

Why Kabbalah?

By Rabbi Edward L. Nydle/ B'nai Avraham

“The Hidden things (nistartot) belong to YHWH our Elohim, and the revealed things are for us and our children forever to do all the words of this Torah.” Dev.29:28

“It is not hidden from you and it is not distant.” Dev.30:11

I wish to address a controversial issue within the Nazarene “Movement”. It has caused criticism of several rabbis because of a lack of understanding on the part of the critics who have not allowed a renewing of their minds. For some reason many have distanced themselves from the study of *Torat HaNistar* (the concealed Torah). Due to this misunderstanding it is imperative that we, as followers of the Messiah, re-embrace the *Torat HaNistar* and not allow it to be hijacked by New Agers and cults. Kabbalah or spiritual metaphysics is not a religious “fad” but in fact an ancient method of studying the Holy Scriptures on a very deep level. In ancient times it was part of the training in the school of the prophets.

Kabbalah is the study of how the human soul and mind broadens its horizons to encompass and experience the reality of the presence of YHWH. This requires many years of study and practice in order to experience the expansion of mental capacity and intellectual functions.

Orthodox Judaism has defended the use of Kabbalah (Hebrew for received) throughout the ages. Rabbis Shabtai Kohen, the RaMHaL, the Gaon of Vilna, Haim of Volozin, and the Hasidic rabbis have defended the legitimacy of the Kabbalah. Anyone who wished to discredit or disrespects Kabbalah should be considered out of step with the greatest minds of Judaism and even the Messiah (the greatest teacher of Kabbalah). We must return and redeem what has been stolen and abused to its rightful owners, the *talmidim* of the Messiah.

Torah is divided into four levels of study called *PaRDeS* (*pashat, vremez, drash, and sod*) the Hebrew word for garden, paradise, or vineyard. Any beginning Yeshivah student knows this to be true. All four levels are necessary to be a student of Torah. If one studies the Torah and does not understand these levels, one is said to have not fulfilled his obligation of Torah study¹. Every student of Torah must study Kabbalah. The body (the revealed) without the soul (the hidden) is dead, and a soul without the body is a ghost. You cannot have one without the other.

¹ Sha'ar HaMitzvot 1a , the Ari'zal

The Torah verses quoted above refers to the foundational truth that no *Halakah* (the way of walking out the *mitzvot*) can be based upon prophecy or by mystical means. *Halakah* is decided upon by man and by logical debate and discussion. Even more shocking to the reader is the fact that *Halakah* is not decided by Heaven. *Halakah* is decided by the *rabbanim* ordained to make these decisions². The entire Torah is on the earth, including the hidden parts. *Halakah* provides the vessel for the manifestation for the metaphysical light of Kabbalah. Both the physical and spiritual worlds need rectification. How can this be done unless both aspects of Torah are involved? Both inner and outer realities need to be sanctified. Both have their source in the upper worlds and correspondence below in the human body.

The Torah is one, even as YHWH is One. The Torah is also one with YHWH³. Therefore; anyone who separates any part or portion of the Torah from its other parts is causing a separation in the Name of YHWH.

- *“One who causes that Kabbalah and its wisdom to be separated from the Oral Torah and the Written Torah, causing the people to refrain from them and saying that the Torah and Talmud should only be studied according to pashat, it is certainly as if that one dried up the rivers of the Gan Eden. Woe to him! It is better that such a one was never born into this world. If one does not respect the Oral and Written Torah, it is as if that one returned the world to void and chaos, more this such one brings poverty to the world and lengthens our exile.” **Tikkunei Zohar 43***
- *“The one who has the ability to perceive the secrets of Torah and does not make the appropriate efforts to do so is judged very severely.” **Rabbi Eliyahu, Even Shelema***
- *“It is a true and correct thing that the value of Kabbalah study is very sublime...and great will be the punishment for those who do not study the secrets of Torah.” **Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, Yehaveh Da’at***
- *“One should not say that he will go study the wisdom of the Kabbalah prior to studying the Bible, Mishna, and Talmud. For our sages have already taught that one must not enter the vineyard (PaRDeS) until ones belly is full of meat and wine. For this would be similar to a soul without a body, there is no merit, no function, and no value until the soul is united with the body completely, rectified by the 613 commandments of the Torah.” **Rabbi Haim Vital, Etz Haim 2a***
- *“Whatever is learned according to pashat must also be in accordance to the sod. For when the secrets of the Torah are revealed, one realizes that the learning of his youth are also true and correct. Anyone who does not understand the secret meaning, even the pashat cannot be clear to him.” **The Gaon of Vilna, Even Shelema***

² T.B., Baba Metzia 59

³ Zohar, Ekev 73a

The one who wishes to begin Torah study with Kabbalah in the end will stumble and fall. The study of the sod level has its proper time and place. It should, only be studied after one is firmly rooted and grounded in the Torah and *Halakah*.

