

נ"ה



JUDAISM

Facts and
Fundamentals



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FORWARD

RABBI MOISHE MAYIR VOGEL

It is my pleasure and privilege to present the Aleph Handbook. It is a guide to Jewish thought and practice; and it has been designed to help you observe Jewish traditions both in and out of prison. While we have tried to make the Aleph Handbook as “user friendly” as we could, we would like to continue making it even better. Therefore, we invite readers to submit suggestions and, of course, corrections/clarifications.

For information about specific Jewish holidays and observances, please read the National Liberator as well as our other periodicals. We also invite you to participate in Aleph’s correspondence courses. Please contact Aleph, Northeast region for more information.

If you haven’t been receiving material from Aleph, please ask your rabbi, chaplain, or family member to sign you up for our mailings through our website, www.alephne.org. You should also encourage your rabbi, chaplain, or family members to visit the site often, since we post new articles and information regularly.

Maintaining one’s Jewish identity can be a challenge; especially, in prison. But there are several things to remember that can put the challenge in perspective. First, Judaism is a process, not a destination. If, for whatever reason, you can’t fulfill a particular mitzvah at the moment, you will hopefully have the opportunity again soon.

Second, G-d does not judge a person by the standards of our great rabbis. Rather, G-d judges each one according to his/her own path of development. G-d wants to know; are you trying to improve yourself spiritually? It’s a question each of us must answer.

Third, the courts have indicated that prison officials must make reasonable accommodations for Jewish observance. If there is a policy (not a specific problem) that interferes with your right to follow Jewish traditions, please have your rabbi, chaplain or family member contact us.

Finally, I would like to recognize the members of the Aleph, NE region, including Leibel Estrin and Leah Teitelbaum who worked on The Aleph Handbook, and all our volunteers and staff, for all your efforts on behalf of our fellow Jews.

5th Teves, 5766

EDITORS NOTE

LEIBEL ESTRIN

This book is dedicated to my beloved wife Fraida Sara, and our children, Raphael Yitzchak Ephraim ob”m, Chaya Feiga Reizl, ElieMelech Chaim, Sholom DovBer, Kaila Rochel, Nechama Rivka, and Yisroel Tzvi Hirsh.

I would also like to thank the *Mashpia* (spiritual advisor) of Pittsburgh’s Chabad community, HaRav Yisroel Meir ben Reb Zvi Hirsh Altein who reviewed this manuscript. His patience and his perception were truly remarkable. May he and his wife be blessed with many years of good health and *nachas* from their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

The *Sefer Yetzira* (Book of Creation) states the “first in thought is last in deed.” To that end, this book is dedicated to the Rebbe, M.M. Schneerson. According to the Zohar, “When the *tzadik* departs, he is to be found in all the worlds even more than in his lifetime.” In other words, the Rebbe continues to guide Jews throughout the world with boundless love and affection.

Kislev 5766

INTRODUCTION

How would you define Judaism?

Anthropologists might claim that Judaism is a culture. Theologians would claim that it is a religion. Sociologists might venture that Jews, coming in as many shades and colors as they do, constitute a distinct culture.

True, Judaism has cultural and religious elements. It also has racial components. For example, all members of the priestly tribe dating back to Aaron have similar genetic markers. Yet Judaism is much more.

In essence, Judaism is a way of life. It prescribes and proscribes the actions of man from the day of his birth to the time of his passing. Judaism is also a process; one that helps man progress from being centered on self to being centered on G-d. Finally, Judaism represents a way of looking at the world; a view of reality that sees the hand of Heaven behind the seemingly random events of history.

*“In essence,
Judaism is
a way of life.”*

Yet what does it mean to be a Jew? What makes Judaism different from other religions? How do we know that the Torah is “true”?

These are just some of the questions we hope to cover in *The Aleph Handbook*. We will look at the roles, responsibilities, and rewards of being Jewish. We will address some of the myths and mistaken beliefs people have about Judaism. We will suggest how you can follow Jewish tradition while in prison. And we’ll show you how to strengthen your personal relationship with your Creator through understanding, as well as belief.

Yet *The Aleph Handbook* is only an overview; which means that it will not cover a lot of situations that you will face. Whenever these occur, you should contact a rabbi who truly knows Jewish law and tradition and who understands constraints that you face, and who can recommend the path that’s right for you.

G-D

WHAT IS G-D?

The core of Judaism, and of all existence, is G-d.

Maimonides (1135 -1204) , the great Jewish philosopher, physician, and scholar, opens his *Mishneh Torah* by saying, “The foundation of foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence. All the beings of the heavens, the earth, and what is between them came into existence only from the truth of His Being.” This statement about the existence of G-d dictates several things.

First: There is only one Prime Cause and Force in the universe. G-d existed before creation and will continue to exist forever. He is both eternal and unchanging. Anything, and everything including time and space, the stars, the forces of nature, good and evil, mankind, and all of existence derive from, and are totally united with G-d. Nothing exists outside of G-d.

Second: G-d has no physical form, yet is perfect in every manner of being. Maimonides states, “G-d is one. He is not two or more than two, but one. The oneness of any of the individual things that exist in the universe is unlike His unity.” In other words, G-d’s unity is both unique and indivisible. This also means that G-d has no shape, form, or matter. G-d is above and beyond anything that we can conceive. Again, we return to Maimonides, “He is the Knower. He is the Subject of Knowledge, and He is the Knowledge itself. All is one.”

Third: G-d is the vitalizing Force of existence. Some philosophies believe that G-d set up the world and monitors it from “afar,” allowing the cosmos to run on its own. This is similar to a watchmaker who installs a battery and lets the watch run, interceding only when “forced.”

Judaism rejects this concept. Although G-d’s presence is hidden from our mortal eyes, G-d continually sustains creation. If G-d withdrew His sustaining force even for the slightest second, everything would cease to exist.

Not only does G-d continually sustain creation, G-d actively guides all that occurs through *Hashgocha Protis*, “Divine Providence.” Rebbe Yisroel, the Baal Shem Tov (1700 - 1760) stated that every act contributes to fulfilling the Divine Plan. Even the leaves swaying in the wind express Divine Providence and Divine intent. As creations, we will never know the Divine intent behind a particular act; however, the Torah does teach us the Divine intent behind creation at large.

What is the Divine intent according to the Torah?

After describing the first six days of creation, the Torah states (*Beraishis* 2:3), "And G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because He rested from all His work that G-d created to do." The last two words imply that something remains "to do." What remains "to do" is man's duty to perfect himself and the world around him. In effect, man's job is preparing the world to be a proper dwelling place for G-d.

To help us accomplish that goal, G-d "blessed" each of us with a unique set of talents and capabilities that we can use to a) perfect our own soul and b) elevate "our portion of the world."

All this sounds very nice and noble, yet man is complex and faces many drives. How can the spiritual aspect of man deal with the very physical world in which we live?

It's a question that theologians, philosophers, scientists, and psychologists have been trying to address for centuries. About 70 years ago, Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl came up with an explanation, and perhaps, the answer.

Frankl believed that in previous generations, man's responsibilities to himself, his family, and his community gave meaning to his life. Recently, however, social/political systems (and to a certain extent, technology) have addressed most of our immediate needs, leaving us feeling empty and forcing us to search for meaning.

Frankl theorized that the inability to find acceptable meaning is at the root of addiction, aggression and/or depression. It's a phenomenal insight into man's psyche.

Theoretically, man should be satisfied after his basic needs are met; however, it's obvious that, in general, man wants or needs something more--and that is, to fulfill his or her role in perfecting creation. How do we know this?

When the Bible describes the creation of animals, it uses the Hebrew word *vay-eetzer*, "formed." This word contains the letter *yud*. When the Bible describes the creation of man, *vayeetzer* is spelled with only two *yuds*. This teaches us that man is essentially different from animals. Both man and animals have a vital soul with emotional and intellectual faculties. (In an animal, the emotion dominates. When man behaves properly, however, his intellect controls and guides his emotions.)

Besides the vital soul, man has an "intellectualizing" soul. It is the soul symbolized

by the extra *yud* in *vayeetzer*. Properly channeled, it enables man to transcend himself. For example, it is what leads man to art, music, philosophy, and religion. It is that which drives man to seek meaning.

Jews have a third soul, as well. It is called a *Nefesh Elohis*, a G-dly soul. According to Rabbi Shneur Zalman, the *Nefesh Elohis* is truly a part of G-d Above. Like a flame that soars upward, the G-dly soul yearns to merge with its Creator. However, it cannot without losing its identity. So, in His kindness, G-d gave us the Torah. It expresses Divine will and wisdom and enables the soul to "connect" to G-d without becoming nullified. The Torah helps us satisfy our inner drive for meaning in our life, while providing the tools we need to elevate the world around us.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. I am the L-rd
your G-d Who
has taken you
out of the land
of Egypt from
the house of
bondage. | 5. Honor your
father and
mother. |
| 2. You shall
have no other
gods before
Me. | 6. You shall not
murder. |
| 3. You shall not
take the Name
of the L-rd your
G-d in vain. | 7. You shall not
commit adul-
tery. |
| 4. Remember/
Observe the
Sabbath day to
keep it holy. | 8. You shall
not steal (i.e.,
kidnap people
to sell into slav-
ery) |
| | 9. You shall not
bear false wit-
ness. |
| | 10. You shall
not covet. |

The word “Torah” is related to the Hebrew word *horaah*, which means “instruction.”

The Torah is the guidepost for our life. The Torah consists of five “books.”

1. *Beraishis* (Genesis) begins with Creation and describes the lives of the Patriarchs, *Avrohom* (Abraham), *Yitzchok* (Isaac), and *Yaakov* (Jacob).
2. *Shmos* (Exodus) describes the “birth” of the Jewish people through their sojourn in, and liberation from Egypt. It also contains the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.
3. *Vayikra* (Leviticus) describes the life of the Jewish people in the desert and the service of the tribe of Levi in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle).
4. *Bamidbar* (Numbers) continues describing the journeys of the Jewish people in the desert.
5. *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) restates the laws given by *Moshe* (Moses). It ends with the death of Moses at the border of the Land of Israel.

The Five Books of Moshe are called the Written Law. However, when Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai, he received the Oral Law, too. It is a body of knowledge that is required to explain the Torah. For example, the Torah contains the commandment to wear phylacteries, *Tefillin*. But it does not tell us what *Tefillin* should look like, how to make them, or how they should be worn. The Oral Law supplies this information.

At first, the Oral Law was passed down from teacher to disciple. When it was feared that the tradition may be lost, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi committed it to writing. This became the *Mishna*. However, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi wrote in a very abbreviated style, so the sages recorded their tradition of understanding in the *Gemarah*. Together, the Six Orders of the *Mishna* and the 60 *Mesechtas* “tractates” of the *Gemarah* make up the *Talmud*.

When Jews speak of the “Bible,” we not only mean the Torah and *Talmud*, they mean other sacred literature as well. In Hebrew, the Bible is known as the *Tanach*, an acronym for *Torah*, *Neviim* (Prophets), and *Kesuvim* (Writings). The Prophets consist of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, as well as 12 Minor Prophets. *Kesuvim* includes Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemia, and Chronicles.

The *Tanach* (Bible) is a treasure house of wisdom. No other society, culture or religion has anything that compares to it. It is the ultimate expression of the way man should live and what can happen if man follows his own drives. For that reason, the Torah is called by several popular expressions, *Toras Chaim*, *Toras Moshe*, and *Toras Emes*.

TORAS CHAIM, THE “TORAH OF LIFE”

The Torah does not just deal with man’s relationship to G-d, it covers every facet of life, including:

Agriculture: “You shall not plant the vineyard with mixed seeds.” (*Devarim* 22:9)

Business: “A perfect and just weight shall you have; a perfect and just measure shall you have.” (*Devarim* 25:15)

Ethics: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (*Vayikra* 19:18)

Civil Law: “If indeed the theft be found in his hand, whether an ox or donkey or sheep, still alive, he must pay double.” (*Shmos* 22:3)

Furthermore, events in the Bible are not just “stories” of the past. They are also paradigms, allegories, and models for us to use in the present and future. For example, Noah built an ark to protect himself from the floodwaters of the world. So too, we must protect ourselves from influences that can overwhelm us.

Noah survived by building and entering an ark. The Hebrew word *teiva*, ark, can also mean a “word.” According to Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, we too should seek refuge... in words of Torah. These words will give us the strength and the protection we need to withstand the storms around us.

Obviously, we can read the Torah on many levels. However, to do it properly, you need to follow a number of rules that were handed down by the rabbis. For example, perhaps the most misquoted verse in scripture is, “But if there be a fatality, then you shall award life for life; an eye for an eye, a tooth for tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot; a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise.” (*Shmos* 21:24) According to the secular world, the verse teaches that one who injures another should be punished by receiving the same injury in return.

This does not make sense for a number of reasons. Let's say that a robber took money from a photographer and injured his eye in the process. According to the previous line of reasoning, we would have to injure the thief's eye to execute justice. However, most of us would agree that a photographer's eye is "important" to his work. Injuring the thief's eye, therefore, would not be the same.

As a result, the literal meaning of "an eye for an eye" cannot be correct. The Torah must be referring to something else. How do we know? The Hebrew term used in the phrase "eye for eye" is *tachas*, which means "in place of." Elsewhere in the Torah, it refers to monetary compensation. So the Rabbis knew that it must mean monetary compensation here, as well.

If the Torah wanted us simply to pay someone we injured, why didn't it say so? The answer is, we could easily have missed the point! The Torah is also emphasizing that we must feel another person's pain as if it were our own. If we could simply "get away with" paying someone for damages, we could easily lose the compassion that we are supposed to feel. Therefore, the Torah of Life teaches us an "eye for an eye."

TORAS MOSHE, THE "TORAH OF MOSES"

"From a historical perspective, modern science supports the Torah's view of creation of earth."

The Torah was given to the Jewish people through *Moshe Rabbeinu* ("Moses our teacher.") Some philosophies and religions try to mimic the role of Moses. These religions believe that the man of G-d serves as a *gatekeeper*. You have to go through him first before you can reach G-d.

Judaism rejects this. Judaism teaches that every person has a direct, special, and personal relationship to G-d. When we pray, we pray directly to G-d, not to anyone else. We are permitted to ask Moses, any *tzadik*, "righteous person," or even a departed loved one to "intercede" on our behalf. However, we don't have to go to, or through, anyone, and that includes Moses our teacher.

So what was Moses' role? Moses served as a *facilitator*. His main purpose was to help people strengthen their relationship with G-d. Yet Moses served another purpose as well. In addition to a facilitator, Moses served as a *dugma chaya*, a living example of what man could achieve. Finally, the Zohar calls Moses the "faithful shepherd." This could also be translated as "a shepherd of faith." Moses nurtured and sustained the faith of the Jewish people in G-d.

TORAS EMES, THE "TORAH OF TRUTH"

The Hebrew word for truth, *Emes*, is spelled *aleph, mem, tes*. These are the first, middle, and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This teaches us that one quality of truth is consistency from beginning to end. The Torah has that quality. It is consistent to its own set of rules from the first word in the Book of *Beraishis* to the

last word in the Book of *Devorim*. For example, G-d has several descriptive names in the Torah, such as *Elokim, Adoshem*, etc. Each name refers to a specific quality or attribute. Every time that particular name appears in the Torah, it is describing G-d as He is revealed through that attribute.

There's another aspect to the Torah of Truth. The Torah states that first there was water, then plants, then animals, and finally man. Scientists agree with this evolution. The Torah even alludes to "the big bang theory" of the creation of the universe. The first sentence of the Torah is inaccurately translated as "In the beginning G-d created the Heavens and the Earth."

