

THE LIGHT OF KABBALAH

Introduction to the Book of Zohar

VOLUME TWO

THE SPIRITUAL SECRET OF KABBALAH

ORIGINAL TEXTS
OF RAV YEHUDA ASHLAG
Commentary by Rav Michael Laitman PhD



T H E L I G H T O F K A B B A L A H

Introduction to the Book of Zohar

VOLUME TWO



LAITMAN
KABBALAH PUBLISHERS

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Executive Editor: Talib Din
Editor: Clive Borkum
Project Coordinator: Lenny Estrin
Translation: David Brushin
Drawings: Roman Ferber, Eugene Nemirovsky, Michael Gonopolsky
Production Manager: Tony Kosinec
Proofreading: Chaim Ratz
Type Setting: Baruch Khovov
Book Design: The George Partnership

Laitman Kabbalah Publishers Website:

www.kabbalah.info

Laitman Kabbalah Publishers Email:

info@kabbalah.info

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ZOHAR
VOLUME TWO

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Introduction to the Book of Zohar

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TO THE READER

For many centuries, the wisdom of Kabbalah was inaccessible to anyone who could not read Hebrew. Now, for the first time in the history of the Western World, readers of the English language and serious students of Kabbalah have the opportunity to learn the Wisdom of Kabbalah from the 20th Century's greatest Kabbalist, Baal HaSulam. In this text,* the student will find a systematic, graduated exposition of Kabbalah unlike any treatment found in other available texts. This text comes with a brilliant commentary by Michael Laitman, a scientist and Kabbalist who received the Tradition from that illustrious chain that includes the Ari, Baal HaSulam, and his teacher, Rabash.

"The Wisdom of Kabbalah" is an exhaustive text that the reader will certainly make a steady companion in his exploration of the Upper Worlds for many years to come. Enjoy!

Talib Din, Executive Editor
Bnei Baruch
May 16, 2004

* As Rav Laitman did not translate the Hebrew text word for word, the reader will find that the English translation does not strictly follow the Hebrew text.



FOREWORD

While working on a course of virtual lessons at the World Academy of Kabbalah that Michael Laitman teaches on the Internet, we did our best to preserve the style and spirit of his classes and discussions. This is not a literary text, nor is it a lecture on philosophy. Here you will discover secret, deep layers of information about the Upper World. In this way, through the Kabbalist, the Creator reveals the Thought of Creation and His light.

In one of his Saturday discourses, M. Laitman told us about the attitude of his Teacher, Rabash, to the manuscripts of his great father Baal HaSulam, the commentator on “The Book of Zohar”. While publishing the manuscripts, Rabash never allowed himself to make even a single correction of what might seem to be a mistake. M. Laitman acted in a similar way, when he was preparing his Teacher’s notes for publication. “What may now seem like a mistake will become clear when we ascend the higher spiritual level”, said Rabash to his disciple Michael Laitman. We try to follow the advice of our teachers and make a point of leaving all the “mistakes” and “typos” uncorrected.

This book was not written; to its last line it was orally shared with numerous members of the virtual group, who gather in many places in the world to hear these classes.

While reading this book, you can join the community of beginning Kabbalists, provided you treat it as a very special Kabbalistic text filled with profound meaning. Succumb to your sensations, let the Upper Light lead you, correct, and prepare your soul, your spiritual vessels, for reception of the ultimate delight – merging with the Creator.

The students of
Rav Michael Laitman



PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF ZOHAR

1. The depth of wisdom and learning contained in the Holy Book of Zohar is concealed behind a thousand locked gates.

Why is it “concealed behind a thousand locked gates”? In actual fact, no one conceals anything; everything exists within the framework of the natural laws of the creation. Unlike in this world, there is no key that can unlock the gates to enter where one may or may not be. The spiritual world is completely open; a person just advances from one spiritual level to another, and leaves one realm to enter the next in accordance with the way he changes his own properties.

In our world an object can be moved from one place to another by way of mechanical displacement, whereas in the spiritual world we need to make an inner motion in order to pass from one part of the world to another. This is what they call a locked gate; as long as the person is confined to one part, the next one remains concealed, “locked” from him.

What can be done to open it? Transform yourself in accordance with the part you wish to enter, and then you will get inside. It is pretty simple. Everything exists within man. By inwardly using his potential abilities, anyone can easily move in spiritual space, from his present state to the state of perfect infinity and merging with the Creator.

All wisdom consists in the method of advancing in spiritual space. Hence it is said that the depth of wisdom is “concealed behind a thousand locked gates”. It is not concealed behind any kind of external gate.

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All the locks and keys are within us. Carrying out inner actions correctly and opening the locks with our own inner keys is our method. This is the purpose of studying “The Book of Zohar” and the wisdom of Kabbalah as a whole.

Human language, being poor and meager, can serve us neither as a suitable instrument, nor a sufficient means of expression for uncovering the full meaning of even a single sentence in “The Book of Zohar”.

This means that even if we take the smallest phrase from “The Zohar”, which seems quite clear to us, the interpretation of it will definitely depend on our level of attainment. By gradually developing our inner potential, by adapting ourselves to various spiritual laws and properties, we will begin to discover great depth in every word, phrase, or sentence of the book, and not the actions and phenomena that we perceive today. Depth of perception depends solely on the researcher’s level of attainment.

My explanations are only the rungs of a ladder.

The structure of the commentary to “The Book of Zohar” resembles a ladder. This does not mean that the first volume of the book is intended for beginners and the last for the most advanced students. Every sentence, every word in the text includes inner levels of attainment of all the described actions and states.

