

MONTREAL JEWISH MAGAZINE

March
2015

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PURIM

EXODUS MAGAZINE - MONTREAL

ADAR

5775

*Dear Friends,
On Behalf of Chabad
Russian Youth Center,
We Wish You a Happy,
PURIM !*



*Children and adults you are invited to celebrate
a spectacular pre - Purim evening.*

What:

*Pre - Purim Masquerade, Magic show,
Gifts for ALL Children, Pizza, Hamantashen,
Fun for the Whole Family*

When:

Sunday March 1-st, 2015 at 16:00

Where:

*At Our Synagogue -
7370 COTE-S.-LUC Road,
On the SECOND Floor, Suite # 111*

For Additional Information Please Contact

Rabbi Moshe Reikhtman at : (514) 777-9161

Wishing You a Happy Holiday !

Je Suis

We live in a strange world. The Jewish people, who brought monotheism, morality and kindness into the dictionary of an uncivilized world, are under attack. Israel, in a legitimate battle against an enemy that clearly seeks its destruction and will concoct any lie and propagandize it to gain support, is vilified by everyone from the international court to elementary school teachers. It seems like everything is up-side down...

Perhaps by examining our situation within the broader context of Jewish history we can recognize something about our own time – and, if we're lucky, plot a course of action that will get us out of this mess. According to Jewish tradition, the First Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people exiled to Babylon because of the problems of idol worship, adultery and murder. Seventy years later they returned to rebuild the Temple and regain sovereignty in their homeland.

Four centuries later, the Second Temple was destroyed as a result of "baseless hatred" – a type of hatred that is completely illogical and without reason, an atmosphere in which one's hatred and anger brew not due to the hurtful actions of our fellows, but because of what we imagine they harbour inside about us. In truth, it is a projection of the negativity that we ourselves harbour about others. The exile that followed this era is the one we still find ourselves in some 2,000 years later.

Exile is not meant primarily a punishment. Rather, it is a physical expression of a spiritual state of being; the Jewish people adopted an "exile" mentality, and the physical exile was the natural consequence of that state of being. However, the purpose served by exile is to address the problems that lead to the destruction and rectify them, returning with even greater strength to a healthy spiritual state of being. The question is obvious. Idol worship, adultery and murder, the negative actions that destroyed the First Temple, are grievous and damaging transgressions that touch the very core of what Judaism is all about – the unity of G-d, the sanctity of the Jewish people and the value of human life. Baseless hatred, on the other hand, is something that is very elusive, both in its defiance of definition and the fact that its existence or the damage it causes are not readily evident. If the purpose of exile is to repair the damage, then why did the first exile, which came to address

the more severe problems, last only seventy years while the current exile, which comes to address the issue of baseless hatred – whatever that is – is so long and bitter?

In other words, when a person kills someone, he can clearly see the result and he knows instantly that he did something wrong; with baseless hatred one may not even realize that it is happening, and even when it does one might try to justify it in various ways.

The first step in dealing with any kind of problem is to clearly articulate exactly what the problem is. When a doctor is confronted with an illness that can be diagnosed with clarity and certainty, then all she has to do is prescribe the right medication or treatment for that illness. However, when the cause of the symptoms is elusive, when the illness cannot be diagnosed, then the doctors have a much more difficult time treating the patient.

The purpose of exile is to serve as a medicine for the malaises that plague us. The illnesses of the generation of the First Temple were easy to identify and define, and so the medicine was short and effective. The Jews of that period had a distortion in the psycho-emotional part of their being, which contains seven general characteristics. Each of these seven, in turn, contains ten sub-characteristics. Therefore, there were seventy characteristics that needed to be healed, and so the treatment was seventy years of exile.

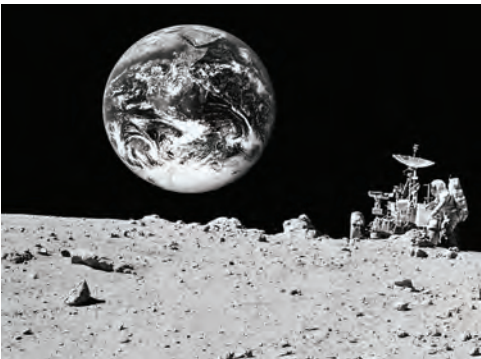
Baseless hatred, the illness of the generation in which the Second Temple was destroyed, is much more difficult to classify as a serious illness, and hence much harder to diagnose and treat. Therefore, we still find ourselves in exile two-thousand years later struggling with pretty much the same problems – a lack of clarity and a lack of unity.

If the poison that brings exile and lack of clarity is hatred for no reason, then the antidote that will restore the unity of the Jewish people, and, in turn, their unity with G-d and their homeland, is a love without reason. But not a flaky love that suffers from the same lack of clarity and direction that we are trying to rectify. Rather, we need a love that penetrates even a heart of stone (and a stoned heart) and sincerely has the ultimate goodness of our brothers in mind, regardless of what sect they belong to, what kind of job they drive to or what magazines they subscribe to.

MONTREAL JEWISH MAGAZINE

March 2015 • Adar 5775

think!
again.



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The greatest discovery of the millennium happened near its very end.

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While the conscience of humanity may be uselessly miffed by the victimization of Jews, the Jews of France will know that there is one place on earth that exists to prevent that victimization.

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| PERSPECTIVES

IRAN'S GROWING PRESENCE ON ISRAEL'S BORDERS

The fact that at least three high-ranking IRGC officers were killed in the attack highlights once more that Iran perceives Syria and Lebanon as Tehran's first line of defense against Israel.

— by Dr. Shimon Shapira

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Purim Guide



THE 4 MITZVAHS OF PURIM:



Listen to The Megillah

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 (EVENING)

THURSDAY, MARCH 5 (DAYTIME)

To relive the miraculous events of Purim, we listen to a public reading of the Megillah (the Scroll of Esther) on Purim eve and again on Purim day. Whenever Haman's name is mentioned, we twirl noise-makers and stamp our feet to "drown out" his evil name. Tell the children Purim is the only time when it's a mitzvah to make noise!



Send Gifts of Food

AT LEAST TWO KINDS OF FOOD IN EACH GIFT

THURSDAY, MARCH 5 (DAYTIME)

On Purim we emphasize the importance of Jewish unity and friendship by sending gifts of food to friends. Send a gift of at least two kinds of ready-to-eat foods (for example, pastry, fruit, beverage), to at least one friend on Purim day. It is proper that men send to men and women to women. Sending these gifts should be done through a third party. Children, in addition to sending their own gifts of food, make enthusiastic messengers.



Give Gifts to the Needy

TO AT LEAST TWO PEOPLE

THURSDAY, MARCH 5 (DAYTIME)

Concern for the needy is a year-round responsibility for the Jew. On Purim, particularly, it is a special mitzvah to remember the poor. Give charity to at least two, but preferably more needy individuals on Purim day. The mitzvah is best fulfilled by giving directly to the needy. Even small children should fulfill this mitzvah.



Eat The Festive Meal

THURSDAY, MARCH 5 (DAYTIME)

As on all festivals, we celebrate Purim with a special festive meal on Purim day when family and friends gather together to rejoice in the Purim spirit.

THE PURIM STORY

Jewish morale was at an all-time low. The Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, the nation conquered, and for almost 70 years, Jews had been dispersed in foreign lands. The prophesied end of Exile had not materialized, and the blight of assimilation had set in. Just then, the enemy arose to carry out his evil plans. This time it was Haman. Descended from the Jew-hating tribe of Amalek, Haman devised his scheme to solve "the Jewish problem" once and for all, by annihilating every Jew, men, women and children, throughout the world, in a single day.

And it almost worked. Were it not for Mordechai. A descendent of King Saul and advisor to King Achashverosh, Mordechai sensed the danger. Donning sackcloth and ashes, he went to the gate of the palace, crying aloud, rallying the Jews to return to Torah. His niece, Queen Esther, called for him. He told her that she must go to the king and plead for her people. Officially in disfavor, she feared to go but saw that she had no choice. She undertook a three-day fast of penitence, and called upon the whole Jewish people to do likewise. Then she went to the king.

It is a story of great courage and self-sacrifice — first and foremost by Queen Esther and Mordechai and ultimately by the whole Jewish nation. For throughout the duration of the whole year, not one single Jew chose to convert, even to save his life. The nation was awakened to a wholehearted return to Torah and *mitzvot*, and throughout the year strengthened their faith and observance. And in the merit of this, they were able to rise up against their enemies and destroy them, on the 13th of Adar, the very day destined for the "final solution." The Jewish people had shown their true character. They had earned the right to leave Exile, to return to the Holy Land and rebuild the Temple. As it was in those days, so may it be with us today. Each year in fulfilling the special *mitzvot* of the Purim festival, we reaffirm our commitment to the eternal values of the Torah ... and we share in the very same merit that redeemed the Jewish people in the days of Mordechai and Esther.

