



Orthodox Jewish Mysticism

An Overview of Judaism, Torah and Kabbalah

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This presentation introduces the general reader to Torah Cosmology. Torah Cosmology is a term I am using in order to re-integrate the basic concepts of Torah and Jewish history together with Kabbalah and the mystical experience. Furthermore, although the Jewish people and her sages have been the carriers and teachers of the science of Kabbalah, its tools and methodology are not intended for Jews alone. The term Torah Cosmology also refers to the universality of these teachings.

In the first section I begin with a brief history of the Jewish people and also introduce some vocabulary and concepts basic to this tradition. The second section presents the paradoxical notion of divinity central to Torah, Judaism, and the Kabbalah. In the third section I will conclude with Torah Cosmology's relation to other religions and cultures and its universal application.

Section I

Jewish Mysticism

Kabbalah is central to an understanding of Torah Cosmology. Kabbalah (*kab-bah-lah'*) is the Hebrew word for received tradition. The word originally designated the entirety of the Judaic oral tradition as it was *received* from generation to generation. Later, however, it was limited to refer specifically to the mystical or esoteric elements of Judaism's vast oral teachings.

Mysticism in general refers to a direct and immediate experience of the sacred or the knowledge derived from such an experience. Mysticism occurs in most, if not all, religions of the world, although its importance within each varies greatly. Orthodox Jewish mysticism, however, is inseparably wedded to the external form of traditional Jewish practice. This practical observance includes her rituals, her prayer/meditations, and her emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge.

The interdependency of Judaism's mystical soul with her bodily form and the role it has played in Jewish history and in the molding of the collective Jewish mind renders the term "Jewish mysticism" a misnomer. To the contrary, it is the minutiae of the laws and the traditional formulas of the prayers that are experienced by the Jewish sages-mystics as the hidden landscape of divinity itself. When Talmudic learning and everyday rituals are viewed from this perspective and permeated with flames of divine passion it is precisely here wherein lies the revelations and truths of existence after which the Jewish seeker of unity thirsts. Once again, the term Torah Cosmology re-integrates "Jewish mysticism" back into its original and all encompassing rubric.

My purpose here is not to unveil the Kabbalah proper, but rather to introduce the general underpinnings of this ancient wisdom as it applies to a cosmology of Torah. The actual terminology of the Kabbalah is a highly evolved science employing mathematical-like analysis replete with its own detailed symbolic notation. The technical language of the Kabbalah is unique in the world to the extent of her communicative capabilities. While fluency on this level requires decades of study, the general principles can be made accessible to one with little background, just as the philosophy underlying much of modern physics has been "brought down" and translated into lay terms.

Yet to explain basic concepts of the Kabbalah without a general familiarity with the fundamentals of Judaism is a virtual impossibility for a reason that is axiomatic to the Kabbalah itself. Once again, as a hand in its glove, the teachings of esoteric Judaism are inextricably isomorphic with her esoteric tradition of laws and customs. This principle is attested to not only by all schools of Orthodox Judaism involved primarily with the legal and ethical applications of living Judaism but by virtually all Jewish mystics over the over past millennia of Jewish history.

Moses and Sinai

3,300 years ago, some three million Hebrew refugees, fleeing a life of 210 years of exile and bitter slavery in the land of Egypt, were gathered together by their leader and prophet Moses at a mountain in the Sinai Desert. Here, they collectively experienced a revelation of such immense proportions that, according to tradition, each individual actually died and was then resurrected. In the manner in which Moses and his nation received the Torah they were, in affect, "restructured." The "cosmic code" carried within the genetic bloodline of each soul was altered, permanently transfiguring this nomadic community into a singular and indivisible collective archetype - the newly born Nation of Israel. Each man, woman and child was now existentially experienced as a living cell in a greater encompassing mind which, as we will see below, was the inception of a process that was intended to spread to global proportions.

Although there have been numerous seers and holy men throughout Jewish history, the prophet Moses is accorded a unique status. The Bible observes that Moses was a "man of God" (Deut. 33:1) with the oral tradition being that he was "half man and half god." He had the ability to unite himself to God whenever necessary, at any time and in a fully awake state of consciousness. The Creator is personified as saying of Moses, "Mouth to mouth, I will speak with him" (Numbers 12:8).

