

PARSHA TOOLS & RECIPES

This book is a compilation of the weekly Parsha Tools and Recipes sent by Email from Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz to his readers from November 2005 to January 2007 (#18- Mishpatim and #19- Terumah were skipped). To receive his weekly Emails contact him at:

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Paradise Principle Institute

The current focus of the **Paradise Principle Institute** is to '**Bring Back the Jewish Glory**'. The PPI seeks to research and teach how to re-inspire our people to their own roots by offering an authentic Torah-based Kabbalistic perspective that features teachings and life changing techniques to help access 'Paradised' higher consciousness and to bridge secular wisdom to its Torah\Kabbalah based roots.



Introduction

Dear Friends,

I'm happy to see the first stages of the Parsha Tools coming out in a rough draft book form. I thank HaShem and those 1 or 2 wonderful soul-family people (whom I don't know yet if they want their names mentioned). This rough draft format sort of captures the 'just do it' free spirited style of the Parsha Tools ideas from its inception till now. This spirit expresses itself in the way that these Parshas have evolved and changed over time from

being a short 'tool focused' essay to being a longer more idea centered presentation. Your guess is as good as mine as to what form these essays will take in the future...I'm a natural explorer who rejects being boxed in, in any way, shape or form (in case you haven't yet noticed). I thank G-d that he created email...Why—you may ask? Because instead of me having to write an entire book that people may or may not buy, but almost surely won't really read through to the end, now I have the satisfaction of knowing that the chances of people reading my writings on a weekly basis are much greater.

Writing your own 'take' on the Parsha is a wonderful and very important Tikun for the soul and a wonderful project to take on for the year. I highly recommend it to all of you out there. And if you're saying to yourself, "How can I commit to a whole year's worth?" My answer to you is, "Don't commit to anything, and for that matter, don't even think about it at all, just do it!"

One last thought before, I just do it—and send out this Email preface to be included in the rough draft book. 'Tools', I believe are a very important way of conveying wisdom and Torah in our 'quick-fix' generation. Not only because they are instant, but also because they serve to internalize intellectual principles in a way that goes beyond just the 'wow' effect that interesting Torah has on us.

I'm looking forward to continuing our weekly connection, G-d willing. Thanks for being a part of it.

Blessings to you all,

Yitzchak

Av 5766/August 2006

#1 BERESHIT - Soul Resonating (How to get answers from the soul)

Shalom and Happy New Year,

The New Year brings out in me the desire to share and communicate with you all....Maybe B"H if I'm worthy, the sharing and communication will flourish and reproduce itself---- in both directions; me to you and you to me. I have an idea for the year [.....let's see how far it really goes...]---'THE WEEKLY PARSHA TOOLS'. Tools are short, sweet and useful. They can also change our lives if we are inspired by them and practice them enough...Here's a tool for 'Parshat Breishit that we'll call---

"SOUL RESONATING"

1. A basic Kabbalistic Creation principle is that everything that will ever happen has always existed within the realm of the Infinite Being.
2. A person's soul which is 'A part of Hashem....' , knows a lot more than we think, a lot more Torah and truth and knowledge of what will take place in life in the future which means plugging in to the Divine realm of that which has always existed and will eventually happen.
3. Abraham plugged into or 'resonated' with his soul & knew all of the Torah before it was given. Rebbe Chanina ben Dosa [the Talmudic 'Wonder Rebbe'] resonated with his soul while in prayer and could tell if a sick person would live or die according to how 'fluently the prayer came out of his mouth'. I told both of my daughters to resonate with their souls in making the biggest decision of their lives'...choosing the right husbands for themselves!
4. I'd like to propose this tool to anyone of you who is open enough and cautious enough [i.e. backing up your resonating-choices with sound authoritative support and advice] to engage an unknown area in life that you need to reach some type of a decision about. Resonate the decision with your souls. The resonance could be done while praying, meditating, receiving Divine dictation or any other creative activity that suits you. Perhaps [as the 'Slonimer Rebbe' writes] you can get to the resonance point by asking yourself the question, 'Does this idea find Favor in Hashem's Eye's?' Obviously there's a lot more sophisticated meditative techniques to reach true resonance, but you know what---let's leave it as simple as possible---your Neshama will inform you how to do it!

#2 NOACH - Seeing Negative People Positively

I want to send you the second Parsha at this point in order to keep pace with the upcoming Shabbat Parshat Noach. The response to the 1st Parsha was positive and I was thrilled to connect with a few friends...Keep those cards and letters coming...

1. The entire Parsha of Noah is an in-depth study of how societies fail because of twisted philosophical outlooks. 340 years after humanity and all of creation was washed away in a flood, the Torah presents to us the generation of the Dispersion [the Tower of Babel People].

2. The 'Babel Generation' was even worse than the 'Flood Generation' in that they declared outright rebellion against G-d being the Boss. The 'Flood People' were steeped in immorality and theft and got wiped off the face of the earth which was a lot worse punishment than that received by the 'Babel people' who were dispersed and confounded [by everyone speaking unintelligible languages]. Why did they suffer the less severe fate if what they were doing seemed to be worse?

3. Unlike the 'Flood People', the 'Babel People' practiced mutual love and unity amongst each other. Our sages teach that love often overcomes strict justice. If it worked to save the generation of the Tower of Babel rebels in the eyes of Hashem, then all the more so it can work for each of us in our interpersonal relationships. We can simply reframe the way we perceive the 'rebels' and 'criminals' [including the rebels inside of ourselves] in our lives by hyper- focusing on their good points. The more exclusively we just see the good in them, the more we can really help them become only good.

4. Here's the tool:

A. Identify a negative trait that you're bothered by in someone [or in yourself]

B. Identify a unique and positive trait in that person that you are impressed by and attracted to.

Contemplate it deeply---Think of how you can acquire this trait for yourself

C. Project in great detail how the next time you meet this person, you will 'groove' on this trait [and other positive traits] and nothing negative at all

D. Work towards changing the image you have of this person and this can change how they see themselves in your eyes and even in their own eyes.

#3 LECH LECHA - Holy Selfishness

1. Abraham is depicted as being the pillar of 'Chesed' in the world. Every detail about his life is another aspect illustrating the Torah's living lesson of this Sefirotic trait. 'Chesed' is about overflow, going beyond limits, unconditional loving and selfless giving to others.

2. G-d's directive to Abraham at the beginning of the Parsha, are the 2 words 'Lech Lecha' that sum up the whole Parsha. G-d is telling Abraham, 'Since you're leaving behind your good name or fame, your livelihood and your home which gives you the stability to give birth and raise progeny---therefore I'll compensate all your losses and offer you the directive of 'Lech Lecha'---[which literally means go for yourself or go to yourself or in our

case as Rashi points out 'Go for your own good and benefit']. The rest of the Parsha describes Abraham's recovering his losses described above.

3. The question that should scream out at you is this, 'If Abraham is the world's pillar of selfless giving to others, then why is the beginning-hallmark-challenge of his life all about selfishness; 'TO GO FORTH FOR HIMSELF AND FOR HIS OWN GOOD'? In other words why or how does a life of selflessness base itself on a foundation of seeming selfishness?!

4. The answer is found in an understanding of the Divine Template of the personality as taught by the Kabbalistic explanation of the sefirot. The highest or innermost motivator of the psyche is called 'Keter.' One aspect of Keter is all about being guided by Hashem. This naturally gives rise to another Keter trait [the 2nd deepest motivator of the psyche] which is being in sync with oneself. Only afterwards does the rest of the actualizing of the personality 'kick in'---which includes selfless giving to others. In summary, 1st comes a Divine directive to maximize ME and only afterwards a selfless giving to others [Chesed].

5. The tool is called 'Holy Selfishness Fusion'---

A. 1st contemplate or meditate on some upcoming situation where you have the opportunity to do Chesed with others. Visualize it in all of its fine detail and notice what parts of the experience you feel stronger or weaker in.

B. Now energize yourself with 'Holy Selfishness' by plugging in to your strongest personality traits such as perhaps humor, love, humility or leadership...etc...Next bring Hashem into this experience by noticing that in addition to making everything happen while you're in your strong-personality-trait-'ZONE', also Hashem is enabling you to do all that you do and accomplish down to the last detail. If you visualize this carefully, you'll feel that you're doing your own thing and at the same time you're being infinitely empowered!!

C. Now go back to your original interpersonal scenario with your new supercharged 'Holy Selfishness' & notice the difference. The goal is to act this out in reality and for that matter to supercharge all your other acts of Chesed!

#4 VAYERA - Grooving on Giving

1. Last week I threw a curve-ball at you. I explained how the basis of Avraham's selfless giving was really Holy selfishness. I've decided to keep things simple and straightforward this week--[most people seem to like it better that way].

2. This week's Parsha, more than any other, highlights Abraham's trait of Chesed which is selfless giving. Despite personal suffering after his circumcision and unbearably hot weather conditions,

Abraham anxiously anticipates the 1st opportunity to provide hospitality to anyone who crosses his path. The details as to how he provides hospitality could make up a virtual guidebook on the art of selfless giving. Another chapter in this guidebook would elaborate on how to pray to prevent the immanent destruction of a society of Sodomites. Their contribution to the world is the trait of cruel-selfishness which is the diametrically opposite trait than that which Abraham represented. Further chapters depict Abraham practically single-handedly defending in a war, underdog nations and also bestowing maximal honor to the dead..... and the list goes on and on.....

3. We stand in awe of Abraham, but what about us?! The stories of the forefathers and their personalities and for that matter all the rest of the 5 Books of Moses as well are not meant to be merely history lessons. Rather they are meant to reflect to us what our souls are made up of and what we can manifest in our own lives with the right doses of clarity, inspiration, hard work and good techniques. Sounds great, right? But pray tell, how am I going to bring out the Abraham and the selfless giving inside of me for real?!

4. Kabbalah teaches that one of the sefirotic personality traits of 'Keter'----[which is the deepest underlying motivation of our psyche], is to take pleasure. In other words, in order to maximally activate any part of my personality, I need to 'groove' on doing or being that trait!!

Here's the tool:

A. Choose a 5-minute slot in your day anchored next to a 'permanent' time slot such as wakeup time or morning-prayer time or breakfast...etc...

B. Use these 5 minutes to groove on giving as follows; Contemplate how wonderful it is to give to others and how wonderful you feel about it and project yourself giving to someone later today and how you will groove-out when you're doing it.....Groove on the top 10 selfless givers in your life and on the top 10 giving experiences in your past...etc..etc...you get the idea, don't you---just go wild and ecstatic on the trait of giving!

Even though for realistic purposes I'm prescribing doing this at this point for 5 minutes a day, ultimately the goal of this tool [and all other tools for that matter] is to develop a 24\7 grooving-on-giving consciousness!!!

#5 CHAYEI SARAH "Never missing a day"

1. This week's Parsha features a verse that sums up Abraham's day to day relationship with G-d's Divine Providence. The verse is very cryptic and demands a deep explanation in order to fully uncover it's invaluable lesson in Higher--Consciousness living. The verse is, 'Abraham was old and came with his DAYS and Hashem blessed Abraham with KOL [everything]. The simple explanation is that Abraham captured every opportunity that came his way to elevate the mundane to the level of the Divine. These opportunities are referred to as DAYS---not merely a 24 hour unit of time, but rather an independent entity created by one's meeting TODAY'S UNIQUE CHALLENGE of elevating reality. Abraham, never missed a DAY in his life. Hashem responded measure for measure by blessing him with KOL---the totality of materialistic and spiritual goodness.

2. The master Kabbalist known as the ARIZAL teaches that every person is sent an individualized customized daily quota called a DAY. This DAY is a 24 hour entity composed of all the daily challenges one is presented with to elevate all mundane reality to the level of the G-dly or spiritual. This DAY is a 1-time opportunity to rectify and actualize oneself and the entire world that will never ever be repeated. Like they say in Texas, 'If you snooze you lose'.

3. You're probably bothered at this point and saying, 'Listen Yitzchak, that's fine for Abraham who was as close to being perfect as a human being could be, but what about the rest of us normal, fallible human beings---How can we break through?!!!' Well, I'm glad that you asked that question...[especially since I've got an answer waiting for you]--- The answer is based on the Talmudic story of the potential convert who approaches the great Hillel and asks to be taught the entire Torah while standing on 1 leg. Hillel answers, 'What's hateful to you, don't do to your CHAVER [literally friend]. The Chassidic twist to this story [which by the way answers the question of how this piece of wisdom contains the entire Torah---both between people and people and between people and Hashem] is don't do what's hateful to your CHIBUR [literally connection]...ie... don't do what's hateful or harmful to your CONNECTION or relationship with Hashem!

4. That brings us to our tool for the week. In order to bring out in myself the Abrahamic trait of never missing a DAY, try getting accustomed to asking myself as constantly as possible----'Will this act or thought or word or decision that I'm about to make, enhance my connection to Hashem or the opposite' [I suggest you reduce the question to 1 anchor-word----- 'Connects?']

Have a great Shabbos and Let us all be blessed with the ability to capture our DAYS and to draw into our lives KOL--total wellbeing!

#6 TOLDOT – Bar/Bat Mitzva--ing at all ages

1. I'm proud to announce that my son Yisrael has made it to the ripe old age of 13 years old....You know what that means---- BAR MITZVAH--Just before you wish me a Mazel tov,

I'd 1st like to offer you a challenge-----Make a Bar or Bat Mitzvah for yourself Now!! After you do then you can wish yourself a hearty Mazel Tov, invite some friends, drink a few drinks, eat a few cookies and make a L'Chaim!....Before you accuse me being intoxicated with Bar Mitzvah euphoria, allow me to explain my strange challenge to you....

2. This week's Torah portion begins by vividly pointing out the very stark differences between the personalities of the 'twin' brothers Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov, we are taught, symbolizes the Yaitzer Hatov [good inclination] and Eisav the opposite, the bad inclination. All the teachings describing their personalities are meant to be profile-descriptions of these two opposing drives inside of us. The overt manifestations of these 2 very different personalities came into play when the 2 boys became 13 years old which is of course the Bar Mitzvah age...

3. Both earlier and more contemporary sages illuminate for us what happens at that magic moment when a boy turns 13 or when a girl turns 12. First of all, they undergo a major status change----A minor turns into an adult. A boy\girl turns into a man\woman. Small mindedness gives way to expanded consciousness...One adds an additional level of soul....ie.. in addition to 'Nefesh', now one's 'Ruach' becomes activated. Until now they were exclusively driven by their Yaitzer Hara [evil inclination], and from now on their good inclination begins to kick in also to make it a fair fight. But what is the underlying experiential & psychological change that really happens? What is the Bar\Bat Mitzvah transformation that I the adult can internalize in my life?

4. It all boils down to being a Master of Free Will....not the lower level of free will [which is not so free] of just reacting to the various stimuli that come my way both within me and from without me.....Rather, the more profound application of free will is to choose to be guided in how to live life by One who's knowledge in the matter is much greater than my own. What that means is to open myself up to merge my activities in life with the infinite wisdom of the Mitzvahs-----to be a child or a master of the Mitzvahs-----to be a Bar\Bat Mitzvah!!

5. Whether you're 13, 40 or 70 years old and whether you choose to reframe 1%, 50% or 100% of your activities in a Mitzvah framework, here's a tool for you to at least get started in the right direction:

Choose any daily activity in your life [whether it's between you and G-d, you and others or you and yourself]....then BAR\BAT MITZVAHIZE the activity by reframing it as a Mitzvah.....Check if it's actually a Mitzvah or how it can be, and then have the intention that 'I'm doing a Mitzvah!!'.....Picture yourself in doing the Mitzvah merging with Divine Light and Infinite Wisdom and Wellbeing for yourself and the whole world...Do this act with as much enthusiasm as if you just won the 10 million dollar lottery!....etc..etc..I'm aware that there's a lot more [in fact an entire lifetime may not cover it] to elaborate on to truly make this as powerful a tool as possible...but we're only opening the door.....

MAZEL TOV!!

#7 VAYAITZEI -JACOB'S LADDER - My Personal Divine Coach

1. Our forefather Jacob saw 'a ladder standing on Earth whose top reaches the Heavens...and behold there were Angels of G-d climbing and descending it [the ladder]'. The analogies and their corresponding lessons abound in this classic prophetic vision:

a. The ladder and its ascending and descending angels represent the major exiles of Jewish history and their time spans.

b. The ladder represents the 'Sinai' experience of receiving the Torah. The numerical value of 'Sulam'[ladder] equals the numerical value of Sinai' [130] showing the connection between the two. The Angels represented by Moshe and Aaron ascend to Heaven to bring down to us the Torah [Aaron didn't actually ascend but had a key role in the whole process].

c. The ladder symbolizes the Holy Temple's Altar grounded here on the earth, from which the pleasing aroma of the Korbanot [sacrifices] ascends and draws down Heavenly wellbeing for the whole world... The attending Priests fill the role of the Angels on the ladder.

d. The Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement, explains that the ascending Angels represent our activities in life---every motion, spoken word, all our travels and every one of our affairs all make their mark on high and draw down [the descending Angels] incredible abundance generated by the Divine Delight that we have aroused.

2. A contemporary teacher, Dr. Lisa Aiken, who lectures to audiences far and wide, writes in the 'Forward' of one of her latest books, 'Tuning In' the following insights; '... at least ninety % of Americans believe in G-d, and a majority of them believe that He guides them in their daily lives....we want to know [that Hashem] is involved in our day to day lives in a caring and loving way....If we would keep a daily log of our experiences and start thinking about how they fit into a spiritual framework, we might be amazed at how frequently we receive Divine messages...' Based on this outlook, Dr. Aiken goes on in her book to tell many Divine-Providential stories of a lot of the people she encountered in her travels.

3. In light of the above, perhaps we can humbly submit our own interpretation of the Jacob's ladder analogy; the descending Angels are our G-d-sent daily experiences which are coming to direct us in life and to answer the questions and dilemmas that we are constantly asking ourselves or G-d to clarify for us [the ascending Angels].....and this is all within the framework of discovering and actualizing our calling or mission in life!

4. And what naturally follows my friends is our tool of the week:

a. At the beginning of the week write down the various dilemmas, questions and challenges that you have in life..... both general questions, but even more importantly, questions and challenges that can elicit answers that will direct you to discovering and actualizing who you are and why you're here.

b. At the end the week, write down the highlight experiences of your week. I suggest to write them down in a way that's as effortless as possible [ie... work backward to make it easier to remember and let the recalling come to you without straining yourself. sort of like someone who is taking dictation].

c. Now match your [beginning of the week] dilemmas and challenges with your collected corresponding experiences and see if you can shed some light on why the things that are happening to you are happening..... ***** a word of note----the masters of Chassidut teach that the more real you are about being Divinely guided, the more real G-d will be in truly guiding you.

Happy navigating!

#8 VAYISHLACH - Yaakov Consciousness

1. Our forefather Yaakov almost completely defeated the Guardian angel of Esau in a metaphysical wrestling match. The match represents, among other things, the paradigm struggle between our good and bad inclinations. By being victorious, Yaakov graduated to a higher level of spirituality and accordingly receives the message that he will now have a new name--Yisrael. Similarly Avraham received his new name [an additional letter of 'hei'] after having been called Avram as a result of his elevation to a higher level of spirituality. Our sages teach that the main distinction between the elevated Avraham and the elevated Yisrael is that once Avraham is called Avraham, we are not to refer to him by his previous name, whereas the names Yaakov and Yirael are forever permitted to be used interchangeably. The explanation of this crucial distinction is explained in terms of our lives as follows; Avraham's graduation to a higher level is irreversible since it comes as a result of his circumcision. A circumcised person with all the spiritual advantages that are gained and forever etched onto himself can never go back to the state of being non-circumcised with all the spiritual disadvantages involved. However the difference between being Yaakov or Yisrael is the natural shift or swing that all of us constantly undergo between being in a state of constricted consciousness or expanded consciousness.

2. Let's explore for a minute the more difficult of the two mind states -----the- Yaakov-constricted-state-of-consciousness. Let's see how this is both an inescapable and crucial aspect of spiritual living;

A. Rebbe Nachman teaches that the purpose of a person's fall [the Yaakov state], is to facilitate the ability to rise up to a whole new and higher level.

B. The dynamic of the 'fallen state' expresses one of the primary purposes of life; that of clinging to Hashem and elevating ourselves and our world while in that state:

1) Moses at the end of his 120 year life states that I can no longer come in or go out ----which is interpreted to mean that he can no longer serve Hashem from a fallen

state since he's arrived at place of being in a constant elevation-----therefore the whole purpose for Moses to keep on living on this earthly plain no longer exists.

2) R. Akiva in his early pre-religious years couldn't stand the sight of Torah scholars and wanted to violently bite them like a donkey---- R. Akiva was able to eventually not only come to terms with Torah scholars, but to actually understand their value on a level far above anyone of his generation all because he'd been to that fallen state [of being disgusted with scholars] and was able to elevate that fallen state. [*R. Akiva is the only one of his generation to eventually interpret a teaching based on a difficult verse which extols the virtues of Torah scholars almost equating their virtue to that of Hashem Himself]....[**this same principle explains why the spiritual level of Baalei tshuvah {newcomers to traditional Jewish practice} surpasses even that of the lifelong righteous people---since the newcomer has been to many fallen places and has redeemed or uplifted them]

3) The point is that we are plunged periodically into a state of lower consciousness for very good reasons and we are meant to hang on, survive and even more than this, to somehow redeem that fallen state...ie..to identify the light inside of that darkness!

3. There are a number of tools or techniques which will enable you to light up the darkness while in your constricted-Yaakov-state....Let's take a look at a few:

A. 'Find the Gift' ---whatever dark situation you find yourself in, identify what the 'Gift' is of being in this state.

B. 'Minimalism'----When constricted, don't think too much..... just sort of mechanically act in a minimalist way....ie... only try to hang on by a thread by expecting yourself to only accomplish 15% of what you can accomplish.

C. 'Wait it Out'----If you're constricted, don't make significant decisions and don't get into arguments which you'll only be sorry about afterwards when you regain expanded consciousness....Wait it out and postpone all other important activities till you become 'Yisrael' again....

Shabbat Shalom to all you light-in-the darkness souls!

#9 VAYEISEIV - All Encompassing Communication

1. The 2nd verse of our Parsha states, 'These are the offspring of Jacob...' and immediately without even beginning a new verse goes on and says, 'Josef was 17 years old...etc...etc...'...piecing the 2 ideas together we come up with, 'The offspring of Jacob is Josef...'This begs explanation since we know that the offspring of Jacob are all of his 12 sons and his daughter----who together make up the 12 tribes, the roots of the entire nation of Israel. So why are we taught that the offspring of Jacob is only Josef? What we

are being taught is that Josef somehow encompasses all of Jacob's offspring. This needs understanding.

2. The Kabbalah teaches that the 7 shepherds of Israel; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Josef and David---correspond to the 7 lowest Sefirot or Divinely based character traits. Without going in to any deep explanations of what these traits are and how they express themselves in the lives of these 7 paradigm figures, suffice it to say that these 7 traits represent 7 shades of reality portrayed by the life stories of our 7 shepherds. All the details of Josef's life depict the Sefira 'Yesod'---Sefira # 6 out the 7.

3. The sefira Yesod can be understood by isolating the biological features found in the body part which corresponds to the Yesod, namely the male sexual organ. Its primary function is to reproduce...ie...to convey seed to the female. This seed is drawn from the entire body. In a more conceptual sense, the Yesod or male organ's main task is that of all-encompassing communication. Biologically we also find that the organ, when active is very much alive, literally freezing up the rest of the body and is the seat of the greatest pleasure, and when not in active use, it's totally limp. These functions point to a conceptual parallel; one's ability to know when to remain silent and when one does communicate, it should reflect an inner feeling of great pleasure.

4. Yosef is known as the Tzaddik, the one who's every act conveys the Divine Will. In real life, when one encounters a tzaddik one walks away smiling & filled with great pleasure that was radiated by the Tzadik. A tzadik's role has traditionally been that of the central pillar of society. All revolves around them. They represent the apex of their society or spiritual community and are able to communicate to their people when to hold back and when to express themselves and they're able to communicate to the outside world the essence of the community that they represent. All of these traits depict the major events of Josef's life; his relationship with his brothers [their falling out with him and subsequent reunification are all a struggle to establish Josef's role as their apex] as well as Josef's later role as the 2nd in command in Egypt & his family's main liaison as well as the person who conveys G-d's physical bounty of wealth and food to an entire world that is plagued by poverty and famine.

5. Here's a couple possible tools to bring out at least a part of the Josef in ourselves:

a. 'The all encompassing tool'---In order to appreciate and improve on our ability to always retain and capitalize on all opportunities and experiences and lessons constantly being presented to us...in short to be an 'All encompassing person'----try this; make a list of all the experiences and events [ie..'highlights'] of your previous week. Next to every highlight--- make the following assessment-----did I really retain, capitalize and maximize all I that I could from the experience?....and if the answer is yes than really groove on it, if the answer is that you could've done better---than resolve to do better. Do this on a weekly basis and your friends will ultimately describe you as a person who is good down to the last drop.

b. 'Holistic communication'----when you communicate, don't just say things mindlessly, but add to your words all the dimensions that make you a human being-----happiness, intelligence, emotion, creativity, spirituality...etc..etc... Like any other physical or spiritual exercise---the more you do it the better you get at it.

Shabbat Shalom from 'All of Me to All of you'

#10 MIKEITZ-CHANUKKAH - Seeing in the Dark

1. All the events of this week's Parsha culminate [in next week's Parsha] in an awesome revelation. Joseph in his role as viceroy of Egypt and the global provider of economic sustenance is not recognized by his brothers. He recognizes them though, and decides to teach them a series of life-lessons. This is in response to [and as a 'Tikun' for] their humiliating sale of him in slavery to a group of Egypt-bound wayfarers many years before. They don't get it. Their patience and tolerance almost reach the breaking point...and right before these very capable brothers are about to declare an all out war on Joseph and Egypt, Joseph says 2 words that transform their lives' forever. He says, 'I'm Joseph.' They're overwhelmed with this revelation and too stunned to speak....all at once all the perennial puzzle pieces fit together. The rhyme and reason concerning all the years of their confrontation with Joseph and all the horrible ramifications becomes starkly clear. So too in Messianic times, G-d will say the 2 words, 'I'm G-d' and all the scattered Providential puzzle pieces of our present individual and collective lives' will all unify into the most exquisite puzzle ever assembled! These weeks' Parshas always fall on the Holiday of Chanukkah therefore there must be a connection between this revelation and the essence of Chanukkah.....

2. Chanukkah highlights a cosmic battle between Jewish 'HOD' and Greek 'HOD'....'HOD' is [very briefly] the sefirotic trait of glorifying someone or something that we adore. Greek Hod, which is the foundation to a large extent of modern western civilization, is all about celebrating and glorifying mankind's measurable accomplishments.....in the areas of philosophy, art, science, sports and more. There is one important aspect that is crucial to understand, and that is that the accomplishment must be that which is seeable, graspable and measurable....'What you see is what you get'. Jewish 'HOD' on the other hand glorifies that which is unseen as being the spiritual source of all that which is seen....'What you don't see is what you get'.....

3. This world outlook of glorifying that which is hidden\unseen is the secret of Jewish survival. the Greeks were well aware of this and therefore instead of fighting a battle of genocide that others have unsuccessfully tried against us, they tried to 'darken the light of our eyes' with a series of decrees designed to blacken the spiritual----hidden-----unseen---spiritual light that lights up all forms of darkness, This 'light in the dark principle' makes us the glorious nation that we are and is one of our most important contributions not only to western civilization but to all of mankind! In contrast to this spiritual light, all the HOD of the Greeks is pure darkness... a cosmic battle [still being fought today] of light versus darkness!

4. There are many ways of being able to see light in the darkness. One of the most important ways is what Joseph revealed to his brothers----Being able to see here and now how all the hidden puzzle pieces of your life fit together. Certainly to the extent that we

could somehow know this hidden information here and now, the more we could actively participate in the process. The answer is simple---just step into the future and check it out! The tool that I'm about to reveal to [most of] you is a real life-changer! It's my Chanukah present to you. It's called PRESUME---short for 'pre' [preceding] and 'resume'-- -ie...seeing and actualizing our future now. Here's what you do:

Make a 'graduation speech' with great joy----describe the end of this year's [or month's or week's or however long you'd like] accomplishments and how you accomplished them. Speak as if you're living in the future now. Describe accomplishments that are beyond your present capabilities. Make the accomplishments be representative of all areas of life-- -both materialistic and spiritual. Afterwards come back to the present and get yourself a good partner or counselor to help you along the way....and go to work....

#11 VAYIGASH - The Screams Of Birth

1. "...All the souls of the House of Jacob coming to Egypt are seventy" [Vayigash...Genesis 46\27]. The Torah here is not merely informing us of an interesting historical fact or taking a census. Every word\idea in this short verse is pregnant with meaning of cosmic significance! Rebbe Nachman of Breslov [Likutei Maharar 26] illuminates this verse's incredible message as follows;

Every one of our souls is rooted in these seventy souls of the House of Jacob. These seventy souls are rooted in the seventy 'Faces' [dimensions] of Torah. There are seventy nations of the world that correspond or counterbalance these seventy souls of Jacob and seventy 'Faces' of Torah. Their role can be described as the 'spoilers'. Each of these nations embodies one unique character trait that serves to obstruct or distance each of these seventy souls from manifesting the seventy 'Faces' of Torah. If the obstruction is overcome, one gives birth to or reveals a new dimension of Torah and also gives birth to a new soul. These new souls are drawn down into the world both in the simple, literal sense and as new soul energy drawn down to those who merit it.

2. Sounds simple, right? Wrong! The whole topic is both difficult to comprehend and difficult to carry out. Exile is understood in the literal sense in that each of the seventy soul families are scattered across the earth to cope with its corresponding nation [1 out of 70] and that nation's negative character trait. Exile is also understood in a personal, spiritual sense; ie...the reality of being in a state of internal exile, distanced or blocked off [due to any one or some or all of these negative traits] from actualizing oneself. How does one liberate oneself? Rebbe Nachman provides us with the following solution; He teaches that a woman can only give birth after unleashing seventy screams. So too we can give birth to these seventy 'Faces' or aspects of Torah and new soul energy, by shouting out seventy primal screams!

3. R. Nachman goes on to offer us a shortcut. He explains that the trait of misdirected lust is a trait that encompasses all the rest of the seventy [we'll see B"H later in the Torah that this was Bilaam's secret strategy in his attempt to destroy the people of Israel in the desert]. Obsessive lust blinds one from being able to see anything but the object of the lust---a sort of idol worship. Therefore the antidote that R. Nachman prescribes to remove

this idolatrous lust is to accept upon oneself G-d's Executive rule in all areas of our lives. To the extent that one does this, one frees oneself from lust's clutches. As a result, one loosens at least partially the shackles of these seventy negative traits. Now the screams of labor or birth-giving will be much more effective!

4. Our Parsha tool:

a. Go into a darkened, soundproof room or anywhere where you won't be disturbed or disturb others. I suggest if possible doing this exercise with a group of likeminded friends for maximal effect.

b. Make a 'shopping' list of the various challenges in your life. Begin to elaborate all that you are trying to do to cope with each particular challenge. When you reach the point that you realize that you can't go any farther to cope to reach a solution\breakthrough, then in a very emotionally vocal [screaming] manner toss it all up to Hashem. [King David in Psalms writes, 'Toss up your burden to Hashem and He'll take care of you']. Scream out with all your strength, 'You take it from here on Hashem, I just can't go any further'

**** By doing this exercise, you give Executive rule to Hashem [make him be the BOSS] in the intimate aspects of your life. You're also screaming away the blocks [the 70 traits] that are preventing you from becoming the best you can be. You thereby can give birth to your own unique and brilliant soul-filled Torah insights.

Happy birthday to each and every one of you

#12 VAYECHI - Coping With Personal Exile

1. Yaakov our forefather was very afraid to bring his clan of 70 souls down to Egypt. He knew that Egypt was the antithesis to the vision and the way of life that he, his father and grandfather spent their lives nurturing. [We hope to further elaborate on this point in future Parshas B"H.] Yaakov knew better than anyone what a life of suffering can do to a person, no less an entire nation. G-d spoke to Yaakov at this crucial point and comforted him with 2 promises [Vayigash 46\3-4]:

A. '...don't fear...I will make of you a great nation.'

B. ' I'll descend with you to Egypt and I'll bring you up [out of there]...'

We can understand how the 2nd promise would comfort Yaakov. No matter what darkness and despair the people would face, their Father in Heaven would always be with them. The 1st promise however needs more understanding.

2. On the surface, it seems that G-d's 1st promise to Yaakov could be compared to the following analogy: A spy is assigned by his country's secret intelligence service to venture into the most hostile country on earth at the constant risk of his life for an unforeseen length of time. He's promised that when he finally succeeds in his mission, he'll be

rewarded handsomely and will be showered with honor and fame! Surely that future reward just wouldn't be enough to allay his constant mortal fears. The comparison to Yaakov's situation is obvious. However when we look deeper and begin to fathom who Yaakov really is and his spiritual legacy that our nation inherited, then we can understand how G-d's promises provide precisely the necessary ingredients to comfort Yaakov and relieve his fears.

3. Yaakov instilled into our nations collective subconscious, the awareness that every minute of our lives is meaningful. All that we experience whether painful or otherwise is G-d-sent. Everything coming at us in life is there to build us up rather than to knock us down. The Kabbalistic term for this outlook is 'Tikun' or rectification. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that the more real we are with the fact that every seemingly haphazard event is specifically directed at each person as a guiding light towards one's Tikun, the more real we are with our being constantly Divinely Guided, the more we actually draw down this reality into our lives. It's our choice-- it's all either coincidental or every precious minute becomes a customized and personalized opportunity to turn us into the best person we can be! Recently, the Dahli Lama who is considered by many to be a very sophisticated man of the spirit, requested of a select delegation of Jewish scholars to answer for him a very important question. He asked them what is the Jewish people's amazing secret of survival through all these 1000's of years of persecution and exile. I don't know what they answered him. However I believe that to the extent that we understand and internalize the message of 'Tikun', we can provide the ultimate answer.

4. How can we begin to open up this type of consciousness in our own personal lives, in the midst of our own sufferings and personal exiles? How can we see the Tikun of all of our life's experiences? How can our lives be different than that of the miserable spy, who's payoff is only at the end---how can we receive that payoff all the time and thereby become great individuals and a great nation?! Here's the tool [***If I brought in a previous week a similar I beg of your indulgence---this tool is worth the repetition and review--constantly!];

a. Jump into a real or imaginary Mikve [any body of natural running water used for spiritual purification]----before your 1st dunk, call up to your mind any negative experience that you recently had...try to feel for the most painful part of the experience...

b. Now think to yourself that this painful negative experience is the very best thing that could happen to you and any other substitute experience just wouldn't be as good...[this outlook is based on the teachings of our sages that all that Hashem does and sends our way is for the best]....

c. Now dunk...

d. Next, in your mind, complete the following phrase, 'the reason why this is the best thing for me is because_____ then dunk and whatever answer 1st comes into your mind will probably be a very good indicator of what your specific experience's Tikun is....

e. Carry on with your other experiences one at a time as described above...

#13 SHMOT - Primal Scream Therapy

1. 'And in the midst of that very long period of time...and the children of Israel groaned from their slavery and they screamed...and G-d saw...and G-d knew [and the redemption process began].' The story that unfolds in front of us, especially in the 1st few Parshas of this new Book 'Shmot', describe both a historical and a universal depiction of redemption from exile. The Egyptian exile\redemption process serves as a paradigm which demands careful study in order to draw out a formula or recipe of how to break out of our own personal exiles. In this week's parsha we learn how to begin that process.

2. Exile may be defined as being stuck in a pressurized trap. This trap causes us to be disconnected from the world, Hashem and even from ourselves and our own Divine calling. Based on a tradition from the Baal Shem Tov, Chassidim recite Psalm 107 at the onset of every Shabbat. The main theme of this Psalm is the same we find in our Parsha; the beginning of the redemption process is to recognize that one is in exile---and then one is to groan and scream---and then G-d does His part. Shabbat is redemption from the weekly exile. At the time of the ushering in of Shabbat, one can feel strongest the contrast between weekday exile consciousness and the Shabbat's future idyllic atmosphere.

