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## NAVIGATING THROUGH THE FINANCIAL STORM



It has been more than a year since the financial tornado first struck America and consequently the whole world. Is the worst already over, or - as Obama warned on December 6th - is the worst still to come?

by *Eli Vinokur*

We can speculate to no end, but what is certain as Obama's administration enters the White House is that we're a year and a half into the largest financial crisis since the Great Depression, and there is no actual solution in sight. So, maybe it's time to look at things from a different perspective?

First things first: what is the reason for all the commotion? Most analysts pinpoint the sub-prime mortgage crisis as the catalyst for our financial troubles, but don't let the words "sub-prime crisis" mislead you. The sub-prime market is not the reason for the collapse; it's only where the crisis surfaced. However, it could just as easily have been the "environmental crisis," or even the "nuclear proliferation crisis."

What really started this snowball rolling was not a financial body of any kind, but rather avarice, uncivilized lust and irresponsible opportunism, or simply said, the human self-centered nature.

The only reason it hit the monetary system first is that this system embodies the corrupt nature of people's relations and interconnections.

Unfortunately, this nature cannot be changed by pouring absurd amounts of taxpayers' money into the markets. So far, the trillions spent in the United States, England, France, and elsewhere have increased neither the lending nor the liquidity. And it was all done so recklessly that now no one can get the bailed-out companies and banks to admit what they've spent the money on. In Naomi Klein's words, those trillions "went down the drain," just like the billions that slipped through the hands of the big billionaires.

### A CRISIS OF TRUST

Money didn't cause the crisis and money won't fix it. To cope with today's financial and social challenges, a completely different bailout plan is needed - a plan that bails us out of our own self-centered ways.

### Editor's Note

#### HOPE FOR A WORLD IN CRISIS

A quick glance at the news is all it takes to convince anyone that we live in a deeply troubled world. Rich, poor, young and old are all affected. In this issue of *Kabbalah Today*, we take a look at some of the struggles people are facing and offer Kabbalah's remedy.

The financial crisis continues to dominate the headlines despite all efforts to reverse it. But in the midst of all this, *Navigating Through the Financial Storm* reminds us that money didn't cause the crisis, and therefore, money can't fix it. The way to overcome this winter of hardship is by building the right connections between us.

There is no doubt that economic uncertainty is causing stress for millions, and people are not always handling it well. *What Lies Ahead: Conflict or a Peaceful Transition?* examines the riots that erupted in Greece following the shooting of a teenager and tackles the inevitable question: Is this violence a precursor of events to come, or can we find an alternative?

In these uncertain times, we shouldn't forget they are just as stressful for our children. In *The American Education System: "F" is for Failing*, we consider what our children really need to prepare them for life in the 21st century.

Yet, amidst all the crises and struggles, there is a giant ray of hope. *The International Kabbalah Congress: A Celebration of Unity* will tell you about a historic event of unity where thousands of people, oblivious to race, religion or politics, will join together in peace and harmony, pointing the world to a better way.

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“All our actions will only be to bestow to others and to be of use to them in any way possible. Thus, we will achieve the goal of adhesion with Nature, through equivalence of form with It.”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), *The Future Generation*

► continued from page 1

Everyone uses the expression, “the stock markets tumbled,” but does anyone even know what this phrase really means? The stock market is, after all, nothing more than a conglomeration of estimations and speculations: a sophisticated platform for successful bets and extrapolations that are immediately translated into rates and indexes.

So the stock market is not what collapsed; what really collapsed is the trust between people. Credit companies don't believe the insurance companies, which can't rely on the banks, which were disappointed with the real estate agents, who blame the insurance agents for causing the fall of the Average Joe, who was forced, as usual, to pay for all of this. And if all that wasn't enough, along came Madoff's Ponzi Scheme and shattered whatever trust we had left in the system.

Now, everyone is carefully holding their cards close to their chests, stashing their money back where it used to be in the good old days – under the floor tiles. This is why the seemingly endless spouting of capital has dried up and created what the self-proclaimed mavens refer to as “a liquidity crisis.”

Now hold tight. Despite all the above-written, all is not lost. Actually, in the words of the Beatles, “it's getting better all the time.” Why? Because that same trust that appears to be broken was

never really there. It was no more than an illusion, which is the real bubble that burst. The situation where everyone is concerned only with personal profits is what brought us to this crisis in the first place. And if real trust doesn't exist in the world, it's better to discover it now, before it is really too late.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The real bonus that comes with this crisis is that now we are ready to see the world for what it is: one global boat.

