

# KABBALAH

by Avram Yehoshua

## THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

Kabbalah is an attempt on the part of some Jewish men and women, to seek the God of Israel through mystical and Gnostic means. For many centuries it was well outside normative Judaism, although today it has permeated into Orthodox Judaism and also claims many 'secular' Jewish (and Gentile) adherents. Kabbalah is a counterfeit of Satan. The main reason for this is that man is seen as having to restore the fallen world by his efforts which will bring about the coming of Messiah. Also, the 'way' to God is accomplished through rigorous fasting and spiritual disciplines that are outside the realm of the Bible. This is common to most false religions that seek union with the Divine.

David Stern writes that the Hasidim and the Kabbalists, impatient for Messiah and redemption, force His Hand by 'years of ruthless mortification of their flesh. In each case, of course, they were prevented, by death, by Satan, or by some sin which they committed'<sup>1</sup> of compelling Messiah to come:

'In one of these legends...the 14th century Rabbi Joseph Della Reina ('of the Queen') attempts, with the help of the Prophet Elijah, to destroy Satan (disguised as a black dog), using God's secret names. But he doesn't follow Elijah's instructions to the letter and thus fails in his task. Later he goes astray, having illicit sexual relations with none other than the Queen of France (hence his name), and ultimately commits suicide.'<sup>2</sup>

We have serious biblical problems with the rabbi 'using God's secret names to destroy Satan' and the meeting with Elijah to help him do so. This aside from the fact that he committed suicide. Trying to force God's Hand or to destroy Satan is pride masquerading in religious clothing.

One must ask, 'If Kabbalah were really of Yahveh, the God of Israel, then why didn't the rabbi know or come to find out about Yeshua the Redeemer of Israel?' And why hasn't anyone within Kabbalah proclaimed in the last 2,000 years that Yeshua is the Messiah. No, their 'contact with the spiritual realm' is not with the Spirit of the Living God, but the great Counterfeiter.

Another rabbi of fame and stature within Hasidic and Kabbalistic circles is Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1811). The following story is attributed to him:

'Satan, disguised as a merchant, prevents a rabbi's son from meeting with a great *tzaddik* (holy man). In the end the son dies. The rabbi again encounters the merchant, who tells him, 'Now I have dispatched your son...had he and the *tzaddik* met and joined forces, the Messiah would have come.'

Kabbalah is a mixture of demonic activity, pagan philosophy, gnosticism and the Hebrew Bible. Kabbalah is,

'The mystical religious stream in Judaism'. 'In all periods it was influenced by foreign spiritual currents, such as gnosticism and neoplatonism.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), p. 766.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Taken from *The Messiah Texts* by Raphael Patai, p. 68-73.

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Sinclair, General Consultant, Diana Treffry, Editorial Director, *Collins English Dictionary*, Fourth Edition (Glasgow, Scotland: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), p. 1042. Neoplatonism: 'a philosophical system which was first developed in the 3rd century AD as a synthesis of Platonic, Pythagorean and Aristotelian elements, and

‘A distinction was usually made between theoretical and practical Kabbalah; the latter consisted of the use of Divine or Holy Names, the permutation and combination of Hebrew letters, magical formulae (amulets), etc. for healing the sick and other practical purposes and also for eschatological and genuinely mystical ends (hastening the advent of the messiah, inducing states of mystical or ecstatic experience, etc.).’<sup>4</sup>

The use of Divine names ‘to get to God’ is not the Way of Yahveh. The fruit of this is seen in that magic and amulets are used. This is sin as it goes against Yahveh’s Word in His Torah (Deut. 18:10, 14). These Jewish mystics opened a spiritual door, but not one you want to go through. Notice too the eclectic<sup>5</sup> and over-arching nature of it (‘In all periods it was influenced by foreign spiritual currents’). What could Kabbalah have picked up from pagan mysticism and philosophy (about Creation, etc.), outside of Israel and the Word of Yahveh?

Gnosticism is a ‘secret knowing’<sup>6</sup> designed to entice those into a ‘mystery religion’ where the doing of certain religious things (asceticism, ‘spiritual disciplines, etc.), is ‘the way to contact the god’ or ‘the way to appease the god for sin and guilt’ and or ‘the way to eternal life.’ Kabbalah holds out the same incentive. Kabbalah is nothing more than gnosticism with a Jewish twist to it.

Notice too, if they were really ‘in touch’ with Yahveh, there would be no need to ‘hasten the advent of Messiah’, as they would declare that Yeshua came and will come again. So who is it that they are ‘in touch’ with?

