the positive values of each culture out there⁵.

רמב"ם ה' מלכים פ' י (uncensored versions): וכל הדברים האלה של ישוע הנוצרי ושל זה הישמעאלי שעמד אחריו אינן אלא ליישר דרך למלך המשיח ...

¹קדושין סח: א"ר יוחנן משום ר"ש בן יוחי דאמר קרא כי יסיר את בנך מאחרי (דברים ז:ד) בנך הבא מישראלית קרוי בנך ואין בנך הבא מן העובדת כוכבים קרוי בנך

²There are a few exceptions to this such as the עמוני and מואבי (These are allowed to convert but are not allowed to marry their fellow Jews after conversion) However, any qualifications on conversion (which are mainly qualifications of marriage) no longer apply after mixed טנחריב (ע"ש).

³ר' צדוק הכהן, צדקת הצדיק (רנו): כל אומה כמו שיש לה רע מיוחד כך יש לה גם כן איזה ניצוץ קדוש מיוחד שממנה חיותה כטעם ואתה מחיה את כולם (נחמיה ט) דלולא כן כלא היה וחיות דהש"י ודאי הוא דבר טוב (ע"ש)

⁴פסחים פז: ואמר ר"א לא הגלה הקב"ה את ישראל לבין האומות אלא כדי שיתוספו עליהם גרים (והא דאמר ביבמות קט: רעה אחר רעה תבא למקבלי גרים - היינו כשאינו גר אמיתי)

⁵See the previous note which implies that the Galus experience also served the first goal of gathering in converts.

v. *How do we explain discriminatory laws like interest, Loshon Horo and returning a lost object which apply to Jews and not to non-Jews?*

There are two categories of discriminatory laws. One set of laws is designed to keep us separate from the nations of the world. For example, the laws of kashrus, including יין נסך prevent social contact from becoming overly intimate, while the law against intermarriage keeps us intact as a nation. The whole world has an interest in keeping the identity of the Jews intact. It would be a tragedy for all if this nation, which has made such a disproportionate contribution to the world, would no longer be around to continue its phenomenally productive and creative input in advancing civilization.

A second group of laws, however, seems to be more problematic. These are laws which seem to unfairly discriminate against the non-Jew, such as the laws of interest⁶, loshon hora and hashavas aveida⁷. If we look closely, we will see that a common thread underlies all these laws. All represent exceptional standards of behavior not demanded or even expected by the broader society. If a mother were to buy her child an ice cream, we would not expect all the kids in the neighborhood crying foul that she hadn't bought each and every one of them an ice cream as well. It is expected that a mother will set a higher standard of care and concern for her own children. (Of course there is a certain standard by which she should conduct herself toward those who are not her members of her family as well.)

⁶דברים כג: כ-כא (כ) לא תשיך לאחריך נשך כסף ... (כא) לנכרי תשיך ולאחריך לא תשיך למען יברכך ד' אלקיך...

⁷דברים כב:ג לכל אבדת אחיך ב"ק קיג: מנין לאבידת הכנעני שהיא מותרת שנאמר לכל אבדת אחיך, לאחריך אתה מחזיר ואי אתה מחזיר לכנעני

So too with the Jewish people. We are entitled to, no we ought to set a higher standard amongst our family members, our fellow Jews, than we do with the rest of the world. Let us look at some of the specific examples.

Interest is an essential component of a modern economy. If there would be no interest, people would find it very difficult to find money to borrow and business ventures would dry up. Economies would stagnate and, with growing populations, there would be increasing unemployment and even worse. G-d wants us to take and give interest. He created interest as a part of the inexorable laws of economics. But he asked us to set a higher standard amongst our family members.

So too with *Loshon Hora*. The American Supreme Court upholds the right of people to talk *Loshon Hora* as a constitutional right. Millions of people would be out of a job if *Loshon Hora* laws were upheld – the entire newspaper industry, talk show hosts and many others. People who first become exposed to these laws comment that they never realized how much of their day was spent talking *Loshon Hora*. But HaShem in His wisdom demanded that the Jews keep a higher standard amongst family members. (In fact, we are urged not to talk *Loshon Hora* against non-Jews as well. For here the logic we applied in interest, that *Loshon Hora* might actually be good for the world, surely does not apply.) Similarly, *Hashavas Aveida*. Certainly, many countries have laws requiring that if one finds a wallet in the street that one hand it in. But the laws of *Hashavas Aveida* demand much more of us than that. They require that we look after the object, which, if it is an animal, mean feeding it and working out what, in the long-term, are in the best financial interests of the owner. *HaShavas Aveida* laws tell us to run around and put up signs in the local synagogues and sometimes to hold onto an

object for years. No country has laws that come even close to this exulted standard. G-d says again, “For family members, I expect you to go the extra mile.” Some even regard Noachide observant non-Jews as being family members in this regard¹.

Jews are expected to be totally honest in their dealings with non-Jews, to pay their taxes, to give charity to non-Jewish causes, to look after the non-Jew (*Ger Toshav*) who settles in Israel² and to

¹ בתורה תמימה (דברים כב: ג ט' כב)
כל המפרשים כתבו בכלל הדין הזה (שאינו אנו מצוין להחזיר אבידת עכו"ם) דאיירי בעובדי אלילים הפראים, אבל בסתם אומות דינם כישראל לכל דבר... לדעתי הנה דבר זה מבואר מפורש בדרשת הגמ' ב"ק לח. לענין שור של ישראל שנגח שור של עכו"ם וגו'... ראה הקב"ה שאין האומות מקיימים שבע מצות עמד והתיר ממונן ע"כ. וכמה עמוקים ונאמנים הדברים הקצרים האלה כי הנה... הגה בעצמך אנשים שאין מקיימים מצות אלן ורק עושים ההיפך, אוכלים אבר מן החי ואין דין ודיין ביניהם וגוזלים ושופכים דמים ומגלי עריות ומברכים את השם, הרי אין יתרון לאנשים כאלה על חיתו טרף אף במאומה והם מחריבי עולם ומזיקים לחברת האדם... ובודאי אינם ראויים להחשב לסוג אנשים מן הישוב וממילא אין כל דין ומשפט ולכן גם אין חזקת ממונם עליהם אבל אלה המקיימים שבע מצות והם רוב האומות שבזה"ז ובכל המדינות הנאורות נעלה מעל כל ספק שדינם שוה בכל לישראל.
וכן משמע מהרמב"ם הל' גולה ואבדה יא: ג - אבידת הגוי מותרת שנאמר אבדת אחיר והמחזירה הרי זה עובר עבירה מפני שהוא מחזיק ידי רשעי עולם (או לפי רש"י מפני שמראה שאין מצות השבה חשובה עליו למצות בוראו שהרי השיבה גם לעכו"ם שאינו מצווה עליה; ובמאירי שמציאה מקצת קנין הוא וחזרתו דרך חסידות ואין אנו כפופים לחסידות למי שאין לו דת) ואם החזירה לקדש את השם כדי שיפארו את ישראל וידעו שהם בעלי אמונה הרי זה משובח. ובמקום שיש חלול השם (וכגון אם מצאה במקום רוב ישראל והנכרי ידמה שלא נאבדה רק ישראל גנבה ממנו-סמ"ע ס' רסו סק"ג בשם הב"י) אבידתו אסורה ו(אפילו לא בא לידו - כ"מ) חייב להחזירה ובכל מקום מכניסין כליהם מפני הגנבים ככלי ישראל מפני דרכי שלום (והסביר הסמ"ע סק"ד דלא אסרה התורה אלא השבת אבידה דנפל מבעל העכו"ם בלי ידיעתו ואינו יודע מאיזה מקום נפל וליד מי הגיע שמצאה משא"כ מי שהניח כליו ומטלטליו בחצירו או כיוצא בכוון ולא עלה על דעתו שיתאבד משם אלא הישראל נתוודע לו שגנבים יבואו לעיר ויגנבוהו משם אזי כיון דאין שם אבידה עליו מותר לו להכניסו למקום המשתמר מפני הגניבה מפני דרכי שלום)

² רמב"ם הל' איסורי ביאה יד:
אי זה הוא גר תושב זה עכו"ם שקיבל... המצות שנצטוו בני נח... ולמה נקרא שמו תושב לפי שמותו לנו להושיבו בינינו בארץ ישראל... (עיין ויקרא כה: לב)

make a positive contribution to their broader society. But Jews are expected to do even more than that for their fellow Jew. This is completely understandable; no – it is even it be expected.

vi. *What is anti-Semitism and can it be removed? If the Jews are the 'chosen people' why have they been oppressed so much throughout the generations?*

In the question above, *How do we know the Jews are the Chosen People*, we explained the uniqueness of anti-Semitism. We explained that the normal rules of history and sociology are not sufficient to explain this phenomenon. Only by understanding the Choseness of the Jewish people and how that interfaces with the nations of the world can we come to any

Here we see that non-Jews were allowed to settle in Israel, and that the Jewish nation was commanded to ensure their well-being and to provide settlement arrangements that would ensure that each and every one could make a living. They were given a high degree of autonomy, allowed to create their own cities, and provide for their own Noachide legal system.

Every recorded nation that has discriminated against another, has maximized the discrimination when on its home territory. We the Jewish nation, by contrast, actually increase our obligations when we are in control!

In fact the source of many of the laws relating to non-Jews living in Israel is a non-Jewish slave who flees from his master to Israel:

דברים כג:טז-יז
 (טז) לא תסגיר עבד אל אדניו אשר ינצל אליך מעם
 אדניו (יז) עמך ישב בקרבך במקום אשר יבחר באחד
 שעריך בטוב לו לא תוננו

ספרי:
 עמך ישב - בעיר עצמו
 בקרבך - ולא בספר
 במקום אשר יבחר - במקום שפרנסתו יוצאה
 באחד שעריך - שלא יהא גולה מעיר לעיר
 בטוב לו - מנוה הרע לנוה היפה

understanding of this most harrowing and perplexing issue¹.