The text is composed in such a way that the reader gradually discovers an increasingly clearer picture. He should only aspire for discovering some inner information concealed in the book. That is all man can understand at this stage, but this initial tune up is quite sufficient for the book to begin affecting us in this way.

I intended to help the student attain the heights from which he may see and investigate what the Book itself expounds. Therefore, in this preface, I find it necessary to prepare the student interested in “The

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Zohar” by providing him with correct definitions, to demonstrate how to study the book and learn from it.

In other words, the goal of studying “The Zohar” is to attain the Upper World, to feel and control it, to begin living not just within the limits of this world, but to enter a greater, eternal and perfect realm.

2. At the outset, one should be aware that every concept discussed in “The Book of Zohar”, whether in the language of legends or tales, concerns the Ten Sefirot: i.e., KaHaB (Keter, Hochma, and Bina), HaGaT (Hessed, Gevura, and Tifferet), NHYM (Netzah, Hod, Yesod, Malchut), and their derivatives. Just as the spoken language, consisting of the 22 letters with their various permutations, are entirely adequate for uncovering the essence of any object or learning, so too are the concepts and permutations of the Ten Sefirot sufficient to expose the entire wisdom contained in the spiritual universe.

From the study of the four phases of development of the direct light, we know that these phases (zero, one, two, three, and four) are respectively called “the tip of the letter Yud”, the letters “Yud”, “Hey”, “Vav”, and “Hey”. They make up the word HaVaYaH, the Creator’s ineffable name.

Partzuf Soul	Sefirot	HaVaYaH	Stages	
K	K	—	0	
	H	— י	1	
	B	— ה	2	
	H G T N H Y	ZA	— י	3
		M	— ה	4
M	M	—	4	
	10	5		

What does *HaVaYaH*, the Creator's name, mean? These symbols contain the information about the entire universe. The rest happens to be their various interpretations. If we describe them as *Sefirot*, they will correspond to *Keter*, *Hochma*, *Bina*, *Zeir Anpin* (*ZA*) and *Malchut*. We then further divide the *Sefira ZA* into six the *Sefirot Hesed*, *Gevura*, *Tifferet*, *Netzah*, *Hod*, and *Yesod*. Thus these Ten *Sefirot* are all that we have. *Keter*, the Creator's attitude to the creation, is followed by the *Sefirot*-derivatives, the last of which is *Malchut*, the creation. Accordingly, the Creator's attitude to the creation descends from *Keter* to *Malchut*, while the creation's attitude to the Creator ascends in the opposite direction, from *Malchut* to *Keter*. All that is included in the Ten *Sefirot* is called the Soul or the *Partzuf*. This is all we deal with.

We know nothing beyond that. We can only perceive what enters inside us, and call it our life.

Baal HaSulam says that the combinations of the *Sefirot* and their various, partially used sub-*Sefirot* are quite sufficient to describe all possible states, actions, and properties of everything that takes place between the Creator and the creation.

In our reality, there are three definitions.

In fact, they are not definitions, but, rather, limitations, which we need to understand properly. When we dispose ourselves to "The Book of Zohar" through these three limitations, we understand what it says, and can penetrate its deeper form.

3. *First definition (limitation).*

There exist four categories of knowledge called:

- *Matter,*
- *Form in matter,*
- *Abstract form, and*
- *Essence.*

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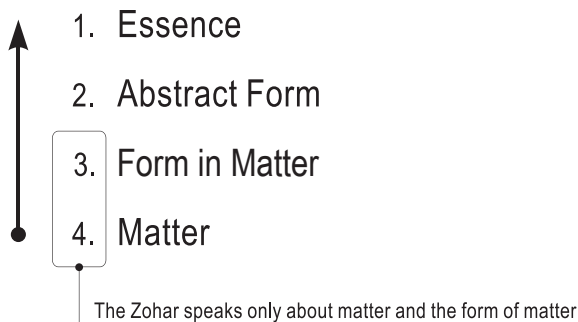
If we move outside from within in our analysis, we find that the essence, abstract form, form, and matter are dressed on one another. This is how we perceive any object in our world.

For instance, here is my cup, which has the form of a vessel (Hebrew: *Kli*). The matter of which it is made is clay. When I speak of it without any reference to its shape or material it is made of, I refer to its abstract form as a *Kli*. In general, what is a glass or a cup? I speak about something abstract, unconnected with a particular, concrete object. Then the essence follows, a category, something that constitutes the notion of a cup, a *Kli* for me.

These are the four degrees of inner attainment of any definition, object, action, or property.

It is the same with regard to the Ten Sefirot. One must be aware that the Book of Zohar does not concern itself at all with such concepts as the Essence of the Sefirot or their Abstract Form. Rather, since the Form is the carrier of Matter, the book discusses either the Form of the Sefirot or the Matter they contain.

If we take essence, abstract form, form in matter and matter (in the order they descend to this world), our attainment starts from matter and rises up. Baal HaSulam says that “The Zohar” only speaks of the first two levels of attainment, matter and form in matter. So this is the first of our limitations pertaining to the study of “The Zohar”.



