



# Secrets of the Cycle

## Passover through Shavuot

*A series of essays explaining the Kabbalah  
of the holidays of Passover, Omer, and Shavuot*

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As we know from the Torah, hametz (leavened grain) is forbidden on Pesah. Now the question arises is in what measure is hametz forbidden? In other words, is even a microscopic amount prohibited, or does the prohibition of hametz fall under the same category of other forbidden food items?

According to Torah law a prohibited food item is nullified if it were accidentally, (and only sincerely accidentally), mixed with permissible food items of the same variety and taste, therefore preventing its identification and removal. Rather than lose the majority of good food the unidentifiable minority prohibited food is nullified by the majority. With regards to hametz, if it were mixed with non-hametz items it too became nullified all the while that it did not add taste to the mixture. This was how the rule was observed in Biblical times. Since Temple times, we can no longer follow this rule.

Over the centuries, our Sages in their wisdom saw the low level of Torah knowledge, and observance amongst the people. In order to safeguard them from mistakes, accidents and cheating, the Sages devised the rule that when a forbidden item is mixed in with what is permitted in such a way that it cannot be identified and removed, then it can be considered nullified as long as it does not add any noticeable taste, and that the ratio is 60 to 1 or more of the permitted against the prohibited.

This law of a 60 to 1 nullification is still in effect today with almost all forbidden mixtures. Mixtures of meat and dairy differ, and according to the Ashkenazi community so too does hametz differ. In spite of all the rational reasons proposed for this 60 to 1 ratio of nullification, the Kabbalah reveals to us that there is a great secret with regards to it. But now is not the time to discuss the Kabbalah.

Sephardim hold that if an all year round kosher item had hametz added to it, be it accidentally or intentionally, and that the ratio of hametz to the rest of the product is 60 to 1, then the hametz is considered nullified, and the entire mixture will be permissible for Pesah.

Mind you, this allowance only applies prior to Pesah itself, and not on or during the holiday. If such a mixture were to occur during Pesah then there is no amount of nullification possible. Even the smallest amount of hametz during Pesah is strictly forbidden by Biblical Torah law.

Ashkenazim are so strict with this concern of violating the Biblical law that they have adopted the minhag to even disqualify 60 to 1 nullifications that happened before Pesah. For the Ashkenazim, if there was a permissible mixture of hametz and Pesah products properly nullified before Pesah, during Pesah this nullified mixture is



reactivated, and becomes forbidden as if the mixture were itself made during Pesah. Therefore, what the Sephardim will allow, the Ashkenazim forbid. This is where minhag, and Halakha differ. Practically speaking each community is obligated to follow their own customs. One cannot choose a leniency simply because one wants to or finds it easier.

With regards to koshering one's kitchen, and preparing one's food for Pesah, this difference of minhag makes a significant difference. Sephardim have a much less stressful approach.

That which is nullified before the Pesah is finished, and done with. It does not come back and reactivate, it does not come back to haunt us. Therefore, Sephardim only concern themselves with the removal of actual hametz that itself is forbidden, and which can cause other items to become equally forbidden.

Being that we are not concerned about previously nullified hametz, we have no concern about hametz reactivating on countertops, or in sinks, or in a number of kitchen appliances. The Sephardic tradition is to simply boil up water in a kettle, and pour it over all open surfaces, and sinks where hot hametz might have been. Clean up the water, and the Sephardic kitchen is kosher for Pesah.

Ashkenazim are very concerned about reactivated hametz, so much so that in order to avoid any possibility of this occurrence they have adopted the practice to cover large areas of their kitchens with aluminum foil. In this way, even hot foods put on to countertops, and the like, will never come directly into contact with the surface that might possibly have absorbed hametz in it.

While many Halakhic authorities can argue that there is no necessity for this stringency, still the practice is a common custom in many Ashkenazi homes. Needless to say, for Sephardim, this practice is as strange and foreign to us as it is accepted and common to Ashkenazim. Again, when it comes to what an individual should perform in one's own home, one must consult one's local Rabbi, and follow the directives of one's own community.

Another famous stringency (humra) of the Ashkenazim is the prohibiting against eating any kind of beans or legumes during Pesah. These are called kitniyot. Their prohibition is actually steeped in history as opposed to Halakha.

In centuries gone by when wheat, legumes, and beans were carried to the public markets in large sacks, it was almost always the case that grains from one type would



get mixed in with grains of another. It seems the carry sacks were never completely cleaned out from one haul to the next, so grains became intermingled.

During the year, this is no concern, however on Pesah; this could become a serious issue. Therefore the Rabbis of those domains made a blanket prohibition against any grains that were carried in these sacks because no one could check them literally grain by grain to make certain no forbidden mixtures had occurred.

Thus all suspected grains, the kitniyot, were shunned. Although we live centuries later, and this concern is no more, still, once a tradition, always a tradition. Although many Ashkenazi Rabbis acknowledge that there really is no reason to prohibit kitniyot anymore, still, they are Halakhically obligated to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors, and uphold this tradition, however antiquated it may be.

Today the Pesah market has become big business. With regards to food products, numerous Rabbinic organizations issue their certifications on a wide variety of products. It is of interest to note that not all of these organizations follow the same Halakhic guidelines.

While the majority of them are Ashkenazi, and therefore share certain common denominators, still there are others that are Sephardic, who tend to be more lenient than the standard Ashkenazim, and other Hasidic groups, who tend to be stricter than their non-Hasidic Ashkenazi peers.

It must be pointed out that regardless of which certification and level of observance one accepts, as long as the others are standing upon the bedrock of Halakha they are all permissible and acceptable. It is only minhag that separates one level of legitimate observance from another. While we personally may not accept the stringencies or leniencies of another, this does not make them to be less or wrong when accepted by those of another group.

Unfortunately, outright prejudice and arrogant religious chauvinism does exist. I have personally witnessed Rabbis from one group speak disparagingly about the observances of another group, not only with Pesah but also with regards to other matters.

Last year, I personally confronted one Rabbi who spoke disparagingly about another Rabbi's list of certified kosher products for Pesah. His attack was racist, and not founded upon any legitimate Halakhic concerns. This Rabbi did not respond to my carefully worded respectful address to him. He ignored me, and continued to make his



disparaging comments. All I could do was to warn my students not to pay heed to this Rabbi. His behavior was deplorable. Unfortunately, he is not the only one to behave in such a non Torah-like fashion.

I could go on the vent my feelings about such hypocrisy, but let it suffice as a warning to us all. If a Rabbi comes out with suspiciously negative things to say against another Rabbi's organization or Halakhic decisions, those objections have to be firmly grounded in Halakha. Not only must the objection be firmly grounded in Halakha, the Rabbi must document both his objection, and sources in detail. Anything less than this should be recognized as suspect and discounted immediately.

Mind you, you will always find members of other communities who follow different minhagim (customs). They may even be your neighbors. They are acting in accordance to their Rabbis, just as you are acting in accordance to yours. Their home is as kosher for Pesah as is yours, even if they are more lenient than you in some regards.

However, just because one family is lenient in some regards does not allow a visiting family from another community to accept the leniencies of their hosts all the while that they are in their homes. Each family must stay faithful to their own communal laws, regardless of whose home they are in.

This is why Sephardim can have a Pesah table full of rice and beans (kitniyot) that they can enjoy, whereas their Ashkenazi guests may not partake of those foods. While Ashkenazim can still eat in the home of their Sephardic neighbors, there are those foods that they cannot partake of. This (and other minhagim) should never be a source of prejudice for an Ashkenazi to mistakenly believe that he cannot eat in a Sephardic home during Pesah. Our Sages have addressed this point in their literature in no unclear terms.

When we understand the roots of the laws of Pesah and can recognize how they are separate from the minhagim, we are in a much better position to properly prepare for the holiday, and to do so, with the minimum degree of stress. After all, Pesah is supposed to be a time of joy, not one of paranoiac fear and stress. Therefore, please, go study the Halakhot and learn the practices. Learn what you are obligated to do under law, and what others in your community follow as a matter of tradition. Do what you have to do and enjoy it.

Have a happy, healthy and sane Pesah.



## Leaven on Passover in Quantum Torah

There is an interesting issue with regards to the laws of Passover that sharply divide the two communities of Torah observant Jews, commonly known as the European Ashkenazim, and the Middle Eastern Sephardim. With regards to leavened products on Passover, all agree that these are Biblically prohibited throughout the entire holiday. There is no disagreement on this fundamental point.

However, what is the Law regarding a product that might contain a small amount of leaven? At what ratio is the amount of leaven in a product considered null and void, therefore allowing the product to be consumed during Passover?

The answer to this question follows the traditional Law of the nullification of forbidden mixtures as outlined by the Torah Sages over many centuries. The general rule is that the ratio for nullification is 60 to 1. In other words, if there is 60 times the amount of the forbidden item in a mixture of otherwise permitted items, then its presence is considered insignificant and therefore, null and void. This is the general rule applied in almost all cases of Torah Law regarding the mixture of permitted foods with forbidden additives.

Now, with regards to Passover, all leavened products, no matter how great or how small are forbidden throughout the entire holiday. During the holiday if even the smallest amount of leaven becomes mixed into a non-leavened food, then the entire mixture cannot be consumed during the Passover holiday. All opinions are in agreement with this as well. However, now we come to the major disagreement.

What if before Passover there is a non-leavened product that had mixed into it a leavened product of a small proportion that is nullified in the 60 to 1 ration. Being that this happened before the Passover, before the time of the prohibition of leaven begins, what is the law regarding this mixture?

According to the Sephardim, once the leaven is nullified in a 60 to 1 ratio with non-leavened items, the leaven is null and void and remains such, whether during Passover or not. Once the mixture is properly permitted, it stays that way, period.

The Ashkenazim on the other hand have a completely different view of this. They insist that regardless of any previous nullification, any such forbidden mixture, regardless of how small the leavened additive may be is reactivated and forbids the entire mixture,





even if it was originally nullified and declared acceptable. In the original Hebrew, this concept is called *Hozar V'Niyur* (return and reactivate).

In other words, from the Ashkenazi point of view even the most miniscule percentage of a leavened product is activated in a larger non-leavened mixture and turns the entire mixture into a leavened state, thus prohibited on Passover. Needless to say, the Sephardim say that no such reality exists. They insist that once it is nullified in 60, it stays nullified and no longer has any power to “return and reactivate.”

So now, who is right? Is this a question of philosophy, or Biblical interpretation or can it be scientifically analyzed to ascertain whether or not such a miniscule amount of a so-called leavened product actually does reactivate, and spread leavening throughout such a entire, larger mixture?

I do believe that a scientific analysis can be performed, and its conclusions would be definitive and final. However, this does not mean that scientific fact and reality would in any way be authoritative to have any influence over an argument in Torah Law to either permit for forbid such mixtures nullified according to the 60 to 1 ratio.

How is it that scientific reality that proves things one way or another can have no real relative value in settling an argument that essentially is based on two different perceptions of reality? Either the leaven returns and reactivates or it does not. It cannot do both simultaneously, or can it?

The answer to this question is that actually yes it can. There can be, and essentially there are, two separate and distinct sets of reality for the same facts. And how can this be? The answer is because, like everything else in existence, the Torah and its Laws exist in a quantum universe.

The law of quantum physics state that reality when observed tends to alter itself to align with the perceptions of the observer. As such, not only is beauty in the eye of the beholder, so too is reality. Therefore, when an Ashkenazi views the reality of the 60 to 1 mixture, nullified before Passover and allowed at that time, once it comes to Passover, he can only see a forbidden mixture. Nothing in science can prove to an adherent of this view that it is wrong or unfounded. Somehow and in some way, his reality is valid, real and not subject to change.

The same can be true of the other side of the discussion. The Sephardi will see a clearly permitted state with absolutely no reality of prohibition, entirely the opposite of his Ashkenazi peer. Both see the reality that they expect to see and both realities validate



themselves, each in the eyes of the individual beholder. This is Quantum Torah. And it is applicable in almost every branch of religious discussion far beyond the example under discussion here.

Yes, Quantum Torah! This is nothing new, space-age or anything else modern. It is as old as the Torah itself. It is as old as creation itself. It is the way G-d made things to be in the beginning.

This is why Torah Law in almost every instance is subject to variant opinions of interpretation and practice. The great codifiers, first Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi who codified the Mishnah, and later Rav Ashi who codified the Gemara, both took extra measures to make sure that their works were not didactic, black and white and monolithic. On the contrary, both authors made the efforts to include the opinions of many others, some in outright contradiction to one another. And still, only together do we have the entirety of the Mishnah or Gemara.

Neither was written to be a definitive final word or code of Law. Only G-d can reveal this. Mankind, on the other hand, looks at G-d's word and sees reflected the profundity, complexity and quantum nature in it, even as it exists correspondingly in the natural world.

Torah legend teaches us that in the beginning G-d gazed into the Torah, and from it created the universe. Therefore, the entire universe, everything in existence around us and within us came forth from out of the Torah. Therefore, everything in existence, around us, and within us, is part of the Torah. Yet, existence as Torah is not found written in any book. The Torah is summed up to us in the words in the Scroll, yet its commentary and true meanings can be found in life itself, and in everything in the universe, everything surrounding us and everything within us.

As existence itself is Torah and as existence itself is quantum, therefore, Torah, the source of existence is by definition also quantum. Therefore, every argument and disagreement, has a truth and a reality to it, all from a unique certain point of view, observed by the beholder. Reality is quantum. Torah is quantum. This apparently was the meaning of the Kabbalist Sage, the Ari'zal, who taught that each and every soul has their own unique and personal commentary (perush) to the Torah.

Nothing is as it seems. Nothing is as concrete and rigid as we may think. Reality is far more fluid and subjective and that we can possibly imagine. Torah is our anchor on reality. And Torah teaches us much about reality far beyond what any one individual is willing or able to see.



In conclusion, during Passover, leaven is nullified in a 60 to 1 ratio in a non-leavened mixture before the holiday begins and does not reactivate. Then again it does reactivate. Both are true, both are real. It all depends on whose perception of reality you choose to follow.

Is this difficult for you? This is only the beginning, the very first step in embracing the Quantum Torah, which I may add is the source from which you and I were also created. G-d, His Torah and His people are all one! Think about it. Better yet, penetrate within and try to experience it! Maybe then, you'll perceive a sense of your quantum self in a quantum universe which came forth from the Quantum Torah of the All Inclusive Ayn Sof (Without End).



## Passover Freedom

As we come to celebrate Passover, we must remember the message of the moment. Freedom, once received, must be preserved. There is an old military saying in Israel, “only those who defend their freedom will keep it.”

With the one exception of Passover, freedom is not something given; it is earned. Freedom requires discipline, hard work and most of all, self sacrifice. In ancient Egypt we paid for our freedom with the blood of our newborn male children; our enemies also paid with the blood of their firstborns. Since that one unique moment in human history when G-d personally intervened and brought us out of Egypt by a supernatural hand, the responsibility to acquire and preserve freedom has fallen into human hands, blessed by G-d and grasping the sword.

Only those who wield the sword stand a chance to defend their freedom. Those who have “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks” (Is. 2:4) have acted prematurely.

By doing so, in their foolish and fantastical illusions of peace, they have again been taken captive and today are in the depths of slavery. They are no longer free men, who can make their own choices and chart the course of their own destinies. Instead they are slaves, without a backbone and without resolve. They are weak in mind and body; completely subject to the directions, whims and commands of another.

Kohelet says (3:8) that there are both times for war and times for peace. Not for naught is the time of war written before the time of peace. War comes before peace. The plagues came to Egypt before the exodus and the apocalypse will come before Mashiah. Wars conquer enemies and only when the enemy is conquered can there truly be peace.

When Mashiah comes there will be plenty of time for peace. Until then, each and every day, it is time for war. Those who fight stand the chance to win. Those who do not fight have already lost. They are slaves. Torah teaches us that the status of a slave is less than a full human being. A slave is considered property and not a man. He cannot even observe many of the laws of Torah. Only a man can observe Torah, only a free man can serve G-d. Slaves grovel; free men stand tall. Slaves submit and follow orders, free men fight and surrender only to G-d.

Here in these United States, Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. He paid for his courage with a bullet to the head. Today, most Americans, other westerners and certainly most



Jews have willingly walked right back into slavery. Although today's slavery is mostly of the mind, still it is as binding and degrading as what was experienced by those living here over a century ago.

This Passover finds the vast majority of us again being slaves. We celebrate a Passover Seder as a hollow reminder of former glory. Today, we have no such glory. Today, we grovel before our many new masters. We embrace peace and passivism and fear raising the sword of free men.

