

SAFE
KABBALAH

PART TWO

**KABBALAH: THE FOURTH
DIMENSION**

BY

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SAFE KABBALAH: THE FOURTH DIMENSION

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CHAPTER ONE
TORAH: G-D'S REVELATION
ON EARTH

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CHAPTER ONE

TORAH: G-D'S REVELATION ON EARTH

Manifestations of the Divine in Everything

G-d's energy comes into this world in many shapes and sizes. When we look at a living being we see G-d.

By extension, Kabbalah teaches us that everything is a manifestation of G-d, because every being - even an inanimate being - has a Divine spark that gives it its ability to exist. By just looking at any aspect of the world we should be able to "see" the presence of its creator.

Nothing can create itself. By the sheer force of logic, then, one should be able to deduce the presence of a Creator. A beautiful sunrise or sunset, a magnificent mountain, an autumn day when all the leaves have turned colors, all instill in us a sense of awe of G-d's majesty.

The more alive something is, the more pronounced is the presence of G-d.

That is why Judaism considers a person who touches a dead body to be defiled. This does not mean that there is something bad about a dead body or about touching one -

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if necessary. However, when G-d's presence is hidden behind the mask of death, we feel the need to reaffirm His presence.

When a vibrant human being has become still as a rock and G-d's presence has receded, it is time for the mourning relatives to look for ways to increase their connection and commitment to G-d, the Giver of life.

The process of mourning and reciting Kaddish (often referred to as the prayer for the dead) is not simply for therapeutic reasons - to enable us to heal. It is intended, primarily, to give us a chance to reexamine our conception of life; making up for the loss of life/G-dliness by increasing our efforts to bring more life into the world and enhance the life that already exists.

Mourning is a time for the living to rise above the death of a loved one - a temporary diminution of the life sustaining G-dly force in the world.

Obviously, within life itself there are differences between plant, animal and human forms. Human life is more expressive of G-d, because it is intelligent life.

More importantly, human life is more G-dly because humans, and only humans, can make choices to grow spiritually and connect with G-d. Only humans have free choice, which derives from their being created in the "image of G-d." Just as G-d has absolutely free choice,

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because nothing can compel G-d to make a choice, so too do we humans have the ability to resist any force in choosing either the wrong or the right thing to do: a very powerful expression of G-d, indeed.

The harder a person toils to make every aspect of his or her life conform to G-d's will, the more that person's life becomes an expression of G-d's presence, the more holy he or she becomes. That is why Judaism, particularly Jewish mysticism, places a great emphasis on our connection to the tzadik, the righteous individual. By connecting to G-dly people we become more G-dly.

Torah: Undiminished G-dliness

Of all the different modes of Divine expression, none is greater than the Torah, G-d's wisdom. All the other expressions of divinity undergo a long process of diminution and filtering before they are able to find expression in a physical world.

Even our G-dly souls cannot possibly coexist with a physical body without some degree of adjustment on the part of the soul: the soul's original intensity and G-dly passion must first become greatly diminished. The tzadik is one whose soul has undergone the least amount of change. This can be attributed to any of several factors:

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The souls of some tzaddikim, by G-d's design, experience little filtering in their journey to this world, and therefore, such individuals naturally feel more spiritual, despite the grossness of their bodies. The body and soul of these tzaddikim clash, and they must therefore "break" their bodies to accommodate the intensity of the soul.

Other tzaddikim are created with very refined bodies in the first place. Their souls do not have much of a struggle because the body poses minimal resistance.

There is a third scenario in which the tzadik works hard at refining his or her body and animal desires until they give way to the soul. However the tzadik reaches the point where his soul dominates his body, one thing is clear: the soul's intensity when it is in the body is always less than it was before it descended into the physical world.

The medium through which the most transcendent G-dly forces come into the world unfiltered and unaltered is Torah. Torah is G-dly energy accessible to the mind. Even the greatest tzadik needs to study Torah to enable his soul to rise above the restrictions of the body, no matter how subtle and minimal.

The Torah serves as the soul's anchor to another world -- the world of undiluted G-dliness which is unimpeded by the constraints of the physical nature of the body.

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In Jewish mysticism, therefore, we do not find that the greater the tzadik the less he needs Torah. One might think that since tzaddikim are so spiritual they do not need the Torah. In truth, the more spiritual they are, the more they realize that their potential is inhibited by the existence of the body and its desires and needs. So the true tzadik always seeks to overcome whatever barrier stands in the way of his connection to G-d. And there is only one means to connect: through the teachings of Torah.

Sick with Love? Learn some Torah

The tzadik's need to connect with G-d sometimes becomes so great that he attains a state that Kabbalah calls *Cholat Ahavah*, Sick with Love. This phrase, taken from King Solomon's Song of Songs, refers to a passionate love for G-d so intense that the tzadik becomes ill when he cannot get any closer.

The Hebrew word for sick -- "*choleh*"- itself tells us something about the nature of the tzadik's unquenched thirst for G-d. The numerical equivalent of *choleh* is 49.¹ According to the Talmud and Kabbalah, there are fifty gates of Torah understanding, but only forty-nine are

¹ In Hebrew, every letter is also a number.

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attainable by man. The elusive fiftieth level will only be attained in the Messianic Era.

Now, the tzadik who has reached the pinnacle -- the forty-ninth level -- is *choleh* sick, because he cannot reach the fiftieth level.

Ironically, the one who has reached the forty-eighth gate is not called *choleh* even though he is farther away from G-d; only the forty-ninth is called lovesick, because the greater the level of closeness to G-d, the more one's love intensifies.

The only way a tzadik can quench his thirst or quiet the passion in his heart for more G-dly revelation without leaving this world is through Torah. The greater the tzadik, the more he feels the need to study Torah.

CHAPTER TWO
TORAH AND SECULAR
KNOWLEDGE

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TORAH AND SECULAR KNOWLEDGE

The Light of Torah

Despite the fact that Torah is divided into many levels, even the "lowest" level of Torah possesses a G-dly light that is untarnished and unfiltered by anything in this world.

Our sages declare that even a ritually unclean person, who would not be allowed to pray because he would consequently sully the words of prayer, can study Torah, because the words of Torah are likened to fire which can never become contaminated.

Torah -- which means guidance or direction -- is either derived from or associated with the word "*ohr*" - "light." In Aramaic, the word for Torah is *Ohraita*, which when broken into two parts, "*ohr*" and "*aita*," reads, "The introduction of light."

The Book of Proverbs states this connection between Torah and light explicitly: "For a mitzvah is a candle and Torah is light." Torah illuminates our souls, our bodies,

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our way of living. Our potential is manifest by the study of Torah, because like light, Torah has the capacity to reveal things that were previously hidden.

While other areas of knowledge -- science, art, music, philosophy - might lead a person to the realization that there is a G-d and make one's life more G-dly, the knowledge itself is not inherently pure and holy. All of these disciplines, to be sure, are G-d's creations, and are, therefore, by definition G-dly.

However, like everything else in creation, G-d deliberately obscured His own light when creating these areas of knowledge.

Indeed, nature itself is a manifestation of G-d, but it is a manifestation of G-d as He is concealed, as we have discussed. Similarly, the study of nature (science) and other disciplines that are based on logic are all part of G-d's deliberate concealment of His own power.

G-d created existence in such a way that His presence is concealed. By being concealed He thereby gives us the opportunity to uncover the true nature of existence, which is G-dly.

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Uncovering the G-dly Energy within Creation through Science and Torah

How do we uncover the inherent G-dly force within all of creation?

The answer, again, is through Torah. Because the Torah that we learn remains in its pure Divine state, it has the capacity to illuminate and reveal all that is hidden.

Science is a prime example of a worldly discipline that, despite its essential G-dly nature, is nevertheless not G-dly in its overt state.

On the one hand, science has been used by some to prove G-d's existence. Many a scientist has, as a result of his research, developed a sense of awe and reverence for the Creator. We do hear, from time to time, a surgeon speak of how he feels that the hands of G-d have assisted him in his incredibly delicate work.

Unfortunately, a more common experience is science employed in the assault against G-d, Torah and religion. The same data that has been used by some to prove G-d's existence has been used by others to deny it.

This paradox attests to the neutral nature of science. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then perceiving divinity in creation is certainly a subjective matter.

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The study of nature does not objectify the existence of a Creator. However, when one masters the Torah and then returns to nature, he is able to uncover its G-dly character. Then he sees the divinity within nature.

Imagine someone receiving a letter from a loved one thousands of miles away. The letter gives the recipient warm feelings. However, there is nothing about the letter that captures the essence of the person who wrote it: it's not his voice, appearance, touch, taste or smell. It's just ink on paper that happened to be written by the loved one. The letter, no matter how beautiful and warm, is no substitute for the loved one himself.

In fact, the more the recipient reads the letter, the more he or she longs to be close to the loved one - a circumstance that would remove the need for letters all together.

Now imagine if that same person were to get so caught up in the emotion evoked by the letter that he failed to do anything to get closer to the loved one. Even more foolish would be someone who, when visited by the loved one, ignored the person because he was so engrossed in the letter ...

When we feel G-d's presence in nature, or in literature, science and other secular disciplines, it is indeed a beautiful and meaningful experience. It is not, however, a

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substitute for the real thing -- studying Torah, which is G-d's direct way of communicating with us. Indeed, in mystical literature, learning Torah is described as G-d's way of embracing us. True, when we are distant from G-d, we can be brought closer to an awareness of Him by marveling at nature, for example. But this is hardly a substitute for the original.

Secular knowledge is no more than a letter from G-d. If we were not in exile, [The concepts of exile and redemption will not be understood by most secular readers in a casual reference without explanation.] we would never be content with just a letter. If we can have G-d visit us in person, why look for Him in a letter? It is only because of the exile and state of confusion that we are in that makes us feel content with the substitute and not even desire the real thing.

Marveling Nature, a Sin?

We can now appreciate what our sages say in Ethics of the Fathers (Chapter 3 Mishnah 7): "He who studies Torah while on the road and interrupts his study to remark -- 'How beautiful is this tree! How beautiful is this plowed field!' -- scripture considers as if guilty of a mortal sin." It is hard to imagine what sin there could be in marveling at G-d's nature.

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When, however, we reflect on the fact that Torah study puts one in direct contact with G-d, we can appreciate the insult one hurls at G-d by interrupting that face to face communication and embrace to look for G-d in His creation.