### A NEW NAVIGATION SYSTEM

*Two people were in a boat, and one of them took a drill and began to drill a hole beneath himself. His companion said to him: Why are you doing this? He replied: What concern is it of yours? Am I not drilling under myself? The other replied: But you will flood the boat for us both, and we will both sink!*

*(The great Kabbalist Shimon Bar Yochai, quoted by the ancient Kabbalistic text, Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus 4:6)*

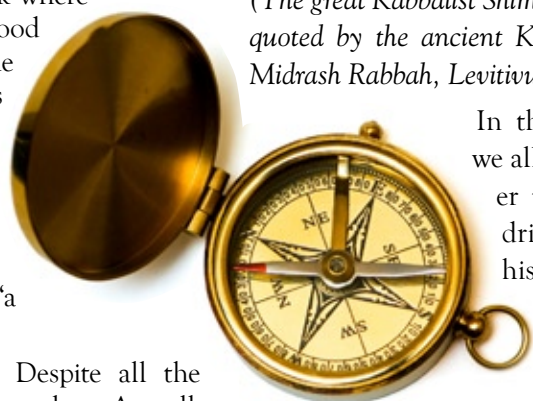
In the global boat we all share, whoever thinks he can drill a hole under his own seat and ignore the well being of others is gravely mistaken. The brokers and investors who believed that only their clients would be harmed if

their gambles failed are now ploughing the deep water along with everyone else. And by everyone I mean *everyone*, from the Hypo Real Estate Bank in Berlin and the AIG in New York, to the Chai Ling Shiu and Sons shoe store in North Thailand. If one person drowns, everyone drowns right along with him.

Why is it so important for us to understand this? Because we're living in a new era, one where trust and mutual consideration require a lot more than lip-service. These are now the laws of the new reality, a reality where we all depend on one another, for better or

for worse. From now on, we have no choice but to work together, as one big family. Only then will we be able to navigate our global ship toward the haven of bounty and prosperity.

*We have already come to a degree where the whole world is considered one collective and one society. Each person in the world draws his life's necessities and his livelihood from all the people in the world; hence, he must serve and care for the well-being of the whole world. (Peace in the World, by Baal HaSulam, the foremost Kabbalist of the 20th century)*

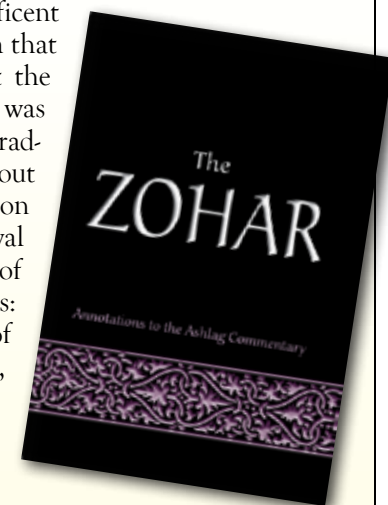


EXTRAS

## THERE'S A GRAND WORLD OUTSIDE OUR BITTER RADISH

Some people cannot agree that man, whom they think of as low and worthless, is the center of the magnificent creation. But these people are like a worm that is born inside a radish and thinks that the world is as bitter and dark as the radish it was born in. But as soon as the shell of the radish (of one's egoism) breaks and it peeps out (comes out of one's egoism, of the intention “for one's own sake,” and enters bestowal and love for others), it wonders (in awe of the Upper World that it revealed) and says: “I thought the whole world was the size of my radish, but now I see before me a grand, beautiful and wondrous world!”

*(From “Introduction to the Book of Zohar,” by Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag)*



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“...one who feels an inner sensation, a pressure of the soul's craving for the way of secrets... should be happy with one's lot...”

Kabbalist Rav Raiah Kook, *Lights of the Torah*



**“Seeing is believing,” or is it? Science now tells us what Kabbalah has been saying for centuries: there is far more to perception than what meets the eye**

by **Keren Applebaum**

*I see trees of green, red roses, too.  
I see them bloom for me and you.  
And I think to myself,  
“What a wonderful world!”  
I see skies of blue and clouds of white;  
The bright, blessed day,  
The dark, sacred night,  
And I think to myself,  
“What a wonderful world!”*

*(What a Wonderful World,  
George David Weiss and Bob Thiele)*

In the 60s, Professor Paul Bach-y-Rita revolutionized the fields of neurobiology and rehabilitation by introducing the concept of sensory substitution. Exploiting the brain's plasticity or ability to adapt, he enabled blind patients to use the sense of tactition to obtain environmental information normally perceived through vision. An electrode connected to a blind patient's tongue was used to relay external stimuli to the brain, which then “translated” the tactile stimuli to visual ones, enabling the blind patient to “see.”

