1. That which represents one's individuality;

2. The unifying principle, as a soul, underlying all subjective experience.
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THE PARDES PROJECT
VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2
How Would You Respond?

1. Your sister comes to you with the long awaited good news. She has just been approved for a scholarship to attend one of the best law schools in the country. Your parents are excited and you begin to discuss plans for a celebration. As you congratulate her, however, you realize that rather than being ecstatic, your sister seems troubled. She explains, with tears in her eyes, that the scholarship has just put the nail in the coffin of her life-long dream. Secretly, she yearns to be an artist.

2. Your friend is deeply troubled. The friend has led an honorable life with a reputation for integrity, honesty and commitment. In fact, your friend is regarded as a model who is looked up to by others. He has reached a point of life where he is being invited to undertake broader leadership roles. Deep inside, he is convinced that his capacities are consumed by merely maintaining the integrity and spiritual growth of his own family, yet the needs of the community are just so great!

3. While your passion has always been Jewish education, you realized early on that teaching would not provide a sufficient income for your family. You therefore embarked on a lucrative career in finance, rising through the ranks to become the chief financial officer of a large corporation. You find, however, that you are increasingly frustrated. Attempts to satisfy your inner self by teaching youth groups on weekends have been insufficient, and your level of discomfort is rising. While you recognize that the burdens of your children's tuition and a mortgage do not afford you the latitude to abandon the world of commerce, you despair as you see your life passing by. Your spouse is prepared to support whatever you choose.
It is customary to recite the following prayer before entering into a Torah discussion:

Shalchan Aruch O.H. 110

May it be Your will, Hashem my G-d and G-d of my fathers, that You illuminate my eyes with the light of your Torah and that You save me from all stumbling blocks and errors, whether it be in discussions of what is prohibited and what is permitted or in monetary matters, whether it be in any other Halachic decisions or just in theoretical study. I pray that I do not make any mistakes, and if I do, my study partners should not take delight in them. I pray that I should not proclaim the impure pure or the pure impure, the permitted forbidden or the forbidden permitted. I pray that I should not derive joy from the errors of my study partner. Open my eyes and allow me to see the wonders of Your Torah because it is from G-d that all wisdom comes forth, it is from His mouth that I will acquire wisdom and understanding. Amen.

Points for Study

1. And than Mordechai said to Esther, who knows? Maybe it was for this very moment that you have become the queen. 
   Book of Esther 4:14
   Source, pg. 18

2. You can not teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself.
   Galileo

3. Just as there are no two faces that are exactly similar, so too there are no two natures that are exactly the same.
   Talmud Brachos 58
   Source, pg. 19

4. It is the basic obligation of every Jew to clarify and decide what is his purpose in this world.
   RAMchal, Mesillos Yesharim, chap. 1
   Source, pg. 20 Biography, pg. 9

5. G-d commanded Moses to exalt the status of every member of the Jewish Nation — to explain to them their individual potential and how to achieve greatness.
   Ramban Bamidbar 1; 3
   Source, pg. 21 Biography, pg. 12

It is as if the Creator Himself met with every single Jew and empowered him or her as an individual — as if He told them “Besides for being part of the community, you as a person are an entity onto yourself.”

Rav Yerucham Levovitz of Mir, Chaver HaMamarim 58
Source, pg. 21 Biography, pg. 10
Every Jew has at least one aspect that raises him or her above every other person. In this area, that person is considered a ruler over all of Israel. There is no such thing as a Jew that doesn't have a crown that only he can wear.

On the other hand....

They (Korach and his company) gathered together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them; "...why do you exalt yourselves over the congregation of G-d?" (Bamidbar 24: 3) Korach's claim (from his point of view) was true, there is no justification for exalting oneself above others. Just as Moses was destined and singled out to receive the Torah, so too is every Jew singled out and destined for a particular task. No one is more exalted than his brother. Just as even one missing letter in a Torah invalidates the entire scroll, and just as every limb in the human body has its irreplaceable purpose, the contribution of every single Jew is vital to the entire people of Israel.