To be sure, G-d can be found in every place in every situation. Everything is evocative of G-d. But Torah is the one place of which G-d said: this is where I want you to find me.

On the humorous side of things, there is a cute story told of a Hebrew School teacher who was trying to discover to what degree parents were educating their children about G-d. The teacher asked the kids to identify symbols in their homes that related to G-d.

One child pointed to the Mezuzah on the door posts; another to the prayer book and so on. One kid could not think of anything. When the teacher pressed the child to find one expression of G-d in the home; at least one object that was associated with G-d, the child finally blurted out: "the bathroom scale."

"The bathroom scale," the teacher asked incredulously!

"Yes," the child continued. "Whenever my mother would go on the scale, I would hear her cry out, 'Oh my G-d'!"

You can even find G-d in the bathroom scale!

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While G-d can be found in everything; His most intimate revelation to us is through Torah.

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CHAPTER THREE
KABBALAH: AN INTEGRAL
PART OF TORAH

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CHAPTER THREE

KABBALAH: AN INTEGRAL PART OF TORAH

Mysticism: The Light of Torah

But, alas, even when we study Torah we might not feel the Divine character that it possesses. Our minds may be so clouded that even when we study Torah we look at it as a mere history book or as an ancient law book or as a beautiful piece of literature.

Even if we are fully aware of the Divine character of Torah, nevertheless, the subject matter of the exoteric part of Torah is not about G-d. We could be studying the laws of an ox goring another ox or of a thief and murderer.

To be sure, whenever we study any part of Torah we recite three blessings which speak of how G-d gives us the Torah.

The Talmud tells us that the reason Jerusalem was destroyed was because the people who studied Torah neglected reciting the blessing on the Torah.

The simple import of this statement is that Torah study for them became an intellectual exercise; they did not

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overtly acknowledge the Divinity of the Torah, although it might have been in the back of their minds.

From this we see that by reciting the blessings before the study of Torah we connect ourselves to the Divine origin of all parts of Torah.

Moreover, it should be noted that in the blessings for the Torah it doesn't say, "He gave us the Torah," past tense, but rather "He gives us the Torah," present tense.

The use of present tense is intended to impress upon us that G-d gives us the Torah anew every day. We cannot escape the fact that Torah study—any part of it—is of Divine origin and is a continuous revelation from G-d.

However, we are mere mortals and when we get into the subject matter that deals with crime, deceit and mundane matters, it is very easy for us to forget about the Divinity of Torah.

Kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism, is the part of Torah that brings us face to face with the Torah's G-dly nature. Jewish mysticism is all about G-d, our Divine soul and our relationship with the Divine.

Thus, notwithstanding the fact that all of Torah is Divine light, we still need the mystical teachings of Torah to illuminate the light.

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For this reason, Kabbalah and Chassidic thought have been compared to oil and light. If Torah is light, then the mystical tradition is that which illuminates the light.

Chanukah and the Inner Light of Torah

The Holiday of Chanukah is associated with light because of the miracle that occurred with the cruse of oil that lasted for eight nights instead of one. It also marks the victory of the Jews over the more powerful Syrian Greeks and brought religious freedom to the Land of Israel.

Upon deeper reflection, we find that the two aspects of Chanukah are interconnected.

What were the Syrian Greeks opposed to? They did not really mind that the Jews studied their Torah and observed their precepts. What irritated them was that the Jews saw in Torah and Mitzvot a truth qualitatively superior to what could be found in all of the science, philosophy, literature and poetry of Greece.

If the Jews would have simply studied Torah because it was the most exquisite literature, the Greeks would have been thrilled. If the Jews would have accepted the observance of the commandments because they guaranteed the stability of society, the Greeks would have

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understood and tolerated it. They might even have accepted it as their own.

The Syrian Greeks, however, detected that when the Jews studied Torah, they "looked down" upon all other intellectual pursuits as being inherently inferior to Torah. The Jews experienced the Divine in Torah and relegated Greek culture to the realm of nature and mediocrity.

This, the Syrian Greeks could not tolerate. To them true enlightenment was embedded in nature and human ingenuity. They glorified both the human physique and the human mind. Language and art, aesthetics and pagan culture were the stuff that illuminated life.

The Jews, however, defined light as the awareness of something higher than nature, an existence that transcended all -- G-d. And G-d -- in His unadulterated state -- could be found, exclusively, within Torah. In comparison to Torah, everything else was darkness to the Jews.

With the defeat of the Syrian Greeks came the miracle of light, because the debate between Greece and Israel was about light. The miracle of light was designed by G-d to show the world that the conflict was not about who was smarter or more beautiful, but about the true definition of light -- the true definition of Torah. Torah was not what the Greeks wanted it to be. Torah is not history, literature,

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poetry, law and philosophy, although it contains elements of all of those disciplines. Torah is unmasked G-dly light.

The Menorah in the Bais Hamikdash

Chanukah is connected to the lighting of the Menorah.

The question has been raised, why do we make such a fuss about the lighting of the Menorah that was resumed when the Maccabees entered the Temple after they defeated the Syrian Greeks. Didn't they also resume the offering of sacrifices which was interrupted when the Temple was in the hands of the enemy?

The difference between the sacrifices and the Menorah parallel the difference between the revealed aspects of Torah and its esoteric side.

The sacrifices are referred to as G-d's *b54* read. What this means is just like bread is what keeps body and soul together. Similarly, the sacrifices were the medium through which G-d enters into and animates the world.

However, the lighting of the Menorah had an added function. Its purpose was to illuminate that connection between G-d and the world.

This parallels the contribution of the inner secrets of the Torah, which illuminates the Divine within the light of Torah itself.

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Yud-Tes Kislev and Chanukah

It is not a coincidence that Yud Tes Kislev and Chanukah occur in the same month.

Yud-Tes-Kislev is the day the Alter Rebbe, the founder of the Chabad Chassidic movement was liberated from prison and the opening of the floodgates of mystical knowledge and Divine light.

Indeed, the Alter Rebbe's very name Shneur means "two lights." This name was given to him by the Ba'al Shem Tov stating that he would become a source of two lights. The Ba'al Shem Tov predicted that he will illuminate the world with the light of the revealed part of Torah. The first light was his authorship of an updated Shulchan Aruch-Code of Jewish law.

The second light was the light of the inner dimension of Torah, through his seminal work, the Tanya and dozens of other works on Chassidic philosophy.

More about the Alter Rebbe, his name and his contribution in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR
IT SOUNDS GREEK TO ME

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IT SOUNDS GREEK TO ME

King Ptolemy and the 72 Sages

The Talmud relates that King Ptolemy of Egypt summoned seventy-two sages of Israel and asked them to translate the Torah into Greek. He then placed them in separate cubicles, so that they could not confer with one another about the translation.

Miraculously, all of them translated the Torah identically. Even the few deliberate changes they made to avoid arousing the king's ire, they thought of independently.

This translation, known as the Septuagint, was the first attempt at introducing the Bible to the outside world.

Concerning this undertaking, our sages say that it was as difficult for the Jews as the day in which the Golden Calf was created. Why was it so terrible for the Torah to be translated into Greek?

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Translation a Double Edged Sword

It has been suggested that by translating the Torah into Greek, they were doing much more than just transferring the knowledge of Torah from one language to another.

To accommodate the needs of the Greek monarch they were compelled to transfer the concepts as well. They may have been the same words, but they were now in Greek garb. Torah had been diminished, although ever so subtly, by fitting it into a secular framework. What had been transcendent was now part of the vast body of literature. Torah had now been admitted into the club of worldly knowledge.

From the point of view of the world, it was a definite boost. The beauty of the Torah cannot be denied.

But, from the perspective of Torah itself and the Jewish people, who have always appreciated its true value, Torah had been denigrated, stripped of its majesty and G-dly image.

This transformation represented the seeds that were planted that later gave rise to the attempt of the Syrian Greeks to impose its culture on the Jewish people.

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The First Change

It is interesting to note that the first difference -- and therefore, the defining one -- between the original and the Greek translation was in the very first few words of Genesis. This change is emblematic of the entire process that was, for all intents and purposes, a negative phenomenon.

In the original Hebrew the Torah begins with the words: "*Breishit bara Elokim...*" Translated literally, in accordance with Hebrew syntax, which places the predicate ahead of the subject, these words would be rendered: "In the beginning, created G-d..." In English, a more accurate rendition would invert the order of the words, yielding: "In the beginning, G-d created..."

When the seventy-two sages of Israel translated this phrase they were concerned. To translate it accurately would leave room for a major distortion. Instead of understanding this opening phrase of the Torah to mean that in the beginning of time G-d created the universe, it could be interpreted that "... [A being, or a primary G-d, called] the beginning created [lower demi] g-ds."

To prevent this gross misinterpretation, the sages inverted the words and made it read in Greek, "G-d created in the beginning." This left no room for any pagan distortion.

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Why does the Torah Start with the Letter Beit?

Besides sacrificing the accuracy of the text, this change had one other striking effect on the words of the Torah.

Our sages make a big to-do about the fact that the first word of the Torah is Bereishit, which begins with the letter Beit, the second letter of the Alphabet and not with an Aleph, the first letter.

The Jerusalem Talmud asks why does the Torah begin with the second letter of the alphabet and not with the first letter of the alphabet?

The Jerusalem Talmud answers that the letter beit is the initial of the word beracha, which means blessing, while the letter aleph stands for *arur* curse.

The question has been raised: aren't there positive sounding words that begin with aleph, such as *ahavah*-love, *echad* -one and *ohr*-light? Conversely, aren't there some nasty sounding words that begin with the letter beit?

Isn't it then arbitrary to say that just because there is one good word that starts with beit and one negative word that starts with aleph, we should therefore begin the Torah with beit?

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Logic of Torah is its Second Step

The following is an adaptation of the Rebbe's discourse on this subject (Likkutei Sichot vol 15):

To shed light on the Talmud's puzzling explanation of why the Torah must begin with the letter "beit," let's return to our discussion of the difference between Torah and other disciplines. Torah is Divine wisdom that has been made accessible -- by virtue of G-d's infinite kindness -- to the human mind. It is not a human creation; it is G-dly light.

When one studies Torah, one has to realize that the first step -- the aleph -- is not the logical understanding of Torah, but its Divine character. Once this fact is understood, then the beit -- step two -- can safely and securely be the understanding of the text, making it accessible to the human mind.