Translating it accurately, the Torah states, "The beginning (of creation) was produced by the Divine power that relates to nature, which first created *hashamaym*, heaven, and then created earth." The word *hashamaym* actually combines two

"G-d gave the Torah to the Jews, through Moses, on Mount Sinai, the 6th of Sivan in the year 2448. More than 600,000 men between the ages of 20 and 60 experienced this revelation."

TORAH

words, *aish* “fire” and *mayim* “water.” In essence, *hashamaym* describes a hot gaseous nebula! According to the Torah, this nebula represented the process of beginning. It then cooled and resulted in the planet Earth!

At this point, you might be thinking, “What about the age of the earth? Haven’t scientists found that it is several billion years old?” Scientists use carbon dating to measure the age of objects. It is based on the fact that carbon decays at a steady rate, all things being equal. But the fact is, all things weren’t equal. The earth may have had greater amounts of ozone or higher temperatures and pressures which would have changed the results. In other words, the assumption behind carbon dating is suspect.

Just for the sake of argument, let’s assume that the scientific view is accurate and the world is “billions of years old”. We can still resolve any conflict. An omnipotent G-d created the world in seven days. Had the results evolved according to nature, it would have taken billions of years. In other words, science measures phenomena in terms of cause and effect, but the world was created in a supra-natural way.

There is still another way to demonstrate the truth of the Torah. For example, the Torah states that an animal must have split hooves and chew its cud to be *kosher*. The Torah names four animals that have one sign of *kashruth* but not two: the hare, the hyrax, the camel and the pig. No other animals have ever been found with one, but not both signs!

We could go on presenting “proofs,” but perhaps the greatest testimony to the truth of Torah is the revelation of G-d on Mount Sinai. Virtually every other religion was started by an individual who claimed some type of revelation. This individual shared his knowledge with a select group of disciples who taught the masses.

Judaism is different. Judaism (and the Jewish nation) came into being when G-d gave us the Torah on Mount Sinai, the 6th of Sivan in the year 2448. This revelation occurred in front of over 600,000 men between the ages of 20 and 60! Every one of them experienced the same revelation. So did their wives and children. In addition, many non-Jews who had left Egypt with the Jewish people also experienced it.

The point is, *millions of people witnessed and experienced* the giving of the Torah. They transmitted what they saw to their children and their children’s children, down

MITZVOS

THE 613 COMMANDMENTS

through the generations until today. No other religion, philosophy, or belief has anything that can compare to the Revelation of G-d on Mount Sinai!

MITZVOS, THE COMMANDMENTS

The Torah contains many commandments.

The Hebrew word *mitzvah*, commandment, is related to the Hebrew word meaning “connection” or “joining.” A *mitzvah* joins the One who commands (G-d) with the one who obeys (man). When most people think of commandments, they think of the 10 Commandments. These were written on tablets and given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The 10 Commandments are found in *Shmos*, 20:1-14.

In addition to the 10 Commandments, there are many other commandments in the Torah. In all, the Torah contains 613 *mitzvos*. There are 365 negative *mitzvos* (you shall not..) and 248 positive *mitzvos* (you shall...).

The 365 negative commandments correspond to the blood vessels that are divided into 365 sections. The negative commandments also correspond to the 365 “organs” in the soul and to the 365 days of the solar year. Fulfilling a negative commandment purifies the body and soul, elevating them to greater holiness.

The 248 positive commandments correspond to 248 bones (sections) in the human body and 248 “organs” in the soul. Fulfilling a positive commandment strengthens and enhances the relationship of the body and soul to the Creator.

In addition to these 613, there are seven *mitzvos* of the sages. They were decreed to enrich our relationship to G-d. The seven are:

Lighting candles before *Shabbos*

Celebrating *Hanukah*

Celebrating *Purim*

Ceremoniously washing hands before eating bread

Making a blessing before eating or drinking and for certain occasions

Saying *Hallel* (Psalms of praise) on holidays

Turning an area into a private domain by using a technique called an *eruv*

The total number of commandments, therefore, is 620. By Divine Providence, the Torah section containing the 10 Commandments has 620 letters!

Most of the Torah's commandments only apply when we have the Holy Temple, a king, and a sovereignty over Biblical Israel. Others apply to a king or high priest. As a result, only about 80 *mitzvos* apply today. Men are obligated to perform these commandments. Women are exempt from performing positive mitzvos that are associated with a specific time, such as wearing *tefillin*. However, women do perform three positive *mitzvos* (that also apply to men), the *mitzvah* to separate a portion of dough to recall the portion that was given to the priests, the *mitzvah* of lighting candles before *Shabbos* and *yomim tovim* (Jewish holidays), and the laws regarding family purity.

The Nature of the Mitzvos

Even though the concept of a *mitzvah* is spiritual, virtually all the *mitzvos* deal with physical things. For example, women need to physically kindle *Shabbos* lights. Men must wear *tefillin* on weekdays. The idea is that these *mitzvos* not only connect G-d to man, they also elevate the physical world, thereby preparing it to be a fit dwelling place for G-d's presence. The act (whether it is in speech or deed) is called the "body" of the *mitzvah*. However, *mitzvos* also have a "soul" and that consists of the energy, concentration, and intention behind it. For example, one can put on *tefillin* while half-asleep and mumbling the words of prayer. Did you perform the *mitzvah* of wearing *tefillin*? Yes, you fulfilled your obligation. Was it the best way to perform the *mitzvah*? Not really.

On the other hand, you can concentrate on the meaning of *tefillin* as you don them and remind yourself of its significance often during prayer. You fulfilled your religious obligation, just as above, but it was an entirely different experience.

The energy, concentration and intention behind any act is called the *kavana*. The more *kavana* that you have, the "higher" the *mitzvah* goes in the heavenly spheres and the greater its ability to draw down Divine light and blessing. (See also *Kavana* in the chapter on Prayer.)

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

According to the *Kabbalist* Rabbi Isaac Luria, everyone must fulfill all 613 *mitzvos* in thought, speech, and deed to perfect his soul. Whenever a person performs a *mitzvah*, he draws down blessings upon himself and into the world. After the person dies, he "experiences" the G-dly energy that he brought into the world as

a reward in Heaven.

If one commits a misdeed, he doesn't bring holiness into the world, but the opposite, G-d forbid. But G-d is merciful, so He gives us an opportunity to do *teshuva*, return/repentance, and rectify the situation while we're alive.

If a person fails or is unable to do *teshuva*, does not elevate his "portion" of the world, or needs to fulfill one or more *mitzvos*, he must come back down in this world! What's more, the person has to reincarnate again and again until he has rectified any misdeeds, completed his personal task of refining the world, and/or fulfilled all the *mitzvos* in thought, speech and deed.

Fortunately, most sages agree that we have gone through reincarnation enough times to be almost finished. The job of perfecting ourselves and the world at large will be completed through *Moshiach* (the Jewish Messiah).

The concepts of reward and punishment are linked to two other concepts, good and evil. In general, the non-Jewish world blames evil on Satan who battles G-d for control of the universe. Judaism rejects this rather childish view. Only one force (G-d) exists in the universe, not two. According to our sages, G-d created the potential for evil to enable man to exercise free will.

The *Zohar* (*Zohar* II, p. 163a) offers a parable: A king desired to test the moral strength of his son, so he orders a charming and clever woman to try to seduce the crown-prince. For the test to be valid, the "harlot" must use all her charms, without betraying her mission in the slightest way. Any imperfection on her part would mean disobedience (to the king) and failure of her mission. While the "harlot" uses all her seductive powers, she inwardly desires that the crown-prince should not succumb to them.

Our sages call the "harlot" the *yetzer hara*, our selfish (evil) inclination. It seeks to undermine one's relationship to G-d by focusing on one's selfish desires. Balancing the *yetzer hara* is the self-less inclination, the *yetzer tov*. It wants man to focus on G-d's will. It's up to man to decide which one he follows.

AFTER LIFE

HEAVEN AND HELL

AFTER LIFE

As we mentioned before, once a person passes away, he or she enjoys the G-dly radiation that comes from all the *mitzvos* they performed on earth. They also benefit when the living perform mitzvos (i.e., give charity, say *Kaddish*, etc.) on their behalf. At the same time, they stay connected to their beloved ones below, celebrating their joys and grieving together in their sorrows.

However, before a person's soul can enjoy the rewards of heaven, it must be "cleansed" of any association with the physical world and its impurities. Depending on the severity of the cleansing that is necessary, the soul may have to descend to *Gehinnom* or purgatory (from the verb "to purge"). Rabbi Yosef Wineburg, in *Lessons in Tanya*, explain the concept as follows:

"The purgatory (*Gehinnom*) where the soul is cleansed of the "stains" of sin so that it may enter Paradise to enjoy the radiance of G-d's glory, operates on the principle of "measure for measure," i.e., punishment in kind. Thus sins of commission caused by the heat of passion and lust are cleansed in a "*Gehinnom*" of fire," while sins of omission, due to insolence and coolness (i.e., lack of fervor), are cleansed in a "*Gehinnom* of Snow."

Once man has been purified, through the process of *Gehinnom* or through the efforts of those below, the person enters *Gan Eden*, the Garden of Eden.

As is obvious by now, the Jewish view of *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom* differs completely with the view taken by non-Jewish philosophers. They see heaven as a place of eternal bliss and "hell" as a place of eternal punishment.

Judaism rejects this. Good is permanent while evil is temporary. Eventually, good will win out and the world will become purified and elevated. At that point, G-d will resurrect every Jew who ever lived and all righteous non-Jews to experience an open revelation of G-d in all His Glory down here on Earth. This is the era of the ultimate reward, called *Olam HaBa*, the World to Come.

May we see it be speedily in our days!

BLESSINGS

BLESSINGS UPON RISING

BLESSINGS

Ideally, everything we do should in some way be linked to G-d, as our sages say, "In all your ways know Him" and "Let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven."

Blessings help us achieve that goal. The Hebrew word for "blessing" is *beracha*, which is linked to the Hebrew word *bircav*, meaning "(bending through) the knees." *Chassidic* philosophy explains that blessings draw down G-dly energy from above while elevating the earthly things below.

In general, blessings fall into three categories: blessings that connect

to the pleasure we receive from eating, drinking, etc.; blessings that are associated with Divine commandments; and blessings that acknowledge G-d in all our affairs. Our sages have ruled that it is not enough to merely "think" a blessing or prayer, it must be physically said so that you can hear it yourself.

Blessings Upon Rising

The first thing we say when we open our eyes in the morning is *Modeh Ani*. It is not really a blessing, but a prayer thanking G-d for giving us the gift of another day of life. We say *Modeh Ani* in bed, even before washing our hands and rinsing our mouth.

"What Blessing?"

Rabbi Nachman Raphael Kahan was exiled to Siberia for the "crime" of teaching Torah to children. After years of deprivation, he was finally allowed to return home. Entering the synagogue in Leningrad for the first time, a fellow Lubavitcher Chasid approached him and said, "When people see each other after a long absence, they typically say the blessing, "Shehechyanu" marking the occasion. But what blessing do you say when meeting someone that you have heard about, but never met before?" The Chasid didn't wait for Rabbi Kahan to think of answer, but said. "One takes a bit of whiskey, says "L'Chaim (to life!) and makes the blessing "Shehacol Neye Bidvaro!"

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*Modeh Ani Lifanecha
Melech Chai Vikayam
Shehechezarti Bi Nishmasi
B'Hemla
Rabba Emunasecha*

*"I offer thanks before You,
Living and Eternal King,
For You have restored my soul in me
With mercy.
Great is Your faithfulness."*

After saying *Modeh Ani*, we wash *negel vasser*, "nail water." While we sleep, the Jewish soul "reports on the day's activities" to the world above. At this point, only a "residue" of life remains in the body. This is comparable to 1/60th of death. When the soul returns to the body, the spiritual impurity associated with this level of death remains on the fingertips. Therefore, many people keep a vessel of water and a small basin by their bed at night. Then in the morning, even before getting out of bed, they first pour water over the right hand, then over the left, right, left, right, and left. After that, they get out of bed. Other people wash *negel vasser* as soon as possible after rising. Once fully dressed, we wash in the same way again, and say the following blessing:

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu "Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
Melech HaOlam King of the universe
Asher Kiddeshanu who has sanctified us
B'mitzvosov Vitzivonu Al with His commandments, commanding us
Natilas yadaim. to wash our hands."*

By making this blessing, we dedicate our hands (i.e., actions) to serving G-d. We follow this with a number of blessings that correspond to the activities that occur after we rise.

For example, the next blessing recognizes G-d's role in creating our physical body and the system that eliminates waste. In addition to saying this blessing now, we say it after leaving the bathroom and washing our hands as instructed above:

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu "Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
Melech HaOlam King of the universe
Asher Yatzar Es HaAdam Who formed Man
Beh Chochma with wisdom
Uvoro Bo Nkavim, Nkavim, and created him with many orifices
Chalulim, Chalulim, Galui and many cavities. It is revealed
V'Ydua Lifnei Kisei Cvodecha and known before Your Throne of*

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*She Im Yesasaim Echad Maihem
O Im Yipaseach Echad Meihem
Ei Efshar Lhiskayem Afilu Sha ah
Echas. Baruch Atoh Ado-noi
Rofeh Kol Basar
U'Mafli Laasos.*

*Glory
that if one of them were blocked
or if one of them were opened,
it would impossible to exist even for
one moment. Blessed are You
Who heals all flesh
And performs wonders."*

The following prayer is similar to *Modeh Ani*, yet uses the name of G-d:

*Elo-hai, Neshama Shenasata Bi "My G-d, the soul that You gave to me
Tahora Hee is pure
Atah Berasa, Atah Yetzartah, You created it. You formed it.
Atah Nefachta Bi, You breathed it into me.
V'Atah M'Shamra b'kirbi You guard it in me
V'Atah Asid Litla Mimeni And eventually You will take it from me
U'lhachazira Bi Lasid Lavo and return it into me in the Time to
Come.
Modeh Ani Lfanecha Ado-noi Olo-hai I thank you, L-rd my G-d,
V'alohai Avoisai, and G-d of my fathers,
Ribon Kol HaMaasim Master of all deeds,
Adon Kol HaNeshomos L-rd of all souls.
Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Blessed are You L-rd
Hamachazir nshamos lfgarim meisim. Who restores souls to lifeless bodies."*

After referring to the descent of the soul into the body, we thank G-d for giving us the natural order of the world and the natural superiority of man in the following blessing. The word *sechvi* in the blessing below means "rooster" and teaches us that G-d created the natural order of life. It also means "heart," i.e., one grasps the concept so thoroughly that it is felt in one's heart. In this context, we thank G-d for giving us the ability to tell the difference between light (good) and darkness (evil):

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu "Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
Melech HaOlam King of the universe
Hanosain L'sechvi Vina who gives the rooster understanding
L'havchin Bain Yom Ubain Liela to discern between day and night."*

The following verse can also be read on many levels. In it, we thank G-d for both

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sight and insight:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Pokeach Ivrim *Who opens the eyes of the blind."*

When you are asleep, you are not in control of your movements. When you wake up, you take control of your body once more! The following blessing thanks G-d for giving us the ability to physically move our limbs. Therefore, even one who is incarcerated should say the following:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Matir Asurim. *Who releases the bound. "*

Most animals spend their lives facing the ground. In this blessing, we thank G-d for enabling us to live in an upright manner, both physically and spiritually:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Zokeif Kfufim. *Who straightens the bowed."*

Just like a body needs clothes for beauty and protection, the Jewish soul must be clothed in words of Torah and good deeds. This blessing thanks G-d for giving us the ability to clothe one's body and one's soul!

