

KABBALAH TODAY

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ECOLOGY AND US

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QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY RAV MICHAEL LAITMAN, PHD— FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH NEW JERSEY'S "COURIER POST"

Q: Why do you call Kabbalah a science and not a religion?

A: It's called a science because this is what it is. The wisdom of Kabbalah started about 5,000 years ago in ancient Babylon. At that time, the whole of humanity was connected and they were together as one nation. Egoism began to grow within people; they became more alienated, which then prompted the famous story of the Tower of Babylon.

The cure for that was a method that was discovered by a certain individual whom we know today as Abraham. He discovered a method to reconnect people despite the growing egoism.

The method he discovered was a scientific method. In other words, it uses scientific research tools to investigate our own internal mechanism, and that is what we know today as

the wisdom of Kabbalah. Judaism, Christianity or Islam date much later than the wisdom of Kabbalah and are actually unrelated.

Q: Can you study Kabbalah while practicing a religion?

A: Yes, anyone can study Kabbalah. It really makes no difference whether you belong to a certain religion or you are completely secular. The wisdom of Kabbalah is beyond all that. It is totally unrelated and you can study it regardless of anything else you do in life, not just religion, but any other belief system or practice that you do.

Q: Is there any difference between authentic Kabbalah teaching and the practice of celebrities like Madonna?

A: Yes, there is a big difference. First of all, to study authentic Kabbalah, you need to study from the authentic sources.

Kabbalah uses five basic authentic sources, which are the writings of Abraham, *The Book of Creation*, and Moses, what we know today as the Pentateuch (also known as the Torah or the first five books of the Bible), then came *The Book of Zohar*, the writings of the Holy Ari, and Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag in the 20th century and his writings. By the way, Ashlag's writings are the best adapted for our generation to study.

In addition, Kabbalah is a study. It's like any science. There are no objects—no red strings, holy water, any kind of fortune-telling, mysticism, charms—none of that belong to authentic Kabbalah, not even meditation. It's just pure study of reality and it enhances your perception of reality to enhance your control over your own life and life in general.

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Editor's Note

Correcting the Optical Delusion

Albert Einstein once said: "A human being is part of the whole, called by us universe ... He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness ... Our task must be to free ourselves from our prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all humanity and the whole of Nature in its beauty."

Kabbalists have always said that if we only gained a sense of our connection with Nature, we would rise to a perfect, eternal level of existence. In this issue, we will show how Nature is pushing us to discover our connection with it, and how we can kindle this connection by ourselves.

"Ecology and Us" explains that we are integral parts of Nature. When we feel this, we will see the underlying reason, and the solution, to our ecological crisis.

In "The Consumer Effect" we explore the globalization of economics, which beautifully demonstrates how interconnected our systems have become.

In keeping with Einstein's description of an "optical delusion of consciousness," Kabbalists say that all we require to feel connected with Nature is a change in perception. "I Saw a Reversed World" shows that how we perceive reality depends on our inner qualities. Hence, only we can change it.

This issue also includes highlights from Rav Laitman's interview with New Jersey's *Courier Post*, which makes a great introduction to the basics of Kabbalah. Enjoy these articles and more in this month's issue.



KABBALAH FOR BEGINNERS

“No desire or quality is naturally evil; it’s how we use it that makes it so.”

ECOLOGY AND US

“WE ARE FACING A TRUE PLANETARY EMERGENCY.

IT IS A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE TO ALL OF HUMANITY,”

FORMER VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE DRAMATICALLY STATED WHEN HE ACCEPTED HIS NOBLE PEACE PRIZE.

BUT ONCE THE CURTAIN CAME DOWN ON THE GLIMMERING AWARD CEREMONY, A QUESTION AROSE:

WILL OUR INCREASING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS SAVE US FROM THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS?

by Chaim Ratz

To take control over the ecological crisis, we must first understand its underlying causes by examining Nature and its systems.

Researchers of natural systems in physics, biology, chemistry and other sciences have learned that all of Nature’s components exist in constant balance. These elements are so interconnected and interdependent that harming even the smallest detail can throw the entire system off balance.

Monkeys Know Best

The secret to Nature’s balance is the reciprocal concern among all of its parts. This reciprocal concern is most evident in the animal kingdom: from insects and mammals that clearly show care for one another, such as ants, bees, monkeys and elephants, to the simplest microbes inside our bodies, which help each other find iron compounds. Researchers have discovered that sharing exists among the vegetative species, and even inanimate particles perform mutual actions to sustain the object they form.



Dr. Jane Goodall, who dedicated her life to studying chimpanzees in their natural habitats, summarized her extensive experience of living in Nature: “I found that which has been described as the peace beyond all understanding, and if we are to feel peace in the world today, that is the peace we must aim for to carry within us.”

Man vs. Nature

Unlike all other creatures, humans continually disturb the perfect balance of Nature’s systems. They exploit the environ-

ment, take pleasure in the suffering of others, and raise themselves on others’ ruins. Indeed, we are not always conscious of our actions. But in Nature, ignorance of the law does not exempt one from the penalty.