3. Throughout all the long period of the Israelites enslavement, there was a constant increase of strangling pressure. What was very curious about this period, was that for close to 210 years they weren't groaning or screaming. That means that somehow they were ok with life and perhaps didn't even feel, at least consciously, that their lives were one big disconnect! Only when the pressure grew unbearable did they begin to groan. R. Nachman [Likutei Maharash 8] says that when we sigh, it's a sign that we recognize that the essential spark of life is lacking in whatever troubled situation that we're focused on. He teaches that the sigh itself draws down that spark of life that was missing.

4. What are therefore the essential steps needed to begin to break out of our individual exiles?

a. Identify one of my hardest struggles and recognize that my situation is not ok. It's lacking essence or life-force. I'm cut off from fully functioning, and from fully being alive vis a vi myself and G-d and others...

b. Groan and Scream about it [with wordless groans----- as in the beginning of the Egyptian process---the ability to properly express themselves with eloquent prayer came only at a later more advanced stage of redemption]...

c. When you build yourself up to an emotional crescendo----when you can no longer take it or deal with it anymore, then throw your burden into Hashem's Hands. Know with a deep certainty that a Divine redemption process has already begun to take hold!

Shabbat Shalom and may we all merit to break free of the chains that are holding us back!!

#14 VAEIRA - The 10 Plagues Emuna Zap

Shalom and Blessings

1. '...in order that you should know that I'm Hashem amidst the Earth...' Moses was told by Hashem to inform Pharaoh and the Egyptians that the underlying reason for inflicting all the 10 plagues on them was to thereby clear up any doubts they may have that there exists any other power or source of control than Hashem. Pharaoh previously had declared, 'Who is this Hashem, that I should listen to His voice?' More than any nation on earth at the time, the Egyptians were steeped in idolatry, which by definition is a denial of G-d's omnipresence.

2. The knowledge of G-d's total control which was conveyed by each of the 10 plagues in all the different aspects of nature [as we shall soon see], accomplished 2 seemingly opposite effects; on the one hand, it wreaked havoc and destruction on Egypt. On the other hand the G-d awareness conveyed by the plagues served to heal and free the Israelites from their crippling slavery. Let us understand with an analogy: A warrior infiltrates behind enemy lines into a prisoner of war camp and secretly makes contact with every one of his fellow countrymen imprisoned there. He lets them know that their King deeply loves them all and has declared all out war. The prisoners are deeply moved by their King's message and gather up great courage to break out of the prison. The news strikes terror into the hearts of their captors leaving them stunned and helpless to react. The inspiring image of the king causes one side to break free and the other side to be broken.

3. The plagues are divided up into 3 groups. The 1st group focused on areas that were concentrated mainly underneath the earth; the river Nile turned into blood and brought forth frogs and the dust of the ground gave rise to lice....The 2nd group of plagues dealt with an area that was on top of the earth; wild animals, diseased livestock and human skin disease. The 3rd group, that is in the airspace above the earth; hail, locusts, darkness and the Angel of death killing Egypt's 1st born. All these are realms of nature which could easily be considered to be chance occurrences. Hashem drove the point home that all is under His direct control!!

4. The Slonim Rebbe [zatz'l] in his work 'Ntivot Shalom' ['Paths of Peace'], teaches that the 10 plagues role as a demonstration of G-d's control of nature is actually reflected within the human experience. The Egyptian inside of us, the denier, is being taught that G-d truly runs the show on every level. The plagues in the sky above the earth are meant to melt away the Egyptian voice inside of us trying to strangle the natural thoughts we have of Emuna [faith]. The plagues on the face of the earth are meant to uproot the denial of feelings of Emuna we have in our hearts. The deepest and strongest of the natural Emuna is that which we know on the body or gut level---that which encourages us to give up even bodily comforts and needs and even our physical life. The plagues that are sourced underneath the earth provide the healing for the body-Emuna from its internal antagonist.

5. Our Parsha tools follow the Slonimer Rebbe's approach:

- a. 'Thought Emuna'---zap away all the emuna blocks you have in your thoughts by saying to yourself whenever you encounter these doubts, the following; 'Even these doubt are from Hashem and it is all for my best and it's teaching me ____ [fill in the blank]...
- b. 'Heart [feeling] Emuna'--- when you feel burnt out, dried up and unenthusiastic in regards to your belief in G-d, yearn deeply that Hashem should open up your heart...
- c. ' Body Emuna'---When you find that your body or lower soul sabotages you in the area of Emuna, even when your mind and heart are on board, tell yourself [your lower-body part of yourself] that I totally accept you just the way you are, and ask yourself if we can make a win-win deal and do the Emuna activity in a way that's good [and fun and easy] for all parts of myself!

#15 BO - The Formula For Personal Redemption

1. '...in order that you should remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your lives' [Devarim 16]. The Mitzvah of remembering our redemption applies in virtually every Holiday that we celebrate, and applies every day and night. The Mitzvah is fulfilled when we read the paragraphs that accompany the "Shema Yisrael" verse that we recite in the evening and morning Prayer Services. Why does the Torah as taught to us by our sages, place so much emphasis on remembering our coming out of Egypt? What piece of advice or soul-healing do we acquire? In order to begin to answer these questions, we need to begin with an important premise: The Torah's purpose in having us remember is not just for us to focus on an historical event. Rather the idea is to personalize the historical lesson in our lives. Our Passover Haggadah states [based on our sages teachings], that every person should see themselves as if they personally left Egypt. The importance of this Mitzvah is that we are learning how to free ourselves from being slaves in our own lives!! So we must seek out the recipe or the formula. What are the elements that comprise our original Egyptian redemption?-----and how do we extrapolate those elements into our own daily and periodic personal redemptions?!

2. When we examine the Egyptian experience, we come up with the following significant points that led to the complete redemption:

a. The 1st phase [the 'ITCHALTA DEGEULA' or the beginning of the redemption] began when the slave nation became aware that something's not right [it took 210 years which shows us that this 1st phase is very difficult]. At that point they began to moan and groan and scream. This immediately caught the merciful attention of Hashem who felt prompted to redeem them.

b. Moshe was chosen to be G-d's messenger to help carry out the Geula [we must mention at this point that the Geula was brought about by G-d alone and this fact has some important ramifications, nevertheless Hashem's way of making it happen was through his 'Trusted Shepherd' Moshe Our Teacher]. The Torah teaches that Moshe was the humblest person on the face of the planet. For our purposes [in coming up with a universal – personalized –Geula -formula], we can derive from this, that the 'Moshe' inside of everyone of us, is maximally revealed and realized when we display our most humble side.

c. The Kabbalists teach that G-d took us out of Egypt with such a powerful exhibition of Divine power and Light that the Egyptians had no choice but to immediately let us go. A popular saying says, 'Easy come, easy go', and this is approximately what happened to our people upon receiving this super-powerful Divine-Light which was way beyond their natural capacities at the time. Their newly acquired spiritual level was soon lost and needed to be recovered over the next 49 days on their preparatory journey to receive the Torah at Sinai. Nevertheless, their newly acquired super-levels were what it took to leave Egypt forever and also served as an inner guide to be easily recovered. This powerful Divine light was partly displayed in the whole episode of the 10 Plagues [as we discussed last week], and partly displayed in the very act of the redemption itself.

3. Now B"H let us translate these events into a practical formula to be used for all of our own personal 'Geulas'----

a. PRIMAL SCREAM---I need to first realize that something's wrong in my recipe for living or for part of it. I'm a slave who needs to be freed. Then I begin to feel the affect of being a slave...I'm overwhelmed and I summon all the inner emotions & yearnings inside of myself & scream from the depths of my soul for Hashem to help me

b. HUMBLENESS---I now get myself out of the way and let Hashem get in the way. I do this in order to enable my leap to freedom. I do this by focusing on the fact that all my accomplishments as a human being are all gifts from Hashem.

c. THE DIVINE-LIGHT-LEAP---finally, in order to summon Divine energy that's way beyond my own capacity, I ask Hashem to help me commit to take upon myself to become a new me, someone who is the antithesis of the 'slave' that I've been until now.

#16 BESHALACH - Impossible Cope

1. 'And Hashem said to Moshe, "Why are you screaming [ie...praying very intensely to Me]? Speak to the children of Israel and tell them to proceed [ie...jump into the Red Sea]". Most of the commentaries wonder why shouldn't the children of Israel be desperately screaming in prayer? After all, they find themselves in desperate straits. Every way they turn is immanently dangerous----wild animals, an attacking blood-thirsty Egyptian army and the ominous sea. Surely their shouts would be in order at this point. Isn't this the strategy that worked for them to set into motion the whole process of redemption from the Egyptian exile?

2. The Holy Zohar teaches us that the danger of this situation was beyond that of the Egyptian exile---both in the plain sense and in the spiritual sense. What was demanded of the children of Israel in the face of impossible odds, was a response of supernatural proportions. As we've discussed a few times, Divine providence reflects our behavior. Here the impossible challenge demanded of us

to react with an impossible response and thereby draw down in turn a miraculous Divine display, the likes of which, have yet to be experienced by mankind. In human terms, this would be expressed as unleashing from deep within yourself a power only displayed by the rarest of people in the rarest of situations. The Zohar's mystical term for this phenomenon is 'ATIK.' The word ATIK means to remove oneself...ie..to remove oneself from one's normal natural state and thereby draw down the supernatural. ATIK is accessed by demonstrating an Emuna [faith] that is proved by doing a corresponding extreme action.

3. Esther's personal 'ATIK' story featured her risking her life at the hands of the Persian King in order to save her people from a holocaust. The Chanukah ATIK story depicts one brave Jewish family willing to take on an entire Greek empire to uproot a spiritual holocaust. People in all facets of everyday life are pushed into situations demanding them to display these types of powers:

A recent story I heard, describes a mother who witnessed her young child about to get hit by a huge truck [G-d Forbid]. With supernatural speed and power she jumps into the street and with one hand scoops up her shocked child and with the other hand single-handedly stops the truck in its tracks. Superwoman? No--she's just like you and me, but she unleashes ATIK! I'm sure if we would jog our memories, we'd recall similar episodes involving ourselves or others we may know.....And what's the inevitable Divine response----only the greatest and most supernatural miracles. Now we understand a little better what G-d demanded of the Israelites at the banks of the Red Sea. In order to respond with the most awesome & miraculous spectacle known to mankind, the splitting of the Red Sea, G-d demanded measure for measure the most awesome of reactions demanded of an entire nation who numbered in the millions----'Everyone jump into the sea NOW!'

4. The tool---'An impossible response to an impossible situation'----will by necessity vary from person to person and situation to situation, but the essential elements remain the same:

a. After determining that you're in an impossible situation, where even screaming and praying isn't enough [in order to clearly make such an assessment, I suggest IF POSSIBLE, to take counsel with the wisest people that are accessible to you----also it would be helpful to scan your life history and find a similar situation that you can compare to your present one and try to analyze what will work best.

b. Now comes the Emuna-filled'Leap' that your dire straits-situation demands of you. Then with serene and crystal clarity---- Leap my friend! And then be certain that G-d will 'follow suit' [so to speak].

[***note***This entire dynamic can be simulated even when there is no urgency or danger---you can still take the LEAP to make an 'about-face' transformation in your life---more to come about this....

#17 YITRO - The Power Of Receiving Torah

1. The entirety of creation froze in deathly silent anticipation. The moment of ultimate cosmic destiny arrived. A select group of humanity completed all their historical preparations to unite with the Creator in an unprecedented union so awesome and powerful that all of existence would be utterly transformed forever. This is 'Sinai', and this is the world's direct interface with the Creator. This is the focal point---everything before and after draws from this moment! The readiness of the 'bride' of this union and the manner of the 'groom' serves as the universal paradigm of Divine interface. Every detail must be thoroughly studied, understood and internalized.

What is the manner of the 'groom' [the Creator]? The answer is 1 word; TORAH. The means for the Ineffable Infinite One to unite with His finite human bride is through Torah. The Torah is the Divine manifestation clothed in garments, enabling the bride [us-- His Holy people] to unite and fuse with Him in the most brilliant union imaginable. Through the union we access eternal life, all the wisdom of existence and the actualization and perfection of our souls and of the entire creation.

2. The Baal Shem Tov offers an analogy as to why G-d chooses to relate to us through His garments [ie...why the nature of Torah--G-d's means of communication--is filtered down]. A prince is castigated by his father the King for being spoiled with the overabundance of living the regal life. In exile he eventually forgets his royal roots and the person that he once was. A sage who can communicate to the prince on his present lowly level, slowly and lovingly nurtures the prince back to his royal status. We are in our raw state, that fallen prince, and Torah is that sage nurturing us back to our elevated state. The Torah garment aligns with us in its Bible stories, moral lessons, and in its template reflecting the human psyche. This template consists of:

- a. 613 Mitzvot [248 positive and 365 negative] paralleling the body's 248 organs and 365 connective tissues.
- b. 5 different levels of understanding [the Hebrew acronym P A R D E S stands for simple, hinted, homiletical, and 2 levels of mystical Torah interpretation] parallels 5 levels of our soul that we can access through these 5 levels of study.
- c. The Torah template serves as our 'eyeglasses' enabling us to see the essence of reality. This is based on the axiom that G-d reality is based upon Torah--His architectural blueprint map.

3. Of course we, the bride, must be as refined and aligned to the groom as possible to facilitate maximum receiving power of the Torah and thereby unify with the Groom. Here are a few possible approaches to help make this happen:

A. Be present with the knowledge that the Torah is a sort of filtered down manifestation of our Groom or our healing sage----wanting to align with us through the Torah garments which parallel our bodies, soul and our world...

B. Approach Torah with humbleness, ego-nullification, complete openness to receive its Wisdom and good character traits...

C. LEARN IT and when you learn, have the following meditative intentions:

1. The Torah provides us with a spiritual 'force field' and a source of Eternal spiritual nourishment...
2. Any lack of clarity that you encounter should be overcome with a true and determined 'warrior spirit'...
3. The Torah is a shimmering coal that we fan into a flame by deeply digging for all of its wisdom....

#20 TETZAVE-ZACHOR - The Amalek Principle

1. We've arrived at a special time. Purim is a week away. The Shabbat before Purim is the time that we read [and thereby fulfill the Mitzvah] the verses of 'Zachor' ['Remember'];ie... recall Amalek---what they did, who they are and what this means for us in our lives. This is the precondition of Purim. If you get the Amalek principle right, then you get Purim right also. Let's explore the particular peculiarities involved and the implications for our Purim and our lives' in general.

2. Amalek isn't merely a physical nation that once existed in Biblical times, which gave the ancient Israelites a real hard time. Rather it's an eternal spiritual enemy within each and every one of us as well as being a very real enemy from without; in every generation it manifests itself supernaturally in various guises as a nation or a movement committed to the total destruction of our people!!

3. Let's go through a number of brief descriptions our sages provide for us to illustrate the Amalek phenomenon:

a. It's the chief force among all the rest of the cosmic forces of evil.

b. The ultimate revelation of Tikun Olam [world rectification] is dependent upon the absolute destruction of Amalek.

c. Their power or lack of it is inversely related to Israel's power or lack of it [and only through the agency of Israel can they be destroyed].

d. They thrive on Israel's lack of clarity regarding our role as a nation that testifies to G-d's presence everywhere despite His being hidden. [Therefore, the numerical value of Amalek is equal to the Hebrew word 'Safek' which means doubt {lack of clarity}]

e. They also thrive on Israel's 'cooling down' i.e.. our lack of enthusiasm in our spiritual devotions and service of Hashem.

f. They always show up [both in a national\historical sense and in a personal sense] at the most crucial junctures, when we are about to leap forward into a new era of Tikun Olam. Here are a few examples:

(1) Adam, the 1st human, was held back by the 1st personification of Amalek as the 'Snake'. The Snake succeeded in preventing Adam and all of humanity from entering into an eternal state of Paradise.

(2) The Israelites were delayed by Amalek from entering into the eternal paradisiacal state of 'Sinai'--a whole new level of Torah consciousness.

(3) The Israelites in the desert were held back by Bilaam and Balak [the last syllables of their names combine to spell out AMALEK thereby revealing their true identity] from 1st entering, as a nation, the land of Israel on a very high national-spiritual level.

(4) The Amalekite King 'Agag' and his nation weren't defeated by King Saul with enough thoroughness [he spared Amalekite animals and humans and was chastised about it afterwards by the prophet Samuel so severely that it cost him his throne] and thereby lost the opportunity to build the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

(5) Haman, the infamous Persian Amalekite villain of the Purim story did all he could to stop the Jews from rebuilding the 2nd Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

(6) In contemporary times, our sages identified Amalek as the Nazis [may their name, as well as all other Amalek representatives mentioned here, be blotted out]. They were committed to the genocide of our people in an era that is fitting to usher in Mashiach. [We see also most recently the beast rearing its ugly head in the guise of nations such as the Hamas and the Iranians who are sworn to the total destruction of our people G-d Forbid]

4. Our challenge is to know the tools or strategies of consciousness needed to undo these forces both from within ourselves and from without [and these 2 dimensions are dependent upon each other];

A. 1st of all be vigilantly aware and cautious of the 'Timing' factor we elaborated on...ie... when you're about to graduate into a whole new level of spiritual excellence---that's when you're the most vulnerable...

B. Be absolutely clear about your personal-Divinely-inspired-mission and step into your future with a self-assured proactive sureness [don't be cocky, just confident]...

C. Be passionate about what you're doing and don't lose an iota of pleasure and joy [this is part of the connection between the joy of Purim and the vigilance of wiping out Amalek]...

D. Be a spiritual warrior--don't give an inch and remember that the best defense is a good offense...ie...your most potent weapon in this fateful war is your own internal Divine light activated by Prayer, Mitzvot, Torah and all other means at your disposal...

#21 KI TISA - The Purim Principle-'Pretense Busting'

1. 'Cut to the Chase'...'Cut the B.S.' [pardon my French]...We live in a world of pretense. Everyone's pretending to be what they're not to some degree. Our sages say that a person's real self comes out when they're under the influence of one of 3 things---[I'll 1st say it in the original because it sounds so much better...bear with me]---'KOSO', 'KISO' AND 'KASO'---ONE'S CUP [being drunk], ONE'S POCKET [being in acute financial pressure] and ONE'S ANGER...in short, all classic examples of situations where pretense doesn't play a part and our true nature is expressed...One contemporary visionary Rabbi is quoted as saying, 'There's no atheist in a foxhole'...Our sages teach that after passing on from our present life into the afterlife, we no longer will have our bodies, clothes or any other pretense to hide behind---in that world, we 'wear our hearts on our sleeves' as they say....i.e... Our bodies and clothes will be the expression of our deeds and our true essences. No pretense...True authenticity with absolutely no pretense is one of the most charming traits that a person can have...The richest humor surfaces when the contrast between the real person and the pretentious one is cleverly pointed out.....What's all this rambling talk about pretense have to do with Purim you must be asking by now [I thought you'd never ask]...

2. In last week's Parsha Tools, we more or less defined Amalek as being that perpetual thorn in the side of the Jewish people standing on the threshold, blocking all of our major national and personal accomplishments. Amalek thrives on our lack of enthusiasm and our lack of clarity of purpose. Amalek reflects back to us our own pretense.... while we're pretending to be ok, we're really not! Amalek can actually do this because they are the essence of pretense. The Holy Ari'zal taught that any phenomenon in the world, no matter how G-dlessly evil, has at least a drop of redeeming goodness keeping it alive. The only redeeming good in Amalek, the very root of evil, is the fact that it exists in order for it to be exposed for what it really is---pure evil---- lacking any substance whatsoever---pure imaginative pretense---i.e...Evil in its purest form is totally baseless---Break the pretense and you break the evil!---Break our own pretense to the very core and break Amalek and bring ourselves and the whole world to its ultimate Tikun or rectification!!

3. Our sages taught us that the measure-for-measure-root-reason of our being subjected to a potential Holocaust at the hands of Haman and the Persians of his time, was because we collectively bowed to an idol a number of years earlier in Babylon at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar. There however was one key twist. We only PRETENDED to bow down to the G-dless values of our Babylonian captors. Therefore G-d, measure for measure, only PRETENDED to repay us with a potential holocaust a few years later. and the famous 'Megilla' only PRETENDED to present a 'natural' historical episode of our people. And the day of Purim was chosen by a lottery, a seemingly haphazard example of Divine

Providential PRETENSION. And on the day of Purim itself we only PRETEND to effect a Tikun through our conscientious spiritual exertions expressed through the Mitzvot of the day of reading and understanding the Megilla and giving gifts to the poor and to our friends----but the truth is that the order of the day is that we're supposed to be so drunk during the day that we barely have a clue as to what we're doing...Actually all of the Tikun is done by Hashem and we're just like His puppets going through the motions....But what we do effect is to discover on Purim that despite all the masks and costumes and other various forms of PRETENSE, when all is said and done, when all the walls of PRETENSE come tumbling down...when all I have left is my true naked self, that's when the real me comes to the surface and the real me wants nothing else in the world except to cling to Hashem, and when that happens, I slam-dunk Amalek with all of it's PRETENSE!!!!!!

4. The tool:

a. Phase 1 - after getting spiced [not plastered], play a game similar to the game, 'Truth or Dare' with your friends daring each other to reveal the true UNPRETENTIOUS you!

b. Phase 2 - after getting plastered, just scream, 'All I really want is Hashem!!'

#22 VAYAKHEL-PIKUDEI - The Everyone In Me

1. "And Moshe assembled the entirety of the Children of Israel and said these are the things that Hashem commanded to do." The scenario taking place is as follows: Moshe came down from his 3rd '40-day-ascent to Mt. Sinai'. One of his purposes was to receive forgiveness for Israel's participation in the in the collective act of idol-worship of the Golden calf. Our Parsha takes place on the day after Yom Kippur--the day of Divine forgiveness. It goes on to describe how the assembled crowd is commanded to keep the day of Shabbat. Afterwards everyone is asked to bring an offering which will go towards the building of the Sanctuary--the Holy Temple--an earthly dwelling place for Hashem that accompanied the nation in their desert wanderings. There's a very lengthy description of the people's contributions--a potpourri of every type of gift representing all the major elements of the physical world--mineral, plant, animal and human [ie... the people's participation in the process]. The Parsha repeatedly points out that everyone's offerings are given with great enthusiasm and that each person's gifts represent the essence of who they are. The culmination of this mass act of heartfelt giving is the description of the activities of Betzalel. Betzalel is the spiritual architect of the Sanctuary. He makes it all come together with Divinely inspired creative intelligence. He is able to enlist the unique and essential soul contribution of every individual...He thereby creates the ultimate masterpiece--G-d's Dwelling Place here on earth...

2. The above scenario is a carefully orchestrated description of 'Tikun Olam' [i.e. rectification of the world]. In this case, we're talking about the rectification or the repair of the damage done by the episode of the Golden Calf. [The truth is that everything in the Torah, when understood on a deeper level, is directed towards the perfection and rectification of mankind and the world.] Every detail is vital for the 'Tikun'; the assembling of the people for the Holy purposes of learning how to keep the Shabbat and of building

the Sanctuary, is meant to counteract the assembling of the people for the unholy purpose of constructing an idolatrous calf. The fact that everyone is contributing from the essence of themselves and that their contributions are representing all elements of the natural-physical world, rectifies and re-elevates their souls and all of reality's elements that sunk into the realms of the Sitra Achra [the realms of evil] as a result of the act of the Golden Calf. Finally Betzalel, in his Divinely inspired act of creative artistic expression, bonds Heaven and Earth & G-d and man, with the design and construction of the Sanctuary---the ultimate expression of 'Tikun Olam'.

3. We are all mini-sanctuaries. The Torah beckons each of us to be a dwelling place for the Divine [see verse 8 of chapter 25 of the Book of Shmot & the major commentaries there for an elaboration of this idea]. Therefore the above account of all that went in to the construction of the Sanctuary, are pertinent to the construction of our own personal-spiritual-sanctuaries'. Let's translate one of these aspects into our weekly Parsha Tool. Just like Betzalel enlisted everyone's unique-soul-contribution in creating the sanctuary, let's do something similar. Do the following steps:

- a. Make a list of about 10-20 people you know...
- b. Search for and identify the unique talents and gifts that each person has over and above everyone else...
- c. You're a mini-world [a microcosm] and a mini-sanctuary. Therefore whatever unique gifts that your friends possess, are also within yourself. With that understanding, go inside of yourself & identify & groove on that unique aspect of your life. [Multiply that by your 10-20 people \talents and you'll discover that you're a very wealthy person indeed]...
- d. From now on, try to see all your encounters with your friends as tremendous opportunities for personal growth. Let their unique talents shine inside of you in an ever-expanding actualization of the Holy Sanctuary that G-d beckons you to be!

#23 VAYIKRA - Korbanot [The Holy Temple Offerings]

1. This week's and next week's Parshas focus on 'Korbanot' [animal and grain offered up in the Temple]. I approach this subject with trepidation. The audience that this weekly email addresses itself to represents a mini- diversified-cross-section of Jewry today. Large segments of this population have very negative & [as we want to show in this composition] misconceived notions about Korbanot. As a result, there are certain Jewish groups who [very liberally] take the liberty of changing and rearranging various aspects of our tradition & either reinterpret the concept of Korbanot or remove it altogether. After all, they reason, how can we modern Jews living in the 21st century consider the idea of sacrifices to be valid?! How can the Bible be so insensitive and cruel to command the slaughter of innocent animals?! And for what---for the sake of a ritual which has nothing to do with these animals?! Isn't it downright primitive and pagan to portray G-d as being so needy that He can only be appeased by sacrificial offerings?! How can anyone take

seriously the idea of a person's sins being atoned for by slaughtering some random animal that has nothing to do with the person receiving atonement?!

2. Let's begin to chip away at some of the misconceptions. Let's take the name of the topic at hand, 'Korbanot.' The common English translation, 'Sacrifices', is probably one of the most misleading translations that exists [...and there is a long-list of 'translation-words' that don't even come close to capturing the essence of the concept—which can only be properly conveyed in the original Hebrew]. For this reason, I'm refusing to translate the word Korbanot in this essay. To sacrifice means to give up something in order to get something in return---'No pain, no gain' to quote the popular maxim. The reasoning would go something like this, ' If I accept upon myself the pain and sacrifice financially and otherwise, involved in offering an animal in the Temple, I would thereby gain for myself Divine atonement... NO!! That's not the idea at all! 'Korbanot' come from the root word—Kiruv or Karov---meaning come close or bring someone closer [the contemporary use of the word 'Kiruv' is a description of bringing a penitent, a Baal Teshuvah, closer to their Jewish and personal Divine roots. And the word even has a secular sense of being 'Mkaraived' or brought closer to any concept]ie... so the idea in our topic, is to bring oneself closer to Hashem in the very act of bringing the Korban.

3. The truth of the matter is that the Torah considers Korbanot to be the peak of true enlightened spirituality. Consider this: This ritual of Korbanot was practiced daily by the nation of Israel for more than 1300 years [about 900 years altogether in Jerusalem's 1st and 2nd Temples, plus over 400 years in temporary Sanctuaries in the desert and in Israel proper in Shilo, Nov and Givon]. And the Korban rite will be resumed in the future Messianic times with the rebuilding of the Temple [speedily in our days B"H]. Now how can it be that an entire nation, historically famous for its wisdom and sophistication and the legacy it has given to mankind in the areas of morality and spirituality between man and G-d, and man and himself, could accept and cause to flourish this seemingly 'primitive' notion of Korbanot for so much of its history and its Messianic enlightened future?! After all, we're famous for being a nation of stubborn, skeptical stiff-necks---2 Jews=3 opinions etc. etc...-----Listen to a few superlatives and platitudes that our Sages described about Korbanot:

a. They are one of 3 practices that 'hold up the world' [along with Doing charity or Chesed and Torah].

b. They provide a pleasing odor for Hashem.

c. The Biblical term Korban is always used in conjunction with the word Hashem [the 4 letter proper Name of Hashem] which expresses Divine Love and Mercy and Transcendence as opposed to being used in conjunction with the word Elokim which expresses Divine strict Judgment.

d. The entire realm of 'Prayer' is based on Korbanot, showing how central Korbanot are to our spiritual living.

e. The Temple when it exists represents the quintessence of spiritual enlightenment, and the main activity is the offering of a wide variety of Korbanot.

f. The Korbanot actually effect a rectification in a person's soul.

4. Ok, enough of the praises and regard that our tradition has for Korbanot. The real question on the table is, how can we bring close to our modern sensitivities, the essence of Korbanot? How do they work? What are the physics involved? I therefore break with my normal custom of wrapping it all up here at the end of the essay with a tool or 2 to internalize the concept. Instead, I'll leave you in suspense until next week's concluding episode and instead of a normal tool, I'll leave you with the task of anticipating for yourselves the answers to the questions at hand [this is actually a great tool in all areas of learning---i.e...First figure it out for yourself and then hear much more clearly what the teacher teaches]...Here are some of the highlights we'll deal with next week:

a. According to the 'Midrash'—the animals fight for the right to be offered as a Korban—What's the explanation?

b. Reincarnation of Humans into animals and other natural\physical elements.

c. Elevating the 'Holy Sparks'.

d. Man is a 'microcosm unifying himself with the entire universe.

e. How Korbanot actually do effect atonement and actually do bond a person to G-d.

#24 TZAV – Korbanot [The Holy Temple Offerings] - Part 2

1. Last week we proposed a challenge. We said that according to so-called modern sensitivities, the concept of Korbanot [the offerings in the Holy Temple] is very difficult to understand. How can we in the 21st century comprehend a ritual of slaughtering an innocent, randomly picked animal for the sake of securing atonement for someone and to appease G-d?! We added fuel to the fire by pointing out the incredible esteem and importance which our Sages and our nation placed in the institution of Korbanot. As opposed to being looked at it as an embarrassing practice that's better kept low key, reinterpreted or perhaps omitted altogether, it's seen as the pinnacle of Jewish spirituality. Therefore, our challenge is to bring closer to our sensibilities the concept of Korbanot [which is in keeping with the simple, yet profound root-meaning of the word Korbanot...ie...to bring close].

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

2. I'm going to ask you to do what my long-time 'mastermind-partner' always asks me to do when dealing with a difficult issue; 'Go upstairs' he says...ie...let's reexamine the root of the issue and thereby expand and reframe our perspective. What that does, is it 'flips a switch' inside of us and we arrive at a place where we can say, 'Now I get it, now it all fits together.' The world is seen by our Sages [both the hidden mystics and the scholars of the revealed Torah] as a Divine majestic kingdom. Everything is unified. Everything is

significant and meaningful. There's no such thing as coincidence. Everyone and everything is on a path of perfection. Our role ideally as a Chosen People and a Light to the Nations, is to be witnesses. A key verse in last week's 'Haftarah' reading states, 'Atem Aidai'--'You [the Jewish people] are My Witnesses' [ie..to G-d's all-encompassing presence and power in the world]. Our world outlook, teachings and very existence as a people depends on us fulfilling this mission of testifying to the world about the otherwise hidden reality of the Divine Kingdom on earth where every aspect of humanity and nature are connecting together the pieces of a magnificent puzzle. In this majestic worldview, an animal is not merely an animal, a person's not merely a person & for that matter, all of nature and reality is much deeper than what it appears to be at 1st glance.

THE HOLY '4'S

3. When we view the world as a Majestic Kingdom, then the physical forms which animals appear as are merely garments, a representation of a universal trait. This trait is one of 4 Divine traits. These traits are rooted in the 4 letters of the proper Name of Hashem. Each letter extends themselves into 4 universal traits which manifest themselves in various forms depending on how far they are from their Divine source. The farther they are, the more coarse and physical they are. In their highest manifestations, they are ineffable, and as they extend downwards [ie..farther from the source], they appear as the 4 images that are etched onto the 'Kisey Hakavod' [the 'Throne of Glory']; a man, an ox, an eagle and a lion. These 4 images then branch out into all life forms in all the lower worlds [the world of Briah, Yetzirah and Assiyah]. This includes the 4 elements [fire, wind, water and earth], the 4 life forms [man, animal, plant and mineral], the 4 main Sefirot [Chochma, Bina, Tifferet and Malchut], 4 levels of soul [Chaya , Neshama, Ruach and Nefesh], and all the other universal 4's that make up reality. These traits, though they have different constructs and functions all parallel each other, are all inter-included with each other and when they're broken down to their essences are virtually the same. When one of them is tapped, then all the other parallel manifestations in the whole chain are in turn effected. Who's the one to primally tap the chain? Of course it is us. We are created in the image of G-d. Each of us is a microcosm---a being who contains within itself all these 4 universal elements and the Divine ability to activate them properly. This activation is maximized when we are in sync with ourselves, our world and with Hashem.

THE HOLY TEMPLE'S EFFECT

4. When the Holy Temple exists then the entire earth's spirituality is in sync. All people everywhere are more aware that G-d's central generator of 'shefa'[abundance]is pumping endlessly out of Jerusalem's Beis Hamikdash [The Temple]. All the pure domesticated animals that are fit to be offered such as the cow, the sheep and the goat, are also more aware. They are aware that they are but a physical manifestation of the trait that's represented by the ox, that's carved out of the Throne of Glory [the birds of our world branch out from the trait represented by the eagle of the Throne of Glory]. There are a number of Midrashim [Talmudic Homiletical Expositions], which describe certain animals vying for the privilege to be the chosen offering or Korban. On some level, they are aware that they will be instrumental in activating and uniting the Holy 4 traits that we discussed above, and thereby cause an 'arousal from below'[a cosmic igniting] of the Male and Female Divine paradigms to come together in Divine Union and give birth to and draw down Shefa needed for the world to exist and flourish.

ATONEMENT-REALIGNING FALLEN REALITY

5. As we pointed out, the microcosmic person contains within themselves these 4 universal traits. Therefore when there is a fallout, caused by a person sinning or being out of sync, the solution is to re--synchronize or reactivate the grand chain of 4's. One would bring a Korban to elevate and reunify these traits both inside of themselves and as a result, those same traits in the entire cosmos. A metaphysical healing occurs and atonement is achieved! Of course the person bringing the animal [as well as the animal on some level], realizes that this particular animal is the destined animal for this particular person at this particular time and place. According to the Halacha, if one has an intention for the wrong time, place or type of Korban, the Korban is disqualified. The person also has the intention that the slaughter & the burning of the carcass are viewed as being in place of themselves being slaughtered and burnt and what is being affected is the subduing of the animalistic nature that caused them to sin in the 1st place. The Korban offerer is also aware that sometimes the animal being offered may be a sort of vessel containing lost souls of people whose post life Tikun is to be 'tossed around' in the atmosphere of this world. These lost souls may have to go through a process of various incarnations in the forms of minerals, plants, animals. The offerer is aware that the Korban offering has the power to elevate and liberate a poor trapped soul from their painful Tikun. [This whole process also may happen at any time when we eat our meals]. But this whole process of elevating lost souls is only 2ndary and incidental to the primary process we have described of reunifying and resynchronizing reality into a revealed Divine Majestic Kingdom.

A DISTINCTION

6. We must point out that the entire process that we've described above actually happens [with a few minor differences] every time we pray and do Mitzvot and good deeds...etc...The main difference is that when the Temple exists, the Korbanot ritual activates this process in a much more intense and effective way, so as to literally transform external and internal reality for all to experience.

THE PARSHA TOOL--'COSMIC IMPACTING VISUALIZATION'

7. Here's the tool;

Once a day [or as often as you feel you are ready for], choose any mundane activity and perform it in a way that will expand your own awareness of its cosmic impact and effect;

For example---when you sit down to eat, be aware that when you have the intention that your eating will strengthen your body and soul to be able to be more effective in your spiritual goals, such as being a Holier person. Focus on the fact that ultimately the food eaten with this intention will help you think holier thoughts, speak holier words and perform holier acts. This in turn will elevate & effect people's eating intentions in the entire world! Dwell on this thought..take time to visualize it and contemplate it...Once you get the idea...you can extend this tool of 'Cosmic Impacting Visualization' to as many daily activities that you're able to do....

#25 THE-PESACH-GET-YOURSELF-FREE-FORMULA

'...AS IF I LEFT EGYPT...'

