

# Body: The Physical World

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## Body: The Physical World

Body: The Physical World According to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

The 24th of Tevet is the anniversary of the passing of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad Chassidism.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman was born in the White Russian town of Liozna on Elul 18, 5505 (1745) – the 47th birthday of the founder of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov. In 1764 he traveled to Mezeritch to study under the tutelage of the Baal Shem Tov's successor, Rabbi DovBer. Despite his youth, he was accepted into the inner circle of the great master's pupils.

Upon his return from Mezeritch, there gathered about him a group of disciples whom he instructed in the ways of Chassidism. It was during these years that he formulated his distinct "Chabad" philosophy and approach to life, which he subsequently outlined in his magnum opus, Tanya, on which he labored for twenty years before publishing it in 1796. By that time, his influence had spread throughout White Russia and Lithuania, where a significant part of the Jewish population regarded him as their Rebbe and leader.

In late summer of 1812 Rabbi Schneur Zalman fled the approach of Napoleon's armies, which were advancing through White Russia in their push toward Moscow (Rabbi Schneur Zalman

actively supported the Czar in the war against Napoleon – see our previous articles, Bonaparte and the Chassid and Is Judaism a Theocracy?). After many weeks of wandering he arrived, in the dead of winter, in the town of Pyena. There he fell ill and on Tevet 24, Motzaei Shabbat (Saturday night) following Shabbat Parshat Shemot, at 10:30 in the evening, he returned his soul to its Maker.

In those last days in Pyena Rabbi Schneur Zalman wrote one of the most profound essays to issue from his pen – a lengthy treatise later published as “Section 20” of Igeret HaKodesh (a collection of his letters and essays appended as “Part Four” of Tanya). Another manuscript that has been preserved from those days is a short discourse entitled “The Humble Soul”, which the Rebbe wrote shortly before his passing (by one account, “After havdallah, several minutes before giving up his soul in purity to G-d”).

The contents of these two discourses present something of an enigma to the student of Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s philosophy, who expects to see a recapitulation of the Rebbe’s earlier works in these products of his final days. Instead, one finds what appears to be a departure from – or even a reversal of – certain key principles of his previous teachings.

### Spirit Over Matter

In his Tanya, Rabbi Schneur Zalman describes a perpetual struggle between the spiritual and the material in man and in creation.

Within the human being, this conflict takes the form of a battle between the “animal soul” and the “G-dly soul.” The animal soul is our physical self – the drive to be and exist, the instinct for self-preservation, self-fulfillment and self-enhancement. The G-dly soul is the source of our spirituality – our drive for self-transcendence, our yearning to escape the confines of our material existence and connect to the infinite

and the eternal. Life is the war between these two opposing drives: every act we do, every word we utter, even every thought we think, is an outcome of this inner struggle, representing the victory of one of the two selves vying to express itself and further its aims via the body and faculties which they share.

On the cosmic level, there is the conflict between the spiritual essence of creation – the divine utterances or sparks of holiness at the core of every created thing – and the mantle of materiality that embodies, obscures and imprisons them. We redeem these “sparks of holiness” by utilizing the material objects and resources of our world to serve G-d, thereby transforming them from material things (i.e. things that exist for their own sake) into spiritual things (things whose sole purpose is to serve a higher end).

What makes the spiritual more holy than the material? Why are the instincts and drives of the animal soul less G-dly than those of the G-dly soul? Rabbi Schneur Zalman explains that the cardinal law of existence is that “There is nothing else besides Him” (Deuteronomy 4:35). Hence, transcendent and self-abnegating entities are holy and G-dly, for they affirm and convey the truth that there is no true existence (that is, nothing that exists for its own sake) other than G-d. Self-oriented things are profane and unG-dly because their very existence entails an obfuscation of this truth.

Thus, even the most innocent of physical actions can be a subtle form of “evil”. If a person eats with no thought other than satisfying his natural craving for food – which is his animal soul’s desire to sustain its physical existence – his eating constitutes a denial of the principle that “there is nothing else.” The Tanya therefore instructs us to sanctify our eating by eating for the purpose of utilizing the energy we derive from our food to serve G-d. In this way, the act of eating becomes a holy act – an act that expresses, rather than controverts, the exclusivity of the Divine.

It is not enough, says the Tanya, to carry out the commandments of the Torah and refrain from transgressing its prohibitions. This is but the most overt battlefield in the war of life. We must go further, to battle the more subtle challenge to the integrity of our bond with G-d: to vanquish the material self that contests the divine truth with its pretensions to a self-defined existence.

The Tanya charts a program for life to achieve this end: to dethrone the material self from its natural station as the seat of our identity and the prime motivator of everything we do, and establish our spiritual self in its place; to transform our every deed from an act of self-perpetuation to an act of self-transcendence and self-abnegation; to actualize the spiritual essence within every creation and free it of its corporeal body and prison, by enlisting it in the endeavor to serve G-d.

As Rabbi Schneur Zalman writes in a key passage in Tanya, "The foundation and root of the entire Torah is to raise and exalt the soul over the body."

### The Conquest of Earth

One would presume the moral tone of such an approach to life to be one of disdain for the material world and for all things physical. Yet the Tanya is far from an ascetic's manifesto. It does not call for a denial of the body's needs, or even for a renunciation of physical pleasure. While it condemns indulgence in the material for its own sake – for no purpose other than sustaining or giving pleasure to the body – it sees the potential for sanctification even in as physical an activity as "eating fat beef and drinking spiced wine" when it serves the purpose of "giving oneself an expansive state of mind in which to serve G-d and [study] His Torah or to fulfill the mitzvah to enjoy the Shabbat and the festivals."

The Tanya goes so far as to declare the physical world to be

the ultimate objective of G-d's creation and the only environment within which His desire for a world can be satisfied. All other dimensions of creation – including the most lofty of spiritual worlds and realities – were created solely to facilitate the creation and the continued existence of our physical world and its actualization of the divine desire for a “home in the lower realms.” Indeed, as Rabbi Schneur Zalman points out in numerous discourses, virtually all the mitzvot of the Torah involve the utilization of some material substance to fulfill the will of G-d – wearing tefillin made of animal hide or tzitzit made of wool, eating matzah on Passover, giving money to charity, etc.

This, however, does not contradict our earlier classification of the material as profane and unG-dly. In fact, it is precisely because of its profanity and unG-dliness – precisely because its very existence belies the truth that “There is none else besides Him” – that the physical reality is the focus of G-d's desire for creation.

For it is in the conquest of the material that the true supremacy of the spirit is revealed. As the intensity of a lamp is measured by the farthest point its light can reach, and as genius is ranked by the extent of its ability to explain itself to the simplest of minds, so is the all-pervasiveness of the divine most powerfully expressed when a material substance – the least transcendent of G-d's creations – is made to serve a G-dly aim.

In other words, the paramount role that physical reality plays in the divine purpose in creation is not a factor of any positive quality on its part. On the contrary: because of its contrariness to all that is spiritual and G-dly, it is the vehicle of choice to reveal the infinite reach and scope of the divine truth.

The Divine Analogue

Such is the world-view put forth in the Tanya and augmented by scores of maamarim (discourses) delivered by Rabbi Schneur Zalman in the four decades of his leadership. Then, in the last days before his passing, he authored two discourses which open an entirely new perspective on the material reality.

In Section 20 of Igeret HaTeshuvah, Rabbi Schneur Zalman addresses the issue of the centrality of the physical mitzvot to the divine purpose in creation. Here, however, he does not explain this in terms of the greater challenge to the divine truth posed by the material world. Instead, he attributes it to a certain synonymy between the divine reality and the physical reality.

We have described physical matter as the most self-defined of G-d's creations. This quality of the physical, we said, constitutes a denial of the truth that "There is nothing else besides Him." But it is also the quality that marks it as the only creation that shares this quality with its Creator.

G-d is the ultimate self-defined being – a being not preceded by any cause, a being who exists to no end other than itself. This is how He perceives Himself – for this is what He is. Other than G-d, there is only one other being that sees and presents itself as such – the physical object. But the physical object sees and presents itself as such only because it was instilled with this self-perception by its Creator. And in granting it this self-perception, G-d has imbued the physical object with a quality that is uniquely His. Only G-d, who Himself possesses absolute being, can create something that exudes such absoluteness of being – something that regards itself as having no other cause preceding it.

So the great lie of the material reality is also a great truth. It is a great lie because it presents itself as a true existence when the only true existence is G-d. It is a great truth because the truth it so falsely appropriates to itself is a representation, imprinted in its very being, of the truth

of its Creator.

If we take the material world at face value, it is a challenge to the exclusivity of G-d. But if we delve deeper into its essence and origin, it is the ultimate attestation to His truth. If we listen to what the physical object says about itself, we hear a blatant denial of its Source; but if we look at what it is, we see an analogue of the divine being.

This is why the mitzvot – the building blocks of G-d's home in creation and the ultimate facilitators of our relationship with G-d – are physical deeds enacted with physical objects: not only because the material world is the greatest challenge to the divine truth (making its conquest the greatest proof of its potency), but also because, in the final analysis, physical matter is the most divine of G-d's creations.

### The Humble Soul

This is also the thrust of *The Humble Soul*, the other discourse authored by Rabbi Schneur Zalman in the last days of his physical life.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman was a master philosopher and Kabbalist, and his achievements as a Talmudist and Halachist were lauded by follower and foe alike. Yet he devoted a great portion of his time to the material needs of his people, working to establish agricultural colonies to provide a livelihood for hundreds of families, and counseling the many thousands who came to Liadi to seek his advice regarding their communal, business and domestic affairs.

In the closing moments of his life, Rabbi Schneur Zalman looked back upon these expended hours and energies without regret. "For the truly humble soul," he wrote, "its mission in life lies in the pragmatic aspect of Torah, both in studying it for himself and explaining it to others, and in doing acts of material kindness in lending an empathizing mind and counsel from afar regarding household concerns, though the

majority, if not all, of these concern things of falsehood.”

Why occupy oneself with “things of falsehood,” much less see them as one’s mission in life? Rabbi Schneur Zalman finds the answer in the following Midrashic account of the creation of man:

Truth said: “He should not be created, for he is full of lies.” Benevolence said: “He should be created, for he is full of kindness” ... What did G-d do? He took Truth and threw it to the ground. Thus it is written (Daniel 8:12), “And You cast truth to the ground.” Said the ministering angels to G-d: “Master of the Worlds! Why are You insulting Your signet?” [Said G-d:] “Truth shall ascend from the earth.” Thus it is written (Psalms 85:12), “Truth shall sprout forth from the earth.” (Midrash Rabbah, Bereishit 8:5)

The material life of man is full of falsehoods: the fallacy that its concerns are formidable and important, the fallacy that material conditions have the power to dictate one’s spiritual course, the fallacy that physical life is an end in itself. Our first inclination may be to demolish these falsehoods, or to rise above them. But the truly humble soul accepts that it is its mission in life not to repress or escape the material, but to deal with it with faith and integrity.

And when it does so, it will find that its cultivation of the false soil of earth has caused a deeper truth to sprout forth: the truth that, in the words of Maimonides, “All existences, of the heaven, the earth, and everything in between, exist solely from the truth of His existence.”

## A Story

How might we reconcile these two world views? Is the vision of reality expressed in Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s Pyena writings a departure from the vision formulated in his Tanya? Or are the Pyena discourses in fact the crowing turret of his life’s



work, while his earlier works are the foundation and edifice that invariably lead to them and support them?

Instead of attempting to resolve this question – an attempt which is sure to consume many more pages than our format allows – we will conclude this essay with a story:

There was once a Chassid by the name of Yaakov Mordechai who for many years deprived himself of all physical comforts in order to achieve a supremacy of spirit over matter in his life. Before his passing, however, he expressed regret at having weakened his body with his unrelenting regimen: perhaps, had he not been so hard on himself, he would have lived to observe even one more mitzvah. “Thirty years to sleep on a bench!” he was later quoted to have said. “To put on tefillin one more time is far more valuable than to sleep on a bench for thirty years!”

When Chassidim told this story, they would add: True—a single mitzvah is more valuable than a lifetime of self-refinement. But to appreciate the value of a mitzvah as Reb Yaakov Mordechai did, one must first sleep on a bench for thirty years.

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## **The Dwarf and the Giant**

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# The Dwarf and the Giant

By Rabbi Yaakov Paley

## The Battle of Britain

In 1940, the German armies ploughed their way through Europe. With every stomp of the German boot another country fell. To secure its grip on its thrashing prey, and to dominate the surrounding waves unchallenged, the Reich had to subdue or destroy the British forces. To conquer Britain via land invasion would be impossible without eliminating the significant threat from the Royal Air Force. Otherwise, every ship sent to the island would be sunken on approach. So began the famous Battle of Britain.

A nation held its breath with their eyes towards the skies, as the British watched a most vicious series of dog-fights. Week after week, Berlin sent steel ravens to claw at their skies, pieces of airplane hurtling earthwards togetherwith the bombs. They followed in horror and hope as their own sons braved the lead-filled skies, to again and again repel the flying Nazis from their country's clouds.

At stake was victory against a tyrannical world order. Should they lose the skies, their countrymen would have their orders barked at them in German, and possibly their future generations would too. Europe would have less hope with the British Forces subdued. They had no choice but to win, and they did. Not due to their skill, for many pilots' first engagement with the enemy was also their last, and planes were being lost almost as quickly as they were being built. Rather it was their relentless courage and sheer perseverance that won freedom for generations and gained Europe a vital base from which to wrest the knife from its attacker.

The Prime Minister, famous for his wisdom in expressing sound

truths in simple sentences, coined a statement of gratitude in honor of the brave airmen. He produced such an eloquent phrase, that it is surely fitting to convey an inspirational message in our own service of our Creator, as the Baal Shem Tov taught us to take a lesson in our Divine service from all we see or hear.

Winston Churchill: "Never was so much owed by so many to so few."

If you and I are soldiers, our planet a battlefield, our galut ("exile") a state of war, and redemption the victory, then we must recognize the power that our arsenal of good deeds unleashes, and the uniquely privileged duty that our present generation bears. Indeed, we were informed by our officers that "Every mitzvah brings Moshiach closer." To understand the magnitude of advancing the onset of the final redemption, one must first appreciate the enormity of each prolonged moment in exile.

It is not the Jewish people alone who are in a state of spiritual and physical displacement. The King of Kings, Creator of All-G-d Himself is in exile too, so-to-speak! The Talmud declares: "When the people of Israel were sent into exile, the Divine Presence was exiled with them. And when they will be redeemed, the Divine Presence will be liberated along with them." "In all their afflictions," prophesies Isaiah, "He is afflicted." Our Sages describe the Divine 'weeping' at His creature's sufferings, and 'grieving' each day in which the Redemption does not arrive. He does not sit in His palace whilst His subjects do battle; rather He is found alongside of us.

Together with G-d, all of His ministering angels are likewise in exile. Not just a few of them, but the entire "a thousand thousands serve Me, and a myriad myriads rise before Me" (Daniel 7:10) suffer the concealment of Divine radiance in their heavens. Moreover, these figures describe one encampment

of angels, whereas "His troops are without number"!

The Lubavitcher Rebbe spent hours closeted in deep discussion with statesmen and scholars, yet he was also able to express profound concepts for the consumption and mind of the child. He described the above thought for a youngster: A child may have a few pennies or even a large collection of pennies, but the child can readily appreciate that his local bank holds far more pennies than he has. And he could only imagine how many pennies there are in the federal bank in Washington...

So a child could readily understand that because G-d has many, many, more angels than the federal bank in Washington has pennies, and each of these individual angels are suffering every second that the exile continues, then to bring the Redemption even one moment sooner brings relief to each one of these countless spiritual beings! Put in this perspective, a moment is not a mere fraction of time; rather it is immeasurable in quantity and certainly in quality.

A child will also appreciate that together with himself, his mother and father, sisters and brothers, are all waiting for Moshiach too. And all the Jews of his neighborhood and country along with millions of Jews across the entire world! In addition, there are untold millions of Jews from hundreds of past generations, whose souls likewise mourn the Divine concealment in the spiritual spheres and whilst in the Garden of Eden still yearn for the future Resurrection.

"In that time, there will be no hunger nor war, no jealousy nor quarrelling, and goodness will be in abundance..." Maimonides describes an era that mankind has always dreamt of. Every moment without starving continents, without countries torn by war and misery, is another great liberation for millions worldwide.

Yet, by Divine Providence, the immense honor of cutting the ribbon on this wondrous Era has fallen to... us! It has not come

to us due to our merits, accomplishments or skills, for we pale before the deeds of past eras. Rather, as “dwarfs standing upon the shoulders of giants,” our final deeds piled upon the accumulative pyramid of all generations past have reached the defining point. “He who affixes doors onto the house, is as if he had built the entire structure.” When that final mitzvah performed at any moment by ‘someone who is anyone’ has slipped into place, then the entire world and all those souls in Heaven, with all the countless spiritual beings including G-d Himself, will be released into a blissful era of divine revelation, peace and plenty.

They will all turn to the relentless fighters who won the final skirmish in a war of good deeds against a dark and unhappy world—that’s us—and exclaim:

Never have so many owed so much to so few!

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## **Brainwashed**

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## **Brainwashed**

In my work as a cult-buster I saw first hand how people can be indoctrinated and brainwashed to do things against their very nature. Over these last few months I looked into the culture of a suicide bomber. According to the stories I read, many people are forced into the heinous act against their will. Recently, there has been a rash of suicide bombers, leaving me wondering if it’s possible for a whole generation, a whole

country, to be brainwashed to commit suicide/murder. An incident at the beginning of this month gave me my answer.

On November 5, 2005, Sajida Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi accompanied her husband to Jordan on a forged passport with the intention of blowing herself up together with him in a Jordanian Hotel.

Husband and wife went to opposite sides of a ballroom in the hotel, where a wedding was taking place, so they could maximize the damage. Since Muslim weddings are split by gender, Sajida al-Rishawi had to go to the women's side of the ballroom. She sat between the women and children with the intention of killing as many people as possible. Had the bomb exploded, she would have succeeded in murdering many of the women and children she was sitting with.

Historically, freedom fighters and those willing to die for their cause are men. By nature a man is territorial and will fiercely protect his own territory, which has led to many men declaring themselves freedom fighters, as well as to many wars.

By nature a woman is a nurturer and wants to take care of her family – and others if necessary. Why, then, would a woman blow herself up? And more so, why would a woman, the nurturer of the home, try to kill as many woman and children as possible?

The Muslim culture, teaches their children that the greatest achievement is being a parent and creating life. I wondered about this would-be suicide bomber who wanted to kill children. Did she have children of her own? Even if Sajida Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi has no children she had to have yearned to be a mother. How can someone who gave birth to her own children – or spent many years yearning for them – callously kill other people's children? How can a woman raised in a culture that promotes creating life, commit an act with

the intention to destroy life?

This 'holy war' has not only changed the face of the warriors, turning them into terrorists, and the face of terrorists by brainwashing women and children to commit acts against their very nature, it has changed the face of the victim too. Male freedom-fighters have traditionally stayed away from killing women and children. Other than in this 'Muslim holy-war', killing defenseless citizens especially women and children, was always considered a weak and pathetic act. Civilian casualties were an unfortunate by product of war, not the target, yet in this war it seems that no one can feel safe that they won't be targeted and their attacker may be an innocent looking woman or child, maybe even a mother holding a baby.

The only explanation that comes to my mind is that, Sajida Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi, like many other men, women and children of the Muslim faith, was simply brainwashed and indoctrinated for so long and from such a young age that killing for the 'right reason' is sanctified, that she wouldn't consider the deaths of innocent women and children murder. Brainwashing those who would otherwise be unwilling to commit heinous acts of terror which are totally against their nature, has sunk this war to a despicable level.

Jihadic terrorism has no justification or rationalization and must be condemned by all G-d fearing people as an evil that must be eradicated.

B"H

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# **GOD BLESS YOU, Gezundheit!**

According to a recent study, 83% of the US population believes in G-d. Incredibly, 76% of doctors believe in G-d, a surprising degree of spirituality in a science-based field.

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## **Leadership**

Ten years ago a lot of people speculated about the future of Chabad-Lubavitch. "Without the Rebbe's leadership", they asked, "can the movement sustain itself?"

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## **The Evolution of G-dliness**

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## **The Evolution of G-dliness**

Ha-Yom Harat Olam

By Eliyahu Kitov

Today is the birthday of the world; on this day He calls all



the created beings of the worlds to stand in judgment. [Are we regarded] as children or as servants? If as children, have mercy upon us as a father has mercy upon [his] children; if as servants, our eyes are turned to You until You will be gracious to us and bring forth our judgment as the light, O Awesome and Holy One.

This prayer is recited after the blessing at the end of each of the three special sections of the Rosh Hashanah Musaf prayer.

We mention the world's Creation to remind ourselves that Rosh Hashanah is a day of renewal. The prayer is repeated three times as an allusion to the three renewals that the world has experienced: the six days of Creation, the period after the Flood, and the day of the giving of the Torah.

At the time of Creation, the world was under the dominion of Divine sovereignty – malchuyot. This changed after the Flood, when Divine providence became dominant – a trait that is symbolized by G-d's accounting of mankind's actions – zichronot. After G-d gave the Torah, the trait of Divine revelation – shofarot –was also introduced.

For the first 1,656 years after Creation, G-d treated man with the attribute of sovereignty alone. The L-rd, King of the Universe, crowned man over the lower creations; he imbued him with honor, granted him power and might, made his life long, and let him do as he wished without restraining him through precepts and obligations.

He did not give him the Torah, nor the Seven Laws of the gentiles [except by allusion], and He promised neither reward nor punishment, for those who are members of the King's household should not require any codes.

They are expected simply to live up to their greatness, retain the honor of the Kingdom, and be worthy of their high standing, by upright deeds and thoughts, as prescribed by the

wisdom of their hearts.

But man was unable to stand up to the test of sovereignty. Instead of imbuing the world with grace through the mighty powers that he had been granted, he filled the whole world with greed, ugliness, and wickedness. Instead of becoming a partner of He Who created the world for him with grace and love, he became instead an associate of Satan, and used his greatness only to corrupt.

For many years G-d treated man with tolerance and patience. But when man showed that there was no chance that he would change his evil ways, the Flood came and inundated the world. It was apparent that a world based on the foundation of sovereignty alone could no longer exist. Man's instincts would always overpower him if he lived in a world without fear or worry.

Thus, G-d tempered the trait of Divine Sovereignty with the trait of Divine Providence for the next 792 years. Perhaps sovereignty together with providence would secure the world's existence.

Man would not lose his superiority with the created world but he would have to accept a yoke of specific commandments and precepts – the Noahide laws – that would make him aware of his responsibilities, that he was acting under supervision and that he was accountable for his actions.

G-d also shortened the number of years that man would live and diminished his powers, so that even if he wished, he could not bring the world to a state of absolute corruption.

But man did not pass this second test either. Ten generations passed between Noah and Abraham – generations that defied G-d's law even though they knew what the result of their rebellion would be. Sovereignty and greatness had not sufficed to defend man against his evil instincts, and Divine providence did not suffice either.

The knowledge that he would be called upon to account for his deeds was not enough to keep man from transgression.

The world stood on the brink of a second disaster and would have been again subject to destruction, but a nation arose, of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, creating a people that would take responsibility for all of Creation and take upon itself the task of restoring honor to those who were created in G-d's image. When they accepted G-d's Torah they saved the world from being returned to void and emptiness; at Mount Sinai the world was renewed, and this time until eternity.

With their acceptance of the Torah, G-d introduced a third element to join with sovereignty and providence as manifesting His Presence in the world. This element – Divine Revelation – provided man with the ability to perceive G-d's revelation; to hear His voice speak through the Prophets; to listen to the call of conscience that would stir him to repent; to tremble in awe of the Creator when the shofar blasts would remind man to consider who he is and what he must do.

Thus, the world after Sinai stands on three pillars: the sovereignty of G-d Who is the absolute source of all that is; the providence of G-d Who rewards and punishes man for what he does; and the revelation of G-d, the yoke of Torah, given to man with the sounds of the shofar that reverberate within him and keep him faithful to his mission.

The echoes of the shofar are always heard. At times they are strong and at times they get weaker, and then strong again. When the great Day of the L-rd comes, they shall burst forth with their full might and be heard by all mankind, as it is said (Isaiah 27:13): And it shall be on that day, a great shofar shall be sounded...

By Eliyahu Kitov |

Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, OBM, was one of Israel's most acclaimed

religious authors, whose books on the Jewish way of life and the Chassidic movement have become renowned. Text translated from the Hebrew by Nachman Bulman and Dovid Landseman.

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# Maimonides Laws of Kings

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# Maimonides Laws of Kings

## CHAPTER EIGHT

By Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

1. When the army's troops enter the territory of gentiles,[1]conquering them and taking them captive, they are permitted to eat meat from animals that died without being ritually slaughtered or which weretrefe,[2] and the flesh of pigs and similar animals, if they become hungry and can only find these forbidden foods.[3]
2. Similarly, they may drink wine used in the worship of

idols.[4]This license is derived by the Oral Tradition[5]which interprets Deuteronomy 6:10-11: "God... will give you... houses filled with all the good things" as "pigs' necks and the like."[6]

3. Similarly, a soldier may engage in sexual relations with a woman[7]while she is still a gentile[8]if his natural inclination overcomes him.[9] However, he may not engage in

sexual relations with her and then, go on his way.[10] Rather, he must bring her into his home as Deuteronomy 21:11 states "If you see a beautiful woman among the prisoners...You shall bring her into the midst of your home..."[11] It is forbidden for him to engage in sexual relations with her a second time until he marries her.[12]

4. Relations with **ayefat toar** are only permitted while she is in captivity as the verse states " If you see... among the prisoners..."[13]

This license is permitted whether the woman is a virgin or not, even if she is married,[14] for the gentiles' marriages are not recognized.[15]

A number of laws are derived from the exegesis of the verse from Deuteronomy quoted above: "And you desire" – even though she is not beautiful.[16]

"Her" – and not another. He may not engage in sexual relations with two women.

