

## Converting the Wisdom of the Nations – part 2

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

### What about Science?

One of the most profound problems that trouble Judaism in the modern era is the apparent lack of serious integration of the findings of science into Torah study. We are hard pressed to find a serious Torah authority and scholar who has taken upon himself to do this.

One might argue that the reason for this is that science is man-made and therefore speculative in nature, constantly evolving and providing only an approximate description of reality, while the Torah is a God-given eternal and absolute truth. The two simply cannot be mixed. The argument might be made that were we to integrate scientific theories and findings into the Torah, once science changed its theories we would be in a fix.

But, the fact of the matter is that such integration has been achieved in the past, not once, but twice. The first integration was performed in the Mishnaic era (approximately 2000 years ago). The sages of that period successfully integrated the astronomical, geometric, and arithmetic knowledge of the ancient world into Torah.<sup>1</sup> The second integration was carried out almost single-handedly by Maimonides (approximately 1000 years ago), arguably the greatest Torah scholar since the Talmudic era. Maimonides did for Greek philosophy and science what the sages had done for the science of their own era. Like the sages before him, Maimonides incorporated his integrated view of reality into legal matters.<sup>2</sup>

Just as predicted, since the time of the Mishnah and Maimonides, science has changed its theories (more than once). Neither the sages, nor Maimonides feared these changes even though they could probably foresee that there would be people who would foolishly attack the Torah as a whole by pointing out the outdated science incorporated into it. But, the truth is that no matter how outdated the science of their time appears today, the method used by the sages and by Maimonides ensures that the integration will be true and relevant even after the science no longer is. Their method



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and the one that we can use today just as successfully are similar to the conversion of a non-Jew to Judaism, as noted in part 1.

As with any act in Judaism,<sup>3</sup> conversion has two dimensions: a revealed external dimension in which specific, technical requirements need to be met and a concealed, psychological dimension, where the motivation for the act of conversion is key. We will be focusing on the latter in order to better understand how the wisdom of the nations can be integrated into Judaism.

### Conversion as a Spiritual Process

Conversion is by far the most complete spiritual transformation we can witness in our present reality. Unlike gradated and continuous changes, conversion illustrates, legally, a quantum leap between two spiritual entities: non-Jew and Jew. Not to say that in our lives we do not experience other quantum leaps in spirituality, but none is as overt and legally binding as the conversion of a convert to Judaism. Though the legal underpinnings of conversion are fascinating in their own respect and do shed some light on our topic of converting wisdom,<sup>4</sup> for our purposes we will gain more by focusing on the spiritual mechanism at work.

The Ba'al Shem Tov taught that every complete spiritual process of transformation involves three stages known as submission, separation, and sweetening.<sup>5</sup> Let us analyze the conversion process, from the point of view of the convert, using this model.

**Submission:** The motivating factor underlying all authentic conversions is the potential convert's existential experience of not being Jewish. All non-Jews, when asked if they are Jewish, would have no reason not to answer in the negative. But a potential convert feels this way even when not asked.<sup>6</sup> This state of being "not-Jewish" is equivalent to a sense of submission that paves the road to conversion.

Indeed, legally, the halachic authority interviewing the potential convert and ultimately conducting the conversion must be convinced that the potential convert experiences a deep inner humility before God, the Torah, and the Jewish people. Moreover, he has to initially reject the potential convert's request. The *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>7</sup> describes the general tone of the first interview:

*When a convert comes to be converted, he should be asked: "Why have you come to convert? Do you not know that the Jewish people are homeless, troubled, and stricken by suffering?"*

*If the convert answers: "I know and I am not worthy of becoming a Jew," he should immediately be accepted [as a potential convert] and be informed of the main principles of Judaism....*

The Jewish authority is obligated to initially turn the potential convert away in order to test his or her resolve.<sup>8</sup> Only if the convert has a supernatural burning desire to become Jewish will he remain adamant and pass the test.

**Separation:** The realization that I am not yet part of God's chosen people causes the potential convert to desire to become Jewish.

The classic example of how total this desire is can be found in the words of Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite princess who had been married (without conversion) to the son of one of the leaders of the Tribe of Judah in the time between the conquest of the Land of Israel and the institution of the Jewish monarchy—a time known as the age of the judges. When her husband died at an early age as punishment for having left the Land of Israel (together with his parents) and for having married a non-Jewish woman, she decided to accompany her husband's mother, Naomi, back to Judah. Naomi, whose husband had also passed away early (as punishment for having left the Land of Israel; he was a leader of the nation) tried to dissuade Ruth. But Ruth responded with the famous words:<sup>9</sup>

*Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from you.*

*Where you go I will go,*

*and where you stay I will stay.*

*Your people will be my people*

*and your God my God.*

*Where you die I will die,*

*and there I will be buried.*

As explained elsewhere, these six statements reflect a Ruth's total conviction to convert and correspond with the five levels of the soul, the psyche, the spirit, the soul, the living one, the singular one and the essence of the soul itself.