Only free men can carry a weapon. Only free men can wield it and fight. Avraham Avinu was such a warrior; so was Yaakov his grandson. Our ancestors went forth from Egypt fully armed and ready for war (Rashi, Ex. 13:18). Yet, alas, today, their descendants sit in their plush homes, comfortable, fat, lazy and passive; ready to be led to the slaughter like lambs instead of being ready to sit at the head of the feast of free men, eating slaughtered lamb.

Today, the slaves fear to raise the sword, to slaughter again the paschal lamb; after all, what would the neighbors think? If I lifted the sword, what would others say? So instead of raising the sword of freedom to defend and conquer, the sword of slaughter is raised up against us, to slit the throats of those too peace-loving to care to defend themselves. Slaves die; who cares? Free men live; everyone cares and everyone is forced to respect them.

The Haggadah teaches that in every generation every man must personally see himself as if he personally went forth from Egypt. Torah is clear that our ancestors went out armed. Today, where are your arms? Where is your sword, your military knife or even your gun? Please do not respond with your loathing of violence and weapons. This only proves your disrespect for Torah and everything holy.

Since the days of Moses, Joshua and David, Israel has had an army and it was the greatest of honors to serve G-d as one of His holy fighters. How far have we fallen, how blind we are, how polluted are our minds that such a natural and logical thing such as self defense should be ignored by so many. Torah commands it and we ignore it, and still many call themselves Torah observant. They cannot even see their own contradictions.

If you want to be like our ancestors who left Egypt at the first Passover, then you should celebrate this Passover just like they did. You should have your weapons of war ready and displayed at your Seder table. They should be practical weapons, not ceremonial ones. You should know how to use them and teach your children how to use them. You



should be ready for war. For remember, soon after the exodus, Amalek came and declared war. The people went out to fight, to survive. As it was then, so nothing has changed today.

Freedom survives because free men fight for it. Freedom dies when people grow lazy and lethargic. First they expect others to fight for their freedom, and then they turn their backs on even those fighters, disrespecting their heroic self-sacrifice. This is the mind of a slave and a coward. First the mind is enslaved, the body then always follows suit.

Passover celebrates victory by the Hand of G-d over the hand of man. Since the first Passover the victory of the Hand of G-d is achieved through the sword and not through the word as the slaves have taught! Talk has its place and it has its power. It is said that the pen is mightier than the sword. This too has its moments. Yet, when the pen and sword are united, then the free men cannot be conquered.

Indeed, even in ancient days, Rabbi Elazar ben Shamma taught (Sifre, Ekev 40) that the Torah came down from Heaven wrapped in a sword. We do not choose one or the other. We embrace them both. Both came down from Heaven equally and together. Both serve the Will of Heaven. Both united and together bring about the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven. Both together are necessary for free men to remain free.

Passover is the time to commemorate freedom, to remember it and to recommit to it. At my Passover table we will have weapons of war, symbols equal to matzah and marror. Matzah is the bread of freedom, marror is to remind us of slavery, and the weapons make sure that we do not confuse the two. We do not fulfill our Passover obligations unless we embrace freedom. This cannot be done by word alone; it must be done by deed.



## The Meaning of Freedom in the Passover Story

The Biblical story of the Exodus is the foundational story of human freedom from bondage, and oppression. Freedom is Biblically portrayed in overtly political and social terms, the nation of Israel was freed from its oppressive bondage to the nation of Egypt. If all there is to this story is a history lesson, then it would be well worth leaving it in the past, mentioned only in history books, like all other major ancient events.

A story of the past belongs in the past. Yet, the Bible is very clear in that it wants this story to be remembered, and even to be mentioned daily. Why is there such emphasis of importance on a long ago ancient event with no present day relevant significance? After all, what form of human bondage, and oppression face us today from which we seek our own freedom?

In viewing the Exodus in only a historical light, one fails to focus on its true essence. The true message of the Exodus is not one of political freedom, a message related to past history. Rather, the message is a psychological one, and is thus a message of perennial value, for all peoples, everywhere, for all times.

We fail to properly focus on the greatest enslaver of our individual persons. This slaver is not a government, a society, or a culture. We are not held bound today in chains, with whips. Today, as in the past, our bondage is a state of mind. Essentially, it is our minds that are held imprisoned. It is our minds that need to be freed from the modern day Egypt of modern day ignorance.

Ignorance is the great enslaver. Ignorance imprisons the mind, forcing the mind to serve the forces of darkness, fear, emotional imbalance, and lack of mental clarity. Remembering the Exodus today, therefore, is transformed into a modern exercise of transformational psychology, wherein which each individual can symbolically redeem oneself from one's own personal, internal, psychological Egypt. Once one recognizes that one no longer needs to be a slave to dark, inner forces that haunt one's own mind, one can then begin one's own march to the psychological promised land, where one can be psychologically free.

The path towards psychological freedom, mirroring the ancient historical event, makes its first stop at Mt. Sinai. In ancient times, the Israelites stopped at Sinai to there receive God's law for creating the proper society. In psychological terms, as we walk our own path towards inner freedom, and enlightenment, we too make a stop at our inner Mt.





Sinai to there receive our own internalized message from our higher, yet unrealized potential Self, that both inspires us, and motivates us to continue along the road to enlightenment.

The Exodus from Egypt is transformed from an ancient historical event into a perennial psychological quest. This quest has taken on many different forms, and symbols over the many centuries of the story being told. Within the Passover Seder, observed by members of the Jewish faith, as their physical fulfillment of remembering the Exodus, one of the Sages is quoted as saying that one who does not see oneself as if he or she is personally redeemed from Egypt has not fulfilled one's obligations in the telling of the Passover story. The only way that one can see oneself as being personally redeemed is by looking at the story in its perennial psychological form, as opposed to looking at it as an isolated, ancient historical event.

One of the more profound examples of this is to be found in the Kabbalistic meditations of the Ari'zal school that have been associated with the ritual observances of the traditional Passover Seder.

The Kabbalistic meditations revolve around the focusing of the mental powers of intellect (the sefirat Binah, also called the sefirotic face, Imma, mother), and intuition (the sefirat Hokhma, also called the sefirotic face, Abba, father). Specifically during the Seder rituals of drinking the four cups of wine (juice), and the eating of the matzah, the meditator contemplates the movement of spiritual energy represented by these two faculties of the human mind. These sefirotic forces are contemplated growing, and maturing as a result of God's mighty Hand bringing the Israelites out of Egypt.

There is unfortunately much confusion, misunderstanding, and even misinterpretation of this meditative process by those who interpret it to be something quite literal, and having a relationship, and an effect only upon other dimensional planes of being, outside the human mind. In reality, the Passover meditations are psychological in dynamic, and are designed to get the meditator to focus on what the real message of freedom is all about. Freedom is about the coherent, rational, and clear awareness of one's internal mind being free from outside oppressive, and dominating forces.

The slavery in Egypt served as an archetype of the human mind imprisoned in its own jail of emotional imbalances, and mental confusion. The Exodus serves as the archetype of full psychological emancipation, which is defined by the Kabbalists as being the harmonious integration, and balance between the academic/intellectual, and intuitive/emotional parts of the human mind. Only when each individual is freed from one's internal slave masters, and self-made demons, is one said to be truly free. The



Kabbalists understood this profound psychological lesson, and incorporated it directly into the meditations of the Passover Seder, in that form which is unique to Kabbalistic language.

The Bible commands that the Exodus from Egypt be remembered throughout all generations. The Passover Seder is a ritual way in which this Biblical commandment is fulfilled literally. Yet, it took the words of the Talmudic Sage, and the later Kabbalah to open up the actual meaning of the story, and lay it out for all to see. God's interest in us remembering the Exodus is not historical, it is psychological. God did not redeem Israel from Egypt merely for historical reasons. God redeemed Israel so that the episode, and its perennial remembrance would serve as the psychological model that we now know that it is. From the beginning, God's intent was not limited to the historical concerns of only Israel, God's greater concern was for the psychological well being of all humanity.

In this light, Passover, and the Passover story is translated from being merely a Jewish holiday, with only ethnic interest, into a universal metaphor and archetype, with message and meaning for everyone. Essentially, Passover is a ritual form for a universal message. While the ritual form is exclusively Jewish, the universal message is for everyone, everywhere. Human psychological freedom, and internal emancipation from oppressive external forces is the duty, and mission of each and every human soul.

By approaching life with clear, rational thought, we gaze upon all things, without fear, or other emotional turmoil. At the same time, we recognize that deep within the mind there is an unconscious place that senses more, and knows more than the conscious rational mind alone. We do not allow this to frighten us, or disturb our equilibrium. On the contrary, through meditation, and self introspection, we endeavor to delve into the murky waters of the unconscious, to extract from it pearls of wisdom, from that place where God Himself spoke, our personal internal Mt. Sinai.

Overcoming internal fears, confronting our own prejudices, seeking to understand ourselves, and why we are the way we are, enables us to discover, and expose the greatest mystery of all times. This internal march to the psychological promised land leads one to discover one's own truth about oneself, and one's own essential identity. The inner quest brings one to discover one's true inner Self. It is the discovery of this inner Self that is the great step that one takes towards that next step, which is to discover God within.

God's Presence imbues all life. This is a lovely theological statement that few people ever realize the full extent of its meaning. This full extent is both an academic concept, and a psychological reality. It is only when the powers of personal intuition (the sefirat

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Hokhma in Kabbalah speak), is activated, and combined with intellect (the sefirat Binah in Kabbalah speak), that one comes to that revelation of mind that unites the inner senses with the outer senses. The physical world around us becomes transformed when we look upon it with eyes that equally see our individual internal realities. We begin to sense God's Presence in all, and we develop the inner awareness of the movement of His invisible Hand in our lives.

When we see God in all, then we recognize the value of all that which God has made. This includes the value of life itself, be it in every human being, or be it in every other form of life. This lesson of the respect for all life is even echoed in the Passover story. The Exodus story mentions how God saved Israel from Pharaoh's pursuing army by drowning them all under the crushing waters of the sea. The Bible relates that upon seeing this miraculous salvation Israel broke out into spontaneous song. The Midrash states that upon seeing Israel below singing God's praises, that the angels in Heaven also began to sing. Yet, God hushed the angels, silencing their song. Sadly, God said to the angels, how can they sing praises to God over the death of the Egyptians, were they too not also God's children?

The value of life, and the mutual respect for all human beings echoes from the Passover story, transcending the limits of the historical events of the time. Realizing this, and living it, is what the Passover, and the Exodus is all about. Those performing the ritual should keep in mind the real purpose of what it is that they are doing. Everyone else should keep in mind, and in the heart, the true message of human freedom and dignity, and live it to the fullest.



## **The Seder Sword,** *A New Passover Tradition*

***“And G-d directed the nation the way of the Yam Suf desert,  
and the children of Israel were armed when they left the land of Egypt.”***

Ex. 13:18

The pasuk immediately before this states that G-d did not guide the nation to take the more direct route which would have taken them into immediate warfare, knowing that they were not yet ready for such. Yet, this pasuk makes it quite clear that they did nonetheless have the weaponry to fight such a battle. Why was the nation prepared for war and yet circumvented from fighting it? The answer reveals to us much about the true state of warfare and what it takes to fight it.

Every soldier and every military commander knows that on the battlefield, while weapons really do matter, still, the greatest weapon is the resolve of the individual fighter to be victorious in combat. True warriors can be wounded numerous times and still press the attack until victory. While weapons are of great value, a strong heart is the most valuable weapon of them all.

While we begin with the praise of the most valued of weapons, we still must never allow ourselves the illusion of thinking that a strong heart alone wins out in battle even against the most advanced weaponry. This is a terrible lie that ends up getting numerous souls killed.

Ultimately the strong heart must be accompanied by the strong arm, and the strong arm must be carrying the strong sword. Inner and outer strength must never be separated in importance. One must never consider one to be more important than the other. In this world, in which we exist as composite entities made up of body and soul, our manner of warfare require of us to address both realms. In the language of the Kabbalah, this physical world of ours is referred to as Olam HaAsiyah, the Dimension of Action. Therefore, as the Kabbalists teach us, the only way to shine the Divine Light into this Dimension of Action is through our righteous and moral behavior, in other words, our correct actions.

When it comes to the conflict between good and evil, talk is cheap and action speaks louder than words. When we speak of the coming of Mashiah, absolutely all Biblical and later Kabbalistic prophecies describe the messianic scenario as one of warfare, conflict and ultimate physical victory over an evil enemy, with the physical death of those



enemies brought about through victory in warfare. It is said that those fighting this war will be a combined force of righteous human beings fighting alongside a military formation of angelic beings. How this will actually materialize, time will tell. Nonetheless, the point is clear, military education and martial experience are prerequisites for any righteous human being who seeks to serve in the messianic army.

While the majority of us may never live to see the messianic army of righteous souls and angelic beings, nonetheless we can each do our share in preparing for the imminent arrival. The Ba'al Shem Tov has rightly taught that each and every soul of Israel has within it a spark of the soul of Mashiah. As such as we refine and better ourselves individually, we each personally help move forward the great and coming event. Although not all of us can merit being physical warriors serving in Israel's army, we can each nevertheless, remember our martial past and future and be the best we can be, as soldiers in the fight above and below. When we strengthen ourselves physically and spiritually thus enabling ourselves to confront any foe be it physical or spiritual we are indeed embodying and rectifying the spark of Mashiah within us.

We all familiar with the "spiritual weaponry" of the Pesah Seder. The matzah, maror, and four cups of wine when properly understood and partaken of in accordance to Torah Law create for us a spiritual barrier and shield that can defend us against any attack in the spiritual plane. However attacks on the physical plane are not covered under this umbrella of protection. Although the night of Pesah is called Lil Shimurim, this is mostly an adage against malevolent spiritual forces. I have known from personal experience of Torah observant people who have been robbed and otherwise physically attacked on Pesah night. We must understand and remember that spiritual protection and physical protection are two separate and different things. We must equally understand that anyone who denies this and claims that spiritual protection automatically includes protection in the physical is dangerously wrong; to listen to such an opinion could lead one to disastrous consequences.

Just as we have our spiritual training and our spiritual protection so too must we emulate our ancestors who when they left Egypt were physical prepared for war. When we train ourselves physically to address physical problems only then are we ready to confront them. When the children of Israel left Egypt their bodies were already hardened by physical labor. Many of them had training serving in the Egyptian army. They were ready to meet any physical threat. Yet, in their hearts, they were still slaves. They had no yet tasted the fresh air of freedom and were not yet strong enough of heart to fight and die for it.



Combat exists in dual parallel dimensions and it must be fought in both simultaneously as well. Therefore, as strong as one may be physically, one must still become strong spiritually. For this spiritual training we have been given Torah and mitzvot. Yet, the flip side is also equally true. One who is strong spiritually must also become strong physically and, like our ancestors who left Egypt, be able to meet combat on both the spiritual and physical planes. It is in this last endeavor that many religious and spiritual individuals have fallen greatly short of accomplishment. The terrible results of this we have seen through Jewish history with the slaughter and death of countless numbers of unprepared and untrained innocent Jewish human beings. This is so contradictory to the true message of Pesah and all of later Biblical Jewish history.

Today, the martial aspect of Torah tradition has been almost completely forgotten. Today, the necessity for physical strength and martial ability is even viewed as irrelevant in certain religious circles. It is the members of these same circles who are more often than not victims of all types of crimes of violence, theft and the like. Unlike our ancestors, they have never learned how to defend themselves and they make the terrible mistake of thinking that their spiritual strength will somehow protect them in this physical world, all the while that they are physically weak. If our ancestors in Egypt would have made this mistake they would have all died in the original battle against Amalek and would have never survived to have made it to Sinai to receive the Torah.

In honor of our ancestors and their going forth from Egypt, armed and ready to fight, I myself have instituted a new minhag which I observe at my Pesah Seder. Next to the tradition Pesah Seder plate with all the spiritual weapons of war on it, I follow in the footsteps of our ancestors who left Egypt and I place there my "sword," which today is a military Special Forces combat knife. This is no toy nor is it merely a symbol. It is a real combat knife the type used by soldiers in today's armies. I myself am trained in certain combat forms and am capable of using such a weapon to defend myself, my family, our Torah and our nation, if I was ever called upon to do so.

By placing such a weapon of war next to my Pesah Seder plate I am proclaiming the great eternal truth. I am a free man and I am willing and able to defend and fight for my freedom. My Pesah Seder is for me no mere holiday of antiquated symbolism. It is not just about eating Matzah and drinking four cups of wine. For me Pesah is Israel's Independence Day. This is the day when Israel became a free people, to be one nation, under G-d, indivisible. We would never have been able to accomplish this without the sword in one hand and the Torah in the other. Thank Heaven we have them both and that we can use each as is necessary, each in their right time and each in their right place.