The secret behind this seemingly fantastic operation can be summed up by Bach-y-Rita's famous words, “We see with our *brain*, not with our eyes.” With this conviction, he pioneered the field of research that can help handicapped people compensate for damaged sen-

sory facilities by using the remaining, functional senses. Stated simply, he advanced the idea that our senses are interchangeable.

This line of reasoning is supported by other data, such as the McGurk effect, showing that our comprehension of speech is a combination of auditory and visual information. In other words, our visual perception is partly responsible for what we hear, suggesting that our brain sometimes interprets visual information as auditory information. Further experiments are in progress to examine the role of vision in perceiving smells (think of seeing a delicious steak when you have the flu and can't smell anything: your mouth still waters from the “delicious smell” of what you see).

Furthermore, there have been many individuals with “special” abilities who also support the notion that our sensory perception may not be as reliant on our senses as we think. One famous example is Rosa Kuleshova, who was able to read regular print and identify colors with just her fingertips, while her eyes were covered.

### **A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT PERCEPTION**

Kabbalah, the wisdom that deeply engages in the field of perception of reality – the general force of nature – tells us that the above mentioned examples are not so surprising. In fact,

as Baal HaSulam, the great Kabbalist of the 20th century, explains, each of our five senses incorporates all the others, meaning that each sense partially perceives what all others do. Therefore, if a person loses one of the five senses, it is partially compensated by the remaining senses. This is not to say that a blind person will literally be able to see, but the other senses will help him overcome the loss by providing pieces of information that were once delivered by vision.

It turns out that we can partially “see, hear, smell, taste, and touch” with any one of our senses. And as Rosa Kuleshova's example shows, this ability is more developed in some people (although in the past, before our senses were numbed by the loud, artificial world invented by man, we all had these abilities).

So was Paul Bach-y-Rita right? Do we actually “see with our brain, not with our eyes”? Not quite, because in fact, there is a lot more to our perception. According to Kabbalah, if science keeps probing the field of perception, it will discover that our brain is but a detector, whereas perception isn't happening in the brain at all, but *outside* of it, in something called the “desire” or “will.”

What is the will? It is our spiritual essence, which bears no relation to our physical body and exists entirely beyond the corporeal matter. *This* is where all of our perception takes place – in our desire, also called our “soul.”

### **INFINITE PERCEPTION**

But there's more. It turns out that everything we perceive “with our five senses” – the great world we see (and hear, and touch, and smell, and taste) all around us – is but a tiny portion of what we are capable of perceiving. Although we perceive all of these things with our non-physical essence, the soul, we only engage the lowest, most external part of it. It is like a “base level” of perception that enables us to perceive the physical world and thus sustain our bodies' physical existence.

However, this sense has an infinitely greater potential: since it is found beyond the corporeal reality, it can perceive an infinite wealth of *spiritual*, non-physical “colors, smells, sounds, tastes and sensations.” To do so, however, we must develop this latent spiritual sense that is already within us.

Then, in addition to the “base level” perception of our current reality, we will continue revealing greater layers of the more “external,” spiritual reality, thus engaging higher parts of our real sensory organ – the soul.

So, how can we do this? How can we perceive this “higher” reality? We can do it just by changing our approach or attitude to life. Kabbalah explains that in reality, nothing ever changes outside of us. The only thing that changes is us. We perceive the constant, unchanging influence of the general force of nature, a force that desires to give us pleasure; but we perceive it inside our continuously changing desires.

The degree of our desires' similarity to this force of nature is what depicts – inside us – the changing picture of the “external” world. In other words, the more we resemble the force of nature by loving and bestowing to others, the more we begin to sense this force and experience a broader, richer reality. But as long as our desires and attitudes remain opposite to this force (egoistic), the only reality we will experience is the one currently felt by most people in the world.

It follows that perception is not really happening through our physical senses and brain. And this is why a person may have no eyes, but still be able to see, as the latest scientific experiments show. So why do we need eyes? It is in order to have the illusion that there is something in front of us! This helps us construct our reality as “me” and “something outside of me,” because we are then able to interact with our environment and research the “external reality.”

And as for the final, most interesting question: what does it feel like to perceive the force of nature? Kabbalists – those who already perceive the entire spiritual realm – say that it can hardly be conveyed in our regular language, which is intended to describe the physical objects we sense around us. Nevertheless, for a slight estimation, they say that the perception through the higher parts of our soul may be hinted at through the broadest imaginable interpretation of the words “eternity, infinity and perfection.”



