

# KABBALAH TODAY

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AUTHENTIC WISDOM FOR A BETTER FUTURE

## PUPPET ON A STRING

Clearly, Saddam Hussein's death isn't going to stop the violence. From a spiritual perspective, Saddam was a puppet on a string.

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## TO UNDERSTAND MEANS TO FEEL

When the Light first "touches" the soul, it evokes a sensation of wanting...

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## KABBALAH ICONS

Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai - author of The Book of Zohar

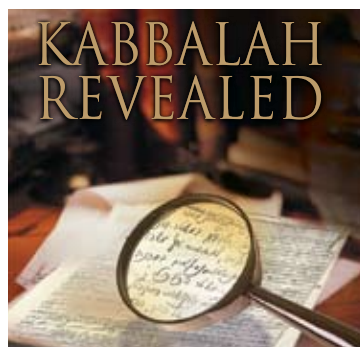
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## SNEAK A PEEK

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## THE SPIRITUAL GARDENER

Our leisurely gardening pastimes reflect our own spiritual roots, and we can relate to them by sheer reflection using the wisdom of Kabbalah.

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# KABBALAH CHRONICLES

The Rambam (Maimonides) wrote that when the whole of humanity was deep in idol worship, one man could not go with the flow. His name was Abraham. He pondered and searched until he found the truth: that the world has only one leader. When he discovered this, he realized he had discovered life's eternal truth and ran to tell the world. Since then, the world has had a method that reveals this truth. Today this method has a different name—"Kabbalah"—but it is essentially the same. If we open our hearts to it, it will teach us why things happen, and how to make them happen better.



everything his contemporaries believed, Abraham was forced to develop a teaching method that would help him reveal it to them. This was the prototype of the teaching method we now call "Kabbalah" (from the Hebrew word *Lekabel*, to receive). Today, Kabbalah teaches us how to discover the single guiding force, and by doing so, receive infinite joy and pleasure.

But Abraham's discovery was no coincidence; it was perfectly timed to counter an outbreak of egoism and selfishness that threatened to destroy the state of love and unity that humanity had been living in up to that point. This is what the Bible means by the words "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech" (Genesis 11:1).

Unity, or altruism, is a powerful force—it can make its users invincible. Up to the time of the Tower of Babel, this was

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## Past

In Chapter One of *The Mighty Hand*, The Rambam (Maimonides) describes how there was a time when people knew that there was only one force governing the world. He explained that once they all forgot it, no one knew this truth, and people believed that there were many forces in the world, each with their own responsibilities—for food, reproduction, wealth, health, etc. But

one man just couldn't grasp how all these forces followed the same cycle and obeyed the same rules of appearance and disappearance, life and death. Through his research of nature, this man, whom we now know as Abraham, discovered that there was really only one force, and all other things are partial manifestations of it.

Once he discovered this, he began to spread the word. Challenged by having to explain a concept that contradicted ev-

# THE BOOK OF ESTHER

a Miracle Inside

At the end of *The Book of Esther*, the villain is sentenced (well, kind of) and hanged; but did we really have to go through all the scary stuff leading up to it?

The *Book of Esther* features four leading characters, which are really two: There is the King, Ahasuerus (whose name is much more speaker-friendly in Hebrew), the Queen, Esther, and the two guys who

In Hebrew, *The Book of Esther* is called *Megilat Ester*. *Megilat* comes from the word *Gilui* (disclosure), and *Ester* comes from the word *Hester* (concealment). In other words, *The Book of Esther* is about disclosing what is concealed.

But let's take this disclosure one step at a time. First, we must remember that the wisdom of Kabbalah explains that in the whole of reality there are only the Creator and a creation that perceives Him. The Bible and all other ancient Hebrew texts, are actually written in different "languages" that explain the same spiritual concepts as the wisdom of Kabbalah.

In *The Book of Esther*, the King is the Creator, obviously, but none of the other protagonists is a separate entity; actually, each character is an aspect of the Creator's single creation. This is a key concept to remember because it shifts everything from a moralistic tale about how the good eventually defeats the bad, to an allegory about our personal relationship with the Creator. According to the Kabbalah, Esther, Haman, and Mordechai are

all within us, and the Creator is the attribute of benevolence that we need to acquire if we want to unite with Him and be happy.

The story begins with establishing the character of the good guy, Mordechai. He discovers that two of the king's servants are plotting to assassinate the king, and alerts him of the danger. But the king's reaction is far different from what we expect; he actually promotes Haman instead of Mordechai!

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## Editor's Note

### THE ORDER OF THE DAY

In the Land of Israel of the 1940s (then called Palestine), a Kabbalah paper was truly an unusual undertaking. For almost two millennia, the wisdom of Kabbalah had been kept hidden and was only revealed to a chosen few. But on June 5, 1940, one of the two great Kabbalists of the twentieth century, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (1884-1954), decided it was time for a change. Rabbi Ashlag, also known as Baal HaSulam (Owner of the Ladder) for his authoritative *Sulam* (Ladder) commentary on *The Book of Zohar*, published *The Nation*, the first Kabbalah paper in history.

*The Nation* was intended for everyone, but despite Baal HaSulam's efforts, its language and style were too complex for most readers to understand. Even today, 66 years after the publication of *The Nation*, Baal HaSulam's actions seem highly unorthodox, if not revolutionary.

But Baal HaSulam was not alone. Rav Avraham Kook (1865-1935), Israel's first Chief Rabbi, supported Baal HaSulam's statements that his generation was ripe and ready for the wisdom of Kabbalah.

Baal HaSulam envisioned a global society, founded on sharing and mutual giving, in accord with the Upper Force. In Kabbalah, the Upper Force is synonymous with "nature's comprehensive law of giving," and Ashlag believed that the more we put off the founding of such a society, the more troubles will befall humanity. Yet, he also assured us that if we consciously applied nature's rule to the human society, we would reach unimaginable heights; we would become eternal, whole, and balanced with the Upper Force.

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## TIME

Kabbalists explain that there is no such thing as “time” or “space” in the spiritual reality. So where does our sensation of time come from? “Spiritual time” is a series of spiritual states. Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag explains that “spiritual time is a number of changes of form, resulting from one another: before and after, cause and consequence.”

More simply, we experience a series of states regardless of time, and we can decide whether we will experience them quickly and joyfully or slowly and painfully. In this way, we can control time, as it is written, “Israel rushes the times.”