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To proclaim this message of Pesah freedom and to encourage and inspire you to embrace the same, I have decided to share with you my personal minhag for the Pesah Seder. This is more than just a mere symbol; it is a message for everyone to see. The nation of Israel lives and we are all free human beings; ready and willing to fight for our freedom be it in the spiritual or in the physical world.

May HaShem bless us all to be righteous soldiers in the army of Mashiah, both spiritual and physical. May our Pesah truly remind us that we are free and able to defend our freedom from whatever foe that arises against us to return us to slavery, be it spiritual or physical. May we rejoice in our strength and continue to grow stronger in our service of Heaven.







extra, often unnecessary stringency upon our requirements to cleanse our homes from leaven on Passover. Most will tell you this is to reflect our inner condition. So, therefore, how can you do one without the other?

It is easy to clean the house and the kitchen, it is all the harder to clean and make kosher the soul. Yet, if the soul is not made kosher, then what kind of Passover are you expecting to have? Indeed, you might impress your neighbors with your scrupulous and meticulous emphasis on legal details. It is not hard to impress similarly shallow people. Yet, how do you think you appear in the Eyes of G-d?

Most really don't care. Most are more concerned with their neighbors than they are with G-d. Of course, none will ever admit to this, but actions always speak louder than words. As long as one remains a lousy, immoral so-and-so, then rest assured every bite of matzah such a one eats is in G-d's Eyes, a bite of forbidden leaven! G-d watches and judges!

So, let's keep our eyes on the ball, on the goal and on the removal of the real leaven (hametz). There are many different ways to observe the cleaning process in accordance to many different opinions of Law. They are all well and good, from the most lenient to the most strict. Yet, never let anyone consider that strict external observance is any kind of sign of strict inner moral discipline and proper character. Often, the opposite is true, the stricter one is with external matters, the more lenient one is with internal matters.

One final note, some of my more religious readers object to my tone and choice of words in either speech or print. I am told that I am harsh and sometimes crass. Well, you may be right! But frankly, my dear readers, I am not now, nor have I ever been interested in being politically correct. There is an old saying that asks, how do you get the attention of a stubborn mule? You hit him in the head with a 2 x 4 (piece of wood). In other words, unless you strike hard, you often fail to get one's attention. Therefore, my dear readers, I strike hard! Now that I have your attention, maybe you will pay heed to my message, instead of to my words. If you get the message, then indeed we will all have a truly kosher and happy holiday.

Freedom! It is our inalienable right, given to us by G-d! Yet, once He has given it to us, it is up to us to protect it and maintain it! May this Passover season see our renewal to the cause to maintain our Divine gift of freedom. May we now and forever stand strong, with weapons spiritual and physical, in hand and in heart, ready to fight for our freedom and to proclaim freedom to the world. If you don't see this and get it, then you still have a lot of leaven (hametz) to remove!





doing this is apparently great. The Ben Ish Hai compares this to the continual burning of the altar flame. This is a positive commandment of the Torah. Therefore, to be able to learn Torah in our dreams might be considered a modern way of fulfilling this commandment, all the while that we do not have a physical Temple.

In order for the fire of Torah to burn in one's heart, one must have more than just an intellectual connection with it. In order to create fire there must be a great deal of heat and something to burn in order for combustion to occur. Mere warmth is not enough! As it is with the physical reality of fire, so it is with the metaphor of the fire of Torah. It is not enough merely to study its words, or observe its mitzvot in lukewarm fashion. One must have a passion for Torah, for HaShem and for His Shekhina. The heat of passion causes the combustion of the fire of Torah in the heart of man. The heat of passion burns the dross of the klipot.

Without heat, there is no fire. Without fire, nothing burns. Without burning, klipot grow in thickness and one becomes even further detached from our beloved Creator. Unless we are on fire for HaShem, continuously, without cessation, then like physical fire, the flame will eventually burn out. This sad state of affairs has already happened in the hearts of far too many good people.

We do not have the right to be lukewarm about our relationship with our blessed Creator. We must be passionately in love with Him at every moment. This is expressed in our everyday ideas, attitudes, feelings, and actions. No one has right to take a temporary vacation from the Torah. No one has the right to say that they integrate Torah into "their" lives. For our lives and everything else, belong to our blessed Creator.

In essence, we do not have "our" lives," we only share in His blessed One Life, that permeates everything in creation. Our lives are the Torah and the Torah is our lives. Anything short of this absolute commitment extinguishes the fire of the Torah from the altar of the heart.

When HaShem led the Benei Yisrael out of Egypt, He did so with a very specific agenda. Throughout the Torah and TaNaKh, Yisrael are reminded that they are HaShem's firstborn child, His son, and His servant. The entire Jewish people share a common soul that itself is bonded to HaShem and His Torah in the most integrated and united of ways. The Jewish nation, therefore, have no choice but to live the life chosen for them and chosen by them. Our exodus from Egypt not only released us from physical bondage; it also released our souls from the shackles of bondage to the limitations of an entrapped mind.



Freedom is much more a psychological state than it is a physical one. Yes, it is correct to say that freedom is a state of mind, before it is a state of being. Because the Benei Yisrael who left Egypt could not embody the mindset of freedom, HaShem had no choice but to let them die in the wilderness. In their minds, they were born slaves and that they remained. Although they witnessed the hand of G-d and received His Torah on Sinai, the mindset of slavery was still too strong within them. They could not resolve themselves to think like free men and live a life of faith, which is the ultimate goal of freedom. Thus, an entire generation died.

Their children, who were born into freedom, knew nothing else. They were the mighty warriors who fought the great battles and conquered the Holy Land by the Word of G-d.

In the Pesah Seder it is written, “in each and every generation, one is required to view himself as if he himself left Egypt.” The reason why we perform such an elaborate ritual as the Seder is to instill deep within the recesses of our minds a reminder that we are already free. We are free from bondage to the Egyptians in all the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual forms that this can be applied. We are free human beings, emancipated from slavery to our limited minds and our lustful natures. We are free to be what we are – human beings created in the image of G-d.

Only a free human being reflecting the image of G-d in which he/she was created can be said to have a heart on fire, thus fulfilling the above verse. Only freedom releases the entrapped embers and allows them to ignite and burn bright. On Pesah night, we are commanded to remember our freedom, a freedom that we already have, but maybe have forgotten. Our main mitzvah of this evening is to remember! When we remember who and what we are as truly free human beings, individually and collectively we will awaken from the slumber of slavery. When the sleeper awakens within each of us, we will awaken to a greater, new world.

I know that a transformation of consciousness is not an easy thing. Therefore, rather than just share with you these lofty words, I feel bound to also reveal to you a Kabbalistic secret. Within the above verse there is concealed certain Holy Names, that when used in a certain manner enables one to open one's heart to ignite the Divine fire and for one's mind to remember and grasp freedom.

In Hebrew, the above verse is, “Esh Tamid Tukahd Al HaMiz'be'ah Lo Tikhbeh.” According to the Mispar Katan form of Gematria the initial letters of the words of the verse numerically equal 28 (Alef=1, Tav=4, Tav=4, Ayin=7, Hey=5, Lamed=3, Tav=4. 1+4+4+7+5+3+4=28). 28 is the numerical value of the Hebrew word Koah, which means “power.”

אתה עה לת  
שדד לח אה

*I pray that You continue to shower down upon your children, the Jewish people, Your spiritual power and Divine light, that we may observe all your commandments in love, awe, and truth. Empower us that we may shine Your Divine light throughout the world that You have created. Empower us that our hearts be ablaze for You.*





*May your Holy Names enter into our minds and melt away all dross, all forbidden and mistaken thoughts, all foolish and improper feelings, all inappropriate speech and wrong actions.*

*Bring true redemption upon us the children of those who left Egypt and let us leave our present exiles, both the exile within us, and the exile surrounding us. Amen, may it be Your Will."*

As you recite this prayer, silently in your mind, contemplate the Holy Names. This is simply done by repeating them over and over in your mind as a chant. Apply a tune to them, if you wish.

Allow yourself to fall asleep as you silently chant these Names and then, WATCH OUT! HaShem may speak to you in your dreams. You may hear words of Torah in your dreams, as you sleep. As the Ben Ish Hai has said, the fire of the altar must never go out, even when we sleep. Now you know the secret of the Divine fire. Keep it burning.

Shabat Shalom, Hag Sameah and Shalom Al Yisrael.







Once the Seder has been completed correctly with the appropriate kavanot, one's soul is prepared to ascent on high on this Lil Shimurim (guarded and protected night).

### **Archetypes of the Mind**

Now for a word about archetypes and the techniques of spiritual mind. Know then that there are two ways of thinking and communication. We human beings exist in, and interact with our outside world through cerebral sensorial processes (seeing, hearing etc.). This interaction with external stimuli explains to us the world around us.

Yet, there is another, entirely different world, one much bigger than our outside world. This world is the true domain of the Mind. This second world is the inner world of human consciousness, the realm of the imagination, feelings and thought. In this world things are very different than they are in the outer world. The inner world is only barely familiar to us.

We experience it mostly through dreams at night. Upon awakening, we know we have experienced something, maybe even something awesome and profound. Yet, in a few moments, sensorial external reality dominates and the realm of the Mind is repressed into that which we call the unconscious.

Now, do not be fooled. Just because our awareness of the realm of inner space has been pushed deep within the recesses of mind, into the unconscious, do not think that it has lost its power of influence. On the contrary, the unconscious mind directs the conscious mind as the wind blow the sails of a ship at sea. The power and influence of the unconscious on an individual's conscious psyche is well documented in psychological literature, especially in the works of the Jungian school.

The power of the unconscious manifests itself in how we interpret the outside sensorial world. The unconscious dictates to us our feelings and our underlying moods and impressions. All areas of thought that are not completely and analytically rational swell up from the unconscious mind. Indeed, feelings by their very nature rise up from deep within us, from the depths of the unconscious mind.

The unconscious mind, therefore, is the proverbial rose-colored glasses which taint how we see and perceive everything in the outside sensorial world. We realize that all of our conscious thoughts are in one way or another tainted by some unconscious prejudice, preference or predisposition. Such taints are referred to in psychological lingo as "projections."



These projections act as veils that cover the true nature of a thing. We perceive our own self-imposed veils over a thing and usually never the direct, untainted knowledge of the thing itself, non-interpreted to us by some aspect of our own unconscious minds.

The Mekubalim (Kabbalists) have long known about the psychological problem of veiled perceptions in all areas of life. They even have their own name to describe these psychological veils of ours. The Mekubalim call them the "klipot," the shells.

The Mekubalim have taught us that the klipot of projection are a blemished form of mind. This state of affairs came into being as a result of Adam's sin with the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil. In essence, the eating of the forbidden fruit of knowledge caused there to be a blemish in the knowledge, i.e., the collective mind of mankind.

In the Kitvei HaAri'zal it is written that all souls were originally united as one grand super-soul. All individual souls today were originally component parts of the super-soul of Adam. Only as a result of the fall did the souls fragment and take upon themselves separate being and consciousness. Yet, deep within us, in that area of our minds cut off to us as a result of the fall, i.e. our unconscious mind, there is still a remembrance of the original state of unity shared by all souls. In a way, at the deepest level of the human psyche, we as a race all think alike. In a way, at the deepest level of the human psyche we all communicate in the same non-verbal ways. There is a collective stratum in the levels of the unconscious. This is the residual memory of our long lost original unity.

The Mekubalim teach that it is the duty and destiny of each and every individual soul to remember from what part of the supernal body of Adam did his Neshama emanate. This requires of us to remember something deep within the unconscious. Now here lies the problem. How can we discover knowledge buried so deeply in the unconscious mind? We do not know what is there, or even where "there" is. It is a virtual impossibility for man to delve into the depths of his unknown mind, unguided and unaided. Such a search, without direction would be completely futile. If such explorations did prove successful in uncovering any enlightening information, rest assured that this epiphany did not come about other than by the direction and permission of your unconscious.

How then can man learn to navigate inner space successfully to the point where he can recognize his own source? How can we ever overcome the fall and descent into consciousness and the loss of our original stature of pure unadulterated mind?

Left to our own devices, we do not stand a chance. Yet, the Holy One, blessed be He, well aware of our fallen state and the inner workings of our conscious and unconscious mind has provided for us a means to accomplish a rectification of our fallen state. The Holy



One has provided for us the roadmap, the set of directions to be followed. By doing so, we can restore that which we have lost. It should come as no surprise that this set of directions is none other than our holy Torah.

Torah is the owner's manual for the human race. The one who studies it and practices it acquires the title of being fully human. Those of us who fall short of Torah can wonder if we can truly call ourselves Adam (man) created in the image of G-d. For without the Torah to rectify our original image (stature), what we have left today is only a small remnant of what once was. Once we were called Adam. Today, only the choice few that achieve a Tikun of the sin of Adam can merit the title, "Ben Adam" (son of man). This was the title ascribed by G-d to the prophet Yehezkiel, the one who gazed upon the chariot and the Heavenly throne. It is this vision that made him to be a Ben Adam.

This needs to be explained. As mentioned above, there are two worlds in which we live, i.e., the inner unconscious world and the outer conscious world. We relate to each of these worlds through the means of communication unique to that realm. We communicate with the outer conscious world (and thus each other) through a means of communication created by the conscious mind, but totally unknown to the unconscious mind; this is the vehicle of language, the spoken word.

The unconscious mind, however, does not know of or recognize words. The unconscious mind speaks through the medium of pictures. These pictures are universal and are applicable to all mankind, according to each soul's unique source.

To understand the matter of the modes of communication used by an individual unconscious to communicate with the unconscious of others, as well as with the conscious world, we must have a rudimentary understanding of the workings of the supernal sefirot.

### **The Workings of the Mind-Soul**

To begin with, we must remember a great rule outlined in the holy Zohar. In the Book of Job (19:26), it is written, "in my flesh will I perceive G-d." This verse is understood as saying that by the examination of "my flesh" i.e., the inner dynamics and operations of both human biology and psychology, we are able to grasp an understanding of the macrocosm. In other words, the study of the microcosm, which is in our grasp, enables us to understand the macrocosm, which is not.

We cannot learn anything about the ten supernal sefirot of Atzilut by observing them directly, for we do not have the spiritual or technological ability to explore this



dimension. What we can do, however, is examine and explore the ten sefirot of the Malkhut of Asiyah, (which construct the "image of Man") and from this mapping, superimpose our findings onto the greater picture of the universe. Indeed, Rabbi Haim Vital used this method throughout his writings to explain the sefirotic universes.

The human mind as we have discussed is divided into two sections, the conscious and the unconscious. The human brain is also divided into two lobes, the right and the left. Thinking and cognition is also divided into two different modes, the rational and the intuitive. Of the sefirot, two correspond to the head, Hokhma and Binah. Communication is also divided between words and pictures.

With all the ingredients here, we can now construct our model and see what it is that our Creator has formed. We have a conscious mind, the left lobe of the brain, rational thinking, words and the sefirah Binah on one side. We have the unconscious mind, the right lobe of the brain, intuitive thinking, pictures and the sefirah Hokhma on the other side.

Let's now add to this, we have an external physical world perceived by us through our senses and an internal spiritual world experienced through our inner archetypes. The physical world around us is seen to the eye and a spiritual world surrounding the physical is unseen to our eye.

Applying this last association to the above, we find that the conscious rational thinking mind of the left lobe of the brain, i.e., Binah deals with our outside visible physical world and communicates with it through the vehicle of speech and words. Our unconscious intuitive cognitive mind of the right lobe of the brain, i.e., Hokhma deals with our inside invisible spiritual world and communicates using pictures and archetypes.

Both of these realms are of equal importance. The human species was designed to exist simultaneously in both the visible and invisible realms. Each realm is governed by its own rules. Each realm is perceived in its own way. We human have needs that derive from each of the source realms. These include our physical needs for food and shelter and our "invisible" needs for emotional, intellectual and spiritual support.

Our needs, therefore, must each be filled in that way that is unique to each world. One will not find fulfillment from hunger with kind, emotional words, nor will one who is lacking emotional, intellectual or spiritual fulfillment be helped by merely being given a piece of bread.



We all know how to fulfill physical needs. We simply follow the laws of physical society and work to fulfill our physical needs. Let it come as no surprise that it is in this same manner than one's inner, intuitive, unconscious spiritual needs are also met.

Yet, how can we define what are our needs in an invisible and unconscious universe? Indeed, this cannot be answered rationally, for the answer comes from the realm of the intuitive and psychic. The answer comes from Hokhma and not from Binah.

The intuitive Hokhma right brain unconscious mind is nourished through archetypal forms and images, such as art and music. The rational Binah left-brain conscious mind is "fed" with intellectually stimulating material such as science and math. We would no longer be human if we lost our need or appreciation of either. The pursuit after art and music, science and math, all of these are integral human needs.

