

# The Wondrous Wisdom of Kabbalah

AN INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING  
THE WISDOM OF KABBALAH



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## WONDROUS WISDOM

AN INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING THE WISDOM OF KABBALAH

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## *Dedication*

*This book is dedicated to every person  
with a point in the heart*

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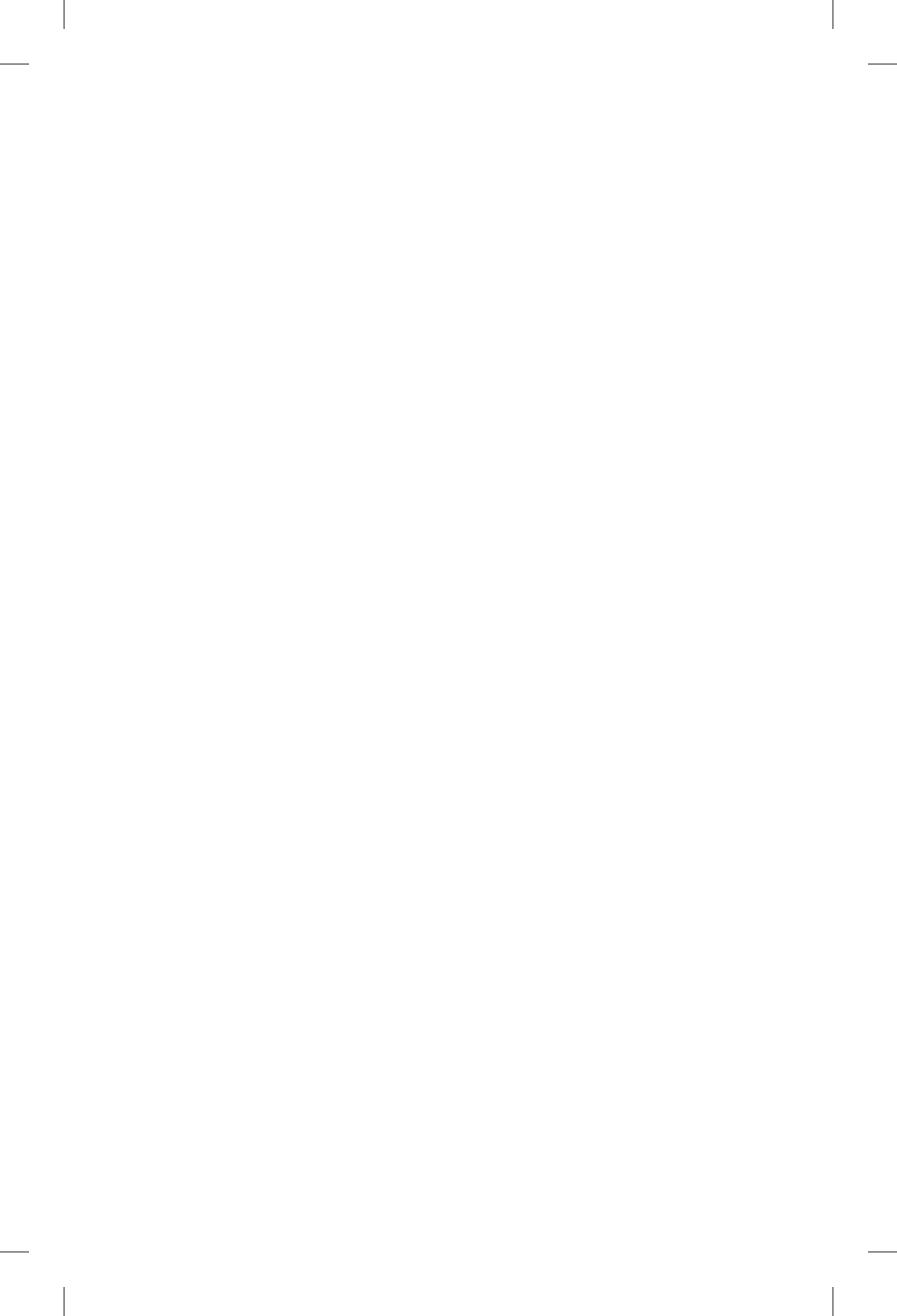


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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of societal development, countless scientific discoveries have been made by men and women seeking solutions to a wide array of problems. Through experimentation, combined with a keen sense of curiosity, human beings have brought great benefits to their world from these discoveries, and the process is actually accelerating.

