

THE PRACTICE OF JUDAISM

By

Rabbi Osher Abramson



With Some Remarks and Comments by
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson



Published for the first time
in honour of the wedding celebration of,
Eliyahu Raphael HaCohen & Sara Gutnick
Sunday, 4th Nissan, 5759

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FOREWORD

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Harav HaGaon VeHarav HaChassid Harav Osher Abramson was amongst the first Shluchim to be sent by the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi J. I. Schneerson, to Australia. He had spent his early years as a student of the Chofetz Chaim and afterwards, in keeping with his Chassidic lineage, he became a firm and loyal Chassid of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, during his sojourn in Poland prior to the second world war. At the urgings of the Rebbe he married the widow of the Shaliach to London, Harav Mordechai Zev HaCohen Gutnick.

In 5708 (1948), Harav Abramson was together with his Rebbetzin, by the previous Rebbe to join his step-son Harav Chaim HaCohen Gutnick in Australia. There he served for over thirty years as a most respected communal Rav and as Rosh Bet-Din of the Sydney community. His distinguished career included the merit of considerable assistance in laying the foundation stones for many of the Chabad institutions that exist and flourish today in Australia.

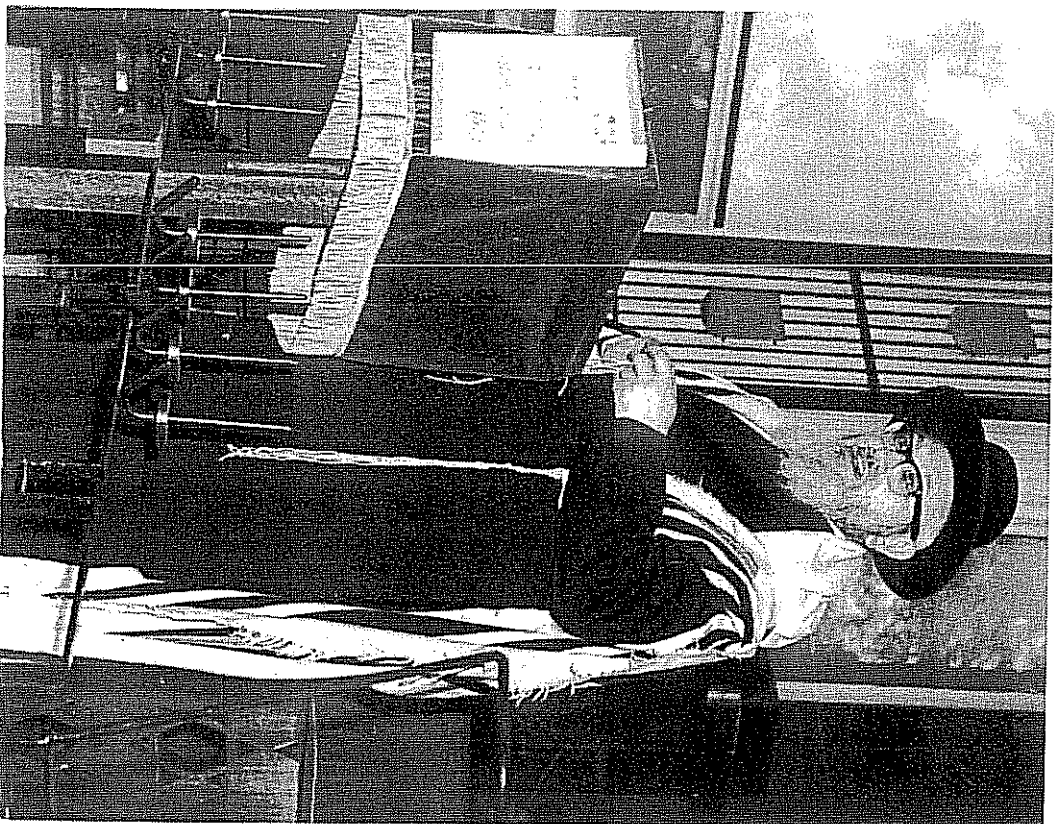
Harav Abramson was a unique and gifted orator in his native Yiddish and later in English. In his early years in Australia he delivered a lecture on the significance of Mitzvot Masaiot – "The Practice of Judaism". In 5713 (1952) he submitted the text of this lecture to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, with the question as to whether he should publish it. The Rebbe took the time to peruse the text and to make thirty-one different comments on its contents. Many of these comments are significant in their own right - even when read separately from the article upon which they are based. The Rebbe also urged that the text with the amendments be published. We believe that this publication never materialised. The text together with the Rebbe's covering letter and three pages of the Rebbe's comments and notes were given to me by Harav Abramson just prior to his passing in Cheshvan 5742. It is with great pleasure that I am able to fulfil the Rebbe's long-standing request and am publishing the original text with the Rebbe's comments and remarks.

I would like to thank Rabbi Mordechai Tzvi Liberow for his assistance in preparing this article for print.

This booklet is being published on the occasion of our son, Elyahu Raphael HaCohen's marriage. HaRav Abramson was a truly dedicated step-grandfather to the Chossen in his younger years and it is truly fitting that this work be published in honour of this Simchah.

We pray that the young couple's home will be filled with Mitzvot Masaiot. May they continue to follow in the footsteps of their respective, illustrious families in spreading the words and practice of Torah and Yiddishkeit in the spirit taught to us by our beloved Rebbe. May we all together merit the revelation of Moshiach speedily and in our days.

