

# KABBALAH TODAY

FREE

APRIL 2007, vol. 1, No. 2

AUTHENTIC WISDOM FOR A BETTER FUTURE

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The law of equivalence of form determines that being close to something means being similar to it.

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## INHERIT THE LAND

By Chaim Ratz

As a student of Kabbalah, Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, Shalom HaLevi Ashlag (the Rabash) had written down every word that his father, Rabbi Yehuda Leib HaLevi Ashlag had spoken. The Rabash's father was also known as Baal HaSulam for his *Sulam* (ladder) commentary on *The Book of Zohar*. These writings went into a notebook that the Rabash named *Shamati* (*I Heard*), indicating that it contained the words he had heard from his father. When Baal HaSulam passed away in 1954, the Rabash was left with a unique spiritual legacy. Within the pages of *Shamati* were descriptions of a Kabbalist's inner, spiritual work, revealing the innermost experiences of a soul learning to bond with the Creator.

Among the revelations in this book was an explanation, given in the winter of 1941, of the spiritual meaning of Abraham's journey to Egypt, and the subsequent liberation of the Children of Israel by Moses. It was a long talk, containing an incredible

ALL JEWISH HOLIDAYS SYMBOLICALLY DESCRIBE THE SOUL'S CONNECTION WITH ITS CREATOR. TO KABBALISTS, THE MOST IMPORTANT HOLIDAY OF ALL IS PASSOVER, WHICH SYMBOLIZES THE PASSING OF THE SOUL FROM A NARROW, CORPOREAL PERCEPTION TO A VAST, SPIRITUAL ONE.



wealth of information. Today, in this Passover issue, we will touch upon some of the concepts that Baal HaSulam conveyed then. These concepts are still mostly unknown to the public, and shed a new light on the familiar texts we recite on Passover.

On the eve of *Rosh Hashanah* (the Jewish New Year) in 1991, the Rabash passed away. But just before his passing, he gave the thick notebook containing his father's writings to his closest student and personal assistant,

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## FROM EXILE TO EXODUS

By Oren Levi

According to Kabbalists, the word *Mitzraim* (Egypt) is divided into two words—*Meitzar* (a strait, a narrow) and *Yam* (sea). Right before we achieve spirituality and oneness with the Creator, we feel pressed between two internal forces that seem to be pulling us in opposite directions. But these straits are actually the gateway to eternity, if and when we truly want to walk through them.

Like all Biblical stories, the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt has much greater significance than the debate as to whether the Israelites actually waded through the Red Sea. If you read this allegory with a Kabbalist's eye, you will find that every word in this familiar tale receives a profound, even sacred meaning.

Every word in the Torah (Pentateuch) reflects a certain manner of connecting to the Creator. Moses, the protagonist in the story of Egypt, represents not only a specific type of contact with the Creator, but is the very desire to make that first contact with Him, the bridgehead.

It is written in the Mishnah (*Sutah* 9:15) that at the end of days, impudence, or self-centeredness, will soar. The text describes the essence of the generation that will be alive at the end of days, the time of the Messiah, as "the face of the generation is as the face of a dog."

**When hope is (almost) gone, the sea will break in two, and we will cross it towards freedom, and towards the Creator**

The transition from being a self-centered (doglike) generation to being a Creator-centered (Godlike) generation is described in the Torah as "the crossing of the Red Sea." Curiously, the Hebrew name for the Red Sea is *Yam Suf*, since, according to *The Book of Zohar* (Part 2, p. 56), *Suf* actually means *Sof* (end). In other words, when the Moses within us has used all the "tricks in his bag" to pull us out of Egypt and toward the Creator, we will find ourselves standing at the shores of the Sea, the end of the road. And when hope is (almost) gone, the sea will break in two, and we

will cross it towards freedom, and towards the Creator.

When we reach *Yam Suf*, we will pass over to the other side. Moreover, we will do it with the help of the Creator, who will block the Egyptians (our self-centeredness), and pave our way to freedom through Moses (the part in us that focuses on the Creator).

At the end of the day, Passover is the end of the previous day, but also the beginning of tomorrow and the prospect of our new freedom.

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## Editor's Note

### Between Moses and Pharaoh

One fateful night in Egypt some thirty-three centuries ago, a nation of slaves rebelled and fled from its oppressors. Since that night, the story of the exodus from Egypt has become the symbol of resistance to oppression.

The exodus from Egypt is in fact, a picturesque description of the most consequential, far-reaching moment in one's life—the passing over from the corporeal world to the spiritual world. Kabbalists call it "the crossing of the barrier." A person who crosses the barrier discovers a vast world where the Creator and the soul converse freely, and the Creator becomes that person's guide. Such people were Abraham, Moses, and all the prophets and Kabbalists who followed them. Such is also the future of each of us—to walk freely in the world of the Creator.

All of the stories in the Five Books of Moses symbolize different spiritual processes. If we know how to read them, they will teach us about our future spiritual states. For example, the story of the Children of Israel's exodus from Egypt is unique—it is the only Bible story that describes the process of how one enters the spiritual world.

In all the ancient scriptures, the Creator is described as a benevolent, giving entity. Kabbalah explains that entering the spiritual world means becoming like Him—benevolent. To enter the spiritual world and make first contact with the Creator, Kabbalists tell us we must learn how to become giving, since this would make us similar to Him. Kabbalists regard Moses as a tiny point in our hearts that wants to be like the Creator—giving. Pharaoh, on the other hand, is the

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"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

--Amos, 8:11-12

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Michael Laitman, who would become his successor. These notes were later published in a book, which Rav Laitman naturally titled, *Shamati (I Heard)*.

## A Mixed Blessing

One starry night, the Creator brought Abraham out of his tent and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars; if thou be able to count them... so shall thy seed be" (Genesis 15:5). But Abraham's reaction was not what we might expect. His reply was, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (Genesis 15:8).

To that, the Creator replied just as surprisingly: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them" (Genesis 15:8). And the Cre-

Abraham asked no further. He was satisfied.

But one question does remain open: why did Abraham's seed have to go through such torments if the Creator always intended to make them rich and independent, and



Jews cross Red Sea pursued by Pharaoh  
Fresco from Dura Europos synagogue

ator continued, explaining what He would do to the oppressors: "And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Thus, after all this torment, Abraham's descendants would be both free and wealthy.

**Why did Abraham's seed have to go through such torments if the Creator always intended to make them rich and independent, and give them their own land? Couldn't He give it to them without first afflicting them?**

To answer this question, Baal HaSulam first explains the meaning of the key elements in the story—Moses, Egypt, "land," and "great substance." In Kabbalah, says Baal HaSulam, Moses is actually man's desire to bond with his Creator, and Egypt is the desire to enjoy life as it is, without

processes, which they define as the process of one's bonding with the Creator. If we are aware of this as we read Kabbalistic writings, we will see how relevant their words are, and how they can relate to any person, regardless of faith or gender. Their message is both personal and, at the same time, universal.

thinking of the Creator. This is why Pharaoh, King of Egypt, says "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" (Exodus 5:2).

