**The Approach to Studying the Wisdom of Kabbalah - Selected Excerpts from the Sources**

* החיוב בלימוד חכמת הקבלה
* שפת המקובלים
* הסגולה בלימוד: המאור המחזיר למוטב
* הכנה ללימוד
* כוונה בזמן הלימוד

**The obligation to Study the Wisdom of Kabbalah**

**1. Baal HaSulam, "Introduction to The Study of the Ten *Sefirot*", Letter 155**

Why then did the Kabbalists obligate every person to study the wisdom of Kabbalah? Indeed, there is a great thing about it, which should be publicized: There is a wonderful, invaluable remedy to those who engage in the wisdom of Kabbalah. Although they do not understand what they are learning, through the yearning and the great desire to understand what they are learning, they awaken upon themselves the lights that surround their souls.

**2. Baal HaSulam,** "**Introduction to “From the Mouth of a Sage”**

You can therefore see the utter necessity for anyone from Israel, whomever he may be, to engage in the internality of the Torah and its secrets. Without it, the intention of creation will not be completed in man.

This is the reason that we reincarnate, generation after generation, to our current generation, which is the residue of the souls upon which the intention of creation has not been completed, as they did not attain the secrets of the Torah in past generations.

**3. Baal HaSulam, "The Teaching of the Kabbalah and Its Essence"**

Since the whole of the wisdom of Kabbalah speaks of the revelation of the Creator, naturally, there is none more successful teaching for its task. This is what the Kabbalists aimed for—to arrange it so it is suitable for studying.

And so they studied in it until the time of concealment (it was agreed to conceal it for a certain reason). However, this was only for a certain time, and not forever, as it is written in *The* *Zohar*, “This wisdom is destined to be revealed at the end of days, and even to children.”

**4. RABASH, Letter No. 62**

Man’s primary work is to examine the greatness of the Creator. That is, one should delve in books that speak of the greatness of the Creator, and while delving, one should depict to oneself to what extent our sages, the Tanaaim and Amoraim, felt the greatness of the Creator.

One should pray to the Creator to shine so he may feel His greatness, so he can subdue his heart and annul before the Creator, and not follow the currents of the world, which is pursuing only the satisfaction of beastly lusts, but that the Creator will open his eyes so he may engage all his life in Torah and work, and “In all your ways, know Him.” That is, even when engaging in corporeal matters, it will be for the purpose of *Kedusha* [holiness], as well.

**5. Baal HaSulam, Letter No. 38**

I will tell you as I heard from the ADMOR of Kalshin. In earlier times, one had to first obtain all seven external teachings, called “the seven maidens that serve the king’s daughter,” as well as terrible mortification. And yet, not many gained favor in the eyes of the Creator. But since we have been rewarded with the teachings of the ARI and the work-ways of the Baal Shem Tov, it is truly possible for anyone, and the above preparations are no longer necessary.

**6. Ramchal, “The Gates of Ramchal”**

The Creator is commanding us to know His guidance, and we do want to know what this guidance teaches us. What this guidance teaches us is but the wisdom of truth, which is delving in His Godliness. It follows that we undoubtedly see it as mandatory to learn the wisdom of truth.

**7. Ramchal, *Derech Etz Chaim***

Learning the wisdom of truth, which is the wisdom of Kabbalah, is the beginning of all the corrections, as Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said openly: By merit of learning the wisdom of Kabbalah, Israel will be redeemed from exile.

**8. Rabbi Baruch Ben Avraham of Kosov, *Pillar of the Work***

The great obligation to study the wisdom of truth, which is the wisdom of Kabbalah and the secrets of Torah, is well known to all, as is explained in ancient books.

**The Language of the Kabbalists**

**9. Baal HaSulam, "The Essence of the Wisdom of Kabbalah"**

Kabbalists have found a set and annotated vocabulary sufficient to create an excellent spoken language. It enables them to converse with one another of the dealings in the spiritual roots in the upper worlds by merely mentioning the lower, tangible branch in this world, which is well defined to our corporeal senses.

The listeners understand the upper root to which this corporeal branch points because it is related to it, being its imprint. Thus, all the beings of the tangible creation and all their instances have become to them like well-defined words and names, indicating the high spiritual roots. Although there cannot be a verbal expression in their spiritual place, as it is above any imagination, they have earned the right to be expressed by utterance through their branches, arranged before our senses here in the tangible world.