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Malbish Arumim. *Who clothes the naked."*

Usually, when we go to bed, we are very tired. Yet we wake up feeling much better. This blessing thanks G-d for giving us a new feeling of strength and of hope every day.

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
HaNosain Lyaeif Koach. *Who gives strength to the weary."*

Most (2/3) of the Earth is covered by water. In this blessing, we thank G-d for giving us dry land!

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Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Rokah HaAretz al Hamayim. *Who spread the earth over the waters."*

In the next blessing, we thank G-d for the ability to walk. Yet there is a deeper meaning as well. Each of us has a mission in life and G-d guides and directs us to perform that mission through Divine Providence. When we recognize that G-d is directing our steps from Heaven, we can feel much more secure in this world!

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Hamachin Mitzadei Gaver. *Who directs the steps of man."*

The following blessing is "tied in" with shoe laces. It thanks G-d for giving us what we need to go out and work, such as shoes!

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
SheAsah Li Kol Tzarchi. *Who has provided me with all my needs."*

According to our sages, the next blessing refers to a belt or sash that separates the more animal parts of our body from the more spiritual. It also symbolizes our strong attachment to G-d.

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Ozer Yisroel B'Gevurah. *Who girds Israel with might."*

The next blessing refers to our custom of wearing something on our heads. A head covering teaches us that G-d's wisdom is infinitely "greater" (i.e., incomparable) to our own!

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Oter Yisroel B'Sivara. *Who crowns the people Israel with*
glory."

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The next three blessings recognize the differences that exist among people. For example, a non-Jew can eat and drink everything. A slave receives food, clothing, and shelter from his master. And women are typically very sensitive to spirituality and G-dliness. As a result, they do not need to perform positive mitzvos connecting with specific times and events. Even though non-Jews, slaves, and women do not have to work as much on their relationship with G-d as Jewish men, nevertheless, we should not be jealous. Instead, we must thank G-d for the opportunities He has given us.

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu
Melech HaOlam
She Lo Asani Goy.* *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe
Who has not made me a non-Jew."*

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu
Melech HaOlam
She Lo Asani Oved.* *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe
Who has not made me a slave."*

(Women do not say the following)
*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu
Melech HaOlam
She Lo Asani Isha.* *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe
Who has not made me a woman."*

When we sleep, we aren't thinking. So, things that are very silly can appear very real. In the same way, the *Yetzer hara*, man's selfish inclination, can trick a person into erring; but only if that person is "sleeping" and not thinking about G-d. In the next blessing, we thank G-d for removing sleep from our eyes and we ask for His protection every day.

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu
Melech HaOlam
HaMavir Sheina Me'Aeini
Usnuma MaAfapai.* *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe
Who removes sleep from my eyes
and slumber from my eyelids."*

We make the following blessing over the ability to understand G-d's Torah by studying the *Talmud* (Oral Law) and its commentaries:

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu
Melech HaOlam* *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe*

BLESSINGS

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

*Asher Kiddeshanu
B'mitzvoso
Vitzsivanu
Al Divrei Torah.*

*Who has sanctified us
with His commandments,
commanding us
concerning words of Torah."*

The next blessing thanks G-d for giving us the written Torah, the Five Books of Moses.

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu
Melech HaOlam
Nosain HaTorah.* *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe
Who gives the Torah."*

Once we've made blessings over the Torah, we immediately recite some passages from it. In this passage, Aaron and his sons, who are *Cohanim*, priests, are commanded to bless the Jewish people. This three-part blessing comes to us in the merit of our forefathers, *Avraham*, *Yitzchok*, and *Yaakov*.

*V'yedaber Ado-noi el Moshe Laymore
Daber El Aaron V'el Banav
Co S'varchu
Es Bnai Yisroel,
Amar Lahem, Y'vorech'checha
V'Yishmarecha, Ya'er Ado-noi
Panav Aleicha Vichuneka.
Yisa Ado-noi Panav Aleicha
V'yaseim L'cha Shalom
V'samo Es Shmi Al
Bnai Yisroel
V'Ani Avarcheim* *And the L-rd spoke to Moses, saying
Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying
'Thus, shall you bless
the children of Israel
say to them, 'The L-rd bless you
and guard you. The L-rd make His
'face' shine upon you and grace you.
The L-rd turn His face to you
and grant you peace.
And they shall set My name upon the
children of Israel
and I will bless them.."*

BLESSINGS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

In addition to morning blessings, we also make blessings over food and on special occasions and situations. For example, before smelling different spices, say:

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu
Melech HaOlam
Borei Minei Bsamim* *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe
Who creates various spices."*

After hearing thunder, a hurricane, or an earthquake, say:

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SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Shecocho U'gvuroso Malai Olam *Whose power and might fill the world."*

Upon seeing lightning or shooting stars, say:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe*
Oseh Maasai B'raishis *Who re-enacts the work of creation."*

Upon hearing bad tidings, G-d forbid, say:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe,*
Dayan HaEmes *the true Judge."*

Upon hearing good tidings, say:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe,*
HaTov v'Hamativ. *Who is good and does good.*

There is a special blessing one says after recovering from a severe illness, crossing the sea or desert, leaving prison, or being rescued from a life-threatening situation. We only say it with a quorum (10 men) at a time when the Torah is read:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu *"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,*
Melech HaOlam *King of the universe,*
HaGomel *Who bestows goodness*
L:Chayavim Tovos *upon the culpable for He has*
Sh'Gmlani Tov. *bestowed goodness upon me."*

TSITSITH

MITZVAH OF TSITSITH

TSITSITH

Tzitsith are ritual fringes that are attached to a garment with four corners. The *mitzvah* of *tzitsith* is mentioned twice in the Torah:

"...they are to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to attach a thread of blue on the fringes of each corner. They shall be to you as tzitsith, and you shall look upon them and remember all the commandments of the L-rd and fulfill them, and you will not follow after your heart and after your eyes by which you go astray - so that you may remember and fulfill all My commandments and be holy to your G-d..." Bamidbar 15:38

"You shall make for yourself twisted cords upon the corners of your covering, wherewith you cover yourself." Devorim 22:12

Short-term, this mitzvah consists of one positive and one negative principle:

- a) to remind us of all the commandments so that we observe them.
- b) to prevent us from following the inclinations of our heart and eyes.

This *mitzvah* also has **long-term** goals:

- a) to remember and observe the commandments of G-d.
- b) to elevate ourselves to a level of sanctity and devotion to G-d.

How can the sight of the *tzitsith* help us actualize our spiritual side?

Tzitsith hints to the 613 precepts of the Torah: the numerical equivalent of the word *tzitsith* is 600. In addition, there are 8 threads, and 5 knots for a total of 613. The 5 knots indicate that we must bind ourselves to the Five Books of Moses, while eight threads suggest the eight organs that attract man to sin: the ears, eyes, mouth, nose, hands, feet, genitals, and the heart. *Tzitsith* remind man of his Divine obligation (the 613 precepts of the Torah) and of his need to guard against desires related to the organs mentioned.

Just like a uniform identifies a soldier, *tzitsith* is part of the uniform of a Jew. Many people wear a four-cornered wool or linen garment called a *talis koton* under their shirt so they can fulfill this *mitzvah*. Other people also wear *tzitsith* when they don

TSITSITH

MITZVAH OF TSITSITH

a large *talis* "prayer shawl" before praying.

Before putting on your *talis koton*, place the threads in your left hand, look at them to make sure that they haven't been torn off, and say this blessing

<i>Boruch Atah Ado-noy Elo-hai-nu</i>	<i>"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d</i>
<i>Me-lech Ho-Olom</i>	<i>King of the universe,</i>
<i>Asher Kid-shonu</i>	<i>Who sanctified us</i>
<i>B'mitz-vo-sov</i>	<i>with His commandments,</i>
<i>V'tzi-vonu</i>	<i>commanding us</i>
<i>Al Mitz-vas Tzitsith</i>	<i>concerning the mitzvah of tzitsith."</i>

What you need to know: *Tzitzith* are permitted in the BOP and in the DOC. (The four-cornered garment should be worn beneath one's shirt and the fringes should be tucked in so that they do not show).

TEFILLIN

LAWS OF TEFILLIN

TEFILLIN

The commandment to wear *tefillin* is found in *Devorim* 6:8 "*You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they should be for a reminder between your eyes.*"

Our sages explain that *tefillin* consist of two small leather boxes with leather straps. Each box contains four Torah sections inscribed on parchment. These passages cite:

- (1) The *Shema* (*Devorim* 6:4-9) - the Unity of the One G-d.
- (2) *Vehayah* (*Devorim* 11:13-21) - the concept of reward and punishment.
- (3) *Kadesh* (*Shmos* 13:1-10) - our duty to remember the redemption from Egyptian bondage.
- (4) *Vehayah* (*Shmos* 13:11-16) - the obligation of every Jew to teach his children (and students)

The *mitzvah* applies to men and boys ages thirteen and older. The *tefillin shel yad*, "hand-*tefillin*" are worn on the "weaker" arm. A right-handed person wears *tefillin* on his left arm. A left-handed person wears them on his right arm. In either case, the *tefillin* should rest against the heart, the seat of the emotions. The straps of the *tefillin* are wound seven times around the arm and three times around the middle finger of that hand. We wear the *tefillin shel rosh*, the "head-*tefillin*," at the hairline above the forehead, so it rests upon the seat of the intellect.

Wearing *tefillin* on the arm opposite the heart, and on the head, teaches us that we must submit our mind, heart and actions to the Almighty. It also teaches us that the intellect must rule over the emotions. Sadly, many people let their emotions control the mind, and then use their intellect to rationalize their behavior. Wearing *tefillin* helps us to overcome this tendency. It also helps us unite our intellect, emotion, and action, thereby devoting all our faculties to G-d.

The question can be asked, "If *tefillin* symbolizes devoting oneself entirely to G-d, shouldn't I wait until I become observant before wearing them? The answer is that each *mitzvah* has its own value, and its own reward. The fact that one does (or does not) do one *mitzvah* should not prevent the person from performing another. In addition, our sages say that the "One *mitzvah* leads to another." Eventually, the more you do and the more you learn, the more you will want to take on many *mitzvos*. In the meantime, though, wear *tefillin* even if you don't relate to it now.

There's another point that we should make. G-d gave us time so that we could spiritually grow, develop, and evolve. Putting on *tefillin* or performing any other *mitzvah* should be viewed as one more step along that path, one more way we connect to our Source.

SELECT LAWS OF TEFILLIN

Tefillin should only be worn on weekdays. On *Shabbos* and festivals, including *chol-hamoed*, (intermediate days of a festival), we do not wear *tefillin*. (In some congregations, however, *tefillin* are also donned on *chol-hamoed*.)

Tefillin are worn during the morning prayers. However, if for some reason it was impossible to wear them in the morning, you may don them later in the day, but not after sunset.

A person should stand when putting on *tefillin*.

Step 1. Take the hand-*tefillin* first out of its container, and position it on the biceps of the weaker arm. Adjust the *tefillin* so it rests against the heart.

Step 2. Before tightening the straps, recite the following blessing:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu "Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
Melech HaOlam King of the universe
Asher Kiddeshanu Who has sanctified us
B'mitzvosov Vitzsivanu with His commandments, commanding us
L'ho-niach Tefillin to put on *tefillin*."

One should not talk or gesture while putting on *tefillin*. If one made any type of interruption, say following blessing:

Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu "Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
Melech HaOlam King of the universe
Asher Kiddeshanu Who has sanctified us
B'mitzvosov Vitzsivanu with His commandments, commanding us
Al Mitzvos Tefillin concerning the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*."

Step 3. Tighten the strap by wrapping it over both the leather base of the hand-*tefillin* and his arm twice. You should now have three loops around the biceps in the shape of the letter *Shin*).

Step 4. Wrap the leather straps seven times down the length of your forearm, winding the remaining strap around your palm.

Step 5. Place the head-*tefillin* above the forehead, so that the knot in the back rests on the nape of the neck. Position the head-*tefillin* so that it is above the hair-line and centered between the eyes. Run the two straps down your front with the black sides facing outward.

Step 6. Unwind the strap from your palm. Loop it around the middle finger, around the lower phalanx near the palm, again around on the middle phalanx, and again around the lower phalanx. The shape should look similar to the letter *yud*. Wind the remaining strap around the palm. (The straps of both the hand- and head-*tefillin* must always be worn black side up.)

One should not interrupt the act of putting on *tefillin*. (The only exception is to answer "Amen" when hearing someone else making the blessing over *tefillin*.) The *tefillin* should be placed on the bare arm and without anything intervening. If for some reason you cannot put the hand-*tefillin* on, you can still don the head-*tefillin*, and vice versa. In each case, say the appropriate blessing, *L'Haneach Tefillin* over the hand-*tefillin* and *Al Mitzvos Tefillin* over the head-*tefillin*.

You should be constantly and respectfully aware of the *tefillin* while wearing them.

It is customary to remove the *tefillin* after morning service. On *Rosh Chodesh* (the first of the month), we remove them before *musaph* (the additional service of the morning.) (Those who wear *tefillin* on *chol-hamoed*, remove them before the *Hallel* prayer).

To remove your *tefillin*, stand, unwind the strap around the middle finger and wind it around the palm. Remove the head-*tefillin* using your "weaker" hand. Store the head-*tefillin* in the *tefillin* bag. Remove the hand-*tefillin* and place it in the bag. It is customary to put the head-*tefillin* on the right and the hand-*tefillin* on the left inside the bag.

When a *talis* "prayer shawl," is worn during prayer, it should be put on first. However, you should remove the *tefillin* before the prayer shawl once the services have concluded.

On *Tisha b'Av*, the *tefillin* are not put on before the morning service, but before

the afternoon service.

The *tefillin* must be handled with due respect and reverence. If you drop them, G-d forbid, you should give charity. Some men fast. (Ask your rabbi what to do.)

Prayer said while wearing *tefillin*

Say the *Shema*. We place our hand over eyes while saying the first line of *Shema*.

<i>She-ma Yis-ro-el</i>	<i>"Hear, O Israel,</i>
<i>Ado-noy Elo-hay-nu</i>	<i>the L-rd is our G-d,</i>
<i>Ado-noy Ech-od</i>	<i>the L-rd is One."</i>

You can find the complete *Shema* in the section on prayer.

What you need to know: The BOP permits *tefillin* to be part of the inmates property. As we go to print, there is renewed hope the DOC - PA will permit *tefillin* to be part of the personal property of every Jewish inmate. The Allegheny County Jail (Pittsburgh) permits *tefillin* to be held by the pod officer.

PRAYER

The Hebrew word for prayer, *tefila*, is related to the word, *p'llillim*, which means to "judge oneself." Prayer helps us work on ourselves so that we can become better people. At the same time, our sages compare prayer to Jacob's ladder that reached from earth to the Heavens. Prayer enables us to talk directly to G-d, thereby attaching ourselves to Him!

In general, our prayers fall into four groups. We praise G-d, thank G-d, confess our transgressions to G-d, and ask G-d to fulfill our requests. Many of these prayers were established by Ezra and the men of the Great Assembly around the time of the Second Temple. Over the next 800 years, the actual order and form of our prayers became fixed. These prayers were recorded in a *siddur*, which means "order." The oldest known *siddur* is that of Rav Amram Gaon, Head of the Yeshiva of Sura in Babylon (present-day Iraq). It is about 1100 years old.