4. *Second definition (limitation).*

Everything existing in the Divine reality that is concerned with the creation of Souls and their forms of existence is conditioned by the following three states:

- *The World of Infinity,*
- *The World of Atzilut, and*
- *The Three Worlds called Beria, Yetzira and Assiya.*

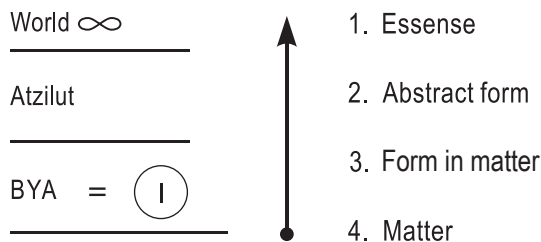
The World of Infinity is absolutely divine and refers both to the state before the *Tzimtzum Aleph* and to the state of Final Correction.

The World of *Atzilut* is the World of our correction. While being corrected itself, it represents the basis, the source of our life and betterment.

The Worlds of *BYA* are the realm in which we exist.

Know that “The Book of Zohar” investigates only the Worlds of BYA (Beria, Yetzira and Assiya) and nothing else. It touches on the Worlds of Infinity and Atzilut only to the degree that the Worlds of BYA receive from them. Otherwise, “The Book of Zohar” does not concern itself with them at all.

The Worlds of Infinity and Atzilut by themselves are of no interest to us. What we do need to know is where we are and how these worlds can help us.



“The Book of Zohar” always speaks about a practical application of everything that we study. It only deals with what is attained in man’s Soul, which exists, acts, rules and facilitates man’s correction, but never speaks of anything abstract.

Consequently, our approach to “The Zohar” should be purely practical. We should dispose ourselves so that the light it emanates can clearly indicate what we need to correct.

The essence and abstract form refer to what is above our correction. We will attain it as well, but later on, after the Final Correction; hence “The Book of Zohar” does not speak about it. Neither does it mention the Worlds of Infinity and *Atzilut*, where we ascend after the Final Correction. This is not our current task.

Our mission is to go through 6000 years (levels) of correction; therefore “The Zohar” speaks only about this process. It describes me and, through me, the World of Infinity and *Atzilut*, dealing only with what concerns me in my matter and form. Nothing at all is said of what exists without being somehow connected with me.

5. Third definition (limitation):

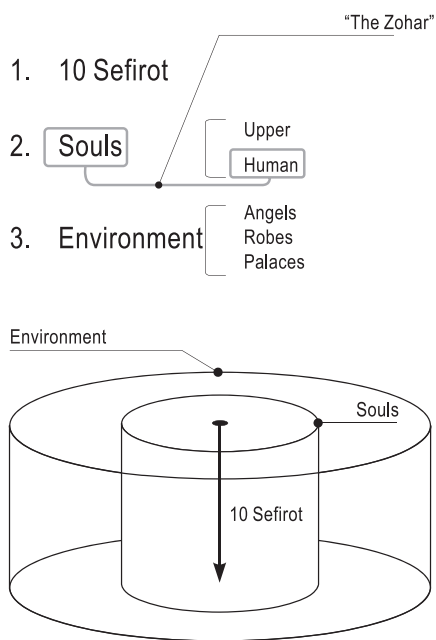
In each of the Worlds of BYA, there are three aspects:

- *Ten Sefirot,*
- *The Souls, and*
- *The rest of reality.*

The Ten *Sefirot* constitute the descending pure light in the form of gradually diminishing emanations. Thus, to the extent of our ability to communicate with these Ten *Sefirot*, we perceive the light.

The Souls dressed on these Ten *Sefirot* exist within the reality that surrounds them. This way, one element is inside another. There are Souls of two kinds: Upper and human. At a later stage we will understand the notion of “the Upper Souls.”

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The rest of the surrounding reality is comprised of “angels,” “robes,” and “palaces.”

These are the inferior spiritual forces that surround the human Soul. Their names indicate resemblance to our world: “angels” are similar to animals; “robes” are the forces that are external with regard to man, but very close to him; in similarity to our world, “palaces” are the forces that constitute man’s more remote surroundings.

In any case, one should know that, although “The Book of Zohar” meticulously explains every minute detail of every world...

However, one should not deceive oneself thinking that everything is explained about all the worlds. “The Zohar” reveals and expounds only that, which concerns one aspect – the human Souls, and completely ignores everything that pertains to the Ten Sefirot or surrounds the Soul (i.e., the Upper Souls, angels, robes, and palaces).

Any other aspect that may be expounded or explained is done so only for the purpose of understanding what it is that Souls receive. “The Book of Zohar” does not utter even a single word about anything that does not relate to Souls.

These three fundamental aspects serve as our point of departure:

- *Not to pass beyond the framework of matter and form in matter;*
- *Not to pass beyond the framework of the worlds BYA;*
- *Not to pass beyond the framework of the human Souls.*

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If we remain within the framework of these three limitations, we will understand correctly what “The Book of Zohar” wishes to provide us with. Thus, we will accurately receive its message through the channel that descends from it to us, and establish contact with the book.

We will neither demand something that is absent in it, nor something that we do not need. We will receive from it only what is necessary for our correction. Every single word in it speaks exactly about it. For example, if a person with a philosophical frame of mind tries to understand abstractly what is written in the book, he will definitely fail. Hence, “The Zohar” seems to be “concealed behind a thousand locked gates.”

If the person wishes to reveal something about the abstract form and the essence, but has not yet achieved the necessary spiritual level, he will not be able to do that from the level of our world by way of philosophical reasoning. To this end, he will have to reach the proper level in the World of *Atzilut* or the World of Infinity, and begin his research there. In general, “The Book of Zohar” has nothing to do with these issues; it exclusively studies the process of our correction. Once we have corrected ourselves and attained the Upper Reality, we will attain all additional knowledge about the abstract form, the essence, the Worlds of *Atzilut* and Infinity, the Ten *Sefirot*, the Upper Souls, angels, robes, and palaces.

