

# KABBALAH TODAY

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AUTHENTIC WISDOM FOR A BETTER FUTURE

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## Editor's Note

### Time to Reveal the Wisdom

Kabbalah is defined by scholars as “Jewish mysticism.” However, Kabbalists define the wisdom of Kabbalah quite differently. According to Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), arguably the greatest Kabbalist in the twentieth century and author of the authoritative *Sulam (Ladder)* commentary on *The Book of Zohar*, the purpose of the wisdom of Kabbalah is “the revelation of His Godliness to His creatures in this world.” Thus, Kabbalists regard their lore as a highly practical and purposeful teaching method.

In the first three issues of *Kabbalah Today*, we introduced the wisdom of Kabbalah as explained by

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## WHO ARE YOU, PEOPLE OF ISRAEL?

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## A “PROPERLY WORKING” NATURE

**JUST AS WE TURN TO THE PROGRAM VENDOR WHEN A SOFTWARE WE INSTALL DOESN'T WORK, WHEN HUMAN NATURE FAILS US, WE MUST ASK THE “NATURE VENDOR” TO PROVIDE US WITH ONE THAT WORKS PROPERLY**

By Chaim Ratz

According to the wisdom of Kabbalah, the Creator is a force of love and wants to bestow His love. Hence, He created in us a desire to receive delight and pleasure. As a result, all our choices aim to increase our pleasure or decrease our pain. Every mineral, plant, animal, or person wants only one thing: to feel pleasure or avoid pain. Without the prospect of future pleasure, we simply cannot live.

The belief that in the future we will be happy is what we call “hope.” When we say, “I’m hopeful,” we really mean that we believe in the likelihood of experiencing joy and plea-

sure in the future. Otherwise, what can we be hopeful about? Thus, all our choices reflect our desire for pleasure.

### The Elusive Pursuit of Pleasure

But do we truly experience pleasure? While there are many good moments in the lives of most of us, the overall picture is less than rosy. The increasing rates of drug abuse, extreme violence, depression and other ills of our affluent society testify that something very basic is missing in our lives. None of these problems is the cause; instead, they are symp-

toms of a much deeper problem—our inability to fulfill our desire to feel pleasure.

To understand why we are dissatisfied, we need to remember that the Creator is a force of love and wishes to give us pleasure. Since the greatest possible pleasure is being in “His shoes”—omniscient and omnipotent—this is what He wants to give us, His power and His mind, Himself.

In other words, His goal in creating us is to make us similar to Him. And by consequence, the only state in which we will ever be happy is when we are like Him, when we discover and share His qualities. Kabbalah states that when we obtain these qualities, we will be infinitely, completely happy.

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### MISSION: POSSIBLE

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Is there a reason for the pressure, the wars, and the attention the world is giving us?



### SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

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We can learn from childhood to appreciate life on a deeper level



### BETWEEN CREATOR AND CREATURE

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The question, “Who am I?” exists in everyone...



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We live in a dream, and we are not even aware of it. It is time to wake up



Editor's Note

## Time to Reveal the Wisdom

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great Kabbalists throughout history. In this issue, we would like to discuss its implementation in our lives.

The reason is simple: the world is not getting any better, and Kabbalah is a means to improve the world. This makes the need to discuss how we can adapt Kabbalistic principles into our society far more pressing than ever before. Therefore, while expanding on the essence and principles of Kabbalah, we will also discuss how they should be introduced to humanity according to the teachings of Baal HaSulam, and the role of the Jewish people in the process.

We hope you will enjoy reading *Kabbalah Today* and we welcome your feedback, so that we can provide you with the most accessible, informative, and enjoyable paper about Kabbalah and its importance to our future.

# A "PROPERLY WORKING" NATURE



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## Concealment and Revelation of the Creator

All the above is very nice, but if we take a look around and honestly ask ourselves if this is the world of a Creator who loves His creatures and wants to benefit them, we will probably think that something went very wrong, either with the Creator, or with us.

The first option, that something went wrong with the Creator, has been our stance since the dawn of history. This is why we keep trying to change the world He created and "improve" it. We constantly invent new foods, technologies, means of trans-

portation, social rules, and the list is endless. We have been pursuing the "better," "stronger," and "faster" for millennia; but has this pursuit resulted in happiness, or even contentment? Probably not. Otherwise we wouldn't keep replacing and changing what we have. Indeed, why are we never satisfied?

with human nature, and not with anything else. In consequence, just as we turn to the program vendor when a software we install doesn't work, when human nature fails us, we must ask the "nature vendor" to provide us with a different nature, one that works properly.