It is within this context that the oral tradition discloses that not only was Moses the recipient of the Ten Commandments and the Five Books of Moses, but he also received all the traditions and visions contained in the books of the prophets and in the additional writings (known by the acronym Tanakh) as well as all of the oral discussions of the Talmud, "All of them were given to Moshe at Sinai." Elsewhere it is taught that, "The Holy One showed to Moses the minutia of the written laws as well as the minutia of the oral laws and even that which the sages would teach on their own accord in the future."

The Kabbalah adds that it is, in fact, "the soul of Moses that extends itself into each and every generation via the sages and saints that are involved with the study of Torah." "Moses is the source of all wisdom and the source of all understanding." "Moshe is the father of all the sages and the father of all the prophets".

The Double Torah

The Torah is considered to not only contain the blueprint of all creation - past, present, and future - but her verses, words, and letters actually *are* the consciousness through which all reality is evolving and guiding itself - a virtual brain through which the Absolute processes its thought and modes of expression.

The term Torah means teachings, instruction. It refers specifically to the Pentateuch - the Five Books of Moses that contain the episodes of Adam and Eve, the serpent and the Garden of Eden, Noah's ark, the Ten Commandments and so forth. These five volumes, containing 5,845 verses, comprise the "Written Torah." The remaining nineteen books (such as Joshua, Isaiah, the accounts of King David and King Solomon, the books of Psalms and Proverbs, etc.) although considered to also be of divine origin, do not hold the equivalent status as the Pentateuch itself and, in one sense, can be viewed as an extended commentary on the first five volumes. The term Torah, however, is also loosely used to refer to all three sections together -- the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Writings (also known by the acronym Tanakh).

The term Torah, however, has a wider generic meaning that encompasses not only the scriptural tradition but also extensive oral traditions. These oral traditions were originally given to Moses during the Sinai revelation though intentionally not in written form. One reason is that this aspect of the tradition is very organic and fluid in its form. Parts of it were initially revealed only in their "seed" form, not to sprout until generations later in the appropriate time.

This is related to the explanation above concerning the unique spiritual character of Moses. The rabbinical/kabbalistic mind is considered to incarnate an element of the consciousness of the original Moses. Thus, his teachings continue to be revealed through the living spirit of the selfsame Moses via the living sages in each succeeding generation. This body of "evolving" teachings is known as the Oral Torah even though also much of it has since been written down over the past two millennia.

The double Torah is considered as one entity with the oral traditions acting as the soul animating the body of the written word. Without the chain of traditions from the prophets and sages to their disciples the written law is virtually a sealed book, both from the mystic's perspective as well as from that of the strict legalist.

The Oral Torah is in turn comprised of two parts. First is the practical, ritual, and ethical material, which traditionally a Jew was trained in from early childhood. This mode of study and practice can be an immensely rewarding experience. It is an adventure into the relationships between man and his fellow man. Within these teachings virtually every aspect of sociology, psychology, ethics, logic, medicine, anatomy, comparative religion, etiquette, aesthetics, philosophy, metaphysics, jurisprudence, love, and sexuality is discussed. Each subject is taken apart again and again with the scrutiny of a master mechanic dismantling a sophisticated machine, cleaning and analyzing each part and then reassembling it back together in order to now use it with greater knowledge and efficiency. This form of methodology, if motivated by love of God is considered *the* supreme form of worship and religious devotion towards which one can aspire. The understanding and enlightenment that is experienced are considered to be the thought forms of the Creator.

The second facet of the Oral Torah is the Kabbalah. This is what is usually translated as Jewish mysticism, but is known by those who study and practice the Kabbalah as the Concealed Wisdom or simply, the Inner Torah. Here, once again the revealed and the concealed teachings of the Torah are united as one. This massive body of sixty volumes with her extensive commentaries is called the Talmud. What is most interesting about these two aspects of the Oral Torah, the legal/moral and the Kabbalah is that the two are often found coexisting side by side in the same literature.

