

ATTAINING THE WORLDS BEYOND

A Guide to Spiritual Discovery

BY
MICHAEL LAITMAN, PhD

COMPILED BY BENZION GIERTZ



LAITMAN
Kabbalah
Publishers

ATTAINING THE WORLDS BEYOND

Copyright © 2003–2010 by MICHAEL LAITMAN

All rights reserved

Published by Laitman Kabbalah Publishers

www.kabbalah.info info@kabbalah.info

1057 Steeles Avenue West, Suite 532, Toronto, ON, M2R 3X1, Canada

194 Quentin Rd, 2nd floor, Brooklyn, New York, 11223, USA

Printed in Canada

No part of this book may be used or reproduced
in any manner without written permission of the publisher,
except in the case of brief quotations embodied
in critical articles or reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Laitman, Michael.

Attaining the worlds beyond : a guide to spiritual discovery /
Michael Laitman. — 2nd ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-9731909-0-8

1. Spiritual life—Judaism. 2. Cabala. I. Title.

BBM723.L25 2010

296.7'12--dc22

22010004755

Executive Editor: Benzion Giertz

SECOND EDITION: MARCH 2010
THIRD PRINTING

Contents

Introduction	9
How to Read the Text	11
1. Perceiving the Creator	15
Window to the Heart	19
Faith above Reason	24
2. Spiritual Path	31
Providence of the Creator	34
Realizing the Creator's Rule	38
3. The Dining Table	40
Act One	40
Act Two.....	43
4. Nullifying Our Personal Interests.....	60
Let the Kabbalah Be Your Guide.....	65
5. The Purpose of Studying Kabbalah.....	67
6 . Spiritual Progress.....	71
Faith: Believing in the Oneness of the Creator	74
7. Our Perceptions.....	78
8. Structure of Spirituality.....	81
False Pleasures.....	84
9. A Plea for Help	87
In Memory of Kabbalist Rav Baruch Ashlag.....	88
10. Counteracting the Desire for Self-Gratification.....	91

Contents

11. Inner Motion and Development	98
Advancing toward Altruistic Pleasure.....	104
12. Eradicating Egoism.....	119
The Search for the Creator	131
13. The Way of Kabbalah.....	139
The Desire to Receive Pleasure	146
14. Revelation and Concealment.....	154
Transforming Egoism to Altruism.....	169
15. Gradual Spiritual Correction.....	176
16. Inner Qualities and Outer Aspects	188
Spiritual Gradations	193
Four Fundamental Outlooks	195
17. Merging with the Creator	202
Phases of Revelation	214
18. The Omnipotent Magician.....	218
19. Spiritual Levels	227
20. The Return to the Creator	239
The Path of the Kabbalah.....	253
21. Correcting Egoism	267
Yearning for Spiritual Qualities	278
22. Spiritual Development	296
23. Spiritual Work.....	317
24. Faith.....	328
25. The Process of Conforming to the Creator	333
26. Cognition of the Spiritual World	341
Grasping Higher Spiritual Levels.....	344

Contents

27. Stages of Correction.....	349
Faith, the Only Antidote to Egoism.....	352
Light that Brings Correction	355
28. Not for One's Self	364
Obtaining " <i>Lishma</i> "	367
29. Transformation of Our Nature	374
30. Fear of the Creator	379
31. A Seed of Altruism	384
32. Battling for the Perception of the Creator's Oneness ...	389
33. Receiving for the Sake of Giving.....	397
34. Suffering Sent as Absolute Kindness.....	403
35. The Evil Inclination.....	410
36. The Work along the Three Lines.....	416
37. Understanding Our True Nature.....	425
38. Kabbalistic Quotes	433
39. Michael Laitman's Search for Kabbalah.....	437
Further Reading	447
About Bnei Baruch.....	456
How to contact Bnei Baruch	461

It is beyond human comprehension to understand the essence of such spiritual qualities as total altruism and love. Even the existence of such feelings is beyond our comprehension; we seem to require an incentive to perform any act that does not promise us some form of personal gain. That is why a quality such as altruism can only be imparted to us from Above, and only those of us who have experienced it can understand it.

Michael Laitman

Introduction

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

Rav Yehuda Ashlag, Introduction to Talmud Esser Sefirot

Among all the texts and notes that were used by my Rav, Baruch Shalom Halevi Ashlag, there was one particular notebook he always carried. This notebook contained all the transcripts of his conversations with his father, Rav Yehuda Leib Halevi Ashlag, the Rabbi of Jerusalem, and a Kabbalist. He was the author of a 21-volume commentary on the book of Zohar, as well as the author of a six-volume commentary on the texts of the Kabbalist, Ari, and of many other works on Kabbalah.

Not feeling well on Jewish New Year's Day in September, 1991, my Rav called me to his bedside and handed me his notebook, saying, "Take it and learn from it." The following morning, my teacher perished in my arms, leaving me and many of his other disciples without guidance in this world.

He used to say, "I want to teach you to turn to the Creator, rather than to me, because He is the only strength, the only Source of all that exists, the only One who can really help you, and He awaits your prayers for help. When you seek help in your search for freedom from the bondage of this world, help

in elevating yourself above this world, help in finding the self, and help in determining your purpose in life, you must turn to the Creator, who sends you all those aspirations in order to compel you to turn to Him."

In this text, I attempt to convey some of the ideas from his notebook as I perceived them. It is impossible to fully relate to what is written there, as each of us can only understand what we read within the limits of our immediate grasp, since each of us is limited by the qualities of our individual souls. Therefore, in the course of interacting with the Supreme Light, each of us will interpret these ideas as our souls perceive them.

May the thoughts of Rav Yehuda Ashlag penetrate this world through the words of his eldest son, my Rav, and may they help all of us unite with the Creator in the course of our lives here in this world!

Michael Laitman

How to Read the Text

The need for this text became apparent to me from the questions that I received from my students, and from the questions that were asked me during various lectures and radio programs, as well as from the letters that continue to flood in from all over the world.