Thousands of years ago, a man named Abraham, who was later called

**We have been pursuing the "better," "stronger," and "faster" for millennia; but has this pursuit resulted in happiness, or even contentment?**

Kabbalists wrote that at the end of the twentieth century, many people would begin to think that, perhaps, the stance that something was wrong with the world had not been the right answer. They would begin to feel that the problem wasn't with the world and its Creator, but with us! This new concept is gaining momentum, and more people than ever are aware that the problem is not with the world, but with humanity.

This is a critical shift: it means that we acknowledge that the problem is

Abraham the Patriarch, had searched and found just that—a method to communicate with Nature's "vendor," who instilled the desire to receive within us. Abraham developed his method and passed it around to anyone who would listen. His students continued to develop it, and today we call it "the wisdom of Kabbalah." If we use the advice of Kabbalists, we, too, will make first-hand contact with the Creator, and learn from Him how to be infinitely and unboundedly happy. ■

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## Between Creator and Creature

The question, "Who am I?" exists in everyone. But when that question can no longer be put aside, then it relates to the Creator: "Who is He?" This is because the Creator is inside us, the Source of the human "self." Hence, no matter how many times we ask ourselves, "Who am I?" the question still relates to the Creator. The "self" is a consequence. Our desires, our every movement, everything we do is, in fact, created by the Creator.

The notion that everything we say and think, even when we speak of the Creator and ourselves, is the work of the Creator, is virtually impossible for us to perceive.

So where is the "self"? There is no "self." The "self" is the work of nature, created by the Creator. The "self" clothes us, yet everything we do is actually His doing. The question, "Who am I?" can only exist outside the Creator. We are different from the Creator only in wanting to resemble Him and to attain His degree.

The will to receive is essentially the desire of us creatures to enjoy, corresponding to the abundance and pleasure that come from the Creator. We feel that will to receive and the Creator wants us to enjoy it. If one simply follows nature's in-

structions, one is like a beast that hasn't even a spark of a Godly soul.

Only if our will to receive is clothed with an intention that monitors its use and corrects it, can we regard ourselves as creatures enlivened intentionally by the Creator, and not just another rock, animal or bird. But that depends on us.

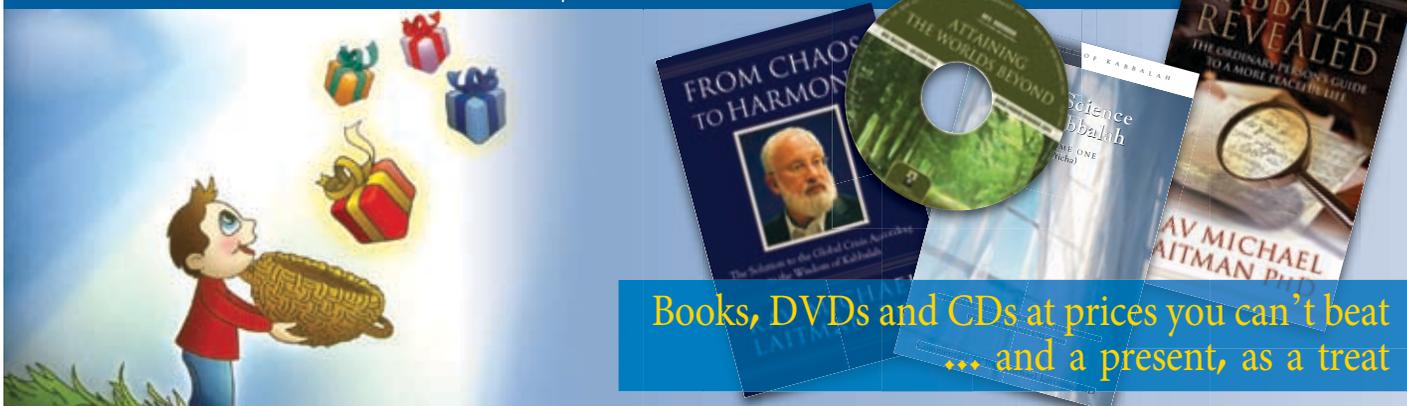
Our desires to drink, eat, sleep, marry, and have children are natural and come from the Creator. We can't escape or altogether change them. However, we can robe the will to receive with an aim and build a correct way to use that desire. The extent and depth of this aim depend solely on us. That is what we call, "Creation." We must

search for the right way to use our natures, our desires.

Nature comes from the Creator, and our job is to know how to use it. In Kabbalah, the whole of our desires and yearning for pleasure is termed "heart". And the "point in the heart" is the way we relate to our nature as given to us by the Creator, as well as our ability to use it correctly.