# KABBALAH CHRONICLES

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the natural way of life. Everyone knew about the one force and were united with it. People experienced it as part of their lives, and didn’t need to work on their unity because they had no egoism separating them. This is what the Bible means by “one language” and “one speech.”

But as soon as they began to develop egoism, they wanted to use their most powerful tool—unity—for their own benefit. This prompted the Creator’s concern: “The Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. ...and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them’” (Genesis 11:6).

**Unity, or altruism, is a powerful force—it can make its users invincible**

To save humanity from its own egoism, the Creator, the single force discovered by Abraham, could do one of two things: disperse humanity and thus prevent a catastrophic clash of self-interest, or teach people how to overcome their egoism.

The latter option had an important benefit: by learning how to unite despite their growing egoism, people would gain deeper awareness of both themselves and their Creator. They would have to study the Creator because their present level of unity had collapsed under their new egoism. Therefore, they would have to obtain a greater “portion” of bonding straight from the source—the united force of

nature, or the Creator. And to do that, they would have to enhance their knowledge of Him.

This is why the Creator revealed Himself to Abraham. This is also why Abraham was such an enthusiastic disseminator of his method. He knew that time was of the essence: either he taught his people how to unite, or they would be dispersed.

As we learn from both the Bible and the ancient Hebrew text, Midrash Raba, Parasha 38, the Babylonians spurned Abraham’s offer. He then fled from Babylon and began to teach while roaming “from town to town and from kingdom to kingdom, until he arrived at the Land of Israel” (Maimonides, *The Mighty Hand*, Idolatry Rules, Chapter 1).

Despite many hardships and challenges, Abraham’s teachings gained some support, and those who supported him helped him share the knowledge with others, filling the ranks with “new recruits.” In time, one lone fighter for truth had grown into a nation whose name symbolizes the one thing they had in common: “the nation of Israel.” Israel, as the great Kabbalist Ramchal explains in his *Commentary on the Writings*, is a combination of two words: *Yashar* (straight) and *El* (God). The people of Israel are those who have one desire in their hearts: to be like the Creator, united by altruism, as opposed to their Babylonian contemporaries.

The collapse of the Tower of Babel was not, however, the end of the story, but only the beginning. Humanity’s egoism continued to grow because the Creator still wanted people to overcome it, and thus gain a deeper awareness of themselves and the Creator. For those who wanted to remain egoists, this would mean even greater alienation. New nations formed and new technologies created new weapons. These were intended to guard



Pieter Brueghel, Tower of Babel.

nations from each other or to subjugate them. But for those who wanted to overcome their egoism and unite despite it, an upgrade of their method was necessary.

This was Moses’ cue. As in the case of Babel, the solution to the intensifying egoism was to escape it. But Pharaoh wasn’t simply an evil king. He actually brought

**As always, the only antidote to intensifying egoism is unity**

Israel (those who want the Creator) closer to the Creator. In Kabbalah, Pharaoh is the epitome of egoism, and the only way to escape him is to unite since, as we’ve seen before, unity makes you invincible because it makes you closer to the Creator. To defeat Pharaoh, Moses returned to Egypt after his escape, united the people around the same idea that Abraham promoted many years previously, and once again helped the people to escape.

But this time, Israel defeated a much more powerful egoism. Pharaoh was not like Nimrod, King of Babel; he could not be defeated by one determined man. Defeating Pharaoh would require a whole, united nation to overcome him. And because this would require a systematic teaching for a whole nation, Moses wrote five new books (The Pentateuch), which are basically an adaptation of Abraham’s teachings for an entire nation.

But this did not complete the Creator’s will. He wanted the whole world to know that there was only one force; this is why he taught it to Abraham, who then brought it to his fellow Babylonians. While Moses’ Torah was a

big step forward, since it elevated a whole nation into contact with the Creator, it was not the end of the road. The end of the road will only come when the whole world is in touch with the Creator, experiencing the unity that the ancient Babylonians did, before the first outbreak of egoism. Put differently, the end of the road will arrive when all of humanity reclaims what it once had, and then lost. This reclamation is very important, since you can only reclaim something when you know what it is. This is indeed the goal of creation: to teach us who/what the Creator is, and to have us reclaim Him/It.

## Present

The “present” started about two thousand years ago, when *The Book of Zohar* was written and then concealed, and Israel went into its last exile. Just like Abraham and Moses in the “past” stage, the “present” stage had two giants of its own: Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai (Rashbi) and The Holy Ari (Rabbi Isaac Luria). Rashbi’s *Book of Zohar* is, as the book itself states, a commentary on the Torah. Just as Moses explained Abraham’s words to the entire nation, *The Book of Zohar* is intended to explain Moses’ words to the entire world. This is why it is written in so many places that *The Book of Zohar* is destined to appear in the time of the Messiah, at the “end of days.” This is also why Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, the great twentieth-century Kabbalist, wrote that the rediscovery of *The Book of Zohar* is proof that the days of the Messiah are here.

As always, the only antidote to intensifying egoism is unity. And the greater the egoism, the more important it is for people to unite. While, at first, uniting Abraham’s family was enough, when Moses fled from Egypt, he then had to unite a whole nation in order to succeed. Today, we need to unite the whole of humanity. Egoism has reached such an intensity that without uniting the whole of humankind, there will be no salvation for humanity.

The middle stage in the process of humanity’s recognition of the Creator was very different from the first. It was a time of subtle growth, when the tool to unite humanity—the wisdom of Kabbalah—was being refined and improved in dimly lit rooms and in small, inconspicuous groups. This is why the two most significant works of that period, Rashbi’s *Zohar* and the Ari’s *Tree of Life*, were hidden as soon as they had been completed. They resurfaced many years later, and in the case of *The Zohar*, even centuries later.

## Future

The “future” started in the 1990s. In 1945, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, also known as Baal HaSulam (Owner of the Ladder) for his authoritative *Sulam* (Ladder) commentary on *The Book of Zohar*, predicted that the last stage in the spiritual evolution of humanity would begin in 1995. Similarly, the Vilna Gaon (GRA) wrote in his book, *The Voice of the Turtledove*, that this stage would begin in 1990. Many other Kabbalists made similar predictions, leading to the conclusion that the future is already here, and now is the time to finally defeat egoism and unite as one.

**To solve our problems, we need an inclusive solution, and such a solution can only be found when we transform human egoism into altruism**

Humanity’s entire history consists of battles against egoism and attempts to unite despite it. Today, most scientists agree that man’s self-centeredness and misunderstanding of nature’s rules are the causes of all that is wrong with our world. Baal HaSulam wrote about it in the 1930s and 40s, but in those days, he was a voice in the wilderness. In recent years it has become evident that without changing ourselves, the world will not change for the better. In fact, we are ruining our planet and our society in so many ways that solving the problems separately will not be possible.