HaRav Mordechai Zev HaCohen Gutnick
Melbourne, Australia
Adar 5759



RABBI OSHER ABRAMSON
AV ERETZ-DIN, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
(5671-5742)

THE REBBE'S COVERING LETTER
REGARDING THIS ARTICLE

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

^{subvich}
770 EASTERN PARKWAY
BROOKLYN 13, N. Y.
Hyacinth 3-9250

מוֹדָע תַּעֲנוּדָה שׁוֹרְטוֹרְטֵרְתָּהּ

לְיִזְבִּיבֵיכֵי
770 אֵיסְטֵעֵרְן פֹּאָרְקוּיִי
בְּרוֹקְלִין נ. י.

ב"ה, ה' מרחשוון, ה'תש"ג
ברוקלין, נ.י.

הרה"ג והרה"ח ה"ח א"א נ"ו ס"
עוסק בצ"צ וכו', מוה"ר א"א ש"י

שלום וברכה:

נעים לי לקבל מכתבו מג' חותם"ס. כן נתקבל בעת
הפ"נ של לרה"ש שנקרא "בעת רצון על ציון כ"ק מו"ח
אדמו"ר זצוקללה"ה נבג"מ ז"ע.

קראתי בשיחה לב אה המאמר שלו ע"ד הנהיגה
רמזות מעשיהו. ובמענה על שאלתו, לדעתי נכון
הדבר להדפיסו, ולשום בגלילון בפ"ע איה הערות
בהננוגע למאמרו, אשר להקלת הענין נעתקו לאנגליה
ע"י מכירי דר. נ. מיינדלע"י.

ח"ח מראש אם יודיע בשו"ט מהתפתחה הישיבה
בפרט, ומהמצב בה"ח א"ש חב"ד במדינתו בכלל.

נשלח לך (אם ירצה) 9-2
קישורים אודות ישיבת א"ש
אשר מאת שפת און אונ"א.

בברכה הצלחה בעבודתו בת"ש
ישיבת א"ש
מנחם מ. שניידר

FREE TRANSLATION OF THE REBBE'S COVERING LETTER
as printed on the previous page

By the Grace of G-d
8th of Mar Cheshvan 5713
Brooklyn, N.Y.

HaRav HaGaon VeHaRav HaChassid [etc]
Moreinu HaRav Csher [Abramson], ע"י

Greeting and Blessing:
I was pleased to receive your letter of the third day Chol-HaMoed
Succos. Your *pari* (פ"פ) for Rosh Hashanah was also received and will
be read at the resting place of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, of saintly
memory.

I have conscientiously read your article on the importance of
practical *Mitzvos*, and in answer to your question - in my opinion it
is proper to print it. A number of comments on your article are
noted on a separate sheet, which, in order to make matters easier,
have been translated into English by my secretary Dr N. Mindel ע"י.

Thank you in advance if you will inform me of good news
concerning the progress of the Yeshivah in particular and of the
circumstances of the Chabad environment in your country in
general.

With blessings for success in your holy work
and with regards to all of Anash יידיש
/Signature/

*We are accustomed here to write "G-d" with the omission of a
letter. See Shulchan-Aruch Admur HaZakein, Orach Chaim, Ch. 85
and further references there. And here is not the place [to expand on
this].*

Publisher's Note: The words in *italics* were added in the Rebbe's
own handwriting.

A copy of one of the original pages
of the Rebbe's "Comments and Remarks"

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RE: THE PRACTICE OF JUDAISM -- Some remarks and comments:

15. Page 6: The reference to the "moloch" as having been thought to be the smallest unit of matter is erroneous, for it was the atom that was ^{at that time} considered indivisible (which is the meaning of the word "atom").
14. End of page 6: The principal components of an atom are the electrons and protons, hence the word "neutron" should be substituted by "proton."
15. Page 7, end of 1st paragraph: The earth would be compressed into a ball of a considerably smaller radius than half mile, as suggested in your article.
16. Page 7, beginning of 2nd paragraph: The meaning of the statement that "If the human eye could ^{see} see, etc.," does not refer to the physical eye ^{of the eye} but to the "intellectual eye." Accordingly, your interpretation does not seem to be the correct one, in my opinion.
17. Page 7, below: Matter and energy are not separate and distinct things, but they are distinct phenomena. Therefore, the sentence should be corrected accordingly.
18. Page 8, line 9: I would omit the words "in perfection," since it is too much to expect perfection from everyone.
19. Page 9, 1st line in the chapter "Religious and Social Preceptors": I would omit the word "spiritual."
20. Page 9, below: The expression "functional attachment" is not clear; likewise, "honor bond" is unavishable. The Hebrew word "כבוד" might best be translated as "companionability."
21. Page 9: Instead of "duties to neighbour," better "duties to fellowman."
22. Page 9, below: The sentence beginning with the words "If any of us, etc." is not clear at all.
23. Page 9, last paragraph extending into page 10: The distinction drawn between the Jewish concept of charity and that of other faiths is not clear.
24. Page 10, 2nd paragraph, 2nd line: I would insert the word "purely" before "ethical," to read "purely ethical."
25. Page 10, below: The reference to the 19th chapter of Leviticus with regard to the re-statement of the Ten Commandments is not adequately explained.

THE PRACTICE OF JUDAISM

AN EXPOSITION OF THE NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE
OF THE OBSERVANCES [MITZVOTH]¹

By Rabbi O. Abramson

²⁰ Publishers Note: The original text of the article contained the word "G-d" written in full. In keeping with the Rebbe's hand-written comment in his covering letter, this word has been printed here with the omission of the middle letter. Other than this change, the text of the article is printed verbatim in its original version as submitted to the Rebbe, with the Rebbe's comments and remarks inserted as footnotes at the point in the text that each comment or remark refers to.