Within the Talmud there exists two parallel streams of discussion, one dealing with the practical, legal and ethical aspects of life and the other with the philosophical and metaphysical realities. This latter aspect is the Kabbalah and with this introduction we should now be prepared to catch a glimpse of this underlying surface upon which the Kabbalist constructs his experience.

Thus, the Jewish mystics have simultaneously always been the judges, legal advisers and community activists to the Jewish nation in all matters both civil and religious. This premise, that the most sublime transcendental unity of God's being is most concentrated and accessible through the manifest diversity of the daily laws, both sacred and profane, as well as through

intense meditation upon the formulas of the daily prayers, cannot be overemphasized. This is the very light with which the Jewish mystic navigates through the hidden landscape of creation.

In order to do so we must first ask a question which the Kabbalist himself is, in one sense, also asking himself. What was and what continues to be the purpose of the Sinaic revelation and its covenant, replete with literally hundreds of ritual laws and commandments? What kind of world are we living in that could conceivably necessitate such an intricate and often overwhelming system of obligation?

To answer this question we must go back in time to the proverbial Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Generally Jewish history is considered to have begun with Moses and the Exodus from Egypt or even 400 years earlier with Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. From a cosmological perspective, however, the story begins almost 6,000 years ago with Adam, the first man/woman.

The details of this account are both deeply allegorical as well as concretely historical. The conflict of this chronology with that of geological time can be resolved, at least in part, by realizing that according to this scheme time and space as we now know it was not manifested until *after* Adam and Eve "fell" and were exiled from their former plane of existence. In other words, the first man and the events leading to his fall existed within a completely different dimension of reality that was not bound by our present laws of physics and logic. An hour of Adamic time could be equal to a thousand years or even a thousand millennia or more of our time.

Similarly, these two beings were not "human" as we are today nor was their reality a corporeal one as is ours. Rather, they were forms of divine, god-like consciousness bound by and acting within a radically different framework of existence. Yet, Adam and his consort had actual physical bodies *relative* to their state of consciousness. Thus, all the details of the events regarding them recorded in Scripture are historical fact *in ratio* to that mode of time and dimension of space. This is another example in Torah Cosmology where the deeper esoteric truth is inherently united with its literal counterpart in exoteric reality.

What is essential to understand here is that mankind's "fall from grace" is analogous to an exponential collapse in consciousness pulling down all reality along with it. Prior to this catastrophic event, all realities - from the most transcendental down through the most physical - were all united. What this means is that every part of existence was contained within and shone forth from every other part. There were no three dimensional-like separations whatsoever, but rather an absolute Oneness shining forth from within an infinite multiplicity. Now, after the ensuing descent, all reality has become fractured and separated from her indigenous unity, dispersed throughout the many different ethnic groups, religions of the world, schools of wisdom and science, diverse forms of organic as well as inorganic life and even within the chronology of time and coordinates of space.

The actual causes behind this cosmological collapse constitutes a profound study and represents a special field within the Kabbalah itself. What is relevant here is that mankind's present consciousness and experience of reality is in a state of cosmic exile striving to regain its true state of being. Furthermore, since Adamic consciousness is inextricably united with the Absolute consciousness (there being only one "substance" to all realities as will be explained momentarily) there is now a very real aspect of Divinity that has, so to speak, also become trapped in a lower and more corporeal dimension, as the Prophet writes, "I (God as the Absolute) Am with him (man as the manifest) in his affliction (Isaiah 63:9)."

Twenty generations following the Adamic Fall, the prophet Abraham began seeding the roots of a community whose purpose would be to rectify this temporal state of consciousness thereby reuniting the manifold divisions of reality. As part of this process his great grandchildren were enslaved in Egypt in order to gather the necessary elements and experiences - both emotionally and spiritually - to complete their cosmological "mission impossible." This then brings us back to

the revelation of the Torah at Mt. Sinai and the multitude of laws, forms of worship, and methods of study.