“We must establish seminaries and compose books, to hasten the dissemination of the wisdom. By that, we will soon be rewarded with the redemption of our souls soon in our days.”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), *The Book of Introductions*

## THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: “F” IS FOR FAILING



**The way we educate our children has a fundamental problem - it is detached from reality. What they really need is “a school for life” - real tools for real life**

by **Riggan Shilstone**

**T**he American public education system is responsible for 90% of our most precious resource: our children. They are our hope for the future, and we must prepare them for the challenges of an increasingly complex world. So far, we have failed miserably at this task.

While we focus on developing skills like math and reading to prepare our children for the competitive job market, we have forgotten all about teaching them the basic life skills. As a result, teen suicide rates are on the rise, depression is an epidemic, and far too many youngsters turn to alcohol or drugs to numb themselves to the pain of their daily existence.

A survey of 16 to 25-year-olds by the Prince's Trust in Britain found that one in ten young people believed life was not worth living or was meaningless. The poll of over 2,000 showed that more than a quar-

ter felt depressed. Almost half said they were regularly stressed and many did not have anything to look forward to. The trust, which aims to help vulnerable young people, said its study revealed an increasingly vulnerable generation.

So, maybe it is time for us to rethink what our children need to learn?

### **A SCHOOL FOR LIFE**

In a recent report to the UK government, advisor Sir Jim Rose recommended that in order to solve these problems, the British primary schools should start teaching kids more about essential life skills. He proposed instituting a curriculum that would prepare children for life by providing them with the “personal, social and emotional qualities essential to their health, well-being and life as a responsible citizen in the 21st Century.” Such a curriculum would include lessons about emotional well-being and social skills.

Sir Rose's report is a good summary of the problem with our education system, and a good indication of what our children are lacking. Maybe other countries should also consider a similar approach and start teaching children content they can actually apply to the world they enter once they leave the classroom.

Instead of spending hours upon hours drilling our children on knowledge that is almost entirely erased from their heads the moment they leave the classroom, schools should be explaining the nature of the world we are living in. From the earliest years, children should learn about the tight connections and interdependencies that exist between people today, and that the desire to benefit at the expense of others (egoism) is the main reason for our suffering. This will make youth see that the short-lived enjoyment they acquire at someone else's expense is actually harmful to them, because the harm they cause someone else boomerangs right back to them. At the same time, we should show them how nature's balanced relationships of mutual love and respect lead to harmony, enabling the existence of life.

### **MORE THAN GOOD GRADES**

If we give our children such knowledge - a real tool for real life, then they will leave school with more than good grades and successful exams. They will understand life and the world around them, and will have no reason to be violent, sink into depression or turn to alcohol or drugs. In addition, their frustration with the pointless and irrelevant education system will be replaced with the feeling that they truly benefit from the things they learn.

A child who understands himself and the world around him learns to look at reality differently. He is truly “ready for life in the 21st century.” He

understands that he lives in an interconnected, globalized world, knows that the reason for all the bad things he sees around him is the human ego, and recognizes that this is what must be corrected to achieve happiness.

### **A NEW APPROACH**

We don't need any revolutionary reforms in order to provide our children with this key to life. All we need are a few specific changes in subjects that are already part of the curriculum. Here are a few examples:

- **The Natural Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and others)**

These subjects explain the natural systems that surround us, providing abundant examples of interconnected systems that work properly. But rather than having to mindlessly memorize the parts and workings of cells just to forget them a week after the exam, students could be shown how these natural systems relate to their lives.

To ensure prosperity and success, a human society should behave just as the cells in an organism (or any other system in nature). The cells are interdependent and interconnected, and they work together in reciprocity. The members of society are very much like the cells, where a person who cares only for himself, and not about the rest of “the human organism,” becomes “cancerous” and eventually destroys everyone, including himself.

- **History and Social Studies**

History and Social Studies provide an excellent opportunity to examine the course of human development and to see how it has been affected by egoism. Society's evolution from the family unit, to clans, then towns and cities, then to nations, and finally - to today's “small global village,” was driven by people's ever-increasing desires to gain and develop. However, the same de-

sires have brought about all the wars and tyrannies throughout history. Such classes can become a great platform for showing how one's egoistic nature can be used constructively - for the benefit of society, or destructively - for satisfying one's narrow self-centered interests and thus to society's detriment.

- **Sports**

Group games can be used to give kids a deeper understanding of the advantages of cooperation and reciprocal work.

### **BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL SUBJECTS**

In order to give our children a solid foundation for coping with the complexities of life in the modern world, there is one more subject that needs to be introduced into the curriculum: “Being Human.” This class - sure to become children's favorite - will engage in the questions that really bother our children, such as, “Why should we go to school in the first place? Why should we study? Why should we get married and have our own children later on in life?” Or more generally, “What do we need all of this for?”