One of the Purim *mitzvot* is the reading of the Megillah — the Scroll of Esther, in which the miracle of Purim is recounted. The Talmud tells us that "whoever reads the Megillah backwards does not fulfill his obligation." Our Sages explain that "backwards" does not only mean in reverse order; it also means that whoever reads the Megillah merely as ancient history has missed the point. The Purim story is directly relevant to our contemporary world. As the Megillah itself tells us, that when we celebrate Purim each year, the miraculous events of Purim are "remembered and re-enacted" in our lives.

Throughout our history, we have seen miracles. Despite centuries upon centuries of persecution, we have survived and flourished, by the grace of G-d. Yet we have remained in exile for nearly 2,000 years, hoping and praying for the final and complete redemption — the redemption that will end suffering and exile forever. May the observance of Purim be a precursor to the coming of Moshiach, our Righteous Redeemer, whose imminent arrival will bring about a better life for all the nations of the world.

HAS THE REDEMPTION BEGUN YET?

From the Rebbe's personal correspondence

Your letter reached me with some delay. In it you express your desire to learn more about the Lubavitch movement, etc. You also ask for clarification of certain questions.

Needless to say, it is difficult in the medium of a letter to expound adequately upon the various questions and matters that you touch upon in your letter. Actually, there is no need to have recourse to such correspondence, inasmuch as your Lubavitcher friends in London, whom you also mention in your letter and with whom you have personal contact, will be glad to go into some of these questions with you at length.

At any rate, in order not to turn you down completely, I will attempt to answer the first question that you put in your letter, where you refer to a statement of mine which you saw quoted in the press, to the effect that the happenings in our time in general, and in the Land of Israel in particular, are not the Beginning of the Redemption (*Atchalta d'Geulah*), while on the other hand I state that life in Israel should be conducted in accordance with the Torah, and you wonder whether there is an inconsistency there.

I wish to assure you that there is no inconsistency in the two statements, inasmuch as they are both based on Torah.

Thus the first statement, namely, that we are not yet at the beginning of the Geulah, is based on the clear ruling of the Rambam, who has explicitly defined the conditions and evidence by which to judge whether or not we are at the threshold of the Geulah. Be it noted that this statement of the Rambam is to be found not in any of his non-halachic works, where there may be room for various interpretations, but in his major Code, where he states the laws (*dinim*) in clear, precise and unequivocal terms. This is what he says, after describing the last days of the Galut:

There will arise a king from the House of David, studying the Torah and practicing the mitzvot like his father David, according to the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, and he will induce all the Jewish people to walk in its ways and strengthen its repair, and he will battle the battles of G-d—it



may then be assumed that he is Moshiach. If he did so and was successful and built the Sanctuary in its place, and gathered the dispersed of Israel—then he is Moshiach with certainty . . .

We see clearly that even after he induces all of the Jewish people to walk in the path of Torah, etc., it may only be assumed that he is Moshiach, but it is not yet certain, and it could in fact turn out that he is not. In other words, there is still a possibility that even this development will not necessarily spell the end of the Galut. As a matter of fact, the Rambam mentions in the previous halachah the fact that there was a time in Jewish history when it appeared that Moshiach had arrived, in the person of Shimon ben Kuziba, yet it later became quite clear that he was not. Only when—as the Rambam says—he will build the Sanctuary in its place and will gather the dispersed of Israel, only then will it be certain that he is Moshiach beyond all doubt. On the basis of your letter, I think it is surely unnecessary to explain to you that the Jewish belief is that the end of the Galut will come when Moshiach himself brings about the ingathering of the exiles, as is clearly evident from the Rambam quoted above.

Pursuant to the above, I trust you will not take it amiss if I add a personal note, to the effect that what has been said above about the conduct of a Jewish congregation or community applies also to the individual Jew, namely the obligation of a Jew to conduct his personal life in accordance with the Torah and mitzvot. This, of course, also includes the great principle of the Torah of “Love your fellow as yourself,” namely, to share a vision of the good by helping others move in the same direction. This is incumbent particularly upon one who goes beyond being just a private individual and who has an influence upon the many. The responsibility of such a person to exercise his good influence in his immediate surroundings and in the world at large is, of course, all the greater. In your case, I see that Divine Providence has granted you a special gift for writing articles and books, etc., through which you are able to reach a very considerable segment of our brethren in different parts of the world. Clearly, it is your sacred duty to utilize this gift to inspire your readers to seek a closer identification with the Jewish people, not only in thought and speech, but in actual everyday life and conduct, in accordance with the principle of our Sages that the essential thing is the deed. [EM](#)

TEN SIMPLE IDEAS TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Jonathan Sacks

Have you made your new year resolutions? If not, try the following. Each is potentially life changing.

1. Give thanks. Once a day take quiet time to feel gratitude for what you have, not impatience for what you don't have. This alone will bring you halfway to happiness. We already have most of the ingredients of a happy life. It's just that we tend to take these for granted and focus on unmet wants, unfulfilled desires. Giving thanks is better than shopping – and cheaper too.

2. Praise. Catch someone doing something right and say so. Most people, most of the time, are unappreciated. Being recognized, thanked and congratulated by someone else is one of the most empowering things that can happen to us. So don't wait for someone to do it for you: do it for someone else. You will make their day, and that will help to make yours.

3. Spend time with your family. Make sure that there is at least one time a week when you sit down to have a meal together with no distractions – no television, no phone, no e-mail, just being together and celebrating one another's company. Happy marriages and healthy families need dedicated time.

4. Discover meaning. Take time out, once in a while, to ask: "Why am I here? What do I hope to achieve? How best can I use my gifts? What would I wish to be said about me when I am no longer here?" Finding meaning is essential to a fulfilled life – and how can you find it if you never look? If you don't know where you want to be, you will never get there, however fast you run.

5. Live your values. Most of us believe in high ideals, but we act on them only sporadically. The best thing to do is to establish habits that get us to enact those ideals daily. This is called ritual, and it is what religions remember but ethicists often forget.

6. Forgive. This is the emotional equivalent of losing excess weight. Life is too short to bear a grudge or seek revenge. Forgiving someone is good for them but even better for you. The bad has happened. It won't be made better by your dwelling on it. Let it go. Move on.

7. Keep learning. I learnt this from Florence



in Newcastle, whom I last met the day she celebrated her 105th birthday. She was still full of energy and fun. "What's the secret?" I asked her. "Never be afraid to learn something new," she said. Then I realized that if you are willing to learn, you can be 105 and still young. If you are not, you can be 25 and already old.

8. Learn to listen. Often in conversation we spend half our time thinking of what we want to say next instead of paying attention to what the other person is saying. Listening is one of the greatest gifts we can give to someone else. It means that we are open to them, that we take them seriously and that we accept graciously their gift of words.

9. Create moments of silence in the soul. Liberate yourself, if only five minutes daily, from the tyranny of technology, the mobile phone, the laptop and all the other electronic intruders, and just inhale the heady air of existence, the joy of being.

10. Transform suffering. When bad things happen, use them to sensitize you to the pain of others. The greatest people I know – people who survived tragedy and became stronger as a result – did not ask "Who did this to me?" Instead, they asked "What does

this allow me to do that I could not have done before?" They refused to become victims of circumstance. They became, instead, agents of hope.

Most of these are, of course, integral elements of a religious life, which may be why so many surveys have shown that those who practise a religious faith tend to live longer, have lower levels of stress and report higher degrees of wellbeing than others. This is not accidental. The great religions are our richest treasuries of wisdom when it comes to the question of how best to live a life.

Life is too full of blessings to waste time and attention on artificial substitutes. Live, give, forgive, celebrate and praise: these are still the best ways of making a blessing over life, thereby turning life into a blessing. [EM](#)

Rabbi Dr. Sir Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the UK and the Commonwealth and a member of the House of Lords, is a leading academic and respected world expert on Judaism. He is the author of several books and thousands of articles, appears regularly on television and radio, and speaks at engagements around the world.

WHY IS PARIS BURNING?

Simon Jacobson

As Paris burning — and anti-Semitism — dominate headlines and our consciousness, some coinciding events were too glaring to ignore: The first documented story of institutionalized subjugation and genocide of Jews in these week's Torah chapters; a prescient Zohar at the end of this week's portion foretelling Ishmael (ancestor of the Arab/Muslim world) attacking Esau (forbearer of the Western world); and the 202nd yearzeit of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, as he was fleeing the advance of the French army on Russia.

Upon connecting the dots of these seemingly unrelated events a stunning relevant image emerges, shedding a revolutionary new light on the current unfolding drama.

Beyond the immediate tragic events happening in Paris — and the imminent threats around the world to Jews and all good citizens — is there something bigger transpiring here?