From this Adamic perspective it can now be appreciated that the Sinaiic Covenant is no longer simply a code of laws along with their intellectual analysis, but rather the written and oral Torahs are actually specific *tools* with which to rectify, reconstitute, and resurrect all mankind and reality. This process of "cosmic mending" with the intent of reconnecting and unifying is called in Hebrew "*Tikkun*" and if there was one word that could epitomize the essence of Judaism for the Kabbalist it is this. (Even the Hebrew word "mitzvah" which is usually translated as "commandment" [as in the *Ten Commandments*] also translates as "connection" and "union"). Thus, the Talmudic exegesis between scholars becomes a communal effort to search out, identify, and extract the impurities and external elements within the form of legal difficulties. For the Kabbalist, every act, word, and thought performed within this Torah context is literally reconnecting the severed conduits within man's own consciousness and reuniting the Absolute with His own displaced Self, so to speak.

This principle of *Tikkun* - that present existence has *de*-olved yet is now once again evolving via the direct engagement of human consciousness and endeavor - is the underlying philosophical theme of Judaism. This is expressed by a formula upon which every observant Jew, Kabbalist or non-kabbalist, is encouraged to meditate upon during the performance of every mitzvah/commandment and before the study of any portion of the Torah - written or oral, revealed or concealed. The formula reads, "I am now uniting the Holy One and His Presence in awe and in love..." The Holy One here represents the male principle of the Absolute relative to the "Presence" which represents His own female counterpart of the manifested creation. It is this female aspect of existence that throughout the cosmic catastrophe, as explained, has become separated and exiled. Her divine sparks of life, like a shattered diamond tossed about in a hurricane, have fragmented and scattered throughout history and nations, ideas and religions, the natural and the supernatural, ever awaiting Her ingathering and redemption. The manifest creation will then emerge to unite with Her beloved, the Absolute, this time in even greater rapture and awareness than before Her momentary separation. "The voice of my beloved! (the Absolute) behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills...He said to me (the manifest creation), Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away" (Song of Songs 2:8,10).

Section II

Although we have stated that the process of *Tikkun* - cosmic mending, unification and ultimate redemption - is the purpose of it all, actually this is only half the picture. Opposing this is the biblical verse, "Know this day and meditate within your heart that the transcending Absolute *is* the manifesting divinity...there is no other" (Deut. 4:39). There is no other *one*, no other *thing*, no "*otherness*" - period. All that can be said to literally exist is the unqualifiable and ineffable Divine Oneness. The phenomenal world with its multifariousness of finite beings ruled over by a personal God and detailed process of *Tikkun* has only a provisional reality relative to the absolute reality. Thus, the Kabbalists refer to God as the *Ain Sof* - the Oneness that has no existential end or edge, i.e. It negates even the possibility of "otherness." Yet at the same time, relative to itself, the appearance of the phenomenal world and its subjugation to its Creator and King is certainly real and from this vantage point it demands, and rightfully so, equal validity and devotion.

This is true because the "Divine perspective" and "our perspective" are two aspects of the same inexpressible Oneness that has chosen to appear in these two different states. Therefore, only the state prior to the manifestation of perspective at all, whether "ours" or "His" is that which actually points towards the real "Essence of God." However, since the combined whole of these opposite yet complementary poles is always greater than the sum of its parts there is no level of consciousness, even the "Divine perspective," that can totally grasp that Essence. That total Essence is not a state of being that is subject to thought or even to direct visionary experience but rather it is, so to speak, a *process* that is forever transcending even Its own transcendence. This "nonexistent Essence" that keeps evolving beyond Itself is *also* called the *Ain Sof* - the

Oneness that has no end or edge, i.e. in this case referring to the limitlessness of Its process of transcendence. The mechanics of how the unqualifiable *Ain Sof* manages to appear as two opposite and mutually exclusive realities which display on the one hand limitation and "otherness" and on the other hand limitlessness and unity is an intoxicating study that is discussed at length and its truths have been integrated into Jewish religious practice, particularly during the past two centuries, by the east European and Russian Kabbalists.