The difficulty of explaining and teaching Kabbalah lies in the fact that the spiritual world has no counterpart in our world. Even if the object of our studies becomes clear, our understanding of it is only temporary. What we learn is grasped by the spiritual component of our ability to understand, which is constantly renewed from Above.

Thus, a subject we initially understand may appear unclear at a later date. Depending on our mood and our spiritual state, the text can appear as either full of deep meaning, or entirely meaningless.

Do not despair if what was so clear yesterday becomes very confusing today. Do not give up if the text appears to be vague, strange, or illogical.

Kabbalah is not studied for the sake of acquiring theoretical knowledge, but to help us see and perceive what is hidden from us.

When, after we have contemplated and acquired spiritual strength, we begin to see and perceive, then our ability to attain the resulting spiritual lights and levels will bring us to true knowledge.

Until we can comprehend the Upper Light and can perceive what it presents to us, we will not understand how the universe is built and how it works, since there are no analogies to these concepts in our own world. This text can help ease our first steps toward perceiving the spiritual forces. At later stages, we will be able to progress only with the help of a teacher.

This text should not be read in an ordinary fashion. Rather, we should concentrate on a paragraph, think about it, and attempt to understand examples that reflect in the issues discussed. We may then try to apply these issues to our own personal experiences.

We should patiently and repeatedly read and think about each sentence as we try to penetrate the author's feelings. We should also read slowly, trying to extract the nuances of what is written, and if need be, return to the beginning of each sentence.

This method can either help us delve into the material with our own feelings, or recognize that our feelings are lacking regarding a particular issue. If the latter is the case, it is a crucial prerequisite for us to move forward spiritually.

This text is not written for quick reading. Though it deals with one subject only, "How to relate to the Creator," it deals with it in different ways. This allows each of us to find the particular phrase or word that will transport us into the depths of the text.

Although the desires and actions of egoism are described in the third person, until we can separate our personal consciousness from our desires, we should consider the aspirations and desires of egoism our own. The word, "body," in the text does not relate to the physical self, but to "egoism," our desire to receive.

To get the most out of this material, I recommend reading the same passages at different times and in different states of mind. By doing so, you can better acquaint yourself with your reactions and attitudes towards the same text on different occasions.

Disagreeing with the material is always positive, as is agreeing with it. The most important aspect of reading the text is your response to it. A feeling of disagreement indicates you have reached the preliminary stage (achoraim, the backside) of understanding, which prepares you for the next stage of perception (panim, face).

It is precisely through the slow meaningful manner of reading that you can develop feelings, or "vessels" (kelim). These are necessary for us to receive spiritual sensations. Once the vessels are in place, the Upper Light will be able to enter them. Prior to their formation, the light merely exists around you, surrounding your soul, although you cannot perceive it.

This text is not written to enhance your knowledge. Nor is it meant to be memorized. In fact, we must never test ourselves on the material.

It is even better if we forget the contents altogether, so that the second reading will seem fresh and entirely unfamiliar. By forgetting the material, it implies that we have grasped the previous sensations and that they have now subsided, leaving a space to be filled by sensations we have yet to experience. The process of developing new sensory organs is constantly renewed and accumulated in the spiritual, unperceived sphere of our souls.

The most important aspect of our reading is the way we feel about the material while reading it, not afterwards.

Once we experience these feelings, they become revealed within the heart and mind, and manifest themselves

whenever they are needed in the continuous process of the soul's development.

Rather than rushing to complete reading the text, it is recommended to concentrate on the sections that appeal to us the most. Only then will the text be able to help and guide us in our search for personal spiritual ascent. The goal of this text is to help us become interested in the mysteries of life such as:

"Why were we born into this world?" "Can we enter the spiritual worlds from here?" "Can we ever understand the purpose of the creation?" "Is it possible to perceive the Creator, eternity and immortality?" "How can we begin to grow spiritually?"

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

Rav Yehuda Ashlag

1

Perceiving the Creator

Generations come and go, yet every generation and every individual asks the same question about the meaning of life. This happens especially at times of war and global suffering, and during periods of misfortune that befall each of us at some point in our lives. What is the purpose of life, which is so costly to us? And shouldn't the absence of suffering be deemed as happiness?

In the Talmud's, *Ethics of the Fathers*, it says: "Against your will you are born, against your will do you live, and against your will you will die."

Each generation has had its share of misfortune. There are some among us who have lived through the Depression, through war, and through postwar turbulence. But I see my generation, being full of problems and suffering, unable to establish itself, and unable to find itself.

In this atmosphere, the question regarding the meaning of our lives stands out particularly clearly. At times it seems that life is more difficult than death itself; therefore, it is no surprise that *Ethics of the Fathers* states, "Against your will do you live."

Nature created us, and we are forced to exist with the qualities that were imposed upon us. It is as if we were only semi-intelligent beings: intelligent only to the degree that we are aware that our actions are determined by our inherent characteristics and qualities, and that we cannot go against

them. If we are at the mercy of nature, then there is no predicting where this wild, unreasonable nature can lead us.

Our natures are responsible for constantly causing conflicts between individuals and entire nations, who, like wild animals, are engaged in a vicious struggle of the instincts. Yet, subconsciously, we cannot accept a comparison of ourselves with primitive beasts.

If, however, the Divine force that created us does exist, then why do we not perceive it, why does it conceal itself from us? For if we knew what It required of us, we would not commit those mistakes in our lives for which we are punished by suffering!

How much easier would life be if the Creator were not concealed from human beings, but were clearly perceived and seen by each and every one of us!

Then, we would have no doubt of His existence. We would be able to observe the effects of His Providence on the surrounding world; realize the cause and purpose of our creation; clearly see the consequences of our actions and His response to them; be able to discuss all of our problems in a dialogue with Him; ask for His help; seek His protection and advice; complain to Him about our troubles, and ask Him to explain why He treats us as He does.

Finally, we would consult with Him for advice concerning the future; we would constantly be in contact with Him and we would be correcting ourselves in accordance with His advice. In the end, He would be pleased and we would benefit as well.

Just as a child is aware of its mother from the moment of its birth, so we would be aware of the Creator. We would learn the correct way of life by observing His reactions to our actions, and even to our intentions. We would perceive the Creator to be just as close as any mother, since we would

see Him as the source of our birth, as our parent, and as the cause of our existence and that of all future life.