THE title of the theme that has been allotted to me is, in many respects, a reflection of the deviation of our generation, or at any rate of a large element of our generation, from our faith and from its philosophy. If, apart from the question of the **significance** and **meaning** of the practical commands of Judaism, the question of their **need** arises amongst us, it is a sure sign of our ignorance of the elementary foundations of our great ancestral faith. We tend to look upon our holy Torah and its Mitzvot as we look upon certain rituals which this or that group of people may adopt by general consent, either for the purpose of separating or distinguishing themselves from the rest of mankind, and thus strengthening their own group; or for certain symbolic purposes which their so-called rituals

THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

1. A general observation regarding this article:
You have surely seen *THE COMMANDMENTS* by Dr. N. Mindel, where the same topic is dealt with, though, perhaps, from a different angle. There you will also find a bibliography of various sources on the subject. I think you could use them to supplement some paragraphs in your article.

represent; or for both such purposes together. Such, for example, are the rituals which have been adopted and meticulously observed by the members of the Masonic brotherhood.

Quite different should be the attitude to our divinely revealed Torah and its precepts. Although indirectly they contain within themselves the merits I have just mentioned, yet to speak so of them in our present context, when we seek to establish the true purpose of Torah and Mitzvot, would be like saying that the purpose of life is that one is able thereby to wear an attractive necktie; or to say that the function of air is that we may use it to blow up a football!

Nobody would dream of making such a suggestion, for all understand with greater or lesser clarity, the purpose and nature of life and air. The suggestion is even more unfounded in the case of the Torah and Mitzvot, except that in the instance of the necktie and the football all see the fallacy of the suggestion, while, where Torah and Mitzvot are concerned, not all understand.

I feel obliged, therefore, before proceeding to my theme, to introduce the basic principles of our faith as they affect the spiritual being of man. As I shall be employing terms which must be understood in a metaphysical-spiritual sense, it is necessary for me to quote an exposition of Maimonides. There is in our literature an expression concerning the souls of the righteous after mortal death: *crowns about their heads and enjoy the rays² of the Divine Presence.*"

Clearly every word in this phrase, as applied to man's soul, is not to be taken literally but figuratively. Maimonides has this to say: One cannot explain to a person blind from birth the difference between colours - if you should attempt to explain to him the difference, say, between red and blue, he would immediately ask: "Can the difference be recognised by my senses? Can it be heard, felt, smelt, tasted?" One cannot explain to a person born deaf the beauty of a violin's lyric notes - he would inevitably ask: "Can these notes be seen, smelt, felt, tasted?" They cannot perceive the colour

THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

2. The word "rays" is not suitable here and perhaps "emanation" might fit in better.

in one instance or the sound in the other, because they are deficient in those sense organs through which colour and sound respectively are transmitted to the brain. So, says Maimonides, are we, human beings created in a material body, deficient in that organ through which the purely spiritual can be comprehended and perceived. It is therefore impossible to grasp what is meant by the "pleasures that are to be derived from nearness to the Divine Presence". We apply to it material terms, "pleasure", "enjoyment", because we have not that spiritual sense organ through which to perceive it, and we have naturally therefore, no appropriate words or terms by which to name it. Thus we use words which signify material experience, such as "pleasure" or "enjoyment" - these are borrowed words, which essentially have no bearing on spiritual experiences, just as for the man born blind we might use terms relating to the senses of hearing or smelling when we wish to convey a visual thing like colour.

2² THE SPIRITUAL BEING OF MAN

The Spiritual being of man can be understood when we recognise that he is endowed with two souls - the one is his *רוחני* *נפש*, a divine soul which emanates from G-d above, and is a spark of G-d Himself³; the second is the *גופני* *נפש*, the material soul, which has its seat in man's mortal being, and gives him his physical life. We may term them in other words - the divine element and the animal element in man. The animal in him drags him to earthly satisfactions, strives to govern all his inborn faculties and to harness his intellect and his capacities to the pursuit of pleasures, just as the animal does instinctively - except that in man, endowed as he is with intellect, the animal in him seeks to rule and use even his mind too. The divine element in man also strives to govern him, seeking to rule his intellect and his capacities in order to elevate his material self, seeking to transform the material into the spiritual, the earthly into the ideal, the *גופני* into the *רוחני*; and so seeking to use man's allotted span on earth in order to ensure for himself everlasting life.

THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

3. Instead of "spark of G-d Himself," better "Divine spark."

This struggle between man's two inner selves for the governance of the microcosm called man, and the victory of the one over the other, has an immense influence on man's outward life, and in particular in the formation of his ego. If the animal in him prevails, his ego becomes materialistic; whereas if the divine in him conquers, he becomes totally different - he is no longer a mere bodily creature, but becomes a G-dly soul clothed in bodily form.

We shall see this more clearly if we take as an example one of the most widely known concepts of the Torah, which has been accepted by the whole civilised world: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". When we examine this doctrine from a logical and practical standpoint, we must ask: is it possible to love anyone as one loves oneself? Or is this some kind of Utopian ideal or a mere fine-sounding phrase? Can we love a stranger as we love our own brother, our own child, or our own father and mother? Clearly not! If, then, there be degrees and variations of the intensity of our love according to our nearness and kinship, how can one's love for a stranger be the same as one's love for one's own self? But the answer is clear: it surely depends on what one is oneself - that is, on what governs one's own ego. If the animal, the physical, in man rules him, then this Golden Rule⁴ is a mere Utopian ideal: physically, men have diverse degrees of kinship, on which, in truth, the degree of love for them depends. One loves a brother more than a stranger; one's own child or one's own parents even more. If, however, man's ego in him is ruled by the divine element in him, he becomes thereby a spark of the divine clothed in a bodily form, and sees in others only⁵ the divine spark that is in them, though that divine element be concealed in the very depths of their beings.