To solve our problems, we need an inclusive solution, and such a solution can only be found when we transform human egoism into altruism. In his article, “Peace in the World,” Baal HaSulam writes that if we unite, every single member of humankind will personally experience the Creator in the deepest sense of the word, for it is written that, “they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them” (Jeremiah 31:33). The wisdom of Kabbalah has been prepared as a method that can do just that: unite, and experience the Creator. In his “Introduction to the Book of Zohar,” Baal HaSulam wrote that if we integrate Kabbalah in our day-to-day lives, we will complete the goal of our creation, and we will be “of one language and of one speech” and at one with the Creator, never to part again. ■

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## LAND

The Kabbalistic meaning of the term, “land” is “desire.” The wisdom of Kabbalah explains that the entire Torah always refers to a single person and the states that he or she will experience. For example, in the verse, “Get thee out of thy country... unto the land that I will show thee” (Genesis 12:1), the Creator tells Abraham to get out of his “land,” out of the egoistic desires he knows he was born with, and go unto the altruistic desires that He, the Creator would show him.



“The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes”  
~Proverbs 21:1

More than 3,000 American soldiers have already died in Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed by their own countrymen. In both cases, the numbers are increasing even as you are reading these lines. Iraq is a sad reflection of the current state of the world.

According to Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (1884-1954), this is just the beginning. In his “Writings of the Last Generation,” he wrote that if humanity did not change its course, it would be dragged into a third and even a fourth world war, and those remaining would still have to make the necessary change we are facing today.

It is not a question of good or bad political choices; there is no single evil individual leading the world to doom. There is a reason why the world is in crisis, and the sooner we understand the

Everything that happens, all the good and bad experiences and all the friends and foes we see before us are His messengers

reason, the better our situation will become. As King Solomon said, it is not in the hands of kings or rulers to determine where the world is going, it’s in the hand of the Force that created and guides the world. This is why it is written, “To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him” (Deuteronomy 4:35).

Kabbalist Ashlag also wrote that the phrase, “there is no other besides Him,” means that everything that happens, all the good and bad experiences and all the friends and foes we see before us are His messengers. If this is how we relate to them, we will discover the Creator through our relationships with the people around us.

Toward the end of his days, Ashlag wrote a series of essays



Clearly, Saddam Hussein’s death isn’t going to stop the violence. From a spiritual perspective, Saddam was a puppet on a string.

describing how events will unfold as humanity achieves spirituality. Today we call those writings, “The Writings of the Last Generation.” While describing that these events *must* unfold, he wrote that we could choose to experience them as spiritual processes, in which case they will not materialize in the physical world, or as physical processes, in which case they will manifest as conflicts and clashes among people and between humanity and nature.

Ashlag also explained that the human ego continually develops in quantity and quality. This is why we constantly want more money, more power, more sex, more of everything. But at the height of egoism, he writes, we will want to control the entire world, know how everything works, and govern it. In short, we will want to become godlike.

The Kabbalah, and practically all spiritual texts, explain that the Creator is good and therefore wants to do good to us, His creations. Because there is nothing better than the Creator Himself, He wants to give us everything He can of Himself: all His knowledge and all His powers.

To accomplish that, He created a “school,” a “playground” where we can practice at being Creators. This is our world. The rules of the game are really quite simple:

1. He is good and therefore wants to do good to you. Granted, you don’t feel it. If you did, you wouldn’t have to choose between being good or not; you’d *know* what to do to be like Him. But there’s a hitch: when you know what to do, you become a copycat, not a student who learns through your own scrutiny.

2. If He is good, and I want to be like Him, I, too, have to be good. To whom can I be good if I can’t see Him? I can “practice” being good on other people.

3. Every time I discover a bad quality in me, and learn how to turn it into a good one through practice on other people, I “graduate” and move on to an even worse quality. This is actually a positive development. Realizing you are worse than you thought doesn’t mean you have become worse; it means you have grown, and have “earned” the right to know yourself better. Ironically, the recognition of your own evil is a reward for your good behavior.

We progress in spirituality by trying to build a better world and a better society. The Creator helps us by sending harder tests for us to pass. This is why the human ego continually develops—the greater the ego, the harder the test. With each test we pass, we become “owners” of another degree; we gain the ability to relate to it from

the Creator’s perspective. At that degree, we are no longer puppets on strings because we have gained the knowledge and the power of the Creator.

The atrocities in our world reflect our overblown and uncontained egoism. But these ordeals don’t have to manifest as natural disasters, terrorism, or global pandemics. If we channel our egos in the right direction the moment they arise, they will not have to manifest in such horrendous displays.

The human ego only points to qualities in our souls that are not (yet) similar to the Creator. At first, these qualities may feel like minor inconveniences, like a mild headache. As the ego grows and dissimilarity with Him continues, the headache becomes a migraine. But if we work on ourselves within when it’s still just a headache, it won’t turn into a migraine, and we won’t have to deal with colossal tragedies. We will feel life as an ongoing revelation, a series of countless possibilities of being

With each test we pass, we become “owners” of another degree; we gain the ability to relate to it from the Creator’s perspective

like the Creator. Our relationships with others will reveal infinite opportunities for similarity with Him. As a consequence, we will feel love for others, instead of hate. Thus, the harsh school will become a cheerful playground.

For this to happen, we need a teaching method. Kabbalah states that if there is none other than Him, then He is the one who put the ego in us, and He must have done it for a reason. Instead of suppressing the ego, Kabbalah offers study books (and other, more modern means of schooling) that teach us how to channel our egos in the same way the Creator channels the hearts of kings.

This is the great revelation that Kabbalah introduces to the world. Instead of killing each other, we can *all* learn how to be omniscient, almighty, Godlike...and happy. ■

## Editor’s Note THE ORDER OF THE DAY

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This was the message that *The Nation* carried. Alas, Baal HaSulam’s generation was not quite ready. His paper was printed only once before it was shut down by the British Mandate authorities, who wrongfully suspected him of supporting communism.

Many years have passed since then, and reality has proven Ashlag’s predictions to be true. His predictions concerning the fall of the USSR, growing alienation among nations and individuals, globalization, and nuclear threats are all true today. However, the good news is that his revolutionary creation, the Kabbalah paper, has become a solid fact, as well.