“The Zohar” cannot tell us about all this until, with its help, we correct matter and form in matter, i.e., the worlds *BYA*, in which our Souls exist. Only after the created desire is corrected will it be possible to say how it attains the higher spiritual levels. As long as this desire continues to remain egoistic, it will be unable to grasp anything above its own level.

Naturally, it will not reach the level of the abstract form or the essence in the Worlds of *Atzilut* and Infinity, because it already means to possess the property of bestowal. Neither will it be able to attain what

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exists beyond the human Souls, especially in the ten divine *Sefirot*, in the pure light that emanates from the Creator.

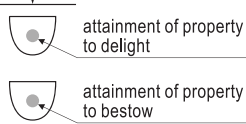
“The Book of Zohar” is written in such a way that it can adequately and positively influence the person who wishes to receive its energy in the right way, i.e., in order to be corrected. Unless the person has this intention as regards “The Zohar”, then he just leafs through its pages being unaware of the great power that the book emanates.

It is so focused that its light affects us only on condition that we aspire for correction and attainment of the Upper World. The method of establishing contact with the Upper Source of correction is called Kabbalah. All that it includes is given only for attuning oneself to the Upper Light.

6. You already know that the Ten Sefirot are called Hochma, Bina, Tifferet, Malchut and their root, Keter. They are ten because Tifferet consists of six Sefirot called Hesed, Gevura, Tifferet, Netzah, Hod, and Yesod. Remember always that when we mention the Ten Sefirot, we mean HuBTuM.

That is, Hochma, Bina, Tifferet, and Malchut. As a rule, even the name Keter is omitted, because Keter represents the Creator. It is attained from the four subsequent Sefirot: Hochma, Bina, Tifferet, and Malchut.

Partzuf Soul	Sefirot	HaVaYaH	Stages	
K	K	—	0	
	H	—	1	
	B	—	2	
	H G T N H Y [ZA]	—	—	3
		M	—	4
M	M	—	4	
	10	5		



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Keter is not even designated by a letter, but by a hook-like tip of the prospective letter “*Yud*”. This is similar to the descending light: the moment it begins to create something, it turns into phase one.




The light being unattainable by itself, we therefore pay no attention to it. We can speak about its property of bestowal, when we feel it inside our *Kli*. In phase two we say that it bestows delight upon us. So in the first case, we speak of what the light is in itself, and in the second – what it gives us.

7. In “*The Book of Zohar*” these Ten Sefirot, *HuBTuM*, are called by the names of four colors: white, red, green, and black.

- White corresponds to the Sefira of Hochma,
- Red corresponds to the Sefira of Bina,
- Green corresponds to the Sefira of Tifferet, and
- Black corresponds to the Sefira of Malchut.

In our world these Sefirot create the four basic colors.

This is similar to an optical instrument that has four lenses with colors corresponding to the ones mentioned above. In spite of the fact that the light is unified, while passing through a lens, it acquires a color and becomes one of the four lights: white, red, green, or black.

	<u>Sefirot</u>	<u>HaVaYaH</u>	<u>Stages</u>
	K	— · —	0 
White	— H	— ך —	1 
Red	— B	— ך —	2 
Green	— ZA	— ך —	3
Black	— M	— ך —	4

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Thus, the light that is found in each of the Sefirot is the Creator's light, simple and unified. In actual fact, it (i.e., the Ten Sefirot) is completely colorless.

The ten (innermost) Sefirot of the direct light have no color, but when they pass through the worlds, they acquire different colors, dress into various shells, and thus manifest before us. That is how we perceive this world.

We can describe the same in a different way. There is only the simple, absolutely amorphous light around us. However, in our inner properties we single out in it such pictures as the still, vegetative, animal, and human levels of nature, the worlds, etc. This is achieved with the help of our inner Kelim. There is nothing like that in the light itself.

Thus, the light that is found in each of the Sefirot is the light of the Creator. This light is simple and unified, from the Rosh (head) of the World of Atzilut to the Sof (end) of the World of Assiya. The differentiation of this light into the Sefirot HuBTuM happens in the Kelim (vessels), also called HuBTuM. Each Kli (Sefira) is like a thin partition through which the light of the Creator passes. This is the way each Kli (partition) imparts a different color to the passing light. Thus, the Kli de Hochma of the World of Atzilut passes white light. This is because the Kli de Atzilut (vessel of Atzilut) is similar to the light itself, and the light of the Creator does not suffer any changes while passing through it.

This is the secret of the World of Atzilut about which "The Book of Zohar" says: "He, the Light, and His Essence are One". In accordance with this, the light of the World of Atzilut is defined as white light. However, concerning the Kelim of the Worlds of Beria, Yetzira, and Assiya, the light passing through them changes and darkens. Consider, for example, that the light becomes the red light of the Sefira Bina in the World of Beria, the green light of Tifferet in the

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World of Yetzira and the black light of Sefira Malchut in the World of Assiya, respectively.

There are other *Kelim* already; hence, the light assumes color. This happens because the *Kelim* in the Worlds of *Beria*, *Yetzira*, and *Assiya* (as in *Bina*, *ZA*, and *Malchut*) are partially or completely uncorrected with regard to the light. If “The Zohar” speaks of colors, we can interpret them as the properties of the *Sefirot*. For instance, when we speak about the color green, it means that the property of *ZA* is implied, and we are at its level or receive through it.

