

Breslov Kabbalah: Part 3 – THE TOOLS

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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.

Accessing the Kabbalah

Notwithstanding the power of the Kabbalah, which contains the mysteries of Creation—indeed, of life itself—how can the average person find the answers he seeks in its study?

Even a superficial study of the Kabbalah shows that most of its texts speak of God's Names and their corresponding applications. Since the Kabbalah is meant to reveal that God is everywhere, it makes sense that everything will be a parallel to God and Godliness. However, the vast majority of people do not understand these parallelisms, especially in the Kabbalah's protracted texts. And even if we did have some knowledge of the mystery of God's presence, how would that help us *apply* that knowledge to our daily lives?

This question is important, as it reflects a fundamental Kabbalistic teaching. When God created man, He gave him the power of free choice to do good or evil. When man performs a good deed, he enables God's Light to shine down on this

material world. When he does an evil deed, he causes an obstruction of God's Light. Ironically, the further one distances himself from God, the greater the revelation of Godliness one needs to return to Him. A strenuous jump might lift a person a few feet off the ground, but only sophisticated rocket power can elevate man from the Earth to the stratosphere. So too, one who is distant from God requires a much greater revelation of Him (i.e., a more powerful energy than is usually available) to make the leap from his material quagmire to spiritual freedom.

In earlier generations, people of great stature—prophets, sages and those of pure souls—were well-versed in the Written and Oral Torahs. It was sufficient for them to experience God with heightened awareness, without resorting to the depths of the Kabbalah. In those days, the Kabbalistic system was reserved for a few “initiates” who were allowed to delve into its mysteries, as we find in the Talmud (*Chagigah* 11b-14b) and the Zohar.

In subsequent generations, however, people began to grow very distant from God and sank to unparalleled levels of debasement. As the generations regressed more and more, they lost their attachment to the higher, Supernal Worlds. Now the only energy that can truly reach out to us in these difficult times is found in the teachings of the Kabbalah. It is the level of Keter, the highest and ineffable level, which still illuminates the darkest places and sustains each and every individual (see p. 59). It is specifically that level which reaches down to us and gives us sustenance and nourishment.

Rebbe Nachman teaches:

Know! The Torah enclothed in the deepest concealments is specifically elevated Torah [i.e., the Kabbalah], which is the energy God uses to sustain the lower worlds. It is this energy which is found in lowly places—within those who have sinned so extensively that God is so totally hidden from them. ... This

corresponds to (*Exodus* 12:12 and Passover Haggadah), “I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night—I, and not an angel ... I, and not a messenger—for I am God, I, and no other.” In the land of Egypt, where the concealment was very great, Israel was submerged in Forty-Nine Gates of Impurity, and so, specifically there, God Himself is enclothed and concealed (*Likutey Moharan* I, 56:4).

Keter is also the level that provides the answers to life’s mysteries.

It provides the necessary advice to develop our potential so that we can face up to and cope with life’s challenges.

But how can we, who are most in need of the Kabbalah’s teachings, access and comprehend its hidden depths?

In a stunning reversal of history, the knowledge of the Kabbalah that was once reserved for a select group of “initiates” was slowly revealed to more and more people until the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chassidism, and his great-grandson, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, made those teachings not only accessible but applicable to all.

The decision to reveal the Kabbalah to the masses was not an easy one. Until the destruction of the Second Holy Temple in 68 C.E.—and in the years immediately following that national cataclysm—knowledge of the Kabbalah was tightly restricted due to the fear that its insights and continuous usage of God’s Holy Names would encourage unworthy people to perform miracles by invoking those Names, leading an already subdued nation in exile further astray. This fear was validated by the Zohar itself, which teaches that the main reason for the long exile and its oppressive suffering is because Torah mysteries are disclosed to the unworthy (*Tikkuney Zohar* #56, p. 90a; cf. *Zohar* III, 128a).

But as the pressures of the exile mounted steadily—the oppression of the Church, the birth of Islam, the rise of the

Karaite sects and other distortions of Torah and authentic Judaism—the Kabbalists finally decided to expand their circles. This expansion was originally intended for small groups of initiates, but it burgeoned rapidly after the Church established the Inquisition during the fifteenth century.