**Sweetening:** Once the conversion is complete, then the convert becomes a full fledged Jew and resolves to never be a non-Jew again. A convert that has converted is likened to a newborn baby. The analogy is that like the newborn infant, the convert is new in some way. He or she is now different. It is as if they have entered reality for a second time, with a new perspective on life and its purpose. On the one hand the convert is still the same person because he retains the same external physiological features, but something has changed—even in his face there must be something new, something you can see.<sup>10,11</sup>

## Synchronicity

So far, we have analyzed the three-stage process of conversion from the convert's perspective.

One of the principles of Kabbalah and Chassidut is synchronicity. Every event that occurs in the world occurs on many planes, simultaneously. The conversion of a non-Jew can occur only if, together with the potential convert, the legal body performing the conversion (called a *Beit Din*) and God Himself also experience the same three-stage process of submission-separation-sweetening, each from their own perspective. By describing the process from the perspective of the *Beit Din* and from God's perspective, we will gain further insight into the process of conversion and better understand the conversion process that the wisdom of the nations needs to undergo in order to be incorporated properly into Torah. Let us begin by looking at things from the perspective of the *Beit Din*—the legal body overseeing the conversion.

## The Beit Din

Performing conversions (for the right reasons<sup>12</sup>) is a weighty matter, because of which most Rabbis<sup>13</sup> are unwilling to participate in them. But, converting the potential convert is one of the greatest acts of loving-kindness that one individual can do for another. Therefore, there were Rabbis who knowingly sacrificed their lives in order to perform conversions.<sup>14</sup> In order to dedicate himself to performing a conversion a Rabbi must experience submission before God.

**Submission:** The Rabbi's experience of submission begins with the very existential realization that he did not make himself Jewish. He did not choose himself to be part of the Jewish people. A Rabbi has to realize and be able to say to himself:

*My being Jewish is due to no merit of my own. It is all a gift from God. Without this gift I am no better than any non-Jew. And even more so,<sup>15</sup> if I were a non-Jew I would be at a much lower level than this convert who is coming to join the Jewish people (and in an extreme manner: I would not have felt this burning desire to become Jewish, which is why God had to have mercy on me and make me Jewish from birth.)*

Realizing this, some of the greatest Chassidic masters would jump and dance with joy after reciting the morning blessing: "Blessed are You... for not making me a non-Jew." My very existence as a Jew is entirely an act of Divine kindness. If one feels this way, how can one ignore a potential convert that is now coming to convert? A Rabbinical authority that senses this will indeed join a Rabbinical court, a *Beit Din* and give of his time and energy to help a potential convert through the process of conversion. After the initial submission, which motivates the members of the *Beit Din* to

engage in conversion in the first place, not from a place of superiority over the convert but from a place of duty to a fellow human being who wishes to come closer to God, comes the *Beit Din's* experience of separation.

**Separation:** For all of his goodwill and burning desire to be Jewish, the convert cannot transform himself into a Jew. There has to be someone objectively guiding his transformation. The sages explain that a captive cannot release himself from his prison, he must get help from the outside, in whatever form.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, for a convert to successfully convert there has to be someone on the other side to accept him. In the case of conversion, this is the *Beit Din*—the court of Jewish law that supervises the conversion. As much as the *Beit Din* cares for the potential convert, its power to perform the conversion comes from its being the legal representative of the Jewish people. As such, the *Beit Din* feels completely separate from the convert.

As much as the *Beit Din* feels an affinity with the convert on the universal human level, it cannot let these feelings interfere with the need to follow the legal requirements of conversion. The *Beit Din* is commanded to first discourage the convert from converting, and then to test his or her resolve to indeed keep the commandments of the Torah. If the *Beit Din* cannot keep itself separate from the convert, it cannot perform its duty properly.

**Sweetening:** Finally, we have arrived at the third stage. A non-Jew will never even think about the possibility of conversion to Judaism if he or she were not expecting to become an integral part of the Jewish people. Consciously, the conversion is motivated by the realization that being a Jew is absolutely different from being a non-Jew. It means having an entirely different relationship with the Creator. Subconsciously, the urge to convert is fueled by the existential urge to be transformed; to become something new. Every convert adds something new to the Jewish people, something that could not be expressed from within Judaism alone. The *Beit Din* too should anticipate the new reality that the convert will bring into Judaism. This is a feeling of sweetening. That a human being who has been existentially separate from the Almighty will now be able to form an entirely new relationship with Him. Through this new relationship something will be added to Judaism.