In light of all that, we have explained until here, we can now begin to understand the psychological and mystical human need for archetypal ritual. It is the performance of ritual acts that are the archetypal, picture language of the unconscious mind, which by now, I pray you should know is synonymous with the human Soul (the Neshama).

We humans have the need to communicate with our physical world in a rational, verbal manner. Without such communication, we cannot come to provide for our physical needs and we thus suffer and possibly die from the lack thereof.

This same law applies to the spiritual world. We must speak the language of the Soul, i.e., the unconscious mind. We must enable it to communicate with our conscious selves by the only means available to it, i.e., through picture, archetype, ritual and symbol.

If we fail to provide for the needs of our unconscious intuitive, spiritual right brain Hokhma selves, then what suffers and can possibly die is our Soul; that most precious essence of our being.

Yet, as we have discussed above, our unconscious mind, our spiritual Soul is the dominant part of the human mind. It controls consciousness similar to the wind in the sails of a ship at sea. Yet, as any good (or bad) sailor can tell you, just because the winds are blowing does not mean that the ship is on the right course. Unless one practices the art of correct sailing, one gets serious blown off course. Unless one follows the rules of the sea, one can end up lost and worse, doomed.

What we learn from this is the importance of respecting the needs of the unconscious mind, the spiritual Soul. It indeed has a message to tell. It indeed has needs of its own. It





is indeed, not only a part of us; it is the lion's share, the majority partner. Neglect the majority and it will be the minority that will suffer. Reject the needs of the unconscious and it will be the conscious mind that will suffer.

### **The Archetypes of the Mitzvot**

This is the underlying meaning as to why the Holy One, blessed be He gave us specific ritual commandments to perform. It is these mitzvot that have to be performed precisely in a certain prescribed manner that are the food of the Soul and the communications of the unconscious mind. Indeed the 613 mitzvot are the collective archetypes of the national Jewish collective super-soul. This cannot be denied and if one were to try to deny this, the peril would be to his own inner psychological stability.

Rabbi Haim Vital expounds on this point in his Sha'arei Kedusha (part 1). As there are 613 mitzvot of the Torah, so are there 613 corresponding parts to the Jewish soul (nefesh). If one lacks fulfillment of any one mitzvah, then his soul is blemished, i.e., handicapped.

When the Holy One, blessed be He gave to the Jewish people the ritual commandments of the Torah, He was providing for the unconscious spiritual mind-soul it's necessary nourishment. Only the 613 mitzvot can serve as the conduit for the reception of the Divine radiance necessary to sustain the soul. This is by G-d's design. He did this only for the Jewish people. For once the Jewish people were to achieve full balance between the three realms of space-time and mind, then they would teach this accomplishment to the nations, in the days of Mashiah.

It is no wonder then why the Jewish people have survived throughout centuries of horrible persecutions and exile. The reason is because our mitzvah performance has provided for us enough Divine radiance to maintain a proper state of psychic-psychological inner balance. This strengthened our inner resolve and enabled us to develop an almost psychic sense, an inner knowledge of truth, justice, morality and spirituality. This is what ensured our survival. This inner resolve within our unconscious spiritual mind-soul is the indwelling spark of the Divine, known throughout Torah literature as the Shekhina.

The Holy One, existing above time, space and consciousness knows well how to integrate all three realms of His creation. Thus we, the Jewish people, by walking in the Divinely ordained revealed plan, enable ourselves to become lords of time and space by being subservient to the power and needs of mind-spirit, conscious and unconscious, thought and spirit, rational and intuitive, Binah and Hokhma, word and archetype.





In spite of the fact that to the secular rationalist, the surrender of his intellect to a "nebulous" spiritual force is an offensive thing, nonetheless, the need to do so is not merely a religious one; it is a psychological necessity. Carl Jung, the founder of analytical psychology writes (CW 13,7), "The intellect does indeed do harm to the soul, when it dares to possess itself of the heritage of the spirit. It is in no way fitted to do this, for spirit is something higher than intellect, since it embraces the latter, and includes feelings, as well. It is a guiding principle of life that strives towards super-human shining heights."

Our subservience of intellect to spirit is expressed by our performance of the ritual commandments. Nowhere does this become more obvious and relevant than with Pesah and especially the Seder.

### **The Mitzvah of the Seder**

Pesah is Jewish Independence Day. It was on this day so long ago in history that our ancestors were miraculously freed from our bondage to the Egyptians. The miraculous manner of our redemption is well known to everyone. What is not so well known is the psychological effect this redemption has had upon collective Israel, at the deepest levels of our collective unconscious.

The holy Mekubalim reveal to us that all Jewish souls, born and unborn, were redeemed and left Egypt along with our ancestors. We must understand that there is a unique relationship between souls born and unborn. We do not only carry the genes of our ancestors; we also carry their memories. This is the source of collective memories that bond a people (any people) as a cohesive group regardless of the passage of time.

The souls of us alive today were indeed in Egypt thousands of years ago. They were preincarnate within our ancestors. In other words, our souls were still unattached parts of the super-soul of our ancestors. As they left Egypt, so did we. Although later on in years our souls separated and incarnated individually, the collective memories of our past dwell within the genes that form the area of the brain that houses our unconscious. This then is reason for the telling of the Hagadah.

The word Hagadah comes from the Hebrew root "Hegid" (to tell). Thus, the word "Hagadah" can best be translated as "the telling." Yet, this telling is not simply a mere story about what happened in ages gone by. This telling is a reminder. It is a reminder as to where we are supposed to be now.



The telling (the Seder) is the archetypal story of the Jewish people and is ingrained within every Jewish soul. The purpose of the telling is not to remind us about the past, but rather to open our eyes about the present. The Pesah Seder speaks to us in the pictorial language of the unconscious mind-spirit. It is food for the soul.

The eating of Matzah and Maror and the drinking of the four cups of wine acts out for us a never-ending story. Performing a Seder in any way different or less than that prescribed by Halakha hinders the ability of the mind-soul, i.e., the spirit to be properly nourished from the Heavenly Source. If the soul starves, it is "I" who will face the psychological consequences. Yet, if we do things in the prescribed manner, by removing all hametz from our environment and observe the Pesah in accordance to Divine Law, then we enable our unconscious to express itself. We enable our unconscious to properly align our inner psychological turmoils. The mind can thus be restored to mental health. Life just got a little bit better on both an individual and collective level.

The message is clear: wake up sleeping souls, grasp your freedom. Grasp your freedom from that which imprisons your unconscious mind-soul and keeps you in bondage to this world and in exile from your true spiritual nature. Rise up and proclaim freedom, freedom from ignorance, from spiritual infancy, freedom from the stranglehold limitations of our sensorial senses, freedom to be what we truly are: multi-leveled trans-dimensional beings of both, spirit and body (ohr with an alef and ohr with an ayin).

*"It is, unfortunately, only too clear that if the individual is not truly regenerated in spirit, society cannot be either, for society is the sum total of individuals in need of redemption."*

The Undiscovered Self, Carl Jung pg. 63



## The Kabbalistic Kavanot of the Pesah Seder

### Introduction

In order for one to properly understand the mystical significance and the latent spiritual power of the Pesah holiday, I must disclose a tremendous amount of information about the order of sefirotic movements and their relationship to us. Mystical meditations (kavanot) cannot be understood or performed correctly unless one knows not only what he is doing, but also why this is being done. The revelation of G-d's light on Pesah night is unique. It is a seed and a taste of the coming redemption to be brought to us by the Mashiah. In order to assist our participation in the mystical side of the Pesah Seder, I must begin with an explanation of the elements involved. Once these are understood, I can proceed to explain how they are to be used. I have endeavored to make things as easy to understand as possible. In doing so, I admit that I have had to leave out many details that the Ari'zal and the Rashash outline in such depth. I pray to HaShem that my endeavors will assist many in using this material for the sake of the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He and His Shekhina.

### The Secret of the Four Sefirotic Mohin

There are many levels of Divine intervention in our daily lives. Yet, each of these occur based upon our individual merits in the eyes of Heaven. Moreover, only Heaven knows when we deserve spiritual intervention or a miracle. The teachings of the Ari'zal make it clear that the Divine intervention in human history that led to the holiday of Pesah was a most unusual event, one that was not predicated upon the actions of man. National redemption of the nature of Pesah has only happened once in human history, but it is prophesied to happen again, bringing to fruition the messianic era.

In the vast majority of times, G-d interacts with our world in accordance to our deeds. The greater our collective merit, the more obvious becomes the Hand of G-d in daily affairs. The Ari'zal outlines four distinct levels of Divine intervention, which he refers to in Kabbalistic metaphor as "Mohin" (sefirotic brains).

According to the mystical teachings, the seven days of creation were created by G-d to manifest the seven lower sefirot. Each of these sefirot are manifestations of aspects of G-d's light in creation. Each one reveals to us a distinct aspect of the Divine plan. Yet, each of these seven serves as a type of body or form to a higher more fluid and mobile aspect of Divine light, which serves to mold, change, and breathe through the lower seven. This higher light consists of the upper three sefirot, which again are called the



sefirotic brains (Mohin). Based upon human interaction with our world, created as it was though the seven lower sefirot, the upper three manifest in either minor or major forms, four different aspects in total.

In order to gain even a basic understanding of these four levels of Divine intervention in human history, we must introduce and explain these concepts using the terms of the Ari'zal himself.

The Ari'zal speaks of there being four Mohin. The four Mohin belong to two general categories: katnut (minor) and gadlut (major). Each of these is then divided into two levels: rishon (1<sup>st</sup> degree) and sheni (2<sup>nd</sup> degree), with the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree being the highest.

Therefore, the four Mohin are:

1. katnut rishon (minor 1<sup>st</sup> degree),
2. katnut sheni (minor 2<sup>nd</sup> degree),
3. gadlut rishon (major 1<sup>st</sup> degree),
4. gadlut sheni (major 2<sup>nd</sup> degree).

However, in order of ascent, from lowest to highest, their order is:

1. katnut rishon (minor 1<sup>st</sup> degree),
2. gadlut rishon (major 1<sup>st</sup> degree),
3. katnut sheni (minor 2<sup>nd</sup> degree),
4. gadlut sheni (major 2<sup>nd</sup> degree).

In the sefirot, the katnut, both rishon (1<sup>st</sup> degree) and sheni (2<sup>nd</sup> degree) correspond to the sefirah Binah, whereas the gadlut, both rishon (1<sup>st</sup> degree) and sheni (2<sup>nd</sup> degree) correspond to the sefirah Hokhma.

G-d always maintains His universe. Therefore, the lowest level of Mohin, katnut rishon, must always be present. If this were lacking for even a moment, then there would be no "adhesive" to bind and hold together the sub-atomic particles that form our universe. If the minimal amount of Divine intervention (i.e., Mohin) were not present, the universe could not exist.

In relationship to Divine Names, the level of katnut rishon is represented by the Name Elokim. Therefore, it is the Name Elokim that is associated with the creation story (ref. Gen.1:1). Elokim maintains the world.

G-d's intervention in human history, by bringing Israel out of Egypt, was for two reasons. First, it was to fulfill His promise to the Avot and to establish for Himself a



people. Second was to manifest a higher level of Divine intervention (Mohin) in the world. This was the manifestation of His essential Name YKVK, the Name that introduces a random spiritual element in creation.

YKVK represents G-d's mercy and therefore intercedes and supercedes the natural order of creation. Elokim represents the laws of nature, the basic and lowest level of Divine Presence in creation. YKVK overrides the basics and introduces a higher element of grace. Therefore, when mankind deserves no special treatment from G-d, the Divine providence manifests as the laws of nature, ruled by the Name Elokim. This is katnut rishon.

When, however, Israel observes G-d's commandments, given at Mt. Sinai through G-d's mercy, (i.e., His Name YKVK), then there is a manifestation of gadlut rishon. This elevation occurs on Shabatot and Yamim Tovim (holidays). Thus, on these sacred days, there is a manifestation of both katnut rishon (the laws of nature ruled by Elokim) and gadlut rishon (special Divine dispensation ruled by the Name YKVK). Therefore, on Shabatot and Yamim Tovim Torah is studied and comprehended with greater ease. One's mind finds it more conducive to receiving spiritual understanding. One "feels" more spiritual on these days. This is because the mohin of gadlut rishon are manifesting above in the sefirot and correspondingly below in the Jewish soul. This elevation, however, is limited to the realm of mind. Nonetheless, it elevates the mind above the level of Elokim (katnut rishon) consciousness that perceives the universe as only being operated by rote without the intervention of the Creator. YKVK (gadlut rishon) consciousness enables one to recognize the Presence of G-d immanently among us.

In review, the weekdays are ruled by Elokim, katnut rishon, which manifests in creation the lowest aspect of the sefirat Binah. On Shabatot and Yamim Tovim, YKVK rules, gadlut rishon, which manifests in creation the lowest aspect of the sefirat Hokhma.

As our present universe continues, we have times when 1<sup>st</sup> degree (rishon) Mohin, from both katnut and gadlut are manifest. However, in order to manifest the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree of Mohin (both katnut sheni and gadlut sheni), something out of the ordinary is needed.

When Israel are observing the mitzvot of the Torah they elevate nature to reveal the Mohin level of gadlut rishon of YKVK alongside and above the Mohin level of katnut rishon of Elokim. When this occurs, and there is balance and harmony between the physical and spiritual realms, then mankind's thinking faculties naturally expand. Intelligence and knowledge flourish. Mankind, therefore discovers in nature secret hidden wonders that when revealed help transform our physical universe from a jungle



into a paradise. This level of revelation and perception is from the side of intellect, thus from the sefirat Binah.

Yet, it is obviously of a higher aspect of Binah than the mere laws of nature expressed through the Name Elokim. This higher aspect of Binah, acquired only after the basic form of YKVK (gadlut rishon) is manifest is called katnut sheni (minor Divine intervention of the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree). It is called katnut (minor) as opposed to gadlut (major) because it is invoked and pursued by man's actions. Katnut sheni occurs when man's actions bring upon him the blessings of his obedience to G-d and the abundance inherent in observing His commandments.

The Mohin of katnut sheni (minor Divine intervention of the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree) are much higher than that of katnut rishon, represented by the Name Elokim. Nonetheless, the two are emanations of the sefirat Binah; the rishon level reveals the lower half of Binah, whereas the sheni level reveals the upper half of the sefirah. The reason why a sefirah is split into two is similar to the human mind, itself split into two. Our minds contain the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious mind is what we are now, with all our limitations and dreams. The unconscious stores within it all our unrealized potential and everything that is yet to be. Therefore, a sefirah is divided between its lower half, which is revealed simply to maintain the worlds, and its upper half that contains its unleashed potential for the manifestation of all good things.

The Mohin of the upper half of Binah, katnut sheni, are also called Elokim, but with a slight twist. In order to show a difference between the upper and lower Mohin (sheni and rishon), the Name Elokim is spelled in a slightly different way than usual. The middle letters of the Name Elokim ascend to the letter that is before them, to signify the ascent from the lower half to the upper half of Binah. Thus, the first letter Alef and the last letter Mem stay the same to maintain the framework of the sefirah. Yet, each of the middle letters: Lamed, Hey, and Yod ascend one letter. The Lamed is replaced with a Kaf, the Hey with a Dalet and the Yod with a Tet. The resulting Name that is used to describe the level of katnut sheni is Akadatam, instead of Elokim.

With this understood we have covered the first three levels of the sefirotic Mohin, which manifest Divine intervention in our universe. Now the fourth and final level, that of gadlut sheni, the major 2<sup>nd</sup> degree of Divine manifestation. This level does not come about through the means or intervention of man. This level can only come about as an altruistic act of our Creator, when He so wishes to reveal the fullness of His Power and Majesty in creation.





Gadlut Sheni (2<sup>nd</sup> degree major) mohin reveal the fullness of G-d's majesty and glory in Creation. While this level can be grasped in the mind through individual prayer on the Shabat, its outer manifestations will only come about when Mashiah comes. This grandiose level of mohin manifests the direct and active Hand of G-d in Creation without any sheath or cloak to disguise it. The Purim story was a miracle wrought by G-d. However, it was a different sort of miracle than was Pesah. During Purim, political plots were thwarted by wise and crafty human beings. No overt miracle happened. Therefore, the Name of G-d is not mentioned even once in the Book of Esther, to signify that G-d's Hand worked in concealment, cloaked in the actions of politics. In the time of the Exodus, and again when Mashiah comes, there will be no such concealment. G-d will reveal the mohin of gadlut sheni and like a nuclear blast; the brilliance of the Divine light will melt away and destroy all opposition to the Hand of G-d.

