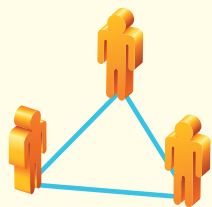


KABBALAH TODAY

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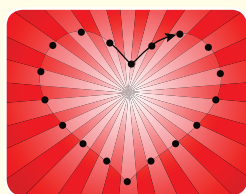
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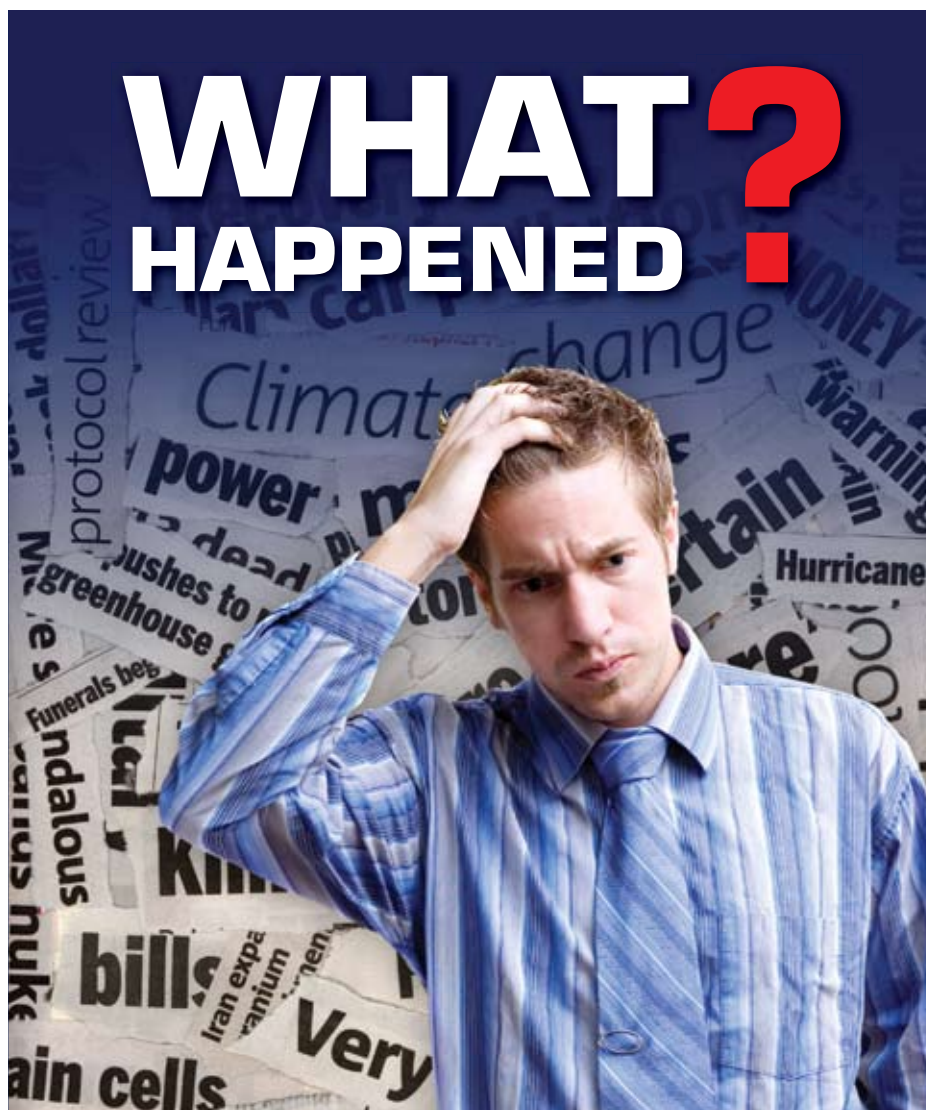
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WHAT HAPPENED?

by Marlene Bricker

Most of us are experiencing a very difficult time. Our financial system is literally crumbling, and our personal assets are disappearing before our eyes. The world's leaders are really not sure what to do about it. It seems as if the whole foundation on which the world has stood has suddenly slipped away. People like you and me are shaking our heads asking, "What in the world happened?"

How did we get into a situation like this? How did gas get so expensive, not to mention food, health care, and everything else we depend on to survive? Is there any politician we can really trust? Should we or should we not be fighting the wars taking place all over the world? Is our government really one "of the people, by the people and for the people?"

THE BUG IN THE PROGRAM

The wisdom of Kabbalah asserts that everything taking place in our world originates from the program under which we operate, a program that is very simple: *How can we get the maximum amount of pleasure for the minimum amount of effort?* It is the $E=mc^2$ of everything we do, determining our thoughts, aspirations, priorities and goals.

But here is the "bug" in this program: it's a never-ending loop. We keep searching for greater and better pleasures, but we are never satisfied, so we never stop searching. It's as if we were running on an endless treadmill all our lives, hopelessly trying to satiate ourselves with more food, money, power, respect, knowledge, and whatever else we can find.

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Editor's Note

CONNECTIONS

Every day, our minds make thousands of connections between bits of data in order to construct our reality. In this issue of *Kabbalah Today*, we examine those connections from every angle.