‘Jewish religion is in principle opposed to magic because the ultimate source of everything is the absolutely free and sovereign will of God which can never be coerced. The only proper attitude is therefore prayer.’<sup>7</sup>

‘Sorcery and magic are prohibited by the Bible (Exod. 22:17) but the Talmud, while proscribing the practice as heathenish, admits its efficacy. Members of the Sanhedrin were supposed to have had a thorough knowledge of magic and sorcery, and legends are told of rabbis using ‘white’ magic. Healing by magic is condemned only when specifically pagan or idolatrous. The magic of names (Divine names, Tetragrammaton, names of angels, permutations and combinations of Hebrew letters or scriptural quotations), whether in amulets or spoken formulas, flourished at all times but particularly under the influence of Kabbalah...Some scholars believe that the tephillin and mezuzah originated as amulets.’<sup>8</sup>

‘The amulet is an object ‘worn as a charm against evil, consisting usually of sacred letters or symbols: names of angels or demons are often written in geometric patterns, etc. Such charms were common in the ancient Middle East...In the Talmudic and gaonic periods,

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which, although originally opposed to Christianity, later incorporated it. It dominated European thought until the 13th century and re-emerged during the Renaissance.

Geoffrey Wigoder, Editor in Chief, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, 7th Edition (New York-Oxford: Facts on File, 1990), p. 535.

<sup>4</sup> Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 535.

<sup>5</sup> Sinclair, *Collins English Dictionary*, p. 490. Eclectic: ‘selecting what seems best from various styles, doctrines, ideas, methods, etc.’

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 656. Gnosticism: ‘characterized by a belief in gnosis, through which the spiritual element in man could be released from its bondage in matter’. Gnosis: ‘supposedly revealed knowledge of various spiritual truths, especially that said to have been possessed by ancient Gnostics’.

<sup>7</sup> Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 619. Listed under ‘magic’.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

amulets were widely worn and their use was recognized, though not specifically approved, by rabbis. With the development of the later Kabbalah and its insistence on the efficacy of combinations of letters of the Divine names, the vogue of amulets became universal, and their preparation was regarded as a rabbinic function.<sup>9</sup>

‘The first signs of Jewish mysticism can be found in the 1st century while the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls may date knowledge on the subject even earlier.’<sup>10</sup> ‘Jewish mysticism’ was picked up in Babylon. It was Babylonian paganism (the basis for gnosticism), that some Jewish men living in Babylon adopted and adapted to the Hebrew Bible (using the Bible for its Names and numbers, etc.), giving Babylonian gnosticism its ‘Jewish clothes.’ Some of these ‘clothes’ came because of the need of the Jewish people:’

‘The religious syncretism (the mingling and fusion of various oriental religions, mythologies, semi-philosophical notions, etc.) of the period, as well as the messianic speculations encouraged by the national and political disasters in Palestine (sic) fostered a special kind of interest in the Bible which stressed its eschatological and mystical tendencies.’<sup>11</sup>

Note well the different religious and secular things that make up Kabbalah. This cannot be of the God of Israel who desires purity and wholeness and whose Word is Truth. Part of the enticement of Kabbalah is the goal of being in the Presence of God. This is a godly desire. But the way they ‘get there’ is not, devising and using ‘secret names’ of God, etc.

‘Closed circles from among the pupils of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai (1st-2nd century), concerned themselves with the mysteries of Creation and the nature of the Divine Throne or ‘Chariot... These gnosticising types of study were termed Pardes.’<sup>12</sup>

‘Later writings depict seven celestial palaces or worlds populated by angels praising and serving the deity; in the last or seventh palace, the throne of Divine glory rises. Prepared by a rigorous mystical discipline, and sanctified through fasting and religious ecstasy, the adepts or, as they were called ‘viewers of the Merkavah’ (Divine chariot), experienced the ascent of their soul through worlds and heavens, and amid lurking dangers, from palace to palace, until they reached the point where they beheld the radiance of the Divine presence and the divine throne. To the soul which achieves this vision are revealed the secrets of creation, the ways of the angels, and the date of Redemption and of the advent of the Messiah.’<sup>13</sup>

The Lord tells us in His Word that there are mysteries that we should not concern ourselves with. Even the traditional Rabbis caution us to not get too involved with four things: the ancient past and the distant future; the things above and the things below. Why not? Because we can only go around and around in circles with them. On the other hand, we have been given what to do by Yahveh and He tells us not to be concerned with the ‘mysteries’ or ‘secrets’ of Creation, His Name, etc:

‘The secret things belong to Yahveh our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this Law’ (Deut. 29:29).