And for the more inquiring students, teachers can provide answers to questions that leave most parents scratching their heads; meaningful questions like, “Who am I?” and, “What is my purpose in life?”

The subject matter of this class, based on the ancient wisdom of Kabbalah, will answer these difficult questions by speaking to children simply and explaining the source of the desires and thoughts that come to them. This class will help the child understand and reveal more about himself and his purpose as a human being, supplementing the knowledge he acquires in the other classes.

“When one obtains the excessive spiritual will to receive, one wishes to devour, for one’s own delight, all the wealth and delights in the next, eternal world, which is an eternal possession.”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), *Introduction to the Book of Zohar*

## THE LITTLE PRINCE EXPLAINS THE FINANCIAL CRISIS



In a time of global crisis, there is a lot we can learn from the simple wisdom of *The Little Prince*

by Mike Kellog

Everyone’s trying to pinpoint the reasons that led us to the financial crisis, and many are writing very long dissertations on it. But the fact of the matter is that the reason can be summed up in just three letters: E-G-O, as many are realizing today. In other words, we were dragged into this turmoil because our interpersonal relationships are not built by the principle of, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” but rather by, “What’s in it for me?” Like all of our problems, the financial crisis is an outcome of our self-centered actions, thoughts, and desires.

Lately the leading financiers, analysts and journalists also recognize that the financial crisis is really a crisis of moral values. “We don’t just need a financial bailout,” wrote Thomas L. Friedman in his December 16 Op-Ed column in *The New York Times*, “We need an ethical bailout... I don’t want to kill the animal spirits that necessarily drive capitalism - but I don’t want to be eaten by them either.” And boy, is he right. As the current crisis demonstrates, people’s insatiable greed has given rise to a hoarding mentality of irresponsible accumulation, until the “pile” they’ve been storing away finally tipped over.

But while the leading financiers are trying to recover from the fact that the crisis caught them so off guard, it turns out that some already knew about the prospects of their self-centered economic approach all along...

A conversation between the Little Prince and a businessman (selected excerpts from the book *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry written over half a century ago):

“And what do you do with five-hundred millions of stars?”

“Nothing. I own them.”

“And what good does it do you to own the stars?”

“It does me the good of making me rich.”

“And what good does it do you to be rich?”

“It makes it possible for me to buy more stars, if any are ever discovered.”

“How is it possible for one to own the stars?”

“I administer them,” replied the businessman.

“I count them and recount them...”

The little prince was still not satisfied. “If I owned a silk scarf,” he said, “I could put it around my neck and take it away with me. If I owned a flower, I could pluck that flower and take it away with me. But you cannot pluck the stars from heaven...”

“No. But I can put them in the bank.”

“Whatever does that mean?”

“That means that I write the number of my stars on a little paper. And then I put this paper in a drawer and lock it with a key.”

“The grown-ups are certainly altogether extraordinary,” the little prince said simply, talking to himself as he continued on his journey.”



THIS IS NOT  
KABBALAH

## KABBALAH: USER MANUAL

### WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?

Although we often feel like isolated individuals and see a world of schisms, Kabbalists say that we are all interconnected and interdependent. Much like the cells of a living body, we are all parts of a single entity called “the collective soul.”

Our individual souls are bound together by an Upper Force that can only be described as complete, unconditional love and bestowal. This force not only connects us together, but all other parts of Creation as well – it is Nature’s all inclusive force, “the Creator.”

Those who have developed the ability to perceive this force and the collective human soul are called “Kabbalists.” They explain that this ability lies within every one of us, but remains dormant until we develop it. And from their perspective, it is evident that in the coming phase of human evolution, all people will discover that they are united, will connect to the Upper Force that unites them, and will thereby find true happiness.

To help us get there, Kabbalists gave us the wisdom of Kabbalah – a method by which we can develop our ability to perceive humanity’s collective soul, and connect to the Creator – the Upper Force that enlivens the whole of Creation.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is the relationship between Kabbalah, red strings and holy water?

A: There is no relation whatsoever. Red strings, holy water and other products are a lucrative commercial invention created in the past two decades.

Q: Is Kabbalah a religion?

A: No. Kabbalah is a science – the physics of the overall reality. It is a wisdom that reveals the comprehensive reality that is normally hidden from our senses.

Q: Is Kabbalah related to tarot cards, astrology and numerology?

A: No. Tarot cards, astrology and numerology are mystical practices which were mistakenly associated with Kabbalah during the past one hundred years.

