

**WHO IS THAT GOY?  
Who may study Torah?  
Keep Shabbat?**

**By Avraham Yehoshua Greenbaum**

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This work is dedicated with love  
to the many dear friends with whom I have been privileged  
to become acquainted over the past two decades  
— Israelites, Jews, Ephraimites, Ten Tribers, Noahides,  
Righteous Gentiles, Believers and Seekers  
from all places and backgrounds —  
who have opened my eyes to the mighty works of God  
in sending sparks of the souls of Israel  
among the peoples of the world.

Avraham Yehoshua ben Yaakov Greenbaum

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# Preface

My purpose in this work has been to seek answers to two questions repeatedly posed to many rabbis these days:

- 1. May a Goy study the Torah?**
- 2. May a Goy observe the Shabbat?**

To this end, I have sought to clarify a number of different halakhic statutes that might apply in different cases of people who would be considered by Jews, and also by those people themselves, as “non-Jews” or “Goyim”. To do so, I have examined sources in the Hebrew Bible (*TaNakh*), Talmud, the later halakhic authorities with particular reference to the comprehensive *Mishneh Torah* law code of Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, “RaMBaM”, Rabbi Moses Maimonides, and the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

Information on all the rabbinical sages cited and sources quoted is given in the Index of Sages and Sources (pp. 82-91).

I have largely provided my own translations of the Biblical, Talmudic, Halakhic and Chassidic sources quoted with the intent of highlighting what I believe may fairly be deduced from them. For the convenience of those with a knowledge of Hebrew, I have included the original Hebrew texts of most of the sources quoted, with acknowledgement and thanks to the outstanding **Sefaria Digital Library of Jewish Texts**. Where one of the Hebrew names of God appears in quoted sources, I have followed the convention of replacing the Hebrew letter *heh* (ה) with the letter *kuf* (ך) to avoid possible desecration of the names of God. In my English transliterations of Hebrew words, I have used the contemporary Sefardic pronunciation and rendered the Hebrew letter ח, *cheit* as “ch” (not as in “lunch” but as in the Scottish “loch” or German *ich*) and the Hebrew letter כ, *khof*, as “kh” (pronounced as a more guttural version of the *ch* in “loch”).

It is not my intention to offer rulings on any questions of practical Halakhah as I am unqualified to do so. My hope is that, with God’s help, these discussions and conclusions will stimulate further examination of the issues and facilitate the return of all the scattered souls of Israel quickly in our time.

Avraham Yehoshua ben Yaakov Greenbaum  
Jerusalem, Eve of the Festival of Shavuot 5781

**WHO IS THAT GOY?**  
**Who may study Torah?**  
**Keep Shabbat?**

עַתָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת לִיקוּק הַיְהוָה תוֹרַתְךָ:

It is a time to act for the LORD, for they have violated Your Torah.

Psalm 119:126

The Hebrew may also be rendered: There is a time when to act for the sake of the LORD, you must breach His Torah!

מִי חָכֵם וְיָגֹן אֱלֹהֵי נָבוֹן וְיִדְעֵם כִּי־יִשְׁרָיִם דְרָגְתֵי יְקֹנֶה וְצַדִּיקִים יֵלְכוּ  
בָּם וּפְשָׁעִים יִכָּשְׁלוּ בָּם:

He who is wise will consider these words, He who is prudent will take note of them. For straight are the paths of the LORD, and the righteous shall walk in them, while sinners shall stumble in them.

Hosea 14:10

# **Introduction: What is a Goy?**

# Introduction: What is a Goy?

Most Jews well know that the term “Goy” is used of any person who is not considered “Jewish” by some criteria or other, and many non-Jews are also fully aware that this is how Jews may refer to them.

The use of this term by Jews when speaking of non-Jews perpetuates the distinction between “us” and “them”, which has historically been one of the main keys to Jewish survival as a unique nation. Yet, excluding “them” can and often has been quite offensive to non-Jewish people. Moreover, as I hope to show in this discussion, in some cases excluding “them” may be quite unjustified, because the supposed “non-Jew” may indeed turn out to have a “Jewish” or “Israelite” soul. Being aware of the possible offense which use of the term “Goy” may cause, some Jews prefer at least in public to use the term “gentile”, which they feel to be “softer”.

In its root Biblical sense, the Hebrew word *Goy* (גוי) simply means a “people” or “nation”, and is used of the Children of Israel themselves as well as of the other nations. God told Abraham: “I will make you into a great **nation**”, *goy gadol*, גוי גדול (Genesis 12:2). He told Moses that He chose Israel as “a kingdom of priests and a holy **nation**”, *goy kadosh*, גוי קדוש (Exodus 19:7 and see also Deuteronomy 4:7). The central blessing of the Shabbat afternoon *Amidah* prayer says: “And who is like Your people Israel, one **nation**, *goy echad*, גוי אחד on the earth?” However, in rabbinical literature and in widespread Jewish parlance until today, the word “Goy” usually refers to a member of the supposedly “non-Jewish” people of the world.

Most Jews understand that a Goy may become a fully-fledged Jew through conversion, and the traditional pathway to becoming a full or “righteous” convert – *Ger Tzeddek*, גר צדק – is spelled out in detail in the Halakhah, practical Torah law. Today, Jewish sectarian movements such as the Reform and Conservative offer various alternatives to the traditional halakhic path, though their conversions are not recognized as valid by the “Orthodox” who adhere to the Halakhah.

At the same time, many if not most Jews today remain quite unaware that in countries all around the world there are growing numbers of

individuals, families and in many cases entire communities of people, whom they would not consider to be “Jewish” or to have any connection with the Jewish people, yet who are seemingly quite spontaneously seeking to learn more about the Torah, to practice its commandments as they understand them, and to connect with Jewish rabbis and established Jewish communities.

With the worldwide proliferation of the Internet over the past decades, and particularly with the ever-expanding use of social networking platforms, numerous Jewish rabbis and others engaged in “Torah outreach” are increasingly discovering how widespread and persistent are such seekers. Yet their appeals for recognition as legitimate Torah seekers are met with different responses from rabbis of differing perspectives.

For most of Jewish history (though not always) outreach to non-Jews inviting them to convert was strictly discouraged. Indeed, in many places in different periods until today, conversion of non-Jews by Jews was strictly forbidden by the non-Jewish governing authorities on pain of death. The Halakhah itself requires that rabbinical courts must initially rebuff applicants for conversion as a way of testing their seriousness, and it often happens that the conversion process is drawn out over lengthy periods of time.

Some present-day rabbis view these “non-Jewish” Torah seekers who are today appearing all over the world as nothing but “Goyim” like any others, who should not be encouraged to study or practice Torah but who should be taught that they are required only to accept and observe the Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah. Some rabbis fear, not without cause, that some of these seemingly “would-be” Jews may in fact be non-Jewish infiltrators, missionaries or “Messianics” of some kind seeking an entrée into Jewish communities through adopting an outward pose.

Yet in many cases these non-Jewish Torah seekers have totally rejected the religious beliefs and practices with which they grew up, and they find that their spiritual aspirations are far from satisfied with a narrow range of permitted Torah study and no more than the Seven Noahide Commandments, six of which are merely prohibitions which do not constitute a proactive spiritual pathway as such.

These people seek deeper Torah wisdom and understanding, long to practice many more of the Torah commandments, and in some cases seek to embrace fully the lifestyle and Torah practice of observant Jews. Yet the

majority of these seekers are located in places far from any orthodox community let alone an orthodox rabbinical court, and thus have no way to fulfill the usual conversion requirements, such as residence in an existing orthodox community for at least a year if not longer prior to conversion.

The acute dilemmas experienced by such people in seeking to express their spiritual aspirations in authentic and permissible ways are encapsulated in two burning questions put repeatedly to rabbis today:

**1. May a Goy study the Torah?**

**2. May a Goy observe the Shabbat?**

In recent times, answers to these questions have been hotly contested among a number of prominent rabbis. Some say that on no account may a person who is not recognized as “Jewish” by heredity or through conversion under the Halakhah be allowed to study Torah or observe the Shabbat in the manner of orthodox Jews. In the view of these rabbis, this would include even candidates for full conversion to Judaism as a *Ger Tzeddek*, “righteous convert”, and it would certainly apply to “Noahides”. By the same token, the Noahides should not observe other Torah commandments that in the view of these rabbis apply only to “Jews”.

On the other side, a number of distinguished contemporary rabbinical scholars have publicly declared that all the people of the world not only may but **must** study the Seven Noahide Commandments and – more radically – that all people of all nations **must** recognize and honor the Sabbath, even though as non-Jews they are not required to abstain from any of the kinds of labor which the Torah forbids to Israel on the Shabbat (Rabbi Joel Schwartz).

Other well-known orthodox Jewish rabbis are teaching that any “non-Jew” in our time who observes the Seven Commandments in the proper manner may be considered a *Ger Toshav* (גר תושב), literally a “resident stranger”), a non-Israelite who has a privileged status under Torah law and who may observe the Shabbat as well as voluntarily practice other Torah commandments (Rabbi Chaim Clorfene). Some leading rabbis are urging that the time has now come for people of all the nations to study the Torah and for Jewish Torah scholars to reach out accordingly (Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh).

Such disputes – some quite fierce – between rabbis, can be most confusing and discouraging to many “non-Jews” across the whole world who have emerged disillusioned and skeptical from other cultural and religious

matrices to discover in the Torah pathway a whole new universe of truth, wisdom and inspiration. With Torah educational materials freely available through the Internet almost anywhere on earth, they feel slapped in the face as they meet a wall of exclusion erected by certain rabbis whom they would want to respect and whose recognition they crave. These “non-Jewish” seekers include highly serious academics, teachers, doctors, nurses, scientists, engineers, technicians, businessmen and -women, mothers of children and many others all ages and occupations, who have often spent a life-time of pain and frustration in search of the truth.

Since the lives and soul-journeys of so many people depend on the answers to these questions, they must be considered with the utmost sobriety and without the mutual slogan-tossing and mud-slinging that characterize so much contemporary discussion in many present-day forums.

As we shall see, one of the main keys to unraveling the truth will be to identify important distinctions between various different Halakhic statuses that may apply to different people who come under vague umbrella terms such as “Goy”, “Gentile” or “non-Jewish”, which turn out to be of little use without further definition.

## Hillel and Shammai

Divisions of opinion between different rabbis have been an integral part of what has come to be known as “rabbinical Judaism” since the closing period of the Second Temple in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. The then head of the Great Sanhedrin, the *Nasi*, was Hillel, scion of the House of David, while his deputy, the *Av Beit Din*, was Shammai (*Pirkey Avot* 1:12).

By their time the Romans were advancing in transforming Judaea into one of the provinces of their empire, and people of many different nations, Samaritans, Greeks, Romans and many others, either lived permanently or were regularly stationed there or passing through. This gave increasing urgency to issues of how Torah-observant Jews, both in the Holy Land and in the widening Jewish Diaspora beyond its borders, were to relate to their non-Jewish neighbors and visitors. In the same period there were also growing internal divisions between the *Perushim* (“Pharisees”) and *Tzedokim* (“Sadducees”) on the one hand, and on the other hand between the *Talmidey Chakhamim*, Torah-scholars in general, as opposed to the relatively ignorant and less religiously scrupulous *Am Ha’aratzim* (singular: *Am Ha’aretz*), “people of the land” (cf. Genesis 23:7 & Leviticus 20:4), and the *Kutim* (“Samaritans” see II Kings 17:24).

The Talmud relates:

A certain Goy came to Shammai and said: “How many Torahs do you have?” “Two,” answered Shammai, “the Written Torah and the Oral Torah”. The Goy said to him: “I believe you about the Written Torah, but with regard to the Oral Torah, I don’t believe you. Convert me on condition that you will teach me only the Written Torah.” Shammai scolded him and threw him out.

The same Goy came before Hillel, who converted him and began teaching him Torah. On the first day, he showed him the letters of the alphabet and said to him: “*Alef, Beit, Gimmel, Dalet*”. The following day Hillel reversed the order of the letters starting with the last letter: *Tav*. The convert said to him: “But that’s not what you told me yesterday”. Hillel said to him: “Didn’t you rely on me? [You cannot learn without relying on an oral tradition.] Therefore, you should also rely on me with regard to the Oral Torah.”

*Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 31a*

While Shammai justifiably drove out the insolent Goy, the infinitely-patient Hillel acted in full accord with his famous maxim: “Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving humanity [*ha-briyot*, הַבְּרִיּוֹת, literally, “the creations”] and drawing them close to the Torah” (*Pirkey Avot* 1:12). With artful wisdom, Hillel immediately gave this Goy a lesson in the first foundation of the pursuit of Torah: Self-nullification (*bittul*) and submission to the higher wisdom. This has come down to us from our ancestors and teachers and is the essence of *Emunah*, faith in the God of Israel, His Torah and His true sages, just as Israel accepted His Kingship and His Torah at Sinai with the words: “We shall do and we shall hear”, *na’aseh v’nishma*, נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע (Exodus 24:7). First, we submit to practicing the tradition as received without demanding reasons and explanations. We do so in full trust that in God’s good time we will be granted to “hear” and understand the truth and discover endless levels of deeper meaning in the Torah.

It makes no difference if the Goy who wanted to convert was a Greek, Roman or of some other nation. We are not told if he was an idolater, one of the epicurean non-believers of the time, or other. He clearly had an interest in converting according to his level of understanding, and it is surely noteworthy that Hillel did not send him to register for a protracted official rabbinical *Beit Din* conversion program that might take many years and

endless challenges to complete. Hillel was actually willing to convert him on the spot and to start teaching him despite his stubborn resistance to the Oral Torah.

The difference between Shammai's high-wall-closed-doors policy and Hillel's open-armed welcome is deeply embedded in the souls of Israel, and may be seen in the conflict between King Saul and King David (see *Likutey Moharan* Part I, Lesson 283) and in more recent times in the division between the *Mitnagdim* ("Opponents") and those whom they opposed, the Chassidim, followers in the path of Rabbi Israel the "Baal Shem Tov" (see *Shevachey Ha-Baal Shem Tov* #228, notes).

## The Talmudic Sources

The Talmudic source for the prohibition against the study of the Torah by a gentile is found in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin* in the name of Rabbi Yochanan.

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן עוֹבֵד פִּזְשִׁימִים שְׁעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה חַיִּיב מֵיתָה שְׁנֵאָמַר  
תּוֹרָה צְנָה לָנוּ מִשָּׁה מוֹרְשָׁה - לָנוּ מוֹרְשָׁה וְלֹא לָהֶם.

Rabbi Yochanan said: An idol-worshipper who engages in Torah study is liable to the punishment of death, as it is stated: "Moses commanded *us* Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4). This indicates that it is an inheritance for *us*, and *not for them*.

*Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 59a*

The Talmudic source for prohibition of the observance of Shabbat by a gentile comes in an earlier section of the same tractate, towards the end of a lengthy discussion about the Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah, their Biblical sources and detailed laws. (The discussion begins at the bottom of *Daf* 56b with the words: "Our rabbis taught: The Children of Noah were commanded seven commandments".)

The Talmud states in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish:

עוֹבֵד פִּזְשִׁימִים שְׁשֶׁבֶת חַיִּיב מֵיתָה שְׁנֵאָמַר (בראשית ח, כב) "וְלֹא יִלְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבּוּתוּ".

An idol-worshipper who observed Shabbat is liable to the punishment of death, as it says: “And day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:23).

*Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 58b*

The Hebrew word rendered here as “observed Shabbat” is the verb *shaavath*, שָׁבַת, literally “rested”. It should be noted, as will be discussed at greater length later (pp. 58ff), that in rabbinical writings this word specifically denotes resting in the sense of abstaining from the labors that are forbidden to Israelites on Shabbat. However, this does not necessarily preclude even the gentile idolater from giving some kind of recognition and honor to the Shabbat of Israel even while performing any labor he may choose.

The commentator Rashi explains (*ad loc.*) that if the idolater were to rest a full day from his labor, the reason he would be liable to the punishment of death is because the verse literally means: “Day and night *they shall not rest*”, which is interpreted homiletically to apply also to humans.

## Who is an idolater?

It is quite shocking to hear that a person might be liable to be punished by death for the seemingly harmless acts of studying Torah teachings or resting on the Shabbat. Is the death penalty to be understood literally? Is it conceivable that we could be talking about any and every Goy? It would surely be reckless to take such statements at face value without careful examination. To interpret them correctly, we must first understand to whom exactly they apply. We will then quickly see that blanket terms like “idol-worshipper”, “gentile” or “goy” will no longer be of use because they are simply imprecise.

The Hebrew term used in both of the above Talmudic texts is *Oveid Kokhavim*, עוֹבֵד כּוֹכָבִים, literally: “one who worships stars”. This is an abbreviated form of the full expression *Oveid Kokhavim U’Mazalot*, עוֹבֵד כּוֹכָבִים וּמַזְלוֹת, “one who worships planets and constellations”. [Technically the word כּוֹכָבִים, *kokhavim*, should be translated as “planets”, which in rabbinic thought include the sun and the moon, while מַזְלוֹת, *mazalot*, are “constellations”, such as those of the Zodiac.] This phrase is usually printed in rabbinical texts using the acronym עֲכוּ״ם, *AKUM*. The Hebrew terms for idolatrous worship used throughout the Talmud and rabbinical literature are *Avodah Zarah*, עֲבוֹדַת זָרָה (abbreviated as ע״ז),

literally “strange” or “alien service” or “worship”, or *Avodat Elilim*, עבודת אֱלִילִים, or *Avodat Gilulim*, עבודת גִּילּוּלִים, “worship of idols”.

In the comprehensive *Mishneh Torah* law code of Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (“RaMBaM”, Rabbi Moses Maimonides), he explains in the opening sections of the Laws of Idolatry that originally idolatry involved literal worship of the stars and planets based on elaborate rationalizations developed in very early times (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Avodat Kokhaim*, Laws of Idolatry, chapters 1-2). However, he states that the Torah prohibition of idolatry extends beyond the worship of stars and planets:

עֵקֶר הַצְּוִי בְּעִבּוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים שֶׁלֹּא לְעִבֹד אֶחָד מִכָּל הַבְּרוּאִים לֹא מִלְּאֲדָן וְלֹא גִלְגַּל וְלֹא כּוֹכָב וְלֹא אֶחָד מֵאַרְבָּעָה הִיסוּדוֹת וְלֹא אֶחָד מִכָּל הַנִּבְרָאִים מִהֶן וְאֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁהָעוֹבֵד יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהוּא הָאֱלֹקִים.

The essence of the commandment against idolatry is not to serve any one of all the created beings, not any angel or sphere or star or planet, and not any of the four elements [fire, air, water and earth] nor any of all that are created from them, even if the worshipper knows that the LORD is the [Supreme] God.

*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Avodat Kokhaim, Laws of Idolatry 2:1*

Understood in this way, it is readily understandable why any actual, practicing *Oveid Kokhavim* or “idolater” should be forbidden to study the Torah and observe the Shabbat, both of which are the very opposite of idolatry, for he will surely pervert both and turn them into service of his god or gods. This will be discussed in greater detail below (pp. 42ff). [Yet despite this, even a practicing *AKUM* is permitted to bring a burnt offering for sacrifice by the priests in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem (*Mishneh Torah, Maaseh Hakorbanot, Laws of Sacrificial Procedure 3:2-5*).]

But could the Talmud possibly be including **all** the Goyim throughout the entire world at all times under the term *Oveid Kokhavim*, regardless of their actual beliefs and practices, merely because they are not halakhically recognized as Jews? Is every Goy considered an idolater?

The answer must obviously be a definitive, resounding “No!” as can be proven from many sources in rabbinical literature.

## Talmudic terms for non-Israelites

It should be noted that the Hebrew term for Jew, *Yehudi*, יְהוּדִי, is found less frequently than might be expected in Talmudical and rabbinical literature. This is because Torah law recognizes no distinction between “Jews” (technically, descendants of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin), and other members of the people of Israel, including genuine descendants of the supposedly “lost” Ten Tribes, as well as full converts (the *Geirey Tzeddek*) and their descendants. For: “There is one Law for the homeborn and for the convert who dwells among you” (Exodus 12:49; cf. Numbers 15:15).

Rather, throughout most of rabbinical literature in Hebrew, the generic term for all people who are subject, whether by heredity or conversion, to the Six Hundred and Thirteen Commandments of the Torah is *Yisra'el*, יִשְׂרָאֵל, an “Israelite”. For this reason, in this work I generally use the term Israelite in that sense. Many translations routinely render the Hebrew *Yisrael* as “Jew”, but this is imprecise and misleading.

When it comes to the status of those who are not Israelite, by no means everyone can simply be considered an *AKUM*. When working with the very Talmud texts themselves and numerous later rabbinical works, hand-written or printed, it is essential to understand that Jews in exile often lived under the strictest restrictions, and their books were subject to rigorous censorship by the dominant non-Jewish religious authorities. Rabbis had to take precautions to ensure that their statements relating to Torah laws about idolatry and kindred subjects would not be construed by the censors as assaults on the dominant religion.

For this reason, different Talmud manuscripts and printed texts from various different times and places use a variety of different terms referring to non-Jews. These may include: *Goy*, גּוֹי, a “member of the nations”, *Nokhri*, נֹכְרִי, a “stranger” or “alien”, *AKUM*, אֶכּוּמִים, as defined above, *K'naani*, כְּנַעֲנִי, a “Canaanite”, *Mitzri*, מִצְרִי, an “Egyptian”, *Kuti*, כּוּתִי, a “Samaritan” (see II Kings 17:24), *Tzeddoki*, צְדוּקִי, a “Sadducee” or “heretic”, *Acherim*, אַחֲרִים, “others”, and more.

The term *Nokhri* signifying a “stranger” or “alien” is specifically defined by Rambam as an idolater: כָּל מְקוֹם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר נֹכְרִי סֵתָם הָרִי זֶה עוֹבֵד עֲכוּמִים “Wherever the term *Nokhri* is used without further definition, it refers to one who practices the worship of planets and stars” (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Maakhalot Assurot*, Laws of Forbidden Foods 11:18). Rashi commenting on

Exodus 12:43, which forbids every “son of a *Neikhar*”, בֶּן נִכְר, to eat from the Passover offering, explains that this term refers to “any person whose deeds have become *strange* to his Father that is in Heaven, and it may refer either to a Goy or to an Israelite apostate”. Thus, we see that even a born-Jew could turn into an *AKUM*, so that to be an idolater in the literal sense of the term is a matter of belief and practice and not dependent upon an accident of birth.

Although the Talmud states that the sages of the Second Temple prayed to nullify the evil desire for idolatry (*Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 64a*), they apparently did so mainly for the Jews in order to wean them from the idolatry of the likes of Jeroboam, Ahab and all who went in their footsteps in earlier times. However, as regards the other nations, the perception of the Talmudic and later rabbis was that idolatry was still rife though by no means universal.

Thus, the commentator RaDaK writes on Zechariah 11:14:

להפר את האחוה בין יהודה ובין ישראל: האחוה שהיתה בין יהודה ובין ישראל בעבודת עכו"ם הופרה אז כיון שגלתה יהודה לא נשאר בישראל עובדי עכו"ם כי ישראל עד שגלו לא הניחו מלעבוד עכו"ם בכל הצרות שהיו באות עליהם וכיון שגלו וראו כי דברי הנביאים אמת בחרבן הארץ לא עבדו אח"כ עכו"ם ויהודה ג"כ עבדו עכו"ם עד שגלו וכיון שגלו בטלה העכו"ם מהם הנה כי הופרה אז האחוה שהיתה ביניהם בעכו"ם.

“To annul the brotherhood between Judah and Israel” (Zechariah 11:14): The brotherhood that existed between Judah and Israel – the Ten Tribes – in idol-worship was broken then, when Judah went into exile and no idolaters were left in the Land of Israel. For prior to the exile of Israel, they did not leave aside the service of any kind of idolatry despite all the troubles that came upon them, and when they went into exile and saw that the words of the prophets were true inasmuch as the land was devastated, they did not worship idols afterwards. Judah also worshiped idols until they went into exile, and when they went into exile idolatry ceased among them, for the brotherhood that previously existed between them and the idol worshippers was broken.