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# MISSION: POSSIBLE

## (AND MANDATORY)

by Yoav Bernstein

A report on global anti-Semitism was released January 5, 2005 by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in the United States Department of State. It stated that “Anti-Semitism in Europe increased significantly in recent years. ...The disturbing rise of anti-Semitic intimidation and incidents is widespread throughout Europe.” Concerning North America, the report stated that “in addition to manifestations of anti-Semitism in the United States, Canada experienced a significant increase in attacks against Jews and Jewish property.”

In most other nations, such as the Swiss or Australians, people go about their business without the constant threat of verbal or even physical abuse. Why can't we be like that? Are we different from other nations? And why does it seem like the eyes of the whole world are fixed on that minuscule group known as “the people of Israel”? Is there a reason for the pressure, the wars, and the attention the world is giving us?

### *The Role of Israel*

Kabbalists write that the Israeli nation has a unique role in the global scheme. Their books explain that this people has no right to exist unless it carries out its role as a chosen people. Moreover, this is the only reason for which the nation of Israel was created.

If we examine its evolution, we will see that the Israeli nation unfolded quite differently from the way other nations did. Each nation has its own genetic root, but the uniqueness of the Israeli nation is in its *spiritual* root. Jews are meant to promote all of humanity to the highest degree that humans can reach, and they are also meant to be the first to reach that spiritual level.

Let's briefly review the Jewish history. Abraham, the father of the nation, was the first Jew. He was born as a Babylonian somewhere between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers. While

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trying to “decode” the secret of human existence, Abraham succeeded in “crossing” the barrier separating our world from the spiritual world. He united these two worlds, and this unity is the root of the word *Yehudi* (Jewish): In Hebrew, *Yehudi* comes from the word *Yechudi*, which means “one,” “united,” or “unique.”

Following the revelation of the spiritual world, Abraham wrote the first Kabbalah book, *Sefer Yetzira* (*Book of Creation*). Subsequently, he began to share his teachings with local residents interested in learning about this newly discovered higher reality. In time, his initial group of students grew and became a nation. Later on, this people received the name “the people of Israel.”

Until the ruin of the Second Temple, the people of Israel simultaneously sensed both the spiritual world and the corporeal world. The only reason why this spiritual nation had to stay tightly connected to the material world, instead of retiring to the perfect and eternal life of the spiritual world, was its mission: it was to transfer the method of spiritual evolution it had discovered to every other nation. After all, this was the original reason for which Israel had been created.

### *Knowing the Role and Following it*

The whole of humanity is actually a single entity, and within it, each nation has its role. The Jews' special role is to implement the correction method and pass it on to all the other nations. This is what is meant by “being a light of the nations.”

Obviously, to make the rest of humanity want to reach the height of spirituality, the people of Israel must get there first. This is the task for which we have been chosen, but the longer we wait, the more we, and all other nations, suffer.

However, to carry out this mission, we must first realize what detaches us from spirituality. Kabbalists, those who have attained the comprehensive reality, tell us that the root of human corruption lies in the inherent quality of egoism that controls every one of us.

Egoism has evolved naturally, from its first (tiny) degree at the beginning of humankind's exist-

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tence to its present degree. It is like a sharp knife that separates people from each other. Today, connections among people are deteriorating even at the family level—the most basic level of association.

Kabbalists explain that this separation among souls is the root of all that is wrong and evil in the world. The method to correct it is explained in the authentic books of Kabbalah, which is a method to correct egoism. By applying its teachings on ourselves and subsequently sharing it with the rest of the world, we will restore the glory of the nation of Israel,

and bring all of humanity to the state of “one man, one heart,” following the principle, “Love thy friend as thyself.”

That same ego, which has grown to monstrous dimensions, is the very reason people lost their spiritual perception after the ruin of the Second

Temple. This is the same unfounded hatred that caused the spiritual ruin of the Jewish people.

The blows we are suffering today are intended to awaken us to our role. Only when we pull ourselves together as individuals and as a nation, and understand the essence of our existence and our role on Earth, can we rekindle our lost connection with the spiritual world. Only then will we earn secure, prosperous, independent, and complete lives here in this world. ■

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# WHO ARE YOU,

by Aviram Sadeh

## Beginnings

In Babylon some 5,000 years ago, a subtle but profound change took place. At that time, Mesopotamia was the melting pot that eventually created modern civilization.

In the years preceding that period, people simply satisfied their basic needs. They led simple lives and settled for a roof over their heads and the necessities of nutrition. They did not aspire to things such as career or high social status.

But 5,000 years ago, humanity gradually began to sense that life was no longer satisfying. This awareness marked the start of a fundamental change in global evolution.

**Abram discovered what no one else had previously discovered: he understood... that people could use that same ego to create a positive change**

When the change began, Mesopotamia began to evolve rapidly in several directions. The foundations of modern agriculture were laid, along with commerce, currency trade, and taxation. Gaps between classes increased, and people were divided into those who possessed more, and those who possessed less.