1. '...And please give us, Hashem...this Holiday of Matzohs...the time of our freedom' [Holiday Siddur]. Every Holiday in the Jewish calendar has a central theme. The last of the prophets who made up the 'Men of the Great Assembly', put together a good part of the ritual service we have in our daily and Holiday prayers. We're informed by the words of the main-theme prayer that the essence of Pesach is that it's 'the time of our freedom' [just as Shavuot is 'the time of the giving of our Torah' and Sukkot is the 'time of our happiness']. If I properly use this auspicious time, I can inoculate myself with my annual dose of freedom. Freedom's in the air...it's there for the taking. But how do I access it? Well, perhaps a direct way, is to make a list of all areas, major and minor, of my life in which I feel myself to be a slave. Next, I'd project into the future--Pesach, one year from now--and see myself as a gloriously free person, liberated from all of my personal slavery. I'd project how I achieved such a lofty goal and then I'd come back to the present and start to go for it! Not a bad plan, if you don't mind me saying so...but I'd like to add a very important dimension; Our Passover Haggada brings a quote from our sages, that says that every person should see themselves as if they personally left Egypt. We can understand from this that the key to understanding how to break out of our personal Egyptian slavery, is to learn how our ancestors did it--get the formula, and apply it in our lives.

THE 5-STEPS OF THE EGYPTIAN EXODUS

2. Let's present a very brief survey of the elements that make up the Egyptian Redemption;

a. 'SHIABUD' [TOTAL AND ABSOLUTE ENSLAVEMENT OF BODY AND SOUL]--- Our Sages brought an analogy comparing this initial phase in Egypt to that of a fetus of a calf in it's mother's womb. Like the fetus, our ancestors were so enveloped in the Egyptian experience that it didn't even occur to them to groan and cry out to Hashem for the first 209 years out of their 210 year exile! But alas they did finally become conscious that they were enslaved in a terrible exile.

b. GROANS AND SCREAMS ---Their awareness of their predicament brought out from a deep gut level, wordless groans and screams. Hashem heard them and actively initiated the redemption process.

c. THE OVERPOWERING DIVINE LIGHT---When the time came to leave Egypt, G-d caused to shine an incredibly powerful providential light into the atmosphere of Egypt and inside of these slaves' consciousness. On the strength of that light, an entire nation LEAPED out of Egypt. They did so suddenly, not even waiting for their dough to rise and transform their Matzohs into Bread for the long journey. This stage is compared in a certain Chassidic work by R. Yitzchak Issack of Homil, to a young student who is dazzled and swept off his feet by the brilliance of his new righteous and amazing teacher. He has awe and behaves with total self-nullification towards his new spiritual master. The student however doesn't yet have the ability to understand or internalize the teachings.

He just says to himself, 'Wow', and remains respectfully silent. Nevertheless, an impression is etched deep in his soul.

d. LOSING THE 'LIGHT' AND RECOVERING IT INCREMENTALLY---This slave nation, the children of Israel, managed, with this incredible G-d given light power and purity, to temporarily transcend their spiritual sickness of being steeped in all 49 gates of Teuma [impurity], long enough to escape out of Egypt. But as fast as they gained their instant light power, they lost it. But the impression it left deep in their souls would serve as a guiding light at the end of the tunnel constantly drawing them to recover it. In order for them to truly recover and internalize this power of soul-based and Faith-based expanded G-d consciousness, they needed to get it back slowly, deliberately and 1 step at a time. The root-causes of their exile...ie... their spiritual perfection process, now had to be examined and rectified. This Tikun process is what we do annually for the 50 days between Pesach and Shavuot. This is the counting and internalizing of the Holy Sefirot of the 'Omer' period. This stage is compared to our young student who matures to the point of not being just satisfied with sitting in his master's presence in quiet awe. Rather, he seeks to understand the source of the wisdom that his teacher possesses. He engages his teacher in constant discussion, and is bold enough even to argue with him until he can figure it all out for himself!!

e. 'SINAI', LIVING IN THE LIGHT--- The culminating historical element in the Egyptian redemption process happens with the nation's receiving of the Torah at Sinai. The pure-G-dly-soulful-expanded-consciousness level is now fully and eternally acquired. This stage is compared to our student's reaching a level, where he's no longer in need of his teacher's wisdom. He gets it on his own straight from Hashem. He sees the wisdom in every aspect of reality. He is no longer the student. He is now the master!

'THE GET-YOURSELF-FREE-FORMULA'

3. Now we're ready for our Parsha Tool...for our freedom formula:

a. Be aware of your personal Egypts--large and small. Let your mind recall all your revealed and repressed enslavements...mark them down. You'll probably be amazed how much there is repressed inside of yourself....

b. Now begin to process them---First groan about them and then wordlessly scream with wild and emotional abandon..[if you're in an embarrassing environment, then either take your chances and go for it, wait till your alone or do it right there, but in a silent way]...Try to get to the point of helplessness, where you truly open your heart to Hashem and beseech Him for help....

c. How do we access the overpowering instantly liberating Divine Light which is beyond our present capacities? We gave the answer at the beginning of this essay---- project a whole 'new you' one year from now on Pesach 5767 [2007]. You'll be a person who enjoyed the most free and liberated year of your life. Make note of exactly how you achieved this glorious goal. Don't forget the aspect of soul, faith, G-dliness and expanded consciousness...otherwise you never will truly escape from your inner slavery....

d. Now just go with the projected plan that you set up for yourself one step at a time....

e. I can't wait to see you on graduation day, telling me about how free and liberated you truly are....

****sorry for being so lengthy AGAIN...maybe next time I'll get it right...I'm going offline about 1 day after you receive this essay till after Pesach, so if you do want to reply, do it now!

Have a happy and freedom-filled Pesach and year!

#26 SHEMINI - Holy Eating

WHAT'S EATING HAVE TO DO WITH HOLINESS?!

1. '...and you should sanctify yourselves...and don't make your souls impure [by consuming impure animals]...' Our Parsha discusses the issue of refraining from eating certain animals and fowl which the Torah considers to be impure. We're taught that this selectivity will insure our status of being a Holy People [among a number of other requirements that the Torah considers as Holy]. If you've begun to pick up my style and my wavelength, then you've probably already anticipated what type of question I'm going to ask. What does eating have to do with being Holy?! Certainly we're all aware of the connection that eating has with physical health. We're living in a society replete with individuals who are experts in the area of nutrition, and with an expertise in knowing which food is natural & organic. Most everybody can tell you a thing or two about dieting. But the idea of Holiness or spirituality just doesn't seem to go together with eating! In fact, at least on the surface, most people would say that eating removes a person from being spiritual.

MUST BE MORE TO IT THAN JUST SIMPLY INGESTING...

2. Let's begin in a very unconventional way; A long time ago, a friend of mine related to me all that he experienced while under the influence of the psychedelic drug LSD. Everything felt to him to be primal and profound. Regarding the act of eating, he described it as being a weird and foreign experience. He wondered why are these human creatures opening their mouths and sticking in this weird organic material. I was impressed by the way that he reexamined normal mundane activities from a fresh new perspective. I asked myself, indeed, what is it that we are really meant to be doing in this act of eating. I know that we eat because we feel a lacking, a hunger. We then ingest the food and the body's digestive system takes over. Enzymes digest the desired nutrients--that which isn't desired eventually filters out of my body. I know it's very important what I eat and how much I eat..etc...But what I really want to find out is what did G-d really have in mind? All the Kabbalistic texts speak about the fact that we're living in a world of 'Tikun'. The world, as reflected in every individual's life, is constantly moving closer to perfection; to a worldwide consciousness that Hashem is everywhere and all reality unifies to reflect that omnipresence and omnipotence. How does all this express itself in the seemingly very non-G-dly act of eating?! Sure, you can answer me that without eating, our physical bodies wouldn't receive their basic needs in order to keep on living and

thereby be enabled to fulfill our Tikun in the world! But there must be more to eating than just being an act of 'enabling'!

'...FROM MY BODY, I SEE G-DLINESS...' [THE BOOK OF JOB]

3. Let's try to illustrate a G-dly way of eating by tapping into a one of the most important and fundamental Kabbalistic principles; 'FROM MY BODY, I SEE G-DLINESS'---what goes on in the physical world, and more specifically in my body, is an amazing reflection of the constructs and processes of the spiritual world, and more specifically, the soul. I can extrapolate the workings of the soul from proper understanding of the workings of the body. Consider the following 'extrapolations';

A. The body has an elaborate filtering system. It first digests that which is most important to itself, continuing on to extract that which is less and less important to it until it completely expels that which is useless to the body. The body's new intake reenergizes it...the stronger the process, the more energy there is.....so too by the soul---the purer and more powerful the 'Kavana' [the intentions and motivations], the more the intended action becomes elevated and spiritually energized. Proper holy eating will transform the ingested food from being a purely physical entity to becoming pure spirituality energizing and rectifying the person and the entire world! Here too, there is an incremental selection process, where the soul retains that which is of greatest spiritual value and finally expelling that which is useless. It should be noted here that this selective-digestive process exists on a grand-mega scale also, both in physicality and spirituality. We call this the 'food chain.' Lower life forms such as plants and animals are ingested and thereby elevated into the realm of higher life forms such as humans and the process goes on and on until eventually all life forms regain their original pristine status--both on the physical and on the spiritual level [as regards souls and their climbing the ladder of ultimate perfection]....

B. If food is ingested in an impetuous, impatient manner, then at the very least, the person suffers from indigestion. If this continues for longer periods, the improperly digested food can be a prime cause of sickness. Similar is the effect in the spiritual world; R. Tzadok Hacoen attributes this 'primal eating disorder' or what we might call this 'grabbing effect' to be at the root of all the world's ills. We fill our hunger and lack .

Oimpatiently without projecting what will happen---and this includes all types of improper consumption in all areas such as money, sex, drugs and power..etc...We create for ourselves spiritual and cosmic indigestion---which reveals itself as mass neuroses, 'baggage', spiritual imbalances & frustrations...

C. A popular maxim states, 'you are what you eat.' Whatever we ingest into our bodies, whether mineral vegetable or animal, and whatever quantities and proportion that we ingest the food, will determine to a great extent who we are. This is not only true physically, but also spiritually; the Torah distinguishes between animals and fowl whether they are pure or impure [ie..kosher or not]. With the proper slaughtering and with our proper intentions in eating, the pure animals will become elevated and will in turn elevate us and the entire world. What makes the eating process, [or any other process for that matter], Holy? It's the elevation itself from a lower to a higher level. Perhaps the 2 areas that best illustrate this concept are food and sex...Here there lays the

median point between the physical and spiritual. Here lays the greatest opportunity to be Holy if practiced properly, or conversely to do irreparable spiritual damage. Here lies the most potent Human challenge and inner battle. The term for bread in Hebrew is Lechem which is also the same root as a warrior [locheim]. The real war is won when one elevates their daily bread to become pure spirituality. Sex and eating [and not abstinence or prayer...etc...] are the 2 subjects that comprise the category of 'Holiness' in the Rambam's classic-all-encompassing Torah work entitled the 'Mishne Torah'. When we eat Holy foods in a Holy way---we spread Holiness in the world and in ourselves. Not only are we what we eat, but so is the entire cosmos affected by what we eat!

THE TOOL; HOLY EATING---WHAT AND HOW

4. This week's 1st Parsha Tool concerns 'what' you eat;

a. A lot goes into a commitment to eating Kosher food. This is beyond the scope of this essay. However, as a true believer in the power of 'minimalism', I'd like to make the following suggestion; Determine what is your level of keeping Kosher [just like anything else there are countless levels]. Place yourself on a scale of 1-10 and try to commit to go up one number--- in a time frame that is comfortable for you...

The 2nd Parsha Tool concerns 'how' you eat':

b. During the process of eating; ask yourself, 'why do I eat'? Once you access the desired goal, ask yourself what deeper reason do I have for eating? Keep going deeper and deeper until you get to your primal motivation for eating. Try as often as possible to eat with this profound intention.

c. After finishing eating, and while in the process of digestion, ask yourself, 'How can I digest this food with the Holiest intentions possible?'---Keep going deeper as we described above!

Bon appetite and Shabbat shalom!

#27 TAZRIA-METZORA More Than Skin Deep

'Tzarat' ---the basics

1. '...a person who has on their flesh...Tzarat [a soul-based body disease], and is brought to the Cohen...and the Cohen declares [the person] to be Tamei [impure due to being affected with the disease].' In an earlier and more pristine time in the history of our people, when the Holy Temple stood and when prophecy and Ruach Hakodesh [a somewhat lesser degree of prophecy], reigned freely amongst the many who sought it, there also prevailed a strange soul-body disease called 'Tzarat'. Our sages teach us that the disease appeared as a result of a person committing certain very specific sins which were rooted in one's being out of whack in terms of character traits or false pride...etc, etc...The disease first appeared on the walls of a person's house, and if it remained untreated or was a more severe strain, it appeared on a person's clothes. The

worst type appeared on a person's skin. The Torah devotes two entire Parshas to describe the various manifestations and treatments of the disease. For our purposes, we need to know, that the Priest [in Temple times] would be the one to diagnose if the disease is a superficial skin disease or actually Tzarat [which was identified as being more than skin deep, showing that the entire person was affected]. The person would then go in to a trial isolation period and could only be declared Tzarat-free by the Cohen himself. The questions to be asked are, first of all, what is the nature of this strange disease and its curious treatment. Why doesn't the disease appear on a wide scale basis in our modern times as it did then? Finally, what does the Torah mean to teach us in regard to Tzarat in our present day reality?

Engulfed

2. We can summarize from some key major mystical sources [the Zohar, the Ariza'l and various Chassidic works], the dynamic that takes place as follows: The affected person is basically engulfed by the forces of evil [literally by the Sitra Achra or the Other Side]. This has been caused by a person becoming so habituated in their crooked ways, that what is wrong seems to them to be right. There is a general numbing effect. The person's heart-based inner feelings are practically deadened. Even a person's remorse for their wayward actions isn't felt at all. The body produces a sort of spiritual antibody in order to make one aware of the problem. This is accomplished by causing the Tzarat to surface----on the walls of one's home, on one's clothes or on one's skin. This engulfed or closed up dynamic begins the process of transformation, from being closed to becoming opened [like they say, 1\2 of the solution, is identifying the problem]. The healing process continues on when the affected one is encountered by the Cohen. Kabbalistically, the Cohen represents the Sefira 'Chochma'. This very meeting activates 'Chochma's healing power. The diseased one's restricted state of consciousness which is greatly responsible for their fallout is now propelled into the opposite direction of internalizing an expanded state of consciousness [Chochma]. Other phases of the atonement\healing process are also designed to 'open' up that which has been closed up.

Out of sync...

3. There is evidence of this soul based disease existing today also in its various manifestations. I have even heard from one who is 'in the know' about the field of homeopathy, that it's founder [Hahnemann], after decades of research, found that the prime source of disease is a term he called 'Psora'. You guessed it, the word Psora is actually our Tzarat. Some probable reasons why the disease doesn't manifest in such a wide scale way today as it once did, are first of all, because without the present-day existence of the Holy Temple, there is no complete atonement\treatment to rid a person of the disease. But beyond that, we are not as 'in sync' vis a vi our body-soul connection as we were in earlier times. Personal experience teaches me that when I've taken upon myself a certain spiritual practice, such as studying at midnight or immersing daily to the Mikve [ritualistic purifying natural waters], and I miss a day, my body [not only my soul] feels horrible [sort of like a daily bather feels after missing a number of days]. Let's use a different type of illustration; I was told that when anything goes wrong in the slightest way with a BMW automobile, it will immediately let you know by just listening to its engine with a semi-sensitive ear. On the other hand when something goes wrong with an old beat up Chevy...you the amateur mechanic may never know about it...you get the idea, right?

In an earlier prophetic, high-leveled, spiritually in sync generation, that which is not right on the inside gets manifested on the outside. This is not to suggest that we are totally out of sync nowadays, nor are we suggesting that the soul-body dynamic only applied once upon a time. The soul and its health, is the main source of the body's health...this is a fundamental Torah and Kabbalistic tenet. I hope to get into this whole fascinating subject at some other opportunity.

Chochma healing

4. Based on what we just learned, let us suggest the following parsha tool to cope with what's possibly a modern day equivalent of the underlying causes of Tzarat;

A. Identify those areas of your psyche which are numb or closed up. Where is it that you find that you just don't 'feel' anymore? Intellectually, you may know that some things are absolutely wrong, but you just don't feel it. You don't feel bad about it at all!

B. Incur 'Chochma Healing' [which corresponds to the Cohen's examination--treatment] as follows:

1. Chochma or expanded consciousness is accessed through the intense study of Torah, in such a way that any idea that one examines, expands one's mindset to be able to see the essential root of the concept along with all of its applications and how this fits in with much of the other concepts and wisdom one has acquired, thereby elevating a person in a very profound way. Now reexamine and open up one's source of 'numbness' in the light of this Chochma...

2. 'Feedback'-----Get feedback from your friends in the area[s] that you feel closed up in. Even better than that, is to find yourself a wise and authoritative spiritual guide\counselor that can dependably break you out of it!!

#28 ACHAREI MOT\KDOSHIM - Holy Interpersonalizing

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

1. '...and love your neighbor as yourself, I am Hashem' [Vayikra 19\18]Rabbi Akiva said that this is a 'Klal Gadol b'Torah' [ie... loving your neighbor as yourself is a principle, that encompasses all of Torah!]. The Talmud illustrates; A potential convert came to Hillel and asked to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel replied [based on our verse]; 'What's hateful to you, don't do to your friend... That's the general principle, now go and learn Torah which will fill you in on all the specifics...'

I hope that you're anticipating the question that I'm about to ask. [If you are, good for you...if you're not, I'll let it slide this time]. The question is; why is this an all encompassing Torah principle? The Torah is divided into two basic areas----that which concerns our relationship with other people, and that which concerns our relationship with G-d. Its clear how not doing to others what's hateful to myself can be used as a key anchor statement to gauge my relationship with other people. What's not clear is how this

interpersonal gauge applies to the other 1\2 of Torah---that which deals with our relationship with G-d.

Assuming that we do find an answer to our question [chances are I'm not going to leave you hanging, right?], then we need to find out how we can practically carry out this principle in a way that will lift up our interpersonalizing to such a Holy level that it will encompass even the Divine relationship realm of Torah....

24000 STUDENTS OF R. AKIVA

2. A teacher of mine here in Jerusalem shared with me the following; it's known that the 'Counting of the Omer' period that we are currently in, is characterized by both a festive side [bridging the Holidays of Pesach and Shavuot] and a mourning side. The mourning side is based on the fact that 24000 of R. Akiva's students all passed away during this period of time. The reason offered by our sages for the Divine decree of their deaths, is that they didn't properly honor each other. The question to be asked is, how could these students of the very same R. Akiva who taught and lived the all encompassing principle of 'Loving Your Neighbor As Yourself', not properly honor each other?! It's pointed out that they weren't accused of not loving each other, but rather not honoring each other. There are 2 ways of expressing love---a self-centered way, and an other-centered way. The self-centered person showing love doesn't really consider that the other person has enough intrinsic importance or wisdom of their own. Therefore [especially when there is a disagreement] they show their love by showering the other person with their viewpoint without trying to take into account that that person has something special to say on the subject....sound familiar?...a form of gentle coercion! Other-centered love always seeks to find the unique and special point of view of the other person...and this will automatically result in a very different way of interpersonalizing...that which is filled with truly honoring the other person---that's the point which 24000 students of R. Akiva didn't get right, and we need to get right in this 'Omer' period.

THAT SPECIAL POINT

3. R. Nachman teaches [chapter 282 of his classic work, 'Likutei Mahararan'] that every one of us has a special point that nobody else in the world has. This is a Divine part of our soul and everybody's soul. When activating this point, the person is considered to be a Tzadik [a saint] and a King and is worthy of the respect of everyone. This special point is so powerful, that R. Nachman teaches that you can totally transform a [nearly] worthless person into being totally righteous, by only focusing on this their 'special point' ! For a person to truly perfect themselves, they need to seek out in all the people that they encounter, this special point, and do their best to internalize it. There can be no greater way for 2 people to lovingly bond, then to seek out each other's special points and cause them to flourish! This Divine point is one of the most important manifestations of G-d's garbing Himself in our world. Now we can answer our original question. The real power of loving our neighbor as we do ourselves by not doing to others what's hateful to us, centers around this special point. What could be more hateful to a person than denying to recognize their Holy special essence point?! And on the other hand, when we do recognize and celebrate this point, than we are not just practicing superlative interpersonalizing, but we are also practicing superlative relating to Hashem Who Chooses to be encountered in this way. And this is what all of Torah is all about---the ability to see Hashem in all aspects of reality and to properly act upon this seeing! Do it with people in

your life and you'll do it in all aspects of living! Now we can also understand why the verse, 'Love your neighbor as yourself' concludes with the words, 'I am Hashem'----the very act of properly loving our neighbor will enable us to encounter Hashem.....

HOLY INTERPERSONALIZING----A TOOL

4. Make a list of all the people that you know. Next to everyone's name, mark down that special Holy point that each person has that no one else has. This part of the exercise is very important in and of itself, but don't stop there...The real challenge is to engage the special points of as many of these people as you can when you are with them. I guarantee you that it will be a blessed activity, thoroughly pleasurable to both you and your friend....and chances are that they will seek to return the favor....

Happy Holy Interpersonalizing!

#29 EMOR - Light Into The Darkness

THE PASSWORD

1. A brokenhearted Rabbi Chiyah fasted for [a 2nd consecutive] 40 day period. He was hoping to be granted Divine permission to be able to visit his beloved Rebbe, R. Shimon Bar Yochai, who had recently passed away. R. Shimon was now presiding over one of the most important Heavenly Houses of Study, which was attended by the highest levels of saints and scholars of all generations. Permission was granted and R. Chiyah found himself standing at the entrance to this Heavenly Yeshiva. Suddenly a thundering 'Bat Kol' [Heavenly voice] announced, '...No one has permission to enter unless they have spent their entire life-time engaged in transforming darkness into light...' [Zohar Breishit]. We're quickly approaching the Holiday of Lag Baomer. Lag is the numerical acronym for the number 33 which stands for this day being the 33rd day of the Omer count----Spelled Backwards, Lag = 'Gal', which means to uncover or reveal. This festive day according to most traditions, is the 'Yahrtzeit' [day of death] of R. Shimon Bar Yochai; the 2nd century author of what is Kabbalah's most important classic work, 'The Zohar'. Annually, on this day, more than 1\2 million people congregate at R. Shimon's gravesite in the upper Gallilee mountain village Meron. This gigantic gathering is not characterized by weeping or sadness at the loss of such a great luminary as R. Shimon. No!---Quite the contrary---it's the celebration of the year, drawing a very diversified crowd [every type of Jew found in the land of Israel] who come and sing and dance in incredible elated joy. And all these people present, share the common feeling [some more consciously than others] of having a mystical soul-connected affinity with R. Shimon! And each and every person is recharged by their encountering of the energy and presence of R. Shimon, with an ability to bring light into the dark areas of their lives.

HOD OF HOD

2. Each day of the Omer, there shines forth the energy of a different Sefira [a trait bridging the Divine realm to the human realm]. If we understand the nature of that Sefira, then we would be able to perceive that everything that takes place on that day bespeaks the essential meaning of that day's Sefira. The Sefira of Lag Baomer is HOD of HOD, which represents the quintessence of HOD. HOD expresses the ability to enable others to bring out their glory. This power of enabling is motivated by the drive to reach down into the lowest levels of darkness of people's souls and of all aspects of reality, and reveal in that very place of darkness, a brilliant shining light. The word 'Zohar' means brilliant light. This dynamic describes the essence of who R. Shimon and his teachings are. All of the wisdom, secrets and stories filling the Zohar have one thing in common; shining light in areas of reality that would otherwise remain unexplained, closed up, and darkened. A coal or an ember is fanned into a full-blown flame [this is the reason that it's customary to light bonfires on Lag Baomer]. The Zohar mystically illuminates countless concepts and principles which span the entire scope of life and Torah. A typical passage penetrates to the soul of matter. The subject is revealed and reveals the following: its source in the Upper Worlds, its transcendent impact in the dimensions of time, space and souls and its purifying and microcosmic effect in the minds and hearts of those who are presently learning the passage. All the episodes and enchanting descriptions of R. Shimon also convey the theme of light shining into the darkness-----from his 13 year hideaway period [from the anti-Semitic Romans] in a dark cave, where the entire scope of the Zohar's Kabbalistic wisdom was revealed to him----all the way to the very last day of his life, when he revealed to all attendant Heavenly and earthly beings, the most important secrets of the Zohar-----and it all culminated in his passing away with a smile on his face---the ultimate expression of light banishing the darkness!!

THE DARKNESS BUSTING TECHNIQUE

3. This week's Parsha Tool is based on a teaching of the Baal Shem Tov [one of the greatest spiritual inheritors and teachers of R. Shimon bar Yochai's Torah and legacy]; He teaches that any pain or illness [or any negativity for that matter], is in essence only an illusory 'Klipa' [shell or covering] of the Divine presence that's trapped and hidden inside of it. Reveal the hidden Divine presence and you bust the illusion---and the pain and the source of the pain disappear. Here's the tool [as it was taught to me very recently];

A. Close your eyes and choose the pain that you want to deal with. This may be a physical, emotional, spiritual pain--or any other type....

B. Pay attention to the form or image that the pain conjures up in your mind's eye---such as a grey blob or a rock...etc...

C. Place that image in front of you and stare it 'straight in the eyes' [so to speak], and then begin to shine on it Divine light similarly to the way one shines a laser beam. The Divine Light energy consists of the following;

1. EMUNA POWER--Fill yourself up with a deep Emuna that all is from Hashem and there is nothing but Hashem and all is for the best...etc..etc...and then direct that light of Emuna directly at this image saying, 'I know that truly there's nothing else there but Hashem'.

2. HELPLESS DVAIKUS POWER--- Passionately ask Hashem to reveal Himself here and now in the midst of this pain because 'I simply have tried everything and am helpless to do it without Your[Hashem's] help...
3. ANY OTHER WAYS OF ACCESSING DIVINE LIGHT THAT WORKS FOR YOU--- such as trusting that Hashem will come through for you as he's done countless times before.....or else unleash a primal gut level scream summoning Divine help.....or else say Emuna-based Torah verses over and over again...etc.. etc...
4. DON'T LET GO----Despite the fact that holding in front of you this painful image is in itself painful, DON'T LET GO and don't leave this place until you've obliterated all layers of darkness and all that fills your mind is pure light!
5. SEAL AND SOLIDIFY THIS HEALING PROCESS--- by thanking Hashem and then sending this brilliant released light to all other related pains and blocks that you and everyone you know and love may have...

Have an enlightening Lag Baomer !

#30 BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI - Transcendent Torah Power

HOW DOES EXTRAORDINARILY DILIGENT TORAH LEARNING DRAW DOWN BLESSED DIVINE PROVIDENCE?

1. 'If you conduct yourselves according to my Laws and you guard my Mitzvot and you do them... Then I'll give you your rains in their season...etc...' [Vayikra 26 verses 3 & 4].

Rashi, the Torah's main commentary, brings from our earlier sages, that we are urged [not commanded] to engage in a deep effort-filled manner of Torah study, not just the normal Divinely commanded mitzvah of Torah study, but rather what's called being 'AMAL' [extraordinary concerted effort] in Torah. To the extent that we are 'AMAL' in Torah, we will draw down benevolent Divine Providence. The Parsha goes on to list positive physical and spiritual Providential Blessings----such as---abundant rain and crops in their proper seasons, success in peace and war, abundance in the area of fertility and the Blessing of being able to walk fearlessly and blissfully with Hashem in our day to day lives. These Blessings are followed by Curses or a shutting down of Divine benevolent providence, resulting from a lack of 'AMAL' in Torah.....

For those of you who are starting to pick up on my style of asking questions [i.e...not taking any peculiarity for granted], you will probably anticipate what we need to ask at this point-----What does this 'AMAL' in Torah consist of ? How does this type of Torah learning effect the learner and the world so much that it's considered to be the primary catalyst of Divine Providence ?! -----

I can give you the short answer or the long one. It would probably be easier for both you and I to go for the short answer. But you know what----I'm not going to do that. First of all, I couldn't even begin to do justice to the massive topic of Torah and its transcendent power. Besides that, we're really getting close to SHAVUOT--the Holiday of receiving our

annual individual Torah portions.....So get yourself comfortable, this might take a while--but we're in no hurry , what we don't finish this time, we can always complete in the next week or two....

'HASHEM, TORAH AND YISRAEL ARE ONE'

2. It's taught in the mystical writings of our Sages the following statement, 'HASHEM, TORAH AND YISRAEL ARE ONE.' I have to admit that this is the most mind-blowing--pregnant with meaning idea I've ever heard. In line with the tradition of my Rebbes, who taught me that when learning a Torah concept, first try to get your own 'take' on the meaning---and only afterwards, check out what the commentaries have to say about it [you'll actually understand both the concept and the commentaries understanding of it much better, not to mention the fact that you'll 'polish up' your soul more powerfully by primally engaging the concept], let us ponder the ramifications of this mystical statement [I suggest that at this point, you avert your eyes from the computer screen for a few minutes and write down all the possible ramifications that you can come up with. This will serve actually as this week's parsha Tool, since the main tools will be featured in the continuation of this week's essay...].

Here are a few ramifications I came up with in my ponderings;

a. **THE CORRESPONDENCE FACTOR** The deeper I properly connect with Torah, the deeper I connect with myself and with Hashem as well as with all of reality [since the Torah is a 'Blueprint of Reality' as our sages teach---Hashem looked into the Torah and Created the World {based on it}. Conversely, the deeper I connect with myself, the deeper I connect with the other dimensions of Hashem and Torah and Reality. And finally, the deeper I connect with Hashem, the deeper I connect with all the other areas! Most likely, these types of correspondences are facilitated by some type of template common to all these dimensions, such as a universal persona [called in Kabbalah a 'partzuf']....Press button A in the dimension of Torah and effect the corresponding button A in the G-d, Yisrael and Reality dimensions!

b. **THE INFINITE INTERINCLUSION FACTOR** Any part of infinity is as infinite as the whole of infinity. If you tap into one aspect of infinite G-dliness, you tap into all the rest! Since G-d, Torah and Yisrael are all one--the same rule holds true by all of them. The entire Torah can be revealed in any specific word of Torah. The totality of a person can be found in any specific body part or character trait...etc...[for example, a proper foot massage sends healing to the entire body and even more important than this---the rectification of one character trait of one person, can rectify that identical point in many other people , and even in all of mankind, depending on how thorough the rectification was].All the realm of space can be tapped into by tapping into one area of space--[king Solomon, with his amazing wisdom, knew exactly which underground veins in the earth of the land of Israel, matched the corresponding terrains and plants all over the globe and was able to thereby grow all the earth's plants in Israel!] The same is true of the dimension of time [..ie..tap into the unique power of a certain Holiday, and that same power is activated the entire year].

c. **THE TIKUN FACTOR** The purpose and inner drive of Creation, as taught by our Sages, is to reveal Hashem's presence in the world where it's hidden. There are various

expressions for this-----fixing that which is broken, raising that which is fallen, uniting that which is disunited or bringing order into that which is chaotic. In one word----'TIKUN'. Certainly the mystical statement that Hashem, Torah and Yisrael are one---is coming to enable TIKUN. And sure enough, we find within each of these realms and in their interconnections, built in mechanisms facilitating TIKUN; The Torah has a higher and a lower manifestation, as does Hashem, Yisrael and the world[s]-----all designed to enable the higher levels to elevate and fix up the lower levels.

UPCOMING ATTRACTIONS

3. As you see, this can get very lengthy. However it all comes together to reveal the transcendent power of Torah and its effect on all other aspects of reality. What we hope to bring in the next week or two is a list of transcendent Torah approaches that will serve to do the following:

- a. Answer the questions that we asked in the beginning of this essay...
- b. Illustrate the ramifications of our essay's mystical statement.
- c. Provide practical techniques for yourself in order to harness your own powers of transcendence in Torah learning...

#31 BAMIDBAR - Transcendent Torah Power [PART 2]

SUMMARY OF LAST WEEK'S TORAH ESSAY

1. I'll begin with the greatest tool of all--'REVIEW'---that which separates the minor league Torah learners from the major league scholars. As you may recall, last week we discussed the concept of learning Torah with extraordinary effort, called 'Amal'. Amal effects not only the wellbeing of the Torah learner, but also draws down blessed Divine Providence for the learner's community and sometimes even for the entire world. In our efforts to fathom how that works, we brought our sages' incredible mystical axiom; 'Hashem, Torah and Yisrael are one'. Our contemplations elicited 3 transcendent ramifications [their acronym is C.I.T.];

- a. Correspondences-----[Activating one realm {ie...Hashem, Torah, Yisrael or Reality}, automatically activates all the others]
- b. Infinite Interinclusiveness-----[Since G-d is infinite and is one with the Torah, Yisrael and Reality, therefore, just as any PART of infinity is as infinite and all-containing as the WHOLE of infinity, so too the same is true of any part of Torah, Yisrael and Reality].
- c. Tikun-----[the concepts brought in a and b above, are called into action by the universe's constant drive to rectify everything---ie...elevating and Divinizing 'fallen' reality].

SOME CONTEMPLATIVE INSIGHTS

2. Let's take our contemplations a step further. We now understand that we have in our hands [if we harness the Torah learning properly], the ability to traverse and impact different dimensions. We also understand that we as microcosmic beings have the ability to press the right psychic buttons inside of ourselves & thereby fix up the whole world [including ourselves]. Our means for accomplishing this is Torah learning in the proper way. We now have the ability to answer the question that we raised last week, 'How can a person's [or a community's] concerted learning effort in Torah draw down blessed Divine Providence [or to the contrary, how can the lack of 'Amal' block it up G-d forbid].?' The answer is simply that the Torah is that which connects Hashem to us---and to the extent that we activate this amazing channel, we reap the fruits of our trans-dimensional efforts.

THE TORAH'S VERY CLOSE TO YOU

3. I hope you're enjoying [at least a little bit] our contemplations of the transcendent side of Torah. But I have to interrupt at this point. Torah is referred to as 'Torat Chayim' [A Living Torah], which means that it's meant to be learned as a recipe for living. Towards the end of the Chumash [5 Books of Moses], there is an amazing verse illustrating this point:

'Because [the Torah] is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it' [Parshat Nitzavim 30\14]. Our sages explain the verse as follows---If your intention is to do it [ie... to actually carry out the concept that you are learning about], then Torah will be intimately close to you----open your mouth, it's right there---open your heart---it's right there!! So without further ado, I present to you some techniques for accessing transcendence in Torah learning. We'll arrange the techniques into various categories, all of which address various aspects of transcendence that we have been discussing. Due to time and space limitations, we will only begin the list this week and B"H continue next week. It is my hope and prayer that you find yourself resonating with one or more of these techniques so much so, that you'll be inspired to be a true 'AMAL' Torah learner. Once you taste a bit of the expanded consciousness that Torah can give to you, and understand the inexhaustible blessing you can bring upon yourselves [and the whole world], then you will want more and more of it!! Who knows, you may just become seriously addicted to it, and go and hide out in a cave somewhere and do nothing but learn Torah all the time for 13 years like R. Shimon bar Yochai !!

TRANSCENDENT TORAH LEARNING TECHNIQUES

4. Let's begin with techniques that can all fit into the category of self-actualization....ie....methods or strategies of Torah learning designed to lead you to achieve self perfection and self actualization;

a. 'YOUR TAKE'----based on the teachings of the Arizal, a very powerful way to actualize our soul's potential is to express our 'take' in Torah. We are all unique and we all have therefore a unique way of seeing reality and understanding Torah. Just like any master of creative expression needs to grow to maturity by actually expressing themselves in the context of their particular art form, the more we express our unique perspective in Torah--which is the ultimate reflection of our soul---the more we mature and perfect ourselves.