As a result he is forced, even on logical grounds, to an attitude of love to a stranger as to his own brother, father, mother, or even his own self. For if man's ego is his divine or spiritual self, he cannot fail to see in it

THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

4. "The Golden Rule" may be ambiguous here and understood in the sense of "The Golden Mean," which, since it involves compromise, is contrary to the Torah.
5. I would omit the word "only."

hers his own brother, or rather something of his own self - for every man is infused with a G-dly spark from the same divine father⁶.

DESCENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASCENT

The divine soul in man descended from the supremest heights, and was clothed in a mortal frame. His descent is a tremendous fact⁷ and has as its purpose the soul's ultimate elevation; for by such means, by embedding itself in a physical form, it can reach such spiritual levels as cannot be attained by a soul that has never had material form. We thus see that when man's body is dominated by his soul, it not only refrains from exercising an evil influence, but, on the contrary, it brings the soul to its loftiest spiritual heights.

We may understand this more clearly if we first assess what the material world is. That world⁸ is called in Hebrew עולם; and what we normally call Nature is rendered by the Hebrew word טבע. Philologically, both words stem from the same roots as two other words which invite our attention:⁹

עולם is of the same root as עולם - concealed or hidden; and טבע, Nature, is of the same root as טבע, submerged - as in קטב טבע ברוך.

We are all familiar with the Biblical expression concerning G-d: וְכָל הָאָרֶץ מְלֵאָה בְּאֵלֹהֵי הַכֹּהֵן - "The whole earth is filled with his glory"; and with the affirmation וְאֵלֹהֵי הַכֹּהֵן - "G-d is one and unique. Together, both phrases mean that there is nothing on earth outside of G-d¹⁰.

The material universe which we perceive with our physical senses is in fact spirit too; it has undergone many concentrative

THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

6. Instead of "G-dly spark," I would prefer "Divine spark" and instead of "divine father," perhaps "Heavenly Father."
7. Instead of "his descent is a tremendous fact," better "It is a tremendous descent."
8. Instead of "That world," I would put "The world."
9. The Hebrew words "עולם - עולם" are not of the same root philologically, although their meaning is similar.
10. The whole subject of the unity of G-d seems to be irrelevant there and would be best left out.

processes and changes until it has solidified into the forms of physical matter - matter which, though physical, is nevertheless not inanimate substance. G-d gives it **חַיִּיּוּת**, existence, and **חַיִּיּוּת**, life. If for the twinkling of an eye, the G-d element¹¹ were taken from it, it would disintegrate into chaos or even nothingness¹².

There were at one time philosophers who admitted the existence only of the material and denied the existence of anything which man cannot perceive with his senses. These philosophers and their theories have long ago been refuted and are bankrupt. Scientists have examined the elements of matter and have come to new conclusions concerning it. Matter, they say, is composed of molecules each so minute that if 125 million of them were brought into close concentration, they would occupy less than half an inch. It was thought that the molecule¹³ was the smallest unit of matter; but other scientists have discovered that each molecule is composed of atoms, each atom so minute that if 5 million atoms were brought into close concentration, a tiny microscopic speck would result. Each atom is a tiny planetary system in which the space between its component electrons and neutron¹⁴ is proportionally much greater than in our solar system.

Thus every material thing consists almost entirely of space, for each of its constituent atoms is comprised almost entirely of space. On this basis, scientists assert that if the human body were so concentrated that only the "solid" parts of the atoms making up man's frame were retained, and the spaces within them eliminated, man would shrink to such minute dimensions that he could scarcely

§ THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

11. Instead of "the G-d element," better "the power of G-d."
12. Omit the words "disintegrate into chaos or even," and supplement with "turn back into nothingness," since without G-d's creative power there would be absolutely nothing and not merely chaos.
13. The reference to the "molecule" as having been thought to be the smallest unit of matter is erroneous, for it was the atom that was considered indivisible (which is the meaning of the word "atom").
14. The principal components of an atom are the electrons and protons, hence the word "neutron" should be substituted by "proton."

be seen under a microscope, while the mass would yet retain - if it could be weighed - the ponderable weight of his whole body! The men of science have further calculated that if we could do the same with the whole terrestrial globe, keeping only the "solid" parts of its atoms, and ridding it of the space within each of them, the earth would then be reduced to a ball with a radius of less than half a mile!¹⁵

In truth, our sages have long since taught that if the human eye could but see what there is to be seen in every stone and blade of grass, the matter in them would appear to be entirely dispersed¹⁶, and the eye would only see the divine power which is the very essence of every stone and blade of grass.

In the words of our sages that which we see, namely **וְרַב** - matter - is in fact **רַק** - void. The essence is the spirit - that which is for us incomprehensible. Science is just beginning to understand that matter and energy are not separate and distinct phenomena¹⁷.