"You may take her as a wife" – He may not take two women as captives with the intention of engaging in relations with one and saving the other for his father or brother.[17]

What is the source which teaches that he may not pressure her in the midst of the war? Deuteronomy 21:12 states: "You shall bring her into the midst of your home..." Thus, he must bring her into an (vacant)[18] place and then, engage in relations

with her.[19]

5. A priest is also allowed relations with **ayefat toar** initially. For the Torah only permitted relations as a concession to man's natural inclination.[20] However, he is not permitted to marry her afterwards, for she is a convert.[21]
6. What is the procedure which a Jew must follow regarding **ayefat toar** after he had relations with her once while she is still a gentile? If she desires to enter under the wings of the **Shechinah**, [22] he may have her immersed in a mikveh [23] for the purpose of conversion immediately. [24]

If she does not accept the Jewish faith, she should dwell in his house for thirty days, as *ibid.* 21:13 states: "She shall mourn her father and mother for thirty days." [25] Similarly, she should mourn the abandonment of her faith. [26] Her captor should not prevent her from crying. [27]

She must let her nails grow and shave her head so that she will not appear attractive to him. [28] She must be together with him at home. [29] Thus, when he enters, he sees her; when he leaves; he sees her, so that he becomes disgusted with her. [30]

He must be patient with her so that she will accept the Jewish faith. If she accepts Judaism and he desires her, [31] she may convert and immerse herself in the mikveh for that purpose, like other converts. [32]

6. A captor must wait three months before marrying his captive: the month of mourning and two months following it. [33]

When he marries her, he must give her **Kiddushin** and a **Ketubah**. [34] If he does not desire her, he must set her free. [35] If he sells her, he violates a negative

commandment,[36] as Deuteronomy 21:14 states: "You may not sell her for money." [37] Should a captor sell his captive, the sale is invalidated and he must return the money.[38] Similarly, if after having relations with her, he forces her to become a servant, he violates a negative commandment[39] from the time he makes use of her as states: lo titamar boh. That phrase means "he should not make use of her." [40]

7. Her captor must be patient with her for twelve months if she refuses to convert.[41]

If she still refuses after this interval has passed, she must agree to accept the seven universal laws commanded to Noah's descendants[42] and then, she is set free. Her status is the same as all other resident aliens.[43]

Her captor may not marry her, for it is forbidden to marry a woman who has not converted.[44]

8. If she conceives after the initial relations with her captor, the child has the status of a convert.[45] In no regard is he considered as the captor's son,[46] for his mother is a gentile. Rather, the court immerses him in the mikveh and takes responsibility for him.[47] Tamar was conceived from King David's initial relations with a **yefat toar**, [48] but Avshalom was conceived after marriage.[49] Thus, Tamar was only Avshalom's maternal sister[50] and thus, would have been permitted to Amnon.[51] This can be inferred from the statement II Samuel 13:13: "Speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you."

9. A **yefat toar** who does not desire to abandon idol worship after twelve months[52] should be executed.[53] Similarly, a treaty cannot be made with a city which desires to accept a peaceful settlement until they deny idol worship, destroy their places of worship,

and accept the seven universal laws commanded Noah's descendants.[54] For every gentile who does not accept these commandments must be executed[55] if he is under our undisputed authority.[56]

10. Moses only gave the Torah and mitzvot as an inheritance to Israel,[57] as [Deuteronomy 33:4] states: "[The Torah...] is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob,"[58] and to all those who desire to convert from among the other nations, as [Numbers 15:15] states "the convert shall be the same as you." [59] However, someone who does not desire to accept Torah and mitzvot, should not be forced to.[60]

By the same regard, Moses was commanded by the Almighty to compel all the inhabitants of the world to accept the commandments given to Noah's descendants.[61]

If one does not accept these commands, he should be executed.[62] A person who [formally] accepts these [commands] is called a resident alien. [This applies] in any place.[63] This acceptance must be made in the presence of three Torah scholars.[64]

Anyone who agrees to circumcise himself[65] and [allows] twelve months to pass without circumcising himself is considered as one of the nations.[66]

11. Anyone who accepts upon himself the fulfillment of these seven mitzvot and is precise in their observance is considered one of "the pious among the gentiles" and will merit a share in the world to come.[67]

This applies only when he accepts them and fulfills them because the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded them in the Torah[68] and informed us through Moses, our teacher, that Noah's descendants had been commanded to fulfill them previously.[69]



However, if he fulfills them out of intellectual conviction,[70] he is not a resident alien, nor of "the pious among the gentiles,"[71] nor of their wise men.[72]

[1]. Some texts substitute idolaters for the latter term.

These leniencies are only permitted when the army enters enemy territory. Though certain Rabbinic obligations are relaxed within **Eretz Yisrael** (See Chapter 6, Halachah 13), all Scriptural prohibitions must be observed.

[2]. Implied by that term is an animal which possesses a blemish, wound, or ailment that will cause it to die within twelve months (**Chullin** 3:1).

[3]. The soldiers are only allowed forbidden foods if they have no alternative. However, they need not be on the point of starvation. This leniency was granted for were they required to forage for kosher food, they would place themselves in danger of enemy attack (Radbaz).

[4]. **Yayin Nesech** in Hebrew. The prohibition against drinking **Yayin Nesech** is included as one of the Torah's 613 mitzvot. In addition, the Sages forbade drinking all wine touched by a gentile. See Hilchot Ma'achalot Assurot, Chapter 11.

The Ramban (Deuteronomy 6:10) objects to this ruling, maintaining that license was only granted in regard to the Rabbinic prohibition. However, **Yayin Nesech** itself is forbidden even during wartime. Other commentaries support his argument noting that idol worship and anything associated with it is included among the three sins for which a person should sacrifice his life rather than transgress.

However, other authorities defend the Ramban's decision, noting that licentious sexual behavior is also one of these

three sins for which for which a person should sacrifice his life and, as stated in the following halachah, soldiers are allowed relations with gentile women in wartime (Or Sameach).

[5]. See **Chullin** 17a.

[6]. The Ramban (ibid.) questions the Rambam's statements, noting that this verse refers to the occupation of **Eretz Yisrael** during the time of Joshua. During the entire fourteen years when **Eretz Yisrael** was settled, there was no obligation to keep any of the dietary laws even outside of a battle situation. If so, how can this license be extended to the circumstances at hand?

However, the Rambam's logic can be explained as follows: Since we see that the Torah relaxed the dietary laws entirely during the conquest of **Eretz Yisrael**, we can assume that temporary license would be granted in other conquests (Radbaz)

[7]. Deuteronomy 21:10-11 states:

When you go out to war against your enemies, God will give them over to your hand, and you may take captives. If you see a beautiful woman among the prisoners and desire her, you may take her as a wife.

The Torah permits this relationship only as a concession to man's natural desires. Were the Torah to unequivocally forbid intimacy with captive women, the prohibition would probably be ignored. Hence, certain strictures are instituted so that soldiers could release their natural desires without leading to total licentiousness and a breakdown of Jewish morality and family life (@82Kiddushin@81 21b

[8]. There are other authorities who forbid all intimacy during wartime. Relations are not permitted until the woman is brought home and undergoes the mourning procedures mentioned

below. This is still a “concession” to man’s natural tendencies for the soldier realizes that ultimately, he will be able to consummate his desires (Ramban, Deuteronomy, @14ibid.@13; Rashi commenting on **Kiddushin** 21a; Jerusalem Talmud, **Makkot** 2:6).

[9]. **Sefer HaMitzvot** (positive commandment 221) and **Sefer HaChinuch** (mitzvah 532) include the laws associated with relations with a captive woman, **yefat toar** in Hebrew, as one of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah

However, though taking a **yefat toar** was permitted, the Sages looked askance at this practice. They cite the example of King David who took Ma’akah, the daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur as a captive wife. Concerning their marriage, **Midrash Tanchuma** comments:

See what came out of their union! Avshalom, who desired to kill his father..., was born. A controversy broke out in Israel and myriads were killed, including the wisest men of the land...

[10]. Judaism views sexuality and responsibility as fundamentally interrelated. Were a soldier permitted to engage in sexual relations with a woman and then, abandon her without any further ties, he would begin to view sexuality as cheap and commonplace. Hence, the Torah instituted the practices described in the following halachot (Guide to the Perplexed, Vol. III, Chapter 41).

[11]. The **Minchat Chinuch** asks why the Rambam makes a blanket statement that the soldier is required to bring a **yefat toar** into his home. As mentioned in Halachah 5, the Sages did not approve of marriage to a **yefat toar** and were pleased when her captor did not desire her and set her free. Hence, ideally, it would seem preferable for the soldier to lose his desire for the woman immediately, free her at that time, and

never bring her home.

Possibly, the Rambam's statements can be understood on the basis of the **Meiri's** commentary, **Kiddushin** 21a. The **Meiri** writes that relations with a **yefat toar** are only permitted when the soldier intends to marry her. If he does not have that intention, all relations, even a single experience, are forbidden. (Note, however, Halachah 4 which states that a priest is permitted to engage in relations with a yefat toar even though he is not permitted to marry her.)

[12]. See Halachah 6.

[13]. Once a captive woman has been enslaved as a servant, intimacy with her is forbidden (**Kiddushin** 21a).

[14]. The word *eishet* used in the above verse can be rendered both as "woman" or "wife of." On that basis, **Kiddushin** (ibid.) derives this law.

[15]. **Sanhderin** 52b teaches that a Jew is not liable for transgression of the prohibition against adultery if he has relations with a gentile's wife. However, though a Jew is absolved for punishment for such an act, a gentile is liable. One of the seven mitzvot which the gentiles are obligated to fulfill is the prohibition against adultery. See Halachot 1 and 5 of the following chapter.

[16]. Though the verse mentions "a beautiful women," by using the word "desire," it implies that the attractiveness of the woman is not the determinant factor. As long as the man desires her, these laws apply (**Kiddushin**, ibid.).

[17]. He may not take even one woman for the sake of another person and not for himself (**Tosafot**, **Kiddushin** 22a).

[18]. This word is lacking in the printed texts of the Rambam and was added on the basis of manuscripts brought from Yemen.

[19]. The **Kessef Mishneh** writes that the soldier must take his captive to a city to have relations with her. Other commentaries offer different interpretations. However, all share the same basic theme. Sexual relations must be carried out in a private place without the knowledge of the other soldiers.

[20]. A priest also has natural desires. Were a captive woman forbidden him, he might be overcome by his instincts and violate the prohibition (**Kiddushin** 21b).

[21]. As mentioned in **Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah** (18:3), a priest may not marry a convert.

[22]. The latter phrase is a euphemism for conversion based on Boaz's blessing to Ruth (1:12): "May a full reward be granted you by God, Lord of Israel, under whose wings you have taken shelter."

@99Like other converts, before conversion, she must accept all the obligations of Torah and mitzvot.

[23]. For a woman, the conversion process involves, immersion in a mikveh and acceptance of the mitzvot (@82**Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah**@81 14:5-6).

[24]. The mourning practices described below are only necessary if the woman hesitates to adopt Torah and mitzvot. If she willingly desires to convert, none of these rites are required (@82**Yevamot**@81 47b).

[25]. On a number of occasions, e.g., Numbers 20:29, Deuteronomy 34:8, the Torah mentions one month as a complete period of mourning. A similar concept is expressed in Jewish law, see **Hilchot Evel** 6:1-2.

This mourning period was instituted to affect both the man and the woman: The man was intended to continually confront this

woman while she was mourning. Seeing her in this state, he would lose his original desire (**Sifri**, Rashi).

From the woman's perspective, this period was an act of mercy, granting her an opportunity to release the grief and sorrow she felt about her forced abduction from her native country and her ruptured family ties. It also represented a purification process, during which the woman was cleansed of the idolatrous practices of her native land (Guide to the Perplexed, Vol. III, Chapter 41).

[26]. **Yevamot** 48b relates that Rabbi Akiva interprets the terms "father" and "mother" as euphemisms for idol worship. Similarly, Jeremiah 2:27 chides the people for "saying to a stock of wood: You are my father;" and to a stone: You brought me forth.

[27]. Rather, he should treat her with mercy and kindness.

[28]. She was required to shave her head to diminish her beauty. This practice also served as a sign of purification and acceptance of a new status (Chizzkuni). Compare to Leviticus 14:8 which describes the initiation of the Levites, and to Numbers 8:7, which describes the purification of a Nazirite.

[29]. The soldier is required to bring his captive to his own home. He is not permitted to find her another dwelling in which to undergo these procedures.

[30]. And set her free, rather than marry her.

[31]. Yemenite manuscripts of the **Mishneh Torah** substitute "and she desires him" for the latter phrase. The change answers a significant question: Can the woman's captor marry her against her will or must she desire him?

The Ramban and other commentaries accept the principle that

the woman's consent is not required for the marriage. Certain opinions maintain that though the Rambam differs regarding forced conversion (see below), he accepts this opinion regarding marriage. However, based on those manuscripts, it appears that after conversion, the **yefat toar** is considered as any other Jewess and cannot be married against her will.

[32]. The Rambam requires the captive woman to willingly accept Judaism. In contrast, the Ramban maintains that she may be converted and married against her will.

[33]. This three month waiting period is not instituted because of the particular circumstances associated with a **yefat toar**, but rather, is a condition imposed on every woman who converts to Judaism.

It would take three months for a woman to realize whether she was pregnant. Thus, the Sages instituted this waiting period in order to determine the pedigree of lineage of any children born to female converts. **Hilchot Gerushin** 11:21 relates that even if a gentile couple convert together, they are forced to separate for three months to differentiate between children conceived before their entry into Judaism and those conceived afterwards.

Similarly, in this instance, the captive woman must wait three months to determine when a child born to her was conceived. As mentioned in Halachah 8, even if she conceived from the original relations permitted her and her captor, that child is not considered his and hence, also has the status of a convert.

[34]. See Chapter 4, Halachah 4, for a definition of these terms. After her conversion, the **toar** is granted all the rights possessed by any other Jewish woman.

[35]. In this instance as well, she is granted all the rights of any other female convert.

[36]. The **Sefer HaMitzvot** (negative commandment 263) and the **Sefer HaChinuch** (mitzvah 533) include this prohibition as one of the Torah's 613 mitzvot. In the Guide to the Perplexed (ibid.), the Rambam writes that this prohibition applies from the time the captor engages in relations with his captive (see below).

[37]. The **Sifri** explains that in addition to the explicit prohibitions against sale of the captive woman, she may also not be bartered, exchanged, or given to another Jew as a servant.

[38]. **Tamurah** 4b relates that any business transaction that violates a Torah prohibition is automatically nullified.

[39]. The **Sefer HaMitzvot** (negative commandment 264) and the **Sefer HaChinuch** (mitzvah 534) also include this prohibition as one of the Torah's 613 mitzvot.

In this instance as well, the prohibition begins from the time of relations, as implied by the verse (ibid.): "You may not sell her for money or keep her as a servant after taking advantage of her."

[40]. The **Sifri** notes that the root amar is Persian for servant and is rarely used in Hebrew.

[41]. A similar interval is granted to a Canaanite servant to decide whether he is willing to become circumcised and accept the mitzvot in which he is obligated (**Hilchot Milah** 1:6).

During this entire period, the captor may neither engage in sexual relations with her or use her as a servant.

[42]. See Halachot 10 and 11 of this chapter and Chapters 10 and 11 for an explanation of those laws.



[43]. The latter term is a translation of the Hebrew, *ger toshav*. As explained in *Halachah 10*, it refers to a gentile who accepts upon himself the observance of the seven mitzvot. The term is appropriate for such a gentile is entitled to settle in **Eretz Yisrael**. For when the Jews have undisputed rule over the land, they are forbidden to allow a gentile who has not accepted the seven mitzvot to dwell there for one moment. See **Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 10:6**, **Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah 14:7**.

[44]. Deuteronomy 7:3 mentions the prohibition against marrying a gentile. It also applies to a resident alien.

[45]. The child only receives the status of a convert after he undergoes the conversion process. Before then, he is a gentile as any child born from relations between a Jew and a gentile woman.

[46]. **Yevamot 23a** comments: "A son born to you from a gentile woman is called her son and not yours." Thus, this child has no relation to his natural father in regard to inheritance or Jewish lineage.

[47]. **Ketubot 12a** relates that a Jewish court may convert a minor. When he comes of age, he has the right renounce the Jewish faith and return to gentile practices.

The **r Sameach** notes that it is only necessary for the child to be immersed in the mikveh if the mother delays her conversion until after his birth. If she converts while pregnant, her immersion is sufficient for her child as well. Needless to say, if the child is male, he must be circumcised as a convert as well.

[48]. While David ruled as King of Judah in Hebron, he conquered Talmai, king of Geshur and took his daughter, Ma'aka, as a **yefat toar** (See commentaries, II Samuel 3:3).

conceived from those relations and bore a daughter, Tamar.

Tamar was extremely beautiful and Amnon, David's oldest son fell in love with her. He literally fell sick with love. His friends noticed him wasting away and helped him contrive a scheme to rape her.

Amnon feigned to be seriously ill and when David came to visit him, he requested that his father have Tamar prepare food for him. Unaware of Amnon's intent, David consented and sent his daughter to him. When she came, Amnon ordered all his servants to leave and took hold of the girl. She protested, begging him to marry her: "Speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." Amnon refused, wanting to only to fulfill his desires.

After consummating his passion, Amnon became obsessed with hate for Tamar. His despise for her exceeded his previous attraction. He sent her away rudely and paid no further attention to her. Avshalom, Tamar's brother, was enraged at the episode. He bided his time and when he had an opportunity, slew Amnon in revenge (II Samuel, Chapter 13).

[49]. Hence, he could have been considered David's heir.

[50]. The **r Sameach** notes that Ma'aka must have converted before Tamar's birth. Thus, she was considered the child's halachic as well as natural mother. Otherwise, halachically, Tamar would not have been considered her daughter and hence, would have had no relation to Avshalom.

[51]. For there was no relation between them.

[52]. The **Kesef Mishneh** questions why the captive woman is allowed to worship idols for such a long time. In no other instance is such tolerance shown. The commentaries suggest that this leniency was granted because she was forcefully possessed.

[53]. Regarding the captive woman's release, Deuteronomy 21:14 states: ,vishilachta which literally meaning: "You shall send her to herself." On this phrase, the **Midrash HaGadol** comments: Send her to herself,' but not to her gods."

[54]. See Chapter 6, Halachah 1.

[55]. See Chapter 9, Halachah 14.

[56]. In **HilchotAvodah Zarah** 10:6, the Rambam writes that no idol worshippers should be allowed to live among us "when the hand of Israel is powerful over them." The extent of the authority the Jews must yield is a matter of question among the commentaries.

It appears that throughout the second Temple period, though Judeah existed as an independent country, the Sages did not exercise this authority. Similarly, in **Eretz Yisrael** today, there are few, if any, Torah leaders who feel justified to assume such powers.

[57]. Chapter 10, Halachah 9, states that a gentile who studies Torah is worthy of death at the hand of God.

[58]. Just as an heir becomes the legal owner of all possessions left to him, the Torah, our national heritage, belongs to each Jew, regardless of background or upbringing.

[59]. With the exception of certain restrictions based on **yichus**, pedigree of lineage, converts are granted the same privileges and responsibilities as native-born Jews. They have a full share in the Torah.

[60]. In the Talmudic era, the later Hasmonean kings conquered the Idumeans and forcibly converted them to Judaism. What were the results of this act? Herod, an Idumean, became King of Judah and ruled the land as a cruel tyrant.

[61]. This obligation is dependent upon every individual in every era. The **Tosafot Yom Yov (Avot 3:14)** relates:

As the Rambam writes, we were commanded by Moses [to compel the gentiles to accept the seven commands]. If this applies to compulsion at the point of the sword, with threats of execution,... it surely applies regarding compulsion through persuasion, to lead their hearts to the will of their Creator.”

The Jews must serve as “a light unto the nations” (Isaiah 42:6) teaching them the seven mitzvot and instructing them in proper behavior (See the commentary of the Radak on the above verse). Similarly, the **Chatam Sofer (Choshen Mishpat, Responsum 85)** writes that it is a mitzvah to guide the gentiles in the service of God.

This particularly applies in the present age, when there is far greater communication between Jews and gentiles than ever before. The Jews should take advantage of this phenomenon. Rather than be influenced by the gentiles, they should utilize this freedom of communication to convince the gentiles to accept their seven mitzvot.

With this halachah, the Rambam begins a different section of **Hilchot Melachim**. These two halachot, and, similarly, the following two chapters, deal with the seven mitzvot the gentiles are obligated to perform. Afterwards, the final two chapters deal with the coming of Mashiach.

An important principle is implied by this sequence. Jewish thought relates that God rewards our behavior “measure for measure.” One of the fundamental achievements of Mashiach will be the refinement of the gentile nations. As the prophet Tzeplaniah 3:9 declares: “I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose” (see Halachah 11:4). As a preparatory step to merit these rewards, we must involve

ourselves in the refinement of the gentiles by motivating their acceptance of the seven mitzvot.

[62]. In contrast to the previous principles, this law only applies when the Jews have undisputed authority over **Eretz Yisrael**. See Chapter 9, Halachah 14.

[63]. The laws regarding resident aliens only applied while the entire Jewish people lived in **Eretz Yisrael** (**Hilchot Avodat Kochavim** 10:6). Nevertheless, in that era, a gentile could accept the obligations of a resident alien in any land.

[64]. Thus, comprising a court of law. The resident alien's acceptance of the seven mitzvot requires the presence of a court as does a gentile's conversion to Judaism.

[65]. I.e. to convert.

[66]. In **Hilchot Avodat Kochavim**, Chapter 10, the Rambam outlines the rules governing our relations with our fellow Jews and those governing our relations with gentiles. After a gentile has waited twelve months, his original commitment to convert is no longer taken seriously and his status reverts from that of a potential proselyte to an ordinary gentile.

The above is based on the standard published text of the **Mishneh Torah** which reads k'min haumot. The Yemenite manuscripts of the **Mishneh Torah** read: kmin min haumot, meaning "as a non-believer from the gentiles." Such an individual is subjected to harsher treatment than most gentiles.

[67]. This principle can be derived from the Mishnah's statement (**Sanhderin** 90a) that Bilaam will not receive a share in the world to come. It can obviously be inferred that the righteous of the gentiles will be granted a portion in that eternal good.

The **Zohar Chadash** (Ruth 78:4) relates that though the pious

gentiles will merit a portion in the world to come, their portion will be separate from that of the Jewish people.

[68]. In the Introduction to his Commentary on the Mishnah (conclusion of section 8), the Rambam writes:

The masses of people were created to be “company” for the wise that they not be alone... Everything in this world is only intended for the sake of a man who is complete in wisdom and deed... as implied by our Sages’ statement: “All that God possesses in this world are four square cubits of Halachah.”

Similarly, our Sages comment that bereishit, the first word of the Torah, can be broken up into two words: beit reishit, “two firsts”; implying that the world was created for the sake of two things that were called “first”: Israel and the Torah.

Accordingly, on one level, the purpose of the fulfillment of the seven mitzvot is to establish a stable world and a moral and hence, thriving society. However, this purpose is not an end in itself, but rather a means to allow the Jews to fulfill the Torah. Therefore, the gentiles’ acceptance of the seven mitzvot must also contain an awareness of the fundamental importance of Torah.

[69]. Though these mitzvot were commanded well before the giving of the Torah, when the Moses received the Torah, these commandments were renewed. We see a similar example in regard to other mitzvot. In his commentary on the Mishnah (**Chullin** 7:6), the Rambam writes:

All the [mitzvot] we fulfill should be carried out because of God’s command transmitted by Moses... We do not circumcise ourselves because Abraham circumcised himself, but because God commanded us, through Moses, to circumcise ourselves.

[70]. Without acknowledging them as Divine commands.

[71]. Thus, there are three levels in the gentiles’ acceptance

of their seven mitzvot: a resident alien who makes a formal commitment in the presence of a Torah court; “the pious among the gentiles,” individuals who accept the seven mitzvot with the proper intent, but do not formalize their acceptance; and a gentile who fulfills the seven mitzvot out of intellectual conviction.

[72]. The Yemenite manuscripts of the **Mishneh Torah** substitute “but rather, of their wise men” for this phrase.

The difference between these two texts revolves around the extent in which a gentile is required to perceive his role in creation. According to the Yemenite texts, a wise man can perceive how the fulfillment of the seven mitzvot can lead to a stable society. Hence, he will commit himself to their fulfillment. However, it is piety, not wisdom, which will motivate an individual to carry them out for the sake of God and Torah.

According to the standard published text, the gentiles themselves must realize that their existence is only “for the sake of Israel and for the sake of Torah.” Anyone who does not understand that concept has not reached complete wisdom.