When one follows this approach, making his or her logical understanding of Torah the second step, then the study of Torah is a beracha, a blessing. The divinity of Torah will then seep through and bring its positive energies into the person.

If, however, one commences Torah study with the notion that all it is a book of human knowledge, then Torah becomes a curse. Bereft of its Divine nature, the Torah can be manipulated and distorted to the point that it becomes harmful.

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When the sages translated the Torah into Greek, they reversed the order. Now the first word was "Elokim," which begins with the letter aleph, representing the Hebrew word "arur" ("curse") which also begins with an aleph.

This revision was thus more than a minor change; it demonstrated what distinguished the real Torah, in its original form, from the translated, diluted version.

Elokim: The Divine Cloaked in the Garb of Nature

It should also be noted that the word Elokim, which the Torah began with in its Greek translation, refers to G-d as He is cloaked within the garb of nature. The word "Elokim" has the same numerical value - 86 - as the word for nature in Hebrew, "ha'teva," which also means "submerged."

In effect, the Greek version of the Torah started with the notion that nature is dominant. We can now appreciate why it has been suggested that this exercise of translating the Torah into Greek was the forerunner of the attempt by the Greeks to "Hellenize" the Jewish religion and the events that led to the story of Chanukah. The victory of light was thus the victory of Torah over those who tried to dim its splendor.

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The Effects of Jewish Mysticism

In conclusion it can be said that one of the effects of Jewish mysticism is its guarantee that the pure, pristine light of Torah will never be tarnished. What the menorah is to the Temple -- a holy place filled with G-dly light into which more G-dly light is introduced -- the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidut are to the rest of Torah. It introduces light into light.

As was mentioned in the preceding chapter, it is no wonder then that the holiday of Chanukah occurs in the month of Kislev, the nineteenth day of which has been associated with the opening of an unrestricted flow of Jewish mystical knowledge to the world.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHASSIDIC CONTRIBUTION

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THE CHASSIDIC CONTRIBUTION

Holiday of Liberation and Light

The 19th of Kislev is the anniversary of the release from prison of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812). Rabbi Schneur Zalman, a disciple of Rabbi Dovber of Mezeritch, the successor to the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement, was the founder of the Chabad, the intellectual branch of the Chassidic movement, and the author of the Tanya, a major classic of Jewish mysticism.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman was credited with fusing Kabbalah and rational philosophical thought, among other major contributions to Jewish thought.

Tragically, the Chassidic movement was strongly opposed by some influential members of the rabbinic community. Based on fears that the mystical movement might be following in the footsteps of Shabbatai Tzvi and other false messianic adventurers who also used Kabbalah in their teachings, and aided with false information about the

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Chassidic leaders that was circulating, they banned the Chassidic movement.

Others were just jealous of the rapid growth and popularity of this new movement. Some unscrupulous adversaries informed the anti-Semitic czarist regime that Rabbi Schneur Zalman was plotting to overthrow the Czar.

Had their plot succeeded, the entire Chassidic movement, which endeavored to popularize the teachings of mysticism, would have faltered and perhaps even disappeared.

After 53 days of interrogation, the charges were proven baseless and Rabbi Schneur Zalman was liberated. Since that day, the 19th of Kislev has been designated as the "New Year for Chassidut," a day on which we dedicate our lives to a greater understanding of the mysteries of Torah

, It is also interesting to note, as was mentioned in an earlier chapter, that Rabbi Schneur Zalman's name is connected to his life's contribution -- the generation of light to the world. Schneur means "two lights."

According to a Chassidic tradition, this was the name the Ba'al Shem Tov himself chose for him. The Ba'al Shem Tov also connected the name with the prophecy that Rabbi Schneur Zalman would illuminate the world with two

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forms of light, the light of the revealed parts of Torah and the light of the hidden part of the Torah.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman's descendent and successor to the leadership of the Chabad Chassidic community, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, added that his second name, Zalman, when rearranged forms the word "*lizman*" - "into time." This refers to the fact that Rabbi Schneur Zalman's teaching of the hidden light of Torah was introduced into the worldly sphere of time.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman was the Kabbalist most responsible for bridging the gap between the supra-rational, esoteric teachings of mysticism and the rational mind.

Why Now?

The question is asked why this process was revealed by Rabbi Schneur Zalman and not earlier.

The question is magnified when we consider the fact that Rabbi Schneur Zalman's effort was a revolution and a miracle. To take something that is essentially beyond the intellect and make it accessible to the intellect is like fitting a square peg in a round hole.

The answer to this question is that the state of the Jewish people necessitated that all the rules of hidden and

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revealed would be broken. G-d issued the “license” for him to override the natural division between hidden and revealed.

Saving the Prince’s Life

A story is told about Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s teacher, Rabbi Dovber, who expressed gratitude to Rabbi Schneur Zalman for saving his life.

One of Rabbi Dovber’s colleagues was also a vocal critic of his popularization of the esoteric wisdom. He was upset at the extent to which Chassidic teachings were being disseminated.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman sensed that this holy rabbi’s displeasure could endanger the life of his mentor, so he successfully assuaged his disapproval with a parable of a prince who was dying of some incurable illness. One doctor promised he can heal him only if they take the crown jewel, pulverize it and dilute with water. Most of it will go to waste, but if the prince could even get a few drops of this potion into his system it could save his life.

The king agrees to destroy his crown for the sake of saving his son, the prince.

The Alter Rebbe compared the revolutionary process of making the hidden teachings accessible to the human

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mind to the pulverizing of the crown jewel to save the life of the prince.

Whetting our Appetite for the Future

There is also a second reason why this revolutionary process of revealing the mystical teachings became a reality in our time.

We are living at the tail end of history. We are now standing on the threshold of the Messianic Age, when all the secrets of the Torah will be revealed and the esoteric knowledge will be spread throughout the entire world.

As a preparation for this glorious age, G-d endowed us with a taste of the gourmet spiritual meal we will soon partake of.

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CHAPTER SIX
FOUR DIMENSION-PARDES

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CHAPTER SIX

FOUR DIMENSION-PARDES

Transparent Garment of Torah

Torah, as Divine wisdom, is the single most **overt** expression of G-dly energy in the world. But, even Torah, in order for it to be understood by us, has to be “dressed” in garments that make it closer to our finite human mind. The teachings of Kabbalah, we shall see, represent the most subtle and “transparent” garment of Torah, through which most of the G-dly light can escape.

Indeed, we are told that Torah can be divided into four levels of interpretation. This does not simply mean that every sentence of Torah has four possible meanings. In actuality it is known that Torah has as many meanings as there are root souls of the Jewish people – 600,000! Moreover, within each of the four levels that we mentioned there are 600,000 interpretations – giving us a grand total of 2,400,000 possible interpretations to every aspect of Torah!

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We are speaking of four **dimensions** of interpretation; four distinct classes, each with their own rules as to how they should be used. These four are said to correspond to the four worlds, which, in turn, are connected to the four letters of G-d's name. These four levels are known by their acronym: Pardes.

Entering the Orchard

As we have noted in an earlier chapter (in Part one of the series), there were four sages who entered a Pardes (orchard). When they left, three of them were adversely affected. One died, one became mentally deranged, one became a heretic and only one entered in peace and left in peace. This orchard has been interpreted as a metaphor for the probing into the Divine secrets of the Torah.

Why did our sages use the metaphor of an orchard?

One simple explanation is that in Biblical and Talmudic imagery, an orchard with its tree bearing fruits symbolizes the extra legal aspects of Judaism. An orchard produces delightful fruits that titillate the palate and are not intended for nutritional purposes.

So too the teachings of Kabbalah are not the staple of our Jewish diet. The staple of Judaism, the bread and meat, the main course are the teachings of Jewish law.

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Kabbalah is the desert that is intended for maximizing our spiritual pleasure and bliss, by enabling us to scale greater spiritual heights.

But, there is another reason given for the use of the simile of an orchard. The Hebrew word Pardes (which is likely to be the source of the English word for Paradise) is actually an acronym for the four levels of Torah interpretation: P'shat, Remez, Drush and Sod.

To enter into the Pardes means that one has plumbed the depth of Torah and has uncovered all its layers of meaning including the one that is most elusive—the mystical dimension.

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CHAPTER SEVEN
P'SHAT

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CHAPTER SEVEN

P'SHAT

These four levels can be translated and explained as follows: P'shat refers to the simple level of interpretation. The word P'shat is related to the word *pashut*, which means simple. The word *pashut* also allows for an interpretation that means, “spread out” or popularized.

This level of interpretation is thus the straightforward, surface meaning of the text; the level that is on the surface for everyone to see.

I did not use the word “literal” meaning of the text, because, the literal meaning is not necessarily the simple meaning of the text.

To cite just three examples:

When the Torah speaks of G-d's “outstretched arm” we cannot take this literally. A literal rendition implying that G-d is in possession of human, physical characteristics is not only incorrect, but also a total repudiation of one of Judaism's basic principles of faith. Maimonides goes to

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great lengths in his Guide for the Perplexed to establish that one cannot ascribe any physical properties to G-d.

Thus, the simple meaning of the phrase “outstretched arm” is its figurative meaning.

Another example of where the literal meaning is not its simple and straightforward meaning is in the prophecies of Bilam. The Torah prefaces some of them with the words “Vayisa M’sholo-and he began his parable.” For example when he speaks of how he sees the Jewish people from the top of the mountain, Rashi explains that it refers to the patriarchs of the Jewish people who are likened to mountains. Other commentators take it literally that Bilam was standing on the top of a mountain from which vantage point he observed the Jewish people.

Why does Rashi – who claims to be interested in the simple meaning of the text, *pshuto shel mikra* – deviate from his normal style and explain the word “mountain” allegorically?

The answer is that the text itself says that these words are a *moshol*, an allegory or parable. The simple meaning of a parable is not its literal meaning.

When a person uses an expression, the simple meaning of what they are saying is not its literal meaning.

To cite one more example:

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When the Torah says “an eye for an eye” – a verse often cited by Judaism’s detractors because it demonstrates a penchant for vengeance – it has actually never been translated that way. The Talmud goes to great lengths to show that the simple meaning of this statement is that one must pay compensation for the eye, not literally take out an eye.

It is therefore ironic that the most conscientious Jews who accept all of the Torah, the Written as well as Oral traditions, and who are often accused of “fundamentalism” are the ones who least interpret verses literally.

