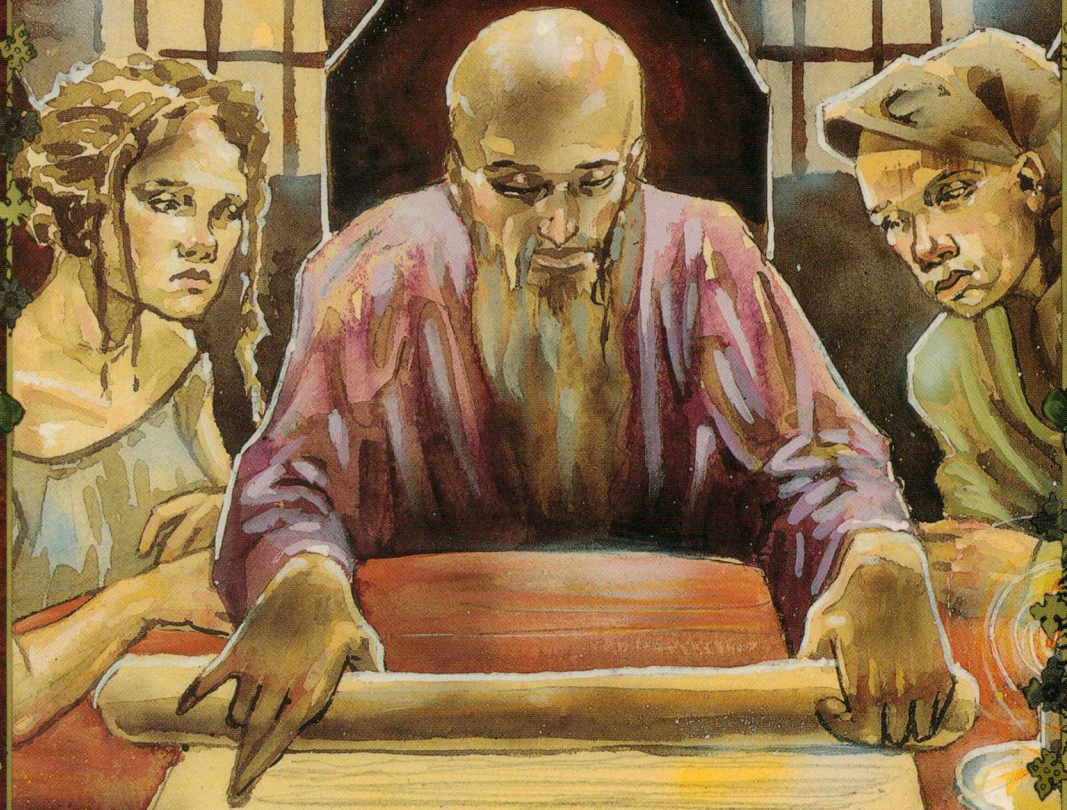


Ars Magica

# Kabbalah



Mythic Judaism

by David Honigsberg, Adam Bank, and Jeremiah Genest

Kabbalah:

Mythic Judaism™

For use with *Ars Magica*™ Fourth Edition

by David Honigsberg, Adam Bank, and Jeremiah Genest

# Kabbalah: The Mysteries of Judaism

## C R E D I T S

**Authors:** David Honigsberg, Adam Bank, and Jeremiah Genest

**Concept and Initial Development:** David Honigsberg

**Revision and Development, Rule Mechanics, and Hermetic-Cabal Relationship:** Adam Bank and Jeremiah Genest

**Development, Editing, Layout, and Project Management:** Jeff Tidball

**Additional Development:** David Chart, Michaël de Verteuil, David Oda, Jessica Pease, John Snead, and H. Tyler Stewart

**Editorial Assistance:** John Nephew

**Cover Illustration:** Dom Reardon

**Interior Illustrations:** Jaume Fabregat i Vilella, Ralph Horsley, Eric Hotz, Jeff Menges, Eric Pommer, and Tonia Walden

**Special Thanks:** Eleanor Banks, Valerie Banks, Bob Brynildson, Jerry Corrick, and Link Martineau

**Playtesting:** Robert Angeloni, Phil Capernaros, David Chart, Michaël de Verteuil, Richard Evans, Dan Fleener, Ian Hargrove, Damelon Kimbrough, MaPhi Messner, Kyle W. Niedzwiecki, David Oda, Jessica Pease, Charles Schafer, John Snead, Robin Steeden, H. Tyler Stewart, and Sabine Völkel

### *About the Authors*

**Adam Bank** is currently pursuing a law degree at Boston University, but he's a nice guy really. He is married to a surprisingly tolerant, non-gaming economist, and together they are grooming their 4-year-old daughter to take over the world. His more arcane interests include Platonism, the philosophy of science, and (of course) game design in all shapes and sizes. This is his first published work. Adam's rabbinical, Ashkenazic relatives would be spinning in their graves over this book if they were dead. He dedicates his portion of this book to his beloved Valerie—and Robert Yu, because he asked.

**Jeremiah Genest** has been playing *Ars Magica* since 1987. A resident of Boston, he is safely concooned in its academic environment. While he denies any intent to be an eternal student, his friends do wonder.

**David M. Honigsberg** lives, works, and writes in New York City. His short stories have appeared in numerous anthologies, including *Elic: Tales of the White Wolf*, *Tapestries*, *The Ultimate Silver Surfer* and the upcoming *On Crusade: More Tales of the Knights Templar*. He has also written, in collaboration with Michael A. Stackpole, the *Chaosworld Campaign* book for Hero Games. An accomplished guitarist and songwriter, he has performed on stages from New York to Seattle both as a solo artist and with the Don't Quit Your Day Job Players. He is currently a rabbinical student at the New Seminary in New York.

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**ATLAS  
GAMES**

PO Box 131233

Roseville, MN 55113

E-mail: [AtlasGames@aol.com](mailto:AtlasGames@aol.com)

WWW: <http://members.aol.com/atlasgames>

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In 1018 AD, while secretly aiding the Christian forces against the Moors of Spain, the Flambeau of Val-Negra from the neighbouring Provençal Tribunal stumbled upon a small, secretive group of hedge wizards practising their magic within the Christian city of Barcelona. Offended by this affront to the Order, the magi initiated contact with the new rivals rather bluntly: "join or die!" The strangers insisted they would do neither, and the Flambeau of the Iberian Tribunal were invited by Val-Negra, their domus magna, to put an end to this presumptuous group in their midst.

The Hermetic-Cabal War began, and ended within the same year!

They called themselves kabbalists, followers of a tradition they claimed pre-dated the Order, the Cult of Mercury, and even Plato himself. Their source of power proved utterly alien to Hermetic understanding, for they had no use for vis, ignored the limits of Hermetic magic, and thrived within the Divine. Instead of a handful of isolated, primitive hedge wizards, the kabbalists appeared to be a close-knit society with links all across Europe and beyond.

While the kabbalists of Barcelona fought the Flambeau to a standstill, their magic seemed incapable of direct offensive strikes. The magi sought every opportunity to exploit this perceived weakness in an effort to deliver a decisive blow.

Then, in Autumn of 1018, a large man clothed in tattered rags and with Hebrew script on his forehead appeared before the gates of Val-Negra, eyes burning with anger. When the grogs barred the gate, the madman simply tore down the wall with his bare hands. Shrugging off the

covenant's imposing defences, the madman ripped open the sanctum of the Flambeau Primus and nearly crushed the very life out of him before finally being destroyed.

Strangely, after the incident, the kabbalists claimed to be so shamed by their one aggressive act that they offered an immediate truce. The chief Quaesitor and the Praeco of Iberia intervened, knowing that the vengeful House Flambeau would not rest until the entire Order was dragged into all-out war. On behalf of the Order, the quasitores negotiated a treaty with the kabbalists, allowing them to continue their work, so long as the two groups avoided conflict. Inexplicably, and despite the urging of the other members of his house, the Flambeau Primus declined to contest the treaty's validity. Since the kabbalists confined themselves to the Jewish quarter, and saw no value in vis, the treaty has remained in place for over two hundred years.

Still, at every Grand Tribunal, whispers and intrigue surround the kabbalists. Who are these strange men? What accounts for their bizarre behavior? Where does their magic come from? What is their purpose?

The answers lie within. Welcome, friends, to Kabbalah.

## Overview

Religion, even in a game, is a sensitive subject, and must be approached with caution and respect. While Mythic Europe, the world

of *Ars Magica*, is similar in many respects to historical Europe, in one crucial sense they have nothing to do with each other. Mythic Europe is a fantastical world, an entirely fictional world, no more real than the worlds contained within the pages of novels. Mythic Europe is a figment of the imagination, existing only as a background to the hobby of collective storytelling known as roleplaying.

The authors of this book do not pretend they can wholly capture a religion in a gaming sourcebook, nor would they want to. This supplement describes what a kabbalist character in the world of Mythic Europe does, not what a kabbalist knows. As such, the reader will find only the barest of introductions to mysticism. Instead, the reader will discover rules and background for playing a new and exciting class of Mythic European characters: divine magicians.

## Mythic Judaism

The denizens of Mythic Europe live under the medieval paradigm (see *ArM4*, page 212). The concepts, rules, and even the sciences of the present day do not hold sway. In their stead, the dreams, fears, legends, and beliefs of the Medieval period are manifest. Previous *Ars Magica* sourcebooks have populated Mythic Europe not only with wizards, fairies, and demons, but also with angels, saints, priests of True Faith, and Christian kings who rule by divine right. How does Kabbalah fit into a game-world where Christianity is not only a faith, but an empirical fact?

This inquiry breaks down into two separate questions: 'What is the status of Judaism in Mythic Europe?' and 'What is the secret behind Kabbalah?'





There are multiple answers to these questions, some of which are discussed briefly below. While this sourcebook must operate from a single outlook, each troupe should answer these essential questions for itself.

## God Works in Mysterious Ways

In Mythic Europe, Jewish beliefs are essentially "correct." So are Christian beliefs. So are Islamic beliefs. These three religions, whose followers are known collectively as the People of the Book, are all equal in the eyes of God. Yet the three religions conflict and sometimes directly contradict each other, in theology and morality. How can all three be true?

Nothing is impossible for the God of Mythic Europe. God is omnipotent, perfect, and is not bound by flawed, mortal logic. The conflicts are between the People of the Book themselves, not with the Host of Heaven.

The secret of Kabbalah is the power of God. Kabbalists are divine magicians, working magic in God's name. So too are Christian and Muslim mystics. This is the outlook assumed by this sourcebook. It allows a saga to delve into all three great religions of Mythic Europe equally.

## Alternate Rules Summary

**Aura of the Jewish Quarter:** The aura of the Jewish Quarter is simply the aura of the Christian city in which the Quarter is located. Jewish holidays and observances do not affect the aura's strength.

**Aura Interactions:** Kabbalists interact with auras just as baal shem do (see page 7).

**Purity:** The power of Purity comes from the magic practices associated with Jewish tradition rather than directly from the Divine. Jewish characters cannot acquire True Faith.

**Kabbalah:** A golem's Divine Might is replaced with Magic Might.

**Merkavah:** Merkavah cannot summon true angels. Kabbalists who try to adjure angels summon demons in disguise instead.

## Other Options

### *God is Love*

The Jewish people are mistaken. Jesus was the longed-for Messiah, and they rejected Him. Yet the Church is wrong in considering the Jews damned. Virtuous Jews can go to heaven, although they have to meet different (perhaps higher) personal standards than Christians, as they do not have the advantage of Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

The secret of Kabbalah is magic. Kabbalists take advantage of God's name to manipulate the laws of the natural world. This outlook requires modification to the rules presented in this sourcebook; those changes are described in the insert on this page.

### *God is Law*

The Jews are correct; others are at best misguided. The miracles of Jesus were magical tricks he learned from the sorcerers of Egypt. Christians and Muslims worship the one true God through a veil of idolatry. Virtuous Christians and Muslims (and others, for that matter) can go to heaven, if they abide by the seven Noahide Laws. Specifically, they must behave equitably in relationships, refrain from blaspheming God's name, refrain from practicing idolatry, avoid immoral practices, avoid shedding the blood of men, refrain from robbery, and refrain from eating meat torn from live animals. Non-Jews do not have the advantage of the halakhah and the Covenant of Abraham.

The secret of Kabbalah is the power of God. This outlook does not require alteration to the rules in this sourcebook, but would require alterations to many of the rules presented in the fourth edition of *Ars Magica* and in many of the supplements that have come before this one. Any storyguide choosing this option should do so with the knowledge that he will be called upon to adjudicate such changes on his own.

## God Only Knows

Neither question needs answering, because they only become important after a character's death, the point at which playing the character becomes quite dull. Similarly, the secret of Kabbalah can never be learned. This sourcebook can be used under this outlook without modification.

## Using this Book

The life of a kabbalist is contemplative and full of esoteric concerns. Unlike dungeon-delving adventures or stories of modern intrigue, the tales of kabbalists are journeys of philosophical and spiritual discovery. Although the authors have merely skimmed the surface, this sourcebook delves deeper into the scholarly aspects of a character's life than any *Ars Magica* supplement before it. Consider yourself forewarned.

For those readers who are interested in playing divine magicians first and understanding the ways of the rabbis second, the authors recommend reading the chapters of this supplement in the following order.

1. Ch. Four: Life of a Rabbi
2. Ch. Six: Practical Kabbalah
3. Ch. Seven: Mythic Judaica
4. Ch. Eight: Legendary Landscape
5. Ch. Nine: Hermetic-Cabal Relations
6. Ch. Three: The Jewish Way
7. Ch. Two: Historical Landscape
8. Ch. Five: The Mysteries

For those readers ready to immerse themselves in the world of the kabbalist, start at the beginning, proceed through the middle, and stop when you reach the end. Then repeat the process using gematria.



## Language Usage

This sourcebook contains a treasure-trove of terms foreign to the English language. When terms which will be important in gaming are first presented, they will be presented in **bold print**. Because pronunciation guides would clutter this sourcebook to the point of incomprehensibility, they are provided separately in a glossary beginning on page 155.

## Aura Interactions

The magic traditions presented in this book draw their power from numerous sources and do not interact with the world the same way Hermetic magic does. The chart below summarizes how each type of aura affects the activities of each new tradition. When using a Virtue or Knowledge from a particular tradition, the character uses the aura interaction of that tradition. For example, if a Hermetic magus with the Virtue Necromantic Summoning were to summon a ghost, he would use the aura modifiers listed below rather than those he normally uses when casting Hermetic spells or performing other Hermetic activities.

### Aura Interaction Table

Tradition	Power Used			
	Magic	Divine	Faerie	Infernal
Kabbalist	no effect	+ (aura)	- (1/2 aura)	- (2 x aura)
Baal shem	+ (aura)	no effect	+ (1/2 aura)	- (aura)
Necromancer	+ (aura)	- (2 x aura)	+ (1/2 aura)	+ (aura)





# Auras

Jewish holy areas have power, granted by the Covenant between God and the Jewish people. It should be treated as an aspect of the standard Dominion aura. Since the center of Jewish worship, the Second Temple, was razed and the Diaspora ensued, the aura has declined in power, though this is not an ongoing effect. It is rare for the Jewish Dominion to reach levels above 6, except on holidays.

The Jewish and Christian auras are mutually compatible, with the strongest predominating in any given area. Jews benefit from Christian auras in the same way Christians do, and vice versa. Jewish auras always have a calm temper (see *Pax Dei*).

The rabbis and those sympathetic to their views regard the Jewish Dominion as the Shekhinah, the physical emanation of God upon the earth (see page 134).

## Aura of the Jewish Quarter

Base Aura: 1

**Modifiers:**

Faithful household	+1
Very pious household	+2
Minor feast day	+1
Major holiday	+2
Sabbath	+2
Synagogue*	+3
Bimah**	+4

\* The synagogue bonus is not cumulative with the bimah bonus.

\*\* Platform in a synagogue from where the Torah is read and prayers are lead.



# Chapter 2

## Historic Landscape

### And God Created the World...

The history of Israel begins in the antediluvian age of the Patriarchs, the wise and pious heads of families, who lead their clans over the whole of the Near East and from whom all Jews are descended. Abraham, the greatest of Patriarchs, formed an ancient pact with God, called the Covenant: Abraham and his descendants would follow God's laws, and the children of Abraham would become God's chosen. This Covenant started the unbroken transmission of an authoritative tradition, the **Torah**, which stretches from Moses, to Joshua, to the sundry elders of the Israeli Empire, to the prophets, and thence to the rabbis of the Middle Ages.

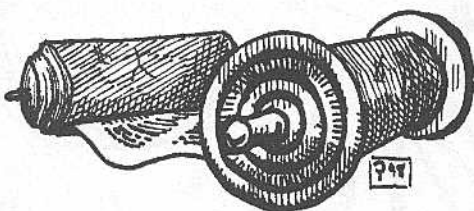
Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson, brought all of Israel into Egypt (known as the 'Sojourn'). Eventually, the children of Israel came under the oppression of Pharaoh, who forced the Israelites to work on building his royal cities. They were delivered up from

oppression by Moses at God's command, and left Egypt in the famous Exodus. Israel's epic escape from bondage was followed by 40 years of wandering, as the Israelites dwelt in the Sinai desert. It was then that Moses received the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Torah.

The Wanderings ended with the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land, led by the warrior hero Joshua. After the conquest, the Israelite tribes settled into the land, but came into conflict with their neighbors. Their lengthy struggle to survive is the period of the **Judges**, who were important leaders raised up by God to deliver His people when they were threatened. The time of the Judges was ended by the appointment of Saul as king to face the great threat of the Philistines.

For over 100 years all Israel was ruled by three kings in succession: Saul, David, and Solomon, who built the Temple in Jerusalem. At the end of that period Israel broke apart (the 'Schism') and formed two states: the northern kingdom of Israel with its capital at Samaria, and the southern Kingdom of Judah, with the capital at Jerusalem. In 721 BC, Samaria fell to Shalmanesser V of Assyria, spelling the end of the northern kingdom. Judah continued as an independent state until falling in 587 BC to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the Temple, took away the cultic vessels, and deported the king of Judah and his entourage to Babylon (the 'Exile').

Cyrus the Great of Persia, after his conquest of Babylon in 539 BC, decreed that the





Israelite exiles should return and rebuild the Jerusalem temple. This is known as the 'Restoration' and ushers in the time of the Second Temple, eventually destroyed by the Roman emperor Titus in 70 AD, never to be rebuilt.

Since the fall of the Second Temple, the Jews have been part of other societies. This is the time of the **Diaspora**, the dark age of Israel without a home. In the Middle Ages, Jews live by a unique set of laws which are sometimes ridiculed. Yet, at times, Jews are seen as important members of cities and communities. During difficult times they are taxed more excessively than their fellow countrymen. They are often prevented from taking on certain occupations. They are sometimes the objects of derision and ridicule. Through this all, however, Jews remain staunchly Jewish, only rarely turning their backs on their faith and converting to Christianity or Islam.

## The Two Major Branches

Jewish culture is at heart uniform. The dispersion of Jewish culture across Europe gave rise to two major branches of Judaism, each branch reflecting the Jews' interactions with the other two great European and Mediterranean civilizations, Christendom and Islam. The Latin-influenced **Ashkenazi** (plural Ashkenazim) developed in Christian-dominated Franco-German lands, and trace their cultural affiliations to Italy and Palestine. The Arabic-influenced **Sephardi** (plural Sephardim) developed in Muslim dominated Andalusian-Spanish lands, and trace their cultural affiliations to Babylon.

The two groups are easily distinguished by their varying pronunciation of Hebrew,



different religious orientation, and religious practices. Ashkenazim, when not dealing with Christians, wrote almost exclusively in Hebrew. The Sephardim, however, regularly employed Arabic for prose and scholarly works, saving Hebrew for poetic composition. Whereas the literature of Jews in Latin areas was overwhelmingly religious in content, the literature of Jews in Arabic areas was well endowed with secular poetry and scientific works inspired by the cultural tastes of the Arabic literati. Most significantly, the two forms of European Judaism differ in their approaches to **Rabbinical Judaism**, the rabbi-centered culture inherited before the fall of the Second Temple, their attitudes toward gentiles (a term that includes all non-Jews), and their attitudes toward gentile culture and politics.

## Sephardic Developments (1000-1148)

Sephardim looked at Arabic culture with undisguised admiration and adapted themselves to Muslim notions of scholarship and artistic taste. In Moorish Spain, Jews frequently served the government in official capacities and, therefore, not only took an active interest in political affairs but also engaged in considerable social and intellectual intercourse in influential circles of the Muslim population. State policy in Muslim Spain mandated the support of literacy and scholarship in all its citizens, and the Sephardim embraced the vitality of Arabic language, scripture, and poetry. The hallmark of the cultured Sephardi became a polished command of Arabic style, lingual mastery of the text of the Hebrew Bible, and the composition of new Hebrew verse set to an alien Arabic meter. Arabic scholars combined Greek philosophy with the revelation to Muhammad. Following suit, Sephardic thinkers, rather than only revering and memorizing the Jewish classics, exposed their literary and rabbinical heritage to rational and

philosophical analysis.

This atmosphere generated a fever of literary creativity in Jewish disciplines, as well as in the sciences cultivated by the Arabs, earning for the period the title of "the Golden Age of Hebrew Literature." The Sephardim extended Jewish cultural perspectives to totally new horizons: mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, political theory, aesthetics, and *belles-lettres*. Sephardic religious leadership overlapped with a new class of Jewish courtiers, including the counselor to the caliphs of Córdoba, Hisdai ibn Shaprut; the viziers of Granada, the Ibn Nagrelas; and high officials of Granada and Seville, the Ibn Ezras, Ibn Megashs, and Ibn Albalias. These courtiers engaged in linguistic and theological research, yielding new insights in biblical prophecy and the structure of the Hebrew language. This new preoccupation with language and beauty lead to a revival of Hebrew poetry, liturgical as well as secular. The poet-rabbis Solomon ibn Gabirol, Moses ibn Ezra, and Judah ha-Levi were the acknowledged supreme masters of a form of expression that became a passion with thousands of Jews throughout Spain.

But by far the most enduring consequence was their redefinition of religious faith in the light of Greco-Arabic philosophical theories. Solomon ibn Gabirol wrote about the Jewish faith in Neoplatonic terms. Abraham ibn Daud defended Rabbinical Judaism using Aristotelian categories. Judah ha-Levi attacked philosophy as religiously bankrupt. Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, or **Maimonides**, one the greatest minds of the Medieval world, synthesized Judaism and medieval Aristotelianism. This new class of philosophers brought Jews and their thought into the mainstream of Western philosophy and gained for them the position of middlemen of culture between East and West.

The trends of Sephardic Judaism did not demote the importance of Rabbinical Judaism. Rather they shaped a fresh approach to rabbinical texts that paralleled in many respects those adopted in biblical exegesis. Strict adherence to consistency, systematization, and linguistic perfection yielded new





codes that often diverged from judgments of the **geonim** (singular **gaon**), the chief rabbis of Babylonian Jewry, and the ancestors of the Sephardim. Maimonides, through his incredible codex of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, brought the Sephardic principles of comprehensiveness, lucidity, and logical arrangement to their apex. Written in Mishnaic Hebrew, Maimonides' work is the only comprehensive treatment of all of Jewish law written before 1220.

With Maimonides, however, the pure Sephardic tradition came to an end; the Almohad (Berber Muslim reformer) invasion of Spain in 1147-48 wiped out the Jewish communities of Andalusia. It drove thousands to northern Spain and Provence, or, as with Maimonides' family (he was still a child at the time), to North Africa and Egypt.

## Ashkenazic Developments

The elders of medieval Ashkenazic Jewry did not seek to integrate Christianity into their lives or learning. They found no intellectual challenge in Christian faith, which they regarded with thinly concealed contempt. They drew their school texts and values exclusively from the **Talmud**, the great work of commentary about Jewish oral traditions, and the **Midrash**, moralistic tales elaborating upon biblical stories. They mostly constituted a merchant class living in urban centers. While they lived under the "protection" of Christian religious and temporal rulers, the Ashkenazim obeyed their own complex of laws and institutions. Except for mercantile relations, Christian society was closed to them, thanks largely to ecclesiastical prohibitions forbidding most forms of social intercourse between Jews and Christians.

With the Arab conquest and the rise of the Carolingians (the dynasty that ruled France and Germany during the 8th through 10th centuries), merchants and rabbis moved from Italy to France and the Rhineland, infusing new energies into the Jewish com-

munities there. A native Ashkenazic religious leadership began to emerge at the very time that the Sephardi entered its Golden Age. After the bloody upheavals of the First Crusade (1096-99) in the Rhineland, Jewish communities that had survived the hatred and violence were able to reestablish their communal institutions and continue the cultivation of their deeply ingrained traditions. By 1150, Ashkenazic Jewry had generated a culture with an indigenous literature that ranged from the popular homily to the esoteric tract on the nature of the divine glory. Study of the Bible and Talmud was focused on **mysticism**, in which prayer and contemplation of the secrets embedded in the liturgy lead to religious experience. The fathers of the Ashkenazic tradition were remembered as biblical poets and initiates into divine mysteries.

The early curricula of Ashkenazic schools were dominated by discussion of religious canon. After the Second Crusade (1147-49), the German Jewish mystics (also called **Chasidim**, or pietists) placed heavy emphasis on the merits of asceticism, martyrdom, and lifelong penitence, adapting to Jewish idiom the features of saintliness celebrated by Christians. The teachings of the Ashkenazim consisted principally of the Midrash, the lives of scholars and saints, and reverent poetry reaffirming the election of Israel and faith in Messianic redemption (see "What Do Jews Believe?," page 22). The chief vehicle of popular instruction consisted of anthologies from rabbinical writings and commentaries on Scripture. The most popular of these was the work of Rabbi Solomon ben Issac of Troyes, known as **Rashi**, the acronym formed from the initials of his name in Hebrew. For the more advanced student, Rashi composed a succinct commentary on the Talmud that, unmatched for compact thoroughness and lucidity, achieved an authority approaching that of the text itself.

As living sources of law and values, the Bible and Talmud were the primary guides of Ashkenazic life, at home, in the marketplace, and in the **synagogue**. Borrowing from Talmudic precedent and from Christian

ecclesiastical procedures, the Ashkenazic rabbis occasionally gathered in regional **synods** to enact legislation on problems of a general nature for which neither the Bible nor Talmud provided direct solutions. Among the most enduring of these measures were protections for Jewish women, such as those prohibiting bigamy, outlawing arbitrary divorce, and imposing severe economic penalties for the abandonment of wives. Regarding the marketplace, the synods lifted the prohibitions against **usury** and against trading in Gentile wines. The synods also adopted severe disciplinary measures, such as excommunication, for those informing or appealing to the Gentile authorities in cases against fellow Jews.

The growth and codification of Kabbalah in Provence in the 13th century and its spread to other parts of Europe was a product of these developments. The theological notions of the mystical kabbalists were criticized as heretical by some rabbis, but the kabbalists' insistence on ritual orthodoxy and their acceptance of the biblical texts as divine revelation helped them avert the suspicions of the Jewish authorities. In time, Kabbalah won a place among the rabbinical elite.

### *Conflicts, Disasters, and New Movements*

The kabbalists lent their support to the Ashkenazic campaign against Arabic influenced philosophy that began in Montpellier, circa 1200 AD. There the orthodox condemned the study of philosophy and evils such as skepticism and religious tolerance. This conflict between fundamentalists and rationalists in Provence and northern Spain was the first of many clashes between the two groups. While both intellectual traditions sought salvation through knowledge, each group charged the other with distortion of tradition, issuing apologies and excommunications characteristic of medieval doctrinal controversy. While the rifts within communities attained bitter proportions, the common threat posed by Christian attacks on the

Talmud in public disputations prevented an open rift, and an uneasy truce existed between the two camps.

## Population

Jews have never constituted a majority of any medieval city or country. Certain areas, though, have higher concentrations than others, and in many cities Jews are permitted to practice their religion without too many constraints. Important countries will be discussed separately.

In most cities, the Jews live in the **Jewish Quarter**, apart from other citizens, with their own streets and markets. The center of the Jewish Quarter is the synagogue, where services are conducted in low tones to avoid offending passersby. Near the synagogue in most Jewish Quarters is the bathhouse, the school and, usually, a hospital. In larger communities there is also a social hall for special events such as weddings.

## Byzantium

Much of what is known about the Jewish community in Byzantium, especially in the city of Constantinople, is due to the writings of a traveler, **Benjamin of Tudela**. Benjamin traveled extensively between the years of 1159 and 1172, recording much of what he saw during his journeys. He spent a great deal of time in Constantinople, a city which houses about 2500 Jews, 2000 of which followed the rabbinical traditions which had been set down hundreds of years earlier in the Mishnah and the Talmud. The other 500 were **Karaites** (see page 15). These two groups did not get along at all, living separately from each other and keeping a high fence between their communities.

The Jews of Constantinople, according to Benjamin, were silk craftsmen and merchants of all kinds. Within the Byzantine





Empire, Jews enjoyed legal status. Synagogues were legally protected places of worship and the authority of Jewish courts to adjudicate in civil cases between Jews was recognized.

Their lives were not easy, however. No new synagogues could be built and no Jew could serve in any position of government. The scriptures could not be read in Hebrew, even in Jewish communities, and the date of Passover had to be moved so that it fell before Easter. According to Benjamin, Greeks often struck Jews in the street and occasionally polluted and defiled the Jewish Quarter of the city. Jews were not permitted live in the city itself. The Jewish Quarter was located "behind an inlet in the sea," forcing Jewish citizens to travel by way of the sea to conduct business with those in the city proper. Through it all, though, the Jews, according to Benjamin, are "rich, kind, and charitable," bearing the yoke of their oppression with good humor.

In 1204, during the sack of Constantinople by the army of the Fourth Crusade, the Jewish Quarter suffered terribly. Many were killed, and most were expelled from the city, scattering to all corners of the once grand empire.

## Islamic Lands

### *Baghdad*

Benjamin of Tudela also traveled to Baghdad and wrote of the extremely fortunate conditions of the Jews there. He reported that 40,000 Jews lived in the city, and that the Jewish Quarter contained no less than 28 synagogues and 10 schools. The heads of these schools did no work other than administering their academies and gathering before the Chief Rabbi to resolve grievances. Baghdad has an important place because it was home to the **Exilarch**, the leader of all Jews outside of the Holy Land-(at least technically). He lived in great splendor and was respected by the Islamic rulers, although his

actual authority outside of Baghdad was and remains questionable.

There is a medieval Hebrew text which describes how the treasures from the First Temple of Jerusalem had been hidden away prior to its destruction by the Babylonians. "All of these vessels were concealed and interred in a tower in the land of Babylonia, in a city named Baghdad." The source states that the hiding places of these treasures were recorded on a copper tablet, now lost.

### *The Holy Land*

After the conquest of Jerusalem by the Moslems in 638 Jews were once more allowed into the holiest of cities. They built a quarter for themselves near the Wailing Wall (also known as the Priest's Gate), where they stayed until the crusader conquest. The crusaders destroyed all Jewish communities, except Ashkelon, which was conquered only in 1153. Many refugees escaped to Egypt and Syria. Communities in those countries made great efforts to ransom Jews as well as Torah scrolls and other books the crusaders held. Some small communities of Jews remained in Palestine, and were mentioned by Benjamin of Tudela, who visited the area around 1170. The Jews once more settled Jerusalem after its conquest by Saladin in 1187.

The Jewish presence in Syria dates back to Biblical times and is intertwined with the history of Jews in neighboring Israel. Rabbis of the community were given legal status equal to that of their peers in Israel. The area was considered so similar to Israel proper that statutes 'pertaining to the land' were often applied to Syria.

With the advent of Christianity restrictions were imposed on the community. The Arab conquest in 636 AD, however, greatly improved the lot of the Jews. Unrest in neighboring Persia in the 10th century resulted in Jewish migration to Syria and brought about a boom in commerce, banking, and crafts. During the reign of the Fatimids, the Jew Menashe Ibrahim El-Kazzaz ran the Syrian administration and he granted Jews positions

in the government. During the 11th century, the Syrian Jews were mostly located in Damascus, Aleppo, and Tyre. They produced many scholars — among them Baruch Ben Isaac — and poets who wrote in Hebrew.

## England

After the Norman conquest of 1066, a few Jews attracted by the economic opportunities came over from the adjacent areas of the continent (the Duchy of Normandy, including Rouen) and established themselves in London. The earliest recorded mention of the London Jewish Quarter dates from the reign of William Rufus (1087-1100), who favored the Jews to some extent.

In 1130, however, the Jews of London were accused of killing a sick man (see “Blood Libel,” below) and were forced to pay an enormous fine. Anti-Jewish feeling also manifested itself in London during the coronation of Richard I (1189) and during the reign of John (1199-1216). In 1190 in York, 150 Jews were killed at the hands of an angry mob. Those who escaped that fate were burned to death in the tower of York Castle. According to contemporary reports, the ringleaders of the mob were men who had borrowed money from Jews but could not repay their debts.

The barons who opposed King John and

his son Henry III (1216-1272) considered the Jews royal financial instruments and maltreated them accordingly. There was a baronial attack on London Jewry in 1215, killing many.

During the lackluster reign of Henry III, the Jews throughout England were oppressed. The climax came in 1224, when it was alleged that some gashes found on the body of a dead child constituted Hebrew characters and the Jews were accused of ritual murder. This resulted in a savage punitive levy on the Jews, in which nearly 300 were hanged. Oppression continued in various forms, such as the confiscation of the principal synagogue in 1232, on the pretext that the chanting could be heard in a neighboring church.

## Germany

Jews have lived in Germany since at least the fourth century. During Roman times, there was a settlement of Jews in the city of Cologne which remained an important center of Jewish life until the time of the Crusades. By the 10th century, there were sizable Jewish populations in cities such as Worms and Augsburg.

The Jews in Germany fared well at times, very poorly at others. Even with periodic persecutions they became important figures in



## Karaites

Karaism is the only continuing Jewish “heresy.” It rejects the Talmud and the whole body of rabbinical thought and literature, basing itself instead on a literalistic interpretation of the Torah. The origins of the sect are obscure, but it claims to be descended from the Sadducees and other early dissidents to the emerging dominance of the Pharisees and their rabbinical successors. A major legitimizing and unifying impulse for this resistance was provided in the second half of the 8th century through the defection of Anan ben David of the family of the exilarch.

Other than their rejection of rabbinical law, the Karaites have little in common, though a separate tradition of legal practice has been emerging. Karaite the-

ological beliefs are highly varied and seem to differ from one community to the next. Typical customs involve sitting in the dark during the Sabbath, refusing medical care, and having very severe marriage restrictions based on extended consanguinity.

Small Karaite communities exist throughout the Middle East, and primarily Central and Eastern Europe, often on the margins of orthodox Jewish communities. By and large, relations with their orthodox neighbors are poor. In 1149, for example, Jehuda ibn Ezra, the Jewish steward of King Alfonso VII of Leon and Castile, used his position to oppress the Karaites of Toledo, and there is no record of any Karaite community in Spain after this time.





many areas of German life. The academy in Mainz, which has been a center of scholarship since the 10th Century, is known throughout Europe, attracting Jewish students from other areas, such as Spain and Italy.

## France

Jews first settled in France in Roman times. Though French Jews generally fared better than their co-religionists in England and Germany, those in Northern France also suffered at the hands of the Crusaders. In 1180, Philip Augustus ransomed all the Jews in his lands in exchange for a huge payment. The next year he seized all loans made by Jews to Christians, pocketing all repayments. Finally, in 1182, he confiscated all Jewish property and expelled all Jews from the lands under his direct control, only to recall them in 1198 in exchange for a hefty share of their

banking revenues.

Southern France, on the other hand, became something of a haven. Provence was one of the most important medieval centers of Jewish learning, both secular and mystical, and was the home of great minds such as Isaac the Blind (see page 120). The rabbis of Provence were the first in the 13th century to use the term "Kabbalah" as a label for Jewish mysticism. They set for themselves the task of making available as much knowledge to other mystics as possible.

## Italy

There are Jewish enclaves throughout Italy dating from Roman times. They stretch from Trani to Venice and Milan, with a particularly large concentration in the university town of Padua. There are 600 Jews, many of them noted physicians, at Salerno, home of



the first school of scientific medicine in the Christian West. Frederick II has several Jews in high positions in his household. Except for St. Gregory VII (1073-85), the Popes have been consistently the most tolerant rulers towards the Jews, and there have never been any anti-Jewish persecutions in the Papal States.

## The Khazars

The history of Khazaria presents a fascinating example of how Jewish life could flourish in the Middle Ages. In a time when Jews were persecuted throughout Christian Europe, the Jewish kingdom of Khazaria was a beacon of hope. Jews thrived in Khazaria because of the tolerance of the Khazar rulers, who invited Byzantine and Persian Jewish refugees to settle in their country. Due to influence of these refugees, the Khazars found the Jewish religion appealing and converted to Judaism in large numbers.

The Khazars were a Turkic people. The early tribes were quite diverse, with reddish hair being predominant among them. In the beginning, the Khazars practiced shamanism, spoke a Turkic dialect, and were nomadic. Later, the Khazars adopted Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, and settled in cities and towns throughout the north Caucasus and Ukraine. The Khazars had a history of ethnic independence extending from the 5th to the 13th century.

The Khazars played a significant role in European affairs. By acting as a buffer state between the Islamic world and the Christian world, Khazaria prevented Islam from significantly spreading north of the Caucasus Mountains. This was accomplished through a series of wars which took place in the late 7th and early 8th centuries, establishing the Caucasus as the boundary between the Khazars and the Arabs. Khazaria was an important trade route connecting Asia and Europe, being a key part of the Silk Road.

Under the leadership of kings Bulan and Obadiah, Judaism spread among the Khazars.

Saint Cyril came to Khazaria in 860 in a Byzantine attempt to convert the Khazars to Christianity, but he was unsuccessful, because by that time the Khazars had already adopted a basic level of Judaism. King Bulan adopted Judaism in 861, after holding a debate between representatives of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. The Khazar nobility and many of the common people also became Jews. King Obadiah later established synagogues and Jewish schools in Khazaria. Mishnah, Talmud, and Torah thus became important to Khazars.

The Rus conquered most of the former Khazar lands in the late 10th century and early 12th century. One of the most devastating defeats came in 965, when Rus Prince Svyatoslav conquered the Khazar fortress of Sarkel. It is believed that he conquered Itil two years later, after which he campaigned in the Balkans. The entire nation finally came to an end in 1259 AD, when it could not resist Russian and Mongol invaders. Khazar Jewry then spread throughout Europe, especially Germany and Hungary.



## Jewish-Christian Relations

The medieval climate against religious minorities is harsh. Christianity is considered the touchstone of citizenship. As such, the Jews are outsiders excluded from the full range of rights enjoyed by members of Christian society. In many parts of Europe, notably in France, England, and Germany, Jews are considered dependents of the princely authorities and are only granted basic rights on sufferance. These can be, and frequently are, subject to arbitrary amendment or repeal at the whim of the ruler. In general, Jews are heavily taxed, though perhaps not more so than the average serf. In exchange the royal courts offer some protection and enforce the collection of debts.



The Church opposes the subjection of Christians to Jews, so Jews may not hire Christian servants. In addition, because they cannot participate in Christian oaths, Jews are excluded from feudal ties, and as such may not normally hold land. In those parts of Europe where they can own land outright, they must either farm it themselves or lease it out to free tenants. Furthermore, the ability to practice trades and crafts in Mythic Europe is increasingly reserved for members of self-regulating guilds. As Jews are unable to take Christian oaths of membership, more and more occupations are closed to them. In many parts of Europe in 1220, Jews are restricted to occupations forbidden to Christians (such as lending money at interest) or less subject to guild regulations (such as inter-city and wholesale trade).

Jews are normally permitted to worship freely so long as their services and practices are discreet. Intermarriage between Christians and Jews are forbidden (by both the Church and rabbinical courts) and apostasy (conversion from Christianity) is punishable by death. The jurisdiction of Jewish courts in family law and in civil cases between Jews is normally respected, but secular courts reserve the right to try criminal cases and those between Christians and Jews. In some cities, Jews are forbidden from handling meat, wine, or produce in the market. This is probably in response to poorly understood Jewish dietary restrictions which forbid the consumption of food polluted by improper handling by gentiles. In many parts of Mythic Europe, Jews are required to wear distinctive dress.

This, then, is the lot of Jews in Christian society. Individual friendships between Jews and Christians are common, but these exist against a backdrop of mutual misunderstanding and mistrust. For some Christians, Jews are collectively guilty of deicide and deemed capable of any sacrilege and anti-Christian acts. These prejudices rose to fever pitch at the start of the crusades, leading massacres of innocent Jews, permanently poisoning relations between the two communities.

## Anti-Jewish Sentiment

The relations between Jews and Christians in Mythic Europe have never been warm. Many Mythic European Christians hold Jews responsible for Jesus' death, placing blame on Judas and Jesus' accusers in the court of Pontius Pilate. Cooler (and more educated) heads know this accusation is unfair, but proofs of original Jewish sympathy to Christ are normally forgotten in the bitter annual commemoration of Christ's passion during Holy Week.

## The Crusades

Except in the Byzantine Empire, active persecution of Jews in medieval Europe prior to the Crusades was rare. When Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade in 1095, its leader, Godfrey de Bouillon, decided first to cleanse Christendom of its enemies closer to home. Starting in Northern France and marching their way up the Rhine valley, the crusaders ignored promises of royal and imperial protection, as well as the protests of the local bishops, and proceeded to slaughter all the Jews they could find who refused to convert to Christianity.

At the start of the Second Crusade in 1147, a French monk, Rodolphe, preached a new round of pogroms against the Jews in Germany. Again the bishops protested, and St. Bernard was called from his monastery to call Rodolphe to order, but the damage was done and Jews were murdered in Cologne, Mainz, and Wurzburg. From there, the pogroms spread to Carentan, Rameru and Sully in France, and to Bohemia before finally burning themselves out.

From this time onwards anti-Jewish rioting became a frequent accompaniment to the start of each Crusade. Any unsolved murder or fit of public hysteria could provoke local massacres which the authorities, when they were not directly implicated, were often powerless to prevent.

## Blood Libel

In 1144, the body of William, a ten year old boy, was found in the woods outside Norwich. His skull had been shaved and the skin punctured at various points in what was understood to be a macabre mockery of the stigmata of Christ's crown of thorns. The crime remained unsolved. Much later, William's mother was persuaded that he had been last seen entering the house of a Jew. An angry mob hauled a group of Jews before the bishop's court accusing them of sacrilegious murder. While it was unlikely that they would have been convicted (the rules of evidence in ecclesiastical courts were quite severe at the time), the Sheriff of Norfolk, claiming royal jurisdiction, had the Jews transferred to Norwich castle for safe keeping. The Jewish Quarter was sacked and burned by the frustrated mob. After the anti-Jewish hysteria had run its course, the terrified Jews were released to rebuild their lives.

William was canonized as a martyr. Because of his wounds, he was presumed to have died for his faith (though no Jews were ever tried or formally convicted of the murder). Nonetheless, the case captured popular imagination, and similar accusations of **blood libel** popped up throughout much of Europe. Despite a complete absence of substantive evidence, Jews were accused of killing male Christian children to consume their blood or heart during their Passover feast. Of course, as early as Genesis 9:4, the Torah expressly forbids the ingestion of blood and meat together. Leviticus 13:7 makes it clearer still, stating "you shall not eat...any blood."

Nevertheless, this myth sparked repeated lynchings and massacres over the centuries, for example, in the French town of Blois in 1171. A Jew there who was riding to the river to water his horse inadvertently made another horse shy. That horse was led by the servant of the mayor of Blois, who informed his master that he had seen the Jew throw the body of a murdered child into the river. The mayor, who bore a grudge against an influential Jewish woman of the community, added to the story by saying that the child had been cruci-

fied for Passover before being thrown into the river. It was said that the blood was necessary to sustain the Jews of Blois, who had somehow become nonhuman. All of the Jews of the town were put into chains and thrown into prison. On May 26, 34 men and 17 women were tortured and then burned at the stake.

## Usury

The Bible prohibits Jews from lending money to each other at interest. One passage in Deuteronomy (23:20), however, permits interest to be charged on loans to foreigners. Many rabbis, though, disapprove of charging interest, even to non-Jews. Even so, as more and more Jews find themselves closed off from different professions, moneylending at interest has become both necessary and permitted.

One rabbinical ruling states that no loans can be made to Gentiles at interest if a livelihood can be earned in another manner. The ruling goes on to say, however, "at the present time, when a Jew may possess neither fields nor vines permitting him to live, the lending of money at interest to non-Jews is necessary and consequently authorized."

Whatever the reasons, the practice of usury reinforces popular hatred of the Jews. Heavy debtors are often the leaders of anti-Jewish pogroms, hoping to destroy their creditors and their records. As often as not, however, these efforts fail as royal officials go over the books of murdered Jews with fine-toothed combs, assiduously collecting unpaid debts on behalf of the king. This is meager compensation to the heirs of the dead Jews, since the crown keeps the money.

Over time, Jews will be edged out of large scale international moneylending by Italian banking houses armed with Papal dispensations permitting the charging of interest. The appearance of alternative lenders to the rich and powerful will greatly reduce princely interest in protecting the Jews. In time, Jewish moneylenders will be reduced to pawnbroking and lending to the poor—precisely those most likely to resort to violence when hard pressed.





## The Fourth Lateran Council

At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, Innocent III and his prelates legislated against improper subordination of Christians to Jews. A handful of the seventy canons enacted concerned what was considered intolerable Jewish influence over Christians. For instance, "Since it is quite absurd that any who blaspheme against Christ should have power over Christians, we...forbid that Jews be given preferment in public office since this offers them the pretext to vent their wrath against Christians."

Canon 68 of the Council promulgated for the first time that where normal external signs fail to differentiate Jews and Saracens from Christians, Jews and Saracens must henceforth be distinguished from Christians by their dress. This order was qualified in a subsequent letter of Innocent, in which he stated that Christians should "not force the Jews to wear such as would lay them open to the danger of loss of life." The same canon forbade Jews to appear in public during Eastertide or to blaspheme Christ.

Yet another canon ruled that Jewish converts to Christianity should be prevented

from backsliding, consistent with church teachings on the irreversibility of baptism. A fourth law prohibited Jewish moneylenders from oppressing Christians with their "heavy and immoderate usury."

## Dress Codes

Since the Fourth Lateran Council, Jews in many countries have been forced to wear outward signs which would identify them. The most common form of this is the "Jewish badge," an item which was approved by as many as 40 different councils in Western and Central Europe. In England, Jews older than 7 years of age have to wear a piece of yellow or crimson taffeta in the shape of the tablets of the Ten Commandments above the heart. In Sicily, in 1221, Jews will be ordered to wear blue badges in the shape of the Greek letter T. Jews in France, Germany, and other countries, the badge takes the shape of a wheel or the letter O. In some countries, a hat of a particular shape was added to the list of necessary wear. These regulations are sometimes unevenly enforced, and exemptions can often be purchased from the local authorities for a fee.

The laws regarding badges also have economic ramifications, as in many areas they have to be purchased at certain specific locations. And those who are supposed to be wearing the badge can be fined if caught without it. It should be noted that sartorial regulations are a common feature of life in Mythic Europe—groups as varied as clergy, doctors, lepers, and prostitutes are also required to wear distinctive clothing.

## Innocent IV on the Jews (1247)

"Certain of the clergy and princes, nobles and great lords . . . have falsely devised godless plans against the Jews, unjustly depriving them of their property by force, and appropriating it to themselves; they falsely charge them of dividing among them on the Passover the heart of a murdered boy... In fact, in their malice, they ascribe to Jews every murder, wherever it chance to occur. And on the ground of these and other fabrications, they are filled with rage against them, rob them...oppress them by starvation, imprisonment, torture, and other sufferings, sometimes even condemning them to death; so that the Jews, though living under Christian princes, are in worse plight than were their ancestors under the Pharaohs. They are driven to leave in despair the land in which their fathers have dwelt since the memory of man. Since it is our pleasure that they shall not be distressed, we ordain that you behave toward them in a friendly and kind manner. Whenever any unjust attacks upon them come under your notice, redress the injuries, and do not suffer them to be visited in future by similar tribulations."

## Friends of the Jews

The Papal instruction of Innocent IV (see insert) is not the first, or the last, the Medieval Church will issue in an effort to stem a tide of anti-Jewish persecutions. It must be pointed out that acts of violence perpetrated against the Jews were, in most cases,

not only not sanctioned, but condemned outright by Church, crown, or both. Such violence is a breach of the royal peace, and if Jews are murdered and robbed of their property by townspeople, the king can no longer depend on them for loans and taxes. Many civic and Church leaders tried to stand up against populist tendencies to harm the Jews and their property.

The role of Bernard of Clairvaux in the Second Crusade is a good example of this. The Bishop of Speyer stopped the rioting in his town by hanging the ringleaders who were responsible for it. The Archbishop of Cologne did the same. This type of success was not universal. During the time of the First Crusade, the Archbishop of Mainz, though he supported the Jews of the city, had to flee for his life. Without protection, all the male Jews of the city were either forced to convert to Christianity or be slain.

## Jewish-Islamic Relations

### The Dhimmi

Islam considers Jews and other non-Muslims living under Islamic rule subject to the jurisdiction of Islamic law. (In contrast, the medieval Church tends to waive jurisdiction over Jews, allowing this to the secular courts.) Because Jews are not the only infidels within Islamic society, they are rarely singled out for special treatment. Rather, they are subsumed under a broader category: the dhimmi. The dhimmi are non-Muslim People of the Book (ahl al-kitab) recognized by

the Prophet Muhammad as recipients of divinely inspired scripture. Overall, the lives of Jews are easier in the lands of Islam. Tolerant Islamic rulers tend to treat Jews (and Christians) well, viewing them as additions to their tax base.

The strictures to be enforced against the dhimmi are specified in the Pact of Umar, which dates to the early years of Islam. These are often neglected, but in times of anti-Christian and anti-Jewish sentiment they can be enforced more strictly. In these cases, the goal is to enforce the neglected restrictions rather than devise new, stricter ones.

According to the Pact of Umar, dhimmi are prohibited from building new houses of worship, publicly displaying religion, proselytizing, or obstructing those who wish to convert to Islam. Some provisions of the Pact of Umar go out of their way to humiliate non-Muslims. They have to rise in the presence of Muslims when the latter sit down; they are to demonstrate their low station by refraining from mounting on saddles and by not bearing arms. The Pact further admonishes the dhimmi to construct their houses at a lower elevation than those belonging to Muslims. There are times, however, particularly during periods of extreme religious fervor, when dhimmi are bound by even stricter restrictions. Religious massacres under Islam are not unknown.





# Chapter 3

# The Jewish Way

## What Do Jews Believe?

This is a far more difficult question than one might expect. Judaism has no dogma, no formal set of beliefs that one must hold to be a Jew. Actions are far more important than beliefs, although there is certainly a place for belief. The closest that anyone has ever come to creating a widely-accepted list of Jewish beliefs is Maimonides's thirteen principles of faith, which he presented as the minimum requirements of Jewish belief.

Judaism does not focus much on abstract cosmological concepts. Although Jews have certainly considered the nature of God, man, the universe, life, and the afterlife at great length, there is no mandated, official, definitive belief on these subjects, outside of the very general concepts discussed above. There is substantial room for personal opinion on all of these matters.

Judaism focuses on relationships: between God and mankind, between God and the Jewish nation, between the Jewish nation and the land of Israel, and between human beings. The scriptures tell the story of the development of these relationships, from the time of creation, through the creation of the pact between God and Abraham, and of the covenant between God and the Jewish people. The scriptures also specify the mutual obligations created by these relationships.

### Thirteen Principles of Faith

- God exists.
- God is one and unique.
- God is incorporeal.
- God is eternal.
- Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other.
- The words of the prophets are true.
- Moses's prophecy is better than any other prophet's.
- The Written Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings contained in the Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses.
- There will be no other Torah.
- God knows the thoughts and deeds of men.
- God will reward the good and punish the wicked.
- The Messiah will come.
- The dead will be resurrected.

## The Nature of God

The definition of the nature of God is one of the few areas of abstract Jewish belief where there are a number of clear-cut ideas about which there is little dispute.

### God Exists

The fact of God's existence is accepted without question. Proof is not needed, and is rarely offered. The Torah begins by stating

"In the beginning, God created..." It does not tell who God is or how He came to be. Judaism views the existence of God as a necessary prerequisite for the existence of the universe. The existence of the universe is sufficient proof of the existence of God.

## God is One

One of the primary expressions of Jewish faith, recited twice daily in prayer, is the **Shema**, which begins "Hear, Israel: The Lord is our God, The Lord is one." This simple statement encompasses several different ideas:

- There is only one God. No other being participated in the work of creation.
- God is a unity. He is a single, whole, complete, indivisible entity. He cannot be divided into parts or described by attributes. Any attempt to ascribe attributes to God is merely man's imperfect attempt to understand the infinite.
- God is the only being to whom worship should be offered. The Shema can also be translated as "The Lord is our God, The Lord alone," meaning that no other is God, and prayer should be offered to no other.

## God Created Everything

Everything in the universe was created by God and only by God. Judaism completely rejects the dualistic notion that evil was created by Satan or some other deity. All comes from God. As Isaiah said, "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I am the Lord, that does all these things" (Is. 45:6-7).

## God is Incorporeal

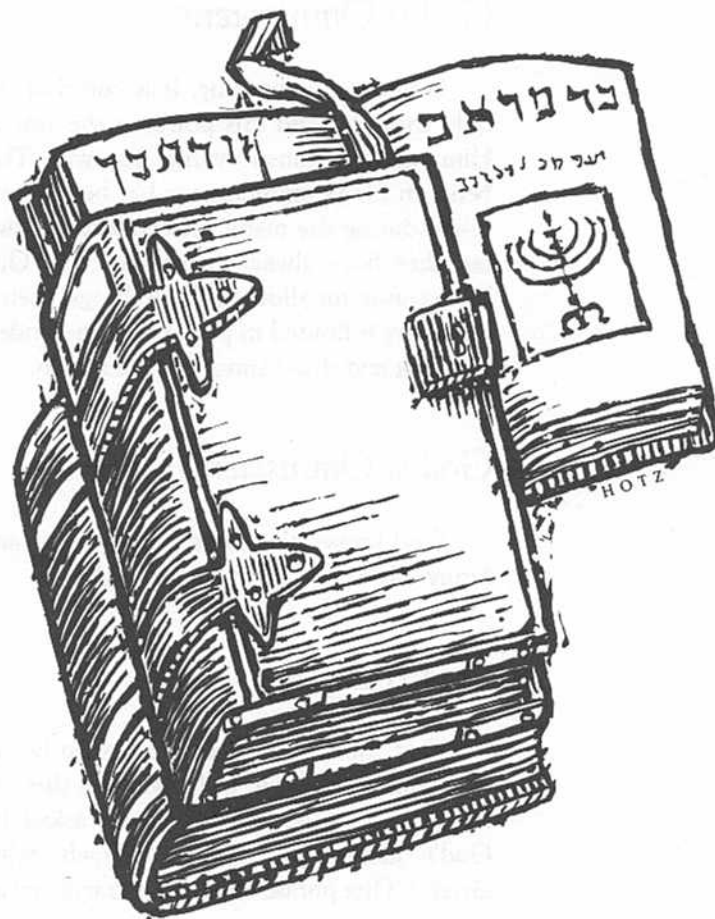
Although many places in scripture and Talmud speak of various parts of God's body

(the Hand of God, God's wings) or speak of God in anthropomorphic terms (God walking in the garden of Eden, God laying tefillin), Judaism firmly maintains that God has no body. Any reference to God's body is simply a figure of speech, a means of making God's actions more comprehensible to beings living in a material world. Much of Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* is devoted to explaining each of these anthropomorphic references and proving that they should be understood figuratively.

It is forbidden to represent God in a physical form. That is considered idolatry. The sin of the Golden Calf incident was not that the people chose another deity, but that they tried to represent God in a physical form.

## God is Genderless

This follows directly from the fact that God has no physical form. God has no body,







no genitalia, therefore the idea that God is male or female is absurd. God is referred to using masculine terms simply for convenience's sake; God is no more male than a table is.

Although God is usually spoken of in masculine terms, there are times when God is referred to using feminine terms. The Shekhinah, the manifestation of God's presence that fills the universe, is conceived of in feminine terms, and the word Shekhinah is feminine.

### *God is Omnipresent*

God is in all places at all times. He fills the universe and exceeds its scope. He is always near to be called upon in times of need, and He sees all that humanity does. He is not just the God of the Jews; He is the God of all nations.

### *God is Omnipotent*

God can do anything. It is said that the only thing beyond His power is the fear of Him; that is, humanity has free will. This belief in God's omnipotence has been sorely tested during the many persecutions of Jews, but they have always maintained that God has a reason for allowing these things, even if humanity is limited in perception and understanding and thus cannot see the reason.

### *God is Omniscient*

God knows all things, past, present and future. He knows all human thought.

### *God is Eternal*

God transcends time. He has no beginning and no end. He will always be there to fulfill his promises. When Moses asked for God's name, He replied, "Ehyeh asher ehyeh." That phrase is generally translated as,

"I am that I am," but the word "ehyeh" can be present or future tense, meaning "I am what I will be" or "I will be what I will be." The ambiguity of the phrase is often interpreted as a reference to God's eternal nature.

### *God is Both Just and Merciful*

God's justice is tempered by mercy, the two qualities perfectly balanced. Of the two Names of God most commonly used in scripture, one refers to His quality of justice and the other to His quality of mercy. The two names were used together in the story of Creation, showing that the world was created with both justice and mercy.

### *God is Holy and Perfect*

One of the most common names applied to God in the post-Biblical period is "Ha-Kadosh, Barukh Hu," The Holy One, Blessed be He.

### *God is our Father*

Everyone is a child of God. The Talmud teaches that there are three participants in the formation of every human being: the mother and father, who provide the physical form, and God, who provides the soul, the personality, and the intelligence. It is said that one of God's greatest gifts to humanity is the knowledge that humans are His children and created in His image.

## *The Name of God*

### *The Significance of Names*

A name is not merely an arbitrary designation, a random combination of sounds. A name conveys the nature and essence of the thing named. It represents the history and

reputation of the being named.

