

KABBALAH TODAY



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NOVEMBER 2007, #9 | A PUBLICATION OF THE BNEI BARUCH ASSOCIATION FOUNDED BY RAV MICHAEL LAITMAN, PHD | www.kabtoday.com

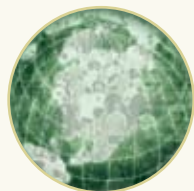
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KABBALAH STEPS IN

WHEN WE RISE ABOVE THE CURRENTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE AND START ASKING ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF LIFE ITSELF—KABBALAH STEPS IN

Kabbalah became hidden about 2,000 years ago. The reason was simple—there was no demand for it. Since that time, humanity has occupied itself with developing monotheistic religions, and later on, science. Both were created to answer man's most fundamental questions: "What is our place in the world, in the universe? What is the purpose of our existence?" In other words, "Why were we born?"

But today, more than ever before, many people feel that what has worked for 2,000 years no longer meets their needs. The answers provided by religion and science no longer satisfy them. These people are looking elsewhere for answers to the most basic questions about the purpose

of life. They turn to Eastern teachings, fortune-telling, magic and mysticism. And some turn to Kabbalah. Because Kabbalah was formulated to answer these fundamental questions, the answers it provides are directly related to them.

Kabbalah made its "debut" about 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, an ancient country in today's Iraq. Mesopotamia was not only the birthplace of Kabbalah, but of all ancient teachings and mysticism. In those days, people believed in many different teachings, often following more than one teaching at a time. Astrology, fortune-telling, numerology, magic, witchcraft, spells, evil eye—all those and more were developed and thrived in Mes-

opotamia, the cultural center of the ancient world.

As long as people were happy with their beliefs, they felt no need for change. People wanted to know that their lives would be safe, and what they needed to do to make them enjoyable. They were not asking about the origin of life, or most important, who or what had created the rules of life.

At first, this may seem like a slight difference. But actually, the difference between asking about life, and asking about the rules that shape life, is like the difference between learning how to drive a car and learning how to make one. It's a totally different level of knowledge. ■

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Editor's Note

A Children's Story?

The wisdom of Kabbalah teaches a simple principle: although we don't often feel it, and see around us a world full of schisms, we are all actually interconnected. In this issue of *Kabbalah Today*, we will explore this principle from several perspectives.

Subconsciously, everyone feels that all the world's problems could be solved if everyone loved one another. "Love Is the Way" explains that love between people is an innate quality of nature, and tells the story of Abraham, the first who discovered this principle.

Many Kabbalists since Abraham have discovered this quality, and like him, wanted to share it with everyone. One of them, the great Kabbalist, Rav Kook, is presented in this issue's "Kabbalah Icons."

As an ideal, nobody opposes the love of man. In practice, however, even though we teach children how important it is to give and to share, we see how difficult it is to do so. "You Have a New Message" discusses how we have invented ways of keeping in touch—without really touching, and without really feeling either.

Today, we have lost the notion that the whole of humanity can be one, big loving family. So how can we make it more than just a children's story?

Kabbalah is designed specifically to answer this question. In "Ask the Kabbalist," Rav Laitman answers questions about Kabbalah's basics, and in "Permission to Reveal" you will see that today's growing interest in Kabbalah is not by chance, but is part of a greater realization: that love of man can—and must—become a reality. Enjoy these articles and more in this month's issue.



KABBALAH FOR BEGINNERS

“The world is a reflection of our own Kelim (tools of perception). When we make them beautiful, the world, too, will be beautiful. The Tikkun (correction) is within, and so is the Creator; He is our corrected selves.”

ASK THE KABBALIST

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY KABBALIST RAV MICHAEL LAITMAN PHD,
ON HIS WEEKLY LIVE TV SHOW, ASK THE KABBALIST



Q: I've been studying Kabbalah by myself for about fifteen years now, and I've memorized entire pages from *The Book of Zohar* and from the writings of the Ari. I recently heard you say that one can only study Kabbalah from a teacher who is a Kabbalist. How does that reflect on how I, and others like me, have been studying Kabbalah?

A: The wisdom of Kabbalah (the wisdom of reception) is called by this name because it is given from teacher to student and from generation to generation. Kabbalah books speak of a higher world, a spiritual one, completely separated from the world we see and feel.

To begin to sense and understand what Kabbalah books are saying, one needs months of guidance and study from a Kabbalist who has traversed the spiritual path and has discovered that higher world. Only a genuine Kabbalist can explain the true meaning of Kabbalah texts to another person, since spirituality is beyond such terms as time, place, and motion.

Kabbalists have created a language to communicate with one another, an encoded language they call “the language of the branches.” Using this language, they exchange

experiences and information, and describe their spiritual attainments in their books. To accomplish that, they apply mundane words to describe spiritual states and processes.

For example, when Kabbalists write the term “animal,” they are not referring to a physical animal but rather describe a certain spiritual root in a higher world, designated by the word “animal.” Therefore, any person who wishes to “decode” this language needs a Kabbalist teacher to decipher it and admit the student into the meaning behind the words.

Reading the books without proper guidance can only produce superficial understanding; that is, the reader will understand matters according to his or her familiarity with the terms as they are in our world.