“How did the Christians historically explain the miraculous survival of the Jew. Only two possibilities - or G-d's chosen people - which they couldn't accept, or the work of the devil, which they proposed. A perverse recognition of Jewish uniqueness.” (Eliezer Berkowitz, *The Hiding G-d of History*)

Here we must distinguish between the true anti-Semite as opposed to the person who merely hates the Jew because he is different. The latter, if he is white and male for example, will also hate blacks, women and all others who are different to him. The real anti-Semite, by contrast, understands who the Jew is, that he is chosen, and that his strength lies in his connection with G-d through the Torah. Hitler certainly understood this²; so did Haman, Amalek and all those who pursued final solutions.

Our Sages tell us that our biggest problems come from the exile (Galus) civilizations. An exile civilization is one which is locked into the same civilization energy as the Jew so that, כשזה קם זה נפל, when this one rises, this one falls. When we Jews keep Torah and Mitzvos, we use up the available civilization energy, and the exile nation finds its energies sapped. When we do not keep the Torah, however, we release these energies for the exile

¹Chazal point out that the words שְׁנֵאָה + שִׁינֵי are the same. This is because, at the very moment when we received the Torah, our distinct moral and spiritual task contrasted us forever from the nations of the world.

²Nazi's hatred and fear of Jews: Totally unjustified in terms of material and political power. “It was a metaphysical fear of the true mystery of G-d's ...presence in history as revealed in the continued survival of Israel. ...The hiding G-d of history was a repudiation of everything Nazi Germany stood for.” (Eliezer Berkowitz, *The Hiding G-d of History*)

¹מהר"ל נצח ישראל פי"ד: שאין לישראל שום מדריגה בינונית, או שהם מושלים על הכל או שהכל מושלים עליהם... (אצל האדם כתיב ג"כ) בדגת היס וכו' לא זכה נעשה ירוד בפניהם

CHAPTER TWELVE: SCIENCE AND JUDAISM

- i. Which is correct: Evolution or Creation?**
- ii. Age of the Universe**
- iii. Are Science and Judaism opposed?**
- iv. Are there limits to Scientific Inquiry?**
- v. What are Miracles?**
- vi. How do Faith and Reason relate?**
- vii. What difference is there between Superstition and the Supernatural, Magic and Mysticism?**

CHAPTER TWELVE: SCIENCE AND JUDAISM

i. Which is correct: Evolution or Creation?

In the Torah, the word for creating something from nothing is mentioned three times during the creation account. The first time was right in the beginning¹, the second was at the beginning of the creation of animal life², and the third was at the creation of soul of man³. This would seem to indicate that these things required some special act of creation. It was not possible to begin the world, or to move from plant to animal life, or to get to the higher, spiritual dimensions of man, based on evolution alone.

On the other hand, this indicates that all others aspects of the creation did have an evolutionary dimension to them⁴. Thus we see that G-d says: let the earth produce the grass, etc⁵ or else words like

¹בראשית א:א בראשית ברא א-לקים

²בראשית א:כא ויברא אלקים את התנינים הגדלים ואת כל נפש החיה הרמשת אשר שרצו המים למיניהם ואת כל עוף כנף למינהו וירא אלקים כי טוב:

³בראשית א:כז ויברא א-לקים את האדם בצלמו
All three creation words are used for man:
אדרת אליהו בראשית א-א ד"ה ברא:
ואצל בריאת האדם נאמר שלש אלה. ויברא אלקים את האדם בצלמו. וייצר ה' אלקים את האדם עפר מן האדמה. ויאמר אלקים נעשה אדם בצלמינו. בריאה לעומת נשמתו צלם אלוקים. יצירה על ציור ותואר אבריו. ועשיה על אופן תיקונו הנטפל אליו בשמירת בריאותו. כמו ויעש ה' אלוקים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם.

Where יצירה and עשייה is used, some form of evolutionary development is indicated.

⁴אדרת אליהו בראשית א-א ד"ה ברא:
בריאה. יצירה. עשייה.. מלת בריאה הונח להורות על חידוש העצם אשר אין בכח הנבראים אפי' כולם חכמים ונבונים לחדשו כמו הדומם או הצומח וכל מיני מתכיות. יצירה נופל על צורת הדבר בכמות והוא המקרה הדבוק. עשייה יתכן על תיקון עשיתו והוא שאינו דבוק.

⁵ויאמר אלקים יקוו המים, ויאמר אלקים תדשא הארץ, ותוצא הארץ דשא, ויאמר אלקים תוצא הארץ נפש חיה למינה

עשה (ויעש), which indicate something from something are used⁶. In fact, the commentators tell us that everything was created on the first day in some potential form⁷, and was then developed into its final form on the assigned day. Even the body of man was considered a part of the evolutionary process⁸.

This is not to say that Judaism and evolution are in complete agreement⁹, and indeed the radical secular bias amongst certain paleontologists has prevented scientists from trying to resolve some of

⁶ויעש אלקים את הרקיע... ויהי כן, ויעש אלקים את שני המארת הגדלים, ויעש אלקים את חית הארץ למינה ואת הבהמה למינה ואת כל רמש האדמה למינהו וירא אלקים כי טוב, וכו' וכן בראשית ב:א-ב - ויכלו השמים והארץ וכל צבאם: ויכל אלקים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה

⁷בראשית ב:ד - אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים:
רש"י שם: תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות ה'. למדך שכלם נבראו ביום ראשון. (וכן כתוב על פ"א פסוק יד)

⁸See note 3 above.

⁹Other than the assertion that certain things were created ex-nihilo, other requirements of a Torah-true perspective are:

1. That the first day not be regarded as more primitive than subsequent days; on the contrary - it was higher spiritually than the other days.
2. That all evolutionary developments be recognized as only taking place because of G-d's providential input.
3. That the time taken be reconciled with the literal Biblical text.
4. That the creation process be regarded as the most perfect for the purposes for which the world was made.
5. That the world and its entire species be regarded as essentially co-operative and not in competition.
6. That man be regarded as the pinnacle of creation, the purpose for which the creation was made.

the differences. But it does show that they are not as far apart as is commonly thought¹.

ii. *Age of the Universe*

Science claims that the universe is between 10 and 20 billion years old², whereas according to the Torah, there were 6 days of creation plus 5761 years. Although the scientific dating may be inaccurate³, there has been no serious scientific challenge to these estimates⁴. Several answers to this challenge talk about two types of time. The Maharal reminds us that time, being that it is a part of the created world, is a relative concept⁵, and indeed, according to relativity theory, it expands and contracts⁶. This allows Dr.

¹Another area of similarity is the basic agreement on the order in which things emerged. An exception to this is the fact that the Torah states that the sun, moon & stars were created on the 4th day after plant life, created on the 3rd; and that birds which used to be thought to have developed from dinosaurs would also be a problem, though now are thought by some evolutionists to have developed from reptile-like creatures, long before dinosaurs.

²Recently, the estimates have been tending towards the lower side, between 12 –13 billion years.

³Rabbi Tatz's approach is that until the end of the six days of creation the laws of the universe as we have them today were not finally put in place. Therefore science, based on current laws, cannot inform us of what happened during the six days of creation.

⁴Unlike evolution, where many prestigious scientists have questioned just how scientific the theory is, the age of the universe, within the given range, has been accepted across the scientific community.

⁵מהרה"ל תפארת ישראל פ"מ: מה שהיה השם יתברך פועל העולם בזמן הוא מצד המקבל

⁶Both motion and gravity effect time. "In 1905 Albert Einstein formulated the effect of motion on time in his special theory of relativity, and in 1917 he formulated the effect of gravity on

Gerald Schroeder to calculate that about 15 billion years in the center of the universe translates into 6 days on the edge of the universe, where the much heavier gravity slows time down significantly. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan comes up with a similar answer based on traditional sources⁷. Similarly, Rav Shimon Schwab talks of two types of time, cosmic time and earthly time. The 6 days of creation are counted according to cosmic time⁸, during which period millions of years may have passed according to our measure of time⁹. Rav

time in his general theory of relativity. These effects were observed in experiments conducted in the 1960's and the 1970's. In one such experiment in 1971, atomic clocks were carried in two high speed aircraft. One traveled eastward, that is, in the rotational direction of the earth, and one westward. After the flight, the onboard clocks were found to have either lost or gained time (relative to a ground based atomic clock) depending on their direction of travel, an effect of motion, and their altitude, and effect of gravity. The results confirmed the predictions made in Einstein's theory of relativity."

⁷Since there are a total of 7 Shmittah cycles, each one 7000 years long = 49,000 years. (ספר התמונה)

We are currently in the 7th cycle, making 6 cycles x 7000 years = 42,000 years prior to the creation of Adam Harishon (לבנת הספיר)

Since these years are prior to אדם הראשון, they must be measured as Divine years rather than earthly years.

(רב יצחק מעכו)

A Divine day is 1000 earthly years long (מדדש)
A Divine year is, therefore, $365 \frac{1}{4} \times 1000 = 365,250$ earthly years

Therefore the universe is $365,250 \times 42,000 = 15,340,500,000$ (approximately 15 billion years)

This is the same time claimed by cosmologists (8 - 20 billion)

⁸Some use the fact that the sun etc. was only created on the fourth day as proof that time could not have been measured as we measure it today).

⁹We might summarize the opinions by saying that some interpretations agree with current cosmology (Dr. Schroeder; R. Aryeh Kaplan;

Dessler brings the Vilna Gaon and other sources to show that time before the sin of the First Man was far more contracted¹; whereas that same time would be perceived today as stretched out into billions of years.

There are several other approaches to this problem, using similar lines of logic². Almost all these opinions existed before the scientific community ever suggested a much longer age for the universe, and therefore this is no mere apologetics. On the other hand we should point out that the scientific community has not established a final age for the universe – the figure changes every year, and I am confident that any remaining differences on this issue will be resolved by further

whereas others leave the issue open (R. Shimon Schwab); still others give other times (Ramban; R Yonasan Eibeshitz). It would be fair to say that we do not know, from a תורה perspective, what the relative time interpretation of the creation days is. A תורה Jew can, in this context, be quite open to the modern cosmological time-table, without necessarily deciding decisively in favor of this. (Bearing in mind the huge conflict the scientists themselves have: 8-20 billion years is quite a range!)

Personally, I prefer Rav Schwab's approach the best, for other approaches try to reconcile the Torah view to current scientific views which may turn out to be incorrect in the future. Indeed, although scientists have kept within the 8-20 billion year range for the age of the universe, their specific assessments have been adjusted pretty much on an annual basis. Rav Schwab's approach can accommodate itself to the vicissitudes of changing scientific opinion.