Kabbalists never write or talk about the physical realm; they write only about internal, spiritual

will of her Maker" (Midrash Raba, 5:8).

Another great example of this inward focus concerns the word "Israel."

*Ysrael*, according to *The Book of Zohar* (VaYshlach, item 247), is really two combined words: *Yashar* (straight, direct) and *El* (God). In other words, when Kabbalists write about Israel, they are actually referring to a desire to bond with the Creator.

The story of the exodus from Egypt is an allegory. It gently points to elements that exist in each of us, and we can choose to tap into them or not. In the story, both Moses and Pharaoh want to enjoy the benefits of bonding with the Creator. This is why the ancient pharaohs helped Israel settle in Egypt. Even Moses, the son of a Hebrew slave, was raised as a prince by Pharaoh's family.

## The Missing Piece

Because Pharaoh knows that his contact with the Creator depends on his contact with the Israelites (the desire for the Creator), he cannot let them leave Egypt. In fact, the only difference between Moses and Pharaoh is that Moses is the part within us that wants the Creator to rule, and Pharaoh is the part within us that wants us to rule, say-

ing "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?"

Clearly, if the Creator were some entity "stationed" somewhere in Heaven, Pharaoh would have no reason to give up his throne. Giving up his throne would mean subordination to someone (or something) else. And indeed, why should he relinquish his throne? To answer that question, we need another piece of information—the Creator's will.

Kabbalah explains that the Creator is not a person, or even an entity. Instead, the Creator is the biggest desire of all—the desire to give pleasure, not to receive it. Imagine what pleasures you could have if such an enormous desire to give was working to please you? If we think about it, it's not so hard to understand Pharaoh's point of view.

The "missing piece" of information that Moses knows, and Pharaoh doesn't, is the Creator's ultimate wish. Because He is so giving, He wants to give us His all. Put differently, He wants to make us godlike, just as He is. To accomplish that, He must teach us who He is, and to learn who He is we must agree to follow Him.

Because Pharaoh doesn't know that the Creator wants to make him godlike, he cannot obey His voice. Pharaoh is afraid that if

he gives up his throne, he will be left with nothing. He simply cannot understand that he will receive both this world and all the spiritual worlds, too. Therefore, he believes he must fight the Creator to the end.

Moses, on the other hand, understands what is at stake, since he has already made contact with the Creator. And because he knows the great benefits that await those who join him, he must fight Pharaoh so he can liberate Israel, meaning all those who want to go straight to God.

**The Creator is the biggest desire of all—the desire to give pleasure, not to receive it**

Today, many centuries after Moses, a multitude of people are awakening to spirituality. A surge of seekers seems to be engulfing the world. These people contain within them the desires that did not attain the spiritual realm in Moses' time. We are experiencing today the same desire that Israel experienced back in Egypt, a hunger for something higher.

This hunger for spirituality is Moses, the desire to bond with the Creator, awakening in the whole of humanity. This hunger also makes the world around us feel more and more like Egypt, a land of material wealth and spiritual dearth. But this time, Egypt is as big as our planet; the whole of humanity is afflicted by spiritual emptiness, and the whole of humanity must be liberated.

Luckily, we have experience to guide us today—the experience gained by the Children of Israel in Egypt can now be found in Kabbalah books. These books are written for just that purpose—to help us resolve the Pharaoh-Moses conflict on the personal level, as well as on the global level. If we understand Passover from its Kabbalistic perspective, we will turn the world's (and our personal) predicaments into adventurous challenges. This approach will elevate humanity to a new level of existence—the spiritual realm, resulting in true liberty and justice for all. ■

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### Questions and Answers

**I was surprised to read in the Haggada (tales for Passover night) that Pharaoh made Israel come nearer to the Creator. How is a negative force capable of working for the Creator and against itself?**

Pharaoh is the force of the Creator. It is a good force that takes a negative appearance in us, as it says: "Two angels lead one to the goal—the 'good' and the 'bad'."

The whole experience of progress in Kabbalah pertains to the acquisition of new forces of bestowal. If we had only good inclinations, we would never be able to advance. Therefore, it is important to relate to Pharaoh as the Force of the Creator that was given to us for our assistance. Pharaoh promotes us by awakening in our egos a desire to advance and develop materially. From awakening that desire, we begin to understand that material progress doesn't give us anything, and that true development is spiritual.

When, under the influence of Pharaoh, we begin to develop spiritually, we search in the spiritual world for what could fulfill our desire for pleasure.

Thus, our own egoism, Pharaoh, is the motivating force behind everything.

We can only enjoy the (very small) pleasures in our world. Once they are gone, they leave us feeling emptier and even more dissatisfied than before. Pharaoh must motivate us to spirituality so that afterwards, when we receive the spiritual delight, he (egoism) will take it for himself. This is why it is written that Pharaoh helped Israel (desires for the Creator) draw nearer to Him.

**What happens to my desires once I cross the Red Sea and enter spirituality?**

When we enter spirituality, our will to receive grows in quality; we want to take pleasure in the Creator and not in pleasures of this world, which are mere costumes over the pleasure that comes from the Creator. In each spiritual degree, we are given a greater portion of desire to enjoy. ...Each additional desire should be used in our search for a connection with the Creator.

--Michael Laitman  
*The Kabbalah Experience*

"The source of the hunger is not the hunger itself, but rather the thirst of the men and women of the younger generation. They are fainted by thirst, devoid of the "stay of water" to rekindle the heart and the mind that has reawakened within them from the source of life... the great spiritual questions that were once known only to the great and to the outstanding, must now be known, to various degrees to the whole nation."

--The Rav Kook, *Eder HaYakar (The Goodly Price)*, p. 144

■ Campus Kabbalah

# ON ROOTS AND BRANCHES

By Gilad Shadmon

To understand the phenomena in our world, we must first understand their origin. If we honestly examine reality, we will have to admit that we have no idea why things happen the way they do. In every field of human knowledge—exact sciences, social science, medicine, or culture—we are unable to thoroughly and accurately explain why things unfold as they do. If we could, we would be able to prevent future misfortunes from occurring.

Once something has gone awry, we may rationalize its causes in a thousand different ways, but at the end of the day, the best we'll come up with is a calculated guess. Here are a few examples: "If I had been wearing my warm coat when we went out last night, instead of trying

laws are undetectable to ordinary persons until they begin to apply the wisdom of Kabbalah to their lives. As a consequence, a new understanding of reality emerges, and with it, the ability to shape it.