"The Financial Crisis: Diagnosis and Cure" and "What Happened?" help us connect the events in today's world with their causes and results. What is actually happening and why? And how can we use this knowledge to change the world around us?

"Floating in a Sea of Information" looks at how we connect to information. How do we access our "knowledge"? Where is it stored – our brains? And what is "collective memory"?

Next, we turn to the connections between people. "Are You Connected?" shows that our isolated and egocentric nature is the cause of the strife in the world, and explains how the Internet can be used as a stepping stone to a spiritual connection – by giving us a taste of connection beyond the constraints of our physical bodies.

"Connect the Dots" explains that what we really need is to connect our shared desires to discover our purpose. Only then will we be able to see the big picture.

Finally, in "A Guide for the Kabbalist Hitchhiker," we examine the connection between corporeal words and spiritual states. Without knowing what this connection is, it is impossible to understand even the most basic Kabbalistic texts. By learning of the connection, one reveals a path to the spiritual world – a world of perfection beyond time or space.

“...when some element appears bad and harmful to us, it is but a self-testimony of that element; that it is still in the transition phase—in the process of its development.”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), “Peace in the World”

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At this point, our world is moving so fast, we can't keep up. Our houses and cars keep getting bigger and bigger. Vacations have to be farther from home and more exotic. Even doing something as simple as purchasing a bottle of barbeque sauce takes forever because there are so many choices! Ironically, most of our lives are spent taking care of our “stuff,” or chasing the next fleeting pleasure.

If we take these things into consideration, is it really surprising that CEOs of companies want more and more, even to the point that their greed takes the entire company down (and other companies along with it)? Should it be surprising that accounting firms tell lies because they do not want to lose the income from the big account? Or that our politicians are only concerned about their own ridings because they desire to be re-elected?

THE NEEDED SHIFT IN HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Kabbalah says that as long as we continue to live in a world where we consider only ourselves, this is as good as it gets. If we do not change, we will continue to experience war, greed, a failing economy, and other troubles that we see all around us.

Although we mostly tend to ignore it, the world around us is not a pretty sight. It is never comfortable to look at issues that are unpleasant, but this time, it is vitally necessary. Until we can clearly see what it is that's not working, there is no way that we will be able to correct it.

Here is an illustration of how our

world is presently functioning. Simply imagine your own body. Suppose your heart decided that it did not wish to share any blood with your kidneys, and your feet did not want your body standing on them. Suppose your lungs refused to share their oxygen. Obviously, your body would not last very long.

This is the way our world is functioning. It is polarized. Each country, as well as every individual, is concerned only with its own interests. Our states and cities only care about their own inhabitants. Our politicians care only about advancing their own agenda, as does the healthcare industry, Wall Street, and (as much as we don't like to hear about it) each and every one of us.

Today, it is becoming evident that we have to start working together. However, it won't happen by creating more and better social and commercial agreements with each other. Instead, we have to treat the root of the problem: change that selfish program inside us, driving us to think only about ourselves no matter what the cost to the entire system.

Living during these times requires an overall shift in our consciousness – *from separated individuals to interconnected “cells” of one, mutual body.* Kabbalah explains that one way or another, we will have to undergo this shift in human consciousness. However, instead of letting our present crises escalate and leave us with no other choice, we can implement this change willingly and pleasantly. And if we do so, the next time we ask, “What happened?” the world will look completely different.



THIS IS NOT KABBALAH

KABBALAH: USER MANUAL

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Although we often feel like isolated individuals and see a world of schisms, Kabbalists say that we are all interconnected and interdependent. Much like the cells of a living body, we are all parts of a single entity called “the collective soul.”

Our individual souls are bound together by an Upper Force that can only be described as complete, unconditional love and bestowal. This force not only connects us together, but all other parts of Creation as well—it is Nature's all inclusive force, “the Creator.”

Those who have developed the ability to perceive this force and the collective human soul are called “Kabbalists.” They explain that this ability lies within every one of us, but remains dormant until we develop it. And from their perspective, it is evident that in the coming phase of human evolution, all people will discover that they are united, will connect to the Upper Force that unites them, and will thereby find true happiness.

To help us get there, Kabbalists gave us the wisdom of Kabbalah—a method by which we can develop our ability to perceive humanity's collective soul, and connect to the Creator—the Upper Force that enlivens the whole of Creation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is the relationship between Kabbalah, red strings and holy water?

There is no relation whatsoever. Red strings, holy water and other products are a lucrative commercial invention created in the past two decades.

Q: Is Kabbalah a religion?

A: No. Kabbalah is a science—the physics of the overall reality. It is a wisdom that reveals the comprehensive reality that is normally hidden from our senses.

Q: Is Kabbalah related to tarot cards, astrology and numerology?

A: No. Tarot cards, astrology and numerology are mystical practices which were mistakenly associated with Kabbalah during the past one hundred years.

Q: What is Kabbalistic meditation?

A: There is no Kabbalistic meditation. Kabbalah teaches a person how to transcend egoism and connect to the quality that prevails in Nature—unconditional love and bestowal.

Q: Are there any amulets in Kabbalah?

A: No. In our world, there are no physical objects that bear any spiritual contents. Amulets can only help a person as a psychological support.