In that state, instead of feeling and perceiving the spiritual world described by the Kabbalists, the reader will see nothing but the corporeal world and will think that this is what the books portray.

Baal HaSulam wrote about this in *The Study of the Ten Sefirot* (Part One):

“Indeed, those whose eyes have not been opened to the sights of heaven, and have not acquired the proficiency in the connections of the branches of this world with their roots in the Upper Worlds, are like the blind scraping the walls. They will not understand the true meaning of even a single word,

for each word is a branch that relates to its root.

“Only if they receive an interpretation from a genuine sage who makes himself available to explain it in the spoken language, which is necessarily like translating from one language to another, meaning from the language of the branches to the spoken language, only then will he be able to explain the spiritual term as it is.”

Q: On one of your shows, I heard that the soul of a human being does not reincarnate in the body of an animal. However, in *Sha'ar HaGilgulim* (*Gate to Reincarnations*) by the Ari, I read that a soul can indeed reincarnate as an animal, plant, or even a stone. There is an obvious contradiction here.

A: Thank you for this question; it taps into a mistake that is very commonly made these days. As we've explained, the wisdom of Kabbalah engages *only* in spiritual forces, not in worldly, earthly matters. Therefore, when Kabbalists use such terms as “rocks,” “animals” and so on, they do that only to describe *spiritual* states that the soul experiences.

But to thoroughly understand the topic of reincarnation, we must understand the term, “soul.” A soul is a spiritual tool of perception; it is considered “a part of Godliness from Above.” When one is awarded with the spiritual perception tool called “soul,” it is a radical change called “the crossing of the barrier,” which separates our world from the Higher World. This is when one begins to feel spirituality.

Thus, clearly, the soul has no connection to our physical body. This is also the reason

we can transplant organs and donate blood without affecting our spiritual essence.

Many books, such as the Ari's *Sha'ar HaGilgulim*, mention terms like “still,” “vegetative,” “animate” or “speaking.” However, these terms relate only to the interior of one's soul and describe its various evolutionary degrees.

When Kabbalists use the term *Gilgul* (incarnation), they are referring to a change of degree that the soul experiences along its evolutionary spiritual process. They are *not* referring to anything else. Therefore, when they describe how one's soul reincarnates as a stone, they want to teach the reader that the soul passes from one spiritual level to another, and that this particular new level is called “stone.”

My teacher, Rabbi Baruch Shalom HaLevi Ashlag (the Rabash) wrote about it in the name of his father, Baal HaSulam, in the book *Shamati (I Heard)*: “And you might say that... sometimes one comes incarnated as a pig. We should interpret that, as he says, that one receives a desire and craving to take liveliness from things he had already determined were litter, but now he wants to receive nourishment from them.”

You can find much more about this in the article, “The Essence of the Wisdom of Kabbalah,” as well as in the book, *The Study of the Ten Sefirot*, “Inner Reflection,” Part One.

Q: For several years now, I have been practicing Kabbalistic meditation. I took some courses on the subject and I'm using a book by Rabbi Chaim Vital for this purpose. But lately, I've been reading in your paper that there is no such term as “Kabbalistic

meditation.” How is this possible if Rabbi Vital writes specifically about that term?

A: First, note that no such term as “meditation” or anything like it appears in even a single authentic Kabbalah book. Additionally, the act that all kinds of courses and study groups call “Kabbalistic meditation” doesn't exist in Kabbalah.

All the writings of Kabbalah, including those of the Ari—which were written by Rabbi Chaim Vital—explain one simple thing: the whole of Creation is made of a desire to enjoy. That desire can only be in one of two states: corrupted—with an intention to receive for itself, or corrected—with an intention to give, to love others.

Q: What does this have to do with Kabbalistic meditation?

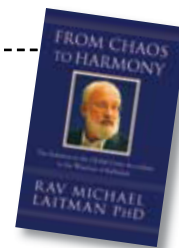
A: In the process of the correction of the soul, a Kabbalist uses a method called “three lines.” This method is built on a simple procedure: first, the Kabbalist “takes” part of the corrupted (egoistic) desire, called “the left line” and subsequently corrects it, using the force of the spiritual Light, called “the right line.” In doing so, the Kabbalist builds a “middle line” within the soul, and thus advances in spirituality.

Because this work concerns changing one's intention from reception to bestowal, it is called “work in intention” or “intention work.” One who is not proficient in the wisdom of Kabbalah misinterprets the term “work in intention” and attaches it to terms that are completely foreign to Kabbalah, such as meditation.

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FROM CHAOS TO HARMONY

"Even if we spend many years trying to obtain something... once we have it, we lose the sensation of pleasure. Apparently, the pleasure that satisfied the desire is also what ended it."



YOU HAVE A NEW MESSAGE



YOU CAN COMMUNICATE IN CODES LIKE YOUTH DO ON CHATS, YOU CAN REMAIN UNEXPOSED BEHIND A COMPUTER SCREEN AND A USER-NAME, BUT NOT FOR LONG. SOONER OR LATER WE WILL HAVE TO LEAVE OUR MASQUERADES AND MAKE ROOM FOR EACH OTHER IN OUR HEARTS, NOT IN OUR CHAT ROOMS

Today's young don't need lengthy letters, placed in envelopes and stamped. These are replaced by the screen and keyboard, or the cellular phone.