RaDaK on Zechariah 11:14

Some consider that ancient sun worship was incorporated into the institutionalized Roman version of Christianity, and Rambam states that the “Edomites [or in some editions, Canaanites] are idolaters and Sunday is their festival...” (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Avodah Zarah, Laws of Idolatry 9:4*). However later authorities, particularly after the Reformation, considered some denominations of Christians to be monotheistic. There were some rabbis who viewed certain Islamic rituals as being rooted in ancient idolatry (see Ibn Ezra on Daniel 11:30). However, Rambam viewed the “Ishmaelites” as not coming under the category of idolaters as such, since the law prohibiting all benefit, including financial, from the wine of an idolater does not apply to their wine (although it may not be consumed) and they are seen as having the same status as the *Ger Toshav*, “resident stranger”, who observes the Seven Noahide Laws:

גֵּר תוֹשֵׁב וְהוּא שֶׁקִּבֵּל עָלָיו שְׁבַע מִצְוֹת וְכוּ' יֵינּוּ אֲסוּר בְּשִׁתְּיָהּ וּמִתָּר  
 בְּהִנָּהּ וְכוּ'. וְכֵן כָּל עֲבוּיִם שֶׁאֵינּוּ עוֹבְדֵי עֲבוּיִם כְּגוֹן אֱלוֹ  
 הַיְשָׁמְעָאִלִּים יֵינּוּ אֲסוּר בְּשִׁתְּיָהּ וּמִתָּר בְּהִנָּהּ. וְכֵן הוֹרוּ כָּל  
 הַגְּאוּנִים. אֲבָל אוֹתָם הָעוֹבְדִים עֲבוּיִם סִתָּם יֵינָם אֲסוּר בְּהִנָּהּ.

It is forbidden to drink the wine of a *Ger Toshav*, one who has accepted the Seven Mitzvot of the sons of Noah... but it is permitted to derive benefit from it [e.g., financially] ... And so too the wine of any Gentile who does not worship idols, **such as the Ishmaelites**, may not be drunk, but one may derive benefit from it, and so ruled all the Ge'onim. However, one may not derive any benefit from even the regular (i.e., non-sacramental) wine of those who worship idols.

*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Maakhalot Assurot, Laws of Forbidden Foods 11:7*

The latter-day halakhic authority, Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, writes as follows on the laws of a Torah scroll that was written by a Jewish apostate, which must be burned, as opposed to a Torah scroll written by a non-Jew, which is not burned but put away in an honorable manner (*Genizah*):

ולמה בכל אלו אמרו רק "יגנו", ובמין "ישרף"? משום דכל אלו  
 רק התורה פסלתן, אבל אין כוונתם לשם עבודת כוכבים. ואפילו  
 מצרי לא אמרין דסתם מחשבתו לכוכבים. אבל המינים אדוקים  
 בכוכבים, ולשמם כתבו, לפיכך צריכין שריפה. וזהו המינים

שבימי חכמינו ז"ל. אבל עכשיו לא שייד זה, שאינן מאמינים בכוכבים אלא הם פורקי עול מלכות שמים, והם בכלל עבריינים, ואין כתיבתם אלא בגניזה ולא בשריפה. וצריך לדעת שהרמב"ם, והטור, והשולחן ערוך, וכל הפוסקים שכתבו דמין ואפיקורס שכתבו ישרף – זהו במינים שבזמן הש"ס. ועכשיו אינם מצוים.

And why in the case of scrolls written by the above categories of gentile did they say only that they should be put away, while in the case of a scroll written by a Jewish apostate it must be burned? The reason is because in the case of gentiles who wrote a Torah scroll, it is only the Torah that disqualified them, but **their intention is not for the sake of idolatry**. And even in the case of a *Mitzri* (lit. Egyptian, see above p. 9) **we do not say that without further specification his thought is to idolatry**. However, the Israelite apostates are tightly attached to idolatry and will have written the scroll for the sake of their idol, and for that reason such scrolls must be burned.

And this applies to the apostates in the times of our sages of blessed memory, but this does not apply now, for they do not believe in the stars but they have simply thrown off the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and they come under the category of sinners, but their scrolls require only putting aside but not burning. And it is necessary to understand that the Rambam, the *Tur* and the *Shulchan Arukh* and all the Halakhic authorities who wrote that scrolls of an apostate (*Min*) and a heretic (*Apikoros*) should be burned were referring to those in the time of the Talmud, but today they are not found.

*Arukh HaShulchan, Yoreh De'ah #281*

# **Part I: Who is that Goy?**

# Part I: Who is that Goy?

## Different statuses, different laws

Despite the exclusion of the “idolater” from Torah study and Shabbat observance, Elijah the Prophet strikingly declares:

מַעֲיֵד אֲנִי עָלַי אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ בֵּין יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּין עַבְדֵי אֱלֹהִים  
אִישׁ בֵּין אִשָּׁה בֵּין עֶבֶד וּבֵין שִׁפְחָה, הַכֹּל לְפִי הַמַּעֲשֵׂה שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה  
כִּד רוּחַ הַקּוֹדֵשׁ שׁוֹרֵה עֲלֵיו.

I call the Heavens and the Earth to testify for me: Be it an Israelite or an Idolater, whether a man or a woman, whether a bondsman or a bondswoman, everything is according to the deeds which the person does, so holy spirit dwells upon them.

*Tanna d'vei Eliahu Rabba #9:1*

If even the literal idolater may change, repent, and through work and effort attain holy spirit, then surely the many people across the world who have repudiated idolatry cannot simply be pushed into the category of idolaters, even though they may not be considered halakhically “Jewish”.

In fact, Talmudic, Halakhic and other rabbinical sources discuss a variety of different categories of non-Israelites, each of whom has a distinct halakhic status. In addition, there are various levels of “captured” or “assimilated” Israelite souls who may currently have little or no connection with their authentic Torah heritage. It is essential to clarify the distinctions between these different statuses before we can address the questions about the eligibility of those who occupy them to study the Torah and observe the Shabbat.

With God’s help we shall discuss in turn the following different statuses:

1. **Ger Tzedek** גֵּר צְדִיק: The “full convert” to Torah
2. **Ben Noah** בֶּן נֹחַ: “Son of Noah” or “Noahide” (plural *Bney Noah*, “Noahides”): These are the “Righteous of the Nations”,

members of the nations who have undertaken the Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah, which apply to all humanity.

3. **Ger Toshav גֵּר תוֹשֵׁב**: A “resident stranger”, a particular category of Noahide who enjoys certain privileges, including the right to reside with the Tribes of Israel in the Holy Land

4. **Tinok Shenishbah תִּינוֹק שְׁנִשְׁבָּה**: A “captured child”, an Israelite who from early childhood was captured and held in captivity, either physically or culturally and spiritually, by people of other nations and thus grew up with little or no knowledge of his or her connection with the people of Israel and the Torah

5. **Hamitbolelim הַמְתְּבֹלְלִים**: “Assimilated” Jews who may have little or no awareness of their Jewish identity or Torah heritage

6. **Ger hamitgayer le-vein ha-goyim גֵּר הַמְתְּגַיֵּיר לְבֵין הַגּוֹיִם**: “A convert who converted among the nations”

7. **Ger hamitgayer beino le-vein atzmo גֵּר הַמְתְּגַיֵּיר בֵּינוֹ לְבֵין עַצְמוֹ**: “A convert who converted on his own” or “privately”

8. **Aseret Ha-sh'vatim עֶשְׂרֵת הַשְּׁבָטִים**: The Ten Tribes.

## 1. Ger Tzeddek

**Ger Tzeddek**, “The Righteous Dweller”, is the term Jews give to a gentile who has converted to Judaism before a rabbinical court and has undertaken to observe all of the 613 commandments of the Torah. From being a complete Goy, the *Ger Tzeddek* has become a fully-fledged Jew or Israelite, with all the associated obligations, responsibilities and privileges. The *Ger Tzeddek* is permitted to marry within the *Kahal*, the “Assembly” of recognized members of the Children of Israel, and obviously is not only permitted but *obliged* to study the Torah and observe the Shabbat in all its details as well as all the other commandments.

The term *Ger*, גֵּר, is defined by the biblical commentator Rashi as “a person who was not born in a particular state but came from a different state to reside there” (כָּל לְשׁוֹן גֵּר אָדָם שֶׁלֹּא נוֹלַד בְּאוֹתָהּ מְדִינָהּ, אֶלָּא בָּא)

מְמַדִּינָה אַחֲרַת לְגוֹר שָׁם, *Rashi* on Exodus 22:20.) Since *Ger* is a generic term that also includes the halakhic status of *Ger Toshav* (see below p. 17), the full convert is termed a *Ger Tzeddek*, where the term *Tzeddek*, צְדִיק, is an epithet meaning “righteousness”.

## The Canaanite Slave

Another case of a non-Israelite “idolater” who may become a member of the Covenant, though ineligible to marry into the *Kahal*, is the “Canaanite slave” or “bondsman”, *Eved K’na’ani*, עֶבֶד כְּנַעֲנִי, though not necessarily from one of the seven ancient Canaanite peoples (Leviticus 25:44-46, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Avadim*, Laws of Slaves chapters 5-9). He or she may be a member of any nation who had been sold (or sold him/herself) into servitude to an Israelite and formally undertakes this status at the time of being immersed in a mikveh under the hand of the new master.

The Canaanite slave is subject to all the three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions of the Torah but is obliged to observe only those of the two hundred and forty-eight positive commandments that apply to Israelite women (i.e., excluding “mitzvot occasioned by time”, *mitzvot sh’ha-z’man geraman*, מִצְוֹת שְׁהַזְמַן גְּרָמָן). While the Canaanite slave may not study Torah, he or she is obliged to abstain from all the labors that are forbidden to Israel on the Shabbat. If the Canaanite slave is formally freed by his master, he becomes a full member of the *Kahal*, the Assembly of Israel, liable to all of the 613 commandments and permitted to intermarry within the community.

With the formal abolition of slavery in modern times (though *de facto* slavery continues in many parts of the world), the halakhic status of the Canaanite Slave is not relevant and will therefore not be discussed further here.

## 2. Ben Noah or “Noahide”

A “Noahide” is a person who has explicitly disavowed idolatry and has formally embraced the Seven Noahide Commandments before a panel of three Torah-observant, learned Israelites (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Melakhim*, Laws of Kings 8:10). In the words of Rambam:

כָּל הַמְקַבֵּל שְׁבַע מִצְוֹת וְנִזְקָר לַעֲשׂוֹתָן הֲרִי זֶה מְחַסֵּידי אֲמוֹת  
הָעוֹלָם וְיֵשׁ לוֹ חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא וְהוּא שֵׁיִקְבֵּל אוֹתָן וְיַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָן

מִפְּנֵי שְׂצוּהַ בְּהֶן הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּתוֹרָה וְהוֹדִיעָנוּ עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּנוּ שְׂבִנֵי נַח מִקֶּדֶם נִצְטוּי בְּהֶן. אֲבָל אִם עֲשָׂאן מִפְּנֵי הַכְּרַע הַדַּעַת אִין זֶה גֵר תוֹשָׁב וְאִינוּ מִחֲסִידֵי אֲמוֹת הָעוֹלָם וְלֹא מִחֲכָמֵיהֶם.

Anyone who accepts upon himself and carefully observes the Seven Commandments is of the Righteous of the Nations of the World and has a portion in the World to Come. This is as long as he accepts and performs them because he truly believes that it was the Holy One, Blessed Be He, Who commanded them in the Torah, and that it was through Moses our Teacher that we were informed that the Sons of Noah had already been commanded to observe them. But if he observes them because he convinced himself logically through his own intellect and conscience, but he does not agree that they were commanded by God, then he is not considered a *Ger Toshav* and is not of the Righteous of the Nations of the World, but merely one of their wise.

*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Melakhim, Laws of Kings and their Wars 8:11*

### 3. Ger Toshav, “Resident Stranger”

Included the general category of the Noahide is that of the *Ger Toshav* or “Resident Stranger”. He is required to make a formal declaration before three Torah-observant, learned Israelites undertaking to observe the Seven Noahide Commandments (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim, Laws of Kings 8:10*). The *Ger Toshav* has the right to dwell in the Holy Land (unlike idolaters). In addition, the Torah commands the Children of Israel to protect the *Ger Toshav* against danger and to “vitalize” him, i.e., sustain him economically where necessary (*Leviticus 25:35; Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 21b*).

In the words of Rambam:

גֵר תוֹשָׁב זֶה עַבְדֵי שְׂקִיבֵל עָלָיו שְׁלֹא יַעֲבֹד עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה עִם שְׂאָר הַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁנִּצְטוּי בְּנֵי נַח וְלֹא מִלְּוֹלָא טַבֵּל הָרִי זֶה מִקְּבָלִין אוֹתוֹ וְהוּא מִחֲסִידֵי אֲמוֹת הָעוֹלָם. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׂמוֹ תוֹשָׁב לְפִי שְׂמִתָּר לָנוּ לְהוֹשִׁיבוֹ בִּינֵינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

The *Ger Toshav* is a gentile who took upon himself not to worship idols together with the other commandments given to the Children of Noah but has not circumcised nor immersed. We accept him, and he is of the Righteous of the Nations of the World. And why is he

called by the name of “resident”? Because we are permitted to let him dwell among us in the Land of Israel.

*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Issurey Biyah, Laws of Forbidden Unions*  
14:7

Rambam proceeds to state that the full status of *Ger Toshav* (as opposed to Noahide) applies only in times when the law of the Jubilee year (Leviticus 25:8ff) is observed, i.e., when a duly-constituted Sanhedrin sits in the Temple in Jerusalem:

אין מקבלין גר תושב אלא בזמן שהיוכל נוהג, אבל בזמן הזה  
אפלו קבל עליו כל התורה כלה חוץ מדקדוק אחד אין מקבלין  
אותו.

The *Ger Toshav* is not accepted except at a time when the Jubilee Year is observed, but at this time even if he undertook upon himself the entire Torah with the exception of one detail, he is not accepted.

*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot Issurey Biyah, Laws of Forbidden Unions*  
14:8

An important annotation by Rabbi Avraham ben David, (“Raavad”), in his *Hasagot* (critical glosses) on Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah* clarifies what this statement implies:

אלא בזמן שהיובל נוהג וכו' כתב הראב"ד ז"ל דעת זה המחבר  
סתום וחתום ולא פירש מהו אין מקבלין גר תושב אלא בזמן  
שהיובל נוהג ומה הן מצות גר תושב והוא שאין מושיבין אותו  
בתוך העיר דדרשינן בספרי עמך ישב ולא בעיר עצמה ומצוה  
להחיותו דכתיב וחי אחיך עמך וקונה עבד עברי כעכו"ם ואלה  
הדינים שאינם נוהגים בו אלא בזמן שהיובל נוהג יש מהן שהוא  
להקל עליו ויש מהן להחמיר עליו שבזמן שאין היובל נוהג יושב  
אפילו בעיר עצמה שאין קדושת הארץ עליה כשהיתה וקונה עבד  
עברי עד זמן שירצה שאין זמן מיוחד ואלו להקל עליו אבל אין  
אנו מצווים להחיותו זהו להחמיר עליו וקרוב הדבר להיות מן  
הטעם כי בזמן היובל היו שומטין והיה יכול להתפרנס שלא  
בטורח צבור ועכשיו אינו יכול מעתה מקיימין מי שהתנה שלא  
למול ושלא לטבול כמה שירצה בכל זמן עכ"ל.

**Except at a time when the Jubilee Year is observed:** The Raavad of blessed memory wrote: The opinion of this writer [i.e., Rambam] is closed and sealed and he does not explain what it means that “the *Ger Toshav* is accepted only at a time when the Jubilee year is observed” and what are the commandments incumbent upon Israel in connection with the *Ger Toshav*. Namely, he is not permitted to dwell within the city, as taught in *Sifrei* on Deuteronomy 23:17: “‘with you he may dwell’ – but not in the city itself”. And it is a mitzvah to sustain him, as it is written: “And your brother shall *live* with you” (Leviticus 25:35). And he may purchase a Hebrew slave just as may an idolater.

The following are the laws that apply to him only at a time when the Jubilee is observed, some being more lenient upon him while others are more stringent. For at a time when the Jubilee is not observed, he may dwell even in the city itself, because the holiness of the Land is not upon it as it was formerly. In addition, he may purchase a Hebrew slave for whatever period of time he wants, because there is no specified time for the slave to serve, and these are leniencies. However, we are not commanded to sustain him, and this is a stringency, and it would seem that the reason is because in the time of the Jubilee the fields were deemed ownerless and he could sustain himself without being a burden on the community, but now he is unable to do so. As regards a gentile servant who stipulated that he will not circumcise and not immerse for as long as he wants, we may keep such a servant at all times.

Raavad, *Hasagot on Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Issurey Biyah*, Laws of Forbidden Unions 14:8

## 4 & 5: The Captive Child and the Assimilated

Many of the “non-Jews” who are today reaching out to rabbis may fit neatly into the categories of potential *Ger Tzeddek* or *Bney Noach*. At the same time, we are also witnessing an extraordinary arousal to Torah among people in all parts of the world who cannot be so readily classified. They manifest a compelling drive to connect with the God of Israel, His Torah and its precepts, the people of Israel and their land. In many cases they say they have always, even from earliest childhood, experienced deep feelings of alienation from their own cultural matrix together with profound cravings for a true and authentic spiritual pathway. Many feel highly frustrated when

told that, as non-Jews, they are eligible only to observe the Seven Noahide Laws, for they feel that from the very roots of their souls they are being called to higher levels of observance and connection.

With the advent of the Internet, which facilitates instant global communication on a scale unimaginable in any past age, those active in the field of Torah outreach have in recent times had unparalleled opportunities to discover ever-growing streams of such people, because they are regularly using Torah websites, listening to rabbis' podcasts, watching and commenting on their videos, corresponding via email and messaging applications, posting and discussing on social networking platforms, purchasing Judaica online, donating to Torah causes and other worthy projects in Israel and elsewhere, etc. They are located quite literally on every continent – Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia, North and South America – sometimes in the remotest outposts. In many cases they live far away from any Torah-observant community, let alone a rabbinical *Beit Din* that is qualified to give a recognized conversion, and for most, the possibilities of their moving to such a community are practically non-existent.

How are Torah-observant Jews to relate to such people? If we are commanded to vitalize and encourage the *Bney Noah*, are we not to open ourselves to those who claim to seek a path of Torah observance that will truly fulfill their spiritual cravings? Are we permitted to offer them teaching and guidance, and encourage them in their quest? Or are they to be given the cold shoulder and told to wait until all the “known Jews” have returned, or until the prophet Elijah will come with Mashiach to determine their status?

## Rabbi Nachman on the Sparks of the Souls of Israel

Rabbi Nachman teaches that great glory comes to the Almighty when those who were farthest away come to recognize Him:

כִּי עָקַר גְּדֻלְתּוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ-בְּרוּךְ-הוּא, שֶׁגַם הָעֲכוּ"ם יִדְעוּ שְׂיִשׁ  
אֱלֹקִים שְׂלִיט וּמוֹשֵׁל, כְּמוֹבָא בְּזִהַר (יתרו דף ס ט): כִּד אֲתָא יִתְרוֹ  
וְאָמַר: כִּי עָתָה יִדְעָתִי כִּי גְדוֹל ה' וְכוּ', כִּי דִין אֲתִיקַר וְאֲתַעֲלָא שְׂמָא  
עֲלָאָה. וְלָעֲכוּ"ם אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לָהֶם לִידַע גְּדֻלְתּוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ-בְּרוּךְ-הוּא  
כִּי אִם עַל-יְדֵי בְּחִינַת יַעֲקֹב, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב (ישעיהו ב' ה' ו'): בֵּית יַעֲקֹב  
לָכוּ וְנִלְכָּה בְּאוֹר ה', כִּי הוּא גְּלָה אֱלֹקוֹתוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ-בְּרוּךְ-הוּא  
יִוְתַר מִשְׁאָר הָאֲבוֹת...

For the essence of God's greatness is that the idol-worshippers too should know there is an Almighty who rules and governs the world. As stated in the *Zohar* (II, 69a): "When Jethro came and said, 'Now I know that God is great' (Exodus 18:11), with this His Name was greatly magnified and exalted above and below." But the idol-worshippers can only know of the greatness of the Holy One through the aspect of Jacob, as it is written (Isaiah 2:5): "O House of *Jacob*, come let us go in God's light." This is because Jacob revealed the greatness of the Holy One even more than the other patriarchs...

*Likutey Moharan* Part 1, Lesson 10:2-3

If it is only Jacob – the nation that faithfully observes the Torah – that can show the gentiles the way of God, are we to rebuff these people knocking at our gates, who have disavowed idolatry, often at great personal cost and pain, and who crave for connection with the Torah?

Where indeed lie the roots of these souls?

The answer to this question may be gleaned from a unique rabbinical teaching contained in another lesson of Rabbi Nachman given on Shabbat Chanukah 1805 and printed in *Likutey Moharan* Part I, Lesson 17. (For the full Hebrew text, see below pp. 76ff.)

How is it possible to win converts when they are so very distant from the holiness of Israel? And what is it that prompts them to even think of converting? ... How is it possible to talk to them so that they listen and come to convert?

But just as when one is very far away from one's friend and cannot talk to him directly so that he will hear, one must write him a letter, likewise it is necessary to send the gentiles a written script so they may hear, even though they are distant.

Now, when the air is tranquil and pure, and one who is capable of speaking the language of Israel – holy speech – talks, then these words are inscribed and engraved in the air, as in: "My tongue is like the pen of a skillful scribe" (Psalms 45:2). And then his holy words go out and are heard from afar, as in: "His fame went out to all the provinces" (Esther 9:4) – for when the air is calm and clear, it is possible to hear from afar.

These words then come to be written in the literature of the nations, “every province according to its writing” (Esther. 8:9). And so, the gentiles discover in their own books ideas which are contradictory to their received religious beliefs...

But how is it that these individuals in particular find contradictions to their religion in their books and come to acknowledge the faith of Israel, while the others find nothing and remain with their traditional beliefs?

**But know! This is because of the good that is suppressed under the control of the nations – namely, the parts of the souls of Israel which they hold in captivity. For all true goodness is with the souls of Israel.**

In other words, this occurs when the nations hold sway and prevent Israel from practicing the commandments – such as when they issued decrees forbidding circumcision and compelling Shabbat desecration (*Rosh HaShanah* 19a; *Me'ilah* 17a; cf. *Bava Batra* 60b). The good which Israel was supposed to perform then becomes caught captive under their control. This is also the case even when they inadvertently prevent the Jews from serving God, by exacting from them levies and taxes, as well as denying them benefits. Through all of this, the good – the souls of Israel – is held captive under their power.

Initially, this good which they hold captive remembers that it comes from a very holy and exalted place. But afterwards, the good under their control is overpowered and dominated to the point where it becomes trapped and bound to them. Eventually, the good itself forgets its exaltedness.

**But when the words of Israel go forth and come to be inscribed in their books, as explained, this good held captive there then finds them in their books. That is, the good finds contradictions to their religion there and thereby is reminded of its exaltedness. It remembers that it came from a very exalted place, that it is a part of the souls of Israel, for whom all the worlds were created.**

**Then this good begins to grieve and pine over its having come from such an exalted level and is now held captive**

**under the control of the impure, evil forces and could, God forbid, come to be eradicated and lost, and it longs and desires to drag itself back and return to its place...**

And know! There are times when the evil realizes that this good is pining with desire to get away and return to its place. They then suppress the good even more powerfully and bring it into an even greater concealment, into the inner recesses of their thought. That is to say, they start thinking maliciously about this good, and by so doing, bring it into even greater concealment and obscurity in the inner recesses of their mind.

As a result, this good then emerges through the offspring that these gentiles bear. This is because the good is hidden and concealed in the inner recesses of their thought and mind, from which the seed issues forth. Therefore, the good emerges in the seed that produces their offspring, and the evil in these offspring is then incapable of overpowering the good which they have within them. In this way, the good emerges through the offspring, resulting in converts. As our sages said (*Gittin 57b*): “The grandchildren of Sennacherib studied Torah.” And the Talmud also mentions other wicked people whose very offspring became converts, as explained.

*Likutey Moharan* Part I, Lesson 17:5-7

For the full original Hebrew text, see below (pp. 76ff).

## **Potential and Actual Converts**

Rabbi Nachman added to this discussion in a teaching given a few years later on Rosh Hashanah, New Year 1809:

The elevation of the fallen faith of idolaters makes converts, for by restoring and refining fallen faith, which is the sustaining force of [idolatrous] belief, their old belief is weakened, and they then come over to our holy faith and so become converts.

**Sometimes they become only potential converts, while sometimes they become actual converts.** That is to say, either idol worshipers actually come and convert; or this may happen only potentially, when their fallen faith is elevated and their original belief is weakened so that holy faith is revealed to them *in their place*. There, in their place, they believe that there is the One

Primordial God, as in the words of the prophet: “In every place offerings are burned and presented to My Name” (Malachi 1:11).

This depends on the strength of the original false belief. If it was initially strong, then afterwards – when it is broken and the fallen, holy faith is lifted up from there – they become actual converts. But if their false faith was not so strong initially, then when it is broken and turned toward holiness, it produces only potential converts.

*Likutey Moharan* Part II, Lesson 5:4

For the full original Hebrew text, see below (pp. 8of).