8. In addition to what was mentioned above, the allegory of the four lights contains an additional important hint. The Upper Lights are called “Sefer” (book).

The wisdom contained in each book is not revealed to the student in the white color it contains...

The light descending to us from the Creator carries its wisdom, reveals itself. This wisdom is not attained from the clear, white color of the light of the Ten *Sefirot*, or from the essence. It is attained from matter and the form in matter, from the Worlds of *BYA*, through our Souls, i.e., from *Malchut*’s reaction to what descends from above. Hence, we cannot grasp the colorless light of *Keter* or the simple light of *Atzilut*, but attain them through the Worlds of *Beria*, *Yetzira*, and *Assiya*, through black, green, and red colors.

These very colors give us an idea of what Infinity, eternity, and perfection are. Although by themselves these properties are colorless, we are totally unable to attain this achromatism. We can only grasp it after we include in ourselves all the existing colors and the immense variety of their combinations, after they intermix within our completely corrected *Kelim*.

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Each of these colors takes its own place in the *Kelim*. Only from absolute attainment, as a result of absorbing the entire palette of colors, do we first come to color white, and then to absolute achromatism.

In other words, we do not attain the color white. We reveal everything through the Sefirot Bina, Tifferet and Malchut. These three Sefirot, which are the three Worlds of BYA, are the colors in which the Book of Heaven is written. The letters and their permutations are revealed through the three colors mentioned above. The revelation of Divine light is mediated only through them.

Moreover, we must discern the following. While the white color in a book is its foundation, all the letters are “wedded” to it.

Since the page of a book is white, the black letters stand out against its background. They seem to be stuck to it, while the white color supports them. By concealing the white color of the page, by violating its absolute whiteness, the letters pass us their wisdom.

As a result, we perceive not the color, but the *Kli*, the letters that we read. In other words, we read not the letters themselves, but the deviations we introduce into the light, i.e., black, green, and red shapes, where, as we see, the light is absent. We perceive the white color even through its absence, because we are created beings and perceive everything out of our deficiencies (*Hesronot*), desires.

All wisdom is in the World of *Atzilut* because *Atzilut* is the World of *Hochma*. *Beria*, *Yetzira*, and *Assiya* correspond to *Bina*, *ZA*, and *Malchut*. The World of *Adam Kadmon* (AK) is *Keter*.

The Worlds of Infinity and AK are the same with regard to us because all that is above *Tzimtzum Bet* and is not included in *Tzimtzum Aleph* is unattainable for us before the Final Correction. From this it follows that both worlds are included into the notion of the World of Infinity. We only attain the World of *Atzilut* through the Worlds of *BYA* because it is a form corrected by *Tzimtzum Bet*.

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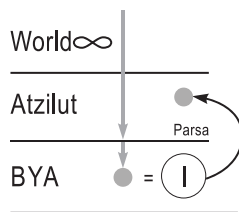
9. “The Zohar” says that we attain the World of Atzilut as white and its luminescence as letters against a white background in the three Worlds of BYA. These three worlds are the colors, the letters and their permutations, as in a book. This is manifested in two ways: if the three Worlds of BYA receive the light of Atzilut in their place (under the Parsa).

That is, the World of Atzilut is a mount, while all the letters, colors and their permutations are determined by our coordinates in the Worlds of Beria, Yetzira, and Assiya. As the light of Infinity passes through the World of Atzilut and enters the Worlds of BYA, we can be in and receive the light in them, or we can rise to Atzilut and receive the light there.

We can freely move within the Worlds of BYA: from Assiya to Yetzira to Beria, and even to Atzilut. Our Souls can move provided they transform their inner properties. The Soul rises to the level to which its inner properties correspond.

If the three Worlds of BYA receive luminescence from the World of Atzilut while in their place, when the light is diminished many times over while passing through the Parsa under the World of Atzilut, then it becomes merely the luminescence of the Kelim de Atzilut.

That is, the Kelim of the World of Atzilut slightly shine in the Worlds of BYA. The light that passes from Atzilut to the Worlds of BYA is called “Ohr de Tolada” (light of birth), i.e., microscopic luminescence in comparison with the light in the World of Atzilut.



Otherwise, the Worlds of BYA (with the Souls in them) rise above the Parsa to the place of the Sefirot Bina, Tifferet, and Malchut of Atzilut, and “clothe” the World of Atzilut, i.e., receive the light, where it shines.

In this case, they certainly receive the light of *Atzilut*. First, we need to enter into the Worlds of *BYA*, reach their highest point in the World of *Beria*, get as close to the *Parsa* as possible, and force all the Worlds of *BYA* to rise to *Atzilut*. Together with the Worlds of *BYA* we will ascend to the World of *Atzilut* and receive the light that is there.

10. All the same, this allegory does not completely reflect the essence, because the book of wisdom of this world consists of a white background and the color of the letters in which there is no spirit (Ruach) of life.

Actually, the allegory about the World of *Atzilut* is as a white page, and the attainment in the Worlds of *BYA*, being similar to letters, is pretty lifeless. It does not convey the vast breathtaking picture that man attains when he enters into these worlds, feels new spiritual universes, the Upper Souls, angels, palaces. He discovers a wonderful, effervescent life, reveals the forces that govern not our tiny world, but the immense universe.