Q: What is Kabbalistic meditation?

A: There is no Kabbalistic meditation. Kabbalah teaches a person how to transcend egoism and connect to the quality that prevails in Nature – unconditional love and bestowal.

Q: Are there any amulets in Kabbalah?

A: No. In our world, there are no physical objects that bear any spiritual contents. Amulets can only help a person as a psychological support.



“When two people love each other, we say that they cleave to one another as one body. And when they hate each other, we say that they are as far from one another as the east from the west.”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), *Introduction to the Book of Zohar*

## WHAT LIES AHEAD: CONFLICT OR A PEACEFUL TRANSITION?



Recent events indicate that people's anger and discontent may erupt at any moment and in any place in the world. It's good to know that there is an alternative to violent conflict

by Asaf Ohayon

An unusual scenario unfolded in Chicago in December, where more than 200 angry workers “peacefully took over” the Republic Windows & Doors factory after being abruptly fired without final pay or benefits. With support from hundreds of union members, officials and even President-elect Barack Obama, the six day occupation ended in victory for the workers.

Was it even thinkable a mere four months ago that American citizens would have to resort to “occupying a building” just to receive what is rightfully theirs? And what would have happened if the incident had unfolded under different circumstances?

We don't have to look very far to find the answer. Coincidence or not, at the same time as the Chicago sit-in, a much more dramatic protest unfolded in Athens, Greece, where a police shooting of a teenager unleashed mass public protests. Angry mobs are estimated to have caused over a billion dollars in damage.

What started in Athens quickly spread all over the country and then spilled over to other parts of Europe, including Spain, Denmark, France, Italy, and Germany. The media has portrayed the violent protests as an outlet for people's deep-seated discontent, intensified by the pressure of the financial crisis, the massive layoffs that came as a result, and the fear of the ones yet to come.

### CAN THINGS GET ANY WORSE?

Well, it turns out that they definitely can. The *International Security Report 2008*, warning of violent protests worldwide, was publicized in November – just before the Europe riots – by the *Oxford Research Group*. Provocatively entitled “The Tipping Point?” it states, “The global economic downturn is the biggest single threat to security across the world. On present trends, many hundreds of millions of people among the poorest communities across the world will suffer most. This is likely to lead to the rise of radical and violent social movements, which will be controlled by force, further increasing the violence.”

A rather pessimistic forecast. So are we doomed to plunge into violent conflict on a global scale?

Not necessarily. Kabbalah assures us that there is an alternative path. However, it will only become available once we realize the true reason for the financial crisis, which is pushing many to the brink of violence, and begin addressing it.

So what is the reason for the unprecedented global financial fiasco? Kabbalah explains that it is our inability to adapt to the changes that our world has undergone. In other words: over the past century, our world has rapidly shrunk into “one small village,” while our attitudes

and ways of thinking about the world have not evolved as fast.

As shown by the latest research, the “shrinking of the world,” which we have all witnessed and many analysts have written best sellers about, wasn't only about Internet and commerce. We have become interconnected and interdependent in such a way that not only our actions, but also our thoughts and desires now determine the fate of others worldwide. We have become one body, one family whose members cannot afford to ignore the close connections between them. It is as if we are connected to each other by invisible threads, where our inability to see them doesn't change the fact that they're there.

And this was exactly what we failed to see. Instead of changing our approach toward life to one of globalism, consideration and warmth with respect to others, we tried to stick to the old, local, narrow-minded, and self-centered approach. The only thing we didn't notice is that the world has changed and there is no turning back. The new degree of connectedness, proven time after time by the current financial crisis, was revealed to allow us to truly become one loving family, and it will not allow us to settle for less.

The present crisis is but a result of our outdated attitudes, which put us in opposition to the global system. As the *Oxford Research Group* pointed out, our problems can only be prevented by reversing the current trends.

### THE ALTERNATIVE PATH

So, how do we turn around the imbalance that has brought the world to crisis, and how do we set the world on a path leading to balance, tranquility and harmony? What do we have to do to shift to a “global mentality” that will ameliorate the financial crisis and set

us on the alternative path of peaceful development?

All this can be done through *education and public opinion*. Instead of “educating” people the way we do now – by filling the media with self-oriented messages that encourage us to be better than others and to step on them on our way to the American dream, we can use the mass media channels (including television, radio, Internet, and advertising) to give people the needed, practical explanation of the world we now live in and the relationships that are now necessary for us to survive and prosper in the new world. This is a world where the actions and thoughts of every person bear a direct relation to the well-being of everyone in the world. And this is why, now, more than ever before, there is a need to create new attitudes and relationships of kindness and consideration for all our “neighbors” – everyone on the planet.

