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The Jewish Theosophist

The OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of
THE ASSOCIATION OF
HEBREW THEOSOPHISTS

THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION



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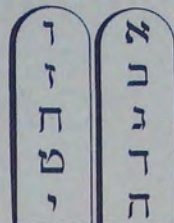
The JEWISH THEOSOPHIST

*Devoted to the study of Judaism in the light of
Theosophy and Theosophy in the light of Judaism*



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE
Association of Hebrew Theosophists

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Volume I.

Seattle, Wash., April, 1927

Number 3

Song of the Dew

*(From the prayer for dew of the Musaph Service for the first day of Pasover,
Translated by Solomon Solis Cohen.)*

O rain, depart with blessings,
With blessings come, O dew;
For mighty to deliver,
Is He that sends the dew.

With psalm and song I'll praise Him,
In rhythms like the dew;
My Rock, my Strong Deliv'rer,
He is, that sends the dew.

His name with glory covers
His folk, as earth the dew;
A prince to their deliv'rance
He sends, that sends the dew.

Hasten, O God, Thy promise—
"I will be Israel's dew"—
And mighty to deliver,
Let fall this day Thy dew.

—*"The Standard Book of Jewish Verse"*

*We extend hearty wishes to all our readers for a happy and joyous Pesach. May we through the celebration
of the festival of Passover approach nearer to ideal happiness and freedom.*

A Message from Dr. Besant

TO HEBREW THEOSOPHISTS

Friends:

"It is a great happiness to me to see members of the great Hebrew race enriching Theosophy with contributions from their ancient Faith. Much wisdom is enshrined in their occult treatises, and European philosophy and metaphysics owe much to the subtle genius of the Hebrew Nation. Great have been its sufferings in the past, but the greater will be its gifts in the future to the human race.

"Step forward, then, Brothers, and take your rightful place among the Nations. Israel has a future and a work to accomplish therein.

"Last year I had the pleasure of laying the foundation stone of a Hebrew synagogue on the Theosophical Society's estate at Adyar, and in our daily Act of Worship a Hebrew Theosophist chanted a Hebrew prayer. Your Faith has thus its first place among the Faiths of the world, each of which is erecting its temple in that Home of the Divine Wisdom.

"ANNIE BESANT, D. L.

"President of the Theosophical Society."



DR. ANNIE BESANT
President of the Theosophical Society

Our Task As Hebrew Theosophists

By LILA B. ALLEBACH

May we who are few wax mighty in our new task. The handful of men who at the call of the "Masters" are assembled to carry forward the work of Universal Brotherhood among those of our ancient faith.

We, the "Children of the Household of Israel," stand where the seers and prophets of our people have stood these three thousand years, summoning men to the higher life in God and the sweeter fellowship in righteousness and love.

These early pioneers would wish us less to chronicle their achievements than to confirm their faith and carry on their work in spirit and when I say in spirit I do not mean that we should confine ourselves to the particular forms and views in which their religious vision expressed itself. On the contrary we must not imprison ourselves in any tradition however adequately it may have served a particular age, for that would make us false to the spirit of progress and liberalism, but rather our task should be to re-interpret the faith so as to bring it into consonance with the conditions of a new environment and not permit ourselves to look upon the old type of Judaism as ultimate and binding and attempt to incrustate it in a shell of permanence.

Hebrew Theosophy is a thing in the making. Our organization did not spring full grown from the brow of the Goddess of History, and it will of necessity have to pass through the cleansing and purging processes of the ages. Decade after decade will mold and refine our Society. The labors and sacrifices of generations yet unborn will perfect it. From the womb of time it comes forth, its birth assured.

As Hebrew Theosophists let us not forget that the march of progress is within us, that the goal of perfection lies within the human soul and the human soul knows not distinction of race, color, caste or sex.

Ours will be the task of bringing Judaism into the World Brotherhood; ours the task to raise the standard of Jewish

thought and learning; ours the task of banishing ignorance from our midst. Without learning and study Judaism cannot survive; ours the task to make the Society of the Jewish Theosophist become the refuge and sanctuary of Jewish thought and learning. Am Haaretz, the unlettered Jew whom ignorance leads to indifference and worse, must find a welcome and a haven within our portals. When ever a Jewish community failed to kindle the lamp of learning and relied solely on worship, observance, and philanthropy, it ultimately disappeared.