An example of this usage occurs in Ex. 3:13-22: Moses asks God what His "name" is. Moses is not asking "what should I call you;" rather, he is asking "who are you; what are you like; what have you done." That is clear from God's response. God replies that He is eternal, that He is the God of the ancestors of the children of Israel, that He has seen their affliction and will redeem them from bondage. The concepts of chillul Ha-Shem and kiddush Ha-Shem are further examples of the importance of names. An act that causes God or Judaism to come into disrespect or a commandment that is disobeyed is often referred to as "chillul Ha-Shem," profanation of The Name. Clearly, this is not harm done to a word; this is harm to a reputation. Likewise, any deed that increases the respect accorded to God or Judaism is referred to as "kiddush Ha-Shem," sanctification of The Name.

A name represents the reputation of the thing named, a name should be treated with the same respect as the thing's reputation. For this reason, God's Names, in all of their forms, are treated with enormous respect and reverence in Judaism.

## The Names of God

The most important of God's Names is the four-letter Name represented by the Hebrew letters Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh (YHVH). It is often referred to as the Ineffable Name, the Unutterable Name or the Distinctive Name. It is related to the Hebrew root Heh-Yod-Heh (to be), and reflects the fact that God's existence is eternal. In scripture, this Name is used when discussing God's relation with human beings, and when emphasizing his qualities of loving kindness and mercy. It is frequently shortened to Yah (Yod-Heh), Yahu or Yeho (Yod-Heh-Vav), especially when used in combination with names or phrases, as in Yehoshua (Joshua, meaning "the Lord is my Salvation"), Eliyahu (Elijah, meaning "my God is the Lord"), and Halleluyah ("praise the Lord").

The first Name used for God in scripture is Elohim. The same word (or, according to Maimonides, a homonym of it) is used to refer to princes, judges, other gods, and other powerful beings. This Name is used in scripture when emphasizing God's might, His creative power, and His attributes of justice and rulership. Variations on this name include El, Eloha, Elohai (my God) and Elohaynu (our God).

God is also known as El Shaddai. This Name is usually translated as "God Almighty," however, the derivation of the word "Shaddai" is not known. According to some views, it is derived from the root meaning "to heap benefits." According a Midrash, it means, "The One who said 'dai'" ("dai" meaning enough or sufficient) and comes from the fact that when God created the universe, it expanded until He said "DAI!". Some note that Shaddai is an acronym of Shomer Daltot Yisrael, Guardian of the Doors of Israel. Finally, the root word S-D-Y also means "breast," which suggest a nurturing and feminine aspect of God.

Another significant Name of God is YHVH Tzva'ot. This Name is normally translated as "Lord of Hosts." The word "tzva'ot" means "hosts" in the sense of a military grouping or an organized array. The Name refers to God's leadership and sovereignty. Interestingly, this Name is rarely used in scripture. It never appears in the Torah. It appears primarily in the prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, as well as many times in the Psalms.

## Writing the Name of God

Jews do not casually write any Name of God. This practice does not come from the commandment not to take the Lord's Name in vain, as many suppose. That commandment refers solely to oath-taking, and is a prohibition against swearing by God's Name falsely or frivolously (the word normally translated as "in vain" literally means "for falsehood").





This is not a prohibition against writing the Name of God per se; it prohibits only erasing or defacing a Name of God. Jews avoid writing any Name of God casually because of the risk that the written Name might later be defaced, obliterated, or destroyed accidentally or by one who does not know better.

The commandment not to erase or deface the name of God comes from Deuteronomy 12:3. In that passage, the people are commanded that when they take over the promised land, they should destroy all things related to the idolatrous religions of that region, and should utterly destroy the names of the local deities. Immediately afterwards, they are commanded not to do the same to God. From this, the rabbis inferred that the commandment is not to destroy any holy thing, and not to erase or deface a Name of God.

### *Pronouncing the Name of God*

Nothing in the Torah prohibits a person from pronouncing the Name of God. Indeed, it is evident from scripture that God's Name was pronounced routinely. Many common Hebrew names contain "Yah" or "Yahu," part of God's four-letter Name. The Name was pronounced as part of daily services in the Temple.

The Mishnah confirms that there was no prohibition against pronouncing the Name in ancient times. In fact, the Mishnah recommends using God's Name as a routine greeting to a fellow Jew. By the time of the Talmud, it was the custom to use substitute Names for God. Some rabbis asserted that a person who pronounces YHVH according to its letters (instead of using a substitute) has no place in the World to Come, and should be put to death. Instead of pronouncing the four-letter Name, they usually substitute the Name "Adonai," or simply say "Ha-Shem" (literally, The Name).

Although the prohibition on pronunciation applies only to the four-letter Name, Jews customarily do not pronounce any of

God's many Names except in prayer or study. The usual practice is to substitute letters or syllables, so that Adonai becomes Adoshem or Ha-Shem, Elohaynu and Elohim become Elokaynu and Elokim, and so on.

With the Temple destroyed and the prohibition on pronouncing The Name outside of the Temple, pronunciation of the Name fell into disuse. Scholars passed down knowledge of the correct pronunciation of YHVH for many generations, but eventually the correct pronunciation was lost, and it is not known with any certainty. The vowels used are not known, nor even if the Vav in the Name was a vowel or a consonant.

## Halakhah

Judaism is not just a set of beliefs about God, man and the universe. Judaism is a comprehensive way of life, filled with rules and practices that effect every aspect of life: what to do when waking up in the morning, what one can and cannot eat, what to wear, how to groom, how to conduct business, how to find one's potential spouse, how to observe the holidays and **Shabbats**, and perhaps most important, how to treat God, other people, and animals. This set of rules and practices are known as **Halakhah**. The word "halakhah" is usually translated as "Jewish Law," although a more literal translation might be "the path that one walks." The word is derived from the Hebrew root Heh-Lamed-Kaf, meaning to go, to walk, or to travel.

### What Does Halakhah Consist Of?

Halakhah is made up of **mitzvot** (singular, mitzvah) from the Torah as well as laws instituted by the rabbis and long-standing customs. All of these have the status of Jewish

law and all are equally binding. The only difference is that the penalties for violating laws and customs instituted by the rabbis are less severe than the penalties for violating Torah law, and laws instituted by the rabbis can be changed by the rabbis in rare, appropriate circumstances.

## The 613 Mitzvot

At the heart of Halakhah are the unchangeable 613 mitzvot that God gave to the Jewish people in the Torah. The word "mitzvah" means "commandment." In its strictest sense, it refers only to commandments instituted in the Torah. However, the word is commonly used in a more generic sense to include all of the laws, practices, and customs of halakhah, and is often used in an even more loose way to refer to any good deed.

Some of the mitzvot are clear, explicit commands in the Bible (thou shalt not murder), others are more implicit (the mitzvah to recite grace after meals, which is inferred from "and you will eat and be satisfied and bless the Lord your God"), and some can only be ascertained by Talmudic logic (that a man shall not commit incest with his daughter, which is derived from the commandment not to commit incest with his daughter's daughter).

Some of the mitzvot overlap; for example, it is a positive commandment to rest on the Shabbat and a negative commandment not to do work on the Shabbat.

Although there is not agreement on the precise list of the 613 (there are some slight discrepancies in the way some lists divide related or overlapping mitzvot), there is complete agreement that there are 613 mitzvot. This number is significant: it is the numeric value of the word Torah (Tav = 400, Vav = 6, Resh = 200, Heh = 5), plus two for the two mitzvot whose existence precedes the Torah: "I am the Lord, your God and You shall have no other gods before Me." There is also complete agreement that these 613 mitzvot can be broken down into 248 positive mitzvot

(one for each bone and organ of the male body) and 365 negative mitzvot (one for each day of the solar year).

The most accepted list of the 613 mitzvot is Maimonides' list in his *Mishneh Torah*. In the introduction to the first book Maimonides lists all of the positive mitzvot and all of the negative mitzvot, then proceeds to divide them up into subject matter categories.

Many of these 613 mitzvot cannot be observed for various reasons. For example, a large portion relate to sacrifices and offerings, which can only be made in the Temple, and the Temple does not exist anymore. Some of the laws relate to the theocratic state of Israel, its king, its supreme court, and its system of justice, and cannot be observed because the theocratic state of Israel does not exist. In addition, some laws do not apply to all people or places.





## Gezeirah: A Fence around the Torah

A **gezeirah** is a law instituted by the rabbis to prevent people from accidentally violating a Torah mitzvah. For example, the Torah commands not to work on the Shabbat, but a gezeirah commands not to even touch an implement that would be used to perform prohibited work, because someone holding the implement might forget that it was the Shabbat and perform prohibited work.

It is important to note that from the point of view of the practicing Jew, there is no difference between a gezeirah and a Torah mitzvah. Both are equally binding; neither can be disregarded on a whim. The difference is generally in the degree of punishment: a violation of the Shabbat was theoretically punishable by death under Torah law, while a violation of the gezeirah would result in a less severe punishment.

Another difference between a gezeirah and a mitzvah is that the rabbis can, in rare appropriate circumstances, modify or abrogate a gezeirah. Rabbis cannot change the Torah law, because that was commanded by God.

## Takkanah: A Law Instituted by the Rabbis

Halakhah also includes some laws that are not derived from mitzvot in the Torah. A **Takkanah** is a law that was instituted by the rabbis. For example, the "mitzvah" to light candles on Chanukah, a post-biblical holiday, is a Takkanah. The practice of public Torah readings every Monday and Thursday is a Takkanah instituted by Ezra.

Some takkanot vary from community to community or from region to region. A Takkanah, like a gezeirah, is just as binding as a Torah mitzvah.

## Minhag: A Custom with the Status of Law

A **Minhag** is a custom that evolved for worthy religious reasons and has continued long enough to become a binding religious practice. For example, the second, extra day of holidays was originally instituted as a gezeirah, so that people outside of Israel, not certain of the day of a holiday, would not accidentally violate the holiday's mitzvot. After the mathematical calendar was instituted and there was no doubt about the days, the added second day was not necessary. The rabbis considered ending the practice at that time, but decided to continue it as a Minhag. It is important to note that these "customs" are a binding part of Halakhah, just like a mitzvah, a Takkanah, or a gezeirah.

Minhag is also used in a looser sense, to indicate a community or an individual's customary way of doing some religious thing. For example, it may be the Minhag in one synagogue to stand while reciting a certain prayer, while in another synagogue it is the Minhag to sit during that prayer. Even in this looser sense, it is generally recommended that a person follow his own Minhag, even when visiting another community.

## Life and Death

### Birth

According to Jewish law, life begins at birth, the time when an infant has emerged more than halfway from the mother's body. Judaism completely rejects the notion of original sin. A child is born pure, completely free from sin.

Immediately after giving birth, a woman is considered **niddah** and must remain sexually separated from her husband for a period of

seven days after the birth of a male child and 14 days after the birth of a female child. After a child is born, the father is given the honor of an **aliyah** (blessing the reading of the Torah) in synagogue at the next opportunity. Afterward, a blessing is recited for the health of the mother and the child. If the child is a girl, she is named at that time. A boy's name is given during the **brit milah** (ritual circumcision).

## Naming a Child

The formal Hebrew name is used in Jewish rituals, primarily in calling the person to the Torah for an **aliyah**, or in the **ketubah** (the marriage contract, see page 39). The standard form of a Hebrew name for a male is [child's name] ben [father's name]. For a female, the form is [child's name] bat [father's name]. If the child is a **kohein** (see page 115), the suffix **ha-Kohein** is added. If the child is of the tribe of **Levi**, the suffix **ha-Levi** is added.

There are no formal religious requirements for naming a child. The name has no inherent religious significance. It is customary among Ashkenazic Jews to name a child after a recently deceased relative. This custom comes partly from a desire to honor the dead relative, and partly from superstition against naming a child after a living relative. It is almost unheard of for an Ashkenazic Jew to be named after his own father, though it does occasionally happen. Among Sephardic Jews, it is not unusual to name a child after a parent or living relative.

## Brit Milah: Circumcision

Of all of the commandments in Judaism, the **brit milah** (literally, covenant of circumcision) is probably the one most universally observed. It is commonly referred to as a **bris** (covenant).

The commandment to circumcise is given at Genesis 17:10-14 and Leviticus 12:3. The covenant was originally made with Abraham. It is the first commandment specific to the

Jews. The biblical text states the reason for this commandment quite clearly: circumcision is an outward physical sign of the eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people. It is also a sign that the Jewish people will be perpetuated through the circumcised man.

The commandment is binding upon both the father of the child and the child himself. If a father does not have his son circumcised, the son is obligated to have himself circumcised as soon as he becomes an adult. A person who is uncircumcised suffers the penalty of **karet**, or spiritual excision. In other words, regardless of how good a Jew he is in all other ways, a man has no place in the world to come if he is uncircumcised.

Circumcision is performed on the eighth day of the child's life, during the day. The day the child is born counts as the first day of his life, thus if the child is born on a Wednesday, he is circumcised on the following Wednesday. To complicate things further, Jewish days begin at sunset, so if the child is born on a Wednesday evening, he is circumcised the following Thursday. Circumcisions are performed on **Shabbat**, even though they involve the drawing of blood which is ordinarily forbidden on the Sabbath. As with almost any commandment, circumcision can be postponed for health reasons. Jewish law provides that where the child's health is at issue, circumcision must wait until seven days after a doctor declares the child healthy enough to undergo the procedure.

Circumcision involves surgically removing the foreskin of the penis. The circumcision is performed by a **mohel** (rhymes with oil—literally, circumciser), a pious, observant Jew educated in the relevant Jewish law and in surgical techniques.

If the child is born without a foreskin (it happens occasionally), or if the child was previously circumcised without the appropriate religious intent or in a manner that rendered the circumcision religiously invalid, a symbolic circumcision may be performed by taking a pinprick of blood from the tip of the penis. This is referred to as **hatafat dam brit**.

While the circumcision is performed, the child is held by a person called a **sandek**. It is





an honor to be a sandek for a bris. The sandek is usually a grandparent or the family rabbi. Traditionally, a chair (often an ornate one) is set aside for Elijah, who is said to preside over all circumcisions. Various blessings are recited, including one over wine, and a drop of wine is placed in the child's mouth. The child is then given a formal Hebrew name.

It is not necessary to have a minyan for a bris, but it is desirable if feasible.

As with most Jewish life events, the ritual is followed by refreshments or a festive meal.

### *Pidyon ha-Ben: Redemption of the First Born*

The first and best of all things belong to God. This is true even of firstborn children. Originally, it was intended that the firstborn would serve as the priests and Temple functionaries of Israel. After the incident of the Golden Calf, in which the tribe of Levi did not participate, God chose the tribe of Levi over the firstborn for this sacred role. This is explained in Numbers 8:14-18. However, even though their place has been taken by the Levites, the firstborn still retain a certain degree of sanctity, and for this reason, they must be redeemed. The ritual of redemption is referred to as **pidyon ha-ben**, literally, redemption of the son.

A firstborn son must be redeemed after he reaches 31 days of age. Ordinarily, the ritual is performed on the 31st day (the day of birth being the first day); however, the ritual cannot be performed on Shabbat because it involves the exchange of money. The child is redeemed by paying a small sum (five silver shekels in biblical times) to a kohein (preferably a pious one familiar with the procedure) and performing a brief ritual. This procedure is commanded at Numbers 18:15-16.

The ritual of pidyon ha-ben applies to a relatively small portion of the Jewish people. It applies only to the firstborn male child if it is born by natural childbirth. Thus, if a female is the firstborn, no child in the family is subject to the ritual. If the first conception ends

in miscarriage after more than 40 days' term, it does not apply to any subsequent child. It does not apply to members of the tribe of Levi, or children born to a daughter of a member of the tribe of Levi.

### *Adoption*

There is no formal procedure of adoption in Jewish law. Adoption as it exists in civil law is irrelevant, because civil adoption is essentially a transfer of title from one parent to another, and in Jewish law, parents do not own their children. However, Judaism does have certain laws that are relevant in circumstances where a child is raised by someone other than the birth parents.

In most ways, the adoptive parents are to the child what any birth parents would be. The Talmud says that he who raises someone else's child is regarded as if he had actually brought him into the world physically. For those who cannot have children of their own, raising adoptive children satisfies the obligation to be fruitful and multiply. The child may be formally named as the child of the adoptive parents, owes the adoptive parents the same duty of respect as he would a birth parent, and observes formal mourning for the adoptive parents as he would for birth parents.

Matters relevant to the child's status are determined by the status of the birth parents, not by that of the adoptive parents. The child's status as a Kohein, a Levi, a Jew, and/or a firstborn, are all determined by reference to the birth parents.

If Jewish parents adopt a non-Jewish child, the child must be converted. This process is somewhat simpler for an infant than it is for an adult convert, because there is generally no need to try to talk the person out of converting, and there is no need for prior education. It is really more of a formality. The conversion must be approved by a Beit Din (rabbinic court), a circumcision or hatafat dam brit must be performed, the child must be immersed in a mikvah, and the parents must commit to educating the child as a Jew.

## Bar Mitzvah

The **Bar Mitzvah**, ("Son of the Commandment"), is the celebration commemorating the religious adulthood of a boy on his 13th birthday. At that point, the boy is deemed personally responsible for fulfilling all the commandments, may henceforth don phylacteries during the weekday-morning prayers, and may be counted as an adult whenever ten male adults are needed to form a quorum (minyan) for public prayers.

In a public act acknowledging religious majority, the boy is called up during the religious service to read from the Torah. This event may take place on any occasion following the 13th birthday at which the Torah is read but generally occurs on Shabbat. This is often followed by a festive Kiddush, or prayer over a cup of wine, with a family social dinner or banquet on the same or the following day. Although these traditions are often celebrated, they are not technical requirements for passage into adulthood — a boy is vested with adult responsibilities at age 13 regardless of the performance of rituals or observances.

## Life

Life is valued above almost all else. The Talmud notes that all people are descended from a single person, thus taking a single life is like destroying an entire world, and saving a single life is like saving an entire world.

Of the 613 commandments, only the prohibitions against murder, idolatry, incest, and adultery are so important that they cannot be violated to save a life. Judaism not only permits, but often requires a person to violate the commandments if necessary to save a life. A person who is extremely ill, for example, or a woman in labor, is not permitted to fast on Yom Kippur, because fasting at such a time would endanger the person's life. Doctors are permitted to answer emergency calls on the Shabbat, even though this may violate many Shabbat prohibitions.

Because life is so valuable, it is not permitted to do anything that may hasten death, not even to prevent suffering. The Talmud states that one may not even move a dying person's arms if that would shorten his life.

## Death

Death is not a tragedy, even when it occurs early in life or through unfortunate circumstances. Death is a natural process. Death, like life, has meaning and is all part of God's plan. In addition, Jews have a firm belief in an afterlife, a world to come, where those who have lived a worthy life will be rewarded.

Mourning practices in Judaism are extensive, but they are not an expression of fear or distaste for death. Jewish practices relating to death and mourning have two purposes: to show respect for the dead (*kavod ha-met*), and to comfort the living (*nihum avelim*), who will miss the deceased.

## Care for the Dead

After a person dies, the eyes are closed, the body is laid on the floor and covered, and candles are lit next to the body. The body is never left alone until after burial, as a sign of respect. The people who sit with the dead body are called **shomerim**, from the root Shin-Mem-Resh, meaning "guards" or "keepers."

Respect for the dead body is a matter of paramount importance. For example, the *shomerim* may not eat, drink, or perform a commandment in the presence of the dead. To do so would be considered mocking the dead, because the dead can no longer do those things.

Some communities have an organization to care for the dead, known as the **chevra kaddisha** (the holy society). These people are volunteers. Their work is considered extremely pious, because they are performing a service for someone who can never repay them.







The presence of a dead body is considered a source of ritual impurity. For this reason, a kohein may not be in the presence of a corpse. People who have been in the presence of a body wash their hands before entering a home. This is done to symbolically remove spiritual impurity, not physical uncleanness: it applies regardless of whether the body has been physically touched.

In preparation for the burial, the body is thoroughly cleaned and wrapped in a simple, plain linen shroud. The Sages decreed that both the dress of the body and the coffin should be simple, so that a poor person would not receive less honor in death than a rich person. The body is wrapped in a tallit with its tzitzit rendered invalid.

The body must not be cremated. It must be buried in the earth. Coffins are not required, but if they are used, they must have holes drilled in them so the body comes in contact with the earth.

The body is never displayed at funerals; open casket ceremonies are forbidden by Jewish law. According to Jewish law, exposing a body is considered disrespectful, because it allows not only friends, but also enemies to view the dead, mocking their helpless state.

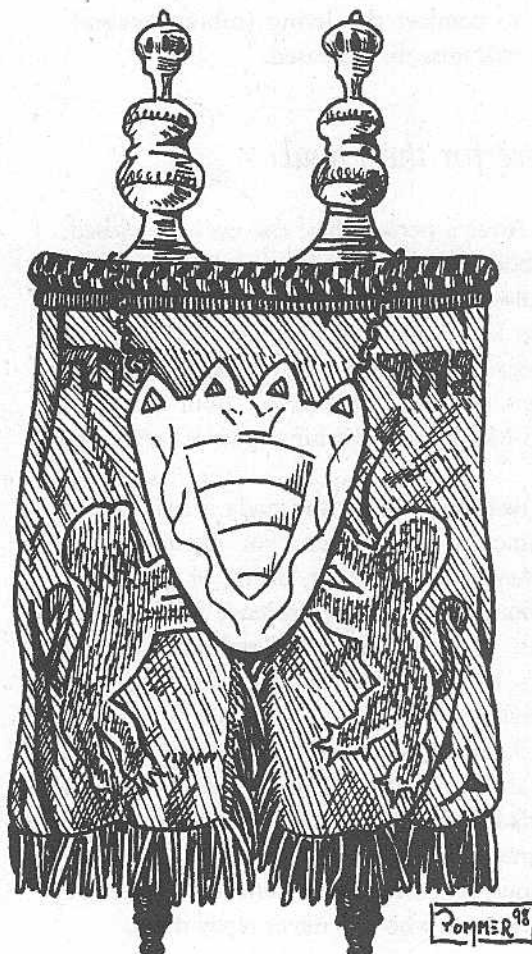
Jewish law requires that a tombstone be prepared so the deceased will not be forgotten and the grave will not be desecrated. It is customary in some communities to keep the tombstone veiled, or to delay in putting it up, until the end of the 12-month mourning period. The idea underlying this custom is that the dead will not be forgotten when he is being mourned every day. In communities where this custom is observed, there is generally a formal unveiling ceremony when the tombstone is revealed.

## Mourning

Jewish mourning practices can be broken into several periods of decreasing intensity. These mourning periods allow the full expression of grief, while discouraging excesses of grief and allowing the mourner to gradually return to a normal life.

When a close relative (parent, sibling, spouse, or child) first hears of the death of a relative, it is traditional to express the initial grief by tearing one's clothing. The tear is made over the heart if the deceased is a parent, or over the right side of the chest for other relatives. This tearing of the clothing is referred to as *keriyah* (lit. "tearing"). The mourner recites the blessing describing God as "the true Judge," an acceptance of God's taking of the life of a relative.

From the time of death to the burial, the mourner's sole responsibility is caring for the deceased and preparing for the burial. This period is known as *aninut*. During this time, the mourners are exempt from all positive commandments ("thou shalt"), because the preparations take first priority. This period usually lasts a day or two; Judaism requires prompt burial. During this *aninut* period, the family should be left alone and allowed the full expression of grief. Condolence calls or



visits should not be made during this time.

After the burial, a close relative, near neighbor or friend prepares the first meal for the mourners, the *se'udat havra'ah* (meal of condolence). This meal traditionally consists of eggs (a symbol of life) and bread. The meal is for the family only, not for visitors. After this time, condolence calls are permitted.

When visiting a mourner, a guest should not try to express grief with standard, shallow platitudes. The guest should allow the mourner to initiate conversations. One should not divert the conversation from talking about the deceased; to do so would limit the mourner's ability to fully express grief, which is the purpose of the mourning period. On the contrary, the caller should encourage conversation about the deceased.

The next period of mourning is known as *shiva* (seven, because it lasts seven days). *Shiva* is observed by parents, children, spouses, and siblings of the deceased, preferably all together in the deceased's home. *Shiva* begins on the day of burial and continues until the morning of the seventh day after burial. Mourners sit on low stools or on the floor instead of in chairs, do not wear leather shoes, do not shave or cut their hair, do not wear cosmetics, do not work, and do not do things for comfort or pleasure, such as bathe, have sex, put on fresh clothing, or study the Torah (except as related to mourning and grief). Mourners wear the clothes that they wore at the time of learning of the death or at the funeral. Mirrors in the house are covered. Prayer services are held where the *shiva* is held, with friends, neighbors, and relatives making up the *minyan*.

The *Shabbat* that occurs during the *shiva* period counts toward the seven days of *shiva*, but is not observed as a day of mourning. If a festival occurs during the mourning period, the mourning is terminated, but if the burial occurs during a festival, the mourning is delayed until after the festival.

The next period of mourning is known as *shloshim* (thirty, because it lasts until the 30th day after burial). During that period, the mourners do not attend parties or celebra-

tions, do not shave or cut their hair, and do not listen to music.

The final period of formal mourning is *avelut*, which is observed only for the death of a parent. This period lasts for twelve months after the burial. During that time, mourners avoid parties, celebrations, theater, and concerts. For eleven months of that period, starting at the time of burial, the son of the deceased recites the mourner's *Kaddish* every day.

After the *avelut* period is complete, the family of the deceased is not permitted to continue formal mourning. There are, however, a few continuing acknowledgments of the deceased. Every year, family members observe the anniversary of the death. Sons recite *Kaddish* and take an *aliyah* (bless the Torah reading) in synagogue if possible. Mourners light a candle in honor of the deceased that burns for 24 hours. In addition, during services on *Yom Kippur*, *Shemini Atzeret*, the last day of *Passover*, and *Shavu'ot*, after the *haftarah* reading in synagogue, close relatives recite the mourner's prayer, *Yizkor* ("May He remember...") in synagogue. *Yahrzeit* candles are also lit on those days.

## *Kaddish*

*Kaddish* is commonly known as a mourner's prayer, but in fact, variations on the *Kaddish* prayer are routinely recited at many other times, and the prayer itself has nothing to do with death or mourning. The prayer begins "May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified in the world that He created as He willed. May He give reign to His kingship in your lifetimes and in your days..." and continues in much that vein. The real mourner's prayer is *El Molai Rachamim*, which is recited at grave sites and during funerals.

The *Kaddish* is recited by mourners to reaffirm faith in God despite the loss of a parent. To do so insures the merit of the deceased in the eyes of God, because the deceased must have been a very good parent to raise a child





who could express such faith in the face of personal loss.

The Kaddish is recited for only 11 months because the soul must spend some time purifying itself before it can enter heaven. The maximum time required for purification is 12 months, for the most evil person. To recite Kaddish for 12 months would imply that the parent was the type who needed 12 months of purification. To avoid this implication, the Sages decreed that a son should recite Kaddish for only eleven months.

A person is permitted to recite Kaddish for other close relatives as well as parents, but only if his parents are dead.

## Purity

### Charity: Tzedakah

"Tzedakah" is the Hebrew word closest to "charity:" giving aid, assistance, and money to the poor and needy or to other worthy causes. The word "tzedakah" is derived from the Hebrew root Tzade-Dalet-Qof, meaning righteousness, justice, or fairness. In Judaism, giving to the poor is not viewed as a generous, magnanimous act. Rather, it is simply an act of justice and righteousness, the performance of a duty, giving the poor their due.

#### *The Obligation of Tzedakah*

Giving to the poor is an obligation in Judaism, a duty that cannot be forsaken even by those who are themselves in need. Some sages have said that tzedakah is the highest of all commandments, equal to all of them combined, and that a person who does not perform tzedakah is equivalent to an idol worshipper. Tzedakah is one of the three acts that gain forgiveness from sin. The High Holiday liturgy states that God has inscribed a judg-

ment against all who have sinned, but teshuvah (repentance), tefilah (prayer), and tzedakah can reverse the decree.

Jewish law requires giving one-tenth of income to the poor. No person should give so much that he would become a public burden. There is an obligation to avoid becoming in need of tzedakah. A person should take any work that is available, even if he thinks it is beneath his dignity, to avoid becoming a public charge. If a person is truly in need and has no way to obtain money on his own he should not feel embarrassed to accept tzedakah. No person should feel too proud to take money from others. In fact, it is considered a transgression to refuse tzedakah. One source says that to make oneself suffer by refusing to accept tzedakah is equivalent to shedding one's own blood.

#### *Levels of Tzedakah*

Certain kinds of tzedakah are considered more pious than others. The Talmud describes these different levels of tzedakah, and Maimonides organized them into a list. The levels of charity, on an ascending scale of godliness, are:

- Giving grudgingly.
- Giving less than one should, but giving it cheerfully.
- Giving after being asked.
- Giving before being asked.
- Giving when one does not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows the identity of the giver.
- Giving when one knows the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know the identity of the giver.
- Giving when neither party knows the other's identity.
- Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant.

## Brotherhood and Love

The Talmud tells a story of Rabbi Hillel. A pagan came to him saying that he would convert to Judaism if Hillel could teach him the whole of the Torah in the time he could stand on one foot. Hillel replied, "What is hateful to yourself, do not do to your fellow man. That is the whole Torah; the rest is just commentary. Go and study it."

Everyone knows that the Ten Commandments forbid murder. The full scope of Jewish law goes much farther. The Law commands the people to construct homes in ways that will prevent people from being harmed, to help a people whose lives are in danger, and not to leave conditions that may cause harm. These commandments regarding the preservation of life are so important in Judaism that they override all of the ritual observances that many people think are the most important part of Judaism.

Jewish law forbids cheating or taking advantage of others. The law regarding business ethics and practices is extensive. It regulates conduct between a businessman and his customer (for example, it admonishes that Jews not use false weights and measures, not wrong in buying and selling, and not charge interest) and between a businessman and his employee (to pay wages promptly, to allow a worker in the field to eat the produce he is harvesting, and not to take produce other than what one can eat from the employer while harvesting).

Most of these laws regarding treatment of others apply not only to the treatment of fellow Jews, but also to the treatment of gentiles, and in many cases even to the treatment of animals. In fact, some of the laws institut-

ed by the sages even extend kind treatment to inanimate objects. The bread on the Shabbat table is covered during the blessing over the wine, so that it's "feelings" are not hurt by having the wine take precedence over it. Of course, Jews do not believe bread actually has feelings, but this practice helps to instill an enormous sensitivity. If one can show concern for a loaf of bread, how can he fail to show concern for his fellow man?

## Dietary Law

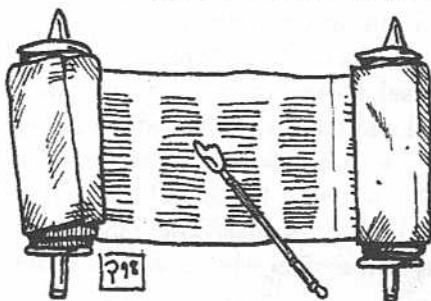
**Kashrut** is the body of Jewish law dealing with what foods can and cannot be eaten and how those foods must be prepared and consumed. "Kashrut" comes from the Hebrew root Kaf-Shin-Resh, meaning fit, proper, or correct. It is the same root as the more commonly known word kosher, which describes food that meets these standards. Kosher is often used to describe ritual objects that are made in accordance with Jewish law and are fit for ritual use. Food that is not kosher is commonly referred to as *treif* (literally torn, from the commandment not to eat animals that have been torn by other animals).



## The Fundamental Rules

Although the details of kashrut are extensive, the laws all derive from a few fairly simple, straightforward rules:

- Certain animals may not be eaten at all. This restriction includes the flesh, organs, eggs, and milk of the forbidden animals.
- Of the animals that may be eaten, the birds and mammals must be killed in accordance with Jewish law.
- All blood must be drained from the meat or broiled out of it before it is eaten.
- Certain parts of permitted animals may not be eaten.
- Meat (the flesh of birds and mammals) cannot be eaten with dairy. Fish, eggs,





fruits, vegetables and grains can be eaten with either meat or dairy. (According to some views, fish may not be eaten with meat.)

- Utensils that have come into contact with meat may not be used with dairy, and vice versa. Utensils that have come into contact with non-kosher food may not be used with kosher food. This applies only where the contact occurred while the food was hot.
- Grape products made by non-Jews may not be eaten.

## Speech and Lashon Ha-Ra

Judaism is intensely aware of the power of speech and of the harm that can be done through words. The rabbis note that the universe itself was created through speech. Of the various sins enumerated in the confession recited on Yom Kippur, eleven are sins committed through speech. The Talmud tells that the tongue is an instrument so dangerous that it must be kept hidden from view, behind two protective walls (the mouth and teeth) to prevent its misuse.

Speech has been compared to an arrow: once the words are released, they cannot be recalled. The harm they do cannot be stopped, and the harm they do cannot always be predicted, for words, like arrows, often go astray.

The harm done by speech is even worse than the harm done by stealing or by cheating someone financially, because amends can be made for monetary damages but the harm done by speech can never be repaired. For this reason, some sources indicate that there is no forgiveness for *lashon ha-ra*.

### Tale-Bearing

There are two mitzvot in the Torah that specifically address improper speech: Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people (Lev. 19:16), and ye shall

not wrong one another (Lev. 25:17, which according to tradition refers to wronging a person with speech).

Tale-bearing is, essentially, any gossip. The Hebrew word for tale-bearer is "rakheel" (Resh-Kaf-Yod-Lamed), which is related to a word meaning trader or merchant. The idea is that a tale-bearer is like a merchant, but he deals in information instead of goods.

It is a violation of this mitzvah to say anything about another person, even if it is true, even if it is not negative, even if it is not secret, even if it hurts no one, and even if the person himself would tell the same thing if asked! It is said that the telling of gossip leads to bloodshed, which is why the next words in the Torah are "you shall not stand aside while your fellow's blood is shed." The story of Do'eig the Edomite (I Samuel Chs. 21-22) is often used to illustrate the harm that can be done by tale-bearing. Do'eig saw Achimelech the Kohein give David bread and a sword, a completely innocent act intended to aid a leading member of Saul's court. Do'eig reported this to Saul. Do'eig's story was completely true, not negative, not secret, and Achimelech would have told Saul exactly the same thing if asked (in fact, he did so later). Yet Saul misinterpreted this tale as proof that Achimelech was supporting David in a rebellion, and proceeded to slaughter all but one of the kohanim at Nob.

The person who listens to gossip is even worse than the person who tells it, because no harm could be done by gossip if no one listened to it. It has been said that *lashon ha-ra* kills three: the person who speaks it, the person who hears it, and the person about whom it is told.

All things are considered to be secret unless a person specifically says otherwise. It is for this reason that in the Torah, God constantly says to Moses, "Speak to the Children of Israel, saying:" or "Speak to the Children of Israel and tell them:" If God did not specifically say this to Moses, Moses would be forbidden to repeat His words! Nor is there any time-limit on secrets. The Talmud tells the story of a student who revealed a secret after

22 years, and was immediately banished from the house of study!

The gravest of the sins of tale-bearing is lashon ha-ra, which involves discrediting a person or saying negative things about a person, even if those negative things are true. Some sources indicate that lashon ha-ra is equal in seriousness to murder, idol worship, and incest and adultery (the only three sins that may not be violated, even to save a life).

It is forbidden to even imply or suggest negative things about a person. It is forbidden to say negative things about a person, even in jest. It is likewise considered a "shade of lashon ha-ra" to say positive things about a person in the presence of his enemies, because this will encourage his enemies to say negative things to be contradictory.

One who tells disparaging things that are false is referred to as a **motzi sheim ra**, that is, one who spreads a bad report. This is considered the lowest of the low.

It is generally not a sin to repeat things that have been told "in the presence of three persons." The idea is that if it is told in the presence of three persons, it is already public knowledge, and no harm can come of retelling it. Even in this case, it should not be repeated if it is known that this will be spreading the gossip further.

### *When Tale-Bearing is Allowed*

There are a few exceptional circumstances when tale-bearing is allowed, or even required. Most notably, tale-bearing is required in a Jewish court of law, because it is a mitzvah to give testimony and that mitzvah overrides the general prohibition against tale-bearing. Thus, a person is required to reveal information, even if it is something that was explicitly told in confidence, even if it will harm a person, in a Jewish court of law.





A person is also required to reveal information to protect a person from immediate, serious harm. For example, if a person hears that others are plotting to kill someone, he is required to reveal this information. That is another reason why the commandment not to go about as a tale-bearer is juxtaposed with "you shall not stand aside while your fellow's blood is shed."

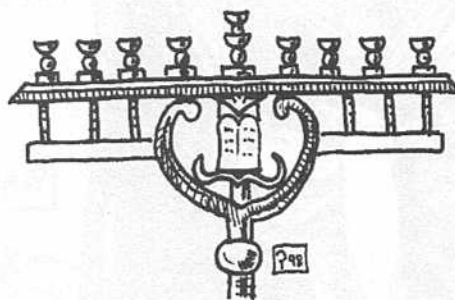
In limited circumstances, one is also permitted to reveal information if someone is entering into a relationship that he would not enter if he knew certain information. This exception is subject to significant and complex limitations; however, if those limitations are satisfied, the person with the information is required to reveal it. In all of these exceptions, a person is not permitted to reveal information if the same objective could be fulfilled without revealing information.

### *Wronging a Person through Speech*

Leviticus 25:17 says, "You shall not wrong one another." This has traditionally been interpreted as wronging a person with speech. It includes any statement that will embarrass, insult, or deceive a person, or cause a person emotional pain or distress.

Here are some commonly-used examples of behavior that is forbidden by this mitzvah:

- Not to call a person by a derogatory nickname, or by any other embarrassing name, even if he is used to it.
- Not to ask an uneducated person for an opinion on a scholarly matter (that would draw attention to his lack of knowledge or education).



- Not to ask a merchant how much he would sell something for if there is no intention of buying.
- Not to refer someone to another person for assistance when it is known the other person cannot help.
- Not to deceive a person, even if no harm is done by the deception.
- Not to sell a person damaged goods without identifying the damage, even if the price given is fair for the goods in their damaged condition.
- Not to offer a person a gift or invite a person to dinner if it is known that the person will not accept.
- Not to compliment a person if the compliment is not meant.

## Marriage & Sex

The Torah provides very little guidance with regard to the procedures of a marriage. The method of finding a spouse, the form of the wedding ceremony, and the nature of the marital relationship are all explained in the Talmud.

### *Acquiring a Spouse*

A woman is acquired to be a wife in three ways: through money, a contract, and sexual intercourse. Ordinarily, all three of these conditions are satisfied, although only one is necessary to effect a binding marriage.

Acquisition by money is normally satisfied by the wedding ring. Although money is one way of "acquiring" a wife, the woman is not being bought and sold like a piece of property or a slave. This is obvious from the fact that the amount of money involved is nominal (according to the Mishnah, a perutah, a copper coin of the lowest denomination, was sufficient). In addition, if the woman were being purchased like a piece of property, it would be possible for the husband to resell her, and clearly it is not. Rather, the wife's acceptance of the money is a symbolic

way of demonstrating her acceptance of the husband, just like acceptance of the contract or the sexual intercourse.

To satisfy the requirements of acquisition by money, the ring must belong to the groom. It cannot be borrowed, although it can be a gift from a relative. It must be given to the wife irrevocably. In addition, the ring's value must be known to the wife, so that there can be no claim that the husband deceived her into marrying by misleading her as to its value.

In all cases, the Talmud specifies that a woman can be acquired only with her consent, and not without it.

As part of the wedding ceremony, the husband gives the wife a **ketubah**. The word "Ketubah" comes from the root Kaf-Tav-Bet, meaning "writing." The ketubah is also called the marriage contract. The ketubah spells out the husband's obligations to the wife during marriage, conditions of inheritance upon his death, and obligations regarding the support of children of the marriage. It also provides for the wife's support in the event of divorce. Additional conditions can be included by mutual agreement. Marriage agreements of this sort were commonplace. The ketubah is often a beautiful work of calligraphy, framed and displayed in the home.

### *The Process of Marriage: Kiddushin and Nisuin*

The process of marriage occurs in two distinct stages: **kiddushin** (betrothal) and **nisuin** (full-fledged marriage). Kiddushin occurs when the woman accepts the money, contract, or sexual relations offered by the prospective husband. The word "kiddushin" comes from the root Qof-Dalet-Shin, meaning "sanctified." It reflects the sanctity of the marital relation. The root word also connotes something that is set aside for a specific (sacred) purpose, and the ritual of kiddushin sets aside the woman to be the wife of a particular man and no other.

Kiddushin is far more binding than an engagement; in fact, Maimonides speaks of a

period of engagement before the kiddushin. Once kiddushin is complete, the woman is legally the wife of the man. The relationship created by kiddushin can only be dissolved by death or divorce. The couple does not live together at that time, and the mutual obligation created by the marital relationship does not take effect until the nisuin is complete.

The nisuin (from a word meaning "elevation") completes the process of marriage. The husband brings the wife into his home and they begin their married life together. The kiddushin and nisuin routinely occur as much as a year apart. During that time, the husband would prepare a home for the new family. There is always a risk that during this long period of separation, the woman would discover that she wanted to marry another man, or the man would disappear, leaving the woman in the awkward state of being married but without a husband.

Because marriage under Jewish law is essentially a private contractual agreement between a man and a woman, it does not require the presence of a rabbi or any other religious official. It is common, however, for rabbis to officiate.

### *The Marital Relationship*

Marriage is vitally important in Judaism. Refraining from marriage is not considered holy, as it is in some other religions. On the contrary, it is considered unnatural. The Talmud says that an unmarried man is constantly thinking of sin. The Talmud tells of a rabbi who was introduced to a young unmarried rabbi. The older rabbi told the younger one not to come into his presence again until he was married.

Marriage is not solely, or even primarily, for the purpose of procreation. Traditional sources recognize that companionship, love, and intimacy are the primary purposes of marriage, noting that woman was created in Gen. 2:18 because "it is not good for man to be alone," rather than because she was necessary for procreation.







According to the Torah and the Talmud, a man was permitted to marry more than one wife, but a woman could not marry more than one man. Although polygamy was permitted, it was never common. The Talmud never mentions any rabbi with more than one wife. Around 1000 AD, Ashkenazic Jewry banned polygyny because of pressure from the predominant Christian culture. It continued to be permitted for Sephardic Jews.

A husband is responsible for providing his wife with food, clothing, and sexual relations (Ex. 21:10), as well as anything else specified in the ketubah. Marital sexual relations are the woman's right, not the man's. A man cannot force his wife to engage in sexual relations with him, nor is he permitted to abuse his wife in any way. A married woman retains ownership of any property she brought to the marriage, but the husband has the right to manage the property and to enjoy profits from the property.

### *Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children*

The minimum age for marriage under Jewish law is 13 for boys, 12 for girls; however, the kiddushin can take place before that, and often does. The Talmud recommends that a man marry at age 18, or somewhere between 16 and 24.

The Torah sets forth a laundry list of prohibited relations. Such marriages are never valid. A man cannot marry certain close blood relatives, the ex-wives of certain close blood relatives, a woman who has not been validly divorced from her previous husband, the daughter or granddaughter of his ex-wife, or the sister of his ex-wife during the ex-wife's lifetime.

The offspring of such marriages are **mamzerim** (bastards, illegitimate), and sub-

ject to a variety of restrictions; however, it is important to note that only the offspring of these incestuous or forbidden marriages are mamzerim. Children born out of wedlock are not mamzerim in Jewish law and bear no stigma, unless the marriage would have been prohibited for the reasons above. Children of a married man and a woman who is not his wife are not mamzerim (because the marriage between the parents would not have been prohibited), although children of a married woman and a man who is not her husband are mamzerim (because she could not have married him).

There are other classes of marriages that are not permitted, which are valid if they occur and which do not make the children mamzerim. The marriage of minors, of a Jew to a non-Jew, and of a kohein to the prohibited classes of women discussed below fall into this category.

A kohein is not permitted to marry a divorcee, a convert, a promiscuous woman, a woman who is the offspring of a forbidden marriage to a kohein, or a woman who is the widow of a man who died childless but who has been released from the obligation to marry her husband's brother. A kohein who marries such a woman is disqualified from his duties as a kohein, as are all the offspring of that marriage.

### *Attitudes Towards Sexuality*

Sex is not considered shameful, sinful, or obscene. Sex is not a necessary evil for the sole purpose of procreation. Although sexual desire comes from the **yetzer ra**, the "evil impulse" of human nature, it is no more evil than hunger or thirst, which also come from the yetzer ra. Like hunger, thirst, or other basic instincts, sexual desire must be controlled and channeled, satisfied at the proper time, place, and manner. But when sexual desire is satisfied between a husband and wife at the proper time, out of mutual love and desire, sex is a mitzvah.

Sex is permissible only within the context of a marriage. It is not merely a way of



experiencing physical pleasure. It is an act of immense significance, which requires commitment and responsibility. The requirement of marriage before sex ensures that sense of commitment and responsibility. Jewish law also forbids sexual contact short of intercourse outside of the context of marriage, recognizing that such contact will inevitably lead to intercourse.

The primary purpose of sex is to reinforce the loving marital bond between husband and wife. The first and foremost purpose of marriage is companionship, and sexual relations play an important role. Procreation is also a reason for sex, but it is not the only reason. Sex between husband and wife is permitted (even recommended) at times when conception is impossible, such as when the woman is pregnant or after menopause.

### *Niddah: The Laws of Separation*

One of the key areas of Jewish sexual practices is the law of *niddah*, separation of husband and wife during the woman's menstrual period. These laws are also known as *taharat ha-mishpachah*, family purity.

According to the Torah, a man is forbidden from having sexual intercourse with a *niddah*, that is, a menstruating woman. Before the fall of the Second Temple, a large portion of Jewish law revolved around questions of ritual purity and impurity. Except for *niddah*, these laws are no longer applicable.

The time of separation begins at the first sign of blood and ends in the evening of the woman's seventh "clean day." This separation lasts a minimum of 12 days. The rabbis broadened this prohibition, maintaining that a man may not even touch his wife or sleep in the same bed as her during this time. Weddings must be scheduled carefully, so that the woman is not in a state of *niddah* on her wedding night.

At the end of the period of *niddah*, as soon as possible after nightfall after the seventh clean day, the woman must immerse herself in a kosher *mikvah*, a ritual pool. The

*mikvah* was traditionally used to cleanse a person of various forms of ritual impurity. It is important to note that the purpose of the *mikvah* is solely ritual purification, not physical cleanliness; in fact, immersion in the *mikvah* is not valid unless the woman is thoroughly bathed before immersion. The *mikvah* is such an important part of traditional Jewish ritual life that a new community will build a *mikvah* before it builds a synagogue.

### *Divorce*

Judaism has always accepted divorce as a fact of life, albeit an unfortunate one. Judaism generally maintains that it is better for a couple to divorce than to remain together in a state of constant bitterness and strife.

Under Jewish law, a man can divorce a woman for any reason or no reason. The Talmud specifically says that a man can divorce a woman because she spoiled his dinner or simply because he finds another woman more attractive, and the woman's consent to the divorce is not required. In fact, Jewish law requires divorce in some circumstances: when the wife commits a sexual transgression, a man must divorce her, even if he is inclined to forgive her. In Ashkenazic practices, the wife must consent to divorce.

This does not mean that Judaism takes divorce lightly. Many aspects of Jewish law discourage divorce. The procedural details involved in arranging a divorce are complex and exacting. Except in certain cases of misconduct by the wife, a man who divorces his wife is required to pay her substantial sums of money, as specified in the *ketubah* (marriage contract). In addition, Jewish law prohibits a man from remarrying his ex-wife after she has married another man. *Kohanim* (priestly caste, see page 115) cannot marry divorcees at all.

According to the Torah, divorce is accomplished simply by writing a bill of divorce, handing it to the wife, and sending her away. To prevent husbands from divorcing their wives recklessly or without proper consideration, the rabbis created complex





rules regarding the process of writing, delivering, and accepting the document. A competent rabbinical authority should be consulted for any divorce.

The document in question is referred to in the Talmud as a *sefer k'ritut* (scroll of cutting off), but it is more commonly known as a *get*. The *get* is not phrased in negative terms. The traditional text does not emphasize the breakdown of the relationship, nor does it specify the reason for the divorce; rather, it states that the woman is now free to marry another man. It is not necessary for a husband to personally hand the *get* to the wife. If it is not possible or desirable for the couple to meet, a messenger may be appointed to deliver the *get*.

The position of husband and wife with regard to divorce is not an equal one. According to the Talmud, only the husband can initiate a divorce, and the wife cannot prevent him from divorcing her. Later rabbinical authorities took steps to ease the harshness of these rules by prohibiting a man from divorcing a woman without her consent. In addition, a rabbinical court can compel a husband to divorce his wife under certain circumstances: when he is physically repulsive because of some medical condition or other characteristic, when he violates or neglects his marital obligations (food, clothing, and sexual intercourse), or, according to some views, when there is sexual incompatibility.

A peculiar problem arises, however, if a man disappears or deserts his wife or is presumed dead but there is insufficient proof of death. Under Jewish law, divorce can only be initiated by the man; thus, if the husband cannot be found, he cannot be compelled to divorce the wife and she cannot marry another man. A woman in this situation is referred to as *agunah* (literally, anchored). The rabbis agonized over this problem, balancing the need to allow the woman to remarry with the risk of an adulterous marriage (a grave transgression that would affect the status of offspring of the marriage) if the husband reappeared. No definitive solution to this problem exists.

To prevent this problem to some extent, it is customary in many places for a man to give his wife a conditional *get* whenever he goes off on a dangerous journey, so that if he never comes home and his body is not found, his wife does not become *agunah*.

## Modesty: *Tznius*

A small but important aspect of purity, *Tznius* is a call to emphasize and strengthen the internal aspects of one's personality, concentrating one's energies on that which is deeper and more hidden within spiritual nature. It is nothing less than a demand that the Jew emphasize the Divine image—the soul which was taken from under the *Kisei HaKavod* (Divine throne) and brought into the physical world—within him. That is why the prophet Michah listed it as one of the three basic principles upon which a Jew must conduct his life.

## Clothing

A person's clothes represent his status and honor. Since biblical times, members of the Jewish faith have maintained their separate identity by their dress. In the Middle Ages they also often had to bear the weight of restrictive dress codes (see page 20).

## Tefillin

The phylactery (Hebrew *tefillin*), is a small, black, leather, cube-shaped case containing Torah texts written on parchment. In accordance with Deuteronomy 6:8, two phylacteries are to be worn by male Jews of 13 years and older as reminders of God and of the obligation to keep the Law during daily life. The name phylactery is derived from the Greek *phylakterion*, meaning amulet.

According to rabbinical regulations, one of the phylacteries is worn on the weak arm

(usually the left) facing the heart and the other on the forehead at the morning service (except on the Sabbath and festivals) and at the afternoon service on the Ninth of Av.

The tefillin are worn in a prescribed manner to represent the letters shin, dalet, and yod, which taken together form the divine name Shaddai. The hand phylactery (tefillin shel yad) has one compartment with the texts written on a single parchment; the head phylactery (tefillin shel rosh) has 4 compartments, each with one text. The extracts are Exodus 13:1-10 and 11-16, and Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21. Because of rabbinical indecision about the exact sequence of the four scriptural passages, very pious Jews may have 2 pairs of phylacteries.

## Shawls

The tallit is the prayer shawl worn by male Jews during the daily morning service (shaharit). It is also worn by the leader of the afternoon service (minha). On Yom Kippur, males wear it for all five services and on Tisha be-Av only during the afternoon service.

Rectangular in shape, the wool (or sometimes silk) shawl has black or blue stripes with fringes (tzitzit) affixed to the four corners as the Torah prescribes (Numbers 15:38). Two fringes fall in front, two behind. Often an embroidered collar is added, inscribed with the blessing to be recited when the tallit is put on. A pious Jew is often buried in his tallit after one of the fringes has been symbolically removed, making it invalid for further use.

The arba' kanfot ("four corners") is often used during times of persecution as a substitute for the larger and more conspicuous prayer shawl (tallit). Unlike the tallith which generally falls across the head, neck, and shoulders, the arba' kanfot has an opening for the head (like a poncho), so that it can be worn beneath the upper garments. Males, including children, wear the arba' kanfot during the day to fulfill the requirement of wearing fringes (Numbers 15:37-41) as reminders of God's commandments.

## Keeping the Holidays

All Jewish holidays begin the evening before the date specified. This is because a Jewish day begins and ends at sunset, rather than at midnight. The story of creation in Genesis says, "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." From this, it is inferred that a day begins with evening, that is, sunset.

## Work on Holidays

Work is not permitted on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the first and second days of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Simkhat Torah, Shavu'ot, and the first, second, seventh and eighth days of Passover. The work prohibited on those holidays is the same as that prohibited on the Shabbat, except that cooking, baking, transferring fire, and carrying, all of which are forbidden on Shabbats, are permitted on holidays. When a holiday occurs on a Shabbat, the full Shabbat restrictions are observed.

## Extra Day of Holidays

The number of days of some holidays do not accord with what the Bible specifies. In most cases, there is the celebration of one more day than the Bible requires. This is due to the Jewish calendar being lunar. When a new month was decided, people in distant communities could not always be notified of the new moon (and therefore, of the first day of the month), so they did not know the correct day to celebrate. They knew that the old month would be either 29 or 30 days, so if they didn't get notice of the new moon, they celebrated holidays on both possible days. This practice of celebrating an extra day was maintained as a custom even after the adoption of a precise mathematical calendar, because it was the custom of ancestors.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated as two days everywhere, because it occurs on the first day





of a month. Messengers were not dispatched on the holiday, so even people in Israel did not know whether a new moon had been observed, and everybody celebrated two days. The practice was also maintained as a custom after the mathematical calendar was adopted.

Yom Kippur is celebrated only one day everywhere, because extending the holiday's severe restrictions for a second day would cause an undue hardship.

### The Calendar

The Jewish calendar is primarily lunar. Each month begins on the new moon when the first sliver of moon becomes visible after the dark of the moon. In ancient times, the new months used to be determined by observation. When people observed the new moon, they would notify the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Temple. When the Sanhedrin heard testimony from two independent, reliable eyewitnesses that the new moon occurred on a certain date, they would declare the rosh chodesh (first of the month) and send out messengers to tell people when the month began.

The problem with strictly lunar calendars is that there are approximately 12.4 lunar

months in every solar year, so a 12-month lunar calendar loses about 11 days every year and a 13-month lunar calendar gains about 19 days every year. The months on such a calendar "drift" relative to the solar year. On a 12-month calendar, the month of Nissan, which is supposed to occur in the Spring, occurs 11 days earlier each year, eventually occurring in the Winter, the Fall, the Summer, and then the Spring again. To compensate for this drift, an extra month was occasionally added: a second month of Adar. The month of Nissan would occur 11 days earlier for two or three years, and then would jump forward 29 or 30 days, balancing out the drift.

In the fourth century, Hillel II established a fixed calendar based on mathematical and astronomical calculations. This calendar, still in use, standardized the length of months and the addition of months over the course of a 19 year cycle, so that the lunar calendar realigns with the solar years. Adar II is added in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years of the cycle.

Yom Kippur should not fall adjacent to a Shabbat, because this would cause difficulties in coordinating the fast with the Shabbat, and Hoshanah Rabba should not fall on Saturday because it would interfere with the holiday's observances. A day is added to the month of Heshvan or subtracted from the month of Kislev of the previous year to prevent these things from happening.

The year number on the Jewish calendar represents the number of years since creation, as calculated by adding up the ages of people in the Bible back to the time of creation.

The "first month" of the Jewish calendar is the month of Nissan, in the spring, when Passover occurs. The Jewish New Year is in Tishri, the seventh month, and that is when the year number is increased.

The length of Heshvan and Kislev are determined by complex calculations involving the time of day of the full moon of the following year's Tishri and the day of the week that Tishri would occur in the following year.

Note that the number of days between Nissan and Tishri is always the same. Because of this, the time from the first major festival

The Jewish Calendar		
Month	Length	Gregorian Equivalent
Nissan	30 days	March-April
Iyar	29 days	April-May
Sivan	30 days	May-June
Tammuz	29 days	June-July
Av	30 days	July-August
Elul	29 days	August-September
Tishri	30 days	September-October
Heshvan	29 or 30 days	October-November
Kislev	29 or 30 days	November-December
Tevet	29 days	December-January
Shevat	30 days	January-February
Adar	29 or 30 days*	February-March
Adar II	29 days	March-April

\*In leap years, Adar has 30 days. Otherwise, it has 29 days.

(Passover in Nissan) to the last major festival (Sukkot in Tishri) is always the same.

The month of Tishri is the busiest time of the year for holidays, there are a total of 13 days of special religious significance, 7 of them holidays on which work is not permitted. These holidays include the holidays known as the "High Holidays," the most important holidays of the year: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

## Rosh Hashanah

**Rosh Hashanah** occurs on the first and second days of Tishri. In Hebrew, Rosh Hashanah means, literally, "head of the year" or "first of the year." Rosh Hashanah is commonly known as the Jewish New Year. The name "Rosh Hashanah" is not used in the Bible to discuss this holiday. The Bible refers to the holiday as Yom Ha-Zikaron (the day of remembrance) or Yom Teruah (the day of the sounding of the shofar). The holiday is instituted in Leviticus 23:24-25.

The **shofar** is a ram's horn which is blown somewhat like a trumpet. One of the most important observances of this holiday is hearing the sounding of the shofar in the synagogue. A total of 100 notes are sounded each day. There are four different types of shofar notes: tekiah, a three-second sustained note; shevarim, three one-second notes rising in tone; teruah, a series of short, staccato notes extending over a period of about three seconds; and tekiah gedolah (literally, "big tekiah"), the final blast in a set, which lasts a minimum of ten seconds. The Bible gives no specific reason for this practice. One that has been suggested is that the shofar's sound is a call to repentance. The shofar is not blown if the holiday falls on a Shabbat.

No work is permitted on Rosh Hashanah. Religious services for the holiday focus on the concept of God's sovereignty. The common greeting at this time is "L'shanah tovah" ("for a good year"). This is a shortening of "L'shanah tovah tikatev v'taihatem" (or to women, "L'shanah tovah tikatevi v'taihate-

mi"), which means "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year."

Judaism has several different "new years." Nissan 1 is the new year for the purpose of counting the reign of kings and months on the calendar, Elul 1 (in August) is the new year for the tithing of animals, Shevat 15 (in February) is the new year for trees (determining when first fruits can be eaten, etc.), and Tishri 1 (Rosh Hashanah) is the new year for years (when the year number is increased; Sabbatical and Jubilee years also begin at this time).

