



**About the cover**

The cover artwork was designed to express the approach of this series of essays which interprets popular media, primarily film and music, through the looking glass of Jewish philosophy. The intent of the essays is not to explain a particular pop-media piece *per se*, but rather to utilize its power to explain Jewish Philosophy. In this sense the media serves as an *articulation* of Jewish Philosophy whereby recondite ideas are brought to life in the “language” of modern man. Jewish philosophy seeks to understand man’s world within the context of the Creator; as such the cover art rests on a backdrop of deep sky blue, *tekhelet*, the color of God’s throne, upon which the entire creation rests. The blue is rendered chaotic through graphic noise, thus giving expression to the unfinished and imperfect nature of creation. Upon this amorphous substrate is the text of the creation narrative, written in the typeface of a traditional Torah scroll, indicating that it is with reference to the ancient lore that we seek to derive meaning. Scattered around the page are ten circles modifying the base color, representing the ten *sefirot*. The *sefirot* are mystical lenses through which divine emanations reach the world and through which man perceives divinity. There is another circle, in a very light *tekhelet*, around the word “*bereishit*” (beginning), symbolizing the *sefirah* of “*keter*” – God’s crown itself. Overlaying these religious symbols are the more familiar symbols of film and music: the director’s clapperboard, treble and bass symbols, and a guitar. The guitar is replicated three times; three representing permanence in Jewish thought. The guitar is no ordinary guitar but the 1950’s Fender Telecaster used to record Led Zeppelin’s Stairway to Heaven, a permanent classic in the music world and the subject of one of the essays in this series.

**Is This Your Copy?**

Please consider the tremendous effort invested in producing this work and purchase your own copy by visiting:

<http://www.divreinavon.com/stairway.htm>

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## Stairway To Heaven – In a Revealed Light

### *A Kabbalistic Approach to Led Zeppelin's Classic Song*

What turns a piece of art into a classic? What makes a song endure the vicissitudes of time and personal taste such that even after decades it still retains the title of “most-played track in radio history”? Something about the song resonates within all who hear it; nevertheless its deep message has remained sealed to the uninitiated. Indeed, the Zeppelin fan magazine “In the Light” refers to “the epic ‘Stairway to Heaven’, [as a song] the meaning of which is an enduring Zeppelin mystery.”<sup>1</sup>

To unlock the meaning hidden within any esoteric text a key is essential. Looking at the inside drawing of the album cover (the illustration can be seen on [wikipedia](#)<sup>2</sup>), the key is revealed. It is a drawing of a lone individual at the bottom of an ominous mountain looking upward questioningly for help, for guidance on her quest. At the top of the mountain stands a looming cloaked figure with a staff in one hand and a lamp in the other - a shepherd, a guide through the darkness of the surrounding night. At the center of the lamp, the source of the light, is a golden star. Yet this is no ordinary star, it is the Star of David - symbol of the philosophy of ancient Israel.<sup>3</sup>

The song's lyricist Robert Plant explains the creation of “Stairway to Heaven” as being an almost metaphysical experience: “It was done very quickly. It was a very fluid, unnaturally easy track. There was something pushing it, saying ‘you guys are okay, but if you want to do something timeless, here's a wedding song for you.’”<sup>4</sup>

The description of “Stairway to Heaven” as a “wedding song” is most enigmatic given that the song has nothing to do with wedding songs - traditional or otherwise. However, by applying the Kabbalistic metaphor of “wedding”, used to depict the union of man and God,<sup>5</sup> the description is demystified. Spiritually striving man is represented in feminine form in that she receives from God. God, as the absolute source of all, is represented in masculine form in that He gives to humanity.<sup>6</sup> As will be developed, “Stairway to Heaven” tells the story of “a lady” - mankind fulfilling its spirituality - climbing heavenward to unite with her Creator. As such, it is most appropriate that the visionary of this song referred to it as “a wedding song”.

It is the intention of this book to present a cogent and comprehensive interpretation of the song based on the mystical philosophy of Kabbalah.<sup>7</sup> Let us look at the words, the music, the concepts, that make up the composition of art known as “Stairway to Heaven” in the light of this wisdom. (Please refer to the full lyrics in your copy of the album or at [lyricwiki](#)<sup>8</sup>).

## There's a lady ... buying a stairway to heaven.

There are three primary symbols used in this lyric: lady, gold, and stairway. In mystical symbolism the relationship between God and His created beings is depicted as one between male and female, with God symbolized as the male and humanity as the female - the "lady".<sup>9</sup> Gold is that most precious of metals which due to its unalloyed purity and resistance to corrosion over time is used as a metaphor for purity, truth, and even God Himself.<sup>10</sup> The term "stairway" is the exact translation of the Hebrew word "*madregot*", used in mystical literature to refer to the ascending levels of spirituality.<sup>11</sup>

This first verse introduces us to a lady struggling from her earth bound station in an effort to rendezvous with her sublime source - Heaven. The first step on this stairway is the recognition that everything in this world is linked to God.<sup>12</sup> "The Lord is God in the heavens above and the earth below, there is nothing else" (Duet. 4:39).<sup>13</sup> As A.J. Heschel puts it, "The pious man is ever alert to see behind the appearance of things a trace of the divine..."<sup>14</sup> This ideal is encoded in the words: *all that glitters is gold*. From a purely physical perspective, all that glitters is certainly **not** gold. However, with the awareness that God is in everything, then all that glitters is godly - all that glitters **is** gold.

In the quest for spiritual elevation - climbing the *stairway to heaven* - one must invest great effort. A relationship with God does not come for free, but must be acquired, or "bought", if you will, through unwavering resolve to reach the Divine.<sup>15</sup>

## When she gets there ... what she came for.

In the physical world transactions are not made at the mere mention of a *word*, however in the spiritual world this is the only way to make acquisitions. The storehouses of spiritual wealth remain closed, opening only to those who have the word - God.

Mystical tradition is replete with references to individuals making their way in the spiritual world by use of a word or divine name.<sup>16</sup> One of the earliest records of ascending to the spiritual realm by means of a divine name describes four individuals ascending to a spiritual Garden of Eden to glimpse the divine.<sup>17</sup> Techniques were later developed whereby one gained entry to the transcendental by repeating a divine name as a mantra.<sup>18</sup> Subsequent schools of thought developed methods to access the metaphysical by employing permutations of divine names.<sup>19</sup>

The "*word*" can also refer to the Bible, as it is known as God's word and is a manifestation of God's name.<sup>20</sup> The Bible provides a number of ways for man to access the spiritual world. By studying the Bible one acquires God's Wisdom, attaching to God's essence.<sup>21</sup> Through the observance of the Bible as a spiritual guidebook, man can navigate a course to spiritual heights.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, mystics employ various meditations related to performing biblical commandments - God's word - in order to attain high spiritual states.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, with a *word* - be it the Bible, or an explicit divine name - one can achieve what would be, by conventional methods, impossible.