The best way to understand the here and now is to step back, lift ourselves above the fray, and take a birds' eye view of the unfolding drama. As always, placing things in the sweep of historical context, looking at the big picture, provides us with critical insight into the current frame and chapter, allowing us to forge a strategy and chart a direction going forward.

France and the Jewish people have a long, complicated and tenuous relationship.

Some of the greatest Middle Age Jewish massacres took place in France. In the 13th century King Louis IX expelled the Jews. And then, the 19th century scarred by the infamous Dreyfus Affair in the 19th century, which exposed the deep-seated French anti-Semitism — a scar that continues to haunt, only to be overshadowed by French complicity with the Nazis.

No wonder the shock elicited by the latest murders of Jews in the kosher supermarket, in the wake the Charlie Hebdo massacre — following the 2006 torturous murder of Ilan Halimi in 2006, and the 2012 slaughter of three children and a rabbi outside a Jewish school in Toulouse in 2012, and other subsequent attacks — exposing the open, raw and long-standing wound which marks the extended history of French prejudice.



To better understand France's complex history with the Jews, let us travel back to the Franco-Russian War of 1812.

During that war, after Napoleon invaded Russia, Jewish leaders in Russia broke into two camps, one supporting the victory of French Emperor Napoleon, the other Russian Czar Alexander I. The former felt that if Napoleon won the war material life would become much easier for Jews. Napoleon, after all, is credited with being a major force in effecting Jewish emancipation, to the point that, by contrast, Alexander vehemently denounced the liberties given to the Jews by the French and demanded that the Orthodox Church protest against Napoleon's tolerant religious policy. He referred to the Emperor in a proclamation as "the Anti-Christ" and the "Enemy of G-d."

The latter group of Jewish leaders, however, argued that though Napoleon's victory offered physical emancipation of the oppressed, it would compromise Jewish spiritual life. Napoleon, after all, represented an atheistic, self-glorifying, G-dless enlightenment, which threatened to assimilate and all but destroy the soul of the Jews unready for the challenges of the modern world. Russia's victory, on the

other hand, would assure that the spiritual integrity of Jewish life would be preserved.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, known as the Alter Rebbe, was a major voice in the Jewish opposition to Napoleon. His position was the one that ultimately prevailed. (for the detailed story [click here](#)). Rabbi Schneur Zalman was obviously not opposed to freedom from material oppression. What he wisely recognized was that this freedom has to be attained gradually, so as not to overwhelm the tenuous nature of spiritual life in a material world. And his fears were confirmed in the events that took place in Europe during the 19th century: Modern assimilation was birthed as a result of a people unprepared for the challenges of accelerated emancipation.

The Alter Rebbe was actually taking a cue from the Biblical Jacob, who made a similar statement to his twin brother Esau 3571 years ago:

In Biblical terms the battle between matter and spirit is the struggle between Esau and Jacob. After Esau and Jacob reconcile, Esau invites Jacob to become his neighbor. Jacob replies, "My lord you know that the children are tender and I have responsibility for the

nursing sheep and cattle. If they are driven hard for even one day, they will die... Please go ahead of me... I will lead my group slowly, following the pace of the work ahead of me, and the pace of the children. I will eventually come to you, my lord, in Seir."

As the great commentator Rashi explains, that Jacob was referring to the end of times, about which the prophet Ovadiah prophesizes: He told him of a longer journey... So when will he go? In the days of the Messiah, as it is said (Obadiah 1:21): "And saviors shall ascend Mt. Zion to judge the mountain of Esau."

Jacob is telling Esau and all of us that there is much work to be done in resolving the inherent tension between the material and the spiritual. And this work must be done with complete focus. Jacob rejects even Esau's offer to help by putting "some of my people at your disposal," even that poses too great of a risk. "Just let me remain on friendly terms with you," Jacob tells Esau.

Similarly, the Alter Rebbe sensed that Jacob (the Jewish people) were not yet ready to accept the offer of freedom coming from the French modern face of Esau. The children are tender and I have responsibility for the nursing sheep and cattle. If they are driven hard for even one day, they will die.

That was then.

But with time things began to change.

History is a process – the process of refining the material world and slowly acclimating it to its inner soul. As the river of time flowed forward, each generation carried the baton of its leg of the great marathon of history – each progressive generation building upon its predecessor, slowly refining the mundane world.

Today, after 3571 years of work from the time of Jacob and Esau, the accumulative energy of countless generations has so refined the world that it is ready for reconciliation. Jacob can finally fulfill his promise to Esau, "I will eventually come to you," and the world can be united under one G-d, with a complete fusion of matter and spirit and each nation serving in its own unique manner (see The Big Confrontation - Jacob & Esau Meet).

Similarly, with the Alter Rebbe's opposition to France. At the onset of emancipation,



when the people — the "children" — were too tender, the leader's responsibility is to ensure that they be able and mature enough to engage with a new world.

But today, 200 years later, as France and the West became more refined and we have achieved a deeper state of maturity, the Rebbe made it clear (in a talk delivered at the end of 1991), that we now have the ability and opportunity to integrate both freedoms: material and spiritual.

The Alter Rebbe paid a heavy price for his war and opposition to France and Napoleon. Ostensibly, the French advance is what led to his untimely passing. Yet, in the big scheme of things the Alter Rebbe left us armed with unprecedented resources: the teachings of Chassidus. Chassidus, contemporary Jewish mysticism, renders and channels this ancient wisdom into an accessible blueprint for life

that teaches us how to integrate our material lives with a higher, spiritual purpose.

Until the Alter Rebbe, cosmic secrets were in the exclusive domain of sacred few Tzaddikim. The Alter Rebbe's liberation on Yud Tes (19) Kislev was a Divine signal and declaration that a new phase in history had arrived – the time had come to empower the masses with the ability to transform their material lives and the physical world into a home for the sublime.

This was always the purpose of existence, but in earlier generations global transformation would have not have been possible without overt Divine intervention. In natural terms, it did not seem possible that human efforts could achieve worldwide change. Yud Tes Kislev opened up a new channel – which would lead in subsequent years to the Industrial revolution, the emergence of

democracy, the atomic and nuclear age, the information revolution – enormous changes that continue to grow at an accelerated pace.

Armed with these tools, and with the refinement and maturity that came with time, today we can harness our prosperity and comforts to advance a spiritual revolution. Yet, the challenge still remains not to take our freedoms for granted. Our greatest enemy today is within: our enemy is complacency – the one borne out of prosperity. When we don't have to fight for our ideals, they tend to stagnate.

As time passed, emancipation was finally achieved to the point that today we are virtually free of any institutionalized oppression. And now, two centuries since the French Revolution and Napoleon's defeat, we can now indeed engage, benefit from — and transform — the freedoms of modern society and thrive as Jews.

And thrive we did. France has, in the last few decades, proudly experienced a unparalleled renaissance of Jewish traditional life.

Yet, the tenuous relationship remains. And now comes the latest Muslim insurgence into France and Europe, with the most recent attacks against French Jews and French citizens. What are we to make of all this? And what happens in France, history shows, affects the world. France clearly plays a central role and reflects the overall European Western world.

So listen to this next fascinating piece of the puzzle:

In the very same verses where Ovadiah foresees Jacob returning to meet Esau, (and saviors shall ascend Mt. Zion to judge the mountain of Esau, fulfilling Jacob's words I will eventually come to you), Ovadiah describes how the Jews exiled in "*Tzorfas*" (France) will, at the end of days, prevail over their enemies and the ones that remained silent in face of their suffering, and how they will return to Zion!

This is the one and only time France is mentioned in the Torah.

This adds an entirely new dimension in our appreciation of the events in 1812 and today: The Alter Rebbe was certainly aware of this prophecy declaring Jacob's return to Esau. But he also knew that this vision was meant

to happen once the "children" had matured. Jacob in his time, and the Jewish people in the Alter Rebbe's time, were not yet ready to engage with France and Seir. France was still the enemy that needed to be avoided and defeated.

The Alter Rebbe, however, also knew, that the time was coming — and indeed, today the time has come — when we can transform France, which epitomized the self-worship of man (as reflected so aptly in the French Enlightenment), into a Divine home.

But the story is not over. France (Esau) is still struggling with its destiny and relationship with Jacob (Jews), as demonstrated in the latest tragic events.

Yet this time, the attackers are Muslims.

So now, for the final piece of this emerging portrait, let us turn to the Zohar at the conclusion of this week's Torah portion, whose theme is the Egyptian persecution of the Israelites. The Zohar (II 32a) writes that at the end of days, the children of Ishmael will wage wars on Esau (the Western world). Edom (Esau) will respond and battle with them. Ultimately G-d will intervene and the Jewish people will rise.

The plot thus thickens. Though we have matured to the point that we can now take on and transform France (Esau), after first needing to be insulated (in the time of the Alter Rebbe), the ride is not easy. We still need to contend with Esau and his many transmutations and incarnations.