PREPARING FOR PRAYER

Before praying, we should generate awe and love for G-d by concentrating on how he manifests His presence. This should be done in great detail, either from this world up to the highest spheres or from the highest spheres down to this lowly world. The idea is to realize how great G-d is and how He invests energy into all of creation, from the tiniest quark to the most massive black hole, as well as past, present, future, all derive from Him; and that there is no place devoid of Him.

Another approach is to consider one's own life; what one has done, where one is spiritually, what one can look forward to (the end of life.) Once a person realizes how far he or she is from G-dliness, one will desire to come close to G-d. This desire should drive one's prayers. Interestingly, the effort to pray is called *avodah*, which means service, e.g., service of the heart. In the book *My Prayer*, Rabbi Nissan Mindel explains:

"The plain meaning of *avodah* is "work." We work with a raw material and convert it into a refined and finished product. In the process, we remove the impurities, or roughness, of the raw material, whether it be a piece of wood or a rough diamond, and make it into a thing of usefulness or beauty. The tanner, for example, takes a raw hide and by various processes converts it into a fine leather.... *Tefilah*

(prayer) in the sense of *avodah* is the “refinery” where the impurities of character are done away with.”

In addition to formal prayers, Judaism also encourages us to “talk to G-d,” each in his/her own language and own way. This “conversation” can take place anywhere and about anything. Everything can be revealed—one’s hopes, fears, requests, and complaints. In fact, G-d desires our complete reliance on Him for all our needs, no matter how small, and so we are encouraged to express ourselves often.

Perhaps the greatest example of that self-expression is *Tehillim*, which literally means “praises” but more commonly is referred to as Psalms. King David composed most of them. Moses, and even Adam, also composed psalms. The 150 chapters of Psalms reflect virtually every emotion available to man. No other literature has ever come close to the beauty, power and simplicity of Psalms. It is unique, not only in its ability to express the days of our lives, but in the way Jews (and non-Jews) have adopted Psalms to express their own heart-felt needs. Perhaps the most well-known Psalm is Number 23:

A Psalm by David.

*The L-rd is my shepherd. I shall lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters.
He revives my soul;
He directs me in paths of righteousness for the sake of His Name.
Even if I will walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff – they will comfort me.
You will prepare a table for me before my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil; my cup is full.
Only goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life, and
I will dwell in the House of the L-rd for many long years .*

The 150 chapters of Psalms are divided into five books that correspond to the Five Books of Moses (Torah). They can also be divided into the days of the week and month. It is customary to say the Psalm that corresponds to one’s age. If a person is 30 years old, he/she would say the 31st Psalm because it is actually one’s 31st year.

KAVANA

Whether one is saying Psalms, praying, or performing a *mitzvah*, one should do it with energy, concentration and intention; this is known as *kavana*. Often, we do things mindlessly, out of habit. To a certain extent, *kavana* is the act of breaking that habit. Maimonides in his Laws of Prayer (4:16) writes, “*Kavana* means that the worshipper must clear his mind of all private thoughts and regard himself as standing before the Divine Presence. If his thoughts are wandering or occupied with other things, he should not pray. ... He should pray quietly and with feeling, not like one who is trying to unload a burden...”

There are a couple of “tricks” to help you with this challenge. One is to verbally tell yourself to “empty your head of irrelevant thoughts.” Another trick is to point to each word as you read it. Another trick is to speak the word loud enough for you to really hear and understand it.

SELECTION OF PRAYERS

The following selection of prayers taken from the daily prayer book.

A father is happiest when children love and respect each other. So, too, G-d shows His love and kindness on us when we show love, respect, and kindness to our Jewish brothers and sisters!

Hareini M'kabel Alai	“I take upon myself
Mitzvah Asaeh	the positive command
Shel V'ahavta	You shall love your neighbor
L'reyecha Kamocha	(your fellow Jew) as yourself.”

In general, there are three dimensions to existence: space, time, and soul, i.e., the person. This beautiful prayer links all three with a request for G-d’s blessings.

<i>Mah Tovv Ohalecha Yaakov Mishkanosecha Yisroel. V'ani B'rov Hasdecha Avo Beisecha Eshtachave el Heichal Kadshecha B'yirasecha. V'ani Sfilasi Lcha Ado-noi Es Ratzon Elo-him B'rov Chasdecha</i>	<i>“How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwelling places, O Yisrael And I, through Your great kindness come to your House; I bow to Your holy sanctuary in awe of You And may my prayer to you, L-rd be at an auspicious time. G-d, in Your abundant kindness</i>
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PRAYER

BARUCH SHEAMAR

Anani B'emes Yishecha. answer me with Your true salvation."

For 20 centuries, the Jewish people have prayed for the Third Holy Temple to be built, ushering in the Era of *Moshiach*. This brief prayer expresses those 2000 years of longing:

*Yehi Ratzon Milfanecha "May it be Your will before You
Ado-noi Elo-heinu V'elohay Avoseinu L-rd, G-d, and G-d of our fathers
She'yibane bais Hamikdash to rebuild the Holy Temple
Bimhere Biyameinu speedily in our days
V'san chelkeinu b'sorasecha and give us our portion in Your Torah."*

The next prayer beautifully describes our Creator and the Rock of our faith:

*Adon Olam Asher Mawlach "L-rd of the Universe Who reigned
B'term Kol Yitzer Nivrah Before anything was created;
L'ais Naasa B'Chevzto At the time when by His Will
Kol Azai All things were made,
Melech Shmo Nikrat then His Name was proclaimed King.
V'Acharae Kichlos HaKol And after all things will end,
Lvado Yimloch Norah Alone, the Awesome One will reign
V'hu Haya, V'hu Hoveh, He was, He is,
V'hu Yehyeh B'Sifara and He will be in glory.
V'hu Echad V'Ain Shaini He is One and nothing
L'Hamshil Lo L'Hachbira Can compare to Him, to consort with Him
B'Li Raishis, B'li Sachlis Without beginning, without end.
V'Lo HaOz V'Hamisra Power and dominion are His
V'hu Ali V'Chai Goali He is my G-d and my living Redeemer
V'tsur Chevli Bais Tzara The rock of my lot in a time of distress
V'hu Nisi Umanos Li And he is my banner and my refuge
Mnas Cosi B'yom Ekra My portion on the day that I call
B'yado Afkid Ruchi Into his Hand, I entrust my spirit
B'ais Ishan V'awira At the time that I sleep and when awake
V'im Ruchi Giviasi And with my soul and body
Ado-noi Li G-d is with me
V'Lo Ira I shall not fear."*

BARUCH SHEAMAR

PRAYER

SHEMA

This prayer introduces the portion of the morning service called "songs of praise." *Baruch SheAmar* contains the word, *boruch*, "blessed" thirteen times. It hints to G-d's 13 attributes of mercy. The number 13 is also the numerical value of the word, *echad*, meaning "One." Before saying the prayer, stand up, gather the front *tsitsith* of the *talis koton* or *talis gadol* and say:

*L'shaim Yichud "For the sake of the Union of
Kudsha Brich Hu the Holy One blessed Be He
U'shechintay with His Shechina (Divine Presence)
I'yachad Sheim to unite the Name
Yud-Hay B'Vav-Hay Yud-Hay with (the name) Vav-Hay
b'Yechuda in a perfect and
Shlim B'shaim Kol Yisroel. complete union in the name of all Israel.*

*Baruch ShAmar Blessed is He who spoke,
V'Haya HaOlam and the world was made
Baruch Hu, Blessed is He;
Baruch Omer V'Oseh Blessed is He who says and does
Baruch Gozer Umkayeim Blessed is He who decrees and fulfills
Baruch Oseh V'Reishis Blessed is He who creates the universe
Baruch M'Racheim Blessed is He who has compassion
Al HaAretz on the earth
Baruch M'Racheim Blessed is He who has compassion
HaBrios on the creatures
Baruch Mshalem Sachar Tov Blessed is He who rewards well those
Lirayav, Baruch Chai Load who fear Him; Blessed is He who
V'kayam lives and exists forever;
Lanetzach. Baruch Podeh U'Matzil Blessed is He who redeems and saves.
Baruch Shmo. Blessed is His name.
Baruch Atah Blessed are You
Ado-noi Elo-heinu Melech HaOlam L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe
HaEl Av HaRacham HaMulal B'feh Amo benevolent G-d, merciful Father,
praised by the mouth of his people
M'Shubach U'Mfoar Bilshon Chasidav exalted and glorified by the tongue of
His pious
V'Avadav U'vShirei Dovid Avdecha ones and His servants and by the
songs of Dovid Your Servant
Nehalelcha Ad-noi Elo-heinu We will exalt You, L-rd our G-d*

PRAYER

SHEMA

*B'ShvaChos u'Vzmiroscha, N'Gadle
U'nshabecha, u'nfarecha V'Namlich-cha,
V'Nazkir Shimcha Malkeinu Eloheinu
Yachid Chay HaOlamim Melech*

*M'shubach U'Mfoar Aday
Ad Shmo HaGadol.
Baruch Atah Ado-Noi Melech
M'Hulal Batishbachos.*

*with praises and songs; we will exalt,
laud and glorify You, proclaim You King
and say your Name, our King our G-d
You are the only One – the life of the
worlds, King
praised and glorified is
His great Name forever and ever
Blessed are You, L-rd, King
who is extolled with praises.”*

At this point, it is customary to kiss the ends of the two front *tsitsith*.

SHEMA

Shema describes the relationship of the Jewish people to our Creator. In *Shema*, we proclaim the Unity of G-d, our submission and devotion to the reign of G-d, love of G-d, self-sacrifice for G-d, and our responsibility to study Torah and teach our children and students. We recite the *Shema* in every morning and evening service, then once again before retiring for the night. It is the hope of every religious Jew, at the time of his passing, to have *Shema* on his lips.

*She-ma Yis-ro-el
Ado-noy Elo-hay-nu
Ado-noy Ech-od*

*“Hear, O Israel,
the L-rd is our G-d,
the L-rd is One.”*

*Bo-ruch Shaym
Ke-vod Mal-chu-so
Le-olom Vo-ed*

*Blessed be the name of
of His glorious Kingdom
forever and ever.*

*Ve-ohavto Ays Ado-noy Elo-He-cho
Bechol Levov-ch Uve-chol Naf-she-cho
Uve-chol Meo-de-cho.
Ve-ho-yu Ha-de-vorim Ho-eleh
Asher Ono-chee Me-tzav-cho Ha-yom
al Le-vove-cho.
Veshi-nan-tom Levo-ne-cha*

*You shall love the L-rd your G-d
with all your heart, with all your soul,
and with all your might.
And these words
that I command you today
shall be upon your heart.
You shall teach them thoroughly to
your children
and you shall speak of them*

Ve-dibar-to Bom,

PRAYER

SHEMA / SHEMONEH ESRAI

*Be-shiv-techo Be-vai-se-cho
Uve-lech-techo Va-derech
uve-shoch-be-cho Uve-kume-cho.
Uke-shar-tom Le-os Al Yo-de-cho
Ve-ho-yu Le-to-to-fos Bain Eine-ch.*

*when you dwell in your house.
and when you walk on the way
when you lie down and rise.
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand
And they shall be for a reminder
between your eyes.
And you shall write them upon the
doorposts of your house
and upon your gates.”*

Uche-savtom Al Me-zuzos Beis-echo

U-vi-shore-cho.

Ve-ho-yo, Im Sho-mo-a Tish-me-u El Mitz-vo-sy, Ah-shar Ono-chi me-tza-ve Es-chem Ha-yom, Le-ah-ha-bo Es Ado-noy Elo-Hay-chem Ul-ov-do Be-chol Le-vav-chem Uve-chol naf-she-chem. Ve-no-sa-tee ay-sev Be-sod-cho Leev-hem-te-cho Ve-o-chal-to Ve-so-vo-to. Hee-shom-ru lo-chem Pen Yeef-te le-vav-chem, Ve-sar-tem Va-a-vad-tem Elo-heem Ah-chay-reem Ve-heesh-ta-cha-vee-sem Lo-hem. Ve-cho-ro Ahf Ado-noy Bo-chem Ve-o-tzar Es Ha-sho-ma-yeem Ve-lo Yee-he-ye Ma-tar Ve-ho-a-do-mo Lo See-tayn Es Ye-vu-lo, Va-a-vad-tem Me-hay-ro May-al Ho-o-retz Ha-to-vo ah-she Ado-noy No-sayn Lo-chem. Ve-lee-mad-tem O-som Es be-nay-chem Le-da-bayr Bom, Be-shiv-te-cho. Uch-sav-tom Ahl Me-zu-zos Bay-se-co U-veesho-re-cho. Le-ma-an Yeer-bu Ye-may-chem Vee-may Ve-nay-chem Ahl Ho-ah-do-mo, Ah-sheerNeesh-ba Ado-noy La-ah-vo-say-chem Lo-says Lo-hem, Kee-may Ha-sho-ma-yeem Ahl Ho-o-retz.

“And it will be, if you will diligently obey My commandments which I enjoin upon you this day, to love the L-rd your G-d and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give rain for your land at the proper time, the early rain and the late rain, and you will gather your grain, your wine, your oil. And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be sated. Take care lest your heart be lured away, and you turn astray and worship alien gods and bow down to them. For then the L-rd’s wrath will flare up against you, and he will close the heavens so that there will be no rain and the earth will not yield its produce, and you will swiftly perish from the good land that the L-rd gives you. Therefore, place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul, and bind them for a sign on your hand, and they should be a reminder between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, to speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall inscribe them on the

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SHEMONEH ESRAI

doorposts of your house and of your gates - so that your days and the days of your children may be prolonged on the land that the L-rd swore to your fathers to give to them for as long as the heavens are above the earth.”

Va-yo-mer Ado-noy El Mo-she Lay-mor. Da-bayr El Be-nay Yis-ro-el Ve-o-mar-to Alay-hem Ve-o-su Lo-hem Tzee-tzees ahl Kan-fay Veeg-day-hem Le-do-ro-som, Ve-nos-nu Lo-hem Tzee-tzees ha-ko-nof, Pe-seel Te-chay-les. Ve-ho-yo Lo-chem Le-tzee-tees, Ur-ee-sem O-so, Uz-char-tem, Es Kol Mitz-vos Ado-noy, Va-ah-see-sem, O-som. Ve-lo So-su-ru ah-cha-ray Le-vav-chem Ve-ah-cha-ray Ay-nay-chem Ah-sheer Ah-tem zo-neem Ah-cha-ray-hem. Le-ma-an tyeez-ke-ru Va-ah-see-sem Es Kol Mitz-vo-soy, Vee-he-yee-sem ke-do-sheem Lay-lo-hay-chem. Ah-nee Ado-noy Elo-Hay-chem, ah-sheer Ho-tzay-see Es-chem, May-eretz Mitz-ray-yeem Lee-he-yos Lochem Lay-lo-heem, Ah-nee Ado-noy Elo-Hay-chem. Emes.

“And the L-rd spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the children of Israel and tell them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to attach a thread of blue on the fringes of each corner. They shall be to you as *tsitsith*, and you shall look upon them and remember all the commandments of the L-rd and fulfill them, and you will not follow after your heart and after your eyes by that you go astray - so that you may remember and fulfill all My commandments and be holy to your G-d. I am the L-rd your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your G-d; I, the L-rd, am your G-d. True.”

