

“...for just as *Torah* is the *Seder* of *Adam*, so too *Torah* is the *seder* of the *olam*, to the extent that *Torah* is the *seder* of everything. Now only the *seder hadam* is revealed and explicated in *Torah*, for without this it would be impossible for humanity to guard the *seder* as is appropriate, therefore this matter is revealed and explicated to man. But the *seder* of the whole *olam* is also within *Torah*, for only *Torah* is the *seder* of the reality of the world as a whole. This is why it says in Midrash (*Bereishit Rabbah* 1:2) that “Hashem gazed into *Torah* and created the world.” Meaning, that the *Torah* itself is the *seder* of everything and therefore when Hashem wanted to create his world and order it he looked in the *torah* which is the *seder* of everything and created his *olam*.

And because *Torah* is the *seder* of the *olam*, everything is ordered – it is one connected whole. Just as *Torah* is *one seder*. Therefore it says in *Pirkei Avot* (5:1) that “in Ten *maamarot* (sayings) did Hashem create the world. Surely he was able to create it in one saying! He did it this way to give reward to the righteous who uphold the entire world that was created in 10 sayings and to punish the wicked who destroy the world that was created in 10 sayings.” The explanation of this is not that Hashem created the world in 10 sayings instead of one so he could punish the wicked – for this matter the mind does not give.

But the explanation is that the number 10 teaches about the matter that it has plurality, and it is one connected whole. For this there were 10. For until 9 the numbers are individual, each one divided for itself, but 10 is a unifying number – everything is one and connected. Therefore the *yud* teaches us about the number 10, for the *yud* is small, it cannot be split into two due to its smallness, like a single point. And this teaches you that when things are ten they are ordered together to the extent that they are like one thing...

This teaching is such that the *olam* is ordered together such that it is “one,” for the *seder haolam* is the *Torah* which is *seder achat* completely since the *Torah* is *achat*. And since the matter is connected and ordered in unification, if one thing goes out from the *seder*, this matter nullifies the whole *seder*. And so too if the *seder* is partially upheld by one thing, it is upholding everything.

...If the world was created in one saying it wouldn't teach of one connected unified *seder* for all creations would be distinct...Now that it is created in 10 sayings, the number *asarah* teaches that the world is ordered and connected together. And from this idea there is for you to learn, that the *tzadikim* that keep the *seder* that Hashem ordered the world in, with this they uphold “all” the world. And the opposite of this is *Rashaim*, that they go out from *Torah* and transgress the *seder* that Hashem ordered and with this they destroy “all” the world. For the whole world is one, connected and ordered. And a change in the *seder* of Hashem is a change in everything...

# A discussion on Mysticism based on The Maharal

## Other sources and quotes to bring into discussion:

Rav Hirsch 19 letters, Letter 3:

In a series of 10 developments God called his world into existence, created an abundance of forces and caused them to pervade each other and influence each other in accordance with his will...thus one glorious chain of love unites all creatures. None is by or for itself but all things exist in continual reciprocal activity – the one for the All and the All for the One. None has power, or means for itself – it gives in order to receive and receives in order to give and finds therein the accomplishment of the purpose of its existence.

Menachem Mendel of Kotzk:

If I am I because I am I and you are you because you are you then I am I and you are you. But if I am I because you are you, and you are you because I am I, then I am not I and you are not you.

Plotinus, Greek philosopher:

“God is not external to anyone but is present with all things, though they are ignorant that he is so.”

Elie Wiesel in “messengers of God”

Said Rabbi Shimon: On this earth everything is arranged in accordance with a divine plan. The blade of grass grows only because, up above, an angel incites it to do so, saying “Grow”, for such is the will of God.

Rav Simcha Bunim:

“All existence other than man, can only comprehend itself. But God created human beings, who contain within themselves the higher and lower worlds so that they can imagine everything in their souls. That is the essence of humanity – that human beings can understand and imagine something other than themselves.”

+ Words to Adon Olam

## A Related Story: The Golem of Prague

You don't have to be in the Czech capital long to realise that mysticism and Prague go very much hand in hand. The practically unmitigated medieval character of the Old and New Towns is the perfect backdrop to all kinds of stories tall and true. Which category the Golem legend belongs in has been the source of speculation for centuries.