There are two levels of creation. We refer to these as the physical and the spiritual. The two are connected. One fits over the other like a glove over a hand. The two interact together as body and soul. What occurs in one always affects the other. Both exist in complete harmony with one another. However, due to the fall of Adam, the collective mankind can no longer consciously interact with the spiritual worlds.

If man would remain cut off from its spiritual Source, the world would fall apart at the subatomic level. YHWH in His mercy reestablished the link by giving mankind instructions (Torah) on how to regain and maintain the spiritual and physical relationship. The purpose of Yisrael is to live the Torah and establish the balance between the two worlds.

The Torah we read is multi-leveled. It is similar to the layers of an onion. We see and interact with the surface but yet deep within lie layer upon layer of meanings and hidden treasures. The key of unlocking the mysteries in the Torah is the cultivation of the human mind on the conscious and unconscious levels. As we study the surface of the Torah it becomes apparent that under the plain meaning of a verse or word is a deeper true meaning of the text. This requires effort and time. This is what we call "Torah Study". It sharpens the mind and allows it to see the relationship between two apparently unrelated things. When one's mind has the proper analytic skills then all the supposed contradictions and conflicts in the surface of the Scripture are resolved and become clear.

Elohim created within man two lobes of the human brain (the physical organ for the mind), the right and the left. These two lobes manifest different forms of thinking. Human consciousness is experienced and expanded by two distinct functions of thought: left brain rational analytical thought, which connects us to the physical world, and the right brain archetypal, intuitive thought, which connects us to the psychological/spiritual inside world. We need both for proper balanced mental health. Through both forms of thinking we can know ourselves and the world around us. This is why the Torah has laws and teachings pertaining to both these aspects of human thought.

Elohim gave us the *mitzvot* in order for us to understand the external physical world by using our analytical skills. These instructions govern our relationship to the world around us. These “laws” keep us balanced as to enable us to receive the Creator’s influence and guidance. These establish our identity as Yisrael and helps to safeguard us as a people. Therefore proper observance of the *mitzvot* is a prerequisite for the reception of the benefits of any study of Kabbalah. Once the physical aspects of Torah are learned, then one is ready to grasp the spiritual counterpart found in Kabbalah. All he need know is the patterns, methods, and laws here in the physical world in order for the spiritual ways found in the Torah to be unveiled to his inner eyes that are trained to perceive Wisdom.

If the vessel that is to contain the Divine Light is not properly prepared, then the vessel will shatter because it will not be strong enough to hold the Light. The Light is the wisdom of the Kabbalah and the vessel is prepared by proper *Halakah*. One’s mind must be trained in logic and walking out the Torah in order to properly elevate the soul. A teacher must prepare the student by binding them to the Torah by proper practice and study. If this is not done by the teacher, then eventually the teacher and students will stray from the Torah and lose their connection to YHWH. Dabbling in Kabbalah without proper guidance and a well-grounded teacher is dangerous. One cannot play with spiritual powers and expect not to be harmed in some way.

Who has the time to penetrate these deeper layers of the Torah? The sages and rabbis who study and live eventually learn its secrets, which is called Kabbalah. This is why in order to study Kabbalah one must first study *Halakah*. Either you have developed and acquired the skills for deeper study or you have not. If you do not, then do not fool yourself, as self-deception is the worst deception. You cannot substitute surface for substance or delusion for self-discipline. Simple book learning and intellectual pursuits are not enough for rectifying the mind. We have to expand our skills and actually comprehend all that we study.

Too many teachers and so-called rabbis have nothing but disdain towards Kabbalah. This is a serious error on their part. Perhaps this is because they do not really know and understand the Torah. None of the critics even have a clue to what real Kabbalah is and probably would not recognize it even if it was right in front of them.

That fact that it is taught by the New Agers and cults does not give anyone the right to abandon true Kabbalah as taught by the ancient sages of Yisrael and our Master Himself. We, as Yisrael, have an obligation to recognize, redeem, and claim what is rightfully our heritage.

- “*With one hour of Kabbalah study, one does more good than a whole month of pashat study, for great is its power to bring Messiah.*” **Rabbi Aharon HaLevi, Sha’ar HaYihud v’HaEmunah**