## CHAPTER NINE

1. Six[1] precepts were commanded to Adam:
  - a. [the prohibition against] worship of false gods;[2]
  - b. [the prohibition against] cursing God;[3]
  - c. [the prohibition against] murder;[4]
  - d. [the prohibition against] incest and adultery;[5]
  - e. [the prohibition against] theft;[6][the command to establish] laws and courts of justice.[7]

Even though we have received all of these commands from

Moses and, [furthermore, they are concepts] which intellect itself tends [to accept], it appears from the Torah's words that [Adam] was commanded concerning them.

[The prohibition against eating] flesh from a living animal was added for Noah, as [Genesis 9:4] states: "Nevertheless, you may not eat flesh with its life, which is its blood." [8] Thus there are seven mitzvot. [9]

These matters remained the same throughout the world until Abraham. When Abraham arose, in addition to these, he was commanded regarding circumcision. [10] He also [ordained] the morning prayers. [11]

Isaac separated tithes [12] and ordained an additional prayer service before sunset. [13] Jacob added [the prohibition against eating] the sciatic nerve. [14] He also ordained the evening prayers. [15] In Egypt, Amram was commanded regarding other mitzvot. [16] Ultimately, Moses came and the Torah was completed by him. [17]

2. A gentile who worships false gods is liable provided he worships them in an accepted manner. [18] A gentile is executed for every type of foreign worship which a Jewish court would consider worthy of capital punishment. [19] However, a gentile is not executed for a type of foreign worship which a Jewish court would not deem worthy of capital punishment. Nevertheless, even though [a gentile] will not be executed [for these forms of worship], he is forbidden [to engage] in all of them. [20] We should not allow them to erect a monument, [21] or to plant an **Asherah**, [22] or to make images and the like even though they are [only] for the sake of beauty. [23]
3. A gentile who curses God's Name, [24] whether he uses God's unique name [25] or one of His other names, [26] in any language, is liable. This law does not apply with regard to Jews. [27]



4. A gentile who slays any soul,[28] even a fetus in its mother's womb,[29] should be executed [in retribution] for its [death].[30] Similarly, if he slew a person who would have otherwise died in the near future,[31] placed a person before a lion,[32] or starved a person to death, he should be executed for through one manner or other, he killed.[33] Similarly, one should be executed if he killed a pursuer when he could have saved [the latter's potential victim][34] by maiming one of [the pursuer's] limbs.[35] These laws do not apply with regard to Jews.
5. There are six illicit sexual relations forbidden to a gentile:[36]
  - a. his mother;[37]
  - b. his father's wife;[38]
  - c. a married woman;[39]
  - d. his maternal sister;[40]
  - e. a male;[41]
  - f. an animal.

[These prohibitions are derived from] the verse [Genesis 2:24]: "Therefore, a man shall leave [his father and his mother and cling to his wife and they shall become one flesh.]"[42]

"His father" – alludes to his father's wife;[43]

"his mother" – is to be understood simply;[44]

"cling to his wife" – and not his colleague's wife; [45]

"his wife" – and not a male;

"They shall become one flesh"[46] – this excludes a domesticated animal, beast, or fowl for [man] can never become "one flesh" with them.[47]

[The prohibition against relations with a maternal sister is derived from] the verse [Genesis 20:13]: "She is my sister, my father's daughter, but not my mother's.

[Thus,] she became my wife.”[48]

6. A gentile is liable [for relations] with [his mother even though] she was seduced or raped by his father [and never married to him]. She is, nevertheless, his mother.[49]He is liable [for relations] with his father’s wife even after his father’s death.[50]He is liable [for relations] with a male whether a minor or an adult[51] and with an animal whether young or old.[52] [In the latter instance,] the gentile alone is executed and not the animal.[53] We are only commanded to kill an animal with which a Jew [engaged in relations].[54]
7. A gentile is not executed for [adultery] with his colleague’s wife unless they engage in relations in the normal manner[55] after she had engaged in relations with her husband at least once. However, if she was merely consecrated or had undergone a wedding ceremony, but had never engaged in relations [with her husband], one is not liable for engaging in relations with her,[56] as [Genesis 20:3] states: “For she has been possessed by [her] husband.”[57]When does the above apply? When a gentile engages in relations with a gentile woman.[58] However, a gentile who engages in relations with a [married] Jewess is liable whether their relations were carried out in a normal or abnormal manner.[59][Similarly,] a gentile who engages in relations with a Jewish maiden[60] who has been consecrated is stoned to death because of her as is the law regarding Jews.[61] If he engages in relations with her after she has undergone the wedding ceremony, but has not engaged in relations [with her husband], he is strangled to death as is the Jewish law.[62] However, if he engages in relations with a Jewish woman after she engaged in relations [with her husband] once, he is sentenced to be executed by decapitation[63] as if he had engaged in relations with a gentile woman.[64]

8. A gentile who singles out one of his maid-servants for one of his slaves[65] and, afterwards, engages in relations with her is executed because of her for [violation of the prohibition against] adultery.[66] However, he is not liable [for relations] with her until the matter has become public knowledge and everyone refers to her as "the wife of X, the slave." [67] When do [relations with] her become permitted again? When he separates her from his slave[68] and uncovers her hair in the market-place.[69] When is a gentile woman considered divorced? When [her husband] removes her from his home and sends her on her own or when she leaves his domain and goes her own way. They have no written divorce proceedings.[70] The matter is not dependant on the man's [volition] alone.[71] Whenever he or she decide to separate, they may [and then, are no longer considered as married.][72]
9. A gentile is liable for [violating the prohibition against] theft whether he stole from another gentile or from a Jew.[73][This applies to] one who forcefully robs [an individual] or steals money,[74] a kidnapper,[75] an [employer who] withholds his worker's wages and the like,[76] even a worker who eats [from his employer's produce] when he is not working.[77] In all [such cases], he is liable and is considered as a robber. With regard to Jews, the law is different.[78] Similarly, [a gentile] is liable [for stealing an object] worth less than a **p'rutah**. [79] Thus, if one gentile stole [an object] worth less than a **p'rutah** and another [gentile] stole it from him, they are both executed because of it.[80]
10. Similarly, [a gentile] is liable [for violating the prohibition against] eating a limb[81] or flesh from a living creature.[82] [This applies] regardless of the amount involved, for [the specification of] minimum amounts only applies to Jews.[83][A gentile] is permitted blood from a living creature.[84]

11. [The prohibition applies] to a limb[85] or flesh[86] that is separated from either a domesticated animal or a beast.[87] However, it appears to me[88] that a gentile is not executed for eating a limb [taken] from a living bird.[89]
12. Though one slaughters an animal, even if one severs the two signs [that distinguish it as having been slaughtered in a kosher manner],[90] as long as the animal moves convulsively,[91] the limbs and meat which are separated from it are forbidden to a gentile because of the prohibition against a limb from a living creature.[92]
13. All prohibitions that apply to a Jew regarding a limb from a living creature also apply to gentiles. Furthermore, there are instances where a gentile would be held liable and a Jew will not for a gentile is liable for a limb or flesh from a living creature whether from a domesticated animal or a beast, whether from a kosher or non-kosher species.[93] Similarly, a gentile is forbidden [to partake of] a limb from a living creature for a limb or flesh which is separated from an animal that is moving convulsively even though a Jew has already severed the two signs.[94]
14. How must [the gentiles] fulfill the commandment to establish laws and courts? They are obligated to set up judges and magistrates in every major city[95] to render judgement concerning these six mitzvot[96] and to admonish the people [regarding their observance].[97] A gentile who transgresses these seven commands shall be executed[98] by decapitation.[99] For this reason, all the inhabitants of Shechem were obligated to die. Shechem kidnapped.[100] They observed and were aware of [his deeds], but did not judge him.[101] A gentile is executed [on the basis of the testimony of] one witness[102] and [the verdict of] a single judge.[103] No warning [is required].[104] Relatives may serve as witnesses.[105] However, a woman may not serve

as a witness or a judge for them.[106]

[1]. **Sanhderin** 56a relates that Adam was commanded regarding all seven commands. Nevertheless, the Rambam choose to quote from **Bereishit Rabbah** 16:6 which mentions the seventh command, the prohibition against eating flesh taken from a living animal, as being given to Noah. It appears that the Rambam chose the latter source because man was not permitted to consume flesh at all until after the flood. Together with the license to eat meat, God explicitly forbade Noah from eating flesh from a live animal.

[2]. The Midrash derives all these six prohibitions from the exegesis of Genesis 2:16: "And God the Lord commanded to man, saying: @53You may eat of all the trees of the garden...@54 As evident from Hoshea 5:11, tzav, "command," serves as an allusion to the worship of false gods. This prohibition is discussed in Halachah 2.

[3]. The mention of God's name develops an association between this verse and the prohibition against cursing God mentioned in Leviticus 24:16. This prohibition is discussed in Halachah 3.

[4]. The Hebrew terms translated as "to man" refer to the command against murder, as mentioned in Genesis 9:6. This prohibition is discussed in Halachah 4.

[5]. The word, "saying," establishes an analogy between this verse and Jeremiah 3:1 which mentions this prohibition. It is discussed in Halachot 5-8.

[6]. This is derived from the license granted by the verse to eat from the trees of the garden, implying that otherwise,

Adam would have been forbidden to do so because the property did not belong to him. This prohibition is discussed in Halachah 9.

[7]. This command is inferred from the word Elohim. For although that term also means "Lord," Exodus 22:27 uses that term in reference to a judge. This command is discussed in Halachah 14.

[8]. This prohibition is discussed in Halachot 10-13.

[9]. Other commentaries explain that gentiles are obligated to perform other mitzvot, for example, honoring one's parents (See Rashi, Genesis 11:32) and charity (See Eichah 4:6). The Ran (**Sanhderin** 56b) relates that the number seven only applies to prohibitions. However, there are other positive commands that gentiles are obligated to fulfill.

[10]. Genesis 17:10 related God's command to Abraham: "This is My covenant between Me and you and your offspring... Circumcise every male."

As the Rambam writes in Chapter 10, Halachah 7, from that time onwards, the Jews were obligated to observe the mitzvah of circumcision. However, Leviticus 12:3 repeats the command to circumcise. In his Commentary on the Mishnah (**Chullin** 7:6), the Rambam explains the need for this repetition:

All the [mitzvot] we fulfill should be carried out because of God's command transmitted by Moses... We do not circumcise ourselves because Abraham circumcised himself, but because God commanded us, through Moses, to circumcise ourselves.

At Mount Sinai, the Jews were singled out by God to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Thus, the mitzvot given then differ, in purpose as well as in number, from the mitzvot given the gentiles. The gentiles' seven mitzvot are intended to establish a stable and moral society. The purpose of the 613 mitzvot is to establish a complete bond between God and

every aspect of man's personality.

Similarly, the mystical nature of the commands differ. **Kiddushin** 31a relates that one who carries out a mitzvah in fulfillment of God's command is greater than one who does so out of his own volition. Why? Because by fulfilling a mitzvah commanded by God, man steps beyond his humanity and performs deeds that are Godly in nature. This quality was granted to the mitzvot at Sinai and not beforehand. Consequently, all the mitzvot previously commanded to the forefathers had to be repeated.

[11]. Genesis 19:27 relates how "Abraham rose early in the morning, [hurrying] to the place where he stood before God." **Berachot** 26b infers that this applies to his morning prayers.

**Kiddushin** 82a states that Abraham fulfilled the entire Torah before it was given. This statement raises a question: Why does the Rambam only mention circumcision and the morning service as mitzvot which Abraham performed?

The commentaries explain that the Rambam only mentions those commands explicitly mentioned or clearly alluded to in the Torah. Furthermore, it is possible that the manner in which the Abraham and his descendants fulfilled the other commands differ from the manner in which we fulfill them today. For example, the **Zohar** writes that Ya'akov's placing the rods before Laban's sheep drew down the same spiritual energies as our donning of Tefillin.

[12]. Genesis 26:12 mentions how "Isaac reaped one hundred measures." **Bereishit Rabbah** 64:6 explains that he measured his crop in order to give tithes.

The Ra'avad questions why the Rambam does not count tithes as one of the mitzvot instituted by Abraham for Genesis 14:20 explicitly mentions Abraham's separation of tithes. The commentaries explain that Isaac and not Abraham, originated

the mitzvah of tithing produce as mandated by the Torah. Abraham tithed the booty he conquered in war. In contrast, according to Scriptural Law, the mitzvah to tithe applies only to certain agriculture products.

[13]. Genesis 24:63 relates how "Isaac went out in the fields to pray toward evening."

[14]. Genesis 32:26 relates that when Jacob was wrestling with Esau's archangel, the latter was able to dislocate Jacob's hip joint. Verse 33 continues: "Therefore, the children of Israel do not eat the displaced nerve on the hip joint." The nerve in question is the major nerve of the lower extremity, running down the back of the leg.

[15]. Genesis 28:11 relates that "Jacob encountered the place and spent the night there, because the sun had set." **Berachot** (ibid.) explains that implied by the Hebrew is the recitation of the evening prayers.

[16]. The **Kessef Mishneh** questions the source for the Rambam's statements, asking which mitzvot were commanded to Amram. Some commentaries point to the statements of the **Mechiltah** (Exodus 19:10) that before the giving of the Torah, Moses reviewed the mitzvot which the Jews had been given in Egypt. Since Amram served as the leader of the people, these mitzvot were probably given to him.

Others explain that the **Mechilta** could be referring to the mitzvot of matzah, marror, and the other elements of the Passover sacrifice given to Moses and not mitzvot given to Amram. They suggest that the Rambam is referring to the mitzvot of divorce and marriage. When Pharaoh commanded the Egyptians to drown the Jewish babies, Amram divorced his wife. Later, at the suggestion of his daughter, Miriam, he remarried her.

[17]. As explained above, there is a difference between the mitzvot given to the gentiles and those commanded the Jews.



[18]. Every false god has an accepted manner in which its adherents serve it. The idol worshippers established many [different] services for each particular idol and image. The service of one does not resemble the service of another (**Hilchot Avodat Kochavim** 3:2). A person does not incur the death penalty unless he worships a false god in its appropriate manner.

[19]. In addition to the sin of serving an idol in its appropriate manner, the death penalty is also given for bowing to one, sacrificing to it, offering incense to it, or pouring libations to it, even if the idol is generally not served in that manner (ibid. 3:3).

[20]. For example, kissing the idol, embracing it, washing it, sweeping before it, and similar acts of affection and reverence (ibid. 3:6).

[21]. A structure which attracts people and motivates them to gather around it. Construction of such a structure is forbidden even as an act of reverence to God (ibid. 6:6).

[22]. A tree which is worshipped (ibid. 8:3). The **Zohar** (Vol. I 49b) relates that worshippers of the moon would employ such trees in their services.

[23]. This is not a general prohibition against all artwork. In **Hilchot Avodat Kochavim** 3:10, the Rambam explains that it only applies to sculptures of human faces. Other images and paintings, imprints, and tapestries of humans are not forbidden.

[24]. The Rambam uses the word berach which literally meaning "blesses" as a euphemism.

[25]. **Hilchot Avodah Zarah** 2:7 explains that this refers to the name Adonai and, of course, the name Y-H-V-H which is only to be mentioned in the Temple.

[26]. The term kinui implies any name used to describe God and not necessarily, one of the seven names, e.g., El or Shaddai which are holy and may not be erased.

[27]. **Hilchot Avodat Kochavim** (ibid.) explains that a Jew is only liable if he mentions either the name Adonai or the name Y-H-V-H in the curse.

The obligation of gentiles in instances where Jews are exempt is not accepted by all Talmudic authorities (Note **Sanhderin** 56a). The **Kessef Mishneh** questions why the Rambam follows the more severe opinion.

[28]. Intentionally, see Halachah 10:1.

[29]. This refers to a person who intentionally delivered a blow to the mother which caused the fetus to die. A Jew would not be held guilty of murder for such an act (See Exodus 21:22, **Hilchot Chovel UMazik** 4:1). However, a gentile is considered liable.

It is obvious from this statement that abortion is equated with murder and is only permitted in certain instances where the mother's life is threatened.

[30]. Genesis 9:6 states: "He who spills human blood shall have his own blood spilled."

[31]. This refers to a person who is **trefe**, possessing a blemish or illness which would cause his death within twelve months. A Jew who kills such a person is not given the death penalty (**Hilchot Rotzeach** 2:8).

[32]. Other texts substitute "in a lion's mouth" for the latter phrase.

[33]. With regard to a Jew who commits such an act, **Hilchot Rotzeach** 3:10 states:

A person who... starves a colleague to death or... sets a dog or

snake upon him: in all cases of this nature, the person is not executed. Nevertheless, he is considered a murderer and the One who avenges blood will seek his blood.

[34]. A person is allowed to kill a person who is trying to kill or rape another individual (**Hilchot Rotzeach** 1:6-12). However, this leniency is only granted when there is no other alternative.

[35]. For he is not allowed to kill him. In contrast, if a Jewish pursuer kills a Jewish attacker under similar circumstances, "he is considered guilty of murder and obligated to die. However, he is not executed by the court" (ibid. 1:13).

[36]. There are many more relationships forbidden to a Jew. See Leviticus, Chapter 17, **Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah**, Chapters 1 and 2.

[37]. This applies even if she is not his father's wife. See the following halachah.

[38]. This applies even if she is not his mother, and even after his father's death.

[39]. As mentioned in the commentary to Chapter 8, Halachah 3, a Jew is not liable for adultery if he engages in relations with a gentile's wife. Nevertheless, the marriages of gentiles are significant for other gentiles and they are executed for committing adultery.

[40]. But not his paternal sister as obvious from the verse quoted below.

[41]. I.e., homosexuality.

[42]. This verse concludes the Torah's description of the creation of Eve and Adam's union with her. Thus, it serves as a guide for the sexual behavior of all his descendants.

[43]. For otherwise, there would be no need for such a prohibition for relations with males are explicitly forbidden.

[44]. It is interesting to note that there is no prohibition against relations with a daughter.

[45]. Halachah 7 explain that this refers to a woman who is married (**nissuin**) and not merely consecrated (**erusin**).

[46]. Give birth to children (Rashi, on Genesis, *ibid.*).

[47]. I.e., children can never be born from such a union.

[48]. Abraham made this statement to Avimelech to excuse his behavior in calling Sarah his sister rather than his wife. Abraham explained that she was like his sister (she was his father's granddaughter). However, he was allowed to marry her because they shared a common paternal ancestor, but not a common maternal ancestor.

[49]. This law is derived from the inclusion of two prohibitions; one against relations with one's father's wife and one against relations with one's mother. If the prohibition against relations with one's mother only applied to a woman married to one's father, only one prohibition would be necessary (**Sanhderin** 58a).

[50]. If not, there would be no need for this prohibition for she would be forbidden as any other married woman (*ibid.*).

[51]. A Jew is only liable for relations with a male nine years and over. Below that age, the Torah does not consider the child as sexually developed (**Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah** 1:14). The **Kessef Mishneh** favors the view that the same laws apply to a gentile as to a Jew. The Radbaz maintains that a gentile is liable no matter what the age of the child.

[52]. The age of an animal is of no significance whatsoever. A person is sentenced to death for relations with an animal even on the day of its birth (*ibid.* 1:16).

[53]. The question of executing the animal was debated and left undecided by **Sanhderin** 55a. Since no decision was reached, the death penalty is not administered.

[54]. The animal is also executed lest it be seen in the street and the passersby comment: "See that animal! So and so was executed for having relations with it."

[55]. I.e., vaginal, rather than anal intercourse.

[56]. "Before the Torah was given, a man would meet a woman in the market-place, if both he and she desired to marry, he would bring her to his home and possess her privately, thus, making her his wife."

"Once the Torah was given, the Israelites were commanded [as follows]: Should a man desire to marry a woman, he must first acquire her in the presence of witnesses. Afterwards, she will become his wife" (**Hilchot Ishut** 1:1).

The latter paragraph describes the two stages in Jewish marriage: **kiddushin** and **nissuin**. Only a Jew is obligated to marry in this fashion. For a gentile, the law remains as it was before the giving of the Torah and the marriage bonds are established through sexual relations alone.

[57]. – When Avimelech took Sarah, Abraham's wife, God employed this phrase to warn him that relations with her were forbidden. From the use of the phrase "possessed by her husband" as opposed to "another man's wife" or the like, our Sages derived that the marriage bond was established through sexual relations.

[58]. For capital punishment in the same manner as a Jew. With regard to relations with a Jewess, a gentile sexual offender is never granted greater leniency than a Jew.

[59]. Leviticus 20:22 uses a plural term, *mishkavei ishah* to describe sexual relations. This expression was chosen to teach

us that one is liable for two forms of intercourse, vaginal and anal (**Sanhderin** 54b).

[60]. The latter term refers to a virgin girl between the ages of twelve and twelve and a half.

[61]. See Deuteronomy 22:23-24. In this specific instance, a more severe penalty is given than in other cases of adultery.

The Jerusalem Talmud (**Kiddushin** 1:1) mentions that whenever a gentile is given the same punishment as Jews, his trial is also governed by the same laws. Generally, a gentile's trial is decided by a single judge on the basis of the testimony of a single witness. In this instance, there is obligation for twenty-three judges, two witnesses, a warning and all other elements required in capital cases involving Jews.

The Ran (**Sanhderin** 57b) does not accept this opinion. He brings proofs that the Babylonian Talmud, on which basis halachah is decided, does not differentiate between this case and other trials involving gentiles.

[62]. Once a couple have undergone the wedding ceremony, the penalty for adultery changes from being stoned to death to strangulation, a less severe means of execution.

[63]. Although a Jew would be sentenced to strangulation for the same sin.

[64]. In the former instances, no punishment would have been exacted for relations with a gentile woman. Hence, the offender is punished according to Jewish law. However, when a parallel offence exists among the seven mitzvot, a gentile is punished accordingly. Decapitation is considered a more severe means of execution than strangulation.

[65]. The slave must also have engaged in relations with the maidservant for the issue of adultery to be raised (Radbaz).

[66]. **Sanhderin** 57a mentions that a master should be executed

for such an act. However, the reason for his execution is a matter of debate among the commentaries.

Rashi maintains that there is no concept of marriage with regard to slaves. The master is violating the prohibition against theft, taking the woman he had given to his slave, but not adultery. The Rambam does not accept this view for the slave never really acquired the woman. Nor does he have the potential to do so, for "everything acquired by a servant becomes his master's property" (Radbaz).

[67]. The fact that the slave had relations with her is not sufficient to establish a bond between them for slaves were known for their lewdness. Their "marriage" is not recognized until the matter is publicly accepted.

[68]. The masculine conjugation of the verb is used implying that it is the master who performs this act.

[69]. Married women are obligated to cover their hair (**Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 115**). Even gentiles would observe this practice.

[70]. A Jew who desires to divorce his wife must give her a bill of divorce (**get**). This document must be composed by a scribe with expertise and training regarding all the particular laws involved. In contrast, gentiles do not require such a document. Their separation constitutes divorce.

Modern commentaries question whether these laws still apply to gentiles in the present age when most countries have instituted formal divorce proceedings. Since these proceedings are recognized by their court system and the laws established by a country must be observed by its inhabitants, a woman may be considered married until formally divorced.

[71]. This differs from Jewish law. According to Scriptural Law, a husband must initiate divorce and does not need his wife's consent. In the Middle Ages, Rabbenu Gershon decreed

that a woman may not be divorced against her will. However, the husband must willingly decide to grant the divorce.

[72]. The Rambam's statements are based on the Jerusalem Talmud (ibid.) which states that the gentiles "do not have divorce." The Ran (**Sanhderin** 58b) quotes an opinion which interprets that statement to mean that divorce is absolutely forbidden to a gentile couple.

[73]. The converse is also true. A Jew is prohibited against stealing from a gentile (**Hilchot Genevah** 1:2). However, he is not given the death penalty for such an act.

[74]. Genevah in Hebrew. In contrast to gezeilah, "robbery," genevah involves taking someone's money secretly without the owner's or the public's knowledge (**Hilchot Genevah** 1:3).

[75]. The command "Do not steal" in the Ten Commandments refers to kidnapping. **Sanhderin** 57a explains how this prohibition applies to gentiles.

[76]. For example, withholding rent due a landlord or the fee charged for the hire of a utensil or other property.

[77]. Deuteronomy 23:25 grants a worker the privilege of eating from the produce he is harvesting. However, this right is only given while he is actually working. Afterwards, taking from the produce is forbidden.

[78]. Though a Jew is also prohibited against all the above, there are different prohibitions involved. He is only labeled a robber if he forcibly taking money in the open.

[79]. A **p'rutah** was the smallest coin of the time. A Jew is also forbidden to steal this minimal amount. However, should he do so, the matter is not taken to court for surely, the owner is not concerned about the loss of such an insignificant amount (**Hilchot Gezeilah** 1:6).

[80]. With regard to Jews, though it is forbidden to steal



from a thief, the fine the second thief is obligated to pay differs from that required of the first. See **Hilchot Genevah** 1:17.

[81]. The term limb implies a bone with sinews and nerves as well as meat.

[82]. The **Sha'agat Aryeh** explains that there is a problem implicit in the Rambam's statements: A gentile is liable for eating even the slightest amount of meat. Since it is impossible for him to eat a limb that has no meat on it whatsoever, it appears superfluous to mention two prohibitions: one against eating a limb and the other against eating meat.

[83]. A Jew is also bound by these prohibitions. However, he is not liable for punishment until he consumes a minimum measure, the size of an olive (approx. one ounce), of these forbidden foods. **Eruvin** 4a explains that the concept of minimum amounts is part of the oral tradition which was given to Israel alone. Hence, the gentiles are liable for eating even the slightest amount of meat.