**10. Baal HaSulam, "The Essence of the Wisdom of Kabbalah"**

Kabbalah uses only names and appellations that are concrete and real. It is an unbending law for all Kabbalists that “Anything we do not attain, we do not define by a name and a word.”

Here you must know that the word “attainment” [Heb: Hasagah] means the ultimate degree of understanding. It derives from the phrase, Ki Tasig Yadcha [“Your hand shall attain”]. That means that before something becomes utterly lucid, as though gripped in one’s hand, Kabbalists do not consider it attained, but by other names such as understanding, comprehension, and so on.

**11. Baal HaSulam, Talmud Eser Sefirot, "Histaklut Pnimit", Part 1, Chapter 2**

Those whose eyes have not been opened to the sights of heaven, and have not acquired the proficiency in the connections of the branches of this world with their roots in the Upper Worlds are like the blind scraping the walls. They will not understand the true meaning of even a single word, for each word is a branch that relates to its *Shoresh*.

Only if they receive an interpretation from a genuine sage who makes himself available to explain it in the spoken language, which is necessarily like translating from one language to another, meaning from the language of the branches to the spoken language, only then he will be able to explain the spiritual term as it is.

 **12. RABASH, Letter 19**

All those who attained the light of the Creator through their work wanted all those who follow them to benefit from their discoveries, too. Therefore, they named each and every attainment, so they might understand the intentions and attainments they had attained. This would create a common language between them.

**The Remedy in the Study: The Reforming Light**

**13. Baal HaSulam, "Introduction to The Study of the Ten Sefirot", Letter 11**

We find and see in the words of the sages of the Talmud that they have made the path of Torah easier for us than the sages of the Mishnah. This is because they said, “One should always practice the Torah and Mitzvot, even Lo Lishma, and from Lo Lishma he will come to Lishma, since the light in it reforms him.”

Thus, they have provided us with a new means instead of the penance presented in the above - mentioned Mishnah, Avot: the “light in the Torah.” It bears sufficient power to reform one and bring him to practice Torah and Mitzvot Lishma.

They did not mention penance here, but only that engagement in Torah and Mitzvot alone provides one with that light that reforms, so one may engage in Torah and Mitzvot in order to bring contentment to his Maker and not at all for his own pleasure. And this is called Lishma.

**14. RABASH, Article No. 12, (1988), "What Are Torah and Work in the Way of the Creator"**

The Torah in order to subdue the evil inclination, meaning to achieve *Dvekut* [adhesion] with the Creator, so that all our actions will be only in order to bestow. That is, by ourselves, we will never be able to go against nature, since the mind and heart that we must acquire require assistance, and the assistance is through the Torah. It is as our sages said, “I have created the evil inclination; I have created the Torah as a spice. By engaging in it, the light in it reforms them.”

**15. RABASH, Article No. 267, "Man Was Created in the Torah"**

The Torah has the power to reform a person, referring to the evil within man, meaning the will to receive, that it will work in order to bestow.

In this manner, he will have *Dvekut* [adhesion] and will be able to receive the real pleasures and will not be considered a receiver. Thus, through the Torah, it will be possible to sustain man in this world, for the Torah will reform him.

This is the meaning of “Let us make man,” which they explained, “I and you will establish him in the world.” That is, from the Creator comes the will to receive and from the Torah comes the desire to bestow, and from those two, man will be able to exist in the world. That is, through those two, he will be able to receive abundance yet remain in *Dvekut*.

**16. Baal HaSulam, Shamati, "The Advantage of a Land", Article 34**

What should one do in order to come to love the Creator? For this purpose we are given the remedy of engaging in Torah and *Mitzvot* [commandments], for the light in it reforms him. There is light there which lets him feel the severity of the state of separation. Bit by bit, as one aims to acquire the light of Torah, hatred for separation is created in him. He begins to feel the reason that causes him and his soul to be separated and far from the Creator.