It were the Sadducees of the Second Temple Era and then the Karaites who broke away from rabbinic Judaism and who accepted only the Bible, who insisted on interpreting the Torah literally.

The Kabbalists identify the source of P’shat with the lowest of the four spiritual worlds, the world of Asiyah-Action. It is the world that is closest to us and to our way of seeing the surface layer of Torah.

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CHAPTER EIGHT
REMEZ

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CHAPTER EIGHT

REMEZ

The World of Hints

If P'shat is the simple meaning of the text, Remez is the alluded meaning.

For example:

When the Torah discusses the Jewish people's departure from Egypt, it can be interpreted as an allusion to the future Exodus of Jews from their exile.

This does not mean that the Torah does not mean to tell us about the Exodus from Egypt. It certainly does not suggest that the story of the Exodus should not be taken as fact. What it does mean is that the Torah, when discussing one topic, can also be alluding to another.

There can even be more remote hints. The hint of the Exodus from Egypt to the Exodus from our exile is an allusion of an entire section of the Torah to an entirely different event, albeit with some similarities.

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There are other hints that are based on similar words. If the Torah uses a certain term in one place, by applying the method of Remez, it can be compared to another section of the Torah where the same expression is employed. This method is actually one of the thirteen methods of Torah interpretation called “*gezeirah shavah*.”

Initials

An even more remote type of Remez is the *roshei teivot* or *sofei teivot* formula. This means that we can take a series of words and use their initials to find a message to which the text alludes.

Alternatively, we might follow the last letters of a series of words to find the hidden message.

For example:

The first three words of Genesis end with the three letters, *aleph*, *mem* and *tav*, that form the Hebrew word *emet*, truth. That this word is hinted in the beginning of the Torah is an indication of the Torah’s high regard for and identification with truth.

It is also said to allude to the statement in Psalms: “The head of your word is truth.” This means that at the head or beginning of the Torah one can find an allusion to the word for truth.

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Gematria and Torah Codes

Other forms of Remez are the gematria of a word. When two words share the same numerical value, it is an indication of a certain relationship.**

Recently much has been said of the Bible Code, where words and phrases can be found in the Torah by skipping letters.

For example, by taking the first occurrence of the letter *tav* in the Torah (which appears at the end of the first word "*Breishit*") and counting fifty letters, one finds the letter *vav*. When one repeats this exercise two more times (skipping fifty letters and ignoring the space between letters) one can form the word Torah, the very name of the Book.

This pattern can also be found in the beginning of the book of Shmos as well as in Bamidbar and Devarim.

Very often, one can find allusions to totally unrelated matters through this method of skipping letters. For example, references to Maimonides and his works have been found "encoded" in the Book of Exodus where the Torah speaks of Moses and the wonders he performed when he was in Egypt (much like Moses Maimonides who also performed wonders in the Land of Egypt).

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In other words, we can even find hints to events and personalities of the future in the Torah.

These messages that can be found are within the framework of Remez, these are allusions in the Torah to totally unrelated subjects and ideas.

Here is not the place to discuss the controversial nature of the Torah codes that have become popular in recent years. I am mentioning this Torah Code only to illustrate the different ways the Torah can hint to other things.

[There are some who have mischaracterized these codes as the “Secrets of the Torah.” These are not secrets. The true secrets are the mystical meanings of the text, the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidut, as will be explained shortly. The codes are a legitimate approach to Torah interpretation that sees the text alluding to other subjects, but these other subjects may not constitute the secrets of the Torah. It is true that the Kabbalists frequently used Remes to buttress some of their mystical teachings. But Remez, in and of itself, particularly the Torah Codes, do not represent secrets of the Torah.

Another misuse of these Codes is to prove the Divinity of the Torah. It is a mistake to base our belief on the Divinity of the Torah on these codes. The doubter will not accept

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any proof if he or she is not prepared to accept the Divine origin of the Torah and follow its Divine dictates. While these codes are powerful tools to show the precision of Torah; its main objective is to whet our appetite to study the meat and potatoes of Torah.]

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CHAPTER NINE
DRUSH

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CHAPTER NINE

DRUSH

Logical Deduction

Drush derives from the word that means to investigate or probe. Very often when a text says something it means more than what meets the eye. It is not that we are drawing an analogy from the text to another area of knowledge, or that we are taking initials, numerical values of letters and relating them to other matters, but that when investigating the text at hand itself one can find deeper meanings.

The method of Drush is also a method of drawing inferences. For example, the Torah says that one whose animal injures another animal in a public place has to pay for the damages, we may deduce that if the animal entered into private property and caused damage to another animal, that the owner should certainly pay, even though this situation is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah.

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This method is called Kal V'chomer-deducing major from minor and is one of the thirteen methods of Torah interpretation.

While the text says one thing, we may use our minds to reason what the Torah would have said in a similar or stronger case.

Reading Between the Lines

Another example of Drush in a non-legal context is in the story of Joseph who was thrown into a pit by his brothers. The Torah describes the pit in the following manner: "And the pit was empty, it had no water." The Talmud reasons "By saying that the pit was empty do we not know that it had no water? Rather the Torah wishes to teach us that while the pit had no water it did have snakes and scorpions."

Here we took the Torah's words and read into them more than what it says explicitly. We read between the lines.

One can therefore deduce further that the brothers actually tried to kill Joseph by placing him into the pit. Yet it was Reuven who urged them not to kill Joseph. Why did he recommend that they throw him into a [pit of snakes and scorpions?

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Two Levels of Drush

Commentators, who follow the method of Drush answer that they were actually testing Joseph. If he was innocent and righteous animals cannot harm him. People however have free choice and can harm even someone who is entirely innocent.

Here we saw two levels of Drush operating in the same subject.

First we deduced that the pit had snakes in it. Then we deduced that Reuven was testing Joseph's righteousness. One could go on and on – employing the methodology of Drush – to find more and more meaning in the text.

The Talmud uses Drush mostly for legal matters, to extract what the Torah means and how the Torah would rule in a given situation that is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah.

The Midrash, is also interested in the Drush level of interpretation. Indeed, the word Midrash and Drush are related. However, the Midrash mostly uses Drush for non-legal matters. One major thrust of Midrashic Drush is the way it allows us to derive relevant messages from the Torah.

Sometimes we can derive life lessons from the P'shat of the text itself. But, the Torah has endless messages that

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show us the proper way of life. Most of these additional messages are embedded in the text of the Torah when we read between the lines.

It should be noted that Midrash is not simply a free for all. Contrary to a popular misconception, Midrash or Drush is not a device that allows everyone license to twist the words of the Torah around to suit ones pre-conceived ideas.

Indeed, even the oft cited statement that “One does not ask questions on Drush,” does not mean that Drush is an open arena for all to enter. What these words, rooted in the great Kabbalist, the Ari’s teachings, really mean is that the rules that govern P’shat do not apply to Drush. Each level of Torah interpretation of Pardes possesses its own system of rules as to what constitutes a basis for the interpretation.

And while the rules of one method cannot be applied to another method – i.e., the rules of P’shat do not apply to the realm of Drush – nevertheless, the level of Drush itself has its own system of rules, though not as exacting and rigid as the rules that govern P’shat.

CHAPTER TEN
SOD

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CHAPTER TEN

SOD

Accessing the Knowledge through One's Pure Soul

We now approach the level of Sod, the secret dimension of interpretation. As was noted in the first section of this series on Safe Kabbalah, Sod is the level of interpretation of the Torah that is inherently hidden and secret. It is not just secret information reserved for a limited audience, but that it derives from a different realm than that which can be taught to everyone.

The only way we access Sod is not through conventional means of learning. Sod must be accessed through one's soul and for whom one's soul is unhampered by improper behavior.

Received Tradition

In the context of methods of interpretation, Sod is the manner of interpretation that cannot be "extracted" from the Torah. It must have been revealed to a person; received by way of a special communication. Virtually

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anyone can read a text and tell what its obvious meaning is. Many can look at the initials or gematria of a word and know to what it alludes. Using deductive reasoning -- coupled with the knowledge of Drush's ground rules -- enables the student to employ the method of Drush to deduce what the Torah would say about a matter not explicitly covered by the Torah.

By contrast, one cannot simply gaze at a text and say what the secret information the text may be conveying. This knowledge, to be authentic, must be ascertained by a received tradition from an authoritative source of transmission. This knowledge may have been received from a saintly teacher or from the mouth of Elijah the Prophet and similar teachers from the "other" world.

This is essentially what the word Kabbalah means. It means "received" and points to the exclusive way one can truly access this secret knowledge.

However, as mentioned before, not everyone is a candidate to receive this knowledge. In addition to the purity of their soul and proper behavior, the person's soul must be attuned to these teachings. We will explore this idea a little later in this book.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
THE FARMER,
ARCHEOLOGIST, GEOLOGIST
AND TREASURE HUNTER

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FARMER, ARCHEOLOGIST, GEOLOGIST AND TREASURE HUNTER

P'shat: What does the Earth Mean to a Farmer?

To better appreciate the differences between the four worlds of interpretation, an analogy from four ways one can analyze the earth could prove helpful.

When a farmer is asked what the earth means to him, or to state the question more simply, what does the earth contain; his answer will be agricultural products. The farmer views the earth as a repository of grains, fruits and vegetables. Nobody can deny this straightforward analysis of the earth and its purpose.

Not only is this the straightforward and obvious characterization of the earth it is the most vital. The very sustenance of life depends on the earth's ability to produce food. No other aspect of the earth can come close to the importance and the indispensable nature of the earth as the source of food.

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Remez: An Archeologist's View

When an archeologist, however, is asked what the earth means to him, or what does the earth contain, his answer, from his perspective will be: relics of the past.

Let's analyze the difference in the responses between the farmer and the archeologist. They might both be experts in their field. It is not the difference in wisdom that distinguishes them, but their different vantage points. The farmer is looking at the most basic understanding and use of the earth, whereas the archeologist is looking at the "hints" that the earth might provide about the past. The relics that are discovered will shed light on which peoples inhabited this area; how did they live; what was their means of livelihood, etc.

The archeologist's view of the earth is no less valid than that of the farmer. The differences between their approaches are that the farmer looks at the most obvious and most significant (P'shat) use of the earth, while the archeologist looks at a more remote aspect (Remez) of the earth.