From early on, children learn to use instant messaging software such as Yahoo! and MSN messengers, ICQ and Skype. It is free, easy, and fast. Moreover, fast Internet allows them to transcend boundaries of time and place, which makes their world both unlimited by geography, yet confined to their PCs or mobile devices. This makes them pragmatic people, matter-of-fact, and estranged like the technology they are using.

But aren't they so already? Is it online communication that alienates us, or our alienation that causes us to develop alienating communication? What is to become of a generation that knows no other way to converse than via wires, or via wireless?

All Wired Up

As a child, I never dreamed that devices from my science fiction comics would become everyday communication tools of six year-olds in my lifetime. When I wanted to play with friends, I had to use an ancient

technology called "feet." I actually walked to my friends' houses to talk to them. Usually, it was my friend's mother I had to talk to, first.

Today, I can commute to work and send messages to friends at the speed of light using my mobile device. And the chance of talking to my friend's mother is much smaller, too. My daughter talks to her friends mostly through the messenger. She substitutes acronyms for words, and emoticons for emotions. It seems that even relationships have become a virtual thing for our children.

Connected After All

To understand the essence of the connection among humans, we must know its root. According to Kabbalah, this root is in a place where time and place are nonexistent. Kabbalists tell us that in that place, we are all connected, a single soul, called "the soul of Adam ha Rishon (the first man)." This soul is like an organism made of myriad cells that tightly reciprocate. At some point in its evolution, the parts (cells) of this soul lost the sensation of their connectedness, and the soul broke into a multitude of separate cells.

The separation created alienation and hatred among us, and ever since, we have been unconsciously searching for substitutes for that sense of wholeness we had once possessed. In fact, all of the social systems we human beings have created throughout history and around the world aim at one purpose: to restore our lost connection and reciprocity.

A key element in our detachment is the ego. The ego not only triggered the shattering, it had been increasing our alienation ever since. The ego makes us want to use others, thus making us dependent on others to satisfy our needs. But the ego also makes us wish we could find other ways of satisfying ourselves, that we would stop being dependent on others, and that other people would simply vanish.

We cannot accept the fact that we are connected and that there is nothing we can do to change it. This "togetherness" annoys and burdens us, hence our resistance and denial of the fact that we are connected. Today's communication means are very true to our state—they project our alienation as well as our connectedness.

On the one hand, we want to be with everyone, and on the other hand we want to remain safe behind our computer

screens and user-names. Thus, despite the advanced technology, modern communication systems do not really connect us; they allow us to be detached, yet connected after all.

As we grow more detached, we will also come to feel a greater need to truly connect. Such connection cannot be achieved via phones, computers, or any other communication device. It must be cultivated deep within our hearts. Sooner or later, but probably sooner, we will discover that we need to upgrade our communication grid to one that is based on thoughts and desires rather than on sms's. If we establish our connections through thoughts and desires, we will rediscover the connectedness we had once possessed in the soul of Adam ha Rishon, and we will reinstate the natural, direct, and wholesome bond among us.

Kabbalah— Connecting People

Our time in history is very special. The soul of Adam ha Rishon is not meant to remain shattered. Once its pieces (us) realize they are detached, they

will realize that this is the reason for their suffering and strive to change it by reconnecting. According to Kabbalah, in 1995 the stage of reconnection has begun.

The current global crises are the first signs that show us we are dependent on each other. But they are not really crises, unless our interdependency is burdensome to us. Had it not been undesirable, we would rush to help each other and would not consider our state a crisis, but an opportunity for strengthening our ties.

When we reestablish our bond, we will feel the one, collective soul of Adam; we will perceive our existence as inclusive, beyond eons and universes, unbounded by our limited perception. Indeed, we will experience the bliss of unbounded freedom. Until then, we continue to hide behind our screens, believing we are guarded from each other by our anonymity. The next phase will be to remove our masks and truly bond in our hearts.

And in the meantime... you have a new message ☺

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BODY AND SOUL

What, if any, is the connection between the body and the soul? Does the soul "dress" within the body? And where does the soul go when the body dies?

To this day, science in particular and humanity in general, do not understand how a spiritual, abstract force can dress within a corporeal substance. In the original texts of Kabbalah, the term "body" does not relate to the biological body, and the term "soul" does not stand for the spirit of life in the physical body. A body, in Kabbalah, is the reality that appears before a person through the five physical senses, and the soul is the reality that appears to a person through the sixth sense.





WONDROUS WISDOM

“The science of Kabbalah studies the unfolding of Creation. It describes the path along which our world must tread while achieving its progressive Tikkun (correction): the level of the Creator—the ultimate degree of perfection and eternity.”

LOVE IS THE WAY

THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY, WE CAN SEE THAT WHATEVER LOVE HAS BUILT, THE EGO HAS DESTROYED. HOWEVER, THE METHOD THAT CAN ACTUALLY KEEP US WHOLE WAS DISCOVERED A LONG TIME AGO. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS STUDY IT



by Chaim Ratz

Ten-year-old Patrick descended the ship's staircase and glanced to his right and left with evident misgivings. He had grown up in a small village in 19th century Ireland, and now, after a long voyage to New York harbor, he looked around him, bewildered. After the long voyage, Patrick's most vivid impression was of people running about and yelling to one another in a variety of languages.