Michael Laitman's Personal Blog

laitman.com

*Kabbalah
and the
Meaning
of Life*



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“...the Creator placed knowledge and authority in the hands of man ... handed him the ability to hasten the process of development as he wishes, freely and completely independent of the boundaries of time.”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), “Peace in the World”

ARE YOU CONNECTED?



Our lives are becoming more and more virtual – from virtual banking to virtual friendships. Kabbalah explains that the virtual world is a stepping stone to the spiritual world, where we are all truly connected as one

by Keren Applebaum

Connection is something we all yearn for, that sense of belonging, of being loved. A connection with others is what holds families together and motivates people around the world to join clubs, religions, and fraternal organizations. Whether society views the specific activity as positive or negative, the pull to “belong” to all these groups is undeniably powerful.

Yet at the same time, we live in a world where people are more isolated than ever. We no longer live in towns or villages where everyone knows the details of everyone else’s lives. We live in suburbs or enormous cities where we often don’t even know our neighbor’s name! Relationships with the local grocer, banker, and retailer have been replaced by self-service machines and internet shopping, and even the family structure is breaking down. That’s how isolated we have become.

STRETCHED (APART) TO THE LIMIT

The wisdom of Kabbalah tells us that these two extremes – the growing desire for connection

and our growing isolation – are inextricably linked together. *The desire for connection stems from our spiritual origins, where we are all united as parts of one common entity.* However, the desire for pleasure at the expense of others – our egoism – does not allow us to feel our existence within that entity. We instead feel our existence as billions of separated individuals. And it is our egoism – which keeps growing – that is driving us farther and farther apart from each other.

The paradox is that the farther apart we are, the greater becomes our need for connection. It’s a bit like stretching a rubber band: the more you stretch it, the greater the tension that tries to bring it back to its original shape. Today, humanity has been stretched to the limits of egoism and isolation. People are beginning to buckle under the tension and weight, as can be seen from the epidemic of suicide, depression and domestic violence in the world.

What can we do about it? The only solution is to begin our journey back toward our connection. And whether we realize it or not, we are al-

ready beginning to do so, as evidenced by the growing influence of the internet and its most popular service – social networking.

TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS – DRAWING THE CONNECTION

Strangely enough, the high-tech world, which played a major part in driving us apart by enabling each of us to be self-sufficient, is now offering us a way to reconnect with each other. Social networking sites are now the most popular feature of the web, even surpassing that long-time favorite, pornography.

For a world that values individuality, the internet provides a non-threatening way for people to connect based on shared inner qualities, interests, desires and goals. People can develop friendships with others around the world they may never even meet! What’s more, this can be done without the distractions that physical contact entails.

We don’t have to deal with these friends on a daily basis, or be subjected to any of those annoying personality quirks that can drive us apart. If you don’t

want to deal with someone, you simply don’t open their email or accept their messaging invitations.

How does the virtual world enable us to develop connections with others without the interference of external impressions? It masks or minimizes such factors as physical appearance, race and religion, and enables us to connect on a deeper, more profound, and less material basis. Rather than being interested in another person’s external attributes, we can get in touch with their internality – their thoughts, likes and dislikes, impressions, and even their unique, personal perceptions.

But that’s not all: this desire to connect with others on a deeper level, and even to experience their innermost feelings and perceptions, has spurred the development of cutting-edge technology that may actually allow us to enter other’s perceptions. We may soon be able to experience another’s world through their eyes (and ears, and hands, etc)!

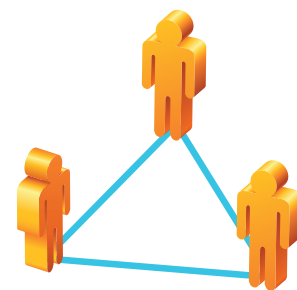
Valeria Fuso, a young Italian designer, has created an “Experience Recorder” – a device that will enable people to exchange their perceptions and experiences online. The device – which looks like a regular glove – is equipped with movement and temperature sensors, photo and video cameras, and an audio recorder. The device can work in automatic regime, capturing every moment of the user’s life, and has an option of immediate and independent access to the Internet via Wi-Fi.

Other new technology that’s being rapidly developed is Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), where everything is done through voice, including commands, communication, and so on. VoIP is very convenient to use while moving around, so a person can literally be connected to the virtual community during all waking hours.

With the help of such cutting-edge technology, human communication is becoming more and more virtual. And

with the availability of such easy access to a virtual connection, we are feeling less of a need to go out of our homes to meet with others. Why pay for the gas – which is getting more expensive from day to day – and lose so much time in traffic jams, when you can “see” others through the computer screen right in your own home?

All these factors are making the internet the prime means of communication and connection between people. Due to the virtual nature of the communication that takes place over the net, our external attributes are fading away and our “inner content” and connection are taking center stage.