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## And she's buying a stairway to heaven

Following the opening verses, the visionary pauses, reviewing to himself the principle thought of *"buying a stairway to heaven"*.

## There's a sign ... two meanings.

A "*sign on the wall*" is a well-worn idiom meaning "indication". On the path of spirituality there are many "*signs*", "*words*", indicators and symbols which are laden with meaning. By decoding these signs, the seeker can achieve great understanding and spiritual heights.

Nevertheless, decoding signs is no simple matter since there are many possible interpretations. Misinterpreting a "*word*" or "*sign*" can have severe repercussions leading to great folly or worse - and so "*she wants to be sure*".<sup>24</sup> Adin Steinsaltz explains that the spiritual realm "is a dangerous place, and no man may find his way in it so long as he tries to grasp things as they appear to be. The greatest difficulty in comprehending esoteric wisdom is that its symbols are viewed as realities and the allegory is not perceived."<sup>25 26</sup>

## In a tree ... thoughts are misgiben.

The *tree* is the Biblical tree of life with the power to grant those who eat from it eternal life.<sup>27</sup> The tree, with its roots in the earth and its branches in the heavens, is the symbolic connection between the physical, finite world and the spiritual, infinite world.<sup>28</sup> It is planted by a *brook*, wherein it is nourished, but moreover where from the world is nourished. The Zohar (Bereishit 35a) explains that the tree of life “collected all the waters of creation, which afterwards flowed in different directions” to water the rest of the world.<sup>29</sup>

Water is the symbol of wisdom<sup>30</sup>, and it is through wisdom that one attaches to the Creator. Commenting on the mystical text “The Bahir”, Aryeh Kaplan explains that “Wisdom is the conduit of God’s essence and it therefore sustains all things.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed water, which is likened to wisdom, is similarly likened to God’s Holy Spirit.<sup>32</sup> To attain a connection with God one must acquire His wisdom.<sup>33</sup>

The *tree by the brook* is then the symbol of God’s holiness;<sup>34</sup> His wisdom channeled into this world, sustaining it and providing creation with the possibility of attaining eternal life.<sup>35</sup> “The tree is a tree of life for those that grasp on to it” (Proverbs 3:18) refers to man’s attaching to God’s wisdom.<sup>36</sup>

With this in mind, a *songbird* - an individual<sup>37</sup> strongly connected to the Creator (as demonstrated by his dwelling in the tree) - imparts a crucial message: *sometimes all of our thoughts are misgiben*. This caveat is essential to anyone embarking on the quest for wisdom - for it calls on the individual to exercise the faculties of the mind to the fullest. At the same time this is an acknowledgment that one must be ever aware that there is Wisdom which cannot be grasped by understanding, but can only be attained through experience.<sup>38</sup>





## There's a feeling ... crying for leaving.

Everything always desires to return to its source - the body is drawn toward the physical, the soul toward the spiritual. This effect, this “*feeling*”, is amplified when one is in close proximity to the source. Thus, when one sees something intensely spiritual, the soul is drawn greatly toward it.<sup>39</sup> The Zohar (Vayakhel 210b) explains that, “just as the thirsty man pants for water, so does the soul thirst for the brilliancy of the light of the Garden [of Eden].”

Though God is present the world over, His presence is more perceptible in certain places. “*West*” refers to the direction of greatest spiritual intensity. Tradition teaches that the divine presence known as the *Shekhinah* actually dwells in the *West*.<sup>40</sup> God’s earthly “residence”, the place where he was most revealed, was in King Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem. The room of greatest divine revelation, known as the “Holy of Holies”, was located in the *West*. And it is to the direction of the *West* that tradition holds we expectantly await the return of the divine presence.<sup>41</sup>

It is at these points, when in close proximity with the divine, that one’s *spirit* is crying for leaving - yearning for union with the divine.<sup>42</sup>

## In my thoughts ... who stand looking.

This verse refers to *thoughts* in a highly transcendental state, for only in such a state could one declare that he has *seen ...voices*. This phenomenon of perceiving sound through the sense of sight is one of the hallmarks of a very high spiritual state. It is first recorded in the Bible when the nation of Israel was in the midst of receiving God's revelation at Mount Sinai - "And all the people saw the voices..." (Exodus 20:15).

The Talmud (*Eruvin* 19a) describes a place just outside the ancient city of Jerusalem known as the Valley of Ben Hinnom<sup>43</sup> where "smoke rises between the trees." It is a place where souls are to reflect on the negative areas of their being in order to rectify their deficiencies. It is a place where individuals *stand looking* in introspection, their expressions of remorse perceptible in what might only be described as - *voices*.<sup>44</sup>

וואוואו and it makes me wonder  
וואוואו and it really makes me wonder

The visionary is again cast into deep thought, but this time even more so as he now adds that he “*really*” wonders. This pause for wonder comes much sooner than the first time - after only two verses - for he has now been taught two very weighty teachings. On the one hand, of man’s great yearning to attach to his spiritual source and partake in the divine abundance. On the other hand, of man’s having to recall his every deed as part of a self-rectification process.

## And it's whispered ... lead us to reason.

The *Piper* refers to the "Pied Piper of Hamelin"<sup>45</sup> who could draw all to follow him, enchanted and entranced, by the tune he played. This figure is paralleled in the spiritual realm by the Messiah, whose very role is to reveal God to mankind, drawing all the world to follow him.<sup>46</sup> As predicted by the prophet Isaiah, "And it shall come to pass in the end of days that the mountain of God's house shall be set over all other mountains and lifted high above the hills and all nations shall come streaming to it. And many people shall come and say: Come let us go up to the mountain of God, to the house of the God of Jacob and he [the Messiah] will teach us His [God's] ways and we will walk in His [God's] paths" (Isaiah 2:2-3).<sup>47</sup>

Both the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 97b) and the Zohar (Vayera 117b) discuss the conditions conducive for the Messiah's appearance. One possibility is that the Messiah will come once the predestined time for the perfection of humanity has arrived. Alternatively, it is possible to bring the Messiah at any time if mankind fulfills its spiritual goals in performing the will of the Creator. Thus, *if we all call the tune* - turning our thoughts and deeds toward spiritual fulfillment - the Messiah will come and *lead us to reason*, revealing God and His wonders - "soon".

As for all this being communicated in a "*whisper*", mystical tradition explains that "God's secrets are whispered."<sup>48</sup> The Zohar (Naso 146a) describes the redemption as the meeting of the King (God) and his Lady (*Kenneset Yisrael*) in the following words: "[W]hen a king is about to join his queen, all his attendants are excited and a whisper runs through them: 'Behold, the King is about to meet his Lady.' Here the Lady is the Community of Israel."