According to the wisdom of Kabbalah, human nature is run by the ego and its desire for enjoyment. This explains the radical changes and rapid cultural and technological progress that humanity experienced at that time.

## THE WISDOM OF KABBALAH OFFERS A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT IS PROBABLY THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL—THE MOMENT OF THEIR NATION'S BIRTH

### The Tower of Babylon

The outbreak of the ego produced a series of critical changes. It seemed as if Babylonians had been given “egoism shots,” prompting them to perform uncontrollable actions.

Until that moment, Babylonians were accustomed to simpler relationships and lived peacefully and quietly. They were as one nation, speaking the same language. In fact, they were almost like kin, as it is written (Genesis, 11:1), “And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.”

Therefore, the people of Babylon were unprepared for the process that suddenly began to affect them without forewarning, and they could not understand it. It seemed as though an unseen hand was moving them like marionettes, and they could not control it.

Before this change, Babylonians had been praying to idols and to Nature's forces. To some extent, they were controlled by the fear and the awe they had developed for those idols. But now they decided to change the rules of the game. Much like a child rebelling against its parents, the Babylonians were impelled by the ego to confront the Upper Force. They attempted to give the ego a higher position than that of the Creator.

The confrontation manifested in the building of the Tower of Babel that was to reach the sky, and even beyond (Genesis 11:4): “And they said: ‘Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name.’”

The tower, which was a building of colossal magnitude, symbolized their egos' drive to dominate Nature. The sky that the Babylonians tried to conquer symbolized the Upper Force.

The eruption of the ego induced several other phenomena, which created a chain reaction that no one could stop. Soon after the outbreak, the Babylonians ceased to understand each other. From the common

**The same Babylonians that followed Abraham... became a group of Kabbalists. This group grew and grew until it finally became “the people of Israel”**

language they had been speaking evolved a multitude of languages, and people grew distant from one another and dispersed in all directions. The growing egoism was separating them like a knife, and each person became more and more self-centered, ignoring the others' needs. In time, actual exploitation began to appear.

### Abraham's Way

Abram, son of Terah, was no different from any other Babylonian. He, too, was an idol worshiper. Moreover, Abram's family was known and respected in the idol-manufacturing industry and made a good living selling them.

Abram's desires, too, began to grow. However, Abram coped with the new situation differently. The prevalent faith in the power of idols didn't satisfy him; instead, he wanted more.

Thus, Abram discovered what no one else had previously discovered: he understood that people were naturally surrendering to their egos, which were now running their lives. Moreover,



he discovered that people could use that same ego to create a positive change. He watched the Babylonians, who until recently were like kin, grow farther and farther apart, and tried to teach them how to bond with each other, despite the outbreak of egoism.

Abram tried to explain to the Babylonians that if they put brotherly love above their erupting egos, they would be rewarded with a deeper bonding with the Upper Force. The essence of Abram's teaching was that the ego's role was not to drive them apart, but to strengthen their love for

one another. He taught them that it is *because* of the effort to maintain the bonding, that the Upper Force is revealed within them.

As a sign of the Godliness he had attained, Abram added the Hebrew letter *Hey* to his name (*Hey* is the letter that symbolizes God), and was called “Abraham.” He began to disseminate his method to anyone who was interested. Alas, only a handful of the Babylonians chose to listen to the teachings of the first Kabbalist in history.

Those who did follow the spiritual revolutionary were the first to put together the group of Kabbalists that later became the nation of Israel. Its members studied the method that Abraham discovered in lessons he would give at a famous tent he had set up along with his wife, Sarah.

It was written about them (Bereshit Raba, va Yeshev): “Abraham the Patriarch would bring them into his house; he would give them food and drink, and he would bring them closer, and he would bring them in under the wings of divinity.”

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The origin of the name, “Babel” is the word *Babal* (Hebrew: confused, mixed), named after the confusion of the tongues (Genesis 11:9): “Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

## BABEL



# PEOPLE OF ISRAEL?

For those who were not yet ready for his method, Abraham developed alternative methods that would suit the roots of their souls. The following verse describes how Abraham sent his messengers eastward, which is today's Far East, where today's Eastern teachings evolved: "But unto the sons of the concubines that Abraham had,

**The duty of Abraham's group is to apply his method to its members, set an example for the rest of humanity, and disseminate his method throughout the world**

Abraham gave gifts; and he sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country" (Genesis 25:6). Today's religions are an outgrowth from Abraham's dynasty.

## Abraham, the Father of the Nation

Abraham is considered "the father of the nation" because he founded the Israeli nation. The same Babylonians that followed Abraham on his path became a group of Kabbalists. This group grew and grew until it finally became "the people of Israel."