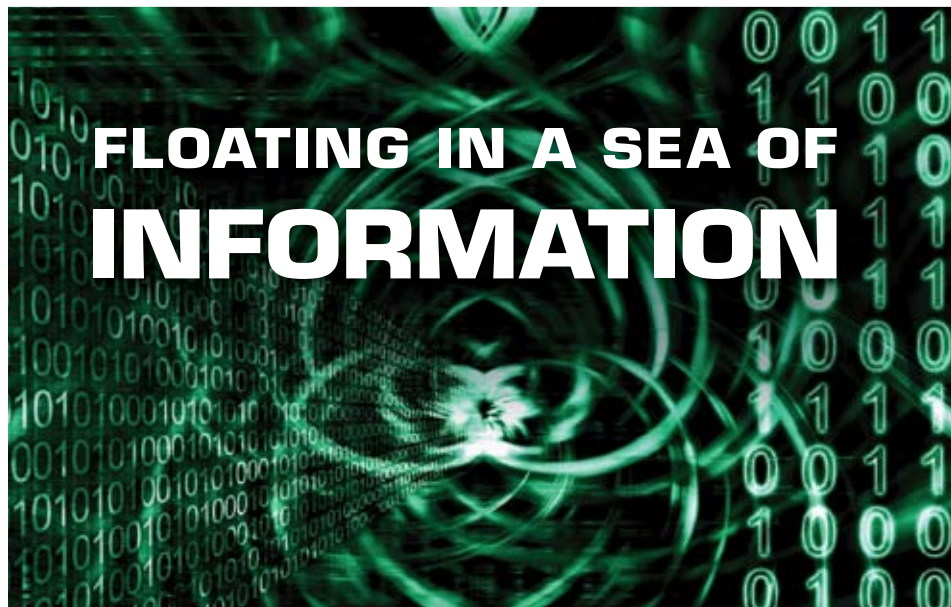
FROM THE VIRTUAL WORLD TO THE UPPER WORLD

Over time, we are discovering that all the external factors are irrelevant, and starting to seek a purely spiritual connection. However, we will soon discover that the virtual connection through the net and other hi-tech means is not enough to attain the absolute, spiritual connection we are seeking; and that a greater, spiritual connection is necessary.

In the meantime, our experiences with the virtual world are helping us experiment with what it’s like to connect beyond the physical realm. But rather than connecting in only the virtual realm of this world, we must learn to connect in the spiritual realm – the level where we all constitute one entity and are literally one. There is no connection – and fulfillment – greater than this.

“...the understanding of the heart is actual seeing, since as the eyes see, so is the understanding of the soul...”

Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato (RAMCHAL), Adir BaMarom (The Mighty One on High)



FLOATING IN A SEA OF INFORMATION

In the Information Age of Internet and Communications, all of us know how to use, get, and share information. But does anyone know where all this information is coming from?

by Chaim Ratz

We are living in the Information Age, when our careers, savings, and life decisions often depend on this amorphous thing that we can neither see, touch, hear nor smell. Information flows around the world almost instantly, but as the recent financial crisis has made clear, information assets – such as stock values that exist only as bits in a computer – can vanish overnight without a trace.

INFORMATION – A BRIEF HISTORY

Information made its big debut with the rise of the Internet. People all around the world suddenly had free access to information, whether on world events, national news, foreign lifestyles, history, health, or new social networks.

It quickly became commonplace for people to use information exchange via the Internet to connect with others.

For example, in 2006, a music video was posted on YouTube documenting a campaign called “Free Hugs,” held in Sydney, Australia, which involved giving away hugs to whomever wanted them. With the help of the Internet, people from Russia, China, US, South America, Israel, Portugal and everywhere else in the world joined this newly created movement and went out to crowded places offering “Free Hugs” to all takers.

Such instantaneous transmission of information around the world may have been mind-boggling 100 years ago, but it’s something we take for granted today. We have grown up in a world of telephones, radio, television, computers and internet. Yet with all the advances that have been made in information dissemination and acquisition, we still have very little knowledge about the real nature of information.

THE SCIENCE OF INFORMATION

Among the numerous scientists attempting to delve into the essence of information and the workings of the human mind, New Yorker columnist James Surowiecki coined the term, “the wisdom of crowds.” His research revealed that when many people work together to reach a conclusion, the result is better than any one of them could have come up with alone.

Moreover, if you ask a group of people to make a guess about something they know nothing about, the average answer of the group will be more accurate than when just one person was asked.

One of the most famous examples of this occurred at a livestock fair in the early 1900s. Over 800 fairgoers guessed the weight of an ox. No one guessed the exact weight, yet the average of all the guesses was off by only one pound!

What is it about groups that enables them to tap into information no single person could produce? And perhaps more interestingly, how do any of us come up with the information that we “know” in the first place? (From our memory, right?)

The attempt to get to the heart of this question has given rise to yet another field of research, the study of memory. Yet the more it is studied, the more elusive memory becomes – to the point that some researchers now suggest that memory does not reside in the brain at all!

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake theorizes that memories are not stored anywhere in our bodies, but in a field called “morphic resonance” – a field of information surrounding us. The brain is merely a “tuner” that taps into this field and brings the desired information to our consciousness. In his own words, “Each

individual both draws upon and contributes to the collective memory of the species.”

A SEA OF KNOWLEDGE

Through the study of information, science is now beginning to discover what the wisdom of Kabbalah has known for thousands of years: that we are all part of one, interconnected entity, or an “information bank,” if you will. Each and every one of us is “floating” in this sea of information, whether we realize it or not.