## Assimilation and Return

God has promised in the Torah:

וְשָׁב יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶת־שְׁבוּתֶךָ וְרָחֲמֶךָ וְשָׁב יְקֹוֹבְךָ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים  
אֲשֶׁר הִפְיָצְךָ יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵיךָ שָׁמָּה :

אִם־יְהִיָּה נִדְחָךְ בְּקִצֵּה הַשָּׂמַיִם מִשָּׁם יְקֹוֹבְךָ יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵיךָ וּמִשָּׁם  
יִקְחֶךָ :

Then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and take you back in love. He will bring you together again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

Even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world, from there the LORD your God will gather you, from there He will fetch you.

Deuteronomy 30:3-4

Every true lover of Israel who yearns for the final Redemption with the ingathering of all the exiles and the ultimate Restoration will surely want to know: Who are these souls? How did they get there? And for our part, what are we do to assist them in coming home and rejoining their people? Even if there is no iron-cast certainty that these are our brothers and sisters, if there is even a shadow of a doubt that they might indeed be so, are we permitted simply to ignore them? Do family ignore even the faintest clue in searching for a lost son, daughter, brother or sister or cousin...? If one of these souls is a “potential” convert but not a candidate to become an “actual” convert, a *Ger Tzeddek*, should we not at least “send” them Torah teachings to nourish their souls in the place where they are? One of the greatest commandments of the Torah is to redeem captives. Here we are not even

required to pay ransom money since we can fulfill the commandment through emails and Internet posts.

## Captive Israelite slaves and their offspring

The mysteries of Divine providence over the souls of Israel, their incarnations and repair over many generations, are discussed in the *Zohar* (*Mishpatim* 95a ff) and other kabbalistic sources (*Shaar Hagilgulim* etc.). Yet even without reference to these teachings, we can easily recognize how highly plausible it is that at least some of these seeking souls may well be descended from members of the Children of Israel who were at some time or other either literally or figuratively taken captive, raised and assimilated among the nations to the point where they lost all awareness of their true identity and soul roots.

From the earliest times Israel's oppressors would capture their children and sell them into slavery, as we find in the prophecy of Joel:

וּבְנֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם מִכַּרְתֶּם לְבְנֵי הַיּוֹנִים לְמַעַן הִרְחִיקֵם מֵעַל  
גְּבוּלָם :

הֲנִי מְעִירָם מִן־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתָם שָׁמָּה וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי גְּמֻלָּכֶם  
בְּרֹאשְׁכֶם :

And you have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem to the Greeks, in order to distance them far away from their homeland.

Behold, I will rouse them from the place where you sold them, and I will repay your deserts on your heads.

Joel 4:6-7

In the first major exile of Israel from their land, the Assyrian king Sennacherib transplanted the Ten Tribes far away in central Asia (II Kings 17:7), where according to tradition, the great majority of them became assimilated and never returned, to the point that they seemingly disappeared completely.

Later oppressors took great numbers Jews into slavery, as in the case of the Romans, who transported innumerable captive slaves from Israel to Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Britain, North Africa and other locations across their empire. In Arabia, Mohammed's armies would

routinely slaughter the entire male populations of Jewish settlements while capturing and forcibly converting all their women and children in order to breed slaves.

Even a cursory glance at later Jewish history shows a repeating pattern of separation from Jewish tradition and assimilation into the surrounding non-Jewish population. This happened on an enormous scale at the time of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, when many sought safety through outwardly acting as Christians while striving to practice Judaism secretly at home. Great numbers were absorbed into the populations of Spain and Portugal and their colonies in North and South America and elsewhere across the world. Today many of their descendants – the *Bney Anousim*, “Children of the Forced [Converts]” – are becoming newly aware of their roots and identity and returning to Torah observance with great fervor.

During the last five hundred years, oppression and discrimination against Jews across Europe pressured many into converting to Christianity or abandoning religious faith entirely in favor of philosophical skepticism and moral relativism. During the Bolshevik, Communist and Nazi persecutions, some Jews sought to survive by blending in or intermarrying with the surrounding gentiles, while others entrusted their children to foster-parents, nunneries etc. to be brought up as Christians. Since the Second World War, untold numbers of Jews in countries across the world, facing the challenges of rampant secular materialism, have lapsed either partially or completely from Jewish self-identification and observance. Particularly in cases of intermarriage between a Jew and a gentile, it often takes only a generation or two for all connection with Judaism to be lost.

## **Matrilineal Descent**

Obviously, any child born of an Israelite mother, even where the mother had been taken into literal or spiritual captivity and separated from her native cultural matrix, not only has “Jewish” genes but is also considered as being fully Jewish under the Torah law of matrilineal descent. Under this law, one born of an Israelite mother is accounted a native-born Israelite even where the father is from one of the other nations (Rambam, *Mishneh Torah Hilchot Issureyi Biyah*, Laws of Forbidden Unions 12:1-2). Indeed, even in cases where the mother has lost all Jewish identity, her children are in certain respects still considered halakhically Jewish, as exemplified in the following law in *Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah*, Laws of Interest:

כותיים יש להם דין מומר לעבודת כוכבים. הקראים אין להם דין מומרים ואסור להלוותם ברבית ואין צריך לומר שאסור ללוות מהם ברבית... תינוק שנשבה לבין העובדי כוכבים ואינו יודע מתורת ישראל כלל דינו כקראים ואסור להלוות לו ברבית... ולכן מומרת לעבודת כוכבים שיש לה בן מן העובד כוכבים שהבן הרי הוא כמוה ונקרא מומר אסור להלוות לו ברבית דהוי כתינוק שנשבה לבין העובדי כוכבים.

The Samaritans come under the legal category of an apostate to idolatry [and it is permitted to lend and borrow from them with interest], but the Karaites do not come under the category of apostates, and it is forbidden to make them loans with interest [just as it is forbidden to give a loan to a fellow-Jew with interest], and no need to add that it is forbidden to take loans from them with interest...

A child who was taken into captivity among the idolaters and knows nothing of the Torah of Israel has the same law as the Karaites and it is forbidden to make him a loan with interest. For this reason, in the case of a woman who became an apostate to idolatry and who has a son from an idol-worshipper – in which case the son has the same status as she does and is called an apostate – it is forbidden to make a loan to him with interest because he is like a child that was taken captive among the idolaters.

*Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 159:3*

## **How should we treat the captive children?**

Clearly the category of the “Captive Child” may include more than literal physical captivity and enslavement and also encompasses the social and cultural captivity of Israelite souls within the worldviews, belief systems, lifestyles and behaviors of the nations as a result of upbringing, education and social conditioning. It was in this wider sense that the term “Captive Child” has been widely used in recent generations by outstanding Torah leaders, most notably Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, in seeking to connect with the alienated and assimilated Jews of our times in a manner of kindness and understanding rather than one of condemnation and rejection.

This approach is set forth clearly by Rambam in *Hilkhot Mamrim*,  
Laws of Rebels:

מִי שֶׁאִינוֹ מוֹדֵה בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁבַעל פֶּה וְכוּי הָרִי זֶה בְּכָלל הָאֶפִיקוֹרוֹסִין  
וּמִיתָתוֹ בְּכָל אָדָם.

בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אָמוּרִים בְּאִישׁ שֶׁכִּפַּר בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁבַעל פֶּה בְּמַחְשָׁבָתוֹ  
וּבְדָבָרִים שֶׁנֶּאֱרָאוּ לוֹ וְהִלָּךְ אַחַר דַּעְתּוֹ הַקְלָה וְאַחַר שְׂרִירוֹת לְבוֹ  
וְכוֹפֵר בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁבַעל פֶּה תַחֲלָה כְּצָדוֹק וּבִיתוֹס וְכֵן כָּל הַתּוֹעִים  
אַחֲרָיו. אָבֵל בְּנֵי הַתּוֹעִים הָאֵלֶּה וּבְנֵי בְּנֵיהֶם שֶׁהִדְיָחוּ אוֹתָם  
אָבוֹתָם וְנוֹלְדוּ בֵּין הַקְרָאִים וְגִדְלוּ אוֹתָם עַל דַּעְתָּם הָרִי הוּא  
כְּתִינוֹק שֶׁנִּשְׁבָּה בִּינֵיהֶם וְגִדְלוּהוּ וְאִינוֹ זָרִיז לְאַחֲזוֹ בְּדַרְכֵי הַמְצֻוֹת  
שֶׁהָרִי הוּא כְּאֲנוּס וְאֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁשָּׁמַע אַחַר כֵּךְ שֶׁהוּא יְהוּדִי וְרָאָה  
הִיְהוּדִים וְדָתָם הָרִי הוּא כְּאֲנוּס שֶׁהָרִי גִדְלוּהוּ עַל טְעוּתָם כֵּךְ אֵלוּ  
שֶׁאֲמַרְנוּ הָאוֹחֲזִים בְּדַרְכֵי אָבוֹתָם הַקְרָאִים שֶׁטָּעוּ. **לְפִיכֵךְ רָאוּ  
לְהַחֲזִירָן בַּתְּשׁוּבָה וּלְמַשְׁכֵּם בְּדַבְרֵי שְׁלוֹם עַד שֶׁיַּחֲזִירוּ לְאִיתָן  
הַתּוֹרָה.**

A person who denies the validity of the Oral Law is one of the  
heretics and should be put to death.

To whom does this apply? To a person who knowingly denied the  
Oral Law in accordance with his perception of things, who went  
after his superficial understanding and his stubborn heart and  
denied the Oral Torah as originally [in Second Temple times] did  
the heretics Tzaddok and Baithos... But in the case of the children  
of these errant people and their children's children, whose parents  
led them astray and who were born among these Karaites and  
raised according to their ideas, they are considered as a child  
captured among them whom they raised.

Such a child may not be eager to take grasp of the pathways of the  
commandments, for it is as if he were under compulsion. Even if he  
later hears that he is Jewish and saw Jews and their religious  
practice, he is still considered as one who was under compulsion,  
for he was raised according to their mistaken path. This applies to  
those whom we mentioned who follow the erroneous Karaite path  
of their ancestors. **Therefore, it is appropriate to motivate  
them to repent and draw them with words of peace until  
they return to the eternal Torah.**

*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Mamrim, Laws of Rebels 3:1 & 3*

## Liability of the Captive Child to Torah and Mitzvot

When the Captive Child becomes aware of his true spiritual roots, is he or she liable to study the Torah and observe the Shabbat and all the other commandments?

The answer is of course: “Yes!” In the eyes of the Halakhah, the Captive Child is considered a fully-fledged Israelite. This is the foundation of the law requiring a Captive Child who returned to the fold in Temple times to bring a sacrifice to atone for unwitting transgressions committed even at a time when he was unaware of his true identity:

כָּל הַמְחִיב חֲטָאת קְבוּעָה עַל שְׂגֵגָתוֹ וְעָשָׂה בְּשִׁגְגָה וְנוֹדַע לוֹ אַחֲרֵי שֶׁחֲטָא אָף עַל פִּי שְׂלֵא הִיָּתָה לוֹ יְדִיעָה בְּתַחֲלָה שֶׁזֶה חֲטָא הוּא הָרִי זֶה חִיב חֲטָאת. כִּי צָד? תִּינּוֹק שֶׁנִּשְׁפָּה לְבֵינוֹ הַעֲכוּוֹת וְגִדֵּל וְהוּא אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ מֵהֵם שֶׁיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא דָתָם וְעָשָׂה מִלְּאִכָּה בְּשִׁבְתָּ וְאָכַל חֶלֶב וְדָם וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָהֶן, כְּשֶׁיִּנְדַּע לוֹ שֶׁהוּא יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִצְוָה עַל כָּל אֵלוֹ חִיב לְהֵבִיא חֲטָאת עַל כָּל עֲבֵרָה וְעֵבֶרָה, וְכֵן כָּל כִּיּוֹצֵא בָּזֶה.

In all situations where a person is obligated to bring a fixed sin-offering for his inadvertent transgression and he transgressed inadvertently and he becomes aware of the transgression after violating it, he is liable for a sin-offering, even though he was not aware initially that this act was a transgression.

Thus, if a child had been captured by gentiles and raised by them without knowing either about Israel or their faith, then if he performed labor on the Sabbath, ate forbidden fat or blood and the like, when he discovers that he is an Israelite and is commanded to renounce all the above, he is obligated to bring a sin-offering for each category of transgression, and the same applies in all similar situations.

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Shegagot*, Laws of Unintentional Sins 2:6.

See also *ibid.* 7:2 on the same law with respect specifically to violations of the Shabbat prohibitions.

Since the Captive Child is liable to bring a sin-offering to atone for his unwitting transgressions, it is clear that in the eyes of the Halakhah he is considered a fully-fledged Israelite and not in need of “conversion”. Without clear evidence of Jewish matrilineal descent, a *Beit Din* may not wish to give

a license to a self-declared Captive Child to marry into the Jewish community without at least a symbolic conversion, but his liability to bring sin-offerings for earlier transgressions indicates that such an individual is and always was fully bound by the laws of the Torah.

## **Rabbi Nachman imagines being a captive**

... Even after overcoming these threats, the Rebbe and his attendant were still in indescribable danger. They were two Jews, alone on a warship filled with Turkish troops. These Turks would think nothing of selling two Jews as slaves in some faraway place. The very thought filled the Rebbe's heart with terror.

He began to think about it. What would he do if he were sold as a slave in a faraway place where there were no Jews? What if nobody knew about it? How would he keep the mitzvot of the Torah? This particular worry bothered him the most. The Rebbe pondered the possibilities again and again. Finally, he was worthy of realizing that he could serve God even if he were unable to actually keep the mitzvot. He comprehended the devotion of the Patriarchs, who lived before God even gave the Torah. They also kept all the mitzvot, even though they often did so only in a symbolic manner. Thus, Jacob fulfilled the mitzvah of tefillin through the sticks he peeled while watching Laban's sheep (Genesis 30:37).

The Rebbe thought along these lines until he understood how he could keep all the mitzvot in this manner. He could continue to serve God even if he were sold as a slave in the most distant land.

From *Shevachay HaRan*, The Praise of Rebbe Nachman, Part II: "Rebbe Nachman's Pilgrimage to the Land of Israel". Printed in "Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom" (Breslov Research Institute)

## 6 & 7: One Who Converted Among the Nations & One Who Converted on His Own

The Talmud in *Shabbat* 68a-b discusses dissenting opinions among the Amora'im on the above-quoted law of the liability of the Captive Child to bring a sin-offering for unwitting desecration of the Shabbat. It is in the context of this discussion that mention is made of two other categories: **a convert who converted among the gentiles**, גַּר שֶׁנִּתְגַּיֵּיר לְבֵין הַגּוֹיִם, and **a convert who converted on his own**, גַּר הַמִּתְגַּיֵּיר בֵּינוֹ לְבֵין עַצְמוֹ.

The Mishnah under discussion by these Amora'im (Mishnah Shabbat chapter 7 Mishnah 1) speaks of the liability of different individuals to bring a sin-offering for unwitting desecration of the Shabbat, depending on whether they were entirely ignorant of the Shabbat according to Torah law or had once known but forgot. The Amora'im dispute which cases of Shabbat desecration by individuals of different halakhic statuses would properly come under the category of “unwitting” such as to carry the liability to bring a sin-offering:

רב ושמואל דאמרי תרווייהו: מתניתין בתינוק שנשבה לבין הגוים, וגר שנתגייר לבין הגוים. אבל הכיר ולבסוף שכח — חייב על כל שבת ושבת.

It was **Rav and Shmuel who both said: Our mishnah is referring to both a child who was taken captive among the gentiles and was never educated and a convert who converted among the gentiles** and never learned the *halakhot* of Shabbat. **However**, one who once **knew** of the essence of Shabbat **and ultimately forgot is liable for each and every Shabbat**, as we learned in the Mishnah with regard to one who knows the essence of Shabbat...

*Shabbat* 68a interleaved with the commentary of Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz

ורבי יוחנן ורבי שמעון בן לקיש דאמרי תרווייהו: דוקא הכיר ולבסוף שכח — אבל תינוק שנשבה בין הגוים וגר שנתגייר לבין הגוים — פטור.

**And it was Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish who both said:** He is liable to bring a sin-offering **specifically** if **he knew** of the essence of Shabbat **and ultimately forgot**. **However, a child who was taken captive among the gentiles and a convert who converted among the gentiles** are **exempt** from bringing a sin-offering. They have the legal status of one who performed the prohibited labor due to circumstances beyond his control.

*Shabbat 68b*

We have cited above (p. 29) Rambam's halakhic ruling that the captive child and one who converted among the gentiles are indeed liable to bring a sin-offering for their past unwitting transgressions, in accordance with the opinion of the Amora'im Rav and Shmuel. However, our focus here is on clarifying two other categories involved in this discussion in the Talmud. The first is mentioned explicitly: **a convert who converted among the gentiles**, גַּר שֶׁנִּתְגַּיֵּיר לְבֵין הַגּוֹיִם. The second is a related category which is mentioned by the commentators on the above discussion, that of **a convert who converted on his own**, גַּר הַמִּתְגַּיֵּיר בְּיָנוּ לְבֵין עַצְמוֹ.

With regard to the **convert who converted among the gentiles**, the Tosafot in their commentary (*loc. cit.*) define this as a case of a person who converted before three regular Jews (as opposed to competent, knowledgeable rabbis) but they failed to inform him fully about the commandment of Shabbat (such as the severe penalties for its infringement). Similarly, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, "RaMBaN" (*loc. cit.*) defines him as "one who converted before three and they informed him about some of the other commandments but not about the commandment of Shabbat, or they erred and failed to inform him properly".

Both the Tosafot and Ramban in their commentaries here make reference to that other category of *Ger*: **one who converted on his own**, or "privately", גַּר הַמִּתְגַּיֵּיר בְּיָנוּ לְבֵין עַצְמוֹ, i.e., a person who voluntarily embraced Torah practice but never submitted to a formal halakhic conversion under the supervision of a duly constituted rabbinical court (*Beit Din*). The Tosafot and Ramban state unequivocally that such an individual is **not considered a Ger** (i.e., a *Ger Tzeddek*), and reference the Talmudic source for this law in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Yevamot* in the name of the Tanna, Rabbi Yehudah: "One who converted on his own is not a convert" (*Yevamot 47a*). Rashi in his comment (*ad loc.*) explains that this is

because the Torah requires that a conversion must be performed before a rabbinical court, *Beit Din*, as derived from Deuteronomy 1:16, where the Torah includes the Ger in the commandment to the judges of Israel to “judge righteously”, which implies that the Ger must be “judged” before a court of law at the time of conversion.

There is no dispute in the Talmud or among the commentators about the halakhic status of **the convert who converts among the nations** (i.e., before three Jews) with respect to his liability to the commandments. His conversion process may have been defective because the three Jews who made up the *Beit Din* that performed his conversion failed to conform to all the halakhic norms and did not caution him properly about the gravity of Shabbat infringement. Yet it is still considered a conversion, carrying with it full liability to observe all the commandments. [It is a point of contention whether for practical purposes some of the many “moonlight” conversions performed by various different groups of possibly well-meaning yet halakhically unversed Jews in many parts of the world can be seen in this category.]

However, **a convert who converted on his own**, i.e., a gentile who converted privately without any supervision on the part of a *Beit Din* or even three ordinary Jews, **is not considered a Ger**. And this would most certainly apply to the halakhic status of the many self-styled “Jews by choice” in our times who have in some way embraced the Torah and at least some of its commandments but have not undergone a halakhic conversion – and in many cases are unlikely to be able to do so.

The respective statuses of “a convert who converted among the gentiles” and of “a convert who converted on his own” are defined in the Halakhah as follows.

With regard to **one who converted among the gentiles**:

גֵּר שֶׁלֹא בִדְקוּ אַחֲרָיו אוֹ שֶׁלֹא הוֹדִיעוּהוּ הַמִּצְוֹת וְעִנְשָׁן וּמִל וְטָבֵל  
בְּפָנָי שְׁלֵשָׁה הַדְּיוֹטוֹת הָרִי זֶה גֵּר. אֶפְלוּ נֹדַע שֶׁבִשְׂבִּיל דְּבָר הוּא  
מִתְגַּיֵר הוֹאִיל וּמִל וְטָבֵל יֵצֵא מִכָּל הָעֲכוּ"ם וְחוֹשֵׁשׁ לֹא עַד  
שְׂתֵּתִבְאֵר צְדָקוֹתָיו. וְאֶפְלוּ חִזַּר וְעָבַד עֲבוּדָה זָרָה הָרִי הוּא כְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
מוֹמֵר שֶׁקְדוּשָׁתוֹ קְדוּשָׁתוֹ וּמִצְוָה לְהַחֲזִיר אֲבֹדָתוֹ מֵאַחַר שֶׁטָבֵל  
נִעְשָׂה כְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.

When a court did not check a [potential] convert’s background and did not inform him of the mitzvot and the punishment for [the

failure to observe] the mitzvot and he circumcised himself and immersed in the presence of three ordinary [Israelites], he is a convert. Even if it is discovered that he converted for an ulterior motive, since he circumcised himself and converted, he has left the category of gentiles and we view him with skepticism until his righteousness is revealed. Even if he afterwards worships false deities, he is like an apostate Israelite. If he consecrates a woman as his wife, the consecration is valid, and it is a mitzvah to return his lost object. For since he immersed himself, he became like any Israelite...

Rambam, *Issurey Biyah*, Laws of Forbidden Unions 13:17

However, with regard to the status of the **convert who converted on his own**, Rambam states:

טָבַל בְּיָנוּ לְבֵין עֲצָמוֹ וְנִתְגַּיֵר בְּיָנוּ לְבֵין עֲצָמוֹ וְאֶפְלוּ בְּפָנָי שְׁנַיִם אֵינוֹ  
גֵר. בָּא וְאָמַר נִתְגַּיַרְתִּי בְּבֵית דִּינֹו שֶׁל פְּלוֹנִי וְהִטְבִּילוּנִי אֵינוֹ נֶאֱמָן  
לְבֹא בְּקֶהֱל עַד שְׂיָבִיא עֵדִים.

When [a convert] immerses himself alone and converts alone – or even if he does this in the presence of two persons – his conversion is not valid. If he comes and says: “I converted in the court of so-and-so and they had me immerse,” his word is not accepted with regard to license to marry within the Assembly unless he brings witnesses to testify to the truth of his statements.

Rambam, *Issurey Biyah*, Laws of Forbidden Unions 13:7

Rambam writes further:

גִּיּוֹרַת שְׂרָאִינוּהָ נוֹהֶגֶת בְּדַרְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תָּמִיד כְּגוֹן שֶׁתְּטַבֵּל לְנִדְתָּהָ  
וְתַפְרִישׁ תְּרוּמָה מֵעֲסָתָהּ וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָזֶה, וְכֹן גַּר שֶׁנוֹהֵג בְּדַרְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
שֶׁטּוֹבֵל לְקָרְיוֹ וְעוֹשֶׂה כָּל הַמְצוֹת, הָרִי אֵלֹו בְּחִזְקַת גְּרִי צָדֵק, וְאִף  
עַל פִּי שְׂאִין שֶׁם עֵדִים שֶׁמְעִידִין לְפָנָי מִי שֶׁנִּתְגַּיְרוּ. וְאִף עַל פִּי כֹן,  
אִם בָּאוּ לְהִתְעַרֵב בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין מְשִׂאִין אוֹתָם עַד שְׂיָבִיאוּ עֵדִים אוֹ  
עַד שְׂיִטְבְּלוּ בְּפָנֵינוּ הוֹאִיל וְהִחֲזִקוּ עִבּוּיִם.

[The following laws apply with regard to] a female convert whom we observe conducting herself at all times according to the ways of Israel, for example, she immerses herself after menstruation and she separates the priestly tithe from dough or the like, and likewise

to a male convert who follows the paths of Israel, for example, he immerses himself after a seminal emission and performs all the mitzvot. These are considered as righteous converts even though there are no witnesses to testify before whom they converted. Nevertheless, if they come to intermix within Israel, we do not permit them to marry within the Assembly until they bring witnesses or until they immerse themselves in our presence since the presumption was that they were gentiles.

*Ibid* 13:9

In the light of these laws, it is perfectly understandable why Jewish people in our times who seek to follow the Halakhah assiduously will not agree to intermarry with anyone who is a self-styled, uncertified *Ger* – “Jewish by choice” – without their undergoing a rabbinically supervised conversion.

Yet while we may not without this conversion accept this *Ger* into the Assembly, we clearly have no authority or ability to judge or determine his or her status in the eyes of God Almighty. Rambam’s words are: “**These are considered as righteous converts** even though there are no witnesses to testify before whom they converted.”