In this medley of languages, Patrick barely managed to recognize his own people. Then, he saw them standing in one corner, a small group of Irish immigrants led by a “veteran” from the home country. Beside them stood a group of Italian immigrants; behind them stood the Russians, and a little farther in the back stood the Polish group, the Ukrainians, and so on. It seemed as if bustling New York harbor had been turned into a giant parade ground strewn with every immigrant group imaginable. “So this is America, the promised land,” Patrick reflected in wonderment.

In fact, Patrick was only the most recent of millions

of immigrants from around the world. Jews, Asians, Africans, and Europeans, left their countries and moved to America, bringing with them all they had—hope of a better future.

They came from different nations, ethnic and religious traditions, and language groups. These differences sometimes ignited friction among them, but the need to survive forced them to make both social and economic arrangements. In time, their country became the strongest superpower in the world—the United States of America.

The Uniting Element

Some 300 years earlier, and 6,500 miles away from what would become the United States, Europe was in turmoil. The Roman Empire had until then dominated Europe. When it faltered, local tribes took over and built what we now know as the European countries: Germany, England, France, Spain and other countries. In each of those countries, the uniting elements were common origins, languages, customs and cultural norms.

But unlike the European countries and the United States, the Israeli nation was neither based on economic profitability nor on common origins. The story of the Israeli nation is intriguing because it is different from the story of any other nation.

Abraham's Method

The reason that the people of Israel were gathered into a nation was a spiritual one, beginning 5,000 years ago in ancient Babylon. In ancient times, humanity lived like one big family where everyone cared for everybody else, and ties of natural, reciprocal love and support prevailed. Indeed, for many generations, life in ancient Babylon was serene and peaceful until a fateful change occurred, taking an established way of life and cultural ethic in a completely different direction.

It was as if an egoistic gene had suddenly been injected into the DNA of the early Babylonians. This growth of egoism produced harsh consequences, from exploitation of others to hatred. The people of Babylon became increasingly self-centered, no longer caring about the needs of their neighbors.

But one man, Abraham, saw the Babylonians drifting apart and refused to accept the change. He decided to go against the current and to search instead for the force that makes the world go around.

Abraham discovered that this Upper Force, was one of complete, unconditional bestowal. He was able to

attain that level, and using his knowledge, developed a method to rise above the ego and achieve this kind of love—the love of all mankind. Abraham knew that if the Babylonians kept their ties of love above their evolving egoism, they would be rewarded with eternal and true bonding with each other. Hence, he began to disseminate the method to the masses.

He gathered a group of students and taught them how to achieve love of man. In time, the group Abraham began grew into what we now call “Israel,” the nation built on the basis of love for mankind.

When the Ego Breaks Loose

All through Israel's history, love of man has been the key to its success and prosperity. As long as we have maintained the ties of love and bonding among us, the people of Israel thrived in its fullest spiritual and physical glory. The height of our success arrived when the First Temple was built, and all of Israel's tribes lived in mutual love.

But when the ego force erupted, Israel's unity was interrupted and separation spread within parts of the nation. The resulting parts became self-centered and lost their bonding with the rest of the nation. In the end, the spiritual division produced physical divisions, the First Temple was ruined, and the people scattered in all directions. When some of the people recognized that division had caused exile and ruin, they tried to revive the love of man, returned to Israel and built the Second Temple. But the strengthening of the ego did not stop there. It broke out once more and manifested in even deeper hatred and separation.

Thus, the Second Temple, too, was ruined.

Even among Rabbi Akiva's group of Kabbalist students, the famous directive, “Love thy neighbor as thyself,” had reverted to hatred. This eventually caused the death of 24,000 Jews in a terrible plague. Thus, the people of Israel lost the love of man and were exiled from spirituality and from the land of Israel for 2,000 years.

The Dream Has Not Yet Come True

Today, even though the people of Israel are on Israeli land, the Kabbalists' dream of a united nation is still far from realized. Even if there is unity during crises, it is only temporary, like the necessary bonding of brothers in arms. Real unity cannot rely on crises caused by outside factors.

A Point in Our Hearts

So how do we once again become a united people, based on the love of man?

There is a special point in the heart in each of us that calls upon us to realize our existence as a nation of love. By doing so, we will pave a new future for all of mankind, one in which everyone will feel interconnected and act as one body. But the means to achieve this intrinsic love is the ancient method, developed by Abraham. Today, the authentic wisdom of Kabbalah is emerging and becoming more relevant than ever. Disseminating Kabbalah's message to the masses is the way to restore the love of man and ascend to the height of happiness and wholeness. ■

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KABBALAH REVEALED

“When we unite with Nature, we will feel as eternal and complete as Nature... Our previous self-centered perception will have been replaced with a whole, altruistic perception. Our own lives will have become the life of the whole of Nature.”