If the above were so, we would have no need for governments, schools, or educators. The existence of all nations would essentially focus on a wonderful and simple coexistence for the sake of a common cause apparent to all: our spiritual unification with the openly visible and perceivable Creator.

Everyone's actions would be guided by clear spiritual laws, called "the commandments," and everyone would obey them because disobeying the commandments would obviously mean inflicting harm on the self, equivalent to jumping into a fire or off a cliff.

If we could clearly perceive the Creator and His Providence, we would have no difficulty in performing the hardest of tasks, for the personal benefit derived from these tasks would be apparent. It would be as if we were giving all our possessions to a stranger without thinking twice about the present or future.

Yet, this would present absolutely no problem, since being aware of the Divine rule would enable us to see the benefits of acting selflessly. We would know that we were in the power of the kind and eternal Creator.

Just imagine how natural it would be (and also how unnatural and impossible it is in the present condition of Divine concealment) to give ourselves fully to the Creator, to surrender all of our thoughts and desires to Him without reservation, and to be what He wants us to be.

We would not have the least concern for ourselves, and would give no thought to ourselves. In fact, we would cease to be aware of our own selves and would transfer all our feelings from ourselves to Him, trying to approach Him and to live by His thoughts and His will.

From the above, it should be clear that the only element lacking in our world is our perception of the Creator.

The attainment of such a perception should be our sole purpose in this world. This is the one goal we should spare no effort to achieve, for only when we can perceive the Creator can we receive His help. This would save us from both the calamities of this life and from a spiritual death, thereby according us spiritual immortality without having to return to this world.

The method of searching for our perception of the Creator is known as "Kabbalah." Our perception of the Creator is called "faith." However, we often mistakenly believe that faith implies groping in the dark, without seeing or perceiving the Creator.

In fact, faith means exactly the opposite. According to Kabbalah, the Light of the Creator that fills a person, the Light of the connection to the Creator, the Light that gives a feeling of unification with Him (*Ohr Hassadim*) is known as "the Light of faith," or simply, faith.

Faith, the Light of the Creator, gives us a sensation of being linked to the eternal. It brings us an understanding of the Creator, a feeling of complete communication with Him, as well as a sense of absolute security, immortality, greatness and strength. It becomes clear that deliverance from our temporal existence and from our suffering (caused by our futile pursuit of transient pleasures) lies only in our attaining faith, through which we will be able to perceive the Creator.

In general, the only cause of our misfortunes, and of the worthless and temporal nature of our lives, is our failure to perceive the Creator. Kabbalah impels us towards Him by teaching us: "Taste and see that the Creator is good." The aim of this text is to guide you through the initial stages of the path to perceiving the Creator.

Window to the Heart

It is clear that, since the creation of the world, humanity has suffered torment and pain in such magnitude, it has often been worse than death itself. Who, if not the Creator, is the source of that suffering?

Throughout history, how many individuals have been willing to suffer and endure any pain in order to attain superior wisdom and to achieve spiritual elevation? How many of them voluntarily subjected themselves to unbearable agonies for the sake of finding at least a drop of spiritual perception and understanding of the Higher Force, and for the sake of uniting with the Creator to become His servant?

Yet they all lived out their lives without ever receiving a response, and without any visible achievements. They left this world with nothing, just as they had come into it.

Why did the Creator ignore their prayers? Why did He turn away from them and scorn their suffering? All of these human beings subconsciously realized that there is a higher purpose to the universe, and to every event that takes place. This realization is called the "drop of unification" of an individual with the Creator.

In fact, despite their immersion in egoism and their unbearable torment when they sensed the Creator's rejection, they suddenly felt a window opening in their hearts, which until then had been closed to the truth. Up until that moment, their hearts had been incapable of feeling anything but their own pain and desires.

This window revealed that they were deemed worthy to experience and feel that longed-for "drop of unification," penetrating each heart through its broken walls. Hence, all

their qualities were altered to the opposite, to resemble the qualities of the Creator.

Only then did they realize that they could unite with the Creator only while in the depth of their suffering. Only then could they grasp Oneness with the Creator, since His Presence was there, as well as the "drop of unification" with Him. At the moment of experiencing this insight, the Light became evident to them and filled their wounds.

Precisely because of these wounds of perception and cognizance, and because of the terrible, soul-tormenting contradictions, the Creator Himself filled these people with such an unbounded, wonderful bliss that nothing more perfect could be imagined. All of this was given to make them feel there was some value to their suffering and agony. It was required in order for them to experience the Ultimate Perfection.

Once having achieved this state, every cell in their bodies convinced them that anyone in our world would be willing to go through unthinkable torment to experience, at least once in a lifetime, the bliss of being united with the Creator.

Why, then, is the Creator silent in response to human pleas for relief?

This can be explained as follows: people are much more concerned with their own progress than with glorifying the Creator. Thus, their tears are empty, and they leave this world just as they entered it, with nothing.

The final fate of every animal is eradication, and people who have not perceived the Creator are as animals. On the other hand, if one concerns oneself with glorifying the Creator, He will reveal Himself to that person.

The "drops of unification," which fulfill the purpose of creation, flow into the hearts of those who are concerned

with the Creator's glory and love. They flow into those who, rather than complain about the unfairness of Divine rule, are completely convinced in their hearts that all the Creator has done is ultimately for their own good.

The spiritual cannot be divided into separate parts; we can comprehend the whole only a part at a time, until we comprehend it all.

Therefore, the success of our spiritual endeavors depends on the purity of our yearning. The spiritual Light flows only into those parts of our hearts that have been cleansed of egoism.

When we look objectively at the nature of our existence and at all that surrounds us, we can more fully appreciate the wonder of creation. According to Kabbalists, who communicate directly with the Creator, His existence has important implications for us. If the Creator in fact exists, and if He generates all the circumstances that affect our lives, then there is nothing more logical than trying to maintain as close a contact with Him as possible.