The belief that God has "no other" and that there is "no end" to the emanating/transcending dialogue is not unique to Jewish mysticism. For example, the non-dualist Advaita Vedanta taught in the Eastern tradition expresses this same idea. Yet, there is one observation from a Kabbalah perspective that warrants closer discussion here concerning the field of non-dualistic experience. Does the *Ain Sof's* "divine perspective" constitute a greater frame of reference and purpose relative to the transient "our perspective," i.e. is the theme of God's unity ultimately more truthful than His apparent disunity? This brings us to the concept of distinction and specialty within "our perspective" - its necessity and its eternal sacredness as integrated into the framework of non-dualism.

This requires that we look more closely at the relationship between the two modes of reality which we have characterized as "God's" and "ours." Not only does the finite and provisional mode of existence receive an absolute value concomitant with the Absolute mode Itself, but despite its relative "unreality" and illusory nature, it has within itself an innate potential to become imbued with a value of distinction and specialty that even the Absolute, paradoxically, is proscribed from attaining. This sacred value of distinction is the quality of eternal *perfectionization*, that is, the ability to continually evolve beyond the Absolute's otherwise endlessly emerging yet static state of absolute perfection.

The *Ain Sof*, in the Absolute mode, is in and of Itself *prima facie* always in a state of perfection and therefore cannot go beyond Itself, for if It did this would point to a previous deficiency. Yet, in order to be able to ascend and now go beyond even Its own previous absolute existence, the *Ain Sof's* own Absoluteness creates (or more metaphorically "squeezes" out of Its hermetic unity) an opposing yet complementary polarity - an "otherness" - which as something *other* than absoluteness and perfection displays limitation and deficiency. This "new" creation is the proverbial "philosopher's rock" (*Can God create a rock so heavy that He cannot lift it up?*) Yet, though incapable of rational explanation from "our perspective," He has done it anyway. He has separated and manifested to Himself an aspect of His own Self that functionally transcends His own omnipotent control. Not only does this diversionary process not impinge upon the former perfection of the Absolute, since these limitations are all taking place exclusively *within* the Absolute, as mentioned, but this pulsating dialogue from within Its own Being reveals an even greater unity - a unity that necessitates and incorporates a hierarchy of distinction.

For the Kabbalist, the complete unity of God consciousness is "not this alone" (the absolute field of being) nor "that alone" (the relative field of being) nor is it a simple compounded mixture of the two. Rather, it is the pulsating dialectic *between* the *Ain Sof* as the Absolute and the *Ain Sof* as the relative that is endlessly contracting and expanding in an evolutionary spiral that eternally ascends towards a higher and more unified consciousness that literally has no end. Therefore, as previously mentioned, the central appellation for God used by the Kabbalists is the *Ain Sof* - the Oneness that has no edge to Its existence and no end to Its process of becoming.

Returning now to the principle of distinction and specialty, both polarities - that which is identified as God and that which we identify as His creation - are equally valid partners in the revelation of that which is more than both together; yet, they are not identical---each possesses something which the other lacks and requires. Creation's needs are known all too well to us and extensively discussed. God's "needs," however, seem impossible to describe in that they meet with numerous logical mazes from which there is no escape except to avoid the discussion altogether. If God is omnipotent then He doesn't have needs and if He has needs then He isn't God. However, the "needs" of the Divine do not limit His omnipotent unity since the interchange is all taking place *within* Itself, *from* Itself, and only *to* Itself, as there ultimately being nothing here but

God as previously explained. Therefore, we can dispense with the anthropomorphic quandary of "needs" without losing the force of an intimate interchange and recurring union between the subject (God) and the object of His attention (the creation). Even though the manifest creation lacks absolute reality (relative to the true Absolute) and therefore has nothing of its own, its illusory "otherness" hides within itself the quality of eternal perfectionization. It is this quality that the already perfect Absolute lacks and passionately desires.