Including, the one in which he weds the daughter of Ishmael (Genesis 28:3), with its own major drama (see The Plot Thickens), resulting in a new series of conflicts that includes not just battles with Jews but also battles between Ishmael and Esau (as reflected in the Muslim attack on French citizens). Because, as Esau's infamous wedding attests, Esau and Ishmael had their own share of differences, besides their commonalities. Both their mutuality and their conflicts would affect their future progeny and the wars they would wage with and against each other, as explained by the Abarbanel (*Mayonei Yeshua*, intro to Daniel, 2:3).

You see, Esau (France) has two faces: One as son of Abraham and brother to Jacob; the second, as warrior and arch-enemy to Jacob. The former is perhaps how Esau has

evolved into the American Revolution, which also brought freedom to the world, but as opposed to the G-dless French Revolution, the American one was built on "In G-d We Trust," the inalienable rights endowed equally to all people by their One Creator (see Two Faces of Esau).

Though we can indeed engage with France, the battle is not over until France makes its choice which face it will embrace.

The final frontier is clearly upon us. And France stands at the center of events — as it does in Ovadiah's vision, and as it has played itself out in its long history, leading to our present day. The challenge is both with Esau and Ishmael, as the Zohar tells us.

We are far ahead of how things were in 1812 and certainly how they were 3371 years ago, but we still have a few steps to make. We stand at the threshold of returning to Zion from France and the rest of the world. Yet, we are faced with finishing the job of refining Esau and Ishmael.

History is a continuum. Peace in our lifetime will only be possible if we make peace with the rifts of our past. Today, we are confronted with forces that have been unleashed thousands of years ago.

Events are sometimes separated by 200 or 3000 years. But when you connect the dots, a bigger picture emerges that helps explain the world altering changes that we have experienced in the last two centuries.

And perhaps, it can help us understand what lies ahead.

Studying all these texts and reviewing the historical roots of today's challenges provides us with that birds' eye view, uncovering for us the hidden choreography behind today's events.

These inside "secrets" provide perspective to current events in France — and the world — illuminating for us: why is Paris burning? Why is France, of all places, at the forefront of today's upheavals?

And above all: After a long history of tension with its Jewish citizens, which of the two options will France — and Europe — choose: To make its peace with G-d and the Jews or to capitulate to the forces of Ishmael? The end, as Ovadiah assures us, will be victory. The only question is this: how will we get there and who will be on board? [EM](#)



THE DISCOVERY OF PLANET EARTH

Tzvi Freeman

For the next several months, we will be running a series of articles exploring the Torah's code of conduct for all humanity, known as the Noachide Code or the Seven Noachide Laws. This system has been called "Judaism for non-Jews," the universal code of human morality, and the Jewish vision for humanity – a vision of a civilized and tolerant world, and ultimately a redeemed world. The article below serves as a general introduction.

I want to tell you about the greatest discovery of the millennium. It wasn't the printing press. It wasn't America. It wasn't even vaccination. The greatest discovery of the millennium happened near its very end.

It was the discovery of Planet Earth.

We were trying to get away from Planet Earth — ever since we had to leave the garden. We built temples reaching to the heavens, to transcend our earthly bounds. Cities to lock out the earth's wildness, as though we were not a part of it. We told her she was a dark and lowly place, that we needed to escape her to reach our destiny. We ravaged her, raped her, paved her. Our dreams were dreams of overcoming Earth.

Until finally, in the ultimate of all dreams, we escaped her. We told her, "Earth, we don't need you anymore! After all, you are just one little planet in an awesome universe! We are going out there to conquer planets bigger and better than you. We shall become masters of the stars, of the galaxies!"

We got to the moon. The moon was barren. We sent probes to Mars. Mars was dead. To the icon of beauty, to Venus. She was dressed in poisonous, burning clouds. And then the pockets of the United States Congress were also barren to fund our useless dreams.

It was then that we looked back from outer space and discovered something we had never imagined. A shining jewel in the vast darkness. Never before had we known her beauty. The most beautiful planet a mind could dream of.

It was then that we realized everything our spirits ever wanted was here. That we need her and she needs us. Our destiny is hers and hers is ours. For we are one.

We discovered Planet Earth.



We need to save our Planet Earth. There was one other time she was in peril, and then there was only one man who could save her. Not that he was the only righteous man. There were others. There was Methuselah and his disciples.

But Noah was not just a spiritual man. He was, as the Torah says, "a man of the Earth." According to our tradition, Noah invented the plow.

So, G-d looked down at the world He had made and how its soul had been ripped out of it, and He saw these people who prayed and meditated and transcended the bounds of body and earth, and He said, "You people are not the solution. You are part of the problem. Only Noah, who knows to bond body and spirit, heaven and earth, he alone

can save My world."

In our century, during the most horrible crimes of humanity, we have seen how spiritual people were quiet. The ravaging of humanity and of the earth has happened with their permission.

But now we have discovered Planet Earth. We have discovered spiritual fulfillment and G-dliness within her. And we know that if we cannot make peace with her and with each other, we will not survive much longer.

The Creed of Noah

At the dawn of creation, G-d gave the first human being six rules to follow in order that His world be sustained. Later, after the Great Flood, he charged Noah with one more. So it is recounted in the Book of Genesis as interpreted by our tradition in the



future tense MOSHIACH MUSINGS

Talmud. There will come a time, our sages told us, that the children of Noah will be prepared to return to this path. That will be the beginning of a new world, a world of wisdom and peace.

For most of Jewish history, circumstance did not permit our people to spread these principles, other than by indirect means. When the Lubavitcher Rebbe began speaking about publicizing them as a preparation for a new era, he was reviving an almost lost tradition.

What fascinates me is the breathing room they provide. They resonate equally in a hut in Africa or a palace in India, in a school in Moscow or a suburban home in America. They are like the guidelines of a great master of music or art: firm, reliable and comprehensive — but only a base, and upon this base each people and every person may build.

According to the sages of the Talmud, there are 70 families with 70 paths within the great Family of Man. And each individual has his or her path within a path. Yet, there is one universal basis for us all.

Anyone who lives by these rules, acknowledging that they are what G-d wants of us, is considered by our tradition to be righteous. That person is a builder with a share in the world as it is meant to be.

The creed of Noah is a sacred inheritance of all the children of Noah, one that every person on the face of the earth can recite every day. And if enough of us will begin to say these same words every day, we will see a different world very soon. Sooner than we can imagine.

Here is a phrasing of the Creed of Noah, according to ancient tradition, with a touch of elaboration:

I, child of Noah,
caretaker of our precious Planet Earth,
accept upon myself the responsibility for
peace and oneness in our world,
as accepted by Adam and by Noah,
transmitted by Moses and his people over
the ages:

1. I will not worship anyone or anything other than the One Creator, who cares for the creatures of our world, renewing the Act of Creation at every moment in infinite wisdom, being life for each thing. In this is

included prayer, study and meditation.

2. I will not show disrespect for the Creator in any way. This may be seen to include respect for the beauty and life of the Creation.

3. I will not murder. Each human being, just as Adam and Eve, comprises an entire world. To save a life is to save that entire world. To destroy a life is to destroy an entire world. To help others live is a corollary of this principle. Every human being that G-d has created is obliged to provide for others in need.

4. I will respect the institution of marriage. Marriage is a most divine act. The marriage of a man and a woman is a reflection of the Oneness of G-d and His creation. Dishonesty in marriage is an assault on that Oneness.

5. I will not take that which does not rightfully belong to me. Deal honestly in all your business. By relying on G-d, rather than on our own conniving, we express our trust in Him as the Provider of Life.

6. I will not cause needless harm to any living thing. At the outset of his creation, Man was the gardener in the Garden of Eden to "take care of it and protect it." At first, Man was forbidden to take the life of any animal. After the Great Flood, he was permitted to consume meat — but with a warning: Do not cause unnecessary suffering to any creature.

7. I will uphold courts of truth and justice in my land. Justice is G-d's business, but we are given the charge to lay down necessary laws and enforce them whenever we can. When we right the wrongs of society, we are acting as partners in the act of sustaining the creation.

May the nations beat their swords into plowshares. May the wolf lie down with the lamb. May the earth fill with wisdom as waters cover the ocean floor. And may it be very soon in all of our lifetimes, sooner than we imagine. [EM](#)

Tzvi Freeman is the author of a number of highly original renditions of Kabbalah and Chassidic teachings, including the universally acclaimed Bringing Heaven Down to Earth. Tzvi's books are available online at Chabad.org.

The arrival of Moshiach and the accompanying turnabout in the World Order, is a very pragmatic ideal. In fact, much of it has happened already.