It lies beyond the bounds of time and space, and contains everything that ever has or will be known. For example, have you ever seen a flock of birds fly in the air, and suddenly make a turn in unison? How do they know that they need to turn? It’s because they receive their information from one place.

It’s the same with all parts of nature. Physics is discovering that elementary particles immediately “inform” one another about any changes happening to them. Similarly, each of us is connected to a common information field, albeit unconsciously. Everything “new” that we learn already exists around us – all we have to do is tune in to it and feel our existence in this sea of information, which is beyond time, space or motion. Then we will experience a life of eternity, perfection, and boundless wisdom.

This sea of knowledge explains all the informational phenomena in our world: the rapid spreading of the Free Hugs campaign, “the wisdom of crowds,” and the morphic resonance phenomena. However, the common information field has a far higher purpose than simply to intrigue scientists. It holds the key to our future: the opportunity for us to consciously feel that we are all connected as a common entity, and thereby feel the perfection of unity.

THE SEA OF INFORMATION OFFERS A FRESH ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRESENT CRISIS

EXTRAS

After many years of experimenting with separation and independence, the troubling events in the world today are making terms such as “globalization” and “the world community” more meaningful. The crises we are facing can only be resolved by the world coming together to find the common answer.

Using the wisdom of Kabbalah, we can tap into our collective information field to gain a clear perception of our common soul – our connection

on the spiritual level. Once we have this perception, we will find the right solutions to all our mundane concerns as well, so that all can prosper – spiritually as well as physically.

If even a small portion of the world population undertakes this effort, then the phenomena that Sheldrake observed (discussed in the article above) will do the rest: the new pattern of interconnection and bestowal will spread around the world via the common information field.

“The Book of Zohar breaks new paths, sets lanes, makes a highway in the desert, it, and all its crops are ready to open the doors of redemption.”

Rav Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), *The Book of Introductions*, “Introduction to the Book *Tree of Life*”

by Asaf Ohayon

If you’ve ever taken a road trip, you probably remember confusedly scanning through your worn-out pocket dictionary in a desperate attempt to find the meaning of an unfamiliar word on a road sign. But just when you need it most, that reference guide seems to be missing.

Thankfully, a friendly local usually happens to appear out of nowhere and takes pity on the miserable tourist, patiently explaining how to get to the Eiffel Tower or the Taj Mahal in Agra. If you happen to be somewhere no one understands your language, then a pair of creative hands and a healthy dose of imagination are sure to help build a bridge between you and others. We all live in the same world; hence, we can always find a common language with others, a way to communicate.

In the spiritual world, however, road trips can turn out a bit different.

THE LANGUAGE OF KABBALAH

“Bear in mind, that the entire wisdom of Kabbalah is founded on spiritual matters that do not take up time or space.” These are Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag’s (Baal HaSulam’s) opening words to the most important book of modern Kabbalah,

A GUIDE FOR THE KABBALIST HITCHHIKER



Exploring the unknown paths of the spiritual world is a lot like hitchhiking through unexplored territory in this world - except it happens in a realm beyond time, space and motion

ah, *Talmud Eser HaSefirot* (Study of the Ten Sefirot). They hint at the difficulties facing anyone who wants to reveal the dimension that lies beyond language and even beyond the human imagination.

How can we possibly understand a world that is completely out of range for us, beyond our regular five senses’ perception? The wildest hand movements, combined with the kookiest facial

expressions, just can’t help the Kabbalist hitchhiker.

In order to describe the experience of spiritual revelation and to bring us closer to it, Kabbalists have developed a special code language that helps them express the seemingly inexpressible. It’s similar to how scientists describe their findings with the help of formulas: Kabbalists document their revelations of the spiritual world with the help of metaphors and names derived from our everyday life.

This system of “metaphoric description” is called “The Language of Branches” – a language that connects the spiritual, upper root of every phenomenon with its corporeal “branch” (manifestation) here in this world.

Yet, as Baal HaSulam writes in *Talmud Eser HaSefirot*, “It is difficult for a novice, for he perceives matters by means of the corporeal boundaries of time, space, change and exchange.” This means that when reading Kabbalistic books, we must strive to disconnect ourselves from all earthly, corporeal notions and try to perceive the concepts that appear in Kabbalah books. We must keep in mind that when such books mention actions or places, they actually depict the stages of one’s inner, spiritual journey.

A USEFUL POCKET DICTIONARY

“For that reason I will make an effort to give every word its spiritual identity ... It is upon the readers to memorize the meaning of these words thoroughly”

(Baal HaSulam, *Talmud Eser HaSefirot*).

Baal HaSulam has actually created a Kabbalistic dictionary for us to use on our journey into the spiritual world. Within it he provides simple definitions for words used in Kabbalah books.

So if you decide to take a different kind of journey – a voyage to the spiritual world, here are some basic definitions that will help you understand what the road maps – the Kabbalah books – are talking about, and where they are leading you.

It’s highly recommended that you cut out this pocket dictionary and keep it in your wallet, to have it handy whenever you might need it along your journey.

Adam HaRishon (The First Man) – This is not the primitive caveman who ran around naked in the Garden of Eden, but the common soul of humanity, incorporating all the souls of all the people in the world.