### YES, WE CAN

If the media channels that fill our minds with information and shape our worldviews will start transmitting information about our interdependency and the importance of new attitudes of kindness and care for those around us, the public opinion will gradually begin to change.

Actually, because the human being is so naturally and easily influenced by society, the shift to the alternative path of peaceful coexistence among all people in our small global village is really not such a difficult feat to accomplish. We have only to use the tools we already have in a way that will benefit us all. Once we implement a different, “globally – aware” education system, human society as a whole will change its egoistic values and be in unison with our new, global reality.

Michael Laitman's Personal Blog  
**laitman.com**  
*Kabbalah  
and the  
Meaning  
of Life*



“...let us think of each other, of how we can help each other by simply joining our desires. Let us assume there are 1000 men and women in the world, who simultaneously want it to happen. This is called the raising of prayer, of desire, which will be answered...”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), *Introduction to the Book of Zohar*



by Chaim Ratz

Not quite an arts festival, not quite a cultural extravaganza, not quite a social experiment, but something of all three, the 8th annual International Kabbalah Congress is a three-day celebration of human unity and a deep personal experience for every participant.

This year, it will be held in the center of Tel Aviv's Exhibition Gardens - *Ganey ha Ta'arucha*. Despite the tension between Israel and its neighboring countries, and a growing uncertainty about the global financial situation, record numbers will make the journey to the 2009 Congress, which will take place on February 2-4. Many of the 6,000 participants arriving from over 52 countries will be first-timers attracted by past attendees' testimonials.

### WHAT'S ON THE AGENDA?

Anyone who has been to a Kabbalah Congress will tell you that it is a most profound, life-changing experience. The program includes immensely engaging workshops, uplifting meal sessions, emotional and energetic cultural evenings, fun activities and games for children and adults, a variety of awe-inspiring music and dance performances by participants from all parts of the world, and enlightening Kabbalistic lessons with Rav Michael Laitman, PhD.

## THE INTERNATIONAL KABBALAH CONGRESS: A CELEBRATION OF UNITY



Over the past five years, the International Kabbalah Congress has established itself as one of the world's most culturally diverse and awe-inspiring gatherings. This year, however, the Congress will be simply off the charts

This winter, the 2009 International Kabbalah Congress will take place at the largest exhibition ground in Israel, in the modern setting of Tel Aviv - Israel's largest metropolis, and will spread the warmth of mutual care and respect all throughout the region. For a few brief days, the makeshift village known as "Pavilion Number 10" will become the warmest and most cordial place in the Middle East, or even the whole world. It's an event of magnificent diversity, a coming together of people of all ages and from all walks of life: celeb-

rities, creative artists, engineers, road workers, dancers, white collar workers, students, musicians, stock-investors, school teachers, performers, tradesmen, writers, DJs, plumbers, academicians, politicians, designers - and the list goes on and on.

### NOT YOUR REGULAR CONGRESS

But the International Kabbalah Congress is more than just a three-day spectacle. As Congress veterans are quick

to point out, the Congress is distinguished by its special preparation, focus, and purpose. The aim of this event is to nurture the common point of human unity beyond all the differences that separate people - beyond languages, races, religions, educational achievements and occupational interests.

The Congress creates a special environment that enables its participants to realize the high potential that lies in the connection between people. Its primary aim is to invert the self-centered approach that lies at the base of human relationships and is opposed to the global nature of life in the 21st century. Since this opposition is what gave rise to the current financial, environmental, and educational crises, inverting our self-centered approach will alter the world's unpromising course and begin moving it toward tranquility, peace and prosperity.

In the midst of the raging global financial crisis, this Congress will give its participants a taste of the better world we all dream of and the practical tools to help us take our first steps as one united human family.

For many participants, the International Kabbalah Congress will become a deeply transformational experience, one where they will break through their psychological barriers that separate them from others and discover new ways of expression and communication. The result will be a multi-faceted event, playful and lively, but at the same time facilitating deep inner focus and personal growth.

Even if you are not a Kabbalah student, this Congress will give you the chance to experience unprecedented unity among people and witness a mini-model of a new, better humanity.

## WHEN IN ROME, DO AS THE ROMANS DO - WORSHIP A HORSE!

EXTRAS



Social opinion is, in fact, such a powerful tool for change that it can make us do *anything*. For example, think of some celebrity figures you admire. Why do you admire them? Is it because of their good looks? Winning personality? Bigger-than-life talent? Well, they may have all of those qualities, but the fact is, more than anything else, a celebrity figure is important to us because the *society* makes them important.