## And a new day ... with laughter.

The Messianic era is referred to as the *dawn* following the dark night of history where man groped to find his spiritual way. "... as the dawn of the morning spreads in the sky, wider and wider, until the entire sky will become bright by the appearance of the sun, so will be the redemption, little by little at the beginning, and gradually becoming wider and wider" (Talmud Yerushalmi, *Brachot* 1:1).<sup>49</sup> It is a *new day*, a new era, in that God's will is openly revealed and everyone lives in harmonious accord with creation.<sup>50</sup>

The term "*day*" is very precise. The history of the world is said to parallel the seven days of creation, each day of creation corresponding to a period of a thousand years.<sup>51</sup> "For a thousand years are in Your eyes as one day" (Psalms 90:4). Thus the total span of time allotted for the completion of history is seven thousand years.<sup>52</sup> The first six days of creation were used for development; correspondingly, the first six thousand years of creation are for development.<sup>53</sup> The seventh day in creation was the Sabbath, a day of rest, a time of perfection. So too the seventh thousand-year period is to parallel the quality of the seventh day of creation as a time of perfection.<sup>54</sup>

The individuals who are to enjoy this wondrous era are those who have long waited for its arrival - *those who stand long*.<sup>55</sup> "And it shall be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that he should save us; this is our Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). So fundamental is this longing for such a perfected time that it has been codified as a principle of faith to be espoused by all.<sup>56</sup>

The era will be one of total good such that all of creation will rejoice at its arrival.<sup>57</sup> This is depicted in esoteric literature as the *forest echoing with laughter*. Explicit use of this symbol is found in a mystical story of the time of redemption: "Just before the day dawned, they heard a tremendous laugh that made the whole forest tremble... What is the great laugh that is heard at dawn? That is the sound of the day laughing at the night."<sup>58</sup> The laugh is the joyous sound of good made upon the ultimate divine revelation.<sup>59</sup>

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The visionary is cast into thought, but does not “wonder” about these particular teachings - rather he sings soothingly, seemingly taking pleasure in the thought of such perfection.

## If there's a bustle ... the May Queen.

A *hedgerow* is most commonly used to demarcate property lines. Extrapolating, it could be used to divide borders of countries. A *bustle* - hurried movement or commotion - in a hedgerow indicates trespass. Indeed, before the coming of God's final redeemer, before the "new day" when the world will live in peace and harmony, nation will trespass nation.<sup>60</sup> Tradition teaches that war itself is a sign of the final redemption.<sup>61</sup> This trespass is not to cause "alarm", since it is clearly a preparation for the ultimate redemption.

"Spring Clean" is a common practice the world over whereby people prepare themselves for the new season. In the spiritual sense, spring-cleaning is a Biblically mandated practice done in preparation for the reenactment of the redemption (Exodus 12:14-20).

"May" is a springtime month used as representative of the season of spring. This is the season of rebirth in nature. It is the season of redemption in the Bible,<sup>62</sup> and it is in this season which tradition holds that the ultimate redemption will take place.<sup>63</sup> The *Queen* is a reference to that aspect of God's presence in the physical world always referred to in the feminine. Tradition refers explicitly to God's presence in its quintessential form as "Queen".<sup>64</sup> The *May Queen* is thus God's redemptive presence.

Consequently the lyric reads: *If there's a bustle in your hedgerow* - if you see nations warring, *don't be alarmed now* - rest assured for, *it's just a spring clean for the May Queen* - it is the preparation for God's redemption.



## Yet there are two paths ... the road you're on.

The terms “two paths” and “change” clearly convey the notion of freedom, free will. Freedom is part and parcel of creation,<sup>65</sup> designed to give man the opportunity to fulfill his purpose in creation.<sup>66</sup> Freedom is that condition wherein one is presented with a choice and given the possibility to choose - to exercise one's free will. Freedom consists not only of being placed in an environment where both good and evil exist but also where one has the capacity to choose and effectuate the choice. As such, there are always two paths<sup>67</sup> by which one can exercise his free will.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, even though one may find that he has in the past chosen one general direction, he always has the opportunity to change his course and fulfill his spiritual destiny.<sup>69</sup> This concept of changing one's path is so essential to creation that it is taught that it was created before the world itself.<sup>70</sup> Tradition teaches that there is always time to change, even to one's dying day.<sup>71</sup>

And it makes me wonder  
Ooooo ooooo

The visionary once again expresses some “wonder”. Yet now it is a wonder which fades into contented thought.

## Your head is humming ... to join him.

Once one becomes aware of the above information, of the spiritual dimension of creation, it begins to resonate in one's mind - "humming" in one's "head". It is something that "won't go", something that will not leave the individual's consciousness, since it so profoundly affects him. It is as if the Messiah himself is "calling you to join him". Tradition teaches that a voice emanates from heaven everyday calling for man to return to God in thought and deed.<sup>72</sup>

## Hear lady can you hear ... the whispering wind.

Addressed to the *lady* - humanity striving for the divine - the rhetorical question is posed: *can you hear the wind blow* - i.e., are you cognizant of the spiritual message. Wind is a metaphor for the spirit. In Hebrew the word for wind is *ruach*, which is used interchangeably to refer to spirit or wind.<sup>73</sup> Air is an invisible substance which completely surrounds man. One can only perceive the air when the wind blows. Air in this sense - invisible and ever present - is a metaphor for God. The blowing wind is consequently a metaphor for God's perceptible presence.<sup>74</sup>

The second half of the lyric answers the first half in kind. To the question, "can you hear the *wind* (God)", comes the answer, "your path to fulfillment lies in choosing the path of spirituality." To the question, are you cognizant of God's presence, comes the answer that it is in the awareness of God that the quest for spiritual elevation lies. It is essential for the spiritual seeker to be cognizant of this wind, for through its perception, which gives rise then to wisdom and understanding, one is bound to the Creator. Tradition encodes this notion in the adage: "Wind gave birth to Wisdom" (Exodus Rabba 15:22).

*Whispering wind* refers to *Ruach HaKodesh* (literally Holy Wind) meaning divine inspiration. Such "*wind*", divine inspiration, emanates from a high spiritual plane and as such is perceptible only to those sufficiently sensitized to its "*whisper*".

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The previous twelve verses are sung Ballad style, with each few verses bringing an increase in musical instrumentation. This reflects mankind's steadily intensifying advancement toward its fulfillment.

At this point in the song a marked shift in the tempo and style is made and maintained for the remainder of the song. These last verses are introduced by what must be described as a musical "explosion" - drums beat fiercely and a radical electric guitar jam is introduced. The increase in tempo of the music corresponds to the increase in tempo of God's plan unfolding. The Zohar (Vayera 117a)<sup>75</sup> explains that as humanity approaches the goal of creation, the thousand years of perfection, advancements in every field of endeavor will occur at a breakneck pace.

The change in style from "Ballad" to "Hard Rock" distinguishes these last lines with a sense of intense urgency. These final verses are not sung but rather shouted, as they reveal the ultimate stage in the history of man when God's plan is made manifest. There is no more time for leisurely talk and song; the visionary is literally screaming at his audience to take action, to take part in the unfolding eschatology.