SHEMONEH ESRAI

Shemoneh Esrai means “eighteen.” It refers to the number of blessings that originally made up this prayer. The prayer is also known as the *amidah* or “standing” prayer. We pray *Shemoneh Esrai* standing with our feet together, like a soldier who stands at attention before his commanding officer. We only look into the *siddur* and do not interrupt for anything!

The *Shemoneh Esrai* contains three themes. The first three blessings praise G-d. The next 13 blessings contain requests for ourselves and the Jewish people at large. The last three blessings thank G-d and ask for His continued Presence in our lives.

In *Shemoneh Esrai*, the essential Jewish soul that is a part of G-d connects and becomes unified to its G-dly Source. We emphasize this by declaring, “My L-rd,

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SHEMONEH ESRAI

open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise” before we begin *Shemoneh Esrai*. We also emphasize our nullification by bowing at specific times during the prayer.

At first glance, it may seem strange to request such mundane things as good health, livelihood, etc. in *Shemoneh Esrai*. But this is a perfect place to state our needs because our ego is not involved. Rather, we are asking for the ability to fulfill G-d’s will in a physical world unhindered by obstacles.

You can find the text of the *Shemoneh Esrai* in any traditional prayer book. Select Laws of *Shemoneh Esrai*

During *Shemoneh Esrai*, we bow four times.

1. When saying the first word, *Boruch*, “Blessed” we bend our knees. At the second word, *atoh*, “You” we bow our heads. At the third word, *Ado-noi*, “L-rd” we raise up.
2. We repeat this at the end of the first blessing. At *boruch*, we bend our knees. At *atoh*, we bow forward. And at *Ado-noy*, we raise up. Then we finish the blessing by saying, *magain Avrohom*.
3. When we say the words, *Modim Anachnu Lach*, “We thankfully recognize...” we simply bow without bending the knee.
4. Before the end of *Shemoneh Esrai*, we find the blessing, *hatov shimcha lecha naeh l’hodos*, “it is fitting to offer You thanks...” At the word, *Boruch*, we bend our knees. At the second word, *atoh*, we bow our heads. At the third word, *Ado-noi*, we stand straight.

During certain times of the year, we add special parts to *Shemoneh Esrai*. For example, during the 10 days between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, we mention the idea of doing *teshuvah*, “return-repentance,” before the King. On fast days, we ask G-d to forgive us and hear our cry for help. On *Rosh Chodesh* and the intermediate days of *Pesach* and *Sukkos* we ask G-d to accept our prayers on these special occasions. And on *Purim* and *Chanukah*, we recall the miracles that occurred.

In addition, we change certain parts of *Shemoneh Esrai* to correspond to the summer and winter season in Israel. In the summer, we say *morid hatal*, “He causes the dew to descend.” In the winter we say, *mashiv haruach umorid hageshem*, “He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall.”

DAILY SERVICES

THE DAILY SERVICES

In the blessing of *Borech aleinu*, we also switch. In the summer we say, *v'sain brocha*, "and place your blessing" and in the winter, we switch to *vsain tal umatar l'vrocha*, "and place dew and rain for a blessing"

Shemona Esrai is so important, that the one who prays at the head of the congregation repeats it with 10 men present. This way, people who do not know this prayer can also take part in it! We also join in three ways:

1. Whenever we hear the name of G-d, *Ado-noi*, we say, *Boruch Hu, uboruch shmo*, "Blessed is He and blessed is His name." And at the end of every blessing, we say, "Amen!"
2. When the leader repeats *Shemoneh Esrai*, we say *kedusha*, "praise of sanctification" at the end of the second blessing. The prophet Isaiah says the angels declare, "Holy, holy, holy is the L-rd of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." The expressions, "Blessed is the glory of the L-rd from its place" and "The L-rd shall reign forever; your G-d O Zion, throughout all the generations. Praise the L-rd!" are associated with the angels. When the entire congregation stands in unison, feet together, and says the same words, we too are like angels praising G-d.
3. When the leader says *Modim*, "we acknowledge," we bow and quietly say this special prayer at the same time. One reason is that this prayer thanks G-d for the many things He does for us; and we join in expressing this thanks so it doesn't appear that we are ungrateful in any way.

Shemona Esrai ends with *sholom*, peace. Our sages say that peace is the greatest blessing of all.

6 REMEMBRANCES

At the end of our prayers, we mention six things that Torah commanded us to recall:

1. (So that you) remember the day you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.
2. But beware and carefully guard your soul lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they be removed from your heart all the days of your life; make known to your children and to your children's children (what you saw) on the day when you stood before the L-rd your God at *Chorev* (Sinai).
3. Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt; how he met you on the way, and cut down all the weak who straggled behind you,

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when you were weary and exhausted; and he did not fear G-d. Therefore, when the L-rd your G-d will relieve you of all your enemies around you, in the land which the L-rd your G-d gives you as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget.

4. Remember, do not forget, how you provoked the L-rd your G-d to wrath in the desert.
5. Remember what the L-rd your G-d did to Miriam on the way, as you came out of Egypt.
6. Remember the *Shabbos* day to sanctify it!

THE DAILY SERVICES

Jews pray three services daily, corresponding to our Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The prayer services also correspond to the times when offerings were made in the Holy Temple. Daily offerings were brought every morning and afternoon, while offerings could be burned all night.

SHACHARIS

The morning service is the longest of the three. It follows the structure of a ladder. It begins with morning blessings followed by Psalms and sections from *Tanach* to make us more aware of the importance of G-d in our lives. We then say *Shema*, proclaiming our devotion to G-d. It is followed by *Shemoneh Esrai*, which contains our requests. After *Shemoneh Esrai*, we say extra Psalms and prayers of supplication and gratitude, and end with *Aleinu*. (This prayer was composed by Joshua, Moses' disciple. It praises and thanks G-d for choosing us from among the nations of the world).

On *Shabbos*, *Rosh Chodesh* (first of the month), and festivals, we add an extra service after the morning prayers. *Musaph*, "the additional service" corresponds to an offering that was brought in the Holy Temple for that particular day.

MINCHA

The afternoon service consists of *Ashrai* (Psalm 145 with a two-line introduction from Psalm 144), *Shemoneh Esrai*, *Tachanun* (prayer of forgiveness), *Aleinu*.

MAARIV

The evening service consists of three prayers. Similar to the morning, we say two introductory blessings and *Shema*. We follow it with *Shemoneh Esrai*. We end the evening service with *Aleinu*.

KRIAS SHEMA AL HA MITAH

It is customary for Jews to reflect on the day's activities, and to put "our house in order" (from a spiritual point of view) before going to sleep for the night. We do this during a service of *Krias Shema al ha Mitah*, "Reading *Shema* upon one's bed." It consists of several brief prayers. They include a statement forgiving anyone who may have angered us during the day. We say this because we do not want others to be punished for anything they may have innocently done to us, and similarly, we don't want to be punished for anything we may have innocently done to someone else.

Krias Shema also includes the complete *Shema* prayer, as well as prayers asking to be forgiven for any misdeeds and asking for our sleep to be sweet and healthy. The service ends with the following blessing:

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi
Elo-heinu Melech HaOlam
Hamapil Chevlei Shaina Al Aeini
UsNuma Al Afapai,
Umair L'eshan bas eyin.*

*V'Yehi Ratzon Milfanecha
Ado-noy Elohai Valohay Avosai
SheTashkivaini L'shalom
V'SaAmidani L'chaim Tovim
U'Ishalom
V'Al Yvahaluni Rayoni*

*"Blessed are You L-rd
Our G-d King of the Universe
Who causes sleep upon my eyes
and slumber upon my eyelids,
And Who gives light to the apple of the
eye.
And May it be Your will
L-rd my G- d and G-d of my fathers,
to let me lie down in peace
And raise me up to a good life
and to peace.
Let my thoughts not trouble me,*

*"Think good
and it will
be good."*

*V'Halomos Rayim V'Hirhurim Rayim
UShi Mitasi Shlaima Lifanecha
V'Haer Eynei Pen Ishan HaMaves*

*Baruch Atoh Ado-noi
HaMaair L'Olam Kulo B'Chvodo*

*nor bad dreams, nor sinful fancies,
and may my bed be perfect before You.
Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep
that of death. Blessed are You L-rd
who in His glory gives light to the whole
world."*

Ideally, one should not speak, eat or drink after saying this blessing.

INSIGHT AND OUTLOOK

According to our sages, a person should serve G-d with joy. Interestingly, many people equate joy with "happiness," which is a feeling of energy and pleasure rolled into one. Hebrew and Yiddish don't have a word for "happiness." The word for joy, *simcha*, combines feelings of attachment, love, purpose, hope, and optimism. It expresses the knowledge that one is doing what one is supposed to; and that is, attaching oneself to G-d. For example, if a great king asked you for a favor, you would carry it out with affection and attachment; that feeling is joy.

It is easy to serve G-d with joy as long as things are going along relatively well. But what if they are not? What if a person is feeling dissatisfied or is upset for one reason or another? How is a person supposed to feel and act?

If the feeling comes from watching another person get something that you want, you should know that the Torah forbids envy. Above and beyond this, you should also know that our sages called this world, *alma d'shikra*, 'a world of falsehood.' Often, what appears to be a great blessing may actually be the exact opposite!

For example, suppose a person wins the lottery. True, he can buy whatever he wants. But from now on, he has to protect himself from all sorts of phone calls. From now on, he'll never be "one of the boys." From now on, he will be viewed with envy and judged for what he does or does not do with his money. At the same time, he will view his buddies with mistrust, wondering when they are going to ask for a loan. Chances are, he will also have acquired different standards. His clothes, car, and house won't be good enough anymore. In effect, he's gained money and lost everything else, including his peace of mind.

On the other hand, what appears to be a curse can turn out to be a blessing. For

example, if a person had a flat tire on the way to the airport and missed the flight, that would appear to be pretty negative. But if the plane had engine trouble, then the flat tire could very well have saved his life. Similarly, stuttering could appear to be a curse, but if it drives the person to overcome his challenge and to become a good speaker, then it was a blessing in disguise.

A true story: The son of a co-worker was a star football player in college. However, a near-fatal car crash left him paralyzed from the waste down. When I tried to comfort the father, he told me that, instead of a tragedy, his son felt that it was a “wake-up call from Heaven!”

Shocked, I asked the father to explain. He said that his son had been partying his life away, and as a result of the accident, he had learned what was really important. True, the son lost his ability to walk. But he felt that it was “a small price to pay” for becoming a better person and for gaining a clearer perspective on life!

On a slightly different level, the idea of *alma d’shikra* teaches us that it is never as good as it looks. For example, a friend once inherited a mansion. From the outside, it looked magnificent and people envied the family who lived there. Inside, it was expensive to heat, things were falling apart, and it was infested with flying bats! The point is, the things we desire *always* come with strings attached.

Understanding that **a)** a curse can really be a blessing and **b)** the “good” things that we see are never as good as they look, can give us perspective.

There is another way to put things in perspective. King Solomon asked the wise men throughout his kingdom for a way to achieve spiritual equilibrium; some way to cheer himself when he was sad, and some way to become a bit more sober-minded when he was feeling too overly joyous due to his material success. One day, a jeweler offered King Solomon a ring carved with three Hebrew letters, *gim-mel, zayin, yud*.

“What do these letters stand for?” King Solomon asked.

“They stand for three Hebrew words that mean, “This, too, will pass,” the jeweler replied. And so it is. The positive and the negative things in life will pass. They are part of the cycle of life, and no one, not even King Solomon can avoid them.

If a person is upset because of an injustice, one should meditate on what the

sages say (*Pirke Avos* 2:1) “Know what is above you – an Eye that sees, an Ear that hears, and all your deeds are recorded in a book.” Nothing is ever forgotten. If someone appears to have “gotten away with something,” it’s not true. Whether in this life or the next, the person will get what he truly deserves.

Finally, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe told someone, *Tract gut vet zein gut*. “Think good and it will be good.” Jews are called “believers sons of believers.” The Hebrew word for “faith” is *emunah*. It really means “conviction.” Our conviction must be that a) G-d is the very definition of goodness; therefore whatever G-d does is ultimately for the good and b) it is His definition of goodness that applies, not ours. By thinking good, we are “asking” G-d to reveal the goodness that is there, and to make it obviously “good” so that we can appreciate it.

To that end, the word *emunah* is related to the word, *uman*, “craftsman.” This hints that we must work on our faith like a craftsman works on his skills. Faith begins where our knowledge ends. Therefore, the more Torah knowledge we have, the greater our faith in G-d.

TALMUD TORAH

In *Devorim* 5:10, the Torah states, “Learn them and safeguard them so that you will be able to do them.” Without learning, it’s impossible to know what to do.

For example, one of the 10 Commandments is “Honor your father and mother.” The question is, how do we fulfill this *mitzvah*? The Torah teaches us that we fulfill it by honoring them (as long as those wishes don’t contradict the Torah), speaking to them with respect, providing them with their needs, etc.

In addition to helping us understand our religious obligations, learning Torah has other benefits. For example, when a person learns Torah, he or she becomes united with the Wisdom of the Creator. That is why our sages said, *Talmud Torah kneged kulam*, “Studying Torah is equal to all the *mitzvos*.”

Studying Torah (the Wisdom of G-d) also leads to performing *mitzvos* that represent the Will of G-d. For example, it is G-d’s will that we honor our parents. Learning Torah naturally leads us to perform that (and every other) *mitzvah* in the best way possible. And since learning Torah is also a *mitzvah*, it connects us to both the Wisdom and Will of the Creator at the same time.

In general, our sages have said that one should learn in the morning and in the evening. The morning usually means right after prayer, as the *Code of Jewish Law* (27:1), states "After prayer, a person should established a fixed time for Torah study. This session should be firmly established and should not be skipped..."

The Lubavitcher Rebbe encourages everyone to learn a portion of the Torah with Rashi's commentary every day, a portion of the *Chassidic* book, *Tanya*, and a portion each a day from Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* or his *Book of Mitzvos*. In addition, one should say a portion of *Psalms* every day so that you can complete the entire book of *Psalms* every month.

The *mitzvah* of learning Torah applies to every person, rich or poor, young or old. If a person lacks the knowledge or materials, he should support others who can study by donating to a *yeshiva* (Jewish school), purchasing books for them, etc.

As a way to help us fulfill this *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah*, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi M.M. Schneerson, of sainted and blessed memory encouraged everyone to purchase Jewish books. Having holy Jewish books around demonstrates to all who visit that Jewish values are important. At the same time, their presence reminds one to use them. At a minimum, try to own a *Chumash* (Five Books of Moses), a book of *Psalms*, and a *siddur* (Prayer Book).

There is another *mitzvah* that can be associated with the Torah and that is to write a Sefer Torah. As you probably know, a Torah is hand-written on parchment by a specially trained scribe. It contains 304,805 letters. To fulfill the *mitzvah* of writing a Torah, it is the custom for someone to purchase a letter. Interestingly, the merit of buying a letter in a Sefer Torah is alluded to in the book of Daniel:

"...*There shall be a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation until that time. And that time your people shall be delivered, every one who shall be found written in the book.*" (Daniel, 12:1)

Your local Aleph representative can help you to purchase a letter in a Torah.

KASHRUS

In *Vayikra* 11:9, the Torah presents the signs of kosher animals, birds, fish, and insects, and permits or prohibits various species of animals. The Torah also has many other laws that deal with eating, such as not to eat the sinew of the thigh, not to mix milk and meat, etc. All dietary laws fall in the category of *kashrus*. *Kosher* means "fit" or "proper."