Matter is energy and the energy content of each individual thing is much greater than its material potential. In this light we may begin to understand the oneness of G-d and the concept **דַּבָּר וְרַק לֹא כִלְיוֹ** - "The earth is filled with His glory". It is for this reason that the universe is called **דְּלוּב** and Nature **גִּבּוֹר**, precisely because of the derivation of these words from **דָּלַגַּת** - "concealed", and **גִּבּוֹר** - "submerged", pointing to the concealment of G-d in his world, and to the veil which the world and Nature drew over G-d.

§ THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

15. The earth would be compressed into a ball of a considerably smaller radius than half [a] mile, as suggested in your article.
16. The meaning of the statement that "if the human eye could but see, etc.", does not refer to the physical eye **עֵינַי וְרַק** but to the "intellectual eye" **עֵינַי הַבְּרִיָּא**, **עֵינַי הַבְּרִיָּא**. Accordingly, your interpretation does not seem to be the correct one, in my opinion.
17. Matter and energy are not separate and distinct things, but they are distinct "phenomena." Therefore, the sentence should be corrected accordingly.

* Publisher's Note: Words in this note were crossed out and the Hebrew words were substituted in the typed text of this page of notes by the Rebbe in his own handwriting. (See the copy of this page printed on page 8).

But this world is created by G-d: He gives it its life and its existence, and through it He gives man a field for spiritual work. Man's work on earth is to draw the divine element forth from its concealment, to seek out the principle, the essence, the incomprehensible which we term *נר* from the subsidiary, which we with our, human eyes see as *נר*. When man's work is carried out in perfection¹⁸, the soul receives its elevation and spiritual ascent - the true significance of *נר* *נר* *נר* *נר* - descent has been wrought for the ultimate purpose of ascent.

20. RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PRECEPTS

The character of the spiritual¹⁹ work which has been ordained for the soul of man in the material world, is first to link his intellect with Divine Wisdom, *חכמת ה' אלהים*, that is with the Torah of G-d; and second, to regulate and fill his daily order of living with the Divine Will, that is with the Commandments which we call the *מצוות*. But Mitzvah does not merely mean a command. The word is derived from the Hebrew word *כתיב* - functional attachment which points to an inner bond²⁰.

For commanding points to an inner link between the commander and the one who is commanded - between G-d who issues the Command and His people who must obey them. The fulfilment of the Commandments is thus a clear indication of the link between, and the recognition by those commanded of, He whose commands they heed. Consequently, by the simple fulfilment of Torah and Mitzvot, the man sets his feet firmly on the true road towards the soul's twin purposes.

As is generally known, our Mitzvot are divided in to two groups: *מצוות עשה* - duties to G-d, such as Tephillin,

THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

18. I would omit the words "in perfection." since it is too much to expect perfection from everyone.

19. I would omit the word "spiritual."

20. The expression "functional attachment" is not clear; likewise, "inner bond" is unsuitable. The Hebrew word "כתיב" might best be translated as "companionship."

Tzitzit, Sabbath, Family Purity, Kashruti, Prayer and so on; and *מצוות עשה* - duties to neighbour²¹, social duties, such as the prohibitions against theft and murder, the positive precepts of loving one's neighbour, charity, acts of loving-kindness and so forth. To all of us, I think, the need and significance of this latter group of ethical commands, which we call *מצוות עשה*, is clear. If²² any of us is exercised at all about the need and significance of the Mitzvot, it is the former, the *מצוות עשה* or *Statutes*, which exercise us.

Let us, then, first establish that this division into two categories - religious duties and social duties - is only a superficial one. Both categories are alike, except that the ethical commands are the more onerous in respect of atonement; violation of any of them is not forgiven by G-d unless and until the neighbour we have injured has himself first given pardon. Apart from this factor, all the commands of Judaism are in their essence, according to our theology, *מצוות עשה* - all are duties to G-d.

Take, for example, the Mitzvah of Charity. Jewish charity differs from that required by other faiths. In the latter, the command to give charity applies only when there is poverty to relieve. If there be no poor, there is no obligation to give, and the command has no relevance - it lapses. Jewish charity on the other hand is a personal religious obligation - just as I am obligated to put on Tephillin and if I do not possess them I am in duty bound to seek until I find them, and if I fail to find and acquire them I am deficient in that particular precept - so that the "light of the soul" generated by the performance of the Tephillin Mitzvah will be denied me - just so, if there be no poor through whom I may fulfil the command of charity, I am denied

THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

21. Instead of "duties to neighbour," better "duties to fellow man."

22. The sentence beginning with the words "If any of us etc" is not clear at all. *

* Publisher's Note: The use of the word "exercised" appears to be the problem here. The British (and Australian) use of this word can also be used in the sense of "perplexed" or "worried" (v. Oxford English Dictionary).

the "soul-light" generated by the performance of the Tzedakah precept²³.

As for the relief of individual suffering, so for the maintenance of institutions. Thus, the Jewish command of supporting Yeshivot and other Torah institutions does not spring from the circumstances that such institutions exist and are in need of help, but springs from the consideration that all Jews are obligated to take a share in the Torah studied by Jewish students. The man who abstains from sharing, even though the institutions may cover their needs from other sources, denies himself his share in Torah. This is the thought that prompts our sages to say "More than the donor does for the poor recipient, the recipient does for the donor".

We see, then, that all the Mitzvot, even those which are ethical²⁴, are threads which bind the individual to his maker. They are all *למנוח* אדם *למנוח* אדם, they are all duties to G-d. Some are fulfilled through he medium of special equipment, such as Tephillin, Tzitzit, Mikveh and so on. Others are fulfilled through the agency of one's fellow man. All are duties laid on us by G-d. That is why in the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, where there is a restatement of the Ten Commandments, each precept is followed by the words *אני ה' אמרתי ל-רד'*²⁵

After both kinds of command, after religious and social alike, the same statement is made: "I am the L-rd", implying that all the commandments are to be fulfilled as statutes, for one clear reason.