The one thing that unites this people is the historic goal for which it was created—implementing Abraham's spiritual method. And that group received the name "Israel" because of the direction of its spiritual growth: *Yashar* (straight) *El* (God), meaning "straight to God, the Upper Force."

## The Tower of Babel—the Last (and Highest) Floor

In the last 150 years, our lives have become quite similar to those of the ancient Babylonians. Since the end of the first wave of the industrial revolution, the evolution of the world began to accelerate in every imaginable realm: electricity, communication and media, economy, gourmet food, luxury products, computers and high-tech, and democracy.

The ego that first erupted in ancient Babylon reached the final stages of its evolution in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century. Today, the evolution of the ego is far more rapid than its growth in the past, and it is still growing faster.

As was the case in Babylon, more and more people today are seeking something beyond even the most intense pleasures our world can offer. As did Abraham, many of us understand that blind obedience to the ego is bound to fail. Attempts at progress in this manner have brought many to feel that there must be another, better way to live life. This dissatisfaction is the prime reason for the epidemic of depression that has been spreading worldwide in recent years.

And, on top of the inner crises that modern man has experienced in the last one hundred years or so, the external reality has become less than welcoming. The past century has seen world wars, terrorism, nuclear catastrophes, expanding poverty, ecological disasters, and crises in virtually every realm of life. All this supports the growing sense that the solution to the situation should be found at a deeper and more inclusive level. Today, humanity is starting to acknowledge the negativity of its situation, as did Abraham in his time.

The sense that a global crisis is already present positions the world in the same place where ancient Babylon stood 5,000 years ago. But the essential difference between those times and ours is that humanity has grown into a population of billions of souls that are ready to comprehend and to implement the method that Abraham developed.

## An Ancient Method for Modern Times

In ancient Mesopotamia, few adopted the method of unity over ego, which Abraham had then developed, and which we now call "the wisdom of Kabbalah." Hence, since that time, humanity's evolution has been split into two essential paths: Israel, and the rest of humanity.

**The sense that a global crisis is already present positions the world in the same place where ancient Babylon stood 5,000 years ago**

The goal of the group of Kabbalists that Abraham founded was to cultivate the method of the Kabbalah, to nurture it and wait for a time when humanity was ready to acknowledge its growing ego as the reason for all that has gone wrong.

Abraham knew that in the last phase of the egoistic evolution, humanity would find itself in despair and hopelessness. He understood that only then would it be ready to listen and employ the method he had designed.

The duty of Abraham's group is to apply his method to its members, set an example for the rest of humanity, and disseminate his method throughout the world. This is the unique task (and purpose) of this group. This is also the origin of the titles Israel has received such as "a light of the nations," "a chosen people," and others.

The two greatest Kabbalists in the last generation—Rabbi Avraham Kook

and Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag—declared that at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the realization of this mission would begin.

Baal HaSulam says in *The Last Generation*, p 341: "Judaism should present the nations with something new, and this is what they are anticipating from the return of Israel to the land. It is not about any other wisdoms."

Rav Kook adds to Baal HaSulam's words in *Letters of the Raayah*, Part III, p 194: "The real movement of the Israeli soul at its greatest glory is expressed only in its eternal, sacred power, which runs in its essential inner spirit. And this is what has made it, and will make it still, a nation that stands as a light of the nations and for redemption and salvation for the whole world."

Only by changing the relationships within today's people of Israel from unfounded hatred to "Love thy friend as thyself" can we be elevated to the apex of humanity and provide answers to all our hardships.

Like the Babylonians then, we, the people of Israel must overcome our egos and bond in brotherly love. By so doing, we will set an example to all of humanity, and we will demonstrate how this action will help us attain peaceful, whole, and eternal lives.

**This mission lies on the shoulders of the descendants of Abraham's group—today's Israel—us.** ■

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## A PRAYER



We all know the term "prayer." But the Kabbalistic meaning of this term may be quite different from what we normally ascribe this term. Kabbalists say that the deeper meaning of the term "prayer" is an appeal of an individual to the Creator with a request to become similar to Him, to be as benevolent. The root of the Hebrew word *LeHitpalel* (to pray) is P.L.L., which is the same root as in the word *LeHafill* (to incriminate). Thus, praying means sentencing oneself. After a person judges him or herself, and sees that he or she is egoistic, one comes to a heartfelt cry to the Creator to change one's nature to altruism. This cry, and only this cry is considered a prayer.

# SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

by Ron Gilboa

Spiritual (Kabbalistic) education has been the heart of our nation from its very beginning. This is why Jews are called *Am HaSefer* (“The Nation of the Book”). Spiritual upbringing has been the essential means for the existence of our society; it constructed society and was a vital element within it.