In 1991, Rav Michael Laitman, PhD, successor of Rabbi Baruch Ashlag (the firstborn son and successor of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag) founded a new group of Kabbalah students—Bnei Baruch (The Sons of Baruch)—named after his teacher. On September 22, 2006, Bnei Baruch published the first issue of its Kabbalah paper, or if you will, the second issue of *The Nation*. Soon to follow was a similar paper in Russian, and now, a much-awaited English version of *Kabbalah Today*.

*Kabbalah Today* is an apolitical, non-commercial paper, aspiring to convey the same message that was conveyed in *The Nation*. It is intended for everyone, regardless of gender, faith, nationality or age. With today’s increasing interest in Kabbalah, a Kabbalah paper seems to be the order of the day. Its aim is to disseminate the vast knowledge hidden in the wisdom of Kabbalah in clear language and at no cost. We believe that this wisdom can change how we perceive ourselves as individuals and as a society. It is our hope that *Kabbalah Today* will add a new dimension to our lives, and help to enhance unity and love among all its readers.

## Questions and Answers

### WHAT IS KABBALAH?

“Kabbalah is not mere theoretical scientific research. Rather, it is a practical method intended to help us through every moment of our lives. Through Kabbalah, one discovers the future, the past, one’s attributes when he or she first descended into this world many lifetimes ago, and the way one still needs to traverse.

“Seeing both ends of the rope, one understands what to do and how best to do it. Kabbalists can also see the forces operating on them at any given moment in time, such as why one should marry a specific individual, or why one’s children are the way they are.”

--Michael Laitman

*Kabbalah, Science, and the Meaning of Life*

### HOW DOES KABBALAH EXPLAIN SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA SUCH AS HEALING OR OUT-OF-BODY TRAVELS?

Kabbalah enables you to live in the spiritual world and in this world simultaneously. It helps you feel, see, and understand your spiritual growth. By studying it, you will learn to see your past, present, and future, and you will know how to lead your life more wisely.

In his book, *The Kabbalah Experience*, Michael Laitman writes about supernatural phenomena: “Those phenomena are not spiritual, but are natural physiological phenomena of which people remote from nature are simply unaware. Kabbalah, however, speaks of a spiritual body, about what happens with the soul.”



“The whole Torah, with all of its spiritual interpretations, should transcend in us. Any person with courage in his heart, power in his pen, and the spirit of God in his soul is called upon to join the campaign and shout ‘Bring forth Light.’”  
--Rav Avraham Ytzhak HaCohen Kook (1865-1935), a Kabbalist, an ordinate, and a thinker.  
Rav Kook was the first Chief Rabbi of Israel.

Kabbalah Icons

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, a single man was granted the spiritual knowledge that Kabbalists had accumulated for 3,000 years before his time. Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai (Rashbi) put it all on paper and then hid it, as humanity was not ready for it. Today, we are ready for the revelation of *The Book of Zohar*.

Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai (Rashbi), author of *The Book of Zohar* (radiance) was a Tana—a great sage in the early Common Era centuries. He was also Rabbi Akiva’s direct student. Rashbi’s name is tied to numerous legends, and he is mentioned constantly in the Talmud and in the Midrash, the sacred Hebrew texts of his time. He lived in Sidon and in Meron, and he established a seminary in the Western Galilee.

Rashbi was born and raised in the Galilee (a mountainous region in today’s north of Israel). Even as a child, he was not like other children his age. Questions such as, “What is the purpose of my life?” “Who am I?” and “How is the world built?” plagued him, demanding an answer.

In those days, life in Galilee was very harsh: the Romans persecuted Jews and continually invented new laws to make their lives miserable. Among these laws was a decree that prohibited Jews from studying the Torah (then synonymous with Kabbalah).

He felt that beneath the Biblical stories lay a profound and hidden meaning, which held the answers to his persistent questions

Despite the Romans’ prohibition, however, Rashbi immersed himself in the Kabbalah and tried to understand its subtle teachings. He felt that beneath the Biblical stories lay a profound and hidden meaning, which held the answers to his persistent questions.

Gradually, Rabbi Shimon came to realize that he had to find a teacher who had already been through the spiritual path, gained experience, and could guide others up the spiritual ladder. He decided to join the group of the greatest Kabbalist of the time—Rabbi Akiva—a decision that turned out to be the turning point in Rashbi’s life.

Studying with Rabbi Akiva

Rabbi Shimon was an avid, devoted student, burning with desire to discover the Upper Force. Before long, he was one of Rabbi Akiva’s top students. He studied with Rabbi Akiva for thirteen years, and reached the highest degrees on the spiritual ladder.

The Bar-Kokheva revolt abruptly ended the great days of Rabbi Akiva’s seminary. Almost all of his 24,000 students died in plagues, and in fierce battles against the Romans. Of the 24,000 students, only five survived, and Rashbi was among them.

Rashbi was among the leaders of the Bar-Kokheva revolt against the Roman

RABBI SHIMON BAR-YOCHAI

rule in the land of Israel. His resistance became even more fierce and unyielding when he’d learned how his teacher, Rabbi Akiva, had been ruthlessly executed.

The Talmud writes that once, when Rashbi spoke against the Roman rule, another Jew heard him and alerted the Roman authorities. In consequence, Rashbi was tried in his absence and was sentenced to death. The Roman emperor sent men to search for him, but to their disappointment, Rashbi seemed to have vanished into thin air.

The Cave at Piqiin

Legends have it that Rashbi and his son fled to the Galilee, hid in a cave at Piqiin, a village in the north of Israel, and remained there for thirteen years. During that time, they delved in the secrets of the wisdom of the hidden. Their efforts succeeded, and they discovered the entire system of creation.

After thirteen years in a cave, Rashbi heard that the Roman emperor had died. He could finally heave a sigh of relief. After leaving the cave, Rashbi gathered nine students and went with them to a small cave in Meron, known as The Idra Rabba (Great Assembly). With their help, he wrote *The Book of Zohar*, the most important book of Kabbalah.

Baal HaSulam described Rashbi and his students as the only beings who achieved perfection, the 125 spiritual degrees that complete the correction of one’s soul. When he finished his commentary on *The Book of Zohar*, Baal HaSulam held a festive meal to celebrate its completion. At that celebration, he stated that “...prior to the days of the Messiah, it is impossible to be awarded all 125 degrees... except the Rashbi and his contemporaries, meaning the authors of *The Book of Zohar*. They were awarded all 125 degrees in completeness, even though they lived prior to the days of the Messiah. Hence, we often find in the *Zohar* that there will not be a generation such as the Rashbi’s until the generation of the Messiah King. This is why his composition made such a strong impression in the world, since the secrets of the Torah in it occupy the level of all 125 degrees. This is also why it is said in the *Zohar* that *The Book of Zohar* will not be revealed except at the end of days, meaning in the days of the Messiah.”