Whether we realize it or not, we are integral parts of Nature. Hence, when we treat our environment egoistically and try to exploit it, we bring about imbalance in the whole system.

In response, Nature does everything possible to rebalance its systems. Its response is automatic, just like when the pressure increases in the earth’s core to such an extent that the external layer of the earth can no longer sustain it, a volcano erupts.

While minerals, plants and animals are instinctively driven to maintain the natural balance, man has the unique opportunity to be balanced with Nature by *free choice*. This is man’s special role in Nature. Should we independently choose to balance ourselves with Nature, we will rise to a

new level of existence and experience the perfection that abounds in Nature.

The Ecological Crisis Is Merely a Symptom

The ecological problems we see are only symptoms indicating that we are out of balance with Nature. To solve the ecological crisis, we need to learn the laws operating in Nature and implement the same principles in our society.

In other words, we have to carry out the general law of Nature, *on the human level*. This means adopting Nature’s principle of reciprocity and concern for one another.

Does this mean that all people are supposed to care for each other’s needs? Yes, it does sound utopian. In fact, in today’s world, anything *besides* love among human beings seems to make sense to us: violence, crime, drug abuse, depression, suicide, poverty and segregation

are all considered routine and likely to happen. Even though we do not encourage any of these ills, we do see them as the inevitable “side-effects” of our lives, right?

Wrong. In fact, all of the above are completely unnatural.

Nature is impeccable and works in perfect harmony. All the problems in the world come from our incongruence with Nature’s laws. Because we don’t realize that we are an integral part of Nature, we tend to think that our egoistic attitude to each other is unrelated to problems such as the ecological crisis. In practice, however, everything we do affects every level of Nature, including the ecology.

Our disregard for the environment goes hand in hand with our disregard for each other. Hence, we cannot really try to correct our dealings with the environment while ignoring our dealings with each other.

Al Gore’s sincere call to the world to wake up and face our environmental challenge is definitely important. But to realize it, we need a method that will enable us to reveal Nature’s complete picture, and that will allow us to find balance with all of its elements, including between ourselves.

In their books, Kabbalists spell out precisely such a method. They describe a step-by-step path that leads to real, positive change. This change starts by correcting our relations with each other and leads to perfection in every realm of our lives. ■

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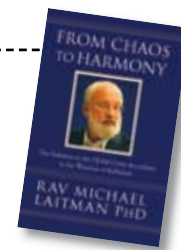
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FROM CHAOS TO HARMONY

“When a single person corrects his or her attitude toward others, this instigates a chain of events, a process of unconscious, positive changes in the awareness of all people.”



STORKS AND TEAMWORK

Every autumn, flocks of storks fly on their way south. Their journey over land and sea covers a great distance.

They begin from cold northern lands and migrate south towards warm Africa. Next autumn, look up at the sky and you'll see the V-shaped flock.

Why do they fly in a V?

Scientists have discovered the reason. When a bird flaps its wings, it creates momentum that eases the flight of the bird behind it.

This is why the V-shape lets the flock cover a much greater distance than one bird could ever do alone.

And another interesting fact: When one of the storks falls out of the flock because it is weak or hurt, two other storks immediately fly beside it to help and protect their fellow flyer.

They remain with the weak bird until it is strong enough to fly again, and only then do they rejoin the flock.

What can we learn from the storks' flight?

People who have a common goal will reach it faster and more easily if they join together in a group.

Each member will help another, and together they'll move forward better than apart.

This is why Kabbalists have always studied in groups.

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Q: But there is spirituality?

A: Yes, spirituality is that aspect of reality which is not perceived by our ordinary five senses. The wisdom of Kabbalah simply enhances your perception of reality. It gives you additional tools which you wouldn't acquire otherwise.

Just like physics gives you certain tools, Kabbalah gives you other tools. You need all kinds of sciences to achieve a complete picture of reality. Kabbalah takes you, so to speak, behind the scenes.

Picture it as embroidery. You see a beautiful picture in front of you, of scenery or a flower, etc. If you turn the embroidery around you see a whole mess of threads. You have to know how the threads are connected to know how to make it into a beautiful flower at the front of the picture. That's what Kabbalah teaches you, how to connect the threads from behind the scenes.

Q: How does Kabbalah change one's life?

A: When you begin to see the forces behind the embroidery we were talking about, you be-

gin to see how all the threads of your life are connected and then you begin to know how to make those connections better for you, so you don't make mistakes that you would otherwise make.

It puts every aspect of your life in order. For example, in families, it strengthens your family ties; in terms of education, it helps you understand your children and it helps you to be better understood by your children, it prevents such problems as drug abuse, depression because you begin to understand the world and live in harmony with it. The world isn't just nature; it's the people around you and yourself most of all. Kabbalah allows you to do that on a personal level, on the social level, and on the global level.

For example, today, it's not a secret that we have a global crisis. We see in every aspect of life, beginning from climate and ending in our own personal lives in depression and disease and whatnot, we have a crisis in every aspect of life. Kabbalah offers a solution because it tells you what's going on behind the scenes and how you can make a difference

there. Today, more than any other time in history, disclosing the wisdom of Kabbalah is a must.

