



***Authentic Kabbalah - Sephardic Studies  
Benei Noah Studies - Anti-Missionary/Anti-Cult Materials***

## **Kabbalah Study in Halakha Commentary to Parashat Nitzavim**

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***“The Nistarot (hidden things) belong to HaShem our G-d,  
and the revealed things are for us and our children forever  
to do all the words of this Torah.”***

(Dev. 29:28)

***“It is not hidden from you and it is not distant.  
It is not in Heaven...”***

(Dev. 30:11-12)

I must now address an important issue that, in my opinion, is vital for the survival of Orthodox Torah observance in our war against deviant cults and apostate heretics.

In recent generations, there has arisen a peculiar phenomenon among certain Rabbanim in the Orthodox world – many have become very distanced and unsympathetic to the study of Torat HaNistar (the concealed Torah).

Mystical Judaism today unfortunately is of more interests to cults and heretical movements than it is to many Orthodox Rabbanim. This phenomenon is not new. Rabbinic disdain towards Kabbalah is not a response to modern cults and heretics. This disdain began hundreds of years ago as a response to the cult of the false messiah Shabtai Tzvi (yimah shmo).

Due to the proliferation of cults and heretical movements today, I believe it is imperative that the Orthodox community re-embrace Mystical Judaism and not allow it to be abused by the unkosher elements.

Hundreds of years ago, most likely due to the Shabatian debacle, the study of Mystical Judaism was questioned as to whether or not it was a legitimate part of Torah. Barukh HaShem, countless Rabbanim came forth and upheld the PaRDeS.

In 1736, Rabbi Yosef Irgass wrote his famous work, Shomer Emunim (HaKadmon), which presents in dialogue fashion all the Torah sources which validate the legitimacy of Kabbalah.

Years before this, Rabbi Shabtai Kohen in his famous commentary on the Shulkhan Arukh (Shach, Y.D. 246: 4) defended the legitimacy of the Kabbalah.

The RaMHaL, Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, Rabbi Haim of Volozin and many Hasidic Rebbes were all adepts of Kabbalah and wrote extensively on the topic.

Therefore, anyone who wishes to state any opinions to either discredit the holy Zohar as being the legitimate teachings of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai or to disrespect or discredit the Kabbalah in general is to be considered a heretic.

The way to respond to cults and heretics is not to surrender to them, but to fight them “tooth and nail.” If they wish to abuse what is holy we must not respond by severing off the holy material from the body of Judaism. This is surrender.

No, we must fight back and redeem what has been stolen and abused and return it to its rightful holy place. Kabbalah must not be allowed to remain in the hands of the cults and heretics. We must understand it, embrace it and return it to its rightful place – the yeshivot of those who fear HaShem (the Haredim).

As is known, Torah study is divided into four separate levels of understanding. These four, the pshat, remez, drash and sod are together referred to by their capital letters as the PaRDeS, the Hebrew word for vineyard. All four levels of Torah study are sacred.

If one studies a subject of Torah and does not understand it at all four of these levels, one is said to have not fulfilled one’s obligation of Torah study (ref. Sha’ar HaMitzvot 1a of the Ari’zal). Therefore, those who have acquired the prerequisites for its study must study Kabbalah, and every male Jew is required by Jewish Law to acquire these prerequisites.

Every male Jew must study Kabbalah? Is this correct? Doesn’t the above pasuk (verse) say, “the Nistarot (hidden things) belong to HaShem our G-d.” Kabbalah is correctly called “Torat HaNistar” (the concealed Torah), and the Nistarot (concealed things) belong to HaShem. Therefore, the Kabbalah should belong to HaShem and should not be studied by man. Is this not the logical application of the pasuk?

Indeed, many believe it is. Yet, this parasha also includes a pasuk that shows this understanding not to be correct. It is written, “*it is not hidden from you and it is not*

*distant. It is not in heaven...*" (Dev. 3011-12). It is a foundation of Halakha that the Torah is not in Heaven. It is here on Earth in the possession of the Jewish people.

This pasuk is the foundation as to why no Halakha is ever ordained by prophecy or by mystical means (ref. RaMBaM, Introduction to Mishnayot, Perek 2). Halakha is decided upon by man, rationally, by logical debate and discussion.

Halakha is not decided by Heaven, not even by HaShem. Halakha is decided by the Rabbanim (ref. T.B., Baba Metzia 59). The entire Torah is on Earth, including its secret section, the Kabbalah. Therefore, we have access to it all and an obligation to study it all.

The Torah is one, even as HaShem is one. Indeed, the Torah itself is one with HaShem (Zohar, Ekev 73a). Thus, one who separates a one portion of Torah from its others is causing there also to be a separation in HaShem's holy Name (G-d forbid).