[84]. Genesis 9:4, the source for the prohibition against eating flesh from a living animal, states: "You may not eat flesh with its life, which is its blood." Nevertheless, **Sanhderin** 59a relates that this verse does not prohibit a gentile from drinking blood taken from a living animal. In contrast, a Jew is prohibited against drinking all blood, whether taken from an animal before its slaughter or afterwards.

[85]. The term limb implies a bone with sinews and nerves as well as meat.

[86]. In **Hilchot Ma'achalot Assurot** (5:2), the Rambam writes:

One is not liable for [the prohibition of] a limb from a living creature unless the limb is separated... with its flesh,

sinews, and bones.

However, if only flesh is separated from a living creature, [a person who eats it] is liable for [the prohibition against eating] **trefe** [meat], but is not liable for [the prohibition against] a limb from a living creature.

The **Kessef Mishneh** notes that a gentile is permitted **trefe** meat and questions why he is prohibited against eating flesh from a living animal.

The **Lechem Mishneh** replies that the prohibition for Jews and for gentiles are derived from different verses. The verse that prohibits a gentile from eating a limb from a living creature states; "You may not eat flesh with its life," explicitly mentioning flesh.

[87]. Though the Torah occasionally differentiates between these types of animals, in this instance, the same laws apply.

[88]. Throughout the **Mishneh Torah**, the use of this expression implies that the Rambam does not have an explicit Talmudic or Midrashic source to substantiate his statements. However, an analysis of the different references to the subject leads to this conclusion.

[89]. The Ra'avad does not accept this statement and maintains that a gentile is liable for eating flesh from a living bird. He is only exempt from eating flesh from a living creeping animal, *sheretz* in Hebrew.

The Radbaz defends the Rambam's statements, noting that though **Chullin** 101b obligates Jews for eating flesh taken from a living bird, gentiles may be exempt from that prohibition. The verse which describes the gentiles' prohibition mentions, *basar* "meat." **Nedarim** 54b relates an argument among the Sages where meat from a bird is considered "meat" or not. Thus, though a gentile is forbidden from eating such meat, he is not executed as punishment.

[90]. Kosher slaughter involves slitting the gullet and the wind-pipe. Once this is done, the animal will surely die within moments.

[91]. After slaughter, an animal will frequently move its limbs convulsively for a short time.

[92]. The animal is considered alive until it stops moving. The Radbaz states that although a prohibition exists, since the animal has been ritually slaughtered, a gentile is not executed for violating this prohibition.

[93]. In contrast, a Jew is only liable for eating a limb from a kosher species (**Hilchot Ma'acholot Assurot 5:1**). The prohibition against a Jew's eating such meat is derived from the verse (Deuteronomy 12:23): "Do not eat the flesh with its life." **Chullin 102a** explains that the prohibition only applies to flesh that we are permitted to eat. Such an exclusion does not apply regarding gentiles.

[94]. A Jew is not held liable under such circumstances. **Chullin 121b** permits a gentile to eat flesh from an animal slaughtered in this fashion and the Rashbah and other authorities accept this view. However, the Rambam follows **Chullin 33a** which forbid a gentile from eating this meat.

[95]. **Hilchot Sanhderin 1:1** obligates the Jews to set up courts "in every major city and town." However, that obligation applies only in **Eretz Yisrael**. In the Diaspora, they are only obligated to establish courts in every major city (*ibid.* 1:2). Similarly, gentiles need not establish courts in towns.

[96]. The Ramban (Genesis 34:13) disagrees and explains that the main function of these courts was not to deal with the ritual elements of these mitzvot, but rather to deal with civil cases, e.g. petty theft, wage disputes, and fraud.

[97]. To cite a parallel: **Tanna D'bei Eliyahu** (Chapter 11) also stresses that a court's responsibilities extend beyond the realm of judgement: "The **Sanhderin** is obligated to tie iron garters around their loins, lift their robes above their ankles... and travel throughout the villages of Israel... teaching the nation."

[98]. In contrast to a Jew, a gentile offender is executed for the violation of even the slightest command. As mentioned in the commentary to Halachah 1 of this chapter, the gentiles were created in order to allow for the maintenance of a stable and orderly world. All the seven commands have that intent. Hence, by violating one of those seven commands, they contradict their very purpose for existence.

[99]. See the commentary to Chapter 3, Hachahah 8.

[100]. Genesis 33:18 relates that during Jacob's return journey from Padan Aram to his father's home, he camped outside the city of Shechem. Shechem, prince of the city, kidnapped Dinah, Jacob's daughter, and raped her.

[101]. As retribution, Shimon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons slew every male in the entire city.

The Ramban (ibid.) does not accept the Rambam's interpretation of those events. He notes that Jacob severely reprimanded his sons for their behavior and did not forgive them even on his deathbed. Had Shimon and Levi administered just and due punishment, Jacob surely would not have criticized them in this fashion.

Other commentaries defend the Rambam's opinion, explaining that Jacob did not object to the sentence administered by his sons, but rather to the guile which they employed in order to enable them to execute it (see Genesis 34: 13-25).

[102]. Two witnesses are required for even the slightest case in Jewish law (**Hilchot Edut** 5:1).

[103]. In Jewish law, capital cases are decided by 23 judges (**Hilchot Sanhderin** 5:2).

[104]. In contrast, a Jew is not punished for violation of a sin until he is warned that the act he is about to commit is a sin and that, in retribution, the appropriate punishment is given (**Hilchot Sanhderin** 12:1-2).

[105]. **Hilchot Edut**, Chapter 13 describes the relatives whose testimony is not accepted in court in cases involving Jews.

[106]. She is also disqualified in Jewish law (**Hilchot Edut** 9:2).

## CHAPTER TEN

1. A gentile who inadvertently violates one of his commandments is exempt from all [punishment][1] with the exception of a person who kills inadvertently.[2] [In such an instance,] the redeemer of the blood[3] is not executed for slaying [the killer],[4] nor may the latter [seek asylum] in a city of refuge.[5] However, the court will not execute him. When does the above apply? When he inadvertently violates a command without [sinful] intention; for example, a person who engages in relations with his colleague's wife under the impression that she is his own wife or unmarried.[6] If, however, one knew that she was his colleague's wife, but did not know that she was forbidden to him or it occurred to him that this act was permitted[7] or one killed without knowing that it is forbidden to kill,[8] he is considered close to [having sinned] intentionally and is executed. This is not considered as an inadvertent violation. For he should have learned [the obligations incumbent upon him] and did not.[9]
2. A gentile who is forced by another person to violate one

of his commandments is permitted to transgress.[10] Even if he is forced to worship false gods, he may worship them.[11] For [gentiles] are not commanded to sanctify God's name.[12] A gentile minor, deaf-mute, or fool[13] is never given punishment for they are not [bound by any] commandments.[14]

3. A gentile who converted, was circumcised, and immersed [in the mikveh],[15] and, afterwards, decided to forsake God and revert to his previous [status as] a resident alien is not granted permission to do so. Rather, he must remain as an Israelite in all matters or be executed.[16] If he was a minor and immersed by the court,[17] he may repudiate [his conversion] when he attains majority and assume the status of a resident alien alone.[18] However, if he does not object as soon as he attains majority, he is no longer given the opportunity to object and his [status] is that of a righteous convert.[19] Therefore, if a Jew has relations with a girl below the age of majority[20] who was immersed [in the mikveh] by a court,[21] the money due her as payment of her **ketubah**[22] or as a fine for raping her[23] or seducing her[24] is placed in the custody of the court until she attains majority and does not repudiate her conversion. [This step is taken] lest she take the money, attain majority, and then, repudiate her conversion. Thus, she would derive benefit as a gentile from monies to which she is only entitled according to Jewish law. [25]
4. A gentile who converts after cursing God's name, worshipping false gods, engaging in relations with a colleague's wife, or killing a fellow gentile[26] is exempt [from punishment].[27] [In contrast,] if he converted after killing a Jew[28] or having relations with a Jew's wife, he is liable.[29] He is decapitated for [killing] the Jew[30] and strangled to death for engaging in relations with a Jew's wife.[31] [He is given the latter punishment] because the laws governing

him have changed.[32]

5. It has already been explained that gentiles are always executed by decapitation[33] except in cases when one engages in relations with the wife of a Jew or a consecrated maiden. [In the latter instance,] he is stoned to death.[34]If he engaged in relations with a Jew's wife after they married, but before they ever engaged in relations, he is executed by strangulation.[35]
6. According to the Oral Tradition,[36] gentiles are forbidden to cross-breed animals and graft different species of trees together.[37]However, they are not executed for [violating this prohibition.][38]A gentile who gave a Jew a blow is liable to die[39] for causing even the most minimal damage.[40] Nevertheless, he is not executed.[41]
7. Only Abraham and his descendants were commanded regarding circumcision as [Genesis 17:9-10] states: "[Keep My covenant,] you and your offspring... [circumcise every male]."[42]The descendants of Ishmael are excluded as implied by [Genesis 21:12]: "It is through Isaac, that your offspring will be called." [43] Esau's [descendants] are also excluded,[44] for Isaac told Jacob [Genesis 28:4]: "May [God] grant Abraham's blessing to you and your descendants," implying that only he is the true offspring of Abraham who maintains his faith and his upright behavior. Thus, they [alone] are obligated in circumcision. [45]
8. Our Sages related[46] that the descendants of Keturah who are the offspring of Abraham that came after Isaac and Ishmael[47] are also obligated in circumcision.[48] Since, at present, the descendants of Ishmael have become intermingled with the descendants of Keturah,[49] they are all obligated to be circumcised[50] on the eighth day.[51] However, they are not executed for [failure to perform this mitzvah].[52]
9. A gentile who studies the Torah[53] is obligated to

die.[54] They should only be involved in the study of their seven mitzvot.[55] Similarly, a gentile who rests,[56] even on a weekday, observing that day as a Sabbath,[57] is obligated to die. Needless to say, [he is obligated for that punishment] if he creates a festival for himself.[58] The general principle governing these matters is: They are not to be allowed to originate a new religion or create mitzvot for themselves based on their own decisions.[59] They may either become righteous converts and accept all the mitzvot or retain their statutes without adding or detracting from them. If [a gentile] studies the Torah, makes a Sabbath, or creates a [religious] practice, a [Jewish court] should beat him,[60] punish him,[61] and inform him that he is obligated to die.[62] However, he is not to be executed.

10. We should not prevent a gentile who desires to perform one of the Torah's mitzvot[63] in order to receive reward from doing so,[64][provided] he performs it as required.[65] If he brings [an animal to be sacrificed] as a burnt offering, we should receive it.[66] If a gentile [who observes the seven mitzvot] gives charity, we should accept it from him. It appears to me that it should be given to the Jewish poor for the gentile [may] derive his sustenance from the Jews and they are commanded to support him [if necessary].[67] In contrast, if an idolater gives charity, we should accept it from him[68] and give it to the gentile poor.[69]
11. The Jewish court is obligated to appoint judges for these resident aliens[70] to judge them according to these statutes so that the world will not become decadent.[71] If the court sees fit to appoint the judges from [the resident aliens] themselves, they may. If it sees fit to appoint them from among the Jews, they may.
12. Should two idolaters[72] come before you to [have their dispute] judged according to Jewish law.[73] If they both desire to be judged according to Torah law, they



should be judged [accordingly]. If one desires [to be judged according to Torah law] and the other does not,[74] they are only forced to be judged according to their own laws.[75]If there is [a dispute between] a Jew and an idolater: If the Jew will fare better according to their laws, they are judged according to their laws. [When the judgement is rendered, the judges] explain: "Your law obligates this judgement." If the Jew will fare better according to our laws, they are judged according to Torah law. [When the judgement is rendered, the judges] explain: "Our law obligates this judgement." [76] It appears to me that this approach is not followed in regard to a resident alien. Rather, he is always judged according to their laws.[77]Similarly, it appears to me that in regard to respect and honor and also, in regard to charity, a resident alien is to be treated as a Jew for behold, we are commanded to sustain them as [Deuteronomy 14:21] states: "[You may not eat any animal that has not been properly slaughtered...] give it to the resident alien in your gates that he may eat it." [78] Though our Sages counseled against repeating a greeting to them, that statement applies to idolaters and not resident aliens.[79][However,] our Sages commanded us to visit the gentiles when ill, to bury their dead[80] in addition to the Jewish dead,[81] and support their poor in addition to the Jewish poor for the sake of peace.[82] Behold, [Psalms 145:9] states: "God is good to all and His mercies extend over all His works" and [Proverbs 3:17] states: "[The Torah's] ways are pleasant ways and all its paths are peace." [83]

[1]. In contrast, a Jew is obligated to bring a sin offering for the inadvertent violation of a negative command.

**Makkot** 9a,b derives the exemption of a gentile from Avimelech's dialogue with God after he took Sarah (Genesis

20:3-7). God told Avimelech that he was liable to die. Avimelech protested that he did not know she was married and hence, had acted inadvertently. God replied that generally, an inadvertent offence is pardoned. However, in this instance, Avimelech would be held responsible. If his servants had not pressured Abraham concerning Sarah, he would never have said she was his sister.

[2]. In such an instance, a Jew is exiled to a city of refuge (See **Hilchot Rotzeach**, Chapter 5).

[3]. A relative of the deceased who desires to avenge his death.

[4]. However, he is not obligated to do so (see **Hilchot Rotzeach** 5:10).

[5]. The **Lechem Mishneh** notes that this applies to a gentile who has not formally accepted the responsibilities of a resident alien. In regard to a resident alien himself, **Hilchot Rotzeach** 5:4 explains that he is executed for inadvertently slaying a Jew. However, if he inadvertently kills another resident alien, he may seek asylum in a city of refuge as Numbers 35:15 states: "These six cities will be a place of refuge for the Israelites, converts, and residents among them" (ibid. 5:3).

[6]. In such an instance, the gentile has no intent to violate God's will. The commentaries explain that he is only freed of liability if he was misled concerning the identity of the woman with whom he engaged in relations. Otherwise, he is responsible to check to make sure no prohibition is involved.

[7]. Certainly, one should realize that relations with another person's wife are not permitted.

[8]. **Makkot** 9a relates that, in a similar circumstance, a Jew is not allowed to seek asylum in a city of refuge. Though he is not executed by the court, he must always live in dread of

the redeemer of the blood (**Hilchot Rotzeach** 6:5).

[9]. As mentioned at the conclusion of Chapter 8, all the seven mitzvot are concepts that can and should be intellectually comprehended. Every individual should appreciate these basic statutes or, at the very least, realize the need for rules within a society and seek guidance from others.

[10]. In contrast, a Jew is obligated to sacrifice his life rather than transgress three sins: idol worship, murder, and illicit sexual relations. Furthermore, when the gentiles attempt to stamp out Jewish practice, we are obligated to sacrifice our lives for the performance of other mitzvot (See **Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah** 5:1-4).

**Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah** 5:6 relates that similar principles apply with regard to remedies. If a person is ill and can be healed by the violation of one of the Torah's commands, e.g. eating non-kosher food, he may violate that command in order to save his life or health. In this instance as well, a differentiation is made regarding the three sins mentioned above. Even if a Jew is deathly ill, he may not violate these commands.

The commentaries question whether a gentile may heal himself through the violation of the seven mitzvot. The wording used by the Rambam "be forced by another person" might imply that only under such circumstances may a gentile violate the seven commands. License is granted because he is not acting voluntarily. In contrast, the willful transgression of a command, even for the sake of a remedy, is not permitted.

However, this differentiation is not accepted by all opinions. Many explain that even in this instance, a gentile may violate a command to save his life.

[11]. II Kings, Chapter 5 relates how Elisha, the prophet, cured Naaman, commander of the Syrian forces, of leprosy.

After his miraculous cure, Naaman exclaimed "Now, I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel."

Naaman willingly accepted the seven commandments. However, he made one provision: "May God pardon his servant when my master goes down to the house of Rimmon and prostrates himself there. For my master leans on my hand and I also prostrate myself." Elisha made no comment, seemingly indicating that his behavior was acceptable (**Sanhderin** 75a).

[12]. The commandment to sanctify God's name states (Leviticus 22:32): "I shall be sanctified in the midst of Israel;" implying that it only applies to Jews (Jerusalem Talmud, **Sh'vi'it** 4:3).

[13]. For they are not capable of taking responsibility for their conduct.

[14]. According to Torah law, Jewish children are not obligated to perform any mitzvot. Nevertheless, our Sages required their parents to train them in the observance of Torah and mitzvot. The commentaries question if gentiles are also obligated to train their offspring regarding their mitzvot.

[15]. Conversion requires these three steps (**Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah** 12:4).

[16]. Judaism is not a faith which is merely intellectually accepted. Rather, it constitutes an essential part of one's being and defines one's very essence. Therefore, a Jew can never leave his faith. Regardless of his behavior, he will always remain a Jew.

The same principles apply to a convert. With his acceptance of Judaism and performance of the conversion rites, he becomes a full Jew. In this regard, no distinction can be made between him and a native-born Israelite. Thus, a return to his previous status is impossible.

[17]. **Ketubot** 11a relates that a court has the right to take this step on the child's behalf for it is to his advantage to become part of the Jewish faith.

It must be emphasized that the court need not seek potential converts. However, if a gentile minor seeks to convert or a child's parents who have themselves converted wish their children to share their new faith, then, the court may take this step. Similarly, if the court feels that it is in the child's best interest to convert, they may convert him (**Kessef Mishneh**).

[18]. A convert must willingly accept Judaism. Since a child is not responsible for his actions, his acceptance as a minor is not significant and he is given this choice when he attains majority.

[19]. The Ran (**Ketubot**, *ibid.*) questions when this objection must be made. No attention is paid to the objection if it is made when the child is a minor or after he attains majority. To require the statement to be made at the precise moment when the child reaches majority is difficult.

Thus, he concludes that the child must repudiate his conversion before attaining majority. Afterwards, if he does not resume Jewish practice before attaining majority, it is considered as if he never converted.

[20]. As will be explained, this applies whether they engaged in relations within or outside the context of marriage.

[21]. As part of the conversion process.

[22]. In the event the man marries her. The marriage contract includes a provision for a sum to be given the woman in the event of death or divorce.

[23]. Deuteronomy 22:29 requires a person who rapes a virgin girl to pay 50 silver shekels as a fine.

[24]. Exodus 22:15 obligates a similar fine to be paid for seducing a virgin girl. **Ketubot**, *ibid.*, specifies that these fines are only paid if the girl converts before the age of three.

[25]. Nevertheless, as soon as the obligation is incurred, the money is given to the court. Thus, in the case of divorce, the convert's husband will not think that he will be freed of the obligation of a **ketubah** and the rapist or seducer will have to take responsibility for his acts immediately.

[26]. The same law applies to a gentile who converts after eating flesh from a living animal, stealing, or ignoring his responsibility to judge his colleagues. However, since a Jew is not given the death penalty for these sins, the Rambam did not feel it necessary to mention them.

[27]. Rashi (**Sanhderin** 71b) explains that he is exempt from punishment because, as a Jew, the process by which he is to be judged has changed (he must be warned, two witnesses must observe him, etc.) and his sentence is changed. He receives a more severe death penalty (for cursing God or idol worship) or no penalty at all (for killing or engaging in relations with a gentile).

Most commentaries agree that this law applies even if a gentile converted after being sentenced to death. However, some authorities maintain that in such an instance, the death sentence remains in force. They base their opinion on **Hilchot Mamrim** 7:9 which explains that a rebellious son is only executed before he attains the age of thirteen and three months. However, if he is sentenced to death before that time and flees, he is executed even after he reaches that age.

[28]. As a gentile, he would receive the same punishment.

[29]. Though the process by which he is to be judged has changed, the sentence remains the same or is lighter. Hence, he is still held responsible for his deeds (*ibid.*).

[30]. As a gentile, he would receive the same punishment.

[31]. As a gentile, this deed would be punished by decapitation, a more severe form of execution.

[32]. See **Lechem Mishneh**.

A gentile who converted after stealing from a Jew must restore the stolen property. However, according to most authorities, a gentile who converted after eating flesh from a living animal is not punished by lashes as a Jew would be.

[33]. See Chapter 9, Halachah 14, Chapter 3, Halachah 8.

[34]. In the Yemenite manuscripts of the **Mishneh Torah**, the word "or" is omitted. Thus, the phrase reads "a consecrated maiden married to a Jew." This version is preferable because relations with a married Jewess are punished by decapitation as explained in Chapter 9, Halachah 7.

[35]. This law is also mentioned in Chapter 9, Halachah 7. Indeed, the entire halachah is redundant. However, it is included to summarize the laws regarding a gentile's execution. Until now, all the sins mentioned carried the penalty of execution by the court. In contrast, though some of the violations mentioned in the following halachot are punishable by death by the hand of God, an earthly court administers no retribution.

[36]. **Sanhderin** 56b.

[37]. These prohibitions are included in the category of **kilayim**. Jews are also forbidden to grow different species of crops in the same field and wear garments that combine linen and wool. See Leviticus 19:19.

[38]. **Sanhderin** 57a considers it an accepted tradition that gentiles are only executed for the violation of seven sins.

[39]. By the hand of God.

[40]. **Sanhderin** 58b explains that Moses killed an Egyptian taskmaster (Exodus 2:11) for violating this prohibition.

[41]. The Maharshah (**Sanhderin, ibid.**) states that, as above, the Sages accepted the tradition that only seven mitzvot are punishable by death. Based on that decision, he explains that Moses' act was an exception. With prophetic intuition, Moses saw that no good would ever come from this Egyptian and therefore, slew him.

[42]. **Sanhderin** 59a,b relates that any mitzvah which was given before Sinai and repeated at Sinai is incumbent on both Jews and gentiles. However, circumcision is not governed by this principle for, as obvious from the verse quoted, it was specifically given only to Abraham and his descendants.

This halachah is included because the Rambam wanted to contrast the obligation of the descendants of Keturah mentioned in the following halachah with the obligation of the gentiles to keep their seven mitzvot. This halachah is a necessary preface to that law.

[43]. The verse implies that only Isaac is considered Abraham's spiritual progeny and it is through him, that he will attain posterity. Hence, his descendants and not those of Ishmael are obligated in circumcision.

[44]. **Yalkut Shimoni, Toldot**, relates that Esau circumcised his descendants as long as Isaac was alive.

[45]. **Sanhderin** 59b derives the exclusion of Esau from Genesis 21:12. The expression "through Isaac," biYitzchak, can also be rendered as "in Isaac," implying "not all of Isaac". It is curious why the Rambam quotes another source when an explicit Talmudic reference exists.

[46]. **Sanhderin** 59b.

[47]. Genesis 25:1 mentions that after Sarah's death, Abraham



married another woman, Keturah. She bore him six sons.

[48]. Since they were born after God commanded Abraham to circumcise all his descendants, they are obligated to be circumcised.

[49]. Both settled in the Arabian desert.

[50]. Because of the doubt involved in their lineage.

[51]. As the Jews are. Ishmael was born before Abraham's circumcision and was circumcised at the age of thirteen. Many Arabs follow the custom of circumcising their children at that age.

In Jewish law, circumcision is a two staged process involving **milah** – cutting the foreskin, and **priyah** – ripping open the thin membrane covering the crown of the penis. **Tosafot (Yevamot 71b)** states that Abraham (and thus, the descendants of Keturah) were not required to perform **priyah**. However, the Rambam does not make this distinction.

[52]. The commentaries ask a general question concerning this halachah: As explained in the notes to Chapter 5, Halachah 4, Sannecherib, king of Assyria conquered many countries and engaged in mass population transfers, thus, obliterating the national identity of most of Israel's neighbors. If so, why was the status of Keturah's descendants left unaffected?

[53]. Other than their seven mitzvot.

[54]. At the hand of God. **Sanhderin 59a** comments: Deuteronomy 33:4 states: "The Torah which Moses commanded us is the heritage of the children of Israel." "It is our heritage and not theirs." The passage continues, noting the connection between the word **morashah**, "heritage" and **meurasah**, "consecrated" and explains that a gentile's study of Torah is equivalent to adultery.

[55]. As mentioned in Halachah 8:10, the Jews have an

obligation to instruct the gentiles in the performance of their seven mitzvot.

A gentile who is well versed in the particular laws involved in the observance of his seven mitzvot is worthy of more respect than a unlearned High Priest (**Sanhderin**, *ibid.*).

The seven mitzvot are by no means a narrow field of study. The **Meiri** (**Sanhderin**, *ibid.*) states that most elements of the Torah are included within them. For example, to observe the prohibition against the worship of false Gods correctly, one must become aware of God's unity with creation. Accordingly, a number of contemporary Sages have suggested the translation of certain basic Chassidic and Kabbalistic texts into English with the intent that they be studied by gentiles.

[56]. Genesis 8:22 records God's promise to Noah "As long as the earth lasts... day and night shall not cease." Yishbotu translated as "cease," can also be interpreted as "rest." Thus, **Sanhderin** 58b interprets the verse as a command prohibiting Noah's descendants from resting "day and night."

[57]. Rashi (**Sanhderin**, *ibid.*) explains that not only is a gentile is forbidden to fix a day as a day of rest, he is prohibited against taking a day off from work even to relax. In contrast, the **Meiri** maintains that the prohibition involves establishing a day of rest. However, a gentile is not prohibited against taking a vacation. The Rambam appears to follow the latter opinion.

[58]. The observance of a festival generally implies a religious content in addition to being a day of rest. Thus, it is surely forbidden.

[59]. At the conclusion of Chapter 11, the Rambam notes that Christianity and Islam have certain redeeming factors for they abolished paganism and "paved the way for the coming of the Moshiach." Nevertheless, in themselves, these faiths are forbidden and may not be observed even by a gentile.