Put another way, the sages say that a new convert is similar to a newborn baby. Like parents full of pride and joy with their newborn child, the *Beit Din* too should feel pride and joy in having brought the convert under the wings of the Divine Presence. And like new parents who have great expectations at seeing their child grow up and become a contributing member of their family and of their people, the *Beit Din* should also envision the wonderful addition that the new convert is to the House of Israel.

Before turning to describe the process of submission-separation-sweetening from God's perspective and before applying the process to the points of wisdom found in the nations, let us spend a little more time exploring the nature of the process from the perspective of the *Beit Din*, but this time using a more common example of how the process plays out. Though most of us are not Rabbinical authorities faced with the issue of conversion, all of us, whether Jewish or not, can make a choice to dedicate time to bringing others closer to God. One of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's campaigns for doing so will be our next topic for studying the submission-separation-sweetening process.

### The Tefilin Campaign

One of the 613 commandments is the donning of *tefilin* every weekday. The sages say that a Jewish male who has never put *tefilin* on is called "a skull without *tefilin*."<sup>17</sup> The Lubavitcher Rebbe encouraged us to go out and bring the commandment of *tefilin* to people who do not regularly perform this *mitzvah*. He called this the *tefilin* campaign.

Now, why would an observant Jew who is very busy leading an active religious life full of Godliness and Torah take away from his very limited time in order to stand on a street corner and ask passersby whether they are Jewish and if they would like to don *tefilin*? One would think this is a waste of valuable time.

The truth is that there is no room for such a dilemma if an observant Jew understands that all the knowledge and commitment needed to lead an observant life are a gift from Heaven (and, if he himself is a *ba'al teshuvah*, a gift of kindness made by other observant Jews). He is not observant because of some great merit and therefore feels a natural desire to pay in kind to other Jews who are still unaware of their heritage. This is the stage of submission.

When he actually goes out to stand on the sidewalk with *tefilin*, a person has to separate himself, knowing full well that this is not his natural place, but thanks to his feeling of separation he is able to navigate its spiritual pitfalls successfully.

Finally, there is a tremendous transformation, a great sweetening that occurs whenever he encounters a Jew who has never performed the *mitzvah* of *tefilin* in his life. As mentioned above, the sages describe such an individual as "a skull without *tefilin*." When such a skull is adorned with *tefilin*, Chassidut explains that a complete transformation takes place; the person's mind is forever altered and his connection with the Almighty immediately strengthens qualitatively. At that very moment, the highest level of his soul called the "singular one" (*yechidah*), which normally hovers above and beyond the physical realm and cannot be experienced, is suddenly revealed. This revelation is a new light that has come into the world, a new expression of Divinity

which could not have been introduced any other way. This new light represents the third and final stage of sweetening.

## Converting Wisdom

Before continuing with God's perspective on the conversion of a non-Jew to Judaism, let us first apply what we have learnt so far about the process of submission-separation-sweetening to the proper way for integrating the wisdom of the nations in general and modern science in particular into Torah. As discussed in part 1, the sages see it as the duty of those Torah scholars that are capable, to bring into faith the points of wisdom discovered by other people. Why is this not happening today? What is preventing the greatest Torah scholars of our generation (and previous generations) to seriously undertake the incorporation of science into Torah?

The simplest possible answer is that the Torah scholars of our generation feel that they do not have the capabilities needed to do this successfully and are therefore free of this burden. We would like to argue that this is not a serious possibility. In every generation, the Almighty gives the Jewish people the talented individuals needed to complete the task of bringing the Mashiach and ushering in the complete and full redemption.

Actually, if you push the greatest scholars of our generation with this question, the answer will be that dealing with science is in the end a waste of time, or as it is known by its legal term, "forsaking the [study of] Torah" (*bitul Torah*). Such a great scholar would ask, "What do I need to get into science for? What benefit [to my understanding of Torah] will come from immersing myself in its study?" There is a lack of appreciation for the value of the wisdom of the nations because it is difficult to see what contribution this wisdom may have for Torah. This is of course similar to the feelings preventing Rabbis from taking time to perform conversions and common Jews from dedicating time to engage in *kiruv* (the Hebrew word for "bringing someone closer [to God]") via the *tefilin* campaign, for example.