Q: What is it like to connect with the Creator?

A: It's a personal connection. It's as if you stop caring for yourself and you experience everybody else's thoughts and cares. You become connected and related and you feel beyond. You don't just feel it,

you really are beyond time and place and motion. You become eternal in a way, because you have eternal perception. It gets you to a point where you just want to give and give.

Q: Is that why you want to share this with other people, because you want to give them this same experience?

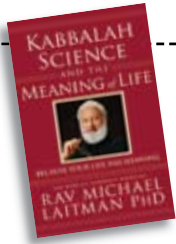
A: Yes, of course. You experience the harmony of nature and reality and you want

to share it. Also, it's not just a privilege. It's really an obligation, because the whole of humanity must come to that point where all of us experience that harmony. Actually, the crisis we are experiencing today is not coming for no reason. It is there to prompt us to think about life, to see how we can build our harmony with it. ■

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Rav Michael Laitman, PhD lecturing in the Marriot Marquise Hotel at Times Square, New York



KABBALAH, SCIENCE AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

“The laws of the Upper World pertain to a reality where time, space, and motion do not apply.”

THE CONSUMER EFFECT

by Seth Bogner

They (Almost) Hit the Jackpot

Myron Scholes and Robert Merton had everything scientists could ever wish for: a Nobel Prize in Economics, tenured professorships at the world's most prestigious universities and fame. But all of this waned when an opportunity presented itself in the mid-nineties. A well-known veteran broker dared the pair to put their genius into practice and make lots of money.

Scholes and Merton were certain that playing the market was like rolling dice: you can easily measure the probability for each and every occurrence. Their foolproof plan was to accurately predict the market through statistical studies.

The two scientists gathered a group of distinguished math and economy professors. Then, along with their ambitious broker, they established a private hedge fund (an investment fund that aims to profit under any market conditions). They called it Long-Term Capital Management or LTCM. The fund developed an investment policy based on mathematical models, established its headquarters in an upscale suburb near Wall Street, and business started rolling.

In four short years, the fund became the envy of every banker and trader on Wall Street. Veteran stock market sharks could not believe their eyes as the fund yielded an astounding 40% return a year with no losses or fluctuations. It seemed that the scientists had discovered a magic formula, identifying patterns in a world of unpredictability. In other words, they had found a way to make a whole lot of money.

Even the ever-skeptical investment bankers were impressed by the group. In fact, they were so impressed that they offered to leverage the fund with a credit of \$100 billion without even asking for the usual guarantees. The fund got financially linked to every bank on Wall Street and set

THE GLOBALIZATION OF ECONOMICS MEANS THAT ANY LOCAL MARKET IS INEXTRICABLY TIED TO THE GLOBAL ECONOMY. THE ONGOING DOLLAR DECLINE, LATELY SPURRED BY CHANGES IN CHINA'S MARKET, CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES HOW INTERDEPENDENT THE WORLD'S MARKETS HAVE BECOME.

WE HAVE TO DISCOVER THE RIGHT WAY TO ACT WITHIN AN INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM—AND WHAT'S A BETTER EXAMPLE TO STUDY THAN NATURE, THE MOTHER OF PERFECT, INTEGRAL SYSTEMS?

up an intricate chain of connections where every link affected the entire chain.

LTCM seemed invincible until one fateful night in September of '98, when the bubble suddenly burst. The disaster began with a seemingly innocuous event—the devaluation of the Thai baht. This triggered a sell-off across Asian and Eastern Europe markets, and the snowball just kept rolling until it eventually reached LTCM. The fund suffered total collapse, causing unprecedented distress to economic systems worldwide.

It seemed that the market was swiftly heading for the point of no return. In a dramatic step, Alan Greenspan, the legendary U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman, convened the heads of every large bank of Wall Street and Europe for an emergency closed-door meeting. Finally, only the economists' prayers and a very costly decision to rescue LTCM, managed to save the world from a deep economic crisis.