[60]. As mentioned in Halachah 8:10, the Jews are obligated to compel the gentiles to observe their mitzvot. When we had undisputed rule over **Eretz Yisrael**, we were able to enforce these mitzvot by administering corporal, and, when required, capital punishment. Even when we no longer have this potential, we are obligated to do whatever possible to make sure the gentiles observe the statutes the Torah established for them.

[61]. I.e., take economic sanctions against him.

[62]. By the hand of God.

[63]. I.e., one of the 613 mitzvot commanded to the Jews aside from Torah study and the Sabbath.

[64]. A person who is not commanded to fulfill a mitzvah receives less reward from God for its observance than one who is commanded. Nevertheless, even in the latter instance, God acknowledges the person's deeds and grants him blessing.

A gentile may only fulfill mitzvot for the sake of reward. He is forbidden to accept them as obligations incumbent upon him. Thus, his intent must be the very opposite of a Jew's who serves God for His sake and not for his own.

The commentaries question the source for the Rambam's statements. Some point to the statements of **Kohelet Rabbah**, Chapter 1: In the Messianic age, God will proclaim: "Whoever has never eaten pork, come and receive a reward." Many gentiles will respond and come to receive their reward.

[65]. He must perform the mitzvah in all of its particulars as required by Jewish law. The Radbaz explains that mitzvot which require holiness and purity, for example, tefillin or mezuzah, should be withheld from gentiles.

[66]. The only sacrifice a gentile is allowed to bring is a burnt offering (korban olah) A peace offering or meal offering

is not accepted from them. Even the libations which accompany the burnt offering may not be brought by the gentile and are purchased with communal funds (**Hilchot Ma'aseh HaKorbonot** 3:2,5).

[67]. Leviticus 25:35 states "When your brother becomes impoverished... come to his aid. Help him survive, whether he is an alien or a native [Israelite]" (See Halachah 12). Since such a gentile may benefit from Jewish generosity, charity given by him may be used for the Jewish poor.

[68]. **Hilchot Matanot Aniyim** 8:9 states that if a gentile king or official gives charity to the Jews we should accept it for the sake of peace. However, if no threat of harming our relations with them is involved, it is not proper to receive charity from them (**Lechem Mishneh**).

[69]. Without publicizing the manner so that the gentile donor will not find out.

Two reasons are given why charity should not be accepted from gentiles:

a) The merit of their generosity will prolong their rule over the Jews (**Bava Batra** 10b).

b) The fact that Jews feel it necessary to receive charity from gentiles causes **Chillul HaShem**, the desecration of God's name, (Rashi, **Sanhderin** 26b).

[70]. The Radbaz emphasizes that this obligation only applies if the gentiles do not establish their own court system first.

[71]. The commentaries do not cite the source for this law. It is possible that it is derived from the obligation to compel the gentiles to accept the seven mitzvot mentioned in Halachah 8:10.

[72]. In contrast to resident aliens.

[73]. Though the gentiles are not obligated to follow Torah law, they may willingly accept it.

[74]. Preferring to be judged according to the civil laws established by gentile society.

[75]. There are a number of differences between Jewish business law and secular law. For example, Torah law requires Two witnesses and does not accept circumstantial evidence. Similarly, the formal acts of transfer through which property is acquired differ.

[76]. **Bava Kama** 113a, the source for this statement, continues:

“If there is no way to vindicate the Jew, try to trick the gentile,” these are the words of Rabbi Yishmael.

Rabbi Akiva states: “We should not try to trick him lest it cause the desecration of God’s name.”

Rabbi Akiva’s opinion is accepted as halachah.

[77]. As mentioned above, the Rambam uses the expression “it appears to me” when he has no explicit proof for his statements. Since we are commanded to sustain a resident alien, it is logical to assume that he is judged according to a single standard even though the outcome will not necessarily benefit a fellow Jew.

[78]. The verse concludes “or sell it to a foreigner.” **Pesachim** 21b comments that it is preferable to give the animal to a resident alien (a gentile who observes the seven mitzvot) than sell it to “a foreigner” (one who does not).

There is a slight problem with the Rambam’s statements. The Talmud makes the above statements on the basis of Leviticus 25:35 which states: “When your brother becomes impoverished... come to his aid. Help him survive, whether he is an alien or a

native [Israelite].”

On the surface, it would be preferable to quote that verse for it directly commands us to help a resident alien. However, there is an advantage to the verse quoted by the Rambam. It clearly distinguishes between a resident alien and an idolater.

[79]. For the sake of peace, we are even allowed to greet idolaters. However, it is improper to show them the honor of repeating the greeting (**Gittin 61a**).

[80]. And comfort their mourners, **Hilchot Evel** 14:12.

[81]. Rashi (**Gittin 61a**) emphasizes that the gentiles should not be buried in the same cemetery. See **Sanhderin** 47a.

[82]. The Radbaz (**Hilchot Matanot Aniyim** 1:9) stresses that gentiles are only given charity when they come together with the Jewish poor. If gentiles ask for alms alone, they may be refused. Other commentaries maintain that enmity may be aroused even under such circumstances and hence, suggest giving them charity at all times.

[83]. The above apply only in the Diaspora or when the Jews do not have undisputed power over **Eretz Yisrael**. However, when the Jews have such power, we are not permitted to allow an idolater to dwell among us even temporarily (**Hilchot Avodat Kochavim** 10:6).

## CHAPTER ELEVEN AND TWELVE

BS”D

The Lubavitcher Rebbe said we are the last generation of exile and the first of redemption

### THE LAWS CONCERNING MASHIACH

Chapters 11 & 12 of Kings (Hilchos Melachim from the Mishneh

Torah of the Rambam

Published by: Sichos In English

#### PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

Since the time of the Rambam (1135-1204), it has been impossible to discuss the subject of Mashiach and the Era of the Redemption without direct reference to the last two chapters of his monumental halachic code, the Mishneh Torah. For example, it is these two chapters that form the basis of the whole of the next publication of Sichos In English – I Await His Coming Every Day: Studies by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson (shlita) on the Rambam's Conception of Mashiach and the Ultimate Redemption.

These chapters conclude the final section (Hilchos Melachim – “The Laws Concerning Kings”) of the final book (Sefer Shoftim – “The Book of Judges”) of the Mishneh Torah, and are sometimes referred to separately as Hilchos Melech HaMashiach – “The Laws Concerning King Mashiach.”

The translation of this classic text which Sichos In English presents herewith is not only new, but – unlike almost all of the extant printed editions, even in the Hebrew original – expurgated. All the passages suppressed by various medieval Christian censors have been translated in full. They appear here in the footnotes that are keyed to the exact positions from which they were deleted.

It is hoped that this publication will give more and more readers access to one of the major primary sources on the subject of the coming of Mashiach.

– Sichos In English

24 Sivan, 5751 [June 6, 1991]

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. In future time, the King Mashiach [1] will arise and renew the Davidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will rebuild the [Beis Ha]Mikdash (Holy Temple) and gather in the dispersed remnant of Israel. Then, in his days, all the statutes will be reinstated as in former times. We will offer sacrifices and observe the Sabbatical and Jubilee years according to all their particulars set forth in the Torah.

Whoever does not believe in him, or does not await his coming, denies not only [the statements of] the other prophets, but also [those of] the Torah and of Moshe, our teacher, for the Torah attests to his coming, stating: [Devarim 30:3-5]

And the Lord your G-d will bring back your captivity and have compassion upon you. He will return and gather you [from among all the nations]... Even if your dispersed ones are in the furthest reaches of the heavens, [from there will G-d gather you in]... G-d will bring you [to the land]...

These explicit words of the Torah include all that was said [on the subject] by all the prophets.

There is also a reference [to Mashiach] in the passage concerning Bilaam, who prophesies about the two anointed [kings]: the first anointed [king] [2], David, who saved Israel from her oppressors, and the final anointed [king] who will arise from among his descendants and save Israel [at the End of Days] [3]. The following [quoted] phrases are from that passage: [Bamidbar 24:17-18]

*“I see it, but not now” – This refers to David; “I perceive it, but not in the near future” – This refers to King Mashiach.*



*“A star shall go forth from Yaakov” – This refers to David;  
“and a  
staff shall arise in Israel” – This refers to King Mashiach.*

*“He shall crush all of Moab’s princes” – This refers to David, (as  
it is written [II Shmuel 8:2], “He smote Moab and measured  
them with a line”); “he shall break down all of Seth’s  
descendants” – This refers to King Mashiach, (about whom it  
is written [Zechariah 9:10], “He will rule from sea to  
sea”).*

*“Edom will be demolished” – This refers to David, (as it is  
written  
[Cf. II Shmuel 8:6 and 8:14], “Edom became the servants of  
David”); “his enemy, Seir, will be destroyed” – This refers  
to Mashiach, (as it is written [Ovadiyah 1:21], “Saviors will  
ascend Mount Zion [to judge the mountain of Esau....]”).*

- Similarly, in regard to the cities of refuge, it is stated [Devarim 19:8-9], “When G-d will expand your borders... you shall add three more cities.” This command has never been fulfilled. [Surely,] G-d did not give this command in vain, [and thus the intent was that it be fulfilled after the coming of Mashiach].

There is no need to cite prooftexts on the concept [of the Mashiach] from the words of the prophets, for all [their] books are filled with it.

- One should not entertain the notion that the King Mashiach must work miracles and wonders, bring about new phenomena within the world, resurrect the dead, or perform other similar deeds. This is [definitely] not

true.[A proof can be brought from the fact that] that Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest Sages of the Mishnah, was one of the supporters of King Ben Koziva, and would describe him as the King Mashiach. He and all the Sages of his generation considered him to be the King Mashiach until he was killed because of [his] sins. Once he was killed, they realized that he was not [the Mashiach]. The Sages did not ask him for any signs or wonders. Rather, this is the main thrust of the matter: This Torah, with its statutes and laws, is everlasting. We may neither add to them nor detract from them. [4]

- If a king will arise from the House of David who delves deeply into the study of the Torah and, like David his ancestor, observes its mitzvos as prescribed by the Written Law and the Oral Law; if he will compel all of Israel to walk in [the way of the Torah] and repair the breaches [in its observance]; and if he will fight the wars of G-d; – we may, with assurance, consider him Mashiach. If he succeeds in the above, builds the [Beis Ha]Mikdash on its site, and gathers in the dispersed remnant of Israel, he is definitely the Mashiach. [5] He will then perfect the entire world, [motivating all the nations] to serve G-d together, as it is written [Zephaniah, 3:9], “I will make the peoples pure of speech so that they will all call upon the Name of G-d and serve Him with one purpose.”

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

1. One should not entertain the notion that in the Era of Mashiach any element of the natural order will be nullified, or that there will be any innovation in the work of creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its pattern. Although Yeshayahu [Yeshayahu 11:6] states, “The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat,” these [words] are an allegory and a riddle. They mean that

Israel will dwell securely together with the wicked gentiles who are likened to wolves and leopards, as in the verse [Yirmeyahu 5:6], "A wolf of the deserts despoils them, a leopard watches over their cities." [In this era, all nations] will return to the true faith and no longer plunder or destroy. Instead, at peace with Israel, they will eat that which is permitted, as it is written [Yeshayahu 11:7], "The lion shall eat straw like the ox." Similarly, other prophecies of this nature concerning Mashiach are analogies. In the Era of the King Mashiach, everyone will realize what was implied by these metaphors and allusions.

2. Our Sages taught: [Berachos 34b] "There will be no difference between the current age and the Era of Mashiach except [our emancipation from] subjugation to the [gentile] kingdoms." The simple meaning of the words of the prophets appears to imply that the war of Gog and Magog [Yechezkal ch. 38] will take place at the beginning of the Messianic age. Before the war of Gog and Magog, a prophet will arise to rectify Israel's conduct and prepare their hearts [for the Redemption], as it is written: [Malachi 3:23] "Behold, I am sending you Eliyah(u) [6] [before the advent of the great and awesome Day of G-d]."

He will not come [in order] to declare the pure, impure, nor to declare the impure, pure; nor [will he come in order] to disqualify the lineage of those presumed to be of flawless descent, nor to validate lineage which is presumed to be blemished. Rather, [he will come in order] to establish peace in the world; as [the above prophecy] continues [Malachi 3:24], "He will bring back the hearts of the fathers to the children."

Some of the Sages say that Eliyahu will appear [immediately] before the coming of Mashiach.

All these and similar matters cannot be [clearly] known by man until they occur, for they are undefined in the words of the prophets. Even the Sages have no established tradition regarding these matters, beyond what is implied by the verses; hence there is a divergence of opinion among them.

In any case, neither the sequence of these events nor their precise details are among the fundamental principles of the faith. One should not occupy himself at length with the aggadot and midrashim that deal with these and similar matters, nor should he deem them of prime importance, for they bring one to neither the awe nor the love [of G-d].

Similarly, one should not try to calculate the appointed time [for the coming of Mashiach]. Our Sages declared: [Sanhedrin 97b] "May the spirits of those who attempt to calculate the final time [of Mashiach's coming] expire!" Rather, one should await [his coming] and believe in the general conception of the matter, as we have explained.

- During the Era of the King Mashiach, once his kingdom has been established and all of Israel has gathered around him, the entire [nation's] line of descent will be established on the basis of his words, through the prophetic spirit which will rest upon him. As it is written [Loc. cit., v. 3], "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier." He will purify the lineage of the Levites first, stating that "This one is a priest of defined lineage" and "This one is a Levite of defined lineage." Those whose lineage he does not recognize will be relegated to the status of Israelites. This is implied by the following verse: [Ezra 2:63] "The governor said to them, '[They shall not eat of the most holy things] until a priest arises [who will wear] the Urim and Tumim.'" From

this verse one can infer that the genealogy of those presumed to be of unquestioned [priestly and levitical] lineage will be traced by means of the prophetic spirit, and those found to be of such lineage will be made known.

He will define the lineage of the Israelites according to their tribe alone; i.e., he will make known each person's tribal origin, stating that "This one is from this tribe" and "This one is from another tribe." However, concerning a person who is presumed to be of unblemished lineage, he will not state that "He is illegitimate," or "He is of slave lineage," for the law rules that once a family has become intermingled [within the entire Jewish people], they may remain intermingled.

- The Sages and prophets did not yearn for the Messianic Era in order that [the Jewish people] rule over the entire world, nor in order that they have dominion over the gentiles, nor that they be exalted by them, nor in order that they eat, drink and celebrate. Rather, their aspiration was that [the Jewish people] be free [to involve themselves] in Torah and its wisdom, without anyone to oppress or disturb them, and thus be found worthy of life in the World to Come, as we explained in Hilchos Teshuvah.
- In that Era there will be neither famine nor war, neither envy nor competition, for good things will flow in abundance and all the delights will be as freely available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d. The Jews will

therefore be  
great sages and know the hidden matters, and will attain  
an  
understanding of their Creator to the [full] extent of  
human  
potential; as it is written [Yeshayahu 11:9], “For the  
world will be  
filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the  
ocean bed.”

## FOOTNOTES

1 In the original Hebrew, HaMelech HaMoshiach (lit., “the anointed king”); i.e., the Messianic King.]

2 In the original Hebrew, the word here translated “anointed [king]” is simply HaMashiach (lit. “the anointed one”); i.e., the Messiah. It is used interchangeably with the earlier phrase.]

3 At this point, before being censored by medieval Christian authorities, the Rambam’s original text continued: “...and save Israel from the hand’s of Esav’s descendants. This and two other such deletions have been copied verbatim in these footnotes from the celebrated Yemenite manuscript in the hands of Chacham Yosef Kapach of Jerusalem. (See footnotes 4 and 5, below.)]

4 At this point, the uncensored original text continued as follows:

“Whoever adds to [the mitzvot] or detracts from them, or misinterprets the the Torah, implying that the mitzvos are not intended to be understood literally, is surely a wicked imposter and a heretic.”

5 The whole of the following passage was deleted from most of

the editions published since the Venice edition of 1574.

“If he did not succeed to this degree or he was killed, he surely is not [the redeemer] promised by the Torah. [Rather,] he should be considered as all the other proper and legitimate kings of the Davidic dynasty who died. G-d only caused him to arise in order to test the multitude. As it is written [Daniel 11:35], “Some of the wise men will stumble, to purge, to refine, and to clarify, until the appointed time, for it is yet to come.”

“Jesus of Nazareth who aspired to be the Mashiach and was executed by the court was also spoken of in Daniel’s prophecies [Daniel 11:14], “The renegades among your people shall exalt themselves in an attempt to fulfill the vision, but they shall stumble.”

“Can there be a greater stumbling block than [Christianity]? All the prophets spoke of Moshiach as the redeemer of Israel and their savior, who would gather their dispersed ones and strengthen their [observance of] the mitzvos. In contrast [the founder of Christianity] caused the Jews to be slain by the sword, their and the majority of the world to err and serve a god other than the L-rd.”

“Nevertheless, the intent of the Creator of the world is not within the power of man to comprehend, for [to paraphrase Yeshayahu 55:8] His ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts our thoughts. [Ultimately,] all the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth and that Ishmaelite [i.e. Mohammed] who arose after him will only serve to pave the way for the coming of Mashiach and for the improvement of the entire world, [motivating the nations] to serve G-d together, as it is written [Zephaniah 3:9], “I will make the peoples pure of speech so that they will all call upon the Name of G-d and serve Him with one

purpose.”

“How will this come about? The entire world has already become filled with talk of [the supposed] Messiah, as well as of the Torah and the mitzvos. These matters have been spread among many spiritually insensitive nations, who discuss these matters as well as the mitzvos of the Torah. Some of them [i.e. the Christians] say: “These commandments were true, but are not in force in the present age; they are not applicable for all time.” Others [i.e. the Moslems] say: “Implied in the commandments are hidden concepts that cannot be understood simply; the Messiah has already come and revealed them.”

“When the true Messiah king will arise and prove successful, his  
[position becoming] exalted and uplifted, they will all return and  
realize that their ancestors endowed them with a false heritage;  
their prophets and ancestors cause them to err.”

6 The name of the prophet is occasionally spelled, as in this verse, without the final letter vav.

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## **Kabbalah and Telepathy**

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# Kabbalah and Telepathy

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## The Power of Thought

Telepathy is usually defined as the ability to communicate by thought transfer, without participation of the senses.

In Kabbalah and Hassidism the power of thought is considered to be the highest of the three powers of the psyche: thought, speech and action. It is therefore most important to guard the mind from impure thoughts or evil thoughts about others. In the book of Tanya we are taught that evil thoughts about someone are ultimately even more harmful than speaking slander about him or actually taking harmful physical action against him.

The phrase used by our sages in the Talmud that describes the phenomenon of telepathy is machshava moelet (“a thought that causes an effect”). Telepathy has a negative connotation when moelet is seen to be from the root meilah (“sacrilege”). On the other hand, the positive connotation of this expression is that thought has an actual effect upon reality.

In Hassidic lore, telepathy is considered to be a gift of the righteous. By clarifying his thoughts, the tzaddik achieves the power to act from afar through his thoughts, transcending the limits of space and time to communicate with another Jewish soul, extricating him from his troubles in a time of need.

As we shall see, the word in the Bible that depicts the ability to communicate through thought is chashmal. Although in modern Hebrew chashmal is an everyday word used to describe the natural phenomenon of electricity, it appears only once in the Bible, in the depiction of the Divine Chariot that Ezekiel envisioned in his prophecy; the most profound chapter of the Bible. Ezekiel describes the “eye of chashmal,” a shade of

light or color.

According to one of the rules of Hebrew grammar, every word has either a two or a three letter root. If a word has a root of four or more letters, then it must be a compound word that can be broken down into two or more roots. Our sages thus explain that the four-letter word chashmal is made of the two words, chash, "silence" and mal, "speech." Maimonides explains that there is a type of angel that are called chashmalim and this is because "they are sometimes silent [chashim] and sometimes they speak [memalelim]." In addition we find in the Book of Proverbs that of the twenty-eight "quality of times" that change in the world there is "a time to be silent and a time to speak." However, in Kabbalah we are taught that this duality of speech and thought exists only in the three lower worlds (Beriah, Yetzirah, Asiyah), that are under the influences of time and are unable to simultaneously tolerate two opposites. Contrarily, in the world of Atzilut there are no paradoxes. In this highest world where time does not exist, chashmal does not refer to those angels, rather it refers to the true chashmal that Ezekiel saw in his prophecy, a light that shone from Supernal Man sitting upon His throne wearing the clothing of chashmal (the numerical value of the word chashmal is equal to the numerical value of malbush, "clothing"). Since in the world of Atzilut everything is unified in wondrous harmony and all paradoxes coexist at one and the same moment, silence and speech also exist there as one. It is in the world of Atzilut that one can find the phenomenon of communication through silence.

Here in the world as we know it, time is divided into separate units to allow for the duality of the paradox to express itself at varying moments. In the lower worlds as we experience them, the character and the fashion of speech is different from silence and they cannot be experienced simultaneously.

## The Power of Silence

There are a number of possible ways to explain silence as an act. The first is that silence is an act of thought. The Hebrew word for thinking is chashov, which even begins with the word chash, "silence" and can also be seen as an acronym for lachush be... that means to sense something through silence. The sense of thought is an inner phenomenon in which one considers something in silence.

A second type of silence is the silence that comes from the realization that there is an infinite gap between our thoughts and the thoughts of God as it says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." This idea is expressed in the midrash that teaches us that when Moses received the Torah, he waited while God "tied the crowns" to the letters of the Torah. Moses asked God about these crowns and God showed him how Rabbi Akiva was destined to explain these crowns in the future. When Moses saw the extent of Rabbi Akiva's Torah study he asked God in amazement why Rabbi Akiva should not be the one to deliver the Torah. God's reply was, "Be silent! This is the thought that came up before me!" Moses then asked to see the reward that Rabbi Akiva would receive for his Torah study and God showed him how the Romans would torture Rabbi Akiva to death. Moses asked in amazement, "This is the Torah and that is its reward?!" and once again, God replied, "Be silent! This is the thought that came up before me!"

It is impossible for a human being to rise up to or to sense God's thoughts, he must therefore be silent. Every true believer in God meets great mysteries throughout his life that he cannot begin to understand, such as the holocaust. The Lubavitcher Rebbe said that one should not even attempt to understand the holocaust, rather we must remain silent, as did Aaron the High Priest when his two completely righteous sons, Nadav and Avihu were taken from him (they died while offering incense in the Tabernacle), as it says, "And Aaron was speechless." Under such circumstances there is nothing else to do but to remain silent and to accept the facts through total

belief that "My thoughts are not your thoughts," and that God is the absolute essence of goodness, even if our own perception of reality seems to contradict this.

The third explanation of silence is the Chassidic interpretation of the reply from God to Moses, "Be silent! This is the thought that came up before me!" which, in the Hebrew "Shtok! Cach ala (came up) bemachshava lefanai," can be rendered, "Shtok! Cach ale (get up) bemachshava lefanai," meaning that through silence one may be able to rise to a higher level of perception and thus to reach an infinitely higher level of thought, coming closer as it were to God's own thoughts.

Another expression of our sages related to silence is "siyag lechochmah, shtika," "A boundary for wisdom is silence." In Kabbalah, the word siyag is interpreted as the light that encompasses wisdom. When one rises higher into the encompassing light of silence that enshrouds wisdom, one draws down a higher encompassing light into the inner soul, thus achieving levels of understanding that previously existed only in the realm of simple faith. We all believe that God is good, even when we cannot see His goodness manifested in reality as we perceive it. However, through the power of faith found in the heart of every Jew as he silently accepts reality, he is able to draw down higher levels of faith and understanding.

Silence	The silence of faith that draws down ever greater levels of wisdom into inner consciousness	<i>“siyag lechochmah, shtika”</i>
	Silence in order to rise to higher levels of perception	<i>“Cach ale bemachshava lefanai,”</i> “thus you shall rise in thought before Me”
	Silence in submission to God’s infinite wisdom	<i>“Vayidom Aharon,”</i> “And Aaron was speechless”
	Refraining from speech in order to think or consider an idea	<i>Chash, silence – chashov,</i> “think”

Our own speech is created by letters and words that are pronounced by the mouth, however, when referring to God and to the Divine part of the soul of every Jew, there is no concept of speech as we know it. God’s “speech” is actually a command, as in “He said and it was, He commanded and they were created.” From a human perspective, Divine “speech” would be what we call “thought” at an infinite level.

**In the world of *Atzilut*, where there is no difference between *chash* and *mal*, silence itself speaks and transmits. It is certainly possible at this level to transmit and reply where words are unable to do so. There are some things that cannot be explained by speech yet silence has the power to convey. This is the power of telepathy.**

*We mentioned previously that chashmal is a shade of brilliant light. This light includes 378 shades (as in the numerical equivalent of the word chashmal); all of the shades of color that the eye is capable of distinguishing. A combination or intermingling of many different shades of color in the correct blending of all the hues is called tiferet. This is the visual phenomenon of chashmal; the inner phenomenon of chashmal is thought transmission. This is either through the natural method of “they are sometimes silent and sometimes they speak,” or at a higher level at which transmission is achieved*

through silence, and it is the inner level of thought that “speaks.”