But what really is a discovery? It is not actually the creation of anything new; it is simply finding what is already there, even if that is a basic concept or idea. Historic inventions that have revolutionized our lives such as the Guttenberg press, the steam engine, and the computer were culminations of ideas already present and waiting to be acted upon. In other words, all great innovations, whether considered inventions or concepts, are like the last link in a series of links in a chain.

A TV program called “Connections” publicized the interconnection between what most people considered a unique event, and that event’s origins. The narrator led viewers through a series of events that, by the end of the program, were woven together to produce a final result, usually a major invention of some kind.

The origins, or roots of any subject are of great importance, and as all Kabbalists, we feel a deep responsibility to convey where the information contained in this book originated. Like everything that has ever been discovered, the roots of discovering Kabbalah do not lie in the words of a book, or from attaining some brilliant independent insight. Rather, these discoveries are a process of regaining ancient information, provided by Kabbalistic writers who, for centuries, have transmitted this wondrous wisdom to all mankind.

Within the depths of each and every one of us lies a question. It concerns the very nature of our existence, and is usually preceded by a cavalcade of preliminary questions. This question remains dormant until a given moment, one that no one can predict. But when this question evolves to the point where it demands an answer, the response is always supplied

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through the help of an “end supplier” of that knowledge—a teacher. The following paragraphs describe a short part of that “chain of wisdom.”

Michael Kellogg, Student of Kabbalist Michael Liatman, was first exposed to Kabbalah in his early twenties. He knew he was looking for something, but he was not exactly sure what that something was. He did study for a period, but then left and for over twenty years primarily studied many other paths that claimed a quicker avenue to fulfill his lack—attaining spirituality. As each new path proved no more enlightening than the previous, Mr. Kellogg discovered all shortcuts were simply detours actually hindering his progress and slowly began to gravitate back to Kabbalah.

By the time Mr. Kellogg came full circle back to this wondrous wisdom, Bnei Baruch, Dr. Laitman’s Israel based teaching organization, was providing materials and lessons on the Internet. Utilizing this vast base of knowledge, Mr. Kellogg began to literally devour any and all materials and online lessons Bnei Baruch could provide.

Then on a clear March day in a hotel lobby, Mr. Kellogg finally came face to face with his teacher, an encounter that changed his life. That meeting, consisting of hours of continuously grilling Dr. Laitman with a vast array of questions, led to a “Kabbalist teacher/student” relationship now spanning years of study. Mr. Kellogg has served as managing editor for English materials in the U.S., as teacher, lecturer, and now has received the great pleasure of co-authoring this work with his Rav.

Kabbalist Rav Michael Laitman, a PhD in philosophy and Kabbalah and an MS in bio-cybernetics, is the author of twenty-three books on the subject of Kabbalah. His books are currently published in nine languages. Dr. Laitman’s journey into the wisdom of Kabbalah began like every other individual’s spiritual journey, with that same burning question deep within: “Why do I exist?” And like all of us, Dr. Laitman’s question was originally ignored or pushed aside by his efforts to lead a normal, comfortable life pursuing educational and business interests.

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After immigrating to Israel in 1974, Dr. Laitman, a bio-cyberneticist by profession, led a reasonably normal life with the usual pursuits and hardships experienced by many Israelis in the 1970's. Yet that burning question still came back to haunt him over and over again. One day in 1975 Dr. Laitman chose to attend a lecture on Kabbalah.

Afterwards, feeling a strong attraction to the Wisdom, Dr. Laitman sought a teacher. Yet even though he began lessons with several instructors, most early efforts were discontinued, as he could not find a teacher who would provide satisfactory answers to his questions. As he wrote in his book, *Attaining the Worlds Beyond*, "I began to search for real teachers. I looked through the entire country and took many lessons. But somehow, an inner voice kept telling me that all I came across was not the real Kabbalah, because it did not speak of me, but some distant abstract issues."