Though Torah and the Jewish people are complete in and of themselves, the conversion of wisdom and the conversion of non-Jews paradoxically add something new to both. In other words, it is hard to imagine the final stage of sweetening that will be the outcome of the conversion process, and therefore hard to be motivated to start the process in the first place.<sup>18</sup> But, we have gotten a little ahead of ourselves. Let's return to the first stage, submission.

**Submission:** As mentioned earlier, just as we are not permitted to convert a group of non-Jews en masse, we cannot convert all of the wisdom of the nations all at once. To be

a candidate for conversion a scientific theory or some other wisdom originating from outside the Torah must show a certain amount of submission before the Torah. With people, it is easier to gauge submission, but gauging the amount of submission in wisdom is far more difficult. Still, there are various signs that a point of wisdom or a scientific theory is ready to be converted.

The most prominent of these is that the wisdom transmits to those that understand it a sense of the limits of human ability to fully understand and describe nature. Or, perhaps the theory has been able to uncover some inherent paradox in reality. When a theory has reached this point, there are scientists who will discount it, because it seems to be flawed—incapable of granting them their ultimate wish, total knowledge. But, there will be other scientists who are moved by what they have discovered to a belief in the Creator and in an all encompassing source of knowledge that is far beyond our understanding. Sometimes, as in the case of quantum mechanics, which we will consider shortly, the theory itself is figuratively begging, in scientific terminology of course, to be incorporated into Torah. Of course, the cursory suggestion that external wisdom, as is, already exists in the Torah, defeats the purpose of submission. The first thing one should feel about the wisdom of the nations is that it is not yet part of the Torah.<sup>19</sup>

For their part, in order to be interested in converting the wisdom of the nations, Rabbis and Torah scholars have to appreciate the truth and beauty in a point of wisdom in order to be interested in converting it. Both beauty and truth are inherent reflections of the Divine in that point of wisdom. As long as a theory has not been integrated into Torah its beauty cannot be praised and must still be considered false, like the beauty of the vain woman described in Proverbs.<sup>20</sup> But, once the wisdom has been integrated and incorporated into Torah, its beauty should be praised. Maimonides is quoted saying, “Accept the truth from whence it comes.” Of course, Maimonides, like us, knew that accepting it fully into Torah requires a conversion process. The Rabbi and Torah scholar have to feel that science has something to teach me, as the representative of the Torah, and we all stand to gain by incorporating its findings into the Torah. This is a very Messianic sentiment, and we have discussed some of its theological background in part 1 of this article.

**Separation:** But, again, you cannot release someone from prison unless you are outside the prison. The Torah offers the Rabbi a unique position. The Torah scholar is like a person who has (by no effort of his own) been extracted from the prison—which represents the manner in which science sees nature as void of the Divine—and been given the special ability to guide others out of their prison. In this sense, the Torah is

separate and its scholars are a breed apart from anyone else studying the real wisdom of the nations.

For instance, when a true Torah scholar reads a text on chemistry, he will not read it as every other student of chemistry will. He stands on a higher plane reaching down to uplift the findings of science. Without the feeling of separation, which to a large degree is indeed a feeling of standing above and over the object being converted, it is impossible to receive the inspiration needed to carry out the conversion.

Extending the example of a chemistry book, we might mention that the inspired Torah scholar reading the text would recognize that though there are over a hundred elements that appear in the Periodic Table, only 92 of them are naturally occurring. He would make a mental note of this because in his Torah studies he would have come across the fact that there are 92 unique roots used in the Genesis account of creation. He would then be inspired to create a parallel between the two, setting the stage for the total conversion, i.e., integration, of the Periodic Table into Torah study.<sup>21</sup>

**Sweetening:** Finally, the result of a successful conversion is that the points of wisdom have been fully integrated into the Torah. They can be smoothly transferred into any scholarly study of the Torah and used without reservation. They now not only reveal Divinity in and of themselves but also serve to increase our understanding of the Torah. The Rebbe Rashab writes that,

*The Divine soul comprehends the Divine alone and is not capable of any other ideas. The animal soul is the opposite, and comprehends natural issues alone. By imbuing the animal soul with the Divine soul, the Divine soul can come to comprehend the Divine issues from nature.*<sup>22</sup>

The Divine that our Divine soul comprehends is Torah knowledge without the integration of wisdom from the nations. The natural issues that the animal soul comprehends are the points of wisdom gathered by the nations of the world. Imbuing the animal soul with the Divine soul is equal to converting the points of wisdom to Torah. The result is that our Divine soul, i.e., our study of Torah, is now enriched by new ideas that provide us with new insight both into Torah and into nature.