## **The Hidden Meaning of “Telepathy”**

*It is an accepted practice that the righteous make use of foreign words while speaking Hebrew only when the word in the foreign language can be interpreted in the Holy Tongue. We will therefore explain a possible interpretation of the word “telepathy” in Hebrew.*

*“Telepathy” is derived from the Greek terms tele (“distant”) and pathe (“occurrence” or “feeling”).*

*The word tele refers to any action performed from afar (as in telescope, television, telegram etc.) In the broadest sense, this describes a non-local phenomenon. In the scientific literature only a phenomenon that cannot be defined by the speed of light is called a non-local phenomenon, for example when there is a spontaneous, simultaneous reaction of one atom at one end of the universe to another atom situated innumerable light-years away from it. Electricity is thus a local phenomenon whereas **true chashmal is a non-local, spontaneous phenomenon that is not affected by the speed of light, something that happens at one point and it is transmitted and immediately sensed elsewhere.***

*In Hebrew, the word tele can be seen to be derived from the word tal, “dew.” The Kabbalistic term related to this is tala di’bdolcha, “crystal dew.” The root-source of dew is in the crystal that is the Divine inner light that illuminates the mocha stima’a or chochmah stima’a of the upper crown of the supra-conscious level of the soul. Apparently it is the “crystal dew” that acts in the transmission of thought, and this is the place one desires to rise through the silence of “cach **ale** bemachshava;” to the mocha stima’a to reach the tala di’bdolcha.*

*In Hebrew, the word telepatia (“telepathy”) is comprised of the letters that make up the word tefila, “prayer,” with the addition of the letter tet. In Hassidism the word tefila is seen to be derived from the root tafel which means to adhere, as when the broken pieces of a receptacle are glued together. In this view, prayer is explained as a joining or communication with God. However, the root tafel in the mishna has two renderings, beginning either with the letter taf or with the letter tet. When rendered with the letter tet, the root means “bland” or “empty,” in which case prayer is perceived as an act of self-nullification. The word telepatia includes all of the letters of tefila, “prayer,” with the additional tet, as mentioned, and can thus be seen to indicate **a Divine form of communication through self-nullification that is closely connected to prayer.***

## **Eliezer Accurately Transmits his Thoughts**

# **Eliezer Accurately Transmits his Thoughts**

*We will now examine an example of the effect of thought transmission, illustrated by the story of Abraham’s servant Eliezer and his mission to find a wife for Abraham’s son, Isaac.*

*The central theme of the Torah portion, Chayei Sarah, revolves around the match between Isaac and Rebecca. Abraham sent his faithful servant Eliezer on this mission, through which, our sages teach us, Eliezer merited to escape the curse of his forebearer, Canaan and enter the blessing that rules over Abraham and his descendants. Upon arriving in Charan, where Abraham’s family lived, Eliezer stopped by the well and prayed to the God of his master Abraham that he should successfully complete his mission, requesting that if one of the girls*

would offer him water to drink and also offer to water his camels, this would prove that she was the true wife for Isaac. Immediately after completing his prayer, Rebecca appeared and offered him water to drink and also offered to water his camels. Eliezer was astounded to realize that his prayer had been answered and went with Rebecca to her home to repeat the story to her father, Bethuel, and her brother, Laban. The climax of the story is in the phrase used by Laban and Bethuel to express their own wonder at the fantastic "coincidence" of Eliezer's prayer and Rebecca's arrival on the scene. Their spontaneous reply is "Me'Hashem yatza hadavar," "This matter has emanated from God." Amazingly, this expression has the numerical value of chashmal.

Eliezer's fervor in relating the order of events to two men who are both renowned for their evil actions, triggered this devout reply, that honored the truth that Eliezer transmitted. This is the power of chashmal to accurately transmit thoughts and feelings to those who listen.

In Psalms we find another expression that has the numerical value of chashmal: "Hu tziva ve'nivra'u," "He commanded and they were created." This phrase expresses the power of thought to command and to act on reality in a natural way, without interference through speech or action.

The complete numerical value of both of these phrases is the same, and the middle word of each phrase is equal to 101 in both cases. Mathematically, when the sum of two sets of three numbers is equal and the middle number of each set is also identical, the base of both sets must also be equal. In this case, the base number in both cases is 75.

hu 12	tziva <b>101</b>	ve'nivra'u 265	= 378 = chashmal =	Me'Hashem 66	yatza <b>101</b>	hadavar 211
	89	164			35	110
		<b>75</b>	=			<b>75</b>

75 is the numerical value of the word bitachon, "trust," which



indicates that **the power of thought to transmit into reality is connected to the inner sense of trust in the soul.** Similarly to the root of tefila, “prayer,” which means to join together, the root of bitachon can be seen to be derived from tach, which also means, “to plaster.”

## **The Power of Prayer**

### The Power of Prayer

We thus see that the tzaddik has the power of to transmit thoughts through the power of prayer. However, every power that God created in the realm of holiness, He also created with a parallel phenomenon in the side of impurity. There are thus people with “super-natural” powers such as telepathy, who derive their abilities from their own self-centeredness and pride.

The tzaddik purifies his thought to make it a tool for his service of God. Just as a purified mouth is a tool for emitting holy speech and purified hands are tools for holy actions, so too in order for thought to become a tool that acts upon reality, one must rectify it and refine it. Much purity of thought is achieved through the power of silence in which a person completely nullifies himself to God in sanctity. Remaining silent in the face of God’s apparently incomprehensible actions, as did Aaron the High Priest when his sons died, purifies thought.

The Arizal points out that the numerical value of chashmal is equal to that of the word malbush, “clothing,” as we mentioned previously. Metaphorically speaking, chashmal is the “clothing” of God in the world of Atzilut. The psyche of man has three garments, these are thought, speech and action, thought being the highest and the most important of the three.

## **The Rectification of Cain**

## The Rectification of Cain

In order to truly and wholeheartedly pray to God, one must purify one's thoughts, therefore Hassidism teaches us that before every prayer one must meditate like the early Hassidim who would meditate for a whole hour to purify and clear their thoughts before prayer. Only once one's thoughts have been cleansed can one turn to God. Then, "as water reflects one's face to his face," so to God will heed his prayers, as it says of Abel, "And God heeded Abel and his offering." In Hebrew Abel is called Hevel, which means "breath". We can thus understand that if one's breath has been purified through true meditation towards God, which entails a great purity of thought, our prayers will be heeded by God.

We shall now examine how the concept of telepathy is connected to the rectification of the sin of Cain, Abel's brother, of whose offering it says, "And to the offering of Cain, God did not heed." The rectification of the power of thought to act upon reality is connected to the roots of Biblical souls and their reincarnations in later generations.

God did not heed to Cain's offering because of the sin of unrefined thoughts weighed him down. Many generations later, it was Elisha the Prophet who succeeded in rectifying Cain's sin. This is indicated in the name of the prophet, which means, "God will heed." Elisha, the outstanding pupil of the prophet Elijah, had the greatest telepathic power of all biblical characters. Elisha achieved a great rectification called tikkun Kayin, "the rectification of Cain." As the firstborn son of Adam, Cain should have received by right a double portion of Adam's legacy. As the firstborn of the first man, Cain was worthy of receiving all the "crowns;" the crown of royalty, the crown of priesthood, the crown of Torah and the crown of "the good name" that is greater than all of them. However, as a result of murdering his brother, Cain lost this right.

Before Elijah rose heavenward in a stormy wind, he asked

Elisha with what he wished him to bless him. Elisha replied that he wished that twice the spirit of Elijah be upon him. This indicates that he wished to receive the double portion that Cain should have received because of his right as a firstborn. Elijah told him that if Elisha would see Elijah being taken from him, this would be a sign that his request had been fulfilled. Indeed, Elishah merited that his wish be granted. This can be seen by the abundance of miracles that Elishah performed, more than any other prophet or biblical character.

The climax of the miracles that Elijah performed was the resurrection of a dead child. On the other hand, Elisha resurrected the dead twice, once even after he himself had died. This difference between the two prophets is not merely a quantitative difference, but also a qualitative one. Our sages teach us that the dead child whom Elijah revived was the righteous prophet Jonah and the first of the two dead people whom Elishah revived was also a righteous prophet, Habakuk. However, the second person whom Elisha revived was actually a wicked person and a false prophet. The innovation of Elisha's resurrecting the dead was therefore his ability to resurrect even the wicked. It is Elisha in particular, through his success in rectifying the sin of Cain, who has the power to revive, to arouse the wicked to repent, who are called "dead" even as they live. A righteous person can be in a "slumber," as Jonah who slept in the depths of the ship, and Elijah is capable of arousing him from his slumber. However, truly resurrecting the dead, the wicked, is something unique to Elisha. From this unique power to resurrect the dead, we can surmise the great purity of Elisha's thoughts.

After Elisha, we are taught that this soul appeared in Hizkiyahu, the king of Judah, whom God thought to make the Messiah, however Hizkiyahu missed his chance because he did not sing God's praises after witnessing the great miracle of Sancheriv's defeat.

Following Hizkiyahu this soul was reincarnated in the soul of Matityahu ben Yochanan, the High Priest in the time of the Hasmoneans; in Akavia ben Mahalalel; Raban Shimon ben Zakai and in Rabbi Akiva. We can thus see that this soul was eventually rectified to the extent that it merited all of the crowns that Cain forfeited by committing his sin. Hizkiyahu merited the crown of royalty; Matityahu received the crown of priesthood and of royalty; the rabbis who followed received the crown of Torah. We are further taught that this soul will once more be reincarnated in the soul of the Messiah, son of David, who is also from the root of Cain. He will then merit the "crown of good name."

According to the Kabbalah, the way to merit the type of ruach hakodesh, "Divine inspiration," that we call "telepathy," is by connecting to the soul of Elisha and by becoming acquainted with the whole of the secret of the reincarnations of Cain.

## **The Friends of Job**

*In the Talmud we find a classic description of the powers of telepathy in the story of Job.*

*Job had three friends who came to console him for his terrible suffering. As it turned out, they did not succeed in consoling him at all, instead they rebuked him, which appealed neither to Job nor to God. A fourth young acquaintance sat and listened in respectful silence until the elder three finished what they had to say. His name was Elihu ben Berachel of the family of Ram and our sages explain that he was from the family of Abraham, so he was certainly a Jew. The numerical value of his name equals mashiach, "messiah," and we are taught that he himself is the soul of the Messiah and that he speaks in good taste and with wisdom. According to Ramban in his commentary on the Book of Job, Elihu reveals to Job the secret of reincarnation and he thus succeeds in appeasing Job, at which point the verse immediately says, "and God heeded*

Job.” The word *vayisha*, “and he heeded,” used in this verse, also implies a connection with the rectification of Cain, to whose offering God did not heed.

*Our sages teach us an amazing thing about Job’s three friends, explaining that this was perhaps the only explicit example of telepathic communication in the Bible. They teach us that the three friends felt Job’s affliction from a distance of 300 parsoot (approximately 1,200 k.m.). They are considered true friends, so much so that at the end of the passage discussing this matter, Rava declares, “This is what people [mean when they] say, ‘Either friends like those of Job, or death’.” Elsewhere in the Talmud we find the phrase, “Either a partner or death,” meaning that death is preferable to living life alone. However, here the phrase is much stronger, insinuating that death is preferable to a life without friends with whom one has a telepathic connection!*

*Our sages teach that the second Temple was destroyed because of causeless hatred between the Jewish people, and that the rectification of that sin will be achieved by unbounded love for all Israel. **The Arizal takes it one step further; he taught that what delays the coming of the Messiah is true comradeship, not merely unbounded love. So the redemption requires true heartfelt and soulful friendship; friends who are connected even by their thoughts.***

## **Telepathy in the Keter**

*Our sages describe the telepathic connection between Job and his friends with two different parables. One opinion is that each of the four friends had three crowns in his home and the face of one of his three friends was engraved upon each crown. If he saw that the face of any crown changed for the worse then he felt that his friend was going through some crisis.*

*A second opinion is that each of the four had three trees in*

*his garden and if he saw that the leaves fell from the tree in an unnatural way, then he felt that his friend was suffering.*

*The words used in the Talmud for "crown" and "tree" are klila and ilana, respectively and both have the same numerical value of 91 (also the numerical value of amen;mal'ach, "angel;" and the combined numerical value of the two Names of God, Havayah and Elokim.)*

*According to the opinion that thought transmission is identified with a crown, it is clear that the crown symbolizes the superconscious, meaning that the thought rises to the highest of the sefirot, the keter, "crown," at the point of the tala dibdolcha, "the crystal dew."*

*According to the opinion that identifies thought transmission with a tree that either wilts or grows, this symbolizes that which occurs at the root. Even though the phenomenon is observed in the leaves and branches, it actually depends upon the power of growth in the roots that grow underground. The tree represents the abundance that the keter, the superconscious, yields. In Kabbalah the ten sefirot embodying the conscious powers of the soul, are called ilana de'chayei, "the Tree of Life," However the roots, and even more so, the power to grow underground, are considered to be the highest keter through which one can perceive that which occurs in the conscious powers: the trunk, the leaves, the branches and the fruit.*

*We see, therefore, that according to both opinions the power of telepathy is in the keter, the superconscious "crown" of the soul.*

## **The Five Powers of the Soul**

*Another way of dividing the different powers of the soul is found in the book of the Tanya. There it states that one must*

*constantly meditate upon the five powers of the soul, three of which we have already enumerated: thought, speech and action. The two powers of the soul above these three are called midot, "emotions" and sechel, "intellect." Midot are what could be called "pathos" or feelings, while sechel refers to pure, abstract intellect that is completely isolated from feelings. The Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya, explains that whereas thought, speech and action are garments, the midot and sechel are the essential powers of the soul. The sechel is the inner, abstract light, which can be harnessed and utilized by the thought when it rises to clothe the pure sechel. This is achieved by the purification and clarification of thought.*

*Something that is full of flaws and dirt becomes heavy and is drawn downwards. On the other hand, when one purifies something, it becomes lighter in weight and is capable of rising higher. This is also true of the garments of one's soul, which become soiled and heavy when succumbing to the baser, more animalistic instincts, self-conceit in particular, as the verse states, "the animal spirit descends downwards on the earth." This tendency towards animalistic behavior is what weighs a person down to earth and in particular, draws his thoughts earthwards. If a person is contaminated spiritually and he does not attain purity in his thoughts and his other garments, then he is unable to act with his thoughts as God wishes us to do.*

*God desires that we be similar to Him, as it is written, "And I said, you are gods," by creating through our own thought-commandments, as it says of God, "He commanded and they were created." This is chashmal. However, if one is heavy with sin, then one does not have the capability of rising in one's thoughts as in the expression mentioned earlier, "thus you shall rise in thought before Me."*

***If the three garmets of the soul are not purified, the essence of the emotions and the intellect cannot be truly sensed nor***

*consciously experienced. In order for the emotions and the intellect to be sensed, one must raise the garments in order that the garments clothe the emotions and the intellect, this being the secret of the chariot that Ezekiel saw; the chashmal clothing Supernal Man. The ascent of the worlds reveals the essential emotions, first to the person himself, and later even to others. Without the garments, the higher worlds and the higher levels of the human soul cannot be perceived.*

*When the purified thought rises to clothe the pure intellect, it takes the essential inner light of the sechel and turns it outwards in order to act upon reality. This however is the second stage of thought-purification. In order to achieve this stage the thought must first rise to clothe the midot, the emotions, and this is achieved through heartfelt prayer.*

*The five powers of the soul mentioned parallel the four worlds, the lower three powers paralleling the lower three worlds and the higher two paralleling two different aspects of the world of Atzilut.*

<i>Intellect</i>	<i>The world of Atzilut (three higher sefirot)</i>
<i>Emotions</i>	<i>The world of Atzilut (seven lower sefirot)</i>
<i>Thought</i>	<i>The world of Beriyah</i>
<i>Speech</i>	<i>The world of Yetzira</i>
<i>Action</i>	<i>The world of Asiyah</i>

## **A Meditation for Experiencing Self-Nullification**

*Another key concept concerning these five levels of the soul that the Alter Rebbe outlined in the Tanya is that in order to achieve self-nullification, one's garment of action must be nullified to the garment of speech, which in turn must be*



*nullified to the garment of thought. In turn, the thought must be nullified to the midot, which are in turn nullified to the sechel. This means that one must sense that the amount of light or vitality at each level is totally null and void in relation to the light from the higher plane. The essential soul is even higher than all of these five levels and in order to achieve true self-nullification, one must reach an understanding that all of the levels are ultimately nullified to the essential soul.*

*This meditation is completely opposite to an ordinary understanding of the world. From a physical point of view, to someone who views the world from a perspective of da'at tachton, "lower knowledge," action is concrete while speech and thought are abstract and therefore not considered so important. This idea is even stated explicitly in the Talmud in the saying, "action is the main principle." This is obviously true; however, once one begins to meditate upon this idea, one realizes that the amount and the quality of light that are revealed in action are completely null and void in comparison to the vitality of speech. Similarly, one realizes that a positive thought contains far more light and illuminates the soul far more than speech. This statement is an amazing innovation, especially when one considers the emotions and the intellect, which are totally imperceptible to someone who has not purified his mind and has not achieved this understanding. This false perception of reality, seeing that which is "above" to be "nothing" while that which is "below" is "something," is a superficial perception of reality. The meditation described in Tanya brings us to the realization that each level is nullified in relation to the level above it, and clarifies to us that that what is "above" is truly "something," while the external world is "nothing." This realization is called da'at elyon, "upper knowledge" and without it one is unable to purify one's thoughts. Someone who perceives the world through da'at tachton is under the influence of, and weighed down by the animal soul. In many*

places we find that Chassidism refers to da'at tachton as "the seed of beast," while da'at elyon is called, "seed of man." as in the words of the prophet Jeremiah "And I have sowed the House of Israel with the seed of man and the seed of beast." Most souls are souls of da'at tachton, we thus feel that "something-ness" is below while all that is "above" is imperceptible and seems to be "nothing." If one has only da'at tachton and feels that speech is nullified to action and that thought is nullified to speech and so on, then one is unable to purify his "garments" and is unable to raise them higher. One is thus unable to reach the "crown" and the "crystal dew" found there, which is the power of inner communication that we call telepathy.

## **The Task of the Angels**

*As mentioned previously, chashmalim are a type of angel. As taught in Kabbalah, these are the cherubim that stand at the entrance to the pardes, guarding the path to the tree of Life in the garden of Eden, holding the "sword with the revolving blade." Whenever a righteous person wishes to enter the garden, these angels begin speaking to him very fast. If he is able to reply to their words correctly, then the tzaddik is allowed to enter. However, if he becomes confused by their speech and does not follow their words, he must remain outside.*

*There are many ranks of angels, each rank higher than the previous one. The angels of the lower spheres pass our prayers up to the angels in the higher spheres until the highest angels of all make crowns, as it were, for God from our prayers. The level of speech of the lower angels is at the level of our thoughts and the level of speech of each rank of angels is at the level of thought of the angels below them. **When we express ourselves in true prayer in which our thoughts are at one with the words we emit, the lower angel***

**garbs himself with our thought and takes it for its own speech.** The angel's thought is always connected to its speech, thus the angel above him is able to clothe his own speech in the thought of the angel below, thus taking our prayers from the lower angel. This process continues through all the ranks of angels until our prayers reach God Himself.

## **Spiritual Powers of the Non-Righteous**

Although we have stated that telepathy is actually a Divine power of the righteous, we sometimes find that "normal" people profess to have similar spiritual powers. It should be clear that ninety-nine percent of these so-called "healers", spiritual diviners and the like, are nothing more than charlatans. This is true whether they deceive the public consciously or whether they themselves truly believe that they possess such powers. The whole of the book of Tanya is intended to save people from self-deception. However, there is still a very small percentage of people who are truly capable of such divination even without having purified themselves in holiness. The powers these people possess do not come from garbing the higher powers of the soul with the garment of thought, rather they have holes in their garments, a type of nakedness through which the light from the upper powers of the soul is manifested. Before the primordial sin, Adam and Eve were both naked and were not embarrassed of their nakedness, however the rectification of their sin was that they must wear garments. Our sages teach us that the word levush, "clothing," is a permutation of lo bosh, "unembarrassed," meaning negation of the negative embarrassment that resulted from the sin.

Garments are of utmost importance, so much so that the word tikkun, "rectification," is a synonym for levush. Through their prayers, the tzaddikim raise and purify their garments, especially the garment of thought. The pure and refined garments then rise to clothe the inner powers of the soul,

which gives the tzaddik the power to perform spiritual actions that normal people are unable to carry out. However, there are people whose natural garments are not refined, rather they have "holes" in their garments. They are born with a defect, just as a person may be born lacking a certain limb, God forbid. This person may develop sharper senses in another limb to overcome his disability. There are those who are born with the ability to solve dreams, for instance, because of holes in the garments allowing the inner light to be revealed, giving them power to act. However these are the unrectified lights of chaos and do not result from the person's having purified his garments, therefore there is always a certain extent of self-conceit in such people.

## **The Three-Stage Process of Raising the Garments of the Soul**

*The overall aim of purifying the garments of the soul is to attain the purification of the garment of thought. All of our prayers, if they are truly heartfelt, have the power to raise the garments of the soul and the corresponding worlds to clothe the higher revelations of the soul in purity.*

***The raising the worlds of the soul is achieved when thought first rises to clothe the pure emotions. When the thought rises to clothe the emotions, then speech ascends to the previous location of the thought and one is able to speak through one's thoughts telepathically.***

*Raising the garments in sanctity is achieved through a three-stage process. The holy Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chasidic movement taught that every spiritual process has three stages: hachna'ah, havdalah and hamtakah, meaning "submission," "separation" and "sweetening". In our case, these three stages correspond to chashmal. To fit this three-stage process, chashmal converts to chash-mal-mal. In that way, it draws the unity of the chashmal from the point at*

which it illuminates in the world of Atzilut, where silence transmits communication, to the lower worlds where it appears as "Sometimes silent, sometimes speaking." This is achieved by the addition of the middle stage that connects chash to mal. This middle stage is also called mal, derived from the same root as the word milah, "circumcision."

*The first stage of hachna'ah (chash) takes place before the thought rises to clothe the emotions, and it consists in the purification of the thoughts in order to prepare them for the ascent. This is the stage of waiting and preparing oneself for prayer in order to cleanse the thought. One way of achieving this cleansing is by relating stories about the righteous, as we learn from the verse that refers to the prophet Elisha, "Please tell me of the great deeds that Elisha did." Relating stories about tzaddikim brings one to gadlut mochin, "mature thought" and brings about the ability to distinguish between an act of a tzaddik and the same act performed by a sorcerer. One example of such seemingly similar acts mentioned in Chassidic literature is the ability of the righteous Pinchas to hover in the air and the similar ability of the wicked Bil'am to do so. Only one who has purified his thought through hachna'ah is able to distinguish between the two.*

*Another way to achieve the silencing of all inner "noise," the first stage of chash, is by listening to profound Chassidic music, which purifies the thought and brings one to a state of inner peace. Inner peace is the knowledge that everything that God does is for the best, a state of cheerful optimism and blind faith. A person in such a state of inner peace is aware that everything that happens is "a cause" of an effect within the Divine plan, and that each cause is a manifestation of God Himself.*

*After the first stage, one is able to receive thoughts transmitted by others, as in the story of Job, in which his friends merely received the feelings that Job transmitted. This stage precedes the ascent of the thought to clothe the*

emotions. When this state has been attained, thought has been purified to the extent that it has become a receptacle for receiving transmissions that come to him.

The following story illustrates this ability:

.....Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz wrote a letter to the Maggid of Mezeritch in which he thanked the Maggid for thinking of him. This happened the year after the passing of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and after the Maggid had accepted the leadership of the Chassidic movement, and he stated the exact time that this had occurred, a time at which there was a great distance between the two. Rabbi Pinchas wrote that the thoughts of the Maggid for him strengthen his service of God.

We see in this story how one tzaddik senses when another thinks of him. This is true dibbuk chaverim, "comradeship," that was felt amongst all of the pupils of the Ba'al Shem Tov, of whom we explicitly learned that they were able to sense when one thought of another from afar.

The second stage, havdalah, mal, "separation", consists of bitul hayesh, "nullification of being," or bitul ha'ani, "self-nullification." Having reached a state of inner peace and total trust in God, the person must return everything to God, as it says, "Give Him that which is His, because you and that which you have are His," and as sang by King David, "For everything is from You and from Your hand we have given You." At this stage the person feels that he has nothing, he is not even an emissary. He feels that everything he does is only God acting through him, and that he himself does nothing; he is merely "an insignificant assistant." This is the service of "separation" in the soul that has the power to enable the ascent of thought in order to clothe the emotions. At the completion of this stage one can sense and reveal the love that includes the fear of the Jew for God, which has been hidden in the soul. Speech then rises to the place of thought and one can now speak through one's thoughts.