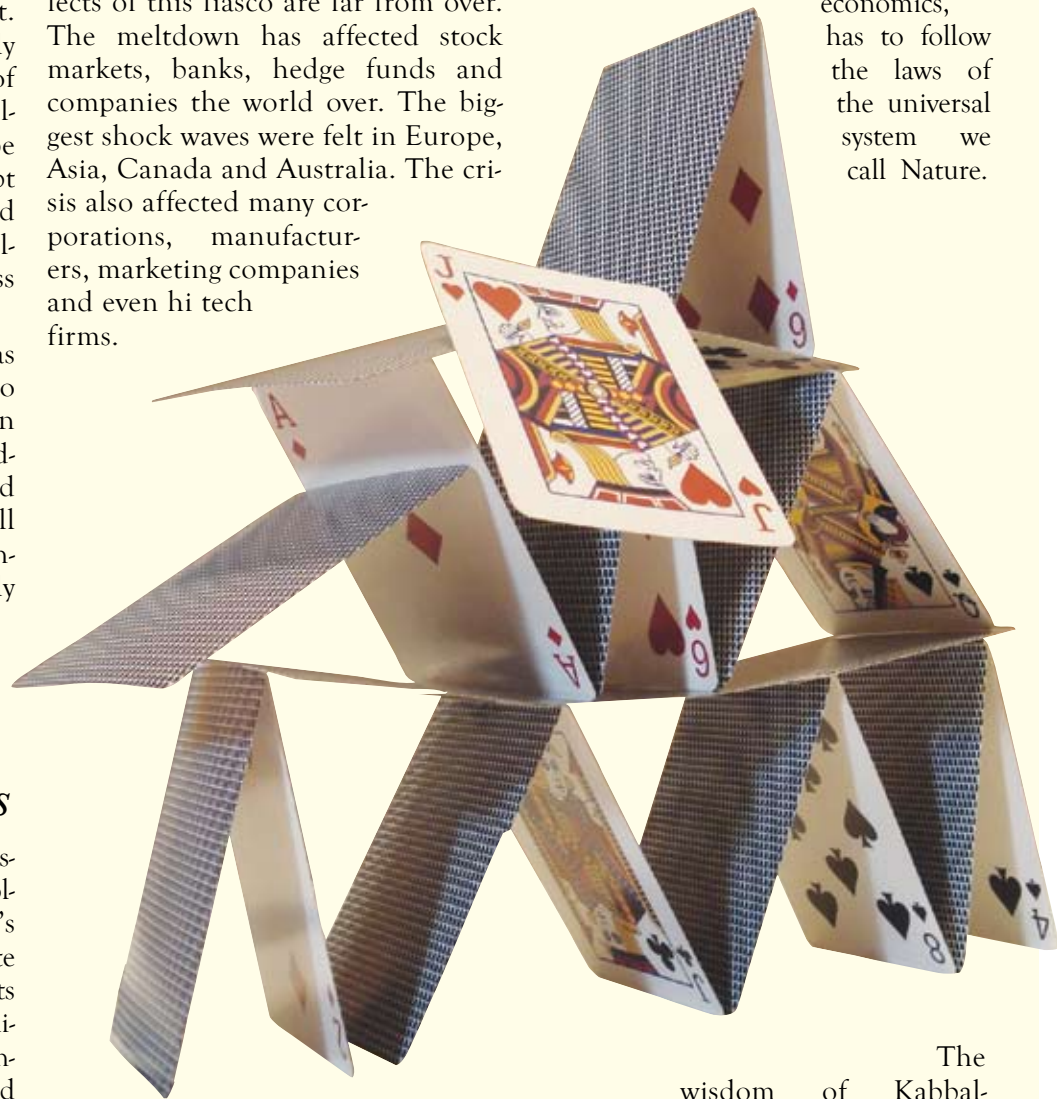
Collapse is Contagious

The current dollar decline is reminiscent of the situation that led to the collapse of LTCM. Although the dollar's been on a downward spiral for quite some time, the most dramatic fall in its value was spurred by a change in China's policy. China, pragmatically concerned with its own economy, started shifting away from the dollar currency and diversifying its investments. As the echoes of this decision reverberated throughout the world, countries like Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Venezuela, Sudan, Iran and Russia began considering a shift away from the dollar in order to safeguard their assets.

A similar trend unfolded during the recent Sub-Prime Mortgage crisis (a mortgage given to risky borrowers) that began in the U.S. and spread throughout the world. The effects of this fiasco are far from over. The meltdown has affected stock markets, banks, hedge funds and companies the world over. The biggest shock waves were felt in Europe, Asia, Canada and Australia. The crisis also affected many corporations, manufacturers, marketing companies and even hi tech firms.

The Systems Between Us

The answer, says the wisdom of Kabbalah, is actually quite simple. Best of all, you do not have to be a brilliant economist to figure it out. However, you do have to realize that we and everything we do, including economics, has to follow the laws of the universal system we call Nature.



Over and over, the sense of a global economic crisis resurfaces. All the attempts to predict economic trends have proved futile. Today, the million dollar question is: How do we establish a truly viable and stable economic system?

The wisdom of Kabbalah teaches that Nature's overarching plan is to bring all of its parts, including us, into perfect unity. In the framework of human society, this unity means that the work of every single individual benefits the whole of humankind.

KABBALAH REVEALED

“We must cultivate a mindset that enables us to form a united human family, a planetary civilization.”



The best example of such behavior are the cells of a living body: they are interconnected and give to each other in order to benefit the body as a whole. In this perfect system, the body provides a cell with everything it needs and the cell is fully dedicated to ensuring the body's well-being. In his article, “Building the Future Society,” Kabbalist Baal HaSulam writes that “...each member is obligated by Nature to receive his or her needs from society, and also to benefit society by his or her work.”

The artificial systems we have established in human society stand in complete contrast to Nature's plan. At the core of human behavior stands the ego, which puts these systems into motion. Our egos prefer constricted, personal interest over the benefit of the whole and advocate the pursuit of wealth, honor and control, even (or especially) at the expense of others.