Both the Torah has gained, because it is wider and integrates more of the wisdom of the nations. And, eventually, the wisdom of the nations will gain too. We will have more to say about this last point when we discuss the conversion of quantum mechanics. In short, we can call this cross-fertilization.

To state this last point another way and to lead into the next chapter, let us say that when a non-Jew converts to Judaism, even God, as it were, is surprised by this addition to His chosen people. Since the Torah is an expression of the Almighty, when the

wisdom of the nations is integrated properly into it, a new face of God is revealed and a new reality is created in the world.

### The Divine Perspective on Conversion

In the last section, we began leading into an explanation of the process of conversion from the Divine perspective. As it were, the Almighty also goes through a process of submission-separation-sweetening whenever a successful conversion is completed. This type of inquiry may not sit well (at least at first) with someone who is versed in Torah but has yet to study Kabbalah and Chassidut (similar ideas are found in the more difficult metaphors for God given by the sages in the *midrash*).

Let us begin with a *midrash*. The sages tell us that every day God regrets having created the evil inclination.<sup>23</sup> As explained in the commentaries on the Torah,<sup>24</sup> God regrets having created the evil inclination because it seduces people to act against His will. However, when a person finds the antidote to the evil inclination, which is *teshuvah*—i.e., regretting having gone against God's will and returning to Him—and because of *teshuvah* grows closer to God than he was initially, then God no longer regrets having created the evil inclination, because in the end it has caused a person to come closer to Him.

But, not only does *teshuvah* serve as the antidote to the evil inclination for people, it does so for God Himself! This is learnt from the fact that on the first day of the month, we are commanded to serve an extra sin offering on the altar.<sup>25</sup> The reason for this sin offering is not clear from the verses. But, the sages explain that this sin offering is for God Himself, meaning it is as if we are bringing an offering as *teshuvah* for God.<sup>26</sup> Why does God need to, as it were, bring a sin offering? The sages say that He is doing *teshuvah* for having decreased the moon's luminosity.<sup>27</sup> This act is considered the archetypal example of all the actions that God regrets, as it were.

In part 1 we explained the origin of the wisdom of the nations. They are sparks of holiness that fell into mundane reality, because of the shattering of the vessels. Of course, like everything, the shattering of the vessels is not some random event without rhyme or reason. It too occurs by Divine Providence.

Why did God choose to shatter the vessels of the World of Chaos in the first place? The sages tell us that God was not content with the way things stood, and wanted to start over again.<sup>28</sup> Before we reached our present state of reality, God created worlds (other states of being) and then shattered them. Sparks from these shattered realities scattered, some of them ending up in unlikely places in our own present reality. As incomprehensible as this may seem, earlier realities were somehow just not right. But, in

our reality, everything fits together perfectly. Still, God regrets having destroyed these alternate realities, because it led to the dispersal of the sparks of holiness to impure places.

This description of God's regret is one of the greatest secrets of creation. Clearly, the notion that God—who is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfect—can sin, and what is more, share that sin with us, asking us to bring a sin offering on His account, is unique to Judaism. You will not find a similar description anywhere else. This is an example of how far removed from human reason the thinking of the Torah is. It requires you to believe in God as perfect and at the same time recognize that God needs to bring a sin offering.

**Submission:** As long as sparks of holiness are dispersed throughout reality, torn from their source in holiness, everything in reality experiences a great deal of suffering. God knows that He is responsible for this suffering. These sparks manifest as the souls of potential converts and as points of wisdom. Until these sparks are returned to their origin in holiness through conversion, God continually asks Himself, "Whatever for did I disperse them in this way? For what purpose did I cause so much suffering?" This is the Almighty's experience of submission, prompting Him to encourage conversion, of both non-Jews and the wisdom of the nations.

**Separation:** When you shatter something, it scatters chaotically in every direction and there is no way to perfectly predict where each piece will end up. But, deep down, in a much deeper and subconscious level, God has a predestined plan and address for every spark of holiness that was scattered. Deep down there is a plan. But, for this plan to work out God had to, as it were, hide the particulars even from Himself. Still, at a deeper level, God recognizes that He must have done everything for a good reason. So the exact reason for why each spark is where it is and what it has to go through in order to be redeemed is hidden, as it were, even from God Himself. But, the truth is that every bad thing that happens has a purpose. Even though it appears as a totally chaotic event (and from God's perspective it is the equivalent of a sin), everything has a Divine purpose and intent. So there is a good reason for everything that He did. It is not arbitrary. As explained in length in Chassidut, no act performed by a Jew is really a sin, and even if it is, it is considered a sin with a Divine intent. The smallest detail of this apparent chaos has a purpose to it.