Of course, as Maimonides puts it, nobody really knows exactly what's going to happen — The Almighty-Master-Of-All-Plans-To-Whom-All-Is-Revealed is really concerned about the suspense factor here. Here are some possibilities:

The first thing Moshiach does is do away with bad marketing. That's the true villain that has held us back all these years. Ask any consumer electronics or computer engineer. We could all own household robots to do our work. We could be consuming less than 10% of the natural resources we consume now — if it weren't for those nefarious busy bodies who market quantity rather than quality. Given the true needs of most people and the productivity possible with modern technology, we should all be working an average of 2.5 hours a week. What's responsible for the other 60+ hours? Bad Marketing. Moshiach's marketing people will get people's minds back on the right track. Thinking about real quality of life. About their relationship with the earth and with their bodies and their souls and the people around them. Once that's done, just about everything else we need to create paradise is here already.

The arrival of Moshiach is not much of a greater miracle than the sudden fall of the communist dictatorship. True, there will be a couple of big Signs-and-Wonders-scenarios — some that'll make the Ten Plagues and the Crossing of the Red Sea look like kid's play. Like, how about the splitting of the Euphrates, for one? But, who says glitz makes a miracle? Personally, I think Moses would have been pretty impressed by the kind of miracles that happened in Eastern Europe and on the Internet over the last few years.

Fact is, nature itself is supernatural. Just that we're too busy to notice. After a bit of time studying with Moshiach, we'll be able to see clearly without the wool pulled over our eyes.

Hi-tech is only here now as a preparation for the technological applications of the times of Moshiach. When finally we become masters over our own tools — rather than the other way around — we shall start to utilize them to discover the divine within Creation and within ourselves.

THE ANSWER TO FRENCH ANTISEMITISM

Caroline Glick

Last month marked the nine-year anniversary of the beginning of the Ilan Halimi disaster.

On January 16, 2006, Sorour Arbabzadeh, the seductress from the Muslim anti-Jewish kidnapping gang led by Youssef Fofana, entered the cellphone store where Halimi worked and set the honey trap.

Four days later, Halimi met Arbabzadeh for a drink at a working class bar and agreed to walk her home. She walked him straight into an ambush. Her comrades beat him, bound him and threw him into the trunk of their car.

They brought Halimi to a slum apartment and tortured him for 24 days and 24 nights before dumping him, handcuffed, naked, stabbed and suffering from third degree burns over two-thirds of his body, at a railway siding in Paris.

He died a few hours later in the hospital.

In an impassioned address to the French parliament on Tuesday, Prime Minister Manuel Valls gave a stirring denunciation of anti-Semitism, and demanded that his people stop treating it as someone else's problem.

In his words, "Since Ilan Halimi in 2006... anti-Semitic acts in France have grown to an intolerable degree. The words, the insults, the gestures, the shameful attacks... did not produce the national outrage that our Jewish compatriots expected."

Valls insisted that France needs to protect its Jewish community, lest France itself be destroyed.

"Without its Jews France would not be France, this is the message we have to communicate loud and clear. We haven't done so. We haven't shown enough outrage. How can we accept that in certain schools and colleges the Holocaust can't be taught? How can we accept that when a child is asked, 'Who is your enemy?' the response is 'The Jew?' When the Jews of France are attacked France is attacked, the conscience of humanity is attacked. Let us never forget it."

Valls words were uplifting. But it is hard to see how they change the basic reality that the Jews of France face.

When all is said and done, it is their necks on the line while humanity's conscience is merely troubled.



Ilan Halimi's case is more or less a textbook case of the impossible reality French Jewry faces. And, as Valls noted, the situation has only gotten worse in the intervening nine years. Much worse.

But back when things were much better, Ilan Halimi was kidnapped, tortured for 24 days and murdered. As Tablet online magazine's Marc Weitzmann reported last September in an in-depth summary of ordeal, the gang that perpetrated the atrocity had been hunting for Jewish victims for several weeks before Arbabzadeh set her trap for Halimi. All their previous attempts had failed. Their previous marks included Jewish doctors, lawyers, television directors and human rights activists, as well as Jews of no particular distinction aside from the fact that they were Jews.

The anti-Jewish nature of the gang was clear from its chosen victims. The anti-Semitic nature of their atrocious crime against Halimi was obvious from the first time they contacted his mother, Ruth Halimi, demanding ransom for his release. They made anti-Jewish slurs in all their communications with her. And as she heard her sons tortured cries in the background, Ruth was subjected to his torturers' recitation of Koranic verses.

And yet, throughout the period of his captivity, French authorities refused to consider the anti-Jewish nature of the crime, and as a result, refused to treat the case as life threatening or urgent.

The same attitude continued well after Halimi was found. As Weitzmann noted, the investigative magistrate insisted "There isn't a single element to allow one to attach this murder to an anti-Semitic purpose or an anti-Semitic act."

The denial went on through the 2009 trials of the 29 kidnapers and their accomplices. Antisemitism was listed as an aggravating circumstance of the crime – and as such, a cause for harsher sentencing – only for the gang leader Fofana. And in the end, even for him, the judges did not take it into account at sentencing.

As for those 29 kidnapers and accomplices, as Weitzmann notes, each one of them had a circle of friends and family. As a consequence, by a one reporters' conservative estimate, at least 50 people were aware of the crime and where Halimi was being held, while he was being held. And not one of them called the police. Not one of them felt moved to make a call that could save the life of a Jew.

After the fact, the media in France were

happy to publish articles by the torturers' defense lawyers insisting, "Only people motivated by 'political reasons' would try to sell the opinion that anti-Semitism is eating away at French society."

When the Halimi family lawyer boasted of close ties to the government and announced he would appeal the sentences of the perpetrators if he didn't think their punishments were sufficient, the French media eagerly shifted the conversation from the torture and murder of a Parisian who just happened to be a Jew by a band of sadists who just happened to be Muslims, to the more comfortable narrative of the Jewish lobby and Jewish power.

So, too, when Halimi, and six years later when the three children and the rabbi massacred at Otzar Hatorah Jewish day school in Toulouse, were brought to Israel for burial, the media reported their families' decision in a negative way hinting that it was evidence of the basic disloyalty, or otherness of the Jews of France.

In other words, what Halimi's murder exposed is that anti-Semitism in France is systemic. Muslims are the main perpetrators of violence. And they operate in social environments that are at a minimum indifferent to Jewish suffering and victimization. This violence and indifference is abetted by non-Islamic elites. French authorities minimize the unique threat Jews face. And the media are happy to ignore the issue, or when given the slightest opportunity, to claim that the Jews are responsible for their own victimization.

Indeed, in live reports from the scene of the hostage taking at the kosher supermarket in Paris last week, Weitzmann noted that in the early hours of the attack, French media failed to mention that the hostages were Jews.

Under these circumstances, where the entire French system is stacked against them, what can be done for French Jewry? What can they do for themselves?

It is far from clear that France is capable of correcting its downward trajectory.

Demography is moving France in a different direction. According to Israeli political scientist Guy Bechor, Marseilles will be the first Western European city with a Muslim majority. The ruling Socialists owe

their victory to the Muslim vote. It is hard to see French President François Hollande and his comrades taking actions that could anger that constituency which votes as a bloc.

Moreover, anti-Semitism in all its forms is manifested throughout French society. For instance, the prosecutor in the Halimi murder trial is the son of a French Nazi collaborator and according to Weitzmann, spent an inordinate amount of the trial trying to understand the perpetrators.

Then there is the Israel issue.

Valls has distinguished himself from his colleagues for his willingness to acknowledge that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. But his is a voice in the wilderness. The overwhelming sentiment of the French elites is hostility toward Israel. This sentiment was manifested in Hollande's treatment of Israel, and through it of the French Jewish community, in the aftermath of the supermarket massacre last month. Hollande told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to attend the anti-terror march in Paris on Sunday, claiming that Netanyahu's presence would detract from the message of unity against terrorism that he hoped the march would communicate.

The underlying assumption of Hollande's message is deeply disturbing.

That assumption is that anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism and is not, as a result, evil. The subtext is that the murder of Jews by Islamic terrorists who seek Israel's destruction is similarly not a crime deserving of the same condemnation as the jihadist murder of French journalists.

Netanyahu rightly ignored Hollande's request that he not attend. And for this move he was subjected to harsh criticism by the French media which accused him of crashing the party and pushing himself onto center stage against the wishes of his unwilling hosts.

Their criticism was then parroted by the Israeli media that studiously ignored the endemic anti-Israel hostility of the French media and the anti-Israel policies of the Hollande government. The Hebrew media, together with Hatnua leader Tzipi Livni, also ferociously attacked Netanyahu as well as Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman and Economy Minister Naftali Bennett for

upsetting French sensibilities by calling on French Jewry to make aliya.

But aliya is the key for contending with the increasing danger that the Jews of France face from the systemic nature of French anti-Semitism. This is true first of all because as France makes it clear that it is not a safe home for its Jews, Israel is a better option. Israel exists so that Jews always will have a better option than suffering at the hands of hostile non-Jews.

Speaking of aliya is also essential because so far the only thing that has caused French authorities to speak directly against anti-Semitism and take action to defend French Jewry has been the prospect of a mass exodus of their Jews.