The Arizal speaks about going through all of the Torah [ie..all the weekly Parshas] and basically writing your own commentary. This may be a bit of a leap for many people. I would suggest to start on a smaller scale. Choose one particular topic in any Parsha in the Torah that truly speaks to you, and simply write [or teach] a commentary that expresses your unique perspective. Once you've got the hang of it--Expand!

b. 'BE A WARRIOR FOR CLARITY'-----here we learn another way of self actualization from the Arizal--The Arizal would enter into a study session with the goal in mind of identifying all areas of the topic at hand that were unclear, difficult or contradictory...etc...He saw these grey areas as being 'Klipot' [ie..representatives of the realm of evil]. He then, like a spiritual warrior, would unrelentingly pursue the absolute truth of the matter, leaving no room for doubts, inconsistencies or unclarities of any kind. By the end of a learning session, he would literally be drenched in sweat from exerting himself so much. The important point to understand, is that those doubts 'on the page', in a different garb, are the roots of the same blocks, doubts, fears and baggage that we have in our lives. Clear up the former ones and the latter ones automatically clear up also. We can easily understand how to carry this out, the hard part is the actual clarifying. Take any piece of Torah that you encounter [from anywhere in the Written or Oral Torah], and go to work. Try to locate that which is unclear or somehow inconsistent with other aspects of the text, or with what you understand to be true, and keep fighting for an explanation that rings true.

c. ' 5 LEVELS OF SOUL TORAH'----Here too, the Arizal guides us to soul actualization. This approach is based on the principle that the layout of Torah parallels the layout of a person. Just as we have 5 levels of soul, so too are there 5 corresponding approaches to learning Torah---whose acronym is P R D S [the word PaRDeS is a garden as in PaRaDiSe--the garden of Eden--- which a person can get to by carrying out the holistic Torah approaches we are discussing]---
P= Pshat= [the simple understanding]-----learning a Torah topic in it's simple or plain sense. This type of learning rectifies one's lowest soul level of Nefesh

R=Remez=[the hinted understanding]---- learning the hinted messages that are usually conveyed through numerical values of key words, or acronyms..[recently someone presented to me a Torah work which matched the 5800 plus verses of Torah with the 5800 plus years since the Creation showing how the verse that corresponds to that year accurately describes the corresponding historical events of that year--probably this too would qualify as Remez or the hinted Torah realm]. There are specific Torah works that concentrate on this area, if someone would like more info, please contact me...This type of learning rectifies the soul level called Ruach...

D=Drash=[the homiletical understanding]---this area of Torah is built on an Oral Tradition that derives moralistic lessons and spiritual concepts and principles from the verses of the written Torah. There is a vast Torah literature in this realm, including the 'Midrash' and the 'Aggadah' and all of their commentary spanning thousands of years...This type of learning rectifies one's soul level of Neshama...

S=Sod=[the secret understanding]---the Kabbalah is the secret area of Torah---over the ages, it has been transmitted in a very discreet and secretive manner. It's content is an expression of the verses of Torah in a subtle, mystical and Prophetic manner. There are a

lot of books on the market for those who want to open up this part of Torah and their souls but I would suggest a lot of discretion in getting only those that are really dependable. I would just like to make an important point. Just as the lower soul levels are accessed before the higher ones are, so too in learning, stability and being properly grounded in Torah is achieved by going and growing in order....This type of learning rectifies the level of soul called the Chayah...

[the 5th level of soul, the Yechidah is accessed by a totally transcendent level of mysticism which is beyond the scope of this essay and for that matter beyond words altogether]...

There's more folks, but yours truly has run out of energy, and I'm sure you too could use a break until we continue next week...

#32 SHAVUOT - Transcendent Torah Tools [Part 3]

WE MADE IT TO THE MOUNTAIN

1. We've come a long way since Pesach...seven full weeks of preparation. The preparation focused on trying to open up a series of inner awakenings. First we tried to awaken in ourselves the various nuances and shades of being enslaved and then to groan and scream about it. Than we merited to be heard on High and with a magnificent Divine light, we were liberated and swept off our feet onto the Divine Wings of the eagle....We were carried miraculously right into the heart of a parted sea, and than across a treacherous desert. We tried to awaken ourselves to ever-deepening levels of freedom and psychic self awareness by counting the Sefirot and internalizing the consciousness they imparted upon every aspect of our personality----especially our hearts' [The 49 day Sefirotic 'Omer' count equals numerically the phrase 'Laiv Tov'--'A good heart']. Some of us have experienced 1% of these timeless spiritual awakenings; some of us have experienced more. However much we have experienced until now, we have available to us this template or formula of liberation whenever we need it. But now we go beyond the preparations. Our eyes are focused on the mountain---Mt. Sinai!! The experience of the mountain has been etched onto the Jewish-collective-subconscious for well over 3000 years. Not only were our souls there, but more important than this, the experience of receiving Torah [like all other Jewish Holiday experiences] is not confined to the permanent past-tense of history. Sinai is right now! The gates are open to receive and activate our own personal portions of Torah. With that quest in mind, let us carry on with our lists of transcendent Torah-learning approaches that we began last week. Our goal is to discover in these approaches, elements that resonate with us so much that we can utilize them in order to actualize ourselves and embrace our newly-received portion of Torah.

CONTINUATION OF TRANSCENDENT LEARNING APPROACHES

2. Let's continue our learning approaches with a different category that we'll just call 'TIKUN'. We'll split up TIKUN into 2 areas:

a. The rectification of the entire world [Tikun Olam]

b. The rectification of the individual [Tikun Ha-adam]

A. TIKUN OLAM----When we fully understand that the world is an environment where Hashem hides Himself, and therefore the world's Tikun is to reveal Hashem in His hiding, then we'll be naturally motivated to become world-wide ambassadors to reveal Hashem in His hiding! A Torah-learning approach that would facilitate this would be concerned with a few basic elements:

1. There would be an awareness of the Torah's ability to serve as a world-wide generator of G-dliness, staving off all of the negativity that's caused by an absence of G-dliness.[There are scholars who upon learning about any type of malady facing any part of the world, or any part of a person's life, are able to point out the exact area of Torah that corresponds to the problem, and then prescribe a regimen of learning this particular Torah topic with concerted enthusiasm until the problem is eliminated]. This was the strategy of such famous Yeshivas [Torah-learning academies] as 'Volozhin' and the Ramchal's Yeshiva...They kept the learning going for 24 hours-a-day in shifts in order to protect the well being of every corner of the world. For those of you who are motivated to participate in a Tikun-Olam type of direction, either find yourself a 24\7 Yeshiva or read on to our last category called 24\7 Torah learning.

2. TORAH OR---the Slonimer Rebbe teaches in volume 1 of his series called 'Netivot Shalom', that any area of life or reality that is not actively learned in a Torah framework is by definition in a state of chaos. The Torah's dealing with that area or topic brings order and unity into the chaos. The more one learns about it in breadth and depth, the more order and Tikun there will be.

3. MARTIAN TORAH---A huge majority of our people today remain ignorant about what Torah is all about. A Tikun Olam motivated person would be therefore naturally called into action to try their best to remedy this situation. This would involve developing an approach to learning taught to me by my 3rd grade teacher [and I remain as impacted today as I was back then]. I was taught to try to see the other person as a Martian who is starting from point zero---no preconceptions---and I must take them by the hand and explain everything in a crystal clear manner. All that I learn would be with the altruistic goal in mind of clearly giving it all over to someone else. The truth of the matter [as taught by our sages in 'The Sayings of our Fathers'] is that this type of Torah learning not only benefits others, but also one's own learning is greatly enhanced enabling one to understand in a much deeper and clearer fashion.

B. TIKUN OF THE INDIVIDUAL----The main application that this learning approach focuses on, is healing and solutionizing. The Baba Sali, a famous Tzadik who passed away about 20 years ago, used to have a long line of people seeking out his wonder cures on a daily basis. He would always have any one of a number of Torah texts open in front of him, and upon receiving the written or oral request for his help, he would simply recite whatever verse or sentence he got up to. That very same verse would always be the key to the person's Tikun or healing salvation! This miraculous phenomenon was not only reflective of the cure-all power of Torah, but also it was reflective of the power of the Tzadik on the level of the Baba Sali. Perhaps we could suggest something similar which would be more appropriate for the common-person. List on the upper side of a sheet of paper the problems, challenges and dilemmas in life that you need solutions and\or

healings for. While engaged in a Torah learning session, pay attention to the 'flashes' [the solutions] that Hashem is sending you 'in between the lines', usually having nothing to do with the topic you are learning. Quickly write them down, before they become forgotten. A more direct cure-all use of Torah learning is provided for us by our Sages. They teach that whatever problem a person faces, engaging in Torah is an instant cure, whether it be a physical ailment, emotional turmoil, confusion, making a living...etc. And if a person is already a Torah learner and is still suffering, the solution is to engage in Torah twice as much and twice as intently as before.

C. TORAH LEARNING 24\7---The natural outcome of all that we have been discussing until now [i.e. the transcendent side of Torah, and all the infinite power and benefits involved in learning it properly], may inspire a few of us [present company included] to yearn to go all the way and fuse all of life, as it's lived 24\7 with Torah learning 24\7 [or maybe 20\7 or 18\7 etc.. you got the idea, right?]. It stands to reason that the more we're involved in Torah, the more we tap in to all of it's amazing impact...You may be thinking at this point, that perhaps I've been over-exerting myself recently, and I just sort of went off the deep end---Well, I won't try to argue my way out that point right now, but what I will do is to throw at you an imaginary portrait of a person who is a modern-day 24\7 Torah learner:

This person is walking, talking, eating and even dreaming his Torah. Perhaps all of their attention is focused on 1 topic, constantly contemplating deeper and deeper ramifications [The Baal Shem Tov taught that any one aspect or word of any part of Torah contains all the rest of Torah. The Vilna Gaon spent a lifetime almost literally in a 24\ 7 Torah learning regimen, revealing how all the rest of the written and oral Torah were all contained in the first Book of the Chumash--'Braishit', and then in the 1st Parsha and finally in the 1st word!!]. Perhaps this person is walking around with 10 topics at once in their mind, and all the inquiries that such a big list entails, and everything that they learn and encounter in life would provide answers....The person may be a singer, poet or creative artist of some type, and Torah is their mode of expression. Their type of Torah not only engages their intellect, but also their emotions and all the rest of the various aspects of the human psyche. They may have set for themselves a goal of covering as much territory as possible in the Written and Oral Torah---this year all of the Mishna, next year all of the Midrash...etc...For this person to succeed , they would need to have 'staying power' through thick and thin with a healthy attitude of commitment and hard work, but probably even more important, a great 'geshmak' [taking great pleasure] in jumping out of bed everyday for another full day of Torah. I could go on and on and tell you about how this person 'Torah-izes' all 'secular' aspects of life by pointing out their source in Torah and other realms of this transcendent persons portrait, but literally the Holiday is soon coming in and I must stop!

I sincerely hope and pray that we can all open up our hearts and souls to receive our annual portion of Torah, whether in grand portions or in small bite-sized chunks....

#33 NASO - Adultery And The Revenge Of The Crying Waters

ADULTERY THEN AND NOW

1. 'And He [the Cohen] gives her [the adulteress] the bitter waters to drink and [if she's guilty] and became impure [through adultery], the bitter waters will cause her stomach to explode...and if the woman is pure, she will be condoned and bear children [in a much easier and improved fashion]. [Parshat Naso---chapter 5, verses 27-28].

Adultery!! In modern western society, that term doesn't have the shock value that it once had. True, everyone is aware of the devastation that it can cause to a marriage and to an otherwise healthy family unit. But take a look around; it seems that every other popular song, novel, movie, mid-age crisis drama and social \psychological philosophy is either romanticizing it, or else views it as even being sometimes necessary for happiness or [ironically enough] for keeping a marriage together. The chances are that there are people that I'm presently writing to who are affected one way or another by adultery in their lives. Who am I to be coming to judge or moralize anyone? The last thing I want to do is to alienate people. What I DO want to do, is to try to show how this 'hot' topic, along with all other Torah topics, teach a lesson [beyond the obvious moral lesson] that is vital and applicable for all of us---& in a positive and hopefully inspiring way.

Let's look at the peculiar elements of the 'adultery check' that was carried out in the times that the Holy Temple was standing;

A. The jealous spouse sees to it that his partner's act of adultery is properly witnessed...etc...and then brings her to the Holy Temple to undergo all ritual procedures involved...

B. The Cohen offers the suspected adulteress a choice of admitting her guilt or being tested [to determine her guilt] by a mixture of water, earth and a piece of Torah parchment together with it's Divine Names, all erased in the water...

C. If she chooses not to confess, and is guilty, the water causes her belly and lower body parts to swell up to the point of death. The same fate occurs to the man that she committed adultery with, wherever he may be at the time. This supernatural event only occurs if:

1. Her husband is innocent.
 2. Their generation is not overflowing with adultery.
- In either of the above cases, the water's effect will not take place.

D. If she is innocent, not only will she be exempt from this horrible fate, but she will be blessed with a blessed birth and fertility way beyond what she would have otherwise.

THE EQUILIBRIUM-INVADER DETECTION PROCESS

2. One of the greatest Torah commentators, Rabbi Chaim Ben Attar [his work is entitled 'The Ohr Hachaim' {'The Light of Life}, was written about 300 years ago], brings a major spiritual principle to explain and tie together all the peculiarities of this strange ceremony. The principle is that when a person or an aspect of spirituality is elevated to a pristine state, then it has the sensitivity and clarity to detect that which is a pure and natural part

of one's flow, as opposed to that which is impure and is felt to be a 'foreign invader' which needs to be cast off. If the invader isn't cast off, then the Divine consciousness state disappears. [This whole dynamic is the mystical state referred to as Hashem's desire to dwell with us in this world. The opposite dynamic is referred to as The Exile of the Shechina {The Divine Presence}]. When one isn't holding by this pristine state, then the sensitivity to detect foreign invaders is also lacking. The 'Ohr HaChaim' brings the Midrash that explains that the waters of creation [the lower waters], in the creation process, were crying when they were cut off from the upper waters of the Heavenly realms. The trauma that the lower earthly waters suffered was healed upon the building of the Holy Temple, when the waters were reunited with the Heavenly realms and thereby re-elevated to their original pristine state. These very same liberated waters are chosen to be the factor that checks the purity or impurity of the suspected adulteress. If guilty, these waters, who remember their fallen state, and recognize that this act of adultery is the culprit that partially causes reality to plunge to a fallen state [including these very waters], immediately act in order to restore equilibrium. They do this by rising up and removing the adulterer & adulteress 'invaders' thereby avoiding falling back to their once bitter and tearful fate of being in a state of separation.

THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

3. As we've often pointed out, Torah is not only a historical account; rather it contains valuable recipes for living. We can all access in our psyche, these very same 'waters' of pristine sensitivity to all that is natural and Holy and on the other hand be sensitive to the 'foreign invaders'. Biologically, these waters function in the same way as does our immune system. When this vital system is functioning properly, any 'foreign invader' is immediately detected and the body goes to work to castigate it with antibodies and other internal defense mechanisms. Auto-immune diseases such as AIDS or LUPUS are extreme cases of a dysfunctional immune system. With no internal defense system, the body can be easily destroyed G-d forbid. A parallel correspondence occurs in the spiritual immune system which we have been discussing.

This week's Parsha Tool aims at activating this sublime sensitivity inside of us;

A. In order to begin to raise yourself up to the level of internal purity and sensitivity that is required, you need to first fill yourself up with Divine consciousness. Here's a few possible ways to do that. I suggest using a more than one way plus any other way that will help you get there:

1. YEARNING----simply yearn and pray to be filled up with Divine purity.
2. CORE MOTIVATION----keep probing deeper and deeper into your core motivations for doing all that you do, until you get to the core. Do this by asking yourself, 'If I could have x what more would I want'? Keep asking until you reach a state where there is nothing more to want, and all the 'bells' go off...
3. ENERGETICS----keep filling yourself up with the Light of Hashem's unconditional love for you, and your desire to pass it on, until you're all lit up...

B. Now try to detect any foreign or invading aspects of your life that don't jive with your lit up Divine essence. Draw a circle with lines coming out all around the circumference [a spider chart]. Write in the circle, 'These are the areas of my life now which either upset my equilibrium or are a contradiction to my natural Divine essential self.' Now simply let the answers come to you and write them down at the ends of the spider chart. Afterwards prioritize them and begin working first on your prioritized choices...

C. The way to rid yourself of these invaders, depends upon their intensity and severity. For starters, I refer you back to A above and steps 1, 2 and 3....but this time do them with the goal in mind of liberating yourself by zapping these invaders with your inner Divine energy. We have brought other 'zaps' in previous editions of 'Parsha Tools' and we'll most likely bring more in the future....

#34 BHAALOTCHA - The Graves Of Lust

THE TEST OF PURE UNADULTERATED SPIRITUALITY

1. Before we examine what the lesson is that Hashem is teaching in this message to the people, let's first pull back a step, and try to understand the bigger picture. Here we have an entire nation, 3-4 million people strong, literally out in the middle of the desert. They are being groomed towards spiritual perfection----to living a miraculous, above nature existence. If they would have stood up to their trials, they would have been the world's vanguard, leading all humanity then and there to global enlightenment and Tikun. The entire 4th book of the '5 BOOKS OF MOSES'--'BAMIDBAR' [literally meaning --'in the desert'], is a study of the trials, failures AND successes of a people whose lessons apply to all generations including our own.

This nation was driven to rise up to whole new level of pure unadulterated spirituality. They were given Heavenly food, called Manna. The effect of the Manna was to fill them up with pure spirituality, so much so that it even spiritualized their bodies; they no longer needed to relieve themselves---nor launder their clothes-- nor shower themselves. The spiritual effect was unlike normal food intake which often causes negative psychological heaviness..etc. The Manna caused them to be internally motivated to study Torah and to get close to Hashem. To top it all off, the Manna provided them with the taste of any food in the world that they desired, yet left them totally free of any lower level desires! However, this gift of packaged spirituality that G-d granted them, was exactly their point of greatest difficulty. The weakest elements of the nation, referred to as the Eiruv Rav or mixed multitude, dragged down the stronger factions of the people, into a 'lusting'. It was a lusting for the good old days when they were able to pamper their lower animalistic selves with meat, sexual lust and all other standard forms of bodily desires that Hashem was trying to wean them from. The battle lines were drawn; pure higher soul spiritually pitted against lower animal-soul lust.

MOSHE'S REACTION

2. Moshe was more than just a leader of the people. He was the 'Tzadik Yesod Olam' [the righteous person who is the pivotal apex of all of his people and the entire world]. In the world of souls as well as in this world, Moshe was charged with the responsibility of the Tikun of all those who are connected to his soul root-----and this encompassed the entire nation. This takes place not only on a conscious level, but also on a super-conscious level. Moshe rises and falls with the people's risings and fallings. In Egypt, before the Hebrew slave nation could speak properly, Moshe also couldn't---he stammered and stuttered. And when the people arrived at Sinai in a united and elevated state, Moshe reached his highest personal levels, climbing up to the Heavens in a supernatural way to bring down the Word Of G-d to mankind.

Here in our Parsha's episode---the people had a fallout; their lower soul overpowered their higher soul. Moshe's reaction was to grow very weak---as he does time and time again in all the Parshas of 'Bamidbar'. He, in his weakness, informs Hashem, that he's not able to bear the burden of this people alone. The Slonimer Rebbe in his work, 'The Paths of Peace', teaches that when a person is under stress or is in the midst of a trial, crisis or breakdown----all the 'extras' disappear; the extra dose of expanded consciousness & the extra dose of clearly-felt help from On High...etc. Moshe's 'extras' disappeared with his people's fallout. [It nevertheless must be pointed out here, that the reason that we are often placed in an ordeal without the 'extras' is to force us to discover levels of inner strengths previously untapped and sometimes it's to force us to act in impossible situations and thereby draw down G-d's miraculous salvation].

HASHEM'S REPLY

3. The Divine response, at Moshe's request, was to provide collaborative help for Moshe. A small part of Moshe's level of prophecy was apportioned amongst the 'Elders of The People', as well as was a part of his burden. There were a number of rectifications that were dealt out to the people [some involving death ---thus the place-name of our Parsha--'The Graves of Lust']. Everyone received the dosage of rectification that was appropriate to their level of sunkenness. The rectifications were administered in a gradual way, allowing the people to continuously reassess their lot and choose to behave differently. The rectification that the Parsha seems to stress the most, is when they get so much of their lusted-after meat [quail] '...until it comes out of their noses'. They partake until they become thoroughly disgusted with it. This Tikun [like 1 or 2 others in the Chumash], recalls the principle of homeopathy----- which gives the sick person an additional dose of their sickness until they are healed.

THE FORMULA

4. We all have inside of us a Moshe and a mixed multitude and all the other levels in between. We are all faced with the constant battle between the higher and lower soul that our Parsha describes. In fact this [higher soul--lower soul battle and struggle for inner harmony, perhaps is the single most important factor involved in achieving wellbeing. A lot of careful study & expert strategizing is needed in order to be successful. We will focus only on one aspect---that which our Parsha focuses on. We'll bring the Parsha tool that you can use for your own personal struggle. Be wise as the maxim points out; 'Give to the wise, and they'll become even wiser'. Use this formula as it's presented, and then apply it to all other areas of your life, such as teaching, parenting, healing, relationships etc...etc;

- a. Identify the lower soul aspect of yourself that demands immediate gratification in the areas of food and other types of lust-----the part that absolutely doesn't want anything to do with higher spirituality in all of its various forms. Whatever method you use to identify this part, energetically, meditatively or cognitively, the main thing is to tangibly feel this part as a very real independent personality....
- b. Present this lower-soul part of yourself with the very real possibility of receiving the object of its desire here and now.....
- c. Now present to it the 'payoff'---ie....the immediate gain involved, such as the sensation of filling of your stomach with delicious food...etc. Now present the 'price' it must pay. This is the crucial part---here, one must take the lower soul by the hand and show it all the negative impact it's lusting has cast upon you and your higher soul; the emotional breakdown, the spiritual and physical fallout, other people in your life who are affected negatively...etc.. The more you expand the list and the deeper you feel the impact, the more thorough will be the healing.
- d. In order to re-create a conscientious harmony---choose at this point a whole new possibility, a win--win agreement between your lower and higher souls!!

#35 SHELACH - Above Nature Living

WHY SPY OUT THE LAND?!

1. 'And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, "Send for yourself people and let them spy out the land of Canaan..." [Parshat Beshalach verses 1-2]
There are many different reasons offered by commentaries over the ages as to why at all was there a request to spy out the land of Canaan [soon afterwards to be called the land of Israel]. This land will serve as the future home of the generation of the wilderness [or the generation of 'Daat' or knowing]. Despite the fact that they had all been living a life of miraculous G-d infused day-to-day living, more so than any other people in history, and this should have been enough to reassure them that they could trust with 100% security that Hashem would bring them successfully into the land, despite any and all possible obstacles, nevertheless they needed more reassurance. Despite the fact that G-d had promised to the forefathers of the nation that they would successfully be brought into the land, it wasn't enough. Their reasons and justifications were varied;
 - a. The common people wanted to know what was waiting for them. They had heard stories of giants and of fierce warrior-nations lurking in the land. They told Moshe that it was worth checking it out-----perhaps they could discover the hiding places of the treasures that were meant for them. Perhaps they could discover which routes were more advantageous to begin their conquest.
 - b. The leaders of the 12 tribes-----the ones who were handpicked to be the spies, also had various rationalizations for spying out the land. Perhaps the nation wouldn't be ready

to descend from a level of pure spirituality 24\7 to a more natural materialistic reality of plowing the earth and worrying about making a living on their own.

c. Moshe asked Hashem what to do. Hashem replied, "Send FOR YOURSELF spies..." I, Hashem, am not telling you to do it, but I am not opposing you either. Some commentaries suggest that Hashem was advising Moshe to send spies with Moshe's own elevated and profound intentions [ie.send FOR YOURSELF means send according to your own intentions]. Moshe's reasoning is that if the spying would actually be done by the highest elements of the people [the tribal leaders], they would rise to the occasion and bring back such a favorable report [a natural consequence of their elevated status], that the people would be so inspired to enter the land, that their reinforced 'Emuna' [faith] itself would help them to overcome all obstacles.

INHERITING THE SUPERNATURAL LAND MEANS HAVING A TRUST OF G-D

2. All of the people's rationalizations proved not only fruitless, but they all backfired in a disastrous way. The spies themselves fell from their high level and came back with an evil report about the essence of the Land. The people bought it, and the result was a Divine decree to not allow anyone over the age of 20 [with very few exceptions], to merit entering the land. They all died out in the desert over a period of the next 40 years. This national calamity became the forerunner of a string of national tragedies that we are mourning for and still trying to correct all the way until our present times [we won't deal in this essay with the question of why the punishment was so severe]. At this point, we must ask, what was the lesson and the Divine message that they [and we] need to understand?!

The answer is simple to comprehend, but incredibly difficult to carry out! The land of Israel is a supernatural entity-----in order to inherit such an above-nature-home, they must show themselves to be a supernatural nation by leaping into the task in a supernatural way. Anything short of that just won't do!

This isn't the first time the nation was prompted to jump into the supernatural;

a. They were born as a nation in a supernatural fashion. They needed to leave Egypt so fast that their bread didn't have time to leaven [thus we eat Matzoh on Pesach]. One of the reasons offered to explain their need to leap out of Egypt, was so that they would inscribe into their very national character from the beginning, a detachment from the realm of time. A fast exodus from Egypt would lift them above time and nature forever!

b. So too, the proper preparation for receiving Torah, which is essentially a guidebook for living in an above-nature fashion, is to declare [in a very non-natural fashion], 'We will do and we will hear'. They committed to carry out all that they will be taught sight unseen. Only afterwards will they 'hear' and learn how to carry it all out.

c. All the tests that our Forefathers were tested with throughout the first of the 5 Books Of Moses, called 'Braishit', were all designed to integrate into themselves and into their people after them, the principle, that even if an ordeal seems impossible to cope with, if they faithfully and fearlessly take the necessary steps, then they would be helped supernaturally and miraculously by G-d.

d. So too, the lesson of supernatural preparation applies in our Parsha. In order to inherit a supernatural land, where the rules of the game are different than other lands----- where actually the only rule to deal with is a full-time national and individual Divine Providence, the nation must faithfully and fearlessly trust in G-d and choose to be led into the land without any reassurances that 'spying things out' could give them. That's how they could inherit the realm of the supernatural.

ABOVE NATURE LIVING----A TOOL

3. Our Parsha is speaking literally about the going up to the land of Israel [referred to as 'Aliyah' in modern day jargon]. Certainly the recipe for successfully [deciding and] settling in the land is no different today then it was some 3500 years ago. It's all about synchronizing yourself to live in an above-nature way. But we can abstract this recipe into all areas of our lives that require us to be supernatural. Here's the tool;

A. Identify an area or challenge in your life which seems to fall in the category of 'mission impossible'. Your only possible successful response is to act in a supernatural way...

B. Now CREATE A NEW REALITY! Create [first of all in your mind] the perfect and ideal scenario where your 'mission impossible' works out wonderfully!!

C. Now become Hashem's main messenger to make it happen. You will continually receive Divine directives which you will be able to hear [AND TRUST] with your intuitive sense [that voice of 'knowing and clarity' inside of yourself], which will constantly guide you step by step to make your 'creation' a reality on the ground!

D. Leave all the results and outcomes to Hashem, and to Hashem alone. Your part is to proactively create and to be a vehicle for making it happen, but be 100% clear that whatever, however and whenever the final product appears is only in Hashem's hands and will therefore be absolutely for the best!

E. The more you repeat this whole process with the various challenges in your life, the more you will draw down miracles and truly live a supernatural life!!

#36 KORACH - Hierarchy Still Rules The Day

THE DEPTH OF KORACH'S REBELLION

1. 'And they [Korach and his followers] said to them [Moshe and Aaron], "you took upon yourselves too much [authority], the entire community is Holy and Hashem is with them, so why do you lord over the people of Hashem?!"' [Parshat Korach verse 3]. Upon first glance we may think that this is just a standard case of a jealous rebel [Korach], who can't stand the fact that Moshe and Aaron are occupying the positions of power and authority that he feels he deserves ----so he stages a rebellion. However when we examine the Midrash and the classic commentaries, the real picture that emerges is of a very wealthy, powerful and clever person who dares to challenge the very foundations

that hold together human society. The Holy Zohar teaches that Korach opposes the whole concept of 'peace'. The peace that he opposes is not simply an absence of argument, but it's much deeper than that. The Slonimer Rebbe explains that the peace that he opposes can be understood as the need for any type of intermediary between G-d and ourselves. You may ask at this point, 'what's wrong with that?! The answer is that our present era of 'Tikun' is an era where the entire world and all of its inhabitants are here to take care of unfinished business. The world at this point is in a state of lacking, and the way to meet the challenge of overcoming the lacking [until we eventually arrive at a world order of perfection and wholeness] is to have a system of 'hierarchy'.

HIERARCHY EXPLAINED

2. Hierarchy or one-upmanship is a setup whereby everyone has someone who is above them and below them. This enables growth. Whoever is lacking has someone to look up to in order to fulfill their needs [as well as an opportunity to help others who are more needy than oneself]. To keep this system smoothly and peacefully running, one constantly needs intermediaries to filter down the information between the higher-ups and the lower-downs. The formula is; ---When in a state of lacking, an intermediary-based-hierarchy-system is needed in order to fill up the lackings and bring everything to a state of wholeness. The word Peace [Shalom] has the same Hebrew root as the word wholeness [Shalem]. The role of peace in a lacking world is to act as the factor that enables the achievement of wholeness. Korach opposed all this. Korach opposed peace. The spread of his philosophy would have resulted in a world where the attainment of perfection, wholeness and peace would be a hopeless dream. Therefore the Divine response to Korach was very severe indeed. The earth literally swallowed him [and his followers] up and he's still down there until this very day!!

KORACH JUMPED THE GUN

3. I think I can guess what some of you may be thinking at this point. You may be asking, 'But wasn't Korach really on to something?! Isn't it far superior for all people to equally have a direct line to G-d--without any hierarchal system to filter it down?! Isn't true that all of us, in our unique way, are just as Holy and special as anyone else?! Wouldn't it be better if society was filled up with totally independent people not lacking anything or in need of anybody, because they and the world are totally perfect already as is, right here and now?!' The answer to all of your questions is a resounding YES!! And this will in the future be the essence of reality. Our sages reveal to us that the world's inhabitants will be perfected beings and will all be standing around in a circle pointing to G-d in the middle...ie...expressing their own unique and independent 'take' of G-d and reality. However all this is true ONLY when there really aren't any lackings in people, society and reality. If this type of philosophy takes hold too early, before it's time, it's a sure recipe for zero-growth, no Tikun Olam, and worse than these, it's the catalyst for what the Kabbalist refer to as 'Shvira'----cosmic breakdown---too much 'shefa' or abundance to be properly processed, resulting in mass chaos!!

Korach jumped the gun. We can perhaps understand why he did, after he experienced an entire nation living a day to day miraculous existence, as well as experiencing a few outstanding Divine demonstrations of future-perfected-world displays such as the crossing of the Red Sea and Sinai. However his fatal mistake [certainly partly influenced by his tainted jealousy and other fallen desires], was that he jumped the gun. The era of

Tikun is a time for hierarchy and not an era for carrying on as if everyone and everything is perfect as is!! You could perhaps make a case for devoting part of your time and energy to PREPARING for the future 'perfect era' , by practicing seeing people and reality as being whole and perfect right now---this is actually the essential point of what Shabbat is, and a few other important areas of life---but when confronting the reality of LACKING, we need to kick in the old system in order to to bring the world to it's Tikun!

HITCALLELUT---A TOOL FOR TAKING MAXIMAL ADVANTAGE OF HIERARCHY

4. Here's an approach for maximally taking advantage of the hierarchal world that we live in. The underlying principle is a very profound one taught by one of the greatest Kabbalists of the last 300 years--R. Shalom Sharabi--The Rashash. He taught that this concept is the very essence of Tikun. The approach\concept is called 'Hitcallelut' or inter-inclusion. The essential working definition is that any and all components that exist in a certain framework contain to a certain extent, all that all the other components contain. To the extent that all the components are inter-included with each other, to that extent there is a state of 'tikun'. I hope that our weekly tool presentation will help to illustrate this very important principle:

- a. Make a list on the left hand column of your paper going from the top to the bottom of your page of 10 people that you know...
 - b. On the top of the page, cover the top horizontal column from left to right with a list of 10 desirable character traits [10 sefirotic traits that you can use are; spirituality, wisdom, creativity, loving, caring, caution, overcoming, enabling, communicating and receiving]...
 - c. Now fill in the chart by grading the 10 people that you know on a scale of 1-10 [10 being the highest] with regard to each of these traits...
4. Now comes the most important step. When you next encounter any of these 10 people, make it a point to groove on their special trait[s] so much so that you strengthen and acquire that same trait for yourself...
5. Use this same system to inter-include into yourself endless other realms of the world's abundance and you will thereby make great strides in your own personal Tikun and that of the entire world!

#37 CHUKAT-BALAK (outside of Israel) - Battle Of The Eyes

AN OVERVIEW

1. 'And Bilaam lifted up his eyes and he saw Israel dwelling...' [Parshat Balak chapter 23 verse 2].

The classic commentary of Rashi states that Bilaam wanted to attack Israel with 'AYIN HARA'--the Evil Eye. I'd like to jump right in at this point and describe to you what the evil-eye-attack that Bilaam intended to inflict is, but first, let's get a bit oriented. Bilaam was one of the most powerful magicians or sorcerers ever to walk the face of the earth. He

was commissioned by another sorcerer of his stature, named Balak, after whom our Parsha is named. The Moabite King, Balak, was in great fear of the Children of Israel, and together with Bilaam they set out to unleash the full force of their deadly magic and curses in order to stop the Israelites in their tracks. Bilaam was Divinely granted a very high level of prophecy [in order to counter the claims of the Gentiles of his day, who felt that it wasn't fair that only the Israelites should receive high-level-prophecy]. Despite all of Bilaam's and Balak's attempts to find the weak point or the Achilles heal of the Israeli nation, he couldn't. Instead, all of his attempts to curse the Israelites turned into blessings. [Its important to point out, that much later in history, most of the intended effects of his curses, did come into being]. At the end of the Parsha, sort of as an afterthought, these men's evil deigns succeeded. There was a cunning trap set in the wilderness in a place called Shittim [a place of extreme danger and vulnerability]. The morally weakest elements of the nation fell into a 'lusting' that ultimately was responsible for a deathly plague causing the loss of 24000 lives.

CORRECT SEEING

2. In order to understand the underlying dynamic of our Parsha, I'd like to introduce an extremely important principle which we'll call "Correct Seeing". There are 3 phases involved in seeing correctly;

a. SEE AND KEEP QUIET-----When we first see something, we see the whole scope or panorama, but generally speaking we see what we see in an external, surface level way. Rather than jumping to any conclusions, saying anything or taking action based on this first impression, Correct Seeing dictates to us to look and keep quiet. Our sages teach, 'An aid to wisdom is keeping quiet' [Kabbalah equates seeing with wisdom]!

b. ANALYZE WHAT YOU SEE----- After seeing what you see, engage in an in-depth analysis of what you saw [interestingly enough, the Hebrew word for this type of analysis is 'YUN' which comes from the root-word 'AYIN' or EYE]. Ask yourself, 'What will result if I think, speak or act upon what I saw in a certain way? What does Hashem want of me?'

c. NOW ACT UPON IT-----Only after you've analyzed, then make your decisions, speak your mind or do whatever actions are called for.

The crucial distinction is to not jump from phase A of initial seeing straight to phase C of acting upon it, unless you interject Phase B of analysis first!!

CORRECT SEEING-----SUMMER'S TIKUN

3. The ancient Kabbalistic classic, 'Sefer Yetzira', teaches that the Summer Hebrew Calendar months, Tamuz, Av and Elul [loosely paralleling the period from late June till early September], correspond to the three senses or traits of seeing, hearing and acting. These 3 traits are themselves the same 3 phases that we have been discussing [Kabbalah equates hearing to the Sefira 'Bina'--analysis or the process of understanding one thing from another and coming up with the appropriate conclusions]. If we were to look at the underlying and essential point of all the Parshas that take place in this summer period, we'd see that they are all stressing this 3-step-process. We'd see that all failures resulted

from not injecting the middle step, and all their successes came from doing it right. Now let's get back to the main point which we began our essay with.

BATTLE OF THE EYES

4. 'AYIN TOVA' a good eye, can be conveyed by describing a person who engages in Correct Seeing. A verse states 'Ayin Tov Yevorach' [a good eyed person is a source of Blessing]. When a person's actions are calculated and merged with their deepest Divinely inspired will, then all that this person sets their eyes on will be blessed. 'AYIN HARA' -an evil eye, works in a diametrically opposite fashion. A person sees something, and immediately without thinking, jumps! They want it for themselves now, and they're jealous of the fact that the other person has it and not them. The danger involved to all sides is huge. When a person engages life and people with an AYIN HARA approach, the Kabbalah teaches that they join forces with the powers of evil in the world and can inflict incredible harm! The Talmud states that the root cause of an overwhelming majority of people's deaths is AYIN HARA! There are a number of ways of protecting oneself from AYIN HARA, such as being very pure, keeping secluded, not giving it any credence, seeing others with a good eye and other ways...