The mohin of gadlut sheni, similar to those of gadlut rishon are represented by the Name YKVK. For this Name YKVK is above the limitations and forces of nature. Regardless of its level of intensity (rishon or sheni), YKVK maintains itself the same as the supernatural force and random element introduced in creation by Divine command.

We have now outlined the four mohin. In review, the mohin are the upper three sefirot, Hokhma, Binah and Da'at. The first two levels referred to as katnut and gadlut rishon refer to the lower halves of the sefirot Binah and Hokhma respectively. The higher two levels referred to as katnut and gadlut sheni refer to the upper halves of these two sefirot.

All of these mohin descend below through the semi-sefirah Da'at. Da'at is counted here instead of Keter because Da'at is the union of Hokhma and Binah that radiates down into the seven lower sefirot. By the way, as you will see in all mystical literature, the seven lower sefirot are referred to by the name of their sefirotic Face (Partzuf), which is ZooN. ZooN is short for Z.A. (Zeir Anpin, the small Face, encompassing the six sefirot) and Nok, which is Malkhut. In the sefirotic realms above, the mohin descend into Z.A. and He then builds Nok. Z.A. is the supernal man, while Israel is the terrestrial man. As it is above, so it is below.

As this occurs in the sefirotic realms above, it also happens in the mind of the one contemplating these mystical movements of Divine light. Before Mashiah comes, the benefits of such a meditation are exclusively individual in that they raise up the consciousness of the one performing them. Even the level of the mohin of gadlut sheni is experienced in the mind, when we meditate upon the supernal sefirot on Shabatot and Yamim Tovim, especially on the night of the Pesah Seder.





Our purpose in knowing this information about sefirotic mohin is to learn to apply the abstract to the concrete. By our awareness and knowledge of this process, we contemplate its happening and as we do so, the passion of our minds and thoughts actually assist the sefirotic movements to occur. The results of this above are still too sublime for us to perceive. However, the radiance released from such sefirotic movement flows down the channels through the worlds until it reaches our world, specifically our minds, and those things to which our thoughts are focused. These things are the objects of the mitzvot that we are presently performing. In the case of Pesah, the sefirotic light radiates below into our minds and from there onto the four cups of wine and the matzot that we are using during the Seder.

Normally mohin enter into Z.A. (as explained above) one step at a time. First, come the katnut and then the gadlut. This procedure occurs during our normal prayers. Our prayer services were specifically arranged to coordinate to the sefirotic movements above. The siddurim (prayerbooks) of the Ari'zal and the Rashash outline the details of how our prayers form a ladder of spiritual ascent for the supernal sefirot and for our minds that ascends along with them.

Pesah is a time out of the ordinary. Unlike other times when the mohin descend into Z.A. (and thus into us) one step at a time, now on Pesah night, by the merciful Divine decree, all the mohin enter Z.A. (and thus into us) all at once. This tremendous influx of Divine light causes there to be such an abundance of spiritual power and force that the armies of evil, both spiritual and physical, are totally overwhelmed by them. As it was at the first Pesah, this light when revealed broke Pharaoh's stubborn heart and killed all the firstborn in Egypt. The forces of evil were broken at that moment and Israel was redeemed from Egypt. This is the result of the revelation of the mohin of gadlut sheni, even more so when it is revealed out of its ordinary order and manifests together with all the other mohin combined.

The mystical meditations of the Seder, therefore revolve around the manifestation of the mohin, by arousing their movement above and by drawing down their energy here below, specifically upon our four cups of wine and four pieces of matzah (the upper, the lower and broken Afikomen in the middle). With this introduction into mohin, their movement, and relationship to Pesah, we can now proceed to discuss the details of how to implement these most important meditations.

### **The Descent of the Mohin into Z.A.**

Sefirotic movement occurs simultaneously in all the worlds. Therefore, what transpires in the supernal realm of the world of Atzilut, also happens here on earth, within the



corresponding aspect to Atzilut here. When one meditates upon the sefirot and their movement above among the Partzufim (sefirotic Faces), the sheer power of one's mind one is assisting this movement to occur, in the worlds above and in this world here below.

On Seder night, we have the opportunity to radiate the light of all four of the mohin simultaneously, each in its place, each in its time. Yet, unlike the normal order of things where the mohin enter Z.A. according to the standard order of their grades, on Pesah night the four mohin enter together. This abundance of light is what broke the stranglehold that the forces of evil had upon Israel.

The four mohin enter into Z.A. above (and into man) below by our performance of two mitzvot – the drinking of the four cups of wine and our eating of the matzah. Before I can proceed to explain the manner in which the mohin descend through our observance of the mitzvot, I must first introduce some more information about the arrangements of the sefirot and the order of the flow of Divine light through them.

As we know the mohin that enter into Z.A. are three in number, which are essentially four. There are the mohin from the side of Binah, the Partzuf of Imma. There are mohin from Hokhma, the Partzuf of Abba. There are also mohin from the Da'at, but these mohin are only a compilation of what is received from Abba and Imma and not anything unique of its own.

The Da'at receives a force from Imma called the Gevurot (severities), which are five in number. The Da'at also received a force from Hokhma called the Hasadim (mercies), which are again five in number. The five Gevurot and the five Hasadim make up the ten sefirot of the Da'at.

Mohin descend into Z.A. in accordance to the order of the sefirotic columns. As is known the sefirot are arranged in three columns, right, left and center. Therefore, each column receives mohin respective of its position. The right column of Z.A. receives the mohin from Abba, which is the sefirot Hokhma, because it is the head of the right column. The left column of Z.A. receives the mohin from Imma, which is the sefirot Binah, because it is the head of the left column. The center column of Z.A. receives the Hasadim and the Gevurot of the Da'at, for the Da'at stands over the center column, even though it is not an actual sefirah. Right, left, center, this then is the order of the descent of the mohin into Z.A.

Accordingly when one is meditating on the flow of light through the sefirot, as outlined in the kavanot siddurim, one begins with the right column, then shifts to the left



column, finally ending in the middle column. The procedure of the drawing forth of the Divine light is a rather simple and mechanical method. Simply stated, the Divine light, signified by one of the holy Names descends from the vessel of one sefirah to another.

*One point must be emphasized here – it is very important to remember that the sefirah is not the light. It is the vessel. The light in all the sefirot is all one and the same light of the Ayn Sof. Only the vessels change, but never the light.*

Each sefirah is a vessel that is three layers thick. These three levels of the vessel of the sefirah are called the inner, middle, and outer layer of the vessel of the sefirah. A specific holy Name or a specific spelling of a holy Name demarcates each layer of a vessel.

Thus, the order of descent begins with the right column. The light, represented by a holy Name is visualized descending from its present “place,” also represented by a specific holy Name, going down into the three-layer vessel of the sefirah underneath it. From this sefirah to the next, downward until all three sefirot of the right column in Z.A. have received the light. From here, Z.A. then passes down the light to the right column of Nok in similar fashion to how Z.A. itself received the light.

This same pattern is then repeated for the left column, and then the center column. Only with the center column, the visualization is performed twice, once to bring down the Hasadim and once to bring down the Gevurot. In this way, with four visualization exercises, the meditator assists in bring down the mohin into Z.A. in the world of Atzilut. Again, as this happens in Atzilut, so does it correspondingly happen in all the lower worlds, including the world of inner man.

### **Special Note**

The specifics of this system are quite detailed. The lists of holy Names, as outlined in the Kabbalistic siddurim, look quite unintelligible. However, when one understands the basics of the system, as outlined here, then the pages and pages of meditations begin to open up and become decipherable. Mind you, kavanot meditation are far more advanced and complicated than what I have written here. All I have done is to ever so slightly open a door to let some light shine out. Even many of those who have studied Kabbalah for years still have a hard time performing kavanot meditations. Therefore, what I am about to present here is a greatly condensed form of what the holy Mekubalim do. In order to properly use this material, one should have a copy of the Rashash Kavanot siddur for Pesah before them. With this basic explanation, one should be able to follow at least the general outline of the kavanot. Without such a siddur, one



should simply contemplate the thoughts associated with each of the mitzvot of the wine and matzah.

### **The Order of the Seder**

A general rule must first be explained. The two major mitzvot of the Seder are the wine and the matzah. Both of these mitzvot become the focal points for receiving the influx of sefirotic radiance now being poured down from the supernal worlds. As wine and matzah are inherently different in their form and structure, so too the mohin that they channel to earth are different from one another. Wine emanates from the side of the supernal feminine, whereas matzah (and all other breads, leavened or not) emanate from the side of the supernal masculine. In essence, wine emanates from Imma Binah and matzah emanates from Abba Hokhma.

The Seder begins, as do all other Yamim Tovim (holidays) with Kiddush. This Kiddush of Pesah is the first of the four cups of wine to be drunk during Seder. As explained earlier, all Shabatot and Yamim Tovim manifest the level of Divine manifestation known as the mohin of gadlut rishon. This is the manifestation of the lower portion of the sefirat Hokhma into Z.A. above. From Z.A. of Atzilut, the Divine light flows downward through the worlds and into mind of the meditating man below. From the human mind, the Divine light is projected onto the cup of wine now being blessed for Kiddush.

Now here is where things get a little tricky. Although the wine and matzah emanate from the different columns of the sefirotic Tree of Life, each nonetheless, must receive full mohin from all three columns. Therefore, when we perform the meditations over the wine of the Kiddush, we first draw down into Z.A. (and from Him unto us and then onto the wine) the right column of the sefirot, first the mohin of gadlut rishon, then katnut sheni and finally gadlut sheni. Light into vessel, vessel after vessel, until the light descends down into the lowest of the right column vessels of the Nok. Yet, this drawing forth of Divine light down the right column is the Divine light as it emanates from Imma, from Her right column. In essence, this is the side of the masculine within the feminine. This is the kavanot over the first cup of wine.

The Kiddush meditations (kavanot) begin with the gadlut rishon and not the katnut rishon. This is for a very good reason. The mohin of katnut rishon corresponding to the Name Elokim are the lowest level of mohin (Divine light) manifest in creation. As such, they are subject to attack from the forces of the "dark side." In order to protect this light from becoming contaminated, the katnut rishon are concealed, as gadlut rishon becomes manifest. Only later, with the eating of the karpas do we meditate upon bringing down into Z.A. the mohin of katnut rishon. At this point it is safe to manifest



the katnut rishon after the other mohin have come first and decimated the forces of evil. Unlike the other mohin, when the katnut rishon are revealed, all three columns manifest at once, being that it is now safe to do so.

One proceeds to recite the Hagadah according to its kosher order as found in any one of the orthodox Hagadot available. When we arrive at the second cup of wine, we meditate upon it as we did with the first. The only exception being that now we meditate upon bringing down the mohin of Imma from the left column, light into vessel, into vessel etc... Of course, there are many more kavanot in the first part of the Seder, but they are not associated to the manifestation of the mohin in Z.A. and therefore we do not have to discuss them here.

After the second cup of wine is drunk, the Seder proceeds to the meal. Prior to eating the meal, we bless the matzot with two blessings, one for bread one for matzah. Yet, prior to these blessings we now meditate upon manifesting the mohin of Abba into Z.A. Remember that the meditations on the wine manifest the mohin of Imma, the meditations over the matzah manifest the mohin of Abba. As with the meditations over the wine, the meditations over the matzah manifest the mohin of Abba according to the order of the three columns. However, here with the matzot, we do not divide the three columns as we do with the cups of wine.

With the matzot, we meditate first on the mohin of the right column, then left column, then center column (Hasadim and Gevurot) of the katnut sheni, then gadlut sheni and finally katnut rishon. The mohin of gadlut rishon were manifest already with the initial beginning of the holiday. Again, the order is as described above. First we contemplate the light of G-d, represented here as specific holy Names, and we visualize this light emanating from the Ayn Sof and flowing into the specific vessels, each represented by its own specific holy Name. Light into vessel, into vessel, into vessel etc...

The order proceeds from the right column of the lowest mohin, through Z.A. into Nok. The left column is visualized in the same manner, followed by the center column (Hasadim and Gevurot). After this is accomplished for the first of the mohin, the same exact order is repeated for the other mohin. The Names used to represent the mohin change, whereas the names of the vessels remain the same. Once one becomes familiar with the system, it is not to long thereafter that one will be able to memorize entire sections of the visualizations with relative ease.

After the Pesah meal, Birkat HaMazon (grace after meals) is recited as usual. The third cup of the Seder is actually none other than the cup of wine traditionally drunk with the conclusion of Birkat HaMazon. At this time, we meditate and visualize the descent of



the Hasadim of the Da'at into Z.A. From Z.A. the mohin are visualized descending into Nok. As this happens, the mohin descend into the mind of the meditator and into the third cup of wine itself.

The fourth and final cup of wine is similar to the first with the exception that the mohin going into the vessels are the Gevurot of the Da'at as opposed to the Hasadim.

To summarize, we have four mohin from the Hokhma, Binah, Hasadim and Gevurot of the Da'at. These mohin manifest in four stages called katnut rishon, gadlut rishon, katnut sheni and gadlut sheni. Yet, these four levels of mohin exist equally in both Hokhma and Binah. Therefore, although all katnut, rishon and sheni, are manifestations of Binah (the lower and upper half of the sefirah respectively), and that all gadlut, rishon and sheni, are manifestations of Hokhma, this applies equally to the subjective sefirot of Binah and Hokhma within the general sefirot of Binah and Hokhma. In other words, we have the katnut and gadlut of Imma Binah and the katnut and gadlut of Abba Hokhma. The gadlut within Imma is from the Hokhma within Imma Binah. The katnut within Abba is from the Binah with Abba Hokhma. Without a full comprehension of this significant aspect of overlap, an understanding of the mohin of the sefirot will be impossible.

The power of this meditation empowers this time to be called a "lil shimurim" (a night of protection). For those who do not have a Rashash siddur to follow the kavanot, a simple prayer before each drinking each of the four cups will suffice. One can use a formula similar to this:

*May it be Your Will HaShem that by my drinking this*

1. first cup of Seder wine
2. second cup of Seder wine
3. third cup of Seder wine
4. fourth cup of Seder wine

*that You manifest within Z.A. the mohin from*

1. the right column of Imma
2. the left column of Imma
3. the Hasadim of the Da'at of Imma
4. the Gevurot of the Da'at of Imma.

*From Z.A. may these mohin descend into Nok and from Nok onto us and into this cup of wine. For the sake of the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He and His Shekhina, Amen.*





For the matzah one can recite:

*May it be Your Will HaShem that by my eating this matzah that You manifest in Z.A. all the mohin of katnut and gadlut rishon and katnut and gadlut sheni, from all the three columns of the sefirot within Abba. From Z.A. may these mohin descend into Nok and from Nok onto us and into this matzah. For the sake of the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He and His Shekhina, Amen.*

### **Conclusion**

One who performs this most minor form of kavanot is still performing a great spiritual task of assisting the sefirotic movements in the world of Atzilut. It certainly causes no harm and may indeed perform great good. May HaShem bless us all with a happy, healthy and kosher Pesah season, one that will bring safety and redemption to our holy Land and to us, Amen.

Hag Sameah.