§ THE REBBE'S COMMENTS

23. *The distinction drawn between the Jewish concept of charity and that of other faiths is not clear.*

24. *I would insert the word "purely" before "ethical," to read "purely ethical."*

25. *The reference to the 19th chapter of Leviticus with regard to the re-statement of the Ten Commandments is not adequately explained.**

Publisher's Note: Subsequently, the following words were added here by the author: *stressing, thus, that all the commandments even those *מפניו* *מפניו* *מפניו*, duties to your fellow man, have to be performed, mainly, because "I am the L-rd Your G-d," who commanded you to do them.*

namely that "I am the L-rd" who has commanded. They are personal duties laid on man in his relationship with his Maker.

It follows from what we have said that the question being dealt with, concerning the significance of the Mitzvot, relates to the ethical as well as the religious commands.

26 THE MEANING OF THE MITZVOT - THE "FEAR OF HEAVEN"

With these thoughts in mind, let us look together at the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy. After the first paragraph of the Shema, which demands of man the acceptance of the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom, and his submission to the requirements of faith in G-d, there appears a warning that material well-being and prosperity be not permitted to lead man astray. Then follows verse 17: "Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the L-rd your G-d, and his testimonies - *עוונות* - and his statutes - *עוונות* - which He has commanded you - *עוונות* *עוונות*". All the commandments are to be upheld, both those commandments called *עוונות*, testimonies - the commands which bear witness to Israel's history, as for instance those connected with Passover, Tabernacles and so on; and those commands called *עוונות*, statutes. All alike are to be fulfilled, *עוונות* *עוונות*, because He, G-d, commanded them.

Then there follows the question: "And when thy son asketh thee in the time to come saying: What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the L-rd our G-d hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say: The L-rd commanded us to do all these statutes *אמרתי ל-רד'*... - to awaken in us fear of G-d, *ל-רד'* *ל-רד'* *ל-רד'* for our eternal good - *אמרתי ל-רד'* - so that we may be blessed in the life everlasting; *אמרתי ל-רד'* - and so that we may have spiritual animation and vitality as at this day."

The questioner is described in Rabbinic literature as the *בן חכם* - the Wise Son. His wisdom is revealed by two facts: first, he accepts the yoke of G-d's Kingdom, speaking as he does *אמרתי ל-רד'*; and, second, he knows the difference between testimonies, statutes and judgments. Knowing that difference he asks the dual question: What is the need and significance of the *עוונות*, the statutes? Further, why need G-d have commanded the testimonies and the judgments, since these could have been realised by our own rational faculties, and needed no divine command? To this second of his questions,

the answer is implied that there are no categories of the precepts; all are מִצְוֹת, all are מִצְוַת עַל פִּי ה', Irrespective of the agency or circumstance through which any of them may be fulfilled - whether the agency be Tephillin or Mezuzah, or a needy fellow man, or some charitable institution. To the earlier question, "What is the need of the Commandments?" the answer is given that their purpose is to awaken in man בְּיָדוֹ הַרָּוָה, the fear of heaven; that is, to make it possible for the soul, clothed in the human frame, to live under a constant divine control, for its eternal benefit, and for its spiritual animation and elevation.

As a basis for all this, the Torah here mentions, as in many other places, the redemption from Egypt, the release from bondage.

26. REDEMPTION AS THE BASIS FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF MITZVOT

I shall not enter here into the deeper meaning of the redemption from Egypt, which according to the wise teachers of Kabbalah and Chasidism is - apart from the ancient historic fact of the Exodus - a symbol of the daily redemption of man. This would take us too long and would lead us into spheres too far removed from our present task. But the fact of the Exodus, as we understand it in its simplicity, the fact of taking a people out of slavery against their own will, has for us a definite psychological teaching. In it, if we ponder on it, we find the inborn reaction of every human being to the acceptance of the yoke of the Divine Kingdom and of the performance of the Mitzvot.

Man possesses within himself two opposing forces. On the one hand, he is democratically motivated - he loves freedom, independence and equality. On the other hand he respects strength, discipline and power; even a totalitarian power which robs citizens of their personal liberties can take root in some countries because there is this inborn willingness to obey and to submit to orders and decrees. For this reason, therefore, every country's regime depends on the spiritual condition of its citizens in relation to these opposing forces which influence man's inner being. If the first impulse, that which demands freedom is the stronger, a democratic regime comes into power, possessing unquestionable merits, but nevertheless having serious defects, for it withholds from man's second impulse -

that impulse which seeks an authority to which to submit - the satisfaction it needs. If on the other hand, the second of man's impulses prevails, a totalitarian regime is established, which likewise has its support in the forces that dwell in man's soul, but which in the end robs the citizens of their elementary rights and freedoms.²⁶

The Exodus from Egypt taught the Jewish people the worth of freedom and independence; but at the same time it interpreted for them the secret of the soul's thirst for the acceptance of an authority - the yearning and straining for the acceptance of "the heavenly yoke. Even as the flame of a candle strains towards the fire element in the atmosphere, just so does man's soul draw towards the G-dly duties and disciplines. Man, * failing to understand this circumstance, seeks to satisfy his soul's yearning by setting up, over himself a fellow man as yoke, and through that fellow man surrenders his freedom.