**17. Baal HaSulam, "Concealment and Disclosure of the Face of the Creator - 1**

One’s request to become stronger in believing in His guidance over the world during the concealment brings one to contemplate the books, the Torah, and to draw from there the illumination and understanding how to strengthen his faith in His guidance. These illuminations and observations that one receives through the Torah are called “the Torah as a spice.” When they accumulate to a certain amount, the Creator has mercy on him and pours upon him the spirit from above, that is, the higher abundance.

But once he has completely discovered the spice—the light of Torah that one inhales into one’s body—through strengthening in faith in the Creator, one becomes worthy of guidance with His face revealed. This means that the Creator behaves with him as is fitting to His name, “The Good Who Does Good.”

**18. RABASH, Article No. 12 (1988), "What Are Torah and Work in the Way of the Creator"**

It is our inability to do anything for the sake of the Creator. Only the light of Torah will correct the heart, for the heart is called “desire,” and by nature, it is a desire only to receive. But how can a person go against nature?

This is why the Creator said, “I have created the evil inclination; I have created the Torah as a spice.” It follows that he is not learning Torah for the intellect, to understand, but he is learning in order to understand so as to achieve *Dvekut* with the Creator, who is clothed in the Torah, and this pertains to the heart. Through the light he will receive, it reforms him, meaning that the will to receive for his own sake can receive strength from above that enables it to work for the sake of the Creator.

**19. RABASH, Article No. 16 (1984), "Concerning Bestowal"**

First, one must see if he has the strength to come to be able to act with the aim to bestow contentment upon the Creator. Then, when he has already come to realize that he cannot achieve it by himself, that person focuses his Torah and *Mitzvot* on a single point, which is that “the light in it reforms him,” that this will be the only reward that he wants from the Torah and *Mitzvot*. In other words, the reward for his labor will be for the Creator to give him this strength called “the power of bestowal.”

**20. RABASH, Article No. 875, "Three Lines – 4"**

Before one is rewarded with emerging from self-love and doing everything in order to bestow, called *Lishma*, although he learns all these matters as they are, they are only names without any clarification, meaning that he has no attainment in those things that he is learning, since he has no knowledge about the material of the upper roots, called “the holy names,” or *Sefirot* and *Partzufim* [pl. of *Partzuf*].

We can learn the upper matters, called “the wisdom of Kabbalah,” only by way of *Segula* [remedy/power], since they can bring a person desire and yearning to adhere to the Creator because of the *Kedusha* [holiness] of the matters that speak of the holy names.

**21. RABASH, Article No. 875, "Three Lines – 4"**

When a person learns the upper matters in order for it to bring him closer to *Kedusha*, it causes a nearing of the lights. This means that this learning will cause him to thereby be rewarded with aiming all his actions in order to bestow. This is called “work in the manner of preparation,” where he prepares himself to be worthy of entering the King’s palace and to adhere to Him.

**22. Baal HaSulam,"Introduction to The Study of the Ten Sefirot", Letter 155**

When he engages in this wisdom, mentioning the names of the lights and the vessels related to his soul, they immediately illuminate upon him to a certain extent. However, they illuminate for him without clothing the interior of his soul, for lack of vessels able to receive them. Yet, the illumination one receives time after time during the engagement draws upon him grace from above, and imparts him with abundance of sanctity and purity, which bring him much closer to achieving his wholeness.

**23. RABASH, Article No. 12 (1988), "What Are Torah and Work in the Way of the Creator"**

Feeling the vitality in the Torah requires great preparation to prepare his body to be able to feel the life in the Torah. This is why our sages said we must begin in *Lo* *Lishma*, and through the light of Torah he obtains while still in *Lo* *Lishma*, it will bring him to *Lishma*, since the light in it reforms him. Then, he will be able to learn *Lishma*, meaning for the sake of the Torah, which is called “Torah [law] of life,” as he has already attained the life in the Torah, for the light in the Torah will have given such qualification to a person as to be able to feel the life that is in the Torah.

**24. RABASH, Article No. 10 (1987), "What Is the Substance of Slander and Against Whom Is It"**

The important thing is to be rewarded with *Dvekut* with the Creator, which is called “a vessel of bestowal,” meaning equivalence of form. This is why the remedy of Torah and *Mitzvot* was given, so that through it we would be able to exit self-love and reach love of others.