¹מכתב מאליהו כרך ב, חלק שני: בראשית-ימי בראשית ימי עולם דף 151 ימים אלו (של ששת ימי בראשית) היו קודם גמר הבריאה שאז הבחנת הזמן היתה אחרת. אולם התורה ניתנה לנו לפי הבחנתנו אנו, שבא משה והורידה לארץ, וזה גדר "דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם", שמדברת לפי הבחנתנו בגשם וגדרי מקום וזמן שלנו. ... הוא שכל גילויי ששת אלפי השנה כלולים בימי בראשית... שאילו לא חטא אדם הראשון היה העולם הזה נמשך רק ששה ימים... (אך כשחטא... והימים נתפרטו לששה אלפי שנים).

²וכגון היערות דבש א ע"ש

adjustments in the figure which scientists suggest³. (See the answer to the next question.)

iii. *Are Science and Judaism opposed?*

Judaism has always been pro-science, requiring that current scientific knowledge be factored into Halachic decisions. Science is ongoing and constantly changing; but, with time, scientific theories are getting closer and closer to Judaism. Thus the Big Bang points to the fact that the world had a beginning, implying that it emerged in a creation⁴, the attempt to combine the four forces of matter⁵ illustrates the scientists

³However, all discussion is within the 10 – 20 billion year range.

⁴The Big Bang postulates that all matter "exploded" outwards from an infinitely small, infinitely dense, piece of matter (or from nothing for that matter). This was the beginning of the universe as far as we can know anything about it, including time and space.

Previously, science believed in the static universe, i.e. that the world had always existed. Jews, who believed in the Creation story, were contradicted by over 20 centuries of science! And then, in the space of forty years (from the 1920s to the 1960s) and despite the resistance of many leading scientists (including Einstein), this theory was conclusively overturned. Suddenly a major conflict between science and Judaism had been resolved! (One of the co-discoverers of this, both of whom won Nobel Prizes, is an Orthodox Jew named Arnold Penzias.)

Scientists today believe that prior to the Big Bang the world was condensed into a infinitely small point. This is indeed how the רמב"ן understands מעשה בראשית :

רמב"ן בראשית א א: השמים ... [היתה] מאין נקודה פחותה מגרגיר חרדל ... ונקודה אחרת הארץ וכל אשר עליה

⁵There are four basic forces in the universe - the strong and the weak forces, gravity and electromagnetism. Three of these operate at a sub-atomic level while the fourth, gravity operates at a macro level. Many physicists regard their biggest challenge today to be the

combining of these four forces into one. They believe that, up until a short while after the Big Bang, these four forces were in fact one force and that they later divided into their present state.

There was no scientific evidence or intrinsic reason for scientists to believe that the world should comprise of one force rather than four. Yet pursuit of this project has involved tens of thousands of scientists for decades, at a cost of tens of billions of dollars. The explanation for their search is that scientists "believe" that ultimately the world is a place of great unity. This is essentially a religious belief. Scientists also believe that the more simple or beautiful (mathematical speaking) a theory, the more true it will prove to be.

Scientists have thus far managed to combine the electromagnetic force with the weak force (called the electroweak force) and they have the basic mathematics to show that these are in turn combined with the strong force (called GUT - Grand Unified Theory). They are now working to show that these three force in turn are combined with gravity. This they call TOE - a Theory Of Everything. This is regarded by some as the last, great frontier in science. All of this supports the idea of a One G-d who is the unifying source behind all reality. (This idea was in stark contrast to the evolutionists idea of a world of chance conflict.)

Timothy Ferris (author of *The Red Limit - The Search for the Edge of the Universe*, Bantam, 1981) wrote, produced and narrated a PBS science special: "The Creation of the Universe": The search for, and the belief in the possibility of finding, a unified field theory "testifies to the triumph of the old idea that all creation might be ruled by a single elegantly beautiful principle."

Ferris states: "Religion and science are sometimes depicted as if they were opponents, but science owes a lot to religion. Modern science began with the rediscovery, in the Renaissance, of the old Greek idea that nature is rationally intelligible. But science from the beginning incorporated another idea, equally important, that the universe really is a uni-verse, a single system ruled by a single set of laws. And science got that idea from the belief in one God..."

"The founders of modern science -- Kepler and Copernicus, Isaac Newton and even Galileo, for all of his troubles with the church -- were, by and large, profoundly religious men.

"I'm not saying that you have to believe in God in order to do science. Atheists and agnostics

believe that everything is ultimately one unity; Einstein's theory that matter is energy makes it easier to believe in spirituality; while probability allows G-d's providence and our choice their rightful place. There are many other examples of this¹.

There may still be disagreements, but we can wait: science is still on the move and that movement is rapidly in the direction towards Judaism. As science gets closer and closer to Judaism, it will yet reconcile its final differences with the Torah.

iv. Are there limits to Scientific Inquiry?

Scientists deal with facts not values². "Science tells us how to heal and how to kill; it reduces the death rate in retail and then kills us wholesale in war; but *only wisdom...can tell us when to heal and when to kill*. ... The scientist is as interested in the leg of the flea as the creative throes of a genius....³."

have won Nobel Prizes, as have Christians and Jews, and Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. But modern scientific research, especially Unified Theory, testifies to the triumph of the old idea that all creation might be ruled by a single and elegantly beautiful principle" (PBS science special: "The Creation of the Universe)

¹Amongst the many other examples an observer centered universe (postulated by some) shows how freedom of choice effects the world; the Punctuated Theory of Evolution brings evolution closer to Judaism; archeology has shown the historical accuracy of the Tanach.

²Actually, science deals with theories about facts. It should be noted that scientists today accept that they can never know the world with certainty. Quantum uncertainty is not simply a function of human error or interference; it is built into the very fabric of the universe as far as we can know it.

³ Will Durant, *A History of Philosophy*

A doctor is as qualified to pass judgment on when life begins and ends as a chef is on which foods are carcinogenic or a computer programmer about which way the PC market is about to go. All are likely to sound intelligent; none have more than an educated layman's chance of being right. Thinking rigorously ethically is a highly specialized business. Judaism, amazingly, is not only able to address all these problems, but the principles of Judaism anticipate the issues. More than ever, science needs these principles to guide it through issues of ever increasing complexity, ever closer to the beginnings of life itself.

Victor Weiskopf writes of his participation in the Manhattan Project, the American WW2 initiative to make the atomic bomb: "Today, I am not quite sure whether my decision to participate in this awesome-and awful-enterprise was solely based on the fear of the Nazis beating us to it. It may have been more simply an urge to participate in the important work my friends and colleagues were doing. There was certainly a feeling of pride in being a part of a unique and sensational enterprise. Also this was a chance to show the world how powerful, important and pragmatic the esoteric science of nuclear physics could be."

After the defeat of Germany, the single, most powerful reason for working on the bomb had been removed. But work continued because, "By then we were too involved in the work, too deeply interested in its progress, and too dedicated to overcoming its many difficulties ... the thought of quitting did not even cross my mind." (After the war, Weiskopf did quit working on the project.) (in *The Joy of Insight, Passos of a Physicist*, Basic Books.)

v. ***What are Miracles?***

There are two types of miracles, those that occur throughout history and those that occurred around the Sinai

experience. The first occurs within nature, producing results that are ordinarily highly improbable (if not impossible), given the laws of nature as we understand them¹. The Sinai events, however, involve a change in the very order of nature, although even these have logic and operate according to certain laws². Moreover, these miracles were not one-time events at a distance which took the people by surprise. A miracle which someone does by walking momentarily on water far away in the middle of a lake in front of a limited number of people is hardly open to verification. By contrast, the miracle of the manna (the מן) took place for 40 years³ in front of the whole nation at extremely close range. Someone who was twenty when the miracle began was sixty when it ended. The Jews, the most skeptical nation on earth⁴, were able to go out every day with their scientific equipment and make sure that what was happening was for real⁵.

¹שעורי דעת (א:ח"א, שעור ד' נסים וטבע ועיין בספורנו (במדבר כג ד"ה וירב העם עם משה))

²שעורי דעת (א:ח"א, שעור ד' נסים וטבע)
...כשברא הקב"ה את עולמו...ומצא לנכון להתנות מתחלה גם את אופן ההנהגה היוצאת מכלל החקים הקבועים...ומעתה לא יקשה כ"כ מדוע ירד פרעה אל הים בראותו כי נקרע לפני בני ישראל, כי הם ידעו כי גם מה שלמעלה מן הטבע מתנהל ע"פ מערכה ידועה וחקים קבועים

³שמות טז:לה - ובני ישראל אכלו את המן ארבעים שנה...
אבן עזרא: זה הנס היה גדול מכל הנסים שנעשו על יד משה כי נסים רבים היו במן ועמדו ארבעים שנה ולא כל הנסים האחרים.

⁴שו"ת הרשב"א ח"א תקמח (בסוף)
וישראל נוחלי דת האמת בני יעקב איש אמת כולו זרע אמת - נוח להם לסבול עול גלות ומה שיגיעם מהאמין בדבר עד שיחקרו חקירה רבה, חקירה אחר חקירה, להסיר כל סיג (dross) מהדברים הנאמרים להם ואפילו מה שיראה להם שהוא אות ומופת ... אף המסופק ענין משה (they even doubted the authenticity of Moshe) ... שהיו פרוכי עבודה קשה ונצטוו משה לבשרם ועם כל זה אמר "הן לא יאמינו ביי" (שמות ד) והוצרך לכמה אותות. וזה אות אמת על עמנו עם ה' שלא להפתות בדבר עד עמדם על האמת בחקירה רבה חקירה גמורה

⁵הכוזרי, מאמר ראשון אות ה א - כתב שיש ד דברים שמוכיחים נס:

Still, it is always possible to have doubts¹. It is always possible to come up with some explanation, however unlikely, for the phenomena at hand. For this reason, the miracles are not the central proof that G-d gave the Torah at Sinai. This is left to the prophetic revelation that each and every Jew had at Sinai. Therefore, this is not the central purpose of miracles. Rather, their primary purpose is to be a show of G-d's ongoing Divine Providence (השגחה פרטית)². From these revelations of Providence we learn to see more hidden acts of Providence as well³. In fact, when we understand things a little

deeper, we realize that טבע and נס are, ultimately, two faces of the same thing⁴.

vi. *How do Faith and Reason relate?*

Since nothing can be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt, Judaism ultimately requires a leap of faith (אמונה)⁵. But this does not mean that it is indistinguishable from any other faith. There has to be a way in which we can distinguish our faith from adherents of other religions. Otherwise anything goes.