However, if we tried hard and actually succeeded in doing so, we would feel as if we were suspended in air, without any support, since the Creator is concealed from our perception. Without seeing, feeling, hearing, or receiving some sensory input, we would be engaged in a one-way effort, screaming into empty space.

Then why did the Creator make us in such a way that we cannot perceive Him? Moreover, why should He hide from us? Why, even when we appeal to Him, does He appear not to respond, preferring instead to affect us in a way that is hidden from us, concealed behind nature and our environment?

If He desired to correct us, that is, to correct His own "error" in creation, He could have done so long ago, either

directly or indirectly. If He revealed Himself to us, we would all see and appreciate Him to the degree allowed by our senses and the intelligence with which He created us. Surely then we would know what to do and how to act in this world, which was supposedly created for us.

Furthermore, paradoxically, as soon as we strive to reach the Creator, to perceive Him, to come closer to Him, we feel our yearning for the Creator vanish, disappear. But if the Creator directs all of our sensations, why then does He specifically dissolve this yearning in those who desire to perceive Him.

And not only that: Why does he put all possible manner of obstacles in our path? Those of us who attempt to come closer are often met with His rejection. Indeed, He may even inflict years of suffering on those who seek Him.

Occasionally, we might even feel that the pride and arrogance that we are told to rid ourselves of, is infinitely more characteristic of the Creator! After all, if the Creator is merciful, especially to those who seek Him, why don't we receive a response to our tears and appeals?

If we can alter something in our lives, it means that He has given us the free will to do it. But for reasons we do not understand, He did not endow us with sufficient knowledge to avoid the suffering that accompanies our existence and our spiritual development.

On the other hand, if there is no free will, then what can be more harsh than making us senselessly suffer for years in the cruel world that He created? Certainly, such grievances are infinite in number. And if the Creator is the cause of our condition, then we have much to criticize and blame Him for, which we do, when we experience pain and suffering.

The Creator sees all that goes on in our hearts.

When we are displeased with something, the feeling of dissatisfaction can be interpreted as blaming the Creator, even if the blame is not directly addressed to the Creator, or even when we do not believe in the existence of the Creator.

Each of us is correct in maintaining whatever our beliefs are in our present condition, regardless of what that belief is. This is because we maintain only what we feel to be true at that moment, as well as what we have analyzed with our own minds.

However, those of us with vast life experience know how drastically our views can change throughout the years. We cannot say that we were wrong before, but now we are right; we must realize that today's point of view may be proven wrong tomorrow. Therefore, the conclusions that we draw from any situation are correct for that particular situation; yet, they can be directly opposite to the conclusions we will draw in other situations.

By the same token, we cannot assess other worlds or their laws, or judge them based on our own current criteria—the criteria of our world. We do not possess supernatural intelligence or perception, and we err constantly even within the boundaries of our own world. Thus, we cannot draw conclusions about the unknown and pass judgment on it.

Only those of us who possess the requisite supernatural qualities can make correct judgments concerning what exists above and beyond the natural. Those who possess both supernatural qualities and our own qualities can more closely describe the supernatural to us. Such a person is known as a Kabbalist—a person of our world, created with the same qualities as each of us, but also endowed with other qualities from Above that permit this person to describe to us what goes on in the other worlds.

This is why the Creator has allowed certain Kabbalists to reveal their knowledge to vast numbers of people in society, in order to help others communicate with Him. In a language we can understand, Kabbalists explain that the structure and function of reason in the spiritual, heavenly worlds are based on laws that are different from--and opposite in nature to--our own laws.

Faith above Reason

There is no boundary separating our world from the heavenly, spiritual world. But because the spiritual world is, according to its properties, an "anti-world," it is placed so far beyond our perception that after we are born into this world, we completely forget all about our past condition.

Naturally, the only way for us to perceive this "anti-world" is by acquiring its essence, its reason, and its qualities. How must we alter our present nature in order to acquire a completely opposite one?

The basic law of the spiritual world is summarized in two words: "absolute altruism." How can we acquire this quality? Kabbalists suggest that we undergo a transformation within ourselves. It is only through this inner act that we are able to perceive the spiritual world and start living in both worlds simultaneously.

Such a transformation is called "faith above reason." The spiritual world is an altruistic one. Every desire and action that exists in that realm is not dictated by human reason or egoism, but by faith; i.e., by a sense of the Creator.

If common sense is a vital tool for our actions, then it would seem that we are not able to completely free ourselves of intellect. However, given that our intellect does not reveal how we can escape from circumstances that the Creator

places before us in a hidden fashion, it will not assist us in solving our problems.

Instead we will remain afloat without support and without logical answers to what is happening to us. In our world, we are guided only by our own reasoning. In everything we do, reason--meaning purely egoistic "reasonable" calculation--is the basis for all our desires and actions.

Our reason calculates the amount of pleasure we expect to experience, and matches it against the amount of pain required to exert ourselves to achieve that pleasure. We then subtract one from the other to assess the cost, and then decide whether we will strive toward pleasure or choose tranquility.

Such a "reasonable" approach to our surroundings is called "faith within reason." In this case, our reason determines how much faith we will expend.

Often we act without any calculation of benefit or cost of effort, as in cases of fanaticism or conditioned behavior. Such "blind" acts are called acts of "faith beneath reason," because they are determined by blindly following decisions made by someone else, rather than by reason or calculation.

Our actions can also be dictated by our upbringing, having become second nature to such an extent that we must make an effort not to act mechanically, through sheer force of habit.

In order to make the transition from following the laws of our world, to following the laws of the spiritual world, we must meet certain conditions. First, we must completely discard the arguments of reason, and forsake using our intellect to determine our actions. As if suspended in midair, we should attempt to hold on to the Creator with both hands, thus allowing the Creator, and only the Creator, to determine our actions.

Figuratively speaking, we should replace our own minds with the Creator's, and act contrary to our own reason. We must place the Creator's will above our own. Once we are capable of doing this, our behavior will represent "faith above reason."

Having completed the first stage, we will be able to perceive both this world *and* the spiritual world. We will subsequently discover that both worlds function according to the same spiritual law of "faith above reason."