The year 2014 saw a 50 percent increase in French aliya. And the Jewish Agency anticipates that the number will double to 15,000 in 2015, with 50,000 more not far behind.

After Ilan Halimi was murdered, out of fear of upsetting the French, no Israeli leader, including then-foreign minister Livni, uttered a word of condemnation against the atrocity. No Israeli representative attended his memorial ceremony.

No one urged French Jews to make aliya. And the number of anti-Semitic attacks increased massively each year. French governmental hostility toward Israel similarly escalated with each passing year.

There is unfortunately every reason to believe that the massacre at the kosher supermarket in Paris last month will not be the last one. But it is also clear that the best way to avert more suffering is to speak often and forcefully about the option of moving to Israel. Israel must also take active steps to prepare the country for the arrival of our French brothers and sisters. Hollande will certainly express his annoyance as he continues to condemn Israel at every turn for imaginary misdeeds. But the French Jews will be strengthened.

While the conscience of humanity may be uselessly miffed by the victimization of Jews, the Jews of France will know that there is one place on earth that exists to prevent that victimization, and that they are welcome here whenever they choose to come. [EM](#)

IRAN ON ISRAEL'S BORDERS

Shimon Shapira

Hizbullah confirmed that an attack was just conducted against a joint Iranian\Hizbullah reconnaissance operation in Mazrat al-Amal in the Kuneitra area on the Golan Heights. Following the attack, Hizbullah announced the death of six of its operatives headed by Jihad Mughniyeh, the son of the notorious Imad Mughniyeh. Just a few months ago Jihad Mughniyeh was appointed commander of the Golan front for Hizbullah.

Similarly, at least three Iranian Quds Force commanders were killed including General Mohammed Allahdadi, Ali Tabatabai, and an additional Iranian by the name of Assadi, who was, in all likelihood, the commander of the Iranian expeditionary forces in Syria. In Hizbullah's official announcement, no details were mentioned about the deaths of Iranian Revolutionary Guard officers who were present. Details about them, however, were provided by Iranian sources.

Ali Tabatabai, also known as Abu Ali Rida, was responsible on behalf of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps for the Golan front with Hizbullah's Jihad Mughniyeh. General Allahdadi, whose real name is Hushang Allahdad, was the IRGC liaison officer to Hizbullah and to Syrian Intelligence and in charge of the weapons shipments from Iran to Hizbullah.

In an official statement, Hizbullah threatened that its response "would be painful and unexpected." Hizbullah's media outlet, al-Manar, reported: "Tel Aviv is playing with fire which would threaten the security of the whole Middle East." Unidentified sources quoted by the Lebanese daily al-Safir, assessed that the response would be "controlled and would stop short of an escalation leading to an all-out war." In parallel, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Muhammad Zarif condemned the operation attributed to Israel but he refrained to issuing a concrete threat against Israel.

Ayatollah Mahari, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's personal representative, called upon the world and its religious authorities — including the Sunni center of al-Azhar — to condemn the attack against "the heroes of Hizbullah." Mahari stressed that the attack exposed Israel's failure to thwart the Iranian



achievements in the nuclear negotiations by means of a provocation against Tehran. Mahari expressed his hope that Hizbullah would respond wisely. Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the Iranian National Security Council, promised that Hizbullah would respond at a convenient time and place.

The fact that at least three high-ranking IRGC officers were killed in the attack highlights once more that Iran perceives Syria and Lebanon as Tehran's first line of defense against Israel. Iran has repeatedly demonstrated its steadfastness towards Syria and Hizbullah as it enjoys the strategic-

military and political benefits arising from maintaining its ongoing radical military and political presence in Syria. Assistance to Syria and Hizbullah and an active ground presence in both countries are seen as additional expressions of Iran's national defense doctrine. This is meant to distance the Iranian homeland from any threat and to conduct the campaign against Israel and the West in areas distant from Iran's borders. [EM](#)

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DOES HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

Yitzchak Gunsburgh

There is no doubt that throughout the generations similar situations have occurred and certain stereotypes have reappeared. If we look hard enough, we would be able to find a suitable counterpart from history to fit our own times, as Ecclesiastes states: “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.” That’s why it is so important to learn the lessons that history teaches us, “Remember days of yore.”

But, when we consider ourselves as the individuals who make history, our first thought is that we have never existed before. There may have been people who were similar to us, whether more or less successful (probably more...), but we are all unique. Every individual perceives their own personality as unique, and their self-image is that they are one-of-a-kind, and this is true for any human being who ever stepped foot on earth.

This is particularly obvious when it comes to spectacular individuals who appear in the sky of history like a shooting star that can never be reproduced. All rights are reserved. That’s how it is with Moses, for example. Since he passed away from the world, on the seventh day of Adar, thousands of years ago, there has never been, nor will there ever be anyone like him, as the Torah testifies, “There will never rise another prophet in the Jewish People like Moses.” We can definitely name individuals who are reminiscent of Moses to a certain extent as in the well-known phrase that refers to Maimonides, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, “From Moses until Moses none rose like Moses” similar, but not identical.

In other words, the main connection and similarity between the people who lived in the past and our present day is only from a collective perspective, as in the concept in Jewish law that, “A community never dies.” Nonetheless, individual Jews are constantly changing, and every personality is unique. “A generation goes and another generation comes, but the land the community stands eternally.”

Then the wisdom of Kabbalah comes and challenges these assumptions. There are



phenomena that reoccur not only in the macrocosm of Jewish history in general, but also in the microcosm of individual people. There are reincarnations. Just as with Kabbalah in general, this field also reached the peak of its revelation in the teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Arizal), who accurately described reincarnations since the days of creation until his own time. The Arizal enumerated a complex “genealogy” of souls, in which one figure from the Torah is reincarnated as another in the days of the Prophets, and once again in the time of the sages, and once more in a later era. The details of reincarnations are complex at times, describing which particular part of the soul was reincarnated as another soul, whether just a spark of it or its root, in the prescribed dose or for a limited time etc...

The figure whose soul returns and is reincarnated more than any other is Moses. In fact, the Zohar interprets the abovementioned verse, “A generation goes, and a generation comes,” to mean that one generation goes and the same generation arrives once again. This refers in particular to Moses, who is reincarnated in every generation anew. Indeed, immediately following the verse, “A generation goes and a generation comes,”

we read, “And the sun rises and the sun sets.” Just as the sun that rose today is the very same sun that set yesterday, so too the same generation that passed returns once more. Apparently, the author of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon, in the guise of a skeptic rationalist, actually alludes here to the secret of reincarnation. Indeed, we can read, “What has been is what will be,” as “who has been is who will be”; and here too, the Kabbalists point out that the initial letters of the first three words spell out “Moses.”

What are we supposed to learn from all this? Let’s first make it clear that the subject of reincarnation is a clear example of a profound Kabbalistic concept that has been adopted by fans of cheap pop-culture pseudo-mysticism for the masses, which widely promotes so-called Kabbalists who take people’s money, but offer nothing in exchange. The biggest danger that arises in this case is developing a warped perception of one’s personality and responsibility (e.g., since my fate is pre-determined, I cannot be held responsible for my actions and their results, because I am not really me).

That’s why it is so important to balance this misconception about reincarnation by introducing its correct context in authentic

Kabbalah, through the teachings of the Chassidic movement founded by the Ba'al Shem Tov. According to the Ba'al Shem Tov, souls are reincarnated, but we shouldn't delve into our previous incarnations, because we should focus on our situation as-is. We only have free-choice within the limits of what we know and perceive, and within those boundaries we take full responsibility for our actions. The secret of reincarnation can explain many obscure events and offer a different perspective on G-d's accounting in His world. But, when all's said and done, I am me and no-one else.

Incidentally, the Ba'al Shem Tov said about himself that his own soul is a reincarnation of Rabeinu Sa'adiah Gaon (who was a shining figure during the era of the Gaonim). Rabeinu Sa'adiah Gaon himself was adamantly opposed to faith in reincarnation, so it is something of a "Jewish joke" that his soul returned and is reincarnated... But, on a more serious note, Rabeinu Sa'adiah Gaon returned to the world, this time in the figure of the Ba'al Shem Tov, to teach us how to allocate reincarnation its correct capacities. Life goes on even after a reincarnation...

So, how does knowledge of Moses' soul's reincarnation help us? There is a tendency to "repress" all Jewish giants and heroes into history. Once there were prophets and sages; once there were tzadikim (righteous individuals) and great Jewish men; once there was Divine insight, but nowadays (with a long drawn-out sigh)... We can recruit many sayings of the sages that refer to the "descent of the generations," such as, "If the first were like angels, then we are like humans. If the first were like humans, then we are like donkeys." It's all true, but not so true. The figures who illuminated the past do return to us, even if they have different facial features, in an updated edition that suits our generation according to its style and status, "Every generation has its own interpreters."