## The Value of Gerim (Converts)

*From Rabbeynu Yosef Haim,  
the Ben Ish Hai of Baghdad*

*From Sefer Orah Haim, Commentary on the Pesah Hagadah*

***“It once happened that R. Eliezer, R. Yehoshua, R. Elazar Ben Azariah, R. Akiva and R. Tarfon were celebrating the Seder in Benei Brak. They discussed the Exodus that entire night, until their students came and said to them, our teachers, it is time to read the morning Shema.”***

*We must understand why the text here says, “the Seder [was in] Benei Brak. This phrase seems superfluous. Why should it matter if they were celebrating in Benei Brak or in another place?*

*The reason why we are informed of this has to do with the fact that they (the Sages) were discussing the Exodus the entire night long, until their students came. With the help of G-d, I will attempt to explain.*

*It is known that Pharaoh was guilty in that he enslaved Israel not in accordance to the edict from blessed HaShem. HaShem only decreed exile [for Israel]. Pharaoh took it upon himself to enslave them. Regarding what the Merciful One said to Abraham, “they shall serve them and be humbled for 400 years,” this in itself is not a part of the [official] edict. Rather HaShem was informing and revealing to Abraham what the future will hold regarding his children through the choice of Pharaoh and Egypt. Therefore, were they subject to judgment, and [Israel] went forth prior to their time.*

*I have written in another place how Pharaoh thought, it is true that HaShem did not ordain [for Israel] servitude, but only exile. “However, it is a good thing that I [Pharaoh] have done to place them in servitude. It is for their own good that I have done so. [I have] prevented them from being thieves [of the pleasures] of this world.”*

*“For Jacob and Esau divided between them the worlds. Jacob took the world to come [as his portion] and Esau took this world [as his portion]. Therefore, all that Israel eats and drinks in this world, it is as if they have stolen it from [the portion] of Esau and all the other nations who are included with him.*

*“I [Pharaoh] placed them [Israel] into servitude so that all that they would eat and drink would not be considered stolen, but rather wages for work. Therefore, Israel must be*

*With the help of Heaven, I have already written in another place the contradiction in this [Pharaoh's] outlook. Now, I will set the record straight.*

*From the essence of justice, Israel owes nothing to Esau and the nations for what they eat and drink in this world. The Rav "Yad Avi Shalom" has written that Jacob pays for the pleasures [Israel] receives in this world with what the converts receive in the world to come.*

*For converts are not Jacob's descendants, they come from Esau and the other nations. Yet, they have a portion in the world to come. However, this is conditional that they share equally.*

*We thus find, according to this that by the power of converts the outlook of Pharaoh desiring to subjugate Israel is completely nullified. Israel owes nothing for the pleasures they receive in this world. By right do they eat and drink. For the converts enjoy the world to come. Moreover, it is certain that all pleasures of this world are not equal to even one portion in the world to come.*

*Now, it is known that Benei Brak [was a town founded] by converts who were descended from Haman, as it is written in the Gemara and the Mefarshim. Now we can clearly see and appreciate why the Hagadah teaches us that “the Seder [was in] benei Brak.” In light of this, we see that it was because of the converts that Israel was released from Egypt. For the going forth from Egypt released Israel from their heavy bondage.*

*If it were not for the converts Pharaoh would not have been accountable for what he had done. For Pharaoh thought that what he was doing was the right and good thing. [He thought] that it is [Israel's] destiny to serve for all their days in order to permit them the enjoyments of this world.*

*We find that it is due to the power of the converts that HaShem was aroused to judgement against Pharaoh and Egypt, and brought [Israel] out [of bondage] prior to the time.*

*Therefore, these holy Tanna'im (Mishnaic teachers) [descendants of Haman] sitting around [performing the Seder] in Benei Brak were aroused to expound on the Exodus more than usual [because of what we have discussed].*



*If it were not for the converts, Pharaoh would not have been subjected to all these different judgements. Therefore, they rose and wondered about the story of the Exodus more than what is expected, and continued to discuss the Exodus "until their students came and said to them, our teachers, it is time for the morning Shema."*

*This is why the author of the Hagadah had to inform us that [this Seder] was being held in Benei Brak, to inform us that it was because of them, [the Rabbis who were descendants of converts] that the Exodus occurred in the first place.*

*With this can we understand, with G-d's help, the respect due to converts [is a Halakha] connected to [the mention of] our slavery in Egypt. "You shall not bother the convert (lit. stranger) for you were all strangers in the land of Egypt. For the converts were the reason for the nullification of Pharaoh's arguments, and the cause of the redemption from the Egyptian bondage.*











*padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.*

*I vino el fuego y quemo el palo qua pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio al cavritico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.*

*I vino el agua y apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio el cavritico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.*

*I vino el buey y bevio el agua que apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio el cavritico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.*

*I vino el shuhet y degollo al buey que bevio el agua que apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio al cavritico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.*

*I vino la muerte i mato al shuhet que degollo al buey que bevio el agua que apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio al cavritico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.*

*I vino EL SANTO BINDICHO EL, y afasto a la muerte que mato al shuhet que degollo al buey que bevio el agua que apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio al cavritico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.*





or ascribe to nature a “guiding spirit.” While both of these understandings are correct, they nonetheless, only express the lowest form of awareness of G-d. This manifestation of G-d’s lowest or “smallest” Partzuf is called Nok, the Feminine (receiving) Face, also known as the Shekhina. This Partzuf corresponds to the lowest of the ten sefirot, Malkhut.

Unknown to most is that above and beyond the natural forces which rules this universe exist “supernatural forces” which apparantly at will can supercede and override all the forces of nature. This metaphysical reality is referred to by G-d’s Name YHVH, the Name of universal Being In Action. YHVH is the Force that manifests Justice in the universe. Justice is the essence and centralizing force within creation. Therefore, the attribute of justice and the holy Name YHVH are said to correspond to the sefirah Tiferet, which is placed in the center and is the “heart” of the sefirotic pattern. Nonetheless, this Partzuf is still called G-d’s “Small Face,” Zeir Anpin in Aramaic or simply Z.A. for short.

In our present state of spiritual affairs, the Name YHVH (the Partzuf Z.A.) is manifest to us through the Partzuf or Face of Malkhut, Elokim. Thus whatever Divine justice that manifests in the world it appears to us to merely be arbitrary forces of nature that erupt without intention or purpose.

In Egypt, Pharaoh was inclined to interpret all the plagues that YHVH sent down upon him as simply being freak acts of nature, sent upon him by Elokim. Pharaoh could not conceive of a spiritual reality above the forces of nature. He could not comprehend a YHVH, a metaphysical Force that at Will suspends nature and acts autonomously. Pharaoh was forced to understand that YHVH is Elokim. In other words, the metaphysical Force of Tiferet is what is manifest in and in control of the Forces of nature known as Elokim. Yet, this too is not the highest level of Divine manifestations.

Elokim manifests G-d as He controls His universe through the unbending laws of nature. YHVH can manifest variations in the laws of nature in order to manifest Divine Justice. Yet, there is a Force even higher than Justice. This is G-d’s grace. Grace is the totally undeserved, altruistic bestowal of G-d’s goodness and mercy. One can never merit G-d’s grace, one can only pray for it and receive as an act of faith. G-d decides who will receive His grace and who will not based upon one’s faith. G-d’s decision in these matters implies that faith is a cardinal principle of the universe, even higher than justice. We can never hope to fathom such profound Divine reasoning. While we may never understand it, we nevertheless do receive G-d’s grace, when He so Wills it, when we have the faith to receive it. One of these times (according to the Zohar and the Sifra D’Tzniyuta) was the parting of the Yam Suf (Red Sea).



*The parting of the Yam Suf was not an act that Israel deserved to have happen for them. Rather, it was an act of G-d's Divine Will, His ultimate grace. This was brought about by the faith of those who were willing to walk forward into the waters up to their necks, knowing in faith that the waters would have to part. Habakkuk wisely said that the righteous will live by their faith. Wisely did our holy Rabbis say that this one mitzvah sums up the whole Torah. For the source of faith and the source of the Torah are both the sefirat Keter. Faith is the irrational knowing and acceptance of G-d's Will and one's surrender to it, regardless of apparent consequences.*

*Faith is the expression of the sefirat Keter. The Partzuf of G-d at this Keter (the crown) level is called "Atika" (the Ancient). It signifies by a reference to age that it is the "first" Partzuf, or the highest of them. It is also called Arikh Anpin, G-d's great (or Long) Face. In the Kabbalah, the Name Ehyeh is applied to this level. The Name Ehyeh means "I Will Be," in the future tense, to signify that the Keter level is not yet revealed.*

*The Hebrew word for faith, Emunah, is numerically equal to 102. When one unites the ten sefirot by having complete faith in HaShem and surrenders to His Will (the sefirat Keter), then Emunah (102) unites with the ten sefirot, and 102 becomes 112. The number 112 is the numerical value of the three holy Names Ehyeh (Keter), YHVH (Tiferet) and ADNY (Adonai, Malkhut). Emunah thus signifies the complete union of all the grades.*

*All three of these Partzufim levels of perceiving the Divine are united within one other, and "stacked" one above the other. Elokim is on the outside (or bottom). YHVH is within (or above) it. Ehyeh is within (or above) it. When we act without righteousness, G-d's justice is concealed within nature. G-d's grace, through our faith, however tears off the veil and manifests Divine power for what it is, a miracle.*

*There are also letters in the Hebrew alphabet that correspond to each level. The Keter level on top is represented by the first letter of the alphabet, Alef. The Tiferet in the middle of the sefirot is represented by the middle letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Mem. Malkhut, the final sefirah is represented by the last letter Tav. Together these three letters spell the Hebrew word for truth, "Emet."*

*When G-d said to Moshe, "Mah (why) Titz'ak (do you yell) Ali (at Me) (Mem, Tav, Alef)" He was subtly telling Moshe not to worry. All three levels and all three Names had become united through the faith of the righteous. Now was to come a manifestation of the power of the Keter in the Malkhut. Israel would perceive G-d's grace through His Keter. Egypt, on the other hand, was to perceive G-d's justice through His Tiferet YHVH.*

*The next time when the Keter is again to be revealed in the Malkhut is when Mashiah comes. Zecharia 14:4 states that when Mashiah comes, "G-d's Feet" are to stand on the Mt. of Olives. Of course, it is impossible to understand this pasuk literally. The "Feet" are a metaphor for Malkhut. The Partzuf of G-d to be revealed here is a reference to the Long Face, the Face of Keter. "G-d's feet" touching the mountain means that again Keter will become manifest in Malkhut, this time to bring redemption to the entire earth, symbolized here by the mountain. May this day come soon.*

*In conclusion, we learn from this parasha the secrets of both faith and redemption. Without faith, there can be no redemption, be it on a personal or on a national level. Only by our surrender of selves to G-d through the act of faith can we enable the mightiest of Divine forces to manifest here on Earth, to change the course of history. It is the way of G-d to manifest within our lives whatever forces necessary to teach us to have faith in Him. We will, therefore, individually and collectively, learn the lessons of faith necessary to bring our redemption.*

*The question left for us to ask is which road shall we choose for ourselves? Will we choose the easy road and surrender to G-d thus quickening the redemption, or will we continue in our stubborn ways and force G-d to humble us, even as He humbled Pharaoh. The choice is ours. The time is short and a decision will be made, either by us, or autonomously by G-d.*





## The Ominous Days of Omer

The days of counting of the Omer are considered by many to be the most ominous days in Jewish tradition. According to the Gemara, during the first 33 days of the Counting of the Omer, a plague ravaged the students of Rabbi Akiva, killing 24,000 of them. A spiritual answer was sought for this devastating event and it was discerned that they were punished by Divine decree because they failed to show proper respect towards one another.

We have here a very important question to ask. Since when is not showing respect to one another such a serious sin that it can open up a whole population to a deadly illness? In our many sins, most of us today do not show proper respect towards one another and we are not being decimated by deadly disease! What was so unique about the students of Rabbi Akiva?

The answer to this question is that the students of Rabbi Akiva were unique. They were like us in one sense and at the same time very unique and very much not like us in another.

Rabbi Akiva's students were unique in that they were his students. They were students of one of the leading Rabbis of his generation, indeed of all times. Of Rabbi Akiva, the Gemara relates that he was worthy enough to have received the Torah on Sinai in place of Moshe Rabbeynu. That is an extremely high level, reached by only the select few.

To have been a student of Rabbi Akiva meant that such a one had to be of the highest caliber of individual. Indeed, we see this so in Rabbi Akiva's surviving student, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, master of the Zohar.

In light of the lofty position held by Rabbi Akiva, the levels of kedusha (holiness) expected by his students was of a heightened level, greater than that to be expected by rank and file Torah students. Indeed, to be a student of Rabbi Akiva meant that one was leaps and bounds higher than the rest and by definition closer to HaShem than the rest. Herein lied the blessing, but also the problem.

The students of Rabbi Akiva can be compared to Nadav and Avihu, the two sons of Aharon HaKohen, who offered "strange fire" before HaShem. Although our Sages speak of these two righteous souls as having been blemished at that moment, their punishment of death was rather harsh in light of what their blemish supposedly was. In



other words, like the students of Rabbi Akiva, Nadav and Avihu were punished far more severe that would have been normally expected.

Here then is the point. The students of Rabbi Akiva, like Nadav and Avihu before them were out of the ordinary. They were special. As such, special rules applied to them. What might be considered a minor blemish in others was for them a major sin. In others words, due to their advanced level and training they should have known better than to have done what they had done.

Indeed, G-d does judge different people differently. He does hold certain people at a higher level more accountable than others. Therefore, when we show disrespect towards one another we are not punished for this grievous sin with the same level of severity as were the students of Rabbi Akiva. We are not on their lofty level.

We are punished in accordance to the level where we are at. In this respect we have an advantage over them, the same advantage a child has over an adult. A child is not punished for his ignorant violation of the law. An adult however is not considered to be ignorant.

Rabbi Akiva's students were spiritually mature in comparison to us, who are like spiritual adolescents. They were held to a higher criterion of judgment. A mere act of disrespect for one on such a high level can be compared to the act of murder by someone not so lofty. They paid the price for their insincerity and left for the generations that followed and us a lesson and example.

The days of the Counting of the Omer are ominous in and of themselves, regardless of whether this event with Rabbi Akiva's students happened then or not. Indeed, it was not the event of the deaths that made these days ominous, but rather the ominousness of these days that caused the deaths to occur during then.

According to the Kabbalah, the days of the Omer lack the complete Light of HaShem that shined first in Egypt on Pesah night and then again on Sinai 50 days later on Shavuot. During this interlude, the supernal sefirotic Lights are in a state of "re-building."

Day by day, level by level the Divine Lights revealed on Pesah are being "re-charged." This procedure continues until Shavuot when all the Lights are recharged and rebuilt, thus enabling the revelation of the Torah. However, in the mean time, these intermediate days, are days of incompleteness and lack of Light.

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Therefore, the Sages knowing this spiritual truth instituted that during the days of Omer one act with behaviors of mourning and spiritual caution. Like mourners, during this time, we do not cut our hair, but new clothes or celebrate weddings.

According to the Kabbalists, these prohibitions last the entire period of the Omer, until the day before Shavuot. Not all however are as cautious as the Kabbalists. Traditional religious Ashkenazi Jews, observe these restrictions only until the 33rd day of Omer, Sephardim one day more.

Even today, like in Rabbi Akiva's times, we have different levels of students. The Kabbalists today can be compared to the higher level student of Rabbi Akiva, whereas the rest of Torah students can be compared to the rank and file who did not achieve the higher lofty status.

Kabbalists today are, in fact, the modern students of Rabbi Akiva, legendary editor of the Sefer Yetzirah and of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai (Rabbi Akiva's heir), legendary author of the Zohar. Kabbalists today, like the students of the great Masters before them, are required to live up to the higher level, above and beyond the practices of those around them. They are to be respected, and admired for this.

Omer is a time for us to be careful. Omer is a time where we are spiritually vulnerable to receive recompense for our sins. Omer is a time of a spiritual "Murphy's Law," which states that if something can go wrong, it will go wrong and at the worst possible time.

We cannot change the ominous influence that Omer brings upon us. Yet, we can change our focus of attention from that which can go wrong, and place it onto that which we can do right.

During these 49 days of Omer when the forces of severity rule over the Jewish people, the Kabbalists recognize that there is no general supernal union of the sefirotic powers. Therefore, they refrain from attempting to perform such unions in their prayers. During the time of Omer, the Kabbalists do not perform meditations in prayer (kavanot), with one exception, this being the counting of the Omer itself.

During the counting of the Omer, the Kabbalists participate in the re-building of the sefirotic structure, sefirah by sefirah, week by week, until all is complete on the 50<sup>th</sup> night, the night of Shavuot.

Each week of the seven weeks repairs one of the seven sefirot. Each day of the week repairs one of the seven aspects within each of the seven sefirot. Thus during the first



week, the sefirah Hesed is built. Day one, the Hesed of Hesed is built, day two, the Gevurah of the Hesed is built, day three the Tiferet of the Hesed is built and so on. Week two the Gevurah is built in the same way. Day one of week two the Hesed of Gevurah is built, day two of week two, the Gevurah of Gevurah is built and so on.

On the 49<sup>th</sup> day of Omer, the Malkhut of the Malkhut is finally built. On the 50<sup>th</sup> day, the crown of Keter, Hokhma, and Binah is added to the rebuilt lower seven within seven thus completing the whole, bring with it the revelation of the Torah.

This cycle we repeat every year. It is not only an event in time, it is also an event in mind. It is a psychological process of inner growth and spiritual maturation that we are destined to follow. As we build the spiritual Lights in the supernal world, so we build the inner "lights" of expanded consciousness within us. What greater expansion of consciousness can there be than the receiving of the Torah!

Yet, although the Torah comes in its time, we must first build the necessary receptacle in order to properly receive it. Not for naught does the Talmud call the students of Torah, builders, for they build the supernal world of the sefirot and teach us how to build the inner worlds of spiritual maturity, mental ability, emotional security, and physical stability.

Omer is a time to be careful. It is not a time to be fearful. If we keep our hearts on Heaven and our eyes upon the building of the sefirot every day of the 49 days, we will be blessed by HaShem and protected from all harm.