The Idra Rabba (Great Assembly) and The Book of Zohar

Idra Rabba is a cave located in the northern part of Israel, between Meron and Zephath. Rashbi took his students to this cave, and there he wrote *The Book of Zohar*.



The sign at the entrance to Rashbi’s secret cave, stating its name—The Assembly—and the names of the members of his group.

We ordinary people find it impossible to understand how great Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai really was. He belongs, as Baal HaSulam puts it, to the highest Inner Light. This is why he had to use Rabbi Abba to put his words into writing. In *The Book*

Rashbi and his students are described as the only beings who achieved perfection

of *Zohar*, the Rashbi tells his students: “I am arranging you as follows: Rabbi Abba will write, Rabbi Elazar, my son, will study orally, and the rest of the friends will converse in their hearts” (*Zohar*, Haazinu).

*The Book of Zohar* was written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, not long after the ruin of the Second Temple and the beginning of the last exile of the people of Israel from its land. But even prior to the exile, Rashbi predicted that *The Book of Zohar* would only be revealed at the end of the exile. He stated that its appearance to the masses would symbolize the end of the spiritual exile: “...in it, they will come out of the exile with mercy” (*Zohar*, Naso).

It is also written in *The Book of Zohar* that its wisdom would be revealed to all toward the end of the six thousand years, the period allotted to the correction of humanity: “And when it is near the days of the Messiah, even infants in the world are destined to find the secrets of the wisdom, and know in them the ends and the calculations of redemption, and at that time it will be revealed to all” (*Zohar*, VaYera).

The Secret of Reincarnation

Rashbi is an incarnation of a unique soul, which coordinates and connects the Upper Force to every creation. This soul comes down into our world and incarnates in the patriarchs of Kabbalah. This is the order of its appearance: Abraham, Moses, Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai, the Ari (Rabbi Isaac Luria), and Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam). Each incarnation of this soul promotes humanity to a new spiritual degree and leaves its mark

in Kabbalah books, which serve the generations that follow.

An example of this process can be found in special sections of *The Zohar* called *Raia Me-Heimna* (The Loyal Shepherd). In these parts, Rashbi speaks from a state of clothing in Moses’ soul. Another example of this is the book, *Shaar HaGilgulum* (Gate of Reincarnations), where Rashbi speaks from a state of clothing in the soul of the Ari.

*The Book of Zohar* is undoubtedly unique and one of the world’s most renowned compositions. Since its writing, thousands of stories have been linked to *The Zohar*, and the book is still shrouded in mystery today. The fascination around it is so great that even though the book is completely incomprehensible to our generation without prop-

er interpretation, millions of people diligently read it.

Rashbi’s Departure

According to tradition, Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai passed away in the presence of his friends on *Lag BaOmer* (the 33<sup>rd</sup> day of the *Omer* count, which starts on the first day of Passover) of the year 160 CE, and was buried in Meron. With his death, the soul of a giant Kabbalist completed its task in our world.

Rashbi fulfilled his destination. Hundreds of thousands visit his gravesite yearly, trying to sense some of the Light that he had brought to the world. The greatest Kabbalists praise his composition and repeatedly claim that *The Book of Zohar* is destined to bring redemption to the world.

Each incarnation of this soul promotes humanity to a new spiritual degree and leaves its mark in Kabbalah books, which serve the generations that follow

Rav Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, writes about the *Zohar* (*Ohr Yakar*): “This composition, called *The Book of Zohar*, is like Noah’s Ark, where there were many kinds, but those kinds and families could not exist unless by entering the ark. ...Thus the righteous will enter the secret of the Light of this composition to persist, and thus is the virtue of the composition, that immediately when engaging, with his desire for the love of God, it will draw him as a magnet draws the iron. And he will enter it to save his soul and spirit and his correction. And even if he is wicked, there is no fear should he enter.”

We are living in a historic time. The soul of Rashbi is completing its mission in our generation, and thanks to this spiritual giant, who lived nearly 2,000 years ago, the wisdom of Kabbalah is emerging so we may all ascend to a life of eternity and wholeness.



## REINCARNATION

The term “reincarnation” is known to us as a process in which the soul leaves the body and “dresses” in a new one. Kabbalah, however, explains that an incarnation is a new state that the soul experiences. It is another phase of the soul’s correction process as it approaches its goal. The innovation that Kabbalah introduces is that to reincarnate, you do not need to physically pass away. A soul can undergo all its incarnations and achieve its goal within the span of a single lifetime!



» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In our story, Esther represents the collective soul, the whole of creation. The two rivals, Haman and Mordechai, represent the soul’s two inclinations—the evil inclination, egoism (Haman), and the good inclination, altruism (Mordechai).

These roles are the reason why the king promotes Haman, instead of Mordechai: To choose altruism and thus unite with the Creator, one must first realize that egoism is bad. We are made of a desire to receive pleasure. To make the shift to altruism, we must realize that egoism is bad for us, and subsequently want to change it. But the

**To make the shift to altruism, we must realize that egoism is bad for us, and subsequently want to change it**

only way we can want to change it is if we evidently see that it is bad for us. How is that done? By giving Haman (egoism) a bait

# THE BOOK OF ESTHER

## a Miracle Inside



J.S. Crompton, The Adversary and Enemy is the Wicked Haman

he cannot resist, which will expose his true nature.

For this reason, up to the very end, Haman is given more and more power until he cannot resist the temptation; when he is asked, “What shall be done unto the man whom the king delights to honor?” he takes the bait:

“For the man whom the king delights to honor, let royal apparel be brought

which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and on whose head a crown royal is set; and let the apparel and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that they may array the man therewith whom the king delights to honor, and cause him to ride on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him: Thus shall it be

done to the man whom the king delights to honor.”

At the heart of *The Book of Esther* lies the deepest principle of how to achieve spirituality: to reveal the Creator, be prepared to first reveal yourself. Creation, of which we’re all part, is made of one thing only—a desire to receive pleasure. The Creator is also made of one thing only: the desire to give pleasure, the exact

opposite of creation. If you think of the Creator and creation as two people, it’s as if one loves everything that the other hates. No wonder they can’t communicate. If we want to communicate, we have to be like the Creator, at least to some extent. The more we are like Him, the better will be our communication with Him.