## Days of Awe

The ten days starting with Rosh Hashanah and ending with Yom Kippur are commonly known as the Days of Awe (Yamim Noraim) or the Days of Repentance. This is a time for serious introspection, when





Jews consider the sins of the previous year and repent before Yom Kippur.

One of the ongoing themes of the Days of Awe is the concept that God has "books" in which he writes the names of humanity, recording who will live and who will die, and who will have a good life and who will have a bad life, for the next year. These books are written in on Rosh Hashanah, but one's actions during the Days of Awe can alter God's decree. The actions that change the decree are "teshuvah, tefilah, and tzedakah:" repentance, prayer and good deeds (usually, charity). These "books" are sealed on Yom Kippur.

During this time it is common to seek reconciliation with people who may have been wronged during the course of the year. The Talmud maintains that Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and God. To atone for sins against another person, it is necessary to first seek reconciliation with that person, righting the wrongs committed against them if possible.

### Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is probably the most important holiday of the Jewish year. The name "Yom Kippur" means "Day of Atonement." It is a day set aside to "afflict the soul," to atone for the sins of the past year. This day is, essentially, the last chance to change the judgment of God, to demonstrate repentance, and to make amends.

Yom Kippur is a complete Shabbat; no work can be performed on that day. One is supposed to refrain from eating and drinking (even water) on Yom Kippur, from before sunset on the evening before Yom Kippur to nightfall on the day of Yom Kippur. The Talmud also specifies additional restrictions: washing and bathing, anointing one's body (with cosmetics, deodorants, etc.), wearing leather shoes, and engaging in sexual relations are all prohibited on Yom Kippur. Most of the holiday is spent in the synagogue, in prayer.

It is customary to wear white on the holiday, which symbolizes purity and calls to

mind the promise that sins shall be made as white as snow (Is. 1:18). Some people wear a kittel, the white robe in which the dead are buried.

### Sukkot

The Festival of Sukkot begins on Tishri 15, the fifth day after Yom Kippur. It is quite a drastic transition, from one of the most solemn holidays in the year to one of the most joyous. This festival is sometimes referred to as Zeman Simkhateinu, the Season of Rejoicing. Sukkot lasts for seven days. The two days following the festival, Shemini Atzeret and Simkhat Torah, are separate holidays, but are commonly thought of as part of Sukkot.

Like Passover and Shavu'ot, Sukkot has a dual significance: historical and agricultural. The holiday commemorates the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Sukkot is also a harvest festival, and is sometimes referred to as Chag Ha-Asif, the Festival of Ingathering.

The festival of Sukkot is instituted in Leviticus 23:33. No work is permitted on the first and second days of the holiday. Work is permitted on the remaining days. These intermediate days on which work is permitted are referred to as Chol Ha-Mo'ed, as are the intermediate days of Passover.

In honor of the holiday's historical significance, Jews are commanded to dwell in temporary shelters, as their ancestors did in the wilderness. The commandment to "dwell" in a sukkah can be fulfilled by simply eating all of one's meals there; however, if the weather, climate, and one's health permit, one should live in the sukkah as much as possible, including sleeping in it. Another observance related to Sukkot involves what are known as the Four Species (arba minim in Hebrew) or the lulav and etrog. The commandment is to take these four plants and use them to "rejoice before the Lord."

## Channukah

**Channukah**, the Jewish festival of rededication, also known as the festival of lights, is an eight day festival beginning on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev. The story of Channukah begins in the reign of Alexander the Great. Alexander conquered Syria, Egypt, and Palestine, but allowed the lands under his control to continue observing their own religions and retain a certain degree of autonomy. Under this relatively benevolent rule, many Jews assimilated much of Hellenistic culture, adopting the language, the customs, the dress, and so forth.

More than a century later, a successor of Alexander, Antiochus IV, was in control of the region. He began to oppress the Jews severely, placing a Hellenistic priest in the Temple, massacring Jews, prohibiting the practice of the Jewish religion, and desecrating the Temple by requiring the sacrifice of pigs (a non-kosher animal) on the altar. Two groups opposed Antiochus: a basically nationalistic group led by Mattathias the Hasmonean and his son Judah Maccabee, and a religious traditionalist group known as the Chasidim, the forerunners of the Pharisees. They joined forces in a revolt against both the assimilation of the Hellenistic Jews and the oppression by the Selucid Greek government. The revolution succeeded and the Temple was rededicated.

According to tradition as recorded in the Talmud, at the time of the rededication, there was very little oil left that had not been defiled by the Greeks. Oil was needed for the menorah in the Temple, which was supposed to burn throughout the night every night. There was only enough oil to burn for one day, yet miraculously, it burned for eight days. An eight day festival was declared to commemorate this miracle. Note that the holiday commemorates the miracle of the oil, not the military victory: Jews do not glorify war.

Channukah is not a very important religious holiday. The holiday's religious significance is far less than that of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavu'ot. It is roughly equivalent to Purim in signifi-

cance. The only religious observance related to the holiday is the lighting of candles. The candles are arranged in a candelabrum called a menorah that holds nine candles: one for each night, plus a shammus (servant) at a different height.

## Purim

**Purim** is one of the most joyous holidays on the Jewish calendar. It commemorates a time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination. The story is told in the Biblical book of Esther. Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, which is usually in March — this is the day Haman chose for the extermination of the Jews. In leap years, when there are two months of Adar, Purim is celebrated in the second month of Adar, so it is always one month before Passover. (Other celebrations that are normally held in Adar are also celebrated in Adar II in leap years.) In cities that were walled in the time of Joshua, Purim is celebrated on the 15th of the month, because the book of Esther says that in Shushan (a walled city), deliverance from the massacre was not complete until the next day. The word "Purim" means "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre.

The Purim holiday is preceded by a minor fast, the Fast of Esther, which commemorates Esther's three days of fasting in preparation for her meeting with the king. The primary commandment related to Purim is to hear the reading of the book of Esther.

The commandment is to eat, drink, and be merry. According to the Talmud, a person is required to drink until he cannot tell the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai," though opinions differ as to exactly how drunk that is. In addition, Jews are commanded to send out gifts of food or drink, and to make gifts to charity. The sending of gifts of food and drink is referred to as *shalach manos* (literally, sending out portions). It is customary to hold carnival-like celebrations on Purim, to perform plays and parodies, and to hold beauty contests.







## Passover

Passover begins on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nissan. It is the first of the three major festivals with both historical and agricultural significance (the other two are Shavu'ot and Sukkot). Agriculturally, it represents the beginning of the barley harvest in Israel, but little attention is paid to this aspect of the holiday. The primary observances of Passover are related to the Exodus from Egypt after 400 years of slavery. This story is told in Exodus, Ch. 1-15. Many of the Passover observances are instituted in Chs. 12-15.

The name "Passover" refers to the fact that God "passed over" the houses of the Jews when he was slaying the firstborn of Egypt. In Hebrew, it is known as Pesach, which is based on the Hebrew root meaning "pass over". The holiday is also referred to as Chag he-Aviv (the Spring Festival), Chag ha-Matzoth (the Festival of Matzahs), and Zeman Cherutenu (the Time of Our Freedom).

Probably the most significant observance related to Passover involves the removal of chametz from homes. This commemorates the fact that the Jews leaving Egypt were in a hurry, and did not have time to let their bread rise. It is also a symbolic way of removing the "puffiness" (arrogance, pride) from the soul. Chametz includes anything made from the five major grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats, and spelt) that has not been completely cooked within 18 minutes after coming into contact with water. Jews may not eat chametz during Passover; they may not even own it or derive benefit from it. They may not even feed it to their pets or cattle. All chametz, including utensils used to cook chametz, must either be disposed of or sold to non-Jews.

The day before Passover is the fast of the firstborn, a minor fast for all firstborn males, commemorating the fact that the firstborn Jewish males in Egypt were not killed during the final plague.

On the first night of Passover (first two nights for Jews outside Israel), there is a special family meal filled with ritual to serve as a reminder of the significance of the holiday. This meal is called a *seder*, from a Hebrew

root word meaning "order." It is the same root from which the word "siddur" (prayer book) is derived. There is a specific set of information that must be covered in a specific order.

Passover lasts for seven days (eight days outside of Israel). The first and last days of the holiday (first two and last two outside of Israel) are days on which no work is permitted. See "Extra Day of Holidays" on page 43 for more information. Work is permitted on the intermediate days. These intermediate days on which work is permitted are referred to as Chol Ha-Mo'ed, as are the intermediate days of Sukkot.

## Counting the Omer

According to the Torah (Lev. 23:15), it is required to count the days from the second night of Passover to the day before Shavu'ot, seven full weeks. This period is known as the **Counting of the Omer**. An omer is a unit of measure. On the second day of Passover, in the days of the Temple, an omer of barley was cut down and brought to the Temple as an offering.

Every night, from the second night of Passover to the night before Shavu'ot, a blessing is recited and the count of the omer is stated in both weeks and days. So on the 16th day, it would be said that "Today is sixteen days, which is two weeks and two days of the Omer." The counting is intended to remind of the link between Passover, which commemorates the Exodus, and Shavu'ot, which commemorates the giving of the Torah. It reminds that the redemption from slavery was not complete until the reception of the Torah.

This period is a time of partial mourning, during which weddings, parties, and dinners with dancing are not conducted, in memory of a plague during the lifetime of Rabbi Akiva. Haircuts during this time are also forbidden. The 33rd day of the Omer (the eighteenth of Iyar) is a minor holiday commemorating a break in the plague. The holiday is known as Lag b'Omer. The mourning practices of the omer period are lifted on that date.

## Shavu'ot

**Shavu'ot**, the Festival of Weeks, is the second of the three major festivals with both historical and agricultural significance (the other two are Passover and Sukkot). Agriculturally, it commemorates the time when the first fruits were harvested and brought to the Temple, and is known as Hag ha-Bikkurim (the Festival of the First Fruits). Historically, it celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and is also known as Hag Matan Torateinu (the Festival of the Giving of Our Torah).

The period from Passover to Shavu'ot is a time of great anticipation. Each of the days from the second day of Passover to the day before Shavu'ot is counted, 49 days or 7 full weeks, hence the name of the festival. Shavu'ot is also sometimes known as Pentecost, because it falls on the 50th day. The counting is a reminder of the important connection between Passover and Shavu'ot: Passover freed the Jews physically from bondage, but the giving of the Torah on Shavu'ot redeemed the Jewish people spiritually from bondage to idolatry and immorality.

The holiday is called the time of the giving of the Torah, rather than the time of the receiving of the Torah. The sages point out

that the Torah is received every day in a constant process. Thus it is the giving, not the receiving, that makes this holiday significant.

Shavu'ot is not tied to a particular calendar date, but to a counting from Passover. Because the length of the months used to be variable, determined by observation, and there are two new moons between Passover and Shavu'ot, Shavu'ot could occur on the 5th or 6th of Sivan. Now that a mathematically determined calendar is used, and the months between Passover and Shavu'ot do not change length on the mathematical calendar, Shavu'ot is always on the 6th of Sivan.

Work is not permitted during Shavu'ot. It is customary to stay up the entire first night of Shavu'ot and study Torah, then pray as early as possible in the morning.



## The Nature of Shabbat

The **Shabbat** is one of the best known and least understood of all Jewish observances. To those who observe Shabbat, it is a precious gift from God, a day of great joy eagerly awaited throughout the week, and a time to set aside all weekday concerns and devote oneself to higher pursuits. In Jewish

## Minor Fasts

There are several minor fasts on the Jewish calendar. These fasts were instituted by the sages to commemorate national tragedies. The minor fasts last from dawn to nightfall, and one is permitted to eat breakfast if one arises before sunrise for the purpose of doing so. There is a great deal of leniency in the minor fasts for people who have medical conditions or other difficulties fasting. The date of the fast is moved to Sunday if the specified date falls on a Shabbat.

Three of fasts commemorate events leading to the downfall of the first commonwealth and the destruction of the first Temple, which is commemorated by the major fast of Tisha B'Av.

Following is a list of minor fasts required by Jewish law, their dates, and the events they commemorate:

*The Fast of Gedaliah*, Tishri 3, commemorates the killing of the Jewish governor of Israel, a critical event

in the downfall of the first commonwealth.

*The Fast of Tevet*, Tevet 10, is the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem.

*The Fast of Esther*, Adar 13, commemorates the three days that Esther fasted before approaching King Ahasuerus on behalf of the Jewish people. The fast is connected with Purim. If Adar 13 falls on a Friday or Saturday, it is moved to the preceding Thursday, because it cannot be moved forward a day (it would fall on Purim).

*The Fast of the Firstborn*, Nissan 14, is a fast observed only by firstborn males, commemorating the fact that they were saved from the plague of the firstborn in Egypt. It is observed on the day preceding Passover.

*The Fast of Tammuz*, Tammuz 17, is the date when the walls of Jerusalem were breached.



literature, poetry, and music, Shabbat is described as a bride or queen. Also, it is said “more than Israel has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept Israel.”

Shabbat is the most important ritual observance in Judaism. It is the only ritual observance instituted in the Ten Commandments. It is also the most important special day, even more important than Yom Kippur. This is clear from the fact that more aliyoth (opportunities for congregants to be called up to the Torah) are given on Shabbat than on any other day.

Shabbat is primarily a day of rest and spiritual enrichment. The word “Shabbat” comes from the root Shin-Bet-Tav, meaning to cease, to end, or to rest.

Shabbat is not specifically a day of prayer. Although there is prayer on Shabbat, and Jews spend a substantial amount of time in synagogue praying, prayer is not what distinguishes Shabbat from the rest of the week. Observant Jews pray every day, three times a day.

Shabbat involves two interrelated commandments: to remember (zachor) the Shabbat, and to observe (shamor) the Shabbat.

### *Zachor: To Remember*

The Law commands Jews to remember Shabbat, but remembering means much more than merely not forgetting to observe Shabbat. It also means to remember the significance of Shabbat, both as a commemoration of creation and as a commemoration of freedom from slavery in Egypt.

In Exodus 20:11, after the Fourth Commandment is first instituted, God explains, “because for six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and on the seventh day, he rested; therefore, the Lord blessed the Shabbat day and sanctified it.” Resting on the seventh day and sanctifying it is remembrance and acknowledgement that God is the creator of heaven and earth and all living things. It is also emulation of the divine

example by refraining from work on the seventh day, as God did.

In Deuteronomy 5:15, while Moses reiterates the Ten Commandments, he notes the second thing that must be remembered on Shabbat: “remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord, your God brought you forth from there with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the Shabbat day.”

These two meanings of Shabbat are remembered when kiddush (the prayer over wine sanctifying the Shabbat or a holiday) is recited. Friday night kiddush refers to Shabbat as both zikkaron l’ma’aseh bereishit (a memorial of the work in the beginning) and zeicher litzit’at mitzrayim (a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt).

### *Shamor: To Observe*

No discussion of Shabbat would be complete without a discussion of the work that is forbidden on Shabbat. This is another aspect of Shabbat that is grossly misunderstood by people who do not observe it.

The Torah prohibits **melachah** (Mem-Lamed-Alef-Kaf-Heh), which is usually translated as “work,” but does not mean precisely the same thing as the English word. Melachah generally refers to the kind of work that is creative, or that exercises control or dominion over the environment. The word may be related to “melekh” (king; Mem-Lamed-Kaf). The quintessential example of melachah is the work of creating the universe, which God ceased from on the seventh day. Note that God’s work did not require a great physical effort: He spoke, and it was done.

The word melachah is rarely used in scripture outside of the context of Shabbat and holiday restrictions. The only other repeated use of the word is in the discussion of the building of the sanctuary and its vessels in the wilderness. From this, the rabbis concluded that the work prohibited on the Shabbat is the same as the work of creating

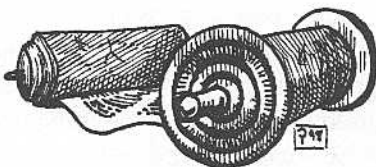
the sanctuary. They found 39 categories of forbidden acts, all of which are type of works that were needed to build the sanctuary.

## Tefilah: Prayer

The Hebrew word for prayer is **tefilah**. It is derived from the root Pe-Lamed-Lamed and the word l'hitpalel, meaning to judge oneself. This surprising word origin provides insight into the purpose of Jewish prayer. The most important part of any Jewish prayer, whether it be a prayer of petition, of thanksgiving, of praise of God, or of confession, is the introspection it provides, the moment spent looking inside, to understand the relationship to God.

For an observant Jew, prayer is not simply something that happens in synagogue once a week (or even three times a day). Prayer is an integral part of everyday life. In fact, one of the most important prayers in Judaism, the Birkat Ha-Mazon, is never recited in synagogue.

Jews are constantly reminded of God's presence and of their relationship to Him, due to constant prayer. The first thought in the morning, even before getting out of bed, is a prayer thanking God for returning the soul. There are prayers to be recited before enjoying any material pleasure, such as eating or wearing new clothes; prayers to recite before performing any mitzvah; prayers to recite upon seeing anything unusual, such as a king, a rainbow, or the site of a great tragedy; prayers to recite whenever some good or bad thing happens; and prayers to recite before going to bed at night. All of these prayers are in addition to formal prayer services, which are performed three times a day every weekday and at additional times on Shabbats and festivals.



## Berakhot: Blessings

A **berakhah** (blessing) is a special kind of prayer that is very common in Judaism. Berakhot are recited both as part of the synagogue services and as a response or prerequisite to a wide variety of daily occurrences. Berakhot are easy to recognize: they all start with the word **barukh** (blessed or praised).

The words **barukh** and **berakhah** are both derived from the Hebrew root Bet-Resh-Kaf, meaning "knee," and refer to the practice of showing respect by bending the knee and bowing. There are several places in Jewish liturgy where this gesture is performed, most of them at a time when a **berakhah** is being recited. According to Jewish tradition, a person should recite 100 berakhot each day. This is not as difficult as it sounds. Repeating the Shemoneh Esrei three times a day covers 57 berakhot all by itself, and there are dozens of everyday occurrences that require berakhot.



## Role of Women

Women are for the most part seen as separate but equal. Women's obligations and responsibilities are different from men's, but no less important. In some ways, women's responsibilities are considered more important. The Ten Commandments require respect for both mother and father. Note that the father comes first in Ex. 20:12, but the mother comes first in Lev. 19:3.

The equality of men and women begins at the highest possible level: God. Both man and women were created in the image of God. According to most Jewish scholars, "man" was created in Gen. 1:27 with dual gender, and was later separated into male and female.

Women are endowed with a greater degree of **binah** (intuition, understanding, intelligence) than men. The rabbis inferred this from the fact that woman was "built" (Gen. 2:22) rather than "formed" (Gen. 2:7),



and the Hebrew root of "build" has the same consonants as the word "binah." It has been said that the matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah) were superior to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) in prophesy. Women did not participate in the idolatry regarding the Golden Calf. Some traditional sources suggest that women are closer to God's ideal than men.

Women have held positions of respect in Judaism since biblical times. Miriam is considered one of the liberators of the people of Israel, along with her brothers Moses and Aaron. One of the Judges (Deborah) was a woman. Seven of the 55 prophets of the Bible were women.

There are many learned women of note. The Talmud and later rabbinical writings speak of the wisdom of Berurya, the wife of Rabbi Meir. In several instances, her opinions on halakhah (Jewish Law) were accepted over those of her male contemporaries. In the ketubah (marriage contract) of Rabbi Akiba's son, the wife is obligated to teach the husband Torah! Many rabbis over the centuries have been known to consult their wives on matters of Jewish law relating to the woman's role, such as laws of kashrut and women's cycles. The wife of a rabbi is referred to as a rebbetzin, practically a title of her own, which should give some idea of her significance in Jewish life.

There can be no doubt, however, that the Talmud also has many negative things to say about women. Various rabbis at various times describe women as lazy, jealous, vain, and gluttonous, prone to gossip and particularly prone to the occult and witchcraft. Men are repeatedly advised against associating with women, although that is as much because of man's lust as it is because of any shortcoming in women. Women are discouraged from pursuing higher education or religious pursuits, but this seems to be primarily because women who engage in such pursuits might neglect their primary duties as wives and mothers. The rabbis are not concerned that women are not spiritual enough, but rather are concerned that women might become too spiritually devoted.

Women have the right to buy, sell, and own property, and make their own contracts. In fact, Proverbs 31:10-31, which is read at Jewish weddings, speaks repeatedly of business acumen as a trait to be prized in women. Further, women can inherit property based on Numbers 27:8.

Women have the right to be consulted with regard to their marriage. Marital sex is regarded as the woman's right, and not the man's. Men do not have the right to beat or mistreat their wives, a right that was recognized by law in Christian lands. Judaism recognizes that forced sexual relations within the context of marriage are rape and are not permitted.

The primary role of a woman is as wife and mother, keeper of the household. There is great respect for the importance of that role. The Talmud says that when a pious man marries a wicked woman, the man becomes wicked, but when a wicked man marries a pious woman, the man becomes pious. Women are exempted from all positive commandments ("thou shalt" as opposed to "thou shalt not") that are time-related (that is, commandments that must be performed at a specific time of the day or year), because the woman's duties as wife and mother are so important that they cannot be postponed to fulfill a commandment. After all, a woman cannot be expected to just drop a crying baby when the time comes to perform a commandment.

It is this exemption from certain commandments that has led to the greatest misunderstanding of the role of women in Judaism. First, many people make the mistake of thinking that this exemption is a prohibition. On the contrary, although women are not obligated to perform time-based positive commandments, they are generally permitted to observe such commandments if they choose. Second, because this exemption diminishes the role of women in the synagogue, many people perceive that women have no role in Jewish religious life. This misconception derives from the mistaken assumption that Jewish religious life revolves around the synagogue. It does not; it revolves

around the home, where the woman's role is every bit as important as the man's.

## The Role of Women in the Synagogue

To understand the limited role of women in synagogue life, it is important to understand the nature of commandments in Judaism and the separation of men and women.

Judaism recognizes that it is mankind's nature to rebel against authority; thus, one who does something because he is commanded to is regarded with greater merit than one who does something because he chooses to. The person who refrains from pork because it is a commandment has more merit than the person who refrains from pork because he doesn't like the taste. In addition, the commandments, burdens, and obligations that were given to the Jewish people are regarded as a privilege, and the more commandments one is obliged to observe, the more privileged one is.

Because women are not obligated to perform certain commandments, their observance of those commandments does not "count" for group purposes. Thus, a woman's voluntary attendance at daily worship services does not count toward a minyan (the 10 people necessary to recite certain prayers), a woman's voluntary recitation of certain prayers does not count on behalf of the group (thus women cannot lead services), and a woman's voluntary reading from the Torah does not count towards the community's obligation to read from the Torah.

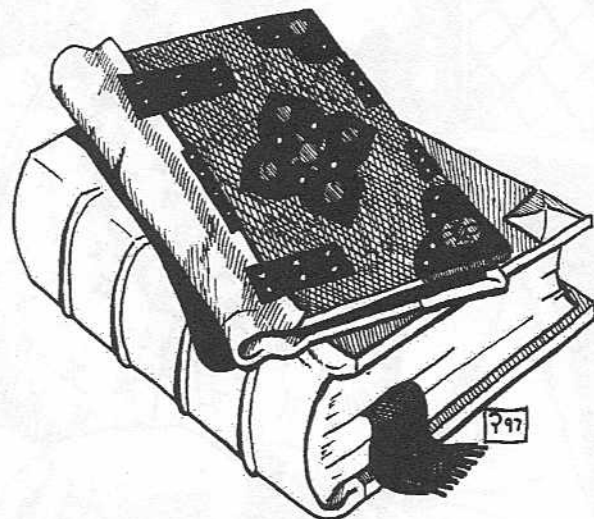
In addition, because women are not obligated to perform as many commandments as men are, women are regarded as less privileged. It is in this light that one must understand the man's prayer thanking God for "not making me a woman." The prayer does not indicate that it is bad to be a woman, but only that men are fortunate to be privileged to have more obligations. The corresponding

women's prayer, thanking God for making me "according to his will," is not a statement of resignation to a lower status (hardly an appropriate sentiment for prayer!). On the contrary, this prayer should be understood as thanking God for giving women greater *binah*, for making women closer to God's idea of spiritual perfection, and for all the joys of being a woman generally.

The second thing that must be understood is the separation of men and women during prayer. According to Jewish Law, men and women must be separated during prayer, usually by a wall or curtain called a *mechitzah* or by placing women in a second floor balcony.

The combination of this exemption from certain commandments and this separation often has the result that women have an extremely inferior place in the synagogue. Women cannot participate in any of the service, and are not obligated to attend. Because of these problems, many women rarely attend services, and if they do go, many of them spend much of the time talking and not paying attention.

This restriction on participation in synagogue life does not mean that women are excluded from Jewish religious life, because the Jewish religion is not something that happens in synagogue. Judaism is something that permeates every aspect of life. Prayer services are only a small, though important, part of the Jewish religion.



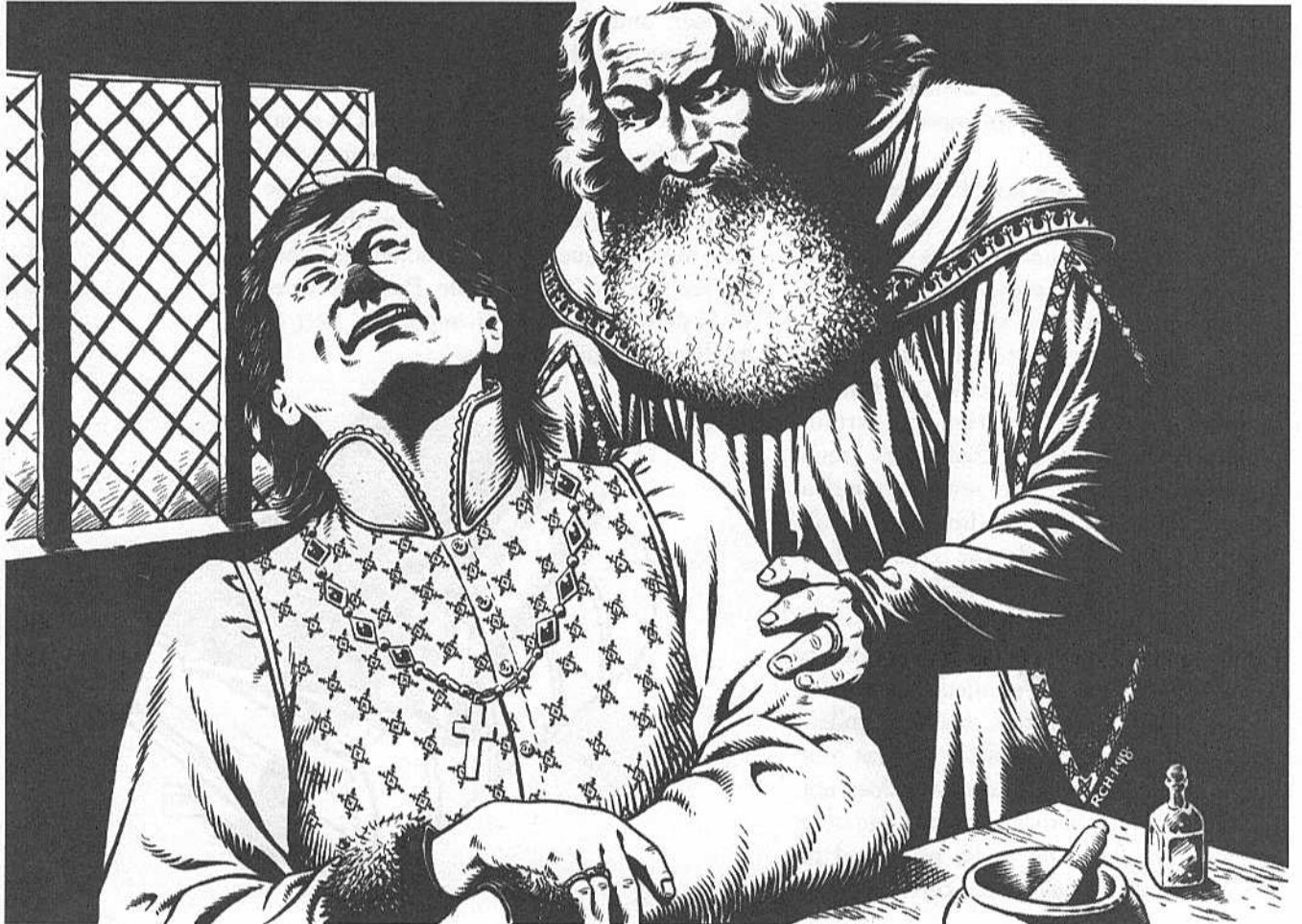


## Synagogue

The synagogue is the center of Jewish religious community. It contains the ark, which holds the Torah, and the eternal flame. At a minimum, it is the place where Jews come together for community prayer. In addition, it is usually the place where children receive their religious education. Most synagogues have a social hall for religious and non-religious functions. Many synagogues also have a Beit Midrash (house of study), a library of sacred Jewish texts for members of the community to study.

## Temple

The Temple was the center of Jewish religion from the time of Solomon to its destruction by the Romans in 70 AD. This was the one and only place where blood sacrifices and certain other religious rituals were performed. It was partially destroyed at the time of the Babylonian Exile and rebuilt. The rebuilt temple was known as the Second Temple. The famous Wailing Wall is the western retaining wall of that Temple, and is as close to the site of the original Sanctuary as Jews can go. (The site of the Temple is, in 1220, occupied by a Moslem Mosque, the Dome of the Rock). The Temple will be rebuilt when the Moshiach (Messiah) comes. Jews eagerly await that day and pray for it continually.



# Chapter 4

## Life of a Rabbi



All kabbalists are rabbis. In fact, most kabbalists place their rabbinical duties before their magical pursuits. Understanding the life of a rabbi is as important to playing a kabbalist as understanding the Kabbalah itself. This chapter explains the life of a rabbi in Mythic Europe.

ity to perform rituals than any other adult male member of the Jewish community. In the Jewish sense of the term, a priest (*kohein*, plural *kohanim*) is a descendant of Aaron, charged with performing various rites in the Temple in connection with religious rituals and sacrifices. Although a *kohein* can be a rabbi, a rabbi is not required to be a *kohein*.

A rabbi is simply a teacher, a person sufficiently educated in *halakhah* (Jewish law) and tradition to instruct the community, answer questions, and resolve disputes regarding *halakhah*. When a person has completed the necessary course of study, he is given a written document known as a *semikhah*, which confirms his authority to make such decisions.

Since the destruction of the Temple, the role of the *kohanim* has diminished, and rab-

## The Rabbi

A rabbi is not a priest, neither in the Jewish sense of the term nor in the Christian sense of the term. In the Christian sense of the term, a priest is a person with special authority to perform certain sacred rituals. A rabbi, on the other hand, has no more author-

### A Sample of Rabbinical Judaism

"...Leviticus 19:18 says: 'Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.' How are we to understand?

"A person says: 'Lend me your sickle,' and the other fellow answers, 'No.' On the following day the other fellow says: 'Lend me your axe,' and the person answers: "I won't lend you, just as you didn't lend me." This is vengeance. But how then would you define a grudge?

"A person says: 'Lend me your axe.' The other fellow answers: 'No.' But the very next day the other fellow says: 'Lend me your sickle' and the man answers: 'Surely, here it is. I'm not like you who wouldn't lend me

your axe.' Now this is a grudge, because the man was treasuring up hatred in his heart, even though he didn't take vengeance.

"'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself': Rabbi Akiba said this is a basic principle in the Torah...

"...Do not say: 'I am going to study the Torah in order to become a rich man,' or 'in order that I may be called Rabbi,' or 'that I may get paid,' but whatever you do, do out of love, and the result will be that honor will come of itself..."

—from the *Commentary on the Torah* by Rabbi Solomon bar Isaac (1040-1105)





bis have taken over the spiritual leadership of the Jewish community. It is important to note that the rabbi's status does not give him any special authority to conduct religious services. Any Jew sufficiently educated to know what he is doing can lead a religious service, and a service led by such a Jew is every bit as valid as a service led by a rabbi. It is not unusual for a community to be without a rabbi, or for Jewish services to be conducted without a rabbi.

When things are spoken of as being said or decided by "the rabbis" or "the sages," this deals with those matters that have been generally agreed upon by authoritative Jewish scholars over the centuries.

It is forbidden to take payment for teaching the Torah or halakhah. Thus most rabbis have another profession, such as cobbler or moneylender, to provide for themselves and their families. In the Rhineland, the 13th century saw the paying of senior rabbis of a community for the other services they provide, such as settling disputes.

## The Yeshiva

The **yeshiva** (plural, **yeshivot**) is a college for unmarried Jewish males in their teens to early twenties, and is the heart of rabbinical education. (Married students usually graduate to a **kolel**, but the word "yeshiva" is also used as the general term for a place of higher learning.) The yeshivot tradition originated at the academies of Palestine and Babylon of the First Century. Study at a yeshiva is undertaken by two **study partners**, or **chavruta**, together with a daily lecture, **shiur**, by a master, **rosh yeshiva**.

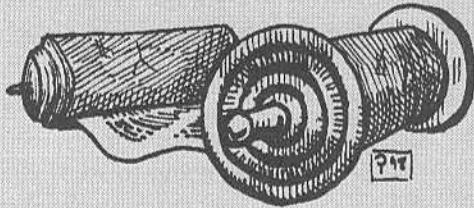
## Scholarship

In the yeshivot of the Rhineland and northern France the master sits among the advanced students, each of whom has studied one section of the Talmudic corpus. Collectively, the students could draw upon any part of the Talmud that seemed to contradict or present difficulties to a correct understanding of the passage under examination in class. The master then considers and resolves contradictions posed by passages in different sections of the Talmud. Students, in turn, raise other questions for the master.

This dialectical approach to the study of the Talmud (which arose in the 10th century) gives masters reputations for logical prowess in proportion to their ability to resolve the logical contradictions they and their students raise. A premium is placed on **hiddushim** (interpretation), not simply on a clear understanding of the text. A mystique thus develops around individual rabbinical masters. Masters compete for attention on the basis of their solutions to difficult scholastic problems in the Talmudic corpus, and students build their own careers by copying and adding to their masters' glosses, which are known as **tosafot** ("additions"). Students build close social and religious ties with their mentors, often living with them.

"Then say the wise: 'At fifteen the age is reached for the study of the Talmud.' Accordingly when the pupils are fifteen years of age the teacher should give them much practice in Talmud-reading until they have acquired fluency in it. Later, when they are eighteen years of age, he should give them that type of instruction in it which lays emphasis on deeper understanding, independent thinking, and investigation..."

—A Course of Study at the Yeshiva, circa 1180



"The Bible says: 'Train up a child in the way he should go.' If you see a child making progress in the Torah, but not in Talmud, do not push him by teaching him Talmud, and if he understands Talmud, do not push him by teaching him Torah. Train him in the things which he knows."

—From *Sefer Chasidim*, "Book of the Pious," circa 1200

In the Sephardic schools, three levels of academic achievement are noted: beginners study the Pentateuch (the first five books of scripture) and liturgy; advanced students study, in addition the rest of scripture, the law in codified form; and sages are the very few who progress to the study of the Mishnah and the Talmud and its commentaries. The rabbis of the Sephardim are heavily dependent on the oral tradition transmitted to Spain from the Jewish Talmudic academies of Baghdad. The approach here is conservative, not innovative: the student is supposed to become another link in the oral chain of interpretation derived from Babylonia, where the Talmud was edited. Sephardic rabbis do not assume, in contrast to their northern brethren, that a bright student should solve difficulties in the text based on the text itself. Rather, he should rely solely on earlier tradition.

In addition to the religious curriculum of Bible, codes, and Talmud, the Sephardic elite are encouraged to spend time in the study of the natural sciences, philosophy, logic, math-

ematics, optics, music, medicine, botany, metallurgy, and even metaphysics. This emphasis in the Sephardic curriculum was introduced in the Muslim south and continues after the expulsion.

## Study Partners

Partnership and cooperation is a constant theme throughout rabbinical literature, thought, and life. The core of the yeshiva is the study group, not the individual pupil. Brotherhood and friendship, both social and academic, are the roots of rabbinical Judaism. Even the great rabbis of the Talmud never study alone. While Hermetic magi study in isolation and secrecy, Jewish divine magicians would be literally lost without their study partners. The blinding light of the Divine is too great for one person alone.

When studying with a partner, a rabbi adds his partner's Communication score to





his Study Total (even if his score is negative). To be study partners, two rabbis must spend the entire season studying the same text, and be continually available for discourse with each other. Both partners generate Study Totals. Once two partners have studied the same text for a number of seasons equal to their highest Communication + Speak Hebrew score, they have helped each other all they can on that text, and the study partner bonus is no longer added. Only two rabbis can be study partners. Larger groups form Talmudic disputation groups (see below.)

### Solitary Study Risks

Any kabbalist who dares study a text whose subject is Kabbalah or Merkavah (other than the *Merkavah Rabbah*) by himself incurs a **solitary study risk**. He must roll a quality die – Stamina and consult the Solitary Study Risk Chart. These are the only types of books a kabbalist is at risk when studying. Other books may be studied alone without risk.

## Talmudic Disputation

Scholars of the Talmud spend much of their time in debate with each other. Talmudic disputation, like traditional Disputatio, is a formalized debate, but there are several key differences. First, more than

two scholars can participate in a season of Talmudic disputation together. Second, all participants gain experience points from Talmudic disputation. Talmudic disputation can be used to increase the following Knowledges: Angelic Lore, Gematria, Kabbalah, Merkavah, Theology: Judaism, Rabbinical Law, and Occult Lore.

There are two requirements for the formation of a Talmudic disputation group. First, the group can be no larger than the highest Communication + Disputatio total in the group. Second, the difference between any two participants' scores in the Knowledge to be discussed can be no greater than two. (For example, a rabbi with a Kabbalah of 2 cannot participate in a Talmudic discussion with a rabbi whose Kabbalah is 5.) Any character with the Disputatio Ability and knowledge of the appropriate subject may participate.

Once a group which meets the minimal requirements is formed, the group can spend seasons in Talmudic disputation. A Talmudic disputation group generates its own Quality equal to the average of the Communication + Disputatio of all its members. Each member of the group has a Study Total equal to the group's Quality + Intelligence + 6, divided by 5. Additionally, each season spent in Talmudic disputation earns each member 1 experience point in Disputatio. If a sourcebook on the subject of the disputation is not available throughout the entire season, all study totals must be divided in half.

A group can spend as many seasons in discussion of a single subject equal to the highest Communication score in the group, with a minimum of one. (For example, the highest Communication score of a member of a Talmudic Disputation group is 4. The group can spend four seasons in argumentation about Kabbalah.) Afterward, the group must add a new member in order to continue argumentation in the same subject, at which point they can argue for a number of seasons equal to the highest Communication score in the group again.

### Solitary Study Risk Chart

Roll	Result
<0	Loses 2 points of Purity (page 84)
0 - 3	Gains major mental affliction (ArM 4, page 181)
4 - 6	Gains 1 Decrepitude point
7 - 9	Gains -2 Flaw Terrors* (ArM4, page 49)
10 - 12	Gains -3 Flaw Sense of Doom** (ArM4, page 50)
13 - 16	Struck blind (incurable)
17+	Struck mad (incurable)

\* Characters may develop multiple Terrors of different things.

\*\* If you already have Sense of Doom, double its negative effects.

# The Yeshiva Library

The library of even the smallest yeshiva is impressive, as the careful study of classic rabbinical texts is one of the foundations of education. This section describes the books most commonly found in a yeshiva library, which your character will spend a lifetime exploring. Note that the Quality listed for most books is a maximum; many copies will be of lesser Quality. The language of the original work is listed in parenthesis; other translations may be available as well.

## The Great Books

The body of Judaic literature is vast. To make rabbinical scholarship a fun aspect of roleplaying, rather than a career, only the most important books of the period are listed here.

### *Torah (Hebrew)*

**Author:** Believed to be the Biblical Moses, as dictated to him by God on Mount Sinai

**Availability:** Any Jewish community with a synagogue or yeshiva

**Subject:** The first five books of the Christian Old Testament, the Torah is the prime source of Judaic theology, history, and law. All other Jewish thought has sprung from the contemplation of its verses. As the millennia passed, however, a vast body of secondary material was written to document the development of Rabbinical Judaism as a source of culture, philosophy, and law. The Torah alone, therefore, does not provide the full depth of knowledge required by a rabbi.

**Characteristics:** Treat the Torah as containing three summae, each dealing with a separate Knowledge. When studying the Torah,

the reader must decide which Knowledge he wishes to increase that season.

- Summa, Theology: Judaism, Level 6, Quality 8
- Summa, Rabbinical Law, Level 4, Quality 8
- Summa, Judaic Lore, Level 4, Quality 8

**Special Rule:** If the Torah is created by the dictates of halakhah it contains one Faith Point.

### *Talmud (Aramaic)*

**Authors:** The Talmud is distilled from various sources, beginning with the Biblical Moses.

**Availability:** Any Jewish community with a synagogue or yeshiva

**Subject:** While on Mount Sinai, Moses received not only the written Torah, but also an oral code which became known as the Mishnah. While mainly a halachic document, the Mishnah also contains stories, folklore, sciences, and parables. The Mishnah itself was expounded upon and codified into the Talmud. The Talmud is the sum of knowledge and beliefs of several millennia of Judaic scholars, and is thus one of the most extensive and learned texts in Mythic Europe.

**Characteristics:** The Talmud is organized into six Orders, which in turn are divided into Tractati. Treat each Talmudic Order as if it contained three tractati, for a total of eighteen tractati in all:

- Six Tractatus, Theology: Judaism, Quality 8
- Six Tractatus, Rabbinical Law, Quality 8
- Six Tractatus, Judaic Lore, Quality 8

**Special Rule:** Each season of Talmud study also earns the reader one experience point in Storytelling.

### *The Mishneh Torah (Hebrew)*

**Author:** Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, aka Mamonides





**Availability:** Completed in 1180, available in any Jewish community with a yeshiva

**Subject:** The product of a single brilliant mind, the *Mishneh Torah* is a fourteen volume compendium of every law contained within the Torah and the Talmud.

**Characteristics:** Summa, Rabbinical Law, Level 10, Quality 10.

**Special Rule:** When contemplating a question of Rabbinical Law, a rabbi who spends an hour consulting the *Mishneh Torah* gains a bonus of +2 to his Rabbinical Law when reaching his decision. This is a one-time bonus, non-cumulative.

### *Guide to the Perplexed (Arabic)*

**Author:** Maimonides

**Availability:** Completed in 1190. Although the book is well known, its unorthodox approach has led to controversy, making it a difficult find in most yeshiva. The *Guide to the Perplexed* is an important source for Christians and Muslims seeking to understand Judaic theology—perhaps the only source available to most gentiles.

**Subject:** The *Guide to the Perplexed* explains Judaic theology using a rational framework, in an attempt to harmonize Jewish thought with Aristotelian philosophy.

**Characteristics:** Summa, Theology: Judaism, Level 6, Quality 9; Philosophiae, Level 4, Quality 7

**Special Rule:** Any Christian or Muslim who reads the *Guide to the Perplexed* gains one level in the Personality Trait, "Tolerance toward Jews," for every two levels of Theology: Judaism gained by reading the text.

## The Mystical Texts

Jewish mysticism contains myriad texts, dialogues, chapters, and fragments. Only a few of the most relevant are included here.

### *Sefer Yetzirah (Hebrew)*

**Author:** Believed to be the Biblical Abraham  
**Availability:** Any Jewish Quarter with practicing kabbalists

**Subject:** The *Sefer Yetzirah*, "Book of Formation," is the fundamental work of all Jewish mysticism. Its six chapters tell of the formation of the Universe by God through the sefirot and the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which were engraved on the primordial ether before the world took shape. It also speaks of the microcosm of the human body, and the divine creative powers within.

**Characteristics:** Summa, Kabbalah, Level 8, Quality 8

**Special Rule:** Reading the *Sefer Yetzirah* without a study partner incurs a solitary study risk (see page 58).

### *Sefer Ha-Bahir, "The Bahir" (Hebrew)*

**Author:** Ascribed to First Century Mishnaic sages, recently edited by Isaac the Blind

**Availability:** Any Jewish Quarter with practicing kabbalists

**Subject:** The *Sefer Ha-Bahir*, "Book of Brightness," is the secondary work of Kabbalah. It teaches how the lower world reflects the divine world through the sefirot (see page 70), how evil is born, and how the soul transmigrates from one life to the next.

**Characteristics:** Summa, Kabbalah, Level 5, Quality 8

**Special Rule:** Studying the *Bahir* alone is extremely dangerous. Without a study partner, the student incurs a solitary study risk (see page 58).

### *Ma'aseh Merkavah (Hebrew)*

**Author:** Various rabbis from the time of the Second Temple

**Availability:** Any Jewish Quarter with practicing kabbalists

**Subject:** The *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, "Work of the Chariot," is actually an anthology of

prayers that delve into the mystical revelations of Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot and the throne of glory. It consists of three narrative sections, concerning ascent into the seven heavens and encounters with angels.

**Characteristics:** Summa, Merkavah, Level 10, Quality 10

**Special Rule:** The *Ma'aseh Merkavah* can only safely be taught by a teacher to a student. In game terms, the *Ma'aseh Merkavah* is only used as the source text for Lectio (see ArM4 page 187). If read alone or used in any other fashion, the student incurs a solitary study risk (see page 58).

### *Merkavah Rabbah (Hebrew)*

**Author:** Rabbi Nehuniah and other scholars of the Second Temple

**Availability:** Any Jewish Quarter with a large group of practicing kabbalists

**Subject:** A loosely assorted compilation of lesser texts consisting of dialogues between great rabbis such as Akiba, Ishmael, and Nehuniah regarding the transformation of man to angel through ecstatic meditation and purification by divine fire.

**Characteristics:** Liber Quaestionum, Merkavah, Target 4, Quality 10

**Special Rule:** Of all the mystical books, this is the safest to read alone and the only one that does not require a roll on the solitary study risk chart (see page 58).

### *Heikhalot (Hebrew)*

**Author:** There are many texts in this category.

**Availability:** Found amongst the Ashkenazim kabbalists; rare elsewhere

**Subject:** A collection of works by a variety of authors. Based on Ezekiel's vision (page 66), these texts usually revolve around the Mishnaic sages Akiva and Ishmael ben Elisha, who travelled through seven halls, which equate with the Seven Heavens (page 128). Many contain ecstatic hymns.

**Characteristics:** Treat the Heikhalot literature as comprising two texts:

- Summae, Concentration, Level 4, Quality 4
- Liber Quaestionum, Merkavah, Target 2, Quality 9.

**Special Rule:** Each season spent studying these ecstatic hymns and tales requires the roll of a simple die. Upon rolling a 10, the kabbalist undergoes a mystical experience. Roll a stress die + Intelligence. On a 9+ the mystic journeys forth into Heaven, returning with interesting insights that the storyguide should invent based on the needs of the developing saga. A roll of less than nine indicates a bad journey, resulting in a tragedy of hubris (see page 101). A botch indicates the kabbalist's soul never returns.

### *Shiur Komah (Hebrew)*

**Author:** Unknown

**Availability:** Any Jewish Quarter with a large group of practicing kabbalists

**Subject:** Hebrew for "Measure of Stature", this text speculates on the size of the 'body' of God seen by the mystic at the end of his journey into heaven. There are secret names for each organ. The knowledge of the measurements are vital for a place in the world to come. This text is considered heretical by many, including Moses Maimonides.

**Characteristics:** Summa, Merkavah, Level 6, Quality 8

**Special Rule:** Reading the *Shiur Komah* without a study partner incurs a solitary study risk (see page 58).



## Books of Lore

Mystical insight of the divine is not the only source of a kabbalist's wisdom. Much power can be gleaned from the folkways and natural philosophies of the Judaic people. The most authoritative texts appear here.



## Sefer Ha-Razin (Hebrew)

**Author:** The angel Raziel, who gave the original copy to the Biblical Noah

**Availability:** There are only seven “true” copies of the Ha-Razin in existence, but a “base” copy of the text can be found in any yeshiva library.

**Subject:** In his gift to humanity, Raziel teaches the role of angels in the seven heavens and their powers on Earth.

**Characteristics:** Summa, Angelic Lore, Level 6, Quality 12

**Special Rule:** Any building that houses a “true” copy of the *Sefer Ha-Razin* has a Magic Resistance of +20 against fire magic (such as the Art of Ignem). This protection also covers all people inside the building. The magic of the book derives from the perfection of its script. A “true” copy can only be made by a scribe with a Purity of 8+ who copies from the original text, housed in the library of the City of Luz in Arcadia (see page 126). Any other copy is “base,” and loses its magical protection, but not its characteristics.

## Sword of Moses (Aramaic and Hebrew)

**Author:** Anonymous 10th century scholar

**Availability:** Large yeshivot, the private libraries of baal shem (see page 106)

**Subject:** Hundreds of charms, recipes, and cautionary tales on the sitra achra (see page 135)

**Characteristics:** Summa, Occult Lore, Level 5, Quality 8

## Studying Gematria

There are no texts on gematria; instead, it pervades all Jewish mystical thought. A kabbalist can study any of the texts in this chapter, not for their content, but to practice gematria. For these purposes, each text qualifies as a tractatus on gematria with a Quality of 2. The Talmud is as one tractatus on gematria, not 18. Gematria is the only kabbalistic discipline intended for solitary practice. Texts that would otherwise require study partners do not incur solitary study risks when used to learn gematria.

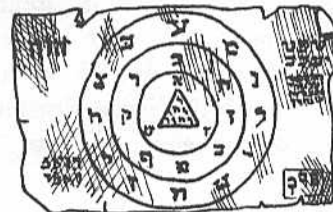
# Civil Responsibilities

Disputes over issues of Jewish religious law are settled internally by local religious courts presided over by one or more rabbinical judges. Their jurisdiction encompasses areas of self-government covered by Jewish law, such as contracts, torts, marriages and divorces, dietary requirements, ritual purity, and holiday observance. Jewish courts rarely have the power to impose death. However, fines and the **cherem** (see below) are quite common penalties.

There is also a community board (**kahal**) of elders who administer questions of public safety and social welfare. These elders derive authority based on age, wealth, family lineage, or influence with Christian rulers. A rabbi usually serves upon it. It is this board, and not the rabbinical court, that is responsible to Christian rulers to see that tax assessments are paid and that law and order are maintained. The elders are also responsible to the community to intercede with the authorities if a threat to its security arises. They also maintain a network of social welfare agencies.

## Cherem

Cherem is exclusion from the community. The punishment of excommunication, also known as niddui, was laid down for twenty-four offenses that include insulting rabbinical authority, testifying against Jews in non-Jewish courts, flouting Jewish customs, blaspheming, and selling non-kosher meat as kosher.



A cherem is enacted in the synagogue. The ark is opened, a sefer Torah taken out, the shofar is blown, curses are pronounced and the candles are extinguished.

There are lighter forms of cherem, involving social ostracism for a limited period. No one will eat with the individual, he is not counted toward minyan, nor called up to Torah readings. The person excommunicated is expected to go into mourning, thus showing contrition.

Stronger forms of cherem involve complete ostracism and treating the person concerned as if he was no longer Jewish. This does not end in death, since the coffin of someone in cherem will be symbolically stoned, and the family will not keep mourning rites.

Even though the use of cherem is discouraged, it often is seen as a means of control of dissent. The best known and most enduring cherem is that pronounced by Rabbi Gershon, who prohibited Ashkenazim from practicing polygamy and divorcing their wives without their consent

## Synods

Jewish communities hold synods from time to time to deal with issues of religious discipline and public welfare. In the 1220s, at the joint Rhenish synods of the communities of Mainz, Worms, and Speyer, a provision was made that every Jewish male should set aside time for study and that if he could not study Talmud he should study scripture or classical rabbinical homilies according to his ability.

## Hevrot

Hevrot are voluntary societies that specialize in religious duties such as visiting the sick, ritually preparing bodies for burial, providing interest-free loans, redeeming captives, and studying the classical religious texts. All are common in Jewish society. While there is no requirement for a rabbi to lead a hevra, he is usually involved in one or more.







# Chapter 5

# The Mysteries

**K**abbalah, meaning “reception” or “receptivity,” is a collection of mystical works and techniques that have their roots in the time of the Second Temple. This chapter will explore the history of Kabbalah, examining its roots within Judaism and highlighting points of interest to your saga.

itself forbade the reading of Ezekiel’s vision aloud, unless the listener was a sage. The techniques developed for understanding the vision were applied to other elements of the Torah and the Mishnah, and grew into the legacy of the Talmudic mystics, the great rabbis whose thoughts and stories comprise much of the Talmud.

## The Chariot Mysteries

Ezekiel’s vision of the Merkavah (meaning “chariot,”) is one of the strangest passages in the Bible (see page 66). It was the heart of early Jewish mysticism. The Second Temple rabbis sought wisdom between the lines of this passage in a field of study they called the **Chariot Mysteries**. The Book of Ezekiel had such mystical significance that studying it required at least two people, lest the truths revealed drive the student mad. The Talmud

## Merkavah

A large body of mystical teachings sprang from Ezekiel’s vision. These teachings gave insight into the divine, and also some measure of power over the world. Through ascetic practices and the recitation of divine and angelic names, mystics prepared to ascend into heaven (through which journey their hands and feet would be burnt away by tongues of heavenly fire) and stand before God, the divine king. The ultimate goal of this heavenly ascent was the transformation of man to angel. More information on these powers are found in Chapter 6. Also, Chapter 8 contains information on many of the mysteries of the Merkavah, such as the Seven Heavens and the angelic denizens.

Here is the seal of the descent to the Merkavah for the inhabitants of the world, for you and for anyone who wishes to descend and to gaze at the King and his beauty. Now take this path, and descend, and see, and you will not be harmed. For I have placed it on a scroll for you and seen it. And afterwards you descended and tested, and you were not harmed. For I have placed the paths of the Merkavah for you like light, and the byways of the firmament like the sun.

—Hotam Ha-Merkavah, *The Seal of the Merkavah*

## Significance of the Word

God spoke the Universe into existence. The Talmudic mystics concluded that lan-

guage was the ultimate power. Kabbalists throughout the centuries gave a great deal of importance to individual letters and words, the greatest of which comprised the many names of God. The most significant name of God was YHVH, pronounced "adonai," which became known as the tetragrammaton. This, according to the rabbis, was the name which the High Priest of the Temple spoke on the Day of Atonement. Many meditations are based upon permutations and letter combinations which involve the Tetragrammaton.

## Jewish Proscriptions Against Magic

Certain passages in the scriptures caution against or even forbid the use of magic. An often overlooked passage in Deuteronomy, however, cautioned the Israelites not to imitate the practices of the people whose lands they are about to enter. Thus, the mystics reasoned, if someone engaged in magical activi-

### From *Tales of Rabbi Zalman*

...On that particular Sabbath, an esteemed young man arose to read the prayers. He sang with a powerful voice, but when he reached the words, "Praise ye the Lord who is to be praised," his voice toyed with the sound, but he did not pronounce God's name.

Rabbi Zalman pondered this a moment. "Stop!" he suddenly commanded, rising from his seat. "Do not give praise, for you are not permitted to recite prayer before God."

Rabbi Zalman walked close to the youth, whose eyes were downcast, and said, much to the astonishment of those gathered there, "You are dead, for the psalms tell us that the dead do not praise God. Tell me the truth, confess the truth before the Creator, glorify the God of glory, and you will then be free to enter Paradise."

And the youth answered: "I have indeed sinned, and rebelled against God. If you and your congregation are willing to bear my sin, I will confess." Those who were present agreed to bear all that he would impose upon them by his words, and so he told his tale:

"In my time, some two centuries ago, there was a Rabbi Aydin, who made three pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the city of glory. Each time he took 100 pieces of gold with him to give aid to those who were studying God's law, and for those who prayed for the restoration of the Temple.

"As he set out on his third pilgrimage, he asked my mother for my company and assistance along the difficult journey. 'I will bring him back to thee,' he said, 'if I do not bring him back to thee, I shall have sinned before God, I and my children.' I set out on the journey with him, with no thought of sorrow.

"When we reached the glory city we were welcomed by the great rabbis there, and were commanded

to sup with them. At the meal, the head of their school turned to us and said, 'Let the young man among us, who travels with the Rabbi Aydin, delight us with his knowledge and his thoughts.' I began to give praise in psalm and song.

"The eldest among them, listening intently, began to weep. Rabbi Aydin went to him and pleaded with him to tell why he cried. The eldest rabbi told him, 'I weep because before this meal is done, God has decreed this young man to die.' Then Rabbi Aydin joined him, tearing his clothes and pulling his hair. 'What shall I do? I have sworn to his mother that I would bring him back to her unharmed. How can I return now that I have failed them both!

"Hearing this all the great men began to weep and, reaching a decision, gathered around me, chanting the strangest and yet most beautiful prayers I had ever heard. Then the eldest among them wrote the Holy Name upon a piece of parchment. The others made an incision in the flesh of my right arm, and inserted the Name into my body. And thus I came away from that place and returned to my mother. Ever since have I lived, wandering from land to land, for no man can know the place of the Name unless I reveal it. I will show it to you, for I am in your hands. Deal with me as you feel right."

Rabbi Zalman commanded that the grave clothes be brought. He approached the young man and draped them about his shoulders. The young man showed him the incision, and Rabbi Zalman took the Name out of it. The youth's body became lifeless, the corpse crumbled in decay, the flesh returned to dust.

—from *Tales of Rabbi Zalman*

ty that derived purely from Jewish theories, the negative commandments against magic would not be broken. The only exception was necromancy, which violated the proscriptions against the ritual uncleanness of a dead body. This is the key to Kabbalah, as it is a uniquely Jewish magical discipline, using the power of holy names, Hebrew prayer, and Judaic theology to accomplish impossible deeds.

## Rabbis of the Kabbalah

Almost all kabbalists were rabbis. Since the mystical tradition was an offshoot of the oral rabbinical tradition, it was necessary to study rabbinical Judaism with reverence and purpose. The Talmudic mystics founded yeshivot which taught both the ways of the rabbi and the mysteries to those students who

### Ezekiel's Vision

Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the Kerubim there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the Kerub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the Kerubin, and scatter them over the city.

And he went in my sight.

Now the Kerubim stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

Then the glory of the Lord went up from the Kerub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory.