The source of Bilaam's and anyone else's power of black magic and sorcery [which may be loosely defined as a drawing down energy from a G-dless lower level realm in order to manipulate nature and people] is AYIN HARA---purposely not seeing G-d's perfect unified purpose in all that they encounter!! Bilaam enlisted AYIN HARA to attempt to bring on the downfall of the Children of Israel. Israel was however too absorbed in AYIN TOVA--Correct Seeing--- for Bilaam to succeed for the most part. Israel won the 'Battle of the Eyes'. Can we today in our lives do the same?! Here's a tool to help us;

CORRECT SEEING--A TOOL

5. a. Journalize all that you SEE in life; the past, present and all that you expect to be seeing in the future. You can make your lists as limited or expanded as you wish...

b. Now judge how much of what you see is 'correct seeing'----Do you analyze what you see, or jump to premature conclusions?

c. The Tikun is to take upon yourself for the present and future [and you can do Tshuva for the past] to begin applying the principle of Correct Seeing. Begin by getting use to asking yourself the questions that we discussed earlier---i.e. 'What would happen if I react in various ways? What does Hashem want of me in this situation?'

#38 PINCHAS\3WEEKS - Blasting Away The Fogging

PINCHAS MERITS HASHEM'S COVENANT OF PEACE

1. 'Therefore [you Moshe] say [to Pinchas], "Behold I [Hashem] bestow upon him my Covenant of Peace".' [Parshat Pinchas chapter 25 verse 12]

It is no simple matter to receive Hashem's Covenant of Peace. The root of the word Shalom-peace is the word Shaleim--a state of being perfect or whole. The Kabbalah teaches that Pinchas went on to become Elijah the Prophet and Elijah never died! His body and soul went up into the Heavens in the presence of his main disciple, Elisha the Prophet. But he never died, and he continues until this day to come back in various bodies [not reincarnations] as a Divine messenger in a myriad of benevolent missions. What did Pinchas do to receive such a distinguished lot in life? He 'blasted away the fogging.' You may be presently saying to yourselves, 'There goes Yitzchak again, boldly recreating the English language to convey some esoteric concept---well, you're right and let me explain;

Let's define 'fogging' as transforming a perfectly clear, lucid, and self-contained reality into a mishmash, fogged over, chaotic mess!

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PINCHAS AND THE 3 WEEKS

2. The Holy Zohar teaches that the episode that Pinchas was involved in, and that earned for him the "The Divine Covenant of Peace", was the most dangerous chapter in the history of our nation. Bilaam's and Balak's evil designs to 'fog' the pure and majestic level of the Israelites, was tragically succeeding. A part of the nation was publicly acting in a way that violated all that was held sacred. Total annihilation was close at hand G-d forbid. Pinchas rose to the occasion, and in an act of true zealousness, he nipped the potential devastation in the bud! Pinchas reinstated a state of peace between Hashem, and His people, and between Hashem and His Creation. The 'fog' cleared. How does this connect with the nature of the present calendar period which Parshat Pinchas always coincides with? We are now entering into a 3 week period referred to as 'In Between the Straits' [Megillat Eicha].The 3 weeks are sandwiched in between 2 fast days---the 17th of Tamuz and the 9th of Av[Tisha b' av]. It's the harshest period of the entire Jewish calendar year. All that anyone would not want to go wrong, goes wrong! And, you guessed it the root-cause is 'fogging'. Let's look into it in a deeper way;

FOGGING AND THE 5 CATAclysms OF THE 17TH OF TAMUZ

3. The 5 events that occurred at various times in History, all on the 17th of Tamuz [and which are complimented and completed by another 5 events which all take place on Tisha b'Av at the end of the 3 weeks], all had a 'fogging' element:

a. THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF AND THE RESULTING BREAKING OF THE 10-COMMANDMENT-TABLETS-----if it weren't for the calf and the broken tablets, the Israelites and the entire world would've lived on the level of pre-sin-Garden of Eden paradise in all ways. Everyone would've been unified around the instantly accessible, infinite wisdom of the Torah. Instead 'fogging' resulted---chaos and unclarity rule the day in the areas of human consciousness, wellbeing, spirituality and interaction....

b. THE ROMAN CONQUEROR APOSTOMUS BURNED A SCROLL OF THE TORAH-----this is explained by the Holy Arizal as not only a burning of one isolated Torah scroll [which is certainly bad enough], but the ramifications are much more deep and far reaching than that. The burning of the Torah represents a situation called 'Torah in Exile'. The Torah, as explained by the Zohar, was what Hashem used as a blueprint to create the world. That

means that all of the wisdom in the Universe is rooted in the Torah. Prior to this cosmic fallout [of the Torah being in Exile], there still existed the ability to easily access all the world's wisdom inside of Torah alone, without the need to refer to outside sources [granted that even this level was a lower level than that which would've been achieved had the Tablets not been broken]. Instead 'fogging' resulted----nowadays in order to access and reunify the exiled Torah, we need to understand the spiritual directives of how to redeem it [the subject of another essay].

c. THE BREAKDOWN OF THE OUTER WALL PROTECTING JERUSALEM'S HOLY TEMPLE-----after years of struggle for control of Jerusalem, 'fogging' resulted-----instead of Jerusalem properly serving as a 'Dira b'Tachtonim' [the main Dwelling Place on Earth of the Divine Presence], the city instead became a gathering place for many of the world's philosophies and religions, though in itself not necessarily a bad phenomenon, but in the case of Jerusalem, this was enough to drive away much of the unique Divine Presence that existed at the time, and also contributed in setting up the scenario for the 'Churban' [the destruction of the Temple and the Exile of the Jews, the Torah and the Divine Presence across the globe].

d. THE CESSATION OF THE DAILY 'TAMID' OFFERING AND OTHER OFFERINGS-----the 'Tamid' [literally 'Always'] offering was instituted for the sake of achieving atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. Therefore it's cessation represented the 'fogging' effect of being exposed to all the negative influences we spoke about concerning the Calf and the broken Tablets.

e. THE SETTING UP OF AN IDOLATROUS OBJECT OF WORSHIP IN THE 'HEICHAL [MAIN HALL] OF THE TEMPLE-----The 'fogging' effect here is obvious. The Holy Temple, the single most powerful place of G-d's omnipotence became invaded by idolatry which represents the possibility of thinking that there are powers other than G-d [G-d forbid].

'ALL WHO CHASE IT CATCH IT IN-BETWEEN THE STRAITS'

4. There is contained in the prophetic writings of Jeremiah, a pivotal verse, 'All who chase it [or her] catch up to it in-between the straits'. The simple meaning is that these 3 weeks are dangerously vulnerable for bad tidings to occur more so than the rest of the year. However a deep Chassidic explanation explains this verse very differently; All those who chase G-D during these three weeks can catch up to Him more so than the rest of the year! We've explained recently in 'Parsha Tools', the esoteric concept of 'opposites'----just beyond and deep inside the worst negativities and darkneses of life, hides Hashem's Presence, to be accessed by those who truly reach out! Ironically these 3 weeks are meant to eventually turn out to be the 3 happiest weeks of the year in Messianic times [soon in our day please G-d]. Tradition teaches that the Mashiach is born on Tisha b'Av at the peak of all of this darkness. If we look deep inside of the 'foggings' of all 5 cataclysmic events, there lays hidden incredible Divine light and salvation. We just need to know how to access it...ie...to Blast away the Fogging.

THE FOGGING BLASTING TOOL

5. a. Identify the 'Foggings' in your life...ie...those area in your life that could potentially be powerfully lucid and enlightened, but instead are a darkened chaotic mess...
- b. Merge with Hashem. This can be done in many ways---prayer, asking Hashem to be with you, trusting in Him, keeping up a written correspondence with Him [ie.. simulating what you think Hashem would reply]...
- c. Co-create a reality where Hashem is guiding you step by step to blast away the 'foggings' of your life...
- d. Now commit to be Hashem's chief agent or 'right-hand' person in making your co-creation happen. Listen to your inner guiding voice and trust it. This stage is perhaps also best accomplished by exchanging written correspondence with Hashem--the Divine Guidance Counselor....

#39 MATOT\ MASAI - The Elevator Effect

THE TRUE PURPOSE OF THE 42 JOURNEYS

1. 'These are the journeys of the Children of Israel...' [Parsha Masai 1st verse]. The Parsha opens up by listing the 42 different stations that the Israelites camped in their 40 years in the desert. They stayed very briefly in some of the places. In others, such as 'Kadesh', they stayed for 19 years. They were directed by Hashem, through the agency of Moshe and Aaron, where to go and how long to stay. A few key Chasidic commentaries go into great length explaining that the real underlying reason for the specific choice of stations they arrived at, was based exclusively on the effect that each station would have on their souls [and on the world at large]. The desert [and this particular desert] environment that they passed through, was considered to be the ideal backdrop for the Tikun of their souls. Mystical sources consider the desert, as beautiful as it appears to be, to be a place overflowing with every type of negative spiritual force or power imaginable. This qualifies it for being the perfect candidate to raise up fallen or lost 'Divine sparks' trapped in this massive world of negative forces. The Kabbalistic\ Chassidic understanding of raising up sparks is that we come into life with crucial pieces of our soul missing [and all of reality for that matter]. We are Divinely guided to redeem these missing soul parts, by successfully coping with and elevating all kinds of ordeals, decisions and clarifications. We 'elevate' by reframing or reorienting any uncertainty to its proper Divine place in the scheme of our lives and of all reality. A foreboding desert scenario affords the Israelites the ability to massively elevate lost sparks and thereby advance in leaps and bounds towards full 'Tikun'. Each of the 42 place names represent 42 specific 'lackings' in the people and in reality which are in need of elevation or Tikun. The length of stay at each place represents the Amount of Tikun-time needed to successfully elevate that 'lacking'.

THE ELEVATOR

2. What is the nature of this mystical concept of '42', and how does this shed light on our ancestors 'sparks' elevating journeys? How does this principle apply in our own lives? Kabbalah teaches that there are a few different variations of the 42 letter Name. What they all have in common is the 'ascending elevator' effect. An ascending elevator takes us from a lower floor to a higher one. Kabbalah explains that the morning prayer service consists of a series of ascents. One part of the service represents a specific Kabbalistic world. We ascend to the next higher world [which is the next part of the prayer service] by the means of an 'elevator'-----one of the 42 letter Name elevators. Each of the 42 places that the Israelites passed through, not only had an elevating effect, but when we view all 42 places as a whole unit, we see an overall ascent. A nation born out of slavery matures and ascends through their 42 major ordeals until they are ready to step in to the Chosen Land. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that each of us are meant to go through 42 key ordeals, meant to raise us up to a state of readiness needed in order to enter our personal post-life 'chosen land'. It's hard to point out specifically when we are going through one of these elevating ordeals, but we can understand through a few practical lessons from this Parsha's principle of the 42 journeys;

THE ELEVATOR EFFECT APPLIED

3.
 - a. Understand that Hashem brings me to key places or ordeals or choices in life[that have the effect of elevating me]....
 - b. Each place is an opportunity for Tikun and self-perfection. The same is true of my life as a whole....
 - c. The way to take advantage of, or to elevate each opportunity, is to:
 1. Identify the challenge as being Divinely sent.
 2. Understand that what's involved is a challenge of redeeming a lost or fallen aspect of myself.
 3. Reframe the challenge as being the best and most inspiring, since it is G-d-sent, and an opportunity to connect even deeper with G-d and with the Divine aspect of myself.
4. Integrate the lesson learned into my outlook on life in general.

#40 DVARIM - Inventory Power

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AWARE OF ONE'S PAST

1. 'These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Israel on the other side of the Jordan...' [first verse on the Parsha and Book of Devarim]. Rashi---the Master commentator explains that Moshe is speaking words of rebuke in a way that will be properly taken to heart:

- A. right before his death
- B. not overtly--but rather covertly through hints...etc...
- C. at a point where the reality of their crossing over into the land of Israel is at hand

Rebuke and a call for repentance is not the only message that's conveyed by the Torah. At most of the significant crossroads that the Children of Israel pass through, taking them from one spiritual environment to a different one, there is some type of accounting, reflection or inventory of what they have or haven't accomplished. This is a phenomenon that expresses itself in many ways as well. At the end of every year, we're encouraged to take stock of our lives and determine if we are true to ourselves and our personal calling, or perhaps we've veered off the course and we need to realign. The masters of the Mussar movement [a movement stressing constant self--improvement] stress that we should be doing this weekly and even daily. Our sages say that if you see a Torah scholar who does something that looks wrong or even questionable at night, you can be sure that by the next morning they've corrected themselves---they've done Tshuvah. In fact this entire 5th Book of the 5 Books of Moses, 'Devarim', is also referred to as the 'Mishne Torah' or the 'Repeat of the Torah.' For the Torah to be properly internalized, we need to review & understand what has happened up to this point. I recently encountered an entire book proving that the common denominator & perhaps secret recipe of all of the greatest Torah scholars of history was that they were driven to constantly review their studies.

MALCHUT AND REVIEW POWER

2. Let's explore the principle a bit deeper. According to the Kabbalah, the last of the 10 Sefirot [a Divine-based template bridging the infinite and the finite] is the Sefira of Malchut. Malchut is defined [in the Zohar] as a trait that has nothing of her own, except from what is given to her from what precedes her. Then, as a result of her being filled up with all of the 10 Sefirot [the entire Sefirotic Unit], she becomes the prime candidate to carry the torch and communicate the message of the Sefirotic unit outside of itself to others. In effect, she's giving birth, based on the past, to the future. In the light of this definition, we can properly understand the principle at hand. The lesson of the Mishne Torah [which is Sefirotically categorized as Malchut], and all the other examples of 'self--review--power' that we've mentioned so far, are teaching us a universal formula for successfully moving or growing from one period to the next one. Let's give this formula practical application;

THE INVENTORY TOOL

3.
 - A. Make a list of the highlights of your previous week. Once you recall as much as you can recall, then pick out those accomplishments, experiences or events that stand out---THE GREATEST HITS! Even without going further in this process, this in and of itself should bring you a lot of inner joy---something, I'm sure we could all use as much of as possible in our lives.
 - B. Now begin to process the GREATEST HITS. Take notice of what you thought would happen, and what actually happened. What's the lesson you can derive from this for the future?! Which experiences had the most impact on your lives?! How can you apply these 'impacts' into your future?!

C. Now begin to project the lessons you've learned into what you want to accomplish in your upcoming week.

4. Our sages teach that when you give over wisdom to the wise, they'll expand the wisdom even more. I encourage all of you wise people out there to take this principle, and create for yourself a beautiful new future out of your past!!

#41 VAETCHANAN - Opening Up The Love

THE OBLIGATION OF LOVING HASHEM

1. 'You shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might' [Parsha Vaetchanan--- chap. 6, verse 5].

Our Sages learn from this verse that the level that we are expected to reach in loving Hashem is very high indeed. We are to love Hashem with all of higher Divine Soul as well as all of our lower animalistic Soul. We are to love Hashem so much, that if we are forced into a situation demanding us to give up our lives for Hashem, we would gladly comply. We are to love Hashem so much that if we are forced to give up all of our money for Him, we would gladly do so. We are to love in Hashem in all situations and ordeals in life that He chooses to lead us in. The Rambam [R. Moshe ben Maimon; Maimonides] describes one of the highest levels of loving Hashem as being an experience of being 'love-sick'. All you can think about all the time in everything that you do is this love!

THE IMPACT OF LOVING HASHEM

2. The impact of this Divine love is a direct reflection of the intensity of the obligation. The general rule regarding the impact of all of our efforts directed in the service of Hashem is that they draw down a reflective or mirror effect from on High. The words in the Psalms 'Hashem Tzilcha' or 'Hashem is your shadow', are interpreted by the Baal Shem Tov to mean that G-d is your mirror. Whatever we do down here, G-d reflects it back to us. So if we walk through life with a superhuman love of Him, He reciprocates and Providentially pervades our lives with a corresponding extraordinary display of His Love.

THE MITZVAH ISN'T THE FEELING, BUT THE HEART-OPENING

3. The question that must be asked is how anyone can be commanded to FEEL anything! The commentary of the 'Ohr Hachaim' ['The Light of Life'] provides us with a beautiful answer. The very next verse [after our essay's verse] states, 'You shall place these words...on your hearts...' We are meant to utilize anything and everything that that can open our hearts. For example, we should focus on how much Hashem loves us and has come through for us consistently throughout our lives. We will bring a fuller list in the Tools--section of this essay, but the main point is to understand that we're not

commanded to FEEL the love of Hashem. Rather our Mitzvah is to do all we can to open up the heart to feel this love.

EXTRAORDINARY LEVELS OF HEART OPENING

4. What we still need to ask however is how in the world can we open the heart so much so, that we can reach the extraordinary levels described earlier. Part of the answer, we've already revealed; Our obligation isn't the feeling, but the preparations needed to access that feeling--What I'm trying to say is that we can only do our best and the level of feeling we achieve is a gift from Above. In order to give you an idea of what it means to do our best to open our hearts [and minds for that matter], let me present to you a very brief illustration of one who is unanimously considered to be the greatest Kabbalist of the last 2000 years or so--the Holy Arizal [R. Yitzchak Luria whose 'Yahrtzeit--day of death, about 470 years ago, falls this week]. He stressed that he achieved what he achieved as a result of trying harder than anyone in his generation. He sat on the banks of the Nile River all week long, actively engaged in his concerted study efforts nearly 24 hours of the day, for seven straight years! He was always deep in contemplating and clarifying one or 2 sentences a week of the classic kabbalistic work, the Zohar. G-d reciprocated measure for measure and the rest is legendary. The Arizal was given the angelic prophet Elijah to teach and reveal to him the mysteries of the Torah and of the universe full time. He was able to see the secrets of people's souls, their thoughts and their Tikunim [rectifications] any time he wanted. He understood the spoken language of birds, plants, rocks...etc..etc.. And all that is just a very small drop in the bucket of what he revealed. And what he revealed is a drop in the bucket of what he knew. The principle is clear, to the extent that you invest a concerted effort to open up your heart or mind, to that extent you will be Divinely bestowed with corresponding levels of an open loving heart and a brilliant lucid mind!

TOOLS FOR OPENING THE HEART TO LOVE HASHEM

5.a CONTEMPLATION OF G-D'S RUNNING OF THE WORLD-----Perhaps one of the best ways to do this type of contemplation is a way that was used in an article by R. Arye Kaplan called 'If you were G-d'. Pretend that you are G-d! You are given an island and your task is to bring everyone on the island to a state of perfection. You are hidden and everyone has free choice. Take the scenario as far as you like and contemplate deeply all the insights you come up with. This type of contemplation can bring you to a deep love and appreciation for G-d and what He's constantly doing for us...

b. EMOTING-----Grab a private sound-proof corner where no one will bother you and start emoting. Cry, scream, sing, dance, shout and do anything else that will help to open up your emotions. Once opened up, have a heart to heart talk with Hashem! As one person in our weekly emoting group recently said, "Praying and talking to HaShem from the heart is a whole different level than doing it from the head."

c. FEELING HASHEM'S PERSONAL LOVE FOR YOU----- There's perhaps nothing stronger to spark love of another, than when you feel their love for you. One of many possible ways to do this is as follows; When you're walking down the street [or perhaps just sitting at home], start bringing to mind all the wonderful things G-d has and is [and will be] doing for you at all times. Start with the most obvious ones such as how G-d enables you to

walk, talk, breathe etc.. and then allow your mind to flow with all the other associated Divine gifts that come to you. This may be written down and collected at the end of a day, week or a longer period. In addition, you can learn from authentic Jewish sources, all the manifold displays of love that G-d shows us at all times....

d. CATALYZING EXTRAORDINARY LOVE----- As we discussed earlier, this type of love is one that reflects the quality of effort invested & the sky is the limit [literally]. First, double up your efforts in A, B and C above. Now ask g-d to saturate you at all times with feelings and insights that focus on loving Him. Write down or take mental note of all the Divine-sent flashes that come to you. Let it be His Will that they will come in greater and greater quantity and quality until you will be a wellspring of Divine love---Amen!

#42 EIKEV - Maximizing The Mitzvah

'ALL THE MITZVAH'

1. 'All the Mitzvah that I command you today, you should take care to fulfill, in order to live and multiply and come to inherit the land that Hashem swore to [give to] your forefathers.' [Parsha Eikev, chap.8, verse 1]

All of the commentaries jump on the strange wording of this verse. Instead of saying 'All the Mitzvah', it should say either 'every Mitzvah' or 'all the Mitzvahs'. The master commentary, 'Rashi', brings 2 possible answers. The meaning is either to do the entire body of Mitzvahs or else to complete the performance of any and every Mitzvah from its beginning all the way through to the end, and thereby gain the Blessings of life, reproduction and inheriting the land. Let's study another explanation which points out a way of plugging a mitzvah for all its worth!

THE 5 SOUL LEVELS OF A MITZVAH

2. Like a person, a Mitzvah is a spiritual being. A Mitzvah has a body and soul. Just like a person takes action with their body, so too the body of a Mitzvah is its actual performance. Just like a person's soul is multi-dimensional [5 levels; Nefesh, Ruach, Neshama, Chayah and Yechidah], the same is true of the soul of a Mitzvah. The performance of the Mitzvah encompasses both the body of the Mitzvah as well as the level of Nefesh. The level of Ruach of the Mitzvah is the knowledge of the Mitzvah...ie...knowing all of the 'Torah' that's taught concerning the Mitzvah. The Neshamah level of the Mitzvah is the 'Kavanah' or intention...ie..the awareness or presence of mind one has when doing the Mitzvah [on the simplest level one is aware that one is in fact involved in doing a Mitzvah]. The reason why this is considered to be such a high level [ie..Neshama], is because it requires one to basically be in a meditative state of focus while involved. The next soul level of a Mitzvah, called Chayah, is achieved by having the intention of doing the Mitzvah for the 'Sake of Heaven'...ie... doing it altruistically in order to magnify Hashem's Presence. Finally, the highest level of doing a Mitzvah, Yechidah, is the doing of the Mitzvah with maximal heartfelt enthusiasm.

THE COSMIC EFFECTS OF MAXIMIZING THE MITZVAH

3. A Mitzvah, like a human being, has a microcosmic effect; A Mitzvah that's maximally activated by performing it with all 5 levels of soul, will in turn effect every other dimension that's related to it in the spiritual world. Here are a few illustrations of this microcosmic effect:

a. THE MITZVAH'S EFFECT ON MYSELF-----When I open up the 5 levels of a Mitzvah, I in turn open up the 5 levels of myself or my soul. To the extent that I do any particular Mitzvah with knowledge, presence of mind, altruism and enthusiasm, I in turn open up these realms in everything that I do. Also, since each Mitzvah is related to a specific body part and character trait, the specific mitzvah that I do will awaken and heal that particular channel in my body and soul. Now we understand what our verse means when it states that when I do 'all the Mizvah' I merit to LIVE!

b. THE MITZVAH'S EFFECT ON THE WORLD-----The world also has the dimensions of body and soul. The more 'soul' I incorporate into my Mitzvahs [and into all actions that I do for that matter], the more influence I have on the entire world. Here too, each Mitzvah corresponds to a particular place on the globe and the type of people living there. Awaken the Mitzvah and awaken that part of the globe!! in addition, according to the amount of soul that I do the Mitzvah with, I will inherit my share of the 'Promised Land', which is also a spiritual being made up of body and soul. This applies literally [ie....my merited portion in the land of Israel], and on a deeper level--I merit my share of the post-life, which is the cosmic realm of the 'Promised Land'. Now we understand what the verse means by promising an inheritance in the land of Israel to the one who fulfills 'all the Mitzvah'.

c. THE MITZVAH'S REPRODUCTIVE EFFECT----- Another aspect of the microcosmic effect of the fully actualized Mitzvah is its reproductive effect; one Mitzvah begets another mitzvah & another & another until one becomes surrounded and encompassed by Mitzvahs. Since the purpose of the Mitzvahs is to Divinize our lives 24\7, the effort that we invest in maximizing one Mitzvah, serves to maximize every moment of our lives!! Now we understand what the verse means by stating that if you perform 'all the Mitzvah', you merit to multiply [ie.. to multiply the richness of living]!

OUR TOOL; MAXIMIZING THE MITZVAH

4.
 - a. Choose a common Mitzvah that generally comes your way such as Loving your neighbor, prayer, or studying Torah....
 - b. Perform that Mitzvah with all the soul levels that we've mentioned:
 - 1) Learn all that you can about the Mitzvah and perform it with this wisdom in a fully integrated way.
 - 2) Do the Mitzvah with meditative presence; remove all other thoughts from your mind except what you're doing at the time.

3) Do it for the Sake of Hashem and the Tikun of the world! Based on what we said earlier about the global microcosmic effects of the Mitzvah, focus your intention to effect all corresponding parts of the globe with your particular Mitzvah.

4) Do it with maximum heartfelt enthusiasm. If you have a hard time to open up your heart with enthusiasm, then do the next best thing - **FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!!**

#43 REEH - Divine Guidance 24/7 - The Ultimate Blessing

A NEW INTERPRETATION

1. 'See that I place before you today Blessing and Curse. The Blessing is that you listen to my Mitzvahs.....' [1st 2 verses of Parsha Reeh].

The simple interpretation of this verse is fraught with difficulties. The simple meaning would be that the condition for the Israelites receiving Blessing, would be that they abide by the Mitzvahs. That seems to be a pretty straight forward way of Divine interaction. The verse's inconsistencies however scream out for a different interpretation:

- a. The proper result of the Children of Israel's obeying the Mitzvahs would be reward and not BLESSING...
- b. They didn't receive the Mitzvahs 'TODAY' but rather 40 years earlier at Mt. Sinai ...
- c. The Mitzvahs aren't 'PLACED BEFORE YOU', but rather commanded...
- d. What the Parsha goes on to describe for the supposed reward for keeping the Mitzvahs, doesn't at all jive with what our Sages depict as the recompense for Mitzvah observance [what's depicted is a blessed environmental reality...]. In fact, they teach that this materialistic world that we live in, isn't capable of paying off that which we deservedly have coming to us for keeping Mitzvahs. Mitzvahs are purely spiritual entities, and this world [and it's 'desserts'] just isn't made out of the same stuff that Mitzvahs are made of.

This leads at least one commentary [The 'Netivot Shalom'] to come up with an entirely new interpretation; 'See that I place before you today Blessing and Curse, The Blessing is when you listen to the Mitzvahs....' means that the source of blessing in our lives comes when we receive G-d's Divine Guidance at all times, guiding us to fulfill our calling in life. The word 'BLESSING' now fits in fine with what comes before and after...the word 'TODAY' simply means that we are always present to receive G-d's guidance, as do the words 'PLACED BEFORE YOU'. Finally, the continuation of the Parsha is truly a description of a Blessed scenario, the result of our people's connecting to the Holy One's Guidance. The word 'Mitzvah' in the verse doesn't literally mean commandment, but rather our bonding with Hashem [Mitzvah in Hebrew comes from the same root as 'Tzavta' which is a sort of interpersonal bonding.

The bottom line in this new interpretation of the verse is that the ultimate Blessing is when we are connected and guided by Hashem all the time!

WHAT IS A BLESSING

2. You may be wondering why indeed the ultimate state of Blessing is a connection with fulltime Divine guidance. Let's look at the essence of the concept of Bracha or Blessing. The word shares the same root letters with the word 'Braicha' which means 'wellspring'. A Bracha is, like a wellspring, the source of an overflowing abundance. What is the phenomenon in life that is the greatest source of overflowing abundance? Hashem--of course!! It's brought in the classic work by the Ramchal, 'The Way of G-d' [section 1/2/3], that all wellbeing and everything good and perfect [including overflowing Blessed Abundance and Blessing itself for that matter] is accessed when we cling to G-d's presence. So the formula is very straight--forward; the essence of Blessing is clinging to or being present with Hashem. People ask Blessings from 'Tzadikim' because their lives radiate G-dliness. The reality, therefore, of a life that is lived in constant and intimate connection to Hashem and to His guidance is a life that has the greatest Blessing. This is the basic concept. Take it and extend it to any and all areas of life, such as healing, making a living and relationships ...etc...and you'll find the secret recipe for Blessed success!

A FEW TOOLS FOR ACCESSING BLESSED DIVINE GUIDANCE 24/7

3. A. DICTATION-----Take a walk around the block. Talk to Hashem about anything you want to receive Divine Guidance about. At a certain point in your walk, switch roles. Let Hashem do the talking to you through your own voice. Take note of all that's been said and utilize this information as a sort of ongoing counsel from above..[I'm not saying that what you're hearing is really G-d's voice, but the very fact that you simulate it, opens up the Divine voice in yourself and is a very valuable resource for you]

B. TO DO SHEETS-----On The top horizontal column of a piece of paper that you want to keep as close to yourself at all times as possible, write down all the questions and challenges that you would want Hashem to counsel you on. Put the paper away and then go into a state of receptivity and wait for the answers to flash at you at any time...Remember, G-d speaks [oftentimes] in between the lines---so keep your ears perked for His subtle messages.

C. 'HAYITAV' ['DOES IT FIND FAVOUR IN THE EYES OF HASHEM?']-----Anytime you would like to know the Divine answer to a certain question concerning your direction in life, or anything else for that matter, simply ask this question---'Does it find favor in the Eyes of Hashem?' The immediate clear answer that you receive is the truest one...

#44 SHOFTIM - Chase After Truth

Shalom and Blessings

1. "Chase after justice concertedly in order to live and inherit the land that Hashem your G-d gives you." [Parsha Shoftim, Chapter 16, Verse 20].

The Hebrew word used in the verse in our Parsha that we're exploring is "Tzedek" or "Justice" (which by the way conveys the nature of what most of the rest of the Parsha deals with.) The Aramaic translation is "Kushta" or "Truth". The entire Torah is translated into Aramaic. The Aramaic historically served the people of their day as a translation to a language that is understandable. Kabbalistically, the Aramaic serves as a bridge into the real world. The original Biblical Hebrew, the Holy tongue, defines the inner essence of reality. Explore the original Hebrew word and thereby understand the essential concept of that word. Aramaic then takes that essential definition and describes its place or application in day-to-day reality. In light of our explanation, we now understand that the way to properly apply justice i.e. to get to the bottom of it or to give it "staying power", is to get to the truth of the matter. Regarding justice – there are many shades – I'm right, you're right, they're right, we're all right. In regard to truth – our Sages teach us there's only one Truth. But to get that one Truth you have to search concertedly for it. You need to search for the inner truth. When you do, you arrive at a level described as Hashem's seal, i.e. Hashem's stamp of approval. Thus our verse teaches to chase justice in order to live and inherit the land. This is the natural result of your acting according to Hashem's Truth and Justice.

A FEW THOUGHTS

2. I'd like to share a few thoughts before I humbly submit to you a multi-step formula for getting to this level of the deepest truth. Far be it from me to say that the formula I suggest is the only way or the all-encompassing way. I'm very far from that!! I'm just interested in providing concrete steps to get there. As you may have noticed, I'm a great believer in formulas and techniques. I've seen this go a long way in bringing closer people who feel themselves to be far away from Judaism with all of its demanding devotion and Avoda (service to Hashem).

As I was saying, far be it from me to discuss the exclusive recipe for truth checking – I feel dwarfed by the Great Pillars of Truth (those people still alive and those who are living in the "World of Truth" – the Afterlife.) These are my true heroes. I've drawn incredible inspiration from their fearless uncompromising truth causing them to often go against the entire generation. Each one of them deserves a book or at least an essay and each of them could probably teach their own truth formula, placing mine in their proverbial "back pockets". And one more thing: There are some things in life that are worth fighting for. You may find yourselves in a crisis or challenge where it seems as if everything and everybody is going against you – and deep down you're very, very clear and you know that the truth is with you and not with the rest of the world. Be fearless and stick to your guns and fight for the truth. Let's get to work. I hope the following steps will help. Perhaps assign a truth value score of 1-10 to each of these steps and then an overall average score. Be brave and stubborn to chase after the truth until you can work up to scoring nines and tens consistently.

A TRUTH CHASING FORMULA

3. Take these steps as a sort of technique, formula or gauge to check the truth value of any principle, decision or piece of wisdom that you encounter.

A. TRUTH STANDS THE TEST OF TIME. This verse in Proverbs states “The expression of truth stands forever.” Our Sages teach, “Falsehood has legs to stand on”, i.e. staying power. Does it stand up to the test of time? Though you can’t know this ingredient of the real truth of anything until a reasonably considerable amount of time will pass in the future, nevertheless you can compare any similar phenomenon that occurred in the past. If it stood the test of time, so can your present topic at hand.

B. TRUTH RESONATES AND BREEDS HOLINESS. Our Sages interpret the verse “Distance yourself from falseness” thusly; Falseness distances you from Hashem. You can feel or resonate with the Divine Truth in a situation, statement or idea... not only does it feel to be something that Hashem would approve of, but also you’ll find yourself being drawn to think, feel, speak and act out in a Holy way. Falseness produces the opposite results (the higher that you go in Kabbalah’s spiritual worlds or soul levels, the more Divinity and Truth will you experience).

C. TRUTH IS RECOGNIZED IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF DECEIT AS LIGHT IS IN DARKNESS. Our Sages also teach that our world is a world of the hiddenness of G-d’s presence (the word “Olam” which means world comes from the Hebrew root for hidden). An even stronger expression offered is that this world is a “world of lies or deceptions” (Alma D’shikra). In a world of lies or deception, the truth, by contrast is very apparent and recognized. (Our sages’ phrase is Emet Nikeret – the Truth is recognized). This power of truth to be recognized in darkness is manifest in the trait of authenticity, where a person fearlessly shines forth the “real me” – even when it would be more comfortable to stay hidden behind their politically correct façade!! Integrity also is an attractive trait where people recognize in the person that they prefer to be courageously truthful rather than comfortably deceitful.

D. TRUTH IS ACCESSED BY SEEING THE WHOLE PICTURE. The Kabbalists teach that truth is one of the traits of the sefira of Tiferet. Tiferet is the sefira that bridges or connects together all the rest of the sefirot of the personality – those above it (the spiritual and intellectual) with those below it (the actual), those to the right of it (the expansive and free-flowing traits) with those to the left of it (the constrictive and limiting traits). In other words, it takes into account the whole picture. Other similar areas that fall into this category are:

1. Torah – the truth that encompasses all elements
2. A judge – needs to rule based on all the factors
3. A Halachic “Poseik” (Authority) – needs to decide based on all the factors
4. Our forefather Jacob – the patriarch who embodied all sides of life, the spiritual with the physical bridged in all areas of life
5. My good friend’s constant advice in times of being confused about which direction to go was, “Go up to a higher level and see the whole picture – and then everything will fit into its proper place.”

E. KEEP PURSUING THE TRUTH UNTIL YOU GET IT. This step or element of truth gauging brings us back to the original verse and theme of this essay – “Pursue the Truth.” The Truth by its nature is something like Divinity itself that is hidden and makes itself increasingly available to a person according to their determination to get it!!

#45 KI TAIZAI - The Principle Of Preemptive Initiating

THE PRINCIPLE'S SOURCE VERSE

1. 'When you go out to battle your enemy and Hashem places [victory] into your hands...' [Parsha Ki Teizei 1st verse]

This verse informs us how to be victorious both on the battlefield in a wartime situation and on the battlefield of life. A careful reading reveals an incredible insight; if you GO OUT to battle your enemy [ie...when you initiate the battle], then Hashem places victory into your hand! Many commentaries point out that this verse applies to both our wartime enemy and to our personal infamous 'enemy', the Evil inclination'---the inner drive to do the opposite of what Hashem wants us to do. Actually the principle that we learn from this verse can be applied even beyond the scope of coping with our 'Yaitzer Hara' [Evil Inclination]. Any battle in life that we anticipate whether it be within ourselves or with other people or challenges fits the bill. The principle can be summed up thusly: When we take PREEMPTIVE INITIATIVE in life, we succeed! Let's explore the principle and how we can apply it in our lives.

THE PRINCIPLE'S APPLICATIONS

2. What we will now list will be a few various applications of the preemptive initiating principle. View each application as not only a further elaboration of the principle in various areas of life, but also as tools or strategies to be applied in the appropriate situations.

A. THE DIVINE PROVIDENTIAL EFFECT-----The major commentaries point out [based on the Torah's expositional principle of learning the connection between 2 different topics, based solely on their physical juxtaposition to each other {this is called 'SIMUCHIM' in Torah jargon}], that when one does initiate the battle, good things will Providentially follow in it's wake-----stated differently, when one does a Mitzvah or puts out positive energy into the Universe, they will be rewarded with the opportunity to do another Mitzvah or continue to put out more good energy. And the opposite also holds true-----a sin or negative energy begets another sin or more negative energy. Related to this Providential effect, is the fact that G-d gave us the gift of knowing when the Day of Judgment [Rosh Hashanah] falls on the calendar, in order to take the preemptive initiative of preparing ourselves and thereby drawing down the best possible Providence in our coming year. The ultimate expression of our nation's collective preemptive initiative which served to transform our providential reality, was when at Sinai we all said, "We will do and we will listen" [to all that Hashem will command us to do] which had the immediate effect of bringing us back to a garden of Eden Paradise state free of death, confusion and all negativity!!