Take gravity, for example. If we stand on a chair and jump to the floor, it might be a game. But if we jump off the roof of a ten-story building, it'll probably prove tragic. In this example, the mistake and its consequence are immediate, so we can link the result directly to its cause: "The man died because he jumped off the roof of a ten-story building."

**We need a tool that can probe the depths of our souls and discover how things work at the level of cause, rather than at the level of effect**

to look chic in my leather jacket, I wouldn't have been sick today." "The dollar is plunging because of the huge trade deficit." "The Knicks are losing their home games because the players feel more pressure at home."

To really understand why things happen and how they evolve, we must look deeper than at the level of results. We need a tool that can probe the depths of our souls and discover how things work at the level of cause, rather than at the level of effect. For such intense examinations, the "Hubble telescope" of introspection and self-scrutiny is the wisdom of Kabbalah.

The wisdom of Kabbalah is a research tool, which, if used correctly, grants its users knowledge about every phenomenon in both this world and the spiritual worlds. Rather than treating reality as a muddle of incidents, Kabbalah describes the events of our world according to the absolute and unchanging laws of nature. These

But what if that man didn't die as soon as he hit the ground? What if he got up, dusted off his clothes and walked away, but suddenly died a year later, without any obvious connection to his jump twelve months earlier? How would he know that he should not have jumped?

**The wisdom of Kabbalah is a research tool, which, if used correctly, grants its users knowledge about every phenomenon in both this world and the spiritual worlds**

He would need a means that showed him what his jump would lead to, in a year's time. This is exactly what Kabbalah does—it sees the causes and their consequences. In Kabbalistic terms, we say that it reveals the connections between the branches (consequences) and their roots (causes).

Gravity is a law. It cannot be "detoured" or lied to. We can, however, study it and learn how to use it to our benefit. But if we did not know it existed, and did not see the connection between gravity

and its consequences, how would we be able to avoid falling?

Probably the most basic principle of criminal law is



that ignorance of the law does not exempt one from punishment. In much the same way, you cannot jump off a building and say, "Oops, sorry, I didn't think..."

The laws that Kabbalah describes are just as rigid. The only difference between these spiritual laws and physical laws is that we don't see the spiritual laws because we are detached from spirituality. To a Kabbalist, who is connected to spirituality as tangibly as you and I are connected to the physical world, these laws are as clear and real

as the force of gravity. To a Kabbalist, ignoring these laws is similar to the man who jumped off the tenth floor being asked halfway down, "How's it going buddy?" and him replying, "It's a breeze!"

## The Law of Root and Branch

The first law we will explore is "The Law of Root and Branch." This law determines that everything that happens in the material world replicates events

that take place in a higher world. Kabbalists describe a higher world that is presently hidden from our senses, but which for them

is very concrete. In fact, it is so concrete that they consider that other world as the basis for everything that happens in our world. They call the world they see, "the world of reasons" or "the root world," and refer to our world as "the world of consequences" or "the world of branches."

Kabbalists teach us that everything we think, feel, imagine, see, and hear has been predetermined in a higher world. Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag describes this law in his essay "The Essence of the Wisdom of Kabbalah." According to Ashlag, "There is no element of reality, or of an event in reality, that you do not find in the Upper World as similar as two

drops in a pond. They are called 'root and branch,' indicating that the element in the lower world is considered a branch compared to its sample template in Upper World, which is the root of the element in the lower world, since that element in the lower world has been imprinted and formed from there."

Using Kabbalah, we can affect this higher system and actually change our fates! First, we need to learn

**First, we need to learn how that system works, and then learn how to operate it by ourselves**

how that system works, and then learn how to operate it by ourselves. Every Kabbalah book describes how the spiritual (root) system works, enabling us to find these actions in our souls. When we find them in our souls, we can "play" with them, and as a result, change our reality. This is what Kabbalists refer to when they talk about *Tikkun* (correction). ■

■ Editor's Note

## Between Moses and Pharaoh

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core of evil, the epitome of egoism.

Because Moses is weak and cannot defeat the powerful, egoistic Pharaoh, the Creator kindly offers His help: "Certainly I will be with thee" (Exodus 3:12). All through the story of exodus, Moses keeps returning to the Creator, and the Creator keeps sending him to face Pharaoh. And every time Moses wins a round, the Creator hardens Pharaoh's heart even more.

Israel, in Kabbalah, personifies Moses' "friends," desires that want to be givers, too. When Pharaoh's oppression becomes too much to bear, the people of Israel understand that they have no other choice but to make a run for it. They feel that they have to escape egoism, even if it means being lost in the desert.

In the desert, they find two things: they pass over to the spiritual world and discover the Creator, and in the process, they discover their love for one another. Ever since that moment at the foot of Mt. Sinai, the revelation of the Creator has meant fleeing from Pharaoh (egoism), following Moses (altruism), and bonding with our fellow human beings.

This second issue of *Kabbalah Today* will dedicate much of its space to the holiday of Passover, showing how we can tap into its deep, spiritual meaning. ■

■ Questions and Answers

### Is Kabbalah a mystical experience?

Kabbalah is not a mystical experience. It is an explanation of a system of natural laws of which we are all part, and which we must learn how to use to our benefit. These laws are active on all levels of nature—still, vegetative, animate, and speaking. Therefore, when we discover them, we can improve all aspects of our world, from climate change to social structures.

### What is the meaning of Passover?

All the holidays represent specific phases in one's path of discovery and understanding of the Upper World, the Creator, leading to the state of complete unification with

Him. *Pesach* (Passover), for example, represents our exit from the sensation of the material world to the sensation of the spiritual world.

It happens when we begin to feel an external, broader world beyond our physical world. We begin to see how spiritual forces affect us, altering the course of physical events and processes in our world.

Passover is the only holiday that is still connected with our material world, or rather, to our exit from it. All other holidays signify a process of discovery and understanding of the spiritual world far beyond our own. To advance toward the spiritual worlds, we must be well versed in the rules that govern them.

--Michael Laitman  
*The Path of Kabbalah*



"I am more fond of sinners who know that they are sinners, than of righteous who know that they are righteous. But sinners who think that they are righteous will never march the path of truth, since even at the gates of hell they will think that they have been brought there to save others."

--Rabbi Yaakov Ytzhak Horovitz (1745-1815), known as The Seer of Lublin.