In 1979, through a remarkable course of events that lead him to ask a total stranger where he might find instruction in Kabbalah, Dr. Laitman was directed to the man who would become his teacher and mentor, Rabbi Baruch Ashlag. His initial classes, held between 3:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., began with one of the instructors reading an article, Introduction to The Book of *Zohar*. The instructor would read a paragraph, then explain what that paragraph meant. And so Dr. Laitman's initial studies began.

One day, months after beginning his lessons, Dr. Laitman was asked if he could drive the main elder of his study group to see a doctor in Tel Aviv. That main elder was Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, son of the great Kabbalist, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag. During this drive and on subsequent drives to the doctor, Rabbi Ashlag began instructing Dr. Laitman in Kabbalah. Even when Baruch Ashlag was eventually put in the hospital, Dr. Laitman would go to the hospital at 4:00 a.m. and study with him there. What felt like a rather precarious beginning became a strong relationship between Kabbalist and student that would last for the next twelve years.

The following two excerpts describe his teacher as well as his teacher's teacher.

**Rabbi Baruch Ashlag – Rabash – (1907-1991)**

Rabbi Baruch Ashlag was the next phase in the evolution of Kabbalah after his father, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag. Baruch Ashlag was the eldest son of Yehuda Ashlag. Born in Poland in 1907, he came with his father to Israel at the age of 15. He always worked simple jobs: construction worker, road works, a shoemaker, or a clerk. He was never ashamed to do such menial tasks, treating them as a necessity for survival in this world. He was offered quite a few high offices, but never accepted any of them.

He was very knowledgeable in Torah and Talmud, but he never served as a rabbi. Instead, he spent his entire life following in the footsteps of his father and advancing in the study of Kabbalah. When his father passed away, Baruch Ashlag took his place and accepted his father's disciples, continuing his work by publishing *The Zohar* with his father's commentaries, as well as writing several other books.

I had already been in search of a teacher for four years when I came to Rabbi Baruch Ashlag in 1979. I was studying by myself and with a variety of "Kabbalists." I went a long way knowing I needed to study Kabbalah, but not knowing who could teach me. I knew this was the place for me from the first lesson with Rabbi Ashlag. I remained with him for twelve years, until his death. When he died I was there at his bedside.

Rabbi Baruch Ashlag followed in the footsteps of his father. He wrote five books of articles, called *Shlavey HaSulam* (*The Rungs of the Ladder*), where he successfully expressed all the inner situations of a person who is on the way for the attainment of the Upper World. He studied every possible situation, every step and movement that we make on the way, explained the exodus to the spiritual world, and how to feel and live in it.

He constructed a system for the attainment of the Upper World for the individual, something that previous Kabbalists did not do. The uniqueness of his articles is especially significant for those who want to

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attain the spiritual world. Without these, it is impossible to even imagine an exit to the spiritual world.

He also left us a manuscript of sermons he had heard from his father, which he called *Shamati (I Heard)*. Using these articles, one can define one's situation, its characteristics and how to continue the spiritual ascent in that situation. The book is the basis for all the situations in the spiritual worlds and their many combinations, all of which can affect the soul of one who aspires to attain them.

The works of Rabbi Baruch Ashlag are essential to anyone who wishes to open to the spiritual world. After the death of Rabbi Ashlag, a group was established carrying his name – Bnei Baruch (The Sons of Baruch) – that continues to study in his steps.

Rabbi Baruch Ashlag obtained this great wisdom through his father, Yehuda Ashlag, also known as Baal HaSulam. The following excerpt from Interview with the Future provides information on this great Kabbalist.

### **Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, Baal HaSulam (1885-1954)**

Neither *The Zohar*, nor the writings of the Ari were intended for a systematic study of the Kabbalah. Although the Kabbalah is indeed a science, before the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was never an actual textbook. In order to fill in the gaps, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, the great Kabbalist who lived in Jerusalem from 1922 until his death in 1954, wrote a commentary on *The Zohar* and the texts of the Ari. He evolved while writing the commentaries, and published his primary work, *Talmud Eser Sefirot (The Study of the Ten Sefirot)*, considered the predominant study book of our time.

