

B”H

Hilkhot Limudei HaKabbalah

The Laws of Learning Kabbalah

*Selections From Sefer Even HaShoham,
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*Translated by Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok
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You must know that there is in the Torah pshat, remez, drash, and sod. Those who only read the Torah correspond to Asiyah. Those (who study) Mishneh correspond to Yetzirah. Those (who study) Talmud correspond to Beriah. Those (who study) Kabbalah correspond to Atzilut. *Pituhei Hotam: The inner Kabbalah corresponds to the Ayn Sof, which dwells within the ten sefirot.*

There are those Asiyatic souls who when they have achieved their level (by only) reading the Torah, they have fulfilled that which they must, and therefore are not obligated to reincarnate to achieve more, (yet, if they have sinned or have not fulfilled a mitzvah, they will be obligated to rectify it).

There are those souls who are higher than this, which have the obligation to achieve the depths of the inner Kabbalah. Even if they have achieved the reading of the Torah, and the study of Mishna, and Talmud, if they have not achieved (their higher level) they will have to return to fulfill that which was lacking.

When (the Torah) is of Atzilut, it is called Kabbalah, for there (in Atzilut) is it (the Torah) free from all its garments, called pshat, as the pasuk says, "I have removed my garment" (Shir 5,3). (Pshat) is the external garment, which is (worn) upon the flesh of man, and which is periodically removed. This is the real meaning of the word "pshat".

HaShem's delight is in the Torah, especially when He is creating worlds. He does this by (creating from) the inner soul of the Torah, which is called the secrets of the Torah, and Ma'aseh Merkava, which is the wisdom of the Kabbalah, as is known.

The Mishna and Talmud are called the "body" of the Torah. Yet, they are like a dream without an interpretation. The secrets of (the Torah), its inner concealed (parts) are called the "soul" of the Torah, they are the interpretation of the dream, which is understood only once one has awoken, as the pasuk says, "I sleep, but my heart is awake" (Shir 5,2). **It is also written, "he has set me in dark places, as those who are long ago dead" (Eikha 3,6). This is a reference to the Babylonian Talmud, whose light cannot**

shine other than by the Zohar, which is the secrets, and the concealed (aspects) of the Torah, regarding which the pasuk says, "the Torah is light" (Mishlei 6, 23).

One should not be amazed to see how the Zohar calls the Mishna a slave girl and a shell. For the study of Mishna, according to pshat, is certainly only a garment and an external shell in comparison to the secrets of the Torah, concealed, and hinted to within. All its pshat is of this world, speaking about physical things here below. Yet these are good shells (that protect the food).

Therefore, when one would understand the pshat of the Mishna, according to halakha, without mistake, this is called the Tree of Knowledge, of Good. However, when (G-d forbid), one is confused (as to its meaning), then it is turned into the Tree of Knowledge, of Evil, and it will be bitter.

Of those who study pshat, it is written, *"in her left hand are riches, and honor"* (Mishlei 3, 16B). This is the reward that is given them in this world for their study of Torah. They study that aspect of Torah related to this world, i.e. the laws of the forbidden, and the allowed, clean, and unclean ect... This corresponds to a servant who serves his master only on condition to receive his reward.

However, those who study the secrets of Torah, which is that aspect of Torah that is studied in the World to Come, of them it is written, *"length of days is in her right hand"* (Mishlei 3, 16A). (For this learning is for the sake of) that World which is (called) "length of days." This is like a child who enters into the deepest (chambers) to serve his father, not for the sake of any reward.

One should not say, I will go and study the wisdom of Kabbalah, prior to having studied Mishna, and Talmud. Our Sages, of blessed memory have already said, one should not enter the Pardes until one has filled one's stomach with meat and wine. This can be compared to a soul that has no body. It receives no merit, can perform no action, or accomplish anything until it is united with a body. Only then is it complete, (and able) to observe the 613 mitzvot.

The opposite is also true. One who studies Mishna, and Talmud, and who does not spend a portion (of time) of the secrets of Torah, and what is concealed therein, this is similar to a body that dwells in darkness without a soul, and without the light of HaShem to radiate therein.

If it is a difficult burden for one to study the Talmud in depth, it is better that one not do so, rather one should try one's ability with this wisdom (Kabbalah), and study the wisdom of truth. Of this is it written, *"any Talmudic student who does not see good fruits (from his learning) in five years, will never see any"* (Hulin 24A).

However, for the one who it is easy to study, this one should spend an hour or two a day studying the halakha. He should intend that his learning is for the purpose of removing the evil klipah, which causes the difficulties (in this study), and to remove the klipah from

the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil, which is the Mishna, the slave girl of the Shekhina. Then one should adorn the Shekhina, which is (the study) of the wisdom of the Kabbalah.

The sin of Adam HaRishon with the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil was that he chose not to study the wisdom of Kabbalah. This was also the sin of the Erev Rav (mixed multitude), who said to Moshe, that he should speak to them Torah (from the Tree of Knowledge, Good, and Evil) and not let HaShem speak it (directly) lest they die (from exposure) to the secrets of Torah.

Therefore, the first Tablets (that Moshe brought down from Mt. Sinai) were broken because they came from the Tree of Life. They, (the mixed multitude), in turn, received (the Torah) from side of the Tree of Knowledge, Good, and Evil. This was the cause of the destruction of both Temples, and this long, and bitter exile, that because of our many sins, we are in.