Don't wallow in nostalgia, singing, "Memories...of the way we were." Don't avoid the issue by saying, if I had lived in a different generation, I would have valued the tzadikim, but not in an orphaned generation like ours. On the contrary, if you are skeptical about today's genuine tzadikim, there is a

chance that had you lived in Moses' time you would have joined Korach and his rebellion! If you only open your eyes, and peel away those layers of cynicism and skepticism, you would believe and be able to see that even today, right here under our noses, there are Jews who are simply tzadikim.

But, beyond the faith and the trust that we need to express in Jews, tzadikim and Torah sages, the reincarnation of Moses means that every generation also has a leader-figure. The sages emphasize that every leader in his own generation is a continuation of Moses, the greatest leader of all times:

Yeruba'al [Gideon the Judge] in his generation was like Moses in his generation. Bedan [Samson the Great] in his generation was like Aaron in his generation. Yiftach in his generation was like Samuel in his generation. In order to teach you that even the most undistinguished individual who is appointed as a public leader, is like the greatest knight. And it says, "And you shall come to the priests and to the judge who will be in those days"... you should only follow the judge in your day. And it says, "And don't say how the previous days were better than these."

Similarly, in the context of Purim, "Mordechai in his generation was like Moses in his generation."

Moses, of all leaders, is the one who needs to be reincarnated, again and again and again, because his task has not yet been completed. Moses was sent to take the Jewish People out of exile and into redemption, and we are still on the way. Just as every generation participates in rectifying the sin of the Golden Calf and the sin of the Ten Spies, so too, Moses returns to add the unique and essential levels needed by that generation to facilitate complete redemption. This is why Moses' final incarnation will be when Moshiach completes his work, speedily in our days. Indeed, the Kabbalists say that Moshiach's soul is that of Moses himself, "The first redeemer is the final redeemer."

There are many tzadikim, but there is only one leader, he is the "Moses of the generation." However, the intended leader may also come up against a lack of faith and attentiveness from the people of his

generation.

When we say that somebody is the leader of the generation, we mean that first of all, he "breathes" the generation, sensing the spirit, the style, the philosophy and the language of the generation and its special needs. As a result, he also feels the pain of all the shortcomings, illnesses and troubles that are peculiar to that generation. Moses suffered when the Jewish People sinned with the Golden Calf, and the verse describes Moshiach suffering all the illnesses of the generation, "Indeed, our sicknesses he bears and our pains he suffers." A genuine leader totally identifies with their generation, so much so that one can say, "The prince of a generation is like the entire generation." There are tzadikim in this generation who still broadcast on the old frequency, remnants of another age shrouded in historic splendor it's a privilege to have such tzadikim in our presence, but the leader of the generation is someone who grew up from the earth of this generation. As in the sages' descriptive expression stating that G-d planted the tzadikim in every generation, i.e., planted and rooted in the earth.

At the same time that the leader of the generation identifies with the generation and its troubles and by power of this identification he also serves as a "channel" through which the unique Torah of that generation is drawn into it from above. The abovementioned quotation relates to Yiftach the Giladi (one of the Judges) as an extreme example of an undistinguished leader. Nonetheless, "Yiftach in his generation was like Moses in his generation." The name "Yiftach" (which means "to open" in Hebrew) alludes to the ability of the leader to open that channel. Every genuine Jewish leader has special aid from above to open up and offer the Torah's viewpoint as it suits that generation, from the inexhaustible treasure trove of the Torah, and through a profound faithfulness to the tradition of generations. [EM](#)

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PURIM & THE TRANSFORMATION OF MADNESS

Tzvi Freeman

Purim, you would think, would be the last day of the year to video-chat with a philosopher. But Professor Mike is no wet blanket at the party. Especially after a few glasses of aged wine. And last Purim, Professor Mike the Philosopher was desperate to understand the metaphysical meaning of Haman and his lottery.

In Mike's mind—being a philosopher—for every twist and turn through which human thought can squirm, there was some event in the history of the Jewish People. And for a philosopher, there's no greater joy than nailing each metaphysical peg into its slot.

So he popped up on my screen, in the middle of the mad Purim rush. If it were anyone else, I would have blocked him. But on Purim, Professor Mike is the guy for a video-chat.

"The Chanukah thing," he says, "I pretty much got down. It's about rationalism. The Greeks effectively locked G-d out of the universe with the deadbolt of logic and reason. If everything runs logically, the original creator can take a hike and won't be missed. Furthermore, He has to stay perfect and ideal, above it all, while the little gods play around with the world. So they found Jews irrational and subversive with their One Big G-d who is everywhere and actually gives a hoot about everything and everyone every little minute."

"Sounds good." I said.

"But what's with Purim and the Persians?" he asked.

"It's just the opposite," I answered. "It's about chaos and the totally random. That's why it's called Purim, which means, literally, Lottery Day. The wild, the crazy and the arbitrary. Take one look around this house and you'll get what I mean."

"Tzvi," Mike's voice was discernibly excited, even over the lousy Skype connection, "you're on to something big there. The Greeks and the Persians were archenemies in every way."

"That was Alexander's downfall, wasn't it?" I pointed out. "He let the Persians prostrate themselves before him, and his generals were furious. Greeks can kneel, but



they can't tolerate the idea of prostration—putting the head at the same level as the feet. Reason has to stay above all."

Mike was now hot on the case. "Okay, let's see where we can take this. But we need to fit it into what we know about Persian beliefs. Like Zoroastrianism. I know a little about that. Mainly Lucasian Zoroastrianism."

"Lucasian?"

"George Lucas. Star Wars. Heavily Zoroastrian."

"Mike, I thought professors learned philosophy from books!"

"For sources, you need books. But to really understand philosophy, I watch sci-fi fantasy and my kid's videos. Horton Hears a Who. Toy Story. Wreck-It Ralph..."

For the first time, I felt embarrassed of my ignorance, talking to such an erudite scholar.

"I haven't watched much of those," I admitted. "But I do know that whenever

there's a heretic in the Talmud, it's most commonly some sort of dual-power thing—the belief that there are two gods, one good and one bad, in constant conflict. And Isaiah has this line about the G-d who 'forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil.' That even made it into the liturgy—slightly altered so we won't have to talk about evil."

"Right. The Force. There's a dark side of the force and the light side. Goodness comes from the light side. Evil from the dark side. But there has to always remain a balance in the universe."

"Mike, that's Obi Wan Kenobi speaking. Seriously, what does George Lucas know of the ancient Persian mind?"

"Well, in the ancient Persian mind, the good force eventually wins. But until that point, the competition is fierce. It's the total opposite of the post-Socratic Greek cosmos, where the supreme intellect is totally removed from what is going on down here. For the Persians, the supreme deity was totally involved in all the messiness down here, locked into battle to the finish."

"So what's random about that?" I asked.

"Not sure."

Gotta hand it to Mike. That's a real philosopher—one who can say he doesn't (yet) know.

"Besides," I said, "Haman wasn't even Persian. He was an Amalekite, one of those nefarious, icon-of-evil tribesmen, descendants of our Uncle Esau, locked in trans-generational nemesis with the Jewish People and their G-d until the end of time."

"Oh yes, Amalek! The essence-core of evil embodied. The ultimate of chutzpah and radical badness."

Pause. Tense pause. Not supposed to happen on video-chat. Except with philosophers. And then:

"I got it."

"Tell me."

"The ideal, consummate, archetypical setting for an Amalekite, the stage upon which his true essence could be manifest, was Persia."

The ideal setting for an Amalekite, where his true essence could be manifest, was Persia.

“Don’t get it.”

“Look,” says Mike, “Persians, like we said, took this whole struggle of good and evil thing very seriously. But this Amalekite comes along with his mega-chutzpah, laughs the whole thing off and says ‘It’s all a big game.’ That’s what Haman did when he threw the dice. He said, ‘Evil, shmevil—I’m beyond all that. It’s an illusion. Above the game, there’s no good and no evil, no right and no wrong, no time and no change, and nothing really matters. And no reason I can’t win.’”

“Yes,” I chimed in, “it says something like that. It says that Haman wanted to reach to a point beyond the cosmic order where dark and light are all the same. I learned that, but I can’t say I really get it.”

Mike explained: “Think of the games people play—board games, video games or sports, games of skill, games of chance or games that combine both. From the inside, a game is a fierce competition. From the outside, it’s a set of artificial rules. The rules determine what’s good and what’s bad, who wins and who loses. But rules can’t take sides. The game itself has no sympathy for the downtrodden, no pride for the valiant, no boos for the villain, no hurrahs for the hero. If it would, it would no longer be a game, but a play.”

“So the game is the universe?” I asked.

“Right. The Persian gods were all within the natural world, pawns in the game. Even when the Achaemenian dynasty adopted a singular god of light and goodness, it was a god still within the system, caught up in this struggle with evil. But Haman saw through all that. He had the chutzpah to jump beyond the system.”