Secondly, the vegetation that the earth contains is a more natural part of the earth, whereas relics of the past are not intrinsic components of the earth.

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Drush: A Geologist's View

A geologist who would be asked what the earth means to him, or what does the earth contain, will provide us yet with a third answer: coal, oil, natural gas, iron, gold, diamonds and all the other natural resources the earth contains.

The geologist will also provide us with a chemical analysis of the earth's composition.

How does the geologist reach these conclusions? It is not obvious to all that the earth has these resources. The geologist must conduct tests and scientific analysis that employs the deductive method of reasoning, to prove that the earth that he is examining has these resources. Often the geologist will be able to predict, based on his analysis of the earth's composition, that there is a strong likelihood that these resources are indeed embedded in the earth at this location.

This method that the geologist employs can be described as Drush. It requires research, probing beneath the surface – both figuratively as well as literally – and arriving at conclusions that are not obvious to the average observer.

If we measure the levels of interpretation by their degree of obviousness to the uninitiated eye, P'shat is the most blatant. Remez is next because everyone can see, for example, a pattern formed by the initials of several words.

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No deductive reasoning is required as in the level of Drush.

On the other hand, there is certain remoteness that Remez has that Drush does not have. Remez, though it is based on the observation of easily detectable elements, nevertheless, takes these “relics” and steers us away from the text to focus on a subject that is usually remote and far-fetched, in relation to the text at hand.

Drush, by contrast, though it takes more sophistication to be able to see the message that Drush arrives at, nevertheless, in the case of Drush it is always inherent in the text; it is its deeper meaning. Thus Drush is often a far more popular approach to Torah study, because it is more closely connected to the basic message of the text. Remez, on the other hand, is far more tantalizing.^π

^π This analysis might explain why in Kabbalah there is a dispute as to which world these four levels correspond to. In kabbalah these four levels of interpretation are said to correspond to the four worlds, or spiritual realms that connect the Infinite Divine light and our finite, physical existence: P’shat corresponds to the spiritual realm known as Asiyah. Sod, corresponds to the highest spiritual world Atzilut (emanation). Remez and Drush are the subject of a disagreement. Some say that Remez is “lower” and corresponds to Yetzirah, and Drush to Beriah, yet others maintain that the reverse is true and that Drush is lower and relates to Yetzirah, while Remez relates to Beriah.

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Sod: The Treasure Hunter

The analogy for Sod, is the treasure hunter. One cannot employ any of the senses and methods of research to find treasures. Either one has the treasure map that guides the hunter to the treasure, or will spend the rest of his life

In light of the above analysis, it appears that both are equally valid approaches. In one respect, Drush requires more sophistication and its message is farther removed from the observer's view of the text. He must employ other instruments (logic, deductive reasoning, etc.) to arrive at the text's deeper meaning. Not so Remez, where he has to only be a more precise observer to note the formation of the initials, the similarity of words, the gematria etc.. (See also Rebbe's note (*Sefer HaSichos* 5748) about the popularity of Remez which buttresses our point that Remez, in one way, is closer to P'shat than Drush.

On the other hand, while the tools of Remez are more basic, based on observation of subtleties in the text and require no deduction or drawing inferences, the meaning that is extracted from Remez is usually more distant from the text than that of Drush. A reasonable person would more easily appreciate the deeper meaning or message of the text if one can logically argue that this is what the text must be teaching us, than to accept the argument that a series of initials forms a word that appears arbitrarily connected to the text. Thus, from this vantage point, Remez is on a higher plane, it is more remote and abstruse. See also Rebbe's note (*Sefer HaSichos* 5748) about the popularity of Remez.

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digging up every inch of earth, destroying houses and farms and everything else to find the elusive treasure.

In the same way, Kabbalah or Sod, is a treasure that is embedded in the Torah, but cannot be accessed by any method of interpretation and deduction. One must have the “treasure map” and follow it carefully. Otherwise, one can literally “uproot” entire structures of Judaism and of life. As we have discussed in earlier chapters of part one, studying Kabbalah without the proper safeguards, can lead and has led to disastrous consequences.

We can now appreciate that all that has been said about the three levels of P’shat, Remez and Drush, does not apply to Sod. There is a quantum leap between the first three and the fourth level of Sod.

CHAPTER TWELVE
THE QUANTUM LEAP

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CHAPTER TWELVE

THE QUANTUM LEAP

The World of Atzilut

To better understand this quantum leap; let us refer to the Zohar's description of the four levels of interpretation as representing the "four Worlds." As is well known, our existence that came about through G-d's creating process has to go through four "worlds" or levels of Divine energy.

The first stage of G-d getting involved, so to speak, in the process of creation, is the generation of the world known as Atzilut. The word Atzilut means emanation. Just as a ray of light does not assume an independent character, so too, the Ten Divine Instruments of creation (known as the Ten Sefirot) are still in a state of closeness (the other translation of Atzilut) to their infinite source.

The Divine instruments then go through another three levels of transformation into instruments – Divine forces – that are incrementally more and more finite, defined and accessible to our level of consciousness – the physical world.

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The infinite light as it “descends” from the highest, most sublime world of Atzilut to the next gradation, the world of Beriah, must undergo a radical revision. This process is known as the *parsa*, a “curtain” that screens and filters the intensity of the light, thereby producing a new dimension of light that is so remote from its source that its source's identity is unidentifiable and untraceable.

Kabbalah is said to correspond to the world of Atzilut, while the other three levels of Torah interpretation are said to correspond to the lower three worlds.. Just as there is a quantum leap between Atzilut and the other three worlds (known in Kabbalistic parlance as *B"ya* (an acronym for *Beriah*, *Yetzitrah* and *Asiya*)), similarly, there is a quantum leap between the three levels of P'shat, Remez and Drush and the highest form of interpretation known as Sod.

And this qualitative gap between Sod and the other levels is not just confined to the difficulty in learning this discipline, but in the degree of G-dly light that is allowed to be filtered through the forms that each of these levels of interpretation assumes.

Sod, possesses a garment just like the others, but its garment, which covers the intensity of the Divine light inherent in Torah, is transparent in the realm of Sod. When one studies mysticism (with the proper precautions

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and from the proper sources) they will experience a qualitatively higher G-dly feeling and intensity than in the other three levels.

A Caveat

One final caveat about the level of Sod:

Because of the abstruse and esoteric nature of Sod, there have been many critics, from within the Torah community and certainly from without, that have criticized the efforts that are invested in the study of Sod.

Some have expressed reservations about its widespread popularization, which are concerns well taken, but others have taken a hostile stance concerning the discipline itself. For whatever reason, they will ridicule the notion that there is a legitimate level of Torah interpretation that is so inscrutable that no one can just find it themselves.

To be sure, there have been critics of the other methods of interpretation as well. Some will deny that the Torah should have no other interpretation than its obvious meaning – P'shat.

The response to these criticisms is that Torah itself declares that it was given on these four levels. If not mentioned explicitly in the Written Torah – although it is alluded to in many places – the existence of other

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dimensions including Sod, is unequivocally mentioned in the Oral teachings of Judaism, such as the Talmud and Zohar etc.

To deny the existence of the other levels of Torah, one is denying the Torah itself. And according to the teachings of Judaism as enunciated by Maimonides, one who denies one aspect of Torah is as if they denied its entirety.

Are You a Mule?

Putting theological concerns aside, there is another facet in not denying the authenticity of Sod.

When we take the word Pardes (which forms the acronym for P'shat, Remez, Drush and Sod, as was discussed earlier) and remove the last letter "s" that stands for Sod, we are left with a word "pered" that has a dual meaning: separation and a mule.

When one separates between the exoteric or revealed levels of Torah and the Sod, esoteric levels of Torah, one creates a separation between the G-dly aspect of Torah and the Torah itself. Torah then loses its true G-dly nature and results in a mule-like creature that has all the features of an animal, but cannot reproduce. It is a sterile animal. By stripping Torah of Sod, one reduces Judaism to a sterile religion that cannot last.

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There are some, as was noted, who deny all the other levels of Torah interpretation beyond P'shat. When one is left with only P'shat that person is left with the three letters, *pei*, *shin* and *tet*, which when rearranged forms the word *tipesh*, which means fool.

Torah must be viewed as an elaborate structure consisting of many tiers. To remove the higher stories of this structure renders us fools and to even leave out the Sod, the highest level, is to cause the demise of Torah. Put somewhat differently, Sod is the soul of Torah that gives meaning and endurance to it.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN
MODEH ANI ON FOUR
LEVELS

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MODEH ANI ON FOUR LEVELS

Torah in its Broadest Form

Not only Biblical phrases are subject to the discipline of Pardes-four levels of interpretation. All of Torah can be understood in this manner. When we use the word Torah in the narrowest sense of the word, we refer to the Five Books of Moses, which is written as one continuous scroll and used by every synagogue for regular readings.

In the broader sense of the word, one might use the term Torah to describe the entire Written Law, Torah Shebichtav, or the Tanach, which comprises twenty-four books, including the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Holy Writings.

In the broadest sense, the word Torah refers to **every** teaching that is based on the knowledge that was given to Moses at Mount Sinai. This means that the entire corpus of the oral law, the Talmud, the Midrash, Kabbalah, our prayers, the interpretations of the early and later commentators on the Bible, Talmud, the codes of law, the

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grammatical works of the Holy tongue, liturgical poetry, etc. etc. are all part of G-d's Divine wisdom that we call Torah.

Modeh Ani, an Integral Part of Torah

Obviously, the prayer we recite upon awakening, Modeh Ani, is an integral part of Torah. It too is subject to the four levels of interpretation of Pardes.

The following is an adaptation of a landmark discourse of the Rebbe on the four levels of interpretation as it pertains to the prayer we recite upon awakening. The Rebbe then proceeds to demonstrate how the Chassidic dimension of this prayer illuminates all the other four levels.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
THE GREAT THANK YOU-
P'SHAT

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE GREAT THANK YOU-P'SHAT

Gratitude

When we examine this prayer that a Jew says upon awakening, we will discover that it too, as all parts of Torah, has at least four ways of looking at it.

Modeh Ani, is the first prayer that is recited as soon as we awaken, even before our hands are clean. It has no mention of G-d's name and can therefore be said even when our bodies are not yet ready for prayers that do have G-d's name in them.