Our willingness to suppress our own reason and be guided only by the desire to give ourselves to the Creator forms the spiritual vessel in which we will receive all of our spiritual understanding. The capacity of that vessel, i.e., the capacity of our spiritual reason, is determined by how much earthly, selfish reasoning we are attempting to suppress.

In order to increase the capacity of our spiritual vessels, the Creator places increasingly greater obstacles in our spiritual path. This strengthens our egoistic desires, as well as our doubts regarding the Creator's rule.

These, in turn, enable us to gradually overcome these obstacles, and to develop stronger altruistic desires. By doing so, we are provided the opportunity to increase the capacity of our spiritual vessels.

If we can mentally grip the Creator with both hands (that is, ignore the critical approach of human reason and rejoice in the fact that such an opportunity has presented itself), and if we can endure this condition for at least an instant, we will see how wonderful the spiritual state really is. This state can be reached only when we have attained the real, eternal Truth.

This Truth will not alter tomorrow, as was the case with all former beliefs, because now we are united with the Creator, and can view all events through the prism of the eternal

Truth. Progress is only possible along three simultaneous, parallel lines. The right line is faith; the left line is cognition and comprehension.

These two lines never diverge, for they are mutually opposed to each other.

Therefore, the only way to balance them is by means of a middle line, which consists of both the right and left lines at the same time. This middle line connotes spiritual behavior, where reason is used in accordance with one's degree of faith.

All spiritual objects are coiled around the Creator; they are layered onto Him in the order from which they emerged from Him. Everything in the universe that is layered around the Creator exists only relative to the creations, and all are products of the original created being, called "*Malchut*."

That is, all worlds and all created beings, except for the Creator, are a single *Malchut* entity, meaning the root or the original source of all beings. *Malchut* eventually fragments into many small parts of itself. The total of the constituent parts of *Malchut* is known as "*Shechina*."

The Light of the Creator, His Presence, and the Divine filling of *Shechina* are all known as "*Shochen*." The time required for the complete filling of all parts of *Shechina* is called the "time of correction."

During this time, the created beings implement internal corrections on their respective parts of *Malchut*. Each being corrects the part from which it was created; meaning it corrects its own soul.

Until the moment the Creator can fully merge with His created beings by revealing Himself entirely to them, or "until the *Shochen* fills the *Shechina*," the condition of the *Shechina*, (the root of the souls) is known as "the exile of the *Shechina* from the Creator" (*Galut HaShechina*). In this condition, there is no perfection in the Higher Worlds. Even in our world, the

lowest of all, every being must also fully perceive the Creator. But most of the time we are occupied with satisfying our petty personal desires characteristic of this world, as well as blindly following the demands of the body.

There is a condition of the soul called "*Shechina* in the dust," when spiritually pure pleasures are considered to be superfluous and absurd. This state is also described as the "suffering of the *Shechina*."

All human suffering stems from the fact that we are compelled from Above to completely reject all common sense and proceed blindly, placing faith above reason.

Yet, the more reason and knowledge we possess, and the stronger and more intelligent we become, the harder it is for us to follow the path of faith.

Consequently, as we attempt to reject our common sense, we increase our suffering.

Those of us who have chosen the path of spiritual development described above cannot agree with the Creator. In our hearts, we condemn the need for such a way; thus, we have difficulty justifying the Creator's methods. Yet, we cannot sustain such a condition for a prolonged period of time unless the Creator decides to help us and reveals the whole picture of creation to us.

When we feel that we are in an elevated spiritual state, and that all of our desires are concentrated only on the Creator, we are ready to delve into the appropriate Kabbalah texts to try to penetrate their inner meaning. Although we might feel that we cannot understand anything, despite our efforts, we must continue to return to the study of Kabbalah again and again, and not despair if we fail to understand the subject.

How can we benefit from these efforts? In fact, our efforts to comprehend the mysteries of Kabbalah are equal to our

prayers asking the Creator to reveal Himself to us. This yearning for a connection is strengthened when we seek to understand the concepts of Kabbalah.

The strength of our prayers is determined by the strength of our yearning. In general, when we invest effort into attaining something, our desire to attain it increases. The strength of our desire can be judged by how much suffering we feel from the absence of the desired object. Suffering, not expressed in words but felt only in the heart, is in itself a prayer.

Proceeding from the above, we can recognize that only after strenuous, yet unsuccessful, efforts to attain what we desire, can we pray so sincerely that we receive it. If, during our attempts to delve into the texts, our hearts are still not quite free from extrinsic thoughts, then our minds will not be able to devote themselves exclusively to study, since the mind obeys the heart.

In order for the Creator to accept our prayers, they should come from the depths of our hearts. That is, all our desires must be concentrated in that prayer. For this reason, we must delve into the text hundreds of times, even without understanding it, in order to achieve our true desire: to be heard by the Creator.

A true desire leaves no room for any other desires. While studying Kabbalah, we will examine the actions of the Creator and thus can progress toward Him. Gradually, then, we will become worthy of comprehending what we are studying.

Faith, or the awareness of the Creator, must be such that we feel that we are in the presence of the King of the Universe. Then, undoubtedly, we will become imbued with the necessary feelings of love and fear. Until we attain such faith, we must continuously strive for it. For it is only faith

that will allow us to enjoy a spiritual life and prevent us from sinking to the depths of egoism, once again becoming pleasure seekers.

Our need to become aware of the Creator must be cultivated until it becomes permanently entrenched in our being. It must resemble a permanent attraction towards a loved one, without whom life seems unbearable.

Everything that surrounds human beings deliberately dulls the need for Divine awareness, and sensing pleasure from anything external instantly reduces the pain of spiritual emptiness. Therefore, while enjoying the pleasures of this world, it is vital that we keep them from obliterating our need to perceive the Creator, as these pleasures rob us of spiritual sensations.

A desire to perceive the Creator is characteristic only of human beings. It is not true, however, of *all* human beings. This desire stems from our need to understand what we are, to comprehend ourselves, our purpose in the world, and our origins. It is the quest for answers about ourselves that leads us to seek the source of life.