This is God's experience of separation, as it differentiates between the seemingly external chaos of reality and God's deepest essence in which everything has purpose and meaning. It is this state of separation and differentiation that gives meaning to the dispersal of the sparks and provides a rationale for conversion to be performed. The

conversion will ultimately reveal the very good reason underlying why this piece of holiness is where it is and has to undergo conversion in order to return to God. Still at the stage of separation, the good reason cannot yet be completely revealed. For that we have to wait for the age of the Mashiach, the sweetening stage in which all will be revealed, a state that we are definitely approaching.

*Sweetening:* But, the sweetening is not just that God is able to reveal His original plan and reasons for the dispersal of the sparks and all the suffering that ensued since. As it were, God also experiences the proverb, "I have toiled, and I have found."<sup>29</sup> When one works hard for success, finding is far more enjoyable than when one attains success without hard work. God, as it were, is still working hard on creation. This is a theme that appears many times in the sayings of the sages. Creation is an ongoing project and effort. For this reason, when it reaches fruition what will be found (even though predestined) will be an even more spectacular and bigger surprise for God than what He had planned for in the first place. Put another way, the result is always greater than all the toil that went into producing it. So what will really happen at the end of days is even more spectacular than the purpose that God knows exists within every iota of chaos.

This amazing description of sweetening from God's perspective is found in a confounding verse: "So says the God of Hosts: Those which are left from this people will be a wonder for Me in those days; even in My eyes they will be a wonder...."<sup>30</sup>

Now let us take this very deep discussion and apply it to the conversion and integration of the wisdom of the nations into the Torah. The bottom line is that once a converted point of wisdom is truly integrated, it leads to a surprising new understanding of Torah. Every interpretation reveals another facet of the Creator, who is said to have written Himself into the Torah. But, interpretations that originate from a soul that has converted or from a converted point of wisdom are so innovative, that they reveal the deepest level of God's plan for creation. Of course, this points at a corollary—that all of the newfound scientific knowledge acquired in our generation is necessary for our understanding of the Creator.

## Converting Quantum Mechanics

Now that we have covered the conversion process in some detail, let us take a pertinent physical example of a prominent piece of wisdom of the nations and see how the process applies to it.

Quantum Mechanics is a very powerful and rigorous theory, which has stood the test of decades of experimentation. Still, Quantum Mechanics is a non-Jewish theory, because as we have defined it above, it only consists of a physical body. In translation

to physics, this means that it only describes material reality, but it does not require or even include a conscious recognition of the Creator. Knowledge that is not imbued with Divinity is non-Jewish knowledge. It can be the best, most useful knowledge in the world, just as numerous non-Jews are good people, but it is still not Jewish. The first step in converting this knowledge is to realize that it is not Jewish.

But, perhaps more than any other wisdom of the nations today, quantum mechanics wants to be converted. How so? Almost every single scientist who has studied quantum mechanics feels that it is incomplete at some basic level. There is an almost supernatural (definitely irrational) desire amongst physicists for framing quantum mechanics into a grand unifying theory<sup>31</sup> that will properly unite the four basic physical forces (the strong, weak, electromagnetic, and gravitational). Being unified and expressing oneness is a particularly Jewish trait. The essential statement of Jewish faith is the *Shema*, “God is one!” So, we can definitely say that quantum mechanics wants to be converted.

Elsewhere,<sup>32</sup> we have dedicated a great deal of discussion to the possibilities of integrating quantum mechanics into Torah. We refer the reader there as that discussion can form the basis for the stage of separation, inspired understanding of quantum mechanics that begins its conversion into Torah

Now, let us add a few words about the sweetening stage. We noted earlier that external wisdom has become part of Torah when it cross-fertilizes with the Torah. When we have reached the stage that we can use quantum mechanics to attain a new interpretation or understanding of some topic in Torah, then quantum mechanics has truly been integrated. But, this also implies that the Torah should be able to reveal new understanding in the external wisdom. In other words, the Torah is able to shed new light on quantum mechanics.

The normal order is that first, the external wisdom is integrated, providing new insight into Torah and only then can the Torah truly fertilize it. The reason for this is that the external wisdom, which represents knowledge from below, is relatively feminine, while the Torah, which is knowledge from Above, is relatively masculine. Their integration is known in Kabbalah as the unification of the higher and lower wisdom, or the marriage of the male and female waters. When male and female unite, the Torah tells us that the female awakens first.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the external wisdom is first to awaken the Torah—i.e., provide new insight into Torah. Only subsequently, does the awakening of the lower wisdom from below prompt a similar awakening of the higher wisdom (Torah) from above, fertilizing the lower wisdom.