## Kabbalah Icons

By Eli Vinokur

# ISAAC LURIA—THE HOLY ARI (1534-1572)

Within a mere year and half, Isaac Luria (the Holy Ari) revolutionized Kabbalah and made it accessible to all. Since his time, his "Lurianic Kabbalah" has become the predominant approach to the study of Kabbalah

Rabbi Isaac Luria (The Holy Ari) was the greatest Kabbalist in 16<sup>th</sup> century Zephath, a city in northern Israel famed for its Kabbalist population. He was also one of the most influential individuals in the history and evolution of the wisdom of Kabbalah.

The Ari's life was shrouded in mystery and legends. One such legend is that when he was born, his father was told that his son was destined for greatness. The Ari's sudden demise at age thirty-

As a young boy, the Ari would confine himself to his room for hours or even days at a time. He would immerse himself in *The Book of Zohar*, the most important book of Kabbalah, trying to understand its subtleties. Many a folktale describes how the Ari was awarded "the revelation of Elijah" (a unique spiritual revelation), and that he studied *The Zohar* "from him." To the Ari, *The Book of Zohar* was the whole world.

As Zephath was the capital of Kabbalist studies in



Zephath — the ancient kabbalistic town. Galilee, Israel

**Finally, with the arrival of the Ari in Zephath and the public's subsequent exposure to *The Book of Zohar*, it appeared that it was now time to introduce the secrets of Kabbalah to the masses**

eight, when he was in his prime, remains a mystery even today.

The Ari was born in Jerusalem in 1534. At the age of eight, he lost his father, and his family was left destitute. Driven by despair, his mother decided to send young Isaac to live with his uncle in Egypt, where he spent many years until his arrival in Zephath.

the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it attracted many practitioners from near and far. Additionally, Zephath is located not far from Mt. Meron, the burial place of Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai, author of *The Book of Zohar*.

The year the Ari left Egypt and went to Zephath, a harsh winter struck Egypt. Torrential rains created massive flash floods, gale force winds tore roof-

tops off buildings, and the Nile spilled over its banks, inundating whole villages under a deluge of mud and water.

One legend has it that on one of the stormiest nights of this dreadful winter, Prophet Elijah was revealed to the Ari. Elijah, as the legend claims, told

**The Ari's ability to transform Kabbalah from a method for a chosen few to a method for everyone, made him a spiritual giant for the ages**

the Ari, "Your end is near. Go, leave here; take your family and go to the town of Zephath, where you are eagerly awaited. There, in Zephath, you will find your disciple, Chaim Vital. You will convey your wisdom to him, anoint him after you, and he will take your place." Elijah also revealed to the Ari: "You did not come into this world but to correct the soul of Rabbi Chaim, for he is a precious soul."

Thus, in the year 1570, in the dead of winter, the Ari went to Zephath, in the land of Israel. He was thirty-six at the time, and he had two years left to live.

We know today that all of the writings of the Ari were actually written by Rabbi Chaim Vital, who wrote down everything he had learned from the Ari during the mere eighteen months they were together in Zephath.

## A Revolutionary and a Kabbalist

Kabbalists kept the wisdom of Kabbalah hidden for 1,500 years prior to the Ari. They would rise at midnight, light a candle and shut the windows so their voices wouldn't be heard outside. Then they would reverently open the Kabbalah books and delve into them, striving to grasp hidden truths. In those days, Kabbalah was a secret study, taught behind closed doors. Kabbalists were reluctant to publicize their work because they feared it would be misinterpreted. "The generation," they said, "is not yet ready."

Humanity had been waiting for many centuries for the right guide to open the gates of the wisdom of Kabbalah to the public. Finally, with the arrival of the Ari in Zephath and the public's

## The Spiritual Guide

# Humankind and Human Kindness

By Aviram Sadeh

In the 1930s, Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam) published a series of articles concerning the state of the people of Israel and the state of the world. In these articles, he outlined the principles by which he believed society could succeed. The short articles in the Spiritual Guide section will be primarily based on his writings and those of his son and successor, Rabbi Baruch Ashlag.

The basis of human nature is egoism. This is hardly a secret. In fact, the Bible acknowledges this condition almost at the very beginning: "...man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21), and Kabbalists explain that the evil inclination is our egoism. The question this brings to mind is, "If egoism is so bad, why did the Creator place it in

us and made us evil from our youth?"

Practically every religion and every teaching tackles the challenge of egoism. Religions in general tell us to suppress it, and eastern philosophies tell us that we need to diminish it. In the words of the famous Chinese philosopher, Lao-tzu, "Manifest plainness; embrace simplicity; reduce selfishness; have few desires" (*The Way of Lao-tzu*).

These modes of coping with the human inclination towards egoism worked well for many years. But today, our egoism is soaring to unprecedented levels, and for many people, the familiar ways of coping with it just don't seem to work.

This would not be such a problem if only a few were affected by it. But when it occurs in great numbers and in many countries simultaneously,

we have a global challenge. In such a state, we need a different mode of thinking, one that acknowledges the fact that we cannot defeat our egoism because it is our very nature. Therefore, we need to find a way to use it to our benefit, rather than abolish it.

In his article, "Peace in the World," Baal HaSulam uses the section, "Using the Nature of Singularity as a Subject of Evolution in the Collective and in the Individual" to introduce a solution he believes will work. His method is really quite simple and very practical—he suggests that since we are already individualists, we should not try to change this, but instead use our personal skills and abilities for the *common good*.

In other words, he says we cannot and should not change our individualistic nature. In-

stead, we should use our personal skills, develop them to the maximum, and work with them in a way that benefits the whole of society. If we use our desires to contribute to society, and everyone else uses their skills to contribute to each other, Earth will very quickly become nothing less than Paradise.

At the moment, explains Baal HaSulam, we are using our skills for two purposes: to develop ourselves and to hinder the development of others. This may not be easy to detect on a personal level because we are naturally reluctant to examine ourselves objectively, but we can see it happening among nations, as well as among rival ethnic groups within nations. The result is that we are spending huge amounts of time, energy, and money just to undo what others are doing to us.

Imagine the kinds of achievements we could attain if, instead, we only used these resources to further our own development. Even better, imagine if every person now using their resources to hinder others' progress used them to help each other and promote others' development in every way possible.

Negative concepts that are so common in today's international, financial, and alas, personal relationships would simply cease to exist. They would become redundant. Suspicion, concealment of information, and mistrust would all vanish, and we would turn our energy to productive avenues. We would feel that we *want* to contribute to everyone, and everyone would feel that they wanted to contribute to each other. In that state, the whole of humanity would be one. ■

(Abraham contemplated): "How is it possible that this wheel will always drive, without a driver? And who is driving it? After all, it cannot drive itself! And he had no teacher, and no one to let him know. Instead, he was immersed in Ur Kasdim, surrounded by idolaters, fools. And his father, and his mother, and all the people were idolaters. And he, too, was idol-working with them, and his heart roamed and understood, until he attained the path of truth, and knew that the whole world were on the wrong."