All this bears a direct relation to economics. In our ego-based economic system, self-interests of capital and shareholders are the companies' top priority. Even when companies contribute to the community, one cannot help wondering whether such an act is not, in fact, a basic desire to glorify its name in the media for more publicity and a burnished reputation.

Globalization + Ego = Dead End

After thousands of years of egoistic development, we finally find ourselves in a tight corner: the more we try to profit from each other, the more we discover our connection to each other, much like the cells of a living body described above.

LTCM's collapse a decade ago, the recent credit crisis, and the current dollar decline demonstrate just how interconnected our systems are. The smallest fluctuation in a local market can put the entire global market in turbulence.

But what's more is that every action we make as consumers affects a whole gamut of other systems. Just like the “Butterfly Effect” metaphor used in chaos theory, “The Consumer Effect” works the same way.

When Rebecca from Philadelphia goes shopping at her neighborhood mall, she significantly affects the lives of many people around the world. The products she purchases may determine whether a factory will continue to operate, whether a family will have to relocate, and whether a child will be saved from starvation. When Dan from Charlottesville flips

through the TV channels at home, he affects the entire advertising market. One click of the remote control can affect the jobs and lives of thousands of people.

Globalization has made our world so fragile that the smallest crack can cause it to shatter. Local events like the mortgage crisis in the U.S., a natural disaster, a terrorist attack, and military tension in the Persian Gulf directly affect prices of international merchandise and threaten global economic stability.

The Way Out

“And the wonder about it is that Nature, like a proficient judge, punishes us according to our development, for our eyes can see, that the more humanity develops, the greater are the pain and suffering of attaining our keep and sustenance.”

Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), “The Peace”

The wisdom of Kabbalah gives us a much broader perspective on our situation. It explains that we are like children in this sandbox called Earth. And Nature is developing us gradually, much like a parent who teaches his children: the more we grow up, the more we are expected to play nicely.

Kabbalah explains that humanity is going through two parallel processes. On the one hand, Nature is pushing us to unite and work as one body. On the other hand, humanity's egoism is steadily growing, and the fact that these two processes are happening simultaneously is not a coincidence.

One way or another, humanity will have to invert its egoism and work as one body. But instead of having Nature push to make this change, Kabbalists suggest that we take control over the process and master it ourselves.

Kabbalists explain that through educational systems we can raise people's awareness that humanity is like a multi-celled body, and that we are all interconnected. By learning about the overall system of Nature and its principles, people will understand what changes to implement in our social systems in order to balance them with Nature.

By acting in accordance with Nature, we will prosper in every realm of our lives, including economics. Fortunately, we already have the science that explains Nature's underlying plan. It's called “the wisdom of Kabbalah.”

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■ Sneak-a-Peek @ the book *Kabbalah Revealed*

The wisdom of Kabbalah first appeared about 5,000 years ago, when humans began to ask about the purpose of their existence. Those who knew it were called “Kabbalists,” and had the answer to life's purpose and to the role of humanity in the universe.

But in those days, the desires of most people were too small to strive for this knowledge. So when Kabbalists saw that humanity did not need their wisdom, they hid it and secretly prepared it for a time when everyone would be ready for it. In the meantime, humanity cultivated other channels such as religion and science.

AFTER 5,000 YEARS, IT'S ABOUT TIME TO MEET THE MASTER PLANNER

Today, when growing numbers of people are convinced that religion and science do not provide the answers to life's deepest questions, they are beginning to look elsewhere for answers. This is the time that Kabbalah has been waiting for, and this is why it is reappearing—to provide the answer to the purpose of existence.

Kabbalah tells us that Nature, which is synonymous with the Creator, is whole, altruistic, and united. It tells us that we must not only understand Nature, but we must

also want to implement this manner of existence within ourselves.

Kabbalah also tells us that by so doing we will not only equalize with Nature, we will understand the thought that stands behind it—the Master Plan. Finally, Kabbalah states that by understanding the Master Plan, we will become equal to the Master Planner, and that this is the purpose of Creation—to equalize with the Creator.

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ATTAINING THE WORLDS BEYOND

“At the end of correction, all the souls that feel separated will unite with one desire and one thought, one delight and one Creator.”

“I SAW A REVERSED WORLD”

(BABYLONIAN TALMUD, TRACT PESACHIM)

**WHAT IS REALITY?
HOW DO WE
PERCEIVE IT? DOES
IT EXIST WITHOUT
US, OR IS IT
A PICTURE CREATED
WITHIN US,
DEPENDING ON OUR
INNER QUALITIES?
IT SEEMS OBVIOUS—
REALITY IS
EVERYTHING WE
SEE AROUND US:
HOUSES, PEOPLE,
THE ENTIRE
UNIVERSE....
REALITY IS WHAT
WE CAN SEE,
TOUCH, HEAR,
TASTE AND SMELL.
THIS IS REALITY.
OR IS IT?**



by Tony Kosinec

It's morning. You open your eyes and stretch. It's a new day, the sun is shining, and the birds are tweeting. But deep inside, you feel that something isn't right. You woke up on the wrong side of bed, and the last thing you feel like doing is getting up. But you remember that yesterday was a perfect day; you knew that it was going to be a great day the moment you woke up, and you shone all day long. And today, you don't even want to get out of bed.