If the “Jew by choice” is sincere in Torah observance, then should not those who are sure of their own Jewish identity accord them at the very least the same respect that should be accorded to *Bney Noah*, whom the Jews are commanded to sustain and teach?

Are Jews permitted to teach Torah to such “Jews by choice” and to encourage them in their chosen pathway? We cannot know the true soul-roots and history of any given person. But what if in some of these cases of doubt, *safek*, קִשְׁפָּה, there is a possibility that the person does indeed have an Israelite soul?

He or she is not considered a *Ger Tzeddek*, and we may not fully accept them into our communities as such. But are we not to show them some respect, basic human decency and good manners? Can we not acknowledge their spiritual pathway as one that brings glory to the Almighty, as in the case of Jethro? Can we not give them encouragement in their efforts to follow the ways of prayer and devotion to God and the study of Torah, and where appropriate provide them with reliable information about how to do so? If we are commanded to support and sustain the *Ben Noah*, surely all

the more so must we do so in the case of those who may possibly have Israelite souls. If we are permitted to greet even idolaters as one of the pathways of peace (*Mishneh Torah, Avodah Zarah, Laws of Idolatry 10:5*) and to wish them success in their labors (*ibid., Shemittah VeYovel, Laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years 8:8*), are we at liberty to ignore sincere souls in search of Torah truth?

Let us remember that the very first and original convert who “converted on his own” (נִתְגַיֵּיר בִּינוּ לְבִין עֲצָמוֹ) was none other than the patriarch Abraham, father of all the converts, who established the Torah pathway yet sought no license from any rabbinical court or other earthly authority in order to follow the Way of the LORD (Genesis 18:19).

## 8. The Ten Lost Tribes

Countless numbers of people from all kinds of backgrounds and locations are today awakening to the Torah, seeking contact with rabbis and pleading for some kind of recognition. Among them are very large numbers who consider themselves to be rooted in one way or another in the Ten Tribes of Israel.

Most Jews with even a vague notion of the history and destiny of our people are familiar with the idea that ten out of the Twelve Tribes of Israel were taken into exile some generations prior to the destruction of the First Temple and subsequently disappeared into oblivion. However, with the exception of a tiny number of Jews who set off at different times until the present in search of their lost brethren (such as the prophet Jeremiah, Benjamin of Tudela and Menasseh ben Israel in the past, and today the Shavei Israel organization, Rabbi Yitzchak Tchenagel, Rabbi Avraham Fried and others), most Jewish people seem to show little practical interest in looking for the Lost Ten Tribes, if they even give them a single thought.

The Mishnah records a dispute between Rabbi Eliezer the Great and his outstanding disciple and study-partner, Rabbi Akiva, as to whether the Ten Tribes will return:

עֲשֶׂרֶת הַשְּׁבֻטִים אֵינָן עֹתִידִין לְחַזֵּר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דברים כט כז): וַיִּשְׁלַכְם  
אֶל אֶרֶץ אַחֲרַת כְּיֹם הַזֶּה, מֵהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הוֹלֵךְ וְאֵינוֹ חוֹזֵר, אִם הֵם  
הוֹלְכִים וְאֵינָם חוֹזְרִים, דְּבָרֵי רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא. רַבִּי אֶלְיעֶזֶר אוֹמֵר, כְּיֹם  
הַזֶּה, מֵהַיּוֹם מֵאֲפִיל וּמֵאִיר, אִם עֲשֶׂרֶת הַשְּׁבֻטִים שֹׂאֲפֵל לָהֶן, כָּךְ  
עֹתִיד לְהֵאִיר לָהֶן.

The Ten Tribes are not destined to return, as it is stated: “And He cast them into another land, *as it is this day*” (Deuteronomy 29:27). Just as this day passes, never to return, so too, the Ten Tribes go but do not return. These are the words of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Eliezer says: “*As it is this day,*” meaning: Just as the day darkens and then the sky brightens the next day, so too with regard to the Ten Tribes as well, although it is dark for them now, so it is destined to brighten for them.

*Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3*

The Jerusalem Talmud commenting on this Mishnah adds:

רְבִי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יְהוּדָה אִישׁ כִּפָּר אָכּוּס אָמַר מְשׁוּם רְבִי שְׁמַעוֹן אִם  
הָיוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶן כִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֵינָן חוֹזְרִין וְאִם לֹא חוֹזְרִין הֵן. רְבִי  
חִזְקִיָּה רְבִי אֲבָהוּ בִשְׁם רְבִי לְעֶזְרָא אִם בָּאִים הֵן גִּירֵי צְדָק לְעֵתִיד  
לְבֹא:

Rabbi Shimon son of Judah from the village of Akhus says in the name of Rabbi Shimon: “If their deeds were ‘as this day’ they will not return, but if not, they will indeed return.” Rabbi Hezekiah and Rabbi Abahu say in the name of Rabbi Eliezer: “If they come, they will be righteous converts (*Geirei Tzeddek*) in time to come.”

Jerusalem Talmud, *Sanhedrin 53b*

No elaboration is provided as to the procedure whereby the returning Ten Tribers will become righteous converts. Are we to believe they will be subjected to protracted conversion procedures of the kind often imposed today by rabbinical conversion courts? Or might we perhaps witness a new level of “conversion” akin to the simultaneous “conversion” of the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai? Time alone will tell.

Among those today claiming to be from the re-emerging Ten Tribes or “Ephraimites”, some are overt followers of Jesus, even if they do not consider him to be divine. Some consider him to have been sent primarily to gather in the Ten Tribes. In many cases they consider that Jesus himself was a “Torah-observant Jew” and they seek to emulate his way of life as they see it through some level of practice of the commandments according to their understanding. However, coming from Christian upbringings with all the accompanying misconceptions, suspicions and fears of “The Law”, Talmud and Kabbalah etc., many strongly resist accepting the Halakhah as practiced

by Torah-observant Jews, which they consider to be “man-made” and non-binding.

Obviously, Torah-observant Jews see this as an affront to the unity of the Written Torah with the Oral Torah, and find it difficult if not impossible to take such “Ten Tribers” seriously, further increasing the gulf between those who consider themselves unquestionably Jewish and those knocking on their doors from the outside.

To all Torah-observant Jews, it is manifestly clear that one and the same Torah, including both the Written and Oral Torah, applies equally to all Israel, whether “Jews”, “Judah”, “Israelites”, genuine “Ten Tribers” and “Ephraimites”, homeborn or true converts:

הַקְּהָל תִּקְהָ אֶחָת לָכֶם וְלַגֵּר הַגֵּר תִּקְהָת עִוְלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם כְּכֶם כִּגְר  
יְהִיָּה לִפְנֵי יְקֹוֹק:

As for the congregation, there shall be **one law for you and for the stranger (Ger) who dwells**; it shall be a law for all time throughout your generations. You and the stranger (Ger) shall be alike before the LORD.

Numbers 15:15; cf. Exodus 12:3

From the perspective of observant students and practitioners of the Torah, the antagonism of such “Ten Tribers” to the Oral Law and the Halakhah is based upon an erroneous perception of how the Written Torah must be understood, and only when they are willing to accept the Torah in its entirety as all Israel accepted it at Mount Sinai will they be considered to have repented and returned to the Children of Israel, as stated in the Jerusalem Talmud quoted above: “If they come, they will be righteous converts (*Geirei Tzedek*) in time to come.”

The prophet indicates that the first stage of the redemption of the Ten Tribes is when they remember Him from afar:

וַגְּבֹרְתֵי אֶת־בְּיַת יְהוָה וְאֶת־בְּיַת יוֹסֵף אוֹשְׁיַע וְהוֹשְׁבוֹתֵי כִי  
רַחֲמֹתַי וְהָיוּ כְּאִשֶּׁר לֹא־זָנְחִיתִים כִּי אֲנִי יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְאֶעֱנֶם:  
וְהָיוּ כְּגִבּוֹר אֶפְרָיִם וְשָׁמַח לָבָם כְּמוֹ־יִינוֹ וּבִנְיָהֶם יֵרָאוּ וְשָׂמְחוּ יַגְל  
לָבָם בִּיקֹוֹק:

אֲשֶׁר־קָה לָהֶם וְאֶקְבָּצֶם כִּי פְדִיתִים וְרָבוּ כְּמוֹ רָבוּ:

וְאֶזְרְעֵם בְּעַמִּים וּבְמַרְחָקִים יִזְכְּרוּנִי וְחָיוּ אֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם וְשָׁבוּ׃  
וְהִשִּׁיבוּתֵיכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּמֵאֶשׁוּר אֶקְבְּצֵם וְאֶל־אֶרֶץ גְּלָעָד וּלְבָנוֹן  
אָבִיָּאֵם וְלֹא יִמָּצֵא לָהֶם׃

I will give victory to the House of Judah, and triumph to the House of Joseph. I will restore them, for I have pardoned them, and they shall be as though I had never disowned them. For I the LORD am their God, and I will answer their prayers.

Ephraim shall be like a warrior, and they shall exult as with wine; their children shall see it and rejoice, they shall exult in the LORD.

I will whistle to them and gather them, for I will redeem them; they shall increase and continue increasing.

For though I sowed them among the nations, in the distant places they shall remember Me, they shall escape with their children and shall return.

I will bring them back from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria; and I will bring them to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon, and even they shall not suffice for them.

Zechariah 10:6-10

In our time, the return of the Ten Tribes cannot be seen as merely a far-off prophetic dream. For example, an estimated 30 million members of the Igbo people living in Nigeria consider themselves to be descended from the Ten Tribes, and have many traditional practices that include strong parallels in Torah law and custom. The same is true in the case of many other people, including entire communities, both elsewhere across Africa and in countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia, as well as many in Europe and America who also consider themselves descended from or spiritually connected to the Ten Tribes.

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Having clarified the different halakhic considerations that may apply to various different kinds of “non-Jew” with different soul-roots, let us now address our original questions:

- 1. May these people study Torah, and may Jewish rabbis teach them?**
- 2. Are these people permitted to observe Shabbat and if so, in what way?**

**Part II:**  
**Who may study Torah?**  
**Keep Shabbat?**

# 1. May a Goy study Torah?

As discussed earlier (p. 6), the Talmudic source for the prohibition against an idolater studying Torah is in *Bavli Sanhedrin*:

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן עוֹבֵד כּוֹכָבִים שְׁעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה חַיִּיב מִיתָה שְׁנֵאמַר  
תּוֹרָה צְנוּה לָנוּ מִשָּׁה מוֹרְשָׁה - לָנוּ מוֹרְשָׁה וְלֹא לָהֶם.

Rabbi Yochanan said: An idol-worshipper who engages in Torah study is liable to the death penalty, as it is stated: “Moses commanded us a law [Torah], an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob” (Deuteronomy 33:4), indicating that it is an inheritance for us, and not for them.

*Sanhedrin 59a*

Following this passage – as will be discussed at greater length below (p. 46) – the Talmud goes on to state that it is a positive mitzvah for an idolater to study the Torah laws relating to the Seven Noachide Commandments (*ibid.*). From this we may infer that the Torah teachings that an idolater is forbidden to study are those that relate to the 613 commandments that were given specifically to Israel.

Thus, in Talmudic times it would have been forbidden for Jews to facilitate a pagan idolater entering into depth study of the Hebrew text of the TaNaKh, the foundation of all Torah study (though the entire TaNaKh was then available in Greek translation). Similarly out of bounds would have been study of the Oral Law, then mostly unavailable in writing, and also the rules of Torah hermeneutics and their application. These could only be learned from those in the academies of the great authorities of the time who made a specialty out of memorizing, collating, comparing and analyzing the many oral traditions in all the different areas of Torah law. Those privy to the mystical traditions handed down from the prophets would certainly not have facilitated their study by pagans. In contemporary terms, this would mean that the idolater must not study large areas of Talmudic, Halakhic, Kabbalistic and related literature.

Having stated that the penalty for so doing is death, the Talmud raises the question as to why the prohibition of an idolater studying the Torah of Israel is not numbered among the Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah. According to one answer, the prohibition of Torah study by an idolater

is indeed included in the Noahide code under the prohibition of theft, for which the penalty for a Noahide is death (*Mishneh Torah, Melachim, Laws of Kings* 9:9), because the cited verse from Deuteronomy 33:4 calls the Torah “an **inheritance** of the congregation of Jacob” and an idolater who studies Torah has **stolen** this inheritance from the people of Israel.

According to a second opinion, the letters of the Hebrew word in the verse translated as “inheritance” (*MoRaShaH, מוֹרְשָׁה*) may be read as *מְאוֹרְשָׁה* or *מְאוֹרְסָה, MeORaSaH*, which means “betrothed”, and an idolater who studies Torah is like one who has intercourse with a young Israelite woman already **betrothed** to an Israelite man, for which the penalty is death by stoning (*Sanhedrin loc. cit.*).

While the Talmud does not specifically address here the prohibition against an Israelite teaching Torah to an idolater, it is clearly implicit in the prohibition against the idolater studying Torah, for if an Israelite teaches him, then by causing the idolater to sin, the Israelite is violating the prohibition against placing a stumbling block before the blind (Leviticus 19:14).

Indeed, it is forbidden for one Israelite to teach even another Israelite Torah unless that person is upright and of good behavior or at the very least a person who is pure and moral. But if he was on a bad path, it is first necessary to bring him to improve himself and to guide him on the path of righteousness and to examine his progress, and only afterwards may one bring him into the study hall and teach him (*Mishneh Torah, Talmud Torah Laws of Torah Study* 4:1).

The sages said that someone who teaches an unworthy student is like a person who casts a stone in honor of the pagan god “Markulis”, as implied in the verse (Proverbs 26:8): “Like tying a stone in a sling is giving honor to a fool” (*ibid.; Talmud Bavli, Hullin* 133a). This would clearly apply to teaching an idolater.

Rabbi Nachman teaches that the Torah teacher must be most careful not to say something unfitted to the soul and mind of the listener, for this is “adultery”, casting the drops of the intellect in a place where they are useless and unproductive. It is called “wasting” of the seed because it does not result in anything whatever being “born” in the recipient in the sense of repentance and good deeds. If anything is born, it is flawed and blemished – i.e., the listener comes to do something inappropriate on his level (*Likutey Moharan* I:134).

## The “Death Penalty”?

When the Talmud states that an idolater who studies Torah or observes the Shabbat is liable to the death penalty, does that mean that Israel are required to execute him?

In some cases when the Temple stood, pagan offenders were indeed killed, as in the case of a certain pagan in the time of Rabbi Yehudah ben Beteira, who disguised himself as a Jew and succeeded in eating the Passover lamb in violation of the prohibition against its consumption by a pagan (Exodus 12:43), but was later tricked into revealing his identity and killed (*Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 3b*).

However, a non-Israelite who accidentally or unknowingly violates one of the Seven Noahide Laws is not actually punished with the death penalty except in the case of murder, even if unwitting (*Mishneh Torah, Melakhim, Laws of Kings 10:1*). Furthermore:

אם עָסַק בַּתּוֹרָה אוֹ שָׁבַת וְכוּי מִכֵּין אוֹתוֹ וְעוֹנֵשׁוֹן אוֹתוֹ וּמוֹדִיעֵין  
אוֹתוֹ שֶׁהוּא חַיֵּב מִיתָה עַל זֶה, אֲבָל אֵינוֹ נֶהְרָג.

In the case of an idolater who engaged in Torah study or observed the Shabbat... we give him lashes and punish him and inform him that he is liable to the death penalty for doing so, but he is not actually executed.

*Mishneh Torah, Melakhim, Laws of Kings 10:9*

The expression “liable to the death penalty” (*chayav meethah*, חַיֵּב מִיתָה) may also carry the connotation of “liable to death at the hands of Heaven”, as in the case of certain transgressions which are not punished by the earthly court but whose penalty may be an early and untimely death and some level of spiritual “excision”. God alone knows how to deal with the idolater who studies the Torah of Israel in honor of his idol.

A scriptural allusion to how an offender liable to execution might die may be seen in the Hebrew text of Proverbs 19:16, בּוֹזֵה דַרְכָּיו יוֹמַת [יָמוֹת], “he who despises his ways shall die”, where the written text (*ktiv*) means “he shall be put to death”, whereas according to the oral tradition it is read (*k’ri*) as “he shall die”. Likewise, where the Torah states that the owner of an animal that killed a person “shall be put to death” (Exodus 21:29), the traditional interpretation is that this means death at the hands of Heaven

through an act of God unless the owner pays the mandatory ransom (*Mishneh Torah, Nizkey Mamon* Laws of Material Damages 10:4).

It becomes understandable why the idolater would be liable to such a severe punishment for studying the Torah when we consider that idolatry is itself a flagrant denial of the entire Torah.

In the words of Rambam:

מִצְוֹת עֲבוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים כְּנֶגְדַּת הַמִּצְוֹת כֻּלָּן הֵיא שְׁנֵאמַר (במדבר טו כב) "וְכִי תִשְׁגוּ וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת" וְגו' וּמִפִּי הַשְּׁמוּעָה לְמַדּוּ שֶׁבְעֲבוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים הַכְּתוּב מְדַבֵּר. הֵיא לְמִדְתָּ שְׁכָל הַמוּדָה בְּעֲבוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים כּוֹפֵר בְּכָל הַתּוֹרָה כְּלָה וּבְכָל הַנְּבִיאִים וּבְכָל מֵה שְׁנֵצְטוּוּ הַנְּבִיאִים מֵאָדָם וְעַד סוּף הָעוֹלָם שְׁנֵאמַר (במדבר טו כג) "מִן הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' וְהִלָּאָה לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם".

The severity of the violation of the mitzvah prohibiting idolatry is as great as violating all the other commandments put together. For it is said: "And when you stray, and do not observe all these commandments..." (Numbers 15:22). By oral tradition, this is understood as referring to idolatry. From here you may deduce that whoever acknowledges idolatry denies the entire Torah, all the prophets, and everything in which the prophets were instructed from Adam to the end of time, as it is said: "From the day when the LORD commanded and onward throughout your generations" (*ibid.* 15:23).

*Mishneh Torah, Avodat Kokhavim, Laws of Idolatry 2:4*

Rambam continues:

כָּל הַמוּדָה בְּעֲבוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים שֶׁהֵיא אֱמֶת אִף עַל פִּי שְׁלֵא עֲבָדָה הָרִי זֶה מְחַרֵּף וּמְגַדֵּף אֶת הַשֵּׁם הַנְּכַבֵּד וְהַנּוֹרָא. וְאֶחָד הָעוֹבֵד עֲבוּדַת כּוֹכָבִים וְאֶחָד הַמְּגַדֵּף אֶת ה' שְׁנֵאמַר (במדבר טו ל) "הַנִּפְּשׁ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה בְּיַד רָמָה מִן הָאֲזָרַח וּמִן הַגֵּר אֶת ה' הוּא מְגַדֵּף".

Whoever acknowledges idolatry as truth, even though he may not practice idol worship, is abusing and blaspheming the Glorified and Awesome Name. The idolater and the blasphemer are in one and the same category, as it states: "But whether from among the home-born citizens or a stranger (*ger*, גֵּר), whoever acts defiantly [worshiping idols] blasphemes the LORD..." (Numbers 15:30).

*Ibid.* 2:6

One may ask: What might be the motive of the idolater who seeks to study Torah, which is the very negation of his idolatry. Does he seek to show the superiority of his idol by proving to himself that the Torah is wrong and that its sages and expounders were willful falsifiers? From early times until this very day, many have arisen to make such claims, shamelessly twisting the meaning of Biblical verses while distorting, ridiculing and discrediting Talmudic teachings. To use the Torah to justify idolatry is the very height of abuse.

Torah study is not like some academic pursuit, because: “It is not the study that is the main thing but the *actual practice*” (*Pirkey Avot* 1:17). Israel were deemed worthy to receive the Torah because they committed to performing and “doing” the Torah commandments in practice even before “hearing” and understanding their full meaning and implications, as when they said: “All the things that the LORD has spoken **we shall do**” (Exodus 24:3) and: “Everything that the LORD has spoken **we shall do and we shall hear**” (*ibid.* v. 7).

Anyone can pick up a regular book and either take it or leave it, but the study of Torah requires complete submission and obedience to the Word of the LORD and to the teachings of His true prophets and sages in all the generations, submission on every level of mind, heart and soul. The Hebrew word for “study”, *Limud*, לִימוּד, thus derives from the same Hebrew root as the word *Malmad*, מַלְמֵד, signifying the goad which the farmer uses to spur on his oxen and keep them to the furrow without straying.

## Torah for the Noahides

As mentioned earlier (p. 42), the above-quoted Talmudic statement in the name of the Amora, Rabbi Yochanan, that an idolater who studies Torah deserves the death penalty, is followed by a most important qualification. The Talmud raises an objection to his teaching based on the words of the earlier Tanna, Rabbi Meir:

הָיָה רַבִּי מֵאִיר אֹמֵר : מִנִּיּוֹן שְׂאֵפִילוֹ גּוֹי וְעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה שֶׁהוּא כְּכֹהֵן  
גְּדוֹל? שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה ה') אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאֲדָם וְחַי בְּהֵם.  
כֹּהֲנִים לְוִיִּם וַיִּשְׂרְאֵלִים לֹא נֶאֱמַר אֶלָּא הָאֲדָם. הָא לְמִדַּת שְׂאֵפִילוֹ  
עוֹבֵד כּוֹכָבִים וְעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה הֲרִי הוּא כְּכֹהֵן גְּדוֹל.

Rabbi Meir would say: From where is it derived that even a gentile who engages in Torah study is considered like a High Priest? It is

derived from that which is stated: “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances, which, if *a man* practices them, he shall live by them” (Leviticus 18:5). It does not state that if priests, Levites, and Israelites do them, they shall live by them, but rather: “a man”, which indicates any member of **humanity in general**. You have therefore learned that even a gentile who engages in Torah study is considered like a High Priest.

*Sanhedrin* 59a. (See *Ben Yehoyada*’s important annotation on the correct version of the text as given here and his commentary *ad loc.*)

The Talmud resolves the apparent contradiction as follows:

הָתָם בְּשִׁבְעַת מִצְוֹת דִּיְהוָה.

There [in the teaching of Rabbi Meir] the reference is to a gentile who engages in the study of their seven commandments.

*Ibid.*

Thus, we see that it is a positive mitzvah for a gentile to study the laws that pertain to the seven Noahide mitzvot, and when he does so he is highly regarded.

We therefore need to understand which areas of Torah would be included in what Noahides may and should study. Since the first and second Noahide commandments are the prohibitions against idolatry and blasphemy, they would need a full, clear understanding of all their parameters. Moreover, the knowledge that idolatry is prohibited does not in itself satisfy the craving of the Noahide soul to know God and to reach out to Him, and needs to be supplemented with what in Torah literature comes under the heading of *Hashkafah*, general outlook and worldview, *Sifrey Emunah*, works on faith and the ways of prayer, and *Mussar*, spiritual self-improvement. Above all comes the TaNaKh, which in any case is readily available to people across the world in all languages (though many of the translations can be mildly to highly misleading). The book of Job in particular, all of whose protagonists are Noahide prophets, speaks to all mankind.

The third, fourth and fifth Noahide commandments, the prohibitions against murder, incest and theft, can be summarized fairly succinctly, yet their application in actual, day-to-day life requires considerable further elaboration and detail, and many of their ramifications can only be

understood in the light of other related Torah commandments as set forth in the halakhic codes. This applies equally to the sixth Noahide commandment prohibiting the consumption of a limb torn from a living animal, the fulfilment of which in our time requires an understanding of how the Halakhah applies to contemporary meat production and marketing. And proper fulfilment of the seventh Noahide commandment enjoining the establishment of courts of Justice clearly requires a proper grasp of the Torah concept of Justice.

As indicated earlier (p. 42), the Noahide would not be eligible for depth-study of the Hebrew text of the TaNaKh or of the classical hermeneutical rules as applied to display the roots of the Oral Torah in the written text and to derive practical Halakhah. This would exclude depth study of Talmud and much technical halakhic literature, though not necessarily the study of summaries of practical Halakhah in various areas. While the study of general works on Emunah most certainly applies to the Noahide, the study of kabbalistic texts dealing in depth with the Hebrew names of God and mystical meditations (*kavanot*) would not be included.

## The Thirty Future Noahide Commandments

We cannot complete this discussion without referring to the tradition that in time to come the Noahides will have **thirty** commandments. The Babylonian Talmud states in the name of the Amora, Ulla, that originally the nations accepted thirty commandments upon themselves but later abandoned most of them (*Hullin* 92a). The Jerusalem Talmud also speaks of thirty commandments which the *Bney Noah* will take upon themselves **in time to come** (*Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah* 9a).

The commentator Rashi on the passage in *Hullin* 92a states that the thirty commandments are not specified, nor do we know from where they are deduced.