From this perspective it can be understood, according to the Kabbalah, from whence the sacredness of distinction and specialty draws its power. Sacredness is the extent to which any object, moment or thought in the relative field in which the *Ain Sof* as the Absolute has constricted, "squeezed out" and concealed from Itself in order to now endow that aspect of former absoluteness with the ability to transcend even Its own omnipotent boundaries by momentarily "dipping" into the substance of Its own relative field. The separation of Itself from within Itself thus produces a value of sacredness via the dialectic of the process of the graduated levels of ascending divinity. By necessity, however, the ascending divinity leaves behind a grosser aspect - its relative background - while the *effect* of the accretion is absorbed back into the field of the Absolute. The object or moment thus utilized by the Absolute for Its process of passage beyond Its own Self, so to speak, has now become sanctified and holy, that is, it is the Absolute Itself emerging and becoming separate and distinct from within Its own opposing "otherness." This is the Jewish definition of a person, place, or thing becoming "holy" (in Hebrew - *Kadosh*, *Kiddush*, *Kaddish*, *Mikdash*, etc.) It is that aspect of the Infinite via Its own finite mode which is in the process of evolving even beyond Its own infinity. Thus, that which is designated as Holy (as opposed to secular or profane) refers to that distinct and specialized aspect of finite divinity whose evolutionary process has now become animated as it begins its emerging ascent. That which is "shed" off into the relative background becomes profane and secular for the time being, be it six days or six millennium, only to eventually also undergo the same process itself, all factors being equal.

The entire spectrum of creation - man, animal, vegetable, and mineral - is, for the Kabbalist, experienced as a miraculously manifested state of God's own Being that is in the process of transcending the threshold of Its own absolute existence, absolute consciousness, and absolute joy. This "finite" side of the Infinite which, like a spider's web, is being spun out of Itself, now becomes the sacred substance out of which human consciousness and all manifest reality is constructed. The sum total of God's emerging "otherness," the "other end" of the Godhead, currently accessible on an individual level and in the future on a global level, is known in the Torah as the *"Ohr HaGanuz"* - the Hidden Light. It is this highly concentrated "earthly" form of divinity that actually illuminates and crowns the "head" of God's absolute Oneness and thus amazingly reveals in itself an aspect that is "higher up" and more divine than the Divine Itself. It must be remembered, however, that the process by which the God "head" (the state of Absolute perfection) is crowned through the evolving movements of the God "body" (the state of relative perfectionization) is not an end in and of itself, rather together these two polarities are producing a synthesis whose whole is greater than its two opposing parts. It is that *greater* wholeness from which all opposites emanate which is the ineffable *Ain Sof* as It is in and of Itself.

Let it once again be reiterated, however, that despite this seemingly paradoxical dual nature within the *Ain Sof*, this, in the kabbalistic experience, does not in any functional way alter or even minutely modify the cosmological "law" of classical Judaism which asserts that the Absolute Oneness is all that exists and that there is literally nothing that intervenes and separates Itself from Itself; as it states in the ancient tome of Jewish mysticism, the Zohar, "There is no place devoid of Him."

This, in short, would be a Jewish interpretation of absolute non-dualism. Not only does the ancient Kabbalistic tradition allow for the relative yet necessary existence of distinction and specialty but its vision of ultimate unity in fact *demand*s a sliding scale and evolving hierarchy of subordinated and superordinated values, as explained, which manifests as functional differences between the sacred and the profane, between the force of light and darkness, between intervals

of time and coordinates in space, and ultimately between the nations of the worlds and their respective lands of origin. Jewish non-dualism can thus be pictured as poised within the tension of a synthesis between classical monotheism, *panentheism*, and metaphysical monism. There is only one Supreme Being, who, as our sole object of focus, is eternally *separate* from and forever transcending our grasp. This we call the Lord and King who decrees and seals the daily destiny of mankind (monotheism). Meanwhile every aspect of our apparently separate and subjugated reality is contained *within* the Supreme Being (panentheism = "Everything is contained within God but God is not contained within everything"). And even the reality of separateness as it appears from "our perspective" and the encompassing reality that we call "God's perspective" are ultimately of the *same* unified substance (monism). This then is the conceptual framework that the Jewish seeker of unity uses to chart his course and understand his interaction with the world.

In concluding this section it should parenthetically be emphasized that no matter how subtle and detailed our descriptions of the divine process may become all that has been said and all that can ever be said is, at best, only a model and symbolic representation of the deeper truth itself. One must never mistake the map for the territory. One must never mistake knowing *about* God for the direct experience of simply *knowing* God.

Section III

After having scanned through Jewish history and outlined the foundations of the Kabbalah, it would now be appropriate to discuss some of the universal applications of Orthodox Kabbalah.