SINGING THE WORLDS BEYOND

by Ron Gilboa

Kabbalists have always been writing lyrics and composing melodies inspired by their profound bond with the Creator. Songs surge from their hearts like tidal waves of overflowing joy. And indeed, can there be a greater inspiration for music than the Giver of life to the whole of reality?

Yet, a song in Kabbalah is not meant to express mere impressions of contact with the Creator, though this is a vital part of it. Kabbalists compose songs in a very special way, evoking special emotions in the listener. Through songs, Kabbalists hope to help us experience spirituality, too. For this reason they write their songs like a prayer for correction, providing us with direct and instantaneous connection to the Source of life.

A Bond of Love

When a Kabbalist experiences the Upper World, he or she enters another realm of reality. Past, present, and future merge into a single stream of life, and the Kabbalist experiences all the souls united in the eternal love of the Single Force that operates and governs all of life. But most of all, a Kabbalist discovers that being in the spiritual re-

ality is possible only through the bond of love between the Kabbalist and all other souls. It is for this love that Kabbalists try so diligently to share their spiritual experiences with us. Their sole wish is that we, too, will discover and feel the kind of life offered when we bond with the Creator of reality. In their songs, they call this “being filled with the Upper Light.”

The Holy Ari revealed the secrets of the Upper World and described them in great detail in his books: worlds, *Sefirot*, souls, positive and negative forces. But to those devoid of contact with the spiritual world, these words are meaningless. Ordinary people cannot emotionally relate to them.

Thus, the only one way we can relate to what we do not understand is through our hearts. And what better way to open our hearts than through song? Hence, through lyrics and tunes, Kabbalists designed for us another entry to experience the wholeness and eternity of the spiritual reality. This is also why, along with the complex books they composed, both the Ari and Baal HaSulam blessed us with songs and melodies.

THE HOLY ARI WROTE THE LYRICS, BAAL HASULAM WROTE THE MELODY, AND TOGETHER THE TWO GIANT KABBALISTS LEFT US WITH A UNIQUE (AND MELODIC) WAY TO CLIMB TO THE SPIRITUAL WORLDS—IN SONG

From the Tune to the Heart

Baal HaSulam, the greatest Kabbalist of our time, left us a special gift. Alongside his vast written works—the *Sulam* (Ladder) commentary on *The Book of Zohar*, *The Study of the Ten Sefirot*, and other monumental pieces—he composed melodies for each of the Ari’s poems. Because Baal HaSulam achieved the same spiritual degree as the Ari, he was able to compose melodies to work in perfect harmony with the Ari’s words, enhancing the former’s words with the latter’s tunes. Thanks to his work, the inspiration from the Ari’s words permeates the heart and gently heals the soul. Every time we listen to the songs, the words and the melodies play the chords of our souls, fine-tuning them towards the goal of perfection.

Even if we are not yet corrected, we can always feel the deep emotions in the songs. If we wish to feel what the Kabbalist must have felt while writing these songs, we will sympathize to some extent with the sublime state described in the music. Thus, that higher state would “shine” on us with what Kabbalists refer to as



“Surrounding Light”—a special power that can reform us and help us achieve bonding with the Upper World. Gradually, the Surrounding Light admits us into the perfect state, the root from which our soul came into our world.

When we achieve that state to the fullest, the words and music will embrace us like the Surrounding Light, and we will achieve our life’s goal—bonding with the Upper Force, the Creator. And all we need to do for that to happen is listen. ■

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KABBALAH MUSIC ON
WWW.KABBALAH.INFO

The Kabbalah Music section on kabbalah.info contains hours of listening for your innermost spiritual experiences, featuring melodies of the 20th century’s greatest Kabbalist, Baal HaSulam (Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag) played by musicians from around the globe, in instrumental, modern, classical, jazz and electronic arrangements.

extras

TRUE LOVE

We love our lovers, we love our friends, we love to eat, we love our pets, and we love our hobbies. But actually, we love ourselves. Therefore, we love anything and anyone that makes us feel good.

In truth, the only love that can ever be in our world is the natural love we feel for our children. Yet, even that love is an instinct, instilled in us by nature to ensure the continuation of our species. Can an instinct qualify as love?

According to the wisdom of Kabbalah, love is a genuinely altruistic act. It occurs when we do something good for someone we love simply because we want to do good to the object of our love. If we do not think of our own emotions before, during or after the fact, if our love object does not know that we are their benefactors, and if we do not know whether or not we actually benefited, this is true love. Why? Because there is no shred of egoistic benefit that can come from such an act. This is pure altruism, done for the sake of doing good. And altruism is synonymous with love.





ATTAINING THE WORLDS BEYOND

“Those of us who love the Creator are sure to feel revulsion toward egoism, since we know from personal experience how much harm the ego can cause.”

■ Kabbalah Icons

RAV AVRAHAM ISAAC HACOHEN KOOK (1865-1935)

“Hear me, my people, I speak unto you from within my soul... from within that feeling that I sense deeper than all my sensations of life, that you, only you are the content of my life...”

Rav Kook,
His Chambers, p. 181

by Eli Vinokur

Rav Avraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, is one of the most prominent figures in the history of the Jewish people. He was a remarkable spiritual leader, a brilliant thinker, a great poet, and one of the leading adjudicators (ordinate, judge on Jewish affairs) in recent generations.