On a grander scale, continued Rabbi Jose, was the miracle of G-d's word. **When G-d revealed Himself to the children of Israel in the desert, each individual standing at the base of Mount Sinai heard G-d's word as a personal and unique address.** A public message to a people was also a private message to each person. All who stood expectantly at the foot of that arid mountain understood the meaning of revelation in accordance with their own striving, their own capacities and their own heart.

There were those that went off the path of the Torah because they rebelled against a method of learning which ran counter to their unique individual nature.

Do not attempt to do a thing unless you are sure of yourself, but do not relinquish it simply because someone else is not sure of you.

Sometimes it is the very fault of the leader which allows him and his people to connect. If the righteous man would be perfect there would be no way for the people to connect with him. It is for this reason that the Talmud tells us that a leader must always have a skeleton in his closet (lit. a sack of reptiles hanging behind him) so that he can always have a way to connect with his people.

Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. That simple, that difficult. Warren Bennis

Rabbi Jose the son of Rabbi Chanina, once told of two miracles. The first was the miracle of the manna. When G-d provided the Israelites with manna in the desert, said Rabbi Jose, the manna assumed whatever shape and taste each individual desired: to infants it seemed like mother's milk; to the young it was succulent; and to the old it was reviving.
A father is obligated with respect to his son, to circumcise him, to redeem him if he is a first-born, to teach him Torah, to take a wife for him and to teach him a craft. Rabbi Yehudah says: anyone who does not teach his son a craft ... it is as if the father has taught him banditry. Talmud Kidushin 29a

It is not only the tribe of Levi (whose members are absolved of all worldly responsibility in order to devote their lives to the service of G-d) but any Jew from any walk of life who is inspired and driven to dedicate himself to stand before G-d and serve Him ... and he therefore throws from his shoulders the yoke of mundane pursuits, he is sanctified as the holy of holiest ... G-d will provide for him just as is a Kohan and a Levi... Maimonides, Laws of Shmita 13; 13 Source, pg. 28 Biography, pg. 16

Be my wife according to the law of Moses and Israel. I will cherish, honor, feed and financially support you in accordance with the custom of Jewish husbands ....

Excerpt from the Ketuba, the Jewish marriage contract

Source Biography

Many of these biographies were contributed by Rabbi Matts Greenblatt

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746)

Though Rabbi Moshe Chaim is best known for his masterly ethical work, Mesillat Yeshorim, probably the most popular musar work in Jewish literature, his main focus in most of his numerous works was on the Kabbala.

Born in Padua, Italy, into a distinguished family, his genius was obvious from a very early age. Besides his complete mastery of the entire Biblical, Rabbinic, and Kabbalistic literature, he was thoroughly educated in the science and literature of the time. He was the author of three full-length plays which have been published in modern editions. Unfortunately, his preoccupation with Kabbala and the impact he made on the young, aroused opposition and false suspicion of Sabbatean influence. About 60 years ago, a huge cache of letters was found (published by Dr. Simon Ginzburg in 1937) which describes at length in his own words, the persecution that he endured.

Eventually, he left Italy and settled in Amsterdam. In 1740, at the age of 33, he published the Mesillat Yeshorim, which contains many a Kabbalistic word. It is a moving, inspiring work describing how a thoughtful Jew may climb the ladder of purification until he attains the level of holiness. At least three English translations of this work have been made. In 1743, Reb Moshe
Chaim left for Eretz Yisroel with his family, arriving in the same month that the sainted R. Chaim ben Atar died. Little is known of his life in the holy land and just a few years later, he and his family perished in a plague.

Though most of R. Moshe Chaim’s opponents are long forgotten, his profound spirituality continues to touch and inspire Jews of all groups. Both the Gaon of Vilna and the Maggid of Mezertich were great admirers. In recent years, largely through the efforts of the late Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, a new edition of his works has been published, including several heretofore unpublished manuscripts. And, in one of the standard texts of modern Hebrew literature, R. Moshe Chaim is hailed as the father of modern Hebrew literature.

Reb Yerucham Levovitz (1875-1936)

From that day on I have striven to revive the sublime feelings, the awe, the joy, the inner fervor for holiness which were awakened by being in his presence.