And the sound of the wings of the Kerubim was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh. And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the Kerubim; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.

And one Kerub stretched forth his hand from between the Kerubim unto the fire that [was] between the Kerubim, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen: who took it, and went out.

And there appeared in the Kerubim the form of a man's hand under their wings.

And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the Kerubim, one wheel by one Kerub, and another wheel by another Kerub: and the appearance of the wheels [was] as the color of a beryl stone.

And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.

When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither

the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.

As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a Kerub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

And the Kerubim were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

And when the Kerubim went, the wheels went by them: and when the Kerubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.

When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them.

Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the Kerubim.

And the Kerubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the Kerubim.

Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.

And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

—Ezekiel 10: 1-22

had the proper aptitude, and later kabbalists followed their example. Through their time at the academy, kabbalists sought a more intimate connection with the Divine through a combination of study, deeds, and meditation. Before the kabbalists of the Provençal school coined the term Kabbalah, rabbis engaged in such studies were known as “men of understanding,” “believing ones,” or “masters of mystery.”

## Spread of Kabbalah

During the Diaspora mystical interpretations truly began to flourish. Mystical schools sprang up in numerous locations and those who founded them were both powerful and learned in the Torah. The Diaspora also put Jews into contact with many other cultures, resulting in the integration of other beliefs into the Kabbalah and the spread of Jewish mysticism throughout Europe. The original kabbalists were found in Palestine and in Babylon. They studied the *Sefer Yetzirah* in secret, and taught the mysteries in whispers. As Jews made their way into Western Europe their rabbis went with them. Many of these sages had different ideas regarding mysticism and by the end of the 12th century distinct “flavors” of mysticism had grown up in those countries.

## Early Kabbalistic Texts

The great, early works of Jewish mysticism are listed in Chapter 4, beginning on page 59. Such books were written so that, while a learned rabbi could understand, uninvited eyes could not. They contained contradictory stories and statements, and passages designed to confound the unwanted reader. In most cases, however, a deeper reading with proper guidance could erase confusion and lead to remarkable discoveries.

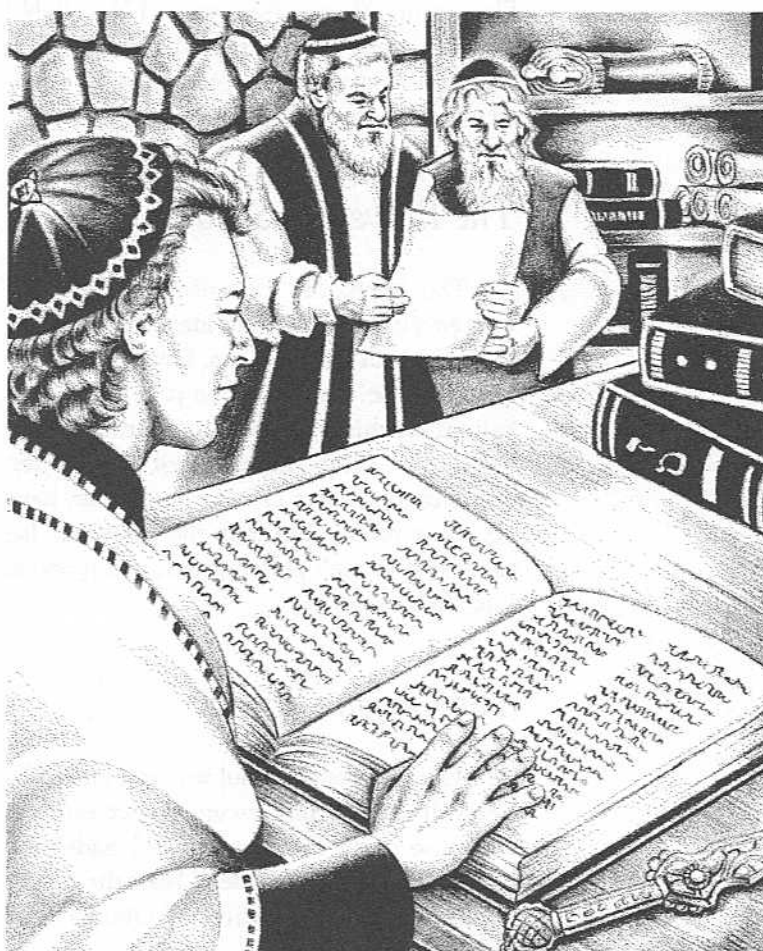
These texts began as oral works which were passed down from teacher to student.

Only later were these texts committed to a written form so they could be studied with greater ease. In almost all cases, the texts presume the reader has a thorough knowledge of scripture. There were no easy, introductory texts within Kabbalah.

## Early Kabbalistic Schools

### *The Babylonian School*

The Geonic period, named after the Geonim, began in the 6th century and ended in the 11th. During this time, the Geonim lead all of Babylonian Jewry, answering questions regarding the law and adding their own commentaries on the Talmud. Babylon became a major center of mystical activity and a vast amount of material was added to the canon, particularly concerning the role of





angels and demons. Additionally, more emphasis was put on finding numerological correspondences with texts and prayers, using a system known as **gematria** (page 77). Because the numerological significance of letters became important, rabbinical works developed a consistency in spelling that benefited scholars for ages to come.

### *The German Chasidim*

The word Chasid simply means “righteous,” an ancient term of respect for pious men. In 11th century Germany, a group known as the Chasidei Ashkenaz gained prominence in both the scholarly and mystical areas. The Chasids espoused indifference to persecution, even by other Jews, and equanimity of spirit. They also sought enlightenment through meditation and prophecy.

The peak of the movement came in the later part of the 12th century, with Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (see page 122). Rabbi Eleazar’s works, while rooted firmly within tradition, contain many references to gematria and the chariot mysteries.

### *The Provençal School*

The Sephardic kabbalists of Provence worked with very different ideas than those of their German counterparts. Under the influence of Isaac the Blind (see page 120); kabbalistic teachings moved to an entirely new level, with great emphasis put on the ten sefirot of the Tree of Life. Although they have access to information from the Chasidim, little of that group’s philosophy is incorporated into their works.

### *The Gerona School*

The Provençal school was first seeded by Spanish Sephardim escaping persecution. The ideas of the Provençal school made their way back to Spain as some of Isaac the Blind’s pupils founded the yeshiva of Gerona. The

Gerona rabbis made kabbalistic ideas available to a wider public, much to the disfavor of the other schools and their original mentors in Iberia.

The Spanish kabbalists were also in contact with the Chasidim. Under this cross-pollination of ideas, a new system of Kabbalah, “prophetic Kabbalah” was born. This system stressed meditative ecstasy which allowed the mystic to achieve higher and higher levels of understanding and communion with the Divine.

## The Tree of Life (Etz Chayim)

Scholars have been pondering the **Tree of Life** for millennia. It is impossible to expound upon its mysteries in a single section of a gaming sourcebook. While there are certain aspects of the Tree that lend themselves to straight-forward explanation, the authors cannot do it justice. Therefore, the authors strongly advise those readers looking to truly understand the Kabbalah to sample the various texts contained in the Bibliography.

The concept of the Tree of Life originates in the first verse of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, which states that the God used “32 mystical paths” to create the world. These 32 paths are the ten **sefirot**, meaning “emanations” (singular sefirah), and the 22 paths which connect them. The sefirot themselves have been the basis of a great deal of commentary, as different mystics attached different meanings to each of them, often calling them by different names. This is an important lesson of Kabbalah: it has never been a single system of magic, and is only occasionally consistent.



## The Structure of the Tree

The Tree of Life can be seen as an upside down tree. Its roots are at the top of the diagram and its trunk and branches descend towards man. Although much of Kabbalah is based on what can be seen as the ascent of the tree, moving from lower sefirot to higher sefirot, in a way, the journey is actually one of descent. A high level of consciousness is required to make this mystical journey.

## The Ten Sefirot

Each of the ten sefirot represents an aspect of the divine, a particular emanation which descends from God to man. The word sefirah comes from a three-letter root with means either book (sefer), number (sephar), or communication (sippur). The sefirot, therefore are critically involved with the mystical pursuits of memorization (book), mathematics (number), and meditative prayer (communication). The *Sefer Yetzirah* equates them with the Universe (book), the Year (number), and the Soul (communication). According to the *Bahir*, the word sefirah is also connected with the Hebrew word sappir, meaning sapphire, for it is said that the radiance of God is like that of a sapphire.

## Names of the Sefirot

The names and pronunciations of the sefirot follow below. Each will be explained later.

## What They Represent

Each of the sefirot is connected with one of the Ten Sayings uttered by God to create the world. Each sefirot is also associated with a particular name of God. According to the Kabbalah these are "the ten names which must not be erased," the holiest of the Divine names.

## Additional Correspondences

The seven so-called "lower" sefirot are connected to Biblical heroes, each of which incorporates the aspect of a sefirah in his ethical behavior. Because of his acts of kindness and love, Abraham is associated with Chesed. Isaac represents the attribute of strict justice, Din. Jacob is connected to the attribute of mercy, Rachamim, which is seen as a balance between Chesed and Din. King David represents kingship, Malkhut and, together with the prior three, makes up the "four legs of the Throne." Moses and Aaron represent the sources of prophecy in the sefirot of Netzach and Hod. Lastly, Joseph represents righteousness, which corresponds to Yesod, also called Tzaddik, meaning righteousness.

The sefirot are called garments (levushim) in some texts. God clothed himself in ten sefirotic garments at the time of the creation of the world. These garments allow man to look at Divine light without going blind. Through study and meditation, the mystic is able to grow used to looking at one garment and can then penetrate through to the next. In this way, the sefirot serve as rungs on a ladder, as the mystic ascends to a greater understanding and perception of God.

## The Paths

To state that the paths connect the sefirot to each other is a gross oversimplification. The paths control the flow of energy from one sefirah to another, and give the tree its final form. The paths have their own detailed correspondences. Each path is represented by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. While different schools of mysticism use different methods of connecting the sefirot, one thing remains constant: the number of these paths is always 22 which, when combined with the ten sefirot, gives the number 32.

There are three different types of paths: three vertical, seven horizontal and twelve diagonal. The *Sefer Yetzirah* speaks of these as mothers, doubles and elementals. The mothers are all associated with instances when





God makes things: the firmament, the two luminaries, and the beasts of the field. The seven doubles correspond to the seven times when God saw things. Six of those times, God saw that His creation was good. The seventh time, He sees "all that He had made." The twelve elementals are connected with other actions which God did during the creation: the spirit of God hovered, God divided between the light and darkness, God called the light day, God called the firmament heaven, God called the dry land earth, God placed them (the luminaries) in the firmament, God created great whales, God blessed (the animals): be fruitful and multiply, God created man, God blessed (the man and the woman), God said to the man and woman "Be fruitful and multiply," and God said, "Behold I have given you all of these things."

### The Pillars

The diagram of the Tree contains three vertical rows which are called pillars, the middle being the longest. Each of these pillars has certain correspondences.

The Pillar of Severity runs from Binah to Hod. As a whole, these sefirot are seen as feminine and receptive. The Pillar of Mercy, running from Chokmah to Netzach, has masculine and active attributes.

The Middle Pillar, running from Keter to Malkhut, balances the two opposing forces with neutral and interrogative aspects, and is called the Pillar of Peace or Harmony.

## The Ten Sefirot

It is impossible to comprehend God if only one or two of the sefirot are understood. An understanding of the Divine may only be reached through study and meditation upon the sefirot in their entirety.

### Keter: Crown

The uppermost sefirah on the Tree of Life is Keter, the idea of the seed of ideas, God's pure mind. It is the crown of the Tree and, for that reason, the name of God which is associated with it is one of the most mystical of all, Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh. The saying from Genesis which is connected with Keter is "In the beginning, God created..." The part of the Tetragrammaton which corresponds to Keter is the top of the yud (Y).

Although Keter is found at the apex of the diagram there is still another level above it. Because Keter is the first emanation, there must be something from which Keter emanates. This level is called the Eyn Sof, the hidden, unknowable aspect of God, unimaginable by the human mind under any circumstances. The anthropomorphic language used in the scriptures refers only to the aspects of God revealed through creation and the sefirot. Many kabbalists believe that God should be referred to as "it" not as "He," since that pronoun only refers to the revealed God.

### Chokmah: Wisdom

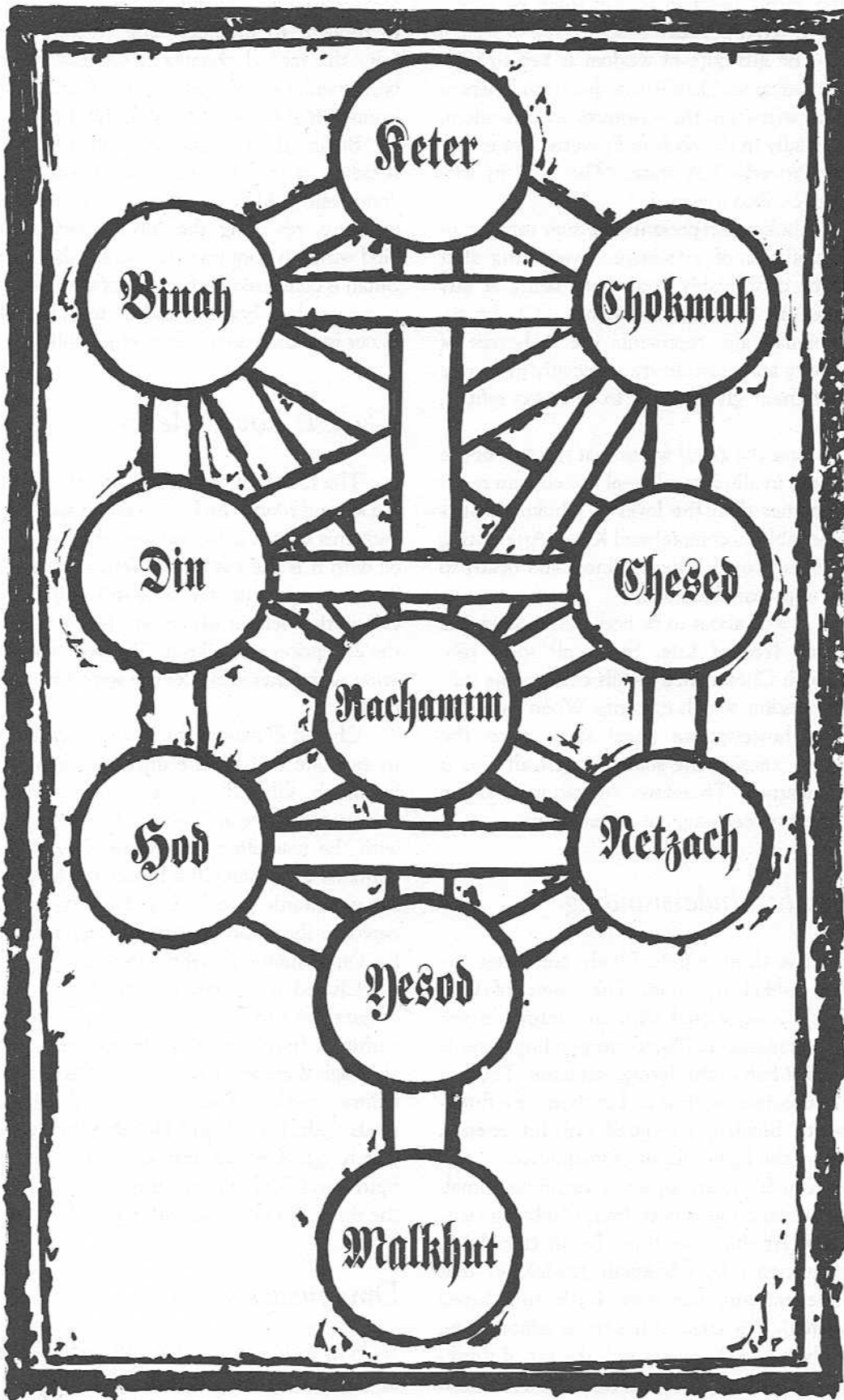
The second of the sefirot is Chokmah. The Divine name most often associated with it is Yah, meaning "Lord." The Saying associ-

## The Ten Sefirot

Sefirah	Translation	Pronunciation
Keter	Crown	(KEH-tehr)
Chokmah	Wisdom	(CHOHK-mah)
Binah	Understanding	(BEE-nah)
Chesed	Love	(CHEH-sehd)
Din*	Justice	(DEEN)
Rachamim**	Mercy	(rah-chah-MEEM)
Netzach	Victory	(NEH-tzach)
Hod	Splendor	(HOHD)
Yesod	Foundation	(YEH-sohd)
Malkhut	Kingship	(mahl-CHOOT)

\* also known as Gevurah, Strength (ge-VOOH-rah)

\*\* also known as Tiferet, Beauty (tih-FEH-reht)







ated with Chokmah is “Let there be light,” and its letter is Yud.

The attribute of wisdom is key to both Rabbinical and kabbalistic Judaism. There is much written in the scriptures about wisdom, especially in the book of Proverbs. For example, Proverbs 3:19 states “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth.”

Chokmah represents the sum total of all possibilities of existence. Everything that might conceivably come into being at any time is contained within Chokmah. Chokmah also represents the archetype of activity and masculinity, especially in its role as “father,” giving birth to the next sefirah, Binah.

Isaac the Blind wrote that the soul of the mystic, in all of its ethereal travels, can reach no higher than the level of Chokmah. It is impossible to comprehend Keter. Attempting to do so would bring madness and death to the unprepared kabbalist.

A soul about to be born passes down the entire Tree of Life. Since all souls pass through Chokmah, all souls contain the infinite wisdom which it grants. When a child is born, however, an angel slaps it on the mouth, causing the soul to forget all that it has learned. Therefore, education is not a process of learning, but remembrance.

### *Binah: Understanding*

The third sefirah, Binah, completes the first kabbalistic triad. The name of God which is associated with this sefirah is the Tetragrammaton. The corresponding letter is the first heh of the Tetragrammaton. The saying associated with it is “Let there be a firmament.” Binah is associated with hitbonenut, one of the higher forms of meditation.

Binah’s main aspect is feminine. Binah (understanding) is born from Chokmah (wisdom). At the same time, Binah (female) is impregnated by Chokmah (male), so that understanding can give birth to Chesed (mercy). The triad of the three sefirot, then, symbolize God’s pure mind, the act of thinking, and the object of his thought. The trio is

also seen as representing the progress from will to thought to intellect. The creation story from the second chapter of Genesis, which begins with God, then progresses from man to woman, is also associated with the trio.

Binah, through the attribute of understanding, is the interpretation of wisdom. It draws out hidden thoughts and gives them meaning, revealing the infinite wisdom of God which is contained in Chokmah. Often, Binah is compared to the roots of a tree which is watered by Chokmah and, in turn, branches out into the seven sefirot which follow.

### *Chesed: Love, Mercy*

The fourth of the sefirot, and the first of the second triad. The Divine name associated with this sefirah is El, and the letter associated with it is the vav of the Tetragrammaton. The vav represents not only this sefirah, but every other sefirah which falls below it, with the exception of Malkhut. The saying associated with Chesed is “Let the waters be gathered.”

Chesed illustrates the Divine inclination to emanate and fill the universe. Emanated by Binah, Chesed represents the power of unmitigated love and mercy. It is associated with the masculine side of the Tree, which contains the “masculine beauties.” The tendency towards pure love and mercy is tempered by its counterpart on the opposite pillar, Din, which represents judgment.

Chesed also is said to correspond to one of the three parts of the human soul. The soul within a living body contains three parts, although there are actually five parts of a soul before birth. These parts are called Neshamah, Ruach, and Nefesh, three words which can best be translated as Pneuma, Spirit, and Soul. Nefesh, the highest level of the three, is associated with Chesed.

### *Din: Justice*

The fifth of the sefirot is Din, also known as Gevurah (strength), although Din is the

older of the two appellations. The name of God which is associated with this sefirah is Elohim. The saying associated with Din is "Let the Earth give forth vegetation."

Din, being on the Pillar of Severity, is considered a feminine sefirah. It tempers the attribute of Mercy, allowing God to limit His goodness where necessary. Din therefore represents the tendency to withhold emanation, since too much emanation would not allow the universe to exist. In its pure form, Din embodies the power of severity and absolute justice. The combination of Chesed's unqualified love and Din's strict and unforgiving justice gives birth to the sixth of the sefirot, Rachamim, which contains the element of tempered judgment.

This sefirah is associated with the second part of the soul, Ruach.

### *Rachamim: Mercy*

The sixth sefirah is also known by the name Tiferet (beauty). It is the "child" of Chesed and Din, embodying the concept of wholeness and balance between unlimited kindness and unlimited justice. The Divine name associated with Rachamim is the Tetragrammaton, YHVH. The biblical saying associated with this sefirah is "Let there be luminaries (i.e., the sun and the moon)."

Rachamim is said to be the aspect which finds its fullest representation in the tangible Torah, the written law. It is also said to be a mirror that shines with an inner light. Tradition has it that Moses was able to gaze through this mirror. Other prophets, however, cannot attain this lofty level and must be content to gaze through the mirror that does not shine, one of the attributes associated with the last sefirah, Malkhut.

This sefirah is associated with the first part of the soul, Neshamah.

The triad formed by Chesed, Din, and Rachamim represents three archetypes of God's ethical perfection, the moral attributes of unqualified love, strict and unforgiving justice, and tempered judgment. While Rachamim emanates from Din, it is said to be

the son of Chokmah and Binah and is, therefore, a masculine sefirah. Prayers which emphasize God as the father and king are usually prayers referring to Rachamim in particular or, through it, to the other sefirot in general. One such prayer mentions God as Av ha-rachamim, the father of mercy.

### *Netzach: Victory*

Netzach is the seventh of the sefirot. It is associated with the Divine name Adonai Tz'vaot and the corresponding saying is "Let the waters swarm."

It is said that Netzach, together with the eighth sefirah, Hod, embodies the means by which God governs the world. It is also seen as a "lower manifestation" of Rachamim. It is a filter through which mercy flows on its way to the sefirah of Yesod and Malkhut. Netzach and Hod, being very close to the bottom of the Tree, are the means by which divine preservation of the world is assured. They are the agents of God's guidance to the world. These sefirot are the channels of inspiration, the field of prophetic vision. Netzach focuses its energies upon Yesod, fueling the prophetic spirit. Yesod, the ninth sefirah, is the seat of prophecy, the place which must be attained before any true connection with the Divine can occur.

Netzach and Hod are often spoken of together, sometimes being referred to as twins. In some kabbalistic texts, it is assumed that any mention of twins or pairs is probably a symbolic reference to these sefirot.

### *Hod: Splendor*

The eighth sefirah is Hod. The name it is associated with is Elohim Tz'vaot and the saying corresponding to it is "Let the earth bring forth animals."

Hod is the lower manifestation of the sefirah above it on the pillar, the sefirah of Din. Like Netzach, it filters the emanations of its higher sefirah, serving to temper Din as those energies flow to Yesod and Malkhut. It





serves as a channel of inspiration for prophetic visions.

In some of the earlier texts, such as the *Bahir*, Netzach and Hod are listed in the ninth and tenth position. Sometimes the sefirot are used to correspond to various parts of the body and since Yesod and Malkhut are the male and female sexual organs, Netzach and Hod become the legs and are therefore below those two sefirot. This particular arrangement is not common.

### *Yesod: Foundation*

Yesod, the ninth of the sefirot, is connected with two Divine names, Shaddai and El Chai, the former having the connotation of nurturing, the latter of life. The saying associated with it is "Let us make man." The alternate name, Tzaddik (righteous one), is sometimes used because scripture says the righteous man is the foundation of the world.

Yesod represents the pure procreative power of God. It is associated with the penis in many texts and there are numerous writings which pertain to the mystical conjunction of Yesod and Malkhut, which is receptive and associated with the feminine aspect of the Divine, the Shekhinah.

Although it is listed ninth in this chapter, it is listed seventh in the *Bahir*, above Netzach and Hod.

### *Malkhut: Kingdom/Kingship*

The last of the sefirot is Malkhut, corresponding to the level upon which all humanity currently dwells. The name of God associated with it is Adonai and the Divine saying is "Be fruitful and multiply." This sefirah is associated with the moon, which is designat-

ed as feminine. The letter associated with this sefirah is the final heh of the Tetragrammaton.

As Rachamim is associated with the written law, so Malkhut is associated with the oral law. Malkhut, being feminine, is connected very strongly with the Shekhinah and the Shabbat, since one of the important symbols of the Shabbat is the Shabbat Queen.

Malkhut is called "the mirror that does not shine." This is the medium that all prophets look through to see their visions. It is said that if the mirror was not obscured or filtered, it would be overwhelming.

In some of the earlier texts, Malkhut is listed in the seventh position, because the Sabbath is the seventh day and placing it in the seventh position accentuates that correspondence.

### *The Four Universes*

Not only does the Tree of Life take the mystic on a journey from Malkhut to Keter, but also takes him on a journey through four supernal universes. Each of these universes represents a particular level of the creative process. As the kabbalist grows more aware in his perceptions of the pure emanations embodied by the sefirot, he also gains in understanding of these realms. The four universes are alluded to in this verse from Isaiah: All that is called by My name, for My Glory (Atzilut), I have Created it (Beriyah), I have Formed it (Yetzirah), and I have made it (Asiyah).

Each of the universes has its own Tree of Life. These trees stack one atop the other, lining up the Malkhut of one tree above the Rachamim of the tree below. This is "Jacob's Ladder," the pattern which Jacob saw in his great dream. A well-trained mystic can work to achieve a proper understanding of Rachamim and, from there, journey onward to the next higher tree's Malkhut and begin again from there.

"Then immediately my heart was enlightened like the gates of the east, and my eyes gazed into the depths and paths of Torah, and never again did I forget anything my ears heard from my teacher, of study; nor would I ever again forget anything of the paths of Torah in which I engaged for their truth."

—From the *Merkavah Rabbah*

# Meditation

After knowledge of the Tree of Life, meditation is probably the most important aspect of Kabbalah. From Talmudic times, meditation has been recognized as necessary for anybody who desired to enter into the mysteries. All prayer, done properly, is a form of meditation. There is no mystical task which is not aided by meditation.

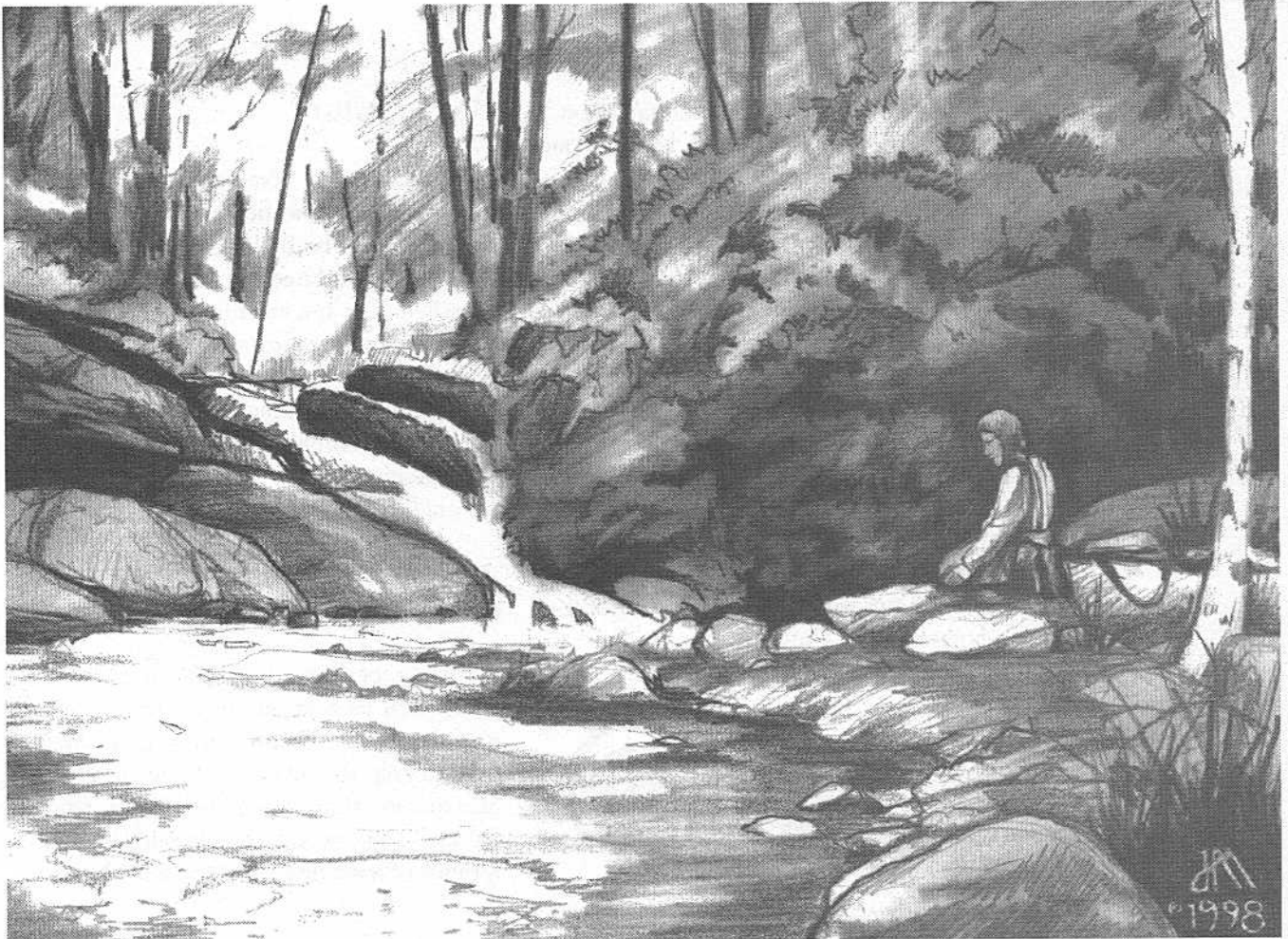
The main purpose of meditation, no matter what the kabbalist was using it for, was to bind the soul to a higher level, to attain enlightenment. This would allow the mystic to receive wisdom that he would not normally be able to comprehend and, in some cases, to be able to predict the future. There are many methods of meditation, including recitation of scripture, recitation of holy

names, performing acts to emulate God, song, prayer, dance, ritual motions and body positions, quietude, and stillness.

Every prophet mentioned in the Bible meditated. The Book of Joshua requires that the teaching of Moses should be meditated upon day and night. Maimonides wrote that an individual who truly masters meditative techniques becomes worthy of Ruach HaKodesh, the holy spirit, and his soul ascends to the level of the angels.

## Meditation and Kabbalah

There are three basic forms of meditation within the Kabbalah: hitbodedut, hitbonenut and devakut. All of these utilize the technique of kavannah.





## Kavannah

Although not a form of meditation, *kavannah* is necessary in any meditative exercise. The word comes from the Hebrew root which means "to direct," indicating that the purpose of meditation must be directed to God. The importance of purpose flows through all of Kabbalah.

## Hitbodedut

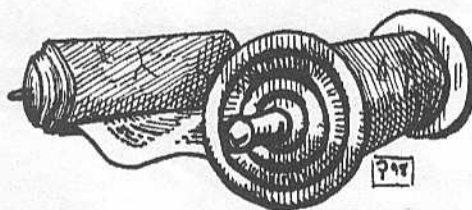
Derived from the word *badad* which means "to be secluded" or "to be alone," *hitbodedut* refers to a state of internal isolation where the individual mentally secludes his essence from his thoughts. *Hitbodedut* is isolation of the soul from all external and internal stimuli. It is the form of meditation used to prophesy.

## Hitbonenut

*Hitbonenut*, meaning "contemplation," is the form of meditation which brings about understanding. A mystic would hold in his mind's eye a word, phrase, or image, and gaze upon it until its inner meaning became clear. The subject of contemplation fills the mind, acting as a gateway to higher consciousness.

## Devakut

*Devakut* is best defined as a "mystical cleaving" or "mystical attachment" to God. It is a method of bringing one to higher levels by doing things which are reminiscent of the attributes of God. The purpose is to adhere to the Divine, not to merge with it.



## Common Threads in Meditation

### Music

Said the prophet Elijah, "Get me a musician." As he listened to the music, the hand of the Lord came upon him, and he received a prophecy. King Saul comes upon a band of prophets who are playing music and prophesying. Their music transports Saul and he, too, is able to prophesy.

Music is one of the easiest ways to put the mind in an altered state in which the mystic's consciousness can attain the necessary separation needed for advanced meditation. Music is also able to alter the mystic's mood, since, according to many, it is not possible to properly meditate when in a depressed state of mind.

### Body Posture

Kabbalists are sometimes told that they should meditate while standing with their feet together. The Bible shows a second position, that of kneeling with hands outstretched. The ten reaching fingers represent the power of the sefirot which the mystic uses to focus power. A third position, sitting with head between the knees, is alluded to many times in both Biblical and Talmudic writings. The prophet Elijah used this position to channel spiritual energy, producing rain.

### Divine Names

The repetition of Divine names is sometimes used as a means to achieve a proper meditative state. Names are chanted over and over to help the mystic clear his mind of all extraneous thoughts not related to the Divine. The Second Temple rabbis taught a formula of repeating Divine names 112 times.

# Gematria

Gematria is the Jewish variant of numerology. Those who use gematria can discover hidden connections between the passages and words of the great books, illuminating their understanding and bringing them closer to the Divine.

The letters of the Hebrew alphabet double as numbers. The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, aleph, is not just associated with the number 1, but is the representation of 1, just as the second letter is also 2 and so on. A complete listing of the Hebrew alphabet and the number which each letter stands for can be found on page 154.

Because each letter doubles as a number, each word or phrase of the Bible adds up to another number. By examining words, phrases, or verses with identical numeric value, kabbalists seek to gain insight into the relationships between those passages. For example, the numerical equivalent of the word for strength, *gevurah*, is the same as that of the word for lion, *aryeh*, 226. There are fourteen finger bones in a person's hand and the word for hand in Hebrew, *yad*, has the numerical value of fourteen.

## Methods of Gematria

The truths waiting to be discovered in gematria are infinite. Unfortunately, this leads to as much confusion as insight.

### *Simple Totals*

The most basic gematria is figuring out what the numerical value of a given word is, without going further and taking into account other words or phrases which may match that number. For example, the word *lev* means heart. The gematria for *lev* is 32 which is, of course, the number of paths in the Tree of Life. The last and first letters of

the Torah spell the word *lev*, which shows that the entire Torah is to be held in the heart.

### *Simple Correspondences*

The total of a word or phrase can be used to cast additional light on another word or phrase, as with the totals of the words for lion and strength. For example, a verse from the Song of Songs "I have gone down into the nut garden" is equal to the phrase "This is the depth of the chariot."

### *Squaring the Values*

This method of gematria involves the squaring of the value of each letter before they are totaled. Usually, the value of the Tetragrammaton is 26: yud is 10, heh is 5, hah is 6. But if those numbers are squared, yud becomes 100, heh becomes 25 (of which there are two) and vav becomes 36, for a total of 186. Another important name for God, *Makom*, shares that value.

### *Adding Extra Numbers*

It is perfectly acceptable, in any form of gematria, to take the final value and add to it either the number of letters in the word or



## An Important Note on Hebrew Numbers

Numbers above 10 are created by combinations of letters (such as yud aleph standing for 11). There are two numbers which do not follow this convention, the numbers 15 and 16. Normally, the number 15 would be written as yud heh. This creates the word *yah* which is another name for God. For that reason, 15 is written tet vav: 9 and 6, which add up to 15. Similarly, the number 16 would normally be written as yud vav, but this would be two letters of the Tetragrammaton in order. Therefore, 16 is written as tet zion: 9 and 7, which add up to 16.



the number 1, the 1 representing, in most cases, the singularity of the Divine.

### *The Atbash Cipher*

This method of calculation involves the juxtaposition of letters. Aleph, the first letter, is replaced by tav, the last letter. Bet, the second letter, is replaced with shin, the next to last letter, and so on. The scripture says that the Hebrew people will be strangers in a strange land for 400 years. The word for stranger in Hebrew is ger. However, using the cipher, the gimmel may be replaced by another resh (RR), yielding the number 400.

Another example of the use of this cipher is in the Hebrew word for commandment, mitzvah. The four letters of this word are MTzVH. Using the cipher, one can substitute a yud for the mem and a heh for the tzaddik, thus giving YHVH — the Tetragrammaton — showing the connection between God and the commandments.

## Dream Interpretation

Within both Judaism and Kabbalah, dreams are seen as a means by which God communicates with people. Not all dreams can be seen as such, and that is where the dream interpreter steps in, helping to determine whether or not a particular dream is a genuine revelation from the Divine. Dream interpreters are able to translate the oft-times difficult symbols within an individual's dreams and make clear to him the deeper meaning. The symbolic references are of the utmost importance, and can both foretell the future and give clearer insight into the present.

In the Bible, the ability to interpret dreams is seen as a God-given talent that is limited to a select few, the most memorable

being Joseph. When Joseph interprets, he denies that he is interpreting by his own power, avowing that God allows him to interpret, even saying in one case that "interpretations belong to God."

Dream interpretation was big business in the days of the Second Temple. In Jerusalem alone there were no less than 24 interpreters of dreams. Dream interpretation was taken very seriously, as were dreams themselves. Interpreters often used methods that seem quite modern in order to deliver the most accurate sense of a dream they could. The rabbis of the Talmudic period discussed dream symbols and the art of their interpretation at great length.

## Rabbinical Attitudes

The rabbis of old held that dreams were one sixtieth part prophecy, as sleep is one sixtieth part death. A dream not interpreted is like a letter not read. All dreams have an interpretation, but there is no such thing as a clear dream. After all, "there cannot be a dream without some nonsense."

Although there are good dreams and bad dreams, a man who goes without dreaming for seven days to avoid a bad dream is evil for he has denied himself Divine communication. Sometimes, a bad dream is better than a good dream, because they bring about repentance. Since no dream is ever totally fulfilled, bad dreams should be welcomed, not feared.

## Kabbalistic Attitudes

Mystics link the ability to receive dreams to proper meditation. The word for dream is chalom, the root of which is chalam, "to strengthen," meaning that dreams are caused by the strength and vitality of a soul when it overcomes the body. When a kabbalist has meditated properly, he is receptive to prophetic dreams.

Dreams can also be granted. A dream

interpreter made his living not only from interpreting dreams brought to him, but by sending requested dreams into the minds of paying customers.

## Interpreting Dreams

There may be many possible meanings for a given symbol, and many symbols can mean the same thing, depending upon the dreamer himself. The following sections deal with specific types of interpretations, and provide a rough example of the tools of the interpreter's trade.

### *Intersecting Symbols, Crossover Meanings*

Dreams which contain a river, a bird, or an overflowing cauldron all represent peace.

In the first instance, a river which serenely traverses a country indicates tranquility in the territory of that country. In the second instance, a bird which flies across international boundaries, mountains, and seas stands for global peace and harmony. In the last example, a pot brimming with nourishing food hints at domestic, personal peace.

When puzzling out intersecting symbols, the interpreter must consider his client. If a lowly peasant dreamed of a bird, for example, the meaning of "international peace" would not be warranted. The interpretation given for the dream about the river and the dream about the bird are reserved for those who would be expected to be concerned with greater peace rather than personal peace.

The interpreter must take more into account than the social status of the dreamer. The profession of the dreamer may come into play as well. For example, a scholar's dream of a tree might be interpreted as a sign that he is to be raised to a position of authority, since







the sefirot is called a Tree of Life. On the other hand, a thief who dreams of a tree may be seeing an omen of the gallows, since it is a construct of wood.

### Allusions to Biblical passages

Many dreams tie into specific Biblical passages, requiring the interpreter to have a working knowledge of scripture. Three examples from the Talmud are:

- Dreaming of a vine laden with fruit means that one's wife will not have a miscarriage, based upon the passage "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine," because wine, unlike other foods, improves with age.
- Goats symbolize a year filled with blessings, based on the passage "The goats' milk will be enough for your food."
- A goose in a dream signifies wisdom, because of the verse "Wisdom cries aloud in the streets."

### Dreaming About Sex

Dreams with sexual content are often seen in very positive light, even if the sex within those dreams goes against the laws as set forth in Torah. The rabbis give a very positive interpretation of dream-intercourse with

one's mother, because a proverb says, "Thou wilt call understanding 'mother.'" Similarly, dream-intercourse with one's sister foretells wisdom, according to the proverb, "Say to wisdom, 'thou art my sister.'" This interpretation, of course, would not apply to somebody who has been accused of a sexual crime.

### Wordplay and Dreams

The rabbis realized that many times dreams reveal their meanings by way of wordplay or symbolic puns. A man once dreamt his nose fell off. The rabbi said this dream meant that anger had been removed from the dreamer, since the word "af" denotes both nose and anger.

### Variations on a Theme

Many times a symbol can appear in different ways, with each variation's interpretation taking on a slightly different meaning or shade. Here are a number of different interpretations of the symbol of death, according to the rabbis:

- If the dead are stealing from the living, one of the dreamer's relatives will die.
- If the dead are giving implements of iron or weapons of war to the living, then wherever the dreamer travels he can rest assured and have no apprehension.
- If the dreamer is offered a gift from a dead person and refuses, something bad will happen.
- If the dreamer is visiting people where somebody has died, something will happen in which God will come close to him.
- If he sees himself in a grave, he will be handed over to a cruel person.
- If there is a corpse in the house, it is a sign of peace in the house (because the memory of the dead is not being repressed).
- If the corpse eats and drinks in the house, it is a good sign for the house.

## Dream Interpretation in the Talmud

A certain man went to Rabbi Jose ben Chalafta and said to him, "I was told in a dream, 'Go and bring the fruits of your father's labors from Cappadocia'"

"Did your father ever visit Cappadocia?" the rabbi inquired. On hearing a negative response, he said to the man: "Go and count twenty boards in the flooring of your house, and you will find what you have been ordered to seek."

"But there are not twenty boards there," the dreamer replied.

"If that is the case," said the rabbi, "count from the beginning to the end and back again, and you will find it."

The dreamer went and did as he had been told.

How did the Rabbi deduce this? From the word Cappadocia! (kappa = 20; dokia = boards)

- If the corpse takes an article from the house, it is a bad sign for the house.

Other rabbis say that anything that the dead take away is considered a good sign, unless what they take is a shoe or a sandal (the explanation here is that it means the master of the house is either going with the deceased or is going to lose his foothold in the streets, that is, his business or other endeavors will not go well).

Anything that the corpse puts down is a good sign, except for dust and mustard, both of which are associated with the grave and with burial.

If a dreamer sees dead people in a dream it is a good sign if he is healthy, but a bad sign if he is sick.

## Talmudic Dream Symbols

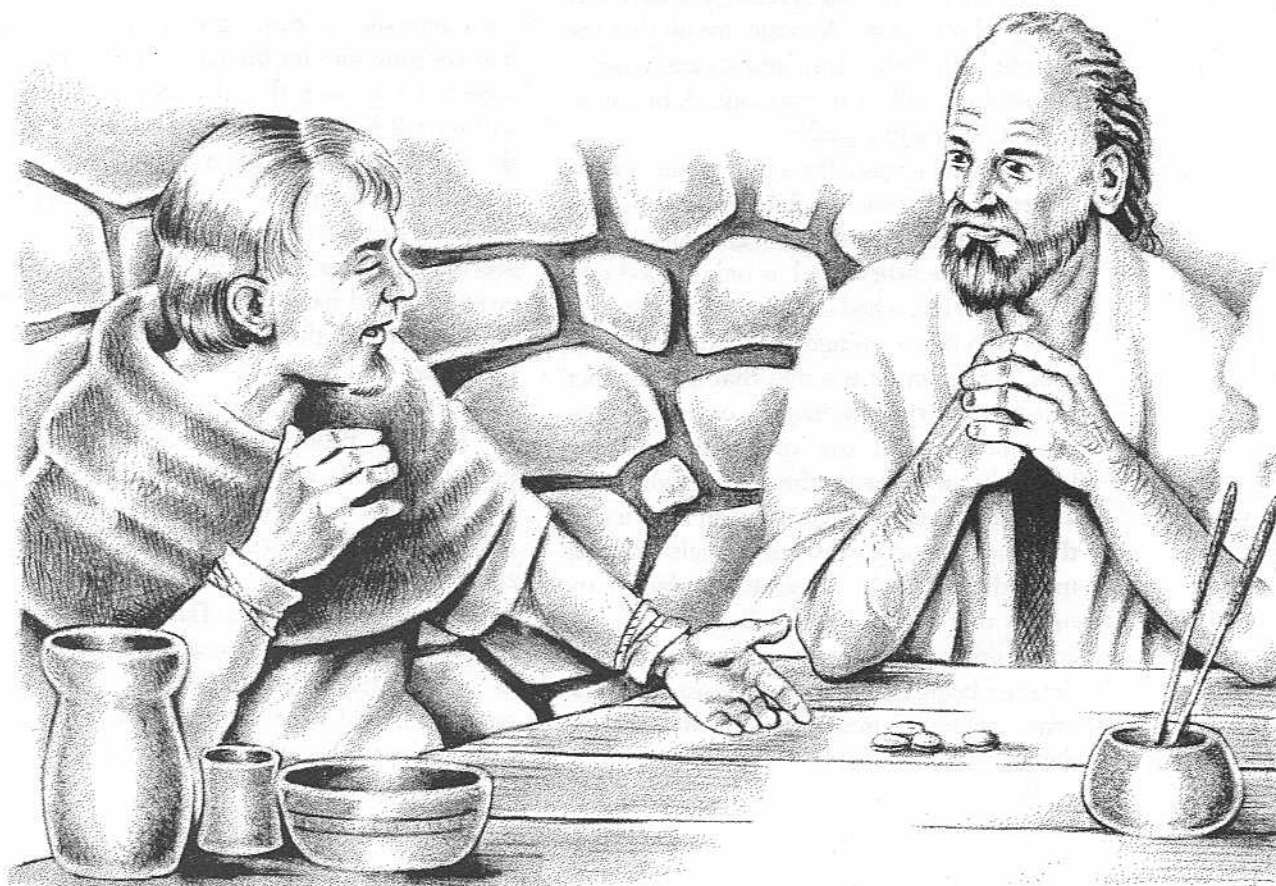
There are a number of symbols to which the Talmud gives positive interpretations

even though, on the surface, it might not seem that such a symbol would be treated well.

### Foods

It is common for an individual to see himself eating in dreams. The Talmud says that all kinds of fruits and vegetables are good signs with the exception of unripe dates and turnip-tops. Other foods are handled more specifically. White grapes are always a good sign but red grapes are only a good sign when they are in season, a bad sign otherwise. Seeing wheat is an indication that the dreamer will see peace.

Trees also factor into dreams. Seeing a fig tree is an indication that learning will be preserved within the dreamer. Seeing an olive tree is an indication that the dreamer will have many sons and a palm tree in a dream means that any iniquities which beset the dreamer will come to an end.





Other food symbols apply to learning or to business. For example, if little pomegranates are seen it means the dreamer's business will increase. Large pomegranates are an indication of even greater growth. Similarly, seeing little olives also indicates that business will increase.

## Animals

According to the rabbis, seeing animals in dreams is a good sign with rare exceptions. Seeing a monkey or a long-tailed ape is never a good sign. Seeing an elephant is a good sign, and wonders shall be wrought for the dreamer, but only if the animal is saddled. Otherwise, it is a bad omen. If a serpent is seen in a dream, it means that the dreamer's living is assured. If the serpent bites the dreamer, it means that his living will be doubled. However, if the dreamer kills the serpent, it is a sure indication that he will lose his livelihood. Seeing a goat means that the dreamer will have a blessed year, and seeing several goats indicates several blessed years. A rooster means that the dreamer will have a son, and several roosters means there will be several sons. A hen is an indication of a fine garden.

As with grapes, the color of an animal sometimes matters. A white horse is a good sign, whether it is walking or galloping. A red horse, on the other hand, is only a good sign if it is walking; a bad sign if it is galloping.

Oxen factor strongly in dream interpretation. Eating an ox is a sign that the dreamer will become rich. Riding an ox means that the dreamer will rise to greatness. Being kicked by an ox means the dreamer will go on a long journey. Being gored by an ox is a sign that the dreamer's sons will struggle together in study of Torah. Being bitten by an ox means that the dreamer will have suffering come upon him. The rare instance of the dreamer being ridden by an ox, instead of the other way round, means that the dreamer will die.

## Religious Activities and Historical Figures

Putting on tefillin is an indication that the dreamer can look forward to greatness. Praying in a dream is also a good sign, provided that the prayer is not finished.

The dreamer may hope for piety if he sees any of a number of signs, including King David, the Book of Kings, the Book of Psalms, or the Song of Songs. Other figures and books indicate wisdom: King Solomon, the book of Ezekiel, the book of Proverbs, and the book of Ecclesiastes. The dreamer should fear Divine punishment, though, if he sees King Ahab, the Book of Jeremiah, Book of Job, or Book of Lamentations. Seeing the scroll of Esther is a sure indication that a miracle will be wrought for him.

## Miscellaneous Symbols

There are a number of other, sometimes common, symbols, many of which have excellent connotations for the dreamer. Entering a large town is a sign that the dreamer's desire will be fulfilled. If the dreamer sees himself shaving his head it is a good sign but if he sees himself shaving his head and his beard, the good sign extends to his family. Similarly, if he sees himself sitting in a small boat, he will acquire a good name. Sitting in a large boat on the open sea, though, means a good name for himself and his family.

If the dreamer is arrested, it is a sign that he will be protected. If he is put in neckchains, this shows that additional protection will be bestowed. If he is tied in ropes, this additional protection does not take effect.

These examples from Talmud show that the rabbis were able to see nearly everything as a potentially beneficial sign and storyguides should keep this in mind when it comes time for a dream to be interpreted.

# Chapter 6

## Practical Kabbalah



### Character Creation

A kabbalist takes up a player's magus slot. Kabbalists are believed to possess the Gift, but do not suffer the usual social penalties associated with the Gift.

Because all kabbalists are ordained rabbis, all kabbalist characters must be male (though see the sidebar on page 84 for suggestions on playing female kabbalists in alternative sagas). Kabbalists may take up to ten points of Virtues and Flaws, in addition to the Virtues automatically conferred by the kabbalist template. Some Virtues are available to a kabbalist at a discounted cost, described in the template below.

### Kabbalist Template

**Starting Abilities:** Concentration 3, Gematria 2, Kabbalah 3, Merkavah 2, Occult Lore 3, Scribe Hebrew 3, Speak Hebrew 5, Speak Own Language 4, Theology: Judaism 3

**Starting Purity:** 2

**Starting Experience Points:** (age +10) (minimum age 30 – Int)

**Automatic Virtues** (at no cost): Rabbi (page 115), Gematria (page 116), Purity (page 116)

**Recommended Abilities:** Angelic Lore, Disputatio, Judaic Lore, Leadership, Rabbinical Law, Scribe Aramaic, Speak Aramaic

### Required Flaw

*Outsider* –2: Even in the most tolerant of lands, the Jewish people are alien to the dominant social group of the area. You have a bad reputation +3 among the Gentiles of the area. (Although this Flaw is “required,” it does count against the 10 Flaw points kabbalist characters are allowed, and does allow the purchase of two points of corresponding Virtues.)

### Typical and Discounted Virtues and Flaws

*Craft Amulet* +2, *Incantation* +4: Many kabbalists pursue the more practical side of Kabbalah, although doing so often impedes the growth of Purity. See page 107 for details. *Dream Interpretation (Discounted)* +3: While Theology: Judaism confers much on the wisdom of dreams, the Exceptional Ability must be purchased separately.

*True Faith (Discounted)* +2: Kabbalists with True Faith place the spiritual welfare of the Jewish Quarter in general above their own quest for Purity. For a kabbalist to increase True Faith, he must sacrifice esoteric study for years of public service as a spiritual leader. Note that Purity and True Faith have no effect on each other, as each is concerned with different goals.

*Incomprehensible* (–3): Kabbalists, like Hermetic magi, may suffer from an eccentric understanding of divine magic. All ritual rolls



and Talmudic Disputation are at -3. *Expenses (-1)*: This is a common Flaw for kabbalists, representing the obligation of Tzedakah (see page 34).

## Purity

The pursuit of spiritual perfection is the driving goal of all kabbalists. In *Ars Magica*, this endless pursuit is measured by the rise and fall of the kabbalist's **Purity** score. Purity is a kabbalist's most important trait, affecting all aspects of the character's life, especially his magical abilities. All kabbalists begin with a Purity of 2.

### Increasing Purity

Purity is achieved by furthering the ideals of Judaism. While game-related examples are provided here, a detailed discussion of Jewish spirituality is provided in Chapter 3. Purity cannot be achieved passively, such as simply entering quiet hermitage. Instead, Jewish spiritualism has a strong active component, requiring the Jewish faithful to actively seek

out friendship, to spread learning, and do good works. A kabbalist character's search for Purity should be a welcome roleplaying challenge.

Each season, the storyguide (or troupe) decides whether the kabbalist character has sufficiently pursued the increase of Purity in that time. If the kabbalist actively strove for Purity, he earns the equivalent of one experience point in Purity for that season. This is not an experience point reward in the typical sense. Rather, it is a mechanical measure of the kabbalist's achievements. No other experience points from any other source can ever be spent on Purity. Once the kabbalist's experience in Purity exceeds his current Purity score by 1, he adds 1 level to his Purity score, and loses the accumulated experience points.

### Losing Purity

The storyguide determines when a kabbalist has committed an impure act sufficient to decrease Purity. Loss of Purity is always measured in 1 or more full levels of decrease, the exact amount depending upon the gravity of the sin. Loss of Purity is immediate, rather than at the end of each season. For example, Rabbi Zalman neglects his wife for

## Women Kabbalists

While the Talmud prohibits women from carrying out some of the legal duties of rabbis, there is no direct mitzvot or halakhah against women engaging in scholarly rabbinical studies. There are many wives and daughters of rabbis who are famed for their own wisdom and understanding. Some wedding contracts even state that one of the wife's responsibilities will be to teach the husband Torah. Furthermore, since women are usually stronger in Binah than men, female kabbalists are at least plausible.

Female kabbalists will not be able to carry out the legal responsibilities of the rabbi, but this does not hamper their mystical development. Raising children and keeping house are meditative tasks. There would be little or no loss of Purity involved, especially since women

are exempt from many of the positive commandments that their other tasks keep them from. While on the surface it may appear that niddah leads to a loss of Purity, the mikvah afterwards removes the impurity. This should have no impact on the game.

In communities that allow woman kabbalists, often due to a doting father or husband (or most likely both), it is not too far-fetched to see the woman accepted in rabbinical disputation circles. Such behavior might cause some disconcertion from visitors to the community.

Woman kabbalists, if allowed, would be created as any other kabbalist. The differences are all in roleplaying and community acceptance, the same issues that female characters find in all aspects of Mythic Europe.

over a month. The storyguide decides his Purity drops 2 levels, from 6 to 4.

## Lesser of Two Evils

Sometimes, in the furtherance of an important goal, a kabbalist will have to commit minor sins. For example, although traveling to Provence to study with Isaac the Blind is a worthy act for a kabbalist, doing so will require leaving his family behind. Unless the kabbalist is truly acting selfishly, the storyguide should permit such lapses without requiring the loss of Purity.

## Effects of Purity

The constant effects of Purity follow.

**Natural Magic Resistance:** Add Purity to all natural resistance rolls.

**Resist Aging:** Subtract Purity from a kabbalist's aging rolls. Other sources of age resistance (such as baal shem amulets) are not cumulative with this bonus; only the source with the highest benefit is applied to the roll. A kabbalist's aging roll is made with a quality die. Purity is not added to Stamina to determine when aging begins.

**Resist Injury:** Add Purity to all soak rolls.

**Resist Illness:** Add Purity to all Stamina rolls against poison or disease.

**Inspiration:** Add half Purity, rounded down, to Leadership rolls when interacting with Jewish people.

**Attention from the Infernal:** Unfortunately, demons are attracted to characters with high Purity, and enjoy hatching elaborate plots to lead such characters into sin. See Chapter 8 for details.

## The Limit of Purity

Purity limits the magic a kabbalist can perform in various ways, which are detailed as the powers of kabbalists are introduced below.

## Ritual Purity: Yihudim

Some kabbalists have developed a system of purity rites, called **Yihud** ("unification," plural Yihudim). Kabbalists conduct Yihudim for three purposes. Yihud, or so practitioners claim, unifies God and the Shekhinah, God's female manifestation (see page 134). Additionally, the rites of Yihud unify the soul

### Example Purity Maintaining Actions

(Actions that maintain, but do not increase, Purity)

- Maintaining dietary requirements.
- Frequent sexual intercourse with your spouse.
- Observing the holidays.
- Spending a season in self-contemplation (see page 92).
- Spending a season in study, research, or Talmudic disputation (see page 58).

### Examples Purity Increasing Actions

#### Charity (Tzedakah)

- Donating texts to a yeshiva library.
- Funding a poor student's entry into a yeshiva.
- Helping an impoverished family rebuild its home.

#### Brotherhood and Love

- Making a new friend.
- Negotiating less-restrictive laws with the local lord.
- Saving an innocent from a lynch mob.

#### Marriage and Sex

- Falling in love and marrying.
- Having and raising children.
- Striving for emotional intimacy with your spouse.

#### Modesty (Tznius)

- Achieving rapport with an angel through Merkavah (see page 95).
- Gaining a (true) good reputation in the Jewish Quarter.
- Increasing positive Personality Traits (such as Bravery, Curiosity, or Honor).



of the adept who performs them with the soul of God. Finally, Yihudim aid the atonement of sins and the purification from sin.

Yihudim involve *kavvanah*, the meditation upon the secret meanings of prayers, and elements of sacrifice, such as fasting, sexual abstinence, and ascetic pursuits. Yihud requires the kabbalist to give up many of the pleasures of God's world. This itself is a sin, and so some rabbis have forbidden its practice. When performed in moderation, however, and out of love for God, the Yihudim purify kabbalists with the loving embrace of the Shekhinah.

A kabbalist may practice Yihud a maximum of one season each year. At the end of a season devoted to Yihud, the kabbalist rolls a quality die + Stamina + Theology: Judaism. If the result is at least three times the kabbalist's current Purity score, he gains 3 experience points in Purity. If the result is at least twice the kabbalist's Purity score, he gains 2 experience points in Purity. If the result is equal to or greater than the kabbalist's Purity score, he only gains 1 experience point. If the result is lower than the kabbalist's current Purity, or if the kabbalist has already spent a season of Yihud this year, he loses 1 level of Purity.