In the Roman Empire during the reign of Caligula, the most worshipped celebrity was - Caligula's horse! In other words, if society is influenced to think that a horse is important, then society actually starts to worship that horse. And because your values are determined by the society, you will also begin to worship the horse.



## RECENT STUDY: “HAVING A GOAL IN LIFE IS GOOD FOR YOU”

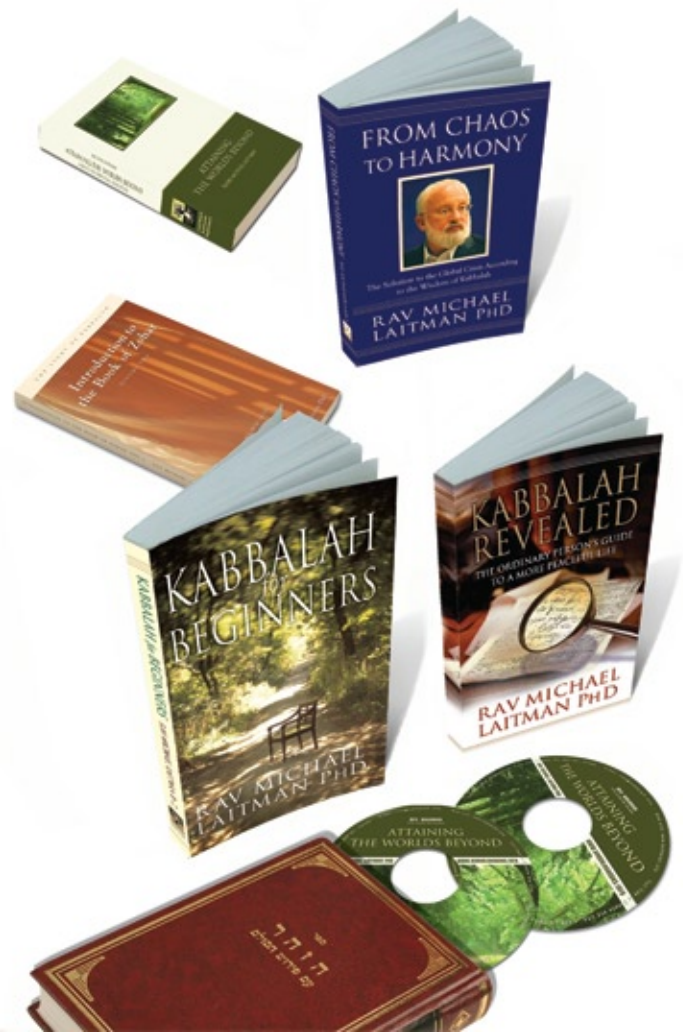


A new Japanese study has found that people who have something to live for have a lower risk of dying than those who do not. Finding a purpose in life may even override the risk of a stroke due to stress, researchers say. The only thing the researchers could not find, however, is the reason for the difference.

Well, you don't have to be a scientist to realize that a goal that's "shining" for you from afar fulfills, energizes and revitalizes you. But the challenge is to find a goal that can actually keep our interest throughout our lives. In fact, it is practically impossible to find such a long-lasting, "eternally-energizing" goal in this world. That's because all of our goals gradually lose their value as we go through different life experiences, mature, and change our preferences. Or, we attain our goals, and then we no longer have anything to look forward to.

There is, however, one goal that never fades or stops "shining" for us once we attain it, and that can sustain our sense of purpose for the duration of our entire lives: the spiritual goal. Moreover, its value - and our desire for it - only increase with time. Why? Because of the nature of the spiritual goal: As soon as we attain it, we reveal that it is actually much greater than we thought, and we immediately see the following, much greater degree of spirituality we can attain. Hence, the attainment of this goal is infinite, just like the goal itself, and it never puts an end to our desire for it.

So what exactly is the spiritual goal? It is to reveal the all-inclusive force of Nature that governs the entire universe (including us) and sets everything in motion. By attaining it, we reveal an existence beyond time or space, and beyond our temporal, corporeal existence.



[www.kabbalahbooks.info](http://www.kabbalahbooks.info)

### 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 world-wide 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](http://www.kab.tv)), the Online Kabbalah Education Center ([www.arionline.info](http://www.arionline.info)), and [www.kabbalah.info](http://www.kabbalah.info), the largest, most comprehensive Kabbalah site on the Internet.

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

### About Kabbalah Today

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

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

of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag.

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

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

Sincerely,  
*Kabbalah Today* editorial staff

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

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