Further Reading

To help you determine which book you would like to read next, we have divided the books into five categories—Beginners, Intermediate, Advanced, Good for All, and Textbooks. The first three categories are divided by the level of prior knowledge readers are required to have. The Beginners Category requires no prior knowledge. The Intermediate Category requires reading one or two beginners' books first; and the Advanced level requires one or two books of each of the previous categories. The fourth category, Good for All, includes books you can always enjoy, whether you are a complete novice or well versed in Kabbalah.

The fifth category—Textbooks—includes translations of authentic source materials from earlier Kabbalists, such as the Ari, Rav Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam) and his son and successor, Rav Baruch Ashlag (the Rabash).

Additional translated material that has not yet been published can be found at www.kabbalah.info. All materials on this site, including e-versions of published books, can be downloaded free of charge.

Beginners

Kabbalah for Beginners

Kabbalah for Beginners is a book for all those seeking answers to life's essential questions. We all want to know why we are here, why there is pain, and how we can make life more enjoyable. The four parts of this book provide us with reliable answers to these questions, as well as clear explanations of the gist of Kabbalah and its practical implementations.

Part One discusses the discovery of the wisdom of Kabbalah, and how it was developed, and finally concealed until our time. Part Two introduces the gist of the wisdom of Kabbalah, using ten easy drawings to help us understand the structure of the spiritual worlds, and how they relate to our world. Part Three reveals Kabbalistic concepts that are largely unknown to the public, and Part Four elaborates on practical means you and I can take, to make our lives better and more enjoyable for us and for our children.

Kabbalah Revealed

This is the most clearly written, reader-friendly guide to making sense of the surrounding world. Each of its six chapters focuses on a different aspect of the wisdom of Kabbalah, illuminating its teachings and explaining them using various examples from our day-to-day lives.

The first three chapters in *Kabbalah Revealed* explain why the world is in a state of crisis, how our growing desires promote progress as well as alienation, and why the biggest deterrent to achieving positive change is rooted in our own spirits. Chapters Four through Six offer a prescription for positive change. In these chapters, we learn how we can use our spirits to build a personally peaceful life in harmony with all of Creation.

Wondrous Wisdom

This book offers an initial course on Kabbalah. Like all the books presented here, *Wondrous Wisdom* is based solely on authentic teachings passed down from Kabbalist teacher to student over thousands of years. At the heart of the book is a sequence of lessons revealing the nature of Kabbalah's wisdom and explaining how to attain it. For every person questioning "Who am I really?" and "Why am I on this planet?" this book is a must.

Awakening to Kabbalah

A distinctive, personal, and awe-filled introduction to an ancient wisdom tradition. In this book, Michael Laitman offers a deeper understanding of the fundamental teachings of Kabbalah, and how you can use its wisdom to clarify your relationship with others and the world around you.

Using language both scientific and poetic, he probes the most profound questions of spirituality and existence. This provocative, unique guide will inspire and invigorate you to see beyond the world as it is and the limitations of your everyday life, become closer to the Creator, and reach new depths of the soul.

Kabbalah, Science, and the Meaning of Life

Science explains the mechanisms that sustain life; Kabbalah explains why life exists. In *Kabbalah, Science, and the Meaning of Life*, Michael Laitman combines science and spirituality in a captivating dialogue that reveals life's meaning.

For thousands of years Kabbalists have been writing that the world is a single entity divided into separate beings. Today the cutting-edge science of quantum physics states a very similar idea: that at the most fundamental level of matter, we are all literally one.

Science proves that reality is affected by the observer who examines it; and so does Kabbalah. But Kabbalah makes an even bolder statement: even the Creator, the Maker of reality, is within the observer. In other words, God is inside of us; He doesn't exist anywhere else. When we pass away, so does He.

These earthshaking concepts and more are eloquently introduced so that even readers new to Kabbalah or science will easily understand them. Therefore, if you're just a little curious about why you are here, what life means, and what you can do to enjoy it more, this book is for you.

From Chaos to Harmony

Many researchers and scientists agree that the ego is the reason behind the perilous state our world is in today. Laitman's groundbreaking book not only demonstrates that egoism has been the basis for all suffering throughout human history, but also shows how we can turn our plight to pleasure.

The book contains a clear analysis of the human soul and its problems, and provides a "roadmap" of what we need to do to once again be happy. *From Chaos to Harmony* explains how we can rise to a new level of existence on personal, social, national, and international levels.

Intermediate

The Kabbalah Experience

The depth of the wisdom revealed in the questions and answers within this book will inspire readers to reflect and contemplate. This is not a book to race through, but rather one that should be read thoughtfully and carefully. With this approach, readers will begin to experience a growing sense

of enlightenment while simply absorbing the answers to the questions every Kabbalah student asks along the way.

The Kabbalah Experience is a guide from the past to the future, revealing situations that all students of Kabbalah will experience at some point along their journeys. For those who cherish every moment in life, this book offers unparalleled insights into the timeless wisdom of Kabbalah.

The Path of Kabbalah

This unique book combines beginners' material with more advanced concepts and teachings. If you have read a book or two of Laitman's, you will find this book very easy to relate to.

While touching upon basic concepts such as perception of reality and Freedom of Choice, *The Path of Kabbalah* goes deeper and expands beyond the scope of beginners' books. The structure of the worlds, for example, is explained in greater detail here than in the "pure" beginners' books. Also described is the spiritual root of mundane matters such as the Hebrew calendar and the holidays.

Advanced

The Science of Kabbalah

Kabbalist and scientist Michael Laitman, PhD, designed this book to introduce readers to the special language and terminology of the authentic wisdom of Kabbalah. Here, Michael Laitman reveals authentic Kabbalah in a manner both rational and mature. Readers are gradually led to understand the logical design of the Universe and the life that exists in it.

The Science of Kabbalah, a revolutionary work unmatched in its clarity, depth, and appeal to the intellect, will

enable readers to approach the more technical works of Baal HaSulam (Rav Yehuda Ashlag), such as *The Study of the Ten Sefirot* and *The Book of Zohar*. Readers of this book will enjoy the satisfying answers to the riddles of life that only authentic Kabbalah provides. Travel through the pages and prepare for an astonishing journey into the Upper Worlds.