B. PREEMPTING THE EVIL INCLINATION----- Our Sages say that we should always preempt our inclination to do bad by instead doing that which is goodly and G-dly. We thereby avoid ever being captured in the claws of the Evil Inclination. Our parsha talks about a voluntary or permissible war as opposed to a mandatory war. The term used is a 'Milchemet Reshut .' The meaning in terms of the battles of life, is to be detached from all entanglement in the 'permissible' areas of life, such as overindulging and the like, that

would only hold us back. When we detach ourselves like this, we never even come into the realm of the Evil Inclination [and if we do, then preemptive initiating will no longer be effective---thus our Sages recommend very different strategies when we're entrapped---certainly declaring war on our overpowering enemy would be disastrous, unless we happen to be on the level of R. Shimon Bar Yochai or any other absolutely pure and perfect 'Tzadik' who need never fear 'messing around' with Evil].

C. PREEMPTING BY BLINDING THE 'ENEMY' WITH THE 'FLIP SIDE' OF IT'S OWN MEDICINE-----When you anticipate potential crippling opposition, then preempt it with a strong dose of its own medicine:

1. Initiate 'bundles of Mitzvahs' to stave off 'bundles of Sins'...
2. Initiate a strong dose of Torah to stave off a strong dose of self-destructive desires...
3. Initiate a strong dose of Holy and positive desires to stave off the opposite [and even if you only 'fake it to make it', our Sages say that this alone will eventually awaken the heart to true enthusiasm...

The Chassidic Masters teach, "By doing 'Asei Tov' [positive mitzvohs and actions], we stave off the need to do 'Sur Meira' [preventative Mitzvohs and actions---ie... actions designed to keep us away from wrongdoing].

D. DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN----The nature of life [and a well-known physics principle] is that what goes up must come down. In order to preempt this principle, ALWAYS GO UP!! Our sages call this being 'Maalim B'Kodesh'---always seek to preempt a potential fall by constantly being more Holy, going higher and starting anew!

#46 KI TAVO - Save The Last For First

Shalom and Blessings

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIRST FRUITS [BIKURIM]

1. 'And it shall come to pass when you come into the land...and you shall take of the first of the fruits of the earth...' [Parsha Ki Tavo chap. 26 verses 1-2].

The Talmud describes at length the very colorful and celebratory ceremony involved in the bringing of the first fruits to the Holy Temple. The farmers, after having exerted themselves successfully, dedicate the first fruits of their labor to G-d. They brought the fruits up to Jerusalem and were received with great joy, music and fanfare. They declared to G-d that they've done their part in dedicating the first fruits to Him, so in return they ask of G-d, "Look down from your Holy Heavenly Dwelling Place and Bless your people Israel and the Land..." [chap. 26, verse 15]. Our Sages laud this whole affair with the greatest of praises saying that in the merit of the 'Bikurim' [first fruits offering], the whole world was created. We are taught that the reason that this Mitzvah fulfills the purpose of creation is because these fruits were the most precious thing to the farmers and they nevertheless selflessly dedicated the first [most important part of] portion to Hashem. G-d's purpose in creating the world, we are taught, was for Him to have a Dwelling Place or

a significant presence of G-dliness in a world where G-d is normally hidden! When a farmer declares that G-d's portion takes precedence to their most precious possession that is a very powerful testimony to G-d's presence in the world!

FIRSTS

2. In light of our understanding of the special significance that there is in dedicating the first and most precious portion of ourselves and our possessions to G-d, we now have insight into why Judaism dedicates virtually all 'Firsts' to G-d. Here are a few representative examples:

- a. The First of the mineral world----money is tithed for G-dly charity purposes.
- b. The First of the plant world----the First Fruits are dedicated to the Temple.
- c. The First of the animal world----The tithes of animals are considered Holy.
- d. The First of the Human world----The first-born are designated Holier in certain respects. So too is the first stage of marriage as well as the initial phase in the history of our nation...
- e. The Firsts in the realm of time----The new Year, the new month and even the newest part of the day all are set apart from the remainder of their respective time frames as having greater Holiness...

'FIRSTS' IN REGARD TO ELUL AND ROSH HASHONAH

3. There is a clear connection between our Parsha's theme of 'Firsts' and the period that we presently find ourselves in. We are rapidly approaching the first part of a new year [Rosh Hashonah]. Our new year is not merely meant to be seen as an occasion to raise our glasses in a toast to a healthy and happy new year. Our New Year, like all the other 'Firsts' we've been discussing, represents the dedication of that which is most important to us, namely our lives, first and foremost to Hashem's Service and to be Hashem's special 'agents' committed to bringing the world to it's Tikun [rectification or perfection]!! The best way to accomplish this is to isolate and identify that which is the first and innermost part of our psyche, namely our 'Ratzon' [our will, volition or primal desire], and then to dedicate it to be the Divinely directed C.E.O. of all that we do in life 24\7! The Kabbalah teaches that this 'Ratzon' [as well as all the other 'Firsts' that we've discussed so far] is the highest 'Sefira' called Keter. When it is activated, all the rest of the Sefirahs; traits or component parts of the personality, follow suit. [The same is true regarding the remainder of the bodies of all the Firsts we've discussed...ie... they follow the lead or the direction of what the 'First' does]. The Keter is the inner motivator. If I do what I want to do, then all the rest of my inner and outer world will be in sync--- if not , not! Elul---the last month of the old year is the time to get in sync with a new year and a new ME---dedicating the first and innermost aspect of myself, my will or volition, to be a partner with G-d. Let's check out a few tools that will instruct us how to awaken this 'Ratzon'.

A FEW ELUL RATZONING TOOLS

4. a. BEYOND LIMITS YEARNING AND VISIONING [BLYV]-----See yourself as someone who has no limitations regarding what you're capable of accomplishing. The sky's the limit. If you had all the money, power, talent, capabilities etc...ask yourself what more you really would want in life. This type of exercise produces the best results when you repeat it a number of times. In the beginning, you just open up the 'yearning juices'---so have patience and your true desires will really start opening up. When you feel you're 'there', then dedicate the choicest part of the 'new you' to helping G-d rectify the world!

b. DIVINIZING MY 'IN THE ZONE' STATE-----Search for that area of your life where you feel that you're in your element and you're empowered, or as they say nowadays, 'you're in your zone'. Visualize the experience of being 'in your zone' in the greatest of detail. Then go back and integrate G-d's role in your 'zone' experience; His active direction and empowering of all the multiple aspects of your 'zone' experience.

c. NEXT ELUL'S 'PRESUME' OR GRADUATION SPEECH-----Imagine that you are now in Elul one year from now and proudly reporting to a group of close friends, all that you have become and have accomplished throughout the entire year [especially regarding your dedication of yourself to be G-d's partner in doing 'Tikun Olam' or to being a G-d revealer where He's normally hiding]. Report on how you succeeded. Take good notes. Chances are [based on my personal experience] that even if you don't ever look at your notes until one year from now, you'll accomplish what you set out to do----all the more so if you really actively work on it during the coming year!

#47 NITZAVIM\VAYELECH - You're Already Very Close

THE PARSHA OF TSHUVA

1. ' Because this [Mitzvah or way of life] is very close to you [it's] in your mouth and in your heart to do it.' [Parsha Nitzavim chap. 30 verse 14]
Our double Parsha is the one that always falls on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashonah. One of the central topics is 'Tshuvah'; a return to G-d, Judaism and to our true authentic self. The description brought in our Parsha is a returning from a place of being totally down and out, as the verse says, "If you're cast away to the ends of the Heavens, from there, Hashem... will gather you..." [Ch. 30 verse 4]. Some commentaries point out that the type of Tshuvah dynamic being discussed here [there are endless levels of Tshuvah], is the most extreme kind. The Torah is here dealing with a situation where people fall in to such a state of hopelessness and despair, that there's almost nothing to be done, short of the most intense and radical Tshuvah possible-----a Tshuvah not primarily motivated by fear of punishment or even fear of G-d, but rather by a pure and powerful love of G-d.

TSHUVAH MOTIVATED BY LOVE OF G-D

2. Our Sages teach an amazing principle about a person whose return or Tshuvah is based on Love of G-d. Not only are their sins forgiven, as is the case by any penitent, but

their sins in retrospect are actually considered to be positive and a source of merit! Somehow their darkness, confusion and waywardness served as the actual springboard for transforming their lives. I believe that we all know or have heard of people who can testify that their worst hard luck story filled with struggle, horrible disease, death, abuse or any other type of unbearable suffering, became the very thing that caused their total life transformation! The Rambam [R. Moshe ben Mammon] in the 10th chapter of his treatise on Tshuvah, portrays a portrait of a person who's Tshuvah is love motivated. This person is a walking, talking picture of love sickness. All they can think, speak and generally obsess about is their love of G-d. These spiritual levels sound very fascinating and enticing, but what about those of us who don't drive around spiritual Rolls Royces, but rather old beat-up chevys, and who don't dine nightly on caviar on the Riviera, but rather settle for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on the run-----How can we discover these incredible levels in our lives?!

YOU'RE VERY CLOSE RIGHT WHERE YOU'RE AT NOW!

3. The culmination of our Parsha's Tshuvah presentation is a small group of verses that reveal to us the essential point of the whole Tshuvah dynamic. Tshuvah isn't something 'in the Heavens' or 'over the seas' [ie...very far away from us], but rather it is so close to us that all we need to do is to open up our mouths and our hearts and it's right there---immediately accessible! Do you want to be a SUPERJEW?! Do you want to be someone who's walking around lovesick for G-d 24\7?! Do you want to be someone who's transformed their entire inner--motivational--wiring--system to the extent that all you really want to do is what Hashem wants?! Don't look outside of yourself to those rare individuals who've MADE IT! You'll probably decide that that's fine for them----those elite souls who were born [and raised] with the proverbial [spiritual] spoon in their mouths. What's really going to make an impact in your life is something that is do-able and relevant to you where you're at right now! Look inside of yourself---it's RIGHT THERE!! You'd be amazed at how realistic it already is for you to truly be an incredible world--class Jew!! My friends, we're 2 weeks away from being Divinely videotaped and X-rayed on High in order to determine who we are and where we fit in to G-d's plan of Tikun Olam [rectification of the world]. So let's get to work;

A STRATEGY FOR YOU TO REVEAL THE SUPERJEW INSIDE OF YOU NOW!!

- 4.a. Make a few lists of all of the values that you hold by in your life; Let 1 list be comprised of your top 10 moral values, another list ---your top 10 spiritual values and another list your top 10 Mitzvahs----ie...what you think that you're doing right now that would qualify to be something that you're pretty sure G-d would categorize as being a Mitzvah.
- b. Next go through all of your above 30 entrees one by one----and yearn to improve their level [in a realistic way with minimal effort] to the point that you would consider them to be 'the stuff that SuperJews are made of', and then mark them down.
- c. Get an outsider's objective truth check. Present your finished list to a qualified, humble and compassionate expert on Judaism and see how you measure up. I'm sure you'll be pleasantly surprised!

#48 THE ROSH HASHONAH FACTOR

NOT A STANDARD DAY OF JUDGEMENT

1. 'Today the World is born' [Talmud; Tractate Rosh Hashonah]. Our Sages teach us that all created beings come before Hashem to be judged on Rosh Hashonah [The 2 day Jewish New Year]. However the nature of the judgment that takes place is very different from what we would expect. As opposed to a scenario that depicts a detached and objective judge having no contact whatsoever with any of the very worried litigants [which normally is the case], on Rosh Hashonah, together with a solemn and fearful mood, there also prevails a mood of Holiday joy; Many dress in festive white clothing. We eat our Holiday meals with rich ritual & with an inner trust that the Divine Judge will see in us only the best and grant us a year of goodness and abundance. What's even more unique is that this Divine Judge is rooting for us!! We are taught that the time of year that G-d is [so to speak] closest and most accessible to us, are the '10 days of Tshuvah', beginning with Rosh Hashonah and concluding on Yom Kippur. In fact, we are assured that this very same Divine Judge will ultimately forgive us and grant us atonement for our sins. Obviously there must be more to the 'Day of Judgment' than just straight forward judgment. Let's look into it further:

THE KABBALISTIC VERSION

2. The Kabbalists present to us a very unique description of what takes place in the Spiritual World during this time period. The Divine Male and Female 'Partzufim' [Kabbalistic personas] go through sort of a courting ritual reminiscent of the Torah's account of how Eve was bodily separated apart from a sleeping Adam, and was presented to him, upon his awakening, as being as being his sole soul partner in Creation. So too does the Divine Female Partzuf [also referred to as the 'Shechina' or 'Malchut'], go through a separation process from Her Divine Soul-Mate [who is referred to as 'The Holy One' or 'Zeir Anpin'], starting on Rosh Hashonah and ending on Yom Kippur every year anew. The rest of the Jewish month of Tishrei's Holidays from after "Yom Kippur", through 'Sukkot' until 'Simchat Torah', are depicted as a face to face bonding process between the Male and Female Partzufim, culminating in their ultimate Union on Simchat Torah. Let's now try to understand Rosh Hashonah in light of the translation of the mystical concepts we've brought so far from the Sages of both the revealed and the Esoteric Hidden realms of the Oral Torah.

RE-CREATION OF THE WORLD

3. Relative to the Creator of the World, we his creations, take on the role of the Female paradigm or Partzuf. All that we discussed in the previous paragraph about the female being separated from a back to back attachment to her Male counterpart during the 10 days from Rosh Hashonah until Yom Kippur, can be understood as each one of us being granted free will and independence. To quote a line from a famous contemporary song, "If you love somebody, set them free." By being separated from the backside of G-d, so to

speak, we are not only realizing our independence, but we are being granted the ability to look at ourselves and deeply introspect into the essence of who we are. G-d's part in this separation dynamic, is to temporarily stop the inertia of life [ie...the continued carrying on of things automatically as they have been going]. Also He takes an introspective look at what's going on in His World, and what each of us, His potential Divine Creation partners, have been and can be contributing to the purpose of Creation in the immediate future. All of this comes into crystal clear focus when we, in our state of introspective independence, see [along with G-d] who we truly are.

G-d re-creates the World on Rosh Hashonah, and we are judged to see what we can contribute to this new World and to its rectification. As we said earlier, the Judge wants us to succeed. The Holiday's joyous spirit is based on the incredible opportunity we have to merge or re-merge the essence of ourselves with the Creator. The main challenge is to look deep enough inside of ourselves to identify our inner Divine self that's inspired to partnerize the essence of who we are with G-d in bringing about Tikun Olam [the rectification of the World].

ROSH HASHONAH TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

4. Here are a few strategies that can help us to be successful in taking advantage of the incredible opportunities being presented to us on Rosh Hashonah:

a. REDISCOVERING YOURSELF-----This tool requires the most time. I realize that time is short--- do your best;

1. Draw up a list of the highlights of your year
2. Find the underlying core motivation [why you did what you did]
3. Now allow a birth to take place, based on last year's highlights and their core motivation and a lot of concerted yearning and brainstorming. The birth should consist of a new, wonderful and inspired 'you' and a new recipe for living in the coming year

b. PARTNERIZE WITH G-D'S NEW YEAR CREATION PLAN-----Take this 'new you' which you've hopefully discovered in [a] above, and look deep inside to discover how you can best contribute of yourself towards G-d's Tikun Olam.

c. CROWNING THE KING-----A major theme in the liturgy of the Prayers of Rosh Hashonah is our crowning of the King. Certainly by you partnerizing the essence of yourself with Hashem, you're accomplishing this. In addition, here's a very useful anchoring statement that you can instantly access to 'Crown the King'; Ask yourself [whenever you are making any decision], 'What Does G-d say about this?' Or better yet, 'Does this find favor in the Eyes of Hashem?'

d. SHOFAR-----There are many 'Kavanot' or intentions one can have upon hearing the sounds of the Shofar. Here's a very powerful one----Think to yourself that the sound of the Shofar is like a primal cosmic scream penetrating so deep into the universal Soul and into your own, that it has the ability to shatter all obstacles separating you from Hashem and from your true self!

e. NULLIFICATION OF ALL NEGATIVE DECREES-----There's no better and more auspicious time for this, than from Rosh Hashonah until Yom Kippur. One of the best ways to connect with this energy and to effect a true nullification is 'Tshuvah' [stay tuned for next week's Parsha Tools]. Actually all the tools being mentioned here work very well. The famous Prayer book line is 'Tshuvah, Tefilla [prayer] and Tzedakah [charity] avert the evil decree'.....another good piece of advice is to 'turn the other cheek' in all areas of life.

f. SPIRITUAL GENETIC ENGINEERING-----How we are on Rosh Hashonah effects our entire year, so be righteous, happy and positive in thought, speech and action and everything is going to be all right!!

Shabbat Shalom and Shanah Tovah
Yitzchak

#49 HAAZINU - The Essential Point Of Tshuvah & Yom Kippur

ORIENTATION

1. 'G-d, [please] create for me a new heart & renew in me the proper spirit' [Psalms 51]. Let's get oriented. We're in the midst of an annual renewal process. We talked last week about a Kabbalistic dynamic that's presently taking place in the spiritual world; The Divine Male and Female 'Partzufim' [personas] are in a 10 day process of separating from a back to back connection. We 'translated' that separation-metaphor to mean that G-d is granting us the free willed independent insight to introspect and see who we really are. G-d as well, temporarily free of us hanging on to His coat-tail [so to speak], i.e...a low-level inertia-fueled relationship, is introspecting also. He chooses to start the Creation and world rectification process again---and this time around, He takes a real close look at each of our past, present and future essences and how we can contribute to the re-creation and rectification of the world. That's the judgment dynamic of Rosh Hashonah.

THE SIMPLE EXPLANATION

2. Where are we at now, a few short days before Yom Kippur? The answer on a simple level is that this separation \independence \introspective process continues and deepens. it is known as the '10 days of Tshuvah'. We examine deeply who we are---where did we miss the mark and lose our ability to be in sync with ourselves, G-d and life in general--- How can we resynchronize, dedicate and partnerize our unique selves with Hashem's new 'Tikun Olam' plan?!

This intense process culminates on Yom Kippur---A day of Divine pardon and a sealing of our annual fate! Most of us have experienced these High--Holidays and even know a thing or two about this spiritual process. Unfortunately, many of us haven't felt the process to be relevant enough to our lives to jump out of bed in the morning in order to take advantage of the incredible Divine gifts of spiritual growth and purification that this period offers us [and for that matter, once we truly understand the power of Tshuva, any period is relevant]. In light of that, let's explore a bit deeper:

THE FEAR FACTOR

3. The Kabbalists teach us that this month of Holidays enable us to rectify the 'Sefirah' called 'Gvurah'. Gvurah is the trait of withholding or saying no [ie...setting boundaries]. The inner motivation of Gvurah is FEAR!! In regard to the present 'Days of Awe', the fear is awakened by becoming hyper-aware of myself [the letters for the Hebrew word for fear, 'Yira', can be rearranged to spell 'Reiya'--seeing or awareness]. I'm aware of who I am and I'm aware that G-d is aware of who I am and is watching me and judging me. This hyper-awareness drives me to clearly recognize my potential and actual strengths and weaknesses. This recognition naturally opens up a deep feeling of fear inside of me---a fear of losing that which I have or potentially have. This includes my connection with the Divine both inside and outside of myself. I'm also afraid of losing the ability to live a quality life: a life filled with gusto, purpose, and power and directed by a drive to actualize my calling. All of this fear serves as a natural springboard to take action to protect all of the abundance that I may stand to lose if I'm not careful. I'm driven to make a better living-recipe that will enable me to hold on to what is precious. Our Sages teach us that this type of fear is an even greater way to insure that we reach self- perfection than love [of G-d and of our soul] is. However both fear and love are necessary. When the two of them are working together as our inner motivators, they are referred to as the 'wings to fly' in spiritual ascent and in doing Mitzvahs. Fear without love is like a body without a soul and results in an empty and habitual way of living. Love without fear, like a soul without a body, won't allow my mundane life to be channeled to a level of expressing and experiencing the Infinite.

WHAT IS TSHUVAH

4. Now that we more or less have a clear understanding of the 'fear factor', we can now begin to understand what 'Tshuvah' [PENITENCE] is [and what it isn't]. First, by contrast, let's try to understand why the concept of Tshuvah shuts a lot of people down. A Baal Tshuva [a penitent] conjures up the image of a cult-crazed, brainwashed, moralizing, guilt-ridden, Divine punishment-obsessed, emotionally-crushed, depressive, colorless robot! That's sure not a good reason to jump out of bed in the morning during the 10 days of Tshuvah or on Yom Kippur! So let's try to describe the real experience of one involved in Tshuvah;

First of all, I pick up on the hyper-awareness that we are discussing, along with its accompanying sensitivity that what I have is precious and therefore I'm afraid to lose any of it. That leads to deeper introspection about how I live my life. I don't want to lose all that is potentially available to me in conscientious living. I don't want to live a lie or to be a walking self contradiction. I don't want to be trapped in a state of personal exile, self betrayal, futility and meaninglessness where I'm so out of touch with myself that my words and actions never properly bespeak the true desires of my soul, intellect and emotions. I'm relentlessly driven to be true to myself---all of myself---my Divine self within me and my receptive self to the Divine that's without me. I'm yearning to live life to the fullest--with gusto, meaning, purpose, in sync with my 'calling' in life. These are some of the inner motivations of a 'Baal Tshuva' [literally a master of return or response [to myself]. Tshuvah is something that a Baal Tshuvah seeks out constantly 365\24\7---

it's a drive. When the Baal Tshuvah recites the 'Viduyim' [confessions] with shame for where they went off the track and commitment to change [these are the basic Halachic components of the Tshuvah process], they're doing so because they're driven to return to their true authentic self!

WHAT IS YOM KIPPUR

5. I'll be brief [hopefully]. The Kabbalah teaches that G-d raises us up on Yom Kippur to a higher consciousness, an elevated space. They call it 'Bina'. It's a place that transcends evil. It's a place of happiness, freedom; redemption, ultimate clarity and the source of where our souls come from. It's the place where we can truly declare to Hashem that whenever we veered from synchronizing our will with His Will, it wasn't really us. It was only externalities; the environment, our confusion, our constricted consciousness, our ignorance...etc. But here in this Holy Yom Kippur space, we're truly with Hashem....and you know what else, we're truly with ourselves too! And the way we get to this place on Yom Kippur is through Tshuvah---real open hearted Tshuvah---the culmination of all of our spiritual work on these 'Days of Awe.'

And G-d's response---Atonement--- thusly He expresses to us His love, and we rediscover ours for Him---therefore He signs and seals our annual fate in the best way possible for us and for His Universe!

TOOLS FOR TSHUVAH AND YOM KIPPUR

6. Here are a few tools to help us along:

A. TSHUVAH-- BEING TRUE TO MYSELF

1. To reach the inner truth factor, journalize where I'm off and inauthentic. Ask myself when I speak or act, if I am really representing who I am, my desires, my feelings, my understandings, my gifts, my powers, my abundance, my interests, my true life-calling and my inner Divine voice.

2. Allow my unbearable inner-exile and lack of true self-expression to fire me up to create a new recipe of living that will truly represent who I am!

B. CONFESSIONS----Take an existing list of confessions in any Yom Kippur prayer book [or create my own], and match my lackings that I came up with in [a] above with the confessions list. Use this list as an anchor on Yom Kippur [or anytime] to do the inner work that's needed.

C. THE 'YOM KIPPUR' POINT----In a Prayer or discussion with G-d, declare that all that I have done which isn't in line with His Will, isn't really me!! It's only externalities,...etc..[see above].

D. THE SIGNING AND SEALING POINT----Towards the end of the day of Yom Kippur in the 'Neila' service [the time of the closing or 'locking' of the gates], commit to live from now on from the vantage point of the newly discovered me!

Shabbat Shalom and you should have the greatest year possible!

Shalom and Blessings,

**** Thank G-d we completed an entire year of Parsha Tools. A lot of incredible energy went into and came out of the 'Tools' for myself and for a lot of other individuals and groups of people. Stay tuned for some future possibilities I'd like to suggest of how to keep 'riding high' with this form of communication in the near future. After a lot of Hi-Holiday contemplations, I decided to keep going, with one significant change---the name. We're going to call it 'Recipes' instead of tools, with the hope and prayer that we can live up to the challenge of compiling, over the weeks and months ahead, a treasure chest [yours and mine] or a cookbook of RECIPES FOR HIGHER LIVING 24\7. A spiritual recipe is more all-inclusive, systematized and packaged than a tool [which is only a part of a spiritual recipe], and it is my hope that we can all get joyfully chubby digesting all the psychic food that these recipes are guiding us to cook up and eat!

PARSHA RECIPES FOR HIGHER LIVING 24/7

#1 BERESHIT - Emulating Creation

IN HIS IMAGE AND HIS LIKENESS

1. ' And G-d said, let us make man in his Image and after His Likeness.....And G-d Created Man in His Image...' [Parsha Bereshit verses 26 & 27]. These verses teach us perhaps one of the most important principles found anywhere in the Torah. Man is G-d-like!! In one sense, man is G-d-like in that they contain within themselves the entire Universe---thus it is written--'Let US make man...etc..the US referring to all the components of the Universe co-partnering with Hashem in literally being inside of man and creating the Universe and Man in the same master Divine template. The ramifications are awesome. Man is the microcosm of the world, which itself is a template of the Man model. If people press the right buttons in themselves, they activate in the world, the corresponding forces involved. But perhaps even more significant than man's microcosmic essence is man's Divine essence. We're made in His Image ['Tzelem'] and in His Likeness ['Dmut]. Kabbalah explains that the 'Tzelem' or Image is based on a Divine Male paradigm ['The Holy One Blessed Be he], conveying the trait of 'Hashpaah' [reaching out and influencing others]. The 'Dmut' or 'Likeness' represents a Divine Female paradigm [the Shechinah]...ie... passively and selflessly receiving influence from others. The ramification that this has on our lives is that we're hardwired to harness Divinity inside and outside of us, and thereby reveal that the world is one big G-dly Kingdom. We activate our Divine Feminine side or 'Likeness' by clinging to G-d and doing his Will. We activate our Divine Masculine side by emulating G-d in all that we do and in the way that we influence the people in our lives.

EMULATING HIM

2. One of the last Mitzvahs in the Torah is the Mitzvah of emulating G-d's Ways. The verse states, '...And you should go in His Ways' [Parsha Ki Tavo chapter 28 verse 9]. The Sages teach from this verse that just as G-d is benevolent, so too should we be. The scope and breadth of 'His Ways' for us to emulate, is expanded by more contemporary scholars to include His Divine Sefirot [which by definition, include everything]. The emulation principle, if one deeply contemplates it, opens up for us a unique dimension or approach to understanding Torah and life that has as yet to be fully tapped in to. Study the Creator's Ways carefully in order to know how to emulate them. And what better area to study and emulate than the Creator's Way of Creating! Therefore our goal in this essay is to study SOME of the significant phases of Hashem's Creation process, both the revealed and the hidden esoteric realms, in order to suggest an initial tentative Creation Recipe [to be constantly upgraded B"H] to be used in our own lives whenever we creatively express ourselves. Let's begin our exploration into the significant phases of the Creation process;

PHASE ONE---THE OHR GANUZ POINT

3. What I'm about to discuss is the most sublime, illusive, esoteric and unfathomable part of the Creation process. But at the same time, it's absolutely crucial; to the extent that you 'get it', all the other aspects will slip into place with corresponding ease. If you don't 'get it', then any and all expressions of creativity will be like a creature or a creation with its head cut off. The point I'm referring to is called the 'Ohr Ganuz Point' [the Hidden Light Point]. In the Biblical Creation process, it is represented by the words of the 3rd verse in the Torah, 'And G-d said let there be Light and there was Light.' Even though this verse comes after the 1st 2 verses which bring up the concepts of Heaven and Earth and Chaos, our Sages reveal to us that this Light preceded everything [the reason that it appears afterwards is because the 1st 2 verses represent a specific Kabbalistic period, era or process that preceded the Hidden Light Process. Nevertheless the main order of the Creation process needed for Tikun and for our intents and purposes of emulating creativity in our lives, requires that the Hidden Light precedes everything]. This light is a nuclear [ie... all-encompassing] and transcendent [ie...beyond space and time, and with it select people can see from one end of the world to the other, and from the beginning of time till the end of time] entity. To the extent that you tap into it, you give birth and rectification to all subsequent phases of the creative process that follow. This 'tapping in to', being as it is the first phase of the creative process, is the polar opposite of the way that most of us have been taught to create or develop things. First, we're taught, construct a vessel, vehicle or plan to encompass and convey our inner ideas. Then the idea will be properly packaged and expressed..etc. Ohr Ganuz-based-creativity teaches the opposite---First go down as deep as you possibly can into your own Divinely inspired primal soul will and wisdom until all the bells sound off, everything fits together and you've reached that majestic inner essence point ! Once you've got there, don't worry about creating vessels, plans, strategies or enlisting people to carry out your insights---IT ALL WILL HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY ON IT'S OWN!! What you need is 'Bitul'---selflessly removing yourself from getting in Hashem's Way. Instead, let Hashem open up your essence---your own personal 'Ohr Ganuz Point'. Experientially, you should be feeling a strong dose of the transcendent and nuclear aspects we described earlier, along with a 'Knowing' that all else in the creative process will automatically follow suit. How do you get there? How do you dig deeper and deeper? The first part of the answer is 'Ratzon' [Primal Will]. You are what you Will. Therefore, get clarity on your deepest unobstructed flow of 'Ratzon' and you thereby tap the 'Ohr Ganuz'!

ALL THE REST FOLLOWS

4. The rest of the Torah's Creation account, as well as the rest of our creation process, follows naturally and automatically. The Torah first discusses on day one, the creation of Heaven, earth and the state of chaos. Some commentaries teach that right after the revelation of the hidden light, the entirety of Creation...ie..all that will follow in the G-dly account of Creation as well as all that will follow in History for the next 6000 years and beyond, are all encoded in the 1st day of creation of Heaven and earth, but this is all manifested in a chaotic state...ie...no clear order, definition or delineation, rather it was all revealed in ONE WORD! Only afterwards were the details of each day manifested in their proper order. The 6 days of creation along with all the '1sts' in the Torah became the paradigms which gave rise to and were the basis of all subsequent manifestations in Creation!

THE CREATION RECIPE

5. Before actually presenting a Creation Recipe with all of its corresponding tools, we need first to present a few points of clarification. In order to fully emulate the Creator's Creative process, we would need to encompass, not only what's being presented in this essay, but also the following points, which G-d Willing we'll be able to also deal with at some time in the future;

a. THE PRACTICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THE PURPOSE OF CREATION-----there are around 5 or 6 major reasons taught as to why G-d created the world. Living our lives with these reasons in the forefront of our minds certainly goes along way to being aligned with the 'Image of G-d' that we have been created in....

b. YEISH MI YEISH [SOMETHING FROM SOMETHING]-----A big part of the Creation process and creativity in general is concerned with utilizing that which already is in existence, and then forming something new from it.....

c. POST OHR GANUZ PROCESSING-----In order to truly complete the creative process presented in our essay, much more attention should be given to the completion or actualization stage....

NEVERTHELESS, HERE IS THE 'OHR GANUZING CREATIVITY RECIPE' THAT WE CAN EXTRAPOLATE SO FAR:

1. Keep going deeper and deeper in clarifying your Will...this can be achieved by asking yourself what you want [in a general way or in any specific situation]. Keep asking why you want this. As long as you can give an answer, you're not there yet until your true answer is 'JUST BECAUSE'.
2. Another Ratzon [will] probe is to do a resonance check inside of yourself to see if you are 100% flowing with no inner objecting voices holding you back. The way to deal with the objecting voices is to keep asking what it is that you really want and why [or why not this particular objective].
3. A 3rd Ratzon approach is to keep asking that if you could have what you want, what more would you want, until there's nothing else.
4. Once you know what you want, then in a state of mind that is as detached as possible [..ie..not caring if things work out for you or don't, and not caring what people think about you], hyper- focus with every fiber of your being constantly day and night, on the object of your desire until it manifests.
5. Alternatively, you can co-create the perfect or ultimate desired reality of your life [or any other desired outcome], and then let go and allow G-d to make it happen through you.
6. All the rest of the coming into being of your desired outcome [after reaching 'Ohr Ganuz'], as we said earlier, will [according to the degree that you tapped your Inner Ohr Ganuz] happen on its own. So sit back and enjoy the miraculous unfolding in front of your eyes.

#2 NOAH - Rectifying Humanity

NOAH'S ATTEMPT

1. 'Noah, a man of the earth, planted a vineyard and drank from the wine, got drunk and became exposed in his tent' [Parsha Noah Ch. 9, verses 20 and 21].

In the Parsha, we're presented with a very long description of how Noah, with G-d's constant guidance, attempted to save humanity and all the globe's animals from the world-wide devastating flood. And the Torah goes on to describe how the ark withstood the flood and finally found its way to dry land. What comes after that seems to be a very strange and incongruous story of how Noah got himself blindly drunk, became indecently exposed and was subsequently covered up by his more righteous sons. I have no doubt that a modern day Hollywood scriptwriter would 'go to town' with this scenario; The star actor, playing the lead role of Noah, would become America's latest heartthrob, appearing on the front covers of the nation's top celebrity magazines in his movie's famous 'exposed' scene. However, we're here to learn a Torah lesson to transform our lives, and not to just be tossed into the world of entertainment-fantasy!

The Holy Zohar enlightens us: Noah, as well as the rest of humanity throughout history until the Messianic times, was driven by the deepest of primal drives. He wanted to rectify the damage done by the fallout caused by Adam's sin. Noah's getting drunk wasn't a weekend binge in order to let his hair down after a hard week of work. No! He wanted to rectify all of creation. He understood, just as did his predecessor Adam, that to do this, he needed to go down to the underbelly of the beast---straight down into the realm of chaos and evil, and attempt to raise it all back up to unify with it's Divine roots. Noah literally and conceptually got drunk, indecently exposed and failed!!

ADAM'S SIN

2. Adam sinned by disregarding the express Divine command of not eating from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. R. Shlomo Elyashiv [OB"M], the author of the contemporary Kabbalistic series of volumes called the 'Leshem', describes the sin at incredibly great length. The main point is this; Adam, who was practically an angelic being and the composite of all the pure souls of humanity, was separated from any type of inner evil urge. Nevertheless, for truly altruistic reasons, he was driven to explore the 'forbidden fruit' of the realm of evil. His exploration caused evil itself to begin to become entrenched in his very being, further pulling him down to ultimately eat of the fruit [the word 'eat' as it is used in this context is a byword for both literal and not so literal eating--ie..having premature forbidden sexual relations with his wife] and thereby ingesting spiritual poison into himself, and causing all of humanity to become a hopeless mixture of good and bad soul energy. Humanity's subsequent legacy, over the next 5767 years until this very day and maybe beyond, was to 'unmix the mix', and the rest as they say, is history. The 'Leshem' goes on to describe what Adam could've accomplished if he hadn't sinned. He could've tapped into the 'Ohr Ganuz' [The Hidden Light], Creation's quintessential point [see last week's Parsha Recipes essay for more on this point], and in a relative easy, smooth and immediate fashion, elevate the world to it's ultimate pristine state [that humanity has been working to get to, consciously or not, for all of it's history]!

Instead, we are not only condemned to extricate ourselves from the clutches of evil, ingrained in the dimensions of time and space, in our own lives & throughout history, but also our deepest drives and our most difficult tests are the same as Adam's. The main instigator was the drive to explore the realm of evil and fix it up. The subsequent effects of the ingestion of evil, included a universal drive towards all fallen desires, fallen beliefs, cardinal and not so cardinal sins. If we want to get back to Paradise, we need to get right, what Adam got wrong! [It should be mentioned, that as opposed to Adam, who initially had no internal evil drive, and was therefore tested to see if he could stay away from it, we, on the other hand are sunk inside of it, and our Tikun is to pull ourselves and everything else out of it].