It is only in our days that the great Kabbalist, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, established the comprehensive and concise method suitable for all souls that descend to this world. Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag was born in Warsaw in 1885 and came to Jerusalem in 1922. He was appointed the rabbi of one of the neighborhoods in Jerusalem, and began to write *The Study of the Ten Sefirot*. He gave his composition this name because the spiritual

world and this world, the souls in the Upper Worlds and indeed the entire universe, are all comprised of ten *Sefirot*.

This textbook of six volumes contains more than two thousand pages. It includes everything that Kabbalists have written since the dawn of time, from the writings of Adam (the First Man), Abraham the Patriarch, Moses, Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai to those of the holy Ari. This book displays Kabbalah in a concise manner, fit for study. Thus, we have with us today everything needed to learn how creation was made, how it comes down to us and how we can influence it from below all the way to the highest world, to have the future we desire. This is why today Kabbalists study only the books of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag.

When we learn from *The Study of the Ten Sefirot* under the right conditions, meaning in the right way and under the right guidance, the Upper World opens. There is a special approach to the material in the book, and a special key that explains how to read the text, to make it open correctly. When we study in this way, we begin to feel the universe, to see and feel in every sense what exists beyond the range of our senses, because our senses are corporeal and limited, and can perceive nothing beyond their scope.

Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag writes in the introduction to *The Study of the Ten Sefirot* that, thanks to the permission he received from Above to write the book, anyone can attain the highest point of soul evolution in our world, and anyone can attain equivalence of form with the Upper Force, i.e. the Creator. We can attain the highest spiritual levels while living in this world, because the body no longer stands as a barrier between us and our souls. It doesn't matter if our soul is clothed in a body or not, because we can freely move from world to world, existing in all the worlds simultaneously, in a state of eternity and perfection. Then, we become timeless, motionless, and spaceless.

Baal HaSulam writes that by using his method, all these situations are attainable; he writes that his method is suitable for everyone without exception. Besides *The Study of the Ten Sefirot*, he also wrote a commentary

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on *The Zohar* and on the writings of the Ari. Baal HaSulam writes about himself, that he is a reincarnation of a soul that starts with the First Man, continues through Abraham the Patriarch, Moses, Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai, the Ari and finally to himself. Because of this, he could take the compositions of these Kabbalists, process them, and present them to us in way that suits our generation.

Although Baal HaSulam lived in our generation, what happened to his writings is much the same as what happened with *The Zohar* and the writings of the Ari: some of his writings were concealed and are only now being published. I, too, have many manuscripts of Baal HaSulam that my students and I prepare for publication. They are manuscripts that I received as spiritual inheritance from my rabbi, Baruch Ashlag.

And so the knowledge has been passed from one Kabbalist to the next. Through countless generations this great wisdom has flowed from giver to receiver, from mouth to mouth, and from teacher to student. This great legacy of teaching from Rav to disciple is presently expressed through two organizations, Bnei Baruch, carrying the name of Baruch Ashlag, and the Ashlag Research Institute (ARI).

Why is Kabbalah learned in such a manner, passed down from teacher to student? The answer is simple: there is no other way. Kabbalah is a method, and that method is instruction in a process, not instruction in a philosophy or a religion. It is not a matter of discovery, but rather a matter of learning that process. For this reason, no one can discover the spiritual world alone.

Throughout the pages of this book, you will read words that cannot be claimed by any single individual, for the teachings within this book were handed down to the last link just as assuredly as they were presented to that link's teacher by his predecessors. This book is made up of the information from many articles, classes, private discussions, and books by Mike Kellogg, his teacher Michael Laitman, or from those who have instructed him. True authorship of such information can never re-

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ally be claimed, and even the style in which the material is presented has been strongly influenced by the style of that source of information.

This information is available to anyone and everyone who has the desire to open a book, to turn a page, and to listen to a lesson. Certainly one may pay a small price for the paper it is written on, as well as the cover that binds the pages of Kabbalistic texts, but the wisdom contained within those texts is priceless.