So what actually changed? Did reality change? Or did you?

According to Kabbalah, the picture of the world as we know it is, in fact, non-existent. “The world” is a phenomenon felt by human beings. It reflects the extent to which a person's qualities match the quality of the ab-

stract force outside of him, the force of Nature.

So what is this force of Nature that surrounds us? Kabbalists describe it as the quality of absolute love and giving. Furthermore, they explain that the degree of equivalence between man's qualities and the quality of Nature is what man perceives as “the world.”

What does this mean? Let's use a radio receiver to demonstrate. The radio stations are continuously broadcasting, but we hear their broadcasts only when we tune the radio to a certain frequency. How does the radio receiver “catch” the broadcast? It generates an inner frequency that is identical to the sound waves in the air outside of it. So, the radio receiver “caught” the broadcast only after it had changed its inner frequency, but the sound waves were there all along.

Kabbalists explain that we perceive the reality outside of us in exactly the same way—according to the “frequency” that we generate within us. In other words, the reality that surrounds us is completely dependent on our inner qualities. Hence, *only we can change it.*

Still baffled?

One's Life Is Within Oneself

In order to understand the way we perceive reality, let's picture man as a closed box with five “openings”: eyes, ears, nose, mouth and hands. These organs represent our five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. We perceive reality through these five senses. The range of tones we can hear, colors we can see and so forth, are completely dependent on the perception of our senses.

For example, let's have a look at how our hearing mechanism works. First, the sound waves assemble next to the ear drum and cause it to vibrate. The ear drum's vibrations move the bones in the middle ear, and signals are sent to the brain as a result. The brain then translates the sound waves into sounds or voices. This is how we hear. In other words, the entire hearing process takes place *within us*. All our other senses work the same way.

The signals that arrive through all our senses go to the brain's control center. There, the newly received information is compared with the existing information in our memory. Based on this comparison, our brain then depicts a picture of a world that seems to exist “in front” of us. This process creates the feeling that we live in a specific “place,” even though that place is really inside of us.

So what do we truly perceive? Only *our inner reaction to the external stimuli*—not what is actually outside. We are “closed inside our box,” hence we can't really tell what's out there.

Our pictures of reality, therefore, result from the structure of our senses and the existing information in our brains. Years ago, science discovered that electrically stimulating the human brain will make us feel as if we're in a certain place and situation.

In fact, natural scientists already know that different creatures perceive the world differently. A cat's ability to see through darkness is six times greater than ours. The dog's sense of hearing is

much sharper and sensitive than ours—dogs can hear regular sounds long before people hear them. The human eye is tuned to a wavelength that ranges between purple and red. That is why we can't see a shorter wavelength than purple, such as ultraviolet. However, bees are able to perceive ultraviolet radiation and use it to locate different types of flowers.

Such examples easily show that if humans had other senses, they would perceive a completely different picture of reality.

It Was All a Dream

Kabbalists explain that man can perceive reality on two levels, and both are completely influenced by his inner qualities:

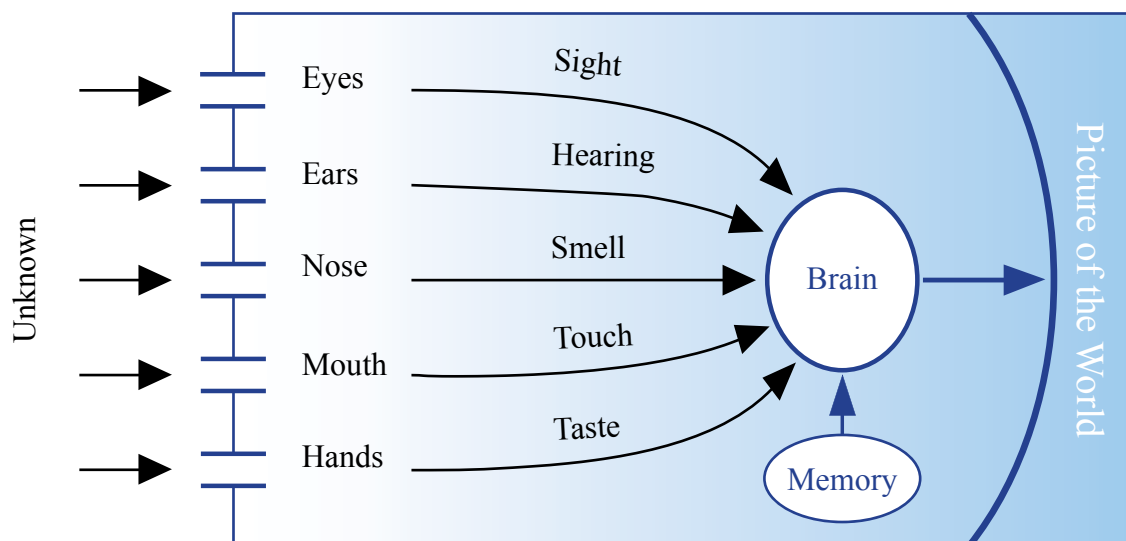
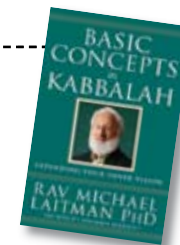
On the first level, a human being's inner quality is “egoism,” which is opposite to the quality of Nature. This quality of egoism, which we presently possess, makes us feel separated from others and even encourages us to take advantage of them. Egoism is also the reason that our picture of reality is a world of warfare, struggle, poverty and corruption.