## And as we wind ... road

This phrase is a classic simile meaning “as time goes by”, however far more poignant, since it also conjures the image of reaching the end of the road. Indeed, mystical philosophy envisions the world as having a very specific beginning point in time and a very specific end point.<sup>76</sup> This end point signifies the final time by which man will have had to spiritually elevate himself. At this end point, God will be revealed to His Creation and bring about the rectification of what man has still left undone.<sup>77</sup> This final stage in history is known as the Messianic era.

## Our shadows ... soul

This metaphor seems most awkward in that it compares a shadow - something cast by a physical body, to a soul - something inherently non-physical. However, if we understand this verse in the context of the previous one, its message becomes clear. At the end of time, before God's ultimate revelation, mankind will for the most part be on a spiritually low level,<sup>78</sup> yet will merit to see the greatest spiritual revelation in history.

How can such a generation, so far removed from holiness, merit such wonder? The answer to this paradox is that this last of generations will make use of the merit of their ancestors.<sup>79</sup> That is to say, this last of generations may not merit through their good behavior such wonder and miracle, yet they will nevertheless enjoy it simply because of their ancestors' greatness and the covenants drawn up with them which ensured this ultimate salvation.

Though dwarfs themselves, they will be standing on the shoulders of giants, spiritually speaking. As such, the shadow cast by an individual standing on the shoulders of his predecessor standing on the shoulders of his predecessor since the beginning of time casts a giant shadow.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the soul of the actual individual present at this late stage in history, as was said, is quite small.<sup>81</sup>

## There walks ... know

At this point in the song, the symbol of the *lady* switches from its use as man striving for connection with the Creator, to being the Creator's divine presence in this world, that divine immanence which makes itself manifest to mankind.<sup>82</sup> This dual usage of the "lady" is a common Kabbalistic device employed to represent both the aspect of God which is the recipient of divine abundance, as well as mankind in its struggle to reach up and receive the divine.<sup>83</sup>



## Who shines ... show

White light is the ultimate anthropomorphism as it is something which is not corporeal, and permeates and illuminates all.<sup>84</sup> White light is the symbol of pure divine energy.<sup>85</sup> The role of the feminine aspect of the divine - known as the *Shekhinah* - is to reveal the light to those who merit its radiance.<sup>86</sup> In Kabbalistic literature this radiance is known as "*Ziv HaShekhinah*".<sup>87</sup> The Talmud reveals that, "The righteous sit with crowns on their heads and delight in *Ziv HaShekhinah* - the divine radiance" (*Brachot* 17a).

The Zohar (*Balak* 191a) teaches that due to man's evil actions the light of the *Shekhinah* is covered; and conversely, through the good deeds of the righteous, her beauty, her divine radiance, is made visible. The revelation of her *light* is her true desire – she "*wants to show*".

## How everything ... gold

As explained in the previous lyric, the role of the *Shekhinah*, the “lady”, is to reveal God to mankind.<sup>88</sup> Through this revelation comes the realization that “The Lord is God in the heavens above and the earth below, there is nothing else” (Duet. 4:39) - that *everything* is gold.

The use of the words “*still turns*” indicate that though such a perspective was possible at one time, it would seem that now it is not possible. Indeed it is predicted that in the time known as “the end of days”, before the final redemption, mankind will have sunk to a particularly depraved level.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, even then, hidden beneath it all, everything is still Godly. With the proper perspective - *everything still turns to gold*.<sup>90</sup>

## And if you ... hard

In order to receive the word of the Creator one must be attuned to his spiritual nature. This is not something simple, since man is by definition immersed in the physical world. As such, God Himself exhorts man, "Listen to Me, you that follow righteousness, you that seek the Lord..." (Isaiah 51:1).

The Bible, in an effort to sensitize man to his innate spirituality, prescribes the daily recital of the verse (Duet. 6:4) which begins with the word "*Shma*" - "Listen". It is a call to man to "*listen very hard*". Aryeh Kaplan explains that "it is telling us to open our perceptions completely, so as to experience God's unity."<sup>91</sup>

## The tune ... last

The *tune* is used idiomatically, as in an earlier verse (*if we all call the tune...*), to refer to the ways of spirituality. After great effort and determination, one is guaranteed to attain spiritual perception. “If one says, ‘I toiled in spiritual growth and didn’t achieve’ - don’t believe him; If one says ‘I didn’t toil and did achieve’ - don’t believe him; If one says ‘I toiled in spiritual growth and did achieve’ - believe him” (Talmud *Megilla* 6b).<sup>92</sup> This Talmudic dictum emphasizes that if one does not invest the effort to attain spiritual goals, one can not expect to achieve in this realm of endeavor. On the other hand, if one does strive for spirituality, one is guaranteed to achieve - guaranteed that “*the tune will come to you at last*”.

## When all ... all

God is an absolute unity which unifies all creation.<sup>93</sup> This reality is presently concealed in order to provide man with the opportunity to reveal it and thereby merit cleaving to his spiritual Source.<sup>94</sup> Ultimately, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9), everything will be recognized as being unified, connected, one.<sup>95</sup>

The Zohar (Ahrei Mot 77b) describes this ultimate unity in the world as follows: “... when the Lady shall return to the place of the temple and the King shall be wedded with her, then all will be joined together without separation, and regarding that this it is written, “On that day the Lord shall be one and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

The Biblical verse (Duet. 6:4) to be recited twice daily states: “Listen Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One”. This primary declaration of faith seeks to instill in man that understanding of God’s absolute unity<sup>96</sup> - that *all are one and one is all*. The wording is precise: “*all are one*” - everything in the world will be recognized as being at one with God; “*one is all*” - this oneness is all that exists (and not that there is one unity of God and some other entities as well).

## To be ... roll

Though a thinly veiled play on the words “Rock and Roll”, even this verse is packed with divine meaning. Throughout the Bible God is designated a “Rock”<sup>97</sup> and man is referred to as being “hewn from that Rock”<sup>98</sup>. As such, man is in some sense a spiritually separate entity - “rolling” independently. In the ultimate era of perfection, man will realize the goal of creation wherein he connects to the spiritual Source from whence he came. Thus it can be said that man will have become one with the *Rock* and not to *roll*.<sup>99</sup>

## And she's ... heaven

The last verse is sung at the original tempo and style, closing the loop as it were, between the original message of humanity striving heavenward and final message of the ultimate redemption of humanity. And indeed both messages are integral parts of the one and sole purpose of Creation. The purpose, as formulated by the eighteenth century philosopher M. H. Luzzatto, is for man to enjoy the goodness of God by attaching himself to the Creator through emulation of His ways.<sup>100</sup> It is towards this purpose that mankind slowly struggles. And it is to this goal that mankind is guaranteed to ultimately achieve.

<sup>1</sup> In *The Light* magazine, Theolyn Brock.

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hermit\\_led\\_zep\\_4.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hermit_led_zep_4.jpg)

<sup>3</sup> Jimmy Page designed the illustration of the inside cover, explaining that, "It is the Hermit character from the Tarot, a symbol of self-reliance and mystical wisdom" (R. Godwin, *The Making of Zeppelin IV* [Canada: Collector's Guide Publishing, 1996], p.17). The Tarot referred to is based on Kabbalistic symbolism - albeit an unauthorized application. (For a discussion on the history of the Star of David see G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* [New York: Schocken, 1971], pp.257-281).