The laws of keeping *kosher* are decrees that G-d gave to us at Mount Sinai. Nevertheless, our Rabbis have found many reasons for the laws of *kashrus*. One of the most famous has become a common saying: "We are what we eat." This adage recognizes that foods spiritually affect the person who consumes them. Therefore, if something is not *kosher*, it's incompatible with one's soul.

Spiritual incompatibility is one explanation for the laws of *kashrus*. Yet researchers have found many health benefits, as well. For example, pig meat may have trichinosis. Eating milk and meat together is hard to digest. However these are side issues, for no matter how healthy or unhealthy a particular item may be, its *kosher* status represents the Will of G-d. Therefore, *kashrus* is not a set of laws that can become outdated through sanitation, food inspection or production.

Meat, Dairy and Pareve

In general, there are three categories of food: meat, dairy, and *pareve* (neither milk nor meat).

Meat

Any meat or fowl, and/or food made with meat and fowl products like bones, soup or gravy are *fleishig* (meaty). Similarly, meat ingredients in any product (including liver pills), must meet all requirements for *kosher* meat. Among them:

1. The animal chews its cud and has split hooves.
 2. It must be slaughtered according to Jewish law by a skilled and carefully trained kosher *shochet*, "butcher."
 3. The permissible parts of the animal must be salted before cooking.
- There are many additional laws concerning the *kashrus* of the meat we eat.

KASHRUS

FISH

Dairy

The term *milchig*, “dairy” refers to all types of milk, butter, cream and yogurt, and every variety of cheese, whether hard or soft. It also refers to milk derivatives such as, sodium caseinate and lactose. Even the smallest amount of dairy in a food causes the food to become dairy. Therefore, you should not eat or use these foods with meat products.

Dairy foods require certification verifying that the milk and cheeses:

1. Are from a kosher animal.
2. Have no meat-fats, or any kind of meat substances mixed into them.
3. Contain no non-kosher substances.

Pareve

Foods that are not meat or dairy, or derivatives are considered *pareve* “neutral.”

Pareve foods can generally be served with either meat or dairy meals, can be prepared in meat or dairy pots, and may be served on meat or dairy dishes. However, *pareve* foods cooked in a meat pot may be only served on meat dishes. Similarly, *pareve* foods cooked in dairy pots may be served only in dairy dishes.

Pareve food cooked with meat or dairy products become *fleishig* or *milchig* respectively. If the *pareve* foods only touched milk or meat, you can wash it and the food will remain *pareve*, as long as a) the *pareve* and meat or milk items are room temperature or cooler, b) and all the items have not been mixed with pungent or sharp foods such as onions, lemons, pickles, etc.

It is not necessary to have a separate set of dishes for *pareve* foods. However, it is common to set aside serving trays and especially bakeware as *pareve*. These are always washed separately from meat and dairy dishes. You should also have separate dish sponges, dish towels, draining boards, etc.

Below are some laws pertaining to pareve foods.

Fish: All kosher type fish must have both fins and scales.

Eggs: Eggs must be opened and examined. A blood spot in an egg, whether raw, cooked, or fried, renders that egg *trafe*, “unkosher.” Each egg should be opened

KASHRUS

SEPARATING MEAT & DAIRY

into a glass examined before being cooked or mixed with other eggs. If you find a blood spot, the whole egg should be discarded and the vessel washed in cold water. Jewish law recommends cooking at least three eggs at a time.

Leafy Vegetables and Grains: Green leafy vegetables and certain grains and fruits that could contain worms and insects must be inspected before they can be used. You should examine these foods thoroughly and even wash them in cold water to remove any worm or insect. An insect does not, however, make the food or utensil not *kosher*. You can simply remove it. It is also common to find worms in packages of noodles, grains, etc., especially if they have been stored for a long time.

Oil: In recipes where oil or shortening is required, it must be pure vegetable shortening, as many oils contain animal fats. To ensure that the oil being used is free of animal fats, it must be under strict rabbinic supervision.

- An increasing number of food processors are adding milk products to obtain extra Vitamin D and calcium. For example, candy and cereal often contain milk products, as do some low-calorie sweeteners. Often, commercial kashrus organizations will publish bulletins describing changes in the condition of items, labeling mistakes, or other vital information.

Separating Meat and Dairy

The prohibition against combining meat and dairy foods is mentioned in the Torah, elaborated in the *Talmud*, and passed down through the generations of the Prophets and Rabbis. This prohibition applies three different ways:

Eating: We must not eat any meat and dairy foods or their derivatives together.

Cooking: We must not cook any meat and dairy foods together. The term cooking includes baking, frying, roasting, etc.

Benefiting: We must not have any benefit from meat and dairy foods cooked together such as selling them or doing business with such foods.

To avoid any transgression, it's customary to have two sets of dishes, silverware, and cleaning utensils.

KASHRUS

MEAT & DAIRY

Waiting Between Meat and Dairy

Here are some rules about separating meat and dairy foods:

You shouldn't have meat and dairy foods at the same meal even if they were prepared separately and even if you wait between eating.

After eating dairy, you should rinse your mouth and eat something *pareve*, ideally with a hard consistency. Most people wait one-half hour after eating dairy before they will eat meat or meat products. Other people wait one complete hour. Certain hard cheeses (Swiss, Muenster, etc) that stick to your teeth or take longer to digest require waiting six-hours before eating meat.

If you eat meat, you must wait six full hours before eating dairy. If you find a small piece of meat between your teeth after six hours, you should remove it and rinse your mouth. However, you do not have to wait another six hours.

If you are on a special diet and for children under nine years old, you should consult a qualified rabbi. If there are no special problems, you should train children early to wait between eating meat and dairy foods.

The six-hour waiting period is standard for all Jews, except those groups that have *halachically* established other customs.

If you do not chew or swallow the food, but spit it immediately from your mouth, you don't have to wait. You should still rinse your mouth well. However, if you have chewed or swallowed even the smallest amount of food, you have to wait the full amount of time.

If *pareve* foods were prepared in meat or dairy utensils that were used within the last twenty-four hours, then even though that item may not be eaten with the opposite type of food, the waiting period is not necessary.

However, if the *pareve* food is sharp or spicy, then even if the utensils were not used with hot meat or dairy respectively within the last 24 hours, it may not be eaten with the opposite food types.

Concerning the waiting period for these, and the definition of the terms sharp, spicy, and hot, consult a qualified rabbi.

What you need to know: According to Jewish law, only food prepared under

ACTS OF KINDNESS

TZEDOKAH

Rabbinical supervision can be certified kosher. However, the federal prison system provides a common fare diet with many kosher items.

The PA DOC has stated that it will not provide kosher food unless ordered to do so by the courts. Currently, one inmate has begun legal proceedings to challenge the existing policy. Inmates wishing to join should write to Aleph Institute (North East), and we will forward their letter to the attorney handling the case.

Many county jails do provide kosher food. If there is a problem, please ask to see the rabbi and please have the rabbi contact Aleph.

ACTS OF KINDNESS

Our sages say the world stands on three things: Torah, Prayer, and Acts of Kindness.

So far, we've looked at the *mitzvos* of *Tefilla* and *Talmud Torah*. *Gemilus Chassadim* means acts of kindness.

The Torah states, "After the L-rd your G-d shall you walk...and unto Him shall you cleave." (*Devorim* 13:5). Our rabbis wonder, "How is it possible for a human being to copy the Divine Presence?"

They answer that the commandment to "walk after the L-rd your G-d" means to mimic His attributes and ways. For example, as G-d is called merciful and gracious, so should you be merciful and gracious. As G-d clothed Adam and Eve who were naked, so should you clothe those in need. As G-d visited Abraham after he circumcised himself, so should you visit the sick. As G-d comforted Isaac over the passing of his mother Sarah, so should you comfort mourners.

The *mitzvah* of performing acts of kindness applies to the poor and the rich, to the living and for those who passed on, to those who deserve and those who do not. There's no limit to the acts of kindness that we could, or should, perform.

What acts qualify as *gemilus chassadim*? The *mitzvah* of performing deeds of kindness applies to both Jews and non-Jews and covers any kind of personal service that one performs for another. Typical acts include

- loaning money or any object
- providing hospitality
- visiting and comforting the sick (either in person or by mail or phone)
- clothing those in need

TZEDOKAH

CHARITY...

- comforting mourners (either in person or by mail or phone)
- restoring peace between husband and wife or any two people

What you need to know: Although there are a lot of limitations in prison, one can still perform many acts of kindness, and every act is a *mitzvah*.

TZEDOKAH

Tzedokah (supporting a person in financial need) is another act of kindness. Often, *tzedokah* is translated as “charity.” But its true meaning is “righteousness.” The less fortunate deserve to be helped and the donor is commanded to provide it.

The *mitzvah* to help the less fortunate is found twice in the Torah. *Vaykira* 25:35 states, “*And if your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself; then you shall assist him, both the stranger, or sojourner, that he live with you.*”

The *mitzvah* is also found in *Devorim* 15:7-10, “*If there be among you a needy man, any one of your brethren within any of your gates in the land that the L-rd your G-d gives you; you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand in the face of your needy brother. But you shall open wide your hand to him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need....*”

Interestingly, the Hebrew word meaning “to give” is *notain*. It is spelled the same way backwards and forwards. According to our sages, this teaches us that the one who gives also receives in return.

Abraham was the first person to donate 10% of his wealth to *tzedokah*. This is one reason that Maimonides writes, “We must be careful to fulfill the mitzvah of *tzedokah* more than any of the other positive commandments, for *tzedokah* is a sign of a righteous person, the trademark of Abraham’s children...”

The Torah provides a number of different ways to give *tzedokah*. They include providing food or clothing to the poor, helping a needy bride and groom, and

offering hospitality to strangers. If you don’t have money, you can give *tzedokah* spiritually by helping others learn about their Jewish heritage. According to Rabbi Levi (*Vayikra Rabba* 24), “*If you don’t have anything to give him, comfort him at least with consoling words.*”

It is customary to give *tzedokah* every day except *Shabbos* and holidays. It is a

AHAVAS YISROEL

LOVE A FELLOW JEW

custom for all Jews to give before praying, even if it’s only a few coins, and for girls and women to give before lighting *Shabbos* and *yom tov* candles.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe established a fund called *Keren Hashana*, “annual fund.” The person submits an amount of money that corresponds to the days of the year and the fund will distribute a portion daily to charity on the person’s behalf.

For example, there are 354 days in the Jewish year (and 383 in a leap year). If a person could only afford to donate three cents a day, he could send *Keren Hashana* \$10.62 (354 x \$.03) and every day, the fund would distribute it for him. You can arrange for this through your Aleph representative.

AHAVAS YISROEL

Leviticus 19:18, the Torah commands us ‘...*You shall love your fellow like yourself...*’ This is the mitzvah of *Ahavas Yisroel*, “love of a fellow Jew.” Our sages teach that the souls of Jewish people are a “portion” of G-d. This means that the souls of all Jews come from the same source. Only our bodies separate us as individuals. Therefore, the commandment “love your fellow Jew as yourself” can be taken literally, because your fellow Jew is part of yourself! In fact, our sages have said that the Jewish people make up one spiritual body. The rabbis serve as the “eyes” of the congregation. Those who are involved with the needs of the community are the “hands.” Those who financially support Torah scholars are called the legs.

The point is, the Jewish people are truly one. Every person is important and no person is more important than any other. Nine Moses’ could not form a *minyan*, “quorum.” 10 Jews who may not know Hebrew can. In fact, our sages have said that the Divine Presence hovers over 10 Jews, without exception.

In *Judaism: Thought and Legend*, Rabbi Meir Meiseles writes, “*What lies at the root of peace, happiness and everything which is good and beautiful in the world? The invariable answer would be love. Not a superabundance of sentiment gushing out upon everyone, nor ostentatious philanthropy, but a simple, impartial, warm feeling of kinship with everyone, irrespective of person and place, a feeling which is nurtured on the knowledge that everyone is a living soul, that everyone at bottom resembles ourselves and is our natural brother.*”

MEZUZAH

Protection

Our sages taught that the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed because people hated each other without reason. Showing love, sensitivity, and respect to others above and beyond reason can help rebuild it, speedily in our days.

MEZUZAH

It is the custom of a king's palace to have guards at every gate and every door. The guards serve two functions: they publicize the special importance of the location, and protect the contents and individuals within.

From a Jewish perspective, attaching parchment scrolls called *mezuzos* to the door post of practically every room serves the same purpose. They proclaim that the house is devoted to Jewish ideals. At the same time, they protect the contents and the individuals (both while they are inside and are out of the house.)

The *mezuzah* actually refers to a parchment scroll that contains the two Biblical passages that mention this Divine commandment (*Devorim* 6:4-9 and 11:13-21), "and you write them upon the door post of your house and upon your gates." The scroll is inscribed in the same manner and using the same script as a Torah. The outside of the *mezuzah* contains the Divine name *Sha-dai*. In addition to being one of the names of G-d, it is an acronym of three Hebrew words that mean: "Guardian of the doorways (homes) of Israel."

Select Laws Concerning Mezuzah

1. Homes, offices, public buildings, the gates to a private courtyard, and even the gates to a city require *mezuzos*.
2. All doors of the house, including the doors leading to corridors, pantries, porches, fire escapes, etc. should have a *mezuzah*.
3. A prison or a synagogue does not require a *mezuzah*. In addition, *mezuzos* should not be affixed in inappropriate places, e.g., the entrance to toilets, bathrooms, showers, locker rooms, etc.
4. No additions should be made to the text of the *mezuzah*.
5. Outside the Holy Land, the duty of affixing a *mezuzah* in a rented apartment begins on the 30th day after moving into it.
6. The *mezuzah* is folded so that *Shema* which is on the right-hand side of the written page, should be on the top, with the writing inside, from left to right.
7. Before being affixed, place the *mezuzah* in a protective cover or case. It could be made of glass, wood, metal, or any other material.
8. The *mezuzah* should be affixed at a 45 degree angle pointing in to the more

MEZUZAH

Protection

important room.

9. It should be placed over two-thirds of the way up the door post.

10. Before affixing a *mezuzah* (or many *mezuzos*) say the following blessing:

<i>Boruch Atah Ado-noy Elo-hai-nu</i>	<i>"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,</i>
<i>Me-lech Ho-Olom</i>	<i>King of the universe,</i>
<i>Asher Kid-shonu B'mitz-vo-sov</i>	<i>who has sanctified us with His commandments,</i>
<i>V'tzi-vonu</i>	<i>and commanded us</i>
<i>Likboa Mezuzah.</i>	<i>concerning the affixing of the mezuzah."</i>

11. It is a custom to check *mezuzos* (and *tefillin*) at least twice every seven years. Many people have the custom to check them more often. (Unfortunately, printed, improperly written, and otherwise un-kosher *mezuzos* have flooded the public market. In addition, many *mezuzos* that were originally proper have since faded or cracked due to age or weather. A competent authority should periodically check all one's *mezuzos*.)

What you need to know: Although we do not hang a *mezuzah* on a door in prison, however, the Rebbe once related that his father-in-law, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, traveled alot and never went over night without a *mezuzah* in his possession. Although he would not put a *mezuzah* on his door on the hotel, nevertheless, he would keep one with him.

For information concerning where to acquire kosher *mezuzos*, contact your local Aleph representative.

TESHUVA

REPENTANCE

TESHUVA

Teshuva means “return.” It is the ability to renew our relationship with G-d after we have jeopardized it. In a sense, *teshuva* is greater than Torah because it enables us to overcome the spiritual damage that we caused by transgressing G-d’s commandments.