Our task as Hebrew Theosophists must be to transmit a heritage of three thousand years, the learning and wisdom of thirty centuries, the history, religion, ethics and literature of an unique people. We have shared with the world a Bible, an Apocrypha, a Talmud, a Philo, a Gabirol, a Spinoza, a Mendelssohn; we are not of the past only, we have yet many startling revelations to vouchsafe unto mankind, many a sacred book to bequeath unto it. We must therefore, for the sake of the world, remain true to our destiny, and share with the world Universal Brotherhood.

As Hebrew Theosophists we may well accomplish this high purpose, with our ideals grounded in the mighty themes of our sacred literature, may we fashion on a heroic scale, a mighty age, ministering to the needs of a world tragically confused, planting anew the seeds of justice and truth everywhere and patiently and lovingly fashioning the links in the golden chain of a Universal Brotherhood.

The world's sporadic distemper is not a new thing in the pageantry of our lives. We shall meet the blind fury of our day without bitterness and without fear, in compassion and in resignation.

We have no apprehensions for an ancient people that has weathered ten thousand storms; we know that the world needs us most, when it most hates us, and it is our hope that Theosophical Judaism

will be so nurtured in an atmosphere that it will re-emphasize the mystic elements of our faith, for our race has ever been touched by the burning coal of prophetic ecstasy; may it be profoundly personal, inward, a brotherhood that will glow with fervor and ecstasy, a brotherhood that holds forth promises of revelation and divine intimacies to those who are seeking the great happiness. May we remain true to our destiny, slaves of a deathless vision, masters of an ancient wisdom, "dreamers from Ur, and Tekoa, from Anatoth and

Galilee, lost in the sorry traffic of Rome and London, but ever in our hearts the promptings of an ancient splendor, in our blood the rythm of a mighty song, and in our hand the torch of Truth." Forward to our new task then Brothers, Onward the Lotus Banners go, and shall we not say with Bialik,

Shelter me beneath your pinions,
With a mother's, sister's care,
And your lap shall be my refuge
And my nest of secret prayer.

Hasidism—One of the Jewish Aspects of Theosophy

By RABBI LEONIDE STAMBALCHEK

The movement known as Hassidism, which appeared about 200 years ago among the Jews of Podoli, Russia, revealed a deeply rooted Hebraic aspect, thereby creating a newly awakened relationship between the Jews and their culture and religion. It was not a religious sect, neither was it an organization of definite reforming principles. Hassidists never undertook to change the Jewish religion in the slightest, neither did they correct one detail of the Laws of "Shulhan Aruch" a book for all the rules and good counsels of "Talmud." *

*In the main this book is divided into two parts; first, that which deals with the mutual relationship between man and his surroundings and second, that which deals with the mutual relationship between man and God.

Hassidism only strove to bring out a new way of serving God, having as its goal the perfecting of ones own soul. It produced a deep spiritual contentment, personal and individual in the heart of its followers, thereby arousing a deep piety, a true sincerity, rapture in service, an understanding of prayer and a happy outlook on life in general.

Hassidism encountered quite a different outlook on life, prevailing during that epoch and widely spread among the Jewish orthodoxists and learned men. Their system was founded chiefly on penance, fasting and monastic self-denial. It exacted a terrific toll from the individual, turning him into a gloomy, pessimistic character.

Hassidism was an energetic protest against such a way of living. It taught the Jews to fulfill all commandments and laws without any special use of sophistry but with sincerity. It is important to note that the Hassidists were self assured that they were not changing the substance of their religion in the least; but that they were following in the footsteps of their fathers. They were merely changing the approach to the fulfillment of their forefathers religion.

One of the most celebrated leaders and founders of Hassidism, was Rabbi Israel, named "Baal-Shem-Tov." His influence spread among a great number of the people, who heeded his saying and followed his practical directions in all ways of life. On the other hand, learned Rabbis and eminent persons, as well, even those of different religions, came to him and harkened to his wisdom and knowledge.