<sup>4</sup> R. Godwin, *The Making of Zeppelin IV*, p.48.

<sup>5</sup> Kabbalistic thought refers to a mystical "lady", known as the *Shekhinah*, who dually represents both God's immanent presence and *Kenneset Yisrael* - man spiritually striving for union with God Himself (see G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.111-112). This lady, representing man reaching for the divine (*Kenneset Yisrael*), is referred to as God's "wife" (Zohar Vayikra 20b) and "bride" (Zohar Tzav 34b). "Lurianic customs came on the whole...to bring about or to symbolize the mystical "sacred marriage" (*hazivvug ha-kadosh*) between God and His *Shekhinah*" (G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, [Jerusalem: Keter, 1974], p.194).

"Under the symbolic aspect of "the marriage of the King and Queen," the Sabbath was enriched by a wealth of new customs ... all of which were intended as meditations on the *Shekhinah* in her aspect as God's mystical bride" (G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.195). The *Shekhinah*, is explicitly referred to as "bride" in the description of how R. Yannai would done his robes on Shabbat eve and exclaim, "Come thou, O bride, Come thou, O bride" (Talmud *Baba Kama* 32b; Talmud *Shabbat* 119a).

The Talmud (*Taanit* 26b) explains the verse in Song of Songs (3:11), "On the day of His wedding" as referring to the giving of the Bible, a time when God was unified with His people in a perfected state. "The Holy One, blessed be He, went forth to meet them; like a bridegroom who goes forth to meet the bride" (*Pirkei DeRebbi Eliezer* [New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981], Ch.41, p.322).

"While outwardly the Song of Songs is simply a beautiful love song, it actually is the most profound song of unification of Zer Anpin [God] and his Bride [the *Shekhinah*]" (R. A. Kaplan on *Bahir* [Maine: Weiser, 1979], #174, p.180).

"Shir HaShirim, Ruth, and Lamentations refer to Israel in feminine imagery [in their relationship to God]" (Z. Levine, "The Role of Women in bringing the Redemption", *B'Or Ha'Torah* No. 6 [1987]: p.136).

See R. A. Steinsaltz commentary to "The Seven Beggars" in *Beggars and Prayers* [New York: Basic Books, 1979], p.181. See also Zohar (Prologue 8a; Teruma 145a; Vayikra 4a; Ki Tazria 42b, 44b, 55a).

<sup>6</sup> These are purely convenient conventions utilized to denote spiritual concepts in physical terms. God is neither masculine nor feminine. Furthermore, both male and female human beings have the capacity to receive from God and as well as give to other human beings.

<sup>7</sup> The intention is not to probe the motivations of Robert Plant, especially given that he himself states that the song was somehow supernaturally "pushed" on him. His description provides the latitude for the reasoned interpretation presented herein.

<sup>8</sup> [http://lyricwiki.org/Led\\_Zeppelin:Stairway\\_To\\_Heaven](http://lyricwiki.org/Led_Zeppelin:Stairway_To_Heaven)

<sup>9</sup> See note 5 above.

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 25:39; Kings I 6:20, 10:18; Chronicles II 3:6; Job 22:55; Zohar (Teruma 148a).

<sup>11</sup> The term is ubiquitous; see for example *Nefesh Hahayim* [Bnei Brak: Y.D.Rubin, 5749], p.188; R. M. H. Luzzatto, *The Way of God* [Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1983], 4:4:5. Kabbalah employs the mechanism of the "*sefirot*" - referred to as *stairs* - toward the perception of God. (G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.100, p.104).



<sup>12</sup> "... The Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*), the Essence of God that pervades creation. It is this essence that is the true beauty of all things. Thus, whenever one contemplates any beauty, he must realize that this is the Divine Essence, and can thus make use of it" (R. A. Kaplan on *Bahir* #173, p.180).

<sup>13</sup> "By which is meant that the world does not exist as something specific, separate and additional to God..." (R. Steinsaltz, *The Sustaining Utterance*, p.75).

"Do I not fill the heavens and the earth, says God" (Jeremiah 23:24).

"The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

"God is the spirit and soul of all" (Zohar Ahrei Mot 67a).

"God fills and encompasses all creation" (*Nefesh Hahyaim*, 3:4, p.156).

See also Psalms 72:19, 148:13. Numbers 14:21.

<sup>14</sup> A. J. Heschel, *Wisdom of Heschel* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986], p.199.

<sup>15</sup> "If one says I toiled in spiritual growth and didn't achieve - don't believe him; If one says I didn't toil and did achieve - don't believe him; If one says I toiled in spiritual growth and did achieve - believe him" (Talmud *Megilla* 6b).

"What is the meaning of the verse, 'Gold and glass cannot equal it, neither shall the exchange thereof be vessels of fine gold.' (Job 28:17)? [R. Meir] answered: These are the words of the Bible, which are hard to acquire like vessels of fine gold, but are easily destroyed (forgotten) like vessels of glass" (Talmud *Hagigah* 15a).

<sup>16</sup> Zohar (Ahrei Mot 78b); R. A. Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah* [Maine: Weiser, 1985].

<sup>17</sup> Talmud *Hagigah* 14b. See also Rashi and Tosafot on *ibid.*.

<sup>18</sup> R. A. Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, p.11.

<sup>19</sup> R. A. Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah*, p.12, ch.6.

<sup>20</sup> Zohar (Yitro 87a, 90b, Mishpatim 124a; Vayikra 13b; Shmini 36a; Kedoshim 80b; Haazinu 289b); Tanya, p.489, n.32. R. Cordoza, *Torah as God's Mind*, pp.14-15.

<sup>21</sup> "...knowledge of the Bible means union with God" Zohar (Ahrei Mot 61a). Also Zohar (Shmini 36a); R. M. H. Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:4:9.

<sup>22</sup> "When he [man] obeys God's commandments, he attaches himself to the same physical objects as the One who gave the commandments. In obeying the commandments, man therefore attaches himself to God to the greatest possible degree" (R. A. Kaplan on *Sefer Yetzirah* [Maine: Weiser, 1990], (1:7), p.62). Zohar (Prologue 11a).

<sup>23</sup> "...many mystics would engage in meditations related to the observance of various commandments. They were making use of God's "saying" and edict, and in this manner, were able to reach much higher levels than usual" (R. A. Kaplan on *Sefer Yetzirah* (1:6), p.55).