In the words of Maimonides, (The Laws of *Teshuva*):

“If a person transgresses any of the *mitzvos* of the Torah, whether a positive command or a negative command, whether willingly or unintentionally, when he repents and turns away from his sin, he must confess before G-d, Blessed be He, as [Numbers 5:607] states, “If a man or a woman sins against one’s fellow man...they must confess the sin that they committed.” This refers to a verbal confession. This confession is a positive command.” (1:1)

What constitutes *teshuva*? That a sinner should abandon his sins and remove them from his thoughts, resolving in his heart, never to commit them again as [Isaiah 55:7] states, “May the wicked abandon his ways...” Similarly, he must regret the past as [Jeremiah 31:180 states, “After I returned, I regretted.” [One must reach the level where] He Who knows the hidden will testify concerning him that he will never return to this sin again.... (2:2)

In essence, Maimonides defines *teshuva* in terms of the “3 R’s” of regret, recite, and resolve. There’s another act involved, as well: rectify. If possible, a person should try to repair whatever damage was done, both materially and spiritually. For example, if a person took something, he or she should return it to its owner. If the owner isn’t known, the person should give the equivalent value to charity. Similarly, if a person wronged another by speech, he should seek to set the record straight with those who heard him. He should also ask the person who was wronged for forgiveness.

The process of *teshuva* should also drive the person to better himself, especially in those areas of weakness. For example, if a person was dishonest in someway, he or she should look for opportunities to make society a better place by promoting honesty in one’s relationship with others, in the home, and in the workplace. Our sages said that a person should continually do *teshuva* until one’s misdeeds can be accounted like *mitzvos* because they were the cause of so much good!

SHABBOS

SHABBOS / HOLIDAY CANDLES

SHABBOS

“And G-d rested on the seventh day... and He blessed it and made it holy.”
(*Beraishis* 2:3)

“Remember the Shabbos day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the L-rd your G-d; in it you shall do no type of work, neither you, your son, daughter, servant, maid-servant, cattle, nor the stranger within your gates; for in six days, the L-rd made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that exists within, and rested on the seventh day, therefore, the L-rd blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” (*Shmos* 20:8-11)

Shabbos is one of the greatest gifts ever given to the Jewish people. It is indeed a day of rest. But it’s more than that. *Shabbos* is a day of rejuvenation, physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is an island of sanity and serenity in the sea of confusion called life. Above all, it is a reflection of the Time to Come, when mankind will be liberated from its selfish nature.

Shabbos serves as a sign that G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. *Shabbos* also serves as a sign that G-d chose the Jewish people at Mount Sinai and charged us to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” to the world.

The dual nature of *Shabbos* is hinted by two words. The first word is *zachor*, as the 10 Commandments in *Shmos* 20:8, states, “Remember the *Shabbos* to sanctify it.” The second word is *shamor*, “to guard.” In *Devorim* 5:12, the Torah states, “Guard the *Shabbos* to sanctify it.” According to our sages, G-d communicated both words at the same time to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai.

How do we fulfill the commandment to “Remember the *Shabbos* to sanctify it?” According to our sages, we do it through many acts that serve to separate ourselves from our daily lives, leaving the world with its worries behind. These include lighting *Shabbos* candles, dressing in different (fresh) clothes, reciting *Kiddush* over wine or grape juice, and eating special foods such as *challah*.

In addition to acts that emphasize the holiness of *Shabbos*, we try to avoid all types of creative labor, even though they may be fun, relaxing, “therapeutic.” etc. *Shabbos* is a time to “let go and let G-d.” Our job is to relax and enjoy the day.

SHABBOS

SHABBOS, KIDDUSH, MEALS

Saturday evening, we can enter the world again. The following story illustrates the attitude that we should have:

“It’s G-d’s Problem!”

On *Shabbos*, we have to view that all our work is done, whether or not it actually is. Perhaps one of the most dramatic examples of this occurred in December 1999. Back then, most software used two digits to describe the year. This worked well up through 1999. Once the calendar turned to Jan. 1st, 2000, however, people feared that the computers would switch to 1900, causing chaos. Experts predicted that banks would lose track of deposits and accounts. The electronic navigation systems on large oil tankers would stop working. The software that kept airplanes flying could suddenly have bugs.

At the time, a neighbor worked as a senior programmer for Westinghouse. His division built atomic-powered, electric generating plants, such as the one at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania. To operate these plants, they generated millions of lines of code and virtually all of that code used the two-digit scheme for recording dates. Needless to say, the team responsible for developing the appropriate software patch worked long hours. But even they didn’t know whether the patch would take care of everything. As the day approached, I asked my neighbor what he thought might happen.

“I really don’t know” he replied honestly. “But I’m not going to worry about it.” “You’re not going to worry about it?” I responded incredulously. “Why not?” He looked at me and smiled. “Because January 1st is *Shabbos*. So it’s G-d’s problem, not mine.”

LIGHTING SHABBOS CANDLES

When G-d formed the world, He said, “Let there be light.” In a brilliant essay, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of sainted and blessed memory asked the rhetorical question, “Why was light created first when no one was around to benefit?” The Rebbe explains that light wasn’t as much a result of creation as its purpose and goal. Through the mitzvah of lighting *Shabbos* candles, G-d gave women the merit to repeat this process of “Let there be light!” every week of the year.

From a historical perspective, our sages say that our matriarch Sarah had a miraculous lamp that remained lit in her tent from one *Shabbos* to the next. Once she

SHABBOS

SHABBOS, KIDDUSH, MEALS

passed away, the same miracle occurred with Isaac’s bride, Rivkah. According to our sages, she began blessing the *Shabbos* lamp from the age of three.

Today, the woman of the home has the responsibility for lighting candles. Through this pure and simple act, she changes the atmosphere of her house from the mundane to the holy. At the same time, she officially welcomes the *Shabbos* queen into the home and helps kindle the Divine spark in every Jewish being. In addition to married women, girls three and over are encouraged to light their own candles as a part of their education. The young girl should light before her mother in case she needs help.

It is customary to put a few coins into a *tzedakah pushka* (charity box) before lighting the candles. The proper time to light *Shabbos* candles is 18 minutes before sunset Friday. Young girls should light before this time. Traditionally, women light two *Shabbos* candles, corresponding to the words, *shamor* and *zachor*. Some married women add a candle for each child, recognizing that every individual brings his or her unique light into the world.

What you need to know: A woman at home can light *Shabbos* candles on behalf of her husband. However, if no woman will be lighting them, each man should light the candles and say the blessings. Most institutions permit this procedure. If you encounter a problem with this, please have your rabbi contact Aleph.

Once the candles have been lit, they should be allowed to burn until they go out. A Jewish individual should NOT extinguish them.

Procedure for lighting Shabbos candles:

1. Light the candles
2. Spread your hands out around the candles
3. Draw your hands inward in a circular motion three times to accept *Shabbos*.
4. Cover your eyes with your hands and say the blessing:

*Boruch Atoh Adonoi
Eloheinu Melech HaOlam
Asher Kideshanu Bemitzvosov
Vitzivonu Lehadlik Ner Shel*

*“Blessed are You L-rd
Our G-d King of the Universe
Who sanctified us with His commandments
Commanding us to light the lamp of*

SHABBOS

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Shabbos Kodesh the holy Shabbos."

Uncover your eyes and bask in the glory of *Shabbos*. The time of lighting candles is especially favorable. People customarily add their own prayers to G-d, asking for health and happiness. Their prayers are readily accepted because they are said while performing the *mitzvah* of lighting the *Shabbos* candles.

CAUTION: The candles must be lit before sunset. It is prohibited to light candles after sunset.

HOLIDAY CANDLES

In addition to lighting candles in honor of *Shabbos*, women light them to honor festivals.

CAUTION: When lighting after the onset of a festival, do not strike a match instead light the fire from a flame burning continuously since the onset of the festival, such as a gas pilot or candle.

What you need to know. The chapel should contain candles and matches. If you have a problem securing or lighting candles for Shabbos, contact your Aleph representative.

KABBOLOS SHABBOS

Before Friday evening service that ushers in *Shabbos*, we say several Psalms and hymns. The service is called *kabbolos Shabbos*, "welcoming *Shabbos*." Our sages compare *Shabbos* to both a queen and a bride. Just as a welcoming committee always greets the queen whenever she visits, so too, we welcome in the *Shabbos* queen every week through Psalms and hymns. The most famous of these prayers is *L'Cha Dodi*, "Come my beloved," by Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, of Sfas. Having "officially" welcomed the bride, we begin *maariv*, evening service.

KIDDUSH

Shabbos and holiday meals begin with the *kiddush*. It is a prayer that contains blessings over wine or grape juice and the holiness of the special day (e.g., *Shabbos* or *yom tov*). Any male over thirteen can recite *kiddush*. In some places, one male recites *kiddush* for all those present. The *kiddush* cup should hold a minimum of four ounces of liquid. The one who recites *kiddush* drinks at least two ounces and distributes the rest. Friday evening, everyone stands while the

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kiddush is being recited. On Saturday afternoon, standing is a matter of custom. Everybody answers "Amen" at the end of the blessing over the wine and at the end of the blessing over the special day. The Friday night *kiddush* testifies that G-d created the world, rested on the seventh day and gave it to us. The afternoon *kiddush* speaks about *Shabbos* as a sign forever between us and G-d.

What you need to know: Most institutions accommodate the requirement for grape juice on Friday night and Saturday since it is a religious obligation. If this is a problem, please have your rabbi contact Aleph.

SPECIAL MEALS

On *Shabbos* and *yom tov*, it is a *mitzvah* to eat one festive meal in the evening and another the following afternoon. (When *yom tov* occurs on two consecutive days, we have evening and afternoon meals both days.) The *Shabbos* and *yom tov* meals begin when the head of the household makes *kiddush* on wine. Afterwards, all wash. Fill up the *shissel* (container). Lift it up in your left hand and pour water over your right hand up to the wrist. Next, pour water over your left hand up to the wrist. Do this three times, alternating between right and left. After drying the hands, say:

<i>Baruch Atoh Ado-noi Elo-heinu</i>	<i>"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,</i>
<i>Melech HaOlam</i>	<i>King of the universe</i>
<i>Asher Kiddeshanu</i>	<i>who has sanctified us</i>
<i>B'mitzvosov Vitzivanu Al</i>	<i>with His commandments, commanding us</i>
<i>Natilas yadaim.</i>	<i>to wash our hands."</i>

After the family members and guests gather around the table, the head of the house lightly draws the knife across the *challah* to indicate the place of cutting, then raises the *challahs* and recites the blessing. Everyone responds "Amen." He cuts a piece of *challah* for himself, dips it in salt, and eats it so that there is no lapse in time between the blessing and the act of eating. Then he distributes *challah* to all those present. Each one eats a piece before resuming conversation. A popular custom is to offer the males two small whole loaves of *challah* so that each may make a blessing.

A traditional *Shabbos* or *yom tov* meal includes wine, fish and meat or chicken, as well as many other delicacies. It also includes songs, words of Torah, and

SHABBOS

YOMTOV, KIDDUSH, MEALS

stories of our sages. To conclude, everyone recites the blessings after the meal, in keeping with the Torah commandment, “*When you have eaten and are satisfied you shall bless G-d your G-d*” (*Devorim* 8:10). The *Talmud* records that Moses developed the first blessing, Joshua formulated the second, and Kings David and Solomon formulated the third. Our rabbis were responsible for the rest.

SPECIAL DRESS

On *Shabbos* and *yom tov*, it is the custom to wear special clothes. During the times of the *Talmud*, many people didn’t have special clothes for *Shabbos* or *yom tov*. Some would roll their cloaks up during the week, and unroll them for *Shabbos* or *yom tov*. Today, many people have a special suit, tie, or jacket that they only wear on these occasions.

What you need to know: Some institutions allow inmates to don different clothes for *Shabbos*. Whenever possible, you should set aside special or clean clothes for *Shabbos* and the Jewish Holidays.

HEARING THE TORAH IN THE SYNAGOGUE

On *Shabbos* and *yom tov*, it is the custom to attend services at the synagogue and to listen to the Torah reading during the morning. The Torah is also read on *Shabbos* afternoon.

MAINTAINING A SHABBOS ATMOSPHERE

Shabbos is a time for relaxation. It’s a day for family and friends. During *Shabbos*, we leave the world behind us. On this day, we combine spiritual pursuits like learning with physical rest, great food and fine clothes. It’s the best of both worlds!

SHALOSH SEUDOS

On *Shabbos*, it is a *mitzvah* to eat *shalosh seudos*, “the third meal.” According to the *Talmud* (*Shabbos* 118A), a person who enjoys three meals on *Shabbos* will have a good judgment in the World to Come. Some people eat bread. Others have cake. It is also the custom to sing songs and share words of Torah.

Shalosh seudos must begin before sunset. If it is a meal with bread, it may continue until after dark, yet it remains *Shabbos* for those participating, even if three stars have come out and it is night. *Shabbos* is over when those having *shalosh seudos* have said the grace after a meal, and prayed the evening service.

HAVDOLAH

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SHABBOS, MELAVE MALKA

After *Shabbos* ends, we say *havdalah*, “partition” to separate the holy day of *Shabbos* and the rest of the week. You shouldn’t do any work or eat any food before saying *havdalah*. However, if you have to do work after *Shabbos*, but before *havdalah*, you can rely on the special words we say in the evening *Shemoneh Esrai* prayer on Saturday night. (See your prayer book for details.) You can also say the words, *Boruch hamavdil bain kodesh l’chol*, “Blessed is the One Who separates between the holy and the mundane.”

Ideally, you should say *havdalah* over grape juice. In addition to making a blessing “*bore pri hagafen*” over wine or grape juice, we say blessings over spices, fire, and the One who separates the holy and mundane.

Why spices? Smelling spices can comfort broken spirits. Now that *Shabbos* is over, we need a “lift.” Smelling spices provides that boost.

After wine and spices, we say a blessing over a special *havdalah* candle, one that has two wicks. (If you don’t have a *havdalah* candle, you can unite the flames of two candles). After the blessing, we hold our fingernails to the light to see difference between light and dark reflected on our hands. The last blessing is *havdalah* itself (“Blessed art Thou, L-rd our G-d King of the Universe, who makes a distinction between the holy and the ordinary”).

If you forgot to say *havdalah* Saturday night, you can say it anytime until Tuesday sunset. In this case, say a blessing on wine and *havdalah*, but not the blessings on spices and fire.

HAVDALAH FOR YOM TOV

We also say *havdalah* at the end of *yom tov*.

If *yom tov* ends in the middle of the week, we do not say the blessings over fire and spices. If *yom tov* ends on Friday night, we do not say *havdalah* since the holiness of *Shabbos* is even greater than that of *yom tov*.

If *yom tov* starts after *Shabbos* (i.e., Saturday night), we do not make a separate *havdalah* prayer. However, we refer to *havdalah* in the *yom tov* evening *kiddush*, saying, “Blessed art Thou, L-rd our G-d King of the Universe, who makes a distinction between the holy (i.e. *Shabbos*) and the holy (i.e., *yom tov*).”

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MELAVE MALKA

We make the blessing for fire on the *yom tov* candles, not a separate *havdalah* candle. However, we do not make the blessing over spices since the holiness and joy of *yom tov* makes up for the departure of our *Shabbos* soul.

MELAVE MALKA

Just as we welcomed the *Shabbos* queen with a special service, *kabbalas Shabbos*, we accompany her out with a special meal called, *melave malka*, "escorting the queen." The Talmud relates that we receive many rewards and benefits from having a *melave malka*. The Talmud also explains that food eaten for *melave malka* nourishes the *luz* bone. This small bone is located on the top of the spine. Our sages say that it never decays and that G-d will use it to resurrect us in the days of Messiah.