As we explained elsewhere, Judaism has empirical roots in the Sinai experience. For a Jew, faith is a rational extension of what he knows to be true. Faith is what allows us to stretch our horizons into areas we cannot know for sure (which actually is most of our life). Without this faith, we would be very limited indeed. But that does not mean that you can believe what you want. Reason is what ensures that what we believe in is the most rational and empirically supported of all the alternatives. For example, when we say that we believe in G-d, what we mean

א-שמהפך בו טבע הדברים
 ב - שיהיה הענין הזה לפני המונים
 ג - יראהו בעיניהם ולא יגיעם בספור בקבלה
 ד - שיחקרו על הדבר ויבחנוהו בחינה אחר בחינה שלא
 יפול בלב אדם ספק כי יש בו צד דמיון או צד ספק

¹מב"ם הקדמה לפירוש המשניות והלכות יסודי התורה כתב שמה שאדם רואה בנס יש תמיד בלבו דופי

²מכתב מאליהו ח"א דף 203:
 גדר הניסים הוא, שהקב"ה מראה בגילוי את השגחתו, באופן שכל בעל לב יכיר כי אין זה מקרה טבעי, אלא יד ה' נגלית כאן. ע"כ כשיש נס הבא לטובתנו בעה"ז, כך יש נס המתגלה ביסורינו, כאשר השם ית' מראה השגחתו בגלוי בסייעו לשונאינו...

This applies also to the Miracles around the Sinai experience:

S. R. Hirsch (עח: כג-כד)

... and that substance which He sent down to them and to them alone was rationed out to them in strict accordance with the needs of each individual household. It was quite evident therefore, that these were acts of Divine Providence which lavishes loving care upon every single member of each and every family in Israel, from the oldest to the very youngest...

³מב"ן שמות יג:טז:
 ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים, שהם יסוד התורה כלה, שאין לאדם חלק בתורת משה ר' עד שנאמין בכל דברינו ומקרינו שכלם נסים אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם... שפת אמת (בהר תרל"ז):

הנסים והטבעים הכל אחד ובאמת אין נס גדול כמו הטבע שהוא הגדול שבנפלאות המושגים לנו... ובאמת הדורות שנעשה להם הנסים היה קבוע בהם האמונה והיה שווה להם הטבע והנסים

⁴הסביר הפחד יצחק (חנוכה, רשימה, ה, בסוף הספר) ... כל חוקי הטבע אינם אלא הגבלות. ההגבלות האלו במהותן עומדות הן בסתירה לאותו אור הראשוני שהיה התחלה לבריאת העולם. שכן על האור הראשוני הזה נאמר שבו היה האדם צופה מסוף העולם עד סופו... (בלי הגבלה) ... לחוקים של טבע ... אלא שהאור הראשוני הזה נגנז לצדיקים לעתיד לבא. ... (ו) בכל מקום שחז"ל אומרים על איזה דבר שהוא נגנז ... הכונה היא ... שקודם הגניזה היתה פעולתו בגילוי ולהדיא; ואילו אחר גניזתו אינו פועל אלא ... בהסתר ובכיסוי. מה שאנחנו קוראים נס ומה שאנחנו קוראים טבע אינם אלא שני אופנים בפעולת האור הראשוני הזה. האופן הראשון הוא בזמן שנעשה נקב כחודו של מחט באותה גניזה, ואז ממילא בטל חוק הטבע המשתייך לזה... (= נס). ולעומת זאת בשעה שהגניזה סתומה מכל צד, ואז האור הראשוני הזה אינו פועל אלא בכיסוי ובהעלם הרי אנחנו קוראים לזה טבע. וזה שכתב הרמב"ן כי כל הטבע אינו אלא נסים נסתרים. כלומר, אותו האור עצמו שהוא שרש הנס הוא עצמו שרש הטבע. אלא שפתיחת הגניזה היא נס, ואילו עצם הגניזה היא טבע.

⁵מדרש תנחומא פ' שופטים, סי' ט' ד"ה (ט) והיה הכל: בא חבוקק והעמידו על אחת שנאמר (חבוקק ב') וצדיק באמונתו יחיה.

is that G-d is the best explanation for the facts of the world as we see them¹.

Judaism values reason so highly that it is at the center of our Oral Law. Something which is purely logical needs no further proof, and is considered as binding as if a verse had been written in the Torah. But Judaism also recognizes that faith based on reason alone would be a cold, philosophical faith, not a real relationship with G-d. (See Belief in G-d, first section). We are multi-faceted and capable of complex relationships with things. A Jew is simultaneously critical and believing, skeptical and passionate, questioning and trusting. It is this marvelous little bag of rich responses, which makes commitment to Judaism so rewarding.

vii. What difference is there between Superstition and the Supernatural, Magic and Mysticism?

Superstitions are the beliefs which people have without any basis in fact. The Supernatural however, is a plane or rather several planes of reality which exist between us and the Almighty².

Whenever G-d puts a force in the world, it can be used for both good and bad. Prophecy is the expression of bringing a positive and accurate wisdom down from higher realms³. The abuse of

¹Of course we want much more from our belief in G-d than to turn it into just another scientific theory. We want a relationship with G-d. But the starting point is as we have stated it.

²These are divided into Olamos which are in turn divided into the Sefiros.

³ספר העיקרים ג:יב -שכתב שהנבואה היא סעיף מתורה מהשמים כי כל תכליתו הוא לגלות ולחזק תורה מהשמים

דעת תבונות (קעח דף רא הוצאת הרב פרידלנדר): הנבואה היא ידיעה והשגה שהקב"ה נתן לנביא מכבודו יתברך.

דרך ד' ג-ו: ... הרי הוא משכיל בהשכלה עליונה מכל השכלה שאפשר לאדם והיא השכלה בבחינת היותו קשור

this is Kishuf – magic. Mysticism, the Kabbalah, is the wisdom which describes all those realms between us and G-d in His Essence. Both prophets and mystics were and are able to use their connection with these higher planes to bring certain forces down to earth. But this was not their primary purpose. Prophecy's primary job was as a revelation of G-d's will and purpose for the world, and later to strengthen and clarify that revelation⁴. Prophecy included the Kabbalah which, once brought down, could be passed on by those privy to the inner wisdom of the Torah revelation. The primary purpose of the Kabbalah is to understand the cosmic impact, which even our seemingly trivial actions have, and to therefore motivate us to achieve greater heights of spirituality⁵.

בבוראו. והנה גלוי כבודו ית' הוא יהיה הפועל בכל מה שימשך לנביא בנבואתו: והנה ממנו ימשך בכח הדמיון שבנפש הנביא ... ומתוך הדמיונות ההם תמשך בו מחשבה והשכלה...

דעת תבונות (קעח דף רא הוצאת הרב פרידלנדר):
וידאו מהם כל השפעותיו בכל דרכיהם, וידאו כל עניניהם שבהם תלויים כל חוקות השמים והארץ וכל צבאם וכל פרטיהם. ועל כן ידעו העבר והעתיד מה שהקב"ה עושה בעולם

⁴רמב"ם הל' יסודי התורה פ' ד' הל' ז':
לכונן אותם ולהודיעם מה יעשו או למונעם ממעשים הרעים שבידיהם
ספר העיקרים ג ח: להזהיר על קיום התורה
ספר העיקרים ג:ח:
... הנבואה ... לא להגדות העתידות ... אלא שגם זה היה נמצא בנביאים ... להורות על אמתת נבואתם כדי שיאמינו דבריהם

⁵ר' חיים פרידלנדר: היא לא רק להחכים אותנו בהבנת הדברים, אלא ללמד אותנו הלכה למעשה את דרכי עבודת השי"ת. ... כל מה שמגלה השי"ת לנו מדרכיו ומעולמו ... הוא למוד עבודתו ... ונבין מה היה רצונו בבריאת השלבים השונים של העולמות, ... ומה התפקיד שמוטל עלינו ביחס לעולמות אלה. (מבוא לקל"ח פתחי חכמה דף 23)

Specifically, this means knowing the cosmic dimensions of each מצוה. This makes us more alert and responsible to the significance of our actions:

חכמת האמת מלמדת אותנו איך שכל מצוה, על כל פרטיה ודקדוקיה, עומדת ברומו של עולם " ... ואיך כל דבר הקטון כאן למטה בארץ –הולך ומתרחב למעלה, ומרעיש כל העולמות. אז ישים האדם אל לבו. ודאי זה

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT

- i. What is the purpose of existence?**
- ii. What is the World to Come? What happens after a person dies?**
- iii. Is there After-Life?**
- iv. Who is the Self? Who am I? Am I my body or my soul? What is the relationship between the body and the soul?**
- v. What is Man's soul?**
- vi. What is the nature of Reward and Punishment in the next World?**
- vii. Why is the World-to-Come not mentioned in the Torah?**
- viii. Who is the Messiah? How will we be able to tell when he has arrived?**
- ix. What will the world be like after the Messiah comes?**

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT

i. What is the purpose of existence?

G-d is perfect. Therefore He could not have created the world for His own benefit, since there is nothing that He could have added to His own perfection. Rather, He created the world for our sake, i.e. in order to share His perfect goodness with us. Now, His perfect goodness means that He created us in such a way that by so doing, He was doing not only good but the best possible good. On the surface, this ought to have been achieved by creating us as close to Him, to perfect goodness, as possible. But that would have made us very different to G-d in one crucial respect. He would be a creator of goodness; we would be a created goodness. He would be an active bestower of good; we would be spiritual robots. Therefore, G-d made a two-stage process, with two separate environments. He created us so that at first we would be a certain distance away from Him. As a result we would have freedom of choice and, should we choose good, we would be active creators of good in our own right. The environment that is perfect for this is this world. Then, having acquired that crucial attribute of being a creator of good we move on, with this attribute, to the next world. That world is perfectly suited for being as close to G-d with respect to all our other attributes¹. We are now ready to receive the maximum good, of basking in and deriving pleasure from G-d's magnificent radiance².