Naturally, this example fails to express such sensations. Why is it so? Baal HaSulam says: *...because the book of wisdom of this world consists of a white background and the color of the letters in which there is no spirit of life. The revelation of wisdom (in our sensations) is not within their essence, but outside of them, i.e., in the intellect of the one studying them.*

As we ascend from the Worlds of *BYA* to the World of *Atzilut* and attain the heavenly wisdom, it exists not on paper, not outside us in some book, but turns into reality that permeates and surrounds us as a result of our inner changes.

In accordance with this, one must be aware that the color white contained in the book is a subject of study in and of itself, and the function of the other three colors is to manifest it.

This is a very important sentence. I advise you to look at it closely.

Here I would like to remind you that we are one group that exists for the sake of achieving one Goal. There are many of us, and we wish to help each other. Only by joining our forces and desires will we be able to fulfill this great mission.

Baal HaSulam writes that when we combine our efforts and aspirations, then each of us frees himself from an existence inside a closed shell. Thus we create one common *Kli* of such enormity that, while passing through the Worlds of *BYA* to *Atzilut*, we attain not the colors of *Beria*, *Yetzira*, and *Assiya*, but the white background of *Atzilut*. In other words, we reach a state where we transcend the limits of matter and the form in matter, and begin attaining the abstract form – something that is completely inapprehensible in our world.

While reading books in this world only, we attain the wisdom contained in the letters. By reading a book in the spiritual world, we adapt the letters within ourselves and build our inner properties, configure our inner forces, and define the combinations of our *Sefirot*. While passing from letter to letter, from word to word, from phrase to phrase in the books recommended by Kabbalists, we inwardly perform spiritual actions.

By creating these letters within ourselves, we attain through them the white background, i.e., absolute wisdom, the level of *Hochma*. This is the difference between the attainment of spiritual and earthly wisdom. The earthly wisdom is concentrated in our inner *Kelim*, in our knowledge, whereas the spiritual wisdom enables us to attain the light in our sensations, to the extent of similarity of our inner *Kelim* to the properties of light.

11. It should always be borne in mind that there are four categories of knowledge, which were mentioned above, in the first limitation, namely:

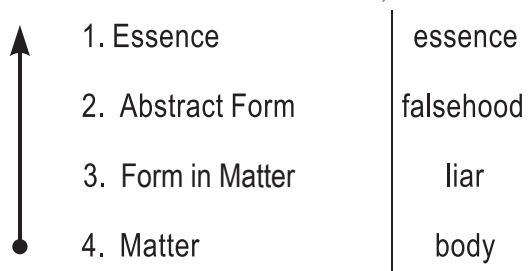
PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF ZOHAR

- Matter,
- Form in matter,
- Abstract form, and
- Essence.

I will explain them first using actual examples from this world. For example, when we say a: “strong person”, or “truthful person”, or “liar” etc., we discern between the following:

- *The matter the person consists of, i.e., the body. Matter is the fourth stage, so if we speak about a person, it means the body.*
- *The form into which this matter is shaped, i.e., strong, truthful or false (let us say a liar).*
- *The abstract form, i.e., it is possible to comprehend an abstract form of falsehood irrespective of the matter of a person and study these three forms as such, without their being manifested in any matter or body. In other words, it is possible to investigate the qualities of strength, truthfulness or falsehood, to discern their merits or baseness, when they are abstracted from any matter at all*
- *The essence (of falsehood)*

12. Know that the essence of a person, as such, is quite impossible to perceive without his material embodiment, as discussed in the first



limitation. This is because our five senses and our imagination do not offer us anything more than the revelation of the actions of the essence, but not of the essence itself.

That is, we do not perceive the essence, which is purely divine. We can more or less abstractly attain whatever derives from it, but not the essence itself.

... because our five senses and our imagination do not offer us anything more than the revelation of the actions of the essence, but not of the essence itself.

For example:

- *Our vision perceives only the waves from the essence of what we see, according to the light it reflects.*

When I am looking at an object, I do not know what it really is. I only perceive it as waves that it reflects. They return to me and create a certain form in my perception.

- *Our hearing is simply the power of influence of sound waves, transmitted through the air from some essence. This air, reflected under the influence of a sound wave, exerts pressure on the membrane of the eardrum. This is how we are able to hear that something is near us.*

The sound comes from something beyond me. That is, I know nothing about the source of the sound; I have no clue as to what it is by itself. I can only judge it by the way I perceive it.

- *Our sense of smell is the irritation of our nerve receptors reacting to smells, by the air emanating from the essence, and this is how we sense a smell.*

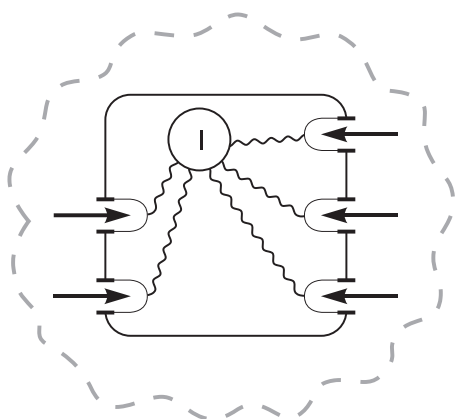
Everything depends on our nerve receptors and on how they transmit to us this or that smell.

PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF ZOHAR

- *Our sense of taste is only a derivative from a contact between some essence and our gustatory receptors.*

These four senses offer us nothing but the revelation of actions emanating from some essence. It never reveals the essence itself.