The Tikunei Zohar 43 states, ***"One who causes that Kabbalah and [its] wisdom to be separated from the Oral Torah and the Written Torah, causing people to refrain from them and saying that the Torah and Talmud should only be [studied according to] pshat (its simplistic meaning), it is certainly as if [that] one dried up the river(s) of the Garden [of Eden]."***

***Woe to him! It is better that [such a one] was never born into this world. If one does not respect the Oral and Written Torah, it is as if [that one] returned the world to void and chaos (tohu u'bohu), [more this such a one] brings poverty to the world and lengthens our exile."***

Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna has said in his book, Even Shelema, *"The one who has the ability to perceive the secrets of Torah, and does not make the appropriate efforts to do so is judged very severely."* Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef has said in his Yehaveh Da'at (4,47), *"It is a true and correct thing that the value of Kabbalah study is very sublime . . . and great will be the punishment for those who do not study the secrets of Torah."*

Now that the obligation and legitimacy of Kabbalah study has been proven, let us now turn our attention the necessary prerequisites for study.

Rabbi Haim Vital, the master Kabbalist and primary student of the Ari'zal has written (Etz Haim 2a) that, *"one should not say that he will go study the wisdom of the Kabbalah prior to studying the Bible, Mishna and Talmud. For our Sages have already taught that one must not enter the vineyard (Pardes, used here, as in RaMBaM to describe metaphysical speculations) until one's "belly" is full of "meat and wine." For this would be similar to a soul without a body, there is no merit, no function and no value (to Kabbalah study) until the soul is united with the body completely, rectified by the 613 commandments of the Torah."*

Echoing the sentiments of Rabbi Haim, the holy Mekubal and primary student of the Ben Ish Hai, Rabbi Yehuda Fatiyah, writes the following in his work entitled, Minhat Yehuda (page 93). Quoting the pasuk in Psalms 32:9, he writes:

*“Do not be like a horse or a Pered (mule) that will not understand.” This will be understood in accordance to what our Sages have said (RaMBaM, Y.T. 4:13; S.A. Yoreh Deah 246:4). One must always first fill oneself with the learning of Talmud and Halakha and only afterwards study the wisdom of Kabbalah. Thus is its order PaRDeS.*

*The final letter “S” (samekh) corresponding to the Sod (secret level) is the last letter. The one who is so enthusiastic and wishes to begin Torah study with Kabbalah in the end will stumble and will come to “uproot the plants” (become a heretic) G-d forbid. Regarding this it is written, “do not be like a (Sus) horse or a Pered (mule). The letter “S” in Sus (horse) is the same letter “S” in PaRDeS, yet it’s location is now before the letters PeReD (here meaning mule, but also the same three letters of PaRDeS, less the “S”).*

*Thus it says, “do not be like a horse” and then afterwards “like a mule” which is the PeReD of PaRDeS. For the one who does this “will not understand” the Sod level of Torah correctly.”*

There is a “Hovah D’oraitta” (Torah obligation) to study the Torah of the Kabbalah. Yet, like many other mitzvot of the Torah, this mitzvah has its proper time and proper place. Kabbalah study can be compared to marital relations. They should only be performed by a couple properly married according to Halakha and even then should be done in absolute privacy.

Kabbalah study, like marriage, can only be entered by those who have reached a certain age. According to HaRav Ovadiah Yosef (Yehaveh Da’at 4,47) one must be at least twenty years old to study and of course married.

One must also have the necessary prerequisite of Talmud and Halakha study for a minimum of five years (ref. Rabbi Haim Vital, Etz Haim, Introduction). Once a student has met all the prerequisites, he may enter study, yet, like marital relations, study is performed in private.

Kabbalah study in the holy yeshivot in Yerushalayim to this day is still taught only in small groups, usually in the early morning pre-dawn hours. No one boasts about their studies. No one usually talks about them either. Most students, when asked will deny that they are even studying this material.

This is the right way to be – modest, concealed, silent and secret. Even if everybody is studying, no one should be talking. Just like a married couple is intimate, yet they do not advertise what it is that they are doing, so serious Torah students study Kabbalah and do not advertise it.

Today all too many Rabbanim show public disdain towards any type of mystical study. This is a serious error. In spite of the unfortunate fact that the cults and the heretics cling to the Kabbalah and contaminate it, this still does not give anyone the right to abandon the holy Kabbalah into the hands of the enemies of Torah.

The holy sacred body of mystical Torah knowledge embodies the presence of HaShem's Shekhina, His "Feminine" Presence. **All the while that the holy sacred Kabbalah is in the hands of unclean secular Jews and Gentiles, it is as if the Shekhina is being repeatedly raped.** She cries out for salvation, yet Her cries fall onto deaf ears. Some of Her lovers consider Her too contaminated to save. This is a disgrace against Heaven that cannot be tolerated.

We must do whatever we can, whatever it takes, to redeem the holy Shekhina from the evil defiling hands of the unworthy.

Kabbalah study must be returned into the sacred study halls of the righteous (Orthodox Jews). **We must do battle with the cults and heretics exposing their lies and perversions of truth.** When thus exposed the Shekhina is redeemed from their defiling hands. We will have saved the Shekhina. We will have saved the Torah.