¹כל זה מבוסס על הדרך ד'

²בראשית מסילת ישרים כתב הרמח"ל שתפקיד האדם להנות מזיו השכינה

ii. What is the World to Come? What happens after a person dies? Is there After-Life?

Death is the separation of the body from the soul. Thirty days before a person dies his soul begins to leave his body, a process that lasts for a year after death³. After death, the soul goes to the World of Souls (Olam HeNeshamos) and the body begins to rot in the ground⁴. Both continue to grow in these environments, the body by becoming pure dust and then being reconstituted in a purer form. Later, the body and the soul recombine at a stage called *Techiyas Hameisim*, the Resurrection of the Dead⁵. The person now grows even more, continuously getting closer to pure spirituality whose source is G-d. None of the growth after death is as a result of our choice, since there will then be no evil. The great attractive force of G-d's pure spirituality will automatically draw us closer, each according to our spiritual level at death.

iii. Who is the Self? Who am I? Am I my body or my soul? What is the relationship between the body and the soul?

The idea of consciousness is one of the mysteries to which 21st Century science is investing great efforts. The mystery is one of self-awareness. Clearly,

³גשר החיים ומנה שם 7 שלבים

⁴This stage became necessary to purify the body and the soul from the impurity left over from the sin of the First Man and Woman.

⁵Tzadikim have *Techiyas Hameisim* at the beginning of *Yemos Hamashiach* so that they can experience this time. The rest of us have *Techiyas HaMeism* at the end of *Yemos Hamashiach*.

we have a natural sense of ourselves, of being ourselves which is more than simply being aware of our bodies or our minds¹. (In fact insanity sets in when we are no longer clear about the boundaries between ourselves and others.)

Judaism believes that G-d created man with a body and a soul and that He then fused both of them into one coherent unit². However, the fact that these two radically different things, body and soul, combine to form one reality, is indeed a mystery. It represents the miracle of the self.

This miracle was needed to effect freedom of choice, which is the fundamental element that allows us to be autonomous moral and spiritual human beings. Angels are pure soul and therefore have no choice; animals are pure instinct³ – they too are without choice. Only body-soul creatures can have choice.

I can either become more body with a soul, or more soul with a body. But I can only become “I” by taking care and of body and of soul. G-d created us as body-soul humans because He wants us to become the best “I” that we can become.

¹Although animals clearly have consciousness, we do not know whether they have self-awareness and to what degree. But, as we explain below, the human mystery is not so much one of self-awareness; rather it is the fact that body and soul combine to create this self-awareness.

²Hence the morning bracha אשר יצר is followed by אלוקי נשמה. אשר יצר ends with the words ומפליא לעשות, which, according to the *Ramo*, is coming to link the two *brachos*.

³They have a נפש, the basic level of animal soul which allows them to have consciousness and to make desecret choices like whether to hunt or to sleep. (*Ramban, Parshas Bereishis*) They also have emotions, can learn things (up to a point) and can have relationships. What they lack is a desire or an ability to grow spiritually or to have meaningful lives. One will never see an animal lying on a rock having an existential crisis.

iv. *What is Man's soul?*

Our soul is that part of ourselves which lets us know that there is something bigger than ourselves. There are actually many levels of the soul, five according to the simplest categorization. Some of those levels are contained within ourselves and some of those are so exalted that they are actually not contained by the body; rather they are connected to us, from beyond ourselves. It is the higher levels of the soul which allow ourselves to extend ourselves beyond ourselves, to see horizons of growth and character development; to have a final vision for all mankind.

Prior to the נשמה being put into the גוף, the נשמה was no different to any other created being – a complete taker of השם's goodness⁴ with all the shame that implies⁵. However, after being placed in the body, it can now become an active force for good⁶. In this way, man⁷ shares with G-d the task of bringing the world to completion, becoming His partner in creation⁸. This partnership facilitates a type of intimacy with G-d which is a source of great joy⁹.

v. *What is the nature of Reward and Punishment in the next World?*

⁴דעת תבונות דף קסח: והנה הנשמות עצמן טרם רדתן לגוף אינן אלא כשאר הנבראים – תלויים בבורא יתברך, לפי שאין להם שם עבודה ובחירה.

⁵דעת תבונות שם: בבושת מקבל הצדקה

⁶דעת תבונות שם: רק אחר רדתן לגוף אז ניתן להם הבחירה, ואז בדבר זה הם תלויים בעצמן, ולא בבורא יתברך

⁷היינו הצדיקים (שם)

⁸דעת תבונות שם: ותראי כמה כבוד גדול חלק הבורא ב"ה אל הצדיקים שחשבם לשותפים אליו, וכמו שארז"ל (זוהר ח"א ה'): עמי אתה (אם פתח) – עימי אתה. (ע"ש באורך)

⁹דעת תבונות שם: והנה כביכול, כנסת ישראל לבה גס בהקב"ה כאשה לבעלה, וזה מצד היות לה חלק בתיקון העולם עצמו, ... [ונהנים מזיו השכינה] לא מתוך בושא אלא מתוך שמחה והרמת ראש (ע"ש)

Ultimately, G-d wants to give to all His created beings, including the רשעים¹, and will look for ways of doing so². עונש, which is really just the natural consequence of a person denying G-d to give to him as He wishes, is a way in which G-d can ultimately get to give the person as He originally desired³. For ultimately, nothing can stand in the way of G-d's Will, and it is His Will to do good to us⁴. Punishment, including Gehinom⁵, then, is simply a temporary means to an end⁶, and is not an absolute good⁷. Serving

only to facilitate G-d's giving, it will ultimately disappear⁸.

Total רשעים, who may nevertheless have done some good, get their reward in this world rather than the next. They cannot get their reward in עולם הבא because they have absolutely no relationship with it⁹. However, this would only be if their good actions were effortless or by rote. רשעים who consciously exerted themselves to do good, to whatever tiny degree¹⁰, would already, to that degree, have some relationship the World to Come¹¹ and will continue to grow in the World to Come¹².

¹רמח"ל, קל"ח פתחי חכמה, דף ה-ו: ואם תאמר: כך הוא טוב – להטיב לצדיקים כמו להרע לרשעים, ורחמי רשעים אכזרי, הרי כתיב: "וחנותי את אשר אחון – אף על פי שאינו הגון" (ברכות ז.ז.), וכתיב "יבוקש את עון ישראל ואיננו ואת חטאת יהודה ולא תמצאינה" (ירמיהו נ כ) הרי שרוצה להטיב גם לרשעים.

²רמח"ל, קל"ח פתחי חכמה, דף ה-ז. וז"ל המכתב מאליהו ח"ב עמ' 63: וכבר כתב הגרש"ז זצ"ל "הלואי ויזכה החוטא לגיהנום", פירוש כי גיהנום ענינו חרטה ובידור ... ועי"ז בא לבסוף לידי תקון.

³רמח"ל, שם: אמנם במכתב מאליהו ח"א עמ' 291 אמר שהמקבל שכר על ידי בחירתו לטוב, יש בזה כח הצמיחה בעוה"ב וימשיך ויגדול שם ברוחניות. "אבל מי דלא קנה הוייתו בבחירה אלא שהגיע להתבטלות הרע שבו על ידי יסורי גיהנום ... הוא לא יכלה ולא יתפתח עי"ז, כי כח ההשגה לא ניתן לו בעולם ההוא

⁴רמח"ל, שם עמ' ג-ו: יחוד השליטה זה יחוד רצונו ית"ש - שא"א שיהיה שום דבר מבטל רצונו בשום טעם ... כי הרצון העליון רוצה רק טוב לבד, וזה אינו טוב ודאי – שלא יוכל טובו להתפשט בבריותיו.

⁵מהר"ל (חידושי אגדתא על ב"מ נח בדפי המהר"ל דף 29): כי הגיהנם הוא מצד עולם הזה בלבד ... [ובשלו מסויים כבר יהיה] בטל הגיהנום כי אין הגיהנום לעתיד לבא

⁶רמח"ל, שם עמ' ו: והרשעים צריך להענישם כדי שימחול להם אחר כך ... אך סוף המעשה בכל בני אדם, בין צדיקים בין רשעים, הוא לתת להם טוב.

⁷רמח"ל, שם עמ' ז: נוציא מכל זה שהעונש הוא רע ... אלא שהמצאו צריך לברייטא, כדי להגיע ממנו אל התכלית: ואם היה אפשר בלאו הכי – היה יותר טוב לפי הרצון

⁸רמח"ל, שם עמ' ו: אם כן העונש (אלו לא היה מביא לתיקון – ר' פרידלנדר) הוא רע, עד שצריך שיהיה כלה ולא נצחי ובגמ' בבא מציעא דף מח עמ' ב: כל היורדין לגיהנום עולין חוץ מג' שיורדים ואינם עולים ואלו הן הבא על אשת איש והמלבין פני חבירו ברבים והמכנה שם רע לחבירו פירש במהר"ל (חידושי אגדתא שם בדפי המהר"ל דף 29): שאר חטאים עולים תוך זמן משפט שלהם וחורין לירד ואלו ג' אין עולים עד שקבלו משפט שלהם. ע"כ רואים שאפילו ג' אלו עולים בסוף

⁹Even in the case of a total רשע, G-d is not repaying the person any reward for any good he might have done in this world. Actually, G-d does not want to pay him in this world rather than the next. However, Rav Dessler explains that, since this person is simply not spiritual enough to connect with the spirituality of the World to Come, such a person would not be able to receive such reward even if he were given it. G-d therefore has no choice but to reward the person in this world.

¹⁰מכתב מאליהו ח"א עמ' 4: אם אדם איננו זוכה לעוה"ב גופא, אלא שמרשים לו לעבור מבחוק ולהנות רק מריח טוב של עוה"ב ... הוא השכר היותר קטן אשר אפשר להמצא, ועל כרחונו הוא עבור המצוה היותר קטנה אשר אין קטנה הימנה (שהרי כל מצוה יש לה מתן שכרה בעוה"ב) ע"כ.