When the children of Yisrael will comprehend their situation, and seek out HaShem their G-d, to know Him, and to experience Him, in accordance to the secrets of the Torah, when they will know who they serve, and who is their King, such will they merit to study the wisdom of truth, as it is written in Parashat Naso, Ra'aya Mehemna 124B, *"being that in the future, Yisrael will taste of the Tree of Life, which is (the teachings of) the Holy Zohar, then shall they be redeemed from exile"*.

There is that group of Rabbis who study only pshat, and who never study Kabbalah. These Rabbis say that the Torah has only pshat (G-d forbid). Of them it is written, *"they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge"* (Yirmiyah 4, 22). Being this (type of Rabbi) is disgusted by the Tree of Life (i.e. the Kabbalah), the Holy One, blessed be He does not assist them. They (in turn) declare the clean to be unclean, and the forbidden to be permitted, and the blemished to be kosher. Many stumbling blocks come forth from their hands.

This is the meaning of the Mishna (Abot 6, 2), *"Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi says, Everyday a bat kol (heavenly Voice) calls forth from Mt. Sinai, proclaiming, Woe to the world for the disgrace shown to the Torah!"* For without a doubt those who only study pshat, and the facade (of Torah) causes (the Torah) to be dressed in the garments of mourning, sackcloth and ashes are her covering. All the nations of the world ask Yisrael, "what difference is there between you and us, what difference is there between your Torah, and our scriptures?" For your Torah is also filled with simple stories, and superfluous things. There is no greater disgrace of the Torah, than this. Therefore, *"Woe to the world for the disgrace shown the Torah"*, by not studying Kabbalah, which is what gives honor to the Torah.

It is certain that they (those who do not have a portion in the Kabbalah) will have no portion in the World to Come. For the Torah of the World to Come is not according to pshat, for there the only study is the secrets, and concealed aspects of the Torah.

For by it (the study of the Kabbalah) will the redemption draw near . . . for the Holy One, blessed be He derives no pleasure from His world other than when (Yisrael) is studying Kabbalah.

One does not fulfill his obligation (of Torah study) by only studying Mikra, Mishna, Agada, and Talmud.

One is required to study all that one is able of the secrets of the Torah, and Ma'aseh Merkava.

The pshat of Torah, its stories, laws, and mitzvot, when understood exclusively according to pshat provide no opportunity for us to know and perceive our blessed Creator. On the contrary, there are mitzvot and laws that the mind cannot comprehend their purpose. The gentiles approach us and ask, "What is this Torah that your G-d has commanded you. (The Torah) appears to be full of puzzles, and symbolisms, for example the taking of a ram's horn, and blowing it on Rosh HaShana, and you (Yisrael) says that by this action, the spiritual Satan, the supernal accuser is thereby neutralized . . . it appears that most of the mitzvot of the Torah, especially the specifics of the laws are not comprehensible to the mind, at all. Being this is so, where is the glory of the Torah, it's beauty, and it's greatness?"

The wisdom of truth is the rectifier. It is as if it gives power and strength to those above. This is certainly called study for it's own sake.

More than this, **man was not created other than for the study of the wisdom of Kabbalah.**

Pituhei Hotam: The edict from above not to publicly study the wisdom of truth (Kabbalah) was only for a certain time, until the year 5250 (1490). From then onward . . . the best way to observe this mitzvah is in public, before great, and small, for by merit of this will King Mashiah come.

Not all who wish to come to this study succeed in doing so. For the secrets of Torah are not revealed to man by the power of the intellect, but rather by the spiritual influx from HaShem, who sends down His influence from above, or through His intermediaries, the angels, or by Eliyahu HaNavi.

There exists in every generation those who have the Ruah HaKodesh (holy spirit, i.e. Divine inspiration), and who have Eliyahu HaNavi appear to them to teach them this wisdom.

In these generations, HaShem has not held back his salvation from Yisrael. He has sent us his holy one from Heaven, **the great holy, and pious Rabbi Yitzhak Luria**, who was full of Torah like a pomegranate, in Mikra, Mishneh, Talmud, dialectics, midrashim, agadot, Ma'aseh Bereshit, Ma'aseh Merkava; he was an expert in the language of trees, the discussions of the animals, and the communications of the angels. He knew the

wisdom revealed in ones face, and knew the actions of all men, past, present and future. He knew the thoughts of men while they were still unconscious, even prior to the person themselves knowing them. He knew of future events, as well as present events in foreign lands, as well as the edicts passed in the Heavenly court. He knew peoples past lives, as well as their source in the body of Collective Man above, and Collective Man below (Adam HaRishon). He understood the flickering of a flame. With his eyes he could see (the astral bodies) of the souls of the righteous, and he would study Torah with them. By a man's smell, he could tell all of his actions.

All these wisdoms the Ari'zal had at all times without having to meditate or search after them. We have not heard of such a one since the days of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai. **All this the Ari'zal did not achieve through the power of magic (Kabbalah Ma'asit), for all know it is forbidden, and extremely dangerous to use, and severe is the penalty for the violator.**

All the Ari'zal's powers were achieved by his piousness, holiness, purity, and separations from secular life, for years, with nothing but holy books. Eliyahu HaNavi was regularly with him speaking to him, face to face. **Though we say there are no prophets, Divine inspiration, and the revelations of Eliyahu still exist.**