Introduction to the Book of Zohar

This volume, along with *The Science of Kabbalah*, is a required preparation for those who wish to understand the hidden message of *The Book of Zohar*. Among the many helpful topics dealt with in this text is an introduction to the “language of roots and branches,” without which the stories in *The Zohar* are mere fable and legend. *Introduction to the Book of Zohar* will provide readers with the necessary tools to understand authentic Kabbalah as it was originally meant to be—as a means to attain the Upper Worlds.

The Book of Zohar: annotations to the Ashlag commentary

The Book of Zohar (The Book of Radiance) is an age-old source of wisdom and the basis for all Kabbalistic literature. Since its appearance nearly 2,000 years ago, it has been the primary, and often only, source used by Kabbalists.

For centuries, Kabbalah was hidden from the public, which was deemed not yet ready to receive it. However, our generation has been designated by Kabbalists as the first generation that *is* ready to grasp the concepts in *The Zohar*. Now we can put these principles into practice in our lives.

Written in a unique and metaphorical language, *The Book of Zohar* enriches our understanding of reality and widens our worldview. Although the text deals with one subject only—how to relate to the Creator—it approaches it from different angles. This allows each of us to find the particular phrase or word that will carry us into the depths of this profound and timeless wisdom.

Good for All Levels

Attaining the Worlds Beyond

From the introduction to *Attaining the Worlds Beyond*: "... Not feeling well on the Jewish New Year's Eve of September 1991, my teacher called me to his bedside and handed me his notebook, saying, 'Take it and learn from it.' The following morning, he perished in my arms, leaving me and many of his other disciples without guidance in this world.

"He used to say, 'I want to teach you to turn to the Creator, rather than to me, because He is the only strength, the only Source of all that exists, the only one who can really help you, and He awaits your prayers for help. When you seek help in your search for freedom from the bondage of this world, help in elevating yourself above this world, help in finding the self, and help in determining your purpose in life, you must turn to the Creator, who sends you all those aspirations in order to compel you to turn to Him.'"

Attaining the Worlds Beyond holds within it the content of that notebook, as well as other inspiring texts. This book reaches out to all those seekers who want to find a logical, reliable way to understand the world's phenomena. This fascinating introduction to the wisdom of Kabbalah will enlighten the mind, invigorate the heart, and move readers to the depths of their souls.

Basic Concepts in Kabbalah

This is a book to help readers cultivate an *approach to the concepts* of Kabbalah, to spiritual objects, and to spiritual terms. By reading and re-reading in this book, one develops internal observations, senses, and approaches that did not previously exist within. These newly acquired observations are like sensors that "feel" the space around us that is hidden from our ordinary senses.

Hence, *Basic Concepts in Kabbalah* is intended to foster the contemplation of spiritual terms. Once we are integrated with these terms, we can begin to see, with our inner vision, the unveiling of the spiritual structure that surrounds us, almost as if a mist has been lifted.

This book is not aimed at the study of facts. Instead, it is a book for those who wish to awaken the deepest and subtlest sensations they can possess.

Together Forever

On the surface, *Together Forever* is a children's story. But like all good children's stories, it transcends boundaries of age, culture, and upbringing.

In *Together Forever*, the author tells us that if we are patient and endure the trials we encounter along our life's path, we will become stronger, braver, and wiser. Instead of growing weaker, we will learn to create our own magic and our own wonders as only a magician can.

In this warm, tender tale, Michael Laitman shares with children and parents alike some of the gems and charms of the spiritual world. The wisdom of Kabbalah is filled with spellbinding stories. *Together Forever* is yet another gift from this ageless source of wisdom, whose lessons make our lives richer, easier, and far more fulfilling.

Textbooks

Shamati

Michael Laitman's words on the book: Among all the texts and notes that were used by my teacher, Rav Baruch Shalom Halevi Ashlag (the Rabash), there was one special notebook he always carried. This notebook contained the transcripts

of his conversations with his father, Rav Yehuda Leib Halevi Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), author of the *Sulam* (Ladder) commentary on *The Book of Zohar, The Study of the Ten Sefirot* (a commentary on the texts of the Kabbalist, Ari), and of many other works on Kabbalah.

Not feeling well on the Jewish New Year's Eve of September 1991, the Rabash summoned me to his bedside and handed me a notebook, whose cover contained only one word, *Shamati* (I Heard). As he handed the notebook, he said, "Take it and learn from it." The following morning, my teacher perished in my arms, leaving me and many of his other disciples without guidance in this world.

Committed to Rabash's legacy to disseminate the wisdom of Kabbalah, I published the notebook just as it was written, thus retaining the text's transforming powers. Among all the books of Kabbalah, *Shamati* is a unique and compelling creation.

Kabbalah for the Student

Kabbalah for the Student offers authentic texts by Rav Yehuda Ashlag, author of the *Sulam* (Ladder) commentary on *The Book of Zohar*, his son and successor, Rav Baruch Ashlag, as well as other great Kabbalists. It also offers illustrations that accurately depict the evolution of the Upper Worlds as Kabbalists experience them. The book also contains several explanatory essays that help us understand the texts within.

In *Kabbalah for the Student*, Michael Laitman, PhD, Rav Baruch Ashlag's personal assistant and prime student, compiled all the texts a Kabbalah student would need in order to attain the spiritual worlds. In his daily lessons, Michael Laitman bases his teaching on these inspiring texts, thus helping novices and veterans alike to better understand the spiritual path we undertake on our fascinating journey to the Higher Realms.

About Bnei Baruch

Bnei Baruch is a group of Kabbalists in Israel, sharing the wisdom of Kabbalah with the entire world. Study materials in over 30 languages are based on authentic Kabbalah texts that were passed down from generation to generation.

History and Origin

In 1991, following the passing of his teacher, Rav Baruch Shalom HaLevi Ashlag (The Rabash), Michael Laitman, Professor of Ontology and the Theory of Knowledge, PhD in Philosophy and Kabbalah, and MSc in Medical Bio-Cybernetics, established a Kabbalah study group called “Bnei Baruch.” He called it Bnei Baruch (Sons of Baruch) to commemorate his mentor, whose side he never left in the final twelve years of his life, from 1979 to 1991. Michael Laitman had been Ashlag’s prime student and personal assistant, and is recognized as the successor to Rabash’s teaching method.