The order of the sefirotic building during the Omer can be found in most Orthodox Siddurs (prayerbooks). Regardless of what one understands or not, one should pay attention to what each day of the counting means. The little bit of light that one allows in one's soul on that one day, might be enough to save one from the ominous power of the Omer that lurks over us during this time.

May HaShem protect and defend His people Israel, and bring to us a safe counting and completion of the supernal lights.



## Lag B'Omer & the Secret History of the Zohar

Lag B'Omer is celebrated as the anniversary of the death of the master Kabbalist and legendary author of the Zohar, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai. Now, historically speaking, whether this is the actual date of his passing or not has been a subject of Rabbinic discussion for centuries. The conclusions are irrelevant because it is the message of the day rather than any historical event connected to it that makes Lag B'Omer so significant.

As you know, Jewish Law dictates that for the first 33 days of the counting of the Omer, we are forbidden to do certain things (haircuts, shaving, saying shehekhianu, etc.). This is in commemoration to the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiba who died during these days from a plague, which our Sages say was caused by their sins (specifically Lashon HaRa and disrespect). However, not all of Rabbi Akiba's students died at this time.

Rabbi Akiba's greatest student, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, survived this debacle. Now, Rabbi Shimon was not only Rabbi Akiba's student in areas of Halakha, he was only Rabbi Akiba's most trusted student to receive from him the sacred secret traditions of the Torah. In other words, Rabbi Akiba is the one who taught Rabbi Shimon the Kabbalah.

Years later when Rabbi Shimon, and his son, were hiding from the Romans in the cave, legend tells us that Eliyahu HaNavi came, and taught them the Zohar. This could never have happened if Rabbi Akiba did not first teach Rabbi Shimon the methods and techniques necessary how to call upon Eliyahu HaNavi in the first place. Most think that Eliyahu just appeared "out of the blue." This is not so. Eliyahu was summoned, by a specific and special formula that Rabbi Shimon learned from Rabbi Akiba. This formula is not recorded in the Zohar, but it is recorded in other sacred literature.

Now, when did Rabbi Shimon receive this formula from Rabbi Akiba? No one knows for sure. However, there is a recorded tradition in the writings of the HiDA (Rabbi Haim David Azulai), that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai received the sacred traditions of the Kabbalah from Rabbi Akiba specifically on the thirty-third day of the Omer, Lag B'Omer.

When we call this day the "Hillulah" (Ascent) of Rabbi Shimon, the ascent spoken of is not necessarily his death (i.e., the ascent of his soul), but rather the Hillulah is his ascent in the learning of Torah. Lag B'Omer celebrates the day when the sacred traditions of



the Kabbalah were saved from being lost forever. Lag B'Omer, therefore, has always been considered the "Kabbalist's holiday." For on this day Rabbi Shimon became possibly the most important link in the chain of Kabbalistic succession.

Rabbi Shimon saved the Kabbalah from oblivion. More than just save the Kabbalah, he used well the knowledge he received, and thereby received ever so much more. Religious legend will tell us that due to our sins, an edict from Heaven was proclaimed that the Zohar, and its teachings, were to be concealed for over 1,000 years. Not until the year 1290 was the Zohar finally made public. Nevertheless, the editor of the Zohar, Rabbi Moshe DeLeon, never publicly revealed any of the original Zoharic manuscripts.

As is well known, there is great debate as to who really wrote the Zohar itself. Most scholarly evidence does seem to support a later date for authorship of the Zohar. However, the religious faithful will hotly contest this. Some, in their religious zeal will go so far as to proclaim that those who question the authorship of the Zohar are nothing less than religious heretics. Needless to say such views do not add integrity to the scholarly discussion.

In this essay, my intent is to present the legend, the story, the meaning, and the mysticism of this time. All that I intend to show is that the Zohar is a living and vibrant document. Like the Torah itself, the Zohar is far more than a mere book. It is alive; it breathes because it has a soul. With this being said, let me proceed to present the religious side of things. In my following essay, I address other issues about the Zohar proper.

First of all, even the Zohar itself states that Rabbi Shimon himself did not write it. It was originally a set of oral teachings that Rabbi Shimon gave to his Talmidim in the years after he, and Rabbi Eliezer left the cave.

Before his death, Rabbi Shimon charged his talmid (student) Rabbi Abba, to commit all his teachings down to writing. Rabbi Abba, therefore, with the help of the other talmidim, and most assuredly under the tutelage of Eliyahu HaNavi, composed the Zoharic texts. These include the major body of the Zohar along with the two Idarot, the Sifra D'Tzniyuta, the Ra'aya Mehemna, the Saba D'Mishpatim, and many other works including the Tikunim of the Zohar, and the Zohar Hadash.

Legend tells us that these sacred texts were concealed in small circles of trusted students for centuries. Yet, as guided by Ruah haKodesh (divine inspiration), students in successive generations were guided to add to the Zoharic texts. This is why we find much post Rabbi Shimon teachings in a text ascribed to him. Nonetheless, we must





realize that any such additions were revealed by Eliyahu HaNavi, and by the Neshama of Rabbi Shimon from Shamayim. Therefore, although the hands that wrote these later additions were not those of Rabbi Shimon, nonetheless, the teachings were still his and revealed from Shamayim (Heaven) in the same way as was the original Zohar. Thus states the legend, and the religious faith.

Before I return to discuss the significance of Lag B'Omer to us today let me also mention one further point from history.

I am sure you have heard of the Christian-Moslem wars, the Crusades. During the century or so that the Christians held sway over Jerusalem, a certain group of Knights had control over the Temple Mount. These knights, known as the Templars, frantically searched the Temple Mount, all of Jerusalem, and as much of Eretz Yisrael that they could. Some claim that they were searching for the Holy Grail. Yet, as recent authors have pointed out the Holy Grail was not really an old Christian relic, the alleged "cup of Christ." Rather the term Holy Grail was a sort of code name for a secret and ancient mystery.

Some modern authors wish to make ridiculous claims as to what that mystery was in their attempt to tie the Templars into modern day anti-Semitic cults. Yet, in reality what the Templars were looking for was the ancient teachings of the Zohar. This is important to understand because it was during the Crusades that the Zohar was revealed in Spain.

I have been told that the reason for the revelation of the Zohar was in Spain, and not Eretz Yisrael was all a part of this struggle with the Christian Knights Templar. They were attempting to steal this knowledge for the Pope, and the Church. If this had happened then Rome would have won, and Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Shimon would have worked in vain.

To defeat our foes, the sacred documents were smuggled out of their ancient home in Eretz Yisrael, and taken to the only safe haven at the time, Spain. There it was decided that the edict from Heaven to keep them secret had passed. Their public dissemination was essential to prevent their teachings from falling into wrong hands.

Therefore, the Zohar practically exploded onto the Torah scene. Amazingly almost all Rabbis immediately welcomed it, and accepted it as the authentic work of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai. Once the Zohar was safely welcomed into Judaism, the Christians could no longer claim it as their own. Again, the Zohar was saved. Take a guess on what day this happened?



Now, back to Lag B'Omer. Thirty-three is a very special number in its own right. Not for naught was this day chosen by Rabbi Akiba to transmit to Rabbi Shimon the keys of the Kabbalah.

The secret of the Omer is the rebuilding of the Sefirotic lights that were revealed all at once on Pesah night. On Pesah G-d revealed the fullness of His Light all at once with obvious results. Yet, such an act of Divine mercy cannot continually be given to mankind. G-d has ordained that we must merit His Light. This is why He gave us Torah and mitzvot. By our observance of these, we enable the sefirotic paths to open and G-d's Light to flow down to us and to our world. This builds for us merit and thus reward in the world to come.

Omer therefore provides for us the building of the sefirotic vessels in order to receive the Divine Light. Seven times seven weeks. This is the secret of the rectification of the seven days of the week, created corresponding to the seven sefirot. When these are rectified, a new world begins. Thus the fiftieth day, is the day of Matan Torah, the time when we receive the Torah.

Now, remember, Pesah, the Omer and Shavuot are not merely holidays commemorating events of the past. They are much more than this. For every year, with the cycle of time, we relive these experiences and revive them, year after year, as we travel through the cosmos. As we move through the cosmos we bring rectification and revelation to the places in the universe that we touch anew as our earth, its sun and galaxy revolve and move through new space at every second.

The fifth week (from Days 29 – 35) corresponds to the sefirah Hod. Hod is the sefirah opposite to Netzah. Both Netzah and Hod are the “thighs” upon which “stands” the Tiferet. Tiferet is the Torah. Tiferet is the definition and source of Justice in the universe. Tiferet is the principle of the Name YKVK, which reveals G-d's grace and mercy into the severe and unyielding laws of nature represented by G-d's name Elokim. For there can be no justice without mercy and grace.

Netzah means victory. Netzah is the force, the motivation to impose the value of justice upon the world. Netzah is an outgoing force of the Right Column. Therefore, it is the force that seeks to conquer the world and to impose on it the Justice of Tiferet. Hod is Netzah's equal and “feminine” opposite. Unlike Netzah, Hod is an inward moving force of the Left Column of the sefirot.

Hod means glory. Hod is the force that gathers in and benefits from the imposition of Tiferet-Justice brought about by Netzah. Hod is often referred to as the decorations of



beauty of the wife. Hod in essence is “her jewelry.” Hod is the force that receives the benefit of the proper order and alignment of balance in the universe brought about by Torah observance. Hod gathers this benefit and wears it “as jewelry.” The benefit of Torah is thereby seen by all and admired by all, thus reinforcing the value of Torah/Tiferet/Justice.

Hod is the value and benefit of Torah. Rabbi Akiba recognized that in order to pass on the secrets of the Torah to Rabbi Shimon, he would have to do so in accordance to the alignment of the sefirot. Rabbi Akiba therefore chose the one day when the power of benefit and appreciation would be its strongest.

Rabbi Akiba chose the one day when the powers of gathering would be their strongest. He chose the sefirotic day of Hod within Hod, which corresponds to the fifth day of the fifth week of the Omer, specifically the thirty-third day Lag B’Omer. On this sefirotic day, the Hod of Hod would dominate and Rabbi Shimon would thus gather in the all the benefits of the Kabbalah.

As it was then so is it today. Lag B’Omer is the time to receive. It is a day of ascent. For our souls ascend on this day in joy and singing. The forces of severity are thereby broken. On this day we not only celebrate a most important event of the past, we celebrate what we have today, a living and vibrant Kabbalah. We rejoice with Rabbi Shimon, for on this day did he receive the Kabbalah from Rabbi Akiba. We also rejoice on this day because, if our souls are open to it through our observance of Torah and mitzvot, then we too become links in the chain of the Kabbalistic transmission.

Thirty-three is also special in that it is the number that unites the Name YKVK (26) with the seven (7) days of creation, created by Elokim. In other words, this 33, is the secret union of the Names YKVK and Elokim. These two Names together equal 112. This number is three times 33, showing the unity of the Three Sefirotic Columns (right, left, and center). The remainder is 13 the number of Ehad, One which signifies and seals the sefirotic unity.

The number three always signifies the three sefirotic Columns. Thus, thirty-three is actually  $3 \times 1 = 3$  and  $3 \times 10 = 30$ . Single numbers corresponds to the world of Asiyah under the Name Elokim. Tens correspond to the world of Yetzirah under the Name YKVK. Thus, 33 again signifies the union of YKVK and Elokim. This is the union of G-d’s severity in Malkhut, corresponding to Asiyah and Elokim, with His grace, corresponding to Yetzirah and YKVK.



This is the secret that Rabbi Akiba passed onto Rabbi Shimon. For Rabbi Akiba was under the powers of severity and judgement. Soon after passing on the Kabbalah to Rabbi Shimon, Rabbi Akiba was horribly executed by the evil Romans. Rabbi Shimon also fell under the edict of the death penalty but he transmuted the severity of Elokim and infusing it with YKVK. He thus saved his own life and the life of the Kabbalah. You might ask why Rabbi Akiba did not do the same? Alas, he had a different destiny.

So, in conclusion, Lag B'Omer celebrates the survival of the Kabbalah. It celebrates the mitigation of Divine severity to those who are willing to receive the benefits (Hod) of Torah (Tiferet) observance. May we all be so worthy, so blessed and so graced, Amen.



## Secret Revelations about the Truths in the Zohar

*"Understanding is a three-edged sword, your side, their side, and the truth."*

J. Michael Straczynski

Things are not as they seem. What you see, and what really is, are two different things. There are many myths that have been woven over the years. Today, while many know the myths, they do not know what myths actually are. This is very true when it comes to a discussion of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, his relationship to the day of Lag B'Omer, and his believed authorship of the Zohar.

### Lag B'Omer

Lag B'Omer is the 33<sup>rd</sup> day of the traditional counting of the Omer offerings that were performed during Temple times. Today, in remembrance of the Temple practice, Torah observant Jews daily mark the Omer period by counting off the days between Passover and Shavuot.

Legends has it that during the first 33 days of this period, in one unrecorded year around the turn of the first century, a great plague struck ancient Israel resulting in the deaths of thousands of Rabbi Akiva's students. On the 33<sup>rd</sup> day of counting the Omer, the plague ceased. Therefore, to this day, Lag (the Hebrew rendition of the number 33) of Omer is celebrated as the day the plague ended, and something else very special.

It is said that this day is the Day of Ascent for Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai. Traditionally this ascent is interpreted to be the day of his death, thus his ascent to Heaven. Others, however, interpret Rabbi Shimon's ascent to be the day that he merited to receive the secret traditions of the Torah from his master, Rabbi Akiva. Thus Rabbi Shimon's ascent was an ascent in Torah, and had nothing to do with his mortal demise.

The important thing to remember with regards to all these things is this, there are no intact historical records that can verify if any of these things actually happened. Any of them, or all of them, might be verbatim fact, or they might just as easily be complete mythology and legend.

All these stories might have been created for their moralistic (midrashic) value, to inspire spiritual refinements, or they might be history, or they might be a rich blend and combination of both. What we have here are myths, and their historicity neither adds to, nor detracts from, their mythical value and content.

Remember this, a myth, in psychology, is not something make-believe, but rather it is a specific psychic model of the mind, embraced and believed as true. Therefore, it does not matter whether or not the belief has any historical foundations. In the mind, what is believed to be true is true, and that's all that matters from a psychological, consciousness point of view. What is real internally, does not need to be real externally. The mind decides its own reality, the world around the mind may or may not be involved in this decision. Thus, every day, in every way, we are all surrounded by our very own self-embraced myths.

The Sages of Israel learned well this technique, maybe from Grecian culture, and used it liberally, especially throughout midrashic literature, the likes of which we see throughout the Agadata of the Talmud. Yet, the Grecian ways used by the Sages of the Talmud are not limited to the pages of that special book. We find the method of midrash and metaphor used elsewhere in Jewish literature far and wide. This is especially true in Kabbalistic literature of the philosophical school, specifically the works of the Zohar.

The wisdom, beauty and profundity of the Zohar speaks for itself. Whether the texts were written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century by Shimon Bar Yohai, or in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by Moshe DeLeon, or by an even unknown third party at some unknown point, adds or subtracts nothing from the objective value of the texts themselves. The value of the Zohar stands on its own merits regardless of its authorship.

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Any honest scholar can clearly see that some Zoharic teaching either reflect or repeat concepts that can be found in Neo-Platonic metaphysics of 2<sup>nd</sup> century Greek philosophers. Yet, we must ask, is this either important, or significant?

Many Rabbinic teachings, especially the school of Maimonides are based upon Aristotle, so why should it be a bad thing if Zoharic literature has a relationship with other schools in Greek thought?

Indeed, another question that must be asked is who learned from whom? Were the Greek writers influenced by Jewish teachers, or were Jewish teachers influenced by the Greeks? Who influenced whom is a matter that cannot be proven either way. Therefore, to dismiss Zoharic metaphysics because of a connection to Neo-Platonic concepts is disingenuous at best, and outright prejudice, and ignorance at worst.

Again, the value of the Zohar stands on its own merits, and all the scholarly dissections of it, by religious and secular philosophers alike, may add flavor to the academic debates, but they add nothing to, nor detract anything from the Zohar's value, profundity, beauty and moral authority.

### **Partzufim**

In some of the most arcane sections of the Zohar, the Idarot, we are exposed to a series of cryptic metaphors that defy the intellect to interpret. This is because these metaphors are speaking about different grades of human consciousness, and the only way any of them can ever be understood properly is through experience, and not through academic study.

When the Zohar introduces to us the concepts of Partzufim, most readers are completely lost, and have no idea what is being described. So, let's begin with the obvious. A Partzuf is a mask. Rather than ask, who wears the mask, ask instead who is seeing the mask?