Thereafter came the formation of a great society, one of whose members was the great Rabbi Baal-Shem-Tov, who cured and instructed the people by means of his own examples.

His moral teaching he generally gave in the form of sharp laconic proverbs, comments from the Bible and Jewish literature and in the form of parables and prophecies. Some of these were preserved by his pupils in writing, some in the hearts of his hearers, his followers, and their descendants.

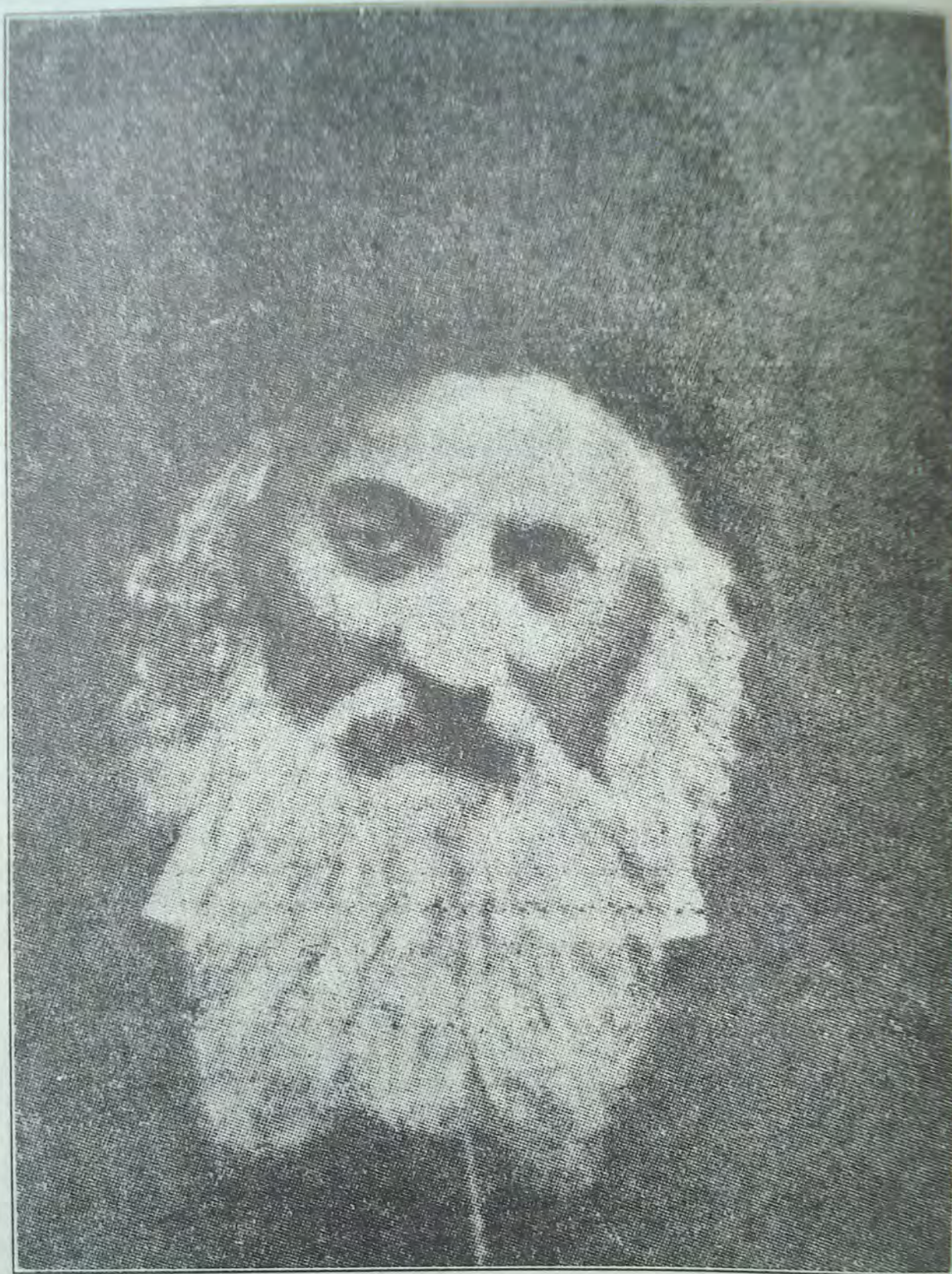


RABBI ISRAEL BAAL-SHEM-TOV
The Kind Master of God's Name

I, myself, was born and passed my childhood in the town of Medziboz where Baal-Shem-Tov lived and had the chief center of his activities. Here also he died and was buried. I, myself, have seen many people who still come to his modest grave to meditate and to pray. Many of