Modeh Ani translates as:

**I gratefully acknowledge the living and eternal king,
for having restored my soul within me, great is your
faithfulness.**

From the level of *P'shat*, *Modeh Ani* is our expression of gratitude to G-d for having given us another day of life.

That we should express our gratitude to G-d for all that He does for us is axiomatic in Judaism. Every day, we are

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required to thank G-d for all the things that we experience in the morning. We thank Him for opening our eyes, standing straight, the ability to walk etc. The first and most basic expression of gratitude – the *P'shat* – is thanking G-d for just being alive, particularly after going through a period of sleep when the relationship of our body to our soul is most tenuous.

When we awaken in the morning, we feel the precariousness of our life and we therefore are impelled to say *Modeh Ani*, the great thank you, even before we had a chance to wash our hands, get out of bed, etc.

The First [Real] Sin

The very first sin committed by Adam of his own volition was his lack of gratitude.

Eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was actually the first sin he committed. However, our Sages tell us that G-d Himself orchestrated this sin. Adam, left to his own devices would never have succumbed to the pressure of the serpent. G-d wanted man to have the struggle with evil so he allowed Adam and Eve to fall prey to the serpent, whose evil was internalized within humanity.

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Once Adam had both his good impulse and evil impulse intact, he failed his first test. When G-d confronted him after eating the forbidden fruit, Adam responded in his own defense, "The woman You gave me gave me this fruit and I ate of it." He blamed G-d for His sin, showing a lack of gratitude for the gift of Eve, a helpmate.

From this we can see that humanity's biggest struggle, set into motion at the very beginning of time, was to show gratitude to G-d and others for all that we get from them.

In the Messianic Age, our Sages inform us, we will only have one sacrifice to bring: a thanksgiving offering. We will have one Psalm left to recite, Psalm 100, A Psalm of Thanksgiving!

We thank G-d for the most routine aspects of life just as we express special thanks when miracles occur.

Gratitude is the underlying theme in so many of our prayers. Shacharit begins with the word *Hodu*-give thanks. The Amidah prayer has one blessing beginning with the word "*Modim anachnu lach*-we give thanks to You."

Before we partake of any food, before we retire to bed, after eating a meal and whenever we experience a miracle.

But, of all our expressions of gratitude, *Modeh Ani* is arguably the most basic and significant, so much so that

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we recite it even when we are ritually impure and cannot recite any other prayer.

This is the simple, straightforward and basic understanding of the prayer *Modeh Ani*.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
AWAKENING FROM THE
DEAD-*REMEZ*

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AWAKENING FROM THE DEAD-*REMEZ*

Waking Up One Last Time

There is, however, another more remote connotation to our expression of gratitude when we say *Modeh Ani*. While it cannot be debated that *Modeh Ani* is first and foremost an expression of gratitude for simply waking up alive, there is a hint of another awakening for which we are grateful – the Resurrection or Revival of the Dead that will occur in the future Messianic Age.

At the end of the *Modeh Ani* prayer, reference is made “Your faithfulness.” According to *P’shat* this means that G-d is reliable and can be counted upon to restore my life not only today, but tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, as well.

On the level of *Remez*, however, the reference to G-d’s faithfulness is a reference to the fact that in the future; we can count on G-d to restore our souls to our bodies in a much more dramatic way. Even those who have died will be restored to life in the Messianic Age. This process

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known as *Techiyat Hameitim*—Resurrection or Revival of the Dead represents one of Judaism’s fundamental beliefs. Maimonides considers it to be the thirteenth principle of faith.

Our daily prayers refer to this process explicitly no less than six times; five in the *Amidah* prayer and one in the preliminary prayers. (In the course of a year, thus, a Jew will make explicit reference to the Resurrection of the Dead over 5,800 times!)

Thus, from the perspective of *Remez*, our expression of gratitude for being alive in the morning after sleep alludes to an even greater awakening from the dead in the future.

Every Second Resurrection of the Dead

Now, on the surface, this seems like a stretch that cannot even be justified by the term *Remez*. It’s like saying that thanking someone for a penny alludes to expressing gratitude for a million dollars!

In truth, however, the hint is not that remote. While it seems that waking up in the morning is not in any way similar to a dead person being revived, there is much more of a similarity than what meets the eye.

We are told that G-d creates the world every second. If G-d were to have stopped creating the world, for one

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instant (actually the most infinitesimal period of time) the world would revert to absolute nothingness. To create a world out of nothingness, G-d must constantly create the universe.

Accordingly, every component of time, we are experiencing a Revival of the Dead! Every instant, G-d is taking us from a state of utter nothingness – a state much more negating than just death – into a state of existence.

We are, thus, dependent on G-d's creative powers and kindness every second. When do we show our gratitude for this total revival? Obviously, we cannot do it every instant. It would even be difficult to do it at certain arbitrary intervals, because our eyes of flesh do not see the changes that occur every instant. When **is** there an opportune time to recognize the extent of G-d's kindness that He literally brings us back to life?

It is in the morning, when we can see the process of a sleeping almost lifeless person (according to the Talmud and *Zohar*, sleep is one sixtieth of death) miraculously coming back to life. In the morning when our limited vision sees the rejuvenating process, we can appreciate the real extent of our revival, from utter nothingness to “something-ness” and vibrant life.

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Thus, the allusion of our thanks for awakening in the morning to the future revival of the Dead, is not as far-fetched and remote as it may appear at first.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
DON'T WITHHOLD - DRUSH

SAFE KABBALAH: THE FOURTH DIMENSION

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

DON'T WITHHOLD - DRUSH

Return the Goods Entrusted to You Even if you are Owed

If *Drush* is the process by which we look beneath the surface for some deeper message other than the obvious one, then *Modeh Ani* should be understood as a challenge to us to emulate G-d's remarkable attitude towards us.

When we go to sleep at night, we entrust G-d with our soul. Not always do we have sufficient justification to demand that G-d return it to us the next morning. Based on our actions the day before, G-d has a legitimate argument that would "allow" Him to keep the soul and not return it to us. Inherent in our declaration of *Modeh Ani* is the profound sense of gratitude and appreciation for G-d's infinite mercy, that He does not claim our soul in return for all the debts that we owe Him.

Using the approach of *Drush*, we then deduce and infer that we too should follow suit in the way we deal with other people. Once we established the principle that G-d does not withhold that which we have entrusted in His

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hands for the collection of our debts, we can apply this to a similar situation in our own lives.

Very often we are given, literally, an article of value in trust. Our job is to return it to the rightful owner when he makes the claim for it.

There is also the possibility that the person, who owns the article that has been deposited with us, might be indebted to us. Whether they borrowed money, caused some damage or the like, there is an outstanding debt. There is a temptation to self-righteously say that since he owes me money and I have his object in my possession, I will withhold the object until the other person pays his debt.

Modeh Ani comes along and categorically dismisses such a thought from our minds. If G-d, to whom I am indebted, refuses to withhold our souls from us, because He has entrusted with our souls and has made a commitment to return it to us, no amount of indebtedness will cause G-d to withhold it.

A mitzvah, such as returning an object to its rightful owner should not be subject to other considerations. *Modeh Ani* teaches us to sort out and separate the two issues.

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Deductive Reasoning

It should be noted that in this mode of *Drush* one need not have any outside information in order to interpret this verse. One must just be equipped with the right way of thinking and the means to analyze a text or a concept. The *Remez* mode, by contrast, requires less reasoning and probing and more outside information.

To appreciate the parallel between waking up in the morning and the future Resurrection of the Dead, one does not have to employ deductive reasoning.

On the other hand, there is a certain amount of “outside” information one must have at his disposal for the process of *Remez* – such as the fact that there will be a Resurrection of the Dead – that is unnecessary for *Drush*.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
THE SECRET OF
AWAKENING-SOD

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE SECRET OF AWAKENING-SOD

The Interpretation of the Ari

The highest level of interpretation – Sod – cannot be adduced from the text of Modeh Ani. Having some basic outside information will also not suffice. Here one must know the secret ahead of time.

According to the Ari: The words “Living an eternal king” refer to the attribute of *Malchut* (Sovereignty) as it is united with the attribute of *YeSod* (Foundation). Thus the phrase “Living and eternal King who has restored my soul within me” means, then, that the restoration of the soul comes from the level of *malchut* as it unites with the level of *YeSod*.”

These cryptic words can be understood as follows:

Fusion

Every morning we experience a rejuvenation of our soul’s vitality. Kabbalah, which is attuned to the dynamics of our

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soul, explains that this process of rejuvenation requires a profound celestial fusion of two distinct G-dly energies.

Malchut, is the tenth and last attribute. It is this attribute that is responsible for the actual creation of the world. In actuality there are, as discussed before, many worlds. Accordingly, the level of *Malchut* of one world is the dynamic G-dly instrument that is responsible for the creation of the next, lower world.

The Attribute of Malchut-Divine Speech

Malchut is often associated with Divine speech. For just as speech is the way a person projects his inner thoughts to the outside, similarly, G-d's attribute of *Malchut*, is the Divine "organ of speech," through which G-d projects an "outside" entity, i.e., one that is further removed – in its consciousness – from its Divine source. *Malchut*, because of its nature to project outward, is thus, viewed as the basis of time and space, the primary characteristics of our existence.

The Attribute of Yesod-The Channel.

Yesod is the ninth attribute: It is the one that collects all of the powerful and infinite G-dly forces – i.e., and energizes the level of *Malchut*. In simple terms, for a

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person's speech to have any meaning there must be an idea or an emotion behind it.

For example, if someone has a feeling of love for another and then they express it in words, the words will have some meaning. But, in order to channel the emotions so that they can be expressed through speech, the level of *YeSod* is crucial.

YeSod has often been translated or adapted as “communicability.” The ability to channel one's feelings so that they can be expressed in speech is what *YeSod* is all about.

Within the context of G-d creating the world, *YeSod* is the channeling of G-d's transcendent powers, His inner feelings, as it were. *Malchut*, is the instrument that contains and limits these powers, making them fit for the ultimate projection outward.

When we awaken in the morning, the process that occurs involves the unification of the transcendent aspects of G-d with His finite powers. When this occurs, the ability to experience a totally new life materializes.