Why was this book written? Thomas Jefferson was once asked for why the Declaration of Independence was written. His reply—“To place before mankind the common sense of the subject in such terms as to command their ascent”—describes my exact purpose for this humble work.

The reader should not consider the book a textbook in learning Kabbalah, but rather an accurate introduction to the Wisdom. For readers wishing to further their studies in Kabbalah, Bnei Baruch provides a massive amount of information at the largest internet site in the world, [www.kabbalah.info](http://www.kabbalah.info).

Bnei Baruch and the Ashlag Research Institute are non-profit organizations with a singular goal: to spread the Wisdom of Kabbalah throughout the world to all of humanity. Classes are provided to all levels of students via the internet and are absolutely free. Texts are currently provided in twenty-two languages.

## CHAPTER 1. WHY DID I PICK UP THIS BOOK?

Throughout the history of humankind, we as creatures have sought to find a way to live out this incredibly short existence all of us experience as “our lives” in a peaceful and tranquil manner. Yet for some reason the process seems to work backwards. Peace and tranquility seem to be present only in the first few years of our lives, followed by a long string of increasingly intense situations that lead us through a maze of chaos we call “adulthood.”

As children, we begin with the tiniest cares, only for food, sleep and human warmth. Yet from the very first element of responsibility forced upon us, our lives begin a slow, yet persistent process of increasing stress and suffering, albeit usually interspersed with short pauses of joy and happiness.

Adolescence brings a myriad of internal and external changes, and along with them, a rollercoaster ride of emotional ups and downs. These highs and lows are felt so strongly that the average teenager can change from feeling like “my world is ending” to “what a wonderful life it is” several times a day, and usually does.

As young adults, we trade in one set of problems for an entirely different set. We meet that “significant other” with whom we will probably spend the majority of our lives. That union usually leads to additional expressions of love, not only increasing our joy, but our headaches, worries, and monthly expenditures as well.

As the years roll by, each seeming to move a little bit faster, we find that many of our original life endeavors have been traded for some element of security in order to provide for that now full household of loved ones. A stable career has become a necessity to provide for our family’s needs and wants. Proper schooling is an absolute must in this age of high technology, and entertainment has become an American staple for

escaping the stress associated with our relentless battles to nurture, provide, and enjoy.

One morning we awaken, look in the mirror, and find someone whose thick dark hair, once taken for granted, now boasts an additional shade we sometimes affectionately call “ultra blonde.” That hard, lean body has miraculously grown a bit softer around the middle, and when we arise some parts just do not wake up as fast as others do. We find we have been struck with a condition that we have earned through years of strife: middle age. Again, responsibilities change, some falling away, some added on.

And as we see those years evaporate into the new environments of grandchildren and retirement, those events that once caused the hair to thin trade themselves for problems such as health, security, and even loneliness. We find our patience has grown longer and longer, and our goals are now slimmed down to realistic endeavors that do not require decades to complete.

But this incredible process called “life as we know it” can sometimes include an additional irritation. This particular annoyance can arise at any time in our lives, and with no apparent solution to its yearning. It is usually so subtle that at first we do not even recognize what the problem is. What is this troubling question with no apparent answer? It is a singular question, a wonderment that is both cruel, yet fair at the same time. That question is, “What is the meaning of my life?”

This question comes to us in a variety of forms.

“What am I doing on the planet?”

“Why is my life the way it is?”

“What am I supposed to be doing here? Is this it?”

Usually, we find this question intervening into our thoughts whenever we are going through a particularly demanding crisis. The intensity of this question is almost always directly related to the suffering we are experiencing at any given moment. The more we suffer, the louder it

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screams. For some of us on the planet, the question becomes so distinct and demanding that we begin to seek an answer.

At first, the search only brings additional questions like:

“What am I searching for?”

“Where do I start?”

“Can there really be more than just.....this?”

Our search leads us through a myriad of avenues, a multitude of solutions ranging from different physical exercises to strange cults, all promising in one way or another to satisfy our growing desire for what is usually deemed “the truth.”