Indeed, from the reception of the Torah until the ruin of the Second Temple, old and young alike have lived in unity and with clear perception of the **Upper Force**. Moses established spiritual education in the nation, and children learned from a very early age to know reality based on its roots in the Upper Worlds. It was said that from Beer Sheba in the south to Dan in the north, not one child was ignorant of matters of purity and impurity.

Purity and impurity do not refer to physical matters, but to the impure egoistic force in us, and to the pure force of giving. In other words, even the youngest among the nation experienced high spiritual states.

## *An Escalating Crisis*

Yet, after the ruin of the Second Temple, the nation lost its tangible sensation of spirituality, though the importance of spirituality remained rooted deep in the hearts of people. Even while in exile, every Jewish child knew how to read and write and calculate, and was taught the ancient writings. The education for unity, established by Kabbalists, kept the Jewish communities united in the Diaspora.

Despite the fact that education produced greater prosperity, today the importance of education is rapidly declining. Papers are replete with news and surveys describing school violence, drug abuse, depression, and disorientation among youth. Young people are indifferent to values and seem to want more than this world can offer.

Moreover, the crisis in education is part of a much larger crisis—one of global proportions. Kabbalists explain that this is a process by which the human ego is magnified to a point that a person can no longer satiate it.

**THE STATE OF THE WORLD, AS WE ALL KNOW, IS CHALLENGING. BUT DON'T LOSE HOPE—IN THE KABBALISTIC METHOD, PARENTS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN TO GIVE LOVE, AND IN THE PROCESS, REMEMBER WHAT THEY HAVE LONG FORGOTTEN**



**The crisis in education is part of a much larger crisis... this is a process by which the human ego is magnified to a point that a person can no longer satiate it**

Another example of the inflation of the ego is the increasing generation gap, which began to accelerate in the past century. The young today cannot relate to their parents' generation, and regard grownups as old fashioned. Thus, on the one hand we do not understand how to raise our children and satisfy their changing and increasing needs. On the other hand, the young haven't the means to communicate with the previous generation. More than ever, we need a method that will serve as a basis for a uniform and happy society, in which all parts find their place and work toward a common goal.

## *Laws of Giving and Loving*

The wisdom of Kabbalah deals with education and with the building of society as means to attain the **Upper Force**. In their writings, Kabbalists reveal the evolution that every person should undergo in a spirituality-based society. Just as each soul receives what it needs from its environment in the

spiritual worlds, a person should receive the right education in each phase of his or her life.

In a society based on the principles of the wisdom of Kabbalah, we can learn from childhood to appreciate life on a deeper level. We will understand that this world is far richer than our five senses can perceive. From an early age, we will learn through games and examples to identify the causes and the latent forces that control reality. Thus, we will know the spiritual laws of love and giving, learn to use them correctly, and be able to live in harmony and balance with Nature.

## *The Best Future*

Children can only implement what they have learned after observing the examples set by adults. Proper education stems solely from personal example. One of the problems in today's world is that we behave opposite to what we teach. For example, while we teach altruistic values of giving and sharing, we conduct ourselves to the contrary.

Such contradictions evoke confusion and disrespect from children toward their parents. However, in an education system based on the wisdom of Kabbalah, the parents' personal examples of altruistic values will be in harmony with what they teach. Education will result from mutual responsibility; it will *unite* the generations.

Parents will understand that such consistency will create the best future for their children, and will commit to proper conduct because of their love for their progeny. Similarly, children will be exposed to values and personal examples of giving from their parents and aspire to join them as active members of society. They will take their place beside the adults and work together for a thriving society.

In the end, a spiritual upbringing will promote society as a whole. Moreover, spiritual education will change life considerably. The younger generation will be assisted by the experience acquired by adults, and use their examples to learn how to overcome their own ego when it bursts. By so doing, youth will appreciate the previous generation and create a stronger bond of love and of respect between them.

The future society that Kabbalists have always yearned for can be built through spiritual education, and it

**More than ever, we need a method that will serve as a basis for a uniform and happy society**

can be built today. It is enough to educate one generation to “kick-start” the process.

This, in turn, will create a uniform society, untainted by a generation gap. Both past and present generations will support one another so that one will be the guarantor of the other's success. The old will set the example, and the need to educate the young to spiritual values will compel the old to set the right kind of example. Thus, they will complement each other and march together toward the complete attainment of the higher reality.