What we have just been going through is a lesson in “G-dly anatomy.” The level of Sod, seeks to map out the different G-dly forces that are responsible for all that occurs in our realm.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
THE FIFTH LEVEL-THE
ESSENCE OF TORAH

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE FIFTH LEVEL-THE ESSENCE OF TORAH

Kabbalah a Transparent Garment

In the foregoing essay, entitled “On the Essence of Chassidus,” the Lubavitcher Rebbe elaborates on the four levels of interpretation as they apply to *Modeh Ani* in particular.

In this landmark essay, the Rebbe demonstrates that *Sod*, though it is the highest level of Torah interpretation, it is, nevertheless, Torah as it is cloaked within a garment that cannot be shed. To be sure, it is the most transparent form of garment as it allows the G-dly light to shine right through it. Despite its radiance, it is nevertheless a garment that defines and limits the divinity of Torah and confines it to its own parameters and format.

Kabbalah is thus the G-dly energy that has the most imperceptible veil and is therefore the most esoteric, but it still possesses a cover that limits somewhat its Divine nature.

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Chassidus: The Quintessential Level of Torah

The Rebbe proceeds to demonstrate that the essence of Torah transcends even the teachings of Kabbalah. This essence or the “quintessential” aspect of Torah, its “fifth level”— transcends the other four levels and defies characterization. The essential level of Torah, the Rebbe states are contained within the teachings of *Chassidut* that have been revealed through the Ba’al Shem Tov and his successors, and particularly through the masters of *Chabad* who have brought these teachings into intellectual comprehension.

Because *Chassidut* is the essence of all the Torah, it has the capacity to shed and instill light into all the four levels of Torah interpretation.

The Form of Sod: Incomprehensibility

In earlier chapters we have discussed how the teachings of *Sod* are actually beyond human comprehension. This is consistent with what the Rebbe says that even Sod has its form. The form associated with Sod is one that defies rational comprehension.

With the advent of the *Chassidic* movement, the barrier between Sod and rational thought was removed. What the Rebbe says in this essay is that *Chassidic* thought transcends the parameters of Sod. This too is consistent

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with our earlier assertion that *Chassidut* has removed the barrier.

Chassidut without a Garment

Because *Chassidut* is the essence of Torah that transcends any of its forms, be it *P'shat* or *Sod*, it is not bound by the constraints of being beyond logic any more so than it is constrained by the bounds of logic. Chassidic thought, therefore, should be understood, in light of the Rebbe's analysis, as representing the essence of Torah that sheds light and instills life into all the forms of Torah.

The Chassidic Approach to *Modeh Ani*

In that classic essay the Rebbe reveals the Chassidic approach to *Modeh Ani* and proceeds to show how it reshapes our understanding of the other four levels.

The Chassidic understanding of *Modeh Ani* is that there is an incorruptible aspect of Jewishness that can never be contaminated. Therefore, we may and should recite *Modeh Ani* even before our hands are clean.

The Yechidah and Moshiach

In that essay, the Rebbe explains how the four levels of Torah interpretation correspond to the four levels of the

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soul. Chassidic thought parallels the fifth and essential level of the soul known as *Yechidah*. Identifying Chassidut with the level of *Yechidah* is important in understanding the relationship between these teachings and the Messianic Age.

Among the greatest luminaries, *Moshiach* is singled out as possessing the *Yechidah* of all souls. The revelation of *Chassidut*, the *Yechidah* of Torah, in our time, is thus a fitting prerequisite to the revelation of the *Yechidah* of all souls.

See the essay at length for one of the most profound expositions of the role of mysticism in general and Chassidic thought in particular and their inter-relationship.

CHAPTER NINETEEN
THE FOUR FACES OF
GENESIS

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE FOUR FACES OF GENESIS: P'SHAT

Breishit: The First Biblical Verse

In order to appreciate what the four levels of Torah interpretation, it would serve us well to illustrate these levels using the very first word of the Torah- *Breishit*, In the Beginning.

To be sure, within each of these four levels of interoperation there are many sub-levels. Some *P'shat* interpretations can be close to *Drush*, and likewise the others. There may also be many different approaches to each of these levels. What follows is a small sampling of these four levels.

P'shat: Chronology

On the level of P'shat the word Breishit can have several meanings:

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According to Onkelus, the famed and hallowed Aramaic translation of the Torah, it means simply “In the beginning [G-d created Heaven and earth.]”

According to *Rashi*, whose commentary is also dedicated to *P'shat*, the word *Breishit* actually means:

“In the beginning of [the creation of heaven and earth, when the earth was desolate and void... then G-d said let there be light.]”

Both interpretations are an attempt at understanding the simple meaning of the text, which seems to be interested in telling us either what the chronology of events in the process of creation were (Onkeles), or what G-d's first specific creation was after he had created heaven and earth (Rashi).

CHAPTER TWENTY
THE FOUR FACES OF
GENESIS - REMEZ

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CHAPTER TWENTY

THE FOUR FACES OF GENESIS-REMEZ

The House Comes First

On the level of *Remez*, the word *Breishit*, when rearranged forms the two words: *Rosh Bayit*-The House is First. This can be an allusion to the fact that G-d's house, the *Beit Hamikdash*, was the first thing in G-d's mind when He created the world.

Obviously, this is not the straightforward meaning of the text. But, because Torah is G-d's infinite wisdom, one can find allusions to an infinite array of information in every word of the Torah. One way of doing that is by rearranging the order of the letters of a given word.

Alternatively, the Torah, by way of this hint, wishes to teach us that the first thing one should build is a home and then get married.

Another hint contained in the word *Breishit* is that each letter stands for a word: *Brishona ra'ah Elokim sheyikablu*

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Yisrael Torah. – In the beginning G-d saw that Israel will accept the Torah.

This is an allusion to the fact that the world was created with the understanding that there will be a Jewish people who will accept the Torah in the future. It is obvious that this message is not the straightforward meaning of the word *Breishit*, but a remote hint to a concept that is true and G-d wanted it transmitted to us via the method of *Remez*.

The notion that the world was created for Torah and Israel, is also found in *Rashi* who quotes this teaching and interpretation of *Breishit* as *Drush*, see below.

All Levels Connected

This points to the fact that the same teaching can be found in the text through alternative methods. The same concept can be mentioned clearly in the text (*P'shat*), alluded to in the through *gematria*, or the like (*Remez*) or deduced by drawing inferences (*Drush*) and may be elucidated on further by the level of Sod.

That the four levels can point to the same teaching is consistent with the assertion that the four spiritual worlds (that the four levels parallel) “evolve” or “devolve” from one another. One would expect to find everything that

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exists on a lower plane in its parallel place on a higher plane.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE FOUR FACES OF

GENESIS - DRUSH

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE FOUR FACES OF GENESIS - DRUSH

Purpose of Creation

The word *Breishit* on the level of *Drush* can also be explained in many ways. The most famous *Drush* is cited by *Rashi* in his commentary that is normally reserved for *P'shat*.

In an uncharacteristic opening statement *Rashi* says “this verse begs to be interpreted according to the method of *Drush*.” This *Drush* is that the word *Breishit* is actually translated not as “in the beginning, but “because of the [two things that are called] beginnings [Torah and Israel], did G-d create heaven and earth.

This *drash* is not how one would translate the verse at face value, but after reflection and after confronting the difficulties in any other simple translation, one is compelled by the force of logic to conclude that the Torah is trying to impart a message. It is not just interested in telling us what G-d created first, but rather what was His purpose in creation.

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If the P'shat is concerned with the order of creation, a chronology of events, the Drush method is interested what is the purpose of Creation. In other words, P'shat focuses on **what** happened, Drush dwells on the **why**.

What is our Mission?

Another *drash* that is based on the translation that In the beginning is connected to the next part of the sentence as in "In the beginning **of** G-d's creating...and the earth was desolate and void.. G-d said let there be light. According to this simple translation one can draw an inference that the Torah only describes the initial state of the world in order to lead to the first G-dly statement of "Let there be light."

This teaches us that of all the things that were created initially including heaven and earth, nothing was important compared to the creation of light.

From this Biblical text – and based on the translation of *Breishit*, one can deduce what the Torah considers the most important thing.

From this we can learn a valuable lesson for our lives. The greatest emphasis and the very first effort should be on introducing light. Our mission is to restore the light of the first day of creation that was concealed. This we achieve

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through the study of Torah and the observance of the Mitzvot.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
THE FOUR FACES OF
GENESIS - SOD

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE FOUR FACES OF GENESIS - SOD

Created Six; Six What?

And finally on the level of Sod, the word *Breishit* is translated as if the word were a composite of two words “*Bara*” and *Shis*.” Meaning that G-d “created six.”

What does the Torah mean when it says that G-d created six? Six what? If it means six days of the week, one does not need the first word of the Torah to teach us this secret when it is mentioned explicitly in the following verses.

This is why, Kabbalah cannot be understood or even known by just looking at the text and translating it a certain way. There is other information that one must access to understand this translation. One must have the “treasure map” to use in navigating the paths that lead to the discovery of *Sod*.

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Six Emotional Attributes

According to the Zohar, the six refers to the six emotional attributes of G-d. When G-d created the world, He employed His emotional attributes.

This echoes the comment of the Zohar on a subsequent verse: For six days G-d made heaven and earth..” The Zohar observes, it does not say “In six days, G-d made heaven and earth, but “six days.” This refers to the six Divine attributes that were instrumental in creating the heaven and earth. The six days of the week each correspond to the six attributes.

Parallel Six Millennia

According to Nachmanides, these six days parallel the six millennia that have existed since creation and which correspond to these six attributes.

Accordingly, we may translate and amplify this first Biblical verse as: “With six attributes – that parallel the six days of creation – G-d created heaven and earth that will last for six millennia [before it is transformed into a Sabbatical form of physical existence]”. It is interesting to note that the first verse of Genesis contains seven words, each corresponding to one of the six attributes and one

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that corresponds to the Shabbat, the final millennium and Divine attribute.

With Wisdom: a More Complete Picture

Another interpretation of the word *Breishit* according to the level of Sod is: “with *chochma*-wisdom. [G-d created heaven and earth]. According to this interpretation the word *Breishit* means “with *reishit*,” or the first Divine attribute, which is *chochma*.

With this interpretation we get a more complete picture of the process of creation. There are actually two components to G-d’s attributes: His intellectual attributes and His emotional attributes. The intellectual component consists of three levels, the first of which is *chochma* and the emotional attributes comprise six levels, the first of which is *chesed* or kindness.