## Golems

The *golem* is the best-known creature from Jewish folklore. Creating a man from simple clay is the pinnacle achievement of the kabbalist because it shows that he has mastered the *Sefer Yetzirah*, has attained a high Purity, and has grasped the creative essence of the Divine. This section contains everything that a player will need to know in order for his kabbalist character to create his own golem, from full man to lesser creations.

### Creating a Golem

Although golems share common features, there is no single method for creating one. Each kabbalist must design his own formula before performing the **creation ritual**. Golem **creation formulae** consist of letter-combinations, chants, and other procedures. Other kabbalists, of course, may always assist in each stage of creating a golem. Like all other kabbalistic feats, creating a golem is intended to be a cooperative task.

## Example Impure Acts

### Minor Sins (1 to 2 level loss)

- Breaking a dietary law.
- Having an opportunity to perform a mitzvah, but declining.
- Failing to properly observe a minor holiday.
- Neglecting marital duties.
- Performing magic for selfish, personal gain.

### Major Sins (3 to 4 level loss or more)

- Abusing your spouse or children.
- Cheating a friend, business partner, or spouse.
- Not giving any level of tzedakah for an entire season.
- Spreading gossip.

### Moderate Sins (2 to 3 level loss)

- Endangering the welfare of others.
- Failing to properly observe a major holiday.
- Intentionally listening to gossip.
- Taking advantage of a friend or business relationship.

### Ultimate Sins (complete loss of Purity)

- Damaging the welfare of the entire Jewish Quarter.
- Murder (true self defense is exempted).
- Performing necromancy.
- Practicing any form of idolatry.

## Designing the Formula

Designing a creation formula of a golem is similar to doing Hermetic laboratory work in many respects.

**Choosing the Form:** First, the kabbalist must choose the form which the golem will take. Each form has a required Formula Level. There are three forms of golems mentioned in Judaic literature.

Form	Formula Level	Req. Purity
Dove	10	2+
Calf	20	4+
Man	30	6+

**The Limitation of Purity:** A kabbalist should not design a formula for a golem whose Required Purity is higher than his own Purity score. If he does, he brings a tragedy of hubris upon himself (see page 101). For example, Zalman has a Purity of 4. He can create a dove or calf, but it is beyond his ken to make a man.

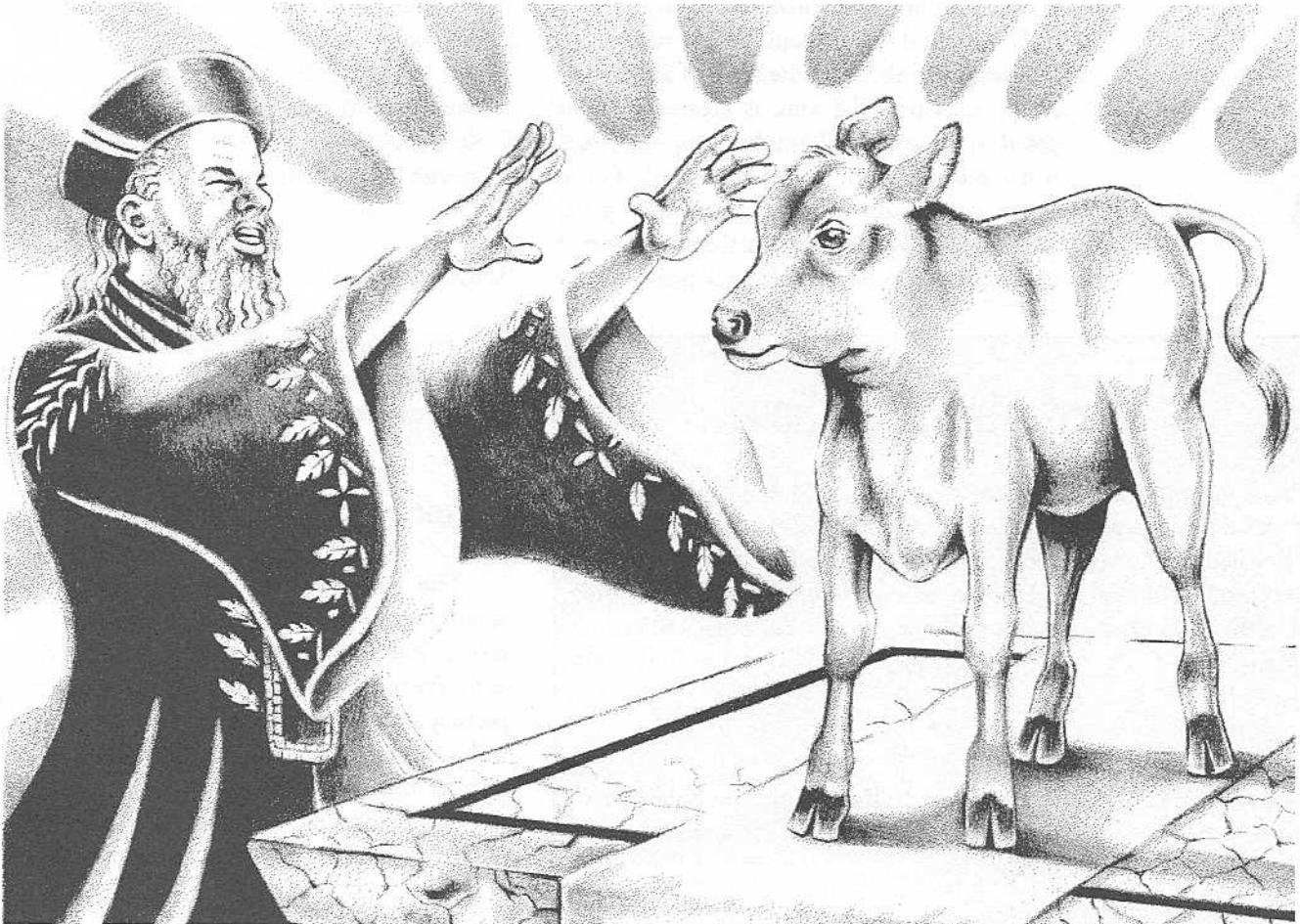
**Design Total:** The kabbalist's Design

Total for designing the formula of a golem is Intelligence + Kabbalah + Theology: Judaism + Concentration + aura. If a fellow kabbalist is assisting in the design, add his Kabbalah score to the Design Total. An assistant's scores, including Purity, may be at any level other than 0. A kabbalist can have a number of assistants equal to his Communication, with a minimum of one assistant.

**Time Spent:** For each point by which the kabbalist's Design Total exceeds the Formula Level, he accumulates one point per season. When he accumulates points equal to the golem's Formula Level, he has completed the formula and can now perform the ritual of golem creation.

## Creation Ritual

**Participants:** The creation ritual has a lead kabbalist, who must have been the primary designer of the formula used in the ritu-







al. The leader can have a number of assistants equal to his Communication, with a minimum of one. Each assistant in the ritual who also assisted in designing the formula adds +3 to his roll (see below).

To properly perform the ritual, the lead kabbalist's Purity should still be equal to the magnitude of the golem's Formula Level. Otherwise, the ritual is unclean, and a tragedy of hubris results (see page 101).

**Time Spent:** The golem creation ritual itself involves gathering dust, kneading it with water, and reciting of hundreds of letter combinations. The ritual is exhausting, lasting one hour per magnitude of the golem's Formula level, and costing one Fatigue level for every two hours of ritual. By spending two extra hours in the ritual (and therefore one extra Fatigue level), all participants may add their Concentration score to their rolls (see below).

**The Ritual Roll:** The lead kabbalist rolls a stress die + Stamina + Kabbalah + any applicable bonuses from above. Each assistant rolls a stress die + Stamina + any applicable bonuses from above. If the total of all participants' rolls plus the aura is greater than or equal to the golem's Formula Level, the ritual is a success, and the golem forms out of clay. If any participant rolls a 0, the entire ritual fails (due to fatigue, the participant faltered in his incantation). If any participant botch-

es, he loses all his remaining Fatigue levels and the ritual is a failure. If the leader botches, the formula is flawed; the golem is created horribly deformed, with limbs jumbled and bones twisted, and dies in agony almost immediately. A new formula must be designed for the lead kabbalist to create another golem of the same type.

## Destroying a Golem

There are several methods to destroy a golem, only one of which is ideal for the kabbalist to use.

### *Emet and Met*

No matter the formula or ritual variant used, the Hebrew word *emet*, "truth," is inscribed upon the forehead of all golems. If the first letter of the word *emet*, an aleph, is erased, what remains is the word *met*, which means "dead." Upon erasure, the golem is instantly destroyed, crumbling into dust. Only the creator kabbalist or one of his assistants can successfully erase the aleph.

### *Violence*

If a golem is reduced to zero Body levels, it is disintegrated. This can be performed by anyone with the malicious intent to do so.

### *Ritual Deconstruction*

The creation ritual must be performed again, but in reverse, culminating in the erasure of the first letter of *emet*. The same rolls as for creation must be made by the very same participants, with the same ease factors. This is the only method that assures utter destruction. If the golem is ritually deconstructed, the same formula may be used to create another golem. Otherwise, a new formula

## Golems in the Talmud

"An ancient tradition states that Rava and Rav Zeira worked together for three years, meditating on the *Sefer Yetzirah*. When they had finally mastered it, they created a calf and slaughtered it, serving it at a feast celebrating their accomplishment. Then they lost their powers and had to work for another three years to restore them."

\* \* \*

"Rava created a man and sent him to Rav Zeira. The Rabbi spoke to him but he did not answer. Then he said: 'You are from the pietists. Return to your dust.'"

## Golem Forms

Game traits for the known golem forms follow.

### Dove

**Divine Might:** 10

**Characteristics:** Cun +1, Per 0, Pre n/a, Com n/a, Str -3, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik +1

**Size:** -4

**Personality Traits:** Obedient +6, Sedentary +3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Peck	+2	0	+4	-5	+4

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, -3, Unconscious

**Body Levels:** OK, -3, Disintegrated

**Powers**

*Calming Coo, CrMe 15, 1 point:* Anyone hearing the golem's coo becomes calm and contemplative.

### Calf

**Divine Might:** 20

**Characteristics:** Cun -1, Per -3, Pre n/a, Com n/a, Str 0, Sta +1, Dex -2, Qik 0

**Size:** 0

**Personality Traits:** Obedient +6

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Hoof	0	+4	+1	+5	+1

**Soak:** +5

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, Unconscious

**Body Levels:** Unhurt, 0, -1, -3, Disintegrated

**Powers**

*Sating Feast, CrCo 35, 5 points per serving:* Upon being properly slaughtered, prepared, and served as part of a kosher meal, the meat from a golem calf restores all lost Fatigue levels. A single calf will serve four portions of this feast. If the meat is properly preserved, each serving can be saved for later and be used to the same effect. The same feaster can benefit from this power more than once. Note that the kabbalist who prepares such a feast must be sure to act in accordance with Purity (giving blessed meat to Hermetic wizards would certainly qualify as an unclean act).

### Man

**Divine Might:** 30

**Characteristics:** Int -6 (incapable of reasoning\*), Per 0, Pre -2 (rough features), Com -5 (mute), Str +5 (boundless strength), Sta +5 (endless reserves), Dex -1 (slow), Qik -2 (shuffling gait)

\*See "Using a Golem in Play" on page 90

**Size:** +1

**Personality Traits:** Obedient +4, Solemn +3, Vengeful +1

**Abilities:** Brawl (Immobilizing) 8, Awareness (of injustice) 3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl Attack	+7	+7	+6	+6*	+13
Immobilization*	+8	+8	+7	+6*	+13

\*As per the Brawling Maneuvers Table, ArM4, page 168. No golem will ever seek to harm another living being, unless driven to madness.

**Soak:** +6/+21 (see Great Fortitude Power)

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body Levels:** OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Disintegrated

**Powers**

*Great Fortitude, MuCo 20, 1 point per attack:* Whenever attacked, the golem may add +15 to his soak for that attack only.

*Mythic Strength, ReCo 75, 5 points per feat:* The golem may perform mythic feats of Strength, as the +5 Virtue Mythic (Characteristic), (see ArM4, page 46). This can be done as many times per day as the golem has Might points to spend.

*Mythic Stamina, ReCo 75, 5 points per feat:* The golem may perform mythic feats of Stamina, as the +5 Virtue Mythic (Characteristic), (see ArM4, page 46). This can be done as many times per day as the golem has Might points to spend.

*Ignore Vile Sorcery, PeVi 100, 10 points per use:* Rather than simply relying on the golem's magic resistance from its remaining Divine Might, by spending 10 points of Might, it can utterly cancel any malign magic of 20th magnitude (100th level) or less attempted against it or anything or anyone under its protection.



must be designed to create a new golem of the same form by the lead kabbalist.

The disintegrated body of a golem destroyed by other means must also be the subject of a ritual deconstruction if the same formula is to be used to create a new golem.

### *Resistance to Destruction*

A golem normally obeys its creator without question, even when facing demise. A mad golem (see "Tragedies of Hubris" on page 101) will permit only a ritual deconstruction, as it desperately seeks the peace of dust. If the ritual deconstruction of a mad golem should fail, however, the golem will slip further into madness, and will turn upon its creators, possibly slaying even those who have fallen into unconsciousness from the grueling ritual.

## Using a Golem in Play

A golem is not a creature of magic, but an entirely natural entity brought forth with God's blessing. Dove and calf golems are affected by the Hermetic Form of Animál, while the golem of man is affected by Corpus and Mentem. Golems, of course, have a Magic Resistance equal to their current Divine Might.

### *Proving Your Worth*

Golems are often created to demonstrate their creator's ability, or to test their creator's limits of understanding. When the golem's purpose is such, the ritual of deconstruction is performed immediately thereafter. Because of this, each season spent designing a golem formula earns the kabbalist and all his assistants one experience point in Kabbalah.



## *The Golem of Man*

As can be seen in its statistics, the Man golem is one of the most potent forces in Mythic Europe. Golems were instrumental in the stalemating of the Hermetic-Cabal war. During the war, nothing infuriated (or terrified) the Val-Negra Flambeau more than watching these slack-jawed half-men dismiss their mightiest magic without blinking an eye. The storyguide, therefore, must be very cautious when a Man golem enters the game.

**Appearance:** A golem appears completely human, except for two telling features: the word *emet* appears, as if drawn in ashes, on its forehead, and the Exceptional Ability Sense Holiness/Unholiness will reveal its powerful Divine nature. The learned may be able to identify a golem by its shambling gait and lack of care for its physical appearance, but to uneducated eyes, golems are indistinguishable from other people.

**Limitations:** A golem is incapable of injuring any living thing, unless by accident or if driven mad. In combat, it always uses

brawling maneuvers that result in Fatigue loss or immobility. Sane golems are protectors, and will take only those steps necessary to protect their wards—unless tempted by the fatal flaw of all golems, the spark of vengeance.

When a golem witnesses an act of true injustice against its ward or the Jewish people, the storyguide may, at his discretion, roll a quality die + the golem's Vengeance. The ease factor of the personality roll depends upon the severity of the injustice, but should never be lower than 6+. If the personality roll is higher than the ease factor, the golem is compelled to act out some form of vengeance. The degree of vengeance depends upon how high the golem rolled, but can range from vandalism to arson (as long as the golem believes it would only damage property, not people) to direct violence.

While a golem is devoid of rational will it is not a zombie. Incapable of true reasoning or creative thought, a golem will carry out its instructions to the best of its ability. When confronted with a situation that would require complex decision making, it will choose randomly or not at all. A golem, however, has full emotional life. It cherishes its wards, takes pride in its work, and loves God. A golem can be driven to despair, revenge, or even madness.

For example, charged to protect a particular street in the Jewish quarter, a golem comes across a large lynch mob that is vandalizing houses and assaulting members of the community. The golem can neither prioritize what is more important, the people or the property, nor strategize a plan of attack that would result in minimal losses on all sides. The golem will simply subdue the nearest gentile, with unnecessary roughness.

Finally, no golem can ever speak, as language is the greatest creative ability of all.

**Abilities:** A golem, it cannot be stressed enough, is a protector. If left to its own devices, it wanders about the Jewish community, seeking to right injustices (it will use its Mythic Stamina so that it never need rest). If given a command by its creator, it will obey to the best of its ability. A command can be very

specific, such as "Stop that wizard from burning down the yeshiva!" or very vague, such as "protect this yeshiva and all within." Only the golem's inability to make complex decisions will stand in its way. Less noble commands, such as "wash the dishes," will result in a loss of Purity for the rabbi commanding the golem unless the command furthers a pure purpose.

**In Combat:** The "tactics" of a golem are unimaginatively simple: subdue the opponent as fast as possible. When confronting a magician, a golem will usually rely on its innate Magic Resistance from its Divine Might. If faced with a particularly dangerous magician, however, it will use its *Ignore Vile Sorcery* power to get within Touch range as soon as possible, and its Mythic Strength to incapacitate the magician in a single blow.



## Meditation

By meditating upon the Mysteries, a kabbalist can expand his mind, his awareness, and even work magic. In *Ars Magica*, meditation falls under the Ability Concentration. This section describes the known uses of kabbalistic meditation.

## The Limit of Purity

All of a kabbalist's meditative powers are limited by Purity in two basic senses: purpose and effect. If a kabbalist uses his powers for an impure purpose, his Purity score will certainly suffer. See "Purity" on page 84. When a meditative power calls for a magnitude of effect, the magnitude of the effect should be no greater than the kabbalist's Purity. If a kabbalist works the effect regardless, he will suffer a tragedy of hubris (see page 101).



## Self-Contemplation

A kabbalist may chose to meditate for meditation's sake. At the end of a season of quiet meditation, the kabbalist rolls a stress die + aura. If the result is three times the kabbalist's current level, he gains three experience points in Concentration. If the result is twice his current level, he gains two points, and if it is only over his current level, he gains one. If he rolls less than or equal to his current level, the season is wasted. A botch results in catatonia for a number of weeks equal to the number of botches rolled.

## Contemplating Mysteries

Kabbalists can meditate to achieve understanding, akin to the Ascetic's Mystic

Understanding ability (see *Hedge Magic*, page 53). This ability is not the power to learn secrets or hidden facts, but instead the ability to understand the plan of the world in ways others cannot.

When a kabbalist contemplates mysteries, the player asks the storyguide a short question. The character meditates for a few moments and then rolls a stress die + Concentration. On a 12+, he succeeds and some understanding is gained. The storyguide provides a short, correct answer to the question. Such answers should generally be one sentence or less, and always a bit cryptic. They may reveal a different part of the truth than the character had in mind, but they should be relevant to the subject and ultimately useful. On a failure nothing is gained, and on a botch the kabbalist receives incomprehensible, useless, or incorrect information. Kabbalists should be restricted to one question on a given subject.



## The Tree of Life: Divine Influence

The Tree of Life, as a map of the Divine, can be used to influence the hearts, bodies, and minds of humankind. This **divine influence** is, in some respects, similar to Hermetic spellcasting. Because the power of a kabbalist comes from the realm of God, rather than magic, divine influence ignores some of the limitations of Hermetic magic, but has some limits of its own.

### *Divine Influence Rolls*

The basic roll for any feat of divine influence is a stress die + Stamina + Kabbalah + Concentration + aura. If a fellow kabbalist is assisting in the feat, add his Kabbalah score to the roll. The assistant's scores, including Purity, may be at any level other than 0. A kabbalist can have a number of assistants

equal to his Communication, with a minimum of one.

**Time Spent:** All feats of divine influence take 15 minutes of uninterrupted meditation per magnitude of the feat, and cost two Fatigue levels from all participants. The lead kabbalist may, by spending an extra 15 minutes in prayer per magnitude of the feat, and two extra Fatigue levels (for a total of four), add his Theology: Judaism to the roll. Fatigue is lost whether the roll is successful or not.

## Healing the Body

A kabbalist can use divine influence to heal physical harm to himself or others. Because this healing is divine, it is permanent, without need for anything unclean such as vis, but otherwise follows the rules of *Creo Corpus* spells. The lead kabbalist must lay hands on the benefactor of the feat for the duration of the meditation.



## Healing the Body

Feat	Ease Factor level of malign spell	Required Purity magnitude of spell
Cancel or reverse the effect of malign magic upon a person's body ( <i>Corpus</i> )		
Bind Wound (+1 bonus to healing rolls)	10	2+
Stop the progress of any disease of typical strength	15	3+
Heal one Body Level	20	4+
Cure any poison or disease	25	5+
Cure a physical handicap	30	6+
Heal all harm done to a human body	40	8+
Rid an entire Jewish Quarter of a plague (Kabbalist must be in Quarter during meditation)	45	9+

## Restoring the Mind

Feat	Ease Factor Level of magic	Required Purity Magnitude of magic
Cancel the effects of malign magic upon the human mind ( <i>Mentem</i> )		
Sooth emotional troubles (i.e., grief)	15	3+
End physical pain (but not the source of the pain)	20	4+
Cure madness	25	5+

## Understanding the Mind

Feat	Ease Factor	Required Purity
Learn the motive influencing the target at the moment when the ritual is complete	10	2+
Learn the present emotions of a target	15	3+
<i>Posing the Silent Question</i> (see <i>ArM4</i> , page 145)	20	4+
Learn a target's Personality Traits and levels	25	5+
<i>Peering into the Mortal Mind</i> (see <i>ArM4</i> , page 146)	30	6+



## Restoring the Mind

A kabbalist may use divine influence to help heal the emotional troubles of others. This aid is permanent unless some extreme act causes them to resurface. For example, a kabbalist can help a mother overcome the grief of losing a son, but the grief would return if the mother discovered the son's corpse.

As with physical healing, the kabbalist must lay hands on the target.

## Understanding the Mind

A kabbalist may use divine influence to learn the thoughts and desires of other people.

To even attempt to understand the mind of a person, the kabbalist must have some connection to him. The most common connections are listed on the Connection Bonus Chart below, but the storyguide may always allow others.

Having a connection to the person also confers a Connection Bonus to the divine influence roll. These bonuses are cumulative, so that if the kabbalist has more than one connection to the target, each connection confers a bonus.

Other than the connections listed on the Connection Bonus Chart, the kabbalist has no other range considerations.

## Shaping the Mind

A kabbalist can even influence the actions of other people, so long as his purpose remains pure. The kabbalist's ability to shape the minds of others is at once more powerful and more subtle than the Hermetic Art of Mentem. A kabbalist does not put alien thoughts into others' heads, nor does he ensorcel the mind. Instead, kabbalists plant seeds of change by engendering new Personality Traits.

**Connection:** The kabbalist must have a connection to the target, and gains Connection Bonuses just as above. No other considerations of range are required.

**Personality Trait:** The kabbalist must choose the Personality Trait he wishes to engender carefully. As always, his motives must remain pure. Additionally, while *Ars Magica* has game rules that help define a character's personality, no character's action should ever be reduced to mechanicals. The free will of the mortal mind is a magic all its own, and of all kabbalistic powers, shaping the mind is the most unpredictable. For example, a kabbalist has the purest of motives when engendering Love in a liege-lord for his Jewish subjects. The lord becomes more caring and attentive to the needs of the Jewish Quarter, and frequently visits. On one of his visits, he chances upon a beautiful young girl, and his love turns into a dangerous obsession.

Personality Traits typically engendered are Acceptance, Bravery, Fairness, Honesty, Love, Mercy, Piousness, Respect, and Sense of Justice.

**Level and Ease Factor:** The kabbalist's player determines the level of the Personality Trait before the ritual is attempted. The ease factor for engendering a personality is the level of the Personality Trait x 5 (absolute value, if level is negative). The limit of Purity insists that a kabbalist should not engender or affect a Personality Trait by more than the kabbalist's current Purity. Otherwise, he risks a tragedy of hubris.

**Duration:** After the ritual is performed, the Personality Trait grows in the target one level per night the target sleeps until the Trait

## Connection Bonus Chart

Connection	Connection Bonus
Knows identity of target*	+0
Familiar with target**	+2
Knows birth-name of target	+3
In sight of target throughout ritual	+5

\*Has seen the target, or knows a name of the target other than the target's birth-name.

\*\*Knows personal facts about the target, such as likes and dislikes, family history, habits.

reaches the level desired. This is often accompanied by profound dreams relating to the Trait. A botch or a tragedy of hubris, however, could send the Trait soaring into the realm of obsession and madness. If the target has a pre-existing Personality Trait that opposes the new trait, that trait diminishes by one level per night of sleep until the new Trait is completely formed. Once engendered, a divinely influenced Personality Trait fades one level per season.

**Player Characters and Shaping the Mind:** While a storyguide might enjoy role-playing characters whose personalities have been shaped by a player kabbalist, a player character should not be forced to act a certain way. Instead, divinely influenced Personality Traits act as player characters' guilty consciences. Whenever a player character takes action that goes against an engendered Personality Trait, the level of the Trait is subtracted from any rolls related to that action.

For example, Thomas, a bullying turb captain, has been subjected to a kabbalist-engendered Personality Trait of Kind +3. Now, whenever Thomas bullies his grogs, he must subtract -3 from his Communication + Leadership (bullying) roll. A player character may overcome this penalty by temporarily spending a point of Confidence.

## Merkavah

**Merkavah** is the most potent, and potentially dangerous, of all the kabbalist's abilities. The rites of Merkavah allow the kabbalist to summon and interact with all manner of supernatural beings, from simple faeries to mighty angels. Some of the practices presented here are at odds with what is presented in *Pax Dei* and the *Maleficium*. This section reflects Judaism's understanding of Angels and Demons, while *Pax Dei* and the *Maleficium* present views which are more in line with Christian interaction with the divine and infernal.

## Adjuration

**Adjuration** is a lengthy summoning ritual which calls forth a supernatural being by the use of solemn oaths, prostration, and holy incantations.



### From the *Ma'aseh Merkavah*

He said to me: "The name of the Prince of the Torah is Yofiel, and everyone who seeks him must sit for forty days in fast, eat his bread with salt, and must not eat any kind of defilement; he must perform twenty-four immersions, and not look at any kind of colored garments; his eyes must be cast to the ground.

"And he must pray with all his strength, direct his heart to his prayer, and seal himself with his own seal, and pronounce twelve utterances.

"He must pronounce letters so that he will not be harmed;

"He must raise his eyes to heaven so that he does not die;

"He must stand and recite a name and give praise so that the name is engraved on all his limbs and the search of understanding be in his heart;

"He should call upon His name, and he should pray

in His name;

"He should make a circle for himself and stand in it, so that the demons will not come and liken him to the angels and kill him."

I sat twelve days in fasting. When I saw I could not endure, I employed the forty-two letter name, and Yofiel descended in anger. He said to me: "Son of a stinking drop! I will not give it to you until you sit for forty days."

Then, I sat for forty days and said three prayers in the morning, three prayers at noon, and three prayers in the evening. And I pronounced twelve utterances at every one.

On the last day I prayed three times and pronounced twelve utterances, and Yofiel descended and with him angels of mercy, and they caused understanding to dwell in my heart.

—Excerpt from the *Ma'aseh Merkavah*





## Researching Adjuration Rites

Because Merkavah is the study of one's personal connection to the greater world, each kabbalist must discover his own adjuration rites. Before creating an adjuration rite, the kabbalist must first know the identity of the being he intends to summon. For example, the kabbalist may have encountered the being personally before, read of it in an occult text, or been told of its existence by an elder scholar.

**The Limitation of Purity:** A kabbalist should not research an adjuration rite for any supernatural being whose Might is of a magnitude higher than the kabbalist's Purity. For example: adjuring a faerie with a Might of 30 should only be researched by a kabbalist with a Purity of 6 or higher. Otherwise, a tragedy of hubris results (see page 101).

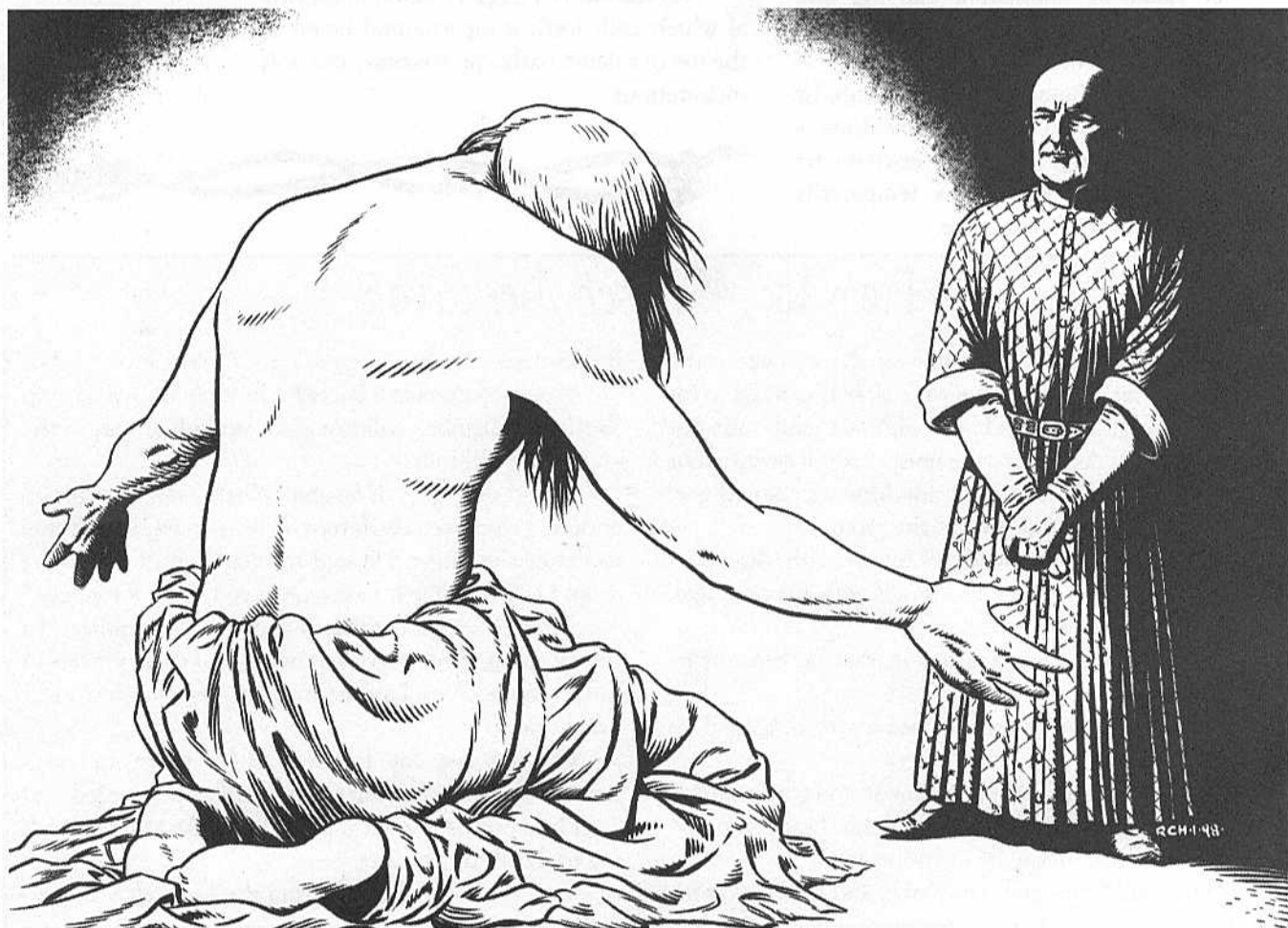
**Research Total:** The kabbalist's Research Total for an adjuration rite is

Intelligence + Merkavah + Theology:  
Judaism + Concentration + entity bonus + aura. The entity bonuses are:

Entity	Bonus
Angel	Angelic Lore score
Demon	Occult Lore score
Spirit	Occult Lore score
Faerie	Faerie Lore score

If a fellow kabbalist is assisting in the research, add his Merkavah and entity bonus scores to the Research Total. An assistant's scores, including Purity, may be at any level other than 0. A kabbalist can have a number of assistants equal to his Communication score, with a minimum of one.

**Time Spent:** When the kabbalist is researching adjuration rites for demons, faeries, or spirits, he can complete his research in one season if his Research Total is higher than the entity's Might.



Researching the rites for the adjuration of angels takes much longer. For each point by which the kabbalist's Research Total exceeds the angel's Divine Might, he accumulates one point per season. When he accumulates points equal to the angel's Divine Might, he has completed the research and can perform the adjuration ritual. Additionally, each season spent researching the adjuration of an angel earns all participating kabbalists one experience point in Merkavah.

If the entity being researched has multiple aspects (see Chapter 8, which begins on page 120), each aspect requires separate research before it can be adjured.

## Adjuration Ritual

Once the adjuration rites are fully researched, the kabbalist can perform the actual adjuration ritual any number of times, but at risk of personal injury and the wrathful impatience of the entity being adjured.

**Participants:** The adjuration ritual has a lead kabbalist, who must have been the primary researcher of the rites used in the ritual. The leader can have a number of assistants equal to his Communication score, with a minimum of one. Each assistant in the ritual who also assisted in researching the rites adds +3 to his roll.

**Preparation:** Before the ritual can begin, the lead kabbalist must spend at least one week in a grueling ritual cleansing, which includes fasting, constant ablution, fervent prayer, and ecstatic meditation. Each week, the kabbalist must make a stress die + Stamina roll of 9+ or lose a Body level due to malnutrition and physical exertion. Angels may require many weeks of such activities (see below). Each week spent in preparation adds +3 to the leader's ritual roll, but wound penalties will also apply.

**Time Spent:** There must be no lapse in time between the leader's preparation and the actual performance of the ritual. If the lead kabbalist takes but a moment to rest, eat, or even look at something pleasant, the entire

preparation is wasted and must begin again. If any Body levels lost to preparation are regained before the ritual, the entire preparation is also wasted. If a demon, faerie, or spirit learns of the kabbalist's intention to adjure it, it will often try to disrupt the preparatory cleansing. The adjuration ritual itself takes 15 minutes per magnitude of the Might of the entity summoned, and costs each participant two Fatigue levels, whether successful or not.

**The Ritual Roll:** The lead kabbalist rolls a stress die + Stamina + Merkavah + any applicable bonuses from above. Each assistant rolls a stress die + Stamina + any applicable bonuses from above. If the total of all participants' rolls plus the aura is greater than or equal to the entity's Might, the ritual is a success, and the entity materializes out of the very air. If any participant rolls a 0, the entire ritual fails. If any participant botches, he loses all his remaining Fatigue levels, and the entire ritual is a failure. If the leader botches, the being appears, probably with several others, to slay those who profaned the Name with an impure ritual.

If the entity is normally invisible, it assumes a tangible form when adjured. Angels and named demons (pages 129 and 138, respectively) may assume any form they please, depending upon their dispositions and current attitudes toward the kabbalist.

**Limit of Purity:** If the lead kabbalist's Purity is lower than the magnitude of the Might of the entity summoned, a tragedy of hubris results.

## Effects of Adjuration

Exactly what happens after the entity appears depends entirely upon the type of entity summoned.

### Faeries

For detailed information on the role of the fay in Jewish folklore, see Chapter 8, which begins on page 120.





**Adjuring Ouza and Azael:** There is only one pure purpose for adjuring a faerie: gaining entrance to the Yenne Velt or the City of Luz, the Jewish lands of Arcadia. In Biblical times, the angels Ouza and Azael came down from Paradise and were corrupted. Their corruption was not complete, however, and rather than appointing them to Satan, God sent them to the corner of the world known today as Arcadia. Ouza now guards the Yenne Velt, and Azael is set over the City of Luz. To gain entrance to Arcadia, one of the two guardians must be adjured.

Realm	Guardian	Faerie Might
Yenne Velt	Ouza	35
City of Luz	Azael	60

Once properly adjured, Ouza or Azael will allow any kabbalists who were participants in the ritual and have a Purity of 4 or higher into their realms. Ouza or Azael will return any kabbalist who invokes its name by rolling a stress die + Communication + Merkavah of 12+.

**Adjuring Other Faeries:** The kabbalist may adjure faeries other than Ouza and Azael. Such creatures play a minor roll in the kabbalist's view of the greater world, and the rites of Merkavah are not well suited to interacting with them. When successfully adjured, faeries (other than Ouza and Azael) do not necessarily instantly appear. An adjured faerie travels from its home to the place where the ritual was performed using its own powers. The Merkavah ritual has no other binding effect on a faerie. Once a faerie arrives, it is free to stay, go, or wreak havoc as it pleases. Some kabbalists have been known to barter with faeries for their services, but an adjured faerie is under no compulsion to do so. A kabbalist must be careful not to seek favors from the fay that go against the requirements of Purity. Additionally, a sin perpetrated by a faerie acting in the kabbalist's name affects the kabbalist's Purity as if he himself had sinned.

## Spirits

Necromancy is an ultimate impure act. The only use for adjuring a spirit, then, is to **exorcise** it. There are two basic categories of exorcism: driving a dibbuk from a body, and banishing a spirit.

**Driving a dibbuk from the body:** When a body is possessed by a dibbuk, the ritual of exorcism can begin immediately. No research, preparation, or adjuration ritual roll is required. The lead kabbalist must be in physical contact with the possessed body as his assistants (if any) circle them both. The dibbuk, of course, will try to resist physically as well as magically.

For every 15 minutes of the ritual, the lead kabbalist rolls a stress die + Stamina + Merkavah + Occult Lore + the Merkavah score of each assistant, and the dibbuk rolls a stress die + its Spirit Might. For every point by which the lead kabbalist's roll exceeds the dibbuk's roll, the kabbalists accumulate 1 point toward successful exorcism. Once the kabbalists accumulate a number of points equal to the dibbuk's Might, the dibbuk is driven out of the body (via the little toe), and cannot possess another person for a number of months equal to the lead kabbalist's Purity.

Each roll, however, costs the lead kabbalist one Fatigue level. If the lead kabbalist reaches Incapacitation, all points accumulated against the dibbuk are lost, and one of the assistants must now lead the exorcism.

**Banishing a spirit:** To banish a spirit, one must properly adjure it, at which time it takes a physical form in the ritual circle. If the spirit wishes to be banished, it immediately departs for the afterlife permanently. Otherwise, the spirit must be exorcised in the manner described above.

## Demons

A properly adjured demon cannot harm any participants of the ritual for an entire day after it is summoned. During that time, the demon must remain in the area (a range no larger than Room) specified as the site of the

ritual unless banished or otherwise released. According to Rabbinical Law, demonology is permitted so long as the demon will not be used for the performance of supernatural acts which go against the natural order of things. There are three methods of dealing with demons that do not affect a kabbalist's Purity: exorcism, interrogation, and banishment.

**Driving a demon from a body:** A demon in possession of a human or animal body may be exorcised following the same rules as for exorcising a dibbuk, above.

**Interrogation:** The lead kabbalist may ask questions of the demon, and the demon is bound to answer, but not necessarily truthfully. A subtle battle of words is fought: the lead kabbalist rolls a stress die + Perception + Awareness, and the demon rolls a stress die + Communication + Guile. The higher the kabbalist rolls than the demon, the more truth is revealed. The lower the roll, the less co-operative the demon becomes. These rolls should only serve as a guide for the roleplayed interrogation between the player and the storyguide.

**Banishment:** A properly adjured demon can be sent back to the *sitra achra* (page 135) for a period of years equal to the lead kabbalist's current Purity score. Demons with multiple aspects, however, are not banished entirely, but only denied that aspect for the period of time.

**Contracting with a demon:** Rather than face banishment, almost all demons will beg and bribe for their release. Banishment, therefore, is a powerful bargaining tool for demonic boons (demonic services requiring nothing in exchange) or demonic contracts (an exchange of promises between the demon and the kabbalist). Receiving a demonic boon or entering into a demonic contract automatically costs at least one Purity level, perhaps more depending on how dark the deed. The *Merkavah* ritual binds a demon to its word unless the kabbalist does not live up to his side of the bargain, but demons are clever in their search for disastrous loopholes. Any impure acts the demon performs in fulfilling its boon or contract costs the kabbalist Purity as if the kabbalist himself had

sinned. If the kabbalist's Purity drops below the magnitude of the demon's Might while the demon is fulfilling its obligation, the kabbalist incurs severe tragedies of hubris.

Contracting with demons is a dangerous, impious activity. Even Solomon himself rarely won the upper hand when dealing with the *sitra achra*. Kabbalists must tread lightly or invoke divine wrath.

## Angels

Apart from creating a golem, the adjuration of an angel is the kabbalist's greatest power. Since before the destruction of the Second Temple, the great rabbis have called down angels, who then bestow upon the rabbis incredible abilities. In *Ars Magica*, this is called establishing a rapport with an angel. The path to rapport, however, is arduous.

**Preparation:** Even the "average" angel's Might is so high that most kabbalists must spend weeks in dangerous ritual cleansing to even stand a chance of adjuring one.

**Demonic Intervention:** After the kabbalist completes the adjuration ritual, the storyguide secretly rolls a quality die. If the result is greater than the kabbalist's Purity, a demon appears instead, disguised as the angel sought.

The kabbalist has only one chance to discover the intervention before it is too late. Before establishing a rapport, an angel will formally greet the kabbalist (see "formal greeting" below). During this exchange, the kabbalist rolls a stress die + Perception + number weeks spent in preparation, with an ease factor of 12+. If he succeeds, the trickery (if any) is revealed, and he can banish the demon. If he fails, the player has to judge by the storyguide's roleplaying (an excellent opportunity to prey upon a player's fears.) If the player chooses to reject the being as a demon, and it is in fact the angel in question, the angel will be infuriated, and will (at the very least) never respond to the kabbalist's adjuration again.

If the kabbalist is deceived, the demon, free from any binding of the adjuration, may strike out at the kabbalist any way it desires,





including continuing the deception and granting the kabbalist corrupt favors.

**Formal Greeting:** An angel will always formally greet the kabbalist who calls it. The formal greeting is, essentially, an opportunity for the storyguide to be a ham, as rabbinical literature is full of melodramatic angelic messages. Discourse with an angel often includes:

- Dire prophecies
- Impossible quests
- Inexplicable instructions
- Inscrutable silence
- Insults and derision (“Son of a stinking drop!” is a favorite angelic taunt)
- Joyous foretellings
- Praises to God
- Statements that sound profound but are nonsensical to human ears
- Strange tales
- Warm salutations
- (And sometimes, all of the above)

**Rapport:** All angels have divine gifts they are able to bestow upon those kabbalists they feel to be worthy of them. Obtaining such a gift signifies a close rapport with the angel and the aspect of the divine it represents. An angel may have multiple “rapport gifts,” but will only grant one gift to the kabbalist per adjuration, and will only grant more gifts if the angel believes the kabbalist’s Purity has substantially increased. The exact nature of a rapport gifts vary greatly among angels. While several suggestions can be found in Chapter 8, page 102 lists the two angels whose rapport gifts are most often sought by kabbalists.

Unless specified otherwise, a rapport gift confers spell-like powers with the following characteristics:

- A rapport gift takes one round to invoke.
- The effects of a rapport gift are resolved in the Magic phase of the round.



- A rapport gift has an unlimited number of uses.
- A rapport gift requires no die roll (that is, it is automatically successful, though it may still be resisted if applicable).

It is a tragedy of hubris for a kabbalist to use a rapport gift after his Purity drops beneath the score needed to summon the angel that gave the gift.

**Angels and Purity:** Most kabbalists will never attain a Purity score high enough to call down an angel without incurring a tragedy of hubris. This reflects the fact that adjuration of an angel for rapport gifts is an inherently selfish, impure act. On extreme rare occasions, an angel may, if it believes the kabbalist is truly deserving, lift tragedies of hubris or Purity loss.

## Striking the Rock: Tragedies of Hubris

Out of greed, desperation, impatience, or despair, even the purest of kabbalists can breach the Covenant of Abraham and work an unlawful divine miracle. Breaking the Covenant, and subsequent divine retribution, is a constant theme throughout Jewish history and legend. The same goes for practitioners of divine magic. In *Ars Magica*, divine retribution against a kabbalist is called a **tragedy of hubris**. To achieve goals they believe to be important, kabbalists often risk such tragedies.

A kabbalist breaks the Covenant when he works a feat of divine magic of a magnitude higher than his current Purity. For example, if a kabbalist wishes to probe every corner of the local bishop's mind, which is within the purview of the kabbalist but requires a Purity of 6 or higher, and the kabbalist only has a Purity of 4, performing the feat would be

an act of ignoring the Covenant

Additionally, losing Purity by committing other forms of impure acts may, at the storyguide's discretion, lead to tragedies of hubris. For example, a kabbalist willingly listens to gossip three times in a row. His player has decided that gaining the information is important to the saga, and does not worry because the kabbalist's Purity score is very high. The storyguide decides that such blatant defiance constitutes a minor transgression, and the character develops a divine curse (see below).

The greater the difference between the kabbalist's actual Purity and the required Purity for the feat, the worse the tragedy. The following is a list of suggested tragedies. The exact nature of the tragedy is always up to the storyguide, and should be based on the gravity of the misdeed and dramatic necessity. A tragedy of hubris always involves a loss of Purity, and may also include other effects, which are described below.

### *Loss of Purity*

Breaching the covenant always results in a loss of Purity. The worse the misdeed, the greater the loss. Storyguides looking for a quick equation can simply reduce the kabbalist's Purity by the difference between his actual Purity and the Purity required.

### *Minor Transgressions*

Minor transgressions tend to affect the kabbalist's social life, as the guilt of the misdeed takes on a supernatural existence.

**Difficulty Meditating:** The misdeed preys upon the kabbalist's conscience; his Concentration score is effectively halved until his Purity is restored

**Disharmony:** The kabbalist's foul temper prevents harmonious practice until his Purity is restored; he cannot participate in Talmudic disputation, cannot participate in another kabbalist's rituals, and cannot gain the assistance of other kabbalists.





**Divine Curse:** Equivalent to a curse worth -1 Flaw points (see ArM4, page 46), until Purity is restored.

**Extra Botch Dice:** The kabbalist suffers an extra botch dice per point of Purity lost on all rolls until his Purity is restored.

**Magical Air:** As per the Flaw (see ArM4, page 47), until Purity is restored.

## Moderate Transgressions

Moderate transgressions tend to attack the mind, as the ramifications of the kabbalist's misdeed drive him to madness.

**Extreme Difficulty Meditating:** The Kabbalist's Concentration is reduced to 0 until Purity is restored.

**Haunted:** As per the Flaw (see ArM4, page 49), save that the entity is actually a minor angel or demon rather than a spirit.

## Kabbalistic Angels

### Yofiel, Prince of the Torah

**Divine Might** (of adjured aspect): 60

#### Rapport Gifts:

**Visual Eidetic Memory:** Bestows the +3 Virtue Visual Eidetic Memory (see ArM4, page 45) unto the kabbalist, and a +3 bonus to all future Merkavah rolls and totals.

**Text Memorization, CrMe 35:** By spending a season with any text, the kabbalist can devote its entire contents to memory. The season of memorization does not earn the kabbalist experience points. After memorization, the kabbalist no longer needs an actual copy of the texts for study, research, or to scribe more copies.

**The Art of Memory:** If the kabbalist does not already have the Exceptional Talent Art of Memory, Yofiel grants it to him, at score of 1. If the kabbalist already has the Art of Memory, Yofiel touches the rabbi's brow and knowledge flows into him, giving him just enough experience points to increase his Art of Memory score by 1.

### Shekhinah, the female emanation of God (for a full description, see page 134)

The Shekhinah has two aspects which can be adjured: the Protector and the Lover.

**Divine Might** (of adjured aspects): 30 for Protector, 65 for Lover

#### Rapport Gifts of the Protector:

**Divine Protection:** By spending a round to invoke this gift, the kabbalist acquires Magic Resistance equal to the kabbalist's (Purity x 5) at the time the gift was bestowed, duration Sun. The Shekhinah may bestow

this gift again once the kabbalist's Purity increases.

**Divine Retribution:** Invoked while a spell is being cast, this gift causes the target spell of any type to have the exact opposite of its normal effects. This gift works on spells of levels up to the Kabbalist's (Purity x 5) at the time the gift was bestowed. For more information see *Mirror of Opposition*, MuVi (gen), ArM4, page 157. The kabbalist's "spell casting speed" for this gift is a quality die + Quickness + Merkavah. The Shekhinah may bestow this gift again once the kabbalist's Purity increases.

#### Rapport Gifts of the Lover:

**Divine Embrace:** Invoking the divine embrace takes a round of uninterrupted prayer. Afterward, the kabbalist enters the highest state of ecstatic trance. While the kabbalist remains embraced, the love of God is made manifest on Earth through the growth a Divine aura with a range of Boundary. Each hour the kabbalist remains embraced, the Divine aura increases one level, to maximum of nine. If the kabbalist is in a Magic, Infernal, or Faerie aura, that aura decreases one level per hour until the aura is 0, at which point a Divine aura grows one level per hour. The aura persists as long as no forces change it. Keep in mind, though, that the sinful everyday actions of normal people will eventually reduce an inflated divine aura to the level normal for the area over the course of days or weeks.

The divine embrace is so intense that a kabbalist can take no voluntary action while embraced, including the most basic of functions. Any source of external distraction requires a Concentration roll of 12+ or the embrace ends. For every six hours of embrace, the kabbalist must make a stress roll + Stamina of 12+ or loses one Fatigue level.

**Permanent Minor Tragedy:** Any minor transgression, which lasts until the kabbalist achieves a Purity of 8.

**Poor Memory, Short Attention Span, or Simple-Minded:** As per the Flaws (see ArM4, page 48), until Purity is restored.

**Terrors:** As per the Flaw (see ArM4, page 49).

## Major Transgressions

Major transgressions destroy the body, as the forces the kabbalist foolishly unleashed tear him apart. The darkest of these tragedies is turning into a werewolf, as per the -2 Flaw Lycanthrope (see ArM4, page 49), save that the kabbalist turns into a wolf every night. Impure acts the rabbi performs while transformed further reduce the rabbi's Purity. If the rabbi's Purity falls to 0, he becomes a wolf forever. To survive this tragedy, the kabbalist must have the aid of his fellows to keep his wolf-form from doing harm. The tragedy ends once Purity is restored.

Other major transgressions include Flaws such as Age Quickly, Arthritis, Blind, or Enfeebled, which afflict the kabbalist until Purity is restored. Sometimes, a major transgression attracts the attention of a supernatural entity, inflicting the kabbalist with the -4 Flaw Plagued by (Entity) (see ArM4, page 50). The entity's primary purpose for plaguing the kabbalist is, of course, to thwart his search for Purity.

## Ultimate Transgressions

Ultimate transgressions affect not only the kabbalist, but what he holds most dear: the local Jewish community. While such tragedy can manifest in all manner of hardships (disease, famine, drought, and so forth), the greatest of all tragedies is an attack by outsiders. Spurred on by demons or the kabbalist's own magic run amok, anti-Semitic feelings of the surrounding communities reach a riotous peak. Property is damaged, livelihoods are ruined, and lives are endan-

gered and lost. Because Kabbalah brought this tragedy, this tragedy is unstoppable by kabbalistic means, and the transgressor must watch helplessly as the rioting plays itself out.

## Mad Golems

The madness of a golem is an especially heart-wrenching tragedy of hubris that happens all too often. A golem is typically driven mad in the following ways:

- When designing the formula, the kabbalist creator had a Purity lower than required (see "Designing the Formula," page 87).
- When performing the ritual, the kabbalist creator had a Purity lower than required.
- After creation, the kabbalist's Purity drops below the magnitude of the golem's Divine Might.
- The golem's Vengeful trait becomes higher than his Obedient trait.
- The golem's creator dies.

A mad dove or calf golem will fall into a fit so terrible that it is torn apart by the spasms of its own muscles within minutes. A mad man golem will turn from protector to vigilante, striking out against its creator's enemies with wild violence. If the creator does not stop the golem, the creator's Purity drops one level per day of the golem's madness. Meanwhile, the golem's behavior worsens, and it turns upon its creator, and the Jewish community itself, until the creator's Purity drops to zero, at which point the golem commits suicide by the most gruesome means available to it. An infernal aura of +3 festers wherever a golem slays himself. Sometimes, the loss of life is so savage that an infernal *regio* is created, in which the mangled body of the golem waits to murder any who enter.







## Examples of Kabbalism

All of the examples here involve Rabbi Zalman of Constantinople. Zalman has a Communication of +2, and can avail himself of the aid of two fellow kabbalists. He enlists two lesser colleagues, Rabbi Tevfik and Rabbi Jonah. The important traits for all three are:

**Rabbi Zalman:** Int +3, Per +3, Sta +2, Purity 8, Angelic Lore 4, Concentration 6, Kabbalah 8, Merkavah 7, Theology: Judaism 9

**Rabbi Jonah:** Sta +3, Angelic Lore 3, Kabbalah 4, Merkavah 7

**Rabbi Tevfik:** Sta +1, Angelic Lore 2, Kabbalah 6, Merkavah 4

## Creating a Golem

Rabbi Zalman decides it is time to create a golem of man. His Design Total is 3 (his Intelligence) + 8 (his Kabbalah) + 9 (his Theology) + 6 (his concentration) + 5 (the aura of the basement of their synagogue) + 4 (Jonah's Kabbalah) + 6 (Tevfik's Kabbalah), for a total of 40. Because the Formula Level of a man golem is 30, it will take the kabbalists 3 seasons of research to develop Zalman's creation formula.

After the research is complete, the kabbalists gather in the hidden room of the synagogue to perform the ritual Zalman devised. The ritual lasts six long hours, and costs each participant three Fatigue levels. At the end, Rabbi Zalman rolls a 3 (his roll) + 2 (his Stamina) + 8 (his Kabbalah), for a total of 13. Rabbi Jonah rolls a 3 (his roll) + 3 (his Stamina) + 3 (his bonus from assisting research), for a total of 9. Rabbi Tevfik rolls a 4 (his roll) + 1 (his Stamina) + 3 (his bonus from assisting research), for a total of 8. The final total of the ritual is 13 (Zalman's total) + 9 (Jonah's total) + 8 (Tevfik's total) + 5 (the aura), for a total of 35. Success! The

golem rises to his feet, bows, and dutifully cleans up the mess.

## Divine Influence

Rabbi Tevfik looked the wrong way at a Greek noble, and the noble's guards beat him within an inch of his life. His two friends find him and bring him back to the synagogue. He is Incapacitated and dying, but Jonah is a skilled doctor and manages to stabilize him. Zalman decides its time for drastic action, lays his hands upon Tevfik's battered body, and enters a trance.

Zalman is attempting to heal all the damage done to a human body, which has an ease factor of 40. Worried he may not have the knowledge to save Tevfik, he spends extra time in prayer, and asks Jonah to assist. The meditation lasts four hours (8, the magnitude of the effect, x 15 minutes, doubled for taking extra time) and costs four Fatigue levels. At the end of the meditative exercise, Zalman rolls 7 (his roll) + 2 (his Stamina) + 8 (his Kabbalah) + 6 (his Concentration) + 9 (his Theology for taking extra time) + 5 (the aura) + 4 (Jonah's Kabbalah), for a total of 41. Zalman almost drops from exhaustion, but his prayers are just strong enough. Tevfik rises, feeling better than he has in years, and asks why Zalman is passed out on the floor.

## Adjuration

Fearing the activity of nearby Flambeau magi, Zalman decides its time to ask for a little divine protection. He seeks to adjure the Shekhinah in her Protective aspect, which has a Divine Might of 30. His Research Total is 3 (his Intelligence) + 7 (his Merkavah) + 9 (his Theology) + 6 (his Concentration) + 4 (his Angelic Lore) + 5 (the aura) + 7 (Jonah's Merkavah) + 3 (Jonah's Angelic Lore) + 4 (Tevfik's Merkavah) + 2 (Tevfik's Angelic Lore), for a total of 50. After two seasons, Zalman is ready.

Zalman retreats into his chambers to begin the dangerous preparatory cleansing. The first week, Zalman rolls a 6 (his roll) + 2 (his Stamina) for a total of 8, not enough to spare him a Body level of damage. The next week, Zalman rolls a 8 (his roll) + 2 (his Stamina) for a total of 10, just enough to get him though. The third week, Zalman rolls a 2 (his roll) + 2 (his Stamina), and he takes another Body level. Afraid to risk any more time, he croaks out to his wife, "I'm ready," and she sends for his two friends.