Guf (Body) – This is the will to receive that drives all of man’s thoughts and actions. This will to receive can either be used for the sake of ourselves, or for the sake of others and the Creator.

Ahava (Love) – When a person starts perceiving spirituality, he reveals the general plan that Nature or the Creator has for him and for all humanity. He then discovers Nature’s attitude toward the whole of humanity is one of absolute, unchanging love.

Ohr (Light) – This is what a person feels when he perceives the Creator. In other words, one who changes his nature from self-love to love for others is filled with a new sensation called “Light.”

Boreh (Creator) – This word comes from the combination of the words, *Bo* and *Reh* – “come” and “see.” In other words, a person is invited to come and see the Creator – to attain his next spiritual degree, which is called “the Creator.”

“...the place that needs correction ... is that each and every individual will understand that his own benefit and the benefit of the collective are one and same thing.”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), “Peace in the World”



As children, we play Connect the Dots as a means of entertainment. As adults, there is a game of connection that can literally change the world if we choose to play

by Robin Craig Carr

Children play a game called “Connect the Dots,” sometimes called “Dot to Dot.” It is a kind of puzzle that contains a hidden picture. Drawn on paper with pencil,

it begins with a sequence of numbered dots, letters or symbols. By drawing lines between the dots in numerical, alphabetical, or symbolic order, one completes the image that is prefigured

in the puzzle.

Believe it or not, we are all involved in a global game of “Connect the Dots.” There is, if you will, a “dot” within each of us – an underlying desire to discover the meaning and purpose of our lives. Kabbalah calls this desire “the Point in the Heart.” And when that point awakens, we begin asking ourselves questions such as: “Why do I exist? Is there more to life than this? What is the purpose and meaning of it all?”

According to Kabbalah, the goal and purpose of life is really all about connecting those dots – connecting our common desires to discover the purpose of life, thus revealing the Big Picture. And just like a Connect the Dots picture puzzle, we are able to see the Big Picture only to the degree that we connect those dots.

CONNECTING TO SEE THE BIG PICTURE

Today, it is becoming increasingly apparent that all of us are globally interconnected. Our supermarkets offer foods from every corner of the world. Manufactured goods rely on components made wherever labor is cheapest. National economies are inextricably tied to commercial agreements between countries. Most of all, the internet realm has connected all of us beyond the boundaries of time and space.

Kabbalah explains that all of this

reflects our movement toward our inner connection – that link through the Points in the Heart. The desire to discover the purpose of life, which we all share, is the very beginning of a fundamentally new sense and consciousness of global interconnection.

Developing this connection and seeing the Big Picture is something that will affect the whole of humanity, as well as every individual. It is how we can create a world where people live in peace and harmony, where each individual realizes the role intended for them in the thought of creation.

So how do we go about connecting those dots? We make the connections through our inner attitudes, unseen to the eye. Through all our personal experiences with people, events or circumstances that seem to occur at random, we cultivate a new sense of interconnection and reciprocity, as if we were the cells of a single organism.

Kabbalah gives us the method to defocus our current perception of separated individuals, and refocus it on a wholesome picture of interconnected beings. Instead of seeing a world of hostility and suffering, we will see one of mutual appreciation and joy.

As more and more people join in this endeavor, the picture will become clearer and clearer. Once we connect the dots and create that Big Picture, we will discover that it was really there all along.



“...every individual in society is like a wheel that is linked to several other wheels ... And this single wheel has no freedom of movement ... but continues with the motion of the rest.”

Kabbalist Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam), “Peace in the World”

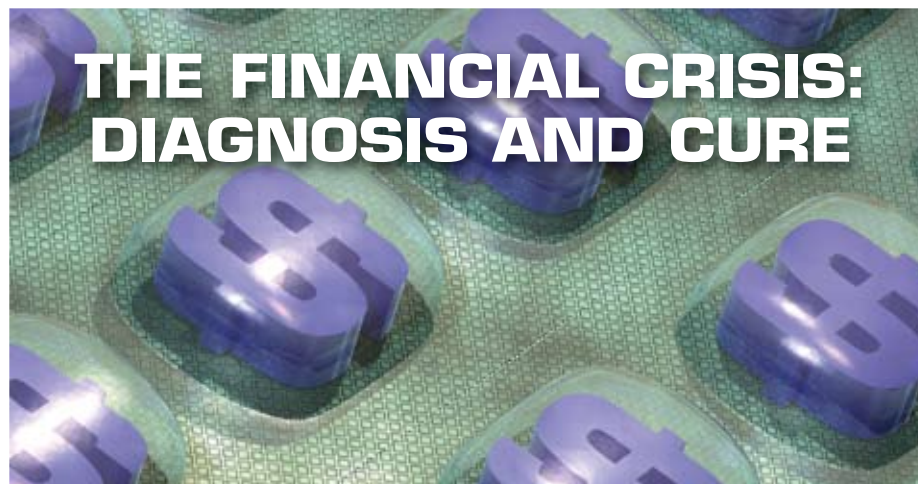
by Riggan Shilstone

Retired couples have seen their life savings vanish in the stock market. Young families are forced out on the street when their home is foreclosed. Consumer confidence in the U.S. is at its lowest point since the rating system was launched in 1967. Companies large and small are laying off employees as the demand for their products plummets. This will put further strain on social services and an economy that is already at the breaking point.