Mike was pouring himself some more wine, his hand shaking, visibly excited. But he kept talking.

“Haman knew full well that within the game, he doesn’t have a chance. Sure, the Jews had assimilated and fallen into decadence. But nonetheless, he was of the dark side and they of the side of light. Nothing he could do could win him enough favor to beat them at this game. And even if he did beat them this time, he would still be the villain, and they the hero.”

“But, in his Amalekite chutzpah, Haman saw himself beyond the gods, above the game. He said, ‘The Jews and I are on a level playing field, because nothing really matters. There’s always a chance I can win, just because that’s where the dice might happen to fall.’”

“And, in his mind,” I pointed out, “that’s just how they fell after all—on his side.”

“On his own,” Mike ranted on, “Haman was nothing but a cold, demoniacal atheist. In ancient Persia, he made himself into the ultimate symbol of nihilism and despair.”

“Okay, fine.” I interjected (Mike could have gone on for hours). “But then we won. So why do we call it Purim? Makes no sense”

“Why not?”

“Mike, we’re celebrating a miracle. We’re not seeing this as some arbitrary fluke of chance. Celebrating a miracle means you recognize that this was a deliberate act of G-d. That’s the opposite of what Haman believed, that it’s just “stuff happens.” And here we’re calling it Lottery Day! Not Miracle Day. Like, Stuff Happens Day!”

“That’s a problem,” admitted Mike, as though pondering a stalemate.

“No problem,” I answered. “Just let me show you this wild and extreme Midrash.”

“Show me.”

Midrash Rabba, Chapter Two. Rabbi Avahu said:

From the very beginning of the world, G-d foresaw the deeds of the righteous and the deeds of the wicked. “And the earth was chaos and empty”—these are the deeds of the wicked. “And G-d said, ‘Let there be light!’”—these are the deeds of the righteous.

But from this we do not know which He desires—whether the deeds of these or the deeds of those. Once, however, it is written, “And G-d saw the light that it was good”—now I know that He desires the deeds of the righteous and He does not desire the deeds of the wicked.

“Yes! I get it.”

“Really?”

“Okay, this is how it works—step by step.

For the Persians, G-d is stuck inside the system, like I explained. He doesn’t choose good, He is good.”

I nod. Mike’s on a roll. No interruptions.

“The Greek philosophers had G-d sort of outside the system, but not really. He’s the ultimate intellect, so the more ideal, perfect and whole anything is, the closer it is to G-d. So He also doesn’t have real choice. He has to choose the most ideal. If it’s not perfect and unchanging, He can’t have anything to do with it.”

Nod again.

“For Haman, the Amalekite, there is no choice, but rather, like I said, stuff just happens. The ultimate origin of being doesn’t really care. He only pretends to care, within the game. But in truth, in His reality, everything is equally insignificant. Haman and the Jews are all the same up there.”

Bigger nod.

“But to the Jews, G-d is perfectly free. He’s not the universe, or the game, or even The One who must stay beyond all. That’s also a peg to stick Him on. He’s not a being inside the system of being—so He has no peg. He could decide nothing at all and nothing would be. Or He could decide things would be and let it all just run in chaos. Or He could decide that things would be and say that light is good and the good will win in the end and the bad will be vanquished.”

Very big nod. I even got some words in: “The Jewish G-d says, ‘Darkness and light are both my creations. But I’m free, so I can choose light.’”

“But really,” Mike jumps in, “He’s not affected by that choice. He’s beyond all that. It’s all the same to Him.”

“Wrong,” I said.

“Why?” he asked.

At that point, I had to tell Mike the example my teacher, Reb Yoel Kahn, gave, strange as it sounds. Reb Yoel said, “I know this may sound strange, but it’s the closest example I can think of for G-d deciding what He really wants: A two-year old saying, ‘I want that!’”

And, yes, we thought that was very strange. So Reb Yoel explained:

When an adult decides he wants something, it’s because that thing has some quality that

fills some need. So, as much as that need is important to him, and as much as that thing fulfills it, that's how much he wants it. Does all of him want it? No. The proof? Provide something better for less and see how fast he changes his mind.

But when a two-year old says, "I want that!"—it's not the that. It's not even the want. It's entirely about the only recently discovered I.

And so, there is no cell of that screaming, cute little monster that is not entirely absorbed in this wanting. The proof? Try providing an alternative. Try convincing a two-year old to make a different choice. If it weren't for the power of distraction, those little guys would tear the world to pieces with their I wants.

So I explained that to Mike. And I explained that G-d wants good and not evil in the same sort of way. It's not a rational decision due to the qualities of the desired object, just as it isn't arbitrary. It's a decision of the I. And so it is absolute and all-consuming. Once He decides, all of Him is invested in that decision.

"So," Mike says, "you're telling me that G-d is defined by this desire?"

"Absolutely no and no again! He's not defined by anything. If He were defined, He wouldn't be G-d anymore. He would be another thing that is. The fact that He wants this and not that tells us nothing about Him. He wants it because He wants it."

"Of course."

"But once He wants it, all of Him wants it, totally and absolutely."

I paused to down some Purim wine. Then:

"There's a whole passage in the Tikunei Zohar about this. Here's one line:"

From the preface to Tikunei Zohar:

No thought can grasp you.... You are He that is wise, but not with knowable wisdom. You are He that is understanding, but not with knowable understanding. There is no place where You are known.

"Get that?" I asked. "He is wisdom because He decides to be wisdom—and therefore He is not defined by that wisdom. And yet He is there, all of Him, within that

wisdom. And so the wisdom becomes, at its core, unknowable wisdom. And the same with kindness and compassion, and all the characteristics by which we know Him. He is found there within them, all of Him, and yet He is not grasped within any of them."

"This is getting paradoxical," says Mike. "You know, I'm a philosopher. I experience deep trauma approaching paradox."

"How do you get along with two-year olds?"

"Not so well either."

"But you watch your kids' videos."

That sparked it. "Yes!" he exclaimed, "It's like one of those scenes at the climax of a classic sci-fi thriller. The hero and the villain meet face to face in their final duel. As the light sabre of the hero lies poised to finally vaporize the villain, the villain grins. And he pulls his last strategy, the one that tells us who he truly is. He says, 'So you destroy me, so what? Does that make you a hero? Eventually, you will die as well, as has every mortal. It's all a game. The whole universe is a game. You are no hero, I am no villain. There is no meaning. There is no purpose.'"

"And then," he concluded (almost), "The hero has to come to a deeper realization. He has to resolve that reality does have meaning. That good and evil are real. They lie at the very core of all that is real. And that is how he wins."

"Just as we won on Purim," I explained, "when we said we are Jews no matter what. That's when we really got it. Got that Torah is real."

I couldn't stop there:

"So that's what we're saying about the chaos thing—the lottery. That's the name Purim. It's the essence-point that's beyond reason, beyond any desire, beyond change. And yet, once a choice is made, even that essence-point is totally involved in every consequence of that choice. It's as though the wheel of fortune got stretched out into a line with an arrow at the end pointing towards a destiny of good."

Mike, like most brilliant thinkers, is quite ADD. I hope he was following, because I went on:

"So that all of G-d is found in every cell of His creation. Nothing is necessary, but

all is deliberate. Nothing must be, but all is desired. Desired by all of G-d, even at the very core, that which is totally beyond."

Mike was pondering. He sipped a little more wine.

Then his face lit up, and he exclaimed excitedly "So when Haman threw the dice..."

Me: Unbeknownst to him, it actually came out in favor of the Jews.

Mike: So G-d does play dice with the universe! But the dice are loaded!

Me: No!

Mike: Why no?!

Me: Because they are still dice! It's random!

Mike: But He chooses how it will fall! You can't have both at the same time!

We're in a yelling match at this point, banging our fists on a table stretched to opposite ends of the globe. I can see the wine splattering on the screen of Mike's iPad.

"Sure you can have both at the same time," I said. "You could have a statistical average that is totally random, but always ends up being in favor of the good side nonetheless."

"So is it random or not random?"

"Yes."

"Yes what?"

"Yes, it is both. And that's why we call it Purim—lottery day. Chance. Random. Chaos. To say that even the essence-beyond-everything is invested in the choice."

Pause. Or maybe it was a bad connection.

Meekly: "Tzvi, you have to understand. I'm a philosopher. Paradox is just...well...very hard for me."

"It's okay, Mike. You can still be a philosopher, even with paradox. Paradox is a window on the infinite. The only window."

"I guess that's why life is so paradoxical."

"I guess."

"Unlike Aristotle."

"L'chaim."

"L'chaim!" [EM](#)

Tzvi Freeman is the author of a number of highly original renditions of Kabbalah and Chassidic teachings, including the universally acclaimed Bringing Heaven Down to Earth. Tzvi's books are available online at Chabad.org.