But above all, the Rav Kook was a great Kabbalist who dedicated his life to instilling the message of unity in the people. From the height of his spiritual attainment, he called upon the whole of the Jewish people to unite and to renew the spiritual connection among people.

The spiritual redemption of the people of Israel, the natural bonding among its factions, was for the Rav Kook a precondition for the establishment of the state of Israel. He repeatedly stated that the redemption of the land could come only through bonding



among us, and that only by implementing the wisdom of Kabbalah would such a deed be possible. In that regard, he wrote, “The secrets of the Torah bring redemption, and return the people of Israel to its land” (*Orot*, p. 95).

Waking Up and Bonding

“Our whole work is only to unite all the different Jewish sects and mend the schisms already present in our midst,” (*Igrot*, Part 4, p. 104).

In 1903, when the Rav Kook moved to the land of Israel, the Jewish settlement was divided and separated into sects, or groups. Each sect tried to retain what it had brought with it from its birth country. The Rav Kook did not agree with the atmosphere of separation among the Jews

in those days, and assumed an almost impossible task: to unite the nation under one concept.

His high spiritual degree revealed to him that the return of Jews to the land of Israel may have ended their physical exile, but did nothing to terminate their spiritual exile—the separation among Jews, which is the root of all our troubles. He tried to awaken us to return to the spiritual degree we had held prior to the ruin of the Temple, a degree that was expressed through love and unity.

He often stated that the secret of the power of the Israeli nation would be the bonding among its members, and that unity and spirituality were really one and the same. He wrote that when we do unite, we will climb back to our spiritual degree, return to the root of our being, and live peacefully and quietly in our land.

Advocating Love and Peace

“I wish that the whole of humanity could fit into a single body, so I could embrace them all,” (from a conversation of the Rav Kook with the author Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz).

The Rav Kook was overflowing with love for the nation and indeed for the whole world. His love was as true and as unconditional as a mother’s love for her child. His sole desire was to bond us all with this love; he knew that only this love could bring true happiness and equality among us.

The Rav Kook explained that the quality of love is a spiritual quality, and that the only method to obtain it is the wisdom of Kabbalah: “The wisdom of truth teaches us the global unity... and how to go by its light without failing,” (the Rav Kook, *Orot Kodesh*, Part 2, p. 393).

The Study of Kabbalah Is the Key

“Now the days are nearing when all will recognize and know that Israel’s salvation and the salvation of the entire world depend solely on the appearance of the wisdom of the hidden light

(the Kabbalah) of the internal-ity of the secrets of the Torah in a clear language,” (the Rav Kook, *Igrot*, Part 1, p. 92).

The Rav Kook served in many public offices, but he often said that his true wish was to delve in the wisdom of the hidden, for this was most important to him. “What I feel, the contentment and pleasure in studying the hidden...is my prime goal. All the duties of the other skills are secondary to my essence,” (*Mist of Purity*, p. 31).

He aspired to connect us to the secrets of the wisdom of Kabbalah, and often criticized those who publicly opposed its dissemination. He knew that only by learning its secrets would we find happiness and unity. “In our lives, we need the hidden secrets to be revealed and exposed. By revealing these secrets we will know ourselves and we will know what is hidden within us” (the Rav Kook, *Maamarei Raiah*, p. 153).

Today, many years after spiritual giants such as the Rav Kook and Baal HaSulam brought Kabbalah’s wisdom into our world, their advice is more pertinent than ever. Their writings reveal the only way we can change our future for the better. All we need to do is open our hearts and minds to it. ■

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ASK THE KABBALIST » CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Q: What about meditating on certain letters?

A: The Hebrew letters originated in the world *Atzilut*. A Kabbalist who attains the world *Atzilut* describes the forces within it in the form of letters. It is impossible to achieve any kind of spiritual sensation by picturing the structure of the letter *Aleph* in one’s mind. A Kabbalist perceives the spiritual structure that the letter expresses, the spiritual root to which it points. However, to feel it one must first attain the spiritual degree of the world *Atzilut*.

I teach Kabbalah as I received it from my teacher, Rabbi Baruch Ashlag (the Rabash), the firstborn son and successor of Baal HaSulam. I studied with him from 1979 to his passing in 1991. I was his student and his personal assistant, and I never once heard him mention anything remotely similar to meditation.

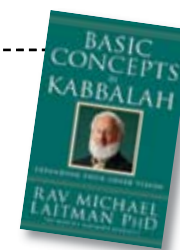
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BASIC CONCEPTS IN KABBALAH

“All of nature’s actions are interconnected; hence, by violating one of its laws, we upset the balance of the entire system.”