Everyone agrees that something must be done to fix the problem, but no one knows what that “something” is. World leaders from Europe and Asia met in China in October, and there will be a G20 summit in Washington in November, but will these meetings produce tangible results? In order to fix a problem, you must first understand the cause, and even the most knowledgeable economics experts are baffled. Blame has been assigned to everything from greed, a godless economy, corruption in business and government, the production of bio fuels, the free market and deregulation, oil prices, and poor mortgage practices, to name just a few.

DIAGNOSING THE ROOT CAUSE

According to the wisdom of Kabbalah, the confusion arises because we are looking at symptoms, rather than causes. If we want to find the root cause of our market collapse, we must examine the evolution of societies in general. Throughout history, people have operated as individuals, focused on personal well-being and that of those close to



Is there anyone in the world who remains untouched by the current financial crisis? Everyone agrees that something must be done; Kabbalah can tell us what that something is

them, such as family or tribe. It was fair to exploit anything else in the world if it brought benefit to one's familial unit.

Over time, the circle of people necessary to support the individual expanded. Tribes became villages, which became cities, which became states and eventually, countries. In today's world, all facets of society have become so intertwined that even the broadest political and cultural boundaries have become virtually meaningless. We have become a single entity called “humanity,” where each part depends on the health and proper functioning of all the other parts.

And this is where the root cause of our current crises becomes apparent. Until today, societies functioned by exploiting another part of the system. The rich took advantage of the poor;

developed countries used the resources of the undeveloped world; the strong preyed on the weak. Now that we have reached a point where humanity is a single organism, who is there left to exploit?

The events happening around the globe clearly demonstrate that our traditional patterns of behavior can only result in our killing the organism of which we are part. After all, by exploiting others, we are consuming ourselves.

HEALING THE HUMAN ORGANISM

The solution to this problem is readily available to us: We must begin to understand and follow the laws that apply to organisms, rather than to individuals. Nature provides us with clear models

for this, whether we look at the human body, ecosystems or galaxies. In a healthy organism, each part takes what it needs for its own maintenance, and contributes everything else to the well-being of the whole. Nothing is wasted and nothing is consumed in excess. Thus, the entire organism exists in harmony and balance.

This is exactly how we should behave in the realm of human society, since we have become one human organism. Our institutions – including the economy – must be built upon an organism's law of sharing and reciprocity.

At present we are at a crossroads, and the decisions we make to address the current financial crisis will determine our future. We can try to return to the past by implementing policies of isolationism and protectionism, as some nations are already doing. Kabbalah warns that such efforts are doomed to fail and will only bring greater suffering, because it is impossible to reverse our natural evolution into a globalized system. Nature has already imposed the laws of the organism on us, and we can no more break them without consequence than we can break the law of gravity.

Our other option is to dedicate ourselves to understanding and conforming to this newly discovered set of natural laws – those of globalization, communication, interaction and interdependence. Then we will create a world of mutual caring for one another for the sake of everyone's survival. Kabbalah tells us that in the process, we will discover vast reservoirs of untapped potential within and around us, thanks to the new and healthier connections between us.



EXTRAS

Have you noticed the “football madness” that's happening all over the world? People are warming up their intention, their thoughts and desires for this sport even on the days and times when there are no games scheduled. The TV is virtually bombarding us with this “intention,” people are wearing their favorite team colors, everyone's

KABBALAH VS. FOOTBALL MADNESS

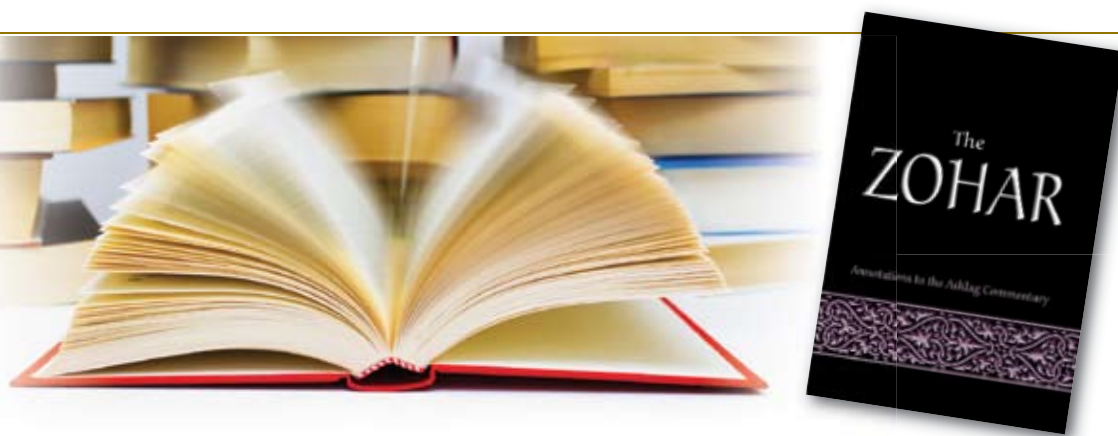
talking about it, and it's slowly becoming “the only thing that exists,” even for those who are not ardent fans. What happens is that masses of people are living through the same emotions.