However, gradually our life experience makes us realize that egoistic perception does not bring us true satisfaction, since it can never experience a pleasure that lasts.

On the second, higher level, our inner quality is absolute love and giving—just like the quality of Nature's force. Those who perceive the world this way can see how all people function as

BASIC CONCEPTS IN KABBALAH

“The science of Kabbalah offers its own method of researching the world. It helps us develop the ability to feel the concealed part of the universe.”



parts of one system, working in reciprocity and creating a circle of endless pleasure.

According to Kabbalah, our existence on the first level is just a phase we go through, and its whole purpose is to let us independently change our perception of reality. Kabbalists, who learned how to change their perception, define our present existence as “the imaginary life” or “the imaginary reality.”

In contrast, they call the corrected, whole and perfect existence “real life” or “the true reality.”

When looking back on their previous, egoistic perceptions, they describe them as a dream by saying, “we were like unto them that dream.”

Psalms 126:1

This means that presently the true reality is concealed from us. We do not feel it because we perceive ourselves and the world according to our inner qualities, which are presently egoistic. At the moment, we do not sense that all people are connected as one because we repel such a relationship. The egoistic desire imprinted within

us is not interested in such connections, and that is why it does not let us see the true picture of reality.

If we invert our egoism to the quality of Nature—loving and giving—we will feel and perceive completely different things around us that we did not notice before. Moreover, everything we saw before will look completely different—whole, eternal and purposeful. This is what Kabbalists mean in the verse, “I saw a reversed world”

Babylonian Talmud, Tract Pesachim

Taste and See

The wisdom of Kabbalah teaches that our purpose in life is to independently rise from our present, limited existence to the true, eternal existence.

How do we do it? The only way to break free of egoistic perception is to make contact with the reality that exists outside of it. To do this, we need authentic Kabbalah books because they were written by those who discovered the true picture of reality. In their books, Kabbalists tell us about the perfect reality that is, in fact, right next to us. We just need to change our inner frequencies in order to pick up the broadcast.

As one reads about the true reality, the fog is gradually cleared over one’s senses, and he starts sensing that reality. In fact, Kabbalists explain that it isn’t by understanding the text that we change our qualities. Even if a person does not understand what he reads, his desire to understand attunes his perception.

“Although they do not understand what they learn, through the yearning and the great desire to understand what they learn, they awaken upon themselves the lights that surround their souls ... Hence, even when one does not have the vessels, when he engages in this wisdom and mentions the names of the lights and the vessels related to his soul, they immediately shine upon him to a certain measure...”

Rabbi Yehudah Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), “Introduction to Talmud Eser Sefirot”

The difference between our present sensation of life and the one we can achieve is enormous. In order to somewhat describe it, *The Book of Zohar* compares it to the difference between a thin candle’s light and an infinite light, or as one grain of sand compared to the whole world. However, if you really want to know what it means, Kabbalists suggest that you see for yourself. ■

“Taste and see that the Lord is good.”

Psalms 34:8

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DREAMS

Many people are fascinated by dreams and dream interpretation. Some even believe that dreams contain important tips for life and can help us solve our problems. But as far as Kabbalah is concerned, a dream is nothing more than a physical phenomenon. Dreams have nothing to do with the soul or with spirituality.

When we’re asleep our brain processes the experiences we went through during the day and unloads some of the impressions we have acquired. It sorts the accumulated information and stores it in our memory. That’s all there is to dreams.

Don’t get confused when you find references to dreams in sacred books, such as *The Bible* or *The Book of Zohar*. Sacred books depict only the *spiritual* reality and the soul’s development. They never talk about any events of this world. Thus, even stories that seem to talk about dreams are actually talking about spiritual discernments one makes in one’s soul.

For example, the term “awake” in Kabbalah refers to one who feels the Creator’s Light in his soul, while “falling asleep” indicates that the Light has left his soul. When one’s soul is refilled by the Light, he “wakes up” to a new day.

Again, sacred books describe the spiritual states of a Kabbalist’s soul. They do not talk about our physical bodies or the dream phenomenon. A Kabbalist can experience the spiritual state called “dreaming” even while physically awake. There is no connection between the soul and the physical body; the two are completely separate.

extras



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KABBALAH IS NOT PHILOSOPHY

IN ANCIENT TIMES, KABBALAH INSPIRED GREAT MINDS TO SEARCH FOR MEANING, BUT THE BRANCH CALLED "PHILOSOPHY," WAS SOON TO VEER OFF IN ANOTHER DIRECTION

Perhaps we think of Kabbalists as secluded people hiding in dim, candle-lit chambers, writing magical scriptures. Well, until the end of the 20th century, Kabbalah was indeed kept secret. The clandestine approach toward Kabbalah evoked numerous tales and legends surrounding its nature. Although most of these tales are false, they still baffle and confuse even the most rigorous thinkers.