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Unraveling The Zohar

# A WAKEUP CALL



**WE ARE BORN INTO A STATE OF SLEEP, LIVE IN A DREAM, AND WE ARE NOT EVEN AWARE OF IT. IT IS TIME TO WAKE UP**

“And on the first month, on the fourteenth day etc. Rabbi Chiya opened: ‘I sleep, but my heart waketh; Hark! my beloved knocketh.’” ... “The assembly of Israel said, ‘I sleep in the exile in Egypt.’” It is because the exile was due to the domination of the left over the right. Also, the *Mochin* (Lights) of *Malchut* leave because of the domination of the left. This is the meaning of sleep. “My children were under the harsh enslavement,” but my heart is awake, to keep them from perishing in the exile. ... “My beloved knocketh, this is the Creator, who said, ‘and I have remembered My covenant’” (*The Sulam Commentary on The Book of Zohar, Parashat Emor, item 128*).

by Dudi Aharoni

In this unique essay, Rabbi Chiya, one of Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai’s nine students, teaches us how to listen to the voice within our hearts. This is the voice of the Upper Force, which calls upon us

Rabbi Chiya explains the way to achieve this sublime state by using one of the most profound verses in the *Song of Songs*, “I sleep, but my heart waketh; Hark! my beloved knocketh.” This

one from Israel has a spark from the Creator that wants to awaken into contact with Him. In moments when this spark awakens within us, we feel a need to search for something higher and more sublime in our lives, to understand what we are living for.

## Echoes in Our Hearts

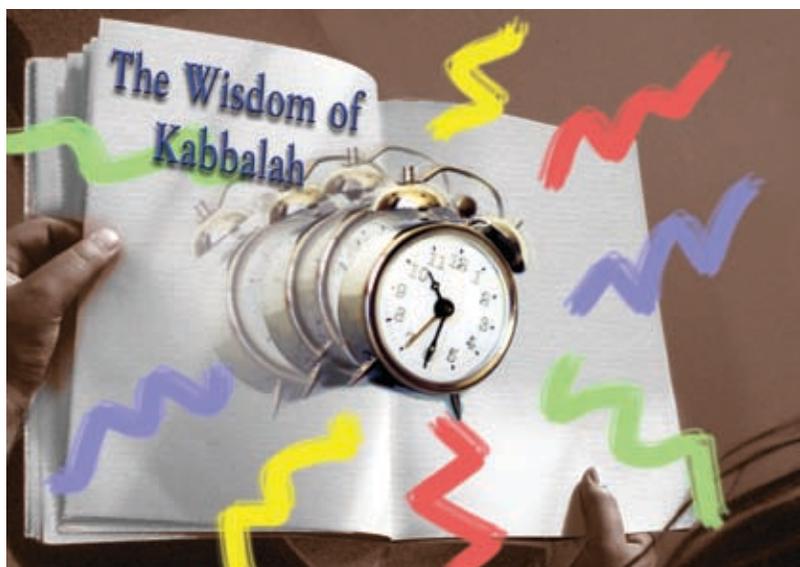
The voice of the Creator echoes in our hearts. Every person is awakened by this call, like a “clarion” from the Creator, who longs to be man’s “Loved One.” The Creator wants us to become similar to Him and to rise to His degree by uniting with Him through love among us.

The echoes resonate within our hearts to show us that we are in exile from the spiritual life, that we are asleep and that it’s time to wake up.

## The Creator’s Voice

These days, we have been given a wonderful opportunity. Today, every person can listen to the voice of the Loved One, the Creator. The greatest Kabbalists have paved the way for us to understand that we are sleeping, to discover the dream, and to wake up. The wisdom of Kabbalah represents “the voice of the Creator,” which echoes in our hearts. It is like an alarm clock whose ring is loud enough to awaken us to the morning of a new life. Let’s bond with it and wake up to the good life, to the Light. ■

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to bond with each other. When we do, we will achieve a new life—truer and better.

Rabbi Chiya begins his words with a verse that speaks of the first month in the Hebrew calendar. This month is called “the head of the months,” as it is the precursor of the beginning of a new life of love and unity.

*The Book of Zohar* says that to live such a wonderful life, we must learn how to transcend our egos while we are still living in this world, and obtain the nature of the Creator, that of love and giving. When we learn how to love one another, we will rise to another level of existence and become similar to the Creator. This is when we will be called “Adam” (man), from the verse, *Adammeh la Elyon*, “I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah, 14:14).

verse contains the entire spiritual path, the path that will lead us to perfection.

## We Were Like Unto Those Who Dream

Until one knows the wisdom of Kabbalah, one does not understand why he or she comes into this world, or what the future holds. In Kabbalah, such a state is called “sleep.” Only those who awaken from their sleep achieve spiritual attainment and can view the past as though they have been dreaming.