THE HISTORICAL DRIVE TO RECTIFY ADAM'S SIN

3. The 'Leshem' explains at great length of how Adam's primal drive to investigate and attempt to rectify the realm of evil was the primal test and subsequent fall or glorious victory of many of history's primary players including; all 3 Forefathers, Moshe, the entire generation that wandered for forty years in the desert and King Solomon. We discussed in an earlier essay, a concept we called 'The Paratrooper Principle', where, similar to a paratrooper who is parachuted behind enemy lines in order to rescue his captured comrades, a spiritual paratrooper needs to be spotlessly clean [spiritually] and detached [so as not to be attached to the forces of evil that they'll encounter], and when inside of enemy territory, they need to have a crystal clear vision of the Ohr Ganuz-pristine roots that they came from & are heading back to.

SOME RECIPES FOR RECTIFYING HUMANITY [IE...ADAM'S FALL'S EFFECT ON HUMANITY]

4. A. THE DETACHED-OHR GANUZING RECIPE

1. Get yourself 'detached' as best as you can, to the point where it's all the same to you if you're praised and things work out well for you or just the opposite. [a suggestion; whatever it is that you're stuck on---whether it be a control issue or approval issue---put it into a visual mind balloon and let it float on up to Hashem for Him to take care of]...

2. Do the 'Ohr Ganuzing' tool that we described last week at length----- in brief, try to get to the essence of your soul by first discovering your Primal Will Point-----this you do by constantly asking yourself why, until you finally get to the point where the only answer you can give is 'just because'!! Next take your newly discovered primal will point and hyper focus on it actualizing in reality, enlisting all the powers of psyche that you've got, until it actually manifests.

B. THE SABA OF NEVORDIK'S 'NAASE VNISHMA' RECIPE

Just as the Israelites recaptured the spiritual level of Adam before the sin, when they declared that they would first obey [whatever Hashem will command us to do] and afterwards they would HEAR how to carry out the commands, so too by us here and now-----Commit to do whatever Hashem wants, and then figure out how to do it [a suggestion---use as often as possible the anchor word 'HAYITAV', which means, does what I'm currently doing find favor in Hashem's Eyes?].

C. THE YOM KIPPUR RECIPE

On Yom Kippur, our consciousness becomes so elevated, that in that higher realm, it's a crystal clear fact of life that I'm a soul---and sinning is not what I'm all about---it's external to me---so I just throw all the sins away [a suggestion----- to get into that elevated state---you need to engage the world with your G-dly side---ie...think, see, talk, listen...etc... with your G-dly side...].

D. THE PARADISE NOW RECIPE

1. P-L-U-G I-N-----maximize as much as you can your PRESCENCE, LOWER SOUL integration, GROOVING on life, INFINITIZING everything and NITZULING [ie..maximally utilizing all of your inner and outer resources]

side is totally involved in the process

3. Be Hashem's Divine messenger to reveal G-dliness wherever G-dliness is normally hiding or not felt.

#3 LECH LECHA - Me Against The World

AVRAM THE ONE FROM THE OTHER SIDE

1. And the refugee came and told Avram the 'Ivri' [literally the Hebrew person]...' {Parsha Lech lecha ch. 14 verse 13}

The sages explain that the reason why Avram [Abraham's name before receiving an extra letter] is referred to as the 'Ivri' [from the Hebrew root meaning on the other side], is because the rest of mankind were on one side [of a world outlook] and Avraham was on the other side. We, the Hebrew\Ivri people have spiritually inherited from the Patriarch of our people, Abraham, the ability to stand up to the entire world and say--'you're wrong, I'm right!' Sounds enticing, intriguing and impossible, right? I mean, just think about going contrary to the flow of your own family, and if you can do that, then try to imagine going up against your city, your country, the world!! It would probably demand of you to have steel fortitude, crystal-clear vision and incredible guts to stand up to the opposition. But that's who Abraham was, and so too by extension are we, his spiritual\genetic progeny! Our mission-impossible challenge, if we so decide to accept it, is to find out what has made Abraham into an 'Ivri', and what formula or recipe can we come up with to be the 'Ivri\Hebrew' people ourselves [this tape will self-destruct in 5 seconds].

FIRST FIND OUT WHO I REALLY AM

2. In order to truly understand what it means to be an Abraham, who single-handedly takes on the entire world, we need to first focus on his inner dynamics...ie...what truly made him tick! Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapirah, the Warsaw ghetto Rebbe, opens up for us a window to understand these inner dynamics. He explains the first verse of our Parsha in this way; 'And Hashem said to Avram, Go inside of yourself [ie...seek to reveal the essence of your being] BY DETACHING YOURSELF from seeing your self identity as

being connected to your land, your birthplace, your father's house...'] G-d instructed Abram, in order to be an Ivri and stand up to humanity for all time] to discover his essence by looking at his own identity totally divorced from the elements that most people use to define other people---etc...their nationality, religion, job, family, status etc...etc...Rather, start without any preconceived notions. In order to drive this point of self-discovery home, some of the Kabbalah's classic texts teach that our forefathers, along with all the rest of us, have a double identity. There's an Abraham of this world, 'in the flesh', but there's also an Abraham in the upper world, which represents our ultimate potential--what we're meant to live up to in our lifetime. Numerous stories are told of great people that were driven until their dying day, by this concept of the 'upper world me', and as a result, had incredible achievements in life. Usually these people lived their lives by knowing how to read the Divine providential signposts and knowing at all times how to answer the question---'What is it that G-d is showing me personally that is lacking in the world, that only I can fix or improve?'

THE 'SHLAIMUS' [COMPLETE OR PERFECT] WAY TO EXPRESS IT

3. Avram the Ivri understood very clearly and lived a very important principle that our Sages teach us, "Every person should say to themselves that the whole world was created for me." This is not meant to be understood in the sense that everyone and everything in Creation is meant to serve me, rather very much to the contrary--I'm meant to personally feel the responsibility of perfecting Creation. Many commentaries explain that this is exactly the reason why Abraham is called the Patriarch of our people and not Noah. Noah was more of a follower of Hashem. Abraham was an initiator, G-d's full-fledged partner. Abraham saw himself in a role similar to that of a C.E.O., who feels personal responsibility that at the end of the day, his company should be successful and profitable. So too was Abraham's approach to G-d's Creation. As a result, Abraham understood that he not only needed to strive to become perfect, but also to make sure that he influenced the rest of the world to do the same. Here are a few cases in point:

A. BEING G-D'S MERKAVA—

-Abraham, as well as Yitzchak and Yaakov are known as 'THE MERKAVA'--- the human vehicles of G-dliness in this world. They achieved the level of being intimately associated with G-d's Name. In our Silent-Standing-Amidah Prayer, we address G-d as being the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Yitzchak and the G-d of Yaakov. Not only in regards to prayer are the Patriarchs G-d's Vehicles, but also in every action that they took and every word that they spoke.

B. BEING THE WORLD'S PILLAR OF PERFECTED CHARACTER TRAITS----Every aspect of Abraham's life represented the Divine-Based Sefirah or trait of 'Chesed'---unlimited giving and love. If one wants to learn what the essence of Chesed is, let them learn from the sources, the portrait of Abraham that is portrayed, and by doing this, one can understand on a very deep level what Chesed is.

C. ULTIMATE PERFECTION IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS----Abraham lived in a generation whose approach to interpersonal relations was based on one of two strategies [brought in 'The Ethics of the Fathers' [ch. 5 Mishna 11]:

'What is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine' [the generation of the flood];

'What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours' [the generation of Sodom and Gemarah].

One who carefully studies the behavior of these societies [and interestingly enough, our modern western society as well], will find that these 'mottos' capture in an incredibly accurate way, the underlying reason behind all of their peculiar laws and peculiar behavior. Abraham, on the other hand, based on all that we've said about him so far...ie...he was a global figure of G-dliness and Chesed par excellence, taught that everything belongs to Hashem, and therefore, 'What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours.'

THE 'AVRAM HAIVRI IN ME' RECIPE

4. Let's put it all together in order to fulfill what our Sages say, 'A person should always ask themselves, when will my actions reach the level of the actions of our Forefathers?'

a. TAKING ON THE CHALLENGE OF STANDING UP TO AND SINGLEHANDEDLY CORRECTING THAT WHICH IS WRONG IN THE WORLD-----This can be motivated by one of two things. Firstly, I may not be able to stand the injustice and all else that I see as being wrong with the world, whether it be on a global scale or on a much smaller scale. This approach will require me to be very clear as to what are the specific 'Tikunim' needed to right all that is wrong. A different motivation would be starting from the positive side and asking myself, what Divine talent or gift do I possess more than anyone else in the world [as far as I can know] which is exactly what is needed to correct what's wrong!

b. DISCOVERING MY ESSENCE-----if you really want to have a chance of influencing people in a grand Abrahamic way, you need to plug into your essence and function from that level. As we mentioned in earlier essays, this requires you to;

1. Tap your essence in a detached way....the main thing is not the 'outer trappings' that the world identifies you as that matter; rather it is your essence. See the last 2 weeks' essays-recipes, where the description of the exercise, in brief, was to keep asking yourself why you want what you want until the only answer is 'just because'.

2. Be constantly aware of G-d's Providence guiding you to reach the level of your 'Upper World Essence' [...ie..the 'Abraham Abraham' point] and be driven to constantly strive to reach that point.

c. ACTUALIZING MY ESSENCE AND INFLUENCING THOSE AROUND ME TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITIES-----

This includes;

1. Having the perspective that the world was created for me and therefore I have the sole responsibility of perfecting it...

2. Tapping in to my strongest character trait and being driven to live up to it on its highest level, and to help others to do the same [with both my own trait as well as theirs]....

3. Be a wellspring of G-dliness---seeking to reveal G-d wherever He seems to be hiding, or wherever His Presence is not felt...

4. Relate to people as G-d does and as Abraham does, by being a living example of the motto, 'What's mine is yours and what's yours is yours'....

#4 VAYEIRA - What's The Big Deal Anyway

TEN ORDEALS

1. '...Now I know that you are a fearer of G-d...' [Parsha Vayeira Ch. 22 , verse12]
This verse occurs after Abraham successfully copes with [what most commentators consider] the last of the 10 major ordeals or tests that Hashem sends his way throughout the course of his life. The Mishna in 'Pirkei Avot' [Ch. 2, 4th Mishnah] states, 'Abraham was tested with 10 ordeals and stood up successfully to all of them...' Actually Abraham was tested by more than 10 major ordeals [and if we include those relatively minor ordeals, than we will discover that Abraham successfully stood up to ordeals every single day of his life as the verse at the end of Abraham's life states, 'Abraham was old and came with his days']. So why does the Mishnah limit the number to 10? The answer can be found right next to the place from which the question arises [as is true in many other places in Torah and in life for that matter]....Our Mishna lists many other units of 10, after bringing Abraham's 10 trials. Here are some of them:

- a. The 10 Divine sayings in the Creation process.
 - b. The 10 generations from Noah to Abraham.
 - c. The 10 trials that the Generation of the Desert tried Hashem with.
 - d. The 10 phenomena that were created right before the first Shabbat of Creation...
- The point is that the number 10 is what the Kabbalah calls a 'Komah Shlaimah' or a complete unit. The source of all complete units are the 10 Sefirot [Divine Traits which bridge all units which are finite to the Infinite]. Various commentaries frame Abraham's trials into units of 10 to teach us that the ordeals that he underwent represent the totality of all the types of ordeals that exist. And why was that necessary?! The answer is that Abraham was a Patriarch of our nation, and therefore all that he experiences and is challenged with, is automatically channeled towards the welfare of his progeny until the end of time. As a result, we the Children of Abraham have a built-in spiritual/genetic immunity from failure and a maximal ability to succeed, when it comes to coping with any and all ordeals that come our way [perhaps this is another good answer to the famous question of how we Jews have such incredible resilience and ability to survive]. As we mentioned, the 10 Sefirot represent a complete Sefirotic unit. Each of the ten are links in a chain of a lifelong refining process. Abraham's ordeals are a lifelong chain of customized and personalized refinements of 'Emunah' [belief in the Divine]. He only receives the subsequent test when he has grown to that level. Each test reflects his present ability to stand up to it. Our challenge in exercising our built-in 'Abrahamic-ordeal-coping-powers', is to create a recipe that can help us maximally to take advantage of ordeals one at a time and all of them [if and when we can identify them as such] as one unified lifelong test.

WHAT IS AN ORDEAL?!

2. In order to be able to recipe-ize [hey...when you write your own compositions, you can also feel free to re-invent the English language to express yourselves as you wish], the realm of ordeals, we need to understand just what exactly an ordeal is. The Hebrew word is 'Nisayon.' The root letters [from which we always can derive the word's conceptual essence], are NEIS. There are 2 different meanings of the word NEIS, each representing a different type of ordeal. The first meaning is a flag or a banner that's hoisted up to a high place to broadcast its proud message. When we successfully undergo an ordeal, we are by definition ascending to a higher level by actualizing our hidden potential. The 2nd meaning of NEIS is a miracle. When we have no choice but to cope with an impossible situation, and we understand that the only way to succeed is to surrender our fate to G-d, then we go way beyond just bringing out our natural hidden potential. We bring out the Divine side of ourselves and we draw down G-d into the picture, enabling us to succeed in a challenge which is way beyond our natural abilities. This is truly a miracle, or a miracle evoking process.

As we mentioned above, ordeals are customized and personalized. Hashem only sends to us an ordeal when we are ready, and can stand up to it and grow from it. In fact without ordeals, we wouldn't grow and we wouldn't be able to bring out our hidden and Divine potentials. And though we do have an incredible advantage to succeed implanted inside of us by Abraham and the Patriarchs, we can still fall and fail the test, and subsequently need to be tested again to get back to our present level. The ordeal reflects back to us in an incredible way where we are holding in life and what we need to do to grow to the next level. The students of the 'Mussar giant', the 'Saba of Nevordik', R.Yosef Yuzel Hurvitz, report that when they saw their Rebbe walk in the door with a huge smile on his face, they knew that he was in the midst of undergoing some type of ordeal. The 'Saba' knew that the ordeal was the only ticket to spiritual growth and that was the reason for his smiling celebratory attitude.

ORDEAL RECIPE-ING

3.

A. LIFELONG ORDEAL RECIPE-ING---

1. Recall the major ordeals of your life.

2. Look for the common thread connecting them all together and identify the lifelong theme of your life's ordeals.

3. See all past, present and future ordeals as being a lifelong refining process of your life's 'Tikun'. This wide-angled perspective can help you immensely to know how to properly react to all ordeals.

B. INDIVIDUAL ORDEALS RECIPE-ING

1. BE CELEBRATORY WHEN IN THE MIDST OF AN ORDEAL-----though your natural tendency is to be upset and confused when you're thrust into the thick fog of being challenged by difficulties, hold your head high and know that Hashem is, so to speak, reaching his hand down to pull you up to a whole new level.

2. MAXIMIZE YOUR AWARENESS OF WHAT THE ORDEAL IS ALL ABOUT-----one way to do this is keep handy and close to you at all times a pen and a sheet of questions asking

what is the Divine message that Hashem is sending to you in each and every one of your ordeals. Since Hashem is constantly speaking to us in 'instant flashes' and 'in between the lines', we need to be ready to receive His answers at all times with our question sheet handy and available to quickly write down the Divine-sent answers!

3. WHEN HAVING TO REACT TO YOUR ORDEAL, ALWAYS ASK; 'HOW WOULD HASHEM WANT ME TO REACT?'

4. WHEN THE ORDEAL IS PARTICULARLY TOUGH;

A. DO TSHUVAH-----our Sages teach that there is no suffering that does not reflect back to us our 'being off' in some way. Tshuvah will get you 'back on' again and eliminate the need to be tested further

B. CRY OUT TO HASHEM---that you're helpless to pass this test without His maximal intervention

5. DEVELOP THE PROPER ATTITUDE TO BE ABLE TO PROCESS ORDEALS IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE;

A. Get used to saying and thinking that this ordeal is the best possible thing in the world that could've happened to you.

B. Be flexible---expect the unexpected and go with whatever flow of tests that Hashem sends your way.

C. Avoid the 'Roller-coaster effect' of always having ups and downs in life, by always seeing yourself as being on your way up.

D. See yourself as being like Abraham, a Patriarch, who's every ordeal is to be faced head-on with an inspired knowledge that you are rectifying Creation, revealing hidden G-dliness and paving the spiritual way for your children and your children's children...etc...until the end of time!

#5 CHAYEI SARAH - Matchmaking

SUPREME IMPORTANCE

1. '...and bring a wife for my son, for Yitzchak...' [Parsha Chayei Sarah Chap. 24\Verse 4].

Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, was sent by his elderly master to the place of Abraham's roots, to where his extended family resided. Eliezer's mission was of utmost importance. He was charged with finding a wife for Abraham's son Yitzchak. The scope of importance of such a mission cannot be underestimated. Any act of matchmaking must be approached with the proper degree of awe! The potential results are of cosmic importance. If the match is successful, and the woman and the man come to complete each other, and they come to be the prime players responsible for facilitating each others and their

progeny's 'Tikun' or reason for being alive, then the matchmaker's holy task is ultimately accomplished. The matchmaker is thus truly partnerizing with and emulating G-d, the ultimate matchmaker.

G-D---THE ULTIMATE MATCHMAKER

2. We're taught by our Sages that G-d, so to speak, dedicates a large portion of his daily activities to matchmaking. We're informed by a Midrash, that upon hearing this [piece of info. about G-d's daily matchmaking activity], a certain Roman noblewoman scoffed and said, "What's the big deal?! Anyone can do that." And to prove her point, she took 1000 of her male slaves and matched them up with 1000 of her female slaves in a grand mass marriage ceremony. Well, as you may have guessed, the next morning these newlyweds' lives were a mess----black eyes, violent arguments and absolute resolve to divorce each other...The point is clear; matchmaking is no casual matter. In fact the key to success for the matchmaker, is to synchronize their matching with G-d's matching, and that is no easy matter.

ONWARD THROUGH THE FOG

3. In Eliezer's case, in addition to the crucial ramifications of a normal matchmaking process, he was charged with securing a match for Yitzchak, which would influence in a very primal way, the future fate of the Jewish people and in a wider sense, that of all mankind. Now add to all of that, the fact that matchmaking involves making a fateful choice in an area as blind as it can be! After all, what can we really know about the life-long compatibility of a couple from a limited knowledge of their character traits?! And even if they do meet and 'click', how can one really know what life will be like behind closed-matrimonial-doors for the rest of their lives. And if you're going to suggest to me at this point, to let them first live together and see if it works out, I'll suggest back to you, that besides other reasons for not doing it which I'll keep discreet at this point, there is the solid reason that it just doesn't work! Statistics , that I have here at my disposal, show that their chances for divorce are much higher than that of a couple who commit to marry without this trial marriage arrangement.....So what's poor Eliezer to do?! And what are the 'poor' rest of us to do?! The matchmaking challenge, or the search for the proper Divine-stamped-recipe, actually extends beyond the realm of matrimony. It also involves matching up a person to their 'Beshert' [Divinely sanctioned fate] in terms of their job, home, proper path and proper matches in all areas of life! So let's precede my friends in our earnest search....onward through the fog!

GETTING ON HASHEM'S WAVELENGTH [A FEW MATCHMAKING RECIPES]

4. Dear friends, please don't lose heart. I know that we've painted a pretty bleak picture so far regarding the specific question of knowing who or what it is that Hashem truly wants us to connect to. But, never fear, this 'shidduch' [matchmaking] process goes back a long way---it's as old as our nation is---so we've managed to learn a few things along the way about how to get on to Hashem's wavelength---which is always the surest bet---whether in the realm of matchmaking or any other realm for that matter. Here are a few recipes with a bit of background explanations;

A. ELIEZER'S WAY--'ABOVE NATURING' AND 'OMENING'-----Eliezer's strategy was not to take any chances with the inherent hazards of a natural approach. He chose, rather, to approach the situation in an above-nature fashion. He first prayed that G-d should open his eyes to recognize Yitzchak's destined wife in the merit of his master Abraham. In addition, he asked G-d to show him the proper omens or signs to assure him that she [Rivka] is the one! His demand that the omen needs to take place in a very specific manner, caused the Sages to 'raise their eyebrows' and they engaged in a lengthy discussion to determine if Eliezer's approach to Omen-ing was Kosher or not. For our purpose, we can derive 2 recipes;

1. ABOVE NATURE--ing-----To be able to side-step nature to receive G-d's above nature assistance in opening our eyes to choose the proper match, is a lengthy discussion-----however, this much we can say at this point----based on the fact that G-d reflects our actions ['G-d is your shadow' is the source-verse in Psalms], so if we act in an above-nature way [specifically with regard to acting with clarity in spiritual matters], then G-d will respond in kind, by opening up our eyes to be able to see that which we normally aren't able to see.....

2. OMEN--ing-----The general distinction between O.K.--OMEN-ing and NOT O.K. OMEN-ing, is that we are allowed to take as an omen or a sign of G-ds sanction, those type of omens that clearly and logically seem to be directly sent to us from G-d in order to guide us...ie... the sign shows that Divine providence is clearly encouraging us to go in one direction or another. Regarding those omens that don't seem to have any direct connection to the desired matter at hand, STAY CLEAR! Do me a favor, when in doubt, ask an authority---thanks!

B. THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S PERSONALIZED DIVINE PROVIDENCE PRINCIPLE---- [otherwise fondly known as THE PUPPET SHOW---where G-d the grand puppeteer is dangling in front of us the puppets {ie..people or situations} of our life 24\7 who are sending us subtle Divine messages about which direction to go in life]----simply stated, the more real or believing that you are with the fact that Hashem is personally guiding you to where you need to go in life, the more Hashem will actually guide you! This would seem to be the ultimate solution to all of our difficulties in matchmaking---IT IS!! However, there's just one small catch; unless you have what it takes to just jump right in to the 'Puppet Show' and be real with it 100%, it can be a lifetime growth process until you really 'get it down'.

C. THE WANTING TO KNOW WHAT G-D WANTS OF US RECIPE---This one is easier, not easy, but easier----the greater that we want to know what G-d wants of us [in our case in terms of the proper shidduch], the more we will know!---So pray and yearn with all of your heart to know!!

D. THE SLIDING SCALE BITACHON [Divine trust] AND HISHTADLUT[[concerted effort] RECIPE-----The greater Bitachon that you have, the less Hishtadlut that you need, and vice versa....so the recipe to truly get to know Hashem's 'take' on the situation is to constantly increase the amount of Bitachon, which not only will reduce your efforts, but also open up your awareness of the Divine Will. This too is a principle that applies in all kinds of other areas in life, but it's application in matchmaking, is even more crucial; After all, at one end of the spectrum, you're walking up a blind alley which would demand

of you to make the greatest concerted effort and dig up as much hidden information that you can---which probably would also involve doing a comprehensive check on the character profiles of him and her and how they match up! At the other end of the spectrum, don't forget that the match is truly MADE IN HEAVEN, so why not let Heaven take care of it.

E. THE 'RED LIGHT' RECIPE-----This recipe is a favorite strategy of our local seasoned Jerusalem matchmakers who have been marrying off many many young people for many many generations--[so listen closely];----The very fact that you're already in the 'shidduch game' and have had certain people presented to you as being possibilities, is itself a CLEAR SIGN OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE---therefore go with the flow of it---and if you find that there are not too many RED LIGHTS----it's Beshert! What is too many red lights?! When do you back off?! Besides getting yourself a good solid authoritative 2nd opinion, the answer is to incorporate all of the above recipes together and G-d Willing, you'll know!!

F. PRAY YOUR HEART OUT----the best recipe of all!!

#6 TOLDOS - Channeling Wealth

AN EXECUTIVE DECISION

1. 'And G-d should give to you from the Heavenly Dew and the fat places of the earth...' [Parsha Toldot ch. 27, verse 28].

Our Matriarch Rivkah made an 'executive decision'. She masterminded a plan whereby her son Yaakov would dissuade her other son Esau from receiving the birthright and [in a hidden and cunning fashion] their father Yitzchak's Blessing. She knew, as did her husband Yitzchak, that these sons, who represented history's 2 most important dynasties---the nations Yisrael and Edom, were diametrically opposite personalities. When the nation of Edom, symbolized by their quality of 'hands' ['...the hands are the hands of Esau...'] or the quality of doing [ie...the nation who would control the world's material\physical realm] was strong, then Yisrael, symbolized by their quality of 'voice' ['...the voice is the voice of Yaakov..'] or calling out to G-d in prayer and Torah learning [ie... the nation which would stand out in the spiritual realm], would be weak. And conversely, when Yisrael's spirituality was strong, Esau's or Edom's physicality would conversely be weakened. She knew that Yitzchak's treasured Blessing was a Blessing of wealth, wealth-- pure and simple ['...the fat places of the earth']. And she knew that even if her son Yaakov received the blessing of earthly wealth, he would still be a person and a nation whose dominant characteristic and contribution to civilization would be spiritual---a spirituality that would be expressed throughout most of their history in a state of materialistic poverty. So why the deception?! Yaakov's receiving a blessing of material wealth would give him an eternal 'claim' to that wealth, even if he couldn't actually acquire it. This claim, in the distant future would enable his nation to receive its due share & meanwhile to always have a legal claim on it in Heaven's Eyes. What is striking from this outlook is how earthly wealth is seen or viewed. Yitzchak, our Patriarch, and to a large extent Rivkah, our Matriarch, clearly felt that the nation of Yisrael would flourish

spiritually, and carry out it's legacy of beaming to the world the light of G-dliness in all aspects of living, in an unhampered fashion, as an impoverished nation! Our question or quest must be therefore, to explore why this is so----- What is the Torah's viewpoint of wealth, and how can we apply this to our lives?!

WEALTH AS A MEANS AND NOT AS AN END

2. I'd like to jump 'out of the box', out of my usual pattern of working my way through the essay, point by point ,until we reach the thesis of the essay, upon which to build the recipe at the end. Rather, let's just reveal the principle or thesis at this point: Wealth is a form of 'Shefa' or abundance. Just like all other forms of 'shefa' that are drawn down to us from above, like wisdom, all forms of wellbeing, prophecy and life itself----we need to play by the rules to get the proper effect. The most important rule of 'shefa--receiving' is that it must be properly channeled or conducted. Rather than receiving it as an end in itself, where once it's given to us it would be ours--period, 'shefa' is meant to be seen as essentially something that belongs to Hashem. It is temporarily deposited in our care, to be channeled onwards in the best and wisest possible way that will facilitate doing 'Tikun of our lives and of the world. The Torah doesn't view wealth as well as other forms of 'shefa as something inherently bad, but only as something to be avoided if one doesn't know how to handle it! Jewish History is illuminated by many outstanding saints and scholars who possessed great wealth and always used it in ways that would emulate G-d's own benevolent way of utilizing 'shefa'---ie... as a means to maximize 'Tikun Olam'. In short, our wealth is a Divine deposit to be channeled in the best possible way. When we reframe our view of wealth as being a Holy channeling process, not only do we turn ourselves into a magnet to receive wealth, but we also avoid all the horrific pitfalls that our Sages, going all the way back to our Patriarchs and Matriarchs were wary of.

RECIPES FOR CHANNELING WEALTH

3.

A. SEE WEALTH AS A MEANS-----See your present and potential wealth as a means and not an end in and of itself [ie...hoarding money with the sole intention of status-seeking, power or money-lust]

B. SEE YOUR WEALTH AS BELONGING ULTIMATELY TO G-D-----See the wealth as being a borrowed deposit from Heaven and therefore as a sort of a Divine test----to see if you use the wealth to free you up from those burdens and necessities that life demands of all of us, such as maintaining mental, emotional and physical health and wellbeing----
ALL IN ORDER TO ENABLE YOU TO DO THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE----
ie...your personal mission in life and contribution towards 'Tikun Olam'!

C. BE A CAREFUL CONDUIT WHEN GENERATING TO YOURSELF WEALTH-----If you want to activate all of your powers of the psyche or personality to draw wealth down to yourself [as is popular in many 'New Age' strategies]---be sure to see the potential wealth as being a Divine gift to be used as a means to achieve 'Tachlis' [ie...to be used for the highest purpose].

D. BE AWARE OF THE TRAPS AND THE PITFALLS OF WEALTH-----

1. Be aware of when the luxury turns into necessity...

2. Be aware when the wealth is causing you to forget what you're meant to do in life...
3. Be aware when you begin becoming a slave to wealth, as opposed to becoming a masterful channeler of wealth...
4. Be aware when you begin to cut corners, cheat and even steal from other people [even if it's in the most subtle ways]...

E. BE APPRECIATIVE-----Be happy and even ecstatic with your lot in life. As we often mention, G-d reflects our actions and attitudes [He is referred to as 'Our Shadow']. He happily bestows all kinds of shefa including wealth to an appreciative person. Our Sages say, "Who is the wealthy, one who is happy with their lot".

F. BE REPRODUCTIVE WITH WEALTH-----Be a person who is constantly involved in creating ways and strategies that will enable the wealth received to expand and reproduce itself for the benefit of the multitudes. Hand in hand with this dynamic, be a reproductive benefitter of the multitudes with all forms of 'shefa' you receive; Torah, healing, happiness, goodness and life itself.

Shabbat Shalom
Yitzchak

#7 VAYEITZEI - Coping With Deception

YAAKOV THE 'TAM'

1. '...And Yaakov told Rachel that he was her father's brother...' [Parsha Vayeitzei, ch. 29, verse 12]

Here's the scenario; our forefather Yaakov has been commanded by his parents to run for his life from his brother Esau, who wanted to kill him. He was told to go back to his mother Rivkah's birthplace, and to seek out there, a marriage partner for himself from the household of her brother Lavan. Lavan is infamous. He is known as being a notorious swindler and deceiver. Yaakov has a reputation of being just the opposite. He grew up in his father's and grandfather's holy patriarchal home and spent 14 years in the Torah academy of Shem and Eiver, so engrossed in study, that he never even laid down at night to sleep. Besides all this, Yaakov's inherent trait was to be a 'Tam'. The Hebrew term 'Tam' is very difficult to translate into English, but it's approximate meaning is a person who has no deception in them at all---rather this person is truthful, straightforward, authentic, happy with their lot, and has sort of a holy naiveté that allows this person to be beloved to Hashem and achieve very high levels. Now back to our essay's opening verse. Our commentaries teach us that Yaakov wasn't informing his intended bride-to-be, Rachel, how he was related to her. In fact Yaakov wasn't her father's brother at all. He was her father's sister's son. Rather Yaakov was informing his worried bride-to-be, that even though he was Yaakov, 'The Tam', he was a fitting match for her father Lavan-the-deciever [as the verse states, ...'that he was her father's brother...']. What we need to understand is how in the world could Yaakov, being the antithesis of deception, cope properly with

deception day in and day out for the next 20 years of his life, and come out of it not only surviving, but also smelling like 'a bed of roses', and keep his precious trait of being a 'Tam' intact. And of course, in understanding how Yaakov could do it, we will understand the recipes for us to be able to do it as well.

THE PATH OF MIRRORING THE DECIEVER

2. 'Rashi' [R. Shlomo Yitzchaki], the Torah's most important commentary, brings a Midrash to explain Yaakov's anti-deception strategy. He says basically, that Lavan is a deceiver and that Yaakov can match him, deception for deception. King David [in the 2nd 'Book of Shmuel' Ch. 22, verses 26-27] teaches this mirroring -principle stating, ' With a righteous person, be righteous...with a 'tam', be a 'tam'...with a pure person, be pure...and with a crooked person, be crooked.' At this point, as opposed to transforming this principle into a tool or recipe, I come to warn you about the dangers of this approach. If you want to play with fire, unless you're very careful, you just may get burned. Yaakov [and for that matter, King David also], became a walking , talking and living wellspring of wisdom and Torah.....this, combined with the fact of his being the paradigm of being a 'Tam'---the antithesis of deception, enabled him to tangle with someone as notorious as Lavan successfully. A lesser person, or a lower level society of people, attempting to do the same, are in real danger of being hurt----either by falling deeply from their present spiritual level, or else, by eliciting the wrath of the other person, to be worse than they already are.

[****I'm saying what I'm saying with hesitation and trepidation. After all, how could the Torah be teaching us a way of coping that only applies to a very few special people. The Gemorah doesn't make this distinction, and we've all probably had to resort to matching deceit for deceit in our lives just to survive. So why my extra dose of caution?! It's just that I've personally witnessed how easily a person or even an entire community can 'deceive itself' in this area and be truly harmed.]

THE PATH OF LIVING IN A HIGHER REALM

3. R. Chaim ben Attar, the author of the Torah commentary called 'Ohr Hachayim' [approximately 300 years ago], teaches that Yaakov points out to Rachel, that he indeed he was her father's match in terms of deception, but he would be able to pull it off in a kosher way [as is evident from the continuation of our essay's theme verse, where Yaakov states that he is Rivkah's son]. What was Yaakov's kosher way? In short, Yaakov faced every life challenge by reframing it as opportunity to further contribute to rectify the world. How did he accomplish this? Well, beyond a very detached and elevated mindset and character makeup that he possessed, he also didn't see the world the way that most people do. He managed to relate to life at its root level. People weren't just people, they were Kabbalistic paradigms; Rachel and Leah, Yaakov's 2 wives, were 2 aspects of the 'Shechinah'---the Female Divine paradigm expressed as G-d's felt presence in the world. Yaakov himself represented one aspect of G-d's Male Paradigm. Yaakov's pursuit of these 2 sister's hands for the sake of being his marriage partners, represented the Divine Male and Female Paradigm's Unifications of the Upper World. Even the 20 years of labor that Yaakov worked for Lavan, wasn't merely an exercise in sound animal husbandry, excellent breeding practices and not even simply a demonstration of being honest when working for a crooked employer. Rather, the different type of sheep represented the different phases in the Kabbalistic Creation process, and Yaakov's choices of how to breed

these sheep were determined by the deepest contemplations of how to best facilitate the Creation process. Yaakov saw everything that came his way in life, as an opportunity to unify the realm of the mundane with it's G-dly source. All was seen as being good and sanctifiable. He lived above time [he stated that his 7-year-stint in working for Rachel's hand in marriage seemed to him like a few days]. Everything was done in a complete and 'Tam' fashion [he states to his brother Esau, after returning to Israel, that he lived with Lavan for 20 years and kept himself intact as the saying goes, 'with Lavan I lived and all of the 613 Mitzvot I kept']. That's how Yaakov coped with Lavan's deceptive ways for so long.

So you may ask, that may be fine for Yaakov, and for anyone else that excels in so many profound and sublime areas, but what's the practical lesson to be drawn for someone like me, who finds myself holding on a bit of a more simple level? Never fear! Here's a simple tool that's do-able and with a lot of persistence, can truly help you to see a world that's unified and rectifiable, and allows you the ability to cope with some of the toughest people and challenges. You've possibly heard me at previous times bring this tool, but I bring it again because its application at this point is very appropriate. It's called the 'Mikve Tool', and here's what you do: Simply dunk yourself into a real or imagined body of water. While dunking, say to yourself, that all that's recently happened to you is the best possible thing in the world for you. Then bring up into your mind a specific negative or painful experience that you have had recently. Come up for air and then dunk again and say to yourself that the reason why this experience is the best possible thing that could've happened to you, is because_____ and wait for an answer to come in to your mind. The answer usually has something to do with the rectification of your personality or soul, such as a need to be more humble, loving, believing...etc...

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES OR RECIPES

4. We wouldn't be doing even partial justice to the topic of coping with deception, unless we brought a few other possible approaches. What I would suggest to you to do with all these approaches is to assess your relative strength to stand up to a deceiver or a deceptive environment, and then choose the appropriate approach. If you feel so threatened that any type of interface at all would be harmful for you, then keep your distance from the deceptive one[s]. If you feel more bold and confident in yourself and your abilities to survive and effect change, then choose a strategy that suits your style;

A. BE A RADICAL 'TAM' IN THE FACE OF DECEPTION----- *****The point here, is that one's 't-a-m ness' will draw down a Divine-based-protective-force-field, and sometimes will even transform the deceiver into becoming a bit of a 'tam' also...Anyway here's a few basic steps in 'Tam-ing';

1. Be radically authentic-----what you express on the outside, should be a reflection of what you feel on the inside...

2. Be radically happy with your lot.

3. Make 'HOLY SIMPLICITY' your primal value and 'Modus operandi' in life....this includes all areas of life; how you interact with people, with Hashem and with life itself...[Don't forget what the Breslov Chassidim are fond of saying, 'it's not simple to be

simple! And don't forget what the Kabbalists are fond of saying 'Simplicity is in the highest Sefirotic realm of 'KETER']....