The story of *The Book of Esther* encompasses the entire path of spiritual progress, one that all of us will experience. The beauty of the story is that we don’t have to understand it all at once. These few pages in the Bible can be read again and again, each time revealing new secrets. All we need to take with us is that simple principle: to reveal the Creator, be prepared to reveal yourself, first. Every time we want to know more about the Creator, He will show us who we are, instead. But this is not because He is hiding; it’s because we have to discover the Haman within us before we discover the greatness of Mordechai,

who is the one who really loves the Creator.

Working this way guarantees not only that we will reveal the Creator, but the rewards that Mordechai received, as well: “Then

**At the heart of The Book of Esther lies the deepest principle of how to achieve spirituality: to reveal the Creator, be prepared to first reveal yourself**

took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordechai, and caused him to ride through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him: ‘Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delights to honor.’ Moreover, Mordechai’s final reward is Haman’s greatest wish: “And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordechai.”

So the good, the bad, and the beautiful (queen) are all within us. To discover them, just ask (of the Creator) and you’ll receive. ■

# TO UNDERSTAND MEANS TO FEEL

In Kabbalah, Adam (from the Bible) has a “surname”: *Ha Rishon* (the First). This doesn’t mean that he was the first man on Earth, or that he was the first human male to be a ‘man.’ *Adam ha Rishon* (The First Man) means that he was the first person in whom the desire to discover life’s purpose appeared. Adam discovered that life’s purpose is to become similar to the Creator—the altruistic force that creates all life—and he achieved this goal. In fact, his name testifies to the fact that he achieved it because the name Adam comes from the Hebrew words, *Adameh LaElyon*, “I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14). In other words, Adam was the first person in the history of humankind to consciously perceive the Creator, or as Kabbalists put it, to attain Him.

Today, the question of the purpose of our lives is awakening in growing numbers of people. Their inability to find the answer to this question brings many people to despair, disappointment, divorce, and even suicide.

If Adam were alive today, he wouldn’t be alone in his quest.

Today, there is a surge of people asking the same question Adam asked himself nearly 6,000 years ago. Moreover, the increase in depression cases, suicides, and violence (domestic, racial, and international) are largely attributed to our inability to answer the one question: “What is the meaning of my life?”

In that regard, Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag writes in one of his most important compositions, *The Study of the Ten Sefirot*, that his book is intended for any person who is asking, “What is the meaning of

my life?” Baal HaSulam explains that the only reason the wisdom of Kabbalah appeared in this world was to help us answer this one question.

## A Light That Reforms

In the introduction to *The Study of the Ten Sefirot*, Rabbi Ashlag asked why Kabbalists stated that every person must study Kabbalah. He answered that anyone who reads the books of Kabbalah, even without understanding

them, draws a Light from above that shines in one’s soul. This Upper Light is really a different name for the force that created all our souls, the force that will correct us and eventually fill us with pleasure.

When the Light first “touches” the soul, it evokes a sensation of wanting to correct “my evil desires.” This is why this Light is called “the Light that reforms.” But in the beginning, we don’t really know *what* is evil about our desires. As we continue to

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

### Questions and Answers

## WHICH CHARM IS THE BEST FOR SUCCESS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX?

In *Awakening to Kabbalah*, Michael Laitman explains that “Kabbalah is a science with clear and concise laws that must be studied. It has no connection with charms and blessings and other things that are done in its name, originating in the time Kabbalah was concealed from people and ascribed magical forces. The books of Kabbalah clearly explain what steps we need to take to acquire that knowledge.” With the knowledge you acquire, you will know which action is the best for you at any given situation, including those with the opposite sex.

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## LUCK

Why is one person rich and famous, while another has to work hard and remain anonymous? Why is one person born with a silver spoon in his or her mouth, while another is born into a poor family? The Kabbalistic meaning of the term, “*Mazal*” (luck) comes from the root *NaZal* (dripping). It describes a process where Light, or energy, “drips” from the Upper Degree to the lower one. For Kabbalists, who know the laws that operate the system of reality, this “dripping of energy” is planned and predetermined. But for us, who are unfamiliar with this system of rules, this “dripping” seems incidental and unpredictable. This is why we call it “luck.”

■ Sneak a Peek @ the book *Kabbalah Revealed*

# Desires – the Engine of Change

Desires don’t just pop out of the blue. They form unconsciously within us and surface only when they become something definable, such as, “I want a pizza.” Before that, desires are either not felt, or at most, felt as general restlessness. We’ve all experienced that sense of wanting something but not quite knowing what it is. Well, it is a desire that has not yet ripened.

Plato once said, “Necessity is the mother of invention,” and he was right. Similarly, Kabbalah teaches us that the only way we can learn anything is by first wanting to learn it. It’s a very simple formula: when we want something, we do what it takes to get it. We make the time, muster the energy, and develop the necessary skills. It turns out that the engine of change is desire.

The way our desires evolve both defines and designs the entire history of humanity. As humankind’s desires developed, they urged people to study their environment so they could fulfill their wishes. Unlike minerals, plants, and animals, people constantly evolve. For every generation, and for each person, desires grow stronger and stronger.

This engine of change—desire—is made of five levels, zero through four. Kabbalists refer to this engine as “a will to receive pleasure,” or simply, “the will to receive.” When Kabbalah first appeared, some 5,000 years ago, the will to receive was at level zero. Today, as you might have

guessed, we are at level four—the most intense level.

But in the early days when the will to receive was at level zero, desires were not strong enough to separate us from nature and from each other. In those days, this oneness with nature, which today many of us pay good money to re-learn in meditation classes (and let’s face it, not always successfully) was the natural way of life. People didn’t know any other way. They didn’t even know that they could be separated from nature, nor did they want to be.

In fact, in those days, humanity’s communication with nature and with each other flowed so seamlessly, words were not even necessary; instead, people communicated by thought, much like telepathy. It was a time of unity, and the whole of humanity was like a single nation.

But then the change occurred: people’s desires started to grow and they became more egoistic. People began to want to change nature and use it for themselves. Instead of wanting to adapt themselves to nature, they began wanting to change nature to fit *their* needs. They grew detached from nature, separated and alienated from it and from each other. Today, many, many centuries later, we are discovering that this was not a good idea. It simply doesn’t work.