—Rambam, *Yad HaHazakah (The Mighty Hand)*, Idolatry Rules.



subsequent exposure to *The Book of Zohar*, it appeared that it was now time to introduce the secrets of Kabbalah to the masses.

It is difficult to overstate the Ari's importance and stature. Within merely eighteen months, he had left a huge mark on the history of Kabbalistic thought. Moreover, he made that mark without writing a single word himself, as his

notable publication is *Eight Gates*, a series of eight books describing—among other things—the concept of reincarnation. Many more invaluable books were prepared from the Ari's short time in Zephath, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to describe them.

When the Ari arrived in Zephath, he organized a group of Kabbalists who became known as the "The

...in my days, the channels were blocked... and in his days the channels will be revealed. ...and know that he is a great man, a spark of the Rashbi [Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai]." It appears that the Ramak destined the Ari to succeed him, and instructed his students to accept him as their teacher.

The Ari passed away at age 38 after falling ill from an epidemic that broke out



entire Kabbalistic teaching was revealed only through the writings of his student, Rabbi Chaim Vital.

While Chaim Vital, the Ari's prime student and sole successor, wrote all of the Ari's teachings, he was unable to publish all his writings in his lifetime. This work was carried forward by Vital's kin and students over the following centuries.

Among the foremost writings Rabbi Vital did publish was the book, *Etz Chaim (The Tree of Life)*. In this book, Rabbi Vital presents the Ari's Kabbalistic teachings in a clear and simple style. Another

Ari Cubs." Among its members were some of the most illustrious Kabbalists of the time. Rabbi Shlomo Elkabetz, composer of the famous song, *Lecha Doddi* (Go, My Beloved), and the great Kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Kordovero (the Ramak) are but two of them.

The Ramak is also regarded as the first to recognize the Ari's greatness; he was both the Ari's student and his friend. Shortly before his passing, the Ramak said to his students, "Know, that there is one man, who is sitting here, who will rise after me and enlighten the eyes of the generation with the wisdom of Kabbalah.

in the summer of 1572. His appearance was a forerunner to a whole new era of human and spiritual stage. He was not only among the greatest Kabbalists, but also among the first to be given "permission from Above" to disclose the wisdom of Kabbalah to the masses. His ability to transform Kabbalah from a method for a chosen few to a method for everyone, made him a spiritual giant for the ages. Today, many more souls are ready for spiritual elevation, and they need his method—the Lurianic Kabbalah, the method that Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Holy Ari, devised. ■

## THE TREE of LIFE

A poem by Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Holy Ari)

Behold that before the emanations were emanated and the creatures were created,  
The Upper Simple Light had filled the whole existence.  
And there was no vacancy, such as an empty atmosphere, a hollow, or a pit,  
But all was filled with Simple, Boundless Light.  
And there was no such part as head, or end,  
But everything was Simple, smooth Light, balanced evenly and equally,  
And it was called the Endless Light.

And when upon His simple will came the desire to create the world and emanate the emanations,  
To bring to light the perfection of His deeds, His names, His appellations,  
Which was the cause of the creation of the worlds,  
He then restricted Himself, in the middle,  
Precisely at the center,  
He restricted the light.

And the light drew far off to the sides around that middle point.  
And there remained an empty space, a vacuum  
Circling the middle point.  
And the restriction had been uniform  
Around the empty point,  
So that the space was evenly circled around it.

There, after the restriction,  
Having formed a vacuum and a space  
Precisely in the middle of the endless light,  
A place was formed,  
Where the emanated and the created might reside.  
Then from the Endless Light a single line hung down,  
Lowered down into that space.  
And through that line, He emanated, created, formed, and  
Made all the worlds.  
Before these four worlds came to be  
There was one infinite, one name, in wondrous, hidden unity,  
And even in the angles closest to Him  
There is no force and no attainment in The Endless,  
As there is no mind that can perceive Him,  
For He has no place, no boundary, no name.

### Questions and Answers

#### What is the difference between this world and the spiritual world?

This world is the lowest point that a Kabbalist attains. It is the total opposite of the Creator and is termed, "the exile in Egypt." The natural power that works on us in that state, the power of our egoistic nature, doesn't allow us to advance anywhere except to care for ourselves. This is called "the state of Pharaoh."

Our egoism doesn't let us feel the sublime and perfect state. It is egoism, man's inner and vicious force called "Pharaoh," that the Torah (Pentateuch) speaks of at length. The force that liberates us of that state and admits us into the spiritual world is called "Moses." Pharaoh, Moses, and everything that is written about the exodus describe spiritual states and emotions.

—Michael Laitman  
*The Path of Kabbalah*

#### Is it possible to change the future through Kabbalah?

The Kabbalah is meant for precisely that purpose.

—Michael Laitman  
*The Kabbalah Experience*

### Sneak-a-Peek @ the book *From Chaos to Harmony*

## A New Direction

Our egos grow daily, and they will intensify the contrast between nature and us. To spare us the experience of the suffering this contrast entails, we should begin to advance toward acquiring nature's quality of altruism.

People are built in such a way that we feel that things outside us change, not us. This is how reality is perceived in human senses and in the human mind. In truth, however, nature's force is constant and unchangeable. If we are identical to it, we feel wholeness. If we are completely opposite, we feel that this force is totally against us. In between these two extremes, we feel the intermediary stages.

When one begins to balance oneself with nature's quality, the pressure for self-change lessens. This, in turn, reduces the negative experiences in one's life. In fact, from nature's perspective, nothing changes in this scheme; it is the individual who changes. Thus, the change itself creates in that person

a sensation that nature's impact has changed.

Today, the contradiction between us and the altruistic force of nature is not at its worse, since our egos have not reached their maximum level of development. This means that the level of negative phenomena we are experiencing could still grow stronger. This, by the way, is also the reason some of us still do not feel the general crisis that the world faces.

But our egos grow daily, and they will intensify the contrast between nature and us. To spare us the experience of the suffering this contrast entails, we should begin to advance toward acquiring nature's quality of altruism, to change the course of evolution. And we should begin soon.

When we do, we will immediately feel a favorable response at all levels of existence. For instance, let us assume that a certain man has a son who is behaving very badly. The father talks to the son and tries to persuade him to

change his ways. In the end, they agree that from now on they will begin with a clean slate, and the boy will better his ways. If, in the next day, the boy improves his ways, even just a little bit, his father's attitude toward him will immediately change for the better. Thus, everything is measured and judged not according to the result, but according to the direction.

When more people become concerned about correcting interpersonal relationships, and regard this attitude as the most important thing, because their lives literally depend on it, their common worry will become the public opinion, which will affect all the members of society. Because of the internal connection among us, every person in the world ... will instantaneously begin to feel that he or she is connected to all the other people and depends on them. People will begin to think about the reciprocal dependency between themselves and the rest of humanity.