**Preparation for the Study**

**25. RABASH, Article No. 12 (1988), "What Are Torah and Work in the Way of the Creator"**

Prior to learning Torah, a person should examine the reason for which he is learning Torah, for any act needs to have some purpose that causes him to do the act. It is as our sages said, “A prayer without an aim is as a body without a soul.” For this reason, before he comes to learn Torah he must prepare the intention.

**26. RABASH, Article No. 12 (1988), "What Are Torah and Work in the Way of the Creator"**

a person must make a great effort before he comes to learn so that his learning will bear fruit and good results, meaning so the learning will bring him the light of Torah, by which it will be possible to reform him. Then, through the Torah, he becomes a wise disciple.

What is a “wise disciple”? Baal HaSulam said that it is a student who learns from the wise. That is, the Creator is called “wise,” and a person who learns from Him is called a “disciple of the wise.” What should one learn from the Creator? He said that a person should learn only one thing from the Creator. It is known that the Creator wishes only to bestow. Likewise, man should learn from Him to be a giver. This is called a “wise disciple.”

**27. Baal hasulam, Introduction to The Study of the Ten *Sefirot*, item 17**

Hence, the student pledges, prior to the study, to strengthen himself in faith in the Creator and in His guidance in reward and punishment, as our sages said, “Your employer is liable to pay you the reward for your work.” One should aim one’s labor to be for the *Mitzvot* of the Torah, and in this way, he will be rewarded with enjoying the light in it, and his faith will strengthen and grow through the power in this light, as it is written, “It shall be health to your navel, and marrow to your bones” (Proverbs 3:8).

Then one can be certain that from *Lo Lishma* he will come to *Lishma*, in a way that even one who knows about himself that he has not been rewarded with faith still has hope through the practice of Torah, for if he sets his heart and mind to attain faith in the Creator through it, there is no greater *Mitzva* than this. It is as our sages said, “Habakkuk came and stressed only this: ‘A righteous shall live by his faith’” (*Makkot* 24).

**28. RABASH, Article No. 12 (1988), "What Are Torah and Work in the Way of the Creator"**

If in the beginning of his study, when a person comes to study, there is no desire to thereby achieve complete faith, which he can achieve through the light in the Torah by wanting to adhere to the one who wears it, who is clothed in the Torah and gives the light of Torah and none other, it follows that he is learning Torah, which is the clothing of the Creator. Through it, he wants to achieve complete faith, adhere to the one who wears it, who is the giver of the Torah.

Here there is unification of three discernments: 1) the Torah, which is the clothing of the Creator, 2) the Creator, who is clothed in the Torah, and 3) Israel, the person who is learning Torah with the above intention. This is called “unification,” called “the Torah and the Creator and Israel are one.”

**29. Pri Tzadik, VaYeshev, item 3**

The first Hassidim [adherents of the Hassidut movement] would spend one hour in prayer so as to aim their hearts to their Father in heaven. The word “aim” means the directness of the heart; it is to direct the heart so it is not scattered into the passions and lusts of worldly matters, but only to aim directly to his Father in heaven.

**Intention During the Study**

**30. Rabash, Lishma and Lo Lishma**

One must try to remember the goal while studying Torah, so it will always be before his eyes what he wants to receive from the study, that the study will impart greatness and importance of the Creator

**31. RABASH, Article No. 22 (1985), "The Whole of the Torah Is One Holy Name"**

During the study we must always pay attention to the purpose of the study of Torah, meaning what we should demand from the study of Torah. At that time we are told that first we must ask for *Kelim*, meaning to have vessels of bestowal, called “equivalence of form,” by which the restriction and concealment that were placed on the creatures are removed. To the extent that this is so he begins to feel the holiness and begins to have a taste for the work of the Creator. At that time he can be happy because *Kedusha* [holiness] yields joy, for the light of doing good to His creations shines there.

**32. RABASH, Article No. 12 (1988), "What Are Torah and Work in the Way of the Creator?"**

While learning Torah for the sake of learning Torah, he should still distinguish with which intention he is learning. Is it to observe the commandments of the Creator, as it is written, “And you shall reflect on Him day and night,” or is he learning in order to receive the light of Torah because he needs the light of Torah in order to cancel the evil within him, as our sages said, “I have created the evil inclination; I have created the Torah as a spice”? It turns out that he is learning in order to obtain the spice, as our sages said, “The light in it reforms him.”