The mysterious tale of the Golem takes place in the dim tangle of lanes that once made up the now-defunct Jewish Quarter – today's gentrified Josefov – essentially part of the Old Town. The tale goes that in the 16th century, the renowned Rabbi Löw, also known as the Maharal of Prague, was seeking a way to protect the local Jewish people from pogroms and the whim of unpredictable rulers up at Prague Castle. Endowed with the power to transform the four elements into living things, he moulded a superhuman from the mud of the Vltava – the Golem. To bring the Golem to life, Rabbi Löw had to insert a shem (a clay tablet bearing the name of God) into its mouth.

The amorphous clay beast is usually depicted around eight feet (2.4 metres) high with illuminated eyes and a thick belt around his considerable waist, though this image originates from a 20th-century film called The Golem. Previous depictions show the creature slightly thinner and more humanlike, but always tall and muscular – his task was, after all, to protect the Jewish people of Prague. With that in mind, it may come as a surprise to find that the word golem in Yiddish means 'stupid' or 'lethargic', although the Hebrew meaning was originally closer to 'shapeless mass'.

Rabbi Löw would deactivate his creation for the Sabbath, to allow the creature to rest according to the Jewish custom. However, one day he forgot, and the Golem went raging through the ghetto, destroying everything in its path. Rabbi Löw was reciting Psalm 92 in the Old New Synagogue when he was interrupted and told of the chaos the Golem was causing. He eventually confronted the monster outside the synagogue, where he managed to remove the shem.

The Golem was never revived and allegedly was later stored in the synagogue's attic, which remained locked for centuries. To this day, Psalm 92 is recited twice during services in Prague's most famous synagogue.

## Some Textual Questions to ask Chanichim:

- Looking at the Hebrew of this piece is a great example of the pitfalls of translation. What does SEDER really mean? What about MAAMAR – do we think Hashem actually spoke to create the world? What about OLAM – this comes from the word “hidden” how is that related?
- How does this piece completely redefine what the word TORAH means?
- What does “for this matter the mind does not give” mean? (paragraph 2)
- The Maharal uses the word “teaches” a lot throughout this piece – why is that so important?
- How does the last line of this piece change our understanding of the R'Nachman saying “the whole entire world is a very narrow bridge”?

## Some personal General to ask Chanichim:

- When the Maharal introduces kabbalistic concepts he will say “by way of wisdom (chachma)”. When the Ramban introduces these concepts he says “by way of truth” – significance?
- When the gemara brings a proof it says “come and hear.” When the Zohar does this it says “come and see.” What is the difference between hearing and seeing?
- How does this piece help redefine the first line of the Shema? Why do we cover our forehead?
- If you count the number of sayings in Bereishit you will only reach 9. The sages say one of them is the word Bereishit itself. How can you interpret this?
- How else is the number 10 significant? Connection to 10 plagues/commandments? What about the 10 things created before creation? 10 sefirot of kabbalah? (See maharal on Avot Perek 5).
- Would you describe mysticism and logical? Is it ok for such a large branch of Judaism to be filled with paradoxical logic? Can you think of any paradoxes in mysticism?
- What do you think the Maharal would say about how the world runs? How does he fit into the general Jewish philosophical picture on magic and divine providence:

Heretical	Jewish			Heretical
Kalam	Baal Shem Tov	Ramban	Ramban	Deism
?	?	?	?	?

## Some personal questions to ask Chanichim:

- What practical effect does the whole world being connected have on our lives?
- What do you think of the story of the Golem? Should these kind of stories merit focus when discussing mysticism?
- Have you ever had a mystical experience? Does dreaming count?

## Some Interactive Resources:

**Drawing** – Draw the forms of some other Hebrew letters and discuss their meaning

**Symbolism** – Take a look at the Kabbalistic sephirothic tree to build on the meaning of 10.

**Youtube** – 4 mins, BimBam, How did Kabbalah begin? A brief history of Jewish mysticism.

**Poem** – Emily Dickinson - *Behind Me — dips Eternity — Before Me — Immortality — Myself — the Term between — Death but the Drift of Eastern Gray, Dissolving into Dawn away, Before the West begin —*

**Art** – This kabbalistic symbol has been associated with the Maharal's outlook. Have a delve into what it could mean.

**Song** – Aleph Bass - Darshan