## WHO IS A KABBALIST?

Many people think that Kabbalists lead a pure and virtuous way of life, and that they were awarded their high attainments and proximity to God because of their humility. But the truth is, Kabbalists obtain their spiritual degree by turning their egoistic nature, inherent in all of us, into an altruistic nature, equal to the Creator in its qualities. On the surface, a Kabbalist seems like a completely ordinary person: working, learning, and performing “normal” social duties. However, a Kabbalist experiences a reality that is hidden from most of us: the reality of the Upper Force that governs nature.

Mike's Place



# Why Do We Call the Creator “the Creator”?

By Michael R. Kellogg

**W**hy do we call the Creator “the Creator”? At first glance, the answer seems obvious: we call Him that because He created creation. But this immediately brings up another question: “How did He do that?” Well, there are nearly as many explanations as there are people. Among them are answers that were given to us by folks who actually experienced spirituality through the wisdom of Kabbalah. And fortunately for us, these people wrote down and left us detailed information that answers this very question.

These people we call Kabbalists explain that this whole shootin’ match known as Creation started with an initial thought, which they called “the thought of Creation.” They tell us that this initial thought was “to bestow good to His creatures.” How did they find this

out? They experienced it, and then they simply wrote down what they felt. But the real question here is:

*What did they experience and how did they experience it?*

Now, in order to bestow good to something, there’s got to be “something” on which to bestow good. After all, how can there be giving if there is no one to receive what is being given? That wouldn’t make any sense at all. So to create a “bestow-ee” in this picture, the “bestow-er” created a desire, or as Kabbalists call it “a will to receive delight and pleasure.” This desire, our “bestow-ee”, was created and then filled with delight, the most wondrous and wonderful pleasure we can imagine, and even more.

While our will to receive (which we will call “Desire”) was sitting there feeling good, it suddenly began to feel something else. It actually began to sense

that “somebody” was giving it this delight—that there was a “giver” in this picture.

Previously, Desire felt only pleasure, but not that the pleasure came from anything or anyone in particular. The discovery of the giver (the Creator) made Desire want to relate to the giver of that pleasure, the Creator. In fact, Desire’s discovery of the Creator made Desire want to be like Him, to do what He does, even more than it wanted the pleasure the Giver was providing.

“After all,” Desire thought, “if the Creator gives so much, imagine how much pleasure He has! Well, being a will to receive pleasure, why shouldn’t I have this pleasure, too?” This new yearning caused a rather dramatic change that is going to flip flop this whole picture.

In order to have what the Creator has, the will to receive

decides it wants to do what the Creator does, just as our children often want to do what we do—just to be like us. But Desire has no ability to give because it has nothing to give, so it does the next best thing—it stops receiving. This is not what the Creator does, but Desire figures it is the closest it can come to being like Him.

But oh, what a problem this creates. Now the Creator isn’t doing what He is supposed to do, He isn’t giving, and Desire is not doing what it is supposed to do either—receiving. Realizing what a mess this is, Desire now begins to think, “How can I do what I was created to do, and still be able to be like the Giver?” Desire now comes up with a plan, and oh what a plan it is.

Desire wants to be able to give, just like the Giver. In other words, the goal is to give to the

Giver, to the Creator. But what does the Creator want? Does He want a new Volvo? Does He want world peace? Does He want a membership in some swanky country club, tickets to the World Series, what?

Well, being a giver by nature, the Creator only wants to give.

Eureka!!! Desire says to itself, “If I receive pleasure, but only because that is the one way I can give the Creator what He wants, I am in business here. I will be giving Him pleasure!” And that is exactly what Desire does.

Kabbalists tell us that the story of the Creator and Desire is a model that shows us how to relate to the Creator. They wrote books that teach us how we can do that, and they called their method, “the wisdom of Kabbalah,” the wisdom of reception (of pleasure).

Sneak-a-Peek @ the book *Kabbalah, Science and the Meaning of Life*

## The Full Picture

**K**abbalists describe only what they attain with certainty within their vessels, meaning the Form in Matter and Matter. Matter is the will to receive and the Form in Matter is the Form of bestowal dressed within the will to receive. In fact, the creature always attains the full picture, but the question is, how certain can we be of what is disclosed?

For example, when we perceive a certain picture, how do we know what we are perceiving? Which part of our perception of the picture is certain and which is not? Since our tools are limited we cannot be sure. Perhaps the spectacles through which we are observing reality are showing a plain ahead of us when, in fact,

there is a chasm right before our feet. Could our next step throw us into the abyss?

If the above example seems unlikely, the next will clarify matters: without radiation gauges, how would we be able to detect radiation? We could easily walk into contaminated areas unknowingly.

We are unable to build tools to assist us in determining the trustworthy from the untrustworthy in spirituality. The difference between what we can or cannot rely on lies in the difference between the various tools at our disposal.

\*\*\*

We should stress that locating the gateway from this world to the spiritual world is not a

direct action. It is more like a search for an exit from a closed circle. Although the opening is in a certain place, it can only be seen after having searched all 360 degrees.

To build the Form of the Creator within, we must first know all the Forms opposite from Him. If the Creator had an image outside of us, we would be able to adopt it immediately and thus end the process. However, such an image does not exist outside of us; it is for us to build the image of the Creator within our own Matter. First we must learn about the opposite Forms to the Creator, and only then can we build similar Forms to Him. The sum of the images creates our image of the Creator.

Questions and Answers

### Some people suffer their entire lives; why do they suffer?

Everyone suffers all the time. Humanity in general has been suffering throughout its history. People lived, died, and never understood the actual reasons for their pain. The pain should accumulate and reach a certain level before we can discover the reasons for it, and who is responsible for it.

The wisdom of Kabbalah is a method that addresses the question of humanity’s suffering and how it can be resolved. As a whole, humankind has already accumulated enough pain to begin to ask about the reasons for it. This is why Kabbalists are now opening the wisdom of Kabbalah to everyone.

### What is the source of the name, The Book of Zohar?

*Zohar* means “splendor,” as it is written in *The Book of Zohar*: “The righteous sit with their crowns on their heads, and delight in the splendor of Divinity.” According to *The Book of Zohar*, the sensation of the Creator (the Light) is called “Divinity.” In any place where the books of Kabbalah write, “so it was written in the book...” they always refer to *The Book of Zohar*. All other books are seemingly not considered books because the word “book” (*Sefer* in Hebrew) comes from the word *Sefira*, which comes from the word “sapphire,” radiance, a revelation (of the Light, the Creator). And this is found only in *The Book of Zohar*.