Ever since that split, we have been confronting nature. Instead of correcting the ever-growing egoism to remain as one with nature, we have built a mechanical,

technological shield to protect us from it. The initial reason we developed science and technology was to secure our shielded existence away from nature’s elements. It turns out, however, that whether we are aware of it or not, we are actually trying to control nature and take over the driver’s seat.

Today, many people are already growing tired of technology’s broken promises of wealth, health, and most important, safe tomorrows. Too few people have attained all these today, and even they cannot be certain they will still have them tomorrow. But the benefit of this state is that it forces us to reexamine our direction and ask, “Is it possible we’ve been treading the wrong path all along?”

Particularly today, as we acknowledge the crisis and the impasse we are facing, we can openly admit that the path we’ve chosen is a dead-end street. Instead of compensating for our self-centered oppositeness from nature by choosing technology, we should have changed our egoism to altruism, and consequently to unity with nature.

In Kabbalah, the term used for this change is *Tikkun* (correction). To realize our oppositeness from nature means that we must acknowledge the split that occurred among us (human beings) five thousand years ago. This is called “the recognition of evil.” It is not easy, but it is certainly adventurous; and most important, it is the first step to true health and happiness. ■

■ Questions and Answers

## DOES STUDYING KABBALAH REQUIRE RETIRING FROM DAILY LIFE?

“There is no requirement to fast or to mortify yourself. One does not have to leave everyday life or abandon family duties. Nor does one float in the air or practice breathing exercises in order to attain tranquility.

“Quite the contrary, students build their egos and turn them into vessels to help them attain the sublime goal. To study Kabbalah and understand how the Upper World operates, one must be at the center of that world and act from within it.

“Therefore, one must perform all one’s mundane duties. The attainment of the spiritual reality must be in one’s corporeal senses, closely connected with one’s normal life.”

## I KNOW MANY METHODS AND TEACHINGS TO ACHIEVE SPIRITUALITY. WHY CHOOSE KABBALAH?

The difference between all the teachings and the Kabbalah, as I understand it from the perspective of the Kabbalah, is that they are built on the nullification of desires, or at least on their complete suppression. Kabbalah, however, states that the Creator can be sensed precisely by expressing the desire for Him (certainly not by nullifying it), but inverting the aim of its use. Which way should a person choose to advance? That is an individual choice.

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

study, the Light “shows” us that there is nothing wrong with our desires in and of themselves. The only thing that’s wrong with us is that the Creator is an altruistic force that creates life, and we are not. And since life’s purpose is to become similar to the Creator, we feel dissatisfied when we are different from Him.

At this point, the next function of the Light comes into play: Once we’ve learned that we are different from Him, and begin to want correction, the Light “grants” our wish and begins to correct us. In other words, the Light teaches us not only who we are, but also who the Creator is, and how we can become more like Him.

## To Understand Means to Feel

When we study Kabbalah, we must become completely detached from everything we have known so far. We should be open to a whole new set of concepts because this is the only way we will be able to walk

on the path Kabbalists have prepared for us. For example, Kabbalists often add a little suffix to their sentences: “and understand that well.” When they write that we should understand something, they don’t mean that we should understand it with our intellect. They mean that we should experience and *feel* the reality they are describing, *live* it.

## The Benefit of Studying Kabbalah

But Kabbalists said that the study shouldn’t be restricted only to those who are asking about the meaning of their lives, and those who want correction. On the contrary, they opened it to everyone. They explain that whatever your desire, the Upper Light shines on *anyone* who is reading a Kabbalistic text. Even if a desire for spirituality has not



awakened in you, as you read, the Light shines and subconsciously moves you closer to the Creator.

If our goal in life is to become like the Creator, and becoming like the Creator is what Kabbalah

teaches, studying Kabbalah will “fast-forward” us toward this end, and hence spare us hardships. In fact, simply studying the material makes dilemmas and problems dissipate before they even surface in your awareness. At the end of

the day, every dilemma is about life’s purpose. Therefore, when you work directly toward this end, all other problems simply vanish.

## The Books (and other good stuff)

In our generation, the books that draw the greatest “Light that reforms” onto their readers are the books of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag. His books, which interpret the writings of these giant Kabbalists, can help us study Kabbalah in a way that draws the most powerful Lights to us. Because Ashlag keeps us focused and aware, his books help our generation avoid suffering and achieve tranquility and peace.

Thanks to modern technology, the study of Kabbalah can take place at any time and any place. If you can’t read a book, download a video and watch it in the comfort of your home. The material is also available at [www.kabbalah.info](http://www.kabbalah.info) and it’s all free. So have fun, and may the Force be with you. ■

# TO UNDERSTAND MEANS TO FEEL



"My teacher Pythagoras, the father of philosophy, did nevertheless not receive those teachings from the Greeks, but rather received them from the Jews. [...] and he himself was the first to convert the name Kabbalah, unknown to the Greeks, to the Greek name philosophy."

--Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), a German humanist, political counselor to the Chancellor, a classics scholar and an expert in the ancient languages and traditions.



# THE SPIRITUAL GARDENER

Surprising as it may be, our leisurely gardening pastimes reflect our own spiritual roots, and we can relate to them by sheer reflection using the wisdom of Kabbalah.

*And God said: 'Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind'.*

~Genesis 1:11

The symbol most associated with the wisdom of Kabbalah is the Tree of Life. Kabbalah and all the ancient writings are replete with examples from the plant kingdom. Ancient Hebrew Scriptures used the spiritual roots of vegetation to explain human spiritual growth processes. They used it as a learning tool, and we can benefit by using it to "touch base" with our souls.

The words below are based on a letter written by Kabbalist Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, the firstborn son and successor of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, also known as Baal HaSulam. In his letter, Rabbi Ashlag explains to his students that the works of the field reflect spiritual processes, and how we can experience them.

## Adam and the Tree of Life

In Kabbalah, the terms, "nature" and "Creator" are considered synonymous. The term, "life" is defined as being in contact with nature and its Creator, and the word, "tree" can either symbolize "life," meaning contact with the Creator, or "knowledge," understanding why the Creator works the way He does. Actually, the degree called *The Tree of Knowledge* is the highest spiritual degree a person can achieve.

The first person to discover the Tree of Life was Adam. He was an ordinary person who felt inclined to research and discover what lies beyond our world. When Moses described what happened to Adam, he used the image of a tree to describe Adam's relationship with the Creator. The Creator told him he could eat of every tree in the garden except for the Tree of Knowledge, reflecting the last and only degree Adam couldn't reach.