The adjuration ritual takes an hour and a half, and costs all participants two Fatigue levels. At the end, Rabbi Zalman rolls a 6 (his roll) + 2 (his Stamina) + 7 (his Merkavah) - 1 (for his current wounded state), for a total of 14. Rabbi Jonah rolls a 4 (his roll) + 3 (his Stamina) + 3 (his bonus from assisting research), for a total of 10. Rabbi Tevfik rolls a 5 (his roll) + 1 (his Stamina) + 3 (his bonus

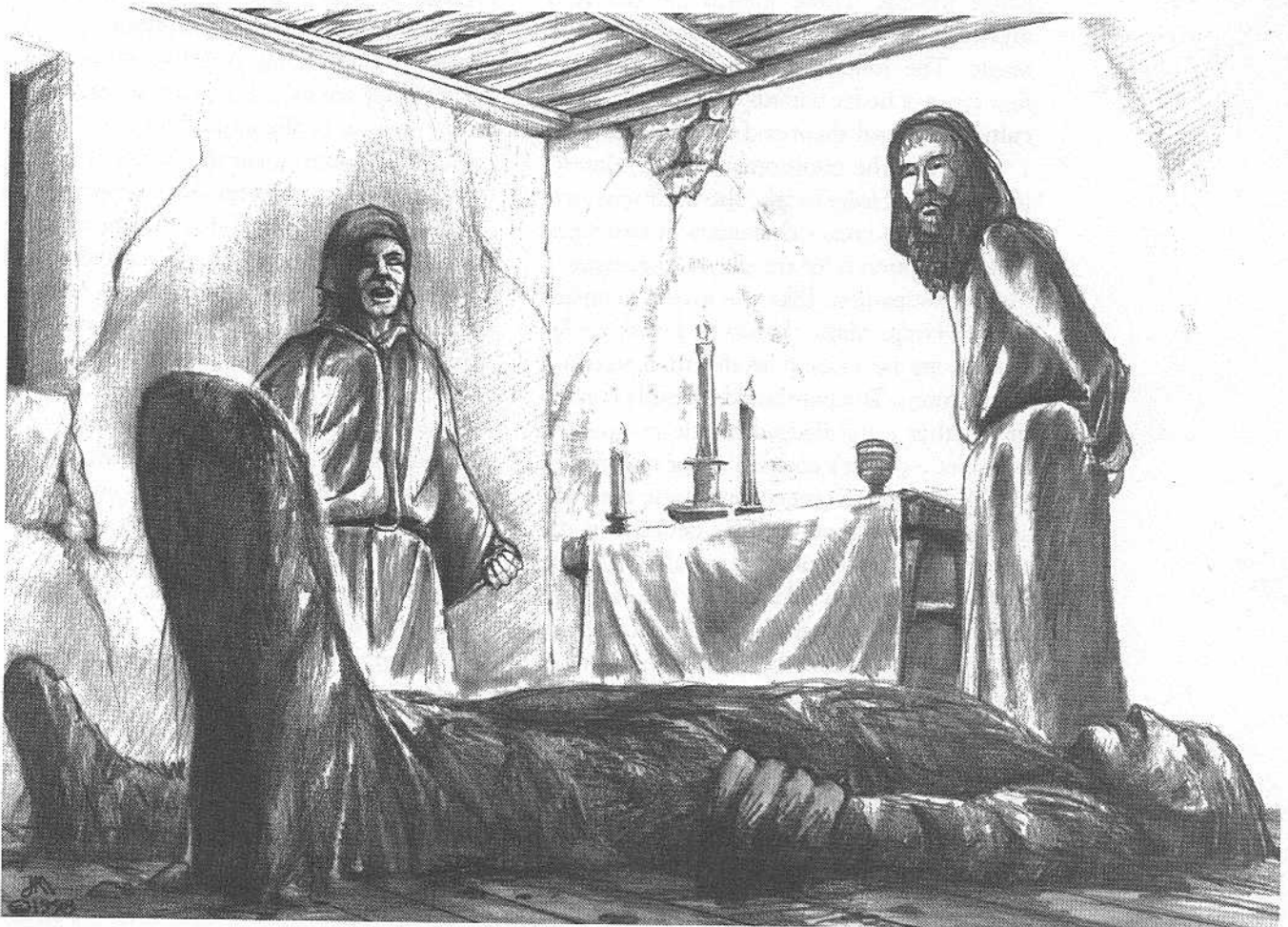
from assisting research), for a total of 9. The final total of the ritual is 14 (Zalman's total) + 10 (Jonah's total) + 9 (Tevfik's total) + 4 (the aura), for a total of 37. Success!

The storyguide rolls a 6, which is lower than Zalman's Purity. No demonic intervention takes place.

The room fills with a soft light, and a beautiful young woman appears, singing the Song of Solomon in a sensuous voice. Zalman, apprehensive about this almost lewd vision, rolls a 4 (his roll) + 3 (his Perception) + 3 (the number of weeks he spend in preparation), for a total of 10, not quite enough to tell if this lovely angel is who she appears to be. Zalman is a risk-taker, however, so he welcomes her.

Their love is joined on all planes.

She grants him Divine Protection which confers magic resistance of 40 (his Purity x 5). His wife feels a spark of jealousy.





# Chapter 7

# Mythic Judaica

## Mystic Companions

There are no other modifications to the companion creation process.

## The Baal Shem

The Jewish People have their share of hedge wizards. These wizards are not holy mystics, but skilled practitioners of folk magic. The following sections present two new types of hedge wizards drawn from Jewish culture: the baal shem and the necromancer.

Just like the traditions of hedge wizardry presented in *Hedge Magic*, the traditions here can be used to create characters in two ways. The first option is for the player to generate a mystic companion. Like the mystic companions of *Hedge Magic*, however, Jewish hedge wizards are far more powerful than standard companions. Troupes should carefully consider whether a full-fledged mystic companion occupies a player's companion or magus slot. Baal shem and necromancer mystic companions gain all the capabilities detailed in the appropriate description. They also gain the listed Abilities, in addition to the standard companion Ability to Speak Own Language at a score of 5. Finally, mystic companions spend (age +10) starting experience points.

The second option is for the player to generate a companion according to the normal rules for doing so, but to select a few of the Virtues and Flaws that bestow capabilities drawn from one of these traditions. Those Virtues and Flaws are described on page 116.

Over the millennia, some of the more practical aspects of the Kabbalah have trickled down from the holy, elite mystics to folk-healers and wandering practitioners of white magic. They are called the baal shem, which means "master of the name," for their power comes from control over the names of God.

A baal shem is not taught in a yeshiva, or ordained as a rabbi, and does not pursue the more esoteric elements of the Kabbalah. As such, either a man or a woman can be baal shem. Baal shem do not seek Purity, and thus can ply their magic as any other trade.

Baal shem are distinguished by the Abilities Craft Amulet, Healer, Name Magic, Second Sight and Sense Holiness and Unholiness. All baal shem who are mystic companions start with the following Abilities at no cost. Baal shem have a minimum age of 20 – Intelligence.

Craft Amulet	4
Healer	1
Medicine	2
Name Magic	4
Occult Lore	3
Scribe Hebrew	2
Second Sight	2
Sense Holiness and Unholiness	2
Speak Hebrew	2

The permutations of the names of God and the angels can shape the world and influence the spirit; the Ability Name Magic is the Arcane Knowledge of using these names. Baal shem use Name Magic to make amulets and magical incantations.

## Amulets

Amulets are small talismans, typically slips of parchment but occasionally engraved metal jewelry, used to ward off evil or to bring good luck and health. They are worn on the neck, to aid the wearer, or placed on the walls of households or other structures, to protect all those who are within.

There are two types of amulets, lesser and greater. Lesser amulets take just a few minutes of preparation and function for a limited time which is described by a duration (the amount of time from creation that an amulet remains magical), and a number of uses (the number of times the effect is generated). If all of an amulet's uses have not been expended by the end of the duration, they are lost. Greater amulets work continuously until dispelled or destroyed, but take much more time to craft.

All amulets are designed specifically for one target. An amulet may be removed from its target without destroying the amulet's magic, but another target cannot benefit from its magic. To function, amulets must be in contact with their targets.

An amulet can only have one effect, although as many as three amulets can be worn by a single person or mounted on a single structure. If more than this number are carried (or mounted on a structure) only three of each variety will function, usually the first three that were picked up (or mounted). Amulets are not cumulative. In cases where two or more similar amulets are carried the one with the largest bonus functions and the others do not. For example, if a character were carrying two amulets, one imparting a +2 knack with swords and the other a +3 knack with swords, only the +3 amulet would function.

There are two categories of amulet

effects: good fortune effects and protection effects. In general, good fortune amulets grant the benefits of Virtues or impart bonuses to Characteristics and Abilities. They are limited to those Virtues that make sense. For example, it would be possible to develop a Knack or Exceptional Talent, but suddenly gaining the experience of one who is Well Traveled is absurd. Amulets may not affect non-living targets, bestow the effects of infernally-granted Virtues or Flaws, cause retroactive effects (like grant or remove the effects of Virtues that deal with character background), grant the effects of Hermetic Virtues, or grant bonuses to Knowledges.

Baal shem can also make amulets of longevity. Such amulets are always greater amulets, and must be worn or carried constantly to be effective. Like longevity potions, they cease to be effective if the target gains an affliction, gains points in an existing affliction, or gains a Decrepitude point. When a



longevity amulet fails, a new one must be constructed. Longevity amulets are not cumulative with longevity potions. Only the amulet or potion with the greatest benefit functions, while the other has no effect. If the greater of the two should fail, however, the other remains in effect until it fails on its own.

Protection effects that are designed for use against magic only counter those spells

that can be magically resisted (see ArM4, page 72). An amulet which protects against magic will overcome spells equal to or less than the magnitude specified during amulet creation.

Protection effects that are designed for use against supernatural beings work both to ward off beings and to dispel their harmful powers. A supernatural being of the type specified during amulet creation cannot approach within three paces of the amulet's wearer unless it possesses a Might greater than the magnitude specified. Additionally, all harmful powers directed toward the amulet-wearer are dispelled if the current Might of the being is equal to or less than the magnitude specified at time of amulet creation. If the amulet is affecting a structure, the being cannot enter nor directly harm any living being within if its Might is less than or equal to the magnitude specified. If the amulet is designed as a lesser, constant effect, the amulet is dispelled the first time a supernatural being overcomes its protective magic (greater amulets are not dispelled in this manner).

Creating a lesser amulet takes only a few minutes, as the baal shem carefully inscribes the proper names and letter combinations on a piece of parchment. The player rolls a stress die + Intelligence + Craft Amulet + Name Magic + Occult Lore + aura. The base ease factor for good fortune effects is 12, modified by a number of factors, and the base ease factor for protection effects is 6, which is also modified. If the roll exceeds or is equal to the ease factor, the amulet is a success.

The creation of a greater amulet, however, takes many seasons of work, as the baal shem must ponder over the correct combinations to bring about a permanent effect. During each season spent in greater amulet creation, the baal shem rolls a stress die + Intelligence + Craft Amulet + Name Magic + Occult Lore + aura. For every point by which the roll exceeds the ease factor, the baal shem accumulates one point toward completion. Once the baal shem has accumulated points equal to or greater than the ease factor, the amulet is complete. If the baal shem rolls a 0,

## Amulet Creation Ease Factors

### Good Fortune Effects

Base Ease Factor: 12

Effect	Ease Factor Modifier
Increase a Characteristic	+ (7 x increase)
Increase a Skill or Talent*	+ (3 x increase)
Add a Virtue effect	+ (7 x Virtue score)
Remove a Flaw effect	+ (7 x Flaw score)
Longevity amulet (for self)**	+ (3 x aging roll subtraction)
Longevity amulet (for other)**	+ (5 x aging roll subtraction)

\*Amulets cannot increase Knowledges

\*\*Must be a greater amulet, and only for a Target of Individual

### Protection Effects

Base Ease Factor: 6

Effect	Ease Factor Modifier
Faerie resistance	+ (3 x magnitude of magic)
Magic resistance	+ (3 x magnitude of magic)
Spirit resistance	+ (3 x magnitude of spirit's Might)
Angelic resistance	+ (7 x magnitude of angel's Might)
Demonic resistance	+ (5 x magnitude of demon's Might)

### Target Modifiers

Target	Ease Factor Modifier
Individual* . . . . .	+0
Structure* . . . . .	+3

\*As per the standard Hermetic definitions of these target types, described in ArM4 on page 104

For lesser amulets, divide the total modifier by 2 and round up. After this division, apply the modifiers from the Lesser Amulet Duration Table based on the desired duration. The result, plus the base ease factor of 12 or 6, is the final ease factor.

the season is wasted. If the baal shem botches, all points already accumulated are lost. Seasons of preparation need not be continuous.

A baal shem can benefit from assistants when making a greater amulet. A baal shem may have as many assistants as his score in Communication, with a minimum of one. All assistant baal shem roll a stress die + Communication + Name Magic, with an Ease Factor of 9+, before the lead baal shem makes his seasonal roll. If successful, the assistant adds his Name Magic score to the lead baal shem's roll. If the assistant fails, no bonus is allowed, and the assistant wastes his season to no effect. If the assistant botches, the leader and assistant become confused, no points are added to the creation total, the season is wasted, and the assistant can no longer help the leader in creating the amulet.

Finally, all amulets have Target modifiers, similar to Hermetic Targets (see ArM4, page 104).

### Example Lesser Amulet

Gavi, a merchant, is haunted by an invisible presence that seems to delight in destroying his inventory. Gavi goes to Pessa, the local baal shem, to be rid of the pest. For a small fee, Pessa agrees to help.

A quick examination of Gavi's house reveals (through Second Sight) a ghost, terribly jealous of Gavi's success. Pessa decides to drive the ghost out with a lesser amulet for the house. Observing the ghost's antics via Second Sight, Pessa guesses that it can be no more than third magnitude (Spirit Might of 15). Pessa's ease factor is 6 (the base) + [12 (protect a structure against a third magnitude ghost) ÷ 2 (because this is a lesser charm)], or 12. Pessa decides the amulet will last a full month (+2), and be of continuous use (+1), in the hope that the ghost will by then give up and haunt someone else. The final ease factor is 15. Pessa rolls a 3. Her score, then, is 3 (the roll) + 2 (her Intelligence) + 4 (her Craft Amulet score) + 4 (her Name Magic score) + 3 (her Occult Lore score), for a total

of 16. Success! Pessa nails the parchment to the door of Gavi's house and watches the ghost fly away, howling unhappily. Even before the month of the protection ends, another local merchant comes to Pessa, begging her to rid him of a spirit with suspiciously similar behavior. She agrees, for a small fee....

### Example Greater Amulet

Years go by, and Pessa, feeling the encroachment of old age, decides it is time to make herself a longevity amulet. For any greater amulet, her seasonal total would be a stress die + 2 (her Intelligence) + 6 (her Craft Amulet score) + 6 (her Name Magic score) + 5 (her Occult Lore score) + 3 (the magical aura in which she lives), or 21. She decides to make a greater amulet that confers a -4 to aging rolls. The ease factor is 12 (the base) + 12 (3 x the subtraction from the aging roll), or 24. She begins her seasonal work. The first season, she rolls 5 (her roll) + 21 (her seasonal total), for a total of 26, accumulating 2 points toward the total. The second season and rolls 7 (her roll) + 21, for a total of 28, accumulating another 4 points. Her third season, she enlists the aid of another baal shem, who successfully adds his Name Magic (8) to her total, which is now 29. That season, she rolls a 8 (her roll) + 29 (her new total), for a total of 37, accumulating another 13 points.



### Lesser Amulet Duration Table

Duration	Ease Factor Modifier
Day . . . . .	+0
Week . . . . .	+1
Month . . . . .	+2
Number of Uses	Ease Factor Modifier
One . . . . .	-1
Three . . . . .	+0
Continuous* . . . . .	+1

\*Continuous protective effects of lesser amulets are dispelled if the amulet is ever overcome.



Finally, her fourth season she rolls a 2 (her roll) + 29 (her new total), for a total of 31, accumulating another 7 points. At last, she has accumulated over 24 points, and her amulet is complete after one year's work, just in time for Winter.

### Incantations

By chanting lengthy combinations of names and mystic letters, a baal shem can cast spells, in a process known as incantation. A baal shem needs no materials to chant a spell, just a good strong voice.

To chant a spell a baal shem must first determine the level of the desired effect. For this purpose, Name Magic functions just like Hermetic magic (see ArM4, page 103). Spells chanted by baal shem are bound by the limitations of Hermetic magic, as described in ArM4 on page 67.

Once the level of effect is known, the baal shem must try to successfully cast it. To do this, the baal shem must equal or exceed the level of effect on a stress die + Communication + Name Magic + aura. This roll is modified by the Words and Gestures Table (see ArM4, page 76), except that a baal shem cannot cast a spell at all unless he actu-

ally chants and gestures. No assistants may aid in an incantation. Finally, if the baal shem wishes to sing rather than chant, he can add his Sing score to his roll at the cost of extra one Fatigue level (see below).

A baal shem cannot use vis, either to increase his roll or to make a spell permanent. A baal shem, therefore, cannot ever achieve a Permanent/Instant duration, boost the spell's range or duration with vis, or perform a Ritual effect through incantation. Baal shem may also not gain bonuses from spell foci when performing incantations that duplicate the effects of Hermetic spells.

When casting a spell, the baal shem spends 15 minutes in uninterrupted incantation for every 5 levels of the spell. At the end of this time the die is rolled, and if the result equals or exceeds the level of the spell, it is successfully cast. The caster loses two Fatigue levels, or three if he added his Sing to the roll, regardless of the spell's success or failure.

### Example Incantation

Pessa is late for her cousin's Bar Mitzvah, and decides to fly from her hut in the wilderness to the synagogue. Her player consults the *Ars Magica* rulebook, and decides that *Wings of the Soaring Wind*, ReAu 20, will do the trick. Pessa spends 60 minutes (15 x 4, the magnitude of the spell) singing (she elects to take extra fatigue in order to add her Sing score to the total) and rolls 6 (her roll) + 6 (her Name Magic score) + 4 (her Sing score) + 3 (the aura she lives in) + 1 (for booming voice), for a total of 20. Success! She zooms off and arrives on time for the celebration, weary but happy.

### Relations with other Magic-Users

The title "baal shem" is often applied to any practitioner of white magic, including kabbalists, as a term of respect. Kabbalists themselves, however, consider the baal shem semi-literate, their magic a bastardization of true Kabbalah. In other words, most kabbalists view the baal shem as Hermetic magi

## Baal Shem Summary of Formulae

### Craft Amulet:

stress die + Intelligence + Craft Amulet + Name Magic + Occult Lore + aura

### Incantation:

stress die + Communication + Name Magic + (Sing) + aura

## Limits on Specialty Stacking

Some of the formulae introduced in this chapter for baal shem and necromancers involve summing multiple Abilities for a roll against a single ease factor. Troupes may, if they wish, prohibit characters from applying more than one +1 bonus from specialization to a given die roll if it offends their sense of game balance.

view hedge wizards. By 1220 the old proscriptions against magic are largely ignored by the Jewish populace, and the baal shem business is booming. Taking action against a baal shem would be taking action against the Jewish Quarter itself, and only the most zealous kabbalist actively pursues the baal shem.

The practical applications of Kabbalah, as demonstrated by the baal shem, are so tempting that many kabbalists have in fact adopted their methods. A kabbalist character may take the Craft Amulet or Incantation Virtues described on page 116. When creating an amulet, a kabbalist substitutes Merkavah for Name Magic. When performing incantations, a kabbalist substitutes Kabbalah for Name Magic. Making an amulet or uttering an incantation will cost a kabbalist his seasonal experience reward in Purity unless the storyguide (or troupe) decides that the magical feat was so central to the furtherance of Purity as to be unavoidable.

The baal shem's ability to create permanent magic items without vis has occasionally attracted the attention of Hermetic magi. It is rumored that magi of Verditius have occasionally offered baal shem extravagant bribes to divulge their secrets. The baal shem themselves, however, don't know how to use Name Magic to make their spells permanent. While a Hermetic magus with sufficient connection to the Jewish Quarter may purchase the Name Magic and Craft Amulet Virtues, the ultimate secret of using the Name of God in a Hermetic laboratory is undiscovered.

## The Necromancer

Speaking to the dead is one of the oldest occult activities, its practice documented by the Bible itself. Outlawed by rabbinical law for millennia, necromancers have long dwelt on the perimeter of Jewish society, and have often assumed the roles of villains or monsters in Jewish legend. The Middle Ages have seen increasing tolerance of magic, however, and now even upstanding members of the Jewish community are tempted by the necromancer's

services—if they are willing to pay the price.

The necromancer as depicted here can be found throughout the traditions of many cultures. As such, it can easily be played as a character of non-Jewish descent.

Necromancers are distinguished by the Abilities Necromantic Summoning and Second Sight. All necromancers who are mystic companions start with the following abilities at no cost. All necromancers who are mystic companions also start with the Virtue Strong-Willed (see ArM4, page 42), and the Virtue Ghostly Ally (page 116) in addition to their normal complement of Virtues and Flaws. Necromancers have a minimum age of 20 – Intelligence.

Bargain	3
Leadership (threats)	3
Legend Lore	3
Occult Lore	3
Second Sight	3
Necromantic Summoning	4







## Necromantic Summoning

The Exceptional Knowledge Necromantic Summoning covers the rites of necromancy handed down from Biblical times, and allows the necromancer to summon a spirit or ghost.

To be summoned, a spirit must be available. The spirit of a Jewish person may be available for summoning up to twelve months after death, even if given a proper burial (see "Progress of the Dead" on page 123). The spirit of a Christian becomes unavailable upon the moment of proper burial. Any ghost currently wandering the earth, or any spirit whose body has not been given a proper burial, may be summoned.

To even attempt the summoning of a spirit, the necromancer must have some connection to it. Having a connection to the spirit also confers a connection bonus to the summoning roll. These bonuses are cumulative, so that if the necromancer has more than one connection to the spirit, each connection confers a bonus. The most common connections are listed on the Connection Bonus Chart below.

Sometimes, a necromancer will want to summon a spirit that he has no connection to. This can be achieved by spending a season studying the spirit. Studying a spirit is not a lab activity; it is more of an investigation than a research project. To study a spirit, the necromancer need not know the exact identity of a spirit. For example, a necromancer

could seek out the spirit of a mason, where any mason would do.

Investigating a spirit includes traveling to places important to the spirit (where it lived or died, for example) conversing with the spirit's survivors, and talking to people with traits similar to the spirit's. If, during these investigations, the necromancer acquires a connection (such as learning the spirit's birth-name), he need not spend the entire season investigating. If a full season of investigation is completed, whether voluntarily or from failing to find any other connection, the necromancer has a new connection to the spirit equal to the his Perception + Legend Lore.

The summoning ritual takes 15 minutes per magnitude of the spirit summoned, and costs two Fatigue levels. Although grueling, this ritual is the necromancer's only clue as to how powerful the spirit is. The necromancer repeats his ritual and incantations over and over again until the spirit at last appears or the necromancer gives up.

Once performed, the necromancer rolls a stress die + Intelligence + Necromantic Summoning + Occult Lore + Connection Bonus + aura. If the roll exceeds the spirit's Might, the spirit appears in a matter of moments from wherever the spirit may be located. Depending on the spirit's personality, it might be belligerent and dangerous when it appears.

## Controlling a Spirit

Necromantic lore often allows a necromancer to summon spirits more powerful than he can otherwise control. If the necromancer feels outclassed, he can always strike a bargain for the spirit's services. Although summoned spirits may not be happy to have their rest disturbed, most spirits will deal fairly with their summoners. This does not mean that spirits will not demand a fair price for their services.

Exactly what a summoned spirit will ask for varies wildly, but will often be related to a task uncompleted at the time of the spirit's

### Connection Bonus Chart

Connection	Bonus
Descendent of spirit . . . . .	+1
Arcane connection to spirit or corpse . . . . .	+5
Knew spirit while alive . . . . .	+2
Knows birth-name of spirit . . . . .	+3
Successfully summoned spirit before . . . . .	+4
Encountered spirit before . . . . .	+1
Spent season studying spirit . . . . .	Per + Legend Lore

death. Other common requests are for proper burials or aid for descendants. Some ghosts may help their descendants for free, while other spirits demand a heavy price to perform any action. In any case, a spirit is a magical being and is bound by its word. Such a being always upholds its end of a bargain if the necromancer does the same. Some necromancers are noted for their skill at making tricky and deceptive bargains, but some spirits are also remarkably clever and literal when interpreting the promises they give.

It is important to note that all bargains must be agreed upon by both the summoner and the summoned being before the summoned being will take any action for the summoner. Payment may be demanded in advance or deferred until a specific later time.

If the necromancer believes he is powerful enough to control the spirit, he may roll a stress die + Presence + Occult Lore + Leadership + aura against an ease factor equal to the spirit's Might. For every five levels (or fraction thereof) by which the necromancer's roll exceeds the spirit's Might, the necromancer may issue the spirit one command without fear of reprisal. The necromancer, however, must always remember to save one command for "Return peacefully from whence you came." A spirit that has been commanded (whether successfully or not) will almost always become belligerent toward the necromancer, and if not dismissed, will haunt the necromancer as much as possible.

Every attempt to control a spirit takes an entire round, is completed in the Magic phase of the round, and costs the necromancer one Fatigue level. If the first control attempt fails, the necromancer may try again, with a cumulative +3 bonus to the spirit's Might per attempt. A necromancer may attempt to command any spirit he summons or any spirit encountered and perceived with Second Sight. Once a necromancer has successfully gained control of a spirit, he can issue it commands without fatigue loss. During a single round, a necromancer can issue a number of commands equal to (Com + Speak Own Language), to any number of spirits, if he has commands remaining. A necromancer can-

not command his ghostly ally in this fashion (see page 114).

## Permitted Commands

*"Assist me"*: The score in an Ability or Knowledge the spirit had while alive will be added to any one related roll.

*"Follow me"*: If used as the necromancer's last command, the spirit will follow the necromancer until sunrise or sunset (whichever comes first), at which point it will be free of any obligation. If the necromancer has commands remaining, the spirit will peacefully accompany the necromancer wherever possible. If a necromancer enters a magically protected area, for example, the ghost will wait outside. Potent necromancers have entire ghostly entourages.

*"Immortalize me"*: The magnitude of the spirit's current Might will be subtracted from the necromancer's next aging roll. (This command disturbs any spirit so greatly that it shakes off all remaining commands and attacks the necromancer in any way it can.) Age resistance bonuses from multiple spirits are not cumulative.

*"Journey"*: A spirit will travel to any place to which the necromancer has an arcane connection.

*"Perform for me"*: The spirit attempts one use of any of its powers or abilities as directed by the necromancer.

*"Prophecy for me"*: Any spirit summoned by a necromancer can be commanded to divine a question. For these purposes, the spirit has the Exceptional Ability Divination equal to its magnitude (Might ÷ 5).

*"Protect me"*: For one magical attack, the necromancer resists with the spirit's current Might.

*"Return peacefully"*: the ghost must return from wherever it was summoned, and cannot harm the necromancer unless commanded again.

Individual commands can be easily combined, for example, "Journey to the synagogue and slay Rabbi Zalman."





## Ghostly Ally

All necromancers have one ghostly ally, which is much like having the +4 Virtue Ghostly Warder (see ArM4, page 46). The major difference is that the ghost need not be anyone the necromancer knew in life. In addition, these ghosts are not limited in how long they can leave the necromancer's presence. Like Ghostly Warders, ghostly allies have 20 experience points in various Abilities. It is suggested that such allies have a Might of 20.

The necromancer may see and speak with the ghost when it is nearby, and call it when it is not (without a summoning ritual), but may not communicate with the ghost otherwise when it is far away.

## Sample Summoning

Gavi, the merchant, is murdered in the night. Gavi's son, Odam, desperate for revenge, secretly travels to the haunted wood where Farvel the necromancer dwells, to learn the identity of his father's murderer. In exchange for several dark favors, Farvel agrees to summon up Gavi's spirit. Odam tells Farvel Gavi's birth-name, and Farvel begins the summoning. After a half-hour ritual (Gavi's spirit has a mere Spirit Might of 10), Farvel knows the time is right, and demands Gavi to come forth. Farvel rolls 5 (his roll) + 3 (his Intelligence) + 4 (his Necromantic Summoning) + 3 (his Occult Lore) + 3 (connection bonus) + 1 (Infernal aura), for a total of 19. Invisible to mortal eyes, Gavi's ghost materializes.

Although Gavi might be willing to name his killer voluntarily, Farvel has other plans for him, and performs the command ritual. He rolls a lucky 18 (his roll) + 2 (his Presence) + 3 (his Occult Lore) + 3 (his Leadership) + 1 (his specialty "threats" in Leadership) + 1 (the aura) for a total of 28. Farvel can issue Gavi's ghost 4 commands (since he rolled 28 and Gavi's Spirit Might is 10). To appease his client, Farvel's first command is "Tell me the name of your murderer." Gavi names a local usurer, and Odam stalks off, blood in his eye. Farvel's next command is, "Follow me," and Gavi is now Farvel's unwilling thrall. Farvel has two commands left, allowing him one additional service and a safe dismissal. Poor Gavi.

## New Traits

### New Social Virtues

The following is a list of new Companion Social Class Virtues, unique to the Jewish Quarter.

**Badchan (+1):** "Badchan" is Aramaic for "joker." You are a wedding jester whose task is to enliven wedding feasts and other celebrations with songs, jokes, and riddles. The badchan have been the Jewish people's satirists since Biblical times. While insults and mischievous tale-telling would be unacceptable from others, they are your livelihood. Your raunchy behavior is usually tolerated, but occasionally gets you in trouble. You have an appropriate reputation of 2 in the Jewish Quarter. This Virtue can also be selected by a grog as a Grog Status Virtue.

**Chazzan (+2):** You are a cantor, a religious professional who leads a congregation in prayer. When you are hired by a congregation, you earn approximately 15 silver pennies per month. You have the following abilities at no cost: Sing 3, and Speak Hebrew 1. If you have purchased the Virtue Educated,

## Necromancer's Summary of Formulae

### Summoning Ritual

stress die + Intelligence + Necromantic Summoning + Occult Lore + Connection Bonus + aura

### Command Ritual

stress die + Presence + Occult Lore + Leadership + aura

add one level to your Speak Hebrew. This Virtue can also be selected by a grog as a Grog Status Virtue.

**Doctor (+3):** You are a doctor, practicing one of the few scholarly professions permitted by gentile authorities. You trained at an academy, and consider the art of healing a true science. You earn at least 30 silver pennies per month, more as your skill and fame increase. You automatically have the following Abilities at no cost: Speak Arabic 5, Scribe Arabic 3, Scribe Hebrew 3, Medicine 3, Philosophiae 3. You must be at least (25 - Int) years old.

**Kohein (+1):** You are of the kohanim, the descendants of Aaron, chosen by God at the time of the incident with the Golden Calf to perform certain sacred work, particularly in connection with the animal sacrifices and the rituals related to the Temple. After the destruction of the Temple, the role of the kohanim diminished significantly in favor of the rabbis, however, kohein lineage remains important. Kohanim are given the first aliyah on the Sabbath (the first opportunity to recite a blessing over the Torah reading), which is considered an honor. They are also required to recite a blessing over the congregation at certain times of the year. You automatically have the Virtue Prestigious Family at no cost (see ArM4, page 42).

**Levite (+1):** You are a Levite. The tribe of Levi was set aside to perform certain duties in connection with the Temple. As with the Kohanim, their importance was drastically diminished with the destruction of the Temple, but their lineage is still tracked. Levites are given the second aliyah on the Sabbath (the second opportunity to recite a blessing over the Torah reading), which is considered an honor. You automatically have the Virtue Prestigious Family at no cost (see ArM 4, page 42).

**Rabbi (+3):** You are an ordained rabbi. This makes you a respected figure and leader within the surrounding Jewish community, and gives you some degree of responsibility for the well-being of that community. Further responsibilities may include being called upon to lead services and to know the many

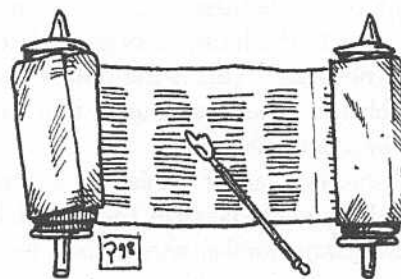
religious and civil laws. For a complete exploration of the role of a rabbi, see Chapter 4. You have some sort of good reputation of level 3 in the Jewish Quarter, and a good reputation of level 1 among the gentiles of the city. You automatically have the +1 Virtue Educated in a Yeshiva (see page 118), allowing you to have Academic Knowledges and Skills. You must purchase the Outsider flaw (see below).

**Shammash (+1):** This is the official whose role it is to keep the synagogue clean, put the prayer books in order, prepare the Torah scrolls, and support the rabbi and chazan in their duties. The shammash's responsibilities include waking the community members in the early morning for prayers. You are also responsible for making announcements in synagogue about births and deaths in the community and the times of prayer services. As a respected member of the community you receive some sort of positive reputation of 2 in the Jewish Quarter.

This Virtue can also be selected by a grog as a Grog Status Virtue.

**Usurer (+2):** You are one of the moneylenders of a busy city, with clients from the gentile nobility as well as the Jewish Quarter. You realize a yearly profit of about 800 silver pennies from your ventures. You have a bad reputation of level 2 in the gentile community, however, as no one is fond of their creditors. In times of economic hardship usury can be a lethal profession, as the nobles sometimes repay their debts with violence.

You automatically have the Ability Craft (Accounts) at level 3. While the various Craft Abilities are usually considered Work Skills, this one counts as a Casual Knowledge. Additionally, your Craft (Accounts) score can be no higher than your highest Scribe score.





## New Exceptional Ability Virtues

The following is a list of Virtues associated with the Jewish Quarter.

**Art of Memory (+1):** This is the traditional Art of Memory as practiced by hedge wizards and scholars throughout Mythic Europe. This Virtue confers the Exceptional Skill Memory 1, which can be increased like any other Ability. To memorize a complex scene, image, or piece of writing (such as a long letter, but not as long as an entire text), the character must roll a stress die + Intelligence + Memory of 9+ or higher depending on the complexity of the item to be memorized. If the character succeeds, he remembers the item in exact detail.

**Craft Amulet (+2):** You have the knowledge needed to make the magical amulets of the baal shem, as described on page 107. To purchase this Virtue, you must either be a kabbalist or purchase the Virtue Name Magic. If you are a kabbalist, your score in Merkavah replaces Name Magic in the formula for crafting amulets. See page 111 for details. This Virtue confers the Exceptional Skill Craft Amulet 1, which can be improved as any other Skill.

**Dream Interpreter (+4):** You are wise in the ways of dreams. You have some sort of positive reputation at level 3 in the Jewish Quarter, and can earn a comfortable living from your ability. This Virtue confers the Exceptional Skill Dream Interpretation at level 1, which can be improved as any other Skill. Dream Interpretation has three uses, which are described in the "Dream Interpretation" insert.

**Gematria (+5):** This Virtue confers the Exceptional Knowledge Gematria at an initial level of 1, which can be increased like any other Knowledge. This is the only Virtue of the kabbalist, other than Purity, that can be taken by a non-kabbalist.

Gematria is one of the earliest systems of numerology, made possible because Hebrew has no separate number system. Each letter of

the alphabet stands for a unique number, and larger numbers are made up of combinations of letters. Mystics have long used numerological techniques to find hidden connections and truths in Biblical and rabbinical texts. In *Ars Magica*, gematria has three uses, which are described in the "Gematria" insert on page 117.

**Ghostly Ally (+4):** You have a necromancer's ghostly ally. See page 114 for details.

**Incantation (+4, kabbalists only):** You can chant a spell like a baal shem, using your Kabbalah score in place of Name Magic. See page 111 for details.

**Arcane Memory (+3, Hermetic magi only):** This Virtue confers the Exceptional Talent Arcane Memory at an initial level of 1, which can be increased like any other Talent. This Ability is only available to high ranking members of House Guernicus and Jerbiton Quaesitors (see page 147 for details).

**Name Magic (+5):** This Virtue confers the Exceptional Knowledge Name Magic at an initial level of 1, which can be increased like any other Knowledge. With this Knowledge, you can perform incantations like a baal shem. See page 110 for details. Note: Kabbalists cannot take this Virtue.

**Necromancy (+5):** This Virtue confers the Exceptional Knowledge Necromantic Summoning at an initial level of 1, which can be increased like any other Knowledge. With this Virtue, you can perform both the summoning and commanding ritual of a Necromancer. See page 112 for details.

**Purity (+5):** You are dedicated to the ideals of Judaism. As such, you can acquire Purity like a kabbalist does, and you start with a Purity score of 1. See page 84 for details. While you cannot perform the magic of a kabbalist, your Purity score has all the other effects listed in "Effects of Purity" on page 85. If you wish, you may take True Faith (see ArM4, page 45) at the discounted cost of +2 Virtue points.

# New Abilities

All the new Abilities listed in this section are Exceptional Abilities. There are only two ways that a character can learn them. The first is for the character to be a member of the tradition of magic that grants one or more of these Abilities. The second way is for a character to purchase a Virtue that specifically allows the character to spend experience on them. Most kabbalist Abilities, however, are available only to kabbalists themselves, and have no Virtue equivalents.

## Exceptional Skills

**Craft Amulet:** Characters with this Ability can craft amulets according to the standard rules for doing so, found on page 107. *Specialties:* endurance, fortune, health, protection, wealth. (Intelligence)

**Memory:** This semi-mystical Ability allows memorization of vast amounts of information utilizing classical mnemonic techniques. See page 116 for details. *Specialties:* acts, images, words. (Intelligence)

## Exceptional Knowledges

**Dream Interpretation:** Understanding the secret meanings of dreams. See the "Dream Interpretation" insert for details. *Specialties:* calling, augury, interpretation. (Perception)

**Gematria:** Numerology using the Hebrew alphabet, primarily used to further understand of the Torah and Talmud. See the "Gematria" insert for details. A character's level in Gematria cannot be any greater than his level in either Speak Hebrew or Speak Aramaic, whichever is higher. *Specialties:* exploring texts, divination. (Perception)

**Kabbalah:** This Ability confers knowledge of the Tree of Life, the metaphysics of the mind of God. Only kabbalists can have this Ability. *Specialties:* golems, healing, the mind. (Intelligence)

## Gematria

**Divination:** You can use Gematria the same way as the Exceptional Ability Divination (see ArM4, page 45).

**Reading a Text:** When spending a season studying a text written in Hebrew or Aramaic, and rolling a stress die + Perception + Gematria of 12+, you can add your Gematria score to your Study Total. Fail, however, and the season is wasted. Botch, and become so confused that you can never study the text again.

**Revisiting a Text:** Even though you can no longer study from a text, you can revisit the text with Gematria to squeeze out a few more experience points. For each season you spend revisiting a Hebrew or Aramaic text, roll a stress die + Perception + Gematria. If you roll 9+, one experience point is gained in the subject of the text. If you roll a 12+, two experience points are gained. If you roll a 15+, three experience points are gained. Fail and the season is wasted. Botch and you become so confused you cannot gain experience in the subject of the text for an entire year.

## Dream Interpretation

**Dream Calling:** By rolling a stress die + Intelligence + Dream Interpretation of 9+, you may give yourself or someone else a dream of your choosing if you touch the person before they are to sleep and the person wishes to have the dream.

**Dream Augury:** You can have an auguring dream about an object or a person if you place an arcane connection to the object or person under your pillow before you sleep. When you sleep, roll a stress die + Intelligence + Dream Interpretation. Your dream confers information to you about the object or person as if you had cast an *Intéllego* spell of a level equal to your roll. The information gained is couched in metaphor and allegory, and will require some puzzling out. You may give another person an auguring dream if you first make a dream calling roll as described above.

**Dream Interpretation:** When a dream is brought to you for interpretation, roll a stress die + Perception + Dream Interpretation + Folk Ken (if any). You interpret the dream as if you had cast an *Intéllego* spell of a level equal to your roll. The equivalent Technique, the subject, and even the type of information conveyed is entirely up to the storyguide. For more information about dreams, see "Dream Interpretation" on page 78.



*Merkavah:* This Ability confers knowledge of secret rites and holy names used to influence supernatural beings. Only kabbalists can have this Ability. *Specialties:* *angels, demons, faeries, spirits.* (Intelligence)

*Name Magic:* Essentially rudimentary Merkavah, Name Magic confers knowledge of the powers of mystical names and words. *Specialties:* *amulets, incantations.* (Intelligence)

*Necromantic Summoning:* Knowledge of the rituals used to call up spirits of the dead. *Specialties:* *particular types of people.* (Intelligence)

## Modified Traits

Some character Traits from *Ars Magica* require modification in the Jewish Quarter.

## Changed Virtues and Flaws

### Alchemy (+1)

Alchemy among the Jews has always been an occupational specialization like medicine. It has never had the mass appeal of Kabbalah. People at large are aware of alchemy, and may even have an inkling of the basic doctrines, nevertheless they are little able or inclined to engage in alchemical operations as they were to dabble in medical procedures. Yet alchemy has always been closely linked with the Jews, and some of the greatest practitioners are from their ranks.

The earliest and most important Hellenistic alchemist, known as Maria the Jewess (Maria Hebraea), who lived in Egypt in the second or third century AD, is quoted as having said that only "the seed of Abraham" was entitled to alchemical experimentation. Zosimus the Panopolitan, whose writings are the wellspring of much alchemical writing is considered to have been a Jew, especially by Arab alchemists.

Many alchemists view the origins of alchemy as having sprung from the Bible. Many biblical figures, kings, and prophets are said to have practiced the Great Art, passing down its secrets encoded in the scriptures. It is said that Adam was the first teacher of alchemy, followed by Noah and several other biblical heroes. For this reason, many gentile alchemists will seek out great Jewish masters for true wisdom.

It should come to no surprise that many kabbalists continue alchemical practices. However, there are many Jewish alchemists, especially in Arabic lands, who have never explored the depths of the Kabbalah, and thus their alchemy retains its similarities to the alchemy known throughout Europe.

There is one advantage to the Jewish alchemist, the Hebrew language and gematria. Through this art, a Jewish alchemist may make his work closer to the nature of creation. It is for this reason that many gentile alchemists attempt to learn Hebrew, some even becoming fluent at it. Any character of any religion, including a Natural Magician, who studies gematria may add his Gematria score to his Alchemy lab total.

### Educated (Yeshiva) (+1)

You have been educated at a yeshiva. You have a score of 3 in Speak Hebrew and 1 in Scribe Hebrew, and may purchase Academic Knowledges at character generation. You are at least (18 - Int) years old. Kabbalists or rabbis need not take this Virtue. It is the father's religious duty to instruct his children in the basic requirements of God's will as formulated in the Torah and its continuing rabbinical interpretations. This mandate has resulted in widespread literacy, especially amongst sons. It is strongly recommended that Jewish characters take this virtue.

### Outsider (variable flaw)

Jews are a minority living in an alien world, and most have this Flaw at a value of

-2 (see ArM4, page 46). For more details on anti-Jewish sentiment see page 18. For Jews living in Islamic areas during times of tolerance this is only a -1 Flaw (see "Dhimmi" on page 21).

## New and Modified Abilities

**Angelic Lore:** This Arcane Knowledge, which can be selected by any kabbalist or other character who can normally begin play with Arcane Knowledges, covers the anatomy and metaphysics of angels and the Seven Heavens. *Specialties:* heavenly geography, individual angels, angelic orders, history. (Intelligence)

**Judaic Lore:** The "Organization Lore" of the Jewish people (see ArM4, page 58). *Specialties:* famous rabbis, history, politics. (Intelligence)

**Rabbinical Law:** The "Civil and Canon Law" of the Jewish people (see ArM4, page 56). This Academic Knowledge contains the vast body of civil and religious laws and customs of Rabbinical Judaism. See "Halakhah," page 26, for details. *Specialties:* Mitzvot, Gezerah, Takkanah, Minhag. (Intelligence)

**Storytelling** (see ArM4, page 55): The history of Judaism is filled with stories, both in the Bible and as created by rabbis to make a point or to make comparisons between characters in scripture. Storytelling is not a mandatory skill but any kabbalist who has it, especially in conjunction with Charm, will be able to hold a group spellbound as he spins his tales. (Communication)

**Theology: Judaism:** The "Theology" Ability of the Jewish People (see ArM4, page 58). *Specialties:* Torah, Talmud, Mysticism. (Intelligence)

**Medicine:** The study of medicine is common throughout Jewish communities. While Christians are discouraged from using Jewish doctors, in the Islamic world they are recognized as the best at what they do. Some rabbis say that all doctors are guaranteed long

stays in Gehinnom, because their profession requires the breaking of many mitzvot.

## Impermissible Virtues and Flaws

**Indulgences** (ArM4, page 43): The concept of indulgences is not found within Judaism.

**Veteran** (ArM4, page 42): Among gentile nations, Jews are neither allowed in armies nor permitted to have their own militias. Converted veterans or Khazar warriors are theoretically possible, but would be quite rare.

**Relic** (ArM4, page 45): Veneration of body parts is an anathema to Jews, although relics in forms other than body parts are possible.



## New and Modified Abilities Chart

### Skills

**Academic Skills**  
Scribe Aramaic  
Scribe Hebrew

**Performance Skills**  
Storytelling\*

### Knowledges

**Academic Knowledges**  
Medicine\*  
Rabbinical Law  
Speak Hebrew  
Speak Aramaic  
Theology: Judaism

**Arcane Knowledges**  
Angelic Lore

**Casual Knowledges**  
Craft—Accounts  
Judaic Lore

### Exceptional Abilities

**Exceptional Skills**  
Craft Amulet  
Memory

**Exceptional Knowledges**  
Alchemy\*  
Dream Interpretation  
Gematria  
Kabbalah  
Merkavah  
Name Magic  
Necromantic Summoning

\*Modified Ability





# Chapter 8

## Legendary Landscape

Many aspects of the Jewish supernatural are impossible to represent in game-mechanical terms. For example, the reader will not find rules for traversing the Seven Heavens in these pages. Yet the other-world of the Jewish mystic is so lush and full of wonder that any saga would benefit from it as background. This chapter presents such a background, with game rules where appropriate.

### Legendary Rabbis and Wise Men

The Torah directly forbids supernatural practices in Deuteronomy 18:10-12. The biblical King Saul himself, however, has the witch of Endor invoke the spirit of the prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 28), seeking the wisdom of the dead. Even the most respected rabbis and Jewish leaders have occasionally resorted to sorcery.

### Thirteenth Century Contemporaries

The statistics provided here are for the official starting date of 1220.

#### *Isaac the Blind (1165-1235)*

Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham, called Isaac the Blind, is the greatest kabbalist of the age. It was he who compiled the *Bahir* by researching with the immortal rabbis of the City of Luz. A resident of Narbonne, he is reputed to be the finest teacher of the mysteries. He is opposed to widespread public dissemination of kabbalistic theories as he feels this would cause distortion and misunderstanding. A kabbalist visiting Narbonne in 1220, especially one with a letter of introduction from a well-known rabbi, would be welcomed into his company.

#### *Rabbi Yitzchak of Vienna (1180-1250)*

Writer of the *Ohrzoru*, an authoritative text on the halakah for Ashkenazic Jews (Summa, Rabbinical Law, Level 4, Quality 10). Currently, he is one of the up-and-coming leaders of the Chasidim of Germany, and a renowned kabbalist. He is also one of the strongest voices against Rabbinical Judaism, arguing that many yeshiva have forsaken the true wisdom of the priests of the Temple by relying too heavily on rational philosophy. He is quite unhappy with the Order of Hermes, which he sees as a conspiracy of wicked idolaters. While satisfied with the treaty, Yitzchak seeks to thwart any further relations between Hermetic magi and kabbalists.

## Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham, Isaac the Blind

**Characteristics:** Int +5, Per +3, Pre +2, Com +3, Str -1, Stm 0, Qik -2, Dex 0

**Age:** 55

**Purity:** 14

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 5

**Virtues and Flaws:** Dream Interpretation +3, Gematria +5, Healer +1, Mythic Intelligence +5, Rabbi +3, Blind -5, Noncombatant -3, Outsider -2

**Personality Traits:** Secretive +4, Meandering +2

**Reputation:** Greatest kabbalist of the age 5, among all rabbis

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Fist*	-4	-6	-5	-4	0

\*Isaac is a pacifist, and so these statistics would only be used for defense.

**Soak:** +14

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Angelic Lore 9 (Kerubim), Artes Liberales 3 (rhetoric), Awareness 3 (lies), Concentration 8 (meditation), Disputatio 8 (Talmud), Etiquette 3 (Jewish), Faerie Lore 6 (Luz), Folk Ken 4 (Jews), Gematria 7 (divination), Guile 2 (demons), Healer 7 (disease), Intrigue 3 (demons), Judaic Lore 9 (rabbis), Kabbalah 10 (divine influence), Leadership 5 (rabbis), Lectio 5 (Merkavah), Medicine 4 (disease), Merkavah 10 (Shekhinah), Occult Lore 6 (demons), Philosophiae 3 (metaphysics), Rabbinical Law 9 (Torah), Scribe Aramaic 6 (mystical writings), Scribe Hebrew 6 (mystical writings), Sing 4 (prayer), Storytelling 5 (Jewish folktales), Theology: Judaism 10 (mysticism)

### Rapport Gifts

*Divine Protection:* Magic Resistance +60

*Looking into the Souls of Men:* Divine magic equivalent of *Peering into the Mortal Mind*, InMe 30. This effect operates constantly, whether Rabbi Isaac wants it or not.

Isaac the Blind also has many other rapport gifts listed in this section at his current Purity.

## Rabbi Yitzchak of Vienna

**Characteristics:** Int +2, Per +0, Pre +1, Com +4, Str 0, Stm +2, Qik 0, Dex -1

**Age:** 40

**Purity:** 7

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 4

**Virtues and Flaws:** Dream Interpretation +3, Gematria +5, Incantation +4, Sense Holiness and Unholiness +1, Social Contacts +1 (among Chasidim), Strong Willed +1, Rabbi +3, Noncombatant -3, Outsider -2, Oversensitive -1 (Sephardic theological theories), Oversensitive -1 (idolaters)

**Personality Traits:** Zealous +3, Curious +2, Prejudiced +2

**Reputation:** Great kabbalist of the age 4, among rabbis

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Fist*	-2	-7	-3	-3	+2

\*Yitzchak is a pacifist, and so these statistics would only be used for defense.

**Soak:** +9

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Angelic Lore 5 (Yofiel), Concentration 5 (research), Craft (Tailor) 4, Disputatio 5 (Talmud), Etiquette 4 (Jewish), Gematria 5 (divination), Judaic Lore 6 (history), Kabbalah 7 (golems), Leadership 5 (rabbis), Lectio 4 (Merkavah), Merkavah 6 (Yofiel), Occult Lore 6 (demons), Rabbinical Law 5 (Torah), Scribe Aramaic 3 (mystical writings), Scribe German 3 (letters), Scribe Hebrew 5 (mystical writings), Sense Holiness and Unholiness 4 (demons in disguise), Sing 2 (debate), Speak Aramaic 5 (mystical writings), Speak German 4 (criticism), Speak Hebrew 5 (arguing), Storytelling 3 (Jewish folktales), Theology: Judaism 8 (mysticism)

### Rapport Gifts

*Divine Protection:* Magic Resistance +35

*Text Memorization:* Rabbi Yitzchak has memorized the Torah, Talmud, and Ma'aseh Merkavah.

*Voice of Heavenly Exaltation:* See page 132.

## Rabbi Eleazar Rokeach of Worms (1160-1238)

Rabbi Eleazar is a great Talmudic scholar, famous kabbalist, and leader of the Chasidei Ashkenaz (page 12). He is the head of the Rhenish synods that are in the forefront of rabbinical law. He is the author of the *Sefer HaRokeach*, an ethical and halakhahic work (Summa, Rabbinical Law, Level 6, Quality 13). In 1197 during the Second Crusade, his

wife and two daughters were slaughtered before his eyes. He has been a main instrument of the popularization of kabbalistic thought and practices amongst the masses of Ashkenazic Jewry, although he considers himself a rabbi and leader of the community first, and mystic second.

## Divine Wizards

### King Solomon

Son and successor of David, the biblical Solomon is traditionally regarded as the greatest king of Israel. He maintained his dominions with military strength and established Israelite colonies outside his kingdom's borders. The crowning achievement of his vast building program was the famous Temple at his capital, Jerusalem.

Solomon also became famous as a sage and poet, deemed wisest of the wise. When two harlots each claimed to be the mother of the same baby, he determined the real mother by observing each woman's reaction to the prospect of cleaving the child in two. He wrote 1,005 songs, all beautiful. The biblical Book of Proverbs contains collections of his aphorisms and teachings. The Song of Solomon is attributed to him in its opening verse. He also captured his knowledge and artistry in his own texts, such as the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, the poetic Odes of Solomon, and the sagacious Psalms of Solomon.

Solomon's great wisdom included magic. In the Wisdom of Solomon, Solomon says: "God...gave me true knowledge of things, as they are: an understanding of the structure of the world and the way in which elements work, the beginning and the end of eras and what lies in-between...the cycles of the years and the constellations...the thoughts of human beings...the power of spirits...the virtue of roots....I learned it all, secret or manifest." The scholar Josephus wrote: "God gave him knowledge of the art that is used against

### Rabbi Eleazar Rokeach of Worms

**Characteristics:** Int +4, Per +3, Pre +4, Com +2, Str -2, Stm +2, Qik 0, Dex 0

**Age:** 60

**Afflictions:** Going blind -1, Weak knees -2

**Purity:** 9

**Size:** -1

**Confidence:** 6

**True Faith:** 6

**Virtues and Flaws:** Dream Interpretation +3, Famous (among Ashkenazim) +2, Gematria +5, Rabbi +3, Sense Holiness and Unholiness +1, Social Contacts +1 (among Chasidim), Strong Willed +1, Temporal Influence +2, True Faith +2, Hatred -1 (Crusaders), Noncombatant -3, Outsider -2

**Personality Traits:** Nurturing +3, Sorrowful +2, Irascible +1

**Reputation:** Leader of the Ashkenazim 4, among Jews

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Fist*	-2	-6	-3	-5	+2

\*Eleazar is a pacifist, and so these statistics would only be used for defense.

**Soak:** +11

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body Levels:** OK, 0, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Angelic Lore 6 (Shekhinah), Concentration 8 (meditation), Disputatio 10 (Mishneh), Etiquette 6 (synod), Gematria 3 (divination), Judaic Lore 10 (history), Kabbalah 9 (golems), Leadership 5 (rabbis), Lectio 8 (law), Merkavah 9 (Shekhinah), Rabbinical Law 12 (Ashkenazic), Scribe Aramaic 6 (law), Scribe German 5 (law), Scribe Hebrew 8 (law), Sense Holiness and Unholiness 4 (in Gentiles), Sing 2 (pray), Speak Aramaic 6 (law), Speak German 5 (law), Speak Hebrew 6 (law), Storytelling 5 (Talmud), Theology: Judaism 12 (law)

#### Rapport Gifts

*Divine Protection:* Magic Resistance +40

*Valor:* See page 132.

demons, in order to heal and benefit men.” He adds that Solomon was a great exorcist and left instructions on how to perform this kind of healing.

The Testament of Solomon is King Solomon’s legendary book on magic. Unfortunately, many later writers aspired to his fame, and borrowed his name. There are many “Testaments of Solomon,” all claiming to be the original. The three most circulated have the following characteristics: Summa, Occult Lore, Level 4, Quality 7; Summa, Herbalism, Level 5, Quality 6, and; Summa, Philosophiae, Level 5, Quality 8.

Rumors persist of the original Testament of Solomon. It is said that the text can teach a rabbi how to command a demon as a necromancer would command a ghost, and how to capture all sorts of spirits in bottles. Even the immortal rabbis of Luz, however, do not know of the text’s whereabouts.

Given to Solomon by the angel Raphael, the Ring of Solomon was proof from God that Solomon was given the divine right to control all the demons and spirits of the earth. This ring is one of many lost treasures of the First Temple. Kabbalists believe that if the Ring were ever found, it would impart to its wearer the knowledge of true demonology: the power to adjure and command demons without risking impurity.

## Rabbi Adam

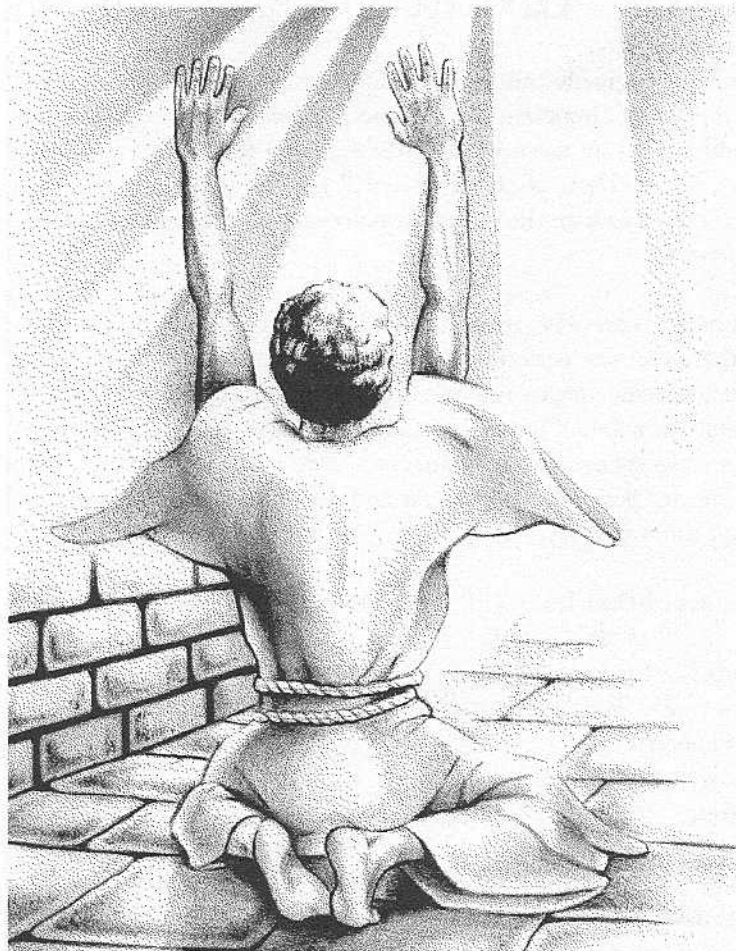
Rabbi Adam, like Solomon, was master of many mysteries. A tale is told where he casts a spell that causes an evil king to dream about awakening at the bottom of a pit in a foreign land, where he is arrested and put to three tests, with his life at stake. During each test Rabbi Adam comes to his rescue, so that the king finds himself greatly in his debt. When the king awakens and finds himself back in his palace, he is more than willing to cancel the evil decree that prompted Rabbi Adam to take action in the first place. Similar tales are told of Rabbi Adam coming to the assistance of his fellow Jews either by interceding with an evil king or by aiding a Jew in danger.

## The Dead

Jewish ghosts are intangible and invisible to normal sight, unable to affect the living world unless given the power by external means. Such external means vary greatly, including sin, righteousness, magic, and the necromantic arts:

## Progress of the Dead

The souls of the Jewish dead do not immediately enter the afterlife. For the first seven days after death, the soul remains attached to the physical body, flitting from its home to the cemetery and back, woeful and confused. This explains why the initial mourning period is one week, as the prayers and observances sooth the soul’s unhappiness.





After the first week the soul ascends and descends for an entire year, until the body is sufficiently disintegrated and the soul is freed. Mourning continues throughout this period. The kaddish prayer said by a son of the deceased each night helps the soul to rise from this attachment, quickens the purgatorial period in Gehinnom, and leads the soul to its place in Paradise. There, the purified soul is embraced by the radiance of the Divine Presence, the Shekhinah, until the time of the Messiah.

## Righteous Ghosts

During the first year after death, the soul of a righteous person can return to earth in a quasi-physical form. These apparitions are quite harmless, concerned only for the wel-

fare of loved ones left behind. To see the ghost of a family-member, however, is extreme bad luck, and mourning families take steps to avoid encountering the spirit of the deceased. Because of this, neighbors and strangers will sometimes encounter ghosts on the road or even in their homes, inquiring about their family and asking for final favors.