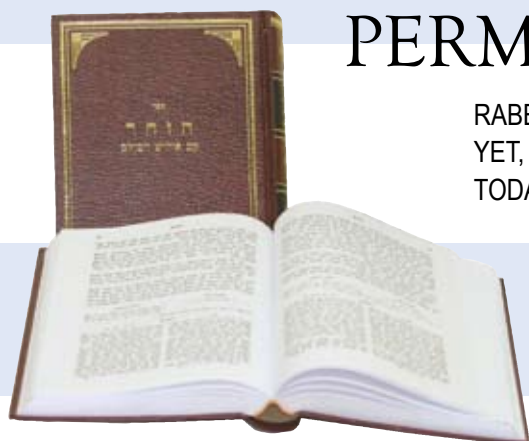
Unraveling The Zohar

PERMISSION TO REVEAL

RABBI SHIMON BAR-YOCHAI HAD AN EXQUISITE TREASURE IN HIS HANDS AND WANTED TO SHARE IT WITH THE WORLD. YET, HE WAS ALSO AFRAID THAT IF IT FELL INTO THE WRONG HANDS, IT WOULD CREATE CORRUPTION TODAY, WE ARE PERMITTED TO TOUCH THE ZOHAR.

“Rabbi Shimon sat and wept. He said, ‘Woe if I reveal; woe if I do not reveal.’ If he did not reveal, the innovations in the Torah would be lost; and if he did reveal, perhaps one who is unworthy of the secrets of the Torah would hear?”

The Book of Zohar, Naso, Idra Rabah



by Dudi Aharoni

Kabbalists have always sought a way to reveal the method to achieve perfection to the people. But passing the method on to others is a complex matter, and Kabbalists had to innovate in order to overcome various obstacles.

This essay in *The Zohar* describes Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai’s internal conflict. He yearned to tell the world about the wisdom of Kabbalah, but feared being misunderstood. To understand why revealing the wisdom of Kabbalah was such a complicated matter, we must first know one of the biggest secrets: the true meaning of the word “Torah.”

The Spice

“Rabbi Shimon said, ‘Woe unto one who says that the Torah comes to tell literal stories. Rather, all the words of the Torah are sublime matters and sublime secrets.’”

The Book of Zohar, BeHa’alotcha

The Book of Zohar tells us that the Torah is not a collection of historic episodes or earthly moral codes. Instead, it is written, “I have created the evil inclination, I have created for it the Torah as a spice, because the Light in it reforms it.”

Kabbalists explain that the Torah is a special force, a “spice,” whose role is to help us realize the purpose of Creation—to transcend the ego, the evil inclination, and equalize with the Higher Force of reality,

the force of love and giving. To begin with, the Torah was given to us for that single purpose.

A Treacherous Addition to the Ego

The Torah has a unique characteristic: it can do good, but it can also do harm. If used correctly, with the aim to equalize us with the Upper Force, the Torah elevates us to a new life. However, if we engage in it without this intent, the Torah does harm. This is why it is written, “Rewarded—it becomes a potion of life to him; not rewarded—it becomes a potion of death to him” (*Masechet Yomah*, 72b).

“Potion of death” means that the Torah evokes additional egoism. That is, besides the corporeal egoism we all possess, it adds a spiritual ego, too. This added ego causes people to consider themselves righteous and think that they should be rewarded by the Creator and by others in this world and in the next. They believe that their place in heaven is guaranteed. This was what Rabbi Shimon feared.

Rabbi Shimon’s purpose was to deliver the wisdom of Kabbalah only to those with a genuine need to correct themselves to similarity with the Creator. Yet, he was afraid that the wisdom of Kabbalah would suffer the same fate as that of the Torah, that it would become a means to obtain honor, wealth, and power. He feared that people would think that it possessed nothing more than liter-

al stories. For this reason, Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai (Rashbi) wrote his sacred book in a special code, and knew that *The Zohar* would have to be hidden for many centuries, until the generation was worthy.

Happy Are Those with a Question in Their Hearts

“Rabbi Shimon lifted up his hands and wept, and said, ‘Woe unto one who would be at that time, and happy is one who would be, and could be at that time.’ And he interprets, ‘Woe unto one who would be at that time because when the Creator comes to call upon the deer, He will examine all the actions of every person... Happy is the one who will be at that time because he will be awarded that Light of the King’s delight.’”

The Book of Zohar, Exodus

In its picturesque style, *The Book of Zohar* tells of Rashbi’s forward gaze, weeping for the days to come at the end of the exile. In those days, he knew, it would be necessary to disclose the wisdom of Kabbalah to realize the purpose of Creation. However, Rashbi also knew that some people would misuse it, and this pained him.

Rashbi was hurt by the thought that people who grew accustomed to improper use of the Torah, or were brought up to suppress their deepest questions, would approach Kabbalah with that same attitude. It is about those people that he says “Woe,” but he immediately adds that there will be many others who, through the wisdom of Kabbalah, will achieve a great Light.

“Happy” are the people in whom the question about life’s meaning will awaken. This is because this question will bring them to the Light that reforms,

hidden in the books of Kabbalah. Then, “when the Creator comes to call upon the deer,” (when the Upper Light comes to fill the souls), these people will be able to rejoice in the King’s delight.

Climbing the Ladder Together

In our generation, we have already been given the *Sulam* (Ladder) commentary on *The Book of Zohar*. The *Sulam* commentary is the first and only commentary that lets us aim correctly in the study of Kabbalah. By allowing us to cultivate the right intention, this commentary helps us discover the treasure that Rashbi hid for us in *The Zohar*. As its name, *Sulam*, implies, this commentary is a ladder to climb to the eternal, perfect, and sublime state that awaits us all. ■

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extras

GARDEN OF EDEN

The wisdom of Kabbalah deals only in man’s desires. Kabbalists discovered that the only thing that exists in reality is a desire, and the fulfillment of this desire.