According to Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Pano (1548-1620), they are all subcategories of the Noahide Laws. His listing of the thirty commandments in seven groups is as follows:

A: 1. Prohibition of idolatry, עֲבוֹדַת אֱלֹהִים; 2. Do not pass a child through fire in the worship of the Molech idol, מְעַבֵּיר בְּאֵשׁ; 3. Prohibition of stick divination, קוּסָם; 4. Prohibition of divining auspicious times, מְעוֹנֵן; 5. Do not rely on omens, superstition,

מְנַחֵשׁ; 6. Prohibition of witchcraft & sorcery, מְכַשֵּׁף; 7. Prohibition of charms & incantations, חוֹבֵר חֵבֶר; 8. Do not consult mediums, אוֹב; 9. Do not consult oracles, יִדְעוֹנִי; 10. Prohibition of necromancy, דוֹרֵשׁ אֶל הַמֵּתִים.

B. 11. Forbidden sexual unions, גִּילוּי עֲרִיוֹת; 12. Be fruitful, פָּרוּ; 13. Multiply seed, רָבוּ; 14. Don't draw up marriage contracts between males, אִיסוּר הַזְכוּר אֶפִּילוּ יַחְדוֹ בְּכִתוּבָה; 15. Don't crossbreed animals, כְּלָאֵי בְהֵמָה; 16: Don't castrate, סִירוּס; 17. Don't graft different species of trees, הֶרְפַּת אֵילָן.

C. 18. Prohibition of Murder, שְׁפִיכוֹת דָּמִים; 19. Do not strike an Israelite, סוֹטֵר לוֹעוֹ שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

D. 20. Prohibition of Blasphemy, בְּרִכַּת ה'; 21. Give honor to the Torah and her sages, כְּבוֹד הַתּוֹרָה; 22. Study the Noahide code, לַעֲסוֹק בַּתּוֹרָה שְׁנִיתָנָה לָהֶם.

E. 23. Theft, גָּזַל; 24. Don't study non-relevant parts of the Torah, שְׁלֵא לַעֲסוֹק בַּתּוֹרָה מוֹרְשָׁה אֵלֵינוּ.

F. 25. Establishment of a system of justice, לְיִשׁוּבוֹ שֶׁל; עוֹלָם; 26. Do not cease from all labor on Shabbat, שְׁלֵא יִשְׁבּוּתוּ.

G. 27. Do not eat all or part of a living creature, אָבַר מִן הַחַי; 28. Do not consume blood of a living creature, דָּם מִן הַחַי; 29. Do not eat *Neveilah*, carrion, an animal that died without proper slaughter, נֶבֶלָה; 30. Do not eat human flesh, בָּשָׂר הַמֵּת.

Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Pano, *Asarah Ma'amarot, Ma'amar Chakor Din* Part 3 chapter 21.

A somewhat different list of the thirty commandments is found in the writings of Samuel HaKohen ben Hofni, who was the Gaon of Sura (d. 1034).

א. עֲבוּדָה זָרָה; ב. בְּרִכַּת הַשֵּׁם; ג. יַחּוּד הַשֵּׁם; ד. תַּפִּילָה; ה. שְׁבוּעַת שֶׁקֶר; ו. הַרְיגַת אָדָם אֶת עַצְמוֹ; ז. הַרְיגַת אָדָם אֶת זוּלָתוֹ; ח. אִשָּׁת אִישׁ; ט. עֲרִיכַת נְשׂוֹאִין עַל יְדֵי מוֹהַר וּמִתָּן; י. הָאָחוֹת; יא. מְשֻׁבָּב זָכוּר; יב. הֶרְפַּעַת בְּהֵמָה; יג. סִירוּס; יד. נֶבֶלָה; טו. אָבַר מִן הַחַי; טז. דָּם מִן הַחַי; יז. אִיסוּר כְּלָאִים בְּבִהֵמוֹת; יח.

חֲסֵר הַפְּתַב יָד ; יֵט . קְרִבְנוֹת ; כ . גָּזַל ; כֹּא . כְּבוֹד אָב וְאִם ; כִּב .  
 מֵעֵבִיר בָּנוּ וּבְתוֹ בָּאֵשׁ ; כִּג . קוֹסִם קְסָמִים ; כִּד . מְעוֹנִן ; כֵּה . מְנַחֵשׁ ;  
 כו . מְכַשֵּׁף ; כז . חוֹבֵר חֵבֵר ; כח . שׂוֹאֵל אוֹב ; כט . יִדְעוֹנִי ; ל . דוֹרֵשׁ  
 אֶל הַמֵּתִים .

1. Prohibition of idolatry; 2. Prohibition of blasphemy; 3. Unification of the Name; 4. Prayer; 5. Not to swear falsely; 6. Prohibition of suicide; 7. Murder of another; 8. Adultery; 9. Marriage by contract; 10. Prohibition of relations with a sister; 11. Prohibition of male homosexual intercourse; 12. Bestiality; 13. Prohibition of Castration; 14. Prohibition of consumption of *Neveilah* , Carrion; 15. Prohibition of consuming a limb from a living creature; 16. Prohibition of consuming blood from a living creature; 17. Prohibition of interbreeding different animal species; 18. [*Missing from manuscript*]; 19. Sacrifices; 20. Prohibition of robbery and theft; 21. Honoring father and mother; 22. Prohibition of passing one's son or daughter through fire in Molech worship; 23. Prohibition of Sorcery and occult arts; 24. Prohibition of divining through astrology; 25. Prohibition of stick divination; 26. Prohibition of witchcraft; 27. Prohibition of casting spells; 28. Prohibition of asking a spirit (*Ov*); 29. Prohibition of the *Yid'oni* oracle; 30. Seeking out the dead.

Sinai Vol. 72, p. 205 and “Samuel ben Hophni’s Noahide Law”

Rav Saadiah Gaon (882/892-942) adds the commandments of Tithing and Levirate Marriage. Rav Nissim Gaon (990-1062) adds 1. Obedience to God; 2. Knowledge of God; 3. Worship of God. Rabbi Meir ben Todros HaLevi Abulafia (c. 1170-1244) and Rabbi Nissim of Gerona (1320-1376) add Charity.

For further details see [“The Thirty Mitzvot of the Bnei Noach”](http://Noahide.net) at [Noahide.net](http://Noahide.net).

Clearly, in the light of these teachings, the array of Torah laws which Noahides must study, understand and observe is very greatly expanded.

## The “Captive Children” and “Jews by Choice”

As we have seen earlier (pp. 42f), the discussion in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 59a) about the eligibility of the non-Israelite to study the Torah applies primarily to the practicing idolater and in a qualified way to the Noahides. It most certainly does not apply to the *Ger Tzeddek*, who is a full convert and who not only may but *must* study the Torah of Israel.

The same is true of the “Captive Child”, *Tinok Shenishbah*, and “one who converts among the nations” *Ger hamitgayer le-vein ha-goyim*. As we have seen, both have the status of full Israelites, as is clear from the discussion in the Talmud about their liability to bring a sin offering for their transgressions (*Shabbat* 68a, see above p. 29). The “captive child” was simply not aware of his Israelite identity and obligations. As for one who “converts among the nations”, i.e., before three Israelites, albeit rabbinically unqualified, his conversion is considered valid and he has the status of a full Israelite.

As soon as the “Captive Child” becomes aware of his Israelite identity and the “Convert among the Nations” recognizes that he was ill-informed, clearly both are not only permitted to study the Torah of Israel but are *obliged* to do so in order to learn about their responsibilities as members of the people of Israel and how to fulfill them. It would follow that rabbis and Torah teachers may and should teach and support them in their pathway.

However, in the case of one who “converts alone by himself”, we have seen earlier (p. 33) that he is *not* recognized by Israel as a convert (*Talmud Bavli, Yevamot* 47a-b). Even a person of unknown status who is seen to observe the commandments scrupulously and who *is* regarded as a *Ger Tzeddek* is still not allowed to marry into the Assembly until he brings witnesses to his conversion or performs the conversion immersion in front of a rabbinical court (*Mishneh Torah, Issurey Biyah, Forbidden Unions* chapter 13:7 & 9).

Then would it be fair simply to place “one who converts alone, on his or her own” – the “Jew by choice” – in the same category as an idolater who is forbidden to delve into the Torah of Israel and may study only the Seven Noahide Commandments? Although Jewish rabbinical courts may not accept such a person as a convert, the fact is that he or she has freely chosen to embrace the Torah of Israel. Moreover, even without official recognition by rabbis and Jewish communities, there is in actuality nothing to stop them identifying as Israelites. Not only would this seem to apply to many of today’s “Jews by choice” across the world, but it would most certainly apply

to those who consider themselves “Ephraimites” or “Ten Tribers”, who according to their own self-identification are *obliged* to study and practice the Torah of Israel.

Many such people are located far from any established, recognized Torah community, and in practical terms are simply unable to move in order to undergo a formal conversion. Should they therefore be discouraged from the path they seek to follow if they believe it to be their true soul-path?

Some orthodox Jewish outreach rabbis today have a policy not to offer any encouragement to people whom they do not consider to be halakhically Jewish yet say they seek to observe the Torah. This attitude is further reinforced by the fact that some such people have indeed proved to be covert missionaries, “Jewish Messianics” or the like, who believe in Jesus but do not adhere to the Halakhah and have no intention of doing so. Yet it may be that rejecting all “non-Jews” across the board unjustly penalizes truly sincere “non-Jewish” seekers who may even be rooted in the souls of Israel even if they do not even know how to express this, like the Fourth Son of the Pesach Seder Haggadah, Who Does Not Know To Ask.

Through the Internet today, practically anyone, anywhere on earth, can find abundant online Torah study resources, including all the classic Hebrew texts, translations and commentaries, all kinds of online audio and video classes and entire courses in many different areas. There is no rabbinical police force that can prevent unworthy individuals from participating in such study. However, the public forum is flooded with so much misinformation about Torah masquerading as “truth”, that Torah outreach teachers surely owe it to those who are indeed sincere seekers to clarify what is correct and what is incorrect.

There are many cases where non-Jews desire to identify with Israel in some way and believe that they should convert and become Jewish. However, their understanding of Torah obligations may be so distorted and their ability to fulfill them so limited that they need to be informed that the Noahide pathway in the fullest sense is more appropriate for them. This indeed is for their own good, as it is better that they should not consider themselves Jews because of the severe penalties for failing to live up to Torah law.

Yet in other cases, just as Ruth insisted on clinging to Naomi and her people despite Naomi’s rebuffs, so there are “Jews by Choice” and “Ephraimites” who insist, no matter what, in pressing on with their chosen

Torah pathway. It may be that at the very roots of their souls they are indeed our lost Israelite brothers and sisters. Even if this is no more than a mere possibility, a *safek*, a “matter of doubt”, should we not at the very least, as a gesture of compassion, give them the benefit of the doubt and provide their thirsty souls with clear, reliable information about the options before them and the true obligations of the Torah pathway.

As the prophesied Redemption of Israel and the Restoration of the lost Ten Tribes draws ever closer, it will be for the rabbinical authorities of the future to determine how the Halakhah would apply to them in practice. As an example of halakhic questions that can arise, consider the tribes in present-day Africa who believe themselves to be members of the Children of Israel descended from the Ten Tribes, some of whom practice polygamy until today. Since their ancestors never knew of or accepted the *Cherem* (“Ban”) against polygamy instituted by Rabbenu Gershom (ben Yehudah, “Light of the Diaspora”, 960-1040), and in any case, the original timespan for its application is widely considered to have technically expired, can they simply be told peremptorily that “Jews do not practice polygamy today”? Or are they permitted to practice polygamy in accordance with Talmudic law (*Mishneh Torah, Ishut, Laws of Marriage 14:3*)?

Other questions could be raised about the obligations of returning “Ephraimites” in the area of prayer. The Ten Tribes went into exile prior to the redaction of the order and formulae of the prayers by the Men of the Great Assembly in early Second Temple times, as enshrined in the *Siddur* Prayer Book and accepted today as mandatory for all Jews. Are “Ephraimites” halakhically obliged to adopt the *Siddur* as we have it today for their prayer life, or may they develop their own forms of prayer based on the fundamental, biblically-derived laws of prayer, the Psalms and sources in TaNaKh, etc.? In general, how would the rabbinical decrees from Ezra onwards, including the decrees and customs of the Babylonian Talmud, considered mandatory for all Jews, apply in practice to the returning Ten Tribes?

At the very least, today’s Torah-observant Jews should be aware that with the rapidly approaching Redemption and Restoration, the future practice of the Torah and the commandments by the Twelve Tribes of Israel may be expected to differ radically in style and many other respects from those of Torah practice as seen in orthodox Jewish communities today.

## Light to the Nations

יְקוֹךְ עֲזִי וּמְעוֹזִי וּמְנוּסָי בְּיוֹם צָרָה אֱלֹהֵי גוֹיִם לְבָאוּ מֵאַפְסֵי־אָרֶץ  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲדֹ-שָׁקֶר נָחֲלוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ הַבֵּל וַאֲיוֹ-בָם מוֹעִיל: הֲיַעֲשֶׂה־לּוֹ  
אָדָם אֱלֹהִים וְהֵמָּה לֹא אֱלֹהִים:

O LORD, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge on a day of trouble, to You nations shall come from the ends of the earth and say: Only falsehood did our fathers inherit, things that are futile and contain nothing that can avail. Can a man make himself gods, and they are not gods?

Jeremiah 19-20

וְהָלְכוּ עַמִּים רַבִּים וַאֲמָרוּ לָכֵן | וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל־הַר־יְקוֹךְ אֶל־בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵי  
יַעֲקֹב וַיְרַנֵּנוּ מִדַּרְכָּיו וְנִלְכֶה בְּאַרְחֻתָּיו כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וּדְבַר־  
יְקוֹךְ מִירוּשָׁלַם:

And many peoples shall go and say: “Come, let us go up to the Mount of the LORD, to the House of the God of Jacob; that He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.” For instruction shall come forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Isaiah 2:3

Numerous passages in TaNaKh stand in marked contrast to the attitude seen in some Jewish quarters today that Torah is exclusively reserved for the Jews and should be practiced almost privately as it were, behind closed doors, with no involvement on the part of “non-Jews” or any kind of outreach to them.

Israel is indeed “a people that dwells apart and is not reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23:9). This is because the people of Israel are uniquely appointed to a life of duty, to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6), whose mission is to minister to the nations of the world.

אֲנִי יְקוֹךְ קָרָאתִיךָ בְּצַדִּיק וְאַתָּה בְּיָדֶךָ וְאַצְרִיךָ וְאַתָּה לְבָרִית עִם  
לְאוֹר גוֹיִם:

I the LORD have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will guard you, and give you as a Covenant of the people, a Light of the gentiles.

Isaiah 42:6

וַיֹּאמֶר נִקְל מְהִיֹּתָךְ לִי עֹבֵד לְהַקִּים אֶת־שְׁבִטִי יַעֲקֹב וּנְצִירֵי  
[וּנְצִירֵי] יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהָשִׁיב וּנְתִתִּיךָ לְאֹר גּוֹלָם לְהַיֹּת יְשׁוּעָתִי עַד־קֶצֶה  
הָאָרֶץ:

And He said: Is it too little that you should be My servant, in that I raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the survivors of Israel? I will also make you a light of nations, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 49:6

## Fierce Anger and its Sweetening

Our sages taught: “As long as there is idolatry in the world, there is fierce anger in the world” (*Sifri* on Deuteronomy 13:18).

Not only is literal idolatry practiced, whether overtly or secretly, in many places on earth, until today. Equally idolatrous is the secular materialist consumption-driven culture and worldview that has now overtaken much of the world, whose gods are self-gratification, pleasure, power, prestige and a multitude of others. With rampant murder, crime, sexual license, legalized homosexual “marriages”, transgenderism and much else that is in direct contradiction to the Torah of Israel and the Noachide Code, is it any wonder that in front of our very eyes today we are witnessing a veritable global conflagration of rage and anger, accusations and recriminations, hatred, conflict, violence and warfare on every level?

As God’s “kingdom of priests and holy nation”, the people of Israel cannot remain indifferent and passive, as if we have no role in the wider world. Nor did our founding fathers, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, remain passive and indifferent. The world in their time was no less dark and benighted than ours. Indeed, there are too many parallels between the culture of the generations of the Tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah and ancient Egypt and the rampant God-denying culture of today.

Rabbi Nachman taught that all three patriarchs busied themselves with preaching to the people of their time and educating them in the ways of God (*Chayey Moharan* #395; *Tzaddik* pp. 328-30). Likewise, Moses sought to mitigate the judgment and fierce anger in the world caused by idolatry through making converts, and thus he attempted to draw close the Mixed Multitude in order to make converts (*Likutey Moharan* Part I, Lesson 215).

The idea that the Torah of Israel is of no relevance to the other nations of the world belies the clear significance of key passages in the Torah itself. Our sages taught that Moses himself explained the Torah in the seventy languages of the nations, as it says: “On the other side of the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began to expound (*bei-eir*, בְּאֵר) this Torah...” (Deuteronomy 1:5). In the words of Rashi (*ad loc.*): “He explained it to them in the seventy languages” (see *Sotah* 32a). The Talmud (*ibid.*) adds that when the Children of Israel first entered the Land of Israel, they built an altar and laid plaster over it and wrote on it all the words of the Torah in the seventy languages.

Israel are enjoined to reach out to the nations: “Tell of His glory among the nations, His wondrous deeds, among all peoples” (Psalm 96:3). “Praise the LORD; call on His Name; proclaim His deeds among the peoples” (Psalm 105:1).

In time to come, the nations themselves will turn to Israel for spiritual leadership:

כִּי־הִנֵּה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יִכְסֶה־אֶרֶץ וְעַרְפָּל לְאֻמִּים וְעַל־יְדֶיךָ יִזְרַח יְקוּק וּכְבוֹדוֹ  
 עָלֶיךָ יֵרָאֶה : וְהִלְכוּ גוֹיִם לְאוֹרְךָ וּמַלְכִים לְנֹגַהּ זְרַחֲךָ :

Behold! Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick clouds the peoples; but upon you the LORD will shine, and His Presence shall be seen over you. And nations shall walk by your light, kings, by your shining radiance.

Isaiah 60:2-3

וְנִלְווּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים אֶל־יְקוּק בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם...

Many nations will attach themselves to the LORD on that day and they shall become My people...

Zechariah 2:15

וְהִלְכוּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְאָמְרוּ לָכֵן | וְנַעֲלֶה אֶל־הַר־יְקוּק וְאֶל־בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵי  
 יַעֲקֹב וְיִזְרְנוּ מִדְּרָכָיו וְנִלְכֶה בְּאַרְחֻתָּיו כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וּדְבַר־  
 יְקוּק מִירוּשָׁלַם :

And many nations shall go and shall say: “Come! Let us go up to the Mountain of the LORD, to the House of the God of Jacob, that He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.”

For instruction shall come forth from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Micah 4:2

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה יְקֹנֵק צְבָאוֹת עַד אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ עַמִּים וַיִּשְׁבְּי עָרִים רַבּוֹת:  
וְהָלְכוּ יֹשְׁבֵי אֶחָת אֶל־אֶחָת לֵאמֹר נִלְכָה הַלֹּוֹךְ לְחַלּוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְקֹנֵק  
וּלְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־יְקֹנֵק צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי נִלְכָה גַם־אֲנִי: וּבָאוּ עַמִּים רַבִּים וְגוֹיִם  
עֲצוּמִים לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־יְקֹנֵק צְבָאוֹת בִּירוּשָׁלַם וּלְחַלּוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְקֹנֵק:  
כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה יְקֹנֵק צְבָאוֹת בְּיָמֵי הַהֵמָּה אֲשֶׁר יַחֲזִיקוּ עֲשָׂרָה אָנָּשִׁים  
מִכָּל לְשׁוֹנֹת הַגּוֹיִם וְהִחֲזִיקוּ בְּכַנְף אִישׁ יְהוּדִי לֵאמֹר נִלְכָה עִמָּכֶם  
כִּי שָׁמַעְנוּ אֱלֹהִים עִמָּכֶם:

So said the LORD of Hosts: The peoples and inhabitants of many cities shall yet come. And the inhabitants of one shall go to the other and say, “Let us go and entreat the favor of the LORD, let us seek the LORD of Hosts; I too shall go!” And many peoples and powerful nations shall come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. So said the LORD of Hosts: In those days, ten men from nations of every tongue will take hold — they will take hold of a Jew by a corner of his cloak and say, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

Zechariah 8:20-23

Many are ever more aware that these days have already begun and are upon us now.

## 2. May a Goy keep Shabbat?

As discussed earlier (p. 7), the Talmudic source for the prohibition against Shabbat observance by an idolater is in the Babylonian Talmud Tractate *Sanhedrin* towards the end of a lengthy discussion about the Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah, their Biblical sources and detailed laws:

אָמַר רִישׁ לָקִישׁ עוֹיָד כּוֹכְבִּים שְׁשָׁבֶת חַיִּיב מִיָּתָה שְׁנֵאָמַר (בראשית  
ח, כב) "וַיּוֹם וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבּוּתוּ".

Reish Lakish (Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish) said: An idol-worshipper who observed Shabbat is liable to the death penalty, as it says: "And day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:23).

*Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 58b*

The Hebrew word rendered here as "observed Shabbat" is the verb *shaavath*, שָׁבַת, literally "rested", i.e., from the biblically-rooted labors that are prohibited to Israel on Shabbat. The commentator Rashi (*ad loc.*) explains that if the idolater were to rest from his labor for a full day, he would be liable to the death penalty on account of the literal meaning of the verse: "Day and night *they shall not rest*" which is interpreted homiletically to apply also to humans.

The Talmud (*ibid.*) adds in the name of Ravina (a later Amora who died about 420 C.E.): "Even on a Monday."

Rashi (*ad loc.*) explains the significance of Ravina's statement:

אמר רבינא אפילו שני בשבת: לא תימא שביתה דקאמר ריש  
לקיש לשום חובה קאמר דלא לכוון לשבות כגון בשבת שהוא יום  
שביתה לישראל או אחד בשבת ששבתין בו הנוצרים אלא מנוחה  
בעלמא קא אסר להו שלא יבטלו ממלאכה ואפי' יום שאינו בר  
שביתה שני בשבת יומא קמא דלאו יום בר שביתה נקט וה"ה  
דהוה מצי למינקט שלישי ורביעי.

You cannot say that the sabbatical rest (*shevitah*, שביתה) of which Reish Lakish is speaking is for the sake of fulfilling an obligation, as if to say the idolater should not intend to take a Sabbath rest, for example, on Shabbat, which is the day of rest for Israel, or on

Sunday, on which the *Notzrim* observe their Sabbath. Rather, what is prohibited for them is any kind of rest (*menuchah*, מְנוּחָה) in the sense that they should not cease entirely from labor even on a day that is not designated for Shabbat rest, such as Monday, the first day that is not a day for Sabbath rest, but by the same token he could have taken Tuesday or Wednesday as his example.

Rashi on *Sanhedrin* 58b

In actual fact, it is practically impossible for even the most learned Torah-observant Jew with a lifetime of experience to refrain entirely from all the labors that are forbidden on Shabbat under the various categories of *Avot*, “fathers”, the Thirty-Nine paradigm labors, and each of their many subcategories of *Toldot*, “offspring” or “generations”, i.e., their related labors. (See *Likutey Moharan* Part I, Lesson 277:4.) More baffling than ever are the challenges of how and under what circumstances on Shabbat we may or may not use the technological marvels of our time – electric lighting, heating and air conditioning, stoves, refrigerators, phones, computers and other devices, cars, medical equipment, etc. etc.

Even so, the Torah-observant Jew is obliged to do everything possible to avoid performing any forbidden labor on Shabbat, whereas the “Goy” is positively encouraged to perform at least some form of “work” on Shabbat. In orthodox Jewish circles, even serious candidates for full conversion to Judaism as a *Ger Tzedek* or female *Giyoret*, who after lengthy periods living in an observant Jewish community may be observing the halakhic Shabbat in every way, must still demonstrate that they are aware they are not yet a full Israelite. They are instructed to do this by performing at least one action each Shabbat that for a fully-fledged Jew would be a transgression, such as lighting a match, swatting a fly or the like. This implies that as a “non-Jew” even such candidates for conversion are not allowed to observe the Shabbat in the manner of Torah-observant Jews until after their full conversion.

It clearly cannot be that the “Goy” is never allowed to take even a momentary rest from activity. What may be inferred from the Talmudic discussion is that he or she is strictly forbidden to practice a complete day of abstinence from all the thirty-nine labors prohibited to Israel on the Shabbat, whether they rest in this sense on the Shabbat itself or any other day of the week. Since abstinence by Israel from these labors is the precondition for their Shabbat “rest” – *Menuchah*, מְנוּחָה – the “Goy” is

excluded from this level of experience, which is akin to receiving holy spirit or prophecy (cf. Jeremiah 45:3 and Rashi there).