Once this stage of bitul hayesh has been achieved, the person is capable of communicating through thought. Another story will further illustrate this point:

*In Russia, the ruling powers wished to invoke certain laws concerning Jewish education that were against Chassidism and against Judaism in general. The third Rebbe of Chabad, the Tzemach Tzedek, was called to court in order to represent Chassidism and Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin was called to represent the Lithuanian stream of Judaism. At some stage of the proceedings it became necessary for the Tzemach Tzedek to plant in Rabbi Yitzchak's mind the answer that he should reply to the judges. Rabbi Yitzchak received the thought and immediately replied accordingly. The reply was successful and the laws were not applied.*

*Later, Rabbi Yitzchak came to the Tzemach Tzedek and thanked him gratefully for the answer he had transmitted to him.*

*We can learn from this story that these great tzaddikim were capable of transmitting thoughts, and receiving them.*

*After the ascent of thought to the place of the emotions, with the completion of the stage of havdalah, "separation," comes the third stage, hamtakah, "sweetening," the second mal of chashmal, through which the ascent of the thought to the pure intellect is achieved. The power of this second ascent is to act upon reality, not merely planting thoughts or speaking through the mind, but actually eliciting changes in reality by the power of thought. This is achieved when the garment of action rises to the first location of the thought, the speech is then at the level of the emotions and thought is at the level of the pure intellect, thus allowing the person to accomplish innovations in nature, performing miracles that either appear to be natural or even change the laws of nature completely.*

*(It should be noted that it is only the inner dimension of the*

*garment that rises, whereas the outer dimension remains in its place.)*

*In order for thought to clothe the pure intellect, changing the vector force of its light from illuminating within to illuminating outside, one must achieve an even higher form of self-nullification, called bitul bimetziut, "nullification of reality." This is an absolute sense of da'at elyon, that the higher worlds are truly "something" while ordinary reality is "nothing." This is one step beyond the Chasidic understanding that the world was created yesh me'ayin, and involves the realization that all of reality is absolutely negligible from God's point of view, He being the only true reality. Taking such a great light and turning it outwards is completely paradoxical, since at this state the outside has been completely nullified. However this is the wonder of it all, that the Torah and mitzvot were given for the sake of this innovation: to project outwardly the light of da'at elyon, which of its own accord can only illuminate within itself and has no capability of illuminating outwardly, since the outside is totally null and void in relation to it and has no way of rising to God. Bringing this light into ordinary reality is called a mitzvah, which can be seen to be derived from the same root as tzavta, "joining."*

*The following chassidic parable illuminates this idea, how mankind can ever hope to connect to God:*

*There was once a great wise man and a very simple person, between whom there could be no communication whatsoever, since the wise man was occupied with his intellectual pursuits while the simple man had no such intellectual understanding. Neither of the two felt any connection with the other until one day the wise man required the physical assistance of the simple man. Only then was a connection established between the two.*

*This is in accordance with the principle that "serving [Torah scholars] is greater than studying it [the Torah]." By serving*



*a Torah scholar one is capable of reaching a place that others are not capable of reaching even if they were to study for another forty years. This is another trait that can be learnt from the prophet Elisha, who served Elijah, thus meriting greater powers than even his master did.*

*There is only one expression in the entire Torah in which the word tzav appears as a noun: "tzav letzav, kav lakav, ze'er sham, ze'er sham." One explanation of the phares tzav letzav, (a tzav for a tzav, a commandment for a commandment) is that opposing each commandment of the Torah. there is an evil instruction ("commandment") that the psyche receive from the other side. A second explanation is that for each of God's commandments, one must set up a boundary of more commandments (restrictions) in order to guard it, as it says "make a boundary for the Torah," and similarly, "a boundary for wisdom is silence." A third explanation is that the commandments must be given in small, measured quantities, as one would feed a young child, drop by drop. These three explanations parallel the stages of chash-mal-mal, and the elevation of the garment of thought through the three stages delineated above.*

*First, by bringing under submission the negative inclination that arises to contradict the positive commandment of the Torah (chash), the garment of thought itself is purified—the first stage in its elevation.*

*Then, in order for thought to rise to the place of the emotions, a restriction of one's natural emotional tendencies is required so that they do not overwhelm one's actions. For the same reason, the sages aspired to "create a restrictive barrier" to protect the performance of the commandments. This second stage involves a process of havdalah or "separation" which is the essence of the first stage of mal.*

*Finally, when thought rises to pure intellect and achieves da'at elyon, it is ready to be outwardly directed through the performance of mitzvot. As such, in order not to*

“break” reality, the illuminative quality of da’at elyon must be inserted drop-by-drop. This also correlates with the Halachic dictum that “mitzvot should not be bundled together.” Rather, every mitzvah should be performed separately and with its own particular intent. Caring for and rectifying reality with da’at elyon through mitzvot corresponds to the second stage of mal.

*(In addition, each of these three stages can be interpreted as corresponding to one of the three phrases in the verse quoted above. “Tzav letzav” corresponds to the submission of the negative inclination; “kav lakav” corresponds to demarcating with a line (the meaning of the word kav, in Hebrew) each mitzvah; and, “ze’eir sham, ze’eir sham,” which literally means “a little there, a little there,” corresponds to the requirement that mitzvot be performed individually, “drop-by-drop.”).*

*In order to reach the level at which the thought clothes the pure intellect, one must unite with “He commanded and they were created,” the numerical value of the Hebrew phrase being equal to that of chashmal, as stated. At this stage one receives the power to give a command and thereby create in a state of natural consciousness. This occurs through the secret of the expression, tzav letzav, as stated. This is the way to raise thought to act on reality, at which point the speech rises to clothe the emotions. This stage realizes the secret of liba lepuma galya, “the heart reveals itself to the mouth,” which is a messianic goal, as taught in Kabbalah that the reason the Messiah has not yet come is because we are in a state in which the heart is not revealed in the mouth. This is a state of complete rectification, called in Kabbalah “the secret of the rectified image.”*

<i>Stage of service</i>	<i>Method of service</i>	<i>Completed stage</i>	<i>Result of service</i>
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<i>Hamtaḥ – Mal</i>	<i>The secret of the three explanations of the expression tzav letzav</i>	<i>Bitul bimetziut</i>	<i>Ability to act on reality through thoughts</i>
<i>Havdalah – Mal</i>	<i>Returning all of one's being to God</i>	<i>Bitul hayesh</i>	<i>Ability to transmit thoughts</i>
<i>Hachna'ah – Chash</i>	<i>Relating stories of tzaddikim; listening to profound Chassidic melodies</i>	<i>Purification of thought</i>	<i>Inner peace; total trust in God; ability to receive thoughts transmitted</i>

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## Kabbalah and Telepathy

- A. The Power of Thought
- B. The Power of Silence
- C. The Hidden Meaning of Telepathy
- D. Eliezer Accurately Transmits his Thoughts
- E. The Power of Prayer
- F. The Rectification of Cain
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- I. The Five Powers of the Soul
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- K. The Task of the Angels
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- M. The Three-Stage Process of Raising the Garments of the

## The Power of Thought

*Telepathy is usually defined as the ability to communicate by thought transfer, without participation of the senses.*

*In Kabbalah and Hassidism the power of thought is considered to be the highest of the three powers of the psyche: thought, speech and action. It is therefore most important to guard the mind from impure thoughts or evil thoughts about others. In the book of Tanya we are taught that evil thoughts about someone are ultimately even more harmful than speaking slander about him or actually taking harmful physical action against him.*

The phrase used by our sages in the Talmud that describes the phenomenon of telepathy is *machshava moelet* ("a thought that causes an effect"). Telepathy has a negative connotation when *moelet* is seen to be from the root *meilah* ("sacrilege"). On the other hand, the positive connotation of this expression is that thought has an actual effect upon reality.

In Hassidic lore, telepathy is considered to be a gift of the righteous. By clarifying his thoughts, the *tzaddik* achieves the power to act from afar through his thoughts, transcending the limits of space and time to communicate with another Jewish soul, extricating him from his troubles in a time of need.

As we shall see, the word in the Bible that depicts the ability to communicate through thought is *chashmal*. Although in modern Hebrew *chashmal* is an everyday word used to describe the natural phenomenon of electricity, it appears only once in the Bible, in the depiction of the Divine Chariot that Ezekiel envisioned in his prophecy; the most profound chapter of the Bible. Ezekiel describes the "eye of *chashmal*," a shade of light or color.

According to one of the rules of Hebrew grammar, every word has either a two or a three letter root. If a word has a root of four or more letters, then it must be a compound word that can be broken down into two or more roots. Our sages thus explain that the four-letter word *chashmal* is made of the two words, *chash*, "silence" and *mal*, "speech." Maimonides explains that there is a type of angel that are called *chashmalim* and this is because "they are sometimes silent [*chashim*] and sometimes they speak [*memalelim*]." In addition we find in the Book of Proverbs that of the twenty-eight "quality of times" that change in the world there is "a time to be silent and a time to speak." However, in Kabbalah we are taught that this duality of speech and thought exists only in the three lower worlds (**Beriah, Yetzirah, Asiyah**), that are under the influences of time and are unable to simultaneously tolerate two opposites. Contrarily, in the world of *Atzilut* there are no paradoxes. In this highest world where time does not exist, *chashmal* does not refer to those angels, rather it refers to the true *chashmal* that Ezekiel saw in his prophecy, a light that shone from Supernal Man sitting upon His throne wearing the clothing of *chashmal* (the numerical value of the word *chashmal* is equal to the numerical value of *malbush*, "clothing"). Since in the world of *Atzilut* everything is unified in wondrous harmony and all paradoxes coexist at one and the same moment, silence and speech also exist there as one. **It is in the world of *Atzilut* that one can find the phenomenon of communication through silence.**

Here in the world as we know it, time is divided into separate units to allow for the duality of the paradox to express itself at varying moments. In the lower worlds as we experience them, the character and the fashion of speech is different from silence and they cannot be experienced simultaneously.

# The Power of Silence

There are a number of possible ways to explain silence as an act. The first is that silence is an act of thought. The Hebrew word for thinking is *chashov*, which even begins with the word *chash*, "silence" and can also be seen as an acronym for *lachush be...* that means to sense something through silence. The sense of thought is an inner phenomenon in which one considers something in silence.

A second type of silence is the silence that comes from the realization that there is an infinite gap between our thoughts and the thoughts of God as it says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." This idea is expressed in the midrash that teaches us that when Moses received the Torah, he waited while God "tied the crowns" to the letters of the Torah. Moses asked God about these crowns and God showed him how Rabbi Akiva was destined to explain these crowns in the future. When Moses saw the extent of Rabbi Akiva's Torah study he asked God in amazement why Rabbi Akiva should not be the one to deliver the Torah. God's reply was, "Be silent! This is the thought that came up before me!" Moses then asked to see the reward that Rabbi Akiva would receive for his Torah study and God showed him how the Romans would torture Rabbi Akiva to death. Moses asked in amazement, "This is the Torah and that is its reward?!" and once again, God replied, "Be silent! This is the thought that came up before me!"

It is impossible for a human being to rise up to or to sense God's thoughts, he must therefore be silent. Every true believer in God meets great mysteries throughout his life that he cannot begin to understand, such as the holocaust. The Lubavitcher Rebbe said that one should not even attempt to understand the holocaust, rather we must remain silent, as did Aaron the High Priest when his two completely righteous sons, Nadav and Avihu were taken from him (they died while offering incense in the Tabernacle), as it says, "And Aaron was

speechless." Under such circumstances there is nothing else to do but to remain silent and to accept the facts through total belief that "My thoughts are not your thoughts," and that God is the absolute essence of goodness, even if our own perception of reality seems to contradict this.

The third explanation of silence is the Chassidic interpretation of the reply from God to Moses, "Be silent! This is the thought that came up before me!" which, in the Hebrew "*Shtok! Cach **ala** (came up) bemachshava lefanai,*" can be rendered, "*Shtok! Cach **ale** (get up) bemachshava lefanai,*" meaning that through silence one may be able to rise to a higher level of perception and thus to reach an infinitely higher level of thought, coming closer as it were to God's own thoughts.

Another expression of our sages related to silence is "*siyag lechochmah, shtika,*" "A boundary for wisdom is silence." In Kabbalah, the word *siyag* is interpreted as the light that encompasses wisdom. When one rises higher into the encompassing light of silence that enshrouds wisdom, one draws down a higher encompassing light into the inner soul, thus achieving levels of understanding that previously existed only in the realm of simple faith. We all believe that God is good, even when we cannot see His goodness manifested in reality as we perceive it. However, through the power of faith found in the heart of every Jew as he silently accepts reality, he is able to draw down higher levels of faith and understanding.

Silence	The silence of faith that draws down ever greater levels of wisdom into inner consciousness	<i>“siyag lechochmah, shtika”</i>
	Silence in order to rise to higher levels of perception	<i>“Cach ale bemachshava lefanai,”</i> “thus you shall rise in thought before Me”
	Silence in submission to God’s infinite wisdom	<i>“Vayidom Aharon,”</i> “And Aaron was speechless”
	Refraining from speech in order to think or consider an idea	<i>Chash, silence – chashov,</i> “think”

Our own speech is created by letters and words that are pronounced by the mouth, however, when referring to God and to the Divine part of the soul of every Jew, there is no concept of speech as we know it. God’s “speech” is actually a command, as in “He said and it was, He commanded and they were created.” From a human perspective, Divine “speech” would be what we call “thought” at an infinite level.

**In the world of *Atzilut*, where there is no difference between *chash* and *mal*, silence itself speaks and transmits. It is certainly possible at this level to transmit and reply where words are unable to do so. There are some things that cannot be explained by speech yet silence has the power to convey. This is the power of telepathy.**

*We mentioned previously that chashmal is a shade of brilliant light. This light includes 378 shades (as in the numerical equivalent of the word chashmal); all of the shades of color that the eye is capable of distinguishing. A combination or intermingling of many different shades of color in the correct blending of all the hues is called tiferet. This is the visual phenomenon of chashmal; the inner phenomenon of chashmal is thought transmission. This is either through the natural method of “they are sometimes silent and sometimes they speak,” or at a higher level at which transmission is achieved*



through silence, and it is the inner level of thought that “speaks.”

## The Hidden Meaning of “Telepathy”

*It is an accepted practice that the righteous make use of foreign words while speaking Hebrew only when the word in the foreign language can be interpreted in the Holy Tongue. We will therefore explain a possible interpretation of the word “telepathy” in Hebrew[1].*

*“Telepathy” is derived from the Greek terms tele (“distant”) and pathe (“occurrence” or “feeling”).*

*The word tele refers to any action performed from afar (as in telescope, television, telegram etc.) In the broadest sense, this describes a non-local phenomenon. In the scientific literature only a phenomenon that cannot be defined by the speed of light is called a non-local phenomenon, for example when there is a spontaneous, simultaneous reaction of one atom at one end of the universe to another atom situated innumerable light-years away from it. Electricity is thus a local phenomenon whereas **true chashmal is a non-local, spontaneous phenomenon that is not affected by the speed of light, something that happens at one point and it is transmitted and immediately sensed elsewhere.***

*In Hebrew, the word tele can be seen to be derived from the word tal, “dew.” The Kabbalistic term related to this is tala di’bdolcha, “crystal dew.” The root-source of dew is in the crystal that is the Divine inner light that illuminates the mocha stima’a or chochmah stima’a of the upper crown of the supra-conscious level of the soul. Apparently it is the “crystal dew” that acts in the transmission of thought, and this is the place one desires to rise through the silence of “cach **ale** bemachshava;” to the mocha stima’a to reach the tala di’bdolcha.*

*In Hebrew, the word telepatia ("telepathy") is comprised of the letters that make up the word tefila, "prayer," with the addition of the letter tet. In Hassidism the word tefila is seen to be derived from the root tafel which means to adhere, as when the broken pieces of a receptacle are glued together. In this view, prayer is explained as a joining or communication with God. However, the root tafel in the mishna has two renderings, beginning either with the letter taf or with the letter tet. When rendered with the letter tet, the root means "bland" or "empty," in which case prayer is perceived as an act of self-nullification. The word telepatia includes all of the letters of tefila, "prayer," with the additional tet, as mentioned, and can thus be seen to indicate a **Divine form of communication through self-nullification that is closely connected to prayer.***

## **Eliezer Accurately Transmits his Thoughts**

*We will now examine an example of the effect of thought transmission, illustrated by the story of Abraham's servant Eliezer and his mission to find a wife for Abraham's son, Isaac.*

*The central theme of the Torah portion, Chayei Sarah, revolves around the match between Isaac and Rebecca. Abraham sent his faithful servant Eliezer on this mission, through which, our sages teach us, Eliezer merited to escape the curse of his forebearer, Canaan and enter the blessing that rules over Abraham and his descendants. Upon arriving in Charan, where Abraham's family lived, Eliezer stopped by the well and prayed to the God of his master Abraham that he should successfully complete his mission, requesting that if one of the girls would offer him water to drink and also offer to water his camels, this would prove that she was the true wife for Isaac. Immediately after completing his prayer, Rebecca appeared and*

offered him water to drink and also offered to water his camels. Eliezer was astounded to realize that his prayer had been answered and went with Rebecca to her home to repeat the story to her father, Bethuel, and her brother, Laban. The climax of the story is in the phrase used by Laban and Bethuel to express their own wonder at the fantastic "coincidence" of Eliezer's prayer and Rebecca's arrival on the scene. Their spontaneous reply is "Me'Hashem yatza hadavar," "This matter has emanated from God." Amazingly, this expression has the numerical value of chashmal.

Eliezer's fervor in relating the order of events to two men who are both renowned for their evil actions, triggered this devout reply, that honored the truth that Eliezer transmitted. This is the power of chashmal to accurately transmit thoughts and feelings to those who listen.

In Psalms we find another expression that has the numerical value of chashmal: "Hu tziva ve'nivra'u," "He commanded and they were created." This phrase expresses the power of thought to command and to act on reality in a natural way, without interference through speech or action.

The complete numerical value of both of these phrases is the same, and the middle word of each phrase is equal to 101 in both cases. Mathematically, when the sum of two sets of three numbers is equal and the middle number of each set is also identical, the base of both sets must also be equal. In this case, the base number in both cases is 75.

hu 12	tziva <b>101</b>	ve'nivra'u 265	= 378 = chashmal =	Me'Hashem 66	yatza <b>101</b>	hadavar 211
89	164			35	110	
<b>75</b>		=		<b>75</b>		

75 is the numerical value of the word bitachon, "trust," which indicates that **the power of thought to transmit into reality is connected to the inner sense of trust in the soul.** Similarly to the root of tefila, "prayer," which means to join

together, the root of bitachon can be seen to be derived from tach, which also means, "to plaster."

## **The Power of Prayer**

We thus see that the *tzaddik* has the power of to transmit thoughts through the power of prayer. However, every power that God created in the realm of holiness, He also created with a parallel phenomenon in the side of impurity. There are thus people with "super-natural" powers such as telepathy, who derive their abilities from their own self-centeredness and pride.

*The tzaddik purifies his thought to make it a tool for his service of God. Just as a purified mouth is a tool for emitting holy speech and purified hands are tools for holy actions, so too in order for thought to become a tool that acts upon reality, one must rectify it and refine it. Much purity of thought is achieved through the power of silence in which a person completely nullifies himself to God in sanctity. Remaining silent in the face of God's apparently incomprehensible actions, as did Aaron the High Priest when his sons died, purifies thought.*

*The Arizal points out that the numerical value of chashmal is equal to that of the word malbush, "clothing," as we mentioned previously. Metaphorically speaking, chashmal is the "clothing" of God in the world of Atzilut. The psyche of man has three garments, these are thought, speech and action, thought being the highest and the most important[2] of the three.*

## **The Rectification of Cain**

*In order to truly and wholeheartedly pray to God, one must*

*purify one's thoughts, therefore Hassidism teaches us that before every prayer one must meditate like the early Hassidim who would meditate for a whole hour to purify and clear their thoughts before prayer. Only once one's thoughts have been cleansed can one turn to God. Then, "as water reflects one's face to his face," so to God will heed his prayers, as it says of Abel, "And God heeded Abel and his offering." In Hebrew Abel is called Hevel, which means "breath". We can thus understand that if one's breath has been purified through true meditation towards God, which entails a great purity of thought, our prayers will be heeded by God.*

*We shall now examine how the concept of telepathy is connected to the rectification of the sin of Cain, Abel's brother, of whose offering it says, "And to the offering of Cain, God did not heed." The rectification of the power of thought to act upon reality is connected to the roots of Biblical souls and their reincarnations in later generations.*

*God did not heed to Cain's offering because of the sin of unrefined thoughts weighed him down. Many generations later, it was Elisha the Prophet who succeeded in rectifying Cain's sin. This is indicated in the name of the prophet, which means, "God will heed." Elisha, the outstanding pupil of the prophet Elijah, had the greatest telepathic power of all biblical characters. Elisha achieved a great rectification called tikkun Kayin, "the rectification of Cain." As the firstborn son of Adam, Cain should have received by right a double portion of Adam's legacy. As the firstborn of the first man, Cain was worthy of receiving all the "crowns;" the crown of royalty, the crown of priesthood, the crown of Torah and the crown of "the good name" that is greater than all of them. However, as a result of murdering his brother, Cain lost this right.*

*Before Elijah rose heavenward in a stormy wind, he asked Elisha with what he wished him to bless him. Elisha replied that he wished that twice the spirit of Elijah be upon him.*

*This indicates that he wished to receive the double portion that Cain should have received because of his right as a firstborn. Elijah told him that if Elisha would see Elijah being taken from him, this would be a sign that his request had been fulfilled. Indeed, Elishah merited that his wish be granted. This can be seen by the abundance of miracles that Elishah performed, more than any other prophet or biblical character.*

*The climax of the miracles that Elijah performed was the resurrection of a dead child. On the other hand, Elisha resurrected the dead twice, once even after he himself had died. This difference between the two prophets is not merely a quantitative difference, but also a qualitative one. Our sages teach us that the dead child whom Elijah revived was the righteous prophet Jonah and the first of the two dead people whom Elishah revived was also a righteous prophet, Habakuk. However, the second person whom Elisha revived was actually a wicked person and a false prophet. The innovation of Elisha's resurrecting the dead was therefore his ability to resurrect even the wicked. It is Elisha in particular, through his success in rectifying the sin of Cain, who has the power to revive, to arouse the wicked to repent, who are called "dead" even as they live. A righteous person can be in a "slumber," as Jonah who slept in the depths of the ship, and Elijah is capable of arousing him from his slumber. However, truly resurrecting the dead, the wicked, is something unique to Elisha. From this unique power to resurrect the dead, we can surmise the great purity of Elisha's thoughts.*

*After Elisha, we are taught that this soul appeared in Hizkiyahu, the king of Judah, whom God thought to make the Messiah, however Hizkiyahu missed his chance because he did not sing God's praises after witnessing the great miracle of Sancheriv's defeat.*

*Following Hizkiyahu this soul was reincarnated in the soul of Matityahu ben Yochanan, the High Priest in the time of the*

*Hasmoneans; in Akavia ben Mahalalel; Raban Shimon ben Zakai and in Rabbi Akiva. We can thus see that this soul was eventually rectified to the extent that it merited all of the crowns that Cain forfeited by committing his sin. Hizkiyahu merited the crown of royalty; Matityahu received the crown of priesthood and of royalty; the rabbis who followed received the crown of Torah. We are further taught that this soul will once more be reincarnated in the soul of the Messiah, son of David, who is also from the root of Cain. He will then merit the "crown of good name."*

*According to the Kabbalah, the way to merit the type of ruach hakodesh, "Divine inspiration," that we call "telepathy," is by connecting to the soul of Elisha and by becoming acquainted with the whole of the secret of the reincarnations of Cain.*

## **The Friends of Job**

*In the Talmud we find a classic description of the powers of telepathy in the story of Job.*

*Job had three friends who came to console him for his terrible suffering. As it turned out, they did not succeed in consoling him at all, instead they rebuked him, which appealed neither to Job nor to God. A fourth young acquaintance sat and listened in respectful silence until the elder three finished what they had to say. His name was Elihu ben Berachel of the family of Ram and our sages explain that he was from the family of Abraham, so he was certainly a Jew. The numerical value of his name equals mashiach, "messiah," and we are taught that he himself is the soul of the Messiah and that he speaks in good taste and with wisdom. According to Ramban in his commentary on the Book of Job, Elihu reveals to Job the secret of reincarnation and he thus succeeds in appeasing Job, at which point the verse immediately says, "and God heeded Job." The word vayisha, "and he heeded," used in this verse, also implies a connection with the rectification of Cain, to*

whose offering God did not heed.

*Our sages teach us an amazing thing about Job's three friends, explaining that this was perhaps the only explicit example of telepathic communication in the Bible. They teach us that the three friends felt Job's affliction from a distance of 300 parsaut (approximately 1,200 k.m.). They are considered true friends, so much so that at the end of the passage discussing this matter, Rava declares, "This is what people [mean when they] say, 'Either friends like those of Job, or death'." Elsewhere in the Talmud we find the phrase, "Either a partner or death," meaning that death is preferable to living life alone. However, here the phrase is much stronger, insinuating that death is preferable to a life without friends with whom one has a telepathic connection!*

*Our sages teach that the second Temple was destroyed because of causeless hatred between the Jewish people, and that the rectification of that sin will be achieved by unbounded love for all Israel. **The Arizal takes it one step further; he taught that what delays the coming of the Messiah is true comradeship, not merely unbounded love. So the redemption requires true heartfelt and soulful friendship; friends who are connected even by their thoughts.***

## **Telepathy in the Keter**

*Our sages describe the telepathic connection between Job and his friends with two different parables. One opinion is that each of the four friends had three crowns in his home and the face of one of his three friends was engraved upon each crown. If he saw that the face of any crown changed for the worse then he felt that his friend was going through some crisis.*

*A second opinion is that each of the four had three trees in his garden and if he saw that the leaves fell from the tree in an unnatural way, then he felt that his friend was suffering.*



*The words used in the Talmud for "crown" and "tree" are klila and ilana, respectively and both have the same numerical value of 91 (also the numerical value of amen;mal'ach, "angel;" and the combined numerical value of the two Names of God, Havayah and Elokim.)*

*According to the opinion that thought transmission is identified with a crown, it is clear that the crown symbolizes the superconscious, meaning that the thought rises to the highest of the sefirot, the keter, "crown," at the point of the tala dibdolcha, "the crystal dew."*

*According to the opinion that identifies thought transmission with a tree that either wilts or grows, this symbolizes that which occurs at the root. Even though the phenomenon is observed in the leaves and branches, it actually depends upon the power of growth in the roots that grow underground. The tree represents the abundance that the keter, the superconscious, yields. In Kabbalah the ten sefirot embodying the conscious powers of the soul, are called ilana de'chayei, "the Tree of Life," However the roots, and even more so, the power to grow underground, are considered to be the highest keter through which one can perceive that which occurs in the conscious powers: the trunk, the leaves, the branches and the fruit.*

*We see, therefore, that according to both opinions the power of telepathy is in the keter, the superconscious "crown" of the soul.*

## **The Five Powers of the Soul**

*Another way of dividing the different powers of the soul is found in the book of the Tanya. There it states that one must constantly meditate upon the five powers of the soul, three of which we have already enumerated: thought, speech and action. The two powers of the soul above these three are called midot, "emotions" and sechel, "intellect." Midot are what could be*

called "pathos" or feelings, while sechel refers to pure, abstract intellect that is completely isolated from feelings. The Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya, explains that whereas thought, speech and action are garments, the midot and sechel are the essential powers of the soul. The sechel is the inner, abstract light, which can be harnessed and utilized by the thought when it rises to clothe the pure sechel. This is achieved by the purification and clarification of thought.