I have said on numerous occasions that the person, his “I”, resembles a black box with five points of entry, our five senses. We perceive only that which enters through them from outside. Moreover, as we



have just noted, we perceive not what enters inside, but what is detected by special membranes positioned at the entry (it is unclear how this external influence reaches us considering our inner limitations), which somehow pass the electrical signals to our brain. That is we selectively perceive the reaction of our senses to some external influence.

Naturally, if one of our senses is damaged or some of our faculties are defective, then our perception of the world will be rather distorted as compared to the normal one. Concerning the ideal picture, we have no way of knowing anything, because we cannot possibly imagine anything existing beyond us. Hence it is utterly impossible to speak about the essence.

We can imagine the abstract form, yet it is unknown whether we can do that correctly.

Even our strongest sense, the sense of touch, which is able to discern between hot and cold, firm and soft, is nothing but the revelation of actions within an essence. However, these too are only the manifestations of the essence. It is possible to cool down something hot or warm

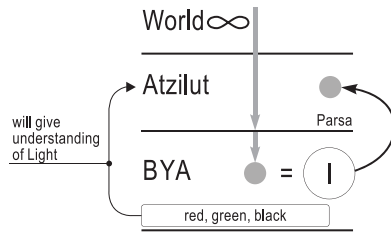
PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF ZOHAR

up something cold. It is possible to melt something solid into a liquid. It is possible to evaporate a liquid and bring it to a gaseous state so that it would become impossible to sense it with the help of our five senses. Nevertheless, the essence is preserved and we can again transform the gas (a totally imperceptible state of some essence) into a liquid or bring the liquid to a solid state.

It is as clear as a sunny day that our five senses will not reveal to us any essence at all, but only instances of manifestation of the essence's actions.

Baal HaSulam means that without ascending through the Worlds of BYA to the Worlds of Atzilut and Infinity in our senses, we will not attain the Creator. We will never be able to perceive something that is outside or above us. Neither our five natural senses - touch, smell, sight, hearing, and taste - nor the Ten Sefirot in the Worlds of BYA will give us anything.

If we wish to attain the Upper categories that are beyond us, we should reach the higher worlds where the white light really exists.



The lights in the Worlds of Assiya, Yetzira, and Beria are black, green and red respectively.

When all of them combined enable us to feel how they stand out against the white background of Atzilut, we will attain what this background really is. Here Baal HaSulam stresses that without correcting our inner sensations and rising to the Upper Worlds the person has no opportunity to attain spirituality.

Moreover, we do not even have the ability to perceive our own essence. I feel and know that I occupy a certain volume in this world, that I am solid, hot, that I think, and so on. All of these are the result of

manifestations that influence my essence. However, if someone were to ask me "What is the essence from which all these manifestations emanate?" I would not know how to answer. After all, Supervision prevents us from attaining the essence. We only attain the manifestations and mode of action originating from the essence.

That is, we cannot attain ourselves, let alone the Upper Worlds, until we reach the level where the essence manifests.

13. We are fully capable of comprehending Matter, which we discussed in the first limitation, i.e., manifestations of the action of any essence.

Now he explains to what extent different levels of attainment are accessible to us. Our attainment is graduated: *Malchut, Zeir Anpin, Bina, and Hochma*. How correctly can we perceive each of these categories?

It is quite possible that such awareness can help me make up for the lack of knowledge. Knowing exactly what I do not know can assist me to get my bearings and avoid errors.

Matter reveals the actions of any essence, and the revelation of matter is quite sufficient for us.

The lowest level of attainment is the attainment of matter. It completely satisfies all our needs and desires. That is, when we attain, feel, and absorb the universe at this level, we have no questions left. That is the way we are created. As we begin to ascend, our needs will develop and grow, including our demands for the sensation of matter. But by and large, we are so created that we feel little necessity for it.

This explains why we do not suffer at all from the lack of any possibility to perceive the essence itself. Moreover, we do not desire it. In the same way, we do not feel the need for a sixth digit on our hand.

I am created so that five digits are absolutely sufficient for me. My brain is designed in such a way that I prefer to work with five fingers,

although, if necessary, I may dispense with a smaller number, somehow compensating for the deficiency. However, I am totally unprepared to work with six or seven fingers. Nature has not provided me with any technique for such work. I cannot even imagine what I will do with an additional digit.

In other words, the comprehension of matter, i.e., the manifestation of the essence's actions, is sufficient for all our requirements and investigations, both in the attainment of our own essence and in the attainment of any external one.

So we have no problem with anything that concerns matter. If we only live within its limits, we feel quite satisfied with our attainments.

But imagine a Kabbalist, who attains higher forms, feels the insignificance of lower categories, and think of his overwhelming aspiration to extend the ability of his senses ad infinitum. He wants to acquire thousands of digits-tentacles, longs for the infinite sensation of an endless diversity of colors, until all of it merges in simple, white, absolute, and all-encompassing knowledge.

We, however, seem to have no problem, and happily agree to live with our five little fingers. Larger aspirations appear under the influence of the Upper Light. It generates in us more and more new needs, while at the same time letting us understand that by having more diverse *Kelim* we could perceive a much greater world than what our five senses can pick in a rather warped way.

When something takes place outside us, we perceive it within a very limited, one-sided, and twisted range of sensations. Let us imagine that some outside influence enters into us unobstructed. Were we designed so that everything could penetrate us without any resistance from us, we would be able to perceive absolutely all outside influences. What does it mean that I perceive something which is outside me? The Creator is outside me, so I will clearly feel and perceive Him.