<sup>24</sup> The danger inherent in interpreting esoteric symbols is illustrated in the following story wherein three of four mystics misinterpreted the sign, or symbol, of the "stones of pure marble":

"Four entered the Orchard [of Spiritual Wisdom]. They were Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, the Other, and R. Akiva. R. Akiva warned them, "When you enter near the stones of pure marble, do not say 'water, water', since it is written, 'He who speaks falsehood will not be established before My eyes' (Psalms 101:7). Ben Azzai gazed and died. Regarding him it is written, 'Precious in God's eyes is the death of His saints' (Psalms 116:15). Ben Zoma gazed and became stricken (demented). Regarding him it is written, 'You have found honey, eat moderately lest you bloat yourself and vomit it' (Proverbs 25:16). The Other (Elisha ben Abuya) gazed and cut his plantings (became a heretic). R. Akiva entered in peace and left in peace." (Talmud *Hagigah* 14b).

<sup>25</sup> R. A. Steinsaltz, *Beggars and Prayers*, p.71. "...the mind can be swallowed up in the kaleidoscope of symbolism, and not be able to emerge." (R. A. Kaplan on *Sefer Yetzirah* (1:8), p.67).

<sup>26</sup> This lyric, “words have two meanings”, may also be understood in the sense of the Scriptural verse, “One word has God spoken, two words I have heard” (Psalms 62:12). Every word of God is laden with meaning and one must delve deeply to comprehend each word.

<sup>27</sup> Genesis 3:22.

<sup>28</sup> “The Tree of life is the Tree of the Sefirot [which connect upper and lower worlds]” (R.A. Kaplan on *Bahir* #95, p.157; #98, p.161). “In a mystical sense, the Sefirot form a ladder or tree through which one can climb and approach the Infinite.” (R. A. Kaplan, on *Sefer Yetzirah* (1:1), p.21). See also R. A. Kaplan, on *Sefer Yetzirah* (1:5), p.46.

<sup>29</sup> See also Zohar (Ahrei Mot 58a).

<sup>30</sup> “What is the water of the Blessed Holy One? It is Wisdom” (*Bahir* #119, p.45).

“There is no mention of water which does not refer to the Bible [God’s Wisdom], as it states, ‘Let he who is thirsty go to the water’ (Isaiah 55:17)” (Talmud *Baba Kama* 17a).

<sup>31</sup> R. A. Kaplan, on *Bahir* #5, p.92.

<sup>32</sup> “[At] the place of the water drawing - there the spirit of holiness is drawn.” (Talmud Yerushalmi *Sukkah* 5:1 (22b)).

<sup>33</sup> “In climbing the Tree of the 32 paths of Wisdom one must begin by attaching himself to *Chakmah* (wisdom)” (R. A. Kaplan, on *Sefer Yetzirah* (1:6), p.52). See also note 21 above.

“[Wisdom] as the link between Creator and creation, it is the vehicle containing the potential for all things” (R. A. Kaplan, on *Bahir* #5, p.92). Zohar (Ahrei Mot 61a).

<sup>34</sup> Zohar (Tzav 34b).

<sup>35</sup> “[Wisdom] as the link between Creator and creation, it is the vehicle containing the potential for all things” (R. A. Kaplan, on *Bahir* #5, p.92).

“What is this tree that you mentioned? He said: It represents the Powers of the Blessed Holy One, one above the other. Just like a tree brings forth fruit through water, so the Blessed Holy One increases the Powers of the tree through water” (*Bahir* #119, p.45).

<sup>36</sup> *Pirkei DeRebbi Eliezer*, Ch.12. Zohar (Prologue 11a; Metzora 53b).

<sup>37</sup> The songbird is God’s righteous servant - the Tzadik (see *Rabbi Nachman’s Stories* [Jerusalem: Breslov, 1983], #28).

<sup>38</sup> R. A. Kaplan on *Bahir* #103, p.162.

“Wisdom is pure non-verbal thought ... Wisdom ... refers to a state of consciousness where the mind is not engaged in reverie.” (R. A. Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, p39).

“First one must strive to understand to the extent of one’s intellectual capacities. Beyond that limit, one is to believe with simple faith.” (R. N. Mendel on *Tanya* [New York: KPS, 1984], 2:7, n. 21).

<sup>39</sup> “The experiences that a person can have in these [meditative] states of consciousness can be so beatific that he may not want to return to his normal state of consciousness. It is possible for a person to become completely lost in the mystic state, actually swallowed up by it” (R. A. Kaplan, *Jewish Meditation* [New York: Schocken, 1985], p.38).

<sup>40</sup> “The *Shekhinah* (Godly Presence) always dwells in the West” (Numbers Rabba 2:10). Also Talmud *Baba Batra* 25a.

<sup>41</sup> R. Hirsch, *Commentary on the Pentateuch* [Gateshead: Judaica Press, 1989], Genesis (3:8), p.71.

<sup>42</sup> “As the deer yearns after water ponds, so my soul yearns after You God” (Psalms 42:2). See also Zohar (Emor 88a).

<sup>43</sup> Gei-hinnom.

<sup>44</sup> Nachmanides (Introduction to Job) writes that the remorse of the soul over its negative past is more psychologically painful than all the suffering of Job.

<sup>45</sup> R. Browning, *Pied Piper of Hamelin*, 1842 (based on German Folk tale).

<sup>46</sup> “[The Messiah] will prepare the whole world to serve the Lord” (Maimonides, *Laws of Kings*, 11:4).

<sup>47</sup> “And in that day it shall be, that the root of Yishai [the Messiah], that stands for a banner of all the peoples, to him shall the nations seek: and his resting place shall be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10). See also Isaiah 66:23; Zechariah 2:15; Zephaniah 3:9.

<sup>48</sup> Arizal, *Atkinu DeSuedati* (Shabbat Poem before Kiddusha Rabba, Liturgy). For example see Genesis Rabba 3:3. G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, p.7.

<sup>49</sup> Similarly Zohar (Vayishlach 170a).

<sup>50</sup> The Messianic era is described in prophecy as one in which universal peace and harmony will pervade the earth - extending through all of nature. “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Yishai, [the Messiah] ... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fating together; and a little child shall lead them... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:1,6-9).

<sup>51</sup> Nachmanides (Genesis 2:3; Leviticus 25:2). For an in-depth analysis of this doctrine see my paper, “Six Thousand Years of Shabbat” *Chidushei Torah*, 5767,

[http://www.divreinavon.com/pdf/one\\_thousand\\_years\\_of\\_shabbat.pdf](http://www.divreinavon.com/pdf/one_thousand_years_of_shabbat.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> “Existence is divided into an initial six thousand years followed by a thousand years of pleasurable rest (*menucha*)” (R. M. H. Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 4:7:2). Talmud *Sanhedrin* 97a. *Pirkei DeRebbi Eliezer*, ch.19.

<sup>53</sup> Six thousand years for work on the soul (R. Y. Ashlag, *Entrance to the Zohar*, ch.4).

<sup>54</sup> Nachmanides (Genesis 2:3). See also Mishna *Tamid* 6:7.

<sup>55</sup> “In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people’ (Isaiah 28:5) - to those that do His will and **expectantly await His salvation**” (Talmud *Sanhedrin* 111b).

<sup>56</sup> Maimonides, *13 Principles of Faith*, #12 in Commentary to Mishna *Sanhedrin* Ch. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Zohar (Prologue 7a). Isaiah 55:12.