**33. The Will of RIBASH and Upright Guidance**

When learning, one should settle within him before Whom he is learning, for sometimes, he distances himself in his learning from the Creator. For this reason, he must settle himself at each time and at each hour.

**34. Baal hasulam, Introduction to The Study of the Ten *Sefirot*, item 18**

the Creator, Who created it and gave the evil inclination its strength, evidently knew to create the remedy and the spice liable to wear off the power of the evil inclination and eradicate it altogether.

And if one practices Torah and fails to remove the evil inclination from himself, it is either that he has been negligent in giving the necessary labor and exertion in the practice of Torah, as it is written, “I did not labor and found, do not believe,” or perhaps he did put in the necessary amount of labor, but has been negligent in the quality.

This means that while practicing Torah, they did not set their minds and hearts to draw the light in the Torah, which brings faith to one’s heart. Rather, they have been absent-minded about the principal requirement demanded of the Torah, namely the light that yields faith. And although they initially aimed for it, their minds went astray during the study.

**35. Baal HaSulam, Shamati 68, Man's Connection to the *Sefirot***

one cannot correct one’s thought, but should only aim the heart—make one’s heart straight to the Creator. Then all of his thoughts and actions will naturally be to bestow contentment upon his Maker. When he corrects his heart to be a heart and desire of *Kedusha*, the heart will then be the *Kli* in which to place the upper light. And when the upper light shines in the heart, the heart will grow stronger and he will add and supplement continuously.

Now we can interpret our sages’ words, “Great is the learning that yields action.” It means that through the light of the Torah he is led into action, as the light in it reforms him. This is called “an act.” This means that the light of the Torah builds a new structure in his heart.

**36. Zohar for All. *Toldot* [Generations] He called – I Do Not Know the Day of My Death” #125**

One should engage in the Torah for the name of the Creator. Divinity is called “Name” because anyone who engages in the Torah and does not exert for her name is better off not being created.

[...] one should engage in the Torah with the aim to extol the Creator and make Him respected and important in the world.

He tells us the meaning of Torah *Lishma* [for her name], which is highways in their hearts: to aim one’s heart so his engagement in the Torah will draw abundance of knowledge for him and for the whole world. Thus, the name of the Creator will grow in the world, as it is written, “And the earth shall be filled of the knowledge of the Lord.” Then the words, “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth” will come true.

**37. Rabbi Abraham Iben Ezra, *Yesod Mora***

Now pay attention and know that all the *Mitzvot* [commandments] that are written in the Torah or have been accepted, which the forefathers had established, although most of them are by actions or with the mouth, they are all in order to correct the heart, for the Creator wants all the hearts and understands every inclination of the thoughts.

**38. RABASH, Article No. 2 (1986), “Lend Ear, O Heaven”**

If a person is rewarded and is given a thought of engaging in the secrets of Torah, although he does not understand a single word that is written there, it is still a great privilege that now he is adhered to the study of the internality of the Torah.

In other words, he believes that they speak only about Godliness and he has room to delve in his thought, since “everything I’m learning is of the holy names, so I must be very fortunate. Therefore, all I need to do is thank and praise the Creator.

**39. Baal HaSulam, "Introduction to The Study of the Ten Sefirot", Letter 156.**

There is a strict condition during the engagement in this wisdom not to materialize the matters with imaginary and corporeal issues. This is because thus they breach, “You shall not make unto you a statue or any image.”

In that event, one is rather harmed instead of receiving benefit.

***40. Likutei Halachot*, *Hoshen Mishpat*, *Hilchot Arev***

The essence of observing the Torah, which is the desire, is through unity. Therefore, anyone who wants to take upon himself the burden of Torah and *Mitzvot*, which is mainly through the intensification of the desire, should be included in the whole of Israel with great unity. It follows that precisely through the *Arvut*, when all are regarded as one, precisely by this they can observe the Torah, since the essence of love and unity is in the desire, when each one is pleased with his friend, there is no disparity of desire between them, and they are all included in one desire. By this they are incorporated in the upper desire, which is the end goal of the unity.

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