Applying this to the integration of science with Torah, we expect that first science will reveal new insight into Torah. Only then will Torah provide new insight into

science. In practice, in most areas that we have treated over the years, we have only seen limited examples of the second stage occurring, but when they do, they are truly powerful.<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

This article would be incomplete without referring the reader to the large amount of work integrating the current wisdom of the nations into Torah at the Gal Einai Institute. Incidentally, the name "Gal Einai" (גל עיני), which literally means "Unveil my eyes" (or, "Open my eyes), is taken from the verse, "Unveil my eyes and I will see the wonders of Your Torah" (גל עיני ואביטה נפלאות מתורתך). The numerical value of the full verse (which is also used as our logo) is 1839, exactly the same as the value of the sages saying that served as the inspiration for this article, "Believe that the nations possess wisdom, but do not believe that they possess Torah" (חכמה בגוים תאמין תורה בגוים אל תאמין). Written a bit more dramatically,

חכמה בגוים תאמין תורה בגוים אל תאמין = גל עיני ואביטה נפלאות מתורתך

The fundamental work on this topic is a short pamphlet titled "[The Torah Academy](#)" (which is currently being expanded into a full-length book). The Torah Academy sets up the basic correspondence between the areas of wisdom considered scientific today and the sefirot. In each area of wisdom, numerous articles and book length texts have been written based on the lectures and seminars given on that topic. We encourage the reader to pay a visit to the [Torah and Science section](#) of our website.

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1. Denigrators of the need for integration between science and Torah would argue that the sages' developed their natural knowledge in parallel to the non-Jewish nations. However, this is both implausible as it suggests that the sages lived in a sterile environment without any connection with their surrounding, clearly not the case. In addition, there seems to be testimony from the sages themselves to the contrary (see for instance *Pesachim* 94b).

2. Perhaps the most important and most far-reaching example can be found in chapter 3 of *Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah*.

3. The Ba'al Shem Tov (*Keter Shem Tov* ???) taught us this important principle based on the verse, "The wise man takes [upon himself] the commandments" (Proverbs 10:8). The Ba'al Shem Tov explained that the plural form of "commandments" in this verse refers not to multiple commandments, but to the two dimensions inherent in the performance of every commandment.

4. For example, a legal stipulation regarding conversion is that conversion is individual, i.e., you cannot convert an entire people all at once. Case in point is the story of the kingdom of Kazar, whose people converted en masse, but did not remain Jewish and ultimately returned to their Christian and Islamic roots.

5. See in length in *Transforming Darkness Into Light*.

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<sup>6</sup>. The potential convert would define him or her self with the words "I am not Jewish."

<sup>7</sup>. *Yoreh De'ah* 268:2. See the full text to see how it clearly reflects the process of submission, separation, and sweetening.

<sup>8</sup>. Of course, the argument that the Jewish people are homeless, troubled, and stricken with suffering in the Shulchan Aruch is not the only one that can be used.

<sup>9</sup>. Ruth 1:16-17.

<sup>10</sup>. Over the years, some non-Jewish melodies were converted into Jewish melodies. In each case, the final result was slightly different from the original.

<sup>11</sup>. Conversion is truly a universal process and applies equally to non-Jews as well as to Jews (and to the Almighty, as we have noted). What need does a Jew have for conversion? The answer is that spiritually, every Jew can undergo this process of submission, separation, and sweetening in respect to his or her animal soul. Focusing on the animal soul, a Jew can say "I am a non-Jew." For most people, it is the animal soul that defines their being, their thoughts, their consciousness and therefore they too can say, "I am a non-Jew."

The idea here is that regardless of whether you are a Jew or a non-Jew there are psychological and spiritual forces that make up your identity that are non-Jewish in the sense that they conceal God from you and make you feel separate and improperly autonomous from Him. Being non-Jewish really means being a corporal reality without a Divine reality. The process of conversion involves infusing this corporal reality with Divine awareness allowing it to relate to God, to serve God, and to come close to God. And again, whether you are Jewish or not, this requires a process of conversion whose first stage is recognizing that I am not yet Jewish. Thus a Jew too is always full of profound humility, recognizing that for all the favors that God has bestowed upon him by creating him a Jew, still, there are many parts of his identity that are far from ideal.