Some people make a point of eating bread for *melave malka*. If you are too full, or if no bread is available, you can have some cakes, cookies, or even fruit. Whatever you eat, have in mind the *mitzvah* of *melave malka*.

Traditionally, we mention the name of *Eliyahu HaNavi* (Elijah the Prophet) Saturday nights, since he will signal the advent of Messiah. Also, he is responsible for recording the fact that we kept the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*. We also share words of Torah.

In addition, *Chassidim* customarily tell stories about the Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), the founder of the *Chassidic* movement, or other great Rabbis and *tzadikim*. These stories help strengthen our faith in G-d and our spiritual leaders.

So far, we've discussed all the ways that we fulfill the *mitzvah* of *zachor*. "Remembering *Shabbos* to sanctify it. We also have a *mitzvah* of *shamor*: "Guarding the *Shabbos* to sanctify it."

Shamor refers to guarding the day, and the uniqueness of the Jewish people by avoiding any work. It affirms our belief that G-d truly provides our livelihood and

LAND OF ISRAEL

AN INHERITANCE

sustenance. All the good of the past week is elevated on *Shabbos*. Simultaneously, *Shabbos* is the source of all the blessings of the week to come.

The Torah forbids work. But that isn't the same as effort. In the Jewish legal sense, "work" refers to the 39 general categories of creative activity (*melacha*) used to build the *Mishkan* (portable sanctuary that the Jews carried in the desert). These *melachos* (types of work) include weaving, dying, building, etc. By ceasing such "creative work" one day a week, we relinquish our control over our environment and remind ourselves that G-d is the Creator of the world and its Master.

LAND OF ISRAEL

The Jewish people are connected by G-d to *Eretz Yisroel*, the Land of Israel. Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (*RASHI*), the famous 11th century scholar, begins his commentary on the Torah by quoting his father who was also a *Talmudic* scholar, Rabbi Isaac said: "The Torah which is the law-book of Israel should have begun with the verse, "This month shall be to you the first of the months," which is the first commandment given to Israel. What is the reason, then, that it begins with the account of creation? In order that He might give them the heritage of the nations. For should the nations of the world say to Israel, "You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan." Israel may reply to them, "All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased. When He willed, He gave it to them, and when He willed, He took it from them and gave it to us."

Abraham received the land of Israel as a heritage, as the Torah states (*Beraishis* 7:5-7) *And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son and all their substance that they had acquired, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to the land of Canaan and they came into the land of Canaan. And Abram passed through the land of Canaan to the place of Shechem, to Alon Moreh. And the Canaanite (tribe) was then in the land. And the Eternal appeared to Abram, and said, "Unto your seed will I give this land..."* G-d's pledge was formalized in the ceremony in which Abraham took four animals and divided them. (The four animals represented the four times the Jewish people would be exiled.) This ceremony, called the *Bris bein HaBesarim* ("Covenant between the Pieces") took place in 1743 BCE.

"Today, we no longer have the Holy Temple. But, our sages state, only the stones have been destroyed, the Divine Presence remains."

LAND OF ISRAEL

AN INHERITANCE

G-d reestablished the right of the Jewish people to the land at Mount Sinai with the Giving of the Ten Commandments in the year 1315 BCE. Forty years later, the Jewish people entered the land and began to conquer it. The Jews remained on the land for over 3000 years! During that time, they settled Hebron and Schem. (The Torah records the purchase of both areas.) They also settled in Tiberias, Safed, Jerusalem, and dozens of other cities. The Jews built the First and Second Holy Temples. And even after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, the Jews retained their connection to the land of Israel. Of the 613 commandments in the Torah, the majority of *mitzvos* are associated with the Land of Israel.

Our sages ask, why is the land called “*Eretz Yisroel?*” They answer, “because the land “runs” to do the will of its Master.” In Hebrew, the word for “land” *eretz* has the same root as *ratza*, “to run.” It also shares the same root as *ratzon*, “will.” The lesson is that G-d “owns” the Land of Israel. In fact the Torah (Devorim 11:12) testifies that Israel is “a land that the L-rd your G-d cares for; the eyes of the L-rd your G-d are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.”

What’s more, G-d gave it to the Jews as long as they follow the laws of the Torah and perform *mitzvos*. If the Jews, G-d forbid, follow their own inclinations, then eventually, the land will cast the inhabitants out (G-d forbid.) However, if the Jews follow the ways and the will of G-d, the land will blossom for them. Throughout history, no other nation has been able to truly settle the land or make it blossom because no other nation has such a close and intrinsic relationship to it.

The First and Second Holy Temples represent the ultimate expression of the relationship between the Jewish people, the Land of Israel, and the Holy One blessed by He. The First Temple lasted 410 years and was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Bavel in 586 BCE. The Second Temple was rebuilt 70 years later. It lasted 420 years. The Romans destroyed it in 70 CE. The Temple is called the *Bais HaMikdash*. It was the place where the Divine Presence was revealed on earth. And no where was it more revealed than in the Holy of Holies.

“Living a Jewish life is a process, not a destination.”

MOSHIACH

THE 13 PILLARS OF FAITH

The Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant with the Ten Commandments. The ark measured approximately 5 feet long by 3 feet wide. It resided in the Holy of Holies, a chamber 30 feet square. The distance from the wall of the chamber to the side of the Ark was 15 feet. Similarly, the distance from the other side of the chamber to the other side of the ark was also 15 feet. Even though the ark was a physical object in the Holy of Holies, it did not take up space! It was a direct manifestation of the Divine Presence.

During the times of the Holy Temples, all males would journey to Jerusalem for *Pesach*, *Shavuos*, and *Succos*. They would offer sacrifices and participate in joyous celebrations. It was a time “to see and be seen (i.e., by G-d).”

Today, we no longer have the Holy Temple. But while the stones have been destroyed, the Divine Presence remains. For that reason, it is forbidden to visit the location where the Temple once stood. Instead, we can pray by the Western wall. It is not part of the Temple itself. Rather, it is part of an outer wall around the Temple.

According to Jewish law, it is forbidden to tear down or destroy a synagogue. *Chassidic* philosophy explains that the same law applies to the Holy Temple. However, there is one exception to the law. One is permitted to tear it down to build a larger or more honorable structure in its place. The First and Second Temples were destroyed. But we are confident that we will witness their replacement: the Third and final Holy Temple in Jerusalem, speedily in our days!

MOSHIACH

The word *Moshiach* means “anointed.” According to Maimonides (*Hilchos Melachim* 11:1), *Moshiach* will reestablish the kingdom of David, as it ruled in the beginning in days of old. He will rebuild the Holy Temple, gather in all the dispersed children of Israel, and will re-establish all the laws, including the sacrificial offerings and Sabbatical and Jubilee years as discussed in the commandments

“The entire purpose of the Torah is to do, to keep trying, day in and day out, morning and evening. Noble ideas and brilliant concepts are merely words in the wind without action.”

of the Torah....”

Maimonides continues (*Hilchos Melachim* 11:1), stating “He will cause all the nations of the world to serve and worship the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is said, “For then I shall overturn to the nations a pure speech, with which they shall all call out to the Name of the L-rd, and serve Him as one unified group carries a load on their shoulders, shoulder to shoulder.”

In other words, Moshiach will be a human with free will. He will be a Torah scholar and sage, who is exalted in both intellect and holiness, yet someone who represents the ultimate in humility. *Moshaich* will maintain an intense and personal interest in each individual. Through his wisdom, his understanding and his knowledge, he will help us to maximize our talents and capabilities. Through this selflessness, he too, will rise in his relationship with G-d.

Moshiach will purify and elevate the world so that all mankind can recognize and accept G-d as the true Ruler and King of creation. As Maimonides states in the Laws of Kings (12:5) “In that Era, there will be neither famine nor war, neither envy or competition, for good things will flow in abundance and all delights will be freely available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d. The Jews will therefore be great sages and know the hidden matters, and will attain an understanding of their Creator to the extent of mortal potential; as it is written, (Isaiah 11:9) “For the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed.”

This is the Jewish vision of the Messianic Era. During this period, sorrow and sadness, pain and confusion, want and desire will disappear. G-d will become the ultimate reality and we will devote ourselves to strengthening the relationship between G-d and this physical world.

At some point during this period, Jews who have passed on will be resurrected to once again live as souls in bodies. This time, however, they will be cured of any illness or defect, so they can worship G-d with a complete heart and soul. According to many sages, righteous non-Jews will also be resurrected.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, of sainted and blessed memory, Rabbi M. M. Schneerson quoting the *Midrash Yalkut Shemoni* has stated, “The time of your redemption has arrived.” Even though the world remains engrossed in physicality, the Rebbe is

telling us that *Moshiach* can be revealed at any moment. We can speed up the process by advancing in matters of Torah and *mitzvos*. Each *mitzvah* we do, each act we perform brings us one step closer to that time.

Non-Jews, too, can help by performing deeds of goodness and kindness. Together, we really can make the dream of a better world a true and lasting reality. May it happen immediately!

THE NEXT STEP

Living a Jewish life is a process, not a destination. Whether a person is born Jewish or converted, one proceeds on a path of spiritual growth, observing more and more. The key is to have set times for learning, at least a little in the morning and a little in the evening. One should learn practical laws, as well as those things that interest you, e.g. Jewish philosophy, mysticism, history, etc. No matter what you learn, success comes from concentration and from reviewing the material often.

In general, learning is most effective when it's done out loud and with someone else. In fact, the classic style of study is with a study partner. The idea of study partners makes a lot of sense for many reasons. Having a partner can keep you from becoming too lazy to learn. A partner can help explain a concept. At the same time, when you explain something to your partner, you strengthen the learning experience for yourself, as well.

In addition to a study partner, every person should have a rabbi, someone who can answer questions of Jewish law and practice. Ideally, you should also have a *mashpia*, a spiritual advisor. This is a person who can help you grow spiritually. Your rabbi can be your *mashpia*. Your *mashpia* can also be someone who is older or more religious. Whomever you choose, he or she should be someone who is ready to listen and to help guide you along the path of Torah.

One final story. For several years, the rabbis of the *Talmud* debated the question, “What is the most important sentence in the Torah?” Finally, the time came to render a decision. The first rabbi got up and stated that *Shema Yisroel Ado-noi Elo-heinu Ado-noi Echad* “Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One ” is the most important sentence in the Torah because it crystallizes man's relationship to G-d. Another rabbi spoke. He believed that *V'ahavta Lireyecha Camocha* “You should love your neighbor as yourself” is the most important sentence because

it summarizes man's relationship to his fellow man. Finally, a third rabbi spoke. "In my opinion the most important sentence in the Torah is, *Es Hakeves Echad Taaseh Baboker v'Ais Hakeves Hasheini Taaseh Bain Haarbayim*, "You shall offer one lamb in the morning and the second lamb toward evening."

The rabbi was met by jeers. The Holy Temple was destroyed. No one could offer sacrifices. What good was this sentence?

"Please let me explain," the rabbi began. "The entire purpose of the Torah is to do, to keep trying, day in and day out, morning and evening. Noble ideas and brilliant concepts are merely words in the wind without action. By commanding us to offer one lamb every morning and another lamb every evening, the Torah is teaching us that action is the key to accomplishment." Needless to say, the rabbis agreed.

We hope that this book will lead you to take those steps. May your journey be a pleasant and productive one, and may we meet on the streets of Jerusalem with *Moshiach*.

13 PILLARS OF FAITH

The following 13 Principles of Faith are more than important ideas. Formulated by Maimonides, they represent the very foundation of the Jewish way of life. No wonder that many people recite them every morning after *Shacharis* prayers.

I believe with complete faith...

1. That the Creator, blessed be His Name, creates and guides all creatures, and that He alone made, makes, and will make everything.
2. That the Creator, blessed be His Name, is absolutely unique and that there is nothing else like Him and that He alone is our G-d, He alone always was, and He alone always will be.
3. That the Creator, blessed be His Name, is not a physical being, that nothing physical can ever affect Him, and there is nothing in the world which is comparable to Him.
4. That the Creator, blessed be His name, is the first and the last.
5. That to the Creator, blessed be His name, and to Him alone, it is proper to pray,

and it is not proper to pray to anyone [or anything] else besides Him.

6. That the words of the prophets are true.
7. That the prophecy of Moses our teacher, may peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the father of all the prophets, those who came before him, and those who came after.
8. That the entire Torah now in our hands is the same Torah that was given to Moses our Teacher, may peace be upon him.
9. That this Torah will not be exchanged, nor will there ever be another Torah from the Creator, blessed be His Name.
10. That the Creator, blessed be His Name, knows all the deeds of men and all their thoughts, as it is said, "It is He Who fashions the heads of them all together; it is He who understands their deeds"
11. That the Creator, blessed be His Name, rewards those who keep His commandments.
12. In the coming of Moshiach, and even though he may delay, I still wait every day for him to come.
13. That those who died will be brought to life at whatever time it shall please the Creator, blessed be His Name and exalted is His remembrance forever and for all eternity.

**Dedication in loving memory of
Zvi Yehuda ben Yitzchak Elchanan Saks OBM**

When a baby boy is born, Chassidim customarily tell the father, "You should become a true *chayal*, a soldier." *Chayal* is an acrostic for three words, a *chasid* (someone who goes beyond the letter of Jewish law; a *yirei shamayim* (someone who has fear of Heaven), and a *lamdan*, (a scholar.)

Zvi Yehuda Saks was a true *chayal*. Tzvi radiated life and positive energy to everyone around him; so much so that it was easy to overlook the depth of his personality. For example, Zvi wasn't satisfied with minimums. Instead, he continually worked on himself, improving in every way he could. Even though he constantly judged himself, he never judged others. He accepted everyone and loved them without reservation—just as a true *chasid* should.

Zvi was also someone who looked upon G-d with fear and awe. When taught a class, he would talk about "G-d Almighty." When he did a mitzvah, he would sense G-d's Presence with it. When he prayed, it was with absolute devotion. In essence, he showed others what it meant to be a *yirei shamayim*.

And Zvi was a scholar. He truly loved to learn. Yet no matter how much he knew about a topic (and he knew a lot about a lot,) he was always trying to know more. And was always willing to share what he learned with others.

Friend, mentor, *chasid*, *chayal*. That was Zvi Yehuda. By taking the lessons of his life to heart, we can hasten the time when we will be reunited once more, with the revelation of Moshiach speedily in our days.

Leibel Estrin

לע"נ
הח' הת' ר' צבי יהודה בן ר' יצחק אלחנן
סאקס

נדפס ע"י ולזכות

ר' אברהם בן שרה
וזוג' חנה מרים בת שפרה
ובניהם
שמואל אברהם בן חנה מרים
דניאל בנימן בן חנה מרים
נתן יצחק בן חנה מרים

לאורך ימים ושנים טובות

לע"נ

הח' הת' ר' צבי יהודה בן ר' יצחק אלחנן

סאקם

נדפס ע"י

הרה"ת ר' יוסף בן מאירה

וזוג' פריידא חנה בת יהודית דיפקא

ובניהם

שלמה שמעי' בן פריידא חנה

יהודית חוה בן פריידא חנה

שניאור זלמן בן פריידא חנה

מנחם מענדל בן פריידא חנה

אברהם יצחק בן פריידא חנה

לאורך ימים ושנים מובות

לע"נ

הרה"ח ר' יחיאל בן ר' יעקב קאפעל ע"ה

מרת מירל בת ר' נתן ע"ה

Vogel

תנצב"ה