OUR OTHER BOOKS

Guide to the Hidden Wisdom of Kabbalah with Ten Complete Kabbalah Lesson: provides the reader with a solid foundation for understanding the role of Kabbalah in our world. The content was designed to allow individuals all over the world to begin traversing the initial stages of spiritual ascent toward the apprehension of the upper realms.

Attaining the Worlds Beyond: is a first step toward discovering the ultimate fulfillment of spiritual ascent in our lifetime. This book reaches out to all those who are searching for answers, who are seeking a logical and reliable way to understand the world's phenomena. This magnificent introduction to the wisdom of Kabbalah provides a new kind of awareness that enlightens the mind, invigorates the heart, and moves the reader to the depths of their soul.

The Science of Kabbalah (Pticha): is the first in a series of texts that Rav Michael Laitman, Kabbalist and scientist, designed to introduce readers to the special language and terminology of the Kabbalah. Here, Rav Laitman reveals authentic Kabbalah in a manner that is both rational and mature. Readers are gradually led to an understanding of the logical design of the Universe and the life whose home it is.

The Science of Kabbalah, a revolutionary work that is 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 “Talmud Eser Sefirot” and Zohar.

Although scientists and philosophers will delight in its illumination, laymen will also enjoy the satisfying answers to the riddles of life that only authentic Kabbalah provides. Now, travel through the pages and prepare for an astonishing journey into the Upper Worlds.

Kabbalah for Beginners: By reading this book you will be able to take your first step in understanding the roots of human behaviour and the laws of nature. The contents present the essential principals of the Kabbalistic approach and describe the wisdom of Kabbalah and the way it works. Kabbalah for beginners is intended for those searching for a sensible and reliable method of studying the phenomenon of this world for those seeking to understand the reason

for suffering and pleasure, for those seeking answers to the major questions in life. Kabbalah is an accurate method to investigate and define man's position in the universe. The wisdom of Kabbalah tells us why man exists, why he is born, why he lives, what the purpose of his life is, where he comes from, and where he is going after he completes his life in this world.

Root of All Science: The process of examining our world with the help of the human mind and manmade tools is called science. All fields of science deal with what is perceived through our natural five senses, yet the Wisdom of Kabbalah deals with acquiring knowledge that exceeds their limitations.

In *Root of All Science*, Rav Michael Laitman presents the differences between Kabbalistic scientific method and the current method used by scientists. The distinction is in the ability of Kabbalah to incorporate human awareness in a verifiable analysis of reality. The enormous significance of this additional focus, to both the scientific researcher and the seeker of spirituality, is that it provides the leap in dimensions enabling the observer to penetrate the causal level of all aspects of existence and all events that occur in this world.

Wondrous Wisdom: Today interest in Kabbalah has exploded world-wide. Millions of people are seeking answers as to what this ancient wisdom really is, and where they can find authentic instruction. With so many conflicting ideas about Kabbalah on the internet, in books, and in the mass media; the time has finally arrived to answer humanity's need, and reveal the wisdom to all who truly desire to know. In *Wondrous Wisdom* you will receive the first steps, an initial course on Kabbalah, based solely on authentic teachings passed down from Kabbalist teacher to student over thousands of years. Offered within is a sequence of lessons revealing the nature of the wisdom and explaining the method of attaining it.

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

Rav Yehuda Ashlag,
from "Introduction to
Talmud Eser Sefirot"

ABOUT BNEI BARUCH

Bnei Baruch is a non-profit group centered in Israel that is spreading the wisdom of Kabbalah to accelerate the spirituality of mankind. Kabbalist Michael Laitman PhD, who was the disciple and personal assistant to Kabbalist, Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, the son of Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (author of the Sulam Commentary on the Zohar), follows in the footsteps of his mentor in guiding the group.

Rav Laitman's scientific method provides individuals of all faiths, religions and cultures the precise tools necessary for embarking on a highly efficient path of self-discovery and spiritual ascent. The focus is primarily on inner processes that individuals undergo at their own pace. Bnei Baruch welcomes people of all ages and lifestyles to engage in this rewarding process.

In recent years, an awakening of a massive worldwide quest for the answers to life's questions has been underway. Society has lost its ability to see reality for what it is and in its place easily formed viewpoints and opinions have appeared.

Bnei Baruch reaches out to all those who seek awareness beyond the standard view. It offers practical guidance and a reliable method for understanding the world's phenomena. The group's unique method not only helps overcome the trials and tribulations of everyday life, but initiates a process in which individuals extend themselves beyond the standard boundaries and limitations of today's world.

Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag left a study method for this generation, which essentially 'trains' individuals to behave as if they have already achieved the perfection of the Upper Worlds, here in our world.

In the words of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, "*This method is a practical way to apprehend the Upper World and the source of our existence while still living in this world. A Kabbalist is a researcher who studies his nature using this proven, time-tested and accurate method. Through this method, one attains perfection,*

and takes control over one's life. In this way, one realizes one's true purpose in life. Just as a person cannot function properly in this world having no knowledge of it, so also one's soul cannot function properly in the Upper World having no knowledge of it. The wisdom of Kabbalah provides this knowledge."

The goal-orientated nature of these studies enables a person to apply this knowledge on both an individual and collective basis in order to enhance and promote the spirituality of humankind, and indeed the entire world.

HOW TO CONTACT BNEI BARUCH

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

E-mail address: info@kabbalah.info

Web site: www.kabbalah.info

Toll free in Canada and USA:

1-866-LAITMAN

Fax: 1-905 886 9697