B. LEVERAGING

1. Identify your strongest points. For example, you may be and feel outstanding in the realm of spirituality or learning or emoting or being creative or getting 'results'...
2. Leverage or utilize this strong point[s] of yours when you are in the heat of an encounter with a deceptive person [rather than having to distance yourself from them]....
3. For example, if you're a lover of wisdom, impress upon the deceptive one how fascinated you are by their depth and breadth of wisdom. Hopefully this will steer them away from feeling challenged by you and therefore needing to deceive you...

C. ESCAPE-----Escape when you need to escape in order to protect yourself. Get a good lawyer if necessary. Included in this 'escape clause' is the ability to not allow the deceiver to trap you into an abusive type of relationship or dynamic that they themselves created, in order to always keep you defensive and under their control....

#8 VAYISHLACH - The Parenting Principle

THE EYES AND HEARTS OF THE CHILDREN

1. At the end of Yaakov's life [Parsha Vayechi]], the Torah uses a textual device to teach a very profound lesson. Normally between any two significant Torah passages, there is a designated blank space to mark the end of one passage and the beginning of another, signifying a break by which to absorb the previous passage's lesson. This device is absent upon Yaakov's demise. Our Sages teach us that this is to signify that just as the textual spaces framing Yaakov's passing are closed up, so were the eyes and hearts of his descendants in Egypt after he passed away. His passing marks the end of the Patriarchal and Matriarchal Era. They, the paradigm parents, die, and the ability of their children to survive and thrive in a hostile environment is greatly diminished. Why is this so? What does a parent, even after becoming inactive, contribute to their children's wellbeing and power of survival? What is it that any parents essentially transmit to their children that's so irreplaceable and vital?

THE HARDSHIPS OF RAISING CHILDREN

2. Yaakov's life was full of challenges in general, and specifically with regard to his offspring. First of all, he was swindled by his father-in-law, and given the bride that he didn't ask for [Leah], forcing him to labor for another 7 years for Rachel. Yaakov lost his beloved wife, Rachel, in the childbirth of his youngest son Binyamin. Also in our Parsha [Vayishlach], he was tested by the episode of Shechem. His only daughter Dina, out of curiosity, ventured out alone one day, only to be raped by a man named Shechem, who as a consequence, was slaughtered along with his people by two of Dina's very zealous older

brothers. Yaakov's favorite son, Yosef, was sold by his jealous brothers as a slave and taken down to Egypt. The brothers reported to their father Yaakov, that Yosef was savagely torn to pieces by a wild animal. Finally Yaakov was forced to bring his entire family down to Egypt for a long and bitter exile. It was no wonder that upon being asked by Pharaoh of his age, Yaakov replied that the years of his life were 'few and bad'. But despite all of this 'TZAR GIDUL BANIM' [the hardships involved in child raising], that Yaakov and his wives went through, we are taught that the quality of their parenting is considered to be on the highest, near-perfect level. This family went on to become the Holy nation of Israel [Yaakov's other name]. What was Yaakov's and the Torah's secret recipe of successful parenting even amidst the toughest of circumstances? Certainly with the incredibly difficult challenges that we face nowadays with regard to family life in general and child raising specifically, we could all do with some good solid authoritative guidance. The topic at hand, as is true of almost all of the other Parshas and topics of the 'Book of Bereshit', features the Patriarchs and Matriarchs serving as a guiding light in a reality of extremely difficult life-challenges. This is one reason why the 'Book of Bereshit' is referred to as the 'Sefer Hayashar'--The Book of Straightness---where the Patriarchs guide us in the straight and correct way of dealing with the most difficult challenges.

THE PARENTING PRINCIPLE

3. In order to understand the power of parenting used by Yaakov and all other parents whose parental influence serve as a constant guiding light, enabling their children to survive and thrive in even the most difficult of situations, even though the parents may not be physically present, we need to go back to the roots. The Hebrew word for parents is 'Horim', which stems from the root, 'Hor-e', which means teaching. The type of teaching that the word Hor-e signifies [as opposed to the word lameid], is not a simple type of teaching, but rather a type of life-guidance. It's the same root-form as the word 'Mor-e' [[a person's teacher] and 'Torah'---both terms pointing to a meaningful, profound and all-encompassing type of guidance. What distinguishes parental life guidance from Torah-guidance or Mor-e guidance?

The Kabbalah teaches us that the parents level of purity of thought and intention that they have at the time of conception, will be permanently transmitted to the child, so too regarding many other aspects of the child's personality. In addition to this, a child receives a sort of metaphysical garb [called a 'Levush'] in the birth canal at birth. This garb serves the children during their entire lives, to properly receive Divine spiritual sustenance and to be guided by the parents influence in all that they encounter in life. Also according to Chassidic sources, the parents have the ability to greatly influence the children's wellbeing with their thought-process alone. All that we have just mentioned are esoteric influences. We haven't even mentioned the parents direct education, guidance and influence that they have on their children through personal example, unconditional deeply caring love as well as ceaseless prayer on their behalf. A father and a mother, in their pure ideal state, have only one thing in mind, and that is the well-being of their children. A Patriarch's or Matriarch's every activity is for the good of their future nation; their progeny, as a result, will be cosmically guided and protected in every step that they take in life.

Our 'FATHER-IN-HEAVEN' [who is also portrayed as 'IMA' or 'Mother' in certain Providential situations according to the Kabbalah], is Someone that we, His children can always turn to for help and guidance in any and every situation that we find ourselves

in. So we see that a parent, even more so than a teacher, is the most intimate, caring, loving source of guidance that their children will ever receive. Any lacking in this all-encompassing flow of passionate guidance will be a source of pain and sorrow for both parent and child throughout their lifetimes and beyond.

RECIPES TO HELP THE PARENTAL GUIDANCE FLOW

4. The practical strategies that I offer this week are based on general Torah--based wisdom and my own experience. In a very generic way, we can attribute the parental strategies of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs to that of the Torah's general approach. Nevertheless, it would be a very worthwhile research project to isolate the specific approaches that the Patriarchs and Matriarchs took...Perhaps sometime in the future....

A. CONCEPTION OR SPIRITUAL GENETIC ENGINEERING-----Keep in mind that you have incredibly powerful spiritual potency at the time of conception. Spend the day beforehand thinking Holy and positive thoughts. Be sure to communicate your love and affection to your spouse. Fortify yourselves with a strong trust in Hashem that the soul you are potentially conceiving, will be just the right one at the right time with all of the right circumstances for you and for the child [think positive and it'll be positive!]....

B. JOYOUSLY AND COMPLETELY ACCEPT UPON YOURSELVES THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTING

1. Develop an constant inner awareness and consciousness of your children being 'center stage' in all that you do-----if you're shopping, consider what they may need....if you're involved in learning, learn it in a way that you can teach it to them....

2. Develop a deep, unconditional love and care for them. Usually Hashem gives this as a natural gift to parents, but it never hurts to add a little bit extra. Consider each of your children to be worth more than billions of dollars, and for that matter, more than life itself. Look for ways to increase this love daily and as often as possible, convey your love to them both directly and indirectly-----by your very actions, motivations and choices that you make in life. Remember that perhaps the most powerful way of educating our children is through our own example....

3. At any rate, there will be times when you will be not so fired up to be a first-rate parent. You will need to give YOURSELF AND YOUR NEEDS more attention. This is natural. The children will understand and normally they'll give you all the space that you need. In fact, this itself is part of the parental guidance process. Just remember not to cross over the red line between doing for yourself what is needed, as opposed to abusing them to get what you need for yourself, in any way whatsoever. The price that you and they will pay for abuse will be much too high, as we see far too often with too many people in our wounded generation.....

C. CUSTOMIZE YOUR PARENTAL GUIDANCE-----Every child is a unique personality, soul and world. Therefore what works for their peers and siblings, doesn't necessarily work for them. Our Sages teach, 'Educate the youth according to their own unique path, and when they become old they won't veer from it' [ie... from this personalized education approach]. Alternatively, there are commentaries who explain

these words of the Sages to mean that you should personalize your child's education BECAUSE they will never change their essential nature even into old age. I would suggest that you look deeply into yourself, and identify that particular child inside of yourself [ie..the Joseph inside of me... etc..]. In this way, you can get to know that child and their needs very thoroughly. Think of which directions, plans, strategies and tools work best to bring out the best in them....and it goes without saying, PRAY ALOT...

D. PREPARING YOUR CHILD TO BE INDEPENDENT-----Ultimately we as parents are given the Holy task of being trainers. We train our children to succeed in life when we will no longer be there to hold their hands. This includes training them to become successful adults, spouses and parents of their own children. Perhaps one of the most important lessons in this regard, is to teach them to be able to anticipate future consequences of their actions. Here again, our Sages provide wise council. They say, 'Who is the wise person, one who anticipates the future [literally the 'birth-product' of their actions].' Of course, the more that this future anticipation is coupled with a consciousness of blissful surrender to all that Hashem sends their way, the better off that they'll be in all ways....

*****As both a parent and a student of Torah and of life, I don't pretend to have even begun what needs to be covered in order to become an enlightened parent. I leave that for the many authors of books on the subject. However I do feel it to be vitally important to explore this topic in the context of our weekly Parsha essay, as it is one of the major life-lessons that the Torah conveys to us through the spectrum of the lives of our Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

#9 VAYEISHEV\CHANUKAH - HOD Revisited [Selfless Glory Enabling] Part 1

OUR ANNUAL HOD VACCINATION

1. '...And designated these eight days of Chanukah to thank ['Le-Hod-ot'] and praise your great name...' [from the 'Al Ha-nissim' Chanukah prayer in the Siddur]...

The Kabbalah teaches that every one of the year's Holidays correspond to a 'Sefirah' [a Divine-based character trait]. Some major historical event occurred at this time of year to offset some type of danger that our nation faced at the time. The historical event and all of its multifaceted components correspond to a specific 'Sefirah' which served as a shield that came to stave off a cosmic threat--which itself corresponds to the antithesis of that Sefirah [or to the 'fallen' expression of that Sefirah]. As we have often encountered in our essays, historical happenings in Torah actually take place inside of us. So what it all comes down to, is that Chanukah is the cosmic and personal battle between the forces of rectified 'Hod' and unrectified 'Hod'----between the glory of Yisrael and the glory of Greece. And our revisiting of this Chanukah--Hod experience every year at this time, points to the fact that we are in need of this 'Hod' injection. So let's search together to find out just what 'Hod' is, in order to receive our annual 'Hod vaccination'!

HOD AS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

2. It's not by chance that Chanukah always comes out at the same time as does our Parsha 'Vayeishev'. In general, any Parsha in the Torah, has a direct connection to the events taking place at that particular time. I once participated in a learning project that had us contemplating the connection between the events of our lives on any particular day, and the events of that day's 1\7 portion of the Parsha [every Parsha is divided up into 7 parts or 'Aliyot', corresponding to the seven days of the week]. In a similar way, our Parsha-'Vayeishev', bespeaks the essential Chanukah message. The most obvious illustration of this connection is found in the story of Yehudah. Yehudah's very name is rooted in the word 'Hod' [ye-HUD-ah]. His mother Leah named him Yehudah, in acknowledgement to Hashem of her meriting to give birth to more than her share of Yaakov's children, relative to Yaakov's other wives. Acknowledgement is one of the meanings of the Sefirotic word Hod and its correspondent Hebrew word 'Hodaah'. Leah, our Sages teach us, introduced the trait of 'Hodaah' to the world. The essence of acknowledgement is a selfless concession or admission to the other person, of receiving something not fully deserved.

Leah's son Yehudah, the very personification of this trait, also demonstrated in his life an act of selfless concession. His destitute and childless daughter-in-law, Tamar, disguised herself as a prostitute, in order to coax Yehudah to have relations with her [which our Sages point out was beyond his control], in order to give birth to a child who would ultimately carry on the chain of propagation of the Davidic\Messianic line! Tamar is eventually convicted of prostitution, and in a public act of self-incrimination, the famous Yehudah admits [acknowledges] to having been the guilty culprit---thereby saving his daughter-in-law's life. As a reward for his act of 'Hod' or 'Hodaah', his tribe becomes the Tribe that goes on to claim the role of Kingship in the nation of Yisrael.

A King, we're taught, must be in sync with the heart of the people. Yehudah's essential trait of selfless concession or acknowledgement is exactly what it takes for a king to be at one with his people. After all, the common folk are constantly falling down in the roller-coaster of life's ups and downs, and having a king who shows the people the way to admit their failings and raise themselves up again, is the perfect leader! In fact, as we mentioned, the pinnacle of Yehudah's future descendants is the one and only King David, who is referred to as the father of all 'Baalei Tshuvah' [penitents]----those 'masters of the getting back up'. And what has even farther reaching consequences of this 'Hod' dynamic, is that our entire nation, the Jewish people or the YEHUDIM, is named after and thereby deeply rooted in the trait of 'Hod'!

MEANWHILE...A FEW YEHUDAH STYLE RECIPES UNTIL NEXT WEEK

3. Before we can fully grasp the connections between Yehudah's Hod and Chanukah's Hod, we need to probe deeper into the battle of Greek Hod versus Yisrael Hod, and the additional dimension of Hod that will be revealed as a result. But alas, that is a huge amount of Torah and recipes, and this year we are fortunate to have Chanukah spread out over 2 Shabbats----so in order to keep you on the edge of your seats[and to give both you and I a bit of a breather by shortening this essay], I'll continue this essay next week.

However, I can't just leave you without any recipes until the second half of Chanukah, so here are a few Yehudah\ Hod recipes to keep you occupied in the meantime;

A. HOD WALKING-----In order to open up in yourself the proper consciousness of appreciation of all of the wondrous favors and goodness being done for you at all times, take a HOD WALK; While walking down the street, express your thanks to Hashem for something good that recently happened to you, and then in a spontaneous fashion, say something else and something else [no matter how trivial or ridiculous], until you are overflowing with thanks. Don't worry about having to strain your brain to think of new things to be thankful for. The rhythm of your walking steps will naturally activate your associative mind... you'll be amazed at how much there really is to be thankful for!

B. HOD TALKING-----When we say to someone, 'I thank you' or 'I'm beholding to you' or 'I acknowledge, admit or concede something to you', we are slightly lowering our ego, and in turn, elevating the other person's importance. In doing this, we are paying sort of a 'cosmic debt' owed somehow to that person. If this is done genuinely and not abusively, it goes a long way in repairing or solidifying our relationship with that person. Therefore the recipe here is to search out for even the slightest 'cosmic debts' we have with the people of our lives and to find the right time and setting to acknowledge to them our thanks, our concession or our admitting to them that we were wrong. People are sensitive beings, and a few simple well-placed words can go a long long way towards causing your relationship to flourish!

C. HOD ENABLING [OR EMPOWERING]-----Another aspect of Hod that we haven't yet discussed, is that of enabling or empowering the other person. Beyond just paying back a cosmic debt, as we discussed above, we achieve a higher level of Hod by selflessly enabling the other person in some important way. Here's what you can do; Make a list of the significant people in your life. Search for one trait that they may have, that you really respect. When you truly feel ready, let them know how much you respect them and their special trait, and the wonderful effect that they have on you and all those who are touched by them...etc... One word of advice [or perhaps caution]----if you feel inside of yourself that you need their mutuality---ie... you need them to enable you and praise you right back, and they're not responding, and as a result, you feel hurt by them, then don't pursue this Hod dynamic with them any further----only do it with those are giving you the reciprocity that you need!

#10 MIKEITZ\HANUKAH - HOD Revisited – [Selfless Glory Enabling] Part 2

A BRIEF REVIEW

1. '...and appointed these eight days of Hanukah to thank [Hodaah] and to praise [Hallel] your Great Name...' [from the 'Al Hanissim' Hanukah prayer in the Siddur].
Let's quickly reorient ourselves. Last week we presented a part of the definition of Hanukah's Sefirotic trait of 'Hod'. We said our goal was to fully understand what Hod is,

how it played itself out in history and to understand how it expresses itself in our own personal psyche, so that we can fortify ourselves with Hod [or as we so poetically stated, receive our annual 'Hod vaccination']. The partial definition of Hod that we gave was based on the life of Yehuda, whose name and personality as well as his mother Leah's and his future royal descendants all bespeak the trait of hod or 'acknowledgement'---an expression of making oneself small, undeserving and indebted, and the other person more important and deserving of praise. We did say that in order to fully understand the concept of Hod and Hanukah, we would need to probe deeper into the battle between Greek Hod and Yisrael Hod. This new perspective brings us beyond our limited understanding of Hod that we have so far of 'acknowledgement', to a fuller and more profound understanding of selfless glory enabling. So without further ado, let us continue our exploration...

GREEK HOD\GLORY

2. Winston Churchill pointed out that the two civilizations that had the greatest effect on modern man are [you guessed it] the Greeks and the Jews. Let's start with the Greeks. It could be argued that the common thread linking all the various contributions that the Greeks gave to modern civilization was the glorification of man. They encouraged and celebrated man's achievements in the fields of philosophy, poetry, art, science and sports. To this day, most of the nations of the world compete in the Olympics. The gold medalists proudly bring GLORY to their counties of origin!! But the Greek influence was more subtle and deep than this picture we are presenting of the glory of proven and competitive human accomplishment. In fact at the time of the miracle of Hanukah, well over 2000 years ago, a very large proportion of our people who were then referred to as Hellenists, took upon themselves a Greek outlook on life and all that implies. The Sages describe the Greek contribution to mankind as that of beauty, as expressed in their Greek language, and as a result the Greeks merited having the Written Torah translated into their tongue--the 'Septuagint'. All the Greek influences of human-centered glory and culture posed a primal challenge for the non Hellenized Jews. It was left to them to discover and actualize the GLORY of Yisrael, which when it shines in all of its true glory, it represents the true antithesis of Greek glory. The two are as different from each other as light is from darkness. In fact, a Midrash points out that of the four major exiles that the Jewish people went through in their history, the Greek exile is referred to as 'DARKNESS' [as hinted at in the Creation verse, 'DARKNESS on the face of the deep'].

VISIBILITY

3. Perhaps the most important distinction between Greek Hod\glory and Yisrael Hod\glory is VISIBILITY. The Greeks were all about visibility. Their competitions were designed to visibly demonstrate one person's superiority over another. All achievements were measurable and visible demonstrations of human excellence. What then, was blatantly missing in all of this humanistic glory?! The answer is the invisible side of being a person; the soul, the G-dly and that which cannot be seen or measured in some type of competition. And that's exactly what bothered the Greeks so much about Yisrael. We gave the world the concept of man's invisible glory. The Greeks, in their attempt to force their world outlook and culture on the entire world, couldn't deal with our principle of invisible glory. So they outlawed it! They forced us to declare publicly, that we have [G-d forbid] 'no part in the G-d of Israel'. They forced us to

desist from learning the Oral Torah---that part of Torah which originally was not written down, and to this day remains in its essence oral and unseen!! They outlawed the keeping of 'Shabbat', which is based on a weekly declaration of [unseen] belief that every Shabbat observer makes, in the world's being created and run by G-d. They outlawed 'Brit Milah' [circumcision], whose unseen spiritual effect is to elevate the sexual act from that of being lustful to being Holy. Anything unseen was out of their realm. They went so far as to throw off the edge of high mountains, those babies whose bodies were born deformed as well as well as elderly people whose bodies and spirits no longer radiated relevance and physical beauty.

JEWISH GLORY FROM THE OHR HAGANUZ

4. We Jews, on the other hand, celebrate the invisible spirit of a person. Our concept of lighting up reality is based on the Hidden light---- the 'OHR HAGANUZ', which G-d created and hid away it's full use from all people [with the exception of an elitist group of a few privileged souls] until Messianic times, so that this light wouldn't be abused and misused by those who are unworthy of it. However we do have partial access to it, to the extent needed to express our unique Hod glory. The 'Ohr Ha-ganuz' allows one to see the invisible in that which is visible---to see beyond space and time, from one end of the globe and of history to the other---to be able to see the unseen deeper meaning of everything, the essence of anything as it shines through it's external form, the whole picture inside of a partial construct or concept----the why of everything, and not just the what----the eternal and infinite inside of the temporal and finite----the soul inside of the body---G-d inside of a world that hides His Presence!!

We light altogether 36 candles on the 8 nights of Hanukah. The Ohr Ha-ganuz openly shone for Adam to see from one end of the world to the other during the first 36 hours of his life. There are 36 Hidden Saints ['Tzadikim Nistarim'] whose righteousness serves to hold up the entire world. The word LIGHT is mentioned in the Torah 36 times! So we begin to see the connection between our 'UNSEEN HOD GLORY' and the roots of spiritually as it applies to Hanukah and beyond. It's not that we see the Greek concept of glory as itself being insignificant or unimportant, but as long as it's lacking the crucial element of the unseen, the spiritual and the soul, it's really only darkness, the antithesis of the Hidden Light. Thus we're taught that the Hebrew word for Greece is 'Yavan'--- and when you add the Hebrew letter 'Tzadi' [which is the concept of a human 'Tzadik', who bonds together unseen G-dliness to visible and external human-ness] to the word 'Yavan', you come up with 'Tzion' [Zion]---which is Jerusalem, the city that our Sages teach, is the epitome of light and beauty and glory!

SEEING THE UNSEEN-----A HANUKAH MEDITATION

In a deeply relaxed state [induced through either breathing exercises, muscle relaxation or saying a phrase or verse over and over again], visualize the following transcendent scenarios:

1. SEEING BEYOND SPACE-----See every activity that you will do in your upcoming day, as being watched earnestly by every single person on the globe alive today. Be aware that every single act that you will perform, will have an incredible effect on that area of the

psyche of everyone in the world. Notice the effect that this perspective has on everyone and also on yourself in turn...

2. SEEING BEYOND TIME-----Now see your upcoming day's activities effecting every person that has ever lived and that will ever live [including yourself], from the beginning of Creation until time everlasting. Notice the effect...etc...

3. SEEING BEYOND SOUL LIMITATIONS-----Now notice the effect that your every action will have on your own soul, down to the last detail. Then expand that 'effect' to all souls, in this life or in the afterlife--first to those who are your 'soul family', and then to everyone else. Again, take notice of the effect on yourself...etc...

4. ADD ALL THE OTHER DIMENSIONS----One by one add to this visualization, all the other dimensions that we mentioned previously in our essay---- ie... seeing how your upcoming day's actions effect and are effected by seeing:

the deeper meaning of everything,
 the essence of everything,
 the whole picture,
 the reason why for everything,
 the eternal and infinite side of everything,
 the soul of everything
 and the G-dly side of everything...

Happy Holiday of Hidden Light and Glory!!

#11 VAYIGASH - Unifying The Primal Schism

YEHUDA AND YOSEF

1. '...Take a stick and write on it, "for Yehudah"...take [another] stick and write on it, 'for Yosef "... and join them [the sticks] together and they shall be united...' [from the 'Haftorah' {the weekly additional prophetic reading} of Parsha 'Vayigash'---Ezekiel Ch. 37, verses 16-17] This week, our Sages chose to feature in the weekly 'Haftorah', the Prophet Ezekiel's vision of a future Messianic scenario, as represented by a metaphor of the uniting of the sticks or Kingdoms of Yehudah and Yosef. Our Parsha opens up with a critical meeting between the 2 brothers Yehudah and Yosef. Yehudah, on behalf of all the other brothers, the Tribes of Israel, comes to Yosef, at the time Egypt's second in command, as yet not known to the brothers as being one of their own, to release their little brother Binyamin and to grant them the food that they so desperately need in this time of worldwide famine.

Our Sages see more than just a meeting of brothers. This is a meeting of Kings. Both of these Kings' respective royal descendants will rule in future times. First comes Yosef's rule; presently in Egypt, in the times of the original conquest of the land of Israel by Yehoshuah and the rule of Israel's first King---Saul [a descendant of the tribe of Binyamin---Yosef's only other brother of

the same mother Rachel]. This is followed by a long period of history where the two kingdoms are ruling simultaneously; Yehudah's kingdom to the south---starting with the rule of King David, and in the north, the rule of the descendants of Yosef----made up of the 10 Tribes. Ultimately the 10 Tribes are exiled and become the '10 Lost Tribes', and to this day, there is a lot of research and speculation as to their whereabouts on the globe and when will be their eventual return home to be [re]integrated into our nation. Nevertheless, over the scope of history, Yehudah and Yosef continue to make up the central pillars of our nation;---Yehudah, in the form of the present day Sephardi [near--eastern] Jews and Yosef [and some say] Yosef's closest brother Binyamin being represented by his descendants, the Ashkenazi [European] Jews.

Anyone who is a long--time resident of the state of Israel, or anyone who knows the respective historical profiles of the Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews, know that they represent 2 very different personality types. And when we follow through to the culmination of their respective historical destinies, we come up with the prophet Ezekiel's vision of a Messianic scenario uniting the two.

But the story gets deeper---much deeper----so deep, in fact that we learn that these two personalities are the very embodiment of the universal schism of creation---playing itself out in every aspect of life on the macro level, as well as the micro level inside of each and every one of us! Until these 2 sides are properly synthesized, harmonized and united, the universe will never reach a state of peace and Tikun. So let's explore a bit further, shall we...

THE PRIMAL SCHISM REVEALED

2. Let's begin our search for the essence of this phenomenon, by going back to the roots of reality. The 'Leshem'-- R. Shlomo Elyashiv[ob'm], has an article dealing with these roots---his article is Kabbalistic physics in it's purist form. He lines up for us, these 2 antithetical traits and traces them back to the inner motivating drives of the [Kabbalistic version of the] Creation process, and follows through to show that they are the underlying processes of virtually all major processes in reality. What I would like to do, is to line up the various manifestations of these traits in a mini-graph. Afterwards we will go on to explore how these traits correspond to the traits of the personas of Yehudah and Yosef. Finally, we'll try to bring techniques and approaches that we can all use to open up and harmonize these traits inside of ourselves.

First, a very brief survey of the roots of the 2 traits ['Leshem' from Sefer HaDeah']:

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. The Yehudah trait's root is 'Chasadim' [the primal process of connecting] | The Yosef trait's root is 'Gvurot' [the primal process of disconnecting] |
| 2. The root of 'Chasadim' in the Creation entrance of the 'Conduit' [G-d-based life energy] entering into the 'Vacant Space' [the space of all future created life that was created by G-d's Hiding Himself] | The root of the 'Gvurot' in Process is the 'Vacant Space' dynamic itself |
| 3. The 'Male Paradigm' | The 'Female Paradigm' |
| 4. 'Orot' --the spiritual abundance that | The 'Vessels' themselves of |

fills up the vessels of reality

reality

5. A 'Generic' orientation

A 'Specific' orientation

6. A quiet and internalized orientation An action-based or arousal orientation

Perhaps the term that best sums up the above distinction is 'CONNECTION'----The 'Yehudah' based orientation is motivated to connect, and the 'Yosef' based orientation is motivated to disconnect.

Now, let's bring a brief survey of the traits as they manifest in Yehudah's and Yosef's lives:

YEHUDAH	YOSEF
1. An orientation of following the rules of an agreed upon higher purpose	An orientation of individualized expression
2. An orientation of permanence	An orientation of transience
3. A 'holistic' orientation	A 'parts of the whole' orientation
4. An orientation of selflessly accepting upon themselves to carry the burden	An orientation of being concerned with elevating their lower desires and pleasures to a Holy and sublime level
5. An orientation of preparing themselves to Come'	Oriented towards spiritually for beautifying and maximally expressing their essence in 'This World' 'The World

Although it may seem over-simplified, it seems to me that we can sum up the essential distinction as being 'SELF'----how the 2 sides relate to self: Yehudah with selflessness, and Yosef, with maximal self expression. So now, when we put the 2 surveys together, we come up with the following:

A A 'Yehudah personality' that is primarily motivated by being connected and connecting in a selfless and devoted way.

B. A 'Yosef personality' that is primarily motivated to liberate themselves from all that holds back maximal self-expression.

A RECIPE FOR IDENTIFYING AND UNIFYING THE PRIMAL SCHISM IN OURSELVES

A. IDENTIFY IN YOURSELF YOUR 'YEHUDAH' AND 'YOSEF' SIDES-----Give yourself a score of 1-10 [10 being the most pronounced expressions of your selfless--connected Yosef side, as well as your liberated--self expressed Yosef side]. To aid you in assessing your score, go through the above surveys with their various sub-traits....

B. IDENTIFY YOUR ACQUAINTANCES AS EITHER BEING 'YEHUDAH' OR 'YOSEF' ORIENTED--
 ----Give each acquaintance a score of 1-10 [again 10 being the most pronounced...etc...] and
 utilize the above surveys to help you...

C. IDENTIFY ALL OF YOUR ACQUAINTANCES 'INSIDE OF YOURSELF' [ie...the Bobby and Lisa
 and Chaim inside of me...etc...]------Feel how these personalities express themselves in your
 life. The more time and effort you invest in doing this step, the more effective will be this whole
 exercise...

D. PRACTICE EXPRESSING YOUR OWN AND YOUR ACQUAINTANCES [INSIDE OF
 YOU] 'YEHUDAH' AND 'YOSEF' SIDES-----Here are a few ways to do it:

1. Play-act these personalities alone or together with others.
2. Project in a meditative or contemplative way how you will in the near future express
 these sides in yourself.
3. Actually practice expressing these sides in yourself in your day to day life....

E. BALANCE OR HARMONIZE THESE TRAITS INSIDE OF YOURSELF-----In order to
 equalize as much as possible, your internal scores of these 2 sides[that you scored in step A
 above], practice expressing your 'weaker side'---ie... your own and your
 acquaintances 'Yehudah' or 'Yosef' side, who's score was lower than the other one. Keep on
 'Expressing' until your scores become more and more equalized...

#12 VAYECHI - Staying Alive

YAAKOV DIDN'T DIE?!

1. 'And Yaakov finished conveying his will to his sons...and he expired and was gathered
 to his people.' [Parsha Vayechi...chapter 49\verse 33]

The master commentary Rash'i, points out that the verse doesn't literally say that Yaakov
 died, rather that he expired and was gathered to his people. The Sages of the Talmud
 [Tractate Taanit pg. 5] teach that despite the fact that the Torah explicitly states that
 Yaakov was eulogized, embalmed and buried, nevertheless he didn't die! Another Tannaic
 source [historically from the time of the Talmud and Midrash] goes so far to say that right
 before being buried, Yaakov turned his head around and gave a proverbial smile or wink
 to his lifelong antagonist---his brother Esau! Very perplexing and amazing, huh?! How
 could it be?! And if you try to answer me that what is being taught, is that Yaakov's body
 died but his soul lived on, or that Yaakov lived on through his descendants [referred to as
 the 'House of Yaakov' or the 'Children of Yisrael']---nice try, but as they say---no cigar.
 That's true of all the righteous people, who in their death are referred to as living---even in
 a more pronounced way then when they were alive. But here, we're being taught that only
 Yaakov didn't die, as opposed to all other righteous people. [For truth's sake, there
 actually is a similar teaching, about King David---thus the popular verse or song, 'David
 Melech Yisrael, chai chai vkayam'---'David King of Israel lives and forever exists'].

Our purpose in conducting this inquiry is not only to simply understand the answer [a worthwhile pursuit in and of itself], but rather to extrapolate from various approaches attempting to answer this perplexing question, the answer to an even deeper mystery--- and that is----- what is the main distinction between life and death! And if we can begin to probe to the roots of this distinction, perhaps we can begin to learn to stay alive even in the face [or many faces] of death!

A FEW APPROACHES.....

2. By no means do I dare to suggest that what I will present to you now will be an exhaustive survey of commentaries dealing with this question. The Torah is more vast than the sea, and I extend a very welcome invitation to anyone who is motivated to search for other commentaries, viewpoints, insights...etc...that deal with this very mysterious inquiry. Certainly you will thereby increase in the world Divine light! Here are a few approaches:

A. THE LEAVE IT AS A MYSTERY APPROACH-----This approach refuses to force the issue and limit something that they feel is meant to remain in the realm of the esoteric, to a constricting definition. Even though this approach may leave us a bit frustrated, the obvious benefit is that in regard to Yaakov's 'transition', the mystery or mystical power of it all remains intact. By the way, this type of approach characterizes the 'Sepharadi' style of learning Kabbalah. The Ashkenazi Kabbalists on the other hand are driven to understand these issues as deeply as possible. [****for more on Ashkenazi, Sepharadi personality distinctions, see last week's Parsha Recipe essay]

B. THE INCREASING LIFE APPROACH-----It's a very worthwhile pursuit to maximize life and thereby defy death's clutches, both at the time of death and in the midst of our day to day lives. What is the idea of LIFE---that we can maximize? Again, I'm absolutely open to hear from you, your ideas....here's a few for starters;

1. LIFE AS A CYCLE-----ie....Whatever 'Shefa' [abundance] that we receive from Heavenly or earthly sources, when we pass it on to others, whether through our intention in thought or our carrying it out in deed, we INCREASE LIFE both to ourselves and to others;

A. IN THOUGHT; Do the following life increasing breathing exercise-----When breathing in, have the intention that each breath is a process whereby Hashem is filling you up with Divine life and love. When you breathe out, have the intention that you are sending it back to Hashem and out to the entire world----only to be returned to you with double the intensity...continue each subsequent breath in this fashion...

B. IN DEED: Whenever you merit to receive a healthy dose of Shefa\Abundance----PASS IT On-----not necessarily the same thing you received, but in one form or another. Not only is this certain to draw down to yourself more Shefa\Abundance, but it also increases life [not only Coca Cola increases life!]

2. LIFE AS SELF EXPRESSION-----I have heard it stated that a very small percentage [around 4% or a bit higher] of the key parts of our psyches are awakened and utilized. I'm

not only referring to our intellect, but also to our creative, emotional, spiritual, interpersonal and experiential sides among others. The more that we can awaken these sides, the more ALIVE we are! Try this recipe:

- a. Project the 4 or 5 main activities of your upcoming day.
- b. See yourself carrying out these activities in a way that you normally do
- c. Now project, 'turning up the volume' on all the above--mentioned sides or powers that you possess....ie...creative, emotional...etc...when you will carry out these activities.
- d. Now go through your day and actually turn up the volume!

3. LIFE AS TAUGHT TO US BY YAAKOV-----Our Sages say that one who properly engages in the 3rd meal of Shabbat---which corresponds to the 3rd Patriarch--Yaakov, merits to draw down an 'inheritance which is boundless'. This is given from Above measure for measure. Yaakov's approach to living is to constantly bring the Divine into the realm of the mundane, so much so, that life becomes a perpetual G-dly realm. This boundless extension of G-dliness draws down a boundless inheritance for the 'Yaakov--type' practitioner of living. Here are a couple of possible ways to actualize this particular life increasing approach:

- a. THE 'ALL IS GOOD' APPROACH----In both thought and deed, increase the level of seeing all as being for the best. Get used to saying it a lot to others and to yourself. Get used to reframing your perspective in this way, in seeing how things did turn out and will turn out. Boldly step into the future with a crystal clear knowledge that whatever will happen, will be for the best!
- b. THE 'ALL IS HOLY'; APPROACH-----Here too, in thought, deed and verbal expression, frame the way that you see and engage reality. Get used to seeing people as being Holy. Say it out loud to them! Chances are that this simple gesture will actually bring out their Holy side that's normally hidden....

3. THE PREPARATION FOR LIFE AFTER DEATH 'NOW' APPROACH

A. THROUGH YOUR CHILDREN AND STUDENTS NOW-----Get used to seeing and relating to your children as being your representation in this world after you pass on. When you relate to them in this way, you will definitely elevate and enrich your relationship with them, and extend your and their sense of eternal living!

B. THROUGH YOUR TORAH, MITZVOS AND GOOD DEEDS NOW-----When you focus on the fact that each piece of Torah learned or good deed performed, has the power to extend and reverberate eternally, you will open up in yourself, an infinite wellspring of life now and forever! [**** our Sages view all Torah that we learned as being our source of post-life food or nutrition which we will be always able to draw more and more from, and our good deeds will serve as our future-life clothing that always remains new and vital...]

C. THROUGH ALLIGNING YOURSELF TO POST LIFE SPIRITUALITY NOW-----This is a huge topic and I can't do it justice with a few lines.....Let this suffice for now - the more that you become LITERAL about spirituality, and literally see G-d's hand everywhere and all the time, the more that you align yourself with this transcendent type of spirituality and thereby increase eternal life for yourself [and the whole world] now and forever...

For more information about Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz or the Paradise Principle Institute visit Paradiseprinciple.com

Questions?

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