¹¹מכתב מאליהו ח"א עמ' 226: כתוב במדרש הנעלם (בראשית ק"ח) שבימי ר' יוסי היו רוצחים בהרים כו' שהיו חסים על עוברי דרכים יהודים שלא לרצחם כו' ואמר ר' יוסי שהם בני עולם הבא. והיינו משום שאפילו אדם השפל ביותר אם עומד בנסיון שלו ומנצח ליצרו בנקודת בחירה שלו שהוא מתנסה בה, הרי יש במעשה זו בחינת חיי עוה"ב. (עיין שם דף 291 אות ג שהאריך יותר)

¹²שם דף 291 אות ג: בזה בודאי יש כח הצמיחה ויזכה להתפתחות-אין-סוף בבחינה ההיא

הבא, by virtue of the impression of their souls (רשימה) which attach to the souls of the צדיקים⁵.

Just as the “punishment” of רשעים is really just an expression of their essential selves, so too is the “reward” of the צדיקים⁶.

vi. *Why is the World to Come not mentioned in the Torah?*

Many proofs for the concept of the Resurrection (the World to Come) can be found in the words of the prophets⁷.

Still, the worst רשעים are described as having no portion in the world to come⁴? However, even these achieve some

¹ ובמהר”ל (חידושי אגדתא על ב”מ נח בדפי המהר”ל דף 29): כי הגיהנם הוא מצד עולם הזה בלבד ... [ויש לאדם מדריגה למעלה מן העולם הזה הגשמי שמעלה אותו מן הגיהנום כלל מכתב מאליהו ח”א עמ’ 290: “וגם בהיותם בארץ אויביהם (בגלות אצל הס”א) לא מאסתים כו’ לכלותם כו’ כי אין רשות למשול בישראל לגמרי מבלי השאיר שום ניצוץ קדושה ... כי ענין של הנקודה הפנימית היא הויה באדם. ובאה עמו לעוה”ב ... (וע’ ב”ב דף י עמ’ ב בסלע זו לצדקה על מנת שיחיה בני כו’ בהפרש שבין ישראל לאומות בזה) ובמכתב מאליהו שם הסביר שמי שמקבל עולם הבא באופן כזה לא יוכל לצמוח עוד בעוה”ב.

² מכתב מאליהו ח”א עמ’ 292: וחלילה לנו להסתפק (rely) במעלותינו הנמצאות בנו, כי לא בהן נזכה לעתיד הגדול.

³ רב צדוק הכהן, מחשבות חרוץ עמ’ 9-28: וכל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, היינו דמעמקי לבבם הנעלם שאינו בהתגלות כלל אפילו לאדם עצמו שהוא שורש נשמתם חלק אלוק ממעל שעי”ז אמרו (שהש”ר ה ב) דהקב”ה לבן של ישראל, דבר זה הוא סוד העוה”ב שהוא נגד ליבא כידוע, והוא החלק לעוה”ב שיש לכל ישראל אפילו לחוטאים, שכל החטאים הוא רק מצד החומר וההתגלות בועה”ז ולא מצד עומק הנשמה הטהורה הנעלמת בעוה”ז וכו’

⁴ רמח”ל, מאמר העקרים, בגאולה ואמנם אחרי התחיה יהיה יום הדין הגדול שידין הבורא יתברך את כלם וישפט הראויים לשאר לנצחיות והראויים לאבד. הראויים לאבד יענשו לפי מה שראוי להם ולבסוף יאבדו לגמרי והראויים לשאר ישארו במדרגה שתגיע להם כפי המשפט בעולם שיחדש ו”ל ר’ צדוק הכהן בתקנת השבים עמ’ 158: ובמשנה בסנהדרין מנו ז’ דאין להם חלק לעולם הבא ו’ מישראל כל והז’ בלעם מאומות העולם, ומסתמא ז’ אלו כוללים כל הנפשות שאין להם חלק לעוה”ב דודאי היו יותר מז’ אלו, רק שכל דבר חלוק לז’ מדריגות כידוע וכל אחת כולל מדרגה מיוחדת וכמו ז’ ימי בראשית, ז’ ימי המעשה ויום הז’ שבת מעין עוה”ב וכן ו’ אלפי שני דעוה”ז, כך יש גם בעוה”ב שהוא זמן קבול שכר על המעשים וגו’

⁵ ר’ צדוק הכהן תקנת השבים שם (וגם במחשבות חרוץ) ע”פ הגמ’ סנהדרין אלה הם שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא ושם במשנה שלפי דורשי רשומות יש להם חלק לעוה”ב וכתב ר’ צדוק שדורשי רשומות היינו שדורשי הרשימות של הנשמות וז”ל שם: ומדרגה זו השיגו דורשי רשומות הרשימו שאמרו זכולם יש להם, והכל אמת דמצד מדריגת הראשונות אין להם ... ומצד השורש [יש להם]. ע”כ וכעין זה כתב המכתב מאליהו ח”א

However, this would only apply to Jews, who have an untouchable core of goodness:

דגוי ששבת חייב מיתה שמהם אין להקב”ה נייחא אלא על ידי המעשה שעוסיקים (פירוש המעשים הטובים) משא”כ בישראל ... אהוב בלא טעם ... מצד השורש ... ומצד מדריגה זו שבעוה”ב אין שום נפש מישראל נגחה אלא בלעם שהוא מאומות העולם (ע”ש שמבאר ענין זה ע”פ הקשר שבתפילין) (ועיין עוד ברב צדוק, מחשבות חרוץ ומ’ 28)

⁶ מכתב מאליהו ח”ב עמ’ 63: מצד שני על אלה הדבוקים בחייהם בתוכן הרוחני האמיתי כתוב “להנחיל אוהבי יש”, ואין היש הזה אלא בס בעצמם. כי בהיותם רוחניים ימצאו את מהותם הרוחנית שהיא היש. והיש הזה כולל הכל, וכל שורשי העולם הבא שלהם נמצאים בתוך עצמם, ואינם שואפים לדברים אחרים זולתם, וע”כ שמחים הם בחלקם. ע”ש עוד

⁷ ישעיה כו, יט יחיו מתוך נבלתי יקומון הקיצו ורננו שכני עפר כי טל אורת טלך

דניאל יב, ב ורבים מישיני אדמת עפר יקיצו אלה לחיי עולם ואלה לחרפות לדראון עולם

R’ Saadyah Gaon mentions the following additional proof:

רס”ג, אמונות ודעות, המאמר השביעי, ב ואומר עוד כי לפי שידוע לפני הבורא מחשבות שיעלו על לבינו מקושי תחית המתים אצלינו לפיכך הקדים דבר זה לנביאו יחזקאל ואמר לו (יחזקאל לז, יא) “בן אדם העצמות האלה כל בית ישראל המה הנה אמרים

However, although, it is strongly hinted at in the five books of the Torah, it is not mentioned explicitly¹. The question is if the reward of עולם הבא is the destiny of man's existence, why is the concept not mentioned explicitly in the five books of the Torah itself? There are many reasons for this², each one reinforcing the other.

¹דברים לב, לט
ראו עתה כי אני הוא אני אמית ואחיה

²בתפארת ישראל פ' נ"ז ונ"ח נותן חמשה תירווצים והבאנו הד' תירווצים הראשונים והקדמה ראשונה (קטע הראשון) מוסיף על הטעם הראשון

The Rambam answers that the people who lived during the time when the Torah was given denied the existence of Hashem, prophecy, and spirituality in general. When Hashem revealed the Torah to the Jewish people and publicized His laws to the world at large, Hashem purposely left out all mentions of spiritual reward and punishment and the resurrection of the dead to ease acceptance of the prophets and the Torah. Once the truth of prophecy was ingrained into the Jewish people, Hashem did in fact reveal the idea through the prophets, as the proofs brought above. (Note that according to the Rambam, the quote from *Daniel* is the single true proof.)

רמב"ם איגרת תחיית המתים, ד
ואמנם מענה השאלה השנית והיא האומרת למה לא נזכרה בתורה תחיית המתים... והטבה בזה שזאת תחיית המתים אמנם תנהג מנהג המופת כמו שבארנו וההאמנה בזה שזה דרכו לא תהיה רק בספור הנביא. והיו בני האדם כלם בזמן ההוא מכת הצאבה אומרים בקדמות העולם שהם היו מאמינים שה' רוח הגלגל כמו שבארנו במורה הנבוכים ומכזבים בהגיע נבואה מאת ה' לבני אדם. וכן יתחייב להם לפי אמונתם הכזבת המופתים ויחסו אותם לכשוף ולתחבולה... הורה שהנבואה היתה אצלם מכת הנמנע ואיך יספר למי שלא נתאמתה אצלו הנבואה דבר שאין ראייה עליו אלא האמת הנביא וכו' וכאשר רצה ה' יתעלה לתת תורה לישראל ולפרסם בהם מצותו ואזהרתו על ידי הנביאים לכל העולם... חדש המופתים הכתובים בתורה עד שהתאמתה בהם נבואת הנביאים וחדוש העולם... ולא הוציאם מעניני העולם הזה בגמול ובענש ומהענין אשר בטבע שהוא השאר הנפש או הכרתה כמו שזכרנו רצוני לומר העולם הבא וזאת ולא נכנס לזולת זה מענין התחיה. והתמיד הענין כן עד שהתחזקו אלו הפנות והתאמתו בהמשך הדורות ולא נשאר ספק בנבואת הנביאים ולא בחדוש הנפלאות ואחר כן ספרו לנו הנביאים מה שהודיעים ה' מענין תחיית המתים והיה קל לקבלו.

The Maharal states that prophecy is a this-worldly activity. It cannot grasp that which is other-worldly³. Our ability to understand the World to Come is a function of our wisdom⁴, of that which we can project beyond ourselves, not of prophecy, which is limited to that which reflect our overall spiritual level. All that prophecy can give us is a guide to completing this world⁵. And the purpose of this world is in order to serve G-d with all our potential. Although we are supposed to believe that we will get rewarded, this should not be the purpose of our spiritual strivings. Therefore, the Torah, lit. "that which teaches us the right way", makes no mention of the World to Come⁶.