Those of us who suffer from this insatiable quest find ourselves attending this meeting or that lecture, reading a book or watching some video, always seeking a certain something we simply cannot put our finger on. We know we want, we just do not know exactly what it is that we want. There is a lack, an unfulfilled.....something. The more we search, the more we attempt promised solutions for nullifying this “lack,” the more frustrated we become when the promised solution turns out to steal our time or—worse—lighten our wallets.

This book was written for all of you who know exactly what we are talking about, for those who have experienced this “lack.” If you should find yourself in the above description commonly referred to as “seekers,” then most assuredly that is the reason you have opened this book.

Seekers can be found in every social stratum. You may find them in the most horrendous of circumstances, poverty stricken, having suffered from calamities too numerous to count, or you may find them at the other end of the spectrum. How often have we heard stories of people who seemingly have everything—money, respect, possessions, friends, family—yet they have just checked themselves into a rehabilitation facility, or worse.

Often those who literally “have it all” find that in the end, they do not. In fact, they would trade all they have for something they simply

cannot put their finger on. They know something is missing, but literally have no clue as to what it is. Therefore, they turn to drugs, relationships, and an array of superficial pleasures to satiate this constantly growing “lack.”

Finally, there are many of us who have not suffered a great tragedy. Certainly, most of us have had our share of suffering, but as a rule we are reasonably comfortable. We work at our daily jobs, feed and support our families, and lead “normal” lives. Yet that lack seems to tingle within, teasing and taunting us. It drives us to search, and search we do.

No matter what your situation, this book offers to help provide some of those answers you are seeking. Its aim is twofold: first, to explain the source of the lack you feel within. Second, to help you discover the solution to this feeling of lack. This world offers no fulfillment or solution to your question, and no answer to satiate your thirst, as what you lack is not available here. By “here” we are referring to the world in which you live. Your sense of lack reveals not only a lack, but a need for discovery.

This brings about the question, “What in the world needs to be discovered?” Have we not discovered just about everything there is to discover on this planet? Have we not begun to explore the heavens? Are medical miracles not being found to a huge variety of ailments every single day? Are our computers not so lightening fast already that we can communicate instantly around the world, thanks to this incredible new toy called “the internet?”

What is left to discover?

The object of discovery is a realm we do not yet occupy. It is the realm of sources, desires, feelings and thoughts. It is the realm of the Creator, and it is simply called “spirituality.”

## OUR OTHER BOOKS

***A Guide to the Hidden Wisdom of Kabbalah (with ten complete Kabbalah lessons)***: 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***: 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.

***Introduction to the Book of Zohar***: is the second in a series written by Kabbalist and scientist Rav Michael Laitman, which will prepare readers to understand the hidden message of “*The Zohar*”. Among the many helpful topics dealt with in this companion text to *The Science of Kabbalah*, readers are introduced 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 certainly furnish readers with the necessary tools to understand authentic Kabbalah as it was originally meant to be, as a means to attain 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.

***The Path of Kabbalah:*** “Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness” (Exodus 20:3). This prohibition from the Bible is also the basis of the wisdom of Kabbalah. Kabbalists state that there is no reality at all, but something called His Essence, the Upper Force.

As uncanny as it sounds, this notion hides in its wings the very prospect of freedom, for every person, for every nation, and for the entire world.

The structure and the perception of reality are the surface of this book. But the story of humanity, or more accurately, of the human soul, is the undercurrent that drives the reader forward in this book. It is about you; about me; about all of us. This book is about the way we were, the way we are, the way we will be, and most importantly, it is about the best way to get there.

***The Kabbalah Experience:*** From the time of *The Zohar* to *The Tree of Life*, and until this day, never has the language of Kabbalah been as clear and accessible as it is in this compelling and informative collection. There is deep wisdom worth contemplating in the answers in this text, though one can begin to experience its light even in the simplest meaning of the words.

*The Kabbalah Experience* is a guide leading from the past to the future, through situations we will all experience at some point in our journey as students of Kabbalah.

Anyone who wants to make the most of every moment in life will find this book to be a wonderful companion, a great reference, and a fountain of genuine knowledge.

## ABOUT BNEI BARUCH

**B**nei 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, Rav Baruch Ashlag, the son of Kabbalist Rav 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 Rav 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 Rav 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

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