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (Preface to Alei Shur)

The Mirrer Mashgiach”, as Rabbi Levovitz was known, was one of the most influential musar thinkers of his time. He first studied with R. Nison Zvi Finkel of Slabodka, who sent him to Kelm where he arrived in the last year of R. Simcha Zisel, the Alter of Kelm’s life. Rabbi Levovitz said that all of his thought was a commentary on Reb Simcha Zisel. Reflecting back many years later he recounted his feelings at the funeral of his mentor: “I have only now begun to understand what man is, and what his obligations are, just now are my eyes opened as I heard your words just a few times and now you have left me”.

Rabbi Levovitz first became “Mashgiach” (spiritual mentor) in the Mirrer Yeshivah in 1908, but during the dislocations caused by World War One he assumed various positions in different Yeshivos until 1923 when he returned to his position in Mir.

He was a man of powerful intellect who accomplished in the sphere of Aggada what others of his generation achieved in the sphere of Halacha. He unraveled many puzzling Aggadic passages and made them shine with fresh clarity and light.

In the last period of his life, secularly educated students from Western Europe and America came to the Yeshiva with many questions. Reb Yeruchem devoted much time to explaining the difference between the knowledge of Torah and that of science and he had a great impact. After many years one of those students was asked why he became such a “fiery Chasid” of Reb Yeruchem. He replied that he was one of the few whom Reb Yeruchem had revived and that was enough reason.

His personality was regal, but self-effacing. His devotion to his students knew no bounds. He once took sick and was prevailed upon to visit Carlsbad. At the time he wrote to a friend that he did not know whether it was proper to forsake the Yeshiva for “a man involved in the tribur (group) can never leave and I question whether he may do so even when his life is at stake (pikuach nefashos)”. Reb Yeruchem’s essays are collected in Daas, Chochmah, and Musar and his lectures on Chumash in Daas Torah. A lengthy essay, on Reb Yeruchem’s life and thought, Adam Binyan, was written by Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.
The Ramban held that the mitzvah of settling Eretz Yisroel applies even today and ultimately settled there himself during the last years of his life. When he arrived in Jerusalem there was hardly a minyan and he wrote that “what had been the most sacred is now the most desecrated”. He organized a minyan and erected a synagogue. Over the centuries his view on the mitzvah of settling the Land has been most influential. He also held that even mitzvos which were obligatory outside of the Holy Land did not achieve the same level as when performed within Eretz Yisroel. Looking back at the chaotic state of the Land during the periods of non-Jewish control, he interpreted Leviticus 26:32 as promising that Israel’s enemies will be unable to settle the Land. As part of the mitzva of settling the Land he included the admonition “that we not forsake the Land to others of the nations” (Numbers 33:53).

Recognizing the anguish people experience in everyday life without apparent explanation, he composed a major Commentary on the Book of Job.

Rav Tzadok HaCohen (1823-1900)

Rav Tzadok, as he was known amongst Chassidim, was one of the most prolific authors in the history of the Chassidic movement. Born into a non-Chassidic rabbinic family, Rav Tzadok became famous as a child prodigy authoring articles and books which later became classics. Later in life, Rav Tzadok became Chassidic and became a Chassid of the Izbitche Rebbe. Having excelled in both Chassidic and non-Chassidic worlds, Rav Tzadok's writings were a synthesis of analytical logic and mysticism. Eventually, Rav Tzadok became the Rebbe of Lublin. His writings are treasured by scholars everywhere.
joyous and healing. He refused to reject Jews as long as they identified themselves as Jews. In a noteworthy exchange with his great friend, admirer, and opponent, Rabbi Yaakov David Willowski, Rav Kook explained the two components of a Jew: his essential nature — the pinte yid, and the path he had chosen in exercising free will. Even if the second element were weak, as long as the first was not repudiated, there was still hope.

He called for and envisioned a spiritual renaissance where "the ancient would be renewed and the new would be sanctified." His vision of repentance disdained fear and apprehension and looked forward to "the poet of Teshuva, who would be the poet of life, the poet of renewal and the poet of the national soul waiting to be redeemed."

Perhaps he was that poet.

Rav Kook's printed works to date are in excess of 30 volumes with many works still in manuscript. There are a number of translations into English of a small fraction of his works.