In Kabbalah, the Garden of Eden symbolizes a desire to give, to bestow upon another. Thus, through acquiring the desire to give, one leaves the “shell” of egoism, its limitations, and feels oneself existing beyond the boundaries of this world. Following one’s exit from one’s ego, a person is integrated in the perfect, eternal, and infinite nature.

REVIVAL OF THE DEAD

The revival of the dead is usually described in movies as a situation where the bodies of the dead come back to life, step out of their graves, and begin to live their lives anew.

But the wisdom of Kabbalah explains that the term “death” relates to the state of our egoistic desires within. Once these are corrected into altruism, we can use them to benefit others. This is called “the revival of the dead.”

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EXPANDED AND REVISED KABBALAH.INFO WEBSITE DELIVERS
COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION AND TOOLS TO MEET WORLDWIDE DEMAND

The world's largest online source for free Kabbalah content, www.kabbalah.info has been updated and expanded to meet the growing worldwide interest in the wisdom and study of Kabbalah. The new site offers quick and easy access to a wealth of information and resources for learning the wisdom of Kabbalah.

Due to the rapidly growing interest in Kabbalah, www.kabbalah.info was renewed, taking first-time visitor needs into specific consideration.

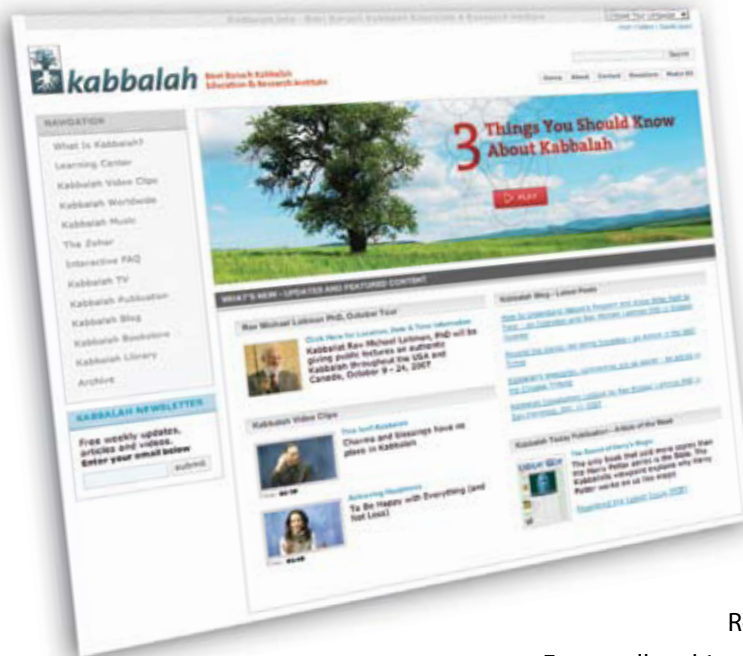
The main goal of this new site is to provide initial explanations of what Kabbalah is and is not, let people know who is it for and why is it studied, and to do it in an entertaining, quick and easy-to-understand fashion.

The site offers all of its materials and services for free, using the latest Flash technology, video clips and list-style articles to present its message to first-timers. Two minutes on the home page already gives the visitor "3 Things You Should Know About Kabbalah" – an introductory Flash presentation, answering the following common questions:

What is Kabbalah?

What is not Kabbalah?

What is the goal of Kabbalah?



Visitors can get this information elaborated in the "What is Kabbalah?" section, or go directly to a guided introductory course, with either a live instructor or recorded lessons. There are options to download free eBooks and audio books, participate in live daily lessons, listen to Kabbalistic music, browse an

extensive library of authentic Kabbalah texts, watch video clips and films, and even ask questions and get answers live, daily, with internationally renowned Kabbalist Rav Michael Laitman, PhD – the principle teacher and founder of Bnei Baruch—Kabbalah Education and Research Institute.

Eventually, this site is for everybody because today, Kabbalah is for everybody. Kabbalists throughout history have pointed to our era as the one where the secrets of Kabbalah would become disclosed to humanity. While there is definitely growing interest in Kabbalah, there is still a lot of confusion as to what it actually is and what it can do for people.

This new site has been developed to put an end to such confusion. It makes clear the essence and purpose of Kabbalah, so that after a short time on the site people can see for themselves what authentic Kabbalah has to offer them and humanity.

The following are available free of charge on www.kabbalah.info:

- Over 10,000 video Kabbalah lessons
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- Feature and documentary films on Kabbalah
- Live daily Kabbalah lessons, simultaneously translated from Hebrew into English, Spanish, German, Russian, Italian, French and Turkish.

The site caters to over 1,000,000 unique visitors a month in twenty-six languages.

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:

info@kabbalah.info

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Published by

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Ramat Gan 52115, Israel

E-mail: info@kabbalah.info

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Through Kabbalah we can reveal nature's complete picture, achieve world peace, eternal life and unbounded fulfillment, all while living in this world. All efforts of the Bnei Baruch Association are aimed solely at achieving these goals.

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