them place letters on his grave in which they relate the chief reasons for their sufferings and in which they express their greatest request and wish.

To the "Spring of Baal-Shem-Tov," which is near the town of Medziboz, people even to this day come from afar in



RABBI ISRAEL BAAL-SHEM-TOV
The Kind Master of God's Name

order to drink the water and pray. Girls go to the spring to wash their faces because of an established belief that thereby one becomes in every way more beautiful.

The descendants of the Hassidists called the town of Medziboz "The Little Palestine" because the blessing of Baal-Shem-Tov preserves it.

This idea partly arises, perhaps, because this town at one time belonged to the Turks and in it even to this time remains an old Turkish castle. In accordance with the legend of the Hassidists there were four great Saints who, one by one, lived in this town exactly 11 years. These were: Rabbi Baal-Shem-Tov, Rabbi Moshe-Chaim-Efraim, Rabbi Boruch and Rabbi Hopta, my own predecessor.

Now I will tell you a few pronouncements, aphorisms and thoughts of Baal-Shem-Tov, selected from those which I have been able to gather from the Hebrew literature and which I have heard from my predecessors and friends. I leave it to the reader himself to judge how near they are in spirit to the ideal and wisdom of Theosophy.

"In every word of the Holy Writing there are whole worlds and divine souls."

"There are things which, even in the Day of Judgment (The Day of the Forgiveness of Sins) cannot be forgiven, as for example, the sin of one man against another."

"From the lips of the Most High came forth letters, signs, for the directing of the world. When these letters come into the world they combine in accordance with those who get them. Should it be for the good or the opposite, God preserve us! But when there is a righteous man who possesses the wisdom of the universe and knows those letters, which have come out of the Lord's mouth, then, even if they are spelt, God preserve us, not for the good, he can change the combination by means of his wisdom and prayers—as for example: to change the word (dead) into (whole), (unhurt), or (defeat, wound), into (pleasure agreeable), in general in accordance with the letters of the High Judgment."

"A man must be courageous and strong and must be joyful when rising or falling."

"The most important is, that man should learn every day a lesson, small or great. On morality, to be whole and pure-hearted in the work of the Blessed One and to get used himself to good qualities and honest behaviour. And you must not let one day go by without doing a good deed, great or small."

". . . And let no one think that he is greater than another only because he has given himself up heartily to service. For he, as every other creature, is created to serve Him. God perhaps gave not this man's friend so much intellect as He gave to him, but in what way is this man more important than a simple worm? For does not the worm serve its Creator also with all its wisdom and strength?"

". . . And so this is a great rule in the serving of the Creator to as far as possible take heed not to fall into grief. Lamentation is a very bad thing. A man should serve in joy. Only when his tears are tears of joy is all well."

"Let no man bury in many useless trifles that thing which he does, for it is the aim of bad thought to install the apprehension that he has not accomplished his task properly, in order to throw him into grief. But grief is a great hindrance to the service of the Creator. And even if he does happen to fall into sin, let him not be too sad that his task has become worse. It is only necessary to repent and return with joy to the Lord, as soon as you have indeed repented, have made up your mind that not in any case will you repeat it, this bad deed. Understand that the Creator knows very well what is passing in your heart and He knows that you want to act as well as you can, but cannot as yet."

"His soul told Baal-Shem-Tov" said one of his followers, "that he was worthy of the highest knowledge not only because he had studied "Mishnaioth" and "Talmud" very much, but for his prayers which he always said with such concentration. Only by this means did he reach so high a state."

