

Breslov Kabbalah: THE TOOLS

Part 1 of 2

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In Part Three of Breslov Kabbalah, we explore the tools that we have received that will allow us to discover our inner potential.

Knowing that we have potential is one thing. Being able to develop it is the next step. Just as precious metals like gold and diamonds must be extracted from the earth with specialized tools, we need proper tools to “mine” our depths in order to develop our potential. What are those tools?

In the biblical account of Creation, we find that God created man and placed him on this earth. Since God intended that we become responsible human beings, we must assume that God gave us the tools with which to develop ourselves. He did: He gave us both a soul and a body, the ability to develop our thoughts and to turn them into actuality. Used in tandem, the body and the soul are the tools we need to survive—and succeed—in this world.

God gave us a third gift—the benefit of His Wisdom and guidance. Through His Torah, He teaches us to grow, mature and attain unparalleled heights, both emotionally and spiritually. Only through the Torah, whose teachings are explained and embellished in the prism of the Kabbalah and Chassidut, can we

understand the power we possess and the best way to develop our unique potential.

What is the Torah?

The Torah is the document received by the Jewish People at Mount Sinai and transmitted in its entirety by Moses some 3,300 years ago, along with the Oral Tradition that accompanied that document. This Oral Torah elucidates the basic meaning of the Written Torah (an extremely terse text that contains much more than it reveals) and explains how to fulfill its commandments. God gave both the Written and Oral Torahs at Sinai. Today the Written Torah is known as the Five Books of Moses and the Oral Torah is known as the Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, the Kabbalah and related texts.

The Oral Torah dovetails with the Written Torah in four primary ways, identified by the Hebrew acronym, *Pardes*. (*Pardes* is the source for the English word *Paradise*, which refers to the Garden of Eden.) *PaRDeS* refers to the four different levels of understanding the Torah: *Pshat* (simple meaning), *Remez* (allusion), *Drush* (moral lessons) and *Sod* (secret meaning, Kabbalah). Taken together, these four levels are the keys needed to enter the Paradise of the Torah.

With these four keys, the Torah opens up and reveals not only its own secrets, but the secrets of the universe—the secrets of matter (space), history (time) and man (soul and consciousness). If we wish to probe the mysteries of Creation and human existence, the Torah is the address. This is the document which God created before He created the world, and which He used as His “blueprint” for Creation. The Torah is nothing less than an illumination of what we call God’s Mind. It is the conceptual link between Him and His world, between Him and us.

Generally, when we speak of Torah, we think of it as the “body” of laws spelled out in the Written and Oral Torahs.

This reflects our understanding that the Torah is a structure of ideas that we can relate to, a distinct form that stands out as the Halakhah, the legal system of Torah. But as a body of laws, Halakhah sometimes seems to lack that inner dimension that motivates us to observe it, as witnessed by the many who feel alienated from its study and practice. Looking only at the body of Torah, one fails to recognize its inner soul, the depths that lie beneath the surface. This is where the Kabbalah comes into play.

The Kabbalah

In a remarkably short time, a tremendous thirst for spirituality has taken hold of the world. In a sense, the vast material wealth and comforts with which we have been blessed are now accompanied by a gnawing lack of fulfillment. Material benefits satisfy, but they don't last very long. If we eat, we must eat again soon. Sensual pleasures bring a certain amount of gratification, but evoke additional wants. Everyone feels some longing, some yearning, some lack. "How can I experience a long-lasting contentment, one that stays with me, one that is engraved on my inner being?" people ask. It is this emotional hunger that has led many to search in earnest for their connection to God and Godliness.

To meet the demand, a plethora of books have flooded the market, among them works purporting to explain the Kabbalah as the major means to attach oneself to the Divine. Whether the pursuit of God is another passing fad or a truly serious quest remains to be seen. Yet one wonders: What has made the Kabbalah the popular handbook of seekers? What exactly *is* the Kabbalah?

The Hebrew word *kabbalah* means received. It designates a body of knowledge that has been received prophetically and transmitted faithfully from generation to generation.

One of the basic tenets of the Kabbalah is that everything

that exists in the physical dimension has a parallel in the spiritual dimension. (Indeed, one of the cognates of the word *KaBbaLaH* is *haK'BaLaH*, meaning parallelism or correspondence.) This follows the ancient Kabbalistic teaching: "As above, so below; as below, so above."

In order to grasp this principle, the initial stage of Kabbalah study is usually devoted to mastering its complex system of correspondences. These correspondences are in no way to be thought of as mechanical. Rather, they afford an inside view of the interrelationships that govern all existence, and lead us back to the root and source of all complexity—the Infinite Being Himself, Who created and continues to sustain the entire multidimensional hologram we call "The Universe."

In order to "think Kabbalah," we must also acknowledge its integral part in our daily lives. For example, everything in creation, mankind included, possesses a dual nature. We can readily see that the human body is comprised of many intricate and interconnected organs, joints, sinews, veins, etc. Yet as complex as the body is, it is just a form. It lacks the ability to do anything by itself unless directed by a deeper dimension—i.e., the soul. Under the soul's direction, all the intricate body parts play their role to act out a person's desires and allow him to attain his goal. On the other hand, having a deeper dimension but lacking the form that would bring that depth into an actual structure, leaves everything in a state of suspended animation. There is no goal, for there is no form.

In the same way that the soul animates the body, the Kabbalah enlivens the Torah. As mentioned above, the Torah is the document received and transmitted by Moses. Of the four keys to understanding the Torah, the first three—the simple meaning, the allusive meaning and the moral lessons—are basically related to the "body" of Torah, the form. This body, like the human body, requires a soul to set it in motion. The Kabbalah is that "soul," the deep mysteries that unlock the

innermost secrets of the Torah. Like the soul of a person, the Kabbalah provides the attraction and motivation that move a person to seek God. By extension, the Kabbalah also contains the necessary mystique to motivate a person to develop his potential, to seek and search even deeper into life and its meaning.

Part 1 of 2.