<sup>58</sup> R. Nachman of Bratzlav’s “The King’s Son and the Son of the Maid” in *Beggars and Prayers*, p.53.

<sup>59</sup> R. A. Steinsaltz’s commentary to “The King’s Son and the Son of the Maid” in *Beggars and Prayers*, p.67. Also Zohar (Vayikra 22b) teaches, “When God comes to have joyous communion with the righteous ... all the trees in the Garden break forth into song.”

<sup>60</sup> Ezekiel 38:18-23; Zechariah 14:1-16. Zohar (Beshalach 58b, Terumah 172b, Balak 212b).

<sup>61</sup> “If you see nations contending with one another, look for the foot of the Messiah” (Genesis Rabba 42:4). “War is the beginning of redemption” (Talmud *Megilla* 17b).

<sup>62</sup> “... in the spring month when you left Egypt.” (Exodus 23:15; 34:18).

<sup>63</sup> “In Nisan [the spring month] redemption was effected, and in Nisan [in the future] will redemption be effected” (Talmud *Rosh Hashanah* 11a).

<sup>64</sup> God’s presence as revealed on the Sabbath - the day which is known as a ‘taste of the world of Spiritual perfection’ - is referred to as Queen, as in: “R. Hanina robed himself and stood at sunset of the eve of Shabbat and exclaimed, ‘Come let us welcome the Queen’ ” (Talmud *Baba Kama* 32b; Talmud *Shabbat* 119a).

<sup>65</sup> “Free Will is bestowed on every human being” (Maimonides, *Laws of Repentance*, 5:1).

<sup>66</sup> “God decreed and arranged the creation of concepts of both perfection and deficiency, as well as a creature with equal access to both. This creature would then be given the means to earn perfection and avoid deficiency. Having accomplished this, the creature could then be said to have made itself resemble its Creator, at least to the degree that this is possible. As a result, it is

then worthy of being drawn close to Him and deriving pleasure.” (R. M. H. Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:2:2).

<sup>67</sup> *Pirkei DeRebbi Eliezer*, Ch. 15 “The Two Paths”.

“Behold I [God] set before you this day life and good, death and evil” (Duet 30:15).

“Behold I [God] set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if you listen (obey) the commandments ... a curse, if you do not ... but turn away from the *path* which I command you” (Duet 11:26-28).

“...I [God] have set before you life and death, blessing and curse: therefore choose life ... that you love the Lord your God, and listen to His voice...” (Duet. 30:19-20).

<sup>68</sup> “If one desires to turn towards the good way and be righteous, he has the power to do so. If one wishes to turn towards the evil way and be wicked, he is at liberty to do so” (Maimonides, *Laws of Repentance*, 2:2).

<sup>69</sup> “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon him” (Isaiah 55:6).

<sup>70</sup> Talmud *Nedarim* 39b. Talmud *Pesachim* 54a. Zohar (Ahrei Mot 69b). Genesis Rabba 1:4. *Pirkei DeRebbi Eliezer*, Ch. 3.

<sup>71</sup> “Repent at least a day before you die” (Mishna *Avot* 2:10) - since one does not know that day he should repent everyday of his life.

“Even if one is completely wicked all his life but repents at the end, he is not reproached with his wickedness” (Talmud *Kiddushin* 40b).

“It was said of Elazer ben Durdia that he did not leave out any harlot in the world without coming to her... [One harlot told him he] will never be received in repentance... [He repented profusely] having placed his head between his knees, he wept aloud until his soul departed. Then a heavenly voice was heard proclaiming [that his repentance was accepted]...” (Talmud *Avodah Zara* 17a).

<sup>72</sup> “Everyday He [the Creator] says: Return ye children of man...” (*Pirkei DeRebbi Eliezer*, ch. 15).

“... the Talmud reports that ‘after ... the spirit of prophecy was withdrawn from Israel ... [the righteous] nevertheless would continue to be informed by divine echo (*Bat Kol*)’ (Tos. *Sotah* 13:4). Maharal explains that ‘this divine echo is inaudible’ (Derech HaChayyim on Mishna *Avot* 6:3); rather, ‘it is close to the level of man’ (Chidushei Aggadoth on Talmud *Baba Metzia* 59b.). R. Tzadok HaKohen comments that ‘these voices are extant today as well, for one who wants to hearken [to them]. And these are the thoughts that arise in everyone’s heart every time to return to God’ (Tzidkath HaTzaddik, ch.221).” (R. Chaim Eisen, “You Will Be Like God”, *Jewish Thought*, Vol.2, Num.1, p.79).

<sup>73</sup> “*Ruach Elokim* - The Spirit of God” (Genesis 1:2; Exodus 31:3).

<sup>74</sup> R. A. Kaplan, *The Infinite Light* [New York: NCSY/OU, 1981], p.51. R. A. Kaplan on *Sefer Yetzirah* (1:9), p.69.

<sup>75</sup> “In the 600<sup>th</sup> year of the sixth thousand, the gates of wisdom on high and the wellsprings of the lower wisdom will be opened. This will prepare the world to enter the seventh thousand, just as a man prepares himself toward sunset on Friday for the Sabbath. It is the same here.” (Zohar Vayera 117a). According to Jewish tradition the year 5600 of the creation corresponds to the common calendar year of 1840. This is clearly a prediction of the Industrial Revolution which has subsequently given birth to massive scientific breakthroughs and technological change at a rate unparalleled in human history.

<sup>76</sup> The present world is to exist for seven thousand years: one thousand years paralleling each day of creation, giving a total of six thousand years of labor and one thousand years of tranquility. (Nachmanides on Genesis 2:3). See also note 52 above.

<sup>77</sup> Ezekiel 38:23. Talmud *Sanhedrin* 97b.

<sup>78</sup> Talmud *Sotah* 49b.

<sup>79</sup> Zohar (Ahrei Mot 66b).

<sup>80</sup> Indeed this explanation fits quite nicely with the actual lyrics since it states “shadows” in the plural in contrast to “soul” in the singular.

<sup>81</sup> Alternatively the verse could be explicated as follows:

Understanding this verse in the context of the previous one, the lyric emphasizes that which will occur at the “end of days” - that late stage in the history of creation metaphorically depicted as the sun setting on the old world order and a new day dawning. Whether dawn or sunset, both are times when the sun causes disproportionately long shadows. Now the body houses the soul, and as such could be said in some sense to approximate the “size” of the soul. The long shadow cast at dawn or sunset is much “taller” than the body, and by inference, the soul that it houses. The “shadows” are those cast by all the individuals of this last of generations. The “soul”, referred to in the singular, is the total unified spirit of the generation. Though the shadows are separate, each cast by a single body, the soul of the generation is one. The people who collectively participate in mass revelation are by necessity of one soul. (This idea is found explicitly in the Bible when the nation of Israel received the revelation on Mount Sinai - they are referred to (in the same verse: Exodus 19:2) as “traveling” (in the plural) yet upon arriving at Mount Sinai as “encamping” (in the singular) - see esp. Rashi on *ibid.*).