## Dibbukim

A dibbuk is disembodied human spirit that, because of former sins, wanders restlessly until it finds a haven in the body of a living person, one made vulnerable through sin. It can be driven out through exorcism, which causes it to leave by the little toe. It is often very difficult to distinguish between a proper dibbuk and a demon.

## Gavi the Dibbuk

Gavi was a greedy merchant in life, turned into a dibbuk by a necromancer. Desperate to rid himself of the sin of greed, thinking it will allow him to enter the afterlife, Gavi forces his victims to carry out mad acts of charity. He will give all their money away, force others to take their greatest possessions, and even force-feed beggars.

*Adventure Seed:* Gavi, up to his usual tricks, happens upon a magus of the covenant performing some selfish act and possesses him. The possessed magus sneaks into the covenant library, loads a wheelbarrow full of important books, and races off to deliver them to one of the covenant's enemies as a "peace offering," giving away the magus' personal magic items and vis to any peasant he meets along the way.

**Characteristics:** Int + 1, Per +2, Pre n/a, Com n/a, Str n/a, Stm n/a, Dex n/a, Qik n/a

**Spirit Might:** 15

**Personality Traits:** Charitable +10 (madness), Frantic +3,

**Weapon/Attack**

None (insubstantial)

**Powers**

*Possession, 5 points, ReMe 40:* See "Possession by a Dibbuk."

*Control, 1 point, ReMe 40:* See "Possession by a Dibbuk."

**Abilities:** Awareness (sin) 3

## Possession by a Dibbuk

A dibbuk must lurk about invisibly until it spies one of the living committing a sin. All sins create demons, who then grant dibbukim access to the sinner's body. Once a dibbuk finds a sinful candidate, it spends 5 points of Spirit Might, and rolls a stress die + remaining Might + a bonus based upon the gravity of the sin. This bonus ranges from +1 (wishing ill upon someone, for example) to +5 (spreading gossip), and is assigned by the storyguide. The dibbuk's victim rolls a stress die + Stamina + Concentration + Purity (if any). Characters with the Virtue Strong-Willed may add +3. Magi who lose the contest have an additional line of defense. They may resist this effect as if it were a Rego Mentem 40 effect.

Once in a body, the dibbuk may speak, move freely, and has access to all the possessed person's Characteristics and Abilities, including magic. Each action that requires a die roll, however, costs the dibbuk one point of Spirit Might. Magi or characters with Purity can try to resist performing such actions by rolling the same contest as above

(that is, they make re-roll the Stamina vs. Might test), except that the contest no longer costs the dibbuk Spirit Might, and magic resistance no longer applies. If the character is successful, the point of Spirit Might is wasted and the dibbuk must try again. Otherwise, the character is just a passenger in his own body. If a dibbuk's Might falls to 0, it must leave the body.

Two clues give dibbukim away. First, a possessed body will always speak with the voice the dibbuk had in life. Second, the change in personality is almost always obvious, since dibbukim are extremely erratic.

A necromancer can turn a spirit that led a sinful life into a dibbuk by commanding it to "roam the night" (see page 113). Such necromantic creations gain +5 to their original Might.

## Faerie

Like their Christian counterparts, rabbis rarely make the distinction between demons and faeries. The Faerie realm of Jewish legend is subordinate to the Divine, rather than anathematized by it. The purpose of Faerie is to challenge the good, punish the wicked, and help reveal the righteous path to those in between.

## The Yenne Velt

The Yenne Velt is a realm of near, dark summer in Arcadia (see *Fearies*), a distorted mirror-world of Jewish life. It is an endless, sprawling Jewish Quarter where everything is a twisted reflection of the true world. In the Yenne Velt, for example, donkeys are revered rabbis, slovenliness is considered pure, the Torah is full of bawdy songs and jokes, and the common-folk ride on the backs of lords.

The Yenne Velt is also home to witches and wizards. Powerful necromancers make their homes in ruined synagogues, serviced by

armies of ghosts. These creatures delight in entering the real world and bewitching children, especially the sons of rabbis. The Yenne Velt is also believed to be the hiding place of the lost treasures of the First Temple, includ-

## The Amorite

A handsome, red-headed man dressed all in black, the Amorite claims to be thousands of years old, and insists on being addressed as "Rabbi." He dwells deep within the Yenne Velt, making his home in a gentile's castle built upside down, with a court of hundreds of ghosts. His ghosts pretend to be alive, and ask him to resolve religious issues and imaginary grievances between each other. Through the years, he has peppered various tomes of lore with tales designed to trick readers into questing for him. Even the *Sword of Moses* has a brief, intriguing reference to "the rabbi of the Yenne Velt who learned at the feet of Solomon." He awaits those kabbalists foolish enough to seek his "wisdom." He challenges all those who find him to a rabbinical debate. If he wins, he commands his ghosts to drive the kabbalist mad. If he loses, he will not permit the kabbalist to leave, insisting that he stay as his study partner for the next few centuries.

**Characteristics:** Int +3, Per 0, Pre +5, Com +2, Str 0, Stm +3, Dex +1, Qik +2

**Faerie Might:** 35

**Size:** 0

**Personality Trait:** Cruel +4

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Brawl	+6	+4	+5	0

**Soak:** 3

**Body Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Powers**

**Undo, special:** By chanting various names of God backwards, the Amorite can cast any Perdo spell (of any Form), up to 25th level. Each chant takes 1 round to cast, and costs the Amorite Might points equal to the spell-equivalent magnitude.

**Command, ReMe 40, 1 point:** He can make any ghost do his bidding.

**Abilities:** Bargain 5 (dark favors), Leadership 9 (threats), Judaic Lore 8 (sorcery), Necromantic Summoning 15 (ghosts of rabbis), Rabbinical Law 9 (civil), Speak Hebrew 5 (trickery), Theology: Judaism 8 (sin)



ing texts of forgotten prayers that no mortal tongue has spoken in thousands of years.

## The City of Luz

This marvelous, Arcadian city has appeared in tales since the Bible. Jacob identifies the city as one of the Gates of Heaven:

*"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.' And he was afraid, and said, 'How full of awe is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.' . . . And he called the name of that place Beth-el, but the name of the city was Luz at first."*

The Talmud tells that Luz is a city of immortals:

*"It has been taught: 'That is the Luz against which Sennacherib marched without disturbing it, and even the Angel of Death has no permission to pass through it. But when the old there become tired of life they go outside the wall and then die.'"*

Luz can be found in many places outside the old lands of Israel, but only by accident. Many travelers have told tales of its wonder, and how they happened upon it at their time of need. If deliberately sought, there are only two paths to Luz: adjuring the fallen angel Azael (page 98), or a hollow almond tree hidden somewhere in the Holy Land.

Luz is more majestic and beautiful than Jerusalem at the height of the Jewish kingdom, although there is no Temple within the city, for the rabbis there pray for the Temple's return just as they do in the world of the living. Milk and honey flows as it did in the ancient days, and the residents want for nothing. The Talmudic disputations held at the Yeshiva of Luz reveal the deepest mysteries, and the library contains the books of Biblical sages and angels.

The ageless residents of Luz live the ideal Jewish life, free from sin and full of prayer and contentment. Their nature, however, is mysterious. They seem to be creatures of faerie, yet many are indistinguishable from the accounts of the ancestral Jews of the Holy

Land. Their lives are full of white magic and study, yet the rabbis are incapable of performing any works of Kabbalah or Merkavah.

Visiting Luz is the goal of many kabbalists, but is not without its risks. Each season spent in Luz reduces Purity by one, as a rabbi's true place is in the mortal world doing good works. At the end of visit, the kabbalist must roll a quality die. If the result is higher than his Purity, he can never leave Luz. He must join the citizens of Luz, not as a true Jew, but as an image of perfect living until the age of the Messiah.

## Sambation

Sambation is the legendary "Shabbat River" beyond which the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel were exiled in 721 BC by Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria. Legends describe it as a roaring torrent, not of water but of stones, so turbulent that nothing can cross it. Every Shabbat, however, it subsides, as if taunting the Ten Tribes imprisoned by it, since Jews cannot travel on that day. Thus the Ten Lost Tribes have dwelt in isolation and exile from the rest of the world for centuries.

Stories about the Ten Lost Tribes and reports of an independent Jewish kingdom in the East have stirred the imaginations of both Jews and Christians throughout the ages. The ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus located the Sambation and the fantastic kingdom beyond in Syria. Pliny asserted it was in Judaea. Rabbi Nahmanides, meanwhile, identified it with the River Habor of the Bible (2 Kings 17:6).

Travelers to Arcadia have encountered many such rivers of stones. Rumored glimpses of great cities beyond these impassible rivers, seen only when the flow of stones subsides, have lead to wild speculation by the kabbalists. Is the land beyond the Sambation a realm in Arcadia? Could there be an angel which provides access to it? Would the Ten Lost Tribes be waiting there to be released?

## Beasts of Note

### Behemoth

This animal of gigantic proportions is mentioned in the Book of Job. The size of a thousand mountains, it drinks so much water each day that a special river flows out of Paradise to quench its thirst. It roars once a year in the month of Tammuz to frighten the wild animals of the world and keep them in control. Several travelers have reported it deep within the Yenne Velt.

### Leviathan

A sea monster of enormous dimensions and king of all the sea creatures that appears in the Torah. God slew the female of the species, to prevent the pair from breeding, and made clothes for Adam and Eve from its skin. The eyes of the Leviathan light up the sea at night and water boils up from the hot breath of its mouth. The foul odor of the Leviathan can even overpower the fragrance of the Garden of Eden.

Kabbalists use the Leviathan to symbolize Samael, the prince of evil. Some say that Gabriel will be sent to slay the Leviathan in the time of the Messiah. Others believe that it will die in battle with the Behemoth. No matter the truth of these tales, many report seeing the beast in the oceans of the world, as well as occasionally in a strange sea at the far reaches of the Yenne Velt.

### Shamir

A miraculous worm that could break even the hardest stone. The shamir was formed by God at twilight on the sixth day just before Shabbat. It is as big as a grain of barley and created for the sole purpose of helping with the building of the Temple, where metal tools were forbidden as they were also instruments of war.

King Solomon, the builder of the First Temple, learnt from the demon Asmodeus that the shamir had been brought from Paradise by a bird and was being kept hidden. So Solomon covered all bird's nests with glass, and when the bird brought out the shamir to break the covering over its nest he managed to capture the worm.

Thereafter Solomon kept it wrapped in wool in a lead box and used it not only for hewing stones but also for engraving the precious stones of the Urim and Thummin on the High Priest's breastplate. It was lost following the fall of the Temple. Some say that the finest of jewelers of the City of Luz have captured it and use it to further their art.



## The Divine

Throughout the Bible, angels play important roles in the lives of men. Angels appear to Abraham. They destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorra. An angel stays Abraham's hand as he is about to sacrifice his son, Isaac. An angel leads the Children of Israel through the desert, appearing as a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Angels and demons are mentioned by the rabbis of the Talmud as well. Angels appear in the daily Hebrew liturgy in the form of the heavenly host that sings praises to God day in and day out. The rabbis also write of demons who lurk in ruins awaiting the entrance of the unwary and unprotected.

## The Divine in your Saga

The great angels and demons of Judaic lore are beyond qualification. They are not monsters to be fought, or allies to be won. They are forces of nature, their power deriving directly from God. Instead of describing these forces in meaningless game attributes, such as listing Asmodeus with an Intelligence of +99, this section only describes the abili-





ties of angels and demons that are quantifiable in game terms.

In place of complete descriptions, angels and demons have **aspects**. An aspect describes one of the entity's roles in the world, and the abilities associated with that aspect. The Might of an entity varies from aspect to aspect, reflecting the uniqueness and importance of the aspect in the scheme of things. Lilith the Corrupter, for example, is much more powerful than Lilith the Tormentor of Children. As a creature of childhood disease and crib-death, Lilith is everywhere, and thus less powerful than the Lilith who seeks to bring down the purest of men.

Rapport gifts are listed for angels who can be safely adjured. The greatest angel ever adjured was Metatron, and only by Isaac the Blind, yet there are angels of the Seventh Heaven that dwarf Metatron in power, and are beyond the reach and understanding of any mortal.

## The Seven Heavens

There are a number of heavens, each a realm of great mystery, filled with God's grace and power.

The First Heaven, Shamayim, is the abode of the stars, each with its angel warder. It is also the home of Adam and Eve. It is ruled by Gabriel.

Within the Second Heaven, Raqia, many fallen angels who have not found their way to Hell are imprisoned. It is here that the planets are fastened. During his visit to Paradise, Moses encountered the angel Nuriel, "standing 300 parasangs high, with a retinue of 50 myriads of angels all fashioned out of water and fire." The Second Heaven is ruled over by Zachariel and Raphael.

The Third Heaven, Shehaqim, is ruled over by Anahel and three subordinate Sarim: Jagniel, Rabacyel and Dalquiel. Enoch says that the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life are found within this Heaven. It is from this heaven that the manna was produced and

delivered to the children of Israel in their wanderings. Enoch also states that Hell occupies the 'northern side' of this Heaven. It is known as the realm of the Angel of Death.

The Fourth Heaven, Machonon, is the abode of Shamshiel, Sapiel, Sagzagel, and Michael, who rules it. It contains the heavenly Jerusalem, the Temple, and the Altar. Here, too, dwells Sandalphon, angel of tears.

The Fifth Heaven, Mathey, has as its prince Shatqiel. It is the empyrean, seat of God and the angels. Here crouch gigantic fallen angels in silent and everlasting despair. These are said to be the grigori, who dwell in the 'northern' regions. The prophet Zephaniah beheld "angels that are called lords, and each of the angels had a crown upon his head as well as a throne shining 7 times brighter than the light of the sun."

The Sixth Heaven, Zebul, is ruled over by Zachiel. It is the dwelling place of the guardian angel of Heaven and earth, half snow, half fire.

The Seventh Heaven is Araboth, ruled over by Cassiel. This is the domain of human souls waiting to be born. It is also the seat of God and of Yofiel, prince of the Torah, as well as the dwelling place of the seraphim.

## Paradise

The Hebrew equivalent of "Paradise" is "Gan Eden," the Garden of Eden, where the souls of the righteous are privileged to enjoy Eternity until the time of the Resurrection.

Where is this wonderful garden? The Torah provides specific geographical coordinates, identifying it as the source of four important rivers. Although none have yet succeeded in locating it, the story in Genesis presumes that the Garden lies somewhere in our terrestrial world, as cherubim guard its entrance from intruders. A powerful case for this position was made by Rabbi Nahmanides. In his treatise on the afterlife, he supported his argument not only from the plain language of Genesis, but also from the testimonies of gentile travelers who spoke of

seeing the Garden somewhere below the equator.

Another variation locates the entrance to Paradise in the Makhpelah cave in Hebron, the tomb of the Patriarchs. Since the burial cave itself houses the gateway to Gan Eden, it is believed that all those who attempt to enter it will be smitten by the Cherub's sword.

## *The Tale of the Four Sages*

The Talmud tells that four sages entered Paradise: Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Ben Abuyah, and Rabbi Akiba. Ben Azzai looked and died. Ben Zoma looked and lost his mind. Ben Abuyah "cut the shoots," meaning he became an apostate. Only Rabbi Akiba ascended and descended in peace.

This legend of the four sages is understood as the tale of a heavenly journey, an ascent into Paradise, involving some kind of mystical contemplation and the ascent of the soul. This story is recognized as a warning tale of the dangers of mystical contemplation. After all, if three of four of the greatest talmudic sages were destroyed by such a mystical endeavor, the dangers it poses were very great. At the same time, this story is also a model of mystical ascent.

## *Angels*

The Bible uses a number of different terms to describe angels, each one showing different aspects of their place in the world. Angels are identified as "the sons of God," "divine beings," and "holy ones." They bear labels such as "minister" and "commander." Rabbinical literature calls angels "the Divine Council" and "Armies of Heaven." The most common term used for angels is *malach* which means messenger or envoy. The Greek word for this is *aggelos*, from which the word "angel" is derived.

## *Two Types of Angels*

According to the kabbalists, a new troop of angels is created every morning. These beings are temporary angels who last only as long as the day before vanishing back into the mind of God. Temporary angels have only one task in the world before their time is done.

Other angels are given names. These are permanent angels, spoken into existence by God on the Fifth Day, the same day the birds were spoken into existence. They are akin to the souls of the planets and stars, and have multiple tasks to perform.

## *What Temporary Angels Can Do*

The most important role of an angel is guardian. There is an angel guarding over each and every object in the world, small and large, from individual blades of grass to the stars themselves. Angels are also stationed as guardians over entire nations.

Certain angels, higher in the hierarchy than their guardian brethren, are given special assignments to fulfill. These angels are capable of performing but one task each. Two angels cannot have the same mission. Angels are equipped with complete understanding of their task, but are not permitted knowledge that does not pertain to their mission, nor can they ever increase their knowledge or understanding. An angel seems omniscient in some matters, and entirely ignorant in others.

## *Man's Relationship With Angels*

Many stories recount that some angels did not want man to be created at all. Kabbalists refer to these as "evil angels," which must not be confused with demons. There are two opposing forces in the minds of humanity, the inclinations of good and evil (*yetzer ha-tov* and *yetzer ha-ra*). These inclinations are personified by evil angels and good angels. Because of this, the relationship





between humankind and the angelic hosts is uncertain.

An esoteric debate has occupied the minds of sages since the beginning: are angels created less than humanity, or is it the other way around? Who is the closer to God in the scheme of things? The two positions break down as follows:

*Angels are lesser than man.* After all, they do not have free will, as man does, nor can most angels perform more than one task before being dismissed. Furthermore, they cannot sing their own songs of praise until they first hear the prayers of men. Then, and only then, can the heavenly choirs sing out.

*Man is lesser than the angels.* Angels have no yetzer ha-ra and are thus perfect in their obedience to the will of God. They are incapable of sin. Not only that, but they dwell in a higher place than does humanity and are closer to the realm of the Divine, farther away from the "inferior" mortal realm.

## Use of Angelic Names

Angels guard more than worldly things. They guard the heavenly gates and other metaphysical passageways. Knowing an angel's name is important for a mystic, as this allows them to slip past these guardians while on spiritual journeys. Knowing the name works as a sort of password, either making the mystic invisible to the angel, or immune to his authority. The names of certain angels are often added to mezuzah scrolls, after the prescribed prayers, for protection. Others are used by the baal shem for their amulets.

## Orders of Moses Maimonides

Moses Maimonides in the *Mishne Torah* lists ten ranks of heavenly angels. They are listed here from highest to lowest.

### Adjuring the Aralim in their Agrarian Aspect

**Divine Might:** varies from 20 to 80

#### Rapport Gift

*Treasures of the Harvest, special:* Aralim bestow spell-like powers that reflect the Art of Herbam. Aralim may give any Herbam spell of a level less than or equal to their (Might ÷ 2). Only one spell is granted at a time. The spell effect is determined by the angel, not by the kabbalist who adjures it.

### Adjuring the Seraphim in their Fiery Aspect

**Divine Might:** varies from 20 to 80

#### Rapport Gift

*White Fire, special:* Seraphim bestow spell-like powers that reflect the Art of Ignem. Seraphim may give any Ignem spell of a level less than or equal to their (Might ÷ 2). The kabbalist must remember, however, not to use this ability in impure, violent ways. Sometimes, a seraph will grant a deadly Ignem spell, such as *Ball of Abysmal Flame*, not to turn the kabbalist into a divine warrior, but to test his worth. If a kabbalist were ever to use such a spell, his Purity would plummet. Only one spell is granted at a time. The spell effect is determined by the angel, not by the kabbalist who adjures it.

## Chaioth ha-Qadesh

The angels of judgement are greater than all of the children of Heaven, for each is greater than the entire host put together. There are usually four given, the two Qadesh and the twined Irin, who are the supreme judgement counsel of the heavenly court.

## Ofanim

Enoch speaks of the "Ofanim of the fiery coals." While Ofaniel is the eponymous head, Rikbiel and Raphael are also denoted chief. The sefirot Wisdom is represented among the angelic hosts by the Ofanim.

## Aralim

Also caled Erelim or Ishim. The 70,000 myriads of Arelim equate to the thrones, are composed of white fire, and are stationed in the Third Heaven. They are appointed over grass, trees, fruit, and grain, and are ruled by Michael.

## Chasmalim

The Chasmalim (called the dominations in Christian lore) regulate other angels' duties and through them the majesty of God is manifested. They belong to the yetziratic world, the world of foundations, presided over by the Angel Metatron. Their chief is often given the name of Hasmal or Zadkiel. The river Dinur ("fiery river") was created out of the sweat of these from carrying the throne of God.

## Seraphim

The seraphim are mentioned in the 6th Chapter of Isaiah, where they are described as having six wings, two which covered their faces, two which covered their legs and two by which they would fly. Ezekiel writes that one of the seraphs touched his mouth with a burning coal, thereby blotting out his sins. They are the angels of love, of light, and of fire.

## Malachim

The principal duty the Malachim is to work miracles on earth. They are said to be the chief grantors of grace and valor. Among the ruling princes of the order are Michael, Raphael, Brabiel, Uzziel, Peliel, and (originally) Satan.

## Elohim

In Hebrew, *elohim* stands for YHWH, in the singular or plural. In 1 Samuel 28:13, where the witch of Endor tells Saul "I saw gods [*elohim*] ascending out of the earth," the word would indicate an angel being called by its superior name. This order corresponds with the *sefirot Netzach*.

## Bene Elohim

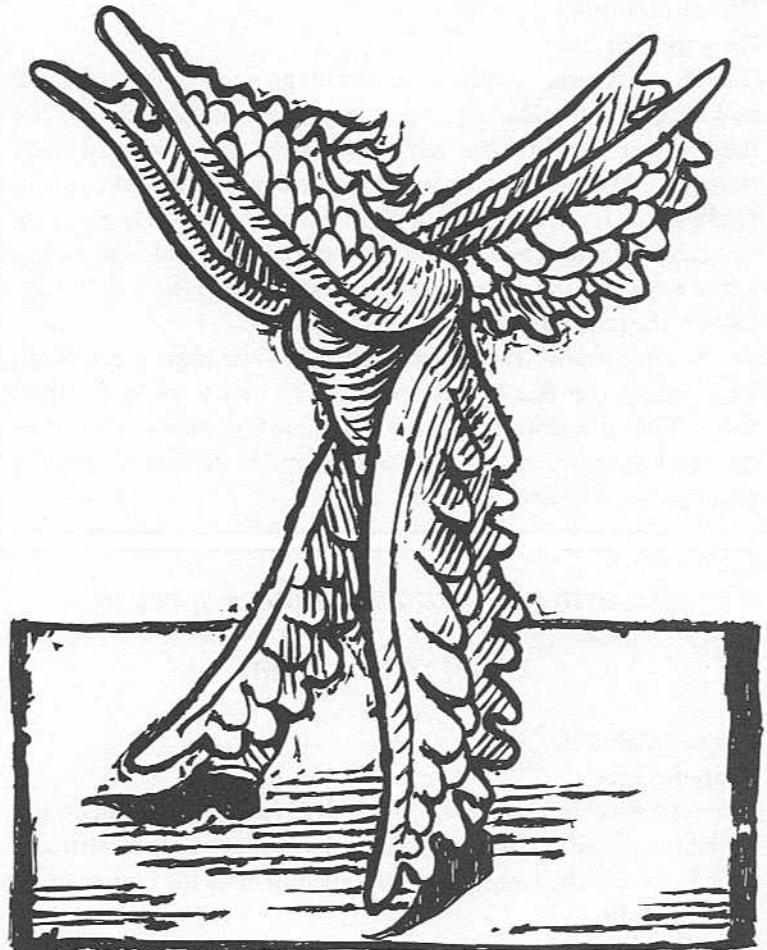
These are the angels who unceasingly sing the praises of God. Rabbis often stress that it is error to translate Bene Elohim as

"Sons of God," instead preferring the title "Sons of the Chiefs."

## Kerubim (Cherubin)

The word "cherub" is, in all probability, a loan word from Akkadian, where *karibu* means "one who prays" or "one who intercedes." Kerubim are not plump children, but fierce sentinels whose purpose is to keep man out of the Garden after the expulsion. In Psalm 18:10, Kerubim are depicted as the steeds of God. They are ruled by the angel Keruviel.

Kerubim are featured on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. It is written that God spoke to Moses from between the Kerubim. According to the Talmud, the two Kerubim on the Ark would face each other when Israel was following the word of God. But on those occasions when they turned from that path, the Kerubim would face away from each other.



## Ishim

These are angels composed of snow and fire, residents of the fifth heaven, where Moses encountered them. In kabbalistic texts they are often called “the beautiful souls of just men.” Their duty since the Creation has

been to extol the Lord. Among the angelic hosts the Ishim represent the 9th sefirot. Zephaniah is listed as chief of the order.

## Specific Angels

While there are many texts which mention angels by name, it is outside the scope of this book to speak of all of them. Instead this section provides a glimpse at a few favorite angels, including those who are associated with the ten sefirot.

### Gabriel

His name means “God is my Strength” and he is associated with the sefirah of Yesod. According to the *Bahir*, he is the angel to God’s left and the Officer of all Holy Forms to the left, indicating that he is in charge of the left Pillar of the Tree of Life. Like Michael, he appears in the Book of Daniel where he helps Daniel understand his vision.

### Haniel

Haniel is connected with the sefirot of Netzach and Hod. His name means “He who sees God.” In certain writings, he is credited with the feat of transporting Enoch to Heaven. Haniel’s name is sometimes used in amulets as an invocation against evil.

### Kamael

Kamael is associated with the sefirah of Gevurah. His name, which means “He who sees God,” personifies justice. Like Metatron, there are those who hold that it was he who wrestled with Jacob. While not an evil angel, Kamael is certainly a darker angel, associated with vengeance and punishment.

### *Adjuring the Malachim in their Valorous Aspect*

**Divine Might:** 30

**Rapport Gift**

*Valor, ReMe 20:* After invoked, and while the kabbalist concentrates, the kabbalist or anyone he touches will remain calm and unafraid no matter the circumstances. Groups can join hands to share in this effect.

### *Adjuring the Keruviel in the Aspect of Ruler of the Kerubim*

**Divine Might:** 45

**Rapport Gift**

*Cherubic Ornament, special:* Keruviel will give the kabbalist a small sculpture of pure gold, depicting the two Kerubim of the Ark of the Covenant. While the kabbalist has many sources of divination, the Cherubic Ornament is the only infallible means to augur God’s will. The position of the Kerubim vary from a close, loving embrace, to facing apart, eyes downcast and sorrowful. The happier the Kerubim, the more pleased God is with the Jews of the kabbalist’s Jewish Quarter.

Some kabbalist do not pursue this gift. The importance of the Kerubim on the Ark comes too close to idol worship for their tastes. They dismissively call the Cherubic Ornament a “theometer,” and question its veracity and origin. Is the statue-granting Keruviel just a demon in disguise?

### *Adjuring Zephaniah in the Aspect of Chief of the Ishim*

**Divine Might:** 50

**Rapport Gifts**

*Voice of Heavenly Exaltation, special:* Zephaniah bestows upon the kabbalist a beautiful, sonorous voice that will never fade with age. This voice is so heavenly that the kabbalist adds his Sing score to all social rolls.

## Metatron

In proper cyclical fashion, Metatron is the angel associated with both the first sefirah, Keter, and the tenth, Malkhut. He is the greatest of all of the heavenly hierarchs. Among his titles are King of Angels, Prince of the Divine Face, Prince of the Presence, Chancellor of Heaven, Angel of the Covenant, and Chief of the Ministering Angels. It is said that Metatron is charged with the sustenance of mankind. The celestial scribe who records the sins and merits of humanity, he is a guardian of heavenly secrets and God's mediator with men. He is often described as the "lesser Yahweh," the archetype of man, and as one "whose name is like that of his master." The latter appellation is based on gematria, for when the consonants that comprise the names Metatron and Shaddai (Almighty) are analyzed, each name totals 314.

Some say Metatron is the angel who wrestled with Jacob and also the angel who led the people of Israel through the desert. "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way and to bring thee unto the place which I have prepared...my name is in him" (Ex 23:20,22).

## Michael

Michael is the chief of the archangels. His name means "Who is like God." He is connected with the sefirah of Tiferet. The *Bahir* says he is the angel to God's right and that he is "water and hail." The text also says that he is the Officer of all Holy Forms on the Right, indicating that he is in charge of the right Pillar of the Tree of Life. There are many things which are attributed to this angel, among them being the staying of Abraham's hand when he was about to slay his son, Isaac.

According to legend, the fire in the burning bush that Moses saw had the countenance of Michael. Michael assisted, along with four other angels, in the burial of Moses and disputed with Satan for possession of the body.

Michael single-handedly defeated an army of nearly 200,000 Assyrians who were threatening Jerusalem in 701 BC. He is one of two angels to be mentioned by name in the Torah, appearing in the Book of Daniel, where he is hailed as prince and protector of the Jewish people.

## Raphael

Another of the archangels, Raphael means "God has healed." He is frequently called upon in kabbalistic meditation in order to effect healing of diseases. In this role of healer, it was Raphael who healed Abraham of the pain of his circumcision and healed Jacob after his wrestling match.



### *Adjuring Haniel in the Protective Aspect*

**Divine Might:** 40

**Rapport Gifts**

*Circular Ward Against Demons, ReVi gen:* As per the Hermetic spell, (see ArM4, page 160), of a level equal to the kabbalist's (Purity x 5) at the time of adjuration.

### *Adjuring Kamael in the Vengeful Aspect*

**Divine Might:** 55

**Rapport Gift**

*Death to Thine Enemy, PeCo 100:* Kamael will command the Angel to Death to slay any one person of the kabbalist's choosing. Asking Kamael to do so is murder, an ultimate sin, reducing the kabbalist Purity to 0 and bringing great tragedies of hubris.

### *Adjuring Metatron in the Aspect of the*

#### *Divine Scribe*

**Divine Might:** 70

**Rapport Gift**

*Glimpse of the Book of Life, special:* If Metatron deems the purpose just, he will show the kabbalist an entry in the book of life which correctly and completely answers any one question, whether it regards the present, past, future, or the impossible.



## Raziel

The name Raziel means "secret of God." He is associated with the second sefirah, Chokmah. He is the legendary author of the lost kabbalistic text, *The Book of the Angel Raziel* (*Sefer Raziel*) wherein "all celestial and earthly knowledge is set down." Raziel gave this text to Adam, who lost it to jealous demons, who then cast it to the ocean bottom. While some say Enoch and Solomon learned from the text, most kabbalists are sure it still lies where it was once thrown, waiting to be recovered.

## Tsadkiel

Tsadkiel's name means "righteousness of God." He is the angel of justice, the protecting angel of Abraham, associated with the sefirot Binah and Chesed.

## Uriel

Although many claim that Uriel means "fire of God" a more proper translation is "light of God." It is Uriel who inhabits the dark places, and casts light into the shadowy corners. Additionally, some hold that it was Uriel who wrestled with Jacob. Uriel is associated with the sefirah of Tiferet and is believed to be the Prince of Peace mentioned in Verse 13 of the *Bahir*. Uriel is the Officer of all Holy Forms in the Center, indicating that he is in charge of the central Pillar of the Tree of Life.

### *Adjuring Raziel in the Aspect of the Teacher*

**Divine Might:** 60

**Rapport Gift**

*Tutelage from Heaven:* For an entire season, Raziel will meet the kabbalist in a secluded location each night (except for Shabbat) to teach him any Knowledge of the kabbalist's choosing. For this purpose, Raziel has an Intelligence + Disputation total of 60. If the kabbalist misses any one appointment, the season is wasted, and Raziel is miffed.

## The Angel of Death

The angel with the task of ending human life goes by hundreds of names. It appears to those on the brink of death in a fiery form, covered with eyes, wielding a great sword coated with the most potent poison in the world. The soon-to-be-deceased gape with amazement, allowing the angel of death to drip his poison into their mouths.

Unlike his brethren, the Angel of Death is far from infallible. In fact, when two people bear the same name, he frequently slays the wrong person. For this reason, Ashkenazim do not name their children after living, older relatives, for the Angel of Death does not distinguish the young from the old. In the age of the Messiah, God shall destroy this befuddled creature and everyone will live forever.

## Shekhinah

Hebrew for "dwelling," the Shekhinah is the presence of God in the world. The term is used as a substitute for "God" in passages where the anthropomorphism of the original Hebrew seemed likely to mislead. In many passages Shekhinah is also a reverential substitute for the divine name.

In rabbinical literature the Shekhinah is associated with several other religious and theological terms. It is said that the Shekhinah descended on the tabernacle and on the First Temple. The glory of God that filled the tabernacle was thought of as a bright radiance, and the Shekhinah is sometimes similarly conceived.

There is also an affinity between the Shekhinah and the Holy Spirit, though the two are not identical. Both signify some forms of divine immanence, both are associated with prophecy, both may be lost because of sin, and both are connected with the study of the Torah. Certain medieval theologians viewed the Shekhinah as a created entity distinct from God (the divine "light," or "glory").

# Sitra Achra: The Infernal

**Sitra achra**, Aramaic for 'other side,' is the generic name for demonic powers, structured in the form of sefirot of impurity. The sitra achra came into being as part of the process of emanation because of the necessity of self-limitation within the Godhead, so that a world of finite entities could have an existence apart from the divine. It is thus a product of tzimtzum and of the constricting justice of the fifth sefirah which balances the overflowing of divine love. The sitra achra is on the left-hand side of God, in the hole of the great abyss ruled over by Samael and Lilith.

The world of the sitra achra is a distorted reflection of the seferotic realm. It has no energy of its own and is parasitic on the divine light for its activity. Man's sins provide the sitra achra with sufficient energy to divide the Shekhinah from her divine husband and force her to enter into an adulterous relationship with Samael, thus bringing catastrophe to the world. Although the sitra achra is not an independent entity opposed to God but a by-product of emanation, it frustrates the spiritual development of God's world. As the evil inclination, it leads man into sin and covers holiness like a shell. On Shabbat the forces of evil have to relinquish any control they have over the world, and the demons of the sitra achra slink back into the great abyss.

In the age of the Messiah the sitra achra will cease to disrupt the harmony of creation. According to some kabbalists Samael himself will be captured by the angel Michael and brought to the People of Israel in iron chains. After the evil has been purged from him, he will be transformed into an agent of holiness, and the divine light will illuminate the sitra achra.

The sitra achra gives rise to two kinds of demons. There are nameless demons, lesser malevolent spirits who are born from the sins of humanity like an endless plague. More

dangerous are the named demons, incarnations of the evil inclination itself.

## Gehinnom

Gehinnom is an endless expanse of the netherworld, which holds one of the gates of Hell. Most people spend up to twelve months here being purged of their sins by the river of fire. The very wicked are incarcerated here indefinitely, though it is said that even they have some respite on Shabbat and festivals when the fires do not burn. The punishments undergone in gehinnom are related to the person's sins. Thus, malicious gossip is punished by hanging from one's tongue. Balaam, who enticed the Israelites into sexual immorality, spends his time immersed in boiling semen. When the Messiah comes, those who remain in gehinnom will be able to answer 'AMEN' to the kaddish prayer recited in heaven. They will then be released and brought into God's presence. Gehinnom is one of the realms of sitra achra.



## Keeping Demons Away

Things that can keep demons from one's doorstep are a good family name, which repels against slander and gossip. Purity does the same, as does regular Torah study and the study of other sacred writings. Most efficacious is studying while wrapped in a prayer shawl. In the same category go acts of charity and certain rituals. The ritual of the Passover seder and going to synagogue on Yom Kippur are believed to be especially potent. The color blue is said to help keep demons away, probably because it is associated with the radiance of God, which is said to be like the color of a sapphire. Noisemakers can keep demons away as well, which is one reason that a glass is broken at Jewish weddings. The invocation of Divine names, especially Shaddai (Almighty), is yet another means of chasing demons away.





## Demons Born by Sin

These diminutive imps are invisible to normal vision, but can be seen with Second Sight. While insubstantial and unaffected by weapons, they are vulnerable to magic, including Ignem spells. The most common lesser demons plaguing the Jewish Quarter follow.

## Demons of Gossip and Slander

These demons wait and listen for tale-telling in order to enter the world. They are horribly ugly little men, their bodies twisted into mangled balls, with huge mouths, distended lips, and flapping, filthy ears used for wings. Whenever a Jewish person speaks even the most harmless slander, a demon of gossip pops out of his mouth. The little beast then flies forth to spread the tale.

## Demons of Open Books

Leaving a book open disrespects the power of language. When a book is open, but unread, a minute demon is occasionally birthed from the sitra achra to suckle the knowledge from its pages. These demons appear as misshapen heads with grimy long beards. They cannot move from the open book that spawned them, and die as soon as the book is closed.

## Demons of Still Waters

These demons rise from stagnant pools of water. They are tiny imps with disproportionately large buttocks and genitalia, defecating and urinating into the water with glee. This is why the ritual bath, the mikvah, must have running fresh water in order to be considered proper.



## Statistics of Demons Born into the World by Sin

### Demons of Gossip and Slander

**Characteristics:** Int -3, Per +1, Pre -5, Com +2, Str -3, Stm 0, Dex +1, Qik +4

**Infernal Might:** 10

**Size:** -2

**Personality Traits:** Gossipy +6

**Weapon/Attack**

None (insubstantial)

**Soak:** 0

**Body Levels:** OK, -3, -5, Vaporized

**Powers**

*Tale-telling, CrMe 20, 1 point:* When a person is day-dreaming or asleep, a gossip-demon can plant gossip it has heard in the person's mind. If the victim rolls a stress die + Intelligence of 6+, he cannot put his finger on where he heard it. If he fails the roll, he remembers the story coming from a very reliable source, typically the originator of the gossip.

### Demons of Open Books

**Characteristics:** Int -5, Per -5, Pre -4, Com n/a (too busy eating), Str 0, Stm 0, Dex 0, Qik n/a

**Infernal Might:** 5

**Size:** -3

**Personality Traits:** Voracious +6, Illiterate +6

**Weapon/Attack**

None (insubstantial)

**Soak:** +0

**Body Levels:** OK, Destroyed

**Powers**

*Gnaw Knowledge, PeMe 30:* By worrying at an open book with its many rows of pointy teeth, the demon can drain meaning away from the text. The letters remain on the parchment, but refuse to come together as words. Each hour the demon spends gnawing decreases the text's Quality by 1.

### Demons of Still Waters

**Characteristics:** Int -3, Per -3, Pre -4, Com 0, Str 0, Stm 0, Dex +3, Qik +3

**Infernal Might:** 5

**Size:** -2

**Personality Traits:** Scatophilic +5

**Weapon/Attack**

None (insubstantial)

**Soak:** +0

**Body Levels:** OK, -5, Destroyed

**Powers**

*Pollute, PeAq 25, 1 point:* Anyone coming into contact with water polluted by this demon must roll a stress die + Stamina of 6+ or contract dysentery. The effects of the disease are fever, extreme upset stomach, and diarrhea. The victim is always Weary (-1), and must make a weekly stress die + Stamina roll of 6+ or become worse. Victims who fail this roll gain one more "permanent" level of fatigue. Once all Fatigue levels are lost, the victim begins to lose Body levels until death. Each week, the victim can recover by rolling a stress die + Stamina of 9+.

### Demons of Ruins

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per +1, Pre -2, Com 0, Str 0, Stm 0, Dex 0, Qik -2

**Infernal Might:** 15

**Size:** -1

**Personality Traits:** Destructive +5

**Weapon/Attack**

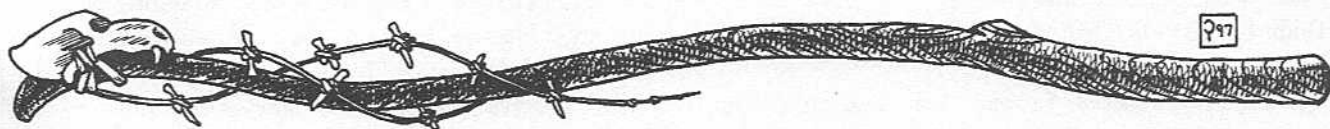
None (insubstantial)

**Soak:** +0

**Body Levels:** OK, -3, -5, Destroyed

**Powers**

*Possess/Control, ReMe 40, 5/1 points:* These demons possess people as a dibbuk does (see page 124), but need not wait for their victims to commit sin. Foolishly exploring a sad ruin is sin enough.





## Demons of Ruins

Failures of all kinds give birth to demons. Ruins where Jewish people have tried to thrive but failed bring forth truly malevolent beings. Even the Talmud warns of the demons lurking in ruins. They appear as hobbled old men, their eyes rheumy, their spirits broken. They possess the unwary to bring ruin to the lives of others.

## The Named Demons

### Satan

The word "Satan" means "adversary." In Jewish literature, he is known as ha-satan, not just adversary, but "the adversary." In many ways, he is God's prosecuting attorney, the evil inclination of humanity. He has no power that is not given him directly from God. This is made clear in the Book of Job, when he asks God for permission to do things to Job and God informs him that he can do certain things, but not others. Satan is some-

times connected with Samael (described below), and some believe that these two demons are one and the same.

### Samael

Samael is the prince of demons, leader of the angels who were expelled from heaven, head of the forces of sitra achra, and husband of Lilith. It was Samael who sent the serpent to seduce Eve in the Garden of Eden. He is active at night and tempts men into sin. The sins of humanity increase Samael's power and allow him to gain temporary control over the Shekhinah, bringing calamity to the world. Since he symbolizes all that is evil and unclean, the word "Samael," which means "poison of God," is avoided and referred to euphemistically. On Shabbat and festivals he has no power over the world.

### Asmodeus

An ancient nemesis of King Solomon, Asmodeus is responsible for the great king's fall from glory. Spending part of his time in

## Asmodeus in the Aspect of the Subverter

In this aspect, Asmodeus appears as an ordinary man, good-looking but not handsome, well dressed but not extravagantly so. He often takes on the role of peasant, sage, petty noble, craftsman, or merchant—but never a rabbi. All who accept his assistance eventually come to ruin.

**Characteristics:** Int All-knowing\*, Per All-seeing\*, Pre +1, Com +4, Str +1, Stm +3, Dex +4, Qik +2  
\* In matters relating to the material world only.

**Infernal Might:** 70

**Personality Traits:** Scheming +6, Darkly Humored +4, Humble -2

<b>Weapon/Attack</b>	<b>Init</b>	<b>Atk</b>	<b>Dfn</b>	<b>Dam</b>
Normal-seeming Punch	+6	+8	+8	+20

**Soak:** whatever he wants it to be

**Body Levels:** OK/OK/OK, really mad

**Powers:**

*Fount of Power, special, 5 points:* Asmodeus can produce

a rook of infernally-tainted vis (though the infernal taint can't be detected by Hermetic means), of any Form or Technique, out of the folds of his robes. It is best not to ask where he got it.

*Marvels, special:* Asmodeus can cast any Hermetic spell, of any level, of any Art, by spending a number of Might points equal to the magnitude of the equivalent spell.

*Know Everything that can be Known About the Living World, special:* While celestial matters (such as the secrets of Heaven or the destination of the souls of the deceased) are beyond this aspect of Asmodeus, he is omniscient in terrestrial matters. For example, Asmodeus knows exactly which pebble to move on a road to start a war, can reveal the hiding place of any object on Earth, or can answer any question of Artes Liberales or Philosophiae. The consequences of following his advice are always dire, however.

Paradise, where he studies in the Heavenly Academy, Asmodeus at first sight does not fit the mold of the typical demon. He performs mitzvot, such as setting a blind man on the proper path, or saving people from suicide. These acts, however, are all part of a greater plan of terrible mischief. Eventually, Asmodeus turns on all his "friends."

## Azazel

A fallen angel to whom, in the ancient rite of Yom Kippur, a scapegoat was sent bearing the sins of the Jewish people. Two male goats were chosen for the ritual, one designated by lots "for the Lord," the other "for Azazel" (Leviticus 16:8). The ritual was carried out by the high priest in the Second Temple and is described in the Mishna. After the high priest symbolically transferred all the sins of the Jewish people to the scapegoat, the goat destined "for Azazel" was driven into the wilderness and cast over a precipice to its death. Azazel is the personification of uncleanness.

## Lilith

Lilith is Queen of Demons, the sum of sexual fantasies and fears, and she of the long, black hair (indicating she is unmarried). Brazen from the first, Lilith comes equipped with many weapons. While lust is her greatest power, she also appeals to the intelligence of her victims, especially educated rabbis. Her intention is usually to corrupt the greatest of men, for if she succeeds, others will follow. She haunts men in their dreams.

Lilith was created at the same time as Adam, as his wife. As the Torah says: "Male and Female He created them." God formed Adam from dust taken from the four corners of the earth, while Lilith was created from slime. Adam and Lilith bickered from the first and had a final confrontation over the question of the missionary position. Adam insisted on it, while Lilith refused, preferring the opposite. At last Lilith pronounced the secret

Name of God, flew out of the Garden of Eden and landed on the shore of the Red Sea.

There Lilith took up residence in a nearby cave and took for lovers all the demons who lived there, while Adam, left alone, complained to God that his woman had left him. God sent three angels, Senoy, Sansensoy, and Semangeloff, to command Lilith to return to her husband. She refused, and they threatened to kill one hundred of her demon offspring daily if she did not return. Lilith, incarnation of the non-maternal, refused. She told the angels that she was born to strangle children, boys before the eighth day of life and girls before the twentieth. The angels left her alone, but to this day, a baal shem can give mothers an amulet with the phrase "Out Lilith!" on it, along with the names of the three angels, and Lilith must leave her children in peace. For this purpose, Lilith has an Infernal Might of 30.

Lilith is thus regarded both as a child-destroying witch and as an incarnation of lust. Lilith (or one of her demonic offspring) usually murder infants outright, but occasionally kidnap them, leaving a kitten or puppy in their place. Children stolen by Lilith's minions are raised in the Yenne Velt to serve as brides or grooms to her demons. Lilith's offspring are also demonic doubles. When a human is about to wed, a demonic double will try to take the place of his or her betrothed. As soon as the wedding vows are pronounced, that person has been lost to the forces of evil.



## Azazel in the Aspect of the Deceiver

It is the role of this aspect to bring down adepts of the Merkavah. He delights in showing up in the place of adjured angels. Azazel the deceiver has an Infernal Might equivalent to the Divine Might of the angel the kabbalist desires to adjure. If the kabbalist is deceived, Azazel grants a false gift identical to the angel's true rapport gift. Each time the kabbalist uses the false gift, however, he incurs a subtle tragedy of hubris. For example, a friend may turn into an enemy, a family member may fall ill, or a golem may grow more vengeful.



# Chapter 9 Hermetic-Cabal Relations

The Order of Hermes is a fraternal organization for the exchange of knowledge, and a policing force to aid the peaceful pursuit of that knowledge. "Foreign affairs" is the least of its concerns, and it is famous for its lack of diplomacy. As such, the Order has three never-fail responses to outsiders: ignore them; assimilate them, or destroy them.

## The Treaty of Barcelona

The short-fought Hermetic-Cabal war resulted in the only recorded treaty between the Order and non-Hermetic wizards. Peace carried the day in Autumn of 1018, primarily due to the pragmatism of the Iberian Praeco and Chief Quaesitor. Hermetic magi and kabbalists did not compete for resources and rarely encountered each other in the natural course of their arts. Save for their strangeness, they posed no threat to the status quo.

The stage was set when House Jerbiton founded a covenant in Barcelona in 1014. Members of this covenant made some contacts within the kabbalistic community of Barcelona, and relations were mutually beneficial until a few members of House Flambeau stumbled up on the kabbalists.

The Flambeau commenced hostilities after it became apparent that the kabbalists would not join the Order. Members of House Jerbiton quickly became involved as well, not on the side of their Hermetic brethern, but in defense of the kabbalists. Although they took no action against the Flambeau in public other than to appeal to the quaesitors for an adjudication of the situation, their covert aid to the kabbalists played some part in obscuring the abilities of the kabbalists and in foiling the offensives of the Flambeau.



Members of the Barcelona covenant appealed to the Iberian Praeco (himself a Jerbiton) and Chief Quaesitor for help on the grounds that open conflict with a large segment of mundanes so soon after the Schism War would endanger the Order as a whole, and that the violent intrusion of the Flambeau in Barcelona would invite the hostility of the local authorities, placing the Order in further danger. The Praeco and Quaesitor did step in, though there is debate about whether they were more interested in protecting the Order from mundanes or heading off a major conflict between House Jerbiton and Flambeau so soon after the

Schism War.

The blame for the whole affair was squarely placed on Flambeau magi who were conveniently dead at the time. The Iberian Praeco and the Chief Quaesitor met with the kabbalists of Barcelona in secret and negotiated a peace. Surprisingly, the Flambeau Primus did not contest the treaty's validity, though many suggest the Chief Quaesitor used political blackmail to keep him out of it. The treaty was pushed through at the next Tribunal and the concerned parties agreed never to bring the matter up again.

As far as the Order is concerned, non-Hermetic wizards are either disorganized



## A Hermetic Magus Encounters a Golem

"...Excellent news! On the morrow, Rabbi Zalman will permit me to examine his man-thing, the 'golem.' My Verditius friend Tobias would die of envy if he knew. Interesting, though: Zalman seems unworried that I might pose any threat to his magical toy..."

"Fascinating. I have new respect for these Geonim. Allow me to detail the experience:

"When Rabbi Zalman first brought the golem to my rooms at the inn, I confess I was a bit nervous. I had heard the rumors of what these things can do, especially if berserk. It was quite an anti-climax when an utterly ordinary-seeming peasant walked slowly into middle of the room, and removed his hat.

"He was unkempt, and sour-smelling, like any other city commoner. His visage was entirely unassuming, save for his eyes, which were an astonishing black. I felt the weight of his gaze, as if the Praeco himself were patiently waiting for me to speak.

"With Zalman's permission, I first cast *Revealed Flaws of Mortal Flesh* upon the golem, and gasped at the effort it took to penetrate the golem's protective aura. From the spell, I learned nothing save that standing before me was a perfectly healthy man, which I knew to not be the case.

"Zalman had told me previously that the golem could not speak, which lead me to a rather uncomfortable speculation about the true nature of Zalman's art. I cast *Whispers Through the Black Gate*, hoping that this scholar was not a necromancer in disguise, presenting a new form of walking dead before me. Much to my relief, the spell failed.

"I tried another tact. First, I cast *Posing the Silent Question* at the golem, asking 'What color is the sky?' the kind of question even a child could answer. I felt the spell penetrate, grab hold, but no reply came.

"Frustration rising, I cast my most potent *Intellégno Mentem* spell, *Peering into the Mortal Mind*. At last, results! But what strange results. A sea of emotion without a single thought to tie them together. I still did not understand.

"Pleased with my albeit puzzling success, I tried bolder experimentation. Taking a large quantity of vis, I improvised an incantation of the Arts *Creo* and *Mentem*, and tried to engender within the golem a feeling of contentment. Had I not been watching closely, I would have missed the tiny smile that appeared on his lips. So, I concluded, his emotive spirit is affected by Hermetic magic, but not his intellective. Did he posses an intellect at all?

"My next move, in retrospect, was foolish, perhaps dangerous. The spark of curiosity lit me up, however, and I cast the *Gift of Reason* upon the golem, just to see what would happen.

"The golem slowly covered his face with his hands, and wept mutely. Rabbi Zalman looked stunned, and moved to console him."

"I felt such shame that I left them there, in my apartments, and wandered about the Jewish Quarter for many hours...."

—From the diary of Appollonus, follower of Jerbiton



hedge magicians or part of an order as formalized as their own. Thus they have difficulty understanding Kabbalah, a magical tradition that is neither. This difficulty is best exemplified by the flawed treaty of Barcelona itself. Although a dense and flowery-worded document, the treaty of Barcelona, at its heart, contains the following provisions.

## Provisions of the Treaty

### Recognition

The kabbalists of Barcelona recognized the Order as a political entity with which it was legally permissible to formalize agreements. Furthermore, the Order similarly recognized the "Order of Geonim." The name Order of Geonim is a misnomer, and is the

result of an incomplete understanding on the part of the Chief Quaesitor. The Chief Quaesitor believed that, since he was representing the Order as a whole in signing the agreement, the kabbalists had to represent a larger political entity themselves for the treaty to be equally binding on both sides. Thus, he insisted, the document required the naming of the kabbalists' society.

Kabbalists, as a whole, are reluctant to give names to anything, especially things that don't otherwise exist. To appease the magi, the kabbalists came up with the "Order of Geonim," named after the spiritual leaders and first kabbalists of Babylon. To this day, rumors and tales of the Order of Geonim, the mysterious secret society of sorcerer-rabbis, is a subject of speculation for imaginative magi. After all, the lack of evidence of its existence proves the Order of Geonim is powerful enough to evade even the greatest Intellégo magic.



## Binding Nature

The Hermetic magi negotiating the treaty agreed that they would make the treaty binding against all members of the Order of Hermes. The enforceability of this provision is, of course, highly debatable. The treaty was ratified at the next Grand Tribunal (backed strongly by members of House Flambeau, not as a gesture of peace, but an attempt to save face). Some scholars of Hermetic Law, however, claim that the magi who signed the treaty had no power to make such a pledge, and thus the treaty has no effect on the Order at large. The various Tribunals have chosen to ignore the subject until it comes up, at which point each Tribunal will most likely come to its own decision.

The kabbalists pledged likewise: that the entire Order of Geomin would be bound by the agreement. Various copies of the treaty were circulated to practicing kabbalists for several years after the treaty was signed. Most of them have been read, and some have made handy bookmarks.

## Pledge

The meat of the treaty is a joint pledge of non-interference as long as neither side provokes hostility. The Iberian Praeco insisted on the vague "provokes hostility" wording, mostly because he still had no true idea of the kabbalist's capabilities. If the kabbalists proved either more or less powerful than was apparent, he reasoned, the very fact that they misrepresented themselves at the signing of the treaty would be a provocation of hostility, thus abrogating the treaty.

## Houses of Hermes

Given the poor formulation of the treaty, individual magi have, for the most part, had the freedom to develop their relationship with the kabbalists as they see fit. Certain

houses, for philosophical or historical reasons, have entered into a variety of relationships with the "Order of Geonim." Some of these magi have a much more realistic image of these miracle-workers, while others still retain their conspiracy-laden beliefs. As of yet, no house or individual magus has pushed the treaty too far for fear of how far-reaching the consequences might be.

Still, most houses have no official position on kabbalists. In fact, most magi have no contact with kabbalists whatsoever.

## House Criamon

Despite mitzvah 348, "Not to tattoo the body like the idolaters" (Lev. 19:28) the seeming similarities between the Enigma and the Chariot Mysteries have led to a discreet understanding. The individualistic Criamon have no unifying policy on kabbalism or kabbalists. Instead, Criamon magi have simply sought kabbalists as their personal tastes have lead them. This has even led to instances of Criamon being invited into Talmudic disputations. Whenever a Criamon enters a



## Proscriptions Against Magic

Most rabbis have decided that the Order of Hermes is a society of idolaters. Obviously, Hermes, their patron, is a god of Greek idolaters. Many rabbis have forbidden the study of Hermetic theories, based on the following mitzvot.

- 319 Not to bow down to an idol, even if that is not its mode of worship (Ex. 20:5)
- 322 Not to lead the children of Israel astray to idolatry (Ex. 23:13)
- 326 Not to give up hating the enticer to idolatry (Deut. 13:9)
- 330 Not to swear by an idol to its worshipers, nor cause them to swear by it (Ex. 23:13) [Note: This mitzvah specifically prohibits a kabbalist from taking the Hermetic Oath.]
- 332 Not to adopt the institutions of idolaters nor their customs (Lev. 18:3; Lev. 20:23)
- 338 Not to consult yid'onim (wizards) (Lev. 19:31)
- 340 Not to practice kessem (a general term for magical practices) (Deut. 18:10)





Talmudic disputation on Kabbalah, Merkavah, or Gematria the experience points go directly to his Enigmatic Wisdom score. Similarly, a Criamon's Enigmatic Wisdom score replaces Kabbalah, Merkavah, or Gematria when calculating the Talmudic discussion group's Study Total (see page 58). Some Criamon clutches have even instituted their own disputation groups, on Hermetic Magic Theory and Enigmatic Wisdom.

### Hermetic Numerology

Through their kabbalistic contacts, members of House Criamon have discovered a large body of common knowledge. This is expressed through the ancient art of Hermetic numerology. Enigmatic Wisdom imparts to the magus the knowledge of how to seek out numerological correspondences in a text, and thereby gain more insight than someone who simply reads it. There are three phases of text-study that benefit from Hermetic numerology: writing a text, reading a text, and re-examining a text.

### Writing a Text with Numerology

**Writing Libri Quaestionum and Tractatus:** If a magus with Enigmatic Wisdom takes an extra season to write a liber quaestionum or tractatus in order to imbue his work with deliberate numerological significance, the text has a "numerology bonus" to its Quality equal to the writer's Enigmatic Wisdom. This bonus, however, is accessible only to a reader who has Enigmatic Wisdom, and who is deliberately using Hermetic numerology while reading the text.

**Writing Summae:** Imbuing a summa with numerological significance is more challenging. Like an ordinary summa, the level of the finished text is determined when writing starts. The level may be chosen freely by the author, up to half his score in the appropriate Art or Knowledge.

For every season spent writing, the magus accumulates a number of points equal to his Communication + Scribe + Enigmatic Wisdom. When the total of points equals or exceeds twice the level of the summa, it is complete. The Quality of the summa equals Communication + Scribe +3, accompanied by a numerology bonus equal to the writer's Enigmatic Wisdom. This bonus, however, is accessible only to a reader who has Enigmatic Wisdom, and who is deliberately using Hermetic numerology while reading the text.

### Hermetic Numerology Chart

Roll	Result
Botch	Confusion (explained below)
3-5	Reader can benefit from writer's Numerology Bonus, if any.
6-8	Reader adds +1 to his Study Total*
9-11	Reader adds +2 to his Study Total*
12-24	Reader adds +3 to his Study Total*
15-17	Reader adds +4 to his Study Total*
18-20	Reader adds +5 to his Study Total*
21-23	Reader adds +6 to his Study Total*
24-26	Reader adds +7 to his Study Total*
27+	Reader adds +8 to his Study Total*

\*Extra experience from numerological study cannot exceed the reader's Enigmatic Wisdom + text's Numerology Bonus.