## The “Death Penalty” and its rationale

In our earlier discussion about the prohibition against an idolater studying Torah (above pp. 44f), we saw that the liability to the death penalty is not to be taken literally, and the same would apply to an idolater who observes a complete Sabbatical abstinence from labor.

In the words of Rambam:

עֲבוּרִים שֶׁשָׁבַת אָפְלוּ בְיוֹם מִימֹת הַחַל אִם עָשָׂהוּ לְעֲצָמוֹ כְּמוֹ שָׁבַת חֵיב מִיתָה וְאִין צָרִיךְ לֹאמַר אִם עָשָׂה מוֹעֵד לְעֲצָמוֹ. כְּלָלוֹ שֶׁל דָּבָר אֵין מְנִיחִין אוֹתוֹ לְחִדּוֹשׁ דָּת וְלַעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוֹת לְעֲצָמוֹן מִדַּעְתּוֹ אֶלָּא אוֹ יִהְיֶה גֵר צָדֵק וְיִקָּבֵל כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת אוֹ יַעֲמֵד בְּתוֹרָתוֹ וְלֹא יוֹסִיף וְלֹא יִגְרַע. וְאִם עָסַק בְּתוֹרָה אוֹ שָׁבַת אוֹ חִדּוֹשׁ דָּבָר, מִכֵּין אוֹתוֹ וְעוֹנְשִׁין אוֹתוֹ וּמוֹדִיעִין אוֹתוֹ שֶׁהוּא חֵיב מִיתָה עַל זֶה אֲבָל אֵינוֹ נִהָרָג.

An idolater who “rested” as one would on Shabbat, even on a weekday, is liable to the death penalty, and it is unnecessary to add that this would apply if he invented his own festival. The principle here is that they are not permitted to institute a new religion or to create new commandments for themselves based on their own reasoning. Either they must become righteous converts and take on themselves all the commandments, or they should observe their own Noahide Laws without adding or detracting from them. If an idolater engaged in Torah or practiced the Shabbat rest or instituted something new, he is beaten and punished and is notified that he is liable with the death penalty for this. But he is not executed.

*Mishneh Torah, Melakhim, Laws of Kings 10:9*

In our time no rabbinical police squads are empowered to go around chastising idolaters who observe the full Shabbat rest. Yet even without a literal death by execution for such a violation, the very idea that it carries a liability to some level of “death” seems extremely severe.

Perhaps it may become somewhat more comprehensible when we bear in mind that the observance of the Shabbat is considered equivalent to

the observance of all the 613 Torah commandments (*Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim* ch 3), and that the Shabbat with its associated rest testifies to God's creation of the Universe (Genesis 2:1-3). Accordingly, if an idolater observes the Shabbat rest in honor of his idol, he is flagrantly denying and blaspheming the Creator of the Universe and mocking His entire Torah.

## God's Special Gift

It is indeed abundantly clear that the Shabbat is God's special gift to Israel. In the words of the Talmud:

אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמֹשֶׁה: "מִתְּנָה טוֹבָה יֵשׁ לִי בְּבֵית גְּנֹזֵי  
וְשַׁבַּת שְׁמָהּ, וְאֲנִי מְבַקֵּשׁ לִיתְּנָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, לֵךְ וְהוֹדִיעֵם."

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "I have a good gift in My treasure house and Shabbat is its name, and I seek to give it to Israel. Go and inform them about it."

*Talmud Bavli, Shabbat* 10b

The Torah states:

וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַשַּׁבָּת לְדוֹרֹתָם בְּרִית  
עוֹלָם: בְּיָמֵי וַיְבִין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹת הוּא לְעַלְמָם כִּי־שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה  
יְקוּק אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת וַיִּנְפֹּשׁ:

The Children of Israel shall guard the Shabbat, observing the Shabbat for their generations as an eternal covenant. Between Me and between the Children of Israel, it is a sign for ever that in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh He rested and was refreshed.

Exodus 31:16-17

Following the recital of these verses in the central blessing of the Shabbat morning *Amidah* prayer, the prayer continues:

וְלֹא נָתַתָּה יְקוּק אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְגוֹיֵי הָאָרְצוֹת וְלֹא הִנַּחְתָּנוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ לְעוֹבְדֵי  
פְּסִילִים וְגַם בְּמִנוּחָתוֹ לֹא יִשְׁכְּנוּ עַרְלִים, כִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ נָתַתָּה  
בְּאַהֲבָה לְזֵרַע יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר בָּם בְּחַרְתָּ:

"... And You did not give it, O LORD our God, to the nations (*goyey*, plural of *goy*) of the lands, and nor did You give it to idol-

worshippers, and nor shall the uncircumcised dwell in its repose, for to Israel Your people did You give it in love, to the seed of Jacob whom You chose.”

From the Shabbat Morning *Amidah* prayer

Rabbi Shmuel Eidels (*Maharsha*, 1555-1631) commenting on the Talmudic prohibition against the idolater observing the Shabbat rest explains:

מצות שבת נקראת כלה וכו' והויא שבת לגבייהו ככלה שנכנסה לחופה ולא נבעלה ולזה וכו' העובד כוכבים וכו' אם הוא שומר שבת הוה ליה כאילו בא על כלת ישראל שנכנסה לחופה ולא נבעלה ואמרינן וכו' דנידון בדיני ישראל וכו' וכן הוא אומר "ביני ובין בני ישראל" משל למלך יושב ומטרונא יושבת כנגדו העובר ביניהם חייב מיתה.

The Shabbat is called a “bride” and is thus is for Israel like a bride who has entered the marriage canopy but whose marriage has not yet been consummated. Therefore, if the idolater observes the Shabbat rest, it is as if he violated the bride of an Israelite who has entered the marriage canopy but whose marriage has not yet been consummated, and we say that he is subject to the same Torah penalty of death that would apply to an Israelite who did such a thing. And thus, the Shabbat is called a sign “between Me and the Children of Israel”. It is as if the King is sitting face to face with the Queen, and someone who comes in between them is liable to the death penalty.

*Chiddushey Aggadot on Sanhedrin 58b*

## **The Ger Toshav**

It may appear as if the sources quoted here entirely rule out the possibility that anyone who is considered a “Goy” or “non-Jewish” may have any part in the observance of the Shabbat. However, such an inference would be far from accurate. Firstly, in the same way as noted in connection with the prohibition of Torah study by various different categories of “non-Jews”, the Talmudic prohibition of Shabbat rest applies specifically to the practicing idolater and cannot necessarily be applied to every category of “Goy” who is not recognized as being “Jewish”. Thus, in another Torah passage giving the commandment of Shabbat, it says:

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִשְׁבֹּת לְמַעַן יָנוּחַ שׁוֹרְךָ  
וְחִמְלֹךְ וַיִּנָּפֵשׂ בְּרֵאֲמֹתֶיךָ וְהִגֵּר :

Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor, in order that your ox and your ass may rest, and that your bondman and the **stranger** (Hebrew: *Ger*, גֵּר) may be refreshed.

Exodus 23:12

We must clarify who exactly is the “stranger” or *Ger* mentioned in this verse? Since this verse is addressed to all Israel, including the *Ger Tzeddek*, the “full” convert, who must observe all the the Shabbat laws like all other Israelites, we cannot say that the *Ger Tzeddek* is the “Ger” or “stranger” mentioned in the verse who must be allowed to be refreshed on the Shabbat. Indeed, Rashi on this verse states that the *Ger* here is the *Ger Toshav*, the Noahide who has disavowed idolatry and undertaken the Noahide commandments but is not a full convert (Rashi on Exodus 23:12 and see also Ramban on Exodus 20:10).

This verse in no way implies that the *Ger Toshav* is required to abstain from all the thirty-nine kinds of prohibited labors and to observe the Shabbat with all the stringencies that apply to the Children of Israel. As far as the Israelite Shabbat-observer is concerned, the verse is teaching that he may not give the *Ger Toshav* work that needs to be done on Shabbat, but rather must respect the *Ger Toshav*’s day of leisure.

However, when it comes to those with the status of *Ger Toshav* themselves, nothing in the verse suggests that they **may not** mark the Shabbat with some kind of recognition, even if not required to refrain from every kind of labor, activity or speech forbidden to Israel. On the contrary, the verse clearly includes the *Ger Toshav* among those who are encouraged to enjoy and be nourished spiritually on the Shabbat day. The Hebrew word in the phrase in the above-quoted verse in Exodus 23:12: “that... the stranger may **be refreshed**”, is *vayiNaFaSh*, וַיִּנָּפֵשׂ, which is from the root *NeFeSh*, נֶפֶשׁ, “the soul” and thus has a spiritual connotation.

In fact, the Halakhah specifically permits a Jew to invite a non-Jew to his Shabbat meal (*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim 325:1*). This indicates that the door is **not** closed on a non-Jew participating in the Shabbat experience.]

## “Remember” and “Guard”

On the contrary, all the peoples of the world are *obliged* to remember and be aware of the Shabbat. This is explained by Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz (1550-1619) in his classic *Kli Yakar* commentary on the Five Books of Moses. On the Torah commandment: “Remember the Shabbat”, as given in the first version of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11), he writes:

The Torah did not want to say *Guard* the day of Shabbat [as in the second version of the Ten Commandments, Deuteronomy 5:12] in order not to give an opening of the mouth to the nations to say: “How can He be commanding us to guard against performing any forbidden labor since the Children of Noah have already been told that ‘day and night they shall not rest’ (Genesis 8:22) and from here the sages learned (*Sanhedrin* 58b) that a member of the nations who rested on Shabbat is liable to the death penalty?”

For that reason, it says here: *Remember* the day of Shabbat. That is to say, even one who is not bound to *guard* the Shabbat by abstaining from labor is still included in the commandment of *remembering* the Shabbat. **For all the nations are obliged to remember the day of Shabbat in order to fix in their hearts the faith and belief in the renewal of creation which is God’s faithful testimony to His existence.**

For included in the Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah is the prohibition against idolatry, and even though the nations are unable to embrace the negative commandment against performing all labor on the Shabbat, they can nevertheless take upon themselves the commandment of *remembering* the Shabbat, to which they are also obliged, in order that the renewal of the universe may be before their eyes for a memorial.

However, in the second version of the Ten Commandments, which were given only to Israel, the Fourth Commandment uses the expression to *guard* the Shabbat, for Israel are obliged to remember the Shabbat and also to guard against the performance of any forbidden labor. This is why in the second version, the reason given for the observance of Shabbat is: “That you may remember that you were a slave”. For this is the reason for abstaining from forbidden labor on Shabbat.

*Kli Yakar* on Exodus 20:8-11

## Shabbat for All the World

In our time the vital importance of recognition of the Shabbat by all the nations of the world has been [strongly emphasized by Rabbi Joel Schwartz, a distinguished halakhic authority in Jerusalem](#) who heads the Renewed Sanhedrin's Noahide Court. He has called for all the nations to keep the Sabbath and for the Jews to help them in this mission.

Rabbi Schwartz explains that many of the problems facing the world today are due to not recognizing the Sabbath. Observed on its proper day and in the proper manner, the Sabbath is a weekly affirmation of God's creation of the Universe. The Sabbath is not a random or man-made day; God Himself established it as part of the seven-day process of creation. Every seventh day since the world was created has been Sabbath. Changing it is to try to replace God and remove Him from the creation.

Rabbi Schwartz expands on the teaching in *Kli Yakar's* commentary quoted above:

“Two different aspects of the Sabbath are expressed in the two versions of the Ten Commandments. The first is in Exodus 20:8, where it says, “*Remember* the Shabbat day and keep it holy’, while the second is in Deuteronomy 5:12, where it says: “*Guard* the Shabbat day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you”.

“The first set of tablets, given at Sinai, were written by God and the commandment to *remember* the Sabbath was a universal commandment: ‘Remember the Sabbath’. Since it was universal, it was followed by an account of creation: ‘For in six days God made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore God blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it’ (Exodus 20:11).

“However, the commandment in Deuteronomy on the tablets written by Moses was a message specifically for the Children of Israel to ‘guard’ or ‘observe’ the Sabbath,” says Rabbi Schwartz, noting that it was followed by a description of God taking them out of Egypt: “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Shabbat day’ (Deuteronomy 5:15). ‘To remember’ refers to the positive commandments of keeping the Sabbath while ‘to guard’ relates to the negative commandments of refraining from labor or other acts that are restricted on the Sabbath.

**“By not instructing the nations in their requirement to ‘remember the Sabbath’, by actually preventing them from taking part in the Sabbath, the Jews have prevented the full light of Mashiach from being revealed in the world,” says Rabbi Schwartz.**

“These two different versions of the Sabbath commandment generate two different aspects of the Sabbath, one for Jews and one for the nations. The Jews are required to both ‘remember’ and ‘observe’, performing all the positive injunctions relating to Shabbat commandments as well as refraining from the 39 kinds of forbidden labor.”

Rabbi Schwartz goes on to explain how people of the nations may mark and honor the Shabbat:

“For people of the nations, the positive mitzvah of remembering the Sabbath is fulfilled through reciting the *Kiddush* – sanctifying the Sabbath – usually performed over a cup of wine. Non-Jews should light two candles in honor of the Sabbath. This is typically done by women. When the non-Jew lights the Shabbat candles at the proper time before sunset on Friday prior to the commencement of Shabbat, a blessing with the name of God may be recited. The sanctity of the Sabbath should be enhanced by having two festive meals including bread, one on Friday evening and the other on Saturday afternoon, and these meals should be accompanied by joyous singing at the table.

“It is no coincidence in this era when people are not keeping the Sabbath or even err as to which day is the Sabbath, that families are falling apart,” says Rabbi Schwartz.

“Moreover, when the Halakhah states that it is forbidden for a non-Jew to keep the Sabbath, it is referring to a non-Jew who does not observe the Noahide laws. **But a non-Jew who has taken upon himself to keep the Noahide laws is permitted to keep the Sabbath.**”

This is in accordance with a halakhic ruling explained by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, (the *Chafetz Chaim*, 1838-1933):

גר תושב גופא אם רצה לקבל עליו בעת תחילת גירותו עוד מצות מלבד השבע גם כן חלה קבלתו שמחוייב אחר כך לקיים וכו' ולא תקשה על זה דאיך ישמור שבת והלא גר תושב גם כן אסור לשמור שבת וכו' דזהו בסתם גר תושב שלא קבל עליו רק שבע

מצות כנהוג ואם כן הוא לענין שאר מצות כאינו יהודי גמור מה שאין כן כשקבל עליו עוד מצות בתחלת גירותו ובכללם היה גם כן שבת בודאי יכול לקיימם ומחוייב לקיימם.

If at the time of the *Ger Toshav's* initial acceptance of his obligations as such, he wanted to undertake more commandments in addition to the Seven Noahide Laws, this undertaking is binding and obliges him to fulfill them thereafter... And you cannot question how he may observe the Shabbat by abstaining from forbidden labors when the *Ger Toshav* is also forbidden to observe the Shabbat... For this applies to a regular *Ger Toshav* who undertook only the Seven Noahide Commandments in the usual way, and if so with respect to other commandments he is like a complete non-Israelite. **But this is not the case when he undertook more commandments at the time of his initial acceptance of the obligations of a *Ger Toshav* and among them was also the Shabbat, and in this case, he can certainly fulfil them and is obliged to fulfill them.**

*Biur Halakhah*, appended to *Mishnah Berurah* on *Shulchan Arukh*, *Orach Chayim* 304

Rabbi Joel Schwartz concludes: **“It is time for a revolution in the world. Even the secular people who don’t believe in God know the world is in danger, though they blame it on things like Global Warming. The Sabbath is a precious gift that Hashem gave to the Jews and it demands respect. But it is time observant Jews showed the nations how they can relate to their Creator.”**

## Light of Mashiach

At the End of Days, all mankind will recognize and honor the Shabbat:

וְהָיָה מִדֵּי־חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדֶשׁוֹ וּמִדֵּי שַׁבָּת בְּשַׁבְּתוֹ יָבֹא כָּל־בָּשָׂר לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת  
לְפָנַי אָמַר יְקֹוֹק :

“And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, **and from one Sabbath to another**, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD.

Isaiah 66:23

אֲשֶׁרִי אֲנוֹשׁ יַעֲשֶׂה־אֵת וּבְרֹאֲדָם יַחֲזִיק בָּהּ שֹׁמֵר שַׁבָּת מִחֲלָלוֹ  
וְשֹׁמֵר יָדוֹ מִעֲשׂוֹת כָּל־רָע: וְאֵלֵי־אֲמַר בְּרוּח־הַנֶּזֶךְ הַנִּלְוָה אֶל־יִקְוֶה  
לֵאמֹר הַבְּדִל יַבְדִּילְנִי יִקְוֶה מֵעַל עַמּוֹ וְאֵלֵי־אֲמַר הַסְּרִיס הוּא אֲנִי עַץ  
יָבֵשׁ:

כִּי־כֹה | אֲמַר יִקְוֶה לְסְרִיסִים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי וּבְחָרוּ  
בְּאֲשֶׁר חֲפָצְתִי וּמְחַזְּקִים בְּבְרִיתִי: וְנִתְּתִי לָהֶם בְּבֵיתִי וּבְחוֹמֹתַי יָד  
וְשֵׁם טוֹב מִבְּנִים וּמִבָּנוֹת שֵׁם עוֹלָם אֶתֶּן־לָוּ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּרֵת:

וּבְנֵי הַנֶּזֶךְ הַנִּלְוִים עַל־יִקְוֶה לְשָׂרְתוֹ וְלֹא־הִבָּה אֶת־שֵׁם יִקְוֶה לְהַיּוֹת  
לוֹ לְעַבְדִּים כָּל־שֹׁמֵר שַׁבָּת מִחֲלָלוֹ וּמְחַזְּקִים בְּבְרִיתִי: וְהִבִּיאוּתִים  
אֶל־הָר קִדְשֵׁי וְשִׁמְחָתִים בְּבֵית תְּפִלָּתִי עוֹלֵתֵיהֶם וְזִבְחֵיהֶם לְרָצוֹן  
עַל־מִזְבְּחֵי כִּי בֵיתִי בֵּית־תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל־הָעַמִּים:

Happy is the man who does this, the man who holds fast to it, who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and stays his hand from doing any evil. Let not the foreigner who has attached himself to the LORD say: “The LORD will keep me apart from His people”. And let not the eunuch say, “I am a withered tree.”

For thus has the LORD said: “As for the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, who have chosen what I desire and hold fast to My Covenant – I will give them, in My House and within My walls, a monument and a name better than sons or daughters. I will give them an everlasting name which shall not perish.

“As for the foreigners who attach themselves to the LORD to minister to Him and to love the Name of the LORD, to be His servants: All who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it and who hold fast to My covenant – I will bring them to My sacred Mount and let them rejoice in My House of Prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be welcome on My altar. For My House shall be called A House of Prayer for All the Peoples.”

Isaiah 56:2-7

We live in a world that is rapidly changing and moving in directions uncharted. What some hail as the “great global reset” is for others a formidable challenge to values they hold dearest and a call to new levels of devotion to God. Among believers there is much talk everywhere of messianic signs. If so, surely not least among them are the burgeoning

throng of people of all backgrounds from all over the world who are turning to Torah in search of guidance. This can only thrill those who understand that the ultimate goal of Creation is for the light of the Torah to shine to all the world.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov said: “Mashiach will conquer the entire world without firing a single bullet” (*Siach Sarfey Kodesh* 1-67).

Rather, “He shall judge the poor with equity and decide with justice for the lowly of the land. He shall strike down a land with the rod of his mouth and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips” (Isaiah 11:4).

The defining quality of Mashiach is that he speaks *peace* to the nations:

גִּילִי מְאֹד בֵּת צִיּוֹן הָרִיעִל בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם הִנֵּה מֶלֶכְךָ יָבוֹא לָךְ צַדִּיק  
וְנוֹשָׁע הוּא עָנִל וְרָכַב עַל־חֲמֹר וְעַל־עִיר בְּנֵי־אֲתָנֹת: וְהִכְרַת־יָרֵכְךָ  
מִמֶּאֱפְרָיִם וְסוּסֵי מִירוּשָׁלַם וְנִכְרַתָּהּ קֶשֶׁת מִלְחָמָה וְדָבָר שָׁלוֹם לְגוֹיִם  
וּמִשְׁלוֹ מֵיָם עַד־יָם וּמִנְהַר עַד־אֲפְסֵי־אָרֶץ:

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion; raise a shout, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king is coming to you. He is victorious and triumphant, yet humble, riding on an ass, on a donkey foaled by a she-ass. And I shall banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem; the warrior’s bow shall be banished. **And he shall speak peace to the nations**, and his rule shall extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

Zechariah 9:9-10

The mission of all members of God’s nation of priests today is to embrace this messianic spirit and likewise to speak peace to the nations and to shine the light of Torah everywhere, in every way possible.

Nobody can deny the dire state of the world today, whether because of “climate change”, “pandemics”, frustration, high tension, rage, hatred, crime, violence, strife, war and the accompanying economic, social and cultural upheavals.

It is all too easy to envisage a scenario in which, “Throughout the land, declares the LORD, two thirds in it shall be cut off and expire and one third in it shall survive” (Zechariah 13:8).

On the “third in it that shall survive”, Rashi explains: “They shall convert and they shall live”, (*yitgay’ru ve’yichyu*, יִתְגַּיְרוּ וַיַּחֲיוּ). The term “they shall convert”, *yitgay’ru*, יִתְגַּיְרוּ, can apply equally to the *Ger Tzeddek* and the *Ger Toshav*.

If so, shining Torah to the nations is a mission of mercy and literal rescue from death.

The “rod” of Mashiach is the “quill” with which he pens his Torah teachings:

בְּקִדְמֵי־תָא בְיָמָא בְּהָהוּא חֲמֵר, בְּפוּרְקָנָא בְּתַרְיֵיתָא כְּלָא בְיָמָא  
 דְּאוּרְיֵיתָא, מְטָה דִּילֵיהּ דְּקָרַע בֵּיהּ יָמָא דָּא קוּלְמוֹס, בְּגִין דְּעַלְיָה  
 אֲתַגְלִיָּיא זְרוּעַ יְקוּיָק, דְּאֲתַמַּר בֵּיהּ (ישעיה נג א) וְזָרוּעַ יְקוּיָק עַל מִי  
 נִגְלָתָהּ.

Initially [in the First Redemption from Egypt, Moses split] the physical sea, consisting of that “material” [i.e. the revealed Torah of *Asiyah*], but in the Final Redemption, the “Splitting of the Sea is entirely in the Sea of the Torah [namely the revelation of her secrets]. The rod with which he will split the sea in the future is the quill, because upon it is revealed the Arm of the LORD, of which it is said: “Upon whom is the Arm of the LORD revealed?” (Isaiah 53:1).

*Tikuney Zohar, Tikun 21, Daf 43a*

In the words of Hillel: “Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving humanity (Hebrew: *ha’briyot*, הַבְּרִיּוֹת, literally, ‘the creations’) and drawing them close to the Torah” (*Pirkey Avot* 1:12).

עַל כֵּן נִקְוָה לָךְ יְקוּק אֱלֹקֵינוּ לְרֵאוֹת מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאָרְתְּךָ לְהַעֲבִיר  
 גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וְהַאֲלִילִים כָּרוֹת וּפְרִתוֹן לְתַקּוֹן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת  
 שְׁדֵי וְכָל בְּנֵי בְּשָׂר יִקְרְאוּ בְשֵׁמֶךָ, לְהַפְנוֹת אֶלְיֶךָ כָּל רְשָׁעֵי אָרֶץ, וּפְרִו  
 וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תְבִיל כִּי לָךְ תִּכְרַע כָּל בְּרָךְ תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל לְשׁוֹן : לְפָנֶיךָ  
 יְקוּק אֱלֹקֵינוּ וְכָרְעוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ, וְלִכְבוֹד שְׁמֶךָ יִקָּר יִתְנַו, וַיִּקְפְּלוּ כָּלֵם אֶת  
 עַל מַלְכוּתְךָ, וְתִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם מְהֵרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, כִּי הַמַּלְכוּת שְׁלֹךְ  
 הִיא וְלְעוֹלָמֵי עַד תִּמְלֹךְ בְּכָבוֹד, כְּפִתוּב בְּתוֹרַתְךָ יְקוּק יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם  
 וָעֶד : וְנֶאֱמַר וְהָיָה יְקוּק לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה יְקוּק  
 אֶחָד וְשֵׁמוֹ אֶחָד :

Therefore, we put our hope in You, O LORD our God, to see soon the glory of Your strength, to remove all idols from the earth, and to cut off completely all false gods; to repair the world under the sovereignty of the Eternal, and for all living flesh to call upon Your Name, and for all the wicked of the Earth to turn to You. May all the world's inhabitants recognize and know that to You every knee must bend and every tongue must swear loyalty. Before You, O Lord our God, may all bow down, and give honor to Your precious Name, and may all take upon themselves the yoke of Your rule. And may You reign over them soon and forever and always. Because all rule is Yours alone, and You will rule in honor forever and ever, as it is written in Your Torah: "The LORD will reign forever and ever." And it is said: "The LORD will be Ruler over the whole Earth, and on that day, God will be One, and His name will be One.