When G-d gave the Torah to Israel and proclaimed to them "I am the L-rd your G-d", he added the words "Who brought you forth out of the Land of Egypt", and proceeded to warn: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me". That is to say: I have brought you forth from Egypt because it is natural that you should desire freedom, the greatest boon to human life, while you equally naturally yearning to have a ruler over you arise from your inner craving for חֵן וְנֶחֱמָה - for the rulership and sovereignty of G-d; therefore I give you the prohibition forbidding you to set over yourselves any other gods - whatever form they take. "For the Children of Israel are my servants", G-d declares in Scripture - "They are **my** servants," our Rabbi's comment "and not the Servants of servants". This lesson in psychology is implicit in the answer given to the wise son, when the

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26. The question of the merits of democracy as compared with a totalitarian regime, as you put it, is debatable. The entire paragraph tends to weaken the conclusions of the article, and seems to detract rather than to add to its strength. I would therefore leave it out. Accordingly some lines on page 15 [of the original typed text - Publisher] also have to be altered.

* [Publisher's Note: See comment 26, which would seem to dictate the removal of this sentence ("Man... Freedom...")]

reply is given to his question concerning the meaning and significance of the Mitzvot: we were slaves in Egypt, we did not revolt against our taskmasters; G-d brought us out from slavery with a mighty hand and amid many wonders; He commanded us to carry out all His statutes - Mitzvot to be fulfilled in the voluntary acceptance of the yoke of His will - in order to awaken in us the fear of Him, that is the sense of His discipline, which in fact is an inborn characteristic of our souls.

20 MITZVAH AND HIDDUR MITZVAH

We see, then, that man's heart is awakened to *מִתְרַחֵק*, the fear of Heaven, by the fulfillment of the Mitzvot. As Jews, we are however obligated to awaken in ourselves the emotion of love too, as laid down in the verse: *וַיִּלֶקֶחַ אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֵלֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים*, "And you shall love the L-rd your G-d". This feeling of love is likewise awakened in the human heart and in the soul of man through the fulfillment of Mitzvot.

The fear of G-d is aroused by the punctilious performance of a Mitzvah in the way prescribed by the rules and laws of the Shulchan Aruch, which tell us what is Kosher and what is not; what is permitted and what is not; how we may deal with a fellow man and how we may not. But there is also *מִשְׁוֵה הַדָּבָר* - the requirement of doing more than the Law demands and thereby there is aroused the feeling of love. In the tenth chapter of Deuteronomy we find the verse: *וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְךָ בְּלִבְךָ אֱלֹהִים וְאָמַרְתָּ אֱלֹהִים וְאָמַרְתָּ אֱלֹהִים*, "To fear the L-rd thy G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him; and to serve the L-rd thy G-d, with all thy heart and with all thy soul". That is, we must fulfil the Mitzvot according to the Halachah as set out in the Shulchan Aruch, which obligates all alike and which is like a path which all tread as a means of moving from one place to another. Thus Halachah is the stimulant of fear of G-d. For the sake of our love of Him, however, we must serve G-d with our whole hearts and with our whole life; with *שְׂרָרָה*, with self sacrifice, because in that region termed *מִשְׁוֵה הַדָּבָר* there are no boundaries or limits - each may attain it in accordance to his own capacity and according to his own individual feelings and exertions. This is at the root of what we know as Hiddur Mitzvah.

Through the Mitzvot then, we awaken *מִתְרַחֵק* - the fear of G-d, and through the Hiddur we awaken *מִתְרַחֵק* - the love of Him. We shall understand this more clearly when we look at the two forms of service that we meet in daily life - the service of a master by his servant, and the service of a father by his son. The conscientious servant does his work punctiliously as instructed - he does not work less than he is duty bound, but his master's whole enterprise, as also his master's purposes, plans and intentions do not interest him at all. He does not give more of his time than is required of him; and he does nothing of his own initiative. He does his work punctiliously because of *מִתְרַחֵק* - fear - because he fears he may otherwise lose his position. Quite different is the service a son gives to his father, the devoted son need only know what his father wishes and need only realise that the work required of him will give his father pleasure and he carries out his tasks with inner satisfaction and enthusiasm. He not only does what father says but also goes further and does what can be deduced from his father's words. The son is in his essential being bound to his father and his undertakings, because his service springs not from fear but from love.

Both these forms of service have a merit and a fault. The merit of the servant's labours is that they stem from *מִשְׁוֵה הַדָּבָר* - from the acceptance of the yoke of duty, without his needing to seek a reason or a motive for this or that undertaking. The fault is that such service is sometimes to "dry" or restricted. The merit of the son's labour is that they are unrestricted in the satisfaction and enthusiasm which derive from his discharging them with all his life and soul. The fault is that his service lacks *מִשְׁוֵה הַדָּבָר* - it does not stem from the yoke of duty. He renders his service from his own understanding and perception of his father's enterprises, and his own understanding may sometimes mislead him. Through the fulfilment of Mitzvot, the merits of both forms of service can be awakened in our inner selves - the merit of love and of fear - which can be attained only through the performance of Mitzvah and Hiddur Mitzvah, with *מִשְׁוֵה הַדָּבָר* - with due acceptance of the Heavenly Yoke.