It is the Word of God that we are to pursue and meditate on and not to get entangled with the ‘spiritual’

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<sup>9</sup> Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 48, listed under *amulets*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

things of darkness that masquerade as Light. As 2nd Cor. 11:14 says, 'No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of Light.' We have our 'contact' with the Holy One through His Son's Sacrificial Blood and His Holy Spirit. But in Kabbalah, there is a schematic, philosophical system of ten levels, known as *sephirot*, that one must climb in order to achieve this revelation.

The goal for the Kabbalists of Gerona (Spain in the 13th century) was

'to achieve communion with God through concentration in prayer and the mediation of the *sephirot*.'<sup>14</sup> The meditation of the *sepher yetzirah* uses the 'creative force of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and propounds the doctrine of ten *sephirot* through which the world came into being.'<sup>15</sup>

'The climax of Spanish kabbalism was the appearance of the Zohar<sup>16</sup> connected with Moses de Leon (d. 1305). All later kabbalistic systems derived from the Zohar, which teaches the self-manifestation or revelation of God through the Divine *sephirot* which He emanated. *En-soph*, the transcendent God, remains forever beyond the grasp of the human mind which can only comprehend the *sephirot*.'<sup>17</sup>

'After death, the human soul is judged and allotted to paradise, hell or transmigration in human or animal form in order to make restitution and be cleansed. The Zohar traces all Kabbalah to the Pentateuch, interpreting every word or letter mystically.'<sup>18</sup>

Transmigration is not found in the Word of God but in many false religions of the world whose philosophy states that if you don't make it the first time around, you get to try it again. It's also known as reincarnation.

'Man must restore the damage' (of fallen Creation) 'by releasing the holy sparks from defilement (*tikkun*). The complete restoration will lead to redemption and the advent of the Messiah. *Tikkun* is accomplished by observance of the commandments, study of the Torah and mystic mediation.'<sup>19</sup>

The idea that Man can and must 'restore the damage' of sin is totally foreign to the Word of God. Only God can redeem Man from his fallen and sinful state and He has done this in Messiah Yeshua. Anyone who thinks that they can help God do this, or do it for God is deceived. Alfred Edersheim writes,

'neither Eastern mystical Judaism, nor the philosophy of Philo, could admit of any direct contact between God and creation. The Kabbalah solved the difficulty by their *Sephiroth*, or emanations from God, through which this contact was ultimately brought about, and of which the *En-soph*, or crown, was the spring'<sup>20</sup> (or first of the ten emanations that man could 'climb' like a ladder to actually 'get to God.')

This is totally foreign to the Scriptures. Yahveh has made it possible for both Jew and Gentile 'to make contact' with Him here on earth, and be received into His Glory on the Day of Judgment, not by any

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 536.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> The Zohar is to the kabbalist what the Bible is to the follower of Yeshua the Messiah.

<sup>17</sup> Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 536.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 537.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 31.

‘works’ (fasting, etc.), of man, but by His Grace, Mercy and Love.

Kabbalism was able to meld into main line Orthodox Judaism through Hasidism. At first, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Orthodox vehemently rejected the Hasidic teaching that anyone could know God (versus the Orthodox tenet that only the learned Rabbis could interpret the Word and give advice and know God, but,

‘kabbalism was absorbed into the doctrine of Hasidism which popularized the mystic teachings.’<sup>21</sup>

As Hasidism grew, it began to meld with the Orthodox, adopting some of their ways and giving the Orthodox much of its teachings and symbols. Kabbalah means, ‘to hand down’<sup>22</sup> or ‘that which has been received’<sup>23</sup> from the verb ‘*kibel*.’ There is no doubt as to its ‘ancientness’ and that it has ‘come down’ to us. There is also no question that Kabbalah is an ‘alternative’ form of religion. As such, it runs totally contrary to the Word of God, both written and Alive. It is just another of many satanic ‘voices’ calling for the souls of Jewish men and women. It also has become acceptable within some Messianic Jewish congregations. More subtle than all the beasts of the field is the Serpent.

‘Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Yeshua, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the Veil, that is to say, His flesh and having a High Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure Water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised), and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works’ (Heb. 10:19-24).

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<sup>21</sup> Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 537.

<sup>22</sup> Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

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