Last paragraph of the *Aleinu* prayer, recited three times daily at the conclusion of every Jewish prayer service

# Rabbi Nathan's prayer for the Captive Souls

From *Likutey Tefilot* Part I, Prayer 17 (translated by Avraham Greenbaum, printed in Volume 2 of "The Fiftieth Gate", Breslov Research Institute)

## Charity – the key to unlocking the exiled Godliness

Loving God: Help me give abundant charity to genuinely deserving, needy people, and to the true Tzaddikim, so that I may become unified with a multitude of the souls of Israel and thereby bring the good hidden within me out into the light. You know the great beauty, the holiness and goodness I have inside me. It's just that they've been suppressed and locked away in a long, bitter exile for years and years, from my very first day on earth until today. I've still not been able to take myself in hand and bring this hidden good out of exile and into the light. I find it impossible to keep in mind where I am in the world. I don't know what to do to bring out the good I have inside me.

Please, God, guide me as to what I should do. Show me Your love and give me complete success. Do wonders with me and give me *life*. Don't let me be like a dead person in my own lifetime! Treat me with the unstinting kindness that befits You, not according to my wrongful, shameful behavior and attitudes. Please have pity on my poor, broken soul and stir up Your compassion for the essential goodness within me. Only with this will I be able to fight and conquer the body and its desires, until the good will take command over the bad and all my bodily desires and bad character traits will be removed, and I will always lead my life the way You want me to.

Father in Heaven! Father in Heaven! Kind, truly loving Father, Who takes pity on the poor and hears the cry of the needy; Who sees the disgrace of the wretched, and hears and attends to a cry from the lowest depths of hell and lower. There is no sigh or cry from anywhere that You do not hear. Teach me and guide me as to what I should say to You. Let me know what I should cry out to You.

Please, please have pity on me! I feel so humiliated. My heart is so crushed. I feel so bereft of intelligence and sensitivity. I am so weak, so confused, so driven, so mixed up. The good inside me is literally trapped and imprisoned in a bitter exile. I'm hemmed in by thousands and thousands of fences,

barriers and walls of iron. Thousands upon thousands of guards and lurking enemies stand in wait for me the whole time, and they won't give me back my soul!

I find it impossible to do even the slightest thing in the proper way. Even when I feel inspired to do something holy, I feel incapable of taking the smallest step with the beauty and splendor that befit an Israelite, as You know. Woe! It is so bitter! bitter! Woe! It is all so very bitter. Woe for my soul - the soul that acted this way! Woe for the days and years I've wasted on vain emptiness, futility and evil. Master of everything: to You I cry and scream. Compassionate God! Turn Your ear to me and hear! Open Your eyes and see my devastation! See my wretched plight!

Master of the Universe: In Your great love, You gave me the privilege of being a member of the People of Israel. You were kind to me and brought me close to the true Tzaddikim – to believe in them and long for them. In the merit of those holy saints, now at rest in the earth, deal with me kindly and help me experience a true spiritual awakening. Let the good within me be genuinely aroused and let me be aware of it! Let the good in me come to understand its great worth and know from where it was taken – from the Supreme Thought of the Holy One, blessed be He. There I arose in the Primordial Thought, together with all the souls of Israel – and I, the lightest creature in the “sea” – above all the four worlds, *Atzilut*, *Beriyah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*...

In my root I am higher than all of them, for I am a member of the People of Israel, who arose in the Primordial Thought. With us God took counsel in creating all the worlds and everything in them, down to the depths of *Asiyah* – this world, together with everything in it, in the heavens, on earth and in the seas.

And now, after all this, please help me! Strengthen me! Fortify me! Stir me and let me *wake up*! Kind, loving God: Help me realize exactly where I am, where I've been cast down to, and how distanced I've been from You for so long. Would anyone believe that the true goodness rooted inside me could have been cast down to such a dismal, shadowy, lowly place, into such abject darkness, down to such degraded, lowly places – places so remote from holiness that they can't even be called places?

Please, God, have pity on me! Every time I want to speak to You and express my feelings, I have no idea where to start or how to finish. I'm under such extreme pressures and my needs are so many that even tens of thousands of

pages wouldn't be enough to explain them all. As a result, I can't open my mouth at all. Even when I do start to talk a little, everything I say is confused, because I have so many different needs that I cannot begin to set them all out and explain everything.

But to You, Master of everything, all secrets are revealed going right back to the very beginnings of creation. You know what is hidden in our hearts and in the depths of our thoughts, and how in my innermost, innermost thoughts, the good in me screams out in the most heart-rending, unbearably bitter voice. The true pity of my condition is beyond all measure. Then why have You closed Your ear to me and hidden Your face for so long? Why have You held back Your love from me?

O LORD our God and God of our fathers: Just as You showed such abundant love and kindness in creating me a member of the People of Israel, so too may it be Your will to arouse Your mercy for me now and help me attend carefully to the words of the true Tzaddikim. Let my eyes be open and my ears hear and my heart understand their message, because their constant labor is to awaken the goodness rooted in the souls of the Jewish People and lift it out of its exile, by bringing people to repent and making converts.

Let me hear the voice of the Tzaddikim of this generation, and the words of the true Tzaddikim now at rest in the earth, as written in their holy works. Let me hear, see and understand their holy words, until the good within me is awakened in its full strength and holy power, so that I will fight against the evil in me, break it, and drive it out of me completely. Let me return to You with all my heart in perfect, genuine Teshuvah – Repentance – and live in the way You want me to live in holiness, purity, joy and good-heartedness.

O God: Please, have pity on me and fulfill my request. And so too, loving God, let the truth be revealed to the whole world, and let the entire People of Israel be aroused so that they come to complete repentance. Let those who are far from You hear and come to recognize the power of Your sovereignty. Show Your love for the People of Israel, and for the good that is imprisoned among the nations of the world. O God: It is in Your power to work mighty miracles and wonders. Do so now, and send a new awareness to the goodness that is scattered and dispersed amongst the nations, so far away from holiness. Let those scattered, exiled souls realize where they are in the world, and where they are likely to go, God forbid, if they do not come back to their Source. Arouse them until they take themselves in hand and remember God and repent and convert wholeheartedly.

O God: You alone know the full tragedy of this goodness, imprisoned as it is in such places. You know the truth, that nothing in the world is more pitiful. No pain and suffering on earth can compare with the unbearably bitter torment suffered by this good, which is in such deep exile and so far away from its Father in Heaven. "What does it benefit the Father to have banished His children? And woe to the son who has gone into exile from his Father's table!" Woe! How bitter for this son! Woe! how terribly, terribly bitter for this son, who was once in such an exalted place and has now fallen so low.

If You Yourself will not take pity upon us, who will? Who will stand up for us? We have no-one to depend upon except You, Heavenly Father. The true Tzaddikim, who had the power to arouse the imprisoned good to awareness of the truth, have passed away because of our many sins. What are we to do in this time of trouble, the like of which has never been? We have been left like a solitary mast on top of a mountain, like a lone banner on a hill. We have nothing to lean upon for support. Our strength is gone. We have no-one to lead us and help us. See how impoverished we are. Our hearts are full of pain and sorrow. Help us, because we are relying on You, for You are good to all.

For the sake of Your goodness and glory, do what You will do to bring all this scattered and dispersed goodness out of its exile among the nations and back to holiness. Keep on bringing more and more true converts and penitents back, until the whole People of Israel and all the people in the world will turn to You with all their hearts. Let us see the splendor of Your power, and let all the idols and false gods be utterly cut off, until the dominion of the eternal God will be revealed over the whole world and all flesh will call on Your Name. Let all the wicked turn to You, and all the inhabitants of the earth will acknowledge You and know that to You every knee must bend and every tongue swear.

## Hebrew texts of teachings quoted from Rabbi Nachman's *Likutey Moharan*

### 1. *Likutey Moharan* Part I, Lesson 17, sections 5-7

ה: אַךְ אֵיךְ אָפְשֶׁר לַעֲשׂוֹת גְּרִים, וְהֵלֵא הֵם רְחוּקִים מְאֹד מִקְדָּשְׁתּוֹ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמֵאַיִן בָּא זֹאת שְׂיָבוֹא לָהֶם עַל הַדַּעַת שְׂיִתְגַּיְרוּ. אַךְ דַּע,  
שְׂזֶה נַעֲשֶׂה עַל־יְדֵי בְּחִינּוֹת (מִשְׁלֵי י"ט: ד'): הוּן יִסְיֵף רַעִים רַבִּים;  
הֵינּוּ עַל־יְדֵי צְדָקָה שְׁנוֹתָן לְתַלְמִיד־חֶכֶם, שֶׁהוּא כָּלוּל מִכֶּמֶה נִפְשׁוֹת  
יִשְׂרָאֵל.

כִּי בְּאַמֶּת, אֵיךְ אָפְשֶׁר לְעַכּוּ"ם לָבוֹא לְאַמוּנַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְהֵלֵא הֵם  
רְחוּקִים מְאֹד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, וְאֵיךְ אָפְשֶׁר לְדַבֵּר לָהֶם שְׂיִשְׁמְעוּ וְיָבוֹאוּ  
לְהַאֲמוּנָה הַקְּדוּשָׁה, אַךְ כְּמוֹ כְּשֶׁאַחַד רְחוּק מְאֹד מִחֲבֵרוֹ, וְאֵי  
אָפְשֶׁר לְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו שְׂיִשְׁמַע, צָרִיךְ לְכַתֵּב לוֹ כְּתָב, כֵּן צָרִיךְ לְשַׁלַּח  
בְּחִינַת כְּתָב לָהֶם, עַד שְׂיִוְכְּלוּ לְשִׁמְעַ אֵף שֶׁהֵם רְחוּקִים.

כִּי עֵקֶר חוּשׁ הַשְּׁמִיעָה הוּא מַחֲמַת שְׂאוֹתִיּוֹת הַדְּבֹר נַחֲקִים  
בְּאֵוִיר, וְהָאֵוִירִים מְכִים זֶה בְּזֶה עַד שֶׁבָּא לְאַזֵּן הַשׁוֹמֵעַ. וְעַל כֵּן  
כְּשֶׁהָאֵוִיר נָח וְזָךְ וְצָלוּל, אֲזִי כְּשֶׁמְדַבֵּר אֶחָד שְׂיִכּוֹל לְדַבֵּר, אֲזִי  
נִשְׁמַע הַדְּבֹר לְמִרְחוּק, כְּמוֹ שְׂרוֹאֵין בְּחוּשׁ.

אָבֵל כְּשֵׁישׁ רוּח־סְעָרָה, אֲזִי אֵי אָפְשֶׁר לְחַבְרוֹ לְשִׁמְעַ, כִּי הָרוּחַ  
מְבַלְבֵּל וּמְפָרִיד חֻלְקֵי הָאֵוִירִים וְנִתְפָּזְרִים, עַד שֶׁאֵי אָפְשֶׁר לְחַבְרוֹ  
לְשִׁמְעַ אֶפְלוֹ הַקּוֹל, מְכַל שֶׁכֵּן הַדְּבֹר בְּעֶצְמוֹ.

וְעַל־יְדֵי צְדָקָה הוּא לּוֹקַח נִפְשׁוֹת, כִּי לּוֹקַח לְעֶצְמוֹ רַעִים וְאוֹהֲבִים.  
כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר מוֹנַבֵּז (ב"ב יא): אֲבוֹתַי גָּנְזוּ מָמוֹן, וְאֲנִי גָּנְזַתִּי נִפְשׁוֹת.  
נִמְצָא, שֶׁכָּל מֵה שְׁנוֹתָן צְדָקָה לְיוֹתֵר אֲנָשִׁים, עַל־יְדֵי־זֶה הוּא קוֹנֵה  
לוֹ רַעִים יוֹתֵר.

וְעַל־יְדֵי זֹאת הָאֲהָבָה שֶׁקוֹנֵה עַל־יְדֵי הַצְּדָקָה, עַל־יְדֵי־זֶה נִזְדַּכְּךָ  
הָאֵוִיר, וְכָל מֵה שְׁנוֹתָנִים לְיוֹתֵר אֲנָשִׁים צְדָקָה, וְקוֹנֵה אֲהָבָה עִם  
יוֹתֵר אֲנָשִׁים, עַל־יְדֵי־זֶה נִתְרַבֶּה יוֹתֵר הָאֵוִיר הַנֶּחַ וְהַזָּךְ, כִּי אֲהָבָה  
הוּא אֲתַדְּבִקוֹת רוּחָא בְּרוּחָא, דְּהֵינּוּ רוּחַ הָאוֹהֵב בְּרוּחַ הַנִּאָּהֵב,  
שְׂזֶה בְּחִינַת אֵוִיר הַנֶּחַ, שְׂרוּחָם נָחִים זֶה מִזֶּה, כִּי אֵין רוּחַ רָעָה,  
שֶׁהוּא שְׂנֵאָה, שְׂיִפְרִיד בִּינֵיהֶם.

כִּי הַשְּׂנֵאָה הִיא בְּחִינַת רוּחַ רָעָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב (שׁוֹפְטִים ט' כ"ג):  
וַיֵּשֶׁם ה' רוּחַ רָעָה בֵּין אַבְיִמְלֵךְ וּבֵין אַנְשֵׁי שְׂכֶם; וַיִּפְרֹשׁ רִשְׁיִי:  
שְׂנֵאָה. נִמְצָא שֶׁשְּׂנֵאָה הוּא בְּחִינַת רוּחַ רָעָה, בְּלִבּוֹל הָאֲוִיר, שֶׁעַל־  
יְדִיזָה אֵין יְכוּלִין לְשָׁמַע הַדְּבֹר.

וְלַהֲפֹךְ, אֲהַבָּה וְרַעוּת הוּא בְּחִינַת אֲוִיר הַנָּח וְהַזָּד, שֶׁעַל־יְדִיזָה  
נִשְׁמָע הַדְּבֹר לְמַרְחוֹק. וְזֶה נַעֲשֶׂה עַל־יְדֵי צְדָקָה, בְּחִינַת הוֹן יְסִיף  
רַעִים רַבִּים, שֶׁעַל־יְדֵי צְדָקָה הוּא לֹקַח לֹ רַעִים וְאוֹהֲבִים, שֶׁעַל־  
יְדִיזָה נַעֲשֶׂה בְּחִינַת הָאֲוִיר הַנָּח וְהַזָּד פְּנִי"ל.

וְכָל מָה שֶׁמְרַבֶּה לְתַן צְדָקָה לְיוֹתֵר אַנְשִׁים, נִתְרַבֶּה בְּיוֹתֵר בְּחִינַת  
הָאֲוִיר הַנָּח וְהַזָּד, כִּי כְּשֶׁנֹּתֵן צְדָקָה לְאִישׁ אֶחָד, נִמְצָא שֶׁקוֹנֶה לוֹ  
אוֹהֵב אֶחָד, וְאִזִּי נִתְדַבֵּק רוּחוֹ בְּרוּחוֹ וְנַעֲשֶׂה שְׂטַח קָטָן שֶׁל אֲוִיר  
הַנָּח וְהַזָּד, וְכִשְׁנֹתֵן צְדָקָה לְשְׁנֵי אַנְשִׁים, נַעֲשֶׂה שְׂטַח יוֹתֵר גְּדוֹל שֶׁל  
אֲוִיר הַנָּח וְהַזָּד, וְכֵן כָּל מָה שֶׁמְרַבֶּה לְתַן לְיוֹתֵר אַנְשִׁים, וְקוֹנֶה לוֹ  
רַעִים וְאוֹהֲבִים יוֹתֵר, בְּבְחִינַת: הוֹן יְסִיף רַעִים רַבִּים, נִתְגַּדֵּל  
וְנִתְרַבֶּה יוֹתֵר וְיוֹתֵר הַשְּׂטַח שֶׁל הָאֲוִיר הַנָּח וְהַזָּד.

וְעַל כֵּן הָעֶקֶר לְתַן צְדָקָה לְצַדִּיקִים אֲמִתִּיִּם וְלַעֲנִיִּים הַגּוֹנִים,  
שֶׁכְּלוּלִים מִכֶּמֶה נִפְשׁוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּי בְּזֶה הוּא מְגַדִּיל מְאֹד הַשְּׂטַח  
שֶׁל הָאֲוִיר הַנָּח וְהַזָּד פְּנִי"ל, כִּי בְּצַדִּיקָה שְׁנוֹתֵן לָהֶם לְבַד הוּא קוֹנֶה  
לוֹ רַעִים רַבִּים מְאֹד, כִּי הֵם כְּלוּלִים מֵהַרְבֵּה נִפְשׁוֹת, שֶׁעַל־יְדִיזָה  
מִתְרַבֶּה בְּיוֹתֵר בְּחִינַת הָאֲוִיר הַנָּח וְהַזָּד פְּנִי"ל.

וְאִזִּי, כְּשֶׁהָאֲוִיר נָח וְזָד, אִזִּי כְּשֶׁמְדַבֵּר זֶה שְׂיִכוֹל לְדַבֵּר דְּבֹר  
הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִי, הֵינּוּ דְבֹר הַקְּדוֹשׁ, אִזִּי זֶה הַדְּבֹר נִכְתָּב וְנִחְקַק  
בְּהָאֲוִיר, בְּבְחִינַת (תְּהִלִּים מֵה): לְשׁוֹנֵי עֵט סוֹפֵר מְהִיר; וְאִזִּי הוֹלֵךְ  
הַדְּבֹר וְנִשְׁמָע לְמַרְחוֹק, בְּבְחִינַת (אֶסְתֵּר ט'): וְשָׁמְעוּ הוֹלֵךְ בְּכָל  
הַמְּדִינּוֹת; כִּי מִחֲמַת שֶׁהָאֲוִיר נָח וְזָד, יְכוּלִים לְשָׁמַע לְמַרְחוֹק.

וְאִזִּי זֶה הַדְּבֹר נִכְתָּב בְּסִפְרֵיהֶם שֶׁל הָעַכְבוֹיִם, מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה  
כְּכִתְבָּהּ, וְאִזִּי מוֹצְאִים הָעַכְבוֹיִם בְּסִפְרֵיהֶם הַפֶּךָ אֲמוּנָתָם, כְּמוֹ  
שֶׁמְצִינּוּ כְּמָה גְרִים שֶׁנִּתְגַּיְרוּ מִחֲמַת זֶה, מִחֲמַת שֶׁמְצִאוּ בְּסִפְרֵיהֶם  
הַפֶּךָ אֲמוּנָתָם.

וּמֵאֵין בָּא זֹאת, שֶׁיִּמְצְאוּ עֲתָה מָה שֶׁהוּא מִתְנַגֵּד לְאֲמוּנָתָם, אֵד זֶה  
בָּא עַל־יְדֵי הַדְּבֹר שֶׁל הַצַּדִּיק, שֶׁנִּחְקַק וְנִכְתָּב בְּהָאֲוִיר, בְּבְחִינַת:  
לְשׁוֹנֵי עֵט סוֹפֵר מְהִיר; וְהָאֲוִיר הִיָּה זֶד וְנָח עַל־יְדֵי בְּחִינַת: הוֹן יְסִיף

רעים רבים; עד שהלך הדבור, בבחינת: ושמעו הולך בכל המדינות; ונחקק ונכתב שם בספריהם, ועלידי בחינה זאת מצאו בספריהם הפך אמונתם, ועלידי זה נתגירו, כמו שמספרין מכמה גרים שנתגירו עלידי זה, עלידי שמצאו בספריהם הפך אמונתם, וכל זה נמשך מבחינה הנ"ל כנ"ל.

וזה בחינת (אסתר ו): וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי. מרדכי הוא בחינת הכפירה בעבודה זרה, כמו שכתוב: איש יהודי; כמו שאמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה (מגילה יג): כל הכופר בעכו"ם נקרא יהודי. הינו שהדבורים שהגיד מרדכי, שהם דבורים של כפירת עכו"ם, הם נכתבים בהאזיר, עד שנמצא כתוב בספריהם כנ"ל.

וזהו: וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי – שהדבורים אשר הגיד מרדכי, שהם דבורי אמונה של הצדיק האמת, נמצא כתוב בספריהם, כי הדבור של הצדיק הלך למרחוק עד שנכתב ונחקק שם בספריהם, שעלידי זה נמצא בספריהם הפך אמונתם, כי נמצא בספריהם הדבורים קדושים אשר הגיד מרדכי, שהוא בחינת הצדיק כנ"ל. וזהו: וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי, כנ"ל. ואזי, כשבאים אלו העכו"ם ומוצאים שם הפך אמונתם, מזה נעשים גרים, בבחינת (אסתר ח): ורבים מעמי הארץ מתיהדים.

ו: אך מאין בא, שאלו דיקא ימצאו בספריהם הפך אמונתם ויחזרו ויפירו אמונת ישראל, והאחרים אינם מוצאים כלל ונשארים באמונתם. אך דע, שזה מחמת בחינת הטוב הכבוש תחת ידם, הינו בחינת חלקי נשמות ישראל הכבוש אצלם, כי כל הטוב הוא רק בחינת נשמות ישראל.

הינו כשמתגברים העכו"ם ואינם מניחים לישראל לעשות מצוות, כמו שהיה נמצא שגזרו שלא ימולו את בנייהם ושיחללו את השבת (עיין ר"ה יט, ב"ב ס: מעילה יז). נמצא, שהטוב שהיו ישראל צריכין לעשות הוא כבוש תחת ידם. וכן כשמונעין את ישראל מעבודת השם יתברך עלידי גרמא שגורמיו, עלידי המסים וארנוניות שמטילין עליהם, וכן עלידי שמונעין טובות מ ישראל, שעלידי כל זה נכבש הטוב תחת ידם, דהינו חלקי נשמות ישראל.

ובתחלה זה הטוב הכבוש אצלם זוכר שבא ממקום קדוש ועליון  
מאד, אך אחר־כך הם מתגברין על זה הטוב וכובשים אותו תחת  
ידם, עד שנתפס ונקשר אצלם, עד שהטוב בעצמו שוכח מעלתו.

ועלידי הדבור הישראלי, שיוצא ונכתב בספריהם כנ"ל, אזי זה  
הטוב הכבוש שם מוצא אותו בספריהם, דהינו שמוצא שם הפך  
אמונתם, ואזי נזכר זה הטוב את מעלתו, אך שבא ממקום עליון  
מאד, דהינו שהוא חלקי נשמות ישראל, שכל העולמות נבראו  
בשבילם, והמה היוצרים ישבי נטעים עם המלך במלאכתו (דברי  
הימים א ד': כ"ג), כי הקדוש־ברוך־הוא נמלך עם נשמות ישראל  
לברא את העולם (ב"ר פ"ח מדרש רות פ"ב).

ואזי מתחיל זה הטוב להצטער ולהתגעגע על אשר נפל ממקום  
גבוה כזה, ועתה היא כבושה בידם, ויבוא, חס ושלום, לכליון  
והפסד, ורוצה להמשיך ולחזר למקומו, ומחמת שפך נקשר  
ונתפס מאד הטוב אצלם בקשרי קשרים, על כן כשמתחיל הטוב  
לחזר, אזי מושך ותולש עמו עוד מהרע שלהם, וזה הוא בחינת  
הגרים שבאים להתגיר, שהם בחינת הרע שנתלש מהם עם הטוב,  
עלידי שחזר הטוב למקומו, כי אי אפשר להטוב לחזר בעצמו,  
מחמת גדל ההתקשרות שנתקשר ונתהדק שם מאד, ובהכרח  
שיתלש עמו מהרע, וזה הוא בחינת הגרים.

וזה בחינת (ישעיהו מ"ד: ה'): זה יכתב ידו לה' – פרש רש"י: אלו  
בעל־יתשובה, הינו בחינת הטוב, ששב וחוזר למקומו, וזה נעשה  
עלידי בחינת כתב כנ"ל, בחינת: וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי  
כנ"ל. ובשם ישראל יכנה (שם) – אלו הגרים, כי עלידי ששב וחוזר  
הטוב, עלידיזה נעשה גרים כנ"ל.