Publisher's Note: At this point there is some text that has been deleted from the original article. It appears that it dealt with the attitude of so-called "Reform Judaism" to the performance of Mitzvot - in the course of which reference was made to (the service in) a

temple where religion is preached without the observance of the practical precepts, as being "as far from Judaism as a non-Jewish church."²⁷

27. SUMMING UP

Summing up our analysis we come to the following conclusions:

(1) The purpose of the creation and the clothing in bodily form of a divine element is for the spiritual elevation of all Creation through the Crown of Creation - Man. There are four categories of created things: *מְדַבֵּר* - the inanimate; *מַצְמֵחַ* - plant life, the vegetable kingdom; *מְדַבֵּר* - the animal kingdom; and *מְדַבֵּר* - that which is endowed with speech - man. Each has been created to serve the other.²⁸

The inanimate serves plant life and gives it its sustenance. Plants are food for the animal and the animal serves man. Man through the fulfillment of Torah and Mitzvot achieves the sovereignty of the G-dly in him over the animal element and by such means raises the whole of creation to the purpose for which it was wrought.

(2) Every Mitzvah has, apart from its outward forms, an inner character, the so called "soul of the command". The Mitzvot which we perform through the medium of various agencies - whether they be duties to G-d or those that we call social duties - are all alike the will of G-d. For the advantage and benefit of man, who is himself comprised of a G-dly element clothed in bodily form, these Mitzvot have likewise been clothed in practical forms - as, for example, Tzitzit, Tephillin, Mezuzah and so on - so that man may be able to fulfil them; but inwardly there is achieved through each Mitzvah a

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27. In the reference to a temple where religion is preached without the observance of the practical precepts, a more forceful expression is called for, for such a temple is not merely "as far from Judaism as a non-Jewish church," but considerably further, since some non-Jewish churches have much more in common with Judaism than such temples.

28. You state that each of the 4 categories of created things has been created to serve others. This is true only as far as each lower category is concerned in relation to the higher ones, but not vice versa.

definite spiritual function in the Higher Spheres, as is discussed at length, in connection with each Mitzvah in the literature of Kabbalah and Chasidism.

אברהם קודם שנתנו כל הוראות כלליות קודם שנתנו אברהם fulfilled the whole Torah, even before it was given at Sinai". So say the Rabbis - meaning that he fulfilled the inner soul of the Mitzvot, no "bodily" form having yet been given them. But since the Torah was given, all the Mitzvot must be fulfilled in practice, in their "bodily" form, in order to manifest the inner soul of each Mitzvah - its inward content.²⁹

(3) The two most important endeavours of man on earth should be to achieve the Fear of G-d and the Love of G-d. Both these objectives are attained through the performance of Mitzvot and Hiddur Mitzvah under the proper acceptance of the yoke of divine duty. We need not seek reasons for the commands that we perform in that spirit of *עוֹלָם עוֹלָם*.

(4) The Mitzvot are, as it were, occupation forces through which the bodily element of man conquers him. Thanks to the Mitzvot, the G-d element in him occupies and rules man's thoughts, words and deeds, by subduing and conquering his body. It is therefore self-evident that the more Mitzvot there are, the more sure will be the victory of the G-dly element in man and the defence of it of what I may call the conquered territories. As Rabbi Chananyah ben Akashyah says: *אֵלֶּיךָ לֵבִי וְרַחֵם אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכֹחַ לֵבִי וְרַחֵם אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכֹחַ לֵבִי* - "The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to enable Israel to have merit, therefore He gave them copious Torah and many

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29. The idea of Abraham having fulfilled the whole Torah in a spiritual sense may have an undesirable effect on the unlearned, although you attempt to minimize this effect by saying that after the Torah was given it is necessary to observe it in practice. Therefore, I would omit it. By way of illustration: I have been visited by a group of people, among whom there was one who had once learned but later turned astray. He argued that we need not be more particular than Rabbi Jose Haglili who maintained that the prohibition of meat and milk did not apply to fowl. It is likely, therefore, that one can use the argument that he need not be more particular than our patriarch Abraham.

commandments" - G-d, seeking to make it easier for man to achieve the goal of his labours, increased the number of Torah and Mitzvot. He added, so to speak, to the forces of occupation.

(5) When we speak of the Mitzvot, we mean not only those which are in the written Torah, but we mean also those which are תורה - those laid upon us by the Rabbis, and even the various חובות - the many Rabbinic enactments which are destined to be laid down by the great exponents of Torah and עמיתים to the end of time. All are in the same way binding on the community, because each Rabbinic precept and each Rabbinic Takanah is designed to strengthen the will to be טוב וצדק - to turn away from evil - and to be טוב וצדק - to do that which is right and good.³⁰

In reality, the whole life and activity of man is divided between - and is a struggle between - Mitzvot and עבירות - transgressions; either what a man does is a Mitzvah, because it binds him more strongly to G-d and G-dliness - or it is an עבירה, transgression, a departure, because it is חסר על דעת קונו - it leads him away from his Maker's will. A man should therefore always review his activities in the light of our Holy Torah and tradition and should seek to determine them in the same light and spirit as the aspiration וְיִרְאוּ בְּלִבָּם לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל מִצְוֹת ה' - "To perfect the world under the Kingdom of the Almighty". When that will be achieved, the whole of mankind will see the world as an עולם הרהיקונו - a perfected universe. Man will then realise Judaism's claim that human fortune lies not in seeking "a good time" but in seeking a good eternity.



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30. *The argument that the Rabbinic enactments should be binding because they are designed to better us, is not very forceful or convincing. It would therefore be best to refer to Maimonides who stated that the Rabbinic injunctions are binding because we are commanded to accept them by the Torah; in other words, the Rabbinic injunctions are rooted in the written Torah.*

31. *The reference to "הקינון עולם" is not suitable here in connection with the idea "to perfect the world under(?) the Kingdom of the Almighty".*