Rabbi Yaacov Yosef of Polonnoye (died 1782)

Rabbi Yaacov Yosef of Polonnoye is the primary firsthand source for the Torah of the Ba'al Shem Tov. His main work, Toldos Yaacov Yosef, is replete with direct quotes from the Ba'al Shem. It is the first major work which expounds Chassidism. Reb Yaacov Yosef was a great talmid chochom and was the rabbi of Shargorod. When he embraced Chassidism, he was expelled from his position on a Friday afternoon. It is said that G-d sends the cure before the sickness. The
rationalism of the enlightenment which undermined religion was met through Chassidism by an unprecedented yearning for spirituality.

Yaacov Yosef developed the concept of the tzadik as the conduit for spirituality to the masses and the interdependency of the two. Ironically, he did not personally enjoy a great following and Rabbi Dow Baer of Meshirech, rather than he, became the successor to the Ba'el Shem Tov. However, his written words retain their power and influence.

**RAMBAM**
*Rav Moshe Ben Maimon (1135-1204)*

Moses Maimonides is known as the greatest Jewish philosopher and codifier of Jewish law in history. Born in Cordova, Spain, he was forced to flee from fanatical Moslems at the age of thirteen, where he traveled with his family to North Africa, and ten years later to Palestine. As a result of the devastation left by the Crusaders, Palestine was virtually uninhabitable, forcing the family to move to Fostat (current day Cairo). Throughout these journeys, the young Maimonides had concentrated on Torah studies under the guidance of his father, and by the time he reached Fostat had become a famous scholar. Supported by his merchant brother, the Rambam wrote extensively, gaining international acclaim in both Jewish and secular fields of knowledge. After the tragic death of his brother, the responsibility of supporting his family fell on the Rambam's shoulders, and through his fame he was appointed chief physician of the Sultan. Despite his many responsibilities the Rambam was able to complete some of his major works, including The Guide for the Perplexed, and his magnum opus the Mishna Torah — the great codification of all Jewish law. While he was considered an undisputed leader of world Jewry at the time, there was bitter opposition to much of his works because they incorporated much of Aristotelian philosophy that went against the traditional purist ideology of much of Ashkenazic Jewry, and others believed his codifications would make much of the role of the rabbi and the study of the Talmud obsolete.
Sources

1. Book of Esther 4:14

The Pardees Project

SILF
מכילים כל חוכמה שאינה בשתי־עשרה יראים.}

אך שמה אשר פורסמל לא ישבך אימנה והזינו על כל דבריך יושלם, גם יושלם לא(className='Annotation')

והנה משה שהרי הוא חכמה ורבים לברכה, והנה זאת㎞ מקימה והנה כי זה לקהל מקיים. כי

הנה צורותיו במילון מדברים לעבר וליד ובלחית. כי

והנה זה בברך/></p>

תנוהי לפי ועדים של א práctica של פתחים דרך школה של העם. כי

ולא היה بهذا בברך לי ולכדי סדר בלתי בולע ולכדי马桶}</p>
שלא יכירו עליה מקום לה.customer nodded assent: "It's a race."

customer: "I see."

salesperson: "You see?"

customer: "I said that it's a race."

salesperson: "Oh, I see."

customer: "Yes, I see."
Psikta D'Rav Kahana 12: 25

Rav A.Y. Kook, Orot HaTorah pg. 43
Most thinking people reach a point where they feel there must be another dimension in life. The chase for the soul, the innate knowledge that there must be more to life — and most of all the feeling that we each have a purpose — brings one to the doorstep of the most important decision we will ever have to make in life.

Investigating our tachlis, our purpose in life, is no easy task. By 40 years of age anyone who has uncovered this individual purpose for his or her existence is well ahead of the game. The Mesilos Yeshorim begins with the charge, "It is the basic obligation of every Jew to clarify and decide what is his purpose in this world." The story is told of one of the great masters of mussar who decided to study the Mesilos Yeshorim, but every time he picked up the book he couldn’t get past this first sentence, the most important question we may ever ask ourselves: Why did God put me on this world? What is my particular task? In what way am I totally indispensable? Let’s talk tachlis.