"Study should be affected with strength and great joy as this lessens outside thoughts. When a man serves God every minute in study work, he has no time left to become proud or to fall in love with pride or any other of the bad qualities."

"If you have considered doing a good deed, then try to fulfill it and do not allow yourself to be persuaded by wicked spirits that that work is too difficult for you. But be very careful. If a feeling of pride appears while you are doing your good work, then put it away from you with strength and energy and then you will most certainly do it absolutely without any feeling of pride. We shall start perhaps by not doing the work for its own sake but afterwards at last we shall do it in His name. And try to do good deeds whenever you can and God will help you not to turn aside, but you must try with all your might to strengthen yourself."

"If in a man there appears a wish to fast, then he must be very careful not to turn aside from that wish, even though he knows that it is best of all to serve God with joy and without self-renunciation, for that causes sorrow, but certainly that man knows in his soul that he must fast, that he has not yet sufficiently corrected his soul."

"Even if a man fasts from one Saturday to the other, let him not allow even the slightest wish to arise and say unto his heart: 'See, I am doing a great deed, I am torturing myself and thus do I purify myself by his fast,' but let him think in his own heart how little it all is in comparison with what the angels who serve God continuously do."

"Everything in the world is full of the Divine, everything that is created by the strength of humane thought, even the smallest thing that happens in the world, all of this is under the observation of the Most High. Let there be no difference to a man between that which happened in accordance with his wish and that which was against his wish, because everything is from God, and it was evidently necessary that that thing was against his wish."

"... And thus if you examine material, physical things, for instance, a vase, and think from whence did that vase receive its form and beauty, then in spite of yourself, you must confess that the material is an important part and the form and beauty is of the Most Divine. And thus when you eat, remember that the taste and sweetness of the food also comes from the highest strength of life. And thus there is life also in minerals and in all and every-

where there is that strength of life. And if a man looks thus, then it means that he looks consciously at the endless, and that helps very much the putting aside of bad thoughts."

"Each thing that a man puts on, eats or uses as a vessel, a thing, has its own life-stream which the man uses. If it were not for that life-stream there would not be that thing. It possesses holy sparks which belong to the root of his soul."

"Prayers said with joy are accepted much better by the Most High than prayers full of sorrow and lamentation. When, for instance, a beggar begs laments and prays with tears to the king, he, in spite of this, only gives him a small sum, but when a dignitary person amiably and joyfully talks to the king and at the same time also expresses his demand then the king gives him a big present befitting a great lord."

"Also in modesty it is quite necessary to use moderation, and that is a very important necessity."

Lastly I will remind my readers that Hassidism also knows of reincarnation. Baal-Shem-Tov believed that he, himself, was the reincarnation of Rabbi Saadia Gaon.

Lejb Sores, famous in Hassidic stories, said the following on reincarnation:

"Baal-Shem-Tov was the reincarnation of Rabbi Saadia-Gaon, Rabbi Saadia Gaon was that of the Jewish King, Hazekiel. My tutor Rabbi David was the reincarnation of "Ari," and he had the soul of Rabbi Shimon-Ben-Jochaji. Hahajim had had the soul of Rabbi Moshe Kordoviro and this was the reincarnation of Rappi Akiba."

About other great persons of Jewish culture and about the reflection of theosophic ideas in their creative genius, I shall try to relate next time.

"Every assembly which is in the service of God is destined to endure, but that which is not in the service of God is not destined to endure."—*Rabbi Jochanan the Sandal Maker, in Pirke Aboth.*

Religion too often has been a divisive instead of unifying influence; we must all find a common denominator, which shall serve to harmonize us, whatever our differences.—*Rabbi Newman, San Francisco.*



MR. J. KRISHNAMURTI
Head of The Order of the Star in the East
Author of "At the Feet of the Master"

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The ideal of this magazine is to help readers in every walk of life to contact the realities for which every human heart is yearning.

It aims to present the opportunities that lead to a realization of that joy and happiness which are always in harmony with good usual living and common sense conduct.

Those are the things that always blend with pleasant surroundings, health and beauty, and harmony in the home and family as well as with all mankind; and thus to a Jewishness and usefulness of the most appreciative kind.

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