<sup>12</sup>. Unfortunately, in many cases, the conversion is motivated by an ulterior motive and not because of the true desire of the potential convert to come closer to God by joining the Jewish people.

<sup>13</sup>. We are here of course speaking only of 100% orthodox Rabbis who truly understand the difficulty of accepting a convert into the Jewish people and who fully follow the letter of the law.

<sup>14</sup>. Until recently, and in some part of the world even today, conducting a conversion of a non-Jew to Judaism is considered illegal, punishable, even by death. But, there were great individuals, who in an example of total self-sacrifice for a potential convert, did carry out conversion. One example such selfless conduct was Rabbi Zalman Zezmer, one of the greatest intellects of Chabad and a disciple of the Alter Rebbe, the founder of Chabad. Rabbi Zalman was captured and sentenced to exile to Siberia by the Czarist regime for having performed conversions. He was one of the few Rabbis of his time who had the audacity to do so. In the end, he passed away before the sentence could be executed.

<sup>15</sup>. As explained in depth in the Mittler Rebbe's *ma'amar*, ויספו עניים שמחה בהו"י.

<sup>16</sup>. *Berachot* 5b.

<sup>17</sup>. *Menachot* ???.

<sup>18</sup>. There are of course Rabbis and Torah scholars who think that science contradicts Torah and therefore does not warrant serious consideration as wisdom of the nations. They fear that giving legitimacy to science will encourage the Torah-bashing science is used for by some people and even some scientists. The truth is that only pseudo-science contradicts the Torah and only mistaken interpretations of the Torah are at odds with scientific findings. Still, fear is many times caused by arrogance. The fear of the seeming contradiction is then a front for a sense of arrogance

over science. Indeed, some fears are positive, but usually the fear of engaging science is strongly motivated by one's feeling of self (ישות).

<sup>19</sup>. See for example the discussion of Kabbalah's 15 bodily contact points appearing in *Body, Mind, and Soul*, pp. 231-4.

When first studying this topic in Kabbalah, many people are tempted to immediately identify these contact points as parallel language for the Eastern chakras, thereby immediately accepting the notion of chakras as positive and "kosher" in the eyes of the Torah. Nothing could be more self-defeating. The initial attitude should be (as is the case in fact) that chakras are not at all part of the Torah. They are part of a tradition that is diametrically opposed to Torah since it does not recognize the existence of one God. Still, there is some wisdom in the notion of chakras that might be converted and integrated into Torah. The separation stage allows one to find the appropriate topic in Torah into which this wisdom might be incorporated (in this case the five Kabbalistic *partzufim* and their respective points of contact in the human form). Finally, once the points of wisdom have been converted, they reappear in a completely new form and with new names altogether. In fact, if the reader of that section in *Body, Mind, and Soul*, were not informed that in a 'previous life' the contact points were Eastern chakras, he might not even realize it.

<sup>20</sup>. Proverbs 31:30.

<sup>21</sup>. For a great deal more on this, see our [article](#) on the Periodic Table.

<sup>22</sup>. *Besha'ah She'hekdimu* 5672, p. ???.

<sup>23</sup>. *Sukah* 52b and *Yalkut Shimoni* Isaiah 425. See also *Yerushalmi Ta'anit* 3:4.

<sup>24</sup>. *Sifte Cohen* to Leviticus 1:14.

<sup>25</sup>. Numbers 28:15.

<sup>26</sup>. *Chulin* 60b.

<sup>27</sup>. A careful reading of the verses in Genesis 1 reveals that initially the sun and the moon were equally luminous, but subsequently the moon was made less luminous than the sun.

<sup>28</sup>. To a certain extent, this is like a child building a sandcastle on the beach only to destroy it in order to build a new one.

<sup>29</sup>. *Megilah* 6b.

<sup>30</sup>. Zachariah 8:6.

<sup>31</sup>. Without a doubt, the physicist who was most stricken by this irrational need was Albert Einstein, who spent most of the last 20 years of his life searching for a way to unify our understanding of the 4 physical forces in nature. We can see this as an example of Einstein's Jewish soul being affected by the yearning within physics to reach a unified state, just as many times we see that Jewish souls are greatly moved when they see a non-Jew yearning to grow closer and serve God, to the point of demanding to become Jewish.

<sup>32</sup>. See our series on [Quantum Mechanics, Relativity, and String Theory](#).

<sup>33</sup>. Leviticus 12:2.

<sup>34</sup>. One of the most important examples, which has already been verified scientifically, is the role of the second X chromosome in the female fetus, a topic we discussed in length in the late 70s and early 80s.