Another reason is the fact that Torah belief has an empirical base – the national testimony of the Exodus and the Sinai events. This is what allows us to be so sure that we are right and they are wrong. Had

³תפארת ישראל פ' נז: כי אין השגת הנבואה רק לדבר שהוא בעולם הזה כמו ביאת משיחנו אף שהוא מדרכה עליונה בעולם הזה ... [אבל] דברים אשר אינם אתו במציאות ... לא שלטה הנבואה בזה... כי אין השגת הנבואה רק לדבר שהוא בעולם הזה כמו ביאת משיחנו אף שהוא מדרכה עליונה בעולם הזה וגו'
גבורות ד' הקדמה ראשונה: [כי דבר] הנבדל לגמרי מן האדם המשיג אין ראוי שיהיה בו השגת האדם וגו' ומסביר המהר"ל שם שבזה חכם עדיף מנביא כי נביא צריך להיות דבוק לפחות קצת למה שמשיג משא"כ החכם

⁴רס"ג אמונות ודעות, המאמר התשיעי, ב
אבל אמר בפירושו אושר העולם הזה ויסוריו בלבד לשתי סבות האחת מפני שגמול העולם הבא דבר שהשכל מורה עליו כמו שבארנו קצרה התורה מלבארו וכו' עיין שם

⁵In fact, if the Torah would have defined our as only reaching completion in the next world, this would have meant that this world is cannot be completed by our Avoda, which is not true:

תפארת ישראל פ' נח: התורה ... הוא תקון עוה"ז ... לקיים את סדר עולם הזה, ואם אתה אומר שיהיה מזכיר עוה"ב אם כן לא היה די בעולם הזה חיישר את ברואיו רק כאשר מבטיח להם עוה"ב, א"כ ... לא היה שלם מצד עצמו וגו'

⁶שם פ' נח: כי אין אפשר שיהיה נזכר בתורה שום שכר כאילו אמר שיעבד האדם בודאו בשביל השכר

the Torah brought in **הבא עולם**, since it is a fundamental belief, our faith would then be predicated on something which we can never, in this World, testify about. Our claims would then be no different to those of other religions¹.

vii. Who is the Messiah? How will we be able to tell when he has arrived?

The Messiah (Moshiach) will be a normal man² who will work on himself until he becomes a very inspiring example to others, a living model of righteousness³. He will be conceived normally, by two parents⁴, live and die, and presumably

¹שם: וגם יש להשיב כי התורה האמיתית לא זכרה עולם הבא בתורה בשביל דבר זה כדי שיהיו כל דברי תורה מבוררים נכרים לכל אדם בחוש העין דבר שהוא יסוד התורה ... כי אם באים להאמין דברים שהוא יסוד התורה כל אחד יוכל לכתוב תורה ומצות מלבו ויאמר שבשכר התורה יהיו לו כן וכך לעולם הבא דברים בלתי ידועים ולא יהיה ניכר האמת מן השקר ... ואדרבה דבר שהוא בלתי ידוע ומפורסם אדרבא מחליש האמונה ... ולא כמו שאר דתות שמניחים דבר שלא נתברר אמתתו

²However, he will be a direct descendent of King David.

³ישעיה יא, ה
והיה צדק אזור מתניו והאמונה אזור חלציו

(מדרש The Abarbanel, explaining a *midrash* דרש) פרשת תולדות, סי' יד) says the following about the Moshiach.

ישועות משיחו, העיון השלישי, א
שיהיה המשיח חסיד עליון ודבק באלקיו וכל מעשיו ופעולותיו יכוון לעבודתו... יותר מלאברהם אבינו וכי ישעיה יא, ה
והיה צדק אזור מתניו והאמונה אזור חלציו

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⁴רמב"ן ספר הויכות, פח
ויהיה איש גמור, בן איש ואשה מזיוג שניהם כמוני

ישועות משיחו, העיון השלישי, ג
והסתכל אמרו "להעמיד מכם" שאמרו בזה שהמלך המשיח יהיה כאחד ממנו ויהיה כמו כן מכל הצדדים

marry and have children. Although he will be a great prophet, he will not be as great as Moses in prophecy⁵. The Moshiach will be able to understand the essence of a person's soul, knowing his spiritual record⁶.

There are very clear criteria for establishing who the Moshiach is. For he is required to achieve certain things. (He has to gather all the Jewish people in the land of Israel, establish a new kingdom of Israel, destroy our enemies, reestablish the Sanhedrin and rebuild the Temple.) If he fails to do even one of them, he is definitely not the Messiah⁷. Similarly, in order to have prophecy, the Moshiach will have to become a master of Torah, and righteous in its fulfillment⁸.

viii. What will the world be like after the Messiah comes?

At this time, all Jews will return to Israel and will dedicate themselves to the highest spiritual lives. The nations of the world will want this to happen - in fact demand that this happens. They will assume responsibility for the physical and scientific progress and well being of the

מפאת האם ומפאת האב, וגם יהיה מאנשי הגלות סובל צרות הגלות כיתר אחיו וכי

⁵איגרת תימן, ד
שהמשיח נביא גדול מאד יותר גדול מכל הנביאים אחר משה רבינו ע"ה

⁶ישעיה יא, ג
והריחו ביראת ה' ולא למראה עיניו ישפוט ולא למשמע אזניו יוכיח וכי' סנהדרין צג:

רבא אמר דמורח ודאין דכתיב ולא למראה עיניו ישפוט ושפט בצדק דלים והוכיח במישור לענוי ארץ

⁷רמב"ם הלכות מלכים יא, ד
ואם לא הצליח עד כה או נהרג בידוע שאינו זה שהבטיחה עליו תורה

⁸איגרת תימן, ד
ואנחנו נתנה בכל נביא שיהיה בתכלית החכמה ואז ינבאהו ה', כי העקר בידנו (שבת צב). "אין הנבואה שורה אלא על חכם גבור ועשיר" ובארזו שענין גבור כובש את יצרו, ועשיר עשיר בדעתו. ואולם כשייתפאר אדם שאינו חכם גדול שהוא נביא לא נאמינהו, כל שכן כשייתפאר אחד מעמי הארץ שהוא משיח

world in return for the Jews taking care of it spiritually and ethically. G-d as a reality, and therefore high ethical standards, will be so clear to everyone that they will not be able to understand let alone be attracted to any alternative. The world will go through many stages even after the Messiah arrives, but they will all be inexorably in the direction of higher and higher spirituality.

In the Messianic era, good will become so clear that we will no longer see evil as having any reality. The Messianic era will be exceptionally suited for maximum spiritual growth, wisdom, knowledge and recognition of truth¹. In particular, those who will rise in the first resurrection, at the beginning of the Messianic Era, will be endowed with the answers to all questions².

Although people will still have the capacity to choose between good and evil³, people will naturally choose to do good, and lose their desire to do evil⁴. Just like a person today could theoretically put their

hand in a fire, but they would be insane to do so. People will understand truth with clarity, without the need for miracles or other proofs of G-d and the Torah⁵, and their hearts will naturally follow their minds⁶. There will be no distractions from dedicating one's life to spirituality⁷. Each Jew will be capable of understanding the truth by himself⁸; Moshiach will be needed only to teach non-Jews how they should serve G-d. None of this will happen immediately⁹. People will continue to grow, first to the stage of the First Man before his transgression, and then to further heights¹⁰. They will remember all the Torah they learned¹¹. Therefore people will longer be rewarded for choosing good¹². Nevertheless people will continue to grow in the Messianic era, as they study more Torah, and practice a purer and purer form of Judaism. The Messianic era

⁵רמח"ל דעת תבונות (עמ' קמד): המצב הרביעי ... שלא יצטרכו אותות ומופתים לאמת האמונה אלא מצד הידיעה וההשגה (וכתב ר' חיים פרידלנדר ז"ל שהמצב הרביעי היינו ימות המשיח

⁶רמח"ל דעת תבונות (עמ' קמד): המצב הרביעי ... שלא יצטרכו אותות ומופתים לאמת האמונה אלא מצד הידיעה וההשגה (וכתב ר' חיים פרידלנדר ז"ל שהמצב הרביעי היינו ימות המשיח

⁷רמב"ם הל' מלכים (פ' יב הל' ה): ולא יהיה עסק כל העולם אלא לדעת את ה' בלבד

⁸רמח"ל דעת תבונות (עמ' קמד): המצב הרביעי ... שלא יצטרכו אותות ומופתים לאמת האמונה אלא מצד הידיעה וההשגה (וכתב ר' חיים פרידלנדר ז"ל שהמצב הרביעי היינו ימות המשיח

⁹רמח"ל דעת תבונות (עמ' קמד): המצב הרביעי ... שלא יצטרכו אותות ומופתים לאמת האמונה אלא מצד הידיעה וההשגה (וכתב ר' חיים פרידלנדר ז"ל שהמצב הרביעי היינו ימות המשיח

¹⁰רמח"ל דעת תבונות (עמ' קמד): המצב הרביעי ... שלא יצטרכו אותות ומופתים לאמת האמונה אלא מצד הידיעה וההשגה (וכתב ר' חיים פרידלנדר ז"ל שהמצב הרביעי היינו ימות המשיח

¹¹רמח"ל דעת תבונות (עמ' קמד): המצב הרביעי ... שלא יצטרכו אותות ומופתים לאמת האמונה אלא מצד הידיעה וההשגה (וכתב ר' חיים פרידלנדר ז"ל שהמצב הרביעי היינו ימות המשיח

¹²רמב"ם (דברים ל:ו): לא יהיה באדם חפץ אבל יעשה בטבעו מעשה הראוי, ולפיכך אין בהם לא זכות ולא חובה, כי הזכות והחובה תלויים בחפץ:

¹כתב הרמב"ם (הל' תשובה פ' ט):

ומפני זה נתאוו כל ישראל, נביאייהם, וחכמייהם לימות המשיח כדי שינוחו ממלכיות שאינן מניחים להן לעסוק בתורה ובמצות כהוגן ... שבאותן הימים תרבה הדעה והחכמה והאמת שנאמר כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ד' [במים לים מכסים] וגו'

וברמח"ל, דעת תבונות עמ' קמד: וישיגוהו בריבוי בדעת והחכמה

²רמב"ם (דברים ל:ו): לא יהיה באדם חפץ אבל יעשה בטבעו מעשה הראוי, ולפיכך אין בהם לא זכות ולא חובה, כי הזכות והחובה תלויים בחפץ:

³רמח"ל דעת תבונות (עמ' קמד): המצב הרביעי ... שלא יצטרכו אותות ומופתים לאמת האמונה אלא מצד הידיעה וההשגה (וכתב ר' חיים פרידלנדר ז"ל שהמצב הרביעי היינו ימות המשיח

⁴רמב"ם (דברים ל:ו): לא יהיה באדם חפץ אבל יעשה בטבעו מעשה הראוי, ולפיכך אין בהם לא זכות ולא חובה, כי הזכות והחובה תלויים בחפץ:

therefore comprises the last stage of preparation before **עולם הבא**¹.