The Rabash was the firstborn son and successor of Rav Yehuda Leib HaLevi Ashlag, the greatest Kabbalist of the 20th century. Rav Ashlag authored the most authoritative and comprehensive commentary on *The Book of Zohar*, titled *The Sulam* (Ladder) *Commentary*. He was the first to reveal the complete method for spiritual ascent, and thus was known as Baal HaSulam (Owner of the Ladder).

Today, Bnei Baruch bases its entire study method on the path paved by these two great spiritual leaders.

The Study Method

The unique study method developed by Baal HaSulam and his son, the Rabash, is taught and applied on a daily basis by Bnei Baruch. This method relies on authentic Kabbalah sources such as *The Book of Zohar*, by Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai, *The Tree of Life*, by the Holy Ari, and *The Study of the Ten Sefirot*, by Baal HaSulam.

While the study relies on authentic Kabbalah sources, it is carried out in simple language and uses a scientific, contemporary approach. Developing this approach has made Bnei Baruch an internationally respected organization, both in Israel and in the world at large.

The unique combination of an academic study method and personal experiences broadens the students' perspective and awards them a new perception of the reality they live in. Those on the spiritual path are thus given the necessary tools to study themselves and their surrounding reality.

The Message

Bnei Baruch is a diverse movement of tens of thousands of students worldwide. Students can choose their own paths and the personal intensity of their studies, according to their unique conditions and abilities. The essence of the message disseminated by Bnei Baruch is universal: unity of the people, unity of nations and love of man.

For millennia, Kabbalists have been teaching that love of man should be the foundation of all human relations. This love prevailed in the days of Abraham, Moses, and the group of Kabbalists that they established. If we make room for these seasoned, yet contemporary values, we will discover that we possess the power to put differences aside and unite.

The wisdom of Kabbalah, hidden for millennia, has been waiting for the time when we would be sufficiently developed and ready to implement its message. Now, it is emerging as a solution that can unite diverse factions everywhere, enabling us, as individuals and as a society, to meet today's challenges.

Activities

Bnei Baruch was established on the premise that "only by expansion of the wisdom of Kabbalah to the public can we be awarded complete redemption" (Baal HaSulam).

Therefore, Bnei Baruch offers a variety of ways for people to explore and discover the purpose of their lives, providing careful guidance for beginners and advanced students alike.

Television

Bnei Baruch established a production company, ARI Films (www.arifilms.tv) specializing in production of educational TV programs throughout the world, and in many languages.

In Israel, Bnei Baruch established its own channel, no. 66 on both cable and satellite, which broadcasts 24/7 Kabbalah TV. The channel is also aired on the Internet at www.kab.tv. All broadcasts on the channel are free of charge. Programs are adapted for all levels, from complete beginners to the most advanced.

Additionally, ARI Films produces educational series and documentaries.

Internet Website

Bnei Baruch's international website, www.kab.info, presents the authentic wisdom of Kabbalah using essays, books, and original texts. It is by far the most expansive source of authentic Kabbalah material on the net, containing a unique,

extensive library for readers to thoroughly explore the wisdom of Kabbalah. Additionally, the media archive, www.kabbalahmedia.info, contains more than 5,000 media items, downloadable books, and a vast reservoir of texts, video and audio files in many languages.

Bnei Baruch's online Learning Center offers unique, free Kabbalah lessons for beginners, initiating students into this profound body of knowledge in the comfort of their own homes.

Michael Laitman's daily lessons are also aired live on www.kab.tv, along with complementary texts and diagrams.

All these services are provided free of charge.

Paper

Kabbalah Today is a free monthly paper produced and disseminated by Bnei Baruch in many languages, including English, Hebrew, Spanish, and Russian. It is apolitical, non-commercial, and written in a clear, contemporary style. The purpose of *Kabbalah Today* is to expose the vast knowledge hidden in the wisdom of Kabbalah at no cost and in a clear, engaging format and style for readers everywhere.

Kabbalah Today is distributed free in every major U.S. city, as well as in Toronto, Canada, London, England, and Sydney, Australia. It is printed in English, Hebrew, and Russian, and is also available on the Internet, at www.kabtoday.com.

Additionally, a hard copy of the paper is sent to subscribers at delivery cost only.

Kabbalah Books

Bnei Baruch publishes authentic books, written by Rav Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), his son, Rav Baruch Ashlag (the Rabash), and Michael Laitman. The books of Rav Ashlag and Rabash are essential for complete understanding of

the teachings of authentic Kabbalah, explained in Michael Laitman's lessons.

Michael Laitman writes his books in a clear, contemporary style based on the key concepts of Baal HaSulam. These books are a vital link between today's readers and the original texts. All the books are available for sale, as well as for free download.

Kabbalah Lessons

As Kabbalists have been doing for centuries, Michael Laitman gives a daily lesson at the Bnei Baruch center in Israel between 3:15-6:00 a.m. Israel time. The lessons are given in Hebrew and are simultaneously translated into seven languages: English, Russian, Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Turkish. As with everything else, the live broadcast is provided gratis to thousands of students worldwide.

Funding

Bnei Baruch is a non-profit organization for teaching and sharing the wisdom of Kabbalah. To maintain its independence and purity of intentions, Bnei Baruch is not supported, funded, or otherwise tied to any government or political organization.

Since the bulk of its activity is provided free of charge, the prime sources of funding for the group's activities are donations and tithing—contributed by students on a voluntary basis—and Michael Laitman's books, which are sold at cost.

How to contact Bnei Baruch

1057 Steeles Avenue West,
Suite 532 Toronto,
ON, M2R 3X1 Canada

Bnei Baruch USA,
2009 85th street, #51,
Brooklyn, NY 11214, USA

E-mail: info@kabbalah.info

Web site: www.kab.info

Toll free in USA and Canada:
1-866-LAITMAN
Fax: 1-905 886 9697