## A Spark from the Creator

The Assembly of Israel, of which Rabbi Chiya speaks, represents the collective of the souls of Israel—us. He explains that every-

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■ Questions & Answers

### What is the spiritual meaning of dreams?

Actually, there’s no connection between dreams and spiritual forces. Our dreams are merely a physical phenomenon. They don’t tell us anything about the soul. Hence, to ascend spiritually and attain the spiritual world, there’s no point in analyzing dreams or sleeping in a specific pose. Kabbalists tell us that the transition to the spiritual world happens in a fully conscious manner.

### Who can study this wisdom?

Anyone who relentlessly asks, “What is the meaning of my life?” can study Kabbalah. This great wisdom can only be studied when there is an inner need, not through coercion. When Rav Kook was asked who was permitted to study Kabbalah, he replied: “Anyone who wants to.” If a person really wants to study, it is a sign that he or she is ready.

### Where is the soul?

The soul is linked with the Creator, senses Him, and is filled by Him, at least in the smallest amount. Spirituality is anything that is beyond time, space, and motion. It is that which is not linked with the sensation of the animate body, but is felt in some inner space in one’s senses, intended for the Creator only.

# WHY KABBALAH? WHY NOW?

The wisdom of Kabbalah teaches us how to live in the reality that is spread before us. It is a systematic method that has evolved over thousands of years, taught by a handful of unique individuals in every generation. Their task has been to ensure that the truths of Kabbalah would be given to those ready to receive them.

During all that time, Kabbalah was concealed from the public (which was not yet ready to receive it), until the current generation; it was this generation for which this

method was specifically developed. That is why *The Zohar*, the Ari and Baal HaSulam (Rav Yehuda Ashlag, the author of *HaSulam* (*The Ladder*, a commentary on *The Zohar*) reveal that from this time forward, the Kabbalah will become a simple and genuine way of life, open to all, with no restrictions. This approach originated in 1995, and we are currently in the midst of this process to expand the reach of Kabbalah.

**Why our generation? Because the souls that descend to this world and dress in our bodies evolve from generation to generation. Ultimately, they will arrive at a point of questioning the meaning of their very existence.**

The question will form: "What is the meaning of my life?" or "What am I living for?" It will arise not only if we are in constantly intensifying pain, but also if we are filled with peace, fulfillment and pleasure. When the pain of this question sud-

denly surfaces, it knocks us flat, before we find the solution in drifting in the currents of everyday life.

The wisdom of the Kabbalah allows us to come to know the "Upper World" – the very system that monitors and leads reality. That includes the reality of this world, the whole of humanity and each and every one of us at any given moment. With the help of Kabbalah, we can control the system of the worlds and determine how to conduct our daily lives, which makes this wisdom necessary for everyone.

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## Questions & Answers

### How do you determine who is permitted to study Kabbalah, and who isn't?

It was the Kabbalists who chose to hide the wisdom of Kabbalah for generations. They determined that it was forbidden to teach it except to those who met the strictest conditions and tests. Moreover, throughout history, Kabbalists repelled people who wanted to study Kabbalah. This is why Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai hid the *Book of Zohar* after he completed writing it. The Holy Ari never wrote a word, but his student Rabbi Chaim Vital wrote in his name. This is how things were until the 20th century.

But in the 20th century, the two greatest Kabbalists of the century, Rav Kook and Rav Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam) declared that concealment time was over, and anyone who wanted to study was permitted to do so.

The reason for the change was that the egoistic evolution of humanity has reached its apex, bringing our generation to a state that the *Book of Zohar* refers to as "entirely unworthy." Today, only the disclosure of the Upper Force through the wisdom of Kabbalah can correct us and elevate us to the complete and perfect spiritual state. This is not a coincidental process, but one carefully predetermined in the Thought of Creation to unfold as it does.

### What do Kabbalists mean by "attainment"?

In Kabbalah, understanding the Thought of Creation, the deepest level of understanding, is called "attainment."

The screenshot shows a website interface for Kabbalah studies. At the top, it says "Bnei Baruch World Center for Kabbalah Studies" and "THE WISDOM OF KABBALAH www.kabbalah.info". A central graphic depicts a path leading into a forest, with the text "The World's Largest Source for Authentic Kabbalah" and "www.kabbalah.info" overlaid. To the right, it advertises "Live Lessons, Films, eBooks, Clips, Audio Books and lots more... and it's all free". A sidebar on the left lists various topics like "What is Kabbalah?", "Why am I looking for something spiritual?", and "What does Kabbalah teach?".

## 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](http://www.kab.tv)), the online learning 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.

Readers are welcome to read the paper in any order they choose, from back to back, a single article that suits them, or simply contemplating one of the questions and answers interspersed throughout the paper. No prior knowledge is required to benefit from the texts.

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 [english@kabbalah.info](mailto:english@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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