—Michael Laitman  
*The Kabbalah Experience*

### What is a holiday?

To know what we must correct, we have to see and feel what it is that needs correction. For that, there are ascents and descents that do not depend on us, called “an awakening from Above.” These are the holidays, the Shabbat (Saturday, the seventh day of the week), and the beginnings of the month, which are “given” to us from above.

—Michael Laitman  
*The Path of Kabbalah*

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"The Kabbalistic approach to the Bible is the only interpretation in complete accord with the infinite wealth found in this book, in originality, independence, and in its total wealth."

--Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832),  
a German poet and novelist.



#### ■ The Spiritual Guide

## How to Study Kabbalah

At the end of his "Introduction to The Study of the Ten Sefirot," Rav Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam) explained the frame of mind in which we should approach the study of Kabbalah. Below is a direct translation of Item 155 from this introduction.

"Therefore, we must ask, why then, did the Kabbalists obligate each person to study the wisdom of Kabbalah? Indeed, there is a great thing in it, worthy of being publicized: There is a wonderful, invaluable remedy to those who engage in the wisdom of Kabbalah. Although they do not understand what they are learning, through the yearning and the great desire to understand what they are learning, they awaken upon themselves the Lights that surround their souls.

"This means that every person from Israel is guaranteed to finally attain all the wonderful attainments

that the Creator has calculated in the Thought of Creation to delight every creature. One who has not been awarded in this life will be granted in the next life etc. Finally, one will be awarded completing the thought that He preliminary planned for him.

"While one has not attained perfection, these Lights that are destined to reach him are considered Surrounding Lights. That means that they stand ready, and wait for one to purify one's vessels of reception. At that time, these Lights will cloth the able vessels.

"Hence, even when one does not have the vessels, when one engages in this wisdom, mentioning the names of the Lights and the vessels related to one's soul, they immediately shine upon us to a certain measure. However, they shine for him without clothing the interior of his soul, for lack of the able vessels to receive them. Despite that, the illumination one receives time after time during the engagement draws upon one grace from above, imparting one with abundance of sanctity and purity, which bring one much closer to reaching perfection."

#### ■ Sketches in Words

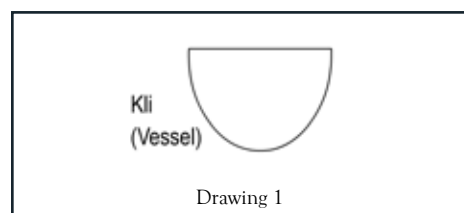
## The Spiritual Vessel (Kli)

By Avi Ventura

In this section, we will see how Kabbalists use one of the most important aids in their explanations of the Upper Worlds—drawings. Drawings have been part of Kabbalah books for many generations, but Kabbalists never really explained what they were writing about. They simply drew schematics, but they did not explain what they represented.

Kabbalah tells us that all of reality is created from only one force—desire. Kabbalistic drawings, therefore, depict desires and how they "communicate" with one another. While these circles, arrows, and lines may seem dry and scientific, they are actually a code through which a Kabbalist understands a universe of emotions and can then communicate it to other Kabbalists.

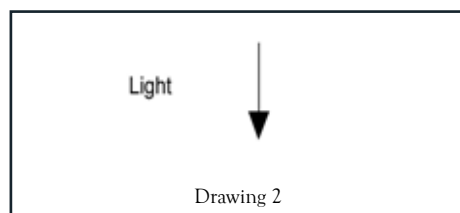
The most basic shape you will find in our drawings is that of a *Kli*, a vessel (drawing 1).



A *Kli*, in Hebrew, can actually mean two things: a vessel that receives something, and a tool, like a working tool. When we use the word *Kli* in this section, it will always mean a vessel.

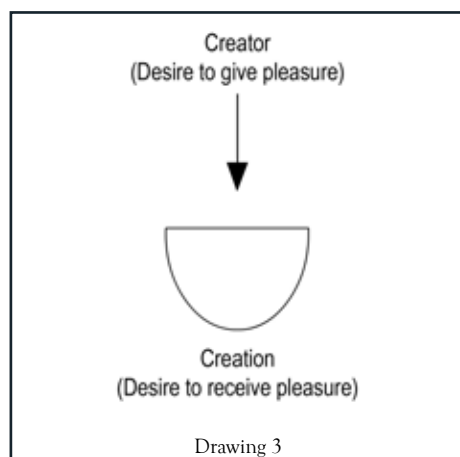
A *Kli* is drawn like a cup or a bowl, facing up to receive Light from above (drawing 2).

Kabbalah explains that there are only two elements in the whole of creation—the Creator and creation. The Creator is



a desire to give pleasure, usually drawn as a downward arrow. Creation is a desire to receive the pleasure that the Creator wants to give. This is why it is usually drawn as an upwardly bowl or a cup. That desire to receive pleasure is the *Kli* (drawing 3).

In most cases, you will see arrows pointing to and from the *Kli*. These represent the way the *Kli* relates to the pleasure



that the Creator wants to give. A downward arrow, for example, can represent the Creator's Light (pleasure), which the *Kli* receives (drawing 3). It can also represent that *Kli*'s desire to receive the Light. But in any case, the center is always the *Kli*, because the *Kli* is actually us, and how we work (if we learn how) with the Creator's Light.

#### ■ Sneak a Peek @ the book *Attaining the Worlds Beyond*

## The Introduction

"If you listen with your heart to one famous question, I am sure that all your doubts as to whether you should study Kabbalah will vanish without a trace. This question is a bitter and a fair one, asked by all born on earth: What is the meaning of my life?"

—Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag  
"Introduction to The Study of the Ten Sefirot"

Not feeling well on the Jewish New Year in September 1991, my Rabbi called me to his bedside and handed me his notebook, saying, "Take it and learn from it." The following morning, my teacher perished in

my arms, leaving me and many of his other disciples without guidance in this world.

He used to say, "I want to teach you to turn to the Creator, rather than to me, because He is the only strength, the only Source

of all that exists, the only One who can really help you, and He awaits your prayers for help. When you seek help in your search for freedom from the bondage of this world, help in elevating yourself above this world, help in finding the self, and help in determining your purpose in life, you must turn to the Creator, who sends you all those aspirations in order to compel you to turn to Him.



Cover photo — *Attaining the Worlds Beyond*

## Battling for the Perception of the Creator's Oneness

We discern all notions and all events according to our own perceptions. We assign names to the events that take place according to the reactions of our sensory organs. Thus, if we speak about a particular object or action, we are expressing how we personally perceive it.

Each of us determines the level of evil in a par-

ticular object according to the degree to which that object obstructs our reception of pleasure. In some cases, we cannot tolerate any proximity to a certain object. Thus, our level of understanding of the importance of Kabbalah and its laws will determine the evil that we will discern in that which stands in the way of our observance of the spiritual laws.