### Reading a Text Imbued with Numerological Significance

**Texts That Can Be Read:** The study of any text on an Art or Knowledge can benefit from the application of Hermetic numerology. When studying a Knowledge, the Hermetic numerology bonus is added after the initial Study Total is divided by five. Hermetic numerology cannot be used to overcome the per season maximums on increasing Ability or Art scores.

**The Numerology Roll:** The reader spends the season studying as normal, but also

rolls a stress die + Perception + Enigmatic Wisdom, and consults the Hermetic Numerology Chart on page 144.

**Confusion:** Botching a numerology roll when studying is a uniquely mixed blessing. Upon a potential botch, the magus rolls a number of botch dice equal to the magus' Enigmatic Wisdom – Perception. If no botch results, the magus experiences simple confusion; all experience points gained from study that season are lost.

For each botch rolled, however, the magus is increasingly befuddled (one level of befuddlement per botch). If the magus ever wants to benefit from studying that particular text again, he must spend one season per level of befuddlement in reorientation to the text. There is a silver lining, however: each season of reorientation with a text earns the magus one experience point in Enigmatic Wisdom, a paradox which is reflective of the Enigma itself.

### *Re-Examination of a Text*

A text is fully studied by a student when, according to the rules, he can no longer benefit from studying it. With Hermetic numerology, however, a magus can re-examine any text he has fully studied in hopes of squeezing out a few more experience points. Such re-examination is risky, however, since chances are that the re-examination will be useless and a season will be wasted. Also, confusion in re-examination has dire consequences.

**Time in Re-Examination:** Re-examination of any text takes at least an entire season, even if the re-examination ultimately fails. To help improve one's chances of enlightenment, the magus can spend more than one season in a single numerological exercise.

**The Numerology Roll:** Roll a stress die, multiply by the number of seasons spent re-examining, and add Perception + Enigmatic Wisdom. The base ease factor is 12. Add three to the ease factor if the text is a liber quaestionum or a tractatus. Add (3 x number of previous re-examinations) if the

text has been re-examined before.

If the roll is at least triple the modified ease factor, the reader gains three experience points in the subject of the text (either Art or Knowledge). If the roll is at least double but less than triple, the reader gains two experience points in the subject of the text. If the roll exceeds the ease factor but not by more than double, the reader gains one experience point. Rolling less than the ease factor results in a wasted season or seasons. In any case, a magus can never gain more experience points from re-examination of a text than he has levels in Enigmatic Wisdom.

**Confusion After Re-Examination:** If the reader rolls a potential botch, the number of botch dice equals the reader's Enigmatic Wisdom + the number of seasons spent in one re-examination + the number of previous re-examinations. Each botch results in one level of utter befuddlement in the subject of the text. The reader "discovers" connections that do not exist, and "achieves" mistaken insights. Before the reader can gain any more experience from any source in the subject of the text, he must spend one season in reorientation per level of utter befuddlement. Additionally, all botch dice when using the subject of the text are doubled until the befuddlement is cleared.

Orientation after re-examination does not require the use of a specific text, just some deep thoughts and re-calculations. For each season of reorientation, the reader gains one experience point in Enigmatic Wisdom.



## House Jerbiton

### *The Hoplitic Pact of Byzantium*

Many Houses view the Jerbiton as effete snobs and forget House Jerbiton's pledge to protect mundane society, especially cities. The fall of Constantinople in 1204 awakened these feelings with a vengeance. This was only compounded by the fact that many magi



within the Order had close ties to the Normans and Franks of the Fourth Crusade. The Jerbiton magi of the Tribunal of Thebes turned from their sodales and sought a response that would not stretch the Code too far.

This answer was provided in 1205. The Jewish Quarter of Constantinople was being continually ravaged by the entrenched crusaders, and Rabbi Zalman ben Jacob, lead rabbi at the time, was entreating the Greek

aristocracy for aid. He gained audience with one Appollonus, who revealed himself as a Hermetic magus of House Jerbiton. This meeting gave genesis to the an informal gathering of kabbalists and magi of Jerbiton, where the Hoplitic Pact of Byzantium was forged.

House Jerbiton and the "Order of Geonim" will ally in defense of any major city with a Jewish Quarter that comes under threat, magical or otherwise. To date, other

## History of the Art of Memory

A Greek legend tells of the poet Simonides of Ceos, who was hired to recite an ode at a nobleman's banquet. The poet began with a few lines in praise of the divinities, Castor and Pollux, before praising his host, his contracted task. The host, however, objected to this diversion from his flattery, deducted half of Simonides' fee, and told the poet he could seek the rest from the gods he had praised. Shortly thereafter, a message was brought to the poet that two young men had come to the door of the house and wished to speak to him. When Simonides went to see them, there was no one there. The banquet hall collapsed behind him, killing the impious nobleman and all the dinner guests as well. Castor and Pollux had indeed paid their half of the fee. When the rubble was cleared away, the victims were found to be so mangled that their own families could not identify them. Simonides, however, called to memory an image of the banquet hall as he had last seen it, and from this was able to recall the order of the guests at the table. Pondering this, according to the legend, he proceeded to invent the first classical Art of Memory.

The key element the tale describes, that is, the use of mental images placed in ordered, architectural settings, remains central to the Art of Memory.

In Roman schools of rhetoric, this approach to memory was refined into a precise and practical system. Students were taught to memorize the insides of large buildings according to certain rules, dividing the imaginary space into specific loci or "places" and marking every fifth and tenth locus with special signs. Facts to be remembered were converted into striking visual images and placed, one after another, in these loci. When needed, the rhetorician needed only to stroll in his imagination through the same building, noticing the images in order and recalling their meanings. At a more

advanced level, images could be created for individual words or sentences, so that large passages of text could be stored in the memory in the same way. Roman rhetoricians using these methods reached dizzying levels of mnemonic skill; one famous practitioner of the Art was recorded to have sat through a day-long auction and, at its end, repeated from memory the item, purchaser, and price for every sale of the day.

Along with the architectural settings most often used in the classical tradition, medieval mnemonists also came to make use of the whole Ptolemaic cosmos of nested spheres as a setting for memory images. Each sphere from God at the periphery through the angelic, celestial and elemental levels down to Hell at the center thus held one or more loci for memory images.

Hermetic Arcane Memory differs from this tradition in interpretation, not technique. Steeped in Neoplatonic thought, the Hermetic magus sees the universe as an image of the divine ideas, and the individual human being as an image of the universe. He also knows Plato's claim that all "learning" is simply the recollection of things known before birth into the realm of matter. If the human memory could be reorganized in the image of the universe, in this view, it could become a reflection of the entire realm of ideas in their fullness—and thus the key to universal knowledge.

The methods of the Order's mnemonic system are dizzyingly complex, involving a combination of images, ideas, and alphabets which require a great deal of mnemonic skill to learn in the first place. Hermetic philosophy and the traditional images of astrological magic appear constantly, linking the framework of the standard Art of Memory to the wider framework of the magical cosmos.

than the occasional covert aid, the Pact has yet to be activated, as no major European city has been sacked. The Jerbiton and their select hoplitic allies have yet to announce the Pact to the rest of the Order. Its ramifications with the Reconquista could be (literally) explosive.

## Arcane Memory

Most Hermetic magi regard mystical memory as a mere curiosity, relying on the Hermetic Art of Mentem to do all their memorization for them. By chance (or divine design), the Hoplitic Pact of Byzantium has drastically altered the opinions of those magi who have been let in on the secret.

This is the story, as whispered among the Hoplites allied with House Jerbiton:

In 1210 AD, Appollonus, a Quaesitor of House Jerbiton, was paying his annual visit to his new friends, Rabbi Zalman and his assistants. At this time, however, Rabbi Zalman was in preparation for adjuring Yofiel, Prince of the Torah and the Keeper of Memory (Zalman had been counseled by a dream interpreter to do so). Wishing not to disrespect his friend's traditions, Appollonus waited at the rabbi's house.

Days later, the adjuration ritual proved successful. Much to Zalman's astonishment, the angel Yofiel greeted him by commanding, "Take me to the yid'onim you have so defiantly allowed into your house." Full of fright, Zalman journeyed home with Yofiel hidden in his left ear. Upon entry, Yofiel assumed his true, blazing form and confronted the magus.

"You stinking drop!" the angel bellowed to Appollonus. "You think to save the children of Abraham with your idolatry? You must be given something more."

With a touch to his brow, the angel quickened within Appollonus the mysteries of Arcane Memory. Appollonus discovered that he could establish an arcane connection to anything he devoted to memory. He also learned that he could teach this Ability to others. After some reflection, he came to the conclusion that this mystical gift had been

given to him as a reward for the role Houses Jerbiton and Guernicus played in protecting the kabbalists of Barcelona. As a quaesitor, he also realized how important this Ability could be in keeping tabs on magi suspected of all manner of Hermetic crimes.

Worried about what might happen if knowledge of this new possibility became common, Appollonus traveled to Magvillus to discuss things with the senior quaesitors and gain further perspective. After much discussion, it was decided that the ability was too powerful to be shared with the Order, yet too useful to be abandoned. It was finally agreed that knowledge of Arcane Memory would only be shared with senior magi of House Guernicus and quaesitors of House Jerbiton. Further, no information on the power would be written down on paper. Thus, this Ability became one of the secret tools that this small circle uses to police the Order.

Of course, Rabbi Zalman has always harbored doubt within his heart as to the true nature of the visitation. Why would Yofiel even speak to a idolater rather than reduce him to ashes? Was the entity a demon in disguise? Was the gift part of a scheme against the Jewish people?

## Creating Arcane Connections through Arcane Memory

There are two memorization skills in *Ars Magica*. The Exceptional Ability Memory (which is granted by the +1 Virtue Art of Memory) is practiced by scholars everywhere. This Ability is described on page 116. Arcane Memory (granted by the +3 Virtue Arcane Memory), on the other hand, is the angel Yofiel's gift to the Order of Hermes.



### Arcane Memory

Type of Object	Ease Factor	Time
Inanimate (up to target Small)	6	10 min.
Location (up to target Room)	9	1 hour
Animal	12	2 hours
Individual	15	3 hours



Utilizing Arcane Memory, a magus can create an arcane connection to a person, place, or thing simply by creating a mnemonic image. To do this, roll a stress die + Intelligence + Arcane Memory, and consult the chart on page 147.

**Time Needed:** Memorization requires careful observation of the object in question. The same distractions that disrupt spell casting will disrupt a memorization session. The time spent in memorization need not be continuous. Each separate session of memorization of the same object, however, requires a new roll, made after each session.

Magi who have heard of this ability have begun the habit of wearing *Creo Imáginem* disguises that, while imperceptible to the eye, alter their visage enough to prevent proper memorization.

### Example of Arcane Memory

Appollonus has long distrusted the magus Callimachus of House Flambeau,

who has often said that all cities should be burnt to the ground. Just in case their relations turn sour, Appollonus decides to create an arcane connection to Callimachus in his mind.

At the next Theben Tribunal, Callimachus takes the floor to make an inflammatory speech. Appollonus is seated quietly nearby, and the storyguide decides that he is close enough to attempt memorization. Callimachus is full of hot air, and his speech lasts two hours. All this time, Appollonus is carefully constructing his mnemonic. At the end of his speech, Callimachus departs dramatically, and Appollonus' rolls a 8 (his roll) + 4 (his Intelligence) + 6 (his Arcane Memory score), for a total of 18. Appollonus has successfully completed two hours worth of memorization, and needs to find an opportunity to study Callimachus for one more hour to form an arcane connection to him, which will require another Arcane Memory roll.

## Phanuel, the Angel Uriel's Aspect of Penance

**Characteristics:** Phanuel has no physical form, existing only in dreams unless adjured.

**Divine Might:** 50

**Personality Traits:** Vengeful +10, Intolerant +3

**Powers**

*Shape the Mind, CrMe 100, 0 points:* Phanuel may increase, decrease, or foster Personality Traits by entering a person's dreams. This ability is automatically successful, unless the character is somehow able to magically resist. Each night Phanuel invades a character's dreams, the character's Personality Traits are altered by one level any way Phanuel may choose. When Phanuel alters the Personality Traits of player characters, however, use the rules set forth in Chapter 6, on page 95.

*All the Evil that Men Have Wrought, InMe 100, 0 points:* Once Phanuel enters a character's dreams, he immediately learns all the sins (minor or major) that the character has committed, and acts accordingly.

## House Flambeau

House Flambeau has never been one to allow old wounds to heal. While the Primus of House Flambeau has mandated that no "direct" action should be taken against the Order of Geonim, distrust and disdain continues to fester. There are many Flambeau, especially of the Iberian Tribunal, who make deliberate attempts to provoke kabbalists into breaking the treaty. Little do they know the true source of their animosity.

### The Influence of Phanuel

Phanuel's task, as assigned to him by God, is to punish the kabbalists for making ultimate transgressions against the Covenant of Abraham (see page 9). It is his unfortunate duty to harden the hearts of gentiles against those Jews who would

defy God's laws. As an aspect of penance, Phanuel often uses the metaphor of cleansing flame in the dreams he sends. Phanuel did not create the antipathy of House Flambeau toward hedge wizards. Instead, he has taken their natural prejudices and directed them to God's purposes. While Phanuel was not responsible for the Hermetic-Cabal war, he has kept the issue alive in House Flambeau, using the magi as the proverbial stone to test the faith of the kabbalists and to fulfill God's purpose for them.

## House Bjornaer

To the kabbalists, shape-shifting is a sin, a defiance of God who made humanity in God's image. The Rhine Tribunal, an area where members of House Bjornaer are powerful, is also home to the zealous Chasidim kabbalists, who revile the Hermetic shape-changers. The Chasidim, however, often seek the aid of open-minded Bjornaer magi when a tragedy of lycanthropy (see page 103) befalls one of their number. On these occasions, the two groups agree to disagree, and put aside their differences to further a common goal.

The maga Guthrude, a follower of Bjornaer with a remarkable degree of tolerance for alien ways, has assisted rabbis under the curse of lycanthropy on several occasions. She believes that kabbalists who suffer this curse have heart-beasts. Since they are untrained in the ways of Bjornaer, she reasons, when their magic awakens their heart-beasts, they lose control.

## House Bonisagus

A magus named Carolinus, a Mentem specialist of the Roman Tribunal, is fascinated with the kabbalistic theory of the five parts of the soul, or the "Pentad" as he calls it. Scholars of Mentem have long recognized two parts of the mind, the spirit and the soul,

a view comporting with Christian theology. The spirit can be manipulated by magic, while the soul is inviolate. Mentem magic has shown that such a division exists, but the kabbalists' success at creating golems and manipulating the mind seems to ignore this division entirely.

Carolinus has devoted some years to determining why that is. He sees two possibilities: either the kabbalists have found five divisions within the spirit, or the elements that magi call "spirit" and "soul" are just two parts of the Pentad. If the first proposal is true, then Mentem magic should be able to separate the mind into five parts. If the second proposal is true, there is a third part of the mind waiting to be discovered. Carolinus can be often found researching by experimenting on hapless ghosts, trying to break them down into their basic components.

## House Ex Miscellanea

When magi first hear of the Order of Geonim, their predictable response is that the kabbalists should simply join House Ex Miscellanea. Rabbinical law, however, makes this impossible (see page 143). On the other hand, most magi Ex Miscellanea are too involved in their own insular traditions to even know that the kabbalists exist. However, the house does include at least two baal shem and several necromancers on its membership rolls, and such player characters can join the house following the rules in *Hedge Magic*, on page 33.

## House Mercere

Redcaps who lack the Gift often carry the messages of mortals as well as of magi, to maintain friendly relations and to make a little extra income on the side. Throughout Europe, kabbalists have occasionally asked Redcaps to deliver various missives, especially in times of need.





Qasim of House Mercere is one of the most important Redcaps in the Iberian Tribunal. A Muslim whose complexion allows him to travel freely in both Moorish and Christian lands, it is Qasim's duty to bring news and messages from covenants through the dangerous lands of the Reconquista. A devout Muslim and a man of peace, Qasim is sympathetic to the plight of the Jewish Quarters under Christian as well as fundamentalist Almohad rule. He frequents Jewish Quarters all over Iberia and sometimes delays his duty as a Redcap to deliver messages between kabbalists instead. He has even helped several Sephardim escape to Provence.

## House Merinita

Sigourney of Shrewsbury, a Merinita arch-mage, is the primary source of the Order's knowledge of the Yenne Velt. Since the Yenne Velt touches many other Arcadian realms, if it were not for Sigourney's travelogues, wanderers might frequently lose themselves in that potentially menacing place. Sigourney is very fond of Biblical lore, and loves to explore all possible connections between the Divine and the Fay.

## House Guernicus

The major concerns of House Guernicus with regard to the kabbalists are the ramifications of the precedent set by the Treaty of Barcelona (and whether the Treaty is binding at all).

In Tribunals where there are strong possibilities of Hermetic-Cabal interaction, the Quaesitor are alert and ready to act to preserve the status quo. Quaesitor Felix of the Levant Tribunal, for example, is actively studying the relationship between House Criamon and the kabbalists.

## House Tremere

The divine in all its forms has very little significance in the life of the power-hungry Tremere magus. An exception that proves the rule is the magus Camillus, who remains connected to his Jewish roots. Camillus spent his childhood as a Jewish orphan in London at the height of English anti-Semitism. Although he never had the opportunity to develop a Jewish education, he has deep respect for Rabbinical Judaism's notion of the scholar-ruler, and keeps the faith the best he can within the framework of his Tremere mindset. For example, Camillus practices charity, not exactly to follow God's law, but as proof that he has achieved the power to be magnanimous.

## House Tytalus

Ever since the diabolic corruption of this house, Tytalus magi have been understandably subdued in their games with the divine. Rabbis have the respect of many Tytalus for their mastery of debate. It was argued at one Tytalus gathering that the Order of Geonim is the "beloved rival" of the entire Order of Hermes.

## House Verditius

The Order of Geonim has neither a need for magic items nor the vis to purchase them, making House Verditius apathetic to kabbalist-related issues. There is a story, however, that certain members of House Verditius knew about the kabbalists long before the Hermetic-Cabal war, and had even come to some understanding of its own with them. The story has countless variations, but is based two verifiable facts. First, a ravaged copy of the *Bahir* can be found in the Library of Harco. According to Harco's records, the text was an anonymous gift from a Verditius



magus of the Levant. Second, a strange dove makes its home in the vaults of Verdi. The dove seems quite content, even though no one has fed it in over three hundred years.

## The Hermetic Kabbalist?

All kabbalist abilities are founded on Purity. Hermetic Theory and Bonisagus' universal system of magic are founded on principles developed by idolaters (namely, the Cult of Mercury) to further their worship of the lesser powers. Idolatry in any form is an ultimate sin against Purity. A sophist might conclude, therefore, that Purity and Hermetic magic are irreconcilable.

Yet, in 1213, the Levant Tribunal had to deal with the strange case of Arash, follower of House Criamon. It seems that Arash's mater had plucked him from cheder (Jewish elementary school) in Baghdad at the age of 8 to begin his apprenticeship. As the years passed, he forgot his previous life and found purpose in the Enigma. While exploring the riddle of his Apprentice's Gauntlet, however, he fell into a fitful, trance-like sleep. He awoke and said: "To Hell with your riddle. I don't belong here. Destroy me if you must, for I will never be loyal to the Order." His mater replied, in typically infuriating Criamon fashion, that she was satisfied with his answer, and that he was now a magus. He was formally recognized at the next Tribunal, and during his welcoming address, stated he was renouncing the Order and returning to Baghdad to learn at the feet of the Geonim there, as he had been told in his dream.

While the furor of the Tribunal attendants was rising, rather than swearing the Oath, he swore to the Treaty of Barcelona, and bade them goodbye. He would have been reduced to ashes had not all the Criamon magi present moved to protect him, allow him egress, and insure his safe and swift pas-

sage to Baghdad, where the rabbis were somehow expecting him.

For the past seven years, Arash has endured life in the yeshiva, where his fellow pupils are a decade younger. As of 1220, he is nowhere near being an ordained rabbi, and has therefore not been initiated into the mysteries. Not even the senior gaon of the yeshiva knows what will happen when he begins to explore the Kabbalah, and God only knows what his attempts at Merkavah might bring.

If his pursuit of Purity is any indication, however, the disaster awaiting Arash may not yet be written. So long as he abstains from Hermetic practices, his Purity grows unfettered. If he even ponders a problem of Hermetic Magic Theory, however, his progress is thwarted. When he deliberately works Hermetic magic, his Purity plummets. Arash has gladly accepted this fall from grace on several occasions to save his young fellows from hardship (he was even kissed by the matriarch of the Quarter for levitating a young boy out of a well he'd fallen into). Interestingly, discussing Enigmatic Wisdom with the senior rabbis has had no spiritual consequences.

Most tantalizing of all to the Criamon magi who remain in contact with him, he has reported that the one Wizard's Twilight he experienced while at the yeshiva cost him no Purity at all, and may have actually contributed to his spiritual growth.

### *Arash in Your Saga*

Arash (see insert) is designed in accordance with the standard magus creation rules, and can be played as a beginning player character. Although unclear, Arash's destiny may be to forge a link between House Criamon and the Kabbalah. If the senior Criamon or kabbalists of the Levant Tribunal know more, they are certainly not telling. Arash himself, however, believes that something awful awaits in his future. When he casts spells, he is certain he can hear the chattering of nearby ghosts and demons.







As a storyguide character, Arash can be a long-running subplot of your saga. The players first learn of Arash as the tale of his flight from the Tribunal meeting reaches their corner of the world. As the players work to make the best of their lives, they hear over the next few years of growing animosity between a few quaesitors and members of House Criamon over the issue of Arash's membership in the Order. Arash's mater is threatened, as she is in violation of the Code since her apprentice has not sworn to the Oath, but she passes into Final Twilight before the situation can be resolved.

Finally, the ball is dropped right in the player's laps. Arash, debatably a member of the Order of Hermes, has been declared the target of a Wizard's March in the Levant. The kabbalists have been helping him evade detection, fleeing from Jewish Quarter to Jewish Quarter across the continent.

Eventually, Arash holes up in the Jewish Quarter of the city near the players. Representatives of House Guernicus and/or House Criamon descend upon the player's covenant, hoping to set up headquarters. Three different conflicts present themselves. One is a disagreement between members of House Quaesitor and House Criamon about whether Arash is subject to Hermetic Law. The second is a fight for jurisdictional power between the Levant Tribunal and the players' Tribunal. Finally, there is the possibility of a resurgence of hostilities between the Order of Geonim and the Order of Hermes. And then there's the Flambeau player character who has been having disturbing dreams lately....

## Arash, Yeshiva Student, Former Follower of Criamon

**Characteristics:** Int +3, Per +1, Pre 0, Com +2, Str -1, Stm +1, Dex 0, Qik -2

**Age:** 30

**Size:** 0

**Purity:** 2

**Confidence:** 3

**Virtues and Flaws:** Destiny +4, Educated at a Yeshiva +1, Purity +5, Bad Reputation -1, Hedge Wizard -1, Noncombatant -2, Outsider (Jewish) -2, Sense of Doom -3, Twilight Points -1

**Personality Traits:** Fatalistic +3, Determined +2, Manipulative +2

**Reputations:** Hedge Wizard 3, among the Order; Traitor 2, among the magi of Levant Tribunal

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Fist (dodge)	-2	-2	-2	-3	0

**Soak:** +3

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Artes Liberales 2, Brawl 1 (dodging), Concentration 2 (meditation), Disputatio 2 (Torah), Enigmatic Wisdom 1 (divine), Judaic Lore 2 (kabbalists), Magic Theory 4 (divine), Occult Lore 2 (ghosts), Order of Hermes Lore (turncoats) 2, Parma Magica 2 (Ignem), Rabbinical Law 2

(civil), Scribe Aramaic 3 (philosophy), Scribe Hebrew 3 (theology), Scribe Latin 2 (mysticism), Sing 1 (prayer), Speak Arabic 4 (demands), Speak Aramaic 3 (argumentation), Speak Hebrew 3 (argumentation), Speak Latin 5 (refusals), Theology: Judaism 2 (sin)

### Arts

Cr 0	In 10	Mu 0	Pe 0	Re 8
An 0	Aq 0	Au 0	Co 10	He 0
Ig 0	Im 0	Me 2	Te 0	Vi 1

**Twilight Points:** 2

**Twilight Effects:** all of his tattoos have been removed

**Wizard's Sigil:** mild hallucinations

### Spells

*Whispers Through the Black Gate* (InCo 15/+23)

*Disguise of the New Image* (MuCo 15/+13)

*Lifting the Dangling Puppet* (ReCo 15/+21)

*Strings of the Unwilling Marionette* (ReCo 25/+21)

*Thoughts Within Babble* (InMe 25/+15)

*Aura of Rightful Authority* (ReMe 20/+15)

*Circular Ward Against Demons* (ReVi 15/+12)

*Eyes of the Past* (InIm 20/+13)

**Equipment:** robes of a yeshiva student.

**Encumbrance:** 0





# Appendix I

# Hebrew Alphabet

The Hebrew alphabet consists of 22 letters. Of those letters, 7 are (or were) pronounced in different ways, depending upon whether a dot called a dagesh is present or not. In addition, 5 letters have two different forms, one form being used if the letter appears at the beginning or in the middle of a word, the other used only if the word ends in that letter. The chart below shows all of the letters, in both regular and final form, along with the letter each represents (or let-

ters, in some cases) and how each is pronounced.

In addition, three gematriot are given for each letter – its simple value, its value when the letters before it are summed, and its value when using “fillings.” For the letters heh and vav all three fillings are given. For more information on these last two values, see Chapter 4.

Letter	Hebrew Name	Sound	Simple Value	Summed Value	Fillings Value
א	aleph	silent	1	1	111
ב	bet	b, v	2	3	412
ג	gimmel	g	3	6	83
ד	dalet	d	4	10	434
ה	heh	h	5	15	6, 10, 15
ו	vav	v	6	21	7, 12, 22
ז	zion	z	7	28	67
ח	chet	ch	8	36	418
ט	tet	t	9	45	419
י	yud	y	10	55	20
כ	kaf	k, ch	20	75	100
ל	lamed	l	30	105	74
מ	mem	m	40	145	80
נ	nun	n	50	195	106
ס	samech	s	60	255	120
ע	ayin	silent	70	325	130
פ	pe	p, f	80	405	81
צ	tzadde	tz	90	495	104
ק	kuf	k	100	595	186
ר	resh	r	200	795	610
ש	shin	sh, s	300	1095	360
ת	tav	t, s	400	1495	406

# Glossary

**13 Principles of Faith:** The most widely accepted list of Jewish beliefs, compiled by Maimonides.

**613 Commandments:** Judaism teaches that God gave the Jews 613 commandments, which are binding on Jews but not on non-Jews. See *mitzvah*.

**Adar:** The twelfth month of the Jewish year, occurring in February/March.

**Adoption:** There is no formal procedure for adoption in Judaism, but one who raises another person's child is acknowledged as the parent in many important ways.

**Adoshem:** A substitute for a name of God.

**Agunah:** Lit. anchored. A woman whose husband disappears without divorcing her.

**Ahl al-kitab:** People of the Book, those non-Muslims recognized by the Prophet Muhammad as recipients of divinely inspired scripture.

**Akiba (uh-KEE-buh):** One of the greatest rabbis recorded in the Talmud.

**Al Cheit (AHL CHAYT):** Lit. for the sin. A confession of community sins recited repeatedly on Yom Kippur.

**Alef-Bet (AH-lef-bet):** The Hebrew alphabet. The name is derived from the first two letters of the alef-bet.

**Aliyah (uh-LEE-uh; ah-lee-AH):** Lit. ascension. Reading from the Torah (or reciting a blessing over the reading) during services, which is considered an honor. See also *Bar Mitzvah*.

**Amidah (uh-MEE-duh):** Lit. standing. A prayer that is the center of any Jewish religious service. Also known as the *Shemoneh Esrei* or the *Tefilah*.

**Aninut:** The period of mourning between the time of death and the time of burial.

**Anusim:** Hebrew: 'the coerced'. Jews who were converted to another religion by force. It was also applied to their descendants. Many of them continued to practice Judaism in secret.

**Arbah Minim:** Lit. four species. Fruit and branches used to fulfill the commandment to "rejoice before the Lord" during *Sukkot*.

**Ark:** An acronym of *aron kodesh*, lit., holy chest. The cabinet where the Torah scrolls are kept. The word has no connection with Noah's Ark, which is "teyvat" in Hebrew.

**Aron Kodesh (AH-rohn KOH-desh):** Lit. holy chest. The cabinet where the Torah scrolls are kept.

**Ashkenazi (ASH ke-NAH ze):** Plural Ashkenazim. Franco-Germanic branch of rabbinical Judaism.

**Av:** The fifth month of the Jewish year, occurring in July/August.

**Avelut:** The year of mourning after the burial of a parent.

**Baal Shem (bahl shem):** Lit. master of the name. A

practitioner of white magic.

**Bar Kokhba (BAHR KOHKH-buh):** Aramaic: Son of a Star. Simeon ben Kosiba, the leader of the last and most successful Jewish rebellion against Rome in 132-135 A.D. He died in battle when the rebellion was defeated. Rabbi Akiba believed he was the *Moshiach* Messiah.

**Bar Mitzvah (BAHR MITS-vuh):** Lit. son of the commandment. A boy who has achieved the age of 13 and is consequently obligated to observe the commandments. Also, a ceremony marking the fact that a boy has achieved this age.

**Beginning of Day:** A day on the Jewish calendar begins at sunset. When a date is given for a Jewish holiday, the holiday actually begins at sundown on the preceding day.

**Beit Din (BAYT DIN):** Lit. house of judgment. A rabbinical court made up of three rabbis who resolve business disputes under Jewish law and determine whether a prospective convert is ready for conversion.

**Beit Hillel (BAYT HIL-el; BAYT hil-EL):** Lit. House of Hillel. A school of thought during the Talmudic period, generally contrasted with the stricter, more legalistic views of *Beit Shammai*.

**Beit Knesset (BAYT K'NESS-et):** Lit. house of assembly. A Hebrew term for a synagogue.

**Beit Midrash (BAYT MID-rahsh):** Lit. house of study. A place set aside for study of sacred texts such as the Torah and the Talmud, generally a part of the synagogue or attached to it.

**Beit Shammai (BAYT SHAH-mahy):** Lit. House of Shammai. A school of thought during the Talmudic period, generally contrasted with the more lenient, humanistic views of *Beit Hillel*.

**Berakhah (B'RUHKH-khah; b'rukhh-KHAH); pl: Berakhot (b'rukhh-KHOHT):** A blessing. A prayer beginning with the phrase "barukh atah..." (blessed art Thou...).

**Bimah (BEE-muh):** The pedestal on which the Torah scrolls are placed when they are being read in the synagogue; i.e., the pulpit.

**Bimah (bee-NAH):** Intuition, understanding, intelligence. A quality that women supposedly have in greater degree than men. Also, in kabbalistic thought, one of the ten sefirot.

**Birkat Ha-Mazon (BEER-kaht hah mah-ZOHN):** Lit. blessing of the food. Grace after meals. The recitation of *birkat ha-mazon* is commonly referred to as *bentsching*.

**Brit Milah (BRIT MEE-lah):** Lit. covenant of circumcision. The ritual circumcision of a male Jewish child on the 8th day of his life or of a male convert to Judaism. Frequently referred to as a *bris*.

**Chai (KHAHY, rhymes with Hi!):** Lit. living or life. The word is often used as a design on jewelry and other ornaments. Donations to charity are often made in multiples of 18, the numerical value of the word.

**Chametz (KHUH-mitz):** Lit. leaven. Leavened grain products, which may not be owned or consumed during *Passover*.

**Channukah (KHAH-nik-uh; KHAH-noo-kah):** Lit. dedication. An eight day holiday celebrating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after it was defiled by the Seleucid Greeks.

**Channukat Ha-Bayit (KHAH-noo-KAHT hah BAHY-ee):** Lit. dedication of the house. A brief ceremony dedicating a Jewish household, during which the mezuzah is affixed to the doorposts.

**Chariot Mysteries:** Mystical tradition drawn from the vision of Ezekiel. The roots of Kabbalah.

**Charoses (khah-ROH-ses):** A mixture of fruit, wine, and nuts eaten at the *Passover seder* to symbolize mortar used by the Jewish slaves in Egypt.

**Chasid (KHA-sid):** Pl. Chasidim. Talmudic word for pious. Ashkenazim mystics, also known as pietists.

**Chazzan (KHAH-zen):** Cantor. The person who leads the congregation in prayer. May be a professional or a member of the congregation.

**Chelev (KHE-lev):** The fat surrounding organs, as distinguished from the fat surrounding muscles. Forbidden to be eaten under the laws of *Kashrut*.

**Cherem (KHE-rem):** Exclusion from the community. Rabbinical excommunication.

**Chesed:** The fourth of the Sefirot. Represents Love and Mercy.

**Chevre Kaddisha (KHEV-ruh kah-DEESH-uh):** Lit. holy society. An organization devoted to caring for the dead.

**Chillul Ha-Shem (khil-LOOL hah SHEM):** Lit. profanation of the Name. Causing God or Judaism to come into disrespect, or causing a person to violate a commandment.

**Chokmah:** Wisdom. The second of the sefirot.

**Chol Ha-Mo'ed (KHOHL hah MOH-ed; KHOHL hah moh-AYD):** The intermediate days of *Passover* and *Sukkot*, when work is permitted.

**Chukkim (khook-EEM):** Jewish religious laws for which no reason is given in the Torah. Some believe that they are meant to show obedience to God.

**Chumash (KHUH-mish):** Lit. five. A compilation of the first five books of the Bible and readings from the prophets, organized in the order of the weekly Torah portions.

**Chuppah (KHU-puh):** The wedding canopy, symbolic of the groom's home, under which the

## KABBALAH: MYTHIC JUDAISM

- nisuin portion of the wedding ceremony is performed.
- Counting of the Omer*: The counting of the days between Passover and Shavu'ot.
- Days of Awe*: Ten days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, a time for introspection and considering the sins of the previous year.
- Devakut* (DEH-vah-koot): "Mystical cleaving" or "mystical attachment" to God. The highest form of meditation.
- Dhimmi*: Generic term for infidels in Islam.
- Diaspora*: The Jewish communities outside of Israel. Accompanied by a consciousness of exile and an institutionalized hope for the coming of the Messiah who will return Jews to their land.
- Dibbuk* (DIB-bek): Pl. Dibbukim. The ghost of a sinner.
- Din*: The fifth of the sefirot. Strength.
- Ein Sof* (ayn sohf): Lit. without end. In Jewish mysticism, the true essence of God, which is so transcendent that it cannot be described and cannot interact directly with the universe.
- Elijah*: Hebrew prophet of the 9th century B.C. who according to the account in I Kings championed the worship of Jehovah as against Baal. He ranks with Moses in importance.
- Eloqaynu*: A substitute for a name of God.
- Essenes*: A movement of Judaism that existed around the time of the dawn of Christianity. It died out shortly after the destruction of the Temple.
- Ester*: One of the heroes of the story of Purim. Also, the book in the Bible that tells her story.
- Ezra*: A Hebrew priest, scribe, and reformer of Judaism of the 5th century B.C. in Babylon and Jerusalem. A narrative book of canonical Jewish (and Christian) Scripture
- Ezekiel*: fr. Heb. Yehezqel. Hebrew priest and prophet of the 6th century B.C. Also, a prophetic book of canonical Jewish Scripture written by Ezekiel. A famous mystic whose vision shaped early Kabbalah.
- Family Purity*: Laws relating to the separation of husband and wife during the woman's menstrual period. Also referred to as the laws of niddah or taharat ha-mishpachah.
- Four Species*: Fruit and branches used to fulfill the commandment to "rejoice before the Lord" during Sukkot.
- Gabbai*: (Hebrew: "collector"), plural gabbaim, or gabbais, treasurer of a Jewish congregation, placed in charge of collecting the funds used for charity.
- Gaon*: Pl. geonim. Hebrew for eminence. The heads of the Babylonian academies from the 6th through 11th centuries.
- Gemara* (g'-MAHR-uh): Commentaries on the Mishnah. The Mishnah and Gemara together are the Talmud.
- Gematria* (g'-MAH-tree-uh): A field of Jewish mysticism concerning finding hidden meanings in the numerical value of words.
- Get* (GET): A writ of divorce. Also called a sefer k'ritut.
- Gezeirah* (g'-ZAY-ruh): A law instituted by the rabbis to prevent people from unintentionally violating commandments.
- Golem* (GOH-lum): A creature created from clay by a rabbi.
- Gossip*: Gossiping is a serious sin in Judaism.
- Goy*: Lit. nation. A non-Jew, that is, a member of one of the other nations. There is nothing inherently insulting about the term; the word "goy" is used in the Torah to describe Israel.
- Guide for the Perplexed*: Maimonides' masterpiece of Jewish philosophy and theology, written from the perspective of an Aristotelian philosopher.
- Haftarah* (hahf-TOH-ruh): Lit. conclusion. A reading from the Prophets, read along with the weekly Torah portion.
- Haggadah* (huh-GAH-duh): The book read during the Passover Seder, telling the story of the holiday.
- Halakhah* (huh-LUHKH-khuh): Lit. the path that one walks. Jewish law. The complete body of rules and practices that Jews are bound to follow, including biblical commandments, commandments instituted by the rabbis, and binding custom.
- Hallel*: Lit. praise God. Psalms 113-118, in praise of God, which are recited on certain holidays.
- Haman* (HAY-men): The villain of the story of Purim.
- Hamentaschen* (HAH-men-TAH-shen): Lit. Haman's pockets. Triangular, fruit-filled cookies traditionally served or given as gifts during Purim.
- Ha-Shem* (hah SHEM): Lit. The Name. The Name of God, which is not pronounced. The phrase "ha-Shem" is often used as a substitute for God's Name.
- Havdalah* (Hahv-DAH-luh): Lit. separation, division. A ritual marking the end of the Sabbath or a holiday.
- Head-covering*: Men cover their heads during prayer. There is no requirement to cover the head at all times, and not all communities practice this even in synagogue.
- Hiddushim*: Interpretation of the text, a style of rabbinical commentary.
- Hillel* (HIL-el; hil-EL): One of the greatest rabbis recorded in the Talmud. His more liberal views of Jewish law are often contrasted with the stricter views of Shammai.
- Hitbodedut* (hiht-BOH-deh-doot): The basic form of meditation, the isolation of the soul from all external and internal stimuli.
- Hitbonenut* (hiht-BOH-neh-noot): Contemplation of an object until a full understanding is achieved. One of the three forms of meditation.
- Hoshanah Rabba* (hoh-SHAH-nuh RAH-buh): Lit. great hosanna. The seventh day of Sukkot, on which seven circuits are made around the synagogue reciting a prayer with the refrain, "Hoshana! (please save us!)."
- Israel*: The chosen people of God. The land given to them by God.
- Iyar*: The second month of the Jewish year, occurring in April/May.
- Judah Ha-Nasi* (JOO-duh hah NAH-see): Compiler of the Mishnah.
- Judges*: Important leaders raised up by God to deliver His people when threatened during Biblical times. This period ended when Saul was raised as king by Samuel, last of the Judges.
- Kabbalah* (kuh-BAH-luh): Lit. tradition. Jewish mystical tradition.
- Kaddish* (KAH-dish): Aramaic: holy. A prayer in Aramaic praising God, commonly associated with mourning practices.
- Kahal*: Board of governing elders.
- Kapparat*: Lit. atonements. A custom during the Days of Awe.
- Karet* (KAH-reht): The penalty of spiritual excision, imposed by God. Certain sins, such as failure to circumcise, are so severe that one who violates them has no place in the World to Come.
- Kashrut* (KAHSH-rut; KAHSH-root; kahsh-ROOT): From a root meaning "fit," "proper," or "correct." Jewish dietary laws.
- Kavannah* (kuh-VAH-nuh; kah-vah-NAH): Concentration, intent. The frame of mind required for prayer or performance of a mitzvah.
- Kavod Ha-Met* (kuh-VOHD hah MAYT): Lit. respect for the dead. One of the purposes of Jewish practices relating to death and mourning.
- Keriyah* (KREE-yuh): Lit. tearing. The tearing of one's clothes upon hearing of the death of a close relative.
- Kerub*: pl. kerubim. Order of angels.
- Keter*: Crown. The uppermost sefirah on the Tree of Life.
- Ketubah* (KTOO-buh): Lit. writing. The Jewish marriage contract.
- Kiddush* (KID-ish): Lit. sanctification. A prayer recited over wine sanctifying the Sabbath or a holiday.
- Kiddush Ha-Shem* (ki-DOOSH hah SHEM): Lit. sanctification of The Name. Any deed that increases the respect accorded to God or Judaism, especially martyrdom.
- Kiddushin*: Lit. sanctification. The first part of the two-part process of Jewish marriage, which creates the legal relationship without the mutual obligations.
- Kippah* (KEY-puh): The skullcap worn by Jews during services.
- Kislev*: The ninth month of the Jewish year, occurring in November/December.
- Kittel* (KIT-'l, rhymes with little, but the t is pronounced distinctly): The white robes in which the dead are buried, worn by some during Yom Kippur services.
- Kohein*; (KOH-hayn) pl: Kohanim (koh-HAHN-eem): Priest. A descendant of Aaron, charged with performing various rites in the Temple. This is not the same thing as a rabbi.
- Kol Nidre* (KOHL NID-ray): Lit. all vows. The evening service of Yom Kippur, or the prayer that begins that service.
- Lashon Ha-Ra* (LAH-shohn HAH-rah; lah-SHOHN hah-RAH): Lit. the evil tongue. Sins against other people committed by speech, such as defamation, gossip, swearing falsely, and scoffing.
- Levi* (LAY-vee); *Levite* (LEE-vahyt): A descendant

- of the tribe of Levi, which was set aside to perform certain duties in connection with the Temple.
- Leviticus*: lit., of the Levites. The third book of Torah consisting mainly of priestly legislation.
- L'Shanah Tovah* (*li-SHAH-nuh TOH-vuh; li-shah-NAH toh-VAH*): Lit. for a good year. A common greeting during Rosh Hashanah and Days of Awe.
- Lulav* (*LOO-lahv*): Lit. palm branch. A collection of palm, myrtle, and willow branches, used to fulfill the commandment to "rejoice before the Lord" during Sukkot.
- Ma'ariv* (*MAH-reev*): Evening prayer services.
- Magen David* (*mah-GAYN dah-VEED; MAH-gen DAH-vid; MOH-gen DAY-vid*): Lit. shield of David. The six-pointed star emblem commonly associated with Judaism.
- Maimonides* (*mahy-MAH-ni-dees*): Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, one of the greatest medieval Jewish scholars.
- Malkhut*: Kingdom/Kinship. The tenth of the sefirot.
- Mamzer* (*MAHM-zer*): Lit. bastard. The child of a marriage that is prohibited and invalid under Jewish law, such as an incestuous union.
- Mechitzah* (*m'-KHEETZ-uh*): The wall or curtain separating men from women during religious services.
- Megillah* (*m'-GILL-uh*): Lit. scroll. One of five books of the Bible (Esther, Ruth, Song of Songs, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes). The remaining books are referred to as sefers (books). Usually refers to the book of Esther.
- Melachah* (*m'-LUH-khuh*): Lit. work. Work involving creation or exercise of control over the environment, which is prohibited on Shabbat and certain holidays.
- Menorah* (*m'-NAW-ruh; me-NOH-ruh*): A candelabrum. Usually refers to the nine-branched candelabrum used to hold the Chanukah candles. Can also refer to the seven-branched candelabrum used in the Temple.
- Merkavah* (*mer-ka-VAH*): Lit. chariot. The Chariot Mysteries.
- Messiah*: Hebrew: moshiach, meaning 'anointed'. The anointed king of the House of David who will be sent by God to inaugurate the final redemption in the end of days.
- Mezuzah* (*m'-ZOO-zuh; m'-ZU-zuh*): Lit. doorpost. A case attached to the doorposts of houses, containing a scroll with passages of scripture written on it.
- Midrash* (*MID-rash*): From a root meaning "to study," "to seek out," or "to investigate." Stories elaborating on incidents in the Bible, to derive a principle of Jewish law or provide a moral lesson.
- Mikvah* (*MIK-vuh*): Lit. gathering. A ritual bath used for spiritual purification. It is used primarily in conversion rituals and after the period of sexual separation during a woman's menstrual cycles.
- Minchah* (*MIN-khuh*): Afternoon prayer services.
- Minhag* (*MIN-hahg*): Lit. custom. A custom that evolved for worthy religious reasons and has continued long enough to become a binding religious practice. The word is also used more loosely to describe any customary religious practice.
- Minyan* (*MIN-yahn; MIN-yin*): The quorum necessary to recite certain prayers, consisting of ten adult Jewish men.
- Mishnah* (*MISH-nuh*): An early written compilation of Jewish oral tradition, the basis of the Talmud.
- Mishneh Torah* (*MISH-ne TOH-ruh; MISH-nay TOH-ruh*): A code of Jewish law written by Maimonides. One of the most respected compilations of Jewish law ever written.
- Mitzvah* (*MIITS-vuh*); pl. *Mitzvot* (*mits-VOHT*): Lit. commandment. Any of the 613 commandments that Jews are obligated to observe. It can also refer to any Jewish religious obligation, or more generally to any good deed.
- Mohel* (*Maw-y'l; rhymes with oil*): Lit. circumciser. One who performs the ritual circumcision of an 8-day-old male Jewish child or of a convert to Judaism.
- Mordecai* (*MOR-duh-khahy*): One of the heroes of the story of Purim.
- Moshiach* (*moh-SHEE-ahkh*): Lit. anointed. A man who will be chosen by God to put an end to all evil in the world, rebuild the Temple, bring the exiles back to Israel and usher in the world to come. Generally translated as "messiah," but the Jewish concept is very different from the Christian one.
- Motzi Sheim Ra* (*MOH-tsee SHAYM RAH*): A person who "spreads a bad report;" that is, who tells disparaging lies. It is the worst of the sins involving speech.
- Musaf* (*MOO-sahf; MU-sahf*): An additional prayer service for Sabbaths and holidays.
- Navi* (*nah-VEE*); pl. *N'vi-im* (*n'-vee-EEM*): From *niv sefatayim* meaning "fruit of the lips." A prophet. A spokesman for God, chosen to convey a message or teaching. Prophets were role-models of holiness, scholarship, and closeness to God. Also: A section of the Tanakh containing the writings of the prophets.
- Ne'ilah* (*n'-EE-luh*): Lit. closing. The closing service of Yom Kippur.
- Ner Tamid* (*NAYR tah-MEED*): Lit. continual lamp. Usually translated "eternal flame." A candelabrum or lamp near the ark in the synagogue that symbolizes the menorah in the Temple.
- Netzach*: Victory. The seventh of the sefirot.
- Niddah* (*nee-DAH*): The separation of husband and wife during the woman's menstrual period. Also refers to a woman so separated. Also referred to as *taharat ha-mishpachah* or family purity.
- Nihum Avelim*: Lit. comforting mourners. One of the purposes of Jewish practices relating to death and mourning.
- Nissan*: The first month of the Jewish year, occurring in March/April.
- Nisuin*: Lit. elevation. The second part of the two-part Jewish marriage process, after which the bride and groom begin to live together as husband and wife.
- Noahic Commandments*: Seven commandments given to Noah after the flood, which are binding on both non-Jews and Jews.
- Omer* (*OH-mayr*): A unit of measure. The period between Passover and Shavu'ot is known as the Omer period, because the days are counted from the time that the first omer of barley was brought to the Temple.
- Onah*: The wife's right to have regular sexual relations with her husband, a right that is fundamental to every Jewish marriage and that cannot be diminished by the husband.
- Oral Torah* (*TOH-ruh*): Jewish teachings explaining and elaborating on the Written Torah, handed down orally until the 2nd century A.D.
- Pact of Umar*: Named after the second Caliph of Islam. Strictures under which non-Islamic People of the Book must live.
- Parshah* (*PAHR-shah*): A weekly Torah portion read in synagogue.
- Passover*: Holiday commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. The holiday also marks the beginning of the harvest season.
- Pentateuch* (*PEN te-took*): The first five books of Hebrew scripture.
- Perutah* (*pe-ROO-tuh*): A small copper coin, sufficient to acquire a wife by money.
- Pharisees* (*PHAR-i-sees*): A movement of Judaism that existed around the time of the dawn of Christianity. It is the forerunner of rabbinic Judaism, which encompasses all of the movements of Judaism in existence today.
- Pidyon Ha-Ben* (*peed-YOHN hah-BEHN*): Lit. redemption of the son. A ritual redeeming the firstborn son from his obligation to serve in the Temple.
- Peirkei Avot* (*PEER-kay ah-VOHT*): Lit. Ethics of the Fathers. A tractate of the Mishnah devoted to ethical advice from many of the greatest rabbis of the early Talmudic period.
- Priest*: A descendant of Aaron, charged with performing various rites in the Temple. This is not the same thing as a rabbi. See Kohein.
- Prophet*: A spokesman for God, chosen to convey a message or teaching. Prophets were role models of holiness, scholarship, and closeness to God.
- Prophets*: A section of Jewish scripture containing the writings of the Prophets.
- Purim* (*PAWR-im*): Lit. lots (as in "lottery"). A holiday celebrating the rescue of the Jews from extermination at the hands of the chief minister to the King of Persia.
- Pushke* (*PUSH-kuh*): A box in the home or the synagogue used to collect money for donation to charity.
- Rabbi* (*RA-bahy*): A religious teacher and person authorized to make decisions on issues of Jewish law.
- Rachamin*: Mercy. The sixth sefirah.
- Rakheel* (*Rah-KHEEL*): A tale-bearer. Derived from a word meaning trader or merchant.
- Rashi* (*RAH-shee*): Rabbi Solomon ben Issac of Troyes, one of the greatest medieval Jewish scholars.
- Rebbetzin* (*REB-i-tsin*): The wife of a rabbi.
- Rosh Chodesh* (*ROHSH CHOH-desh*): Lit. first of the month. The first day of a month, on which

## KABBALAH: MYTHIC JUDAISM

- the first sliver of the new moon appears.
- Rosh Hashanah** (ROSH hah SHAH-nuh; RUSH-uh SHAH-nuh): Lit. first of the year. The new year for the purpose of counting years.
- Sadducees** (SAD-yoo-sees): A movement of Judaism that existed around the time of the dawn of Christianity. It died out shortly after the destruction of the Temple.
- Sandek** (SAN-dek): The person given the honor of holding the baby during a ritual circumcision.
- Second Day of Holidays**: An extra day is added to many holidays because in ancient times, there was doubt as to which day was the correct day.
- Seder** (SAY-d'ar): Lit. order. The family home ritual conducted as part of the Passover observance.
- Sefer K'ritut** (SAY-fayr KREE-toot): Lit. scroll of cutting off. A writ of divorce. Also called a get.
- Sefirot** (se-fee-ROHT): Sing. sefirah. Lit. emanations. In Kabbalah, the emanations from God's essence that interact with the universe.
- Sekhakh** (s'-KHAHKH): Lit. covering. Material used for the roof of a sukkah during the holiday of Sukkot.
- Semikah** (s'-MIKH-uh): Essentially, a rabbinical degree, authorizing a person to answer questions and resolve disputes regarding Jewish law.
- Sephardi** (s'-FAHR-di): Jews from Iberia and their descendants.
- Se'udat Havra'ah**: Lit. the meal of condolence. The first meal that a family eats after the burial of a relative, prepared by a neighbor.
- Shabbat** (shah-BAT; SHAH-bis): Lit. end, cease, rest. The Jewish Sabbath, a day of rest and spiritual enrichment. Saturday.
- Shacharit** (SHAHKH-reet): Morning prayer services.
- Shalach Manos** (SHAH-lahkh MAH-nohs): Lit. sending out portions. The custom of sending gifts of food to friends during Purim.
- Shammai** (SHAH-mahy): One of the great rabbis of the Talmud. His stricter views of Jewish law are often contrasted with those of Hillel.
- Shammus** (SHAH-mis): Lit. servant. The candle that is used to light other Channukah candles. Also, the janitor or caretaker of a synagogue.
- Shtadlan**: Aramaic for 'intercessor'. The Jew who represents the community to the secular authorities.
- Shavu'ot** (shuh-VOO-oh; shah-VOO-uhs): Lit. weeks. A festival commemorating the giving of the Torah and the harvest of the first fruits.
- Shechitah** (sh'-KHEE-tuh): Lit. destruction or killing. Kosher slaughter.
- Shekhinah** (sh'-KHEE-nuh): The Divine Presence of God, generally represented as a feminine quality.
- Shema** (sh'-MAH): One of the basic Jewish prayers.
- Sheva Brakhos** (SHE-vuh BRUH-khohs): Lit. seven blessings. The seven blessings recited during the nisuin portion of the Jewish wedding ceremony.
- Shevarim** (she-vahr-EEM): One of four characteristic blasts of the shofar (ram's horn).
- Shevat**: The eleventh month of the Jewish year, occurring in January/February.
- Shemini Atzeret** (sh'MEE-nee aht-ZE-ret): Lit. the eighth (day) of assembly. The day (or two days) after Sukkot.
- Shemoneh Esrei** (sh'MOH-nuh ES-ray): Lit. eighteen. A prayer that is the center of any Jewish religious service. Also known as the Amidah or the Tefilah.
- Shiva** (SHI-vuh): Lit. seven. The seven-day period of mourning after the burial of a close relative.
- Shloshim** (shlohsh-EEM): Lit. thirty. The thirty-day period of mourning after the burial of a close relative.
- Shochet** (SHOH-khet): Kosher slaughterer.
- Shofar** (sho-FAHR): A ram's horn, blown like a trumpet as a call to repentance.
- Shomerim** (shohm-REEM): Lit. guards, keepers. People who sit with a body between the time of death and burial.
- Siddur** (SID-r; sid-AWR): Lit. order. Prayer book.
- Sidrah** (SID-ruh): Lit. order. A weekly Torah portion read in synagogue.
- Simkhat Torah** (SIM-khat TOH-ruh): Lit. rejoicing in the law. A holiday celebrating the end and beginning of the cycle of weekly Torah readings.
- Sivan**: The third month of the Jewish year, occurring in May/June.
- Sukkah** (SUK-uh): Lit. booth. The temporary dwellings lived in during the holiday of Sukkot.
- Sukkot** (soo-KOHT; SUK-uhs): Lit. booths. A festival commemorating the wandering in the desert and the final harvest.
- Synagogue** (SIN-uh-gahg): From a Greek root meaning "assembly." The most widely accepted term for a Jewish house of worship.
- Taharat Ha-Mishpachah** (tah-HAH-rah hah-meesh-PAH-khah): Lit. family purity. Laws relating to the separation of husband and wife during the woman's menstrual period. Also referred to as the laws of niddah.
- Takkanah** (t'-KAH-nuh): A law instituted by the rabbis and not derived from any biblical commandment.
- Tallit** (TAH-lit; TAH-lis): A shawl-like garment worn during morning services, with tzitzit (long fringes) attached to the corners as a reminder of the commandments.
- Talmud** (TAHL-mud): The most significant collection of the Jewish oral tradition interpreting the Torah.
- Tammuz**: The fourth month of the Jewish year, occurring in June/July.
- Tanakh** (tuhn-AHKH): Acronym of Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings). Written Torah; what non-Jews call the Old Testament.
- Tashlikh** (TAHSH-likh): Lit. casting off. A custom of going to a river and symbolically casting off one's sins. See Rosh Hashanah.
- Tefilah** (t'-FEE-luh): Prayer. Sometimes refers specifically to the Shemoneh Esrei prayer.
- Tefillin** (t'-FIL-lin): Phylacteries. Leather pouches containing scrolls with passages of scripture, used to fulfill the commandment to bind the commandments to your hands and between your eyes.
- Tekiah** (t'-KEE-uh): One of four characteristic blasts of the shofar (ram's horn). See Rosh Hashanah.
- Teruah** (t'-ROO-uh): One of four characteristic blasts of the shofar (ram's horn). See Rosh Hashanah.
- Teshuvah** (t'-SHOO-vuh): Lit. return. Repentance.
- Tetragrammaton**: The four Hebrew letters usually transliterated YHWH or JHVH that form a biblical proper name of God.
- Tevet**: The tenth month of the Jewish year, occurring in December/January.
- Tisha B'Av** (TISH-uh BAHV): Lit. The Ninth of Av. A fast day commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples.
- Tishri**: The seventh month of the Jewish year, during which many important holidays occur.
- Torah** (TOH-ruh): In its narrowest sense, Torah is Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In its broadest sense, Torah is the entire body of Jewish teachings.
- Torah Readings**: Each week, a different portion of the Torah and the Prophets are read in synagogue.
- Torah Scroll**: The Torah (Bible) that is read in synagogue is written on parchment on scrolls.
- Treyf** (TRAYF): Lit. torn. Food that is not kosher.
- Tu B'Shevat** (TOO bish-VAHT): Lit. 15th of Shevat. The new year for the purpose of counting the age of trees for purposes of tithing.
- Tzedakah** (tsi-DUH-kuh): Lit. righteousness. Generally refers to charity.
- Tzitzit** (TZIT-sit): Fringes attached to the corners of garments as a reminder of the commandments.
- Ufruf** (UF-ruf): The groom's aliyah on the Shabbat before his wedding.
- Yad** (YAHD): Lit. hand. Hand-shaped pointer used while reading from Torah scrolls.
- Yeshiva**: pl. yeshivot. Schools for rabbis.
- Yesod**: Foundation. The ninth of the sefirot.
- Yetzer Ra** (YAY-tser RAH): Lit. evil impulse. The selfish desire for satisfaction of personal needs, which can lead a person to do evil if not restrained by the yetzer tov.
- Yetzer Tov** (YAY-tser TOHV): Lit. good impulse. The moral conscience, which motivates one to follow God's law.
- Yihud** (YEE-hood): Pl. Yihudim. Lit. "unification." Purity rituals, practiced almost exclusively by kabbalists.
- Yizkor** (YIZ-kawr): Lit. may He remember.... Prayers said on certain holidays in honor of deceased close relatives.
- Yom Kippur** (YOHM ki-PAWR): Lit. Day of Atonement. A day set aside for fasting, depriving oneself of pleasures, and repenting from the sins of the previous year.
- Zealots**: A movement of Judaism that existed around the time of the dawn of Christianity. It died out shortly after the destruction of the Temple.

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