But Kabbalah was not always kept secret. In fact, the first Kabbalists were very open about their knowledge, and at the same time, very much involved with their societies. Often, Kabbalists were their nation's leaders. Of all these leaders, King David is probably the best known example of a great Kabbalist who was also a great leader.

The involvement of Kabbalists in their societies helped their contemporary scholars develop the basis of what we now know as "Western philosophy," which later became the basis of modern science. In that regard, here's what Johannes Reuchlin, a humanist, classics scholar, and expert in ancient languages and traditions, writes in his book, *De Arte Cabalistica*: "My teacher, Pythagoras, the father of philosophy, took his teaching from Kabbalists ... He was the first to translate the word, *Kabbalah*, unknown to his contemporaries, to

the Greek word *philosophy* ... Kabbalah does not let us live our lives in the dust, but elevates our mind to the height of knowledge."

But philosophers were not Kabbalists. Because they did not study Kabbalah, they couldn't fully understand the depth of Kabbalistic knowledge. As a result, knowledge that should have been developed and treated in a very specific way was developed and treated incorrectly. When Kabbalistic knowledge migrated to other parts of the world, where there were no Kabbalists at the time, it also took a different course.

Thus, humanity made a detour. Although Western philosophy incorporated parts of the Kabbalistic knowledge, it ended up taking an entirely different direction. Western philosophy generated sciences that researched our material world, that which we perceive with our five senses. But Kabbalah is a science that studies what happens *beyond* what our senses perceive. The changed emphasis drove humanity in the opposite direction from the original knowledge that Kabbalists obtained. This change in direction took humanity on a detour that resulted in the general misconception of what Kabbalah is really about. ■

QUOTES OF KABBALISTS

"One should scrutinize and study his essence and the purpose for which he came into this world."

Rabbi Baruch Ashlag (Rabash), *Shamati (I Heard)*

"Only through the expansion of the wisdom of Kabbalah in the masses will we obtain complete redemption."

Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), *Introduction to the Book Tree of Life*

"As one cannot sustain oneself without a measure of knowledge concerning the corporeal conducts of the world, one's soul cannot exist in the next world without acquiring a measure of knowledge of the natural orders of the spiritual systems and worlds."

Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), "From My Flesh Shall I See God"



About Bnei Baruch

Bnei Baruch is a non-profit organization committed to sharing the wisdom of Kabbalah in order to raise humankind's level of spirituality. Its founder and president, Kabbalist Rav Michael Laitman, PhD, was the disciple and personal assistant to Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, son of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (author of the *Sulam* [Ladder] commentary on *The Book of Zohar*).

Bnei Baruch provides individuals of all faiths, religions, and cultures with the precise tools they will need to embark on a fascinating journey of self-discovery and spiritual ascent. Its teaching method focuses primarily on the inner processes that people experience, each at his or her own pace.

In recent years, a massive worldwide search for the answers to life's questions has been gaining momentum. Society has lost its ability to perceive reality as it is, and in its place, superficial and often misleading concepts have appeared. Bnei Baruch reaches out to all those who are seeking awareness beyond the ordinary, who wish to understand their true purpose for being here.

Bnei Baruch's approach to understanding our experience of life on earth is both practical and reliable. By studying Ashlag's method, based on authentic writings, we can overcome the trials of everyday life, and initiate a process by which we will move beyond our present boundaries and limitations.

In addition to *Kabbalah Today*, Bnei

Baruch offers a variety of avenues for further study. Among them are: Kabbalah TV (www.kab.tv), the Online Kabbalah Education Center (www.arionline.info), and www.kabbalah.info, the largest, most comprehensive Kabbalah site on the Internet.

Bnei Baruch welcomes people of all ages and lifestyles to engage in this rewarding process.

About Kabbalah Today

In 1940, Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam) published the first and, as it turned out, the last issue of his Kabbalah paper *HaUma (The Nation)*. Its aim was to introduce the ancient wisdom of Kabbalah in a contemporary style and language. The paper was shut down by the British Mandate authorities after having received malicious (and false) information that the journal propagated communism. Nevertheless, the goals for which *The Nation* was published are even more valid today than ever.

Kabbalah Today continues the spirit of *The Nation*. It is a Kabbalah paper that shares the ancient wisdom of Kabbalah in a contemporary style, and aims to reach people from all walks of life. Its sections provide readers with a wide variety of content, presented in different styles and approaches, while guaranteeing that the material is true to authentic Kabbalah texts such as *The Book of Zohar*, *The Tree of Life*, and the writings of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag.

No prior knowledge is required to read *Kabbalah Today*.

It is our hope that you will enjoy reading *Kabbalah Today* as much as we enjoy making it.

Sincerely,
Kabbalah Today editorial staff

If you wish to share your comments and feedback with us, please write to:

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