Therefore, if we wish to reach the level of hatred toward all evil, we must work on increasing the importance of Kabbalah and extolling the Creator in our minds. In this way, we will cultivate within us love toward the Creator, and to the degree that we will succeed, we will develop hatred toward egoism.

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# THE LAW OF LOVE

THE LAW OF EQUIVALENCE OF FORM DETERMINES THAT BEING CLOSE TO SOMETHING MEANS BEING SIMILAR TO IT. TO BE CLOSE TO THE CREATOR, WE NEED ONLY MAKE OUR QUALITIES SIMILAR TO HIS OWN.

What an interesting world we live in! You and I may be one yard apart, speaking to each other, seeing, hearing, and perhaps even smelling each other. Yet, I have no idea what you are think-

on their charming/lovely/wonderful/smart (choose or add your favorite) loved one.

If, however, you asked who was sitting next to me this morning during my half-hour subway ride to work, or who was standing next to me last night as I lined up to buy tickets to the movies, I doubt I will remember. This is because while waiting in line or riding the train, my mind drifted to other places, times, and topics.

In simple words, physical

ery. Clearly, we can only detect what our senses can perceive.

The eye, for example, can perceive images by receiving specific

**Only if we find a way to equalize with His form will we discover the Creator, and in the process find happiness and peace**

wavelengths between the colors purple and red. This is why we cannot see shorter wavelengths than purple, such as ultraviolet, with a naked eye. A bee, on the other hand, does see ultraviolet, and this enables it to detect different kinds of flowers that we humans would not be able to distinguish.

We all know that our world contains many frequencies, most of which we cannot receive, although they do affect us. Take x-rays, for example, or radio waves. With the right instrument—one that can translate these waves to a length our sense organs can perceive—we will be able to detect those waves in the space around us.

What would you do if I asked you what is being broadcast right now on your favorite radio station? Most likely, you'd say that you don't know (unless you're listening to this station right this minute). But if you turned on the radio and switched to the frequency of your favorite station, you would immediately know the answer.

How did the radio "know" what's on the air in your favorite station? There isn't a little guy in there, singing and talking to make our time more pleasant. The radio only fixes itself

to work on a wavelength, a frequency that existed in the air before we turned it on. It helps us transform the message created in the radio station from an undetectable wavelength to one our ears can detect.

## Spiritual Equivalence

The law of equivalence of form works in the spiritual world, too. But in spirituality, it is about similarity and dissimilarity of in-

will remain detached from the Upper Force. Only if we find a way to equalize with His form

**The law of equivalence of form works in the spiritual world, too. But in spirituality, it is about similarity and dissimilarity of intentions, not about equivalence of frequencies**

will we discover the Creator, and in the process find happi-

**Physical proximity is not internal proximity. We think, feel, and imagine what we feel close to, what we really want. This is our internal life**



Photographer: Joaquim Alves Gaspar

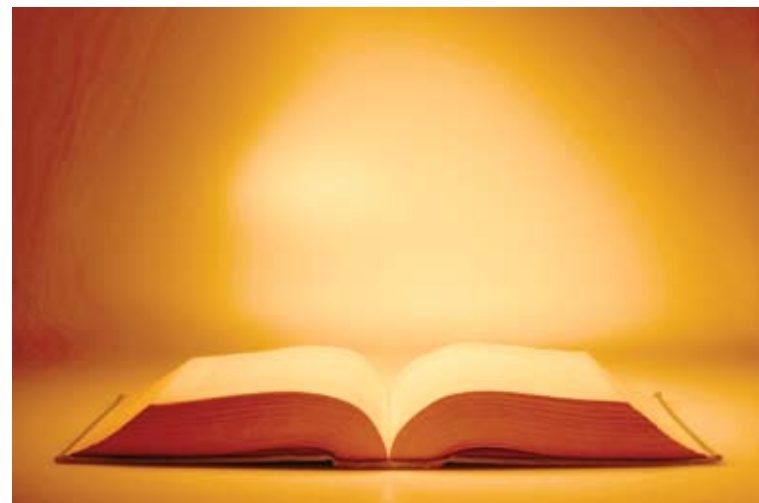
ing and what you really want. Perhaps in this very minute you are thinking about someone living in a different place, or even at a different time.

Lovers "take" their loved ones wherever they go. Quite honestly, people in love are the most boring people to talk to: they may be standing right in front of you, but their minds are constantly

proximity is *not* internal proximity. We think, feel, and imagine what we feel close to, what we *really* want. This is our internal life.

## Physical Equivalence

If we examine the law of equivalence of form in nature, we will see that this is not a new discov-



tentions, not about equivalence of frequencies.

All that is measured in the spiritual world are intentions, thoughts. The intention of the Upper Force, which governs the whole of reality, including our lives, is only to bestow, to give. It acts out of love. If we want to know and understand how the world is ruled, we, too, must acquire the intention to bestow. If we concentrate on ourselves and on our personal benefit, we will not know the reasons for everything that happens around and within us, since we

ness and peace.

Perhaps no one states this principle better than the Rambam: "As He is called 'Merciful,' you too, be merciful. As He is called 'Gracious,' you, too, be gracious. As He is called 'Holy,' you, too, be holy. In this manner the prophets related to all the appellations, 'Forbearing' and 'Compassionate' and 'Righteous' ... to notify that these are good ways..., and that one must conduct oneself in them and resemble Him as much as one can" (*The Mighty Hand*, De'ot, Chapter 1). ■

## Bnei Baruch Kabbalah Groups Worldwide

### Canada

#### Toronto

3701 Chesswood Drive #216  
Toronto, Ontario, M3J 2P6  
Telephone: 1-877-STUDY06  
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### Stamford, CT

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Phone: 203-984-8228  
Email: genes@mykabbalah.info

### United Kingdom London

Telephone: 0044 7951 98 28 11  
or 0044 1883 343 844  
E-mail: orlondon10@yahoo.com

### Australia Sydney

Level 1, 504 Dover lane  
Rose Bay NSW, 2029  
Telephone: +61 2 93713382  
E-mail: info@kabbalah.net.au

### Israel

Bnei Baruch  
PO 1552  
Ramat Gan 52115, Israel  
Telephone: +972-3-9226723  
Fax: +972-3-9226741  
E-mail: english@kabbalah.info  
Web: www.kabbalah.info

## 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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## Published by

Bnei Baruch  
*Kabbalah, Education and Research Institute*  
PO Box 1552  
Ramat Gan 52115, Israel  
E-mail: english@kabbalah.info  
Web: www.kabbalah.info  
Telephone: +972-3-9226723  
Fax: +972-3-9226741