It is we who are gazing upon the masks. The Partzufim are the masks that cover the metaphorical Face of God, as perceived by the meditative mind. What this means is that as the human mind goes deeper and deeper into meditative states of consciousness, the mind draws ever closer to experiencing the numinous reality of God within. Each grade of deeper consciousness exposes to us God within, as psychically perceived as "God" wearing different masks.



These masks are given names like Zeir Anpin, Arikh Anpin, Atika Kadisha and others. Let the Kabbalistic philosophers argue and banter about all they wish as they try to understand what all this means. They are like the blind leading the blind in trying to describe something that the blind cannot see and thus can never clearly imagine. Yet, those who make the descent into the deeper stratas of consciousness come to experience these masks and thus see them for what they are, as vessels, masks, and concealments.

These psychic, psychological structures that we call Partzufim exist within the human mind and enable the mortal mind of man to expand beyond the mortal coil of his flesh to experience the Divine beyond the limitation imposed upon him by the sensory organic brain.

As the mind descends deeper into meditative states it draws ever closer to God. This path is called, ascending the Sefirotic Tree of Life, and the revelations of the Partzufim. Partzufim are the inner perceptions of how we perceive God.

Remember this, God does not really wear any masks. This is all metaphorical talk. Yet, when we reach out to touch God, our limited human faculties only enable us to perceive God through psychic, psychological masks that enable our minds to perceive that which would otherwise be imperceivable.

### **Learning Zohar vs. Understanding Zohar**

*"There are many differences at every moment. In accordances to these differences do the teachings of the Zohar [themselves] change, and are to be interpreted differently each day with new understanding. This is how it is done, in the Supernal Heavenly Academy of the Holy One, blessed be He. Every day the Zohar is learned with new understandings from the Holy One, blessed be He."* (SBST Va'ethanan 72)

The Zoharic texts were not written to teach us about outer space, but rather about inner space. If and when this lesson is ignored, then I believe the entire message of the Zohar becomes lost.

Weaved within every story and teaching, the Zohar mixes together a remarkable blend of midrash, metaphor and other teachings, which are quite true and direct to the point. Those experienced in Zoharic learning and meditative practices intuitively recognize how to read Zoharic texts, and to recognize when the text is speaking metaphorically, and when it is speaking literally.



This same principle and practice is found in the Talmud, and is used and understood in the exactly the same way. Whenever the expression TaShma (in the Talmud) and TaHazei (in the Zohar) are used to introduce a subject (or an explanation of a subject), one should pay special attention.

In Talmud, one should listen, meaning one should take care to understand and contemplate matters deep in thought. On the other hand, in the Zohar, one should sit back, close one's eyes and let one's imagination run wild seeing within, what needs to be seen. These are two different ways of leaning, and the one experienced in them, knows, understands and sees exactly what I am saying. As for the many others without this experience, what can be said about them?

The Zohar is like a mirror. One will see reflected out of it what one projects into it. This is why there will never be an end to original and unique Zoharic commentaries. No two people see alike, no two people share the exact same myth. The Zohar is a work of art, not science. The Zohar should be appreciated as if it belongs in a museum. It cannot be studied as if it belongs in a laboratory.

The mind is the realm of inner experience. This is the realm of the Zohar, and all true Torah Secrets. Only personal inner numinous experience can rightly be called Sod. The chatter of the philosophical Kabbalists does not even come close to this.

We can believe whatever we want to about the Zohar and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai. But our beliefs and our myths are far less significant than are our actions and behaviors. Rather than be concerned with the source of the material, one should instead pay attention to the material itself! It is not the learning, but the doing that counts!



## Hag HaShavuot

### Happy Birthday To Torah

*Note: This essay was written in the year 5760 (2000), please adjust all dates herein accordingly.*

This Shavuot marks the 3312<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Torah. While 3312 is only a number to us, look at what has happened in human history over the past 33 centuries. Although at Mt. Sinai, G-d gave the Torah exclusively to the Jewish people, where it became our national constitution, birthright and law, it has since become the foundation and moral gauge of almost every culture and law in the world. Even peoples as far away in time and place as Native Americans, the Chinese and other oriental cultures, everyone today knows about our Torah, our Moshe and our Laws.

Torah, we celebrate its 3312<sup>th</sup> birthday this Shavuot (for 5760). For over 33 centuries have the Sages of Israel studied this sacred work. You would think that by now every possible understanding of the Torah would have been squeezed out of it. However, herein lies the problem. To read the Torah and to understand its surface teachings is an accomplishment achieved by many. Yet, a point long emphasized from the days of the Biblical prophets to the teachings of the holy Mekubalim of today - there is much more to Torah than meets the eye. Like the depths of the ocean, the Torah conceals many secrets. Indeed, even with tens of thousands of religious texts written over the centuries, the true essence of Torah is as much a mystery to us today as it was 33 centuries ago.

What do we really know about the Torah? Granted, we know the 613 Laws that G-d has commanded us to observe. Barukh HaShem, we obey them. We know the stories about our ancestors. Barukh HaShem, we have learned many moral lessons from Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham & Moshe and we apply those morals to our lives. Yet, is this all there is to the Torah?

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai, the great Talmudic Sage and author of the holy mystical Zohar states, that if all there was to Torah was its stories and morals, it would be quite an unimpressive book. Indeed, Rabbi Shimon says, if all there was to Torah was its surface, we could write a better Torah ourselves, today. However, Rabbi Shimon advises us, this can never be so. One must never underestimate the depths of the Torah. For as it is recorded in Pirkei Avot, "all is within It." Just what this "All" is has never been fully determined. Because in spite of all the study in Torah accomplished over the last 33 centuries, even the holy Mekubalim, the masters of mysticism admit, that the Torah has such depths, that even our deepest scans have just scratched the surface.



All we can say for sure about the Torah is that 3312 years ago, an incredible event occurred, mankind through the Jewish people was contacted by a Force not of this Earth and had an “extra-terrestrial” CLOSE ENCOUNTER far beyond anything in science fiction. This encounter was not with mythical little green men, nor with black eyed, bulb headed aliens in flying saucers. This encounter was with the Creator Himself, along with His entourage of angels. Judging from the description of this encounter recorded in the Torah and other related literature the Sinai revelation appeared more alien, bizarre, and “other-worldly” than anything described or portrayed in the modern entertainment media. The sight on Sinai that day was something for real “out of this world.”

While many have arisen over the centuries to debunk the otherworldly origins of the Torah, none of them has ever succeeded. With the discovery in our generation of the Torah Codes, even some scientists have come forward to make the claim that now there is proof that the Torah could not ever have been written by human hands.

Rabbis and Mekubalim have never needed scientific confirmation for that which they have always known. You see, the Rabbis have a psychic connection with Torah. Through their studies, the Torah becomes a part of them; it seeps into their souls and their consciousness. The Torah absorbs them; they do not absorb it. The Rabbis and Mekubalim, therefore, KNOW the Torah in the same way as “Adam knew his wife Eve” (Gen. 4:1). What Mekubalim have known (and used) for centuries, science is only now catching up.

In this last century, human technology has leaped forward more than in all of human history combined. Our understandings of science & cosmology, matter, energy and light have taken us from investigating the super-strings that underlie all subatomic particles to the big bang and the beginning of the universe. Never in human history have we as a race been so close to recognizing, and even deciphering the Hand of G-d in creation.

Yet, with all our scientific advancements, the general “super theory” about everything still eludes the scientist. My prediction is that even when science does discover their version of the “super theory of everything,” they will soon develop new understandings about what “everything” really means. They will discover that their new theories only create new questions. Thus onwards and onwards will science go towards an unknown and unknowable goal.

It is rather hard starting at the bottom rung of a ladder and to try to climb all the way to Heaven, especially when the ladder twists and turns (like the double helix in DNA),



making the proper direction ever more so impossible to decipher. Would it not be nice if indeed, “Someone” (at the top of the ladder) made contact with us and that “Someone” gave us some instructions on how to properly ascend? Well, contact with THE “Someone” who is “THE ONE” was made at Mt. Sinai. We received there and then in encrypted and coded form full instructions for the evolution of the human race and also our guide how to ascend to the stars. We have only one minor problem in achieving these lofty goals - we have not yet figured out how to decipher the whole message. Torah is and always has been an anomaly to anyone who has not bonded with it in the mystical sense, as described above.

Maybe what we need today is a new, non-surface approach to Torah study. We should acknowledge the profound depths concealed within the Torah and thus endeavor to study Torah with scientific discipline and inquiry. By this, I do not mean, G-d forbid, to insult HaShem by denying the validity and necessity of fulfilling the surface level Laws and moral lessons. On the contrary, we should encourage the exploration of HaShem’s Torah scientifically, in the laboratory, using computers, and every other understanding available to us in modern science.

In order for this course of investigation to be successful, to penetrate beneath the surface of Torah, one will have to be properly connected to its surface through complete observance of the mitzvot, with proper religious morals and values. Only when we start from the beginning of Torah can we ever expect to properly explore and discover the secrets of creation and science that lie concealed within Her depths. I am certain that if pursued correctly by G-d fearing, scientifically prepared and intelligent people, what will be found will be mind boggling. What we might reveal could only be called the Torah of Mashiah.

We know from Einstein’s famous  $E=MC^2$  that there is a direct relationship between matter and energy. Matter becomes pure energy when it speeds up and approaches light. Indeed energy is light. Being that Torah is constantly referred to as the “Light of G-d,” we may wish to reexamine the Torah in light of modern science and apply to it all the lessons now known about the real structure of nature. We might discover previously unknown layers in the Torah, lying dormant, waiting for us to have reached the level of discovery.

Information, as we know, is acquired through learning. Learning, as we know, is the primary mitzvah of the Torah. By studying Torah, even at the trivial level we humans are presently able to understand, we make contact with the universal archetype, the foundation and source of humanity and creation. We touch G-d.





The Midrash teaches us that G-d looked into the Torah and created the world. Pirkei Avot tells us in the name of Ben Hey Hey that the Torah contains everything. If the Torah contains everything, as it does, than I expect “everything” to be found in the Torah to include all the laws of science, physics, chemistry, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, cosmology, metaphysics and everything else. There is much more to Torah than the surface level understanding of how to observe the commandments and to live moral, righteous and holy lives. The Torah reveals to us the Mind of G-d, the very thoughts, ideas and desires of our Creator.

Indeed, Torah does contain all this knowledge and more. Even in the story of the Garden of Eden, hidden gematrias (numerical values of words) form the Fibonacci numerical sequence for the creation of spirals. This mathematical formula is the basis of every spiral pattern in the universe from the shell of a snail to the entire Milky Way galaxy. All this is hinted to in the numerical values of the words spelling out the surface level Garden of Eden story. Who knows what else awaits our discovery? Who knows what questions we have not even thought of yet to ask, all the more so to seek their answers in the Torah.

In light of the awe and wonder of Torah, knowing as we do its extraterrestrial origins, how is then that its surface messages, i.e., the 613 commandments and moral guidance are all ignored repeatedly by people who should know better. Agreed, as human beings we have human frailties and earthly passions. We do not always think with our heads. Sometimes we do not think at all. I understand a person succumbing to earthly passions. As bad and wrong as it is, it is at least understandable. What I cannot understand is why we humans do not take advantage of our greatest gift and potential – our human minds.

The power of the human mind is endless. Scientists tell us that today humans use no more than 10% of our individual brainpower. If the smartest of us uses all 10% and has an I.Q. of, let's say, 200, then one who develops and uses his entire mind will have an I.Q. of at least 2,000. What a mind-boggling proposal! How would someone study Torah and perceive the world with a 2,000 I.Q.? What entirely new and unseen worlds and dimensions would such a person take for granted as we take for granted the air we breathe?

The holy Mekubalim have taught us that Adam, prior to the sin had such an I.Q. and lived such an extraordinary live. Quoting Midrash, the Mekubalim have said that Adam used the special light of the First Day of Creation to see from one end of the world to the other. This is interpreted as Adam having full use of his mental faculties. Alas for us, when Adam sinned with the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil, he lost his full potential,



he was shrunk in stature, mentally speaking, and became the man that we are and know today.

The purpose of HaShem giving the Torah to Israel on this Shavuot day was for us to study and learn it. By doing so, we would be opening long lost avenues in the mind, enabling us to expand our consciousness. Indeed, Jewish scholars have always been a cut above the rest. This is because of both, what we study and how we study. There is a secret method to the madness of constant Torah study.

Yet, with all due emphasis that I can place on Talmud Torah (Torah study), Pirkei Avot (1:17) has already said, "Lo HaMidrash Halkar, Elah HaMa'aseh" (it is not the study, but the practice that counts).

The only way to reach the depths of the Torah is through the surface of the Torah. HaShem, in His Divine Wisdom, knows and understands that the only way to correct the fallen human intellect is through the rectification of the human heart. Indeed, in order to grasp a glimpse of the essence of Torah one must first be in a state of complete bond, unity and harmony with its surface.

You guessed it! Unless and until one is observant of the mitzvot of the Torah and places Yirat Shamayim (fear of heaven) in their hearts, there cannot exist the necessary connection that leads one to full human evolution and personality individuation (fullness of self).

Make no mistake about it – the only way one can find oneself is to go to the source, the Creator of self – and this is none other than HaShem.

In order to get to HaShem one must follow the map that HaShem Himself has outlined for us. Along the route, there are 613 directions, some are right turns, and some are left turns. Yet, unless you follow the directions precisely, you will get lost! Why is it that so many people, Jewish and Gentile alike are so darn stiff-necked and rebellious, always thinking that they know better than G-d? These self-same people, not due to earthly passions, but due to a rebellious heart have messed up humanity for over 33 centuries (5,760+ years to be exact). When will we ever be free of them?

As we approach Torah's 3312<sup>th</sup> birthday, I ask that we contemplate Her wonder. I ask that we contemplate what it is that we are missing that we cannot know until we open our hearts to knowing. I ask that we give Torah the best birthday present She could ever receive from us – our compliance to HaShem's mitzvot.



The Torah is indeed a living, vibrant and passionate FEMALE soul. We know Her best as the Shekhina. This is why Rabbis know the Torah in the same way as Adam knew Eve. The bond is one of passion. The study is energized by elevated libido. Once the earthly passions are disciplined, libido (sexual) force ascends into the heart, creating passion, love and desire to know the ways of HaShem. After years of study and observance of the mitzvot, one's inner and outer being is transformed. One becomes a new individual, an evolved soul.

In such a state the Shekhina, the Soul of the Torah now “modulates a frequency” which the evolved soul can receive. With this “psychic” connection, the true Talmid Hakham (Rabbi, lover of the Torah) is given passage to delve beneath the Torah's surface and to explore her inner depths. The experience is breath taking. This is an act of love that no man or woman can ever quite describe.

This is path of the true Talmid Hakham (Rabbi), the sincere Ben/Bat Torah (Torah-yeshiva student). Yes, women can also experience this level, even as did Sarah, Rivka, Rahel and Leah. Their life stories serve as examples to women how to live exemplary lives crowned by the mitzvot of the Torah. After all, the Shekhina dwells in them, more so than in we men. That is why we men must make extra efforts in Torah study and mitzvot observance – to attain the level and feeling of heart that is more natural to occur among women.

With all the turmoil in world Jewry and in Israel this special birthday holiday, let us take pause to remember the important things in life. Let us seek a glimpse of the “big picture.”

Shavuot tradition (with its source in the holy Zohar) dictates that we stay up the entire night studying Torah at this most auspicious time. According to the Kabbalah, there is a special order of readings for this night called the Kriyat Mo'ed, which sets into motion an alignment of spiritual energies that we call the Sefirot. I know that not everyone is aware of the Kabbalistic meditations for Shavuot. I know that not everyone has access to the order of the Kriyat Mo'ed (special readings). Nonetheless, whatever a person does and studies, make this night a special one.

Rabbi Haim David Azulai (the HiD'A) writes in numerous places that Shavuot night IS NOT a night like all others, therefore, what we study on this night should NOT BE what we study on all other nights. He very clearly states that Shavuot night is not the time to be studying Gemara or to read Mishnayot. One must follow the Kriyat Mo'ed he writes. It is essential.

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For those of you with the opportunity to do so – do not miss your chance to touch the soul of the Shekhina this night, in that special way that only the Mekubalim can know.

For the rest of us, regardless of what course of study one takes; stay up the night; pray with the netz (sunrise) and take a little time out during the night to talk to HaShem. Contemplate His Majesty, wonder about all the secrets of the universe locked up and concealed within the Chumash (Torah) that you hold in your hands.

Give to Torah, a beautiful birthday present. Study Her, explore her, make love to her with your minds and your souls. Observe her mitzvot, see, and feel how wonderful being bonded with HaShem can truly be.

Hag Sameah.