With the advent of the ARI in the sixteenth century, the Kabbalah began to spread further afield. Many Halakhic authorities, recognizing the import of these teachings and their impact upon the common folk, began to incorporate Kabbalistic teachings in their decisions. This was especially true in the period following the Chmelnicki massacres (1648-1649), which began in eastern Ukraine and spread across Europe, leaving nearly a million Jews dead and thousands of Jewish communities in ruins. The masses sought hope and salvation amidst the ruins, and were open to anything that might lift them out of their despair.

Unfortunately, the fears of those who wished to contain the Kabbalah because of the unworthy who would abuse its power were realized at that time. A charismatic Jewish preacher named Shabbetai Zvi began to espouse the Kabbalah in 1666, using it as a basis for his heretical interpretation of himself as the long-awaited Messiah. He misled many thousands of people—among them rabbinical leaders of the generation—and was single-handedly responsible for the destruction of hundreds of Jewish communities around the world which followed him into apostasy. Shabbateanism continued well into the eighteenth century, eating away at the basis of faith and distancing myriads of Jews from their roots.

In the aftermath of the Shabbetai Zvi affair, the Kabbalah again became the focus of heated discussion: “Should it be revealed ...?” “But we need it to sustain us ...?” As these discussions turned into debates, and the debates degenerated into outright battles, the Baal Shem Tov appeared on the scene.

Chassidut

Born in Ukraine in 1698, the Baal Shem Tov strove for and attained incredible heights of spirituality. His understanding was so keen that he could bring the most esoteric teachings about God down to the level of the most ignorant of people. He expounded upon the centrality of man in creation and how God holds everyone in great esteem. God is *always* connected to man (see above, p. 11). However, it is up to man to develop that connection and make it solid. (See *This Land is My Land*, Part VI, for an in-depth review of the revelation of the Kabbalah during the eighteenth century.)

The Baal Shem Tov was well aware of the hidden mysteries of the Torah and could tap into their energy. He took the deepest mysteries of the Torah and explained them in a manner that revealed the Torah for what it was meant to be—a guide for survival and life in this world. ¹ The Baal Shem Tov founded the Chassidic movement which, from its inception, was able to inspire even the lowliest person with a real and deep-rooted feeling of Godliness.

Not only did the Baal Shem Tov excel in his transmission of Torah, he was able to infuse his leading followers—themselves great Kabbalists and righteous men—with the same ability to transmit that hidden message so that others could avail themselves of the secret energy of Keter. Keter parallels the level of *Atika Stimaah* (the Ancient Concealed One), from whence emanates the Torah to be revealed in the time of the Mashiach. The Mashiach himself is called *Pele Yo'eitz* (Wondrous Advisor), reflecting the fact that the Kabbalah and the hidden levels of Torah contain the counsel we need to face the challenges of life and overcome them.

The world of the Kabbalah is unique in that of all the Torah texts we can study, the Kabbalistic teachings are the ones that touch the heart most profoundly. Even a cursory study of Chassidic writings delivers teachings that resonate and

inspire as they expound on life's mysteries in a most practical manner. "This is something I can relate to!" and, "This was said specifically for me!" are some of the oft-quoted reactions after a session of Chassidic study. All the Chassidic masters developed their own unique style to eloquently transmit these teachings to those who earnestly searched for the Godliness in everything.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

Of all the great Chassidic luminaries, no one was better able to master this ability of turning the esoteric into the simple than Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810). A great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, Rebbe Nachman's brilliance in transmitting the Divine message that emanates from the Kabbalah can be seen in page after page, paragraph after paragraph, and line after line of his writings. The whole of Torah translates into eminently practical and personal advice in his teachings, which were transcribed and disseminated by his main disciple, Reb Noson of Breslov.

This book invites you to takes those hidden mysteries of Torah, revealed to us in the esoteric form of the Kabbalah, and turn them into guideposts for developing your capabilities and experiencing life as it should be lived—to its fullest. With Rebbe Nachman as our guide, let us tap into the secret mysteries of the Torah to reveal the wisdom of the Kabbalah in its most exalted form—that of practical advice.

1 The Hebrew word *ToRaH* shares the same root as the word *ToReH* (to teach or guide).