The Creator knew that if Adam discovered the knowledge contained in that tree, he would want to leave the Garden, since he would know as much as the Creator. That, in turn, would detach him from the Creator—life—which is why the Creator forbade him to eat of that tree. We all know what happened: Adam ate, and as a result, we are all denied of Adam's promised eternal life.

But all has not been lost. The Creator also gave us ancient writings that teach us how we can return to the Garden of Eden. He also gave us examples, which Kabbalah calls "branches." These branches can indicate how things really work. If



**"There is not a blade of grass that does not have a lot above that strikes it and tells it, 'Grow.'"**

--Midrash Raba 10:6

we study the writings along with the right explanations, we will understand the spiritual processes that manifest in every plant, and we will learn to emulate them in our souls.

## What Moses Meant

*By the sweat of your face you will eat bread.*

~Genesis 3:19

In Moses' time, spirituality was a tangible reality. Everyone experienced the spiritual world, just as we experience the physical world today. At the time, there wasn't the rift that exists today between us and spirituality. People then didn't have to learn spirituality; they *lived* it. When Moses wrote his Torah (Pentateuch), he used the spoken language of his time so people would understand him. The difference between Moses' contemporaries and people today is that they knew he was using mundane words to explain spiritual concepts, while *we* think he was actually referring to our physical world. Indeed, how can we think otherwise? We no longer feel spirituality the way our predecessors did.

This is why Kabbalists refer to the language of the Bible as "the language of roots and branches." Our world is only the outermost layer of the spiritual worlds; it is only a shell, the farthest branch of a great tree.

To fully understand life you must explore it where it really happens—at its roots. This is what Moses explained. "By the sweat of your face you will eat bread," he tells us. In other words, if we want to eat (become spirituality nourished) we need to work (sweat) for it. Since Adam's sin, contact with the Creator is not a given; instead, we must cultivate it, using every means at our disposal. And the promised reward is priceless: it is our access to the Tree of Knowledge.

## Spiritual Gardening

*For is the tree of the field a man*

~Deuteronomy 20:19

Just like a tree, to be ready to bear (spiritual) fruit, you and I need to experience the same work we do on trees and plants. If we graft, powder, fertilize, and weed those parts in our souls requiring cultivation, our spirituality will enhance and fill our lives with joy. If we nourish our souls, we will be "*like a tree planted by streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, and whose leaf doth not wither*" (Psalms 1:3). It only takes a few ground rules to tend to our inner "plants."

## Fertilize

Like plants, human beings can't grow without fertilizers. In Webster's dictionary, "a fertilizer is a substance (as manure or a chemical mixture) used to make soil more fertile." In plants, the fertilizer needs to be brought from the outside. We already have plenty of "manure" within us; we needn't bring it from the outside,

but rather correct what is already within us. For that, we need to recognize which of our qualities are improper (manure) and correct them (turn them into fertilizer) using the method of Kabbalah. This is the essence of spiritual gardening.

When Kabbalists speak of improper qualities, they speak not about socially

Débourrement d'une feuille d'érable sycomore - Maple budding



indecent qualities, but of spiritual qualities, those which relate to our relationship with the Creator. In the end it does make us treat each other better, but we must keep in mind that the final goal of Kabbalah is to return to the Garden of Eden, to the *spiritual* world.

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# THE SPIRITUAL GARDENER

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## Hoe

In spirituality, “hoeing” means examining the depths of one’s soul. According to Kabbalah, only there, within ourselves, will we discover why we have come into this world. The answers to all of life’s questions rest deep within us. If we want to find them, we must “hoe” into our souls and dig them out.

## Remove Excess Leaves

While we are studying Kabbalah to rediscover the Creator, the “leaves” are our efforts and desires to discover Him. Once we establish this connection, these efforts and desires become “fruits.” We do not change who we are, only our focus of attention: “spirituality” means focusing on the Creator, while “corporeality” means focusing on ourselves.

Leaves are very important. They are beautiful, provide shade, and protect the fruits while they are growing. There shouldn’t be so many leaves that they exhaust the tree’s water and energy, but we do need to have enough leaves to help the fruits grow lush and plentiful. Similarly, when you are learning how to become spiritual, don’t worry if you haven’t made contact with the Creator quickly. Your attempts are your “leaves.” Even if you’re unaware of it, they are protecting the fruits already growing within you, hidden among the foliage.

## Powder

“Powdering,” in Hebrew called *LeAbbek*, means covering with powder or dust. It also means struggling. To connect to the Creator, we have to bridge the barrier between our world and the spiritual world. We are born completely self-centered; and

to connect to the Creator, to nature, we need to become “Creator-centered.” This implies a struggle, however, because our inborn nature objects to being Creator-centered and sends us thoughts that our connection with Him is not a worthwhile goal. Therefore, we must “powder” these thoughts and cover them with our conviction of the importance and the merit of our goal.



## Water

*And God said: ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.’*

—Genesis 1:8

We’ve saved the best for last. Water exists above—in Heaven—and below—on Earth. It is the ultimate solvent and the prime ingredient of everything alive. Not surprisingly, water also represents the Creator,

specifically, His quality of mercy. As the Creator is omniscient, water, too, retains information about everything it touches. Plants can use this quality in water, which tells them when to bud and when to blossom.

To grow, a plant needs only water and a few minerals, which it often takes from the water itself. No other substance can replace water as the sole cause of evolution and



growth. The hydrological cycle allows water to connect the “higher” worlds (air or sky) with the “lower” worlds (earth), just as the Creator does in spirituality. Knowing when and how much to “water” one’s soul with the quality of the Creator is therefore the single most important piece of information a seeker of spirituality needs.

## Becoming a “Spiritual Gardener”

The wisdom of Kabbalah was hidden for many centuries—from the days of Abraham, the Patriarch, to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, however, we can all enjoy what it has to offer. To a spiritual person, Kabbalah is the hoe, the pruning shears, and the plow. The Creator gives the water of life, and we need only turn our “waste” into fertilizer and discover the Creator so that our souls can blossom. In the words of King Solomon, this knowledge “*is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that holdest her fast*” (Proverbs 3:18). ■

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### About Bnei Baruch

Bnei Baruch is a non-profit organization that is spreading the wisdom of Kabbalah to accelerate the spirituality of humankind. Its founder and president is Kabbalist Rav Michael Laitman, PhD, who was the disciple and personal assistant to Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, the son of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, author of the *Sulam* [Ladder] commentary on *The Book of Zohar*.

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