For G-d to relate to the “outside” world, which is the definition of creation, His “active” instruments are the emotional attributes, because as with human emotions they are interactive. It takes one’s emotional characteristics to communicate and relate to another.

On the other hand, just as one’s emotions cannot be expressed without an intellectual backing, G-d’s essential instruments of creation are His “intellectual” attributes,

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the first of which is *chochma*. But these intellectual attributes are not felt within the creation. Thus, the word for wisdom in Hebrew is also *Alef*, which is very likely related to the English word aloof, because the intellectual aspects of G-d are above and beyond the realm of creation.

Torah Preceded Creation by 2,000 years

Translating this idea into more down-to-earth terms, when we look around at the creation we see G-d's love for us that He created a world and provides us with our needs. When we see suffering and pain we come face to face with G-d's attribute of *gevurah*, severity, and so on. To access G-d's inner faculties of *chochma*, one cannot find it within nature; one must study Torah to find G-d's wisdom.

This concept is alluded to in the rabbinic saying that "The Torah preceded creation by 2,000 years." Before creation there was no time and space. Thus, precedence here must be understood in terms of importance.

The Hebrew word for 2,000 is "*alpayim*," the root of which is *aleph* which means wisdom. Thus the phrase "The Torah preceded the world by 2,000 years," means that the Torah transcends creation, inasmuch as the Torah represents the transcendent characteristic of *chochma* that is not inherent in the sphere of creation.

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Corollary to this is the notion that together with our appreciation for the aloofness of Torah is also the realization that the basis of creation – G-d's *midot*, emotional attributes – is actually the Torah – G-d's intellectual attributes. Torah, while it transcends the world, it also controls it.

In summary, the four levels of Torah interpretation as it applies to the very first word of *Breishit* contains a wealth of information. Each level contributes to a deeper level of appreciation for what the Torah has to offer. When we consider the fact that there are infinite teachings within each of these four levels, it magnifies our appreciation for the Torah.

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CHAPTER TWENTY THREE
FOUR DIMENSIONS: SO
WHAT? CONCLUSION

SAFE KABBALAH: THE FOURTH DIMENSION

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

FOUR DIMENSIONS: SO WHAT? CONCLUSION

Torah: Multidimensional

We may now have developed a greater appreciation for Torah and Sod in particular. No longer is Torah viewed as a one-dimensional law book, but as a multi-dimensional Divine book of light that contains everything in it from practical directives as to how we should live our lives to the most sublime secrets of the cosmos.

To be certain, the primary purpose of why G-d gave us the Torah is to adjust our lives to the frequency that G-d had in mind for this world. This translates into one mode of behavior that is in conformity with all of the Mitzvot of the Torah. No mystical experience or spiritual ambition can allow us to compromise one iota of these Mitzvot.

However, to make our Mitzvot complete, and to enable us to grow to greater heights and to instill meaning into our lives and the Mitzvot, we must be aware and master the four levels of To-rah knowledge. By doing so we are able

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to climb the ladder that connects heaven and earth, going from rung to rung, until we are able to appreciate even the level of Sod.

Four Levels of Torah Correspond to Four Levels of our Soul

Moreover, by mastering the four levels of Torah it opens up new wellsprings of Divine energy from within our own souls. We have been taught in Kabbalah that the four dimensions of Torah correspond to the four levels of our soul, that are mentioned in the Zohar: Nefesh, Ruach, Neshomo and Chaya.❓

The level of Nefesh is usually associated with the part of our soul that is responsible for our actions, or our just doing what is right because of the trait called “Kabbalat Ol-Accepting the yoke.” In this mode there is no emotion, no inspiration and no understanding. It is a sense of discipline that one possesses that springs from this level of Divine influence within us.

When we study Torah on the level of P’shat, we energize this level that it should be manifest.

Ruach, which translates literally as spirit, is the part of the soul that is responsible for our emotional capabilities. When we express love for G-d or when we are in awe of

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Him, these feelings emanate from the level of Ruach.. When one studies the Torah on the level of Remez it energizes the level of Ruach.

Neshama, although it can be translated as soul, refers to a specific aspect of the soul, the one that is responsible for the intellectual expression of the soul. Thus when one studies Torah on the level of Drush they energize the level of Neshama.

Finally, the level of Chaya, which means life, is responsible for the soul's power to will, and to surrender one's will to a higher cause. This level of Chaya is stimulated by the study of Sod.

By fathoming the secrets of the Torah, one can also fathom the hidden aspect of one's soul, which is the level of Chaya. For unlike the three other levels of Nefesh, Ruach and Neshama that are the soul's conscious faculties, the level of Chaya, represents the sub-conscious, or subliminal dimension of the soul. When this level is activated, the person is capable of achieving self-transcendence by discovering one's hidden capabilities. Very often, when the level of Chaya is awakened it will even allow a person to surrender his life for their cause.

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The Correlation between the Soul and Torah in Reverse

If the study of Torah can activate the different layers of our soul's potential, the reverse is also true. What is it that enables us to understand the different levels of Torah? It is the fact that we have the soul-energies that correspond to these levels of interpretation.

Now, while all of us possess all the four levels of the soul – and, therefore, are capable and required to master all the dimensions of Torah – nevertheless, each of us enjoys the predominance of one of the four levels. This explains why some of us are more attuned to one of the four levels than someone else.

This explains why, in the past, there were certain Sages who were not privy to the mystical dimension of Torah. And yet, today, these heretofore hidden layers of Torah knowledge are available to everyone. How does this work?

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THE BARRIERS REMOVED**

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE BARRIERS REMOVED

Story of the Alshich

A story is told of the famed Rabbi Moshe Alshich, one of the greatest rabbis of his time, who lived in the city of Tzefat in northern Israel. Tzefat was a city renowned for its Talmudic scholarship and scholars, but, particularly, for its great level of teaching of kabbalah. Indeed, two of the greatest Kabbalists ever, lived, almost side by side, in this holy city. The first was Rabbi Moshe Cordevero, known as the Ramak, and the second, even greater kabbalist, was Rabbi Shlomo Ahskenazi Luria, known as the Ari.

Rabbi Moshe Alshich, who was known mostly for his Talmudic scholarship and his ability to expound the Drush level of Torah most brilliantly, sought to gain entry into the Ari's class of Kabbalah. When the Ari finally allowed him to attend, Rabbi Moshe Alshich, to his consternation, fell asleep no sooner that the Ari began expounding on the secrets of the Torah.

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As one would expect, Rabbi Moshe Alshich was devastated. Was his falling asleep against his own will a sign from heaven that he was not worthy of being a disciple of the Ari? Or, perhaps, it was a sign that he was not ready for the study of Kabbalah. Perhaps he had to undergo more purification?

When Rabbi Moshe addressed his concern to the Ari, the Ari's response was that Rabbi Moshe's soul emanated from the world of Drush and therefore he was not able to fathom the secrets of the world of Sod.

What was the meaning of the Ari's response? And why would it comfort Rabbi Moshe Alshich when he heard that his soul was not capable of studying Kabbalah?

“Why were You Not Zushe?”

To answer these questions it would serve us right to remember an oft-quoted story of the great Chassidic master, Rabbi Zushe of Aniapoli.

He would say: “I am not concerned that I will be asked in the next world why I wasn't like the Patriarchs, or like Moses and other great people of the past. For that question I have a simple answer, I am not the Patriarchs, Moses or any of the other great sages of the past. I am, however, greatly concerned that they may ask me a

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question for which I have no answer, name-ly: 'Why weren't you Zushe?'".

There are two very different reasons for people not having the ability to realize certain intellectual and spiritual goals. The first is that the individual's soul does not have that potential. G-d created many diverse souls, each with a different purpose for which they must have certain resources. Commensurate with their soul's source and spiritual potential, is that individual's capacity to accomplish certain things and to understand certain aspects of Torah.

There is also another reason why we do not realize our spiritual and intellectual goals. It is due to certain obstructions and blockages that do not allow us to penetrate beneath the surface or scale the heights.

One's sins and shortcomings are self-destructive, inasmuch as they make it more difficult for the person to realize his/her own potential. If Zushe was concerned that he was not Zushe, it was because he feared that he fell short of the mark in his own efforts at spiritual growth. As a result, G-d had put roadblocks in his path to make it harder for him to realize his potential.

If Rabbi Moshe Alshich was, at first, concerned that he was not able to study Kabbalah from the Ari, it was because he attribute his inability to do so to his own

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doing. It might also have been G-d's punishment to him for the things that he did or did not do in the past. It might also have been a test that G-d was giving him to see if he was really serious and dedicated enough to learn these secret teachings.

In the end, his inability to stay awake when the Ari expounded the secrets of the Torah was due to neither of these reasons. The real reason that he would fall asleep when the Ari would lecture was because this was not his potential. G-d did not send his soul into this world to master the teachings of Kabbalah according to the level of the Ari.

The Ari's Higher Level

To be certain, even Rabbi Moshe Alshich was a student and master of Kabbalah. It was just that the Ari had been "granted permission" from on High to reveal an even higher dimension of Kabbalah than that which had been revealed heretofore. And it was this new dimension that he was not capable of achieving. His soul had another purpose that was more in line with the level of Kabbalah that preceded the Ari.

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All Levels Accessible to us Now!

As time progresses, and the teachings of the Ari and subsequent Kabbalists, become more and more vital to the world – either because we need greater measures of holiness to keep us afloat, or because we have a need to prepare for the Messianic revelation – our souls are certainly capable of absorbing these teachings. It does not suggest that we are greater than Rabbi Moshe Alshich, but that our souls' mission and the challenge of our time is to learn even these dimensions of Kabbalah.

However, as noted in an earlier chapter, this ability to take the most abstruse and esoteric levels of Kabbalah, particularly, the Ari's teachings, were made possible by the Ba'al Shem Tov and his successors. They were given this capability to take the inherently super-rational concepts and make them rational. Hence, even simple people, whose souls have nothing to do with the world of Sod, can grasp the most sublime of concepts. This process took a special G-dly revelation that transcends all bounds, that enables one to internalize that which is essentially above logic.

Now, however, that the barriers to our studying of Sod have all but been removed, it is a Halacha, a Torah law, that we are obligated to master all of the four levels of Torah interpretation, each according to our soul's capacity. It goes without saying that when we do approach the level

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of Sod, it must be done with apprehension and with proper guidance. In doing so we prepare ourselves and the entire world for the time when “The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the water covers the sea” (Isaiah)