Rav Tzadok HaCohen, of blessed memory, in Tzidkas Hatzadik, teaches a very fundamental principle. He says that at some point in every person's life, God grants a vision, perhaps a form of prophecy. In this vision one sees a picture of oneself, of what he or she could look like, of oneself as the greatest individual one can become. In kabbalistic language this is referred to as isarusa d'leyla, an awakening from above. It is not a result of personal toil but rather a gift from the heavens, a job description, a wake-up call from headquarters.
After having this dream, says Rav Tzadok, most people withdraw into the present and forget what they have seen. They throw away a gift from God, who has just shown them what they could become in life, their raison d'être.

The Talmud states that when the people of Israel stood before the split Red Sea, every single Jew received a prophecy. "A simple handmaiden saw what one of the greatest prophets, Ezekial, didn't see." More then three million Ezekials. What did they see? What did God tell them? Where are their books of prophecy? What became of all the handmaidens?

The answer is that their prophecies were not about the future or about Messianic times. Their vision was of themselves. Each Jew was shown an image of what he or she could become, of his or her unique contributions to the world. When the freed slaves crossed the Sea, it wasn't to get to the other side, it was to become "a holy people and a nation of priests". It became their charge, as it is ours, to work tirelessly to meet that goal.

Rav Tzadok warns that a person should not strive for aspirations that are not one's own. They will only serve as a diversion from the true task of life.

One of the most moving stories of the Torah occurred immediately before the death of Jacob. He gathered all his children around him and told them to listen while he blessed them and told them what would happen to them at the end of days. The Hebrew word, yekara, which is usually translated as "happen," is peculiarly spelled here with a final aleph instead of a final heh. This letter changes the meaning of the word, to "call." Jacob told his children, "Gather as one and I will tell you what will be calling to you at the end of days."

Jacob was teaching his sons, and all of Israel, a fundamental principle. There will come a time in your life when you will hear a calling. When you hear it, it may seem unrealistic or naive, but don't turn away. Grab it. It is yours to attain. If you turn around and go back to sleep, it will disappear. A life is a terrible thing to waste.

Consider the Purim miracle. The Jews in Persia were in serious trouble. A Hitler named Haman was on the loose. King Achashverosh is inaccessible. Miracle of miracles, our very own Queen Esther was perfectly positioned in the royal court. Mordechei approached Esther and charged her with the responsibility of saving her brethren. Esther hesitated and Mordechei said, "Who knows? Maybe it is for this very reason that you have become the queen."

Who knows? Who doesn't know? It's obvious to all who read the story why Esther was so positioned. When God split the sea for the Jewish people, did any Jew say, "Maybe it's for me to walk through? Who Knows?"

But Esther didn't know, and the great Mordechei wasn't sure. More frightening, however, is the rest of Mordechei's statement: "And if you don't seize the opportunity at this time, the Jews will be saved by some other means, but you and your family will be lost."

Esther had a chance to stand up and be counted. She understood. She acted and she saved her people.

According to the Talmud, Moses once became so close to God that he asked, "Please let me see Your face." God said no. His refusal was not strictly theological. God said to Moses, "I revealed Myself to you once at the burning bush. There you hid your face, you didn't want to see me. Now I am hiding My face. When I wanted, you didn't want: now
you want, and I don't want.”

Once in the history of mankind was this opportunity offered, but Moses said no. When Moses was ready, it was too late. The Jewish people lost an historic opportunity. We too must make our contribution or it will be forever lost.

This concept is similarly emphasized by the Psalmist. King David said, “Like a ram moans at the bank of the fast water, so does my heart moan for you, God.”

The commentaries explain that when there is a periodic cloudburst in the desert, the rains come down quick and strong, but, due to the heat of the sand, the water does not soak in. Instead, the water flows in a deluge to the low spots in the desert. These spots are called fast waters, afikim. The desert ram knows where to find these spots, and when it rains, the ram runs with all its might to catch the water before it evaporates in the desert heat. If the ram arrives too late, the ram lets out a moan heard for miles around. Said King David, “So does my heart moan for you, God.”

May we all be privileged to fulfill our task in this world, to be awake for the call and to drink from the waters of Eden in this world and the next.

Based on a lecture given by Rabbi Yaakov Haber to the Women’s group of Kollel Beth Ha’Talmud Yehuda Fishman Institute, Melbourne, Australia.