*Something that is full of flaws and dirt becomes heavy and is drawn downwards. On the other hand, when one purifies something, it becomes lighter in weight and is capable of rising higher. This is also true of the garments of one's soul, which become soiled and heavy when succumbing to the baser, more animalistic instincts, self-conceit in particular, as the verse states, "the animal spirit descends downwards on the earth." This tendency towards animalistic behavior is what weighs a person down to earth and in particular, draws his thoughts earthwards. If a person is contaminated spiritually and he does not attain purity in his thoughts and his other garments, then he is unable to act with his thoughts as God wishes us to do.*

*God desires that we be similar to Him, as it is written, "And I said, you are gods," by creating through our own thought-commandments, as it says of God, "He commanded and they were created." This is chashmal. However, if one is heavy with sin, then one does not have the capability of rising in one's thoughts as in the expression mentioned earlier, "thus you shall rise in thought before Me."*

***If the three garments of the soul are not purified, the essence of the emotions and the intellect cannot be truly sensed nor consciously experienced. In order for the emotions and the intellect to be sensed, one must raise the garments in order that the garments clothe the emotions and the intellect, this being the secret of the chariot that Ezekiel saw;***

*the chashmal clothing Supernal Man. The ascent of the worlds reveals the essential emotions, first to the person himself, and later even to others. Without the garments, the higher worlds and the higher levels of the human soul cannot be perceived.*

*When the purified thought rises to clothe the pure intellect, it takes the essential inner light of the sechel and turns it outwards in order to act upon reality. This however is the second stage of thought-purification. In order to achieve this stage the thought must first rise to clothe the midot, the emotions, and this is achieved through heartfelt prayer.*

*The five powers of the soul mentioned parallel the four worlds, the lower three powers paralleling the lower three worlds and the higher two paralleling two different aspects of the world of Atzilut.*

<i>Intellect</i>	<i>The world of Atzilut (three higher sefirot)</i>
<i>Emotions</i>	<i>The world of Atzilut (seven lower sefirot)</i>
<i>Thought</i>	<i>The world of Beriyah</i>
<i>Speech</i>	<i>The world of Yetzira</i>
<i>Action</i>	<i>The world of Asiyah</i>

## **A Meditation for Experiencing Self-Nullification**

*Another key concept concerning these five levels of the soul that the Alter Rebbe outlined in the Tanya is that in order to achieve self-nullification, one's garment of action must be nullified to the garment of speech, which in turn must be*

*nullified to the garment of thought. In turn, the thought must be nullified to the midot, which are in turn nullified to the sechel. This means that one must sense that the amount of light or vitality at each level is totally null and void in relation to the light from the higher plane. The essential soul is even higher than all of these five levels and in order to achieve true self-nullification, one must reach an understanding that all of the levels are ultimately nullified to the essential soul.*

*This meditation is completely opposite to an ordinary understanding of the world. From a physical point of view, to someone who views the world from a perspective of da'at tachton, "lower knowledge," action is concrete while speech and thought are abstract and therefore not considered so important. This idea is even stated explicitly in the Talmud in the saying, "action is the main principle." This is obviously true; however, once one begins to meditate upon this idea, one realizes that the amount and the quality of light that are revealed in action are completely null and void in comparison to the vitality of speech. Similarly, one realizes that a positive thought contains far more light and illuminates the soul far more than speech. This statement is an amazing innovation, especially when one considers the emotions and the intellect, which are totally imperceptible to someone who has not purified his mind and has not achieved this understanding. This false perception of reality, seeing that which is "above" to be "nothing" while that which is "below" is "something," is a superficial perception of reality. The meditation described in Tanya brings us to the realization that each level is nullified in relation to the level above it, and clarifies to us that that what is "above" is truly "something," while the external world is "nothing." This realization is called da'at elyon, "upper knowledge" and without it one is unable to purify one's thoughts. Someone who perceives the world through da'at tachton is under the influence of, and weighed down by the animal soul. In many*

places we find that Chassidism refers to da'at tachton as "the seed of beast," while da'at elyon is called, "seed of man." as in the words of the prophet Jeremiah "And I have sowed the House of Israel with the seed of man and the seed of beast." Most souls are souls of da'at tachton, we thus feel that "something-ness" is below while all that is "above" is imperceptible and seems to be "nothing." If one has only da'at tachton and feels that speech is nullified to action and that thought is nullified to speech and so on, then one is unable to purify his "garments" and is unable to raise them higher. One is thus unable to reach the "crown" and the "crystal dew" found there, which is the power of inner communication that we call telepathy.

## The Task of the Angels

*As mentioned previously, chashmalim are a type of angel. As taught in Kabbalah, these are the cherubim that stand at the entrance to the pardes, guarding the path to the tree of Life in the garden of Eden, holding the "sword with the revolving blade." Whenever a righteous person wishes to enter the garden, these angels begin speaking to him very fast. If he is able to reply to their words correctly, then the tzaddik is allowed to enter. However, if he becomes confused by their speech and does not follow their words, he must remain outside.*

*There are many ranks of angels, each rank higher than the previous one. The angels of the lower spheres pass our prayers up to the angels in the higher spheres until the highest angels of all make crowns, as it were, for God from our prayers. The level of speech of the lower angels is at the level of our thoughts and the level of speech of each rank of angels is at the level of thought of the angels below them. **When we express ourselves in true prayer in which our thoughts are at one with the words we emit, the lower angel garbs himself with our thought and takes it for its own***

**speech.** *The angel's thought is always connected to its speech, thus the angel above him is able to clothe his own speech in the thought of the angel below, thus taking our prayers from the lower angel. This process continues through all the ranks of angels until our prayers reach God Himself.*

## **Spiritual Powers of the Non-Righteous**

*Although we have stated that telepathy is actually a Divine power of the righteous, we sometimes find that "normal" people profess to have similar spiritual powers. It should be clear that ninety-nine percent of these so-called "healers", spiritual diviners and the like, are nothing more than charlatans. This is true whether they deceive the public consciously or whether they themselves truly believe that they possess such powers. The whole of the book of Tanya is intended to save people from self-deception. However, there is still a very small percentage of people who are truly capable of such divination even without having purified themselves in holiness. The powers these people possess do not come from garbing the higher powers of the soul with the garment of thought, rather they have holes in their garments, a type of nakedness through which the light from the upper powers of the soul is manifested. Before the primordial sin, Adam and Eve were both naked and were not embarrassed of their nakedness, however the rectification of their sin was that they must wear garments. Our sages teach us that the word levush, "clothing," is a permutation of lo bosh, "unembarrassed," meaning negation of the negative embarrassment that resulted from the sin.*

*Garments are of utmost importance, so much so that the word tikkun, "rectification," is a synonym for levush. Through their prayers, the tzaddikim raise and purify their garments, especially the garment of thought. The pure and refined garments then rise to clothe the inner powers of the soul,*

which gives the tzaddik the power to perform spiritual actions that normal people are unable to carry out. However, there are people whose natural garments are not refined, rather they have “holes” in their garments. They are born with a defect, just as a person may be born lacking a certain limb, God forbid. This person may develop sharper senses in another limb to overcome his disability. There are those who are born with the ability to solve dreams, for instance, because of holes in the garments allowing the inner light to be revealed, giving them power to act. However these are the unrectified lights of chaos and do not result from the person’s having purified his garments, therefore there is always a certain extent of self-conceit in such people.

## **The Three-Stage Process of Raising the Garments of the Soul**

*The overall aim of purifying the garments of the soul is to attain the purification of the garment of thought. All of our prayers, if they are truly heartfelt, have the power to raise the garments of the soul and the corresponding worlds to clothe the higher revelations of the soul in purity.*

***The raising the worlds of the soul is achieved when thought first rises to clothe the pure emotions. When the thought rises to clothe the emotions, then speech ascends to the previous location of the thought and one is able to speak through one’s thoughts telepathically.***

*Raising the garments in sanctity is achieved through a three-stage process. The holy Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chasidic movement taught that every spiritual process has three stages: hachna’ah, havdalah and hamtakah, meaning “submission,” “separation” and “sweetening”. In our case, these three stages correspond to chashmal. To fit this three-stage process, chashmal converts to chash-mal-mal. In that way, it draws the unity of the chashmal from the point at*

which it illuminates in the world of Atzilut, where silence transmits communication, to the lower worlds where it appears as "Sometimes silent, sometimes speaking." This is achieved by the addition of the middle stage that connects chash to mal. This middle stage is also called mal, derived from the same root as the word milah, "circumcision."

*The first stage of hachna'ah (chash) takes place before the thought rises to clothe the emotions, and it consists in the purification of the thoughts in order to prepare them for the ascent. This is the stage of waiting and preparing oneself for prayer in order to cleanse the thought. One way of achieving this cleansing is by relating stories about the righteous, as we learn from the verse that refers to the prophet Elisha, "Please tell me of the great deeds that Elisha did[3]." Relating stories about tzaddikim brings one to gadlut mochin, "mature thought" and brings about the ability to distinguish between an act of a tzaddik and the same act performed by a sorcerer. One example of such seemingly similar acts mentioned in Chassidic literature is the ability of the righteous Pinchas to hover in the air and the similar ability of the wicked Bil'am to do so. Only one who has purified his thought through hachna'ah is able to distinguish between the two.*

*Another way to achieve the silencing of all inner "noise," the first stage of chash, is by listening to profound Chassidic music, which purifies the thought and brings one to a state of inner peace. Inner peace is the knowledge that everything that God does is for the best, a state of cheerful optimism and blind faith. A person in such a state of inner peace is aware that everything that happens is "a cause" of an effect within the Divine plan, and that each cause is a manifestation of God Himself.*

*After the first stage, one is able to receive thoughts transmitted by others, as in the story of Job, in which his friends merely received the feelings that Job transmitted.*



*This stage precedes the ascent of the thought to clothe the emotions. When this state has been attained, thought has been purified to the extent that it has become a receptacle for receiving transmissions that come to him.*

*The following story illustrates this ability:*

*.....Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz wrote a letter to the Maggid of Mezeritch in which he thanked the Maggid for thinking of him. This happened the year after the passing of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and after the Maggid had accepted the leadership of the Chassidic movement, and he stated the exact time that this had occurred, a time at which there was a great distance between the two. Rabbi Pinchas wrote that the thoughts of the Maggid for him strengthen his service of God.*

*We see in this story how one tzaddik senses when another thinks of him. This is true dibbuk chaverim, "comradeship," that was felt amongst all of the pupils of the Ba'al Shem Tov, of whom we explicitly learned that they were able to sense when one thought of another from afar.*

*The second stage, havdalah, mal, "separation", consists of bitul hayesh, "nullification of being," or bitul ha'ani, "self-nullification." Having reached a state of inner peace and total trust in God, the person must return everything to God, as it says, "Give Him that which is His, because you and that which you have are His," and as sang by King David, "For everything is from You and from Your hand we have given You." At this stage the person feels that he has nothing, he is not even an emissary. He feels that everything he does is only God acting through him, and that he himself does nothing; he is merely "an insignificant assistant." This is the service of "separation" in the soul that has the power to enable the ascent of thought in order to clothe the emotions. At the completion of this stage one can sense and reveal the love that includes the fear of the Jew for God, which has been hidden in the soul. Speech then rises to the place of thought*

and one can now speak through one's thoughts.

*Once this stage of bitul hayesh has been achieved, the person is capable of communicating through thought. Another story will further illustrate this point:*

*In Russia, the ruling powers wished to invoke certain laws concerning Jewish education that were against Chassidism and against Judaism in general. The third Rebbe of Chabad, the Tzemach Tzedek, was called to court in order to represent Chassidism and Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin was called to represent the Lithuanian stream of Judaism. At some stage of the proceedings it became necessary for the Tzemach Tzedek to plant in Rabbi Yitzchak's mind the answer that he should reply to the judges. Rabbi Yitzchak received the thought and immediately replied accordingly. The reply was successful and the laws were not applied.*

*Later, Rabbi Yitzchak came to the Tzemach Tzedek and thanked him gratefully for the answer he had transmitted to him.*

*We can learn from this story that these great tzaddikim were capable of transmitting thoughts, and receiving them.*

*After the ascent of thought to the place of the emotions, with the completion of the stage of havdalah, "separation," comes the third stage, hamtakah, "sweetening," the second mal of chashmal, through which the ascent of the thought to the pure intellect is achieved. The power of this second ascent is to act upon reality, not merely planting thoughts or speaking through the mind, but actually eliciting changes in reality by the power of thought. This is achieved when the garment of action rises to the first location of the thought, the speech is then at the level of the emotions and thought is at the level of the pure intellect, thus allowing the person to accomplish innovations in nature, performing miracles that either appear to be natural or even change the laws of nature completely.*

*(It should be noted that it is only the inner dimension of the garment that rises, whereas the outer dimension remains in its place.)*

*In order for thought to clothe the pure intellect, changing the vector force of its light from illuminating within to illuminating outside, one must achieve an even higher form of self-nullification, called bitul bimetziut, "nullification of reality." This is an absolute sense of da'at elyon, that the higher worlds are truly "something" while ordinary reality is "nothing." This is one step beyond the Chasidic understanding that the world was created yesh me'ayin, and involves the realization that all of reality is absolutely negligible from God's point of view, He being the only true reality. Taking such a great light and turning it outwards is completely paradoxical, since at this state the outside has been completely nullified. However this is the wonder of it all, that the Torah and mitzvot were given for the sake of this innovation: to project outwardly the light of da'at elyon, which of its own accord can only illuminate within itself and has no capability of illuminating outwardly, since the outside is totally null and void in relation to it and has no way of rising to God. Bringing this light into ordinary reality is called a mitzvah, which can be seen to be derived from the same root as tzavta, "joining."*

*The following chassidic parable illuminates this idea, how mankind can ever hope to connect to God:*

*There was once a great wise man and a very simple person, between whom there could be no communication whatsoever, since the wise man was occupied with his intellectual pursuits while the simple man had no such intellectual understanding. Neither of the two felt any connection with the other until one day the wise man required the physical assistance of the simple man. Only then was a connection established between the two.*

*This is in accordance with the principle that "serving [Torah*

*scholars] is greater than studying it [the Torah].” By serving a Torah scholar one is capable of reaching a place that others are not capable of reaching even if they were to study for another forty years. This is another trait that can be learnt from the prophet Elisha, who served Elijah, thus meriting greater powers than even his master did.*

*There is only one expression in the entire Torah in which the word tzav appears as a noun: “tzav letzav, kav lakav, ze’er sham, ze’er sham.” One explanation of the phares tzav letzav, (a tzav for a tzav, a commandment for a commandment) is that opposing each commandment of the Torah. there is an evil instruction (“commandment”) that the psyche receive from the other side. A second explanation is that for each of God’s commandments, one must set up a boundary of more commandments (restrictions) in order to guard it, as it says “make a boundary for the Torah,” and similarly, “a boundary for wisdom is silence.” A third explanation is that the commandments must be given in small, measured quantities, as one would feed a young child, drop by drop. These three explanations parallel the stages of chash-mal-mal, and the elevation of the garment of thought through the three stages delineated above.*

*First, by bringing under submission the negative inclination that arises to contradict the positive commandment of the Torah (chash), the garment of thought itself is purified—the first stage in its elevation.*

*Then, in order for thought to rise to the place of the emotions, a restriction of one’s natural emotional tendencies is required so that they do not overwhelm one’s actions. For the same reason, the sages aspired to “create a restrictive barrier” to protect the performance of the commandments. This second stage involves a process of havdalah or “separation” which is the essence of the first stage of mal.*

*Finally, when thought rises to pure intellect and achieves da’at elyon, it is ready to be outwardly directed*

through the performance of mitzvot. As such, in order not to “break” reality, the illuminative quality of da’at elyon must be inserted drop-by-drop. This also correlates with the Halachic dictum that “mitzvot should not be bundled together.” Rather, every mitzvah should be performed separately and with its own particular intent. Caring for and rectifying reality with da’at elyon through mitzvot corresponds to the second stage of mal.

*(In addition, each of these three stages can be interpreted as corresponding to one of the three phrases in the verse quoted above. “Tzav letzav” corresponds to the submission of the negative inclination; “kav lakav” corresponds to demarcating with a line (the meaning of the word kav, in Hebrew) each mitzvah; and, “ze’eir sham, ze’eir sham,” which literally means “a little there, a little there,” corresponds to the requirement that mitzvot be performed individually, “drop-by-drop.”).*

*In order to reach the level at which the thought clothes the pure intellect, one must unite with “He commanded and they were created,” the numerical value of the Hebrew phrase being equal to that of chashmal, as stated. At this stage one receives the power to give a command and thereby create in a state of natural consciousness. This occurs through the secret of the expression, tzav letzav, as stated. This is the way to raise thought to act on reality, at which point the speech rises to clothe the emotions. This stage realizes the secret of liba lepuma galya, “the heart reveals itself to the mouth,” which is a messianic goal, as taught in Kabbalah that the reason the Messiah has not yet come is because we are in a state in which the heart is not revealed in the mouth. This is a state of complete rectification, called in Kabbalah “the secret of the rectified image.”*

<b><i>Stage of service</i></b>	<b><i>Method of service</i></b>	<b><i>Completed stage</i></b>	<b><i>Result of service</i></b>
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<i>Hamதாக – Mal</i>	<i>The secret of the three explanations of the expression tzav letzav</i>	<i>Bitul bimetziut</i>	<i>Ability to act on reality through thoughts</i>
<i>Havdalah – Mal</i>	<i>Returning all of one's being to God</i>	<i>Bitul hayesh</i>	<i>Ability to transmit thoughts</i>
<i>Hachna'ah – Chash</i>	<i>Relating stories of tzaddikim; listening to profound Chassidic melodies</i>	<i>Purification of thought</i>	<i>Inner peace; total trust in God; ability to receive thoughts transmitted</i>

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[1] This is according to the Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Abraham Abulafia and others, who taught that all languages evolve from the secret of the “backside” of the Holy Tongue. This is in opposition to the teachings of Maimonides who considered all languages other than the Holy Tongue to be a result of social conformity.

It is the apex of holy wisdom to recognize how foreign languages evolve from the Holy Tongue, and can be considered a messianic task, directed towards the prophecy of “Then I shall turn to the nations with a clear language to call all of them by God’s Name and to serve Him with one shoulder.”

[2] In Hebrew, the word *chashuv*, “important,” has the same root as the word *machshava*, “thought.”

[3] This was requested of Geichazi, Elisha’s pupil, who was excommunicated as a result of his misdeeds. In Kabbalah we are taught that his deeds belong to the most evil soul of all, yet even so, he was given the opportunity to rectify himself by

retelling the great deeds of Elisha.

Close

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## **Why Is Conversion So Hard?**

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# **Why Is Conversion to Judaism So Hard?**

By Tzvi Freeman

Note: This article replaces a previous article that said much the same, but in a way that was often misunderstood. I hope this version will be much clearer to all.

Question:

Why do the rabbis make conversion to Judaism so hard? There are many Jews who don't keep anything Jewish, yet the rabbis demand full observance to become a Jew. Is that fair?

Response:

You have a very good point. Religion, after all, is all about belief. If you believe, you're in; if not, you're out. So why can't anyone who believes in the Jewish religion be considered Jewish? And why are those who don't believe and don't keep any of the Jewish practices still considered Jews?

That's what happens when you view the Jewish people through another people's lexicon—it all looks very puzzling. What, though, if we look at ourselves through our own language, through the original Hebrew?

### Religion versus Covenant

We'll start with this word religion. Is Judaism a religion? Is that the right word?

Religions generally start when one teacher spreads his teachings to many disciples. The people who accept these teachings are considered coreligionists. Their common beliefs hold them together as a community.

Moses didn't preach a religion to individuals. He was more of a populist—a civil-rights leader who stood for empowerment of the people. He took his own people, who already had a common heritage, along with many who had decided to join that people, and brought them to Mount Sinai. There he brokered a covenant between a nation and G-d. G-d said, "I choose this nation to be my messengers of Torah light to the world." The nation, in turn, chose G-d, saying, "Whatever G-d says, we will do and we will obey."

The Jewish people, then, are best described as the "People of the Covenant"—meaning that they are a people because of a covenant. In Hebrew, a covenant is a brit—in this case, not a brit between two individuals, or even between an individual and G-d (as Abraham had made), but a brit between an entire nation and G-d.

So let's replace religion with brit and see what happens.

In a religion, you belong because you believe. In Judaism, you believe because you belong.

The brit, as I wrote, is what defines us as a nation—not geographic vicinity, language, government or culture. Even if we live in different countries, speak different languages, establish different leaders and eat different foods, that



covenant still bonds us. Most significantly: even if we stop keeping our obligations under that covenant or decide not to believe in it, the covenant endures. A covenant, you see, is a two-way deal. It takes two to make it and two to break it. Just because the people have let go, doesn't mean G-d has. That's why it's called an "eternal covenant"—because even if the people may be fickle, G-d doesn't change His mind.

So there's the difference: In a religion, you belong because you believe. In a brit (in this case, Judaism), you believe because you belong.

Believing is part of the brit. So are all the other mitzvot—obligations—of the covenant. It doesn't matter whether you believe in that covenant or those obligations, or believe that G-d obligated you, or believe in G-d at all. You can't fight with history. You are part of this people by virtue of having been born into it, and that's who this people are and what this people do. A deal is a deal.

### Conversion versus Giyur

Let's look at another word—conversion—and things will become even clearer.

Let's say you weren't born into the Jewish people. Let's say you decide you want to enter into the same covenant as every other Jew. If this were a religion, no problem—you would just accept upon yourself whatever beliefs and rites are expected of you, and you're in. That's what people generally mean when they talk about conversion.

But this is a brit. To enter into G-d's covenant with the Jewish people, believing and doing is not enough. You need to become part of that people. How do you do that?

In this way, becoming Jewish is very much like becoming an American, a Moldavian or a Zimbabwean citizen. You can't come to a country and declare yourself a member. It's a two-way street: aside from you choosing your country, the government

of that country has to decide to accept you.

Similarly, if you choose Judaism, you also need Judaism to choose you. Like we said, a covenant is a two-way deal.

So you need to become a ger (pronounced "gehr"). A ger is more than a convert. A ger literally means someone who has come to live among a people to which he or she was not born. A naturalized alien. That's how the ger is described in Torah, and how the process of becoming a ger is described in the Talmud: "A ger who comes to sojourn among us."

By joining this people, the ger instantly becomes part of the same covenant to which the people are part. And although the most essential part of joining this people is to accept the same obligations of the covenant in which they are obligated, it is not by force of his or her acceptance that the ger is obligated. Proof is, if the ger later has a change of mind, it helps zilch. The ger is obligated no matter what, because he or she has now also become "a child of the covenant."

That's one difference between this citizenship and citizenship of a modern country: You could always renounce your citizenship of a country. A Jew, however, is a member of an eternal covenant. Once in, there's no way out.

The details of joining

In short, a ger is an adopted member of the Jewish family. In the words of the paradigm of all gerim, Ruth the Moabite, "Your people are my people; your G-d is my G-d."

The rituals of that adoption are the same as what the Jewish people went through at Sinai: circumcision for males, immersion in a mikvah (ritual bath), and acceptance of all Torah obligations. The crucial element, however, is that all of these are to be supervised by a tribunal of learned, observant Jews—representing none other than G-d Himself. Their job is not only to witness that the ger was properly circumcised and fully immersed in the mikvah, but also to

ensure that the ger is duly cognizant of the obligations of the covenant into which he or she is entering.

That's another distinction between obtaining citizenship of a modern nation and joining the Jewish People: citizenship is mostly associated with the attainment of rights and privileges, while Jewish citizenship (gerut) is principally concerned with the responsibilities that come along with those privileges.

If the ger-wannabe learns of these obligations and feels they are more than he or she bargained for, so be it. You don't have to be Jewish to be a good person and to be loved by G-d. Believe in one G-d and keep His laws—the seven laws of Noah. Judaism—as opposed to Jewishness—is not just for Jews.

But if the ger does accept, then he or she is reborn as an eternal Jew, the same as any one of us who was born into the covenant. The soul of the ger, our sages taught, stood at Mount Sinai. In at least one way, the ger is yet greater, for the ger is the lost child who has found his way home.