During the Messianic Era we will lose the opportunity for acquiring further reward which we now acquire through the challenges of choosing to serve G-d². Nevertheless, great things will be achieved during this time. Firstly, we will continue to do the mitzvos. Although we will no longer have a **יצר הרע**, and doing the mitzvos will seem effortless, the mitzvos will never the less continue to purify us when we do them. We will lose the reward of overcoming our **יצר הרע**, but we still gain from the intrinsic purification process inherent in doing the mitzvos. This will be the final purification before **עולם הבא**³.

In addition, another vital component of perfection will be achieved. The purpose of creation is not just the completion of the individual – **תקון הפרט**⁴.

¹ ר' חיים פרידלנדר (שפתי חיים – אמונה ובחירה ח"ב דף קלה): "ימות המשיח" אינם מטרה כשלעצמה – שכר עבור קיום תורה ומצוותיה, אלא הם ימים של הכנה לעולם השכר.

² ר' חיים פרידלנדר (שם דף קמ): נפסיד בתקופה זו את קושי עבודת ד' של "לפום צערא אגרא"

³ בספר לב ציון (ספר של עיונים על הרמב"ן על התורה) הביא (פרשת נצבים דף רפז) לשון הרמח"ל במאמר העיקרים: " הנה שיתא אלפי שנה הגבילה החכמה העליונה לעבודת בני אדם והשתדלותם על השלמות, ואח"כ יתחדש העולם בצורה אחרת, ראוייה למה שיעשה בו אחר כן, דהיינו ההנאה הנצחית לזוכים לה, וטרם יכלו ששת אלפים אלה, הנה מאריך שיעבוד האומה הנבחרת במצבה השלם, שיוכלו למתק הדברים אחר כך אל הנצחיות ... והאמצעי לזה ... הוא מלך המשיח והנה בזמנו ועל ידו יתקנו ישראל תקון גדול וכל הבריאה אחריהם, שירבה הטוב בכל הצדדים ויסור הרע לגמרי, בין במה שנוגע לנפש האדם הנטייה לטובות, וגו' " ועל זה כתב הלב ציון: וכי דבריו מבואר שהתכלית היא שהמצוות שנעשה אז תזכרו אותנו להיות ראויים למצב של תחיית המתים, ואע"פ שלא יהיה נטיה לרע אע"פ המצוות העושות את פעולות הזיכור, ואין זה מחשב לגדר של שכר, אלא שזה טבען של המצוות.

דעת and in קל"ח פתחי חכמה (פתח ב דף ו) ⁴In Ramchal explains that if the purpose of the world had been exclusively to reward the righteous and punish the wicked, then the cycle of people living and being rewarded and punished could have gone on forever. There would be no need to bring this

Rather, it is the bringing of the whole of creation, the entire history of man, to a state of holistic completion – **תקון הכללי**⁵. As long as some people are doing evil and only some are doing good, there exists a terrible **חלול ד'** in this world⁶. But when everyone will naturally do his will, **קדוש השם's** oneness is revealed, the **גילוי יחודו** of earth who does not recognize G-d's oneness as revealed in this world, **גילוי יחודו**, then His oneness is still not yet revealed⁷. We are therefore all dependent

process to a conclusion by ending the order of the world as we know it and entering into the Messianic era.

דעת תבונות דף לב: "והנה כל זה נגד השכר ועונש ונגד הבחירה. ואם היתה הכונה באמת להעמיד הבחירה והשכר ועונש דהיינו שיהיה העולם תמיד בנוי מבני בחירה, להיות צדיקים או רשעים כרצונם, ותמיד יהיה טוב לצדיקים או רע לרשעים, היה צריך שיהיה זה תמיד, ולא יהיה לו הפסק." ובהארות האיר ל'ס' קסו: כי למה יבטל [הרע]? וכבר איננה רק לרעים, והרי הוא מוגבל בתחומו שלא לעשות כטבעו הרע אלא כמשפט הראוי

But, it is ultimately G-d's will that even the evil person benefit from His goodness. In ultimate terms, G-d does not want the possibility that somebody can disobey His Will, and deprive the world of His maximum bestowal of goodness. Therefore, he also does not want the punishment that goes with that negative choice. Punishment is, in ultimate terms, evil, and needs, at some stage to come to an end. Everything has ultimately to lead to a situation where G-d can bestow good on everyone, even the רשעים. Although the רשעים will be punished, that is only the means to get them to the end. Punishment then is not an objective good: it is a means to an end. Because it is not objectively good, it does not have permanence. It too, must ultimately be destroyed. All of this requires that, at some stage, we move into a higher plane of existence, where we are all maximally predisposed to receiving G-d's goodness.

⁵ רמח"ל דעת תבונות (דף לב): אין סוף הכונה על השכר ועונש אלא על התיקון הכללי

⁶ ר' פרידלנדר שם: [כ]מצבינו עתה יש חילול ד' עצום ונורא בבריאה

⁷This includes non-Jews as well: רמב"ם פ"א מהל' מלכים הל' ד:

particular, the righteous amongst them. These are partners with G-d in bringing about the Messianic state⁶.

The Jewish people therefore have a special responsibility to hasten the Moshiach's coming, both by their own actions, and by helping non-Jews to recognize G-d's oneness as well.⁷ (Then non-Jews will also recognize that their spirituality is dependent on and goes through the Jewish people⁸.)

The Moshiach is the catalyst designated to ensure that mankind achieves this state. The primary vehicle for that state will be the Jewish people⁵ and in

...אם עשה [כל הדברים האלה]...הרי זה משית בודאי ויתקן את העולם כולו לעבוד את ד' ביחד שנאמר כי אז אהפוך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרוא כולם בשם ד' ולעבדו שכם אחד.

R.S.R. Hirsch: Israel's most cherished ideal is that of the universal brotherhood of mankind. Almost every prayer we utter contains reference to the hastening of this end. (The 19 Letters, 15th letter.)

¹רמח"ל דעת תבונות (דף קפט): אמנם כלל תיקון הבריאה חילק אותו האדון ב"ה בין כל הנשמות אשר עשה לעבדו

²רמב"ם הלכות מלכים יב, ד לא נתאוו החכמים והנביאים ימות המשיח לא כדי שישלטו על כל העולם ולא כדי שירדו בעכו"ם ולא כדי שינשאו אותם העמים ולא כדי לאכול ולשתות ולשמוח אלא כדי שיהיו פנויים בתורה וחכמתה ולא יהיה להם נוגש ומבטל כדי שיזכו לחיי העולם הבא

³רמח"ל מאמר העיקרים, בגאולה שירבה הטוב בכל הצדדים ויסור הרע לגמרי בין במה שנוגע לנפש ובין במה שנוגע לגוף דהינו לב האבן יעשה לב בשר, והוא שתגבר בבני האדם הנטיה לטובות ובאפן שלא ימשכו אחרי החמר כלל אלא ינטו תמיד לעבודה ולתורה ויתגברו בה וכו'

⁴רב צדוק הכהן תקנת השבים דף 161 בנוגע להמשיח עצמו

⁵בראשית א:לא רש"י: הוסיף ה-א בשישי בגמר מעשה בראשית לומר שהתנה עמהם על מנת שיקבלו עליהם ישראל חמשה חומשי תורה. ד"א יום הששי כולם תלויים ועומדים עד יום הששי הוא ששי בסיון

רמח"ל, מאמר העיקרים, בגאולה וטרם יכלו ששת אלפים אלה, הנה צריך שתעמד האומה הנבחרת במצבה השלם שיוכלו לעתק הדברים אחר כך אל הנצחיות, וזה מה שהבטחנו עליו שיהיה על כל פנים, והאמצעי לזה יהיה אחד מזרע דוד שיבחרהו האדון ברוך הוא לזה ויעזרהו שיצליח בו, והוא מלך המשיח.

⁶וכתב הרמח"ל בדעת תבונות (דף קעב) שיש שותפות בין הצדיקים והקב"ה בתיקון הבריאה ובדף קעג כתב "והנה הקב"ה מחלק מעצם הנהגתו לכנסת ישראל, להיותו שותפות עמו בהשלמת הבריאה, שיהיה הוא יתברך מתקן מצד אחד, והיא מצד אחר, ומיניה ומינה יסתיים התיקון השלם" ובדף קעו כתב, "ובהגאל ישראל ... הכבוד עצמו יתרומם".

⁷דברים ו: ד שמע ישראל ד' אלקינו ד' אחד רש"י: ד' שהוא אלקינו עתה ולא אלקי האומות הוא עתיד להיות ד' אחד וגו' כד הקמח (ערך הגאולה): וטעם הפיזור ... האחד ש ... ילמוד האומות מהם מציאות הש"י ובענין ההשגחה וגו' וכן בספורנו (שמות יט:ו): ... תהיו ממלכת כהנים להבין ולהורות לכל המין האנושי לקרוא כולם בשם ד' ולעבדו שכם אחד וגו'

⁸תנחומא במדבר ג: ולעתיד עכו"ם רואין היאך הקב"ה מתדבק עם ישראל והם באים להדבק בהם שנאמר (זכריה ח) נלכה עמכם כי שמענו אלקים עמכם

They will attempt to show that they had always acted in a way which reflected this recognition:

ע"ז ב: מלכות רומי ... אומרים לפניו רבש"ע הרבה שווקים תקנינו הרבה מרחצאות עשינו... וכולם לא עשינו אלא בשביל ישראל ...

They will be taught by משיח: משיח does not need to teach the Jews, as it says:

ולא ילמדו עוד איש את רעהו ואיש את אחיו לאמר דעו את ד' כי כולם ידעו אותי למקטנם ועד גדולם: (ירמיהו לא:לג) (וכן בישעיה נד:יג וכל בניך למודי ד')