We must do this soon before the mystical, spiritual heart of Torah is too far removed from the mainstream Orthodox community and becomes lost and with it the Shekhina (G-d forbid).

*"It is not hidden from you and it is not distant..."* (Dev. 30:11-12). We have an obligation of Torah study that cannot be completed until the Benei Torah study Kabbalah. We have an obligation to sanctify HaShem's holy Name (Kiddush HaShem), this cannot be done all the while that cults and heretical groups pervert HaShem's Torah while we remain silent. This matter is not hidden from us, nor is it distant or difficult.

In order to take back that which is rightfully ours, we must recognize it and claim it as such. As long as some Rabbanim show disdain towards Kabbalah, the majority of the Orthodox community will not embrace it. Thus, the Shekhina will continue to be raped by Her defilers and we sit back in silence! Whose disgrace is greater that of the Shekhina or our own?

***"I only wish that the leaders of this generation would make it easier to study Kabbalah. I only wish that they would direct the students to the study of Kabbalah. For thus no other external wisdom (religion, or philosophies) would be able to raise its head, and all the other philosophies would be cast aside from before (the Kabbalah) as the darkness is cast out before the light".***

Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato, Yarim Moshe

# Is the Study of Kabbalah Required by Jewish Law (Halakha)?

## *Let the Rabbanim Speak for Themselves.*

### **Rabbi Haim Vital, Sha'ar HaMitzvot 1A:**

*"Know that every nitzotz (spark) of each and every soul must fulfill all 613 mitzvot, for when one has not fulfilled all the 613 mitzvot, which correspond to the 248 organs and 365 sinews of (body) and soul, that soul is incomplete in it's parts. Such a one is called "blemished." Of such a one it is written, "one who is blemished shall not come forth."*

*Also with regards to Torah study, which is one of the 248 positive mitzvot, one does not fulfill this mitzvah, unless one studies the Pardes of the Torah, which is the capital letters of Pshat, Remez, Drash, and Sod.*

*Within each of these aspects each (person) must strive to achieve (what can be achieved)*

*If one does not do this, one is missing an aspect of the (complete) mitzvah of Talmud Torah, which (as is known) is great and considered equal in value to all the mitzvot.*

*One will have to reincarnate until one has made efforts (to complete study of the Torah) in all four aspects of Pardes."*

### **Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, Yehaveh Da'at, 4-47:**

*"It is a true and correct thing that the value of Kabbalah study is very sublime . . . and great will be the punishment for those who do not study the secrets of Torah, also how great will be the reward for those that do."*

### **The Gaon of Vilna, Even Shelema:**

*"Whatever is learned according to pshat must also be in accordance to the sod. For when the secrets of the Torah are revealed, one realizes that the learning of his youth are also true and correct. Any one who does not understand the secret (meaning), even the pshat cannot be clear to him."*

### **Rabbi Natan Tzvi Kaenig, Torat Natan, Intro. #24:**

*"Any delay in the coming of the Mashiah is due to not studying the secrets of Torah. How many times have we proclaimed this, for the rectifications of all the worlds depend on it."*



**Rabbi Shaul Dweck, Sefer Eyfeh Shelaymah:**

*"The one who studies only the revealed (Torah) is called "one who is not His servant". Also such a one cannot be called a "Talmid Hakham" (a student of wisdom, the traditional appellation for a Rabbi), for this one is just a "Talmid" (student) for the reference of Hakham (wise one, or wisdom) is only in reference to the inner wisdom (Kabbalah) . . .*

*The author of Kiseh Melekh (the commentary on the Tikunim) has said (Tikun 43), "one who can acquire for himself a Rav to teach him Kabbalah, or a friend to learn with, or books to learn from, and neglects to do so causes the continuation of the exile."*

**Rabbi Aharon HaLevi, Sha'ar HaYihud v'HaEmunah**

*"With one hour of Kabbalah study, one does more good than a whole month of (pshat) study, for great is its power to bring Mashiah".*

**Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Zidishuv, Commentary to Etz Haim**

*"Not for nothing, and not by personal opinion were the laws of clean, and unclean, forbidden, and permitted, kosher, and blemished codified. They are all based upon the secrets of the Torah."*

**Rabbi Yishaya Margalit, Kol Omer Koreh**

*"We have heard of the importance of studying the Zohar, and the secrets of Torah. Even when one does not understand (what he learns), one is certain to dwell securely in this world, and to rise in levels of holiness. In the world to come, one's sins are absolved, and one is taken into the gathering of the righteous."*

**Rav Moshe Cordevero, Ohr Ne'erav, 4, 1:**

*"Being that one studies this wisdom (Kabbalah), he will be escorted by the angels and the righteous from Gan Eden. This is not true of any other branch of Torah study."*

**Rabbi Menahem Halperin:**

*"One who openly disregards the study of the secrets (of Torah), it is sure is secretly disregarding the revealed (Torah)."*

**Kaf HaHaim, Orah Haim 155, 12**

*"Regarding the wisdom of Kabbalah, one must not let forth from his mouth that which he has not heard from a reliable Torah source."*