<sup>82</sup> See note 5 above.

<sup>83</sup> Kabbalistic thought refers to a mystical “lady”, known as the *Shekhinah*, who dually represents both God’s immanent presence and *Kenneset Yisrael* - man spiritually striving for union with God Himself (see G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.111-112). In mystical symbolism, God’s presence in this world is referred to as the *Shekhinah* - a lady. In Hassidic tales the *Shekhinah* is often the “daughter of the King”. This dual symbolism (whereby the lady represents both God and Man) is employed throughout Kabbalistic and Hassidic literature and is similarly used as here in *Stairway to Heaven*.

“*Knesset Israel*, the quintessential community of Israel, and also the *Shekhina*, God’s presence in the world” R. A. Steinsaltz, commentary to “The King’s Son and the Son of the Maid” in *Beggars and Prayers*, p.72. Also R. A. Steinsaltz, commentary to “The Merchant and the Pauper” in *Beggars and Prayers*, pp.38-39. See also the note on *Nefesh HaHayim* 2:17, p.143.

<sup>84</sup> R. J. I. Schochet, “Mystical Concepts in Chassidism” in *Tanya*, ch.1.

<sup>85</sup> “In all Kabbalistic systems, light-symbolism is very commonly used with regard to Ein Sof [God]...” (G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.90). “...the Lord will be to thee an everlasting light” (Isaiah 60:19). “[God who is] wrapped in light as a garment” (Psalms 104:2). “...in Thy light do we see light” (Psalms 36:10). See also *Genesis Rabba* 3:3. Zohar (Prologue 12a ; Vayakhel 210b).

<sup>86</sup> “Light is sown for the righteous...” (Psalms 97:11).

<sup>87</sup> Talmud *Brachot* 17a, 64a.

<sup>88</sup> R. A. Kaplan, on *Bahir* #173, p.180.

<sup>89</sup> Talmud *Sotah* 49b. Midrash *Tehillim* on Psalm 45:3.

<sup>90</sup> This idea, that with the proper perspective one can see the hand of God in even trying occurrences, is expressed in the following Talmudic story:

R. Akiva was once going along the road and he came to a certain town and looked for lodgings but was everywhere refused. He said “Whatever the All-Merciful does is for the good”, and he went and spent the night in the open field. He had with him a rooster, a donkey, and a lamp. A gust of wind came and blew out the lamp, a weasel came and ate the rooster, a lion came and ate the donkey. He said “Whatever the All-Merciful does is for the good”. The same night some bandits came and carried off the inhabitants of the town. He said to them: Did I not say to you, “Whatever the All-Merciful does is for the good?” (Talmud *Brachot* 60b).

After each negative occurrence, R. Akiva’s confidence in God’s providence allowed him to accept the event as part of a greater yet unseen picture. In the end, R. Akiva saw in retrospect that his

having to sleep out of the town and having the light extinguished, the rooster and the donkey eaten all effected his eventual salvation. Though it was not clear at the time, all of the bad occurrences eventuated his ultimate salvation.

<sup>91</sup> R. A. Kaplan, *Jewish Meditation*, p.125.

<sup>92</sup> The Talmudic discussion makes a point to emphasize that the equation of effort-versus-achievement stated in this dictum only applies to spiritual endeavor and can not be applied to any secular enterprise (where empirically it is known to not hold true).

<sup>93</sup> "God is a perfect unity, without any composition or plurality." (Tanya 2:7, p.83). See also R. M. H. Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 2:1:6. "The Master is Singular" (*Sefer Yetzirah* 1:5). See also R. A. Kaplan, on *Sefer Yetzirah*, p.49.

<sup>94</sup> R. M. H. Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:2:5.

<sup>95</sup> Zohar (Prologue 12b; Veethanan 260b).

<sup>96</sup> "God is one. ... His unity is such that there is no other unity like it in the world... The knowledge of this truth is a positive precept, as it is written, 'Listen Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One'" (Maimonides, *Laws of Fundamentals of Torah*, 1:7).

"The significance of the first verse of the *Shma*, 'Listen Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One', is therefore to bear witness to God's unity..." (R. M. H. Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 4:4:6).

<sup>97</sup> "Rock refers to nothing other than God" (Talmud *Brachot* 5b). Duet. (Ch.32). Samuel II (Ch.22, 23). Isaiah (Ch. 26). Psalms (Ch.18, 19, 28, 62).

<sup>98</sup> "Hearken to Me, you that follow righteousness, you that seek the Lord: look to the Rock whence you were hewn" (Isaiah 51:1).

"The souls of Israel have been hewn from the Holy Lamp" (Zohar Pinhas 218b).

<sup>99</sup> "And when it [the soul] reaches its source, it cleaves to the celestial light from which it was derived and the two become one" (Meir ibn Gabbai, quoted in G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.175).

<sup>100</sup> "God's purpose in creation was to bestow of His good to another . . . . God alone, however, is the only true good, and therefore His beneficent desire would not be satisfied unless it could bestow that very good, namely the true perfect good that exists in His intrinsic essence . . . . [As] true good exists only in God, His wisdom decreed that the nature of this true benefaction be His giving created things the opportunity to attach themselves to Him to the greatest degree possible for them." (R. M. H. Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, 1:2:1).

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### Praise for “Stairway To Heaven – In a Revealed Light”

*I was very much moved to have read the lyrics and then Mois Navon's interpretation of Led Zeppelin's hit song "Stairway to Heaven". For me it expressed a very moving religious journey, and Mois's interpretation was creative, legitimate and deeply inspiring. I truly believe that the words of the song are informed with many spiritual and mystical truths which deserve to be disseminated to the widest audience possible.*

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin  
Chief Rabbi of Efrat, Israel  
Chancellor, Ohr Torah Stone

*I have found Mois's interpretation of Stairway to Heaven to be thought provoking and inspiring, as well as stimulating and entertaining. His interpretation ... provides a creative and hither-to unconsidered manner with which to view this classic piece.*

Rabbi Binny Freedman  
Director, Isralight International  
Rosh Yeshiva and Dean of Orayta Yeshiva

### About the author

Mois Navon has successfully bridged the secular and the religious, the modern and the traditional, into a cohesive and complementary whole. Growing up on the beaches of California as an avid surfer, it wasn't until his years studying for a degree in Computer Engineering at UCLA that he honed his logical reasoning and analytical thinking. During this time he was also introduced to the Arts which inspired a personal journey to spirituality. While obtaining a minor in Art History, he learned that man speaks profoundly in the language of symbol. Raised in a traditional home, it didn't take long before he began to find philosophical depth in the symbols of the Torah and build logical constructs in essay form. From that time on he dedicated himself to delving into Jewish Thought, writing prolifically and teaching passionately on the subject. His journey brought him to Israel where he obtained rabbinic ordination, and where he continues to write and teach – all while maintaining a notable career as a Computer Engineer.