וזהו: בכתב ישראל לא יכתבו ואל אדמת ישראל לא יבאו  
(יחזקאל י"ג: ט'), הינו כשאין בחינת כתב ישראל, שעלידו נעשין  
גרים כנ"ל, עלידיזה: ואל אדמת ישראל לא יבאו – הינו שאין  
זוכים לשלמות המזבח, שנקרא מזבח אדמה (שמות כ': כ"א, ועיין  
ב"ר פ' יד), ששלמותו עלידי גרים כנ"ל.

וזהו: הכל בכתב מיד ה' עלי השפיל (דברי הימים א כ"ח: י"ט); כי  
שלמות השכל הוא עלידי כתב כנ"ל, כי עלידי כתב הנ"ל, בחינת:  
וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי כנ"ל, עלידיזה נעשין גרים, ועל־  
ידי גרים נשלם המזבח, ועלידי שלמות המזבח נשלם השכל

כַּנִּי"ל. נִמְצָא, שְׁעֲלֵי־יָדַי בְּחִינַת הַכָּתָב הַנִּי"ל נִשְׁלָם הַשֶּׁכֶל. וְזֶהוּ: הַכֹּל  
בְּכָתָב מִיַּד ה' עָלַי הַשֶּׁכֶל כַּנִּי"ל.

וְזֶהוּ: לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת ש-י, וְכָל בְּנֵי בֶשֶׁר יִקְרְאוּ בְשִׁמְךָ – זֶה  
בְּחִינַת תְּשׁוּבָה, שְׁחוּזָר הַטּוֹב לְמִקּוֹמוֹ כַּנִּי"ל, כִּי ש-י הוּא בְּחִינַת  
תְּשׁוּבָה, שֶׁשָּׁב בְּתְשׁוּבָה עַל פְּגָם עֲבוּדָה זָרָה, כִּי ש-י הוּא בְּחִינַת:  
שֵׁשׁ יָדַי בְּאֵלְקוּתַי לְכָל בְּרִיָּה, וְאִין צָרִיךְ לְשׁוּם עֲבוּדָה אַחֲרַת.

לְהַפְנוֹת אֵלַיךְ כָּל רְשָׁעֵי אֶרֶץ – זֶה בְּחִינַת הַגְּרִים. יִכִּירוּ וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל  
יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל – זֶה בְּחִינַת שְׁלֵמוֹת הַדַּעַת שֶׁנַּעֲשֶׂה עַל־יָדַי זֶה כַּנִּי"ל.

וְזֶה: וְהָיָה ש-י בְּצָרֶיךָ, וְכִסְף תּוֹעֲפוֹת לָךְ (אִיּוֹב כ"ב: כ"ה) – שְׁעֲלֵי־יָדַי  
בְּחִינַת כֶּסֶף תּוֹעֲפוֹת, הֵינּוּ בְּחִינַת: הוֹן יִסִּיף רַעִים רַבִּים, שְׁעֲלֵי־יָדַי  
זֶה נַעֲשֶׂה אֲוִיר מְעוֹפֵף, שֶׁנִּזְדַּכֵּךְ הָאֲוִיר כַּנִּי"ל, עַל־יָדֶיךָ נַעֲשֶׂה  
בְּחִינַת ש-י, הֵינּוּ תְּשׁוּבָה וְגֵרִים, כִּי ש-י הוּא בְּחִינַת תְּשׁוּבָה  
כַּנִּי"ל.

ז: וְדַע שְׁלִפְעָמִים, כְּשֶׁהֲרַע רוּאָה שֶׁהַטּוֹב מִשְׁתַּוְּקָק וּמִמְשִׁיךְ עֲצָמוֹ  
וְרוּצָה לְחַזֵּר לְמִקּוֹמוֹ, אֲזִי הֵם מִתְגַּבְּרִים עַל הַטּוֹב בְּיֹתֵר וּמְבִיאִים  
אוֹתוֹ לְתוֹךְ הָעֵלְמָה יִתְרָה, דְּהֵינּוּ שְׁמִבִּיאִים אוֹתוֹ לְתוֹךְ פְּנִימִיּוֹת  
מִחֻשְׁבֵּתָם, דְּהֵינּוּ שְׁמִתְחִילִים לְחַשֵּׁב מִחֻשְׁבוֹת עַל זֶה הַטּוֹב, וְעַל־  
יָדֶיךָ מְכַנְּסִים אֶת הַטּוֹב בְּתוֹךְ הָעֵלֶם וְהַסֵּתֵר יוֹתֵר בְּפְנִימִיּוֹת  
מִחֻשְׁבֵּתָם.

וְאֲזִי יוֹצֵא הַטּוֹב עַל־יָדֶיךָ הוֹלְדָה שְׁמוּלֵי־דִים, כִּי הַטּוֹב הוּא גְנוּז  
וְנִעְלָם בְּפְנִימִיּוֹת מִחֻשְׁבֵּתָם וּמִחֵם כַּנִּי"ל, וּמִשָּׁם הַהוֹלְדָה, וְעַל כֵּן  
יוֹצֵא הַטּוֹב בְּזֶרַע הַיְלּוּדִים, וְאֲזִי אִין כֹּחַ בְּהֲרַע שֶׁל הַיְלּוּדִים  
לְהַתְגַּבֵּר עַל הַטּוֹב שְׁבֵתוֹכֶם, וְאֲזִי יוֹצֵא הַטּוֹב עַל־יָדֶיךָ הַיְלּוּדִים,  
וְנַעֲשׂוּ גֵרִים.

## 2. Likutey Moharan Part II, Lesson 5, section 4

ד: וְכִשְׁמַעְלִין הָאֱמוּנָה הַנְּפוּלָה, מְזֶה נַעֲשִׂין גֵּרִים, כִּי עַל־יָדֶיךָ  
שְׁנִלְקֻטִּין וְנִבְרָרִין נְפִילַת הָאֱמוּנָה שְׁמִשָּׁם יִנִּיקַת אֱמוּנָתָם, עַל־יָדֶיךָ  
זֶה נִחְלָשׁ כֹּחַ אֱמוּנָתָם, וְאֲזִי הֵם חוֹזְרִים לְאֱמוּנָתֵינוּ הַקְּדוּשָׁה  
וְנַעֲשִׂין גֵּרִים.

וּלְפַעֲמִים נַעֲשִׂין גְּרִים בְּכַח וְלְפַעֲמִים נַעֲשִׂין גְּרִים בְּפֶעַל. הִינוּ, אוֹ  
שְׁנַעֲשִׂין גְּרִים מִמֶּשׁ בְּפֶעַל, שְׁבֹאִין עֲבוּיִים וּמִתְגִּירִין, אוֹ שְׁנַעֲשֶׂה רַק  
בְּכַח, שְׁעַל יְדֵי שְׁמַעְלִין אֲמוּנָה הַנְּפוּלָה וְנַחֲלָשׁ אֲמוּנָתָם, עַל־יְדֵי־זֶה  
נִתְגַּלָּה לָהֶם בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁהֵם הָאֲמוּנָה הַקְּדוּשָׁה, וּמֵאֲמִינִים שֶׁם  
בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁהֵם, שְׂיֵשׁ יְחִיד קְדָמוֹן יִתְבָּרֵךְ, בְּבַחֲיַנֵּת (מִלֹּאכֵי אִי״א):  
בְּכָל מָקוֹם מְקוּטָר וּמְגֻשׁ לְשָׁמַי.

וְזֶה תְּלוּי כְּפֵי חֶזֶק הָאֲמוּנָה כְּזַבִּיּוֹת שֶׁהִיא מִתְחַלָּה, הִינוּ  
כְּשֶׁהָאֲמוּנָה כְּזַבִּיּוֹת הֵיטָה חֶזֶקָה בְּתַחֲלָה, אֲזִי אַחַר כֵּן כְּשֶׁמִּשְׁבְּרִין  
אוֹתָהּ וּמַעְלִין הָאֲמוּנָה הַנְּפוּלָה דְּקִדְשָׁה מִשָּׁם וְנַעֲשִׂין גְּרִים, אֲזִי  
נַעֲשִׂין גְּרִים בְּפֶעַל מִמֶּשׁ, וּכְשֶׁהָאֲמוּנָה כְּזַבִּיּוֹת לֹא הֵיטָה חֶזֶקָה כָּל־  
כֵּן בְּתַחֲלָה, אֲזִי כְּשֶׁנִּשְׁבְּרָת וּמֵהִפְכִין אוֹתָהּ אֶל הַקְּדוּשָׁה, אֲזִי אֵין  
נַעֲשֶׂה מִמֶּנָּה רַק גְּרִים בְּכַח:

# Index of Sages and Sources

## **Amora (plural: Amora'im)**

Generic term for a Torah sage in the generations following the Tannaim of the Mishnah who is quoted in the Jerusalem or Babylonian Talmud or Midrashim. The Amora'im reviewed, analyzed, compared and contrasted the many oral formulations of the law and other teachings received by tradition from the different schools of the Tannaim.

## ***Arukh HaShulchan***

See **Yechezkel Michel Epstein, Rabbi.**

## **Avraham ben David, Rabbi (“Raavad” c. 1125-1198)**

Talmudic commentator and key link in the chain of Torah mysticism; author of the *Hasagot*, critical glosses on Rambam's Mishneh Torah.

## **Baal Shem Tov (c. 1698-1760)**

Literally “Master of the Good Name”. This is the title given to Rabbi Israel son of Eliezer, healer, outstanding mystic, and founder of the Chassidic movement.

## ***Ben Yehoyada***

Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud by Rabbi Yosef Chaim, the “*Ben Ish Chai*” (1835-1909), outstanding sage and halachic authority from Baghdad.

## ***Chayey Moharan, “The Life of Our Master Rabbi Nachman”***

Biographical work compiled by Rabbi Nachman's closest disciple, Rabbi Nathan of Breslov, recounting numerous episodes in the Rebbe's life and recording many of his sayings, teachings and parables. Translated into English by Avraham Greenbaum under the title *Tzaddik*, published by Breslov Research Institute (1986).

## **David Kimche, Rabbi, (“RaDaK” 1160–1235)**

Leading Biblical commentator, philosopher and grammarian.

### **Epstein, Yechiel Mikhel, Rabbi (“*Arukh HaShulchan*” 1829-1908)**

Halakhic authority known as the *Arukh HaShulchan* after his magnum opus of that name, explaining and analyzing all the laws in the classic *Shulchan Arukh* Torah law code.

### **Gemara**

Generic term for the Talmud and its teachings as handed down by oral tradition.

### **Ge'onim**

Plural of *Ga'on*, literally “luminary”, referring to the outstanding spiritual leaders and scholars who headed the Talmudic academies that flourished in Babylon and Israel from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.

### **Gershom ben Yehuda, Rabbi (960-1040)**

Rabbenu Gershom *Me'or HaGolah*, “Light of the Diaspora”, lived and taught in Germany and is considered the spiritual father of Ashkenazic Jewry. He enacted important prohibitions including that against polygamy.

### **Halakhah**

Practical Torah law as derived by the legal authorities from the Biblical, Talmudic and other rabbinical sources.

### **Hillel (“The Great” or “The Elder”) 110 B.C.E.-10 C.E.**

Born in Babylon, Hillel ascended to Jerusalem where he became head of the Sanhedrin in the time of King Herod and Emperor Augustus. He was renowned for his love, piety and endless patience. His disciples are known as *Beit Hillel*, the “House” or “School” of Hillel.

### **Ibn Ezra c. 1089-c. 1167**

Rabbi Avraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra, leading medieval Jewish Bible commentator and philosopher.

### **Joel Schwartz, Rabbi, b. 1939**

Torah scholar and prolific writer on Noahide law, teacher in Yeshivat Dvar Yerushalayim, Jerusalem, Deputy Chancellor of the Renewed Sanhedrin and Chief Justice of the Court for Noahide Issues.

## **Karaites**

A breakaway sect that originated in Second Temple times and later expanded, with adherents until today, who consider themselves the authentic Israelites but recognize only the authority of the Written Torah while denying the Oral Tradition as codified in the Mishnah, Talmud and Halakhah.

## ***Kli Yakar***

Classic commentary on the Five Books of Moses by Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz (1550-1619).

## ***Likutey Moharan***

Collected teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810).

## ***Likutey Tefilot***

Collection of prayers based on the lessons in Rabbi Nachman of Breslov's master work, *Likutey Moharan*, composed by his leading disciple, Rabbi Nathan (or Nossan) of Breslov and translated into English and published by Breslov Research Institute under the title "The Fiftieth Gate".

## **Maimonides (RaMBaM 1138-1204)**

Rabbi Moses Maimonides, known as RaMBaM from the acronym of the initial letters of his full Hebrew name, **Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon**, outstanding physician, scientist, philosopher and Torah scholar, author of the comprehensive *Mishneh Torah* law code.

## **Meir ben Todros HaLevi Abulafia, Rabbi ("Ramah" c. 1170-1244)**

Prominent Spanish Talmudist and Halakhic authority.

## **Menachem Azariah of Pano, Rabbi (1548 – 1620)**

Italian Talmudist and Kabbalist.

## **Mishnah**

First written codification of the Oral Torah, redacted in Israel in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. by Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi (R. Judah the Prince, c. 135-217 C.E.). The teachings in the Mishnah are analyzed and discussed in the Talmud.

### ***Mishnah Berurah***

The "Clarified Teaching" by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838–1933), also known as the *Chofetz Chaim* ("He who desires life" Psalms 34:13). *Mishnah Berurah* is a commentary on all of *Orach Chayim*, first of the four parts of the *Shulchan Arukh* dealing with laws of prayer, synagogue, Shabbat and holidays.

### ***Mishneh Torah***

Comprehensive Torah Law Code in fourteen volumes covering all of the 613 Commandments in all their details, by Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (RaMBaM, Moses Maimonides 1138-1204). The *Mishneh Torah* is also called *Yad HaChazakah*, the "Mighty Hand", where the word *Yad*, the sum of the mathematical values of whose Hebrew letters is 14, alludes to the 14 volumes of the work.

### **Moshe ben Maimon, Rabbi (1138-1204)**

Known as RaMBaM or Rabbi Moses Maimonides, outstanding physician, scientist, philosopher and Torah scholar, author of the comprehensive *Mishneh Torah* law code.

### **Moshe ben Nachman, Rabbi, (RaMBaN or Nachmanides, 1194-1270)**

Known as "RaMBaN" from the acronym of the initial Hebrew letters of his full Hebrew name, **Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman**, he was a leading medieval rabbi, philosopher, physician, kabbalist and commentator on the Five Books of Moses and Talmud.

### **Nachman of Breslov, Rabbi ("Moharan", "Our Teacher, Rabbi Nachman" 1772-1810)**

Great grandson of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (c. 1698-1760), founder of the Chassidic movement. Through combining kabbalistic Torah teachings with in-depth scholarship, R. Nachman revived the movement with "a new pathway which is really the old, old pathway our ancestors followed", the path of Torah study and practice combined with personal prayer and devotion. He attracted thousands of followers during his lifetime, and his influence continues to spread.

## **Nachmanides**

See **Moshe ben Nachman, Rabbi**.

## **Nathan (or Nosson) of Breslov, Rabbi (1780-1844)**

Leading disciple of Rabbi Nachman, he transcribed and printed all his master's works as well as composing his own prayers, collected in *Likutey Tefilot*, and authoring extensive Torah discourses of his own based on Rabbi Nachman's lessons, collected in *Likutey Halakhot*.

## ***Pirkey Avot***

"Chapters of the Fathers", one of the 63 tractates of the Mishnah compiling in six chapters the ethical sayings and maxims of the Mishnaic sages.

## **Raavad**

Rabbi Avraham ben David (c. 1125-1198). Talmudic commentator and key link in the chain of Torah mysticism; author of the *Hasagot*, critical glosses on Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*.

## **RaDaK**

David Kimche, Rabbi (1160–1235), prominent Biblical commentator, philosopher and grammarian.

## **RaMBaM**

Acronym of **Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon**, Moses Maimonides (1138-1204), outstanding physician, scientist and Torah scholar, author of the comprehensive *Mishneh Torah* law code.

## **RaMBaN**

Acronym of **Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman**, also known as Nachmanides. Leading medieval rabbi, philosopher, physician, kabbalist and commentator on the Five Books of Moses and Talmud.

## **Rabbi Nissim ben Reuven, ("RaN", 1320-1376)**

Known also as Rabbi Nissim of Gerona (or Gerondi), he was one of the last great medieval Spanish Talmudists.

## **Rashi**

Acronym of **Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki** (1040-1105). Outstanding medieval French rabbi, acclaimed for his ability to present the basic meaning of Torah texts clearly and concisely. He authored the most celebrated commentary on the Five Books of Moses as well as commentaries on the other books of the Hebrew Bible (*NaKh*) and on most of the Babylonian Talmud.

## **Rav (“Abba Arikha” 175-247 C.E.)**

Amora of the first generation after the redaction of the Mishnah, he was a descendant of a distinguished Babylonian family who traced their lineage to King David’s brother Shimei. He founded the Academy of Sura for systematic study of the Oral Law and debated on many issues with Shmuel of Nehardea.

## **Rav Nissim ben Yaakov Gaon (990-1062)**

Head of the Kairouan academy in Tunisia, known for his Talmudic commentary *HaMaft’e’ach* (“The Key”).

## **Ravina**

An Amora of the later generations, died c. 420 C.E.

## **Sa’adiah ben Yosef Gaon, Rav (882/892-942)**

Prominent rabbi, philosopher and exegete of the post Talmudic period of the Ge’onim (“luminaries”), known for his works on Hebrew linguistics, Halakhah and philosophy.

## **Samuel HaKohen ben Hofni (d. 1034)**

Gaon of the Sura Torah Academy in the city of Sura, Babylon from 998 to 1012. Author of responsa on Torah law and many lost works including commentaries on Talmud written in Arabic, of which fragments survive.

## ***Shaar Hagilgulim***

“Gate of the Incarnations”, one of the *Shmoneh Shaarim*, “Eight Gates” written by Rabbi Chaim Vital (1542-1620) setting forth all the teachings in different areas that he received from his master, the kabbalistic giant Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, “*ARI*” (1534-72).

### **Shammai (50 B.C.E.-30 C.E.)**

Leading contemporary of Hillel and *Av Beit Din*, deputy president of the Sanhedrin. Though very different in personality from Hillel, Shammai disagreed with him only on three issues. However, his disciples, the “House” or “School” of Shammai, disputed many halakhic questions with the disciples of the “House” or “School” of Hillel.

### ***Shevachey Ha-Baal Shem Tov***

“Praises of the Baal Shem Tov”, the earliest collection of biographical information and stories about Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), founder of the Chassidic movement.

### ***Shevachay HaRan***

“The Praise of Rebbe Nachman”, by his leading disciple, Rabbi Nathan (or Nosson) of Breslov, giving details of Rabbi Nachman’s personal devotions and a full account of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1798-9. Published in “Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom” (Breslov Research Institute).

### **Shimon ben Lakish, Rabbi (*Reish Lakish*, c.200-c.275)**

Leading Amora. According to the Babylonian Talmud, circumstances forced him to give up Torah study in his early youth and he became a gladiator, until he was brought back to his studies by Rabbi Yochanan, who became his teacher and debating partner. Their discussions are recorded throughout the Talmud.

### **Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz, Rabbi (1550-1619)**

Author of the *Kli Yakar* classic commentary on the Five Books of Moses.

### **Shmuel (c. 165-254 C.E.)**

Shmuel of Nehardea or Shmuel bar Abba, often simply called **Shmuel**, was an Amora of the first generation after the redaction of the Mishnah, a judge, physician and astronomer and head of the Yeshivah of Nehardea in Babylon. He debated on many issues with “Rav”, Abba Arikha.

### **Shmuel Eidels, Rabbi (*Maharsha*, 1555-1631)**

Renowned Polish scholar, famous for his Talmudic commentaries *Chiddushei Halachot*, on legal questions, and *Chiddushei Aggadot* on rabbinic lore, anecdotes, moral exhortations and practical advice.

### ***Shulchan Arukh, “The Set Table”***

The standard code of Torah law as applicable in non-Temple times, written in Safed, Israel in 1563 by Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488-1575). Its four major parts cover (1) the laws of prayer, blessings, Shabbat and festivals; (2) Kashrut, family purity, charity, circumcision, conversion, death and mourning; (3) business life and damages; (4) marriage and divorce.

### ***Siach Sarfey Kodesh***

Collection of sayings of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov and his followers in the ensuing generations of the Breslover Chassidim.

### ***Sifrei***

Midrash Halakhah, classical rabbinic legal biblical exegesis on the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy.

### **Steinsaltz, Rabbi Adin (1937-2020)**

Rabbi, teacher, philosopher, author and publisher. Pioneered a new edition of the Talmud with modern Hebrew translation and running commentary, now translated into English and other languages. In 2004 he was appointed as Nasi, President of the Renewed Sanhedrin.

### **Talmud**

The central text of rabbinic Judaism and primary source of Torah law and tradition. The term *Talmud* is usually used to refer to the collection of volumes or “tractates” making up the “Babylonian” Talmud, (*Talmud Bavli*), completed in Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E., but it may also refer to the “Jerusalem” Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*), which was completed earlier in Israel during the 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E. In both cases, each Talmudic tractate follows its corresponding tractate in the Mishnah, quoting each individual paragraph of Mishnah, and then analyzing and elucidating it in relation to other teachings, as well as venturing into many other subjects and extensive Biblical exegesis.

**Talmud Bavli** see **Talmud**

**Talmud Yerushalmi** see **Talmud**

## **TaNaKh**

The Hebrew Bible. *TaNaKh* is an acronym of the initial Hebrew letters of Torah (Five Books of Moses), **N**evi'im (Prophets) and **K**etuvim (Holy Writings).

## **Tanna (plural: Tanna'im)**

Generic term for one of the sages of the Mishnah or one of their disciples, who memorized and constantly repeated and reviewed the traditional formulations of the Oral Law as received from their teachers.

## ***Tanna d'vei Eliyahu***

Collection of Midrashic teachings revealed by Elijah the Prophet to Rabbi Anan, a Babylonian teacher of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E.

## ***Tikuney Zohar***

A collection of 70 kabbalistic discourses on the first Hebrew word of the Torah attributed to the outstanding Tanna of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E., Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (“*RaShBY*”), foremost disciple of Rabbi Akiva and author of the *Zohar*.

## ***Tosafot***

Critical and explanatory glosses on the Babylonian Talmud by leading rabbis in medieval France and Germany, printed in most Talmud editions on the outer margin of each page opposite Rashi's notes.

## ***Tur***

Short for *Arba'ah Turim*, “The Four Rows” (alluding to the gems in the High Priest's breast plate, Exodus 27:17), a Halakhic code composed by Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher (Cologne, 1270-Toledo, Spain c. 1340), also known as *Ba'al Ha-Turim*. The four-part structure of the *Tur* and its division into chapters (*simanim*) were adopted by the later mandatory *Shulchan Arukh* law code.

## ***Tzaddik***

Title of the English translation of *Chayey Moharan* (“The Life of Our Master Rabbi Nachman”) by his closest disciple, Rabbi Nathan (or Nosson) of Breslov, recounting numerous episodes in the Rebbe's life and recording

many of his sayings, teachings and parables. Translated by Avraham Greenbaum (Breslov Research Institute 1986).

**Yisrael Meir Kagan, Rabbi (“Chafetz Chayim”, 1838-1933)**

Known as the *Chafetz Chayim*, “He who desires life” (Psalms 34:13) from the title of his book on purity of speech, he is renowned as the author of the *Mishnah Berurah* commentary on *Orach Chayim*, “The Path of Life”, the first part of the *Shulchan Arukh* Torah law code dealing with laws of prayer, synagogue, Shabbat and holidays.

**Yechezkel Michel Epstein, Rabbi (1829-1908)**

Halakhic authority known as the *Arukh HaShulchan* after his magnum opus explaining in depth and with great clarity all the laws in the four sections of the *Shulchan Arukh* Torah law code.

**Yehudah ben Beteira**

Eminent Mishnaic Tanna in late Second Temple times, credited with holy spirit.

**Yochanan, Rabbi (180-279 C.E.)**

Rabbi Yochanan bar Nappaha, leading rabbi in the land of Israel in the second generation of the Amoraim, the teachers who expounded the Mishnah. His opinions are quoted thousands of times throughout the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, and he is generally considered to be the compiler of the Jerusalem Talmud. Not to be confused with Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai (1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.) who was a student of Hillel and head of the Sanhedrin at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple and thereafter.

**Yosef Karo, Rabbi (1488-1575)**

Author of the *Shulchan Arukh* (“The Set Table”), standard code of Torah law as applicable in non-Temple times, written in Safed, Israel in 1563.

**Zohar**

Discourses of the 2nd Century Tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (*RaShBY*) and his disciples, woven into an extensive Kabbalistic commentary on the Five Books of Moses.