In fact, people who study Kabbalah may look like they're doing something remarkably similar: working up a special “intention” (of bestowal), pumping up their thoughts and desires in a particular direction, and rooting for an elusive thing called “bestowal” in every way possible. It's the only thing they think and talk about, and the only real thing in life for them.

So what's the difference between football madness and Kabbalah? What makes the inten-

tion and the end goal of Kabbalah students different from the intention and the goal of football fans?

The huge difference is the *result* of the two. Through the method of Kabbalah, people develop a drastically new perception – they open up a new sense that perceives something called “spirituality” or bestowal: a sensation of perfection beyond time and space. Rather than just “passing the time” or “having fun,” they go through an immeasurable inner development of qualities and sensations, thereby moving toward the purpose of their existence in this world.



FROM THE ZOHAR – ANNOTATIONS TO THE ASHLAG COMMENTARY SECRETS OF THE HEBREW LETTERS

Letters represent the desires, properties, and thoughts that, in man's opinion, are suitable for the attainment of the spiritual, the Creator, and His Providence. Man skips from one thought to another: one moment he thinks that it is possible to attain the Upper Worlds with one property, next he believes he can enter the spiritual realms by mastering another. Then, he begins to stubbornly observe all the commandments and pray zealously, or disregards all the actions and plunges into contemplation and reading. Sometimes he craves only knowledge, and sometimes only faith, right down to fanaticism.

Just as there are two extremes in our world – knowledge and faith, in the spiritual world, as man now consciously ascends the spiritual ladder to the Creator, there is spiritual work in the attainment of knowledge and faith. Hence, Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag's commentary on *The Zohar* is entitled *The Sulam* (The Ladder).

Each of the twenty-two Hebrew letters represents a certain property. At times it seems that the property of the letter *Tav* is suitable for the attainment of the spiritual; at times one believes that some other letter is more appropriate. This occurs because in the process of one's spiritual ascent, one begins to increasingly understand the true Goal of creation and the Creator, which is exactly what is demanded of him.

Thus, he continues to sort through it all, until his search yields the truth: Only with the help of the letter Bet, which stands at the beginning of the word *Berachah* (blessing) – contact with the Creator – only with the help of this force can one achieve the goal.

Therefore, *The Zohar* tells us how the letters – properties, forces, and desires – come to the Creator. By offering up his prayer, man asks for some property that seems like a real goal to him. And each letter tries to prove that it is best suited for the attainment of the sensation of the Creator and merging with Him. But the Creator shows that the best and the only letter is Bet, as only it can help man to establish contact with Him. This is why the Torah begins with this letter.



www.kabbalahbooks.info

About Bnei Baruch

Bnei Baruch is a non-profit organization committed to sharing the wisdom of Kabbalah in order to raise humankind's level of spirituality. Its founder and president, Kabbalist Rav Michael Laitman, PhD, was the disciple and personal assistant to Rabbi Baruch Ashlag, son of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag [author of the *Sulam* (Ladder) commentary on *The Book of Zohar*].

Bnei Baruch provides individuals of all faiths, religions, and cultures with the precise tools they will need to embark on a fascinating journey of self-discovery and spiritual ascent. Its teaching method focuses primarily on the inner processes that people experience, each at his or her own pace.

In recent years, a massive world-wide search for the answers to life's questions has been gaining momentum. Society has lost its ability to perceive reality as it is, and in its place, superficial and often misleading concepts have appeared. Bnei Baruch reaches out to all those who are seeking awareness beyond the ordinary, who wish to understand their true purpose for being here.

Bnei Baruch's approach to understanding our experience of life on earth is both practical and reliable. By studying Ashlag's method, based on authentic writings, we can overcome the trials of everyday life, and initiate a process by which we will move beyond our present boundaries and limitations.

In addition to *Kabbalah Today*,

Bnei Baruch offers a variety of avenues for further study. Among them are: Kabbalah TV (www.kab.tv), the Online Kabbalah Education Center (www.arionline.info), and www.kabbalah.info, the largest, most comprehensive Kabbalah site on the Internet.

Bnei Baruch welcomes people of all ages and lifestyles to engage in this rewarding process.

About Kabbalah Today

In 1940, Kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag (Baal HaSulam) published the first and, as it turned out, the last issue of his Kabbalah paper *HaUma* (*The Nation*). Its aim was to introduce the ancient wisdom of Kabbalah in a contemporary style and language. The paper was shut down by the British Mandate authorities after having received malicious [and false] information that the journal propagated communism. Nevertheless, the goals for which *The Nation* was published are even more valid today than ever.

Kabbalah Today continues the spirit of *The Nation*. It is a Kabbalah paper that shares the ancient wisdom of Kabbalah in a contemporary style, and aims to reach people from all walks of life. Its sections provide readers with a wide variety of content, presented in different styles and approaches, while guaranteeing that the material is true to authentic Kabbalah texts such as *The Book of Zohar*, *The Tree of Life*, and the writings of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag.

No prior knowledge is required to read *Kabbalah Today*.

It is our hope that you will enjoy reading *Kabbalah Today* as much as we enjoy making it.

Sincerely,
Kabbalah Today editorial staff

If you wish to share your comments and feedback with us, please write to:

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