Kabbalah means literally "that which has been received," i.e. the esoteric traditions which are transmitted from master to disciple by word of mouth. Yet it also has a deeper meaning for etymologically it derives from the Hebrew root KBL which also signifies the process of comparing, correlating and interrelating varied and even opposing events. The implication is that Kabbalah, aside from containing elements of all mystical systems is additionally a system of coordinating and integrating these different religions, mystical schools, and philosophical systems.

Classical Jewish Kabbalah functions as a highly refined system of categorization replete with an articulate terminology that can systematically define and present virtually every idea, thought, and experience throughout the history of mankind. Furthermore, it is capable of uniting the scientific "vessels" with the "lights" of religion as well as suiting the secular "garments" with the appropriate holy "body." Thus, when the Torah functions in its universal mode it no longer serves only the Jewish nation, but it now becomes a universal *meta* -system with which to correlate all rivers of religions and streams of thought into one organic whole while yet maintaining and validating the unique character of each separate belief system.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel in the beginning of the 20th century, emphasized that it has never been the intention of Judaism to eliminate the religions of the world, but rather to be "a light unto the nations," (Isaiah 49-6) i.e., helping wherever possible in the elucidation and evolution of the various cultures and ideologies throughout the world. Judaism has never been a missionary religion and only accepts converts under special conditions. Rather, she has recognized the value and necessity of all forms of God consciousness even as these very same religions attempted to destroy her. The great medieval Talmudist and philosopher, Moses Maimonides, wrote that although Judaism does not accept for herself the teachings of Jesus and Mohammed, she does recognize that these two religions (which developed directly from classical Judaism) have, in fact, propagated fundamental Judaic ideas throughout the world even unto far removed and undeveloped peoples. Consequently, most of the world's population is conditioned by beliefs in God's unity, spiritual cause and effect (*Karma*), moral responsibility and perhaps most essential of all, belief in the Messianic Era - the vision of universal peace where all nations exist as a "Global Village," speaking the same language, and evolving together towards a higher and more perfected state of consciousness.

The idea of a messianic evolution of mankind and reality is intrinsic to both esoteric and exoteric Judaism. If a Jew rejects this belief then he disconnects himself from the fold of Orthodox Judaism both legally and spiritually. From the perspective of *Tikkun* - exile and return, concealment and revealment - we can see why this is so. The evolution of consciousness, "ours" and "God's," is the beginning, the middle and the end of all existence, as explained. Thus, the Sinaic experience which serves as the vortex for Jewish consciousness is only a microcosm of the future universal experience of all humanity.

In this sense, Sinai was the "testing ground," the prototype for what is to come. As the Jewish Nation of a few million souls was transformed into one "Adam" (Adam meaning man as well as the personal name for the progenitor of mankind), one indivisible being with total God consciousness, knowledge and bliss, so will all the multi-millions of the world's inhabitants evolve and emerge as the one true Adam. "Then I will transform the peoples to an evolved language that they may all call upon the name of the Absolute as one man" (Zefaniah 3:9).

Ultimately, the vision of Adamic consciousness is the sole purpose and goal of the Jewish tradition. The words of the Bible, the visions of the prophets and the discussions of the rabbis overflow with this idea and the means of achieving this end. Even during the Temple periods, 2500 and 2000 years ago, regular offerings were dedicated to the seventy nations of the world with prayers and visions for the evolution of universal consciousness. On certain occasions, both Jews and non-Jews alike participated in these rituals. It is the Jewish belief especially as articulated through the Kabbalah that each religion and spiritual quest feels the growing pains of the other and must try to help clarify each other without obstructing the others unique path of growth. This is all part of the evolving universal *Tikkun* superimposed upon and one with the absolute unity of God that lies at the heart of orthodox Jewish mysticism. The realization of the complete *Tikkun* for the individual, for nationhood, for all humanity and for the entire cosmos is the Supreme Being's own divine promise, "And it shall come to pass, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh..." (Joel 3:1) and, "...In that day the